

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

March 2025

£1

SEPTUAGESIMA SEXAGESIMA
 QUINQUAGESIMA

SHROVE
 TUESDAY



Shrove = Pardon.

ASH
 WEDNESDAY

Remember
 O man
 that dust
 thou art



and to dust
 shalt thou return



PRAYER
 Our weapon

FASTING
 Our weapon



against the Devil



against the Flesh

LENT
 40 DAYS PREPARATION FOR EASTER

I II III

IV Mothering
 or Refreshment Sunday

(And 2 more Sundays in Lent overleaf)



Our weapon against the World

Inside:

Fr Bernard says "remember that we are sinful, but yet beloved."

Living God's Love: Katharine Reedy describes how CGS is transforming communities

Growing Church: a focus on SmAll Saints in pictures

Pulford: Have you thought about becoming a Governor?

Singing together is good for the soul

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Love, sin and evil

By Rev'd Dr. Bernard Minton



Love is one of those words that we use an awful lot in Church, and I wonder how often we ask ourselves what it means. I think that 'love' is a relationship in which we give ourselves to another, and receive them in return.

Love is our name for a relationship in which we put someone else at the centre of our heart, and give ourselves to them. It demands self-giving and vulnerability, and a true acknowledgment and privileging of our beloved: the other. Love is thus a description of what God is like in Himself: this is a description of the Holy Trinity, Who is a flowing interconnected motion of love.

Sin is an opposite to love, because sin is selfishness rather than self-giving. It is only 'an' opposite, not 'the' opposite: love is too big to have just one opposite! Sin is only possible if God has to a degree withdrawn, because it is resistance to God's love, whether conscious or unconscious. Sin is self-preservation and self-exaltation. It is thus inherently incompatible with the fullness of God's presence in His Loving Trinity: this is why we need to be saved by Him, so that we can survive our encounter with His Wholeness (His Holiness).

The two oldest forms of sin (that make up our Original Sin) are idolatry and unrighteousness. Idolatry is when we love things that are not God, and unrighteousness is when we refuse to look truthfully at our selfishness and face up to its consequences. Unrighteousness is a refusal to repent, because repentance means 'turning', and when we repent, we turn to face the consequences of who we are and what we have done. Sin is all-pervasive in humanity, a fact we forget at our peril. If remembered, sin becomes an utterly trivial fact; but if forgotten, sin looms large. We must always remember that we are sinful, but yet beloved. We can always turn again; and we need to!

If we fail to repent, we risk falling into evil, which is the result of deliberate and persistent sinfulness. There is nothing supernatural or 'special' about evil: it is simply a description of someone who relates to the world as though only they were real, and the rest of the world exists merely for their pleasure, as objects to exploit and dominate without compunction. When we make ourselves incapable of love and refuse to be loved, we fall into evil. This is not the preserve of supernatural beings: it describes all those who refuse to open their hearts to love and the risk of pain and loss.

We were made in love and for love, and all things rest in Him.

Fr. Bernard Minton

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



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 1st June at 3pm. (Please note the change of date.)

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Every Brilliant Thing:

“An uplifting play about depression”

A 7-year old boy hopes to cheer up his Mum by writing a list of every brilliant thing in the world...

Friday 7th March 2025 7.30pm at Sacred Heart Parish Hall in aid of the mental health charity, MIND. Tickets £5. To book, text 07704618995. (Or book through Eventbrite who will charge an extra fee.)



Worth a smile

- ☺ A pun is the lowest form of humour – unless you thought of it yourself.
- ☺ Based on my calculations, I can afford to retire five years after I die.
- ☺ Birthday cake is the only food you can blow on and spit on, and still everybody rushes to get a piece.
- ☺ Coffee: starter fluid for the morning impaired.
- ☺ Hospitality: making your guests feel like they’re at home, even if you wish they were.
- ☺ I recently decided to sell my vacuum cleaner – all it was doing was gathering dust.
- ☺ My dog will eat anything until you put a pill in it. Then he’s Gordon Ramsey.

