

contact

The Parish of Keynsham magazine



December January 2023/24



The Army in the Keynsham Remembrance Day parade



The choir at St. John's brings glorious Christmas music



Preparing the church's Christmas meal in Chipata



St Michael's tiny church bustles for Christmas services

SERVICES & ORGANISATIONS

St John the Baptist, Keynsham

EVERY WEEK - 9.15am - with choir
11.00am - with band

Occasional Festival Services: 10.30am - on these Sundays there is an earlier said 8.30am Holy Communion
The news sheet on the website has further details

Evening Services - as advertised

Weekday Holy Communion: 11.00am Wednesdays

Holy Baptism: In public worship / or Sunday 1.00pm
(either by arrangement)

Choir Practice: Friday 6.15 - 8.00pm - Junior Choir & Choir Club
Adults 7.30 - 9.15pm

Worship Band Practice: Wednesday 8.00pm

Bell-ringing Practice: Thursday 7.30 - 9.00pm

Mothers' Union: 1st Wednesday - 1.00pm

Toddlers Group: Wednesday - 10.00am

St John's Pastoral Visiting:
Marcia Cohen T: 986 5687

St Francis', Warwick Road

Morning Service: 9.30am

1st Sunday: Eco Service

4th Sundays: Holy Communion

Other Sundays: Morning Worship

(Crèche area at back of church if needed)

Evening Services: as advertised

Holy Baptism: In public worship by arrangement

St John Ambulance: Wednesday: 6.00 - 9.00pm

Brownies: Tuesday 6.00pm

Choir Practice: Wednesday: 8.00pm

Officers Group: Wed: 9.30-11.45am (term time)

St Margaret's, Queen Charlton

1st & 3rd Sundays: 11.15am - **Holy Communion.**

St Michael's, Burnett

2nd & 4th Sundays: **Holy Communion (1662)**

11.15am

3rd Sunday: **Morning Worship:** 11.15am

MISSION PARTNERS:

TLM Mission partner: Bangladesh: *Dr Ruth Butlin*

CMS Mission Partners: Kenya: *Aaron Stanbury*

CMS Prayer partner: *Ruth Radley*

Chipata South Parish, Zambia.

*A number of groups meet regularly for Prayer, Bible Study and Discussion.
Ring the Parish Office (0117 986 3354) for details.*

**Arrangements for Banns and Marriages etc.
9.30 -10.30am on the 1st & 3rd Saturdays at the Parish Office
Appointment needed**

THE PARISH OF KEYNSHAM DIRECTORY

(www.keynshamparish.org.uk)

The Parish Office is now open to visitors from 10am-12noon Mondays to Fridays. You can make contact by email at office@keynshamparish.org.uk, by phone on 0117 986 3354, or in person during opening hours.

Office Manager: Lin Fry - Facilities Manager: Vanessa Body

Team Rector:

Vacancy

Team Vicar in Charge

Rev'd. Anika Gardiner - Tel:0117 985 3470

Pioneer Missioner:

Trevor James - Tel: 07368 526997

Readers:

Rachel Hall, June Lowe, Rachel Shaw, Paul Thurlow

Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults:

Parish officer: Wendy Harwood - Tel: 0117 986 2323

safeguarding@keynshamparish.org.uk

Directors of Music / Choirmaster:

St John's: *Sam Shackleton BA, MMus* - Tel: 07914186634

St Francis: *vacant*

samshackleton@keynshamparish.org.uk

Tower Captain:

Edric Broom - Tel: 07890 364754

Parish Youth Worker:

Philippa Lovell - contact via the Parish Office

Parish Children and Families Worker:

Vacant

Caretakers: - contact via the Parish Office

St John's: - *Graham Mitchell*

St Francis: - *Jenny Minty and Katie Poynter*

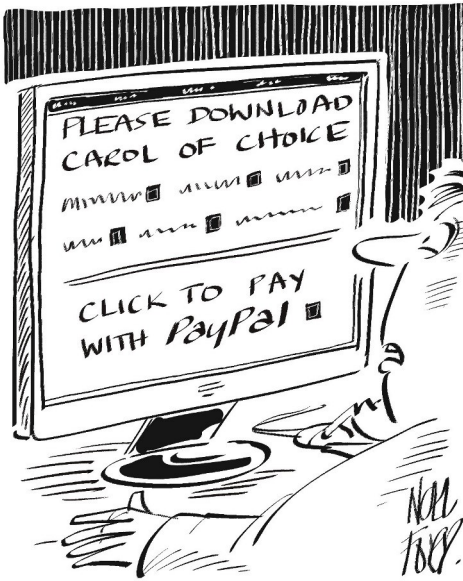
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Message of the Month

December 2023



You'll Never Walk Alone!

If you're anything like me, the finale of *Carousel* is guaranteed to make you cry. When I was a teenager I would have called it 'sappy'. It is. The spirit of Billy Bigelow kneels beside his daughter and implores her to believe it! "Believe him, darling. Believe!" he tells her as she begins to sing the song. It's high American musical hype.

