

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

December 2024 / January 2025

70p

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Fr. Bernard

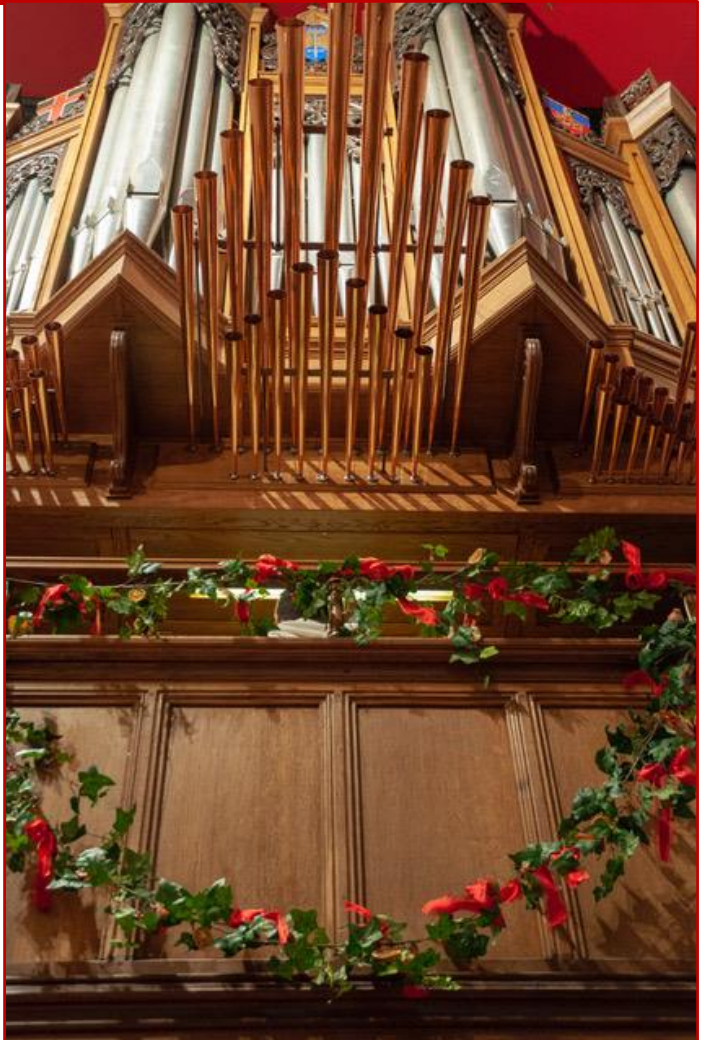
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Another Image of Prayer

By Rev'd Dr. Bernard Minton



Last time I wrote, I suggested an image of prayer. Here is another one: Prayer is like being a swimmer in the sea cheerfully swimming towards the beach, unaware that you are in the grip of a current taking you ever further out to sea. Prayer is both our swimming, and the unseen current's undertow.

All of us find different swimming strokes easier or more helpful: these are the different ways of praying, such as intercession (asking for things), confession (saying sorry), adoration and praise. These are the things we do. But while we are doing them, the current has us in its hands also: this is the Holy Spirit interceding for us "with sighs too deep for words", as St Paul puts it.

God wants to be in a loving relationship with us, as unique and precious individuals, who are called to be consummated in Him as members of His Body. Like every loving relationship, this needs communication. We need to devote time to God, to talk, and tell Him about what we are thinking and feeling, and to listen as He tells us what He is feeling and thinking. This is prayer.

But precisely how this communication is achieved may differ in each case, just as profound and deep human relationships take different forms, and enable their participants to flourish through different details. We do not always have to use words; our relationship with God is endless, infinite, and intimate in ways that go deeper than our own self-awareness, and therefore the prayer relationship is also rather different to any other relationship we know, because God never forgets us.

From God's viewpoint we are always praying: because everything we do, think, feel or say is present to Him. Thus there is a discrepancy between our view of prayer as something we do occasionally when we think about it, and God's view that it is happening all the time. We are not always swimming, but the sea and the current are always there, bearing us up!

In a way, prayer describes the whole of our relationship, as seen from God's point of view looking at us, while grace is how it looks from our point of view, looking at Him. Unconscious prayer can be very powerful and effective as a vehicle for God, at those moments when we are in His presence but to some degree or other unconsciously or automatically. In all these occurrences, we are caught in the current: slowly our hearts are enlarged and we walk deeper in The Way of the Cross, opened to Him even if we do not know it at that moment. All that really matters is that we should let Him bear us up!

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

The Editors would like to thank all the contributors for their articles and continued support over the past year, and we hope you have enjoyed reading your *Saints Alive* Magazine. There will be no January issue, but we will be back in February with, hopefully, more interesting stories and articles to share with you. In the meantime we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy 2025!

*** *** *** *** *** *** *** *** ***

At the last meeting of the Parochial Church Council, an increase in price of *Saints Alive!* was proposed and accepted as there had been no increase for several years. An increase in the price of having the magazine posted was also agreed as the current charge of £9 is unlikely to cover any postage costs next year.

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The Bike 'n Hike team raised £1,000 plus Gift Aid, and so are looking forward to being awarded yet another Silver Certificate.

Thanks again for your wonderful generosity in sponsoring them.



Seasonal smiles

A little girl visited Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and asked what she would like for Christmas. She gasped, and stared at him in horror. “Didn’t you get my email?!”