Lost in translation: *Are you travelling this Spring? Keep an eye out for those delightful translations into English that didn’t quite make it...*

- ☺ Danish airline: We take your bags and send them in all directions.
- ☺ Heathrow: No electric people carrying vehicles past this point.
- ☺ Japanese taxi: Safety first: please put on your seatbelt. Prepare for accident.
- ☺ Kenyan maternity ward: No children allowed.
- ☺ Beijing shop: Haircuts half price today. Only one per customer.
- ☺ Swedish furrier: Fur coats made for ladies from their own skin.

And finally:

- ☺ I’m giving up eating chocolate for a month. Oh, wait, sorry, bad punctuation. I meant, I’m giving up. Eating chocolate for a month.

Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, January: No Weddings

Holy Baptism, January:

5: Poppy Isla Rose Murray

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. January:

2: Ian Macpherson at All Saints; 3: Jennifer Vieyra at All Saints;

7: Beryl Liscoe at All Saints; 8: Peter Wilks at Bierton; 9: Enid Miller at St. Barnabas;

14: Audrey Ingledow at St. Michael & All Angels; 17: Daphne Washington at Crownhill;

24: Suzanne Edwards at All Saints; 28: Diana Ruault at All Saints;

29: Margaret Lutt at St. Leonard's

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

Years Mind, March:

1: Ron Colbert; 3: Madge Taylor, Betty Wille; 4: George Perry; 5: Bunny Winter;

7: Ivor Prewett, Audrey Cooper; 8: Alfred Bolton; 9: Norman Rumbelow, Richie Prince;

11: Marian Wallis, Julia Bicknell; 12: Margaret Nash; 15: Arthur Robinson;

16: Walter (Jim) Dell, Laura Fox; 17: Rodney Austin; 18: Amy Rumbelow;

20: Cora-Anne Ingram; 21: Frank Scammell; 22: Muriel Chandler; 23: Susan Lennard;

28: Beth Durrington; 30: Richard Greensted; 31: Keith Boyce



LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

LIVE PROFESSIONAL CONCERTS

Leighton Buzzard Library Theatre

Saturday 15th March 2025

at 7.30pm

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Leighton Buzzard Music is a registered charity no: 1183681





Being a Governor: “Have you ever considered becoming a school governor?” and if not, why not? Perhaps you are not sure what the role entails or whether you are suitably qualified to undertake it. Perhaps you fear you wouldn’t ‘fit in’ on a governing board ... or perhaps you’ve simply never given it a moment’s thought.

Vacancies arise fairly frequently, so while there isn’t one just now, and this is not a recruitment piece, I’m hoping it might plant a seed in a few of your minds.

What does it entail? In formal terms, the Governing Board sets the strategic vision of the school, overseeing its financial performance, ensuring that money is well spent and holding senior leaders to account for its educational performance. In reality this means attending termly meetings, reading and agreeing documents and policies, undertaking training and being involved in decision making.

But the best bit is visiting the school, meeting and talking to the children (always inspiring and enlightening) as well as staff and parents. It is wonderful to be a part of shaping and supporting young lives, and being part of the school community in this way is extremely enriching.

But I don’t think I’m suitably qualified... : The good news is that you don’t need any formal qualifications or skills at all to be a school governor. You just need to give some time, and have a desire to make a difference. There is lots of training available and a lot of knowledge and support from other Board members. Of course, the reality is that we all have skills and experiences which add value to the work of the Board which is why I want to address this next question...

I’m not sure I’ll fit in on a governing board... : Our school is extremely diverse in every way, and it is important that the Board represents that diversity as well as we can. This is something I want to develop through our church which is also a wonderfully diverse community. And it is important that it is developed through All Saints because 7 out of our 14 Governors are what are known as Foundation Governors, who are all appointed (or recommended to the Diocesan Board of Education) by the PCC. This means that they will be drawn from the community of All Saints or the wider church community of the town.

This is why I hope this moment’s reading has given you the opportunity to at least think about being a school governor. There are added benefits in terms of personal and career development – see here: <https://governorsforschools.org.uk/blogs/school-governors-the-benefits-of-being-a-school-governor/>

But above all I say again: my experience at Pulford has brought me joy, challenge, sense of achievement, laughter and deep spiritual uplift. It is one of the most worthwhile things I have done, and I commend it to you all.

