

Saints ALIVE

The magazine of:
All Saints, Leighton Buzzard
St. Nicholas, Hockliffe
St. Michael's, Eggington
St. Michael and All Angels,
Billington
The Good Shepherd, Sandhills

October 2024

70p

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so you can hug God
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Bike 'n Hike team



All Saints Leighton Buzzard

Vicar of All Saints:

Preb. David MacGeoch
vicar@allsaintslb.org.uk 01525 373217

Team Vicars:

Rev'd Noel McGeeny 01525 237633
Rev'd Dr. Bernard Minton 01525 372149
Rev'd Steve Marsh 01525 838450

Associate Priests:

Canon Malcolm Grant 01525 372771
Canon Don Brewin 01525 373644
Canon Grant Fellows 01525 381418
Rev'd Steve Davies 01525 381418
Rev'd Alison Davies 01525 381418

Diocesan Readers

Roger Collor 01525 376430
Geoffrey Huskisson 01525 757013
Geoffrey Marchant 01525 371797
Linda Morris 07943 053793
Laurelin Burge 01525 371849
Katharine Reedy 07932 359815
Frank Reedy 07777 659128

Churchwardens

Sam Smith 07414 620754
John Sykes 01525 852218
James Legg 07535 973212

PCC Secretary

Phil Tingay pccsecretary@allsaintslb.org.uk

All Saints Parish Office

All Saints Church, Church Square,
Leighton Buzzard LU7 1AE
Open Tuesday - Friday 9.30am - 2.30pm
Tel: 01525 381418

Website www.allsaintslb.org.uk
Email: parish@allsaintslb.org.uk
Facebook: [All Saints Leighton Buzzard](#)

Office Manager & Vicar's PA 01525 381418
Jo Waller

Head Verger

Lindsay Bevis 01525 381418

Director of Music & Choir Master

including Leighton Young Singers Club

Paul Dickens 01525 210210

Free Will Offering Scheme

Mark Jeeves treasurer@allsaintslb.org.uk

Sunday Saints Co-ordinator

Alison Dobbie 01525 759259

Mothers' Union Branch Co-ordinator

Janet Wenborn 01525 370987

Tower Liaison

Margaret Birtles 07949 141211
Kevin Pughe 07402 233022
Barry Eglesfield 07967 755148

Toddler Time

Julie Dolton 07954 148128

All Saints Preservation Trust

30, High St, Leighton Buzzard LU7 1EA
E-mail: enquiry@allsaintspreservationtrust.org
Website: www.allsaintspreservationtrust.org

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magazine@allsaintslb.org.uk

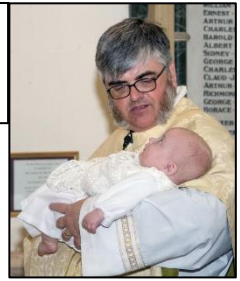
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Distribution: Stephen Jury 01525 381936; stephenljury21@btinternet.com

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An Image of Prayer

By Rev'd Dr. Bernard Minton



I thought that I might this month share an image of prayer that came to me recently, which might be helpful to some.

Imagine that you are at an airport or a station, waiting for your beloved. They have been away for several months, or more. You have not seen them in the flesh for a long time, and now they are coming home. You are waiting for them to arrive, eager and excited, clutching in one hand a bouquet of carefully chosen flowers, all of their favourites, and in the other some small, precious gift, chosen with care and attention, that they will love, and you know they will love, that demonstrates in some way how much you love them and have missed them, and how happy you are to have them back.

Your beloved appears and sees you, and dropping their luggage, they run (or scoot) towards you, arms wide. What are you going to do with the flowers and the gift? If you hang on to them, they are only going to be in the way when your beloved arrives in front of you and seizes you in their arms, expecting your arms to reciprocally enfold them. If you keep hold of the bouquet and the present, your hug is going to be impeded, and the gifts may be crushed or damaged. You have to let them go, put them down, before your beloved arrives face-to-face. They are precious and beautiful, and their time will come: but they are not the first or most important thing. The first and most important thing is you, and the beloved, and your embrace. The physical, intimate contact, and the kiss. Everything else comes later.