Christmas can become a bit like that; sappy and emotional hype with all the lights, colour and music in the dark and cold of December. (Even November these days – we can't wait to put up the decorations, can we?) Are we attempting to drown out the truth – the truth of a broken world dominated by a corrupt deceitful elite and an uncertain future for our planet? Are we looking to smother the inevitable with Christmas cheer? When the superficiality of it all can no longer be denied we cover it with material things – presents we don't need, stuffing ourselves with food some of us can't afford, surrounded by an alcoholic haze.

Yet the message of Christmas truly is: "You'll never walk alone". God comes to us as a human child to identify with us – he comes first-hand to experience the corruption and evil that racks our world. And at the age of 33, it killed him.

Christmas doesn't mean much if Jesus ends up dead, does it? The true meaning of Christmas relies totally on the truth of the resurrection.

One of my favourite saints is St Thomas – the disciple who questioned whether the risen Jesus had really appeared to the other disciples. When I was a teenager, St Thomas' Day was the 21st of December, and then it got moved to the 3rd of July because he was getting ignored in all the run-up to Christmas Day. (Now he gets forgotten in the flurry of summer fetes and music festivals.) But Thomas urges us to be real. He's not going to be caught up in any dramatic human hype.

Faith isn't about accepting something without question just because someone else says so – even if it's someone in the Bible, or a well-qualified theologian, today. Certainly, I want to believe that God exists and that he came to us as a human baby, but I cannot take such a preposterous suggestion on trust. So how are we to go about testing the truth of the gospel claims?

“Come on in, the water’s fine,” called a friend as I hesitated beside the pool. Did I dive in? No way! I sat on the edge and dipped a toe in – then a foot. That’s me. Eventually, I got right in but not before I was sure the friend was telling the truth. That’s the way I went about discovering the truth about God. With me, it hangs on the reality of the resurrection.

When I was about fourteen, a really good youth leader asked a blunt question. “Do you, yourself, honestly believe in the resurrection? If not, the stories of Jesus are just nice stories about a good historical character who came to a sticky end. If you want to believe, you have to be like Thomas and demand evidence.” So I did. On my way home, I asked God to show me. And it was then that I gradually became aware of the difference the risen Christ can make in people’s lives.

God has never ceased showing me that over the years, until, in South Sudan, in the darkest place I have lived, his presence and power were sometimes just awesome. People have asked me how I can believe when there is so much suffering but, in reality, in places like South Sudan, local people open to God know he is truly there upholding and sustaining them through all the pain.

The Book of Job in the Old Testament asks the question: where is God when all the man’s family, possessions, health and dignity are stripped away? Job complains that God, “has set darkness upon my path... he breaks me down on every side...” (Job 19:8-10). But then he still manages to declare, “I know that my Redeemer lives and that at the last he will stand upon the earth.” (Job 19:25). Somehow, the knowledge of the powerful presence of God persists through all the evil and emptiness. Job is telling us like Billy, “Believe him. Believe. With God, you’ll never walk alone.”

So, this Christmas, let’s ignore the hype and listen to the underlying message. We don’t have to drown out the darkness and obliterate the fear. Test it. Ask God to show you, personally, that the song of the angels is true and that you’ll honestly never walk alone. The last words of Jesus, before he ascended into heaven, were, “And remember. I am with you always to end of time.” (Matthew 28:20).

I have found I can trust this but don’t take my word for it, test it for yourself. Pray now and keep praying, ask God to break through all the noise of the Christmas season. Ignore the hype and open your heart. It might take some time for God to overcome the firewalls we have erected over the years, so keep at it, even into the dark days of January when the fairy lights no longer shine and our nation sinks into its post-Christmas gloom.

Trevor Stubbs

A note from the St John's treasurer



First- in case you have missed my input into recent church services- a BIG THANK YOU for all your support as a congregation, through your regular giving. And an especial thank you to all of you who have recently reviewed your planned giving. As with so many organisations, we are facing huge financial pressures and are grateful for your continued support; please do pray for our church finances at this time of change.

Ways to give to the Church

We rely on one-off gifts in addition to planned giving, so thank you to those of you who have recently donated. If you would like to help in this way, please scan the QR code or visit the [Ways to Give](#) website for more information.

We are hoping many people who support the church will transfer to the new Parish Giving Scheme over the next year. This will save on so much administration time and work but there is no pressure, we are grateful for your support in whatever way you choose. Full details are on Ways to Give, and you can do it all by phone, or online, or by completing a paper copy.

Some of you have asked me about how easy it is to transition to the new system, and I certainly found it quite straightforward. Once I had set up the paperwork for the new direct debit, they wrote to let me know it was set up for the start of the next month and advised me to cancel my old standing order. I then informed my bank, and the old payments stopped as the new ones started.

We are hoping to send our donors occasional emails and church updates, but do please let me know if you would prefer not to be contacted in this way.