“Here’s a king!” announced the five-year-old as he unwrapped a figurine from the Christmas decorations box. “Here’s a donkey!” he added a moment later. Then he removed the tissue from another figure, finding the infant Jesus moulded permanently into the little manger. The child exclaimed, “And here’s Baby Jesus in his car seat!”



You can tell a lot about a person by the way they handle three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights.



Grandfather was talking to his grand-daughter, “When I was a child all we got for Christmas was an apple and an orange.” The little girl clapped her hands in joy. “Brilliant! I’d love a new computer and a mobile!”

Parish Registers

There were no weddings at All Saints in either October or November

Holy Baptism, October:

13: Ella Amy Coath, Lily Rose Newton; 27: Summer Flarry, Evelyn Angela Evans de Paula

There were no baptisms at All Saints in November

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. October:

11: Bryan Fleckney at St. Michael's, Eggington;
15: Frederick Whatling at Vandyke Road Chapel;
18: Zoltan Bodacs at All Saints;
25: Peter Williams at St. Barnabas;
29: John Oakley at Bierton

R.I.P. November:

6: Carole Court at St. Mary's, Old Linslade;
8: James Westwood at St. Michael & All Angels, Billington;
11: Janet Finch at St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach;
21: George Plenderleath at All Saints;
22: John Burnett at Bierton;
28: Maurice Crowe at St. Barnabas

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

Years Mind, December:

1: Tony Pyman, Nora Davis; 2: Frederick Deeley; 3: Bram Evans; 4: June Fensome;
5: Peter Harmer, Gary Hargreaves; 6: Leslie Plenderleath, Charles Scraggs; 8: George Lee;
9: Derek Williamson; 10: Kathleen Meredith; 11: Brian Willett, Peter Eglesfield;
12: Edie Skevington, Edna Carpenter; 14: Dorothy Scammell; 17: Terry Spencer;
18: Simon Munford; 20: Cynthia Jury; 21: Keith Biggerstaff; 24: Marie Brooker;
25: Joan Winter, Margaret Ellison, Alice Shelley; 26: Roy Palmer; 27: Sandra Hipwell;
28: Albert Nash, Gwenda Burley; 29: David Brooker, Iris Osborne;
30: Mary Warburton, Reg Lunnon; 31: Edward Meredith, Nancy Meredith, Peggy Stonier

Years Mind, January:

1: Sarah Andrew;
2: Arthur Keyworth, Kay Kiteley; 6: Eileen Garlick, Elizabeth Underwood, David Burley;
7: Joyce Lathwell, John Carter; 8: Margaret Croft; 9: Ellen Daniels,
10: Arthur Speller, Margaret (Peg) Tingey; 11: Ivy Nash;
12: Rita Shephard, Elsie Molloy, Ronald Chandler; 13: Rosemary Dimmock;
15: Annie Norman, Mary Dell, Dennis Holroyd; 18: Danny Munroe; 19: Dian Milne;
20: Maurice Greensted, Dolly Harmer; 21: Audrey Lee; 22: Margaret Beck;
23: Robert Kiteley, Betty Tuck, Annie Williams, Revd. Vernon Smith, Peter Kiddle;
26: Charlotte Sawka; 27: William Leath, Alice Pyman; 28: Russell Palmer; 29: Bill Stonier;
31: John Harris, Maureen Webb, Colin Gilbert

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



So many special ways o tell the Christmas story:

As I write this at the beginning of November the children (and staff) have just returned from a well-earned half term holiday. We have all returned full of energy and enthusiasm for the next half term.

October half term signals a change in our Worship singing; gone are the days of Harvest and we are now full swing into CHRISTMAS! It's the beginning of November I hear you cry...I know! However, learning songs for our Christmas services takes some time, so the sounds of Christmas songs and carols will be heard coming from the school hall during our worship slots. If you're passing the school hall between 10am and 10.30am, you have been warned!

Here in Pre-school and across our two Early Years Reception classes, our nativity play this year is based on Trusting God. This involves a cast of 80 children! In roles like angels, shepherds, villagers, Romans, inn keepers, Wisemen, advisors, Herod, a donkey, Joseph, Mary and of course Baby Jesus, who is played by one of our baby dolls!

This year we are very lucky to have our play specially written for us by one of our reception class teachers. This means that it is pitched at just the right level for the children to be able to perform and learn the story by heart, a story we hope they will remember forever, and which will always hold special memories for them in years to come.

Key Stage One and Two are also performing their own Christmas nativity and service. These both involve casts of 90 children in each and although the characters and the story they are telling will be very similar, the way the children express the message of Christmas will be special and unique to each of them.

Now, whilst these are not West End performances, (and they are not intended to be!) our children put every effort they can into telling the most famous and memorable true story ever told. They conscientiously learn their lines and sing their songs and carols with great enthusiasm and joy. If you have never seen a children's nativity, I encourage you to do so. Children tell this most amazing story in a truly remarkable way, a way that only an innocent child can. One that will remain in your hearts and minds over this Christmas period and for many years to come.



Have a joyous and peaceful Christmas, from the entire Pulford School Family.

Mrs Major, Early Years Lead.



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Selections

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



selections_pet_garden

On a musical note.....



Carol singing for music therapy

We are trying something new this month. On Thursday, 12th December, straight after the 10 am service, we are inviting people with dementia to come along and sing well-known carols for half an hour. It's not a service, as such, and there will be no real structure – just an opportunity to enjoy singing. If successful, we are hoping to provide something similar on a regular basis during 2025.