This is a story of how we encounter God in prayer. The world is precious. We are precious. Our gifts are precious to Him. But in order to grasp His love, we must let everything else go. We cannot open our hearts and arms to God, if we are holding onto other things. Everything else has to go before we can receive the fullness that God offers us.



So, when we pray, we come to our beloved, with arms full of gifts and requests, all of which we solemnly present, as a toddler presents their drawings to their beloved parent. But all God is really interested in is us.

Of course He is interested in the gifts and prayers we bring, because they are tokens of our love, in various inadequate ways. But what God really wants is just us; loving Him, listening to Him, and collaborating with Him for our own lives, and for His creation, by embracing His love in this world.

Fr. Bernard

Our present pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team

All Saints

Sundays:

8.00am Holy Communion
 9.30am Parish Eucharist
 11.30am (usual pattern but can vary occasionally)
 1st Sunday: Messy Mass
 3rd Sunday: All Age Service
 2nd & 4th Sunday: Holy Baptism
 6.00pm Evening Prayer
 1st Sunday: Choral Evensong Plus
 3rd Sunday: Sung with hymns
 (NO choir) followed by Benediction
 2nd & 4th Sunday: Said Evensong

Weekdays:

Holy Communion

10.00am Thursday
 9.00am Saturday
(Service of Healing on 4th Saturday each month)

Morning Prayer:

9.00am Tuesday – Friday in the Chancel

St. Barnabas, Linslade

Sundays:

8.00am Said Eucharist
 10.00am Parish Eucharist
 6.00pm Evensong
www.stbarnabaslinslade.uk

St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington

11.15am Holy Communion

Good Shepherd, Astral Park Sports & Community Centre, Johnson Drive, Sandhills, LU7 4AY:

Sundays at 9.45am:

1st Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors
 2nd Sunday: 'Chapel Time':
Lead reflection and discussion
 3rd Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors
 4th Sunday: 'Morning Break':
Informal service with sermon and discussion.
 Free pop-up café every Sunday from 9.45am
Community Cafe every Wednesday at Astral Park 10am - 12noon with a Music, Rhythm and Rhyme session from 10am - 10:30am.

St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach

Sundays:

8.00am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion
 11.00am Holy Communion
 1st Sundays: Family Service

Tuesdays: 7.00pm Holy Communion

Morning Prayer via Zoom:

9.00am Monday – Saturday
www.saintleonardschurch.com

St. Michael's, Eggington

9.30am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion
 4th Sundays: Café Church 3-4pm

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

9.30am 2nd Sundays: Family Communion
 4th Sundays: Holy Communion

Sunday Saints: for age 3+ year olds, meets during 9.30am Sunday service at All Saints.

All Saints Toddler Time: All Saints every Wednesday during term time, at 9.30am & at 1.30pm.

£1.50 per parent / carer & child; 50p extra per child; refreshments included.

Leighton Young Singers Club: for children in Years 2-6, meets on Fridays at 6.30 - 7.30pm.

Bereavement Café: a support group offering friendship and understanding.

1st Sunday of the month, 2.30-4pm The Spire Coffee Shop, All Saints

Choir Practice: Friday evenings, 6.45 trebles; 7.30 adults.

Bellringers: Practice on Monday, 7.30 - 9.30pm.

Spire Coffee Shop: Tuesday & Friday only, 10am - 2pm.

Contact Details on Page 2.

News Roundup

There is no longer a service at 7.30pm on a Tuesday. The Healing Service will move to the 4th Saturday of each month at 9am.

*** **

Morning Prayer is held in the Chancel at 9am, Tuesday to Friday.

*** **

Link to hope charity shoebox appeal 2024 is now well under way, it supports those people in Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova who struggle to manage without help. Leaflets with all the details are available on the Partners in Mission noticeboard in the north transept. Please return your boxes to church before the end of October. If you prefer to donate individual items from the list, please contact Rosie Dawson or James Legg (07535 973212).



Worth a smile

Signs of our times? Pew-sheet notices that didn't come out quite right...

