

# Saints ALIVE

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

**October 2025**

**£1**

## **Inside:**

The Tree Trail is a wonderful way to discover the wildlife haven that is All Saints Churchyard.

*(This picture: "Inside the Californian Redwood")*

Rev'd Steve Marsh, while remembering Roger Collor, is reminded to say well done straight away.

The Bike 'n Hike team had a great day in Northampton

Rev'd Steve Davies discusses being drawn deeper into God's love.

Ed Price looks forward to a new school year.

Stephen Jury narrates the history of repairs to the weathercock.



# All Saints Leighton Buzzard

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 Rev'd Steve Marsh 01525 838450

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 Rev'd Steve Davies 01525 381418  
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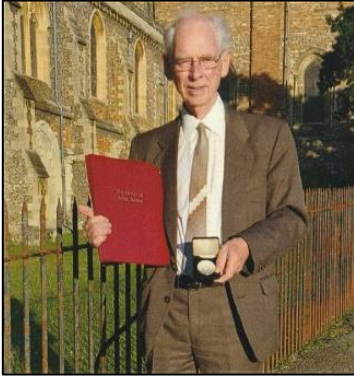
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## ***Rev'd Steve Marsh remembers Roger Collor***



Many of us within the Ouzel Valley Team gathered on 12<sup>th</sup> September at All Saints church for a service of celebration for the life of Roger Collor. Roger was known and loved by many of us across the Team. He had been a Reader, a Churchwarden at All Saints Church, a Trustee of the Pulford Trust and the Safeguarding Officer and a PCC member at St Michael and All Angels Church, Billington. Roger also worked for St Albans Diocese as the Diocesan Pastoral and Advisory Secretary from the mid-1980s until his retirement in 2002.

Last year on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2024 at Evensong in St Albans Abbey, Roger was awarded the Order of St Alban by Bishop Alan, and many of us attended the service to celebrate with Roger and his family. The Order of St Alban, in the form of a medal and certificate, is awarded to six people every year by the Bishop of St Albans to acknowledge their exceptional and faithful service to the Diocese and God's Kingdom.

Roger was very proud to receive the Order of St Alban, and the significance of being awarded it was very apparent at his celebration service. Roger requested that the medal be placed on his coffin and the photograph on the front of the service booklet was of him outside the Abbey with the Order of St Alban medal and certificate on the day he was awarded it.

Over the refreshments after Roger's celebration service, I discussed with several people how fortuitous it was that Roger was awarded the Order of St Alban last September, as now, almost exactly a year later he is no longer physically with us.

This prompted me to reflect on how important it is to encourage and celebrate each other, here and now. The writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews encourages Christians to *'consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, encouraging one another'*. (ch10 vs 23-25)

When you have appreciated something someone has said or done, don't hold back in giving them some encouragement. Do it when you think of it. Don't put it off or forget. A simple encouragement whether face to face or in a text message, or by sending them a thank you card or giving them a gift of appreciation, can be very meaningful and significant to the recipient, sometimes in a way we could not have imagined or anticipated.

Your encouragement could be just the thing the recipient needs to spur them on and to let them know they are greatly valued, as the Order of St Alban did for Roger.

**Steve Marsh**

## ***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)

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Messy Mass

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: All Age Service

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Holy Baptism

6.00pm Evening Prayer

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Choral Evensong Plus

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Sung with hymns  
(NO choir) followed by Benediction

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Said Evensong

#### **Weekdays:**

#### **Holy Communion**

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

*(Service of Healing on 4<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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:**

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: 'Chapel Time':

*Lead reflection and discussion*

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

4<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays: Holy Communion

11.00am Holy Communion

1<sup>st</sup> Sundays: Family Service

**Tuesdays:** 7.00pm Holy Communion

**Morning Prayer via Zoom:**

9.00am Monday – Saturday

[www.saintleonardschurch.com](http://www.saintleonardschurch.com)

### **St. Michael's, Eggington**

9.30am 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays: Holy Communion

4<sup>th</sup> Sundays: Café Church 3-4pm

### **St. Nicholas', Hockliffe**

9.30am 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays: Family Communion

4<sup>th</sup> 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.

£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.