You can help this new venture by coming along and joining in the singing. The bigger the sound, the easier it is for others to join in. And if you know someone with dementia (any form), please consider bringing them along.

Why are we doing this? Here is an extract from an article written by Ronald Devere, MD, director of the Alzheimer's Disease and Memory Disorders Centre in Austin, Texas.

“Musical perception, musical emotion, and musical memory can survive long after other forms of memory and cognitive function have disappeared. In non-demented Parkinson's disease, music therapy can lead to fluent motor flow, such as dancing. But once the music stops, so does the improvement in motor function. In dementia it can improve mood, behaviour, and in some cases cognitive function, which can persist for hours and days after the music stops. Music also does not need to be familiar to exert these improvements and one does not need to have any formal knowledge of music or be musically inclined to enjoy music and respond to it at the deepest level.

And here is an extract from the 15th March 2024 edition of Church Times about the experiences of Adrian Bawtree, Director of Music at Rochester cathedral:

“Mr Bawtree remembers a Christmas singing session that he offered at Rochester Cathedral for a carers' organisation. “Afterwards, somebody said to me, ‘We came last year. My father can't remember what he had for breakfast, but he does remember the singing session last year. That's why we're back here today.’ Another said, ‘Thank you for the session. I get my husband back.’ Something really extraordinary happens with singing and music-making.”

Mr Bawtree emphasises that you don't need to be a professional to run a session. “Ten or eleven years ago, I would bounce around like Tigger, waving my arms around and saying ‘Come on everybody, let's sing a song,’ and, while that was fine — it got everyone going — I realised that was actually the wrong approach. So, the next time, I didn't say anything. I just went into the middle of the group and started singing ‘My Bonnie lies over the ocean,’ without even inviting people to sing. And they just joined in. And that's what we're talking about: you're not running a choir practice — it's just a group sing. Getting people singing, you start to see the benefit almost immediately.”

So do come along and join in the singing.

Paul Dickens



Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Thank you from Mothers' Union

This year Mothers' Union members have with your help raised over £430 for Mothers' Union projects.

This total has been raised through: haberdashery stalls in February and September, £138, selling cards and crosses in March, donations around Mothering Sunday, £70, Toddling around the Church, £170.

With help from non-members at Crafty Natter we have also made and distributed: 81 Cot blankets, 158 bonding cloths, 26 beanie hats and 266 cannula sleeves to Luton and Dunstable NICU and 26 knee blankets, 7 shawls, 4 fiddle blankets, 2 muffs and 4 memory books to Carrington House nursing home. We have supported Hope Aid with knitting jumpers and blankets too.

This is in addition to our routine provision of cards for couples on their wedding day, baptism packs for families of babies being baptised and busy bags for use during church services.

A short meditation for Advent.

The December meeting will be a short meditation for Advent: We welcome any non-members who wish to enjoy a quiet time in the busy preparations for Christmas. The meeting will be on 12th December at 2pm.

For more details, please ask Alison Dobbie or a member of Mothers' Union.

Thank you for your support throughout the year.



LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

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Leighton Buzzard Library Theatre

Saturday 4th January 2025 at 7.30pm

The ever-popular jazz quintet
NICK SMART, trumpet; **NIKKI ILES**, piano
KAREN SHARP, sax; **DAVE WHITFORD**, bass
JAMES MADDREN, drums

PROGRAMME

Jazz standards from the Broadway era
plus original material

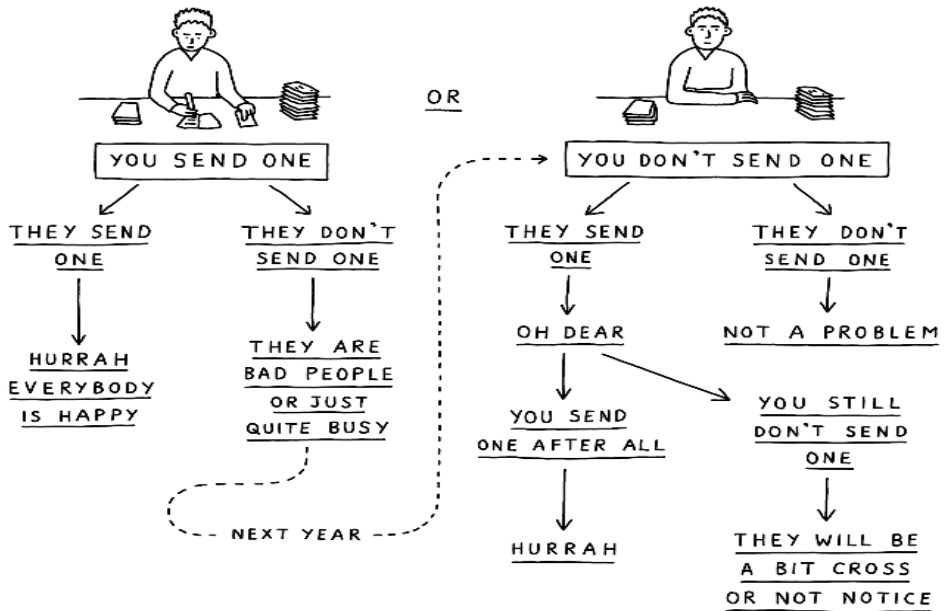
Tickets online from www.leightonbuzzardlibrarytheatre.co.uk

or in person from the Box Office, Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays 10am - 12pm or at the door.