- ❖ Would the person who took the church step ladder last week please bring it back, or further steps will be taken.
- ❖ After Sunday morning coffee, please empty the teapot and stand upside down on the draining board.
- ❖ Hymn of Invitation: 'Whoever He Leads I'll Go'.
- ❖ Our visiting monster today is the Revd Jack Bains.
- ❖ Church toilet out of order. Please use floor below.
- ❖ Worshippers are asked to wail, until the choir has been served Holy Communion.
- ❖ Pray for continual growth for our teens, that a food foundation will be laid in their lives.
- ❖ We are always happy to have you sue our facility.
- ❖ The activity will take place on the church barking lot.
- ❖ Hymn: 'I am Thin, O Lord.'



...I take it our local supermarket has a rather good offer on tinned peas at the moment!

Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, August:

24: Henry Peck & Sophie Elvin at St. Michael's;
31: Brandon Whalley-Nicholson & Lillie Molyneaux at All Saints

'Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate'

Holy Baptism, August:

25: Billy David Kirn-Moss

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. August:

15: Isobel Richardson at St. Barnabas; 19: Anne Humphreys at All Saints;
30: Joanne Bradburn at All Saints

'Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die'

Years Mind, October:

1: Vera Delafield, Arthur Waldock, Henry (Topper) Baines, Diana Reynolds;
2: Walter Sandifer, Paul Kaye; 5: Jim Aris, Rita Styles, John Sandifer;
7: Laurence Nash, Edna Forward; 8: Edwin Cosby;
9: Francis Williams, Hilda Plenderleath, William Delafield; 10: Sheila Twivy;
14: Gilbert Inglefield, Harry Tingey; 18: Sheila Longstaffe;
19: Hugh Harmer, Adelaide Lack, Jeffrey Rudom; 20: Pat Harris, Eric Underwood;
21: John Skinner; 22: Harold Rolls; 25: Doris Morris; 30: Helen Lau



LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

2 LIVE PROFESSIONAL CONCERTS FOR OCTOBER

Leighton Buzzard Library Theatre

Saturday 12th October 2024 at 7.30pm:

Iain Farrington & his art deco trio

Arrangements from the great American Songbook along with more modern popular songs and traditional folksongs. New versions of familiar tunes that combine jazz and Classical styles, to make a toe-tapping and heart-warming evening.'



Saturday 26th October 2024 at 7.30pm:

Rosie Hood Quartet

Traditional English songs, original material touching on politics, struggle, women and unheard stories

Tickets online from www.leightonbuzzardlibrarytheatre.co.uk
or in person from the Box Office on Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays
10am - 12pm or at the door.



Registered charity no: 1183681

Pulford VA Lower School

Head Teacher: Rev'd Dave Heather, MBE

Office Manager: Mrs Alison Quick

Tel: 01525 372188

Website: www.pulfordschool.org

A church school for
a whole community



Singing Together

As many of you will know, my day job is a professional singer with the BBC Singers. Singing has been a huge part of my life since school days. I was lucky to go to a school with a thriving music tradition and teachers who loved singing. Early memories of performing Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat still give me great joy, and from that point on many of my most cherished experiences involve singing and particularly performing with other people.

I am, therefore, very pleased to say that singing is a vibrant part of life at Pulford. Daily worship always involves a song or two and anyone who has ever attended a Pulford service in All Saints will know that our marvellous young people can sock out a hymn with great gusto (and brilliant actions!). To back this up the recent SIAMS report (November 23) made the following comments "*Singing is an integral part of collective worship. Strong links with the local parish church means the children's repertoire is shared in both places, further strengthening community links. Pre-school pupils enjoy singing 'Allelujah'.*"

While the vast majority of my role as a Governor (and especially Chair) is to do with looking after statutory issues and overseeing the school's finances and curriculum, it is always fulfilling to be available to support the school with my particular area of professional expertise. To that end, I recently delivered a short workshop for the school's teachers giving them some ideas for fun singing warm-ups and games. One of the great challenges of being a primary/lower school teacher is that you have to be able to deliver lessons in specialist areas, such as music, as part of the national curriculum. Many teachers don't have extensive musical experience and find such lessons pretty daunting. I wonder if this is felt even more keenly in schools, such as Pulford, where singing and music are so important to its identity and day to day life. So if I can help in even a small way I feel I am adding real practical value to my role as a Governor – and I also get to engage with the school's fabulous staff and have some fun!



Singing and especially singing together really is one of the great universal activities, crossing boundaries of age, race and skill! Indeed, it is one of the many tangible links that Pulford has with All Saints which has its brilliant choir and enthusiastic congregation – we all enhance our worship through song and expressing our faith together in that most uplifting way.