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

**Choir Practice:** Friday evenings, 6.30pm Trebles; 7.30 – 8.30pm Full choir.

**Bellringers:** Practice on Monday, 7.30 - 9.30pm.

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

Saturday 10am - 12noon for drinks & cakes only.

*Contact Details on Page 2.*

## ***News Roundup***

As a fundraiser, finishing during the Christmas Tree Festival, we are organising a Grand Draw. We should be grateful if as many of you as possible would be willing to take a packet of tickets to sell to friends and family. The first prize is £250, so it is well worth buying a ticket. The draw will take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> November. Tickets available from Jenny Huskisson.

\*\*\* \*\*

If you would like to help fill a Christmas Shoebox to be delivered to some of the poorest people in Eastern Europe, 'Link to Hope' Charity would be most grateful. Please see the poster and fliers in church for more information. All boxes to be handed to Rosie Dawson by the end of October latest.



### ***Worth a smile***

When you get to the point where you really understand your computer, it's probably obsolete.



Hacker: I have all your passwords.

Me: Oh thank heaven. What are they?



Dear Lord,

So far today, I am doing all right. I have not gossiped, lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or self-indulgent. I have not whined, complained, or cursed. I have not charged on my credit card or eaten any chocolate. However, I am going to get out of bed in a few minutes, and I will need a lot more help after that! Amen.



While visiting a cathedral recently, I couldn't hear the service over the chatter of the two people sitting in front of me. Finally, I tapped one of them on the shoulder.

"Excuse me," I said, "I can't hear."

The reply was swift and indignant. "I should hope not! This is a private conversation."



A little boy was pestering his parents for a baby brother or sister. They kept telling him 'maybe one day, but we can't afford one yet.' Then one Sunday the little boy dragged his parents over to the noticeboard at the back of church. It was advertising a coming sale at the church and announced: 'Children: free'.



A lady was describing the small attendance at her local church. "We were so few last Sunday that when the vicar began 'Dearly beloved,' I blushed."

# Parish Registers

## Holy Matrimony, August:

2: Ceiran Taylor & Saffron Pughe at All Saints; Stephen Kent & Denise Marsala at All Saints;  
8: William Mead & Catherine Perkins at All Saints

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

## Holy Baptism, August:

24: Jude Isaac Luan Connolly, Harrison Paul Flynn

*'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'*

## Funerals, August:

14: Stephen Dale at Bierton; 15: Raymond James at Crownhill; 19: David Major at All Saints

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

## Years Mind, October:

1: Vera Delafield, Arthur Waldock, Henry (Topper) Baines, Diana Reynolds;  
2: Walter Sandifer, Paul Kaye; 5: Jim Aris, Rita Styles, John Sandifer;  
7: Laurence Nash, Edna Forward; 8: John Oakley;  
9: Francis Williams, Hilda Plenderleath, William Delafield;  
10: Sheila Twivy; 11: Janet Finch; 13: James Westwood; 14: Gilbert Inglefield, Harry Tingey;  
18: Marjorie Duff; 19: Hugh Harmer, Adelaide Lack, Jeffrey Rudom;  
20: Pat Harris, Eric Underwood; 21: John Skinner, Derry Tew;  
22: Harold Rolls; 30: Helen Lau; 31: Rosemary Hall



## LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

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**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

**at 7.30pm**

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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](http://www.pulfordschool.org)***

A church school for  
a whole community



## ***New Year Reflections***

A new school year always brings with it a mixture of excitement, nervousness and uncertainty as well as hope for the future.

This emotional whirl is the same for everyone in the school community - pupils, parents, teachers and staff, and governors. Each of us will experience this in our own way, but it binds us together in a manner that perhaps we don't always fully appreciate.

I have become increasingly mindful of this as I have gained experience in my role as chair of governors. The discussions we have as a board and the decisions we make have considerable implications for everyone involved with our school and often in unexpected ways. For me, it is where the school vision of faith, hope and love becomes a crucial guide.

It is at the start of the year that one of the most important parts of this decision-making process happens as we put together our School Improvement Plan (or SIP as it is commonly known). This is a statement of our aims, vision and strategy for the school as we continue to strive to make it the best place possible for the learning and development of our children.