Many thanks

Anne Hewett, St John's Treasurer



Happy Christmas



It doesn't seem very long since we last sent this message! Nevertheless the editorial team sends you all best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. It is also our opportunity to say a big thank you to everyone who helps with Contact- our contributors, who send both text and photographs, Sue McCaig who looks after the advertising, and the wonderful office team.

Happy Christmas everyone.

More from our Treasurer- The Church Heating System

- **HOT OFF THE PRESS! THE CHURCH HEATING SYSTEM WILL NEED TO BE REPLACED, NOT REPAIRED.** We had hoped to replace the flue and nurse the boiler on for a few more years; we invited two companies to quote for this; after careful consideration, both declined and referred us to a company specialising in flues. This company has just confirmed that a repair to the current system is not feasible. (the boiler is approximately 20 years old anyway) This week, the DCC agreed to replace the boiler.
- **CARBON NEUTRAL AGENDA...**we had already recently commissioned a heating report , hoping to find a greener heating solution, but it seems the only viable solution at this time is to install another gas boiler, at considerable expense, carrying out the suggested recommendations. Arguable, we are already 'carbon neutral' because we source our gas through Good Energy who are one of the most genuine green energy providers. The diocese is likely to approve this, but it will still take some time to get a faculty through to give the go ahead. Meanwhile the DCC has agreed to set up a new fund for future building work, with the heating replacement listed as the first priority. More details will follow, I am sure, but I feel pretty confident that we will raise the funds needed for this!
- **TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS?** Recognising that this is a particularly busy time for the church, I have investigated temporary heating; the only option is very costly, using diesel generators which guzzle fuel, and are not really practicable for a number of reasons, including health and safety.
- **PLEASE WRAP UP WARM, OR BRING A BLANKET!** We have been advised that it could be next summer before this work is done. For now, as we near Christmas, church services will continue in the church, but the decision was taken that from the new year, services will be held in the hall. More information and discussion will follow on this, I am sure!

Anne Hewett

The story behind the hymn: O Come, All ye Faithful

Nobody knows who wrote this well-loved Christmas carol. Originally a Latin Christmas hymn, 'Adeste Fideles', it seems to have first 'surfaced' in English due to John Francis Wade, who lived in the 18th century. He made his living copying manuscripts and sometimes music by hand. Wade was a Roman Catholic, and all services in this church at that time were conducted in Latin, and so he knew the language well. A manuscript by Wade, dating to 1751, is held by Stonyhurst College in Lancashire.^[4] Wade was also a Jacobite who spent part of his life in exile.

The story goes that in about 1750 he slipped this hymn into a manuscript he was copying for the English Roman Catholic College in Lisbon, Portugal. 35 years later, in 1785, it turned up in the Portuguese Chapel in London, where it became known as the 'Portuguese Hymn'.

From there, the hymn appears to have 'travelled' across to the Margaret Chapel in London's West End. Young William Ewart Gladstone, later the British Prime Minister, greatly appreciated the services at this church. He said that the congregation were "the most devout and happy that I have ever seen."

The minister at that time was Frederick Oakley, one of the leaders of the 19th century Oxford Movement, who was later to convert to Roman Catholicism. Oakley believed strongly in the power of religious symbols and fine music, and before he bade farewell to the Margaret Chapel, he introduced this hymn to the congregation. Having started as 'Adeste Fideles', and been for a while 'The Portuguese Hymn', this hymn soon became known – and loved worldwide – as 'O Come, All Ye Faithful'.

Its popularity shows no sign of waning. Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby both released their own recordings a generation ago which are as popular as ever. In any carol service it will produce a great wave of enthusiasm from the congregation.

*O Come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord!*



Little donkey, little donkey

You are bound to sing about donkeys this Christmas, especially the little one that carried Mary to Bethlehem! But how much do you know about donkeys? They are really rather special.

Here are some fun facts:

1. There are more than 44 million donkeys in the world, of all shapes and sizes.
2. There are more than 186 breeds of donkey.
3. Donkeys have good memories. They can remember places and other donkeys even 25 years after they last saw them.
4. Donkeys are not stubborn, they are cautious. If they are fearful about something, they will do their best to avoid it.
5. Donkeys are naturally clean. Given the chance, they are always grooming themselves and each other.
6. Donkeys like to be warm and dry. They come from deserts and savannas.
7. Donkeys are social. They make deep bonds with their family and herd and get very upset if someone they love is taken from them.
8. Donkeys have big ears for a good reason – it means they can hear each other at a great distance. They communicate by braying, grunting, whiffling, squealing and snorting.
9. Donkeys help the ecology of their desert homes by digging into the ground to access water. This provides little creatures such as birds and chipmunks with life-saving water.
10. Donkeys need your help. Millions around the world are being mistreated, and you can take action to help them.