Ed Price, Chair of Governors



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01525 377384, or 07774 901293
email: eileennaples50@outlook.com

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01525 372 204

Selections

*Pet, gift and garden.
Household, kitchen tools and
electrical items.
Calor Gas, DIY and repairs.
Memorial.*



selections_pet_garden

On a musical note.....

Please welcome our new Head Chorister, Olivia Olleson, and our new Deputy Head Chorister, Elisha Arya. They have been senior members of the choir for quite a while, and it is great to see them coming through the ranks to reach these senior positions.

Not many people are aware that the Head Chorister is in charge of the whole choir and not just the trebles. It's fair to say that not all of the adult members of the choir realise that as well!



I recall one occasion some years ago now (no names will be mentioned) when we were standing near the cenotaph, waiting for the Remembrance Day service to start, and one of the adult choir members was chatting away in quite a loud voice. The Head Chorister asked him/her (no clues here) to please keep quiet and stand respectfully. Whilst the instruction was obeyed the aftermath was quite intense until it was explained that the Head Chorister is in charge of choir discipline and that applies to everyone. Quite a task for someone who might be only 15 or 16 years old.

Another of the many duties of a Head Chorister is to arrange the trebles between the two sides, known as Cantoris (the side where the Precentor or Cantor sits in a cathedral) and Decani (the Dean's side). Decani is the south side of the choir and Cantoris the north side. This is by no means an easy task. Those on Cantoris sing second treble when the treble part splits into two voices. Generally speaking, although by no means always, second treble is more difficult to sing. First treble will often have "the tune" and singing second treble can be akin to singing alto, tenor or bass. On the other hand, the first treble part is often higher in pitch and is well-suited to those who have no difficulty with high notes. But there are lots of other factors:

- the voices on each side have to be balanced;
- senior trebles who are "minders" have to sit next to their "mindees" (the younger trebles being looked after);
- there may be particular friendship groups to take into account;
- it's often good to switch parts after a year or so, so that everyone gets experience of singing both first and second.

And then there are the administrative tasks:

- getting out and putting away the music;
- arranging the folders for the Advent carol service;
- helping younger trebles with their ruffs;
- helping the younger trebles with their music theory books etc etc

I am truly grateful to all those who take on these very senior roles – they are a great help to the smooth running of the choir and considerably reduce my workload.

Paul Dickens

Calendar of Events

2nd October

Lunch Club in the North Transept, All Saints 1pm.

Tickets £6.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



6th October

Harvest Festival: Services as usual including Messy Mass 11.30am

Choral Evensong 6pm



Bereavement Support Café

Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm



18th October:

Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm



19th October

Poppy Prom Concert All Saints 7.00pm.

Tickets available from the Parish Office.



21st October

All Saints Preservation Trust: talk about *Alice de la Pole* by Adam Smith 7:30 for 8:00

For further details, please see poster in Church or email

enquiry@allsaintspreservationtrust.org

25th - 26th October

Arts Festival All Saints 10.00am - 5.00pm.

Welcome to Preb. David MacGeoch ...

On Saturday 7th September, at 4pm, Rev'd Prebendary David MacGeoch was licensed by the Lord Bishop of St Albans, Rt. Rev'd Dr. Alan Smith, and installed by the Archdeacon of Bedford, Ven. Dave Middlebrook, as Team Vicar for All Saints Leighton Buzzard.

We were pleased to welcome David's family and friends and members of the congregation from Glastonbury with Meare together with local dignitaries and clergy and congregations from the Ouzel Valley Team and wider Deanery.

David and Kathy would like to thank everyone involved in the arrangements for the service and the reception that followed, and for the warm welcome that they have received since arriving in Leighton Buzzard.



Roger Collor honoured

Roger Collor has been a reader here in Leighton Buzzard for 52 years but has also assisted in the setting-up of a new diocese in Uganda and been a member of several diocesan committees.

Therefore, it was very appropriate that on 14th September, Holy Cross Day, he was admitted to the Order of Saint Alban in Saint Albans Cathedral by Bishop Alan at Solemn Evensong. There were four other recipients, including Colin Bird who has so successfully recently led the Diocesan Board of Finance and managed diocesan finances.

