

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*

February 2025

£1.00

Inside:

Living God's Love –
a new series
exploring the
Diocesan Vision
Statement

Growing Church
another new series,
focussing on
Youth Work in the
Team Churches
See the centre pages

Eco Church
and Show the Love
with a green heart



Plans for
Sung Evensong with
an adult choir

&

How Marley,
the Church Cat,
got to be orange –
the truth revealed



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The Hill of Crosses

By Rev'd Noel McGeeney

A few years ago, we were watching an episode of the Hairy Bikers. They were travelling in Eastern Europe and went to the Hill of Crosses near the town of Siauliai in Lithuania. It was a fascinating episode, and we said we would go there sometime. Recently we went to Riga in Latvia and took the opportunity to go to Lithuania, to the Hill of Crosses.

We hired a driver for the day, and he opened up to us the history of the Baltic states. They were part of Prussia for hundreds of years, ruled by Sweden and after WW2, by communist Russia. Our driver Normunds spoke about the intergenerational trauma that is a cloud over the Baltic states. How the Russians murdered their army officers and disappeared so many to the Gulag. They are now nervous because of the invasion into Ukraine, and he has no doubt that they will not stop there.

We stayed in the old town of Riga which is flat and easy to get around. Plenty of Churches, museums and art galleries. Riga's own history is very interesting as it was part of the Hanseatic league in medieval times set up for the promotion and protection of commerce.

As far back as 1831, local villagers put crosses on a hill that was sacred to them. By 1923 the number was 400 and by 1960, there were 2000. In 1961 the Soviets destroyed the Hill leaving no single cross on it. Soon after the destruction, crosses reappeared as a sign of resistance to communism and Soviet occupation. The destruction was repeated in 1973, 1974 and 1975. The locals continued to return crosses on pain of punishment and incarceration and by 1988 the number of crosses reached 100,000.



On 23 August 1989, two million people held hands to form a human chain over 600 kilometers long, linking three capital cities: Tallinn in Estonia; Riga in Latvia and Vilnius in Lithuania. This peaceful demonstration became known as 'The Baltic Way'.

In addition to Lithuania's non-violent protest with the Hill of Crosses, Estonia's non-violent resistance was a singing revolution leading to independence in 1991. And in Latvia, students began the non-violent effort by boycotting communist youth organisations, while citizens followed suit by refusing to vote in Soviet elections and by refusing to speak Russian in public.

In September 1993 Pope John Paul II visited, and from then on, the Hill of Crosses has become an international destination.

Noel McGeeney

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

Have you renewed your Saints Alive subscription yet? If not, Stephen Jury would be pleased to hear from you. Subscriptions for 2025 are £10 or £20 for those who receive it by post.

*** **

Please remember there is a scheme in place with regard to meeting the Religious Affiliation criteria in support of an application to Pulford School. For more information, or to obtain a card, please speak to a sides person or the Parish Office.

*** **

If you are interested in Confirmation, please take a card with more details, available from the side table or Parish Office. The Confirmation Service will take place in All Saints Church on Sunday 18th May at 3pm.



Worth a smile

A traveller was marooned in a small town because of a landslide caused by heavy rain. It fell in torrents for three days. Looking out of the window of the restaurant, he finally remarked to the waitress: "This is like the flood."

"The what?"

"The flood. Surely you have heard about the great flood and Noah and the Ark?"

"Sorry, sir," she replied. "The internet's been down for three days."



A teenager who had just received her provisional licence offered to drive her parents to church. After a hair-raising ride, they finally reached their destination. The mother got out of the car and said in a quiet but fervent voice: "Thank you!"

"Anytime," her daughter replied.

As the woman slammed the car door she said, "I wasn't talking to you. I was talking to God."



My young daughter needed new boots. When her friend arrived one morning in a lovely pair of new boots, I asked where she had got them. "At the store," she answered.

"Which one?" I asked patiently.

She looked confused, and then down at her boots. "Both of them," was her reply.