Ed Price, Chair of Governors.



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On a musical note.....



***“and this shall be our anthem:
one church, one faith, one Lord!”***
[Thy hand, O God, has guided, Plumptre]

It takes all sorts to make a world, and I would say that applies to singers more than perhaps some others. There are those who are the first to belt out a song at karaoke or who seem to think that every song is an opportunity for their solo debut (usually the same person...). At the other end of the spectrum we have the secret shower singers, the ‘mimers’ in the school Nativities or those who will only ‘go for it’ from the safety of their own car (or several glasses of wine). Despite all this though, it often strikes me how quickly as human beings we use singing as a bonding experience, especially when we sing together.

Even those of us who are not sports fans are familiar with the football chants that are collectively sung at stadiums across the country. For those of us still young enough to enjoy clubbing (or at least tell ourselves we are!) it is impossible to resist joining in with the rest of the crowd as we sing along to our favourite tunes. Even the slightly older / more sensible of us would, I think, find it a challenge to remember the last time they were at a wedding where there wasn’t a collective ‘singalong’ to Bon Jovi’s ‘Livin’ on a Prayer.’ So, what is it about singing collectively that makes even the most timid of singers come out of their musical shell?

As someone who loves both choral music and – unashamedly – belting out the classics at a disco, I’m always struck by the phenomenal sense of power we feel when we sing together. Whether it’s the stranger whose eye you catch across the dance floor singing to Abba and share a knowing smile with, or the childhood friends you blast out the noughties anthems with before getting ready for a night out, singing together provides us with a companionship and belonging that it’s hard to feel anywhere else.



It is no wonder then that singing features so much in our Church services. From congregational hymns to choral solos, music unites us in our one faith with God but also in our fellowship with each other. It provides a moment or two for us to know we are not alone; that we are simultaneously separate and joined. That our voices come together to make one song of praise. I have often seen, and felt, singing move people to tears and I can only think it is because in that moment, we know we are accepted. We are whole. And we are loved.
Amen.

Abby Clark

Calendar of Events

2nd March

Services as usual at All Saints including
Messy Mass 11.30am



Bereavement Support Café

Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm



Choral Evensong 6pm



5th March

Ash Wednesday All Saints

Holy Communion 10am

Sung Eucharist 7.30pm



12th March

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

Tickets £6.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



16th March

Services as usual at All Saints including

All Age Communion 11.30am;

Civic Service 3pm



ALL-AGE WORSHIP

21st March

Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm - 3.30pm



30th March

Mothers' Sunday All Saints

PLEASE NOTE: There will be NO 8am service;

Parish Eucharist 9.30am;

All Age Communion 11.30am



LENT COURSES & DEVOTIONS

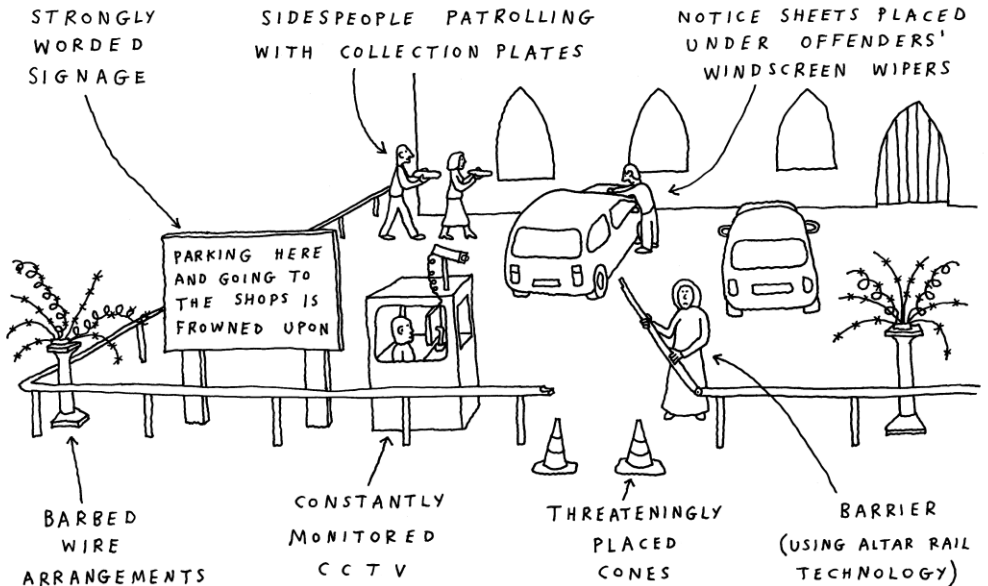
We will be offering 2 different Lent Courses this year:

- Thursday morning, at 11.15am in the Chapel after the 10am service, led by Geoff Huskisson and Alison Dobbie, using the book *"Wild Bright Hope", the Big Church Read.* (Book £10; contact Alison)
- Thursday evening, at 7.30-9pm in church, led by John Wallace, using *'Lent with the Beloved Disciple'* by Michael Marshall.
- Stations of the Cross will be at 6pm every Sunday during Lent in place of Evensong.



THE CHURCH CAR PARK

HOW TO DEFEND IT FROM NON-CHURCHGOERS





on ...

The Growing Church

SmAll Saints is the Sunday school at All Saints Church. It takes place during the 9.30 service. The children start in the service with their parents and then go out to Sunday school with the leaders. They return to the service during communion. The session takes place in the Samaritan room where the children are introduced to the Christian faith in a fun and interactive way.



The weekly theme is the same as in the main service, using the same bible readings and festivals, the children are encouraged to discuss what they have learnt with their family. The children learn through a variety of activities including storytelling games and prayers. Each week the children will use their creativity to make a craft which expresses their individuality and reinforces the lesson of the day. This then serves as a reminder when they take it home of the days lesson. We often end our session, before we rejoin the congregation with quiet time to reflect on our lesson and read a short prayer.



A series looking at youth work in our churches.

This month: SmAll Saints, All Saints' 9.30am Sunday School

During Advent, for instance, we looked at the Nativity story from different perspectives. Over the four weeks we added symbols for the themes of Advent to a mobile which the children made between them. We started with the theme "follow the star" at the top of the mobile; then added a rainbow for Hope; a dove for Peace; and hearts for Love. We presented the finished mobile in church on the final Sunday of Advent.

The children also made an individual decoration each week to take home.

When the children rejoin the service, they are invited to share with the congregation what they have learnt and display what they have made.



SmAll Saints welcomes children from the age of 3 up to confirmation. We also have experience of supporting children with special needs. We are happy for the children to come by themselves or with a parent if they need the added support. We aim to create a safe, supportive and inclusive environment where the children are comfortable asking questions and exploring their faith.

The dedicated team of leaders are passionate about sharing their faith with the children and creating a positive learning experience.

If you would be interested in your child joining us or feel you could support our leadership team, please contact the church office. **Andrea Cox**

Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens: Stuart Blofeld; Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

In the middle of the busy lead up to Christmas at Church how would you respond if you were asked... "Can we do an extra Christingle service?"

This is just what I asked Steve Marsh. It was around the middle of November; all the plans were set for Christmas, and I was asking for more.

I had a good reason. I visit a group of adults with learning disabilities called Friends Within. A friend organises this social club and I asked whether she thought the members would like to come to our Christingle service. It was an event for adults and children so perhaps a group might like to attend? She explained that although the group might like to go, they can have difficulties with the noise and unpredictability associated with children. We talked about whether people might come if we could adapt a service to meet their needs.

From conversations with parents, and members of Friends Within there seemed to be some interest. Volunteers from Church and the wider community worked together to make it happen.

An organisation called WAVE (*We're All Valued Equally*), based in North London support organisers in setting up inclusive social events and church services. They had a "Christingle in a box" which helped us with instructions to make a Christingle and explain it using pictures and words that could make our service more inclusive.