The Bishop read citations for each candidate and presented the medals and certificates saying:

"I admit you into the Order of Saint Alban, in recognition of your faithful service and ministry in Christ's Church. May you continue in Christ's way all the days of your life, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

He then read a prayer and blessed the recipients. The Bishop, Dean and three Archdeacons standing by in spectacular copes were then verged back to their stalls. Solemn Evensong followed sung by the choir of Saint Nicholas Church, Harpenden (Responses, Reading, Canticles Bairstow in D and the anthem Greater Love by Ireland) with Dean Jo being verged back from her stall to cense the High Altar. Afterwards, Roger and Audrey attended a reception in Abbey Gatehouse, the Bishop of St Albans' residence.

I have known Roger and Audrey for many years, for he used to help Brian Willett's father George in the churchyard and planted one of the oak trees in the 1960s. He was also responsible for painting the saints and angels in the south nave aisle (with reportedly his fiancée Audrey sitting on the bottom rung of the ladder).

But really, he has been a dedicated worshipper at All Saints and St Michael's church, Billington reading lessons, prayers and preaching all those 52 years!

Thank you, Roger.



Stephen Jury



on ...

*History all around us,
shaping the
worshipping community
in The Ouzel Valley*



The Pulford Trust, or to give it its full charity name, Pulford's Foundation (including the Pulford Leighton Buzzard School) was set up when Rev. Joshua Pulford, Vicar of the town, died in 1710 leaving provision in his will for the education of the children of Leighton Buzzard. Over the years, many of the land parcels that were left in his will, were sold and the initial income raised used for the purposes of a school.

The first school building, which is now the town's Post Office, was gifted to the Vicar and Churchwardens of Leighton Buzzard, for use as a School House. The Deeds specifically stated that the school was to be known as Pulford's Leighton Buzzard School under the management of the Pulford Trust for the promotion and teaching of the Doctrines of the Church of England.

In 1882 the Church of England donated the land for a new school house at the present location, and the old school building was sold. The current school opened in 1884, under the direct management of the Pulford Trust.

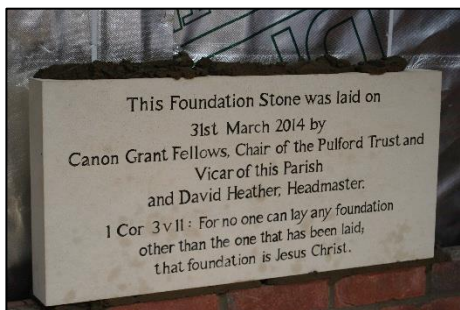
By the Education Act 1902 and subsequent Education Acts the management and administration of the school was removed from the management and control of the Trustees to a Board of Managers with responsibility for religious education vested in the St Albans Diocesan Education Committee. The School House remains the responsibility of the Trustees, but they have no responsibility for the running of the school.

Pulford Trust supports more than the school

The School House



Over the years, the school has been extended and improved, with the old School House being converted into two self-contained flats, before becoming part of the school again, housing the Pre-School. The latest addition was the building of a new block housing 2 new classrooms, which was completed in 2014 and funded by the Trust.

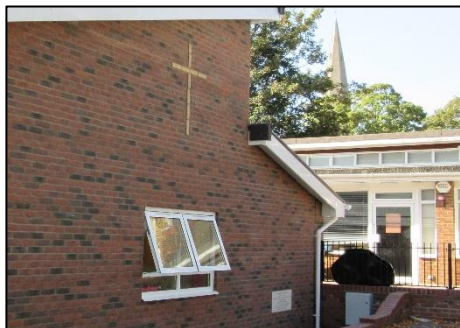


The Trust continues to financially support Pulford School with grants towards the upkeep of the buildings and with such projects as providing i-pads, playground equipment and classroom whiteboards.

We also offer grants for educational projects within the wider parish, in line with Joshua Pulford's ethos, and are pleased to support All Saints Church with resources for their Messy Mass Services and Lower Schools Christian Trails.

The Trust currently has six Trustees including the Vicar of Leighton Buzzard as ex-officio chair and they meet quarterly to discuss applications for grants, which may fall within the remit of the objects of the charity.