<https://www.peta.org.uk/blog/world-donkey-day/>



Christmas Tree Festival

Our ever popular Christmas Tree Festival will soon be here and this year promises to be a good one, with lots of community organisations signed up. As well as the usual colourful and imaginative trees on display, talented local musicians and singers will be performing. There will be crafts to buy and a delicious and warming array of snacks and drinks to purchase.



CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, KEYNSHAM

*Friday 8th Dec
3-8pm*

*Saturday 9th Dec
10am-6pm*

*Sunday 10th Dec
12.0-5pm*



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6th Jan: The Epiphany. Where did the Wise Men come from?

Magi from the East – it isn't a lot to go on. The Magi had originally been a religious caste among the Persians. Their devotion to astrology, divination and the interpretation of dreams led to an extension in the meaning of the word, and by the first century the Magi in Matthew's gospel could have been astrologers from outside of Persia. Some scholars believe they might have come from what was then Arabia Felix, or southern Arabia.

It is true that in the first century astrology was practised there, and it was the region where the Queen of Sheba had lived. She of course had visited Solomon and would have heard the prophecies about how one day a Messiah would be born to the Israelites and become their king.

Matthew's gospel (chapter 2) is clear that the Magi asked Herod: 'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.' So it is possible that in southern Arabia the Queen of Sheba's story of how a Messiah would one day be sent to the Israelites had survived. Certainly, there are a number of other early legends that connect southern Arabia with Solomon's Israel.

To many people this makes sense: that the ancient stories of a Messiah, linked to later astrological study, prompted these alert and god-fearing men to the realisation that something very stupendous was happening in Israel. They realised that after all these centuries, the King of the Jews, the Messiah, was about to be born.

One more interesting thing that gives weight to the theory that the Magi came from southern Arabia is this: if you study any map of Palestine as it was during biblical times, you will find that the old Arabian caravan routes all entered Palestine 'from the East'.

What about the gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?

The story of the coming of the Magi grew in the telling. By the 6th century they had acquired names: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. By medieval times they were considered to be kings. Whoever they were, we do know from Matthew that they brought three gifts to Jesus.

What about their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? While we cannot know for sure what was in the minds of first century Magi, one Victorian scholar, Rev John Henry Hopkins, has offered a possible explanation as to the significance of their gifts. He also wrote the Christmas carol, 'We Three Kings of Orient Are'.

Cont. >>>



Gold, said John Henry Hopkins, was a gift that would have been given to a king. Frankincense had traditionally been brought by priests as they worshipped God in the Temple. Myrrh was a spice that the ancients used in preparing bodies for burial.

If that is true, then you could say that the Wise Men, in choosing their gifts for this infant, honoured Jesus with gold because He was King of the Jews, with frankincense because He was to be worshipped as divine, and with myrrh, because He would also become a sacrifice and die for His people.

The Wise Men were the very first gentiles ever to worship Jesus. What faith they had! They travelled for months over difficult terrain, they never saw any evidence of Jesus' kingship, His divinity or His sacrificial death. They worshipped Him through faith in God's promises about Him. Compare that with the High Priest and religious leaders whom the Wise Men saw in Jerusalem when they first arrived. These head priests knew all about the prophecies of their own coming Messiah, but NOT ONE Jewish religious leader travelled to look for Him in Bethlehem. And it is only six miles down the road!

mannna

From the Church of England Diocese of Bath and Wells



December 2023

Let's make it an Eco Advent

This year across Bath and Wells, church and school communities, as well as families, are being encouraged to have an Eco Advent. You can join in and combine the spirit of Advent with a commitment to the environment as you enjoy an eco-friendly journey to the manger... from the comfort of your own home.

Every day, as the countdown to Christmas continues, you can explore ways to reflect on and appreciate God's creation and share simple actions to take care of it better. Through Eco Advent, each day leading up to Christmas can be meaningful, both spiritually and environmentally.

Ruth Slade, Growing Faith and Everyday Faith Adviser says, "More and more people are aware of the environmental impact of Christmas and as Christians, of course, we are committed to caring for creation. We wanted to offer a fun resource to both celebrate our journey to Christmas and at the same time reflect on our duty to care for this



beautiful world that God has gifted us.

"As well as offering daily Bible verses, prayers and reflections, everyone can join us in our Advent journey by first setting up a starry spiral path to a manger, and follow the daily tasks we are sharing on our website and social media channels. In true eco-fashion, there's no need to buy any special resources, just use what you have to hand to craft what you need to create your starry spiral and manger."

A helpful guide to joining in with Eco Advent is available to download from bathandwells.org.uk/eco-advent, where you will also find the daily Advent tasks. They will also be shared on our diocesan [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#) feeds throughout Advent. ■

News in brief

A step of faith

It was a joyous day in Wells Cathedral on Saturday, 4 November when 86 people were confirmed by Bishop Michael, Bishop Ruth and Bishop Christopher - there were so many fitting them all in the group photo was a bit of a challenge!

Bishop Michael said, "What an amazing afternoon. It has been such a privilege to be with so many different people, each with their own story, each taking their unique step of faith and looking forward to the future together."