Our Christingle service may not have looked traditional; the orange had a coloured-in picture of the world taped to it to remember what it represented, and we used thick icing to stick the sweets onto the orange as we didn't want to risk cocktail sticks. We arranged chairs in a semi-circle for the service in case anyone wanted to dance to the carols, and we placed the Christingles on a table in front of the altar before lighting. However, the congregation came together to make them and there was a lot of fun.

We wanted to include everyone, so we had a video at the end of the service with "We wish you a merry Christmas", with Makaton signing. Makaton is a sign language used to communicate with some people with learning difficulties. Many schoolchildren learn this system. I and my friend were able to sign "Away in a Manger", and it was wonderful to see some of our church members copying the signs. We had live music for the carols which helped to create a great atmosphere.

Overall, people enjoyed the evening; there were good conversations; and the feedback was positive. There was an atmosphere of joy and friendship, and we are hoping to have more services this year. If you are interested in joining us, please let us know.

Fiona Dry

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens: Brian Speller: 210565



“For The Beauty Of The Earth”

Many of us live in a world where disturbed patterns of sleep, work stress, family crisis, financial concerns, and worries such as global warming can lead us to forget the beauties of the world. Albert Einstein said: *“If something is in me which can be called religious then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world...”*

The world that we share consists of wonderful natural surroundings, works of art, enchanting sights, awesome music, succulent food and acts of human kindness for us to appreciate and experience. I believe we are capable of letting the ‘Big Picture’ of the negatives in our world make us forget that the “Big Picture” also contains many small and wonderful joys.

I believe that there is a divine purpose to our world and to our being. The sun rises and sets every day providing pictures of the world that refresh both mind and soul. The ocean is full of its own magic, the moon creates a new world at night and the animals fully speak the language of Mother Nature.

We, as humans, are in danger of becoming divided from both the Earth and each other when we could be working together to protect and uphold both the environment and each other. If we could only step back from the demands of the here and now, we could become both humble and inspired by the world in which we live.

So: Let us take our step back and wonder at the intricate threads of a frosted cobweb.



Let us be humbled by the kindness and concern of the people around us.



With regard to the people around us we have only one commandment: ‘Love one another’.



Roger Spalding

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Julia Haviland 850380; Tina Thompson 378411



Last month Sandra reported the death of Audrey Ingledow, a long-time resident of the village and in January the church was filled with many of her friends from the village and family for her funeral. The service, conducted by Rev'd Noel, included a piece written by Audrey when she was first living with David in Nigeria. She described how in the absence of any other pets she tamed the lizards which lived in the garden of their bungalow!

Many years ago, Audrey gave me a climbing rose tree. I forget why, perhaps it was a whim. After a few years the rose tree died, and on hearing this Audrey promptly gave me a replacement which lives on. When it flowers again this year I will think of Audrey.

Thinking again about the first rose tree, it 'died', it did not 'pass'. It seems people no longer 'die'. We are expected to skirt round the truth with euphemisms although death is as much part of the natural cycle of life as birth. It has been suggested this softens the impact of the loss and I saw a reference this week to the phrase being a 'Genteelism.' You may have guessed this is not a trend I favour, and my family know that when the time comes, I will have 'died'

On a more cheerful note, and optimistically hoping for kinder weather, the church is holding the annual walk and breakfast on 8th March. All are welcome to join us for a walk round the village starting from the village hall at 8.00am followed by breakfast at March House. If you feel unable to walk, then do join us for breakfast at about 9.00am.

Also on 29th March, the Village Hall is organising a quiz including a two-course supper. As on previous occasions Martin will be quiz master and we can expect a wide variety of questions to keep us entertained. Tickets are £15 and further information are available from Sharon on 07713 240466.

Nearly thirty years ago there was a sense of achievement when the Churchyard gates and posts were replaced. The old ones, which we thought had been in place for perhaps 100 years, were in a poor state and Geoff Haviland made new ones to the original pattern. We all thought that was done for another 100 years. Sadly not, it seems modern oak is not as durable as the old, so although the gates are still in good condition, the posts had rotted and had to be replaced. Again, Geoff came forward and with his friend Tony organised the replacements which of course involved removing the rotten stumps, erecting the new posts and fixing to them the gates and transferring the ornamental finials etc. We have high hopes these will last longer than the previous ones and appreciate Geoff's efforts with this.