Jo Waller, Clerk to the Trust



Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Stuart Blofeld; Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

Wednesday drop-in at Astral Park



Lots of fun and creativity was had at our summer holiday drop-in, which ran every Wednesday morning during August. It was great to see both familiar and new faces, and to enjoy many good chats over the Lego, crafts, board games and refreshments. The aim is to provide a welcoming space for families to come and relax together, with everything free of charge. Around 40-45 adults and children attended each week.

We're already planning the next half-term drop-in, on Wednesday 30th October: stay tuned for updates via our Facebook page.

Meanwhile, our regular term-time drop-in continues, open to all, and attended by people aged anything from 0-90. From 10:00-10:30am there is a music, movement and rhyme time for 0-4s, then the option to stay and play, with a range of toys and activities to choose from. Adults often take part in board games or just relax over a hot drink. A member of the Leighton-Linslade Health Connections team is often there along with the regular CGS team, and a listening ear is always available.



If you'd like to know more, or perhaps even volunteer, get in touch with me, Katharine Reedy, via info@goodshepherdsandhills.org.uk or come along on a Wednesday morning to Astral Park Community Centre between 10:00-12:00.

Katharine Reedy

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Brian Speller: 210565; Tom Ware



Firstly we from St. Nicholas Church, Hockliffe, would like to welcome Preb. David MacGeoch and his family to the parish. We wish them every happiness in this new parish.

On 24th July, there was a memorial service for Clare Harris-Ward, and we send our condolences to husband David, and daughter Ragnor.

It's Harvest time again, and some of the fields look bare, as the crops have been brought in. It also makes us think, that as the season changes, it won't be long before Autumn and Winter are on the way. Here in Hockliffe, we are surrounded by farms, with the tractors going up and down the main road. At most churches we always sing "We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land". I think WE are the people to spread the good seeds on the land – the seed meaning "the word of God", as hopefully the seed will fall, grow and prosper.

Here in St. Nicholas, during the Summer, our Cream Teas were a success, and we are now looking forward to our Harvest Lunch, which will commence at 12.00 noon. We hope to see you there.

Services at St. Nicholas

October 13th: Family Harvest Festival at 9.30 a.m. (Donations of food for charity)
Harvest Bring and Share Lunch 12 noon – 2pm

November 10th: Remembrance Service at 9.30 a.m.
10.55: Meet at the lych gate to process to the war graves followed by the Last Post.

December 7th: St. Nicholas Supper at 7.30 p.m. More details to come.

December 21st: Carols by Candlelight at 7.00 p.m.

December 24th: Midnight Mass at 11.15 p.m.

Carol Speller



St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Julia Haviland 850380; Tina Thompson 378411



I regret to report that we have lost our lovely Anne Lethbridge-Farmer who died in hospital at the end of August. Anne was known to so many people as a loving and caring lady who would go to extraordinary lengths to help anyone in need. Sister to Audrey Ingledow, to whom we send our condolences, she will be greatly missed by all who knew her. There will be a requiem mass on 2nd October but other details are not yet known.

We thank Roger Collor for organising the construction of the new memorial wall that is part of the Garden of Rest at St Michael & All Angels. Not quite finished at the time of writing, it will carry up to 40 engraved plaques mounted on attractive blue bricks. Do take a look if you are visiting at any time.

Sometimes a happy memory is triggered by chance and such was the case when I read Paul Dickens' entertaining report of the All Saints Choir's visit to Exeter Cathedral in the last issue of 'Saints Alive'. A few years ago, Julia and I visited Exeter and we took the opportunity to visit the Cathedral which is rich in medieval carvings. There is a complete set of misericords which date back to the 13th century and one features a local craftsman's interpretation of the first elephant to be brought to Britain. It was gifted to Henry III by the King of France in a gesture of goodwill and drew hundreds of spectators to the Tower of London where it was housed.



Craftsmen were working on the cathedral carvings at the time and an envoy was sent to London to record the features of this strange new animal so that a carving could be incorporated into the misericords. The crowd viewing the elephant was so dense that the envoy couldn't get close enough to see the animal's feet and so he guessed that they were cloven hooves like a cow's! These were faithfully worked into the design along with tusks that protrude at very weird angles!

I do hope that the choir was able to see this utterly unique piece of history as there is nothing quite like it anywhere else in the world!