A vicar was expecting his Bishop to come for lunch. He told his small son to be very polite to the visitor, and to address him as 'My Lord.' As they all sat down, the bishop smiled at the little boy and asked him how old he was. The little boy gulped and said: "My God, I'm seven."

Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, December:

No Weddings

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

Holy Baptism, December:

8: Luca Michael Cielo Soliven, Aria Lena Shepherd, Halle Mae Shepherd,
Aaron Lee Shepherd, Georgia Emily Welsh

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. December:

11: Arthur Waring at St. Leonard's; 13: Alan Cross at St. Michael's;
18: Derry Tew at St. Nicholas

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

Years Mind, February:

1: Christopher Blackbird Taylor, Trevor Lunnon; 3: Frank Audas; 4: Ted Summerfield;
6: Thomas Nash; 7: Annie Turney, Yiu To Lau, Lilian Baines, Brian Avery; 9: George Waudby;
11: Stanley Boyce, Doreen Perry; 12: Frederick Bester; 13: Mary Yirrell;
14: John Olds, Ida Kempson; 15: Nina Bolton, Winifred Turner, Gillian Marchant;
18: Bessie Scraggs; 19: Andrew Cooper; 20: Frank Bates;
21: Pamela Gilbert, Ivy Wood, Margaret Marsh;
23: Dorothy Collor, Lilian Cowley, Madge Vincent, Denver Child;
26: Elsie Bates, Peggy King, Irene Scott; 27: Tom Skevington, Ivy Francis, Jeanette Scott;
29: Gerry Beecroft, Doreen Westwood



LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

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Saturday 15th February 2025

at 7.30pm

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Jeffrey Au

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Schubert Impromptu No 3, Op 90; Chopin Sonata No 3, Op 58



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

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



Love thy teacher

In a Voluntary Aided school such as Pulford the Governing Board is the legal employer of the school staff, so as Governors we have a legal – and a moral – responsibility for the health and wellbeing of the staff. One of the most notable changes over my 20 years as a school governor has been the increased pressure on school staff – not just from the DfE and Ofsted, but also from society and parents.



It seems that teachers today are expected to be educators, social workers, psychologists, nurses, counsellors, and many other things – while at the same time being constantly scrutinised for performance and attainment figures! It is little wonder the HSE reports that teachers have the highest rates of work-related stress, depression and anxiety in Britain.

The Governing Board has worked with the school leadership to create a new Home School Agreement which emphasises the importance of working collectively for the good of the children. This includes points such as punctuality – during September-October 2024, 1,200 minutes of class learning was lost due to children arriving late for school; attendance – every missed day is missed learning; making sure that teacher/parent appointments are kept; checking the school website and parent mail for the latest information; naming all clothing (up to 8 hours a week is spent finding lost items!); reading to children regularly, and supporting their homework.

Another change in my time as a governor has been the increased use of email and social media, and this has made it very easy – sometimes too easy – to contact school staff directly, and for parents and carers to share their individual feelings in public. The school receives an average of 1,000 emails each week. Many of these are sent directly to teachers with the expectation of an instant and comprehensive response, regardless of the time of day. It is too easy to vent our emotions in an email or group WhatsApp message, and to distance ourselves from the feelings of the person receiving the message.

We all have a responsibility in the Pulford family to create a more positive working life for school staff so that they can focus their efforts on teaching – they need to be given the time and the space to do that effectively to not only help the children achieve their best academically but also help them to be resilient and confident.

Alan Perrott - Foundation Governor



The Gentleman Gardener

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to pop round to have a chat.



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McTimoney – Corley Technique Skeletal Practitioner

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Eileen M. Naples

BSc., AMCST
Ryecroft, Plantation Road, Leighton
Buzzard, LU7 3HT

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

St Leonard’s Church Hall Heath and Reach

Refurbished Hall available for hire.
Regular or occasional bookings



Capacity approx 130
Easy access. Car parking
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stleonardheath@gmail.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.....