The final cost is not yet known but we are grateful for a grant towards it of £500 from CBC, awarded on the recommendation of our ward councillor, Mr Philip Spicer.

David Thompson

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861



Once again, it's my turn to write the magazine piece, after a very busy and successful Christmas Season. We had a lovely Carol Service, followed by mulled wine and mince pies, where everyone stayed to chat and catch up with all the village news.

The Christingle service was very well attended, even if we only had a few children willing to dress up for the Nativity; and Midnight Mass was as usual a very moving service.

Now we move on in the church's calendar and await Easter.

The churchyard is looking lovely as the spring flowers start to come though. We continue to have our regular working parties – planned for March 15th and June 12th, both at 10.30am for about 2 hours. Anyone wishing to help, just come along. You would be very welcome.

We are expecting a lovely show of daffodils this year planted by the Fleckney family in memory of two family members.



Our Quiz evening is on March 15th at 7pm, in the village hall. Teams of 6 please; and tickets cost £8 per person. Contact Angela on 01525 210420, to book your place.

On the first Wednesday of every month, we have our coffee morning in the church, which is run by Michelle, from 11am till 12 noon.



As usual we have a whole calendar of events planned for the year to keep St Michael's running smoothly, and we owe a big 'thank you' to the small band of people who do all this work behind the scenes to enable us to have such a beautiful church and churchyard.

We are updating the cleaning and flower rota, so if anyone feels the need to volunteer their time or expertise, please see the church officers, Carol or Paul.

*Photo by Rob Farrow, CC BY-SA 2.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9329413>*

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With grateful thanks once again to Parish Pump for their material: The Revd Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace'... If you would like a copy of the published booklet of Uncle Eustace's letters, please email: enquiries@parishpump.co.uk

*All Saints is not the only church to be short of parking space.
Uncle Eustace has some suggestions:*



On the perils of parking near church

The Rectory
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

I cannot be wholly sympathetic because your church car park is now inadequate, only having space for 100 cars. Your solution of advising members of the congregation to park in the adjoining supermarket car park may not have been wise. The maximum time people can stop there is 90 minutes, and as your services often reach that length, returning to find their cars clamped may not make you universally popular – although it may give your congregation the opportunity of practising Christian forgiveness.

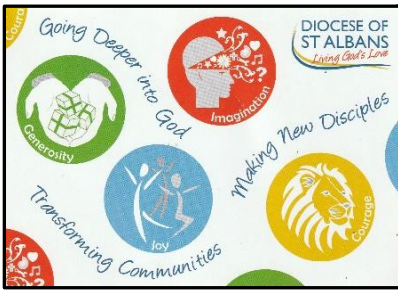
Since the medieval architect who built St James the Least of All was not overly concerned with car parking, the only space we have is along the road by the church. Inevitably, it gets blocked, which causes us all immense satisfaction when those not attending church but intending to have a morning shopping, find themselves unable to get out of the village until Mattins is over.

I did once encourage people to walk to church across the fields, but after we had nearly lost the present Earl in that swampy bit near the brook, I decided the idea was best dropped.

For most, the inconvenience of parking only makes attending church more of a pleasurable challenge; we so enjoy having something to complain about. Major Hastings, however, who has complained endlessly about parking problems, made a point last Christmas by leaving his car in the middle of the vicarage lawn. I was so pleased he happened to park just where I had had a garden pond filled in only the previous week. He returned to find that the car had sunk up to the windscreen and needed a crane to remove it.

For weddings, a farmer allows us to use the field adjoining the church. While he rarely attends church on Sundays, he is always there the week before – I suspect praying for heavy rain, so he can make a fortune charging to tow out with his tractor those who have got stuck. Perhaps the greatest act of witness your church could perform would be to get everyone attending church to park on the ring road, bringing the entire town to a halt until your Sunday morning Service is over.