We celebrate Harvest Festival at the service on 6th October and this will be followed by a Ploughman's lunch starting at 12.30pm. All are welcome at either or, preferably, both!

And finally, a very warm welcome to Revd. David MacGeoch on his licensing as Team Vicar at All Saints Leighton Buzzard. We hope that he enjoys his time in the town and will find time when settled to come to pray with us in Billington.

Geoff Haviland.

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634;

Paul Brown 751861



Right: the church and garden looking resplendent on the occasion of Harry & Sophie's wedding

I have just experienced the thrill of low flying geese flying and honking overhead in 'V' formation. A familiar sight at this time of year in these parts as they make their way to wherever it is they need to be – taking it in turns to expend energy and then benefit from a boost from others when needed. But, instead of me sharing yet more reasons why I am a fan of Autumn, we really should reflect a little on what has recently happened – Summer. An odd growing season if you are a gardener, a wet season if you are a walker and a great season if you are a fan of molluscs.

HOWEVER, there was no rain on the day of the annual cream tea held in the church garden. As always, this was well attended and we were plied with tea and scones, table service no-less. Thanks must go to the team heading up this lovely event who were ably supported by some Girl Guides. Back in the day the activity would have counted towards the hostess badge and currently 'helping other people' is within the Girl Guide promise which has been made for as long as anyone can remember. We were entertained by local band Milk Float while some basked in the hot, hot sun and others dived for shadier spots. I am certain funds will have been raised but the true value of these regular events is that of maintaining community spirit and providing a sense of belonging and safety.

By the time you read this the daylight will be on the slippery slope to December 21st, there will be new lists of things to do, problems to solve and your neighbours may well have done their Christmas shopping; but, with a little help from our friends, we can prepare for the next challenge: find our way through to where we need to be, just like the geese, minus the honking.

If you know anyone who might like a regular copy of Saints Alive, ask them to contact me 01525 211195.

Michelle Plummer

2nd October: Elevenses coffee morning in the church

6th October: 9.30am Harvest Festival at St. Michael's

19th October: 10.00 am garden working party

26th October: 7.00pm Quiz evening with ploughman's supper

in the Village Hall. Contact Angela 01525 210420 or Martine 01525 905009

10th November: 2.30 pm Remembrance service followed by refreshments





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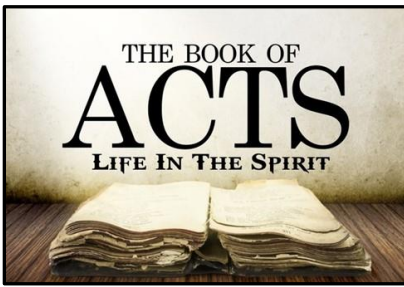
Sponsored Bike 'n Hike
BEDS AND HERTS HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

Bike 'n Hike round Bedford

All Saints Bike 'n Hike team decided this year to go further afield, so Abby, Chris, Emma and Katrina took the train to Bedford, visiting 13 historic and interesting churches, and walking 20km on a glorious sunny day. The route followed part of the John Bunyan trail, including the Bunyan Meeting church which was founded in 1650. It has the most lovely stained glass windows depicting scenes from Pilgrim's Progress and had a long association with John Bunyan. Other highlights included St Paul's and St Peter's. After strolling through beautiful parkland the team enjoyed a pub lunch before reaching Biddenham village where we were very warmly welcomed at St James's - a sweet Norman church with a fine stained glass window celebrating the millennium. Then, a pretty walk along the river Great Ouse and across a re-wilded golf course before heading back into town past an enormous Sikh temple before stopping at the Moravian Church. Nearly all the churches visited were open and many had a friendly team of people to welcome visitors. If you haven't already signed up as a sponsor, there is still time to make a donation- just speak to Abby, Emma or Katrina. Many thanks indeed to all those have generously sponsored the team.

Katrina Grant





Biblical Genres

*A series exploring
the different kinds of writing in the bible.*

This month:

Acts ...

by Rev'd Steve Marsh

When have you seen the Holy Spirit act most powerfully in the life of your Christian community?

One of these times for me was when I came to faith in the early 1990's. Around this time there was a period of renewal known as the 'Toronto Blessing', so called because the first signs of this revival were discerned at the Toronto Airport Vineyard church.