To do this we start off by reflecting. What have we done well? What could we do better? The first of these questions is vitally important - we must be proud and congratulate our school community and thank God for all he helped us achieve. This, in turn, helps us understand where we can take the school forward and build on those solid foundations.

So I ask you all to pray for us as we go through this time of reflecting and planning for the future. As in every year there will be big decisions to make which will impact not only the children at the school now, but those who will be part of our family in the future. I certainly feel that mix of nerves, hope and excitement, but I know that, through God's grace and by focussing on our school vision, we can continue to make Pulford a place of love, learning and togetherness.

***Ed Price, Chair of Governors.***



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# *On a musical note.....*



## *An excellent and inspiring choir leader*

All choirs seem to shut down for August. This summer I found that I was suffering from withdrawal symptoms and was desperate to sing something creative. This reminded me of an exceptional choir leader of Ealing Voices who introduced me to a vast variety of mostly unaccompanied music. This included call and response aboriginal and African music which I found extremely exciting but which I have not sung for decades.

I need to give a bit of background. I have been in a very diverse range of choirs and groups, which I wrote about in a previous article for this magazine in June 2015. Ealing Voices was very different and was organised by an exceptional musician who was a retired opera singer from San Francisco. This group was unlike any other group where I have been a member. The conductor was employed by the Music Service of Ealing Education Department, and her job was to inspire primary school teachers to use music, especially singing, in their teaching. Her first aim was to give the teachers the confidence to sing in front of the class. She also provided documentation which included loads of suitable music as well as a Simple Song Pack with warm up exercises, hints for sight singing and a suggested programme music for concerts. So about 15 primary school teachers (all women) and 5 community members including a couple of men and me met regularly in an Arts Centre in Southall, West London.

The atmosphere at the practices was electric and very exciting. After an inventive warmup she quickly selected a fascinating range of music, mostly unaccompanied. She chose anything that was good to sing. It could be a round by Byrd, a negro spiritual, or a pop song, but especially she used call and response aboriginal songs and African music. Some of it was without music which meant that it could be used directly in early years classes or with groups not used to being in a choir, for example Abeeyo and Alunde. But she also used more complex arrangements such as Mayenziwe, Siyahamba and Amen Siakudumisa which have complex rhythms and harmonies. A famous item was an exciting number "The Buffalo Girl" where I sang the solo tenor.

She organised exciting all-embracing concerts in Ealing Town Hall and in local church halls. This was all to give the teachers confidence in public and also to encourage school music groups. Ealing Voices were also involved in "Friday Night Fever", a concert with a Tabla Ensemble, a Steel Band Club, four school choirs, two school orchestras and a Percussion Group. Out of school concerts included "In the Dreamtime", Harriet Tubman, African music, Doo ron ron, "Summer is a cummin", etc.

Unfortunately, after a fantastic few years she was made redundant because she didn't have a teaching qualification. She was rapidly employed by Derbyshire County Council. It was Ealing's loss, but her influence has certainly continued to this day.

**Brian Bainbridge**

# Calendar of Events

## 1<sup>st</sup> October

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

Tickets £6.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



## 4<sup>th</sup> October

**Harvest Barn Dance and Supper** Billington Village Hall 5-9pm.

Tickets £12, children under 10 £6, available from the Parish Office



## 5<sup>th</sup> October

**Harvest Festival**

**Services as usual including Messy Mass** All Saints 11.30am

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



## 17<sup>th</sup> October

**Crafty Natter** All Saints 1.30pm



## 18<sup>th</sup> October

**Poppy Prom Concert** All Saints 7.00pm.

Tickets £12, U16s £8 available on the door or by pre-booking

[www.trybooking.com/uk/FBEZ](http://www.trybooking.com/uk/FBEZ)



## 19<sup>th</sup> October

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

## 31<sup>st</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> November

**Arts Festival** All Saints 10.00am - 5.00pm.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> November

**All Saints Sunday - Patronal Festival**

**Services as usual including Messy Mass** All Saints 11.30am

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

**Festal Evensong with Commemoration of 40 years since the fire, with The Bishop of Bedford**

All Saints 5pm followed by soup and fireworks



## 3<sup>rd</sup> November

**Commemoration of All Souls** All Souls' Service, All Saints 7.30pm



# BILLINGTON CRAFT FAIR

In aid of



Florence  
Nightingale  
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---

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---

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on ...