A special visitor

The Chaplaincy team at Hinkley Point C, Bridgwater received a special visitor recently, when the His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, Mohammed Saddiq, paid a visit.

Lead Chaplain Ewen Huffman, the first salaried chaplain in the construction industry in the UK,

Praying for football success

As a pioneer in Whiteway in Bath, Rachel Spence journeys alongside her community in a host of ways, this includes helping to set up her local community football team, Whiteway FC. Now Club Secretary and keen supporter, Rachel says, "It is a special team, established by a local man who caused trouble in his community in the past and now wants to give back. He started it to give the young men in his community all the benefits being part of a team offers and hopefully prevent them going down the path he went down. Every team member is sponsored, and St Barnabas' is one of the sponsors ■"

Find out more on these and other stories at bathandwells.org.uk/news

and his team of seven volunteer chaplains hold spiritual ceremonies before major construction activities and regular prayer meetings for the broad mix of people employed there. The Lord Lieutenant met with Christian and Muslim members of the workforce and took part in Friday prayers ■

A unique story

By Michael Beasley, Bishop of Bath and Wells

When I speak to my Mum on my birthday, she often recalls to me the events that surrounded my arrival in the world. These include nearly being born in the hospital lift, my older brother being smuggled in to see me under my dad's overcoat and of various aunts sneaking onto the maternity ward out of visiting hours by wearing their WRVS uniforms.

Each of us has a unique story about our birth. At Christmas we'll be recounting once again the story that we share about another birth - the birth of Jesus. Across the world we'll be re-telling and re-enacting what happened in Bethlehem more than 2000 years ago. We'll recall the journey of Mary and Joseph, the birth in the stable, the arrival of the shepherds, the song of the angels, the visit of the Magi.

Our own birth stories are unique to each of us. Jesus's is common to us all. And not just because we all know about it. For in our recollection of Jesus' birth, we'll also be remembering that that in him, God came to be at one with us. In Jesus God arrived to share fully in our humanity, experiencing complete

solidarity with every aspect of our human condition. Jesus is 'God with us' – in trenches in Ukraine, bomb shelters in Israel and Gaza, in hospital wards where loved ones die, in relationships where there is conflict and distress.

Just as much as he is with us in our greatest joys and our deepest woes, Jesus is also for us. One of the earliest teachers of the Church said this: 'He became what we are so that we might become what he is.' The baby born in Bethlehem stands with us not only in all that we experience. This child also comes to offer us the possibility of opening every part of our lives to the transforming power of God's life of love and joy and peace. He comes so that every day we can become a little more like him.

This is the good news of Christmas and may it be yours this year.

A very Merry Christmas to you all.

Bishop Michael



Let's take it outside

Julie Perry is the Children's and Family's Worker for the Parish of Minehead and runs a weekly outdoor Toddler Church.



Fun on the beach at Toddler Church

How did you get started?

When I took on the role four years ago, I knew from the start I didn't want it to be a baby and toddler group in a church, I wanted a faith-based baby and toddler group and before long we ended up taking it outside completely.

Why outside?

For me, it is where I feel closest to God and it's a way I can share that passion. One mum told me, "When the children are outside there are no boundaries." And that is true, you can take that as physical boundaries, or to learning and spiritual growth.

Where do you meet?

We hold it in a different location every week. We have the beach on our doorstep, safe parks and woods, streams, and more, which is great as lots of our families don't drive.

Do the families come to church?

Not necessarily, but we have found it can be a stepping stone into the church

family for some. I make it very clear to everyone coming along that this group has a gentle faith element. I would hate for someone to come along and not realise.

What is that faith element?

One thing we have in each session is what I call our holy ritual. It can be as simple as having a moment of silence before snack time. It is an opportunity for children to learn how to listen and be calm. As we are outside that can be really powerful. With the breeze blowing through your hair, a seagull squawking in the background, it's like your senses are heightened to everything.

Will you be joining in with Eco Advent?

I am keen to incorporate it into our activities. I am holding a Messy Christmas Craft session at the end of November and I will be sharing it with the many families who attend. One of our activities will be crafting a stable they can then take home and use for Eco Advent. I also plan to use it in our weekly toddler church.

Hear more from Julie at bathandwells.org.uk/toddler-church

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DIOCESE OF
Bath & Wells

Living the story. Telling the story.

Refugee

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple,
Or cosy in a crib beside the font,
But he is with a million displaced people
On the long road of weariness and want.
For even as we sing our final carol
His family is up and on that road,
Fleeing the wrath of someone else's quarrel,
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower
Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled,
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power,
And death squads spread their curse across the world.
But every Herod dies, and comes alone
To stand before the Lamb upon the throne

Malcolm Guite (b 1957)

Exercises for People Over 60

Begin by standing on a flat surface where you have plenty of room on each side.

With a 5lb potato bag in each hand extend your arms straight from your sides and hold them there for as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute and then relax. Each day you will find that you can hold the position for just a little longer.