Leighton Buzzard Music is a registered charity no: 1183681



CHRISTMAS CARDS



CartoonChurch.com



Some more seasonal smiles

With thanks to WickedUncle.co.uk for these

How did Scrooge win the football game? **The Ghost of Christmas passed.**

Did you hear about the man who stole an advent calendar? **He got 25 days.**

What do you call an old snowman? **Water.**

What do fish sing at Christmas time? **Christmas Corals!**

What's green, covered in tinsel and goes 'ribbet ribbet'? **A Mistle-toad!**

Who delivers presents to baby sharks at Christmas? **Santa Jaws.**

What did Santa ask Rudolph about the weather? **Is it going to rain dear?!**

What does Santa call his little helpers? **Subordinate clauses.**

I'm writing a unique and personal message in each of my Christmas cards this year. So for you, I'd like to say: Whoever you are, merry Christmas to my friend/family member who is really special.

How much did Santa pay for his sleigh? **Nothing – it was on the house.**

Where does Father Christmas like to enjoy a mixture of badminton, horse-riding and subtropical swimming? **Santa Parcs.**

Calendar of Events

1st December

Advent Sunday Morning Services as usual

Bereavement Support Café Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm



4th December

Lunch Club in the North Transept, All Saints 1pm

Tickets £6.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



12th December

Mothers Union: A short meditation for Advent, All Saints 2pm



14th December

Mayor's Carol Concert All Saints 7pm

16th December, 18th December & 20th December

School Services – access to the church will be restricted

20th December

Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm – 3.30pm



28th December

Feast of the Holy Innocents Holy Communion All Saints 10am

29th December

Holy Communion All Saints 10.30am



5th January

Epiphany Morning Services as usual

including Messy Mass All Saints 11.30am

Bereavement Support Café Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm



8th January

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

Tickets £6.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



17th January

Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm - 3.30pm



19th January

Services as usual including All Age Communion All Saints 11.30am

Services for Advent, Christmas & Epiphany At All Saints

Sunday 1st December

11.30am Toy Service - Messy Mass for Advent.

Donations of new unwrapped toys go to support KidsOut charity.

6pm Advent Procession Music and readings for Advent

Sunday 8th December

4pm Christingle

Sunday 22nd December

6pm Lessons and Carols for Christmas (streamed)

followed by wine and mince pies

Tuesday 24th December (Christmas Eve)

2.30pm Nativity Service: A short simple nativity service with carols; dressing up as a character from the story optional.

5.00pm Carols by Candlelight

11.15pm Midnight Mass of the Nativity (streamed)

Wednesday 25th December (Christmas Day)

8am Holy Communion

10am Christmas Day Family Communion (streamed)

Sunday 5th January

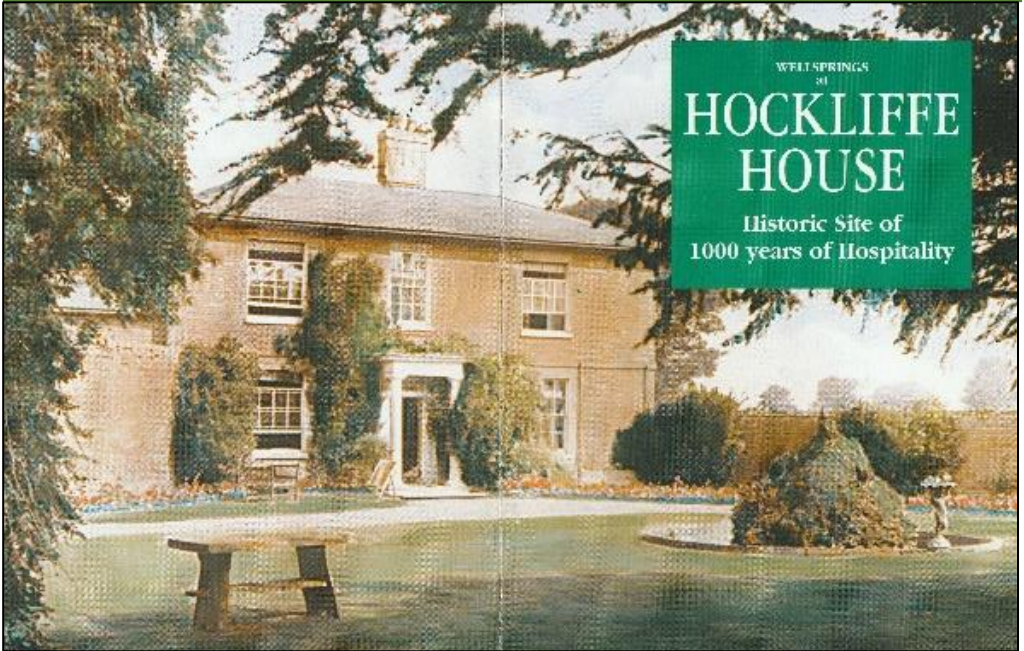
6pm Epiphany Carol Service (streamed)





on ...

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



For over 1,000 years, hospitality has taken many forms at the site of Hockliffe House. The village itself already sited typically a little way off from a busy (Roman Watling Street) thoroughfare, the Lord of the Manor established a roadside facility catering for the needs of the many itinerant poor and sick (especially lepers). As the Hospital of St John the Baptist, it comprised a chapel plus a hall with a central fire, accommodating rows of straw beds. Staffed by brethren under a succession of over 30 Masters for several centuries, it was sustained by gifts such as food or wax for candles, partly prompted by the morbid medieval fear of purgatory, reaching a crescendo of donations in the aftermath of a great fire in 1290.