# The Growing Church

**The All Saints Churchyard Tree Trail** was created several years ago, and remains a wonderful way for families to enjoy the beauty of our grounds today. Starting by the North Porch, the trail leads you on a gentle walk around the building, introducing 28 different trees along the way.

Pick up the laminated Trail Map and Information Sheet from the document holder on the wall at the entrance to the Spire Coffee Shop, or scan the QR code below. It not only helps children (and adults!) learn to recognise the species but also shares interesting historical stories that bring the trees to life.

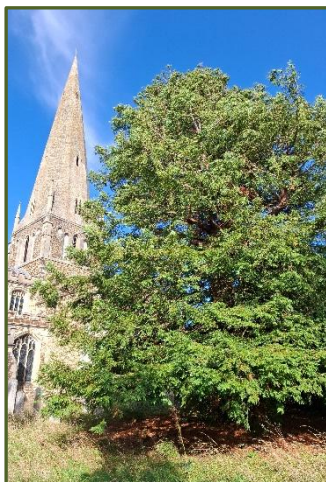
Along the route, you'll visit corners of the churchyard and see new perspectives of our beautiful church that you may not have noticed before.

The trail can be enjoyed as a quick 20-minute outing or extended into an hour-long adventure.

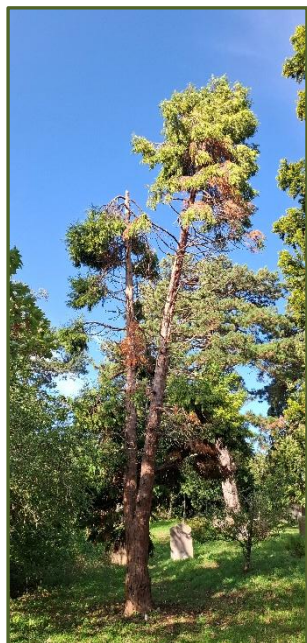
*(Tree photos & Bug shelter Cora Meredith, 2025; others various from Saints Alive archives.)*