After a couple of weeks move up to 10lb potato bags

Next try 50lb potato bags. Try to get to where you can hold 100lb potato bags in each hand for a full minute.

Once you are confident put a potato in each bag.

Greta Bickerton



Israel-Gaza conflict – UK faith leaders condemn antisemitism and call for solidarity

The Archbishop of Canterbury was recently joined by Muslim and Jewish leaders at Lambeth Palace to condemn the sharp rise in antisemitic incidents since the start of the war in Israel and Hamas. They called for unity between British faith communities, against the backdrop of the war.

Archbishop Justin Welby, Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg stood together outside Lambeth Palace and delivered statements calling for solidarity and unity between communities in the UK, and rejecting any form of hatred or discrimination.

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra is a scholar and imam from Leicester, and a former Assistant Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain. Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg is the Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism UK, and Rabbi of the New North London Synagogue.

Christians in India face rising violence

Attacks against Christians in India have been rising, fuelled by right-wing nationalism, while growing numbers of Christians are being arrested under anti-conversion laws. India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, heads the list of states most hostile towards Christians, others include Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

In Manipur, the *Telegraph India* reported 254 churches damaged in recent tribal clashes, all due to mob violence. Human Rights Watch also flag up the growing attacks. They state: "Over the last decade there has been an undeniable increase in the number and frequency of attacks against religious minorities in India, especially Muslims and Christians." The UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Fernand de Varennes, warns: "India risks becoming one of the world's main generators of instability, atrocities and violence, because of the massive scale and

gravity of the violations and abuses targeting mainly religious and other minorities such as Muslims, Christians, Sikhs... It is systematic and a reflection of religious nationalism.”

India is the world’s largest democracy. Hindus make up around 75 per cent of the population, Muslims 14 per cent, and Christians around 5 per cent. The country’s constitution guarantees full religious freedom of worship and witness.

If you want to support the Christian community in India, visit Release International at <https://releaseinternational.org>

Why the King never throws cake away

King Charles is on a mission to tackle food poverty and rising food waste.

It is said that he and the Queen slice from the same cake each day until it is finished, as part of a drive to curb their personal food waste.



As for the nation, the King has been increasingly concerned that in the UK, 12 million tons of food is thrown away each year - even though almost three quarters of it could still be eaten, according to experts. In contrast, an estimated 4.7 million people are living in food poverty.

To combat this problem, King Charles has launched The Coronation Food Project, to coincide with this, his 75th year. Up to eight new food hubs around the country will store food, prepare it, and package it, before redistributing it to organisations like food banks and community kitchens. The long-term goal is to circulate 200 million meals a year.

In the meantime, King Charles is careful not to throw his cake away. Is there one simple thing you could do in your own kitchen this Christmas, to curb your personal food waste?



Chew Valley Choral Society

Calling all singers!

We would love to see you at our next taster session on Tuesday 30 January 2024 from 7.30 – 9.30pm, at Church Hall, Church Lane, Chew Stoke, BS40 8TX.

We are looking for new members for all parts: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. The taster session is a chance for you to sing alongside regular members to see how you get on. Some music-reading ability is an advantage but support will be given to those with less confidence.

The session is free of charge. You are welcome to turn up on the night - no need to register in advance, but to give us some idea of numbers it will be helpful if you let us know if you plan to attend.

For more information about the choir, please visit our website:

www.chewvalleychoral.org.uk

or

email: info@chewvalleychoral.org.uk

Vacancy Update

On Saturday 18th November the members of all four churches were invited to meet in St Francis church for an opportunity to pray and explore the opportunities and challenges that would be faced by a potential new rector. There was a good representation from all the churches. The morning was led by the Diocesan Parish support worker, Claire Horton.

By putting everyone into small groups to discuss, think and pray we were asked to say what was good bad and indifferent about our current situation and to be honest about the challenges ahead.

The process highlighted many areas in which the churches are involved in contact both within and without the church fellowships and that we are a vital part of the wider community.

The conclusion was that we as a parish have a diverse outlook on faith and community and a potential rector would be someone who is comfortable with that.

Robert Cook



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Notes from the PCC – (Not Minutes)

The PCC met on 7th November in the Parish Hall with Anika Gardiner chairing her first meeting in charge of the parish.

It was noted that there had been no progress on finding a Children's and Families Worker and no immediate prospect of any change. The current volunteers are doing a good job.

Trevor James gave the PCC an update on his work. Additional allotment plots had become available adjacent to the Sanctuary Garden at Dapps Hill which he has acquired to provide wellbeing opportunities. There is prayer and spirituality happening three times a day five days a week at the garden. He hopes to provide space for others to use as well.

Regarding the vacancy there was to be a meeting for everyone At St Francis on 18th November to discover our thoughts about the new rector role. A small group is compiling the Parish Profile that prospective candidates will use to see if they want to apply. It was recognised that the Parish Website needs significant revision and updating. The current rectory and Mike Burke's house are to be sold so a new rectory can be purchased. This may be the longest part of attracting a new rector.