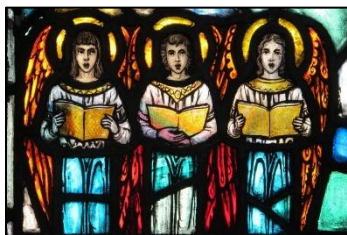
Plans for a new Adult Choir

These days, many things are classified as “pre-Covid” and “post-Covid”, such as the amount of time people spend working at home. Another example is the choir’s attendance at Sung Evensong on the third Sunday of the month. Pre-Covid, the choir regularly sang Choral Evensong on the first and third Sundays of the month. Post-Covid, it is only once a month, usually on the first Sunday of the month.

You will probably recall those early post-Covid days as the choir gradually returned to singing in church. At first, we were in the South transept where there was only room for 25 socially-distanced choristers. At last, came that wonderful day in September 2021 when we finally returned to the choir stalls to sing Parry’s “I was glad”.

In those early days of the journey “back to normal” two Sunday evening commitments a month was thought to be too much. We did plan a whole year of “themed” Choral Evensongs which was very successful in terms of numbers attending, but hard work for those organising curries and other themes.

But now it’s time to think again about the music on the third Sunday of the month. Incidentally, that Evensong is usually followed by Benediction, but there is a distinct break between the two to enable those who do not wish to attend Benediction to leave discreetly after Evensong.



I would like to see if we can set up a new adult choir for this service. This will hopefully include some members of our existing choir, but it would be excellent to have new singers. If you are interested or know someone who might be, please get in touch. It is a great opportunity, perhaps, for people who like singing church music but are unable to commit to a weekly choir.

To start with, we will probably just sing the psalm and canticles to an Anglican chant. I would hope to introduce an anthem quickly and we can then take stock and consider Preces & Responses other than Ferial and possible settings of the canticles.

To give us time to plan and recruit, and because, for one reason or another, there is not a suitable date before the summer term ends, I am proposing 6 pm on Sunday 21st September 2025 as the first service.

Please spend a moment or two to think if there is anyone you know who may be interested.

P.S. For those not in church on 12th January, you missed the presentation of an RSCM Silver medal to our Head Chorister Olivia Olleson, who not only passed the exam, but was awarded a superb “highly commended” grade.

Paul Dickens

Calendar of Events

2nd February

Candlemas Services as usual at All Saints including Messy Mass 11.30am; Festal Evensong for Candlemas 6pm.

Bereavement Support Café

Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm



5th February

Lunch Club in the North Transept, All Saints 1pm.
Tickets £6.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



16th February

Services as usual at All Saints including All Age Communion 11.30am

21st February

Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm - 3.30pm

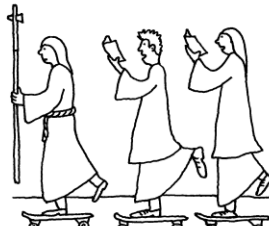


YOUNG PEOPLE

HOW TO STOP THEM LEAVING THE CHURCH



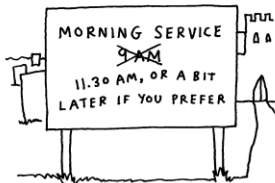
GET THEM INVOLVED



LET THEM LEAD THE SERVICE



ENCOURAGE THE CONGREGATION TO BE MORE YOUTH-FRIENDLY



ADJUST THE SERVICE TIME



SEND THEM ON A LIFE-CHANGING TRIP



LOCK THE DOORS

All Saints themed evening
of food and drink
offering a taste of...

The
Roaring 20's

WEDNESDAY 26th FEBRUARY

7.00pm

TICKETS - £15 each

Dress to impress

RAISING MONEY FOR
TIBBS DEMENTIA
FOUNDATION



on ...

The Growing Church

During the course of a year, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of children come through the doors of All Saints. They come for carol services, end-of year school services, scouts' services, civic services and as members of the Cadets, the ATC, and other uniformed organisations on Remembrance Sunday.