Tree 15: Box



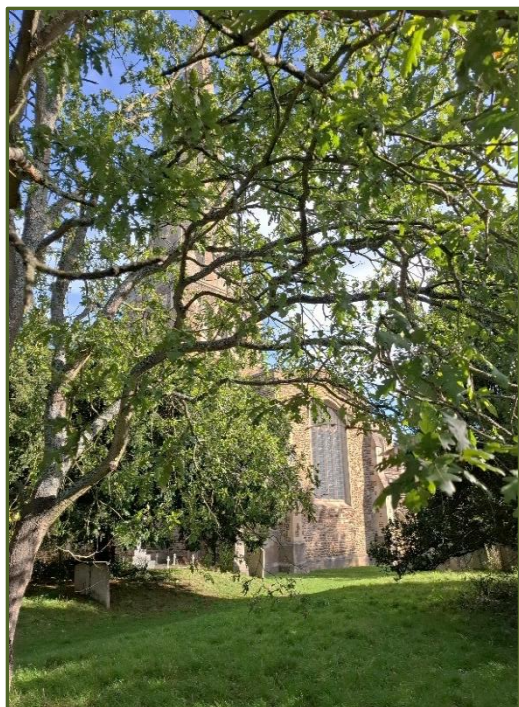
Tree 18: Californian Redwood



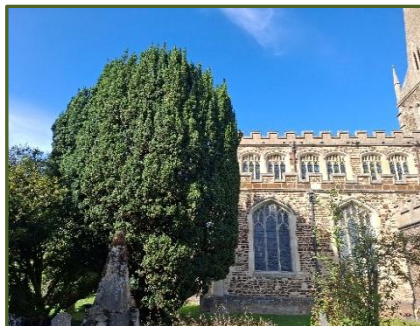
Tree 21: Incense Cedar



*A series looking at youth work in our churches.*  
*This month: the Tree Trail*



*Tree 22: English Oak*



*Tree 17: Irish Yew*



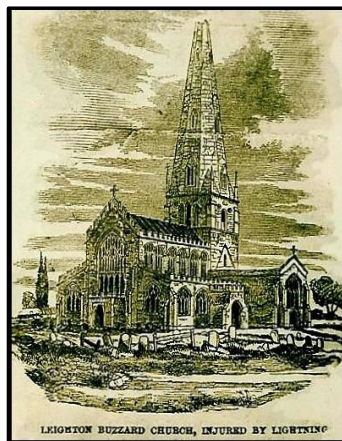
*Bug Shelter*

The trail is a chance to slow down and explore the natural world close at hand. Moving from tree to tree, we can begin to spot differences in leaves, bark, and shape, and discover how much variety exists even within one small space. The trail also highlights the remarkable ecological diversity found in England, where native and introduced species grow side by side. Experiencing this richness first-hand helps children appreciate why protecting trees and green spaces is so important, encouraging both curiosity and care for the environment.



## ***The Spire and Weathercock – a narrative spanning 175 years***

Recently, I saw a Facebook post by Peter Bowsher of an image of “Leighton Buzzard Church, injured by lightning” in the *Illustrated London News* of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1852. Kevin Quick added this text: “*In the great storm of Friday evening, the 16<sup>th</sup> instant, the spire of the parish church... (so well known by travellers on the North-Western Railway) was struck by lightning*”. The electric “fluid” displaced 25 feet of masonry which crashed through the roof. The damage was repaired in 1857.



In the 1970s Brian Willett and I tidied up the servers' vestry and found a set of parish magazines together with an image dated 1893. This shows two steeplejacks holding the cockerel, two churchwardens (bowler and top hats), the vicar Rev. Thomas Wallis Richards (vicar 1862—1901) and his wife seated outside the vestry door. Clearly, more repairs and attention were again needed.



The spire was again struck by lightning, and cracks were discovered and repaired in 1951. This time the vicar, Father Stanley John Forrest, recreated the 1893 scene with the two steeplejacks (from MacDonalds of Nottingham) again holding the cockerel, churchwardens Mr Holmes (black hat) and Dr A.O Bolton (a popular GP in the town), Mrs Forrest and Father Forrest with biretta.



Terry Warburton had the cockerel beautifully gilded in 2014, and we have a new image for the archives showing him with Mr Potts and another steeplejack, with the cockerel about to be taken up the spire for installation.

*Images of groups in 1893 & 1951 above are held in the Beds County Archives refs P91/2/18a and P91/2/18b. Opposite MacDonalds steeplejacks at work in 1951*





The spire was again struck by lightning in August 2019. There was a huge bang, but the lightning conductor worked, and the spire was saved. Inside, dust was dislodged from the Chancel roof which descended as “sparks like a firework” (thankfully without a fire). However, the electric clock mechanism was blown up, together with the control box of the sound system and fuse box. The lightning bolt had entered the electrics through the roof alarm system.

Terry Warburton tells me that some children thought that the cockerel was the Christmas turkey; and that there is a bullet hole through its tail. We’d like to believe that someone with a .22 rifle shot it, thinking they were just shooting their Christmas dinner; but actually it could have happened any time in the last 100 years – we just don’t know. Next time you visit All Saints, please do look up and admire all this work, perhaps through your binoculars

Many thanks to Terry for his help with this article.

***Stephen Jury***

Below: by Dan Burgess. Prints available for sale with 100% going to the Cure Parkinson’s Trust

<https://www.facebook.com/danburgessphotography/>



## ***St. Michael & All Angels, Billington***

***Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh***

***Tel: 01525 838450***

***Churchwardens:***

***Julia Haviland 850380; Tina Thompson 378411***



In August we lost a good friend when Roger Collor died. He had celebrated fifty years as a lay reader and last year was admitted to the Order of St Alban at a service in St Albans Abbey. He said he was not sure what he had done to deserve this honour, but we know it was for his devoted service to the Church, particularly in Billington where he has taken so many services over the years.

During his career he worked for the Milton Keynes Development Corporation when the new city was being built and then for the Diocese where he became an expert in the maintenance and preservation of Church buildings. His knowledge has been a great help to Billington Church over the years, and we will miss his thoughtful contributions at our PCC meetings. We send our condolences to Audrey and the family.