After a full discussion the budget for 2024 was approved.

A teacher exchange from Zambia is agreed and set up for next April paid for by pledges. Accommodation will be needed.

It was agreed that Rachel Shaw's reader licence should be renewed.

Our position on Living in Love and Faith will be reviewed once General Synod has formed a policy but there are no clear options yet.

The future of Contact will be discussed at the next meeting.

Robert Cook

Find the names of sweets or chocolates that fit the descriptions.

Questions

1. High class thoroughfare.
2. Money making Royalty
3. Dark occult
4. Clever folk
5. Alcohol and frozen water
6. Gardeners' delight
7. Feline equipment
8. Assorted girls
9. Dating agencies
10. Edible fasteners
11. Wobbly infants
12. Talk quietly
13. Big bus
14. Gem orchard
15. 100% Au
16. Bowled over
17. Ottoman joy
18. Plentiful
19. Sport for princes
20. Noisy insect
21. H₂SO₄ spillage
22. Chardonnay glues
23. U.S. monetary exclusion
24. Race course signals
25. Tartan granite
26. Sweet tooth cleaner
27. Outside meal
28. Cork for mouths
29. 9,10,11
30. Lots of parties
31. A galaxy
32. Fallen fruits
33. Sly giggles
34. Good, twice, in France
35. One who wanders
36. Mother's local

Answers on the next page

Chocolate and Sweet Quiz

Answers

1. Quality Street
2. Mint Imperials
3. Black Magic
4. Smarties
5. Liquorice
6. Roses
7. Kit Kat
8. Dolly mixture
9. Matchmakers
10. Chocolate buttons
11. Jelly babies
12. Whispa
13. Double Decker
14. Opal fruits
15. All Gold
16. Skittles
17. Turkish delight
18. Bounty
19. Polo
20. Humbug
21. Acid drops
22. Wine gums
23. Dime bar
24. Tic Tac
25. Edinburgh Rock
26. Candy floss
27. Picnic
28. Gob stopper
29. After Eights
30. Celebrations
31. Milky Way
32. Pear drops
33. Snickers
34. Bon bons
35. Drifter
36. Mars Bar

St John's DCC meeting –14th November 2023 - a Summary

Finance – The treasurer's report was noted. The report highlighted the shortfall in our Parish share, currently £64,000. It was agreed that the responsibility for setting a budget for 2024 should not rest solely on the Treasurers shoulders. The majority of the meeting voted in favour of reconvening the Finance subgroup. *Note: The responsibilities of the sub group were agreed by the DCC at a meeting 24th January 2018.*

The meeting was informed that the lack of heating in the church was affecting the ability of musicians to play their instruments. Planned concerts have been cancelled and this affects church revenue.

All were in favour of a proposal to ring fence a legacy to the church to part fund a new boiler

Building for the Future – The Building for the Future group sought permission for

- the opening of a bank account specifically for financing the building project and
- to undertake informal discussions with major church users regarding the proposals for the future reordering of the church. – The permissions were granted.

The meeting noted

- the outside lighting for the church tower is on order and will be fitted in due course.
- the upkeep of the church clock will be discussed at a later meeting
- a heating report recommending the replacement of the church boiler was accepted. It seems unlikely that it will be replaced this winter. Researching a new, suitable boiler and applying for a faculty from the Diocese is likely to take 6 months. All were in favour of holding church services in the Parish Hall from 31st December.

Development

It was noted that there would be a meeting 18th November at St Francis church to think about the future of our parish and the appointment of a new rector. Diocesan Parish support worker Claire Horton would guide the discussions.

DCC members were disappointed to note there are currently no plans to re-advertise for a Children and Families Worker. The DCC recognised the impact the ongoing reliance on volunteers to continue with important children's work has.

The appointment of a new caretaker, Graham Mitchell was noted.

Fundraising Ideas Committee It was noted that a subcommittee had met to discuss possible ideas for fundraising and to consider different ways to advertise and promote the Parish Hall and its facilities. The group aim to plan a calendar of different events throughout the year. The success of the events will rely on volunteers to help organise them.

The DCC approved the use of the church tower for another abseiling event in April.

Reports Reports from the Pastoral Team and Youth worker were noted. Anika Gardiner thanked the pastoral team for all the work they do.

Miscellaneous It was noted that the editor of the Contact magazine is stepping down in June.

In an effort to improve communication in the Parish there will be a trial of WhatsApp communities. If you would like to be a part of the group and receive news and announcements, more information and a link to join will be included in the church news sheet.

These are not official minutes

Deborah Hall - St John's DCC Secretary

FARM DIARY

This is written for non-farmers who live surrounded by farmland.