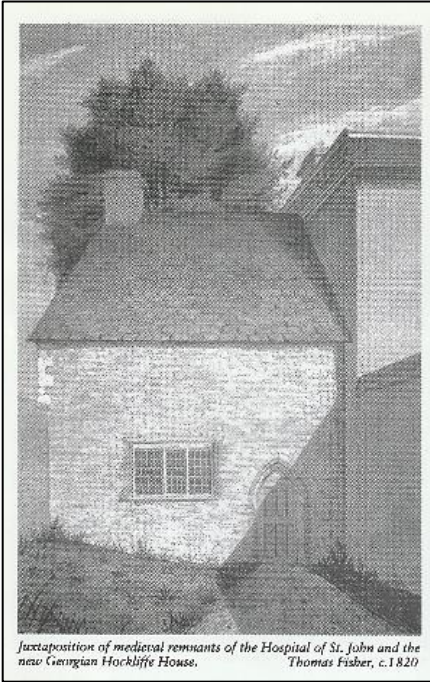
Having recently been acquired by the nearby Dunstable Priory, come the Dissolution it was appropriated by Henry VIII as part of the Honour of Ampthill. Subsequently sold on into private hands, it offered hospitality of a very different sort as an inn, most notably Ye Red Lyon in the 17th century. This eventually led to a heyday as a major coaching inn, as evidenced by its description in a Christie's catalogue of 1804, when sold for £3,517 10 shillings. Internally it comprised a dozen bed chambers with garret, two kitchens, three parlours, a brew house, a dairy, and a malt chamber. Outside in its 48 acres of farmland, fields and orchards could be found barns, stables, a coal house and a piggery. 1818 saw a major makeover to create a new Georgian architectural style, when it adopted the current Hockliffe House name and was immortalised in this watercolour by Thomas Fisher.

Hockliffe House

1000 years of Hospitality



For much of the 20th century it was a prosperous cattle farm run by the Bunker family, with generous largesse to the villagers, running an annual fete in the grounds. Kelly's directory of 1940 even refers to an extant bear garden feature in a perfect state of preservation. The farm closing, most of the land was sold off, to leave just the house and a couple of acres of formal garden.

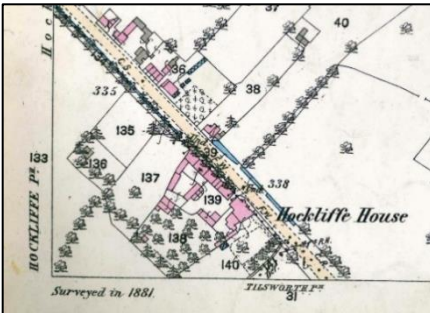


At the turn of the 21st Century, whilst owned by the proprietor of Dunstable's The Book Castle, it hosted a Christian retreat centre of renewal and refreshment, known as Wellsprings. Attended by those of any faith or none, it ran courses, workshops, therapies, arts and crafts activities and away days, backed importantly by hospitality around the table. Thus mirroring full circle the site's original establishment as a place of warm welcome alongside one of England's busiest highways.

Paul Bowes



All that now remains of the medieval Hospital of Saint John is a 15th century pointed blocked doorway and part of a stone wall which was incorporated into the walls of Hockliffe House.



Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Stuart Blofeld; Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

The Value of Rest

How are you feeling today? Positive, energised and well rested or maybe you had a busy week, and you feel stressed, deflated and tired? What does your inner person look like today? We spent time reflecting on this at Church. We each had a “stretchy rubber man” to represent how we were feeling - like the ones you get in children’s party bags. Some of us stretched our man in lots of directions, others in one, some stretchy men broke under the strain!

Being stretched can be a good thing. We learn by taking on new ideas, stepping out of our comfort zone. Sometimes stretching can become too extreme, or we spend too much time feeling stretched and we can’t go back to our normal self. Then we can become exhausted, cynical, less productive and burnt out.

So, do you feel rested? Without judgement, stop for a moment or two and consider how well you are looking after yourself, mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Perhaps you would like to read Matthew 11:28-30. I wanted to share The Message version with you. I think this tells us how Jesus values rest.

“Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Being a scientist, I am interested that studies have shown the brain doesn’t stop working when we rest but simply goes into a different wave pattern. Many breakthrough “lightbulb” moments have not come when sitting at a computer or studying data but when showering, getting off a bus, drinking in the pub or going for a walk with a dog. Doing something which we don’t consider work allows our brain to be more free and creative.

I also believe that for me resting is the time when I can review what I have learned about my faith, and to strengthen my relationship with God. Allowing my mind to wander and think about the important things in life and to regain perspective, simply to BE who God wants me to be, rather than to DO.

It’s when my stretchy man can go back to his normal shape. Even then sometimes I need a friend to remind me to look after myself. Valuing rest then becomes a community project rather than an individual aim.

So next time you find yourself writing a “TO DO” list, take some time out to write a “TO BE” one too. Try sharing it with a friend.

Christmas Events with Church of the Good Shepherd

@ Astral Park Community Centre, Johnson Drive, LU7 4AY

Tuesday 3rd December, 6:30pm:

'Pop-up' carol singing around the estates

Do come and say hello, or join us if you see us around

Sunday 8th December, 9:45am:

Christingle and 'pop up' café, Astral Park

Come and make a Christingle with free refreshments,

and join a short reflection in our 'chapel time' from 10:00 - 10:30.

Saturday 14th December, from 5pm:

Family Carols

With free refreshments and festive Lego competition.