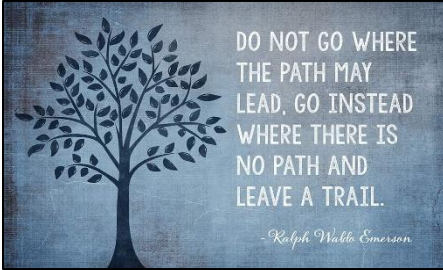
Your loving uncle,
Eustace



Living God's Love

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

Transforming Communities By Katharine Reedy



Last month Father Bernard wrote about what it means to go deeper into God. As we get to know God better, and open ourselves up to His leading, we may find ourselves seeing things differently and being drawn to new people and places - perhaps noticing things we had never really seen before, and even re-imagining the future.

Praying the Lord's Prayer reminds us that our ultimate vision as followers of Jesus is to see God's kingdom come. The Lord's Prayer uses the words 'we' and 'us' and this is an important reminder that, although we have individual lives and tasks, we are to do God's work together collectively.

Transforming communities starts with the belief that God is present and active in our world, and that His love is inclusive of all. It requires a vision of what God's kingdom could look like in our own context, a passion to see things align more with God's will, and a willingness to bring about that change.

This transformation is a key theme throughout the Bible. At the beginning in Genesis, the world was created to be beautiful and good. At the end of time, Revelation tells us that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, which will not just restore the original creation, but will include the very best of human endeavour. In between, things clearly go rather wrong. The law and the prophets attempt to instruct people in how to live God's way, which includes caring for the poor and the marginalised. Micah 6:8 sums this up: *"...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* Mary's song, the Magnificat, reminds us that God's plan is to reverse the oppression and injustice that we see in the world.

Jesus in his incarnation fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies (quoting from Isaiah 61 in his opening manifesto) and launched God's kingdom on earth. He modelled to his disciples how they are to bring about healing, reconciliation and restoration to those in need. He said *"Love your neighbour as yourself"*. He went to those on the margins of society.

How do we go about transforming communities?

The first and most important question to ask is *'Who is my neighbour?'* Keep asking this and be confident that God will answer.

Listen, watch and discern, by listening to God (through prayer and immersion in Scripture) and listening to community members, particularly those on the edges, to understand their needs. When setting up our holiday drop-in, we knew that many families struggle during the school holidays with the cost of living.

Look for where God is already at work. Communities often have many people active in tackling areas of need. The Bible describes these as “*people of peace*” – see Matthew 10:11 and Luke 10:6.

Who are the key people in the community, what can we learn from their understanding of community needs, and how could we work in partnership with them? In the case of Church of the Good Shepherd, partners include the local NHS Leighton-Linslade Health Connections team and those working with adults with learning difficulties (see the CGS article for this month).

The need is great, so it’s better to take small steps and do one or two things well, rather than try and tackle everything at once. Our current Wednesday drop-in started by booking Astral Park every Wednesday, offering free refreshments, listening and reflecting, and welcoming others to join us. But think big – it’s about God’s kingdom not just about one individual church. As well as community partners, look for opportunities to work with other churches and faith communities.

Be interruptible: we need to allow ourselves to be interrupted from the agenda we may have set ourselves, just as Jesus so often was, for example when he sought to spend time alone in prayer. The opportunity to do a Christingle service with adults with learning difficulties and their families and friends came up at short notice during an already busy Christmas season of events, but was a joyous occasion with members of an often-marginalised community.

Do with, rather than do for: our Wednesday drop-in has evolved over time, in response to those who regularly turn up. At the start of a session, we usually take a few minutes to pray together, in which everyone is included whether church-going or not. The Wednesday community has become well-established, although many of the people who are part of it may never come to church on a Sunday. It reminds us that Jesus met people where they were in their everyday lives without waiting for them to fit into an ideal time or religious setting.

Transforming communities is about pioneering new territory. Rose Hudson-Wilkin (Bishop of Dover) as a student had a poster over her desk that stated: “*Do not go where the path leads. Instead, go where there is no path and leave a trail.*”

To keep on doing this work requires prayer, presence and perseverance. As we follow God, who took on human form, He makes his home with us. Over time, we find that transformed communities are safe and nurturing places, reflecting God’s generosity and steadfast love for each person he has created and whom He longs to draw into his family – with no barriers to inclusion.