During this time many felt the closeness of the Holy Spirit, often in prayer and worship meetings. In one gathering I remember feeling God reveal to me the joy of his love and delight in us and then his sorrow about those who had chosen not to be in relationship with him.

Whilst this time was not a positive experience for everyone, with some feeling pressurised to get involved and respond in a certain manner, for many individuals and Christian communities it was a pivotal time. I am aware of many ministries that were birthed during this revival which have remained to this day, influential and life-giving.

During the Toronto Blessing a significant amount of teaching centred on the New Testament book of Acts, as parallels were drawn between what was happening during the Toronto Blessing and the formation of the early church as recorded in Acts.

After a year or so, the Toronto Blessing ebbed away, and I remember being left feeling rather confused. Having become a Christian during this revival, I thought this was what church was like all the time, so when it came to an end, I was unsure about what to expect of the Holy Spirit. Struggling to readjust my level of expectation of the Holy Spirit acting today was one of the contributing factors that led me to go to theological college to inform my thinking on this subject.

As with most theological topics there are a variety of positions concerning the level of expectation of the Holy Spirit acting today, based on studying the book of Acts. The three strongest positions are, firstly, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that we read about in Acts was an exceptional one to kick start the church and we should not expect the same level of the Holy Spirit acting today. The second position is that we should expect the same level of the Holy Spirit acting today but only during times of renewal. The third position is that we should expect the same level of the Holy Spirit acting today all the time.

As with a lot of theological conclusions, I think there is an element of truth in all these positions.

I perceive that the Holy Spirit is acting today, all the time. However, most of the time it is at the level of the still, small voice of God, guiding and inspiring us quietly, individually and corporately. I also identify that there are specific times of renewal, such as the Toronto Blessing in the 1990's, the Azusa Street Revival in California in the 1900's and the Welsh Revivals in the 1900's and 1850's. These times of revival often bring a corrective movement in the church and birth new ministries for the next season in the life of the Christian community. However, these times of revival can only last for a period, as the level of intensity would be exhausting to maintain consistently. Additionally, the ministries they birth need time to establish themselves and mature.

I then observe that there was something unique about the work of the Holy Spirit in the birthing of the church we read of in Acts. This was the only time in the church's history that its leaders had firsthand experience of the incarnated Jesus and his ministry on earth. I discern that this unique level of activity of the Holy Spirit in the time of the incarnation of Jesus and the Acts of the Apostles is evident in the ease and frequency of physical healings.

There were reports of physical healings during the Toronto Blessing, though I did not witness any or know anyone who had. Emotional, relational and spiritual healings were plentiful during this time, and I would witness to an element of this for myself. But physical healings, even if there were some during the Toronto blessing, were not as plentiful as we read of in the first few chapters of Acts and the Gospels. This leads me to believe there was a unique outpouring of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in these times.

The first few chapters of the book of Acts speak of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, in the multiple physical healings and in the establishment of the Christian Church. However, once you read beyond these opening chapters, challenges within the church soon start to emerge, challenges we might relate to today. Arguments about resources, disagreements about certain theological or ethical positions and personality clashes. Encouragingly though, the Holy Spirit is still clearly at work developing and growing the church, with, and sometimes in spite of, the actions of the new Christian community.

This I believe is a level of involvement of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church we can recognise and expect today.

These are my thoughts about how the book of Acts can inform our level of expectation of the Holy Spirit acting today. I encourage you to read the book of Acts and review a time when you have been aware of the Holy Spirit working powerfully in your Christian community.

Hopefully these exercises, along with my offerings in this article, will help you discern your level of expectation of the Holy Spirit acting today. Go and make yourself a drink, grab a Bible and give it a go.

Rev'd Steve Marsh



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT was 9 – 22 September 2024

This year Fairtrade celebrated 30 years of making its mark: Together we can build a better future. Starting with chocolate, then tea and coffee, there are now over 5000 Fairtrade products in the UK and the number continues to grow.

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As reported last year coffee, bananas and chocolate could soon be much more difficult to find on our shelves as climate change and deeply unfair trade is making crops like these harder to grow. As the earth heats up, farmers in low-income countries now need to fund climate change adaptation to protect their crops and livelihoods.

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More details are to be found at www.fairtrade.org.uk



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Alison Dobbie



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