Sunday 15th December, 9:45am:

Communion Service

Fun all-age service and 'pop up' community cafe.

Sunday 22nd December, 9:45am:

Family Service

Fun all-age service and 'pop up' community cafe.

Sunday 22nd December, 3pm:

Christingle Service

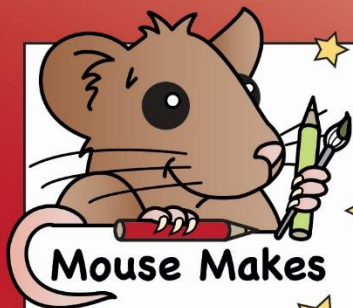
Christingle making, free refreshments
and a short service.

Wednesday 25th December, 9:45am:

Christmas Day Service

An all-age service to celebrate Christmas.





Mouse Makes

★ "Jesus said,
I am the ___ Y
and the ___ U ___
and the ___ I ___.
No one comes to the Father
except through me."
John 14:6

"The child to be born
will be called
H _____, the
_____ of _____"
Luke 1:35

"For unto you is born
this day a
S _____
who is
_____ R _____
the _____ R _____"
Luke 2:11

THE GREATEST GIFT

"She will bear a son,
and shall call his name

for he will save his
people from their sins."
Matthew 1:21

"Jesus said,
I am the

and the life."
John 11:25

B L I G H T L O
R A Y W O J J R
E M M A N U E L
A B Y J E S O
D S A V I O U R
S A V R J S D

O H O L Y O R C R T U
S O N O F M A N H A R T
N L S H E P H E R D U
O Y A E P E R G I F T G
C H R I S T M A S T H S
R E S U R R E C T I O N

JESUS
—
THE
GREATEST
GIFT
OF ALL!

P R O P H E T I
R E D E E M E R
I E M I L I G
E M E S S I A H
S R M E G F T
T E A C H E R E

E V E R L A S T I N G
K I N G O F K I N G S
I N K I G W F D O U
S E S O N O F G O D D
S E W O C O U W O R D
C O U N S E L L O R U

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SON OF MAN • EVERLASTING • SHEPHERD • PRIEST • PROPHET • TEACHER
LIGHT • BREAD • VINE • DOOR • LAMB • COUNSELLOR • CHRISTMAS • GIFT

Find the words from the Bible verses too!

Dec24 © deborah noble @ parishpump.co.uk

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Brian Speller: 210565; Tom Ware



As we enter this Season of Advent our sense of hope is renewed once again through the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as a child, sharing in his humanity with us. We, and the earth we inhabit, sense new life seasonally in the Spring; but as God's Church we now welcome new life as Christians in the child Jesus. The Christ child himself inspires the youngest in our church family and the local village community. Joining with members of our congregation, local school children will come up to the church to help create the man-made crib scene at the back of our church.

Jesus said himself that he is the light of the world. As we live these days of shortened daylight hours, they will begin to get longer alongside the Christ-light as our small village church shines like a beacon on the hill. Yes, the church will once again be packed with worshippers for our annual Carol Service on Saturday 21st December at 7pm. This is a very popular service which is followed by wine and mince pies.

As you receive this month's magazine, St Nick's Supper will be almost upon us. This year it is on Saturday 7th December at 7.30pm. Please contact Julia Dickens on 01525 210210 if you would like tickets. Our church is dedicated to St. Nicholas and this event is one of our main fund raisers. It is a lovely warming evening as we share our stories over wholesome food, drink and live music. We thank Julia and Paul in advance for opening up their home again as hosts.

As I set out on my early morning walk these days, it is wonderful to witness the autumn, and soon to be winter sunrise and the amazing colours it casts through the mist and clouds. Then there is the birdsong, the sound of the woodpecker and the smell and crunch of fallen leaves under foot, in their variety of autumnal colours. New birth and new creation speak through nature, and the trees I walk past each morning have a wonderful way of telling this. They will soon have bared their branches before they are once again full of buds next Spring.

I have recently witnessed new birth as I became a grandparent for the first time during October and so new birth will certainly ring true for me and the rest of the family during Advent and Christmas this year.

I hope the birth of a new child in the person of God's only Son Jesus can be as personal to all of you as one in your own families this Christmas.

May God bless us at St. Nicholas in our Advent hope as we prepare to welcome our Lord and Saviour in his birth amongst us this Christmas.

Geoff Marchant

[Please note that there is no Midnight Mass at St. Nicholas this year.]

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Julia Haviland 850380; Tina Thompson 378411



Where does gravel on paths and drives go to? It is one of life's mysteries. It makes no difference how many tons are spread; give it a few years and it will have vanished leaving a sandy mess ready to be walked into the building.

In the case of the church, we left it fifteen years and then decided we could leave it no longer. Michael & Ginny Reily generously came to the rescue, not only donating the gravel but spreading most of it for us. A very good job done for which we are very grateful.

A lot of people come to the Churchyard to visit graves, have a quiet time of contemplation perhaps while looking at the view or they just walk through to join the footpaths which lead down to Little Billington or out to Slapton.

We have Churchyard clear up days when volunteers come and help cut back overgrown bushes and clear the debris which accumulates in all gardens. Don Brewin is an expert with the bonfire! We do our best to keep it looking tidy despite having limited funds. Recently David Edwards – a long-time resident in the village sent us the following words:

'People tend to think that Churchyards are lonely places.

Maybe some of our poets may be responsible for planting this thought in our minds but whenever I go to St Michael & All Angels, I seem to find someone else is there too.