They come to the trails which explore aspects of the Christian year; to sing as trebles in the choir, and as regular members of the Sunday congregations – at 9.30am when they go to Sunday School; and the twice-a-month 11.30am All Age & Messy Mass services.

They are brought as babies for baptism.

And they come for social groups – to Toddler Time on Wednesdays; Young Singers on Friday evenings; and with family and friends to the Coffee Shop.

They become comfortable in the building, familiar with its sights and sounds, the atmosphere, and perhaps they sense the generations who have worshipped here for centuries past.

So many children – of many faiths, and of none.



A series looking at youth work in our churches.

This month: the town's children use All Saints in many ways ...

And what do they see when they get here?

They explore the history and architectural heritage on their doorstep; experience the scale of the building; the beauty of the angels in the roof (the big wow factor for many); the misericords, the graffiti carved into the stones, the random stairs that go nowhere. Occasionally they get a chance to go up into the bell tower and admire the view from the ringing chamber.



Thanks to Pulford, Linslade Lower, Leighton Middle and the Messy congregation for these photos of their events in December 2024, and quotes from the children:

- * I love the sound – and sight of the organ;*
- * the “Christmassy feeling in church”;*
- * the lights on the giant tree*



- * school services which involve so many people in orchestras and choirs;*
- * the donkey in the stable;*
- * Year 4 children enjoyed singing with other schools and with the Cedars’ orchestra.*

- * learning about the musical instruments and the sounds they made.*

Just coming in and out, experiencing all this, will help to equip these young citizens of tomorrow with the tools and knowledge they will need to make their own informed decisions about what they believe as the grow into adulthood.

Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Stuart Blofeld; Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

Shining a light into the community ...

Christmas is about Jesus the light of the world. It's a chance to share the Christian message of hope with others and to point them to Jesus. In chapter 5 of Matthew's gospel Jesus describes His followers as the light of the world - not drawing attention to ourselves, but rather, making Him visible to those around us.

"You are the salt of the earth....You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven". Or as the Message puts it, "You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth.... You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world."

When engaged with mission and community-building, we look for where God is already at work and seek to join in. We want to encourage the good things already happening and to shine the light of Jesus into our surroundings, highlighting both the beauty and the challenges.

In the run-up to Christmas, there were lots of opportunities to bring people together in a hopeful and positive way, partnering with others where possible. Building on our regular community café and holiday club, we ran several events which offered a safe and welcoming space for people to come together, take part in activities and crafts, and enjoy refreshments.

This included carol singing in two retirement developments as well as on the street in the Sandhills estate where we were joined by members of other churches. Two Christingle services made it possible for adults with learning difficulties and (at different times) families to join in with hands-on crafts and worship. Our Family Carol service invited children and adults to actively participate in a retelling of the Christmas story, sing carols, and share food together in an atmosphere of celebration. Christmas morning was a joyful culmination of all of this.



For some people, being part of a church service might be a rare occurrence. By shining the light of Christ into the world around us at Christmas time, we have been able to build on some of the existing relationships we have developed through our regular community events. In this way we are laying the foundations to continue journeying together in future so that the God colours and God flavours can be seen more clearly in our community.

Katharine Reedy

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Brian Speller: 210565; Tom Ware



When starting to write this article, I thought how much I miss the sparkle and colour in the church and in the home, as the decorations are put away for another year. Maybe we could think about how the Christmas season brightens up our spirits, and our mental well-being. It would be great to keep that feeling all year round.

Have you ever been into a church or building, and had that aura of peace and reverence – I have, but it is nice to know that other people do as well. This poem was written by my friend Julie who sums it up beautifully, with this inspiring poem.