***Katharine Reedy
Church of the Good Shepherd***



Recycling makes the world go round

ECO CHURCH
AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT

Global Recycling Day is on 18th March, and while we are used to having our Council bin with the orange lid for paper, card and plastics, plus the odd trip to the bottle bank with our empties (!) there is so much more to recycling. "I'd recycle more but it's confusing. I don't know where stuff goes!" So, where to start?

Five easy things

While 90% of us regularly recycle some things, eight out of ten UK households regularly send millions of recyclable items to incineration or landfill instead of being made into new products. Our most binned items include: 7.4 million yoghurt pots; 845 million cleaning product bottles; 6 million aftershave/perfume bottles; 526 million aerosols and masses of toilet roll tubes. Make a difference - wash these and they can all go in the recycling bin.

The Council

Central Beds Council website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk: search recycling. They have lots of information, useful tips and an A-Z of what goes where for recycling.

The tricky ones

www.recyclenow.com has great ideas and information and a locator tool so you can find where to take all sorts of stuff the Council doesn't accept. For example:

- **Wine corks** (not synthetic ones) – take them to Majestic Wine
- **Soft plastics**, eg pet food pouches – take to Tesco in big metal cage outside
- **Make-up** – take it to Boots or Tesco which have collection bins

Old bras make money for cancer charity

Ladies – if you have any old bras that don't fit or you no longer wear, don't bin them! Instead take them to the Refill Shop at 7 Friday St where there is a collection box for old bras to raise money for breast cancer charities.

The Refill is also a brilliant zero waste shop selling all manner of dried foods, cleaning products and more but with no packaging at all. Take along a reusable container eg jam jar or an old yoghurt tub; and just buy the amount you need.

Broken? Go to the Repair Café

Did you know our town has a Repair Café every month – usually the last Saturday at the Royal British Legion Hall. The next dates are 22 March, 26 April and 24 May (see ad opposite). So many items are thrown away without even attempting repair. Skilled volunteers repair items at the Repair Café – one even brings a 3-D printer to make replacement parts. You simply pay what you think the repair is worth. You do need to register and book in advance so they know what items are coming in. They repair clothes, sewing machines, small household electricals, mechanical, electronics & computers. Find them on Facebook: (Repair Café LB and Borrowers LB) or see the www.repaircafe.leightonbuzzard.org for more.



REPAIR CAFE LB 2025 DATES



JAN 25	FEB 22	MAR 22	APR 26	MAY 24
JUN 28	JUL 26	SEP 27	OCT 25	NOV 22

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Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

“Make a Mother’s Day”

The Mothers’ Union raises funds for its projects by means of Make a Mother’s Day ethical gift range. It is possible to purchase the gifts throughout the year but there is always a particular focus on Mothering Sunday by encouraging people to buy for or in memory of their mother or someone who has been an important influence.

This year the focus is on Peace which is in short supply in some parts of the world, both within the family and communities.

Please see the Mothers’ Union noticeboard in the north transept for details and personal stories of the successes in recent years.

More information from www.makeamothersday.org

A Prayer for Mothering Sunday

Dear Lord,

This Mothering Sunday, we thank You for the gift of peace,
Your perfect, unshakable peace that stills our hearts and minds.

We give thanks for mothers and caregivers, for their love, patience, and the nurture they provide. Bless them today with a fresh outpouring of Your peace and strength. May they feel Your presence guiding them as they teach and inspire their children to walk in Your ways, becoming peacemakers in their generation.

We also thank You for the Church, our spiritual home, and the work of the Mothers' Union, bringing healing and hope to families everywhere. Amen.



Easter Basket arrangement evening

Monday 14th April 7pm till 9pm at Astral Park.

£20 per head.

*All profits to the Church of the Good Shepherd flower fund
[used to buy flowers or appropriate gifts for members of the
church family or wider community at times of need].*

Booking essential: please call Julie Tierney 07903535470