Sometimes it is someone I know or maybe a stranger visiting the grave of a relative.

Having reserved our plot, this gives me some comfort.

I usually have a read of the memorials and see if I recognize names of people that I knew or may be relatives of people I have known.

I hope, when I take occupation (not too soon) that people may pause and think similarly.

I deem it a privilege to live here in Billington and am glad to know I can remain here.'

Thank you, Dave, I think you echo the thoughts of many people in the village; and it is good to know that the Churchyard is appreciated.

The Christmas Services in the village will be:

22nd December - 6.p.m, Carols by Candlelight

24th December – 11.15, First Communion of Christmas

Everyone is welcome and there will be no service on Sunday, 29th December

David Thomason

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

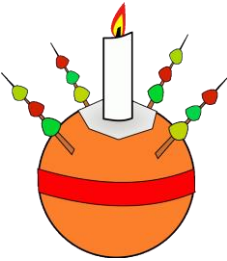
Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861



As we move into December, we enter ADVENT, which means “coming” and we look forward to Christmas when we celebrate the birth/coming of Jesus.



To help us prepare for this celebration, we make an Advent ring which contains five candles. We light one candle each week to represent hope, peace, joy and love and then on Christmas day, the fifth candle is lit to show Jesus Christ is the light of the world.



During Advent we have our CHRISTINGLE Service on December 24th at 3.00pm. At this service we hand out an orange to represent the world that Jesus came to save. In the orange there are four sticks for the four seasons, summer, autumn, winter and spring. They also represent north, south east and west. On the sticks, traditionally, there would have been fruit, nuts and sweets to represent the fruits of the world that are God's gifts to us. The red ribbon around the orange is to represent Jesus' love and the blood He shed for us and for our sins. We light the candle to show God's love in the world.

The collection from the Christingle, as always, will be sent to the Children's Society whose aim is transform the hopes and happiness of young people when they are threatened by abuse, exploitation and neglect.

All of us at St Michael's wish you a very happy and peaceful Christmas and we would like to welcome you at any or all of our following services: -

December 1st: Sunday Service at 9.30am

December 11th: Carol Service at 7.00pm
followed by mince pies and mulled wine

December 15th: Sunday Service at 9.30am

December 24th: Christingle Service at 3.00pm

December 24th: Midnight Service at 11.15pm

December 29th: Joint Villages Service at
St Leonards Heath & Reach at 11.00am



Paul Brown



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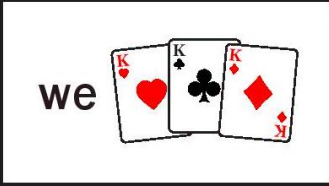
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Christmas Carol Rebus Puzzles

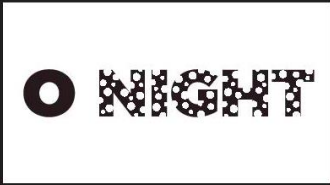
Try to solve these rebus puzzles. What Christmas carols are the words and pictures saying?

1. 

2. 

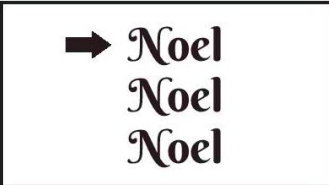
3. 

4. 

5. 

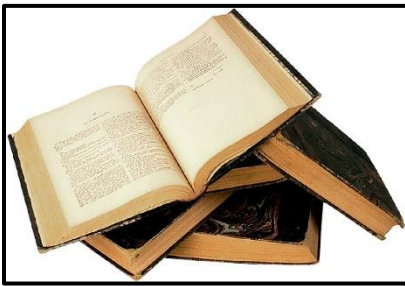
6. 

7. 

8. 

Answers:
 1. Last Christmas
 2. We Three Kings
 3. Oh Christmas Tree
 4. Little Drummer Boy

5. O Holy Night
 6. Blue Christmas
 7. Walking in a Winter
 Wonderland
 8. The First Noel



Biblical Genres

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

This month, to close the series:

The Book of Revelation ...

by Rev'd Steve Marsh

What do you think is the Vision Statement of the Christian faith and where is it in scripture? The Ten Commandments? The Lord's Prayer? The Beatitudes? The Sermon on the Mount? Peter's speech to the Crowd on Pentecost in Acts 2?

These are all key and inspiring pieces of scripture (and you may have thought of others) that contain some elements of the Vision Statement of the Christian Faith. However, I believe the Vision Statement of the Christian Faith is most clearly set out in the New Testament book of Revelation.

Revelation is a complex piece of scripture. It is rich in imagery, which is inspiring for some and frustrating for others. As a Biblical Genre, Revelation is a piece of Eschatological writing, which means it is considering the end times, describing God's final judgement and the complete fulfilment of his kingdom.

The book is split into three sections. The first section, chapters 1-3, contains messages to seven churches, a mixture of warnings and encouragements. These seven messages are useful for churches to consider today.

The second section of Revelation, chapters 4-20, is an account of how the end times will unfold in Heaven and be enacted on earth. There is the image of Jesus, as the Lamb of God, undoing the seven seals releasing seven stages of the end times. Then there is the sending of the horses and riders to earth to trigger various aspects of this. This all culminates with the final judgement of Satan and Humanity. This section is full of incredible imagery that is highly symbolic, the meaning of which has been speculated about for centuries.

Personally, I believe that it is difficult to fully understand the meaning of the imagery of this section of Revelation. However, what we can be certain of is that it reassures us that God's purposes will be fulfilled, and his kingdom will be fully established for eternity.