*A twist of the key turns with a snap,
The big oak door to the church with a latch,
Opens majestically with a swing,
Let your visit to the church begin.*

*The circular font boldly stands
a whisper from the door.
Come in and feel the love
of centuries before.*

*The circle of life depicted
In the stained glass window shining bright.
All the window sills invite you
to bring me flowers and candlelight.*

*The wooden cross upon the wall
reminds us of God's love for all,
and how he sacrificed his son,
the wonders of God's love begun.*

*Then as you turn and glance ahead,
the altar stands above some steps.
A radiant blast of beautiful stained glass
heads the church for all to see.
Why not come and visit me.*

By Julie Tierney

We would like to say a big thank you to Paul and Julia for hosting the St. Nicholas Supper. As usual everyone had a delicious meal, accompanied by excellent music. It was good to see a few new faces, and friends we haven't seen for some time.

The Christmas Carol service was well attended, and there was standing room only! The children and Aoife from Hockliffe School came to sing for us, and we thank them and their parents for coming to support the Church. We would also like to thank Roger and the band, who played not only for the Carol Service, but also play for our regular services.

Carol Speller.

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Julia Haviland 850380; Tina Thompson 378411



Christmas has been both a joyous and a sad time in Billington.

At the Carol Service, the Church was looking like a Christmas card with flowers, candles, carols and of course mince pies and mulled wine to celebrate the birth of the Infant Jesus. The church was full of worshipers and John Wearmouth was with us to play the organ as Carl Moulding was needed to sing bass in the All Saints Choir that evening.

At the first Communion of Christmas the church was attended by a larger than usual congregation. We are thankful to all those who took part in making the season so meaningful.

The sadness in the village has been at the heart of the deaths of two well-known and loved sisters. As we have already reported, Anne Farmer died earlier last year. She died in hospital and left her sister alone and needing daily care. Audrey Ingledow died peacefully in hospital early in December and her funeral was led by Father Noel McGeeney at St Michael and All Angels on 14th January. Both Anne and Audrey were women of great and sincere faith. Audrey spent the earlier part of her married life in Nigeria, overcoming many frightening situations. Afterwards she and her husband David lived happily in Billington where they raised their two children, Robert and Natasha.

Audrey's love for animals and her affection for the country's military services was well known. She wrote many prayers and poems which she shared with Father Noel and Rev'd Don. Among the favourites is "Peter Pan Soldiers" which is read each Remembrance Sunday, not only at St Michael and All Angels but also in churches and cathedrals across the land.

Sandra Brewin

Peter Pan Soldiers

On the 60th Anniversary of D-Day

***Gone are their happy childhood years,
Toy soldiers and bicycles left behind.
Their Country needs them, so they go,
Their loved ones left – with tears – so blind!***

***Over the heaving ocean swells
To Normandie – the fears, the shells,
Peter Pan soldiers, little more than boys
Strong, calm, alert, though sickness cloys –***

***Shallow waters and sandy beaches
Roiling smoke, dust, thud of guns!
Creeping, crawling, running and toiling
Falling, brothers – cousins – and sons.***

***Long the rows of white stones, standing,
Long the wearying grieving stings;
Warm the plea of those still living
"Keep them safely, King of Kings".***

Audrey Ingledow

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861



Now we are looking forward to Spring, and with thanks to Paul Brown for compiling this list, let's look at the social dates planned for this year, so you have things to look forward to in our lovely village!

Church services in St Michael's Eggington continue on 1st and 3rd Sundays each month, with all 5th Sundays this year being at St Leonards Heath and Reach, so that we can join together as one church, one faith, one heart!

March

15th: Quiz Evening starting at 7.00pm in the village hall

30th: Joint Villages Service -MOTHERING SUNDAY- St Leonard's church 11am



April

18th: Good Friday

20th: EASTER DAY - Church Service at St Michael's at 9.30am

May

17th: Plant sale in the churchyard at 10.30am to 12.30pm;
Refreshments in village hall



July

27th: Cream Teas in the churchyard from 3.00 till 5.00 pm



October

5th: Harvest Festival at St Michael's at 9.30am.