The Cream Tea in the churchyard took place on 7<sup>th</sup> September and although the wind blew strongly keeping people inside the Church at least it did not rain like last year. About 40 people came together and enjoyed scones and cakes etc provided by Sandra, Julia, Jean and Tina. We were sorry the event clashed with the cream tea at Hockliffe. If the promised team calendar could be put in place this would help avoid this in future.

Also this month, the ashes of Eva were interred in the Garden of Rest. She joins her husband, Gordon Spencer who died in 1986 and whose ashes were the first interred in this area. For many years Eva & Gordon lived in the Rectory overlooking the churchyard and it is fitting they are now reunited.

In the church the loose plaster in the nave has been repaired. It is not too obvious because the walls have been painted over the years, but lines were drawn in the original plaster to give the effect of stone blocks – perhaps a Victorian conceit when the Church was restored in 1870, but the lines have been put back in the new plaster to preserve the illusion. We are told we should wait a year before repainting to ensure the plaster has dried completely.

The damage had been caused by damp getting into the wall from a misaligned gutter and damaged flashing. This too has now been repaired so hopefully the problem will not recur. The builder commented on the moss covering the tiles on the north side of the church. Many years ago, a copper wire was attached to the ridge as we were advised this should stop moss accumulating but it has not worked. The builder thinks it should have been fixed at a lower level as he has seen such wires being effective. He said to move the wire now would disturb the tiles which is not a good idea and so we will have to live with the moss until the roof is retiled – something we hope is many years away!

***David Thompson***

## ***St. Michael's, Eggington***

***Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney***

***Tel: 01525 237633***

***Church Officers:***

***Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861***



Can you believe it is October already? I know we are all used to the very British discussions on the weather, but it really has been quite glorious this year. Typical summer events, such as the Eggington Hog Roast and Cream Teas afternoon, plus fêtes, barbecues, parties, and weddings across the land are of course all much better under a beautiful blue sunny sky and long summer evenings sat outside. However, while *“Central, eastern and southern parts of England have been exceptionally dry, northern and western areas of the UK - especially Scotland - have been much wetter”* (quote taken from the BBC Weather website).

So who were the lucky ones?

For all those gardeners, growers and farmers struggling to keep crops watered to provide the produce at harvest time and keep their businesses going or their stores full; they certainly would have been happy, even relieved at a heavy rainfall (especially overnight!)

Farm and wild animals have struggled without significant rainfall at any time over these last few months, with troughs not being refilled and streams and lakes being dry. The grass didn't grow because there was no moisture and so the fields burned up and the animals had neither food nor water. We were all beginning to wonder, when will it rain to make those plants grow? Wishing our lives away?

The other thing which for me personally has made the year pass by quickly, is my daughter finding out she was pregnant at Christmas last year and watching her bloom and grow with our first grandchild! I am very pleased and proud to let you know that our grandson was born safely in August, on the same day as his mum's birthday! And although at the time I am writing he is not yet two weeks old, I am already planning all the adventures we can have together, trips out, holidays, Christmases.... So there I am, in one sentence bemoaning the passing of time and in the second wishing our lives away!

So next time you wonder when is this weather going to change, or what will we be doing this time next year, stop and take time to value NOW. Enjoy the sun, give thanks for the rain, and relish every moment you have with those you love.

PS - Happy Christmas!

***Anne Sheppard***

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***Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney***

***Tel: 01525 237633***

***There are no churchwardens at present.***

***For all information, please contact the vicar.***



### ***Life's Journey.***

Life's journey can be seen as a complex but beautiful path filled with ups and downs, twists and turns. Each person embarks on their unique adventure from the moment they are born, shaped by their experiences, choices, and the people around them. This journey is often filled with challenges that test our strength and resilience, but it also offers moments of joy and fulfilment. As we navigate through life, we continually seek meaning in our experiences, leading many to ponder the deeper purpose behind it all.

For many, understanding God's purpose in their lives provides a sense of direction and comfort. Believing that there is a higher power guiding us can transform the way we perceive our struggles and achievements. This faith can encourage individuals to embrace their journey, knowing that every hardship serves a greater purpose. The idea that God has a plan for us can inspire hope and give a way forward in life.