This brings us to the third section in chapters 21-22, which I believe contains the Vision Statement of the Christian Faith. These chapters describe what life will be like once God's purposes have been fulfilled and his kingdom is fully established.

As scripture starts in the book of Genesis with God's act of creation, scripture ends in Revelation with God's act of re-creation. The story of the Garden of Eden lays out how God intended his relationship with humanity to be. Humanity was placed in a bountiful paradise and was to enjoy an intimate relationship with God, free from sin and shame,

typified by walking with God, face to face, in the garden. However, through the sin of seeking to be equal with God, this intimate relationship was broken, and humanity was expelled from the Garden. Through the Law, set out in the Old Testament, a way back to God was established, but it was impossible to fulfil the Law.

Through the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, a new 'grace' based restoration with God the Father was established. The sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost empowered this restoration of relationship with God. Since then, God's kingdom has been rolling out, a project we are involved in today, inspired and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

Once the events laid out in the book of Revelation have come to pass and God's kingdom is fully established, God's act of full re-creation will happen. Revelation chapters 21 & 22 tell us that a New Heaven and a New Earth will be created, and there will be no more sea. Don't panic, this does not mean there will be no more beaches and oceans!! In scripture, the sea was seen as the place where disorder, chaos and evil resides, so this is symbolically saying there will be no more evil.

Whereas God's act of creation was centred around a garden, God's act of re-creation is centred around a city. Don't worry, I am sure there will also be beautiful and bountiful nature. In this city, God and Humanity will live alongside each other as God intended in the Garden of Eden. The restored intimacy between God and humanity is most touchingly described in chapter 21 vs 4 where we are told that *"God will wipe every tear from our eyes"*. Verse 4 goes on to tell us that there will be *"no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* God then triumphantly tells us in verse 5 that *"I am making everything new!"*

There follows a highly symbolic description of the Holy City. We are then informed that access to the Tree of Life, which was cut off from humanity when it was expelled from the Garden of Eden, is restored. We are also told that we will see God face to face, again emphasising the restored intimacy between God and humanity.

Jesus' incarnation gave us, a preview of what God's re-creation will be like, justice, healings, resurrections and restoration of the intimate relationship with God. The Holy Spirit is a deposit of God's re-creation power, giving us inspiring glimpses of its outworking.

In conclusion, whilst much of the book of Revelation can be difficult to fully understand and unpack, the inspiring Vision Statement of the Christian Faith, and description of God's re-creation project, contained in the last two chapters, are there to inspire us, sustain us and keep the fires of our faith and hope burning brightly in joyful expectation.



So, grab a Bible, or open your Bible App, and give Revelation a read, especially chapters 21 and 22. Be envisioned and become more alert, through the Holy Spirit, to spot the glimpses of God's re-creation project emerging around us today.

The 12 Eco Days of Christmas

Christmas is lovely – trees, lights, glitter, lots of special of food – but it’s not all good for the world around us – here are 12 simple things we could do differently:

1. **By starlight:** Having lots of outdoor Christmas lights at night confuses wild birds disturbing their sleep, feeding and breeding. Birds think dawn is about to break with so much outside light- why not have fairy lights indoors only?
2. **It’s a wrap:** Avoid wrapping paper that has foil or glitter – it contains microplastics and cannot be recycled. You can tell if it doesn’t stay in a ball when you scrunch it. Try wrapping gifts in a piece of fabric or let children decorate plain paper.
3. **Shop locally:** Reduce air miles- support local businesses like the Farmers’ Market.
4. **Turkeys don’t vote for Christmas:** Consider having more meat-free options in your festive feasting.
5. **They came bearing gifts:** Don’t be tempted to over shop. Buy ethical gifts or even buy second-hand, giving something a new lease of life.
6. **LED by a star:** Reduce energy use by up to 80% and save money by using LED Christmas lights.
7. **Food glorious food:** You don’t need to turn into Scrooge, but overconsumption adds to waste – and waists! Planning ahead helps – use up what’s in your freezer now and make room for canny use of Christmas leftovers.
8. **Be tree-mendous:** Got an artificial tree? Keep it for as many years as possible. For real trees, go for pot grown – put it in the garden for summer and use it for years. You can also rent real Christmas trees- they go back to the grower for next year.
9. **Brown paper packages tied up with string (a few of my favourite things!)** Plastic sticky tape can’t be recycled. Use string, ribbon or spare wool - all can be re-used.
10. **You’ve got mail:** Look for cards with FSC- the Forest Stewardship Council, and recycle your cards after Christmas or use them to make gift tags. There are cards which contain wildflower seeds – just plant the whole card in spring, or try sending an E-card.
11. **Sleigh the Christmas outfit:** Avoid sequins – they are PVC and not recyclable. You can still be stylish without buying new – shop from your wardrobe or go for pre-loved.
12. **The greatest gift of all:** celebrate the birth of our Saviour by spending some time with those you love – or meet online if distance is great, and of course, come and worship and share Christmas with our lovely community of church friends!

Have a wonderfully happy Eco-Christmas.

Katrina Grant.



REPAIR CAFE LB 2024 DATES

Runs from 10.30-13.30

Royal British Legion,
Bossard Hall, West St,
Leighton Buzzard

- March 23rd
 - April 27th
 - May 25th
 - June 22nd
 - July 27th
 - September 28th
 - October 26th
 - November 23rd
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 - Book online or just turn up
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