18th: Quiz Evening starting at 7.00pm in the village hall



November

9th: Remembrance Sunday Service at 2.30pm followed by tea in village hall



December

10th: Carol Service starting at 7.00pm

24th: Christingle Service at 3.00pm

24th: Midnight Communion Service starting at 11.15pm

25th: Christmas Day service to be agreed

29th: St Michael's Christmas Dinner at the Dukes, Heath and Reach





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The answer you've all been waiting for: How did Marley get to be that PARTICULAR shade of marmalade?

*"Fat old marmalade cat, with golden eyes
slinks through silky black night hallways."
[Angel Edwards]*

We all know Marley – the church cat – and how he slinks. (Such a good word.) Sometimes, he prowls, during services; or lurks, under the pulpit, distracting readers from their readings; wanders up and down the choir stalls, distracting young choristers from their music; keeps watch on the most solemn occasions, weddings & funerals alike. And he slinks, mostly to avoid being put out at lock-up time, especially if it's raining.

Most undeniably – he is ORANGE, MARMALADE, maybe even GINGER. But how did he get to be so?



At the ready – just in case ...



Surely Marley has many homes to go to, but his favourite is Lindsay's chair.

Parish Pump, a useful resource for Parish Magazine editors everywhere, has finally supplied the answer to Marley's colouring. Thank you, Parish Pump!

"It has been a mystery for cat lovers everywhere: what makes some cats ginger?"

Now – after 60 years of searching – scientists have good news. They have finally found the chunk of DNA that is responsible. The so-called Garfield gene is Arhgap36.

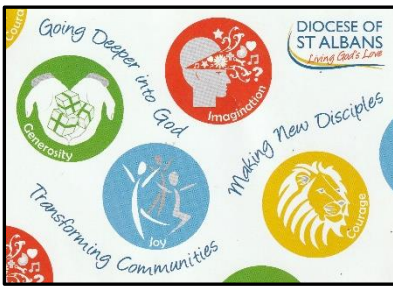
Arhgap36 has been hiding away on the X chromosome, of which males have one copy while females have two. When the Arhgap36 gene is present on a cat's X chromosome, it forces the pigment-making cells in the skin to produce more pheomelanin, leading to the orange morph.

It seems that if a male inherits this gene from either parent, he will be Garfield-ginger, while a female will usually turn calico or tortoiseshell.

This may sound simple, but it took two teams of scientists, one at Stanford University in the US and one at Kyushu University in Japan, to find the Garfield gene independently, thereby solving a 60-year mystery."

So now you know.

Julia Dickens, with grateful thanks to Parish Pump



Living God's Love

*A series exploring
the St. Alban's Diocese Vision Statement
This month:*

Going Deeper into God By Rev'd Dr. Bernard Minton

This year, the longer article for Ouzel Team magazines is going to cover the Diocesan Vision Statement and its accompanying *Living God's Love* prayer. Hopefully, you might be familiar with both of these, but just in case, this is the Diocesan Vision Statement:

"The Diocese of St Albans is Living God's Love by going deeper into God, making new disciples and transforming communities."

The Living God's Love prayer runs as follows:

*Living God, draw us deeper into your love;
Jesus our Lord, send us to care and serve;
Holy Spirit, make us heralds of good news.
Stir us, strengthen us, teach and inspire us
to live your love with generosity and joy, imagination and courage;
for the sake of your world and in the name of Jesus, Amen.*

This prayer and Vision Statement are part of Bishop Alan's vision to renew and refocus our Diocese. We are encouraged to use them and reflect upon them, and over the course of the next year, we will be doing just that! I will begin, by exploring what it means to go deeper into God, and perhaps how we might do that.

Going deeper into God is the essential precursor to 'making new disciples' and 'transforming communities'. We won't be able to do those things unless we have first of all asked for God's help, and above all, we won't be able to do those things well or convincingly if we don't really know enough about the God we are trying to proclaim to recognise Him when and where He is at work! Before we can make new disciples and transform our communities, we need to have focused ourselves on God rather than on our own wants. We need to be sure that the activities we feel called to share are rooted in God, not in our own needs, desires or insecurities.