In the Field The continuing wet weather has meant in our case the last arable crop to be drilled or sown is still in the shed. The field beans are sown about three inches deep (75mm.) and used to be ploughed in eight inches (200 mm.) deep. Either way, as with other seeds, if the ground is saturated or flooded, seeds die. Young plants can stand flooding for short periods but not seeds. Our beans can be drilled later without too great a yield penalty. Farmers have been losing emerged crops to this continuous wet weather but here in central Somerset we are not too badly affected. The sheep and goats are coping with the weather because there are hedges with trees in most fields for them to find some shelter. This is one big advantage for hedges. The sheep are currently grazing the oil seed rape as they did last year. It might save a fungicide next spring as the plants are less crowded and the old leaves are removed by the grazing. There is still maize yet to be harvested around the county. It is almost impossible to travel on most fields with the equipment that we have because of its weight. These crops might yet be lost entirely.

Rewilding There is a lot of talk about this. Many experienced country people are cautious. On a field scale, it is not likely to produce the biodiversity that we crave. The large blue butterfly is an example. These disappeared from the Devon coasts when the farmers, without realising the butterfly's life cycle, changed the grazing livestock from sheep to cattle. The cattle do not crop the grass so tightly and the required ant disappeared and with it the butterfly. This insect needs short grass. Rewilding will not give that. There must be many, many species of insect and indeed plant that will not cope on rewilded ground. The other concern is the loss of farm land to crop or food production. At some point, this loss will be a problem.

River species growth There are not many good news stories in our papers. However, in the Daily Telegraph dated Monday 30th October, Ruth Hallows wrote that river species in England have been thriving over the past 30 years. This is despite all the scandals of pollution in our rivers. One of the largest studies of its kind from experts at the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and Brunel University discovered in a 30 year study that some species particularly susceptible to pollution trebled in species diversity. Overall the average number of families at each site increased by 66% over 29 years. It is not stated how they picked their sites.

Richard Graham

Parish Register & Diary for Dec/Jan

BAPTISMS

05/11/2023	Scarlett Abigail Julia Moger	St John's
19/11/2023	Alfie David Chamberlain	St John's
25/11/2023	Mia Elizabeth Gardiner	St Francis
03/12/2023	Ziggy Mark Ivey	St John's
03/12/2023	Ruby Taylor Parrott	St John's

DEATHS

06/10/2023	Jack David James Gill	30
06/10/2023	James Forster Elmer	86

DIARY

December

2 nd	9.30am	Clergy Consultation Hour *	Parish Office
2 nd	10am	Who Let The Dad's Out	St Francis Hall
3 rd	6pm	Youth Group	OCT
3 rd	6pm	Impact Group for 7-11 year olds	Parish Hall
3 rd	6pm	Youth Home Group	OCT
5 th	11am	WI Carol Service	St John's
5 th	7pm	PCC Standing Committee meeting	Upper Room Parish Hall
5 th	8.15pm	DCC Committee meeting	Upper Room Parish Hall
6 th	2pm	Mothers Union	Parish Hall
6 th	7.30pm	Baptism Preparation Meeting *	OCT
8 th - 10 th	9am	Christmas Tree Festival	St John's
12 th	1pm	Broadlands School Visit	St John's
16 th	9.30am	Clergy Consultation Hour *	Parish Office
16 th	10am	Who Let The Dad's Out	Parish Hall
16 th	7pm	Avon & Somerset Police Male Voice Choir Carol Concert	St John's
20 th	6pm	Reflective Christmas Service – When Christmas Hurts	St John's

DIARY

January

3 rd	6pm	Youth Group	OCT
3 rd	6pm	Impact Group for 7-11 year olds	Parish Hall
3 rd	6pm	Youth Home Group	OCT
3 rd	7.30pm	Baptism Preparation Meeting *	OCT
6 th	9am	Mothers Prayers	St Francis Upper Room
6 th	9.30am	Clergy Consultation Hour *	Parish Office
6 th	10am	Who Let The Dad's Out	St Francis Hall
7 th	1pm	Baptism	St John's
9 th	7.15pm	PCC Meeting	Parish Hall
13 th	12pm	Free Community Lunch	Parish Hall
16 th	7.30pm	DCC Meeting	Parish Hall
20 th	10am	Who Let The Dad's Out	Parish Hall
20 th	9.30am	Clergy Consultation Hour *	Parish Office

* These meetings by appointment only

St. Margaret of Scotland

I have had an interesting email from a Mr. Homer Cox in Buxted, Kent who is an expert on St. Margaret. He came across the article in Contact online and emailed to say that there is another St. Margaret's Hope on the Firth of Forth, which seems a more likely place for her to have come ashore in Scotland and be met by the king. Contact is spreading its wings!


Kath McCarthy

A cold coming we had of it,
 Just the worst time of the year
 For a journey, and such a long
 journey:
 The ways deep and the weather
 sharp,
 The very dead of winter.
 And the camels galled, sore-footed,
 refractory,
 Lying down in the melting snow.



Credit Phil McCarthy

“The Journey of the Magi by T.S. Eliot. Taken from the website “The Island Parson by David Bruce Bryant-Scott”



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