What, then, does it mean to go deeper into God? In the first place, it means we must recognise that God is bigger than we are! This might seem a silly thing to say: of course God is big! But God is bigger even than any word can convey. We live in an infinite and expanding universe where the galaxies and stars we can see in the night sky are billions and billions of years away. The universe is unimaginably huge, and planet earth is a tiny speck in the vastness of space. But all of this enormous expanding universe is still only a grain of sand in the hand of God. God is not just 'outside' the whole universe that we can imagine and conceive, but He is outside all of our mental categories as well. God is

outside time and space, and is simply too 'big' for our minds to be able to hold onto. You might as well try to put the ocean into a bucket!

But, if you can't do that, you can at least go for a swim in the ocean, and that is 'going deeper into God'. We can explore God by thinking about Him; by worshipping Him, alone or with others; by reading the Scriptures; and above all by praying. When we pray, we are consciously trying to open ourselves to God, who is *always* open to us. Going deeper into God means entering into a living relationship with Him, letting Him into our hearts, minds and lives. It also means recognising that however deep we might go into God, there is always far more to discover than we have already experienced. If you fall (and notice that word 'fall') in love with someone, you find that there is always more to know and share about that person. You can never 'come to the end' of a person whom you love: there is always more to discover. And what is true of us tiny frail mortals is infinitely more true of the eternal and holy God.

Going deeper into God also means learning to let go of everything that is 'not God': hence we 'fall' into Him. God is present in everything, because He is the only creator; nothing exists without Him. But He is not identical with the things He has made, and although we can sometimes see Him in them, they can also get in the way. We can get confused, and mistake other things for God. This is what idolatry is: when we worship things, people, or ourselves, rather than God.

To go deeper into God means letting go of everything else that we might otherwise use for protection. Just as the ocean depths are dark and frightening and would drown or crush us if we tried to plunge into them, so also the immensity of God can seem too threatening and dangerous to be endured. God calls us to love Him, and to let His love take possession of our hearts, but we see in Jesus that if we try to do that, it will expose us and make us very vulnerable to those who are not trying to do likewise. Going deeper into God is a risky business: it is safer to stay in the shallows!

Safer; but not what we were made for. We were made by God to love Him: to fully reflect His love and glory. This we can only do if we plunge deeply into His love, and become loving embodiments of His reconciliation.

Fr. Bernard Minton





We are all familiar with the soppy cards and heart shaped merchandise for St Valentine’s Day, but you can also show your love for what you hold dear and want to protect from climate change.

“**Show the Love**” is run by The Climate Coalition - the UK’s largest group of people dedicated to action on the climate and nature crises. It has over 130 organisations, including the National Trust, Women’s Institute, Oxfam, and RSPB - with a combined supporter base of 20 million people. The **Show the Love** campaign brings communities together with its green hearts emblem every February and has grown public support for climate action through local events, heartfelt conversations and green heart crafting in every corner of the country.

How will you show the love?



Get involved – we would love to have some more people on the All Saints Eco Church Team – speak to Katrina Grant or Jaine Holford to find out more. We have lots of ideas to help our church be more eco-friendly but we need more help.



Pick up a green heart in church to display in a window or make your own. There are green heart craft ideas from www.theclimatecoalition.org/show-the-love/crafting



Be inspired by some great stories – how local communities all across UK have made change happen by working together.



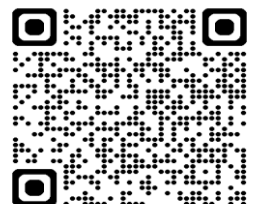
Put Great Big Green Week, 7-15 June 2025, in your diary. All Saints Eco Church Team will be running our usual day of nature-based activities – there will be other local events too.



Climate Coalition seeks to get politicians to work together to tackle climate change and protect nature. There is a wealth of information about the action that government and MPs are taking and it’s all on the Climate Coalition website.

Find out more: follow Climate Coalition on Facebook or scan the QR code for their website:

Katrina Grant





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