As we journey through life, we begin to uncover clues about God's purpose for us. We may experience moments of great passion and excitement, or feel a sense of calm and contentment when engaging in certain activities or pursuing specific goals. These moments can serve as signposts, guiding us toward our purpose and helping us to stay on track. Additionally, the people we meet and the relationships we form can also play a significant role in revealing God's purpose, as they can provide support, encouragement, and guidance along the way.

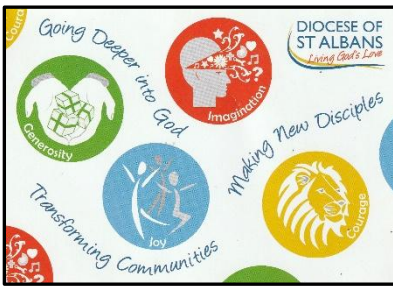
Life's journey is a complex and dynamic path that each individual must navigate. It is filled with twists and turns, ups and downs, and moments of great joy and profound sorrow. As we travel along this journey, we often find ourselves searching for meaning and purpose. For many, this search leads to the question of God's purpose for their lives.

God's purpose is a concept that has been debated and explored by philosophers, theologians, and everyday people for centuries. It is the idea that a higher power has a plan and intention for each individual, and that this plan is unique to them. Some believe that God's purpose is revealed through prayer, meditation, and reflection, while others believe it is discovered through experience, trial and error, and perseverance.

Clearly, whatever twists and turns our journey may take, however convoluted or simple life may be, somehow we seem to arrive at the place we are meant to be.

***Roger Spalding***





# ***Living God's Love***

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

***Draw us deeper ...***

Sometimes – not always – it can be wise to listen to one's instincts. To reflect on the first thing that springs to mind; pause to give that thought time.

As I write on the first line of the *Living God's Love* Diocesan prayer, I pray that you can take the time to reflect on what this prayer says to you. If you are short of time, skip my words and simply take time with the prayer (at the end of the article).

The prayer asks that we can be sent to serve and care, that we can be heralds of good news and do all this inspired by God's love and fuelled with God's gifts. This can only happen if we are connected to our God. Strengthen the relationship with our Lord; then we can be used by God. Without that relationship... phrases like a clanging gong or clashing cymbal come to mind.

## ***The beginning: Living God...***

The first words remind us that our God is not a dead idol or a detached cosmic force. Immediately our focus is turned away from ourselves to God. You might sense a parallel with the opening of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father". If our lives are to make sense of the words that follow, we have to start with God and not ourselves. This God is the one who breathed life into Adam, who chose a people to carry his name, who sent Jesus into the world to live as one of us.

This living God is not merely a force to be studied but a person to be known. He is the shepherd who gathers lambs in his arms, the father who rejoices over his children with singing, and the friend who comes and dines with those who open their hearts. This personal, dynamic presence is the engine of a deeper spiritual life. It is His loving initiative that begins the whole process. As the Apostle John wrote, "*We love because he first loved us*" (1 John 4:19).

Whenever we get a glimpse of God's love it is natural to want more.

Do you remember the words that two downcast, then surprised, disciples used to one another after trudging home to Emmaus and sharing a meal with a stranger? "*Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?*"



**The invitation:** Draw us deeper...

We ask God to work in us, to change who we are. To help us see more clearly, to become more like Jesus.

This is not a plea to a reluctant deity. God is not waiting for us to cross an impossible chasm. Instead, He is consistently and lovingly drawing us closer to Himself. The feeling of a spiritual divide is not from His withdrawal, but often from our own distraction and neglect. The journey toward a deeper love is a partnership, initiated by God and nurtured by our intentional response.

The double-edged nature of the phrase **"draw us deeper into your love"** is that it is both a surrender and a pursuit. It is an acknowledgment that God is the source and sustainer of this love, and at the same time, an active choice to seek Him with all our heart and soul. It is a recognition that our deepest longing for relationship can only be found in Him, and that in delighting ourselves in Him, our desires become aligned with His. That relationship is a living, growing, lifelong one.

Many will be familiar with the words of 1 Corinthians 13. Many, like Alison and I, will have had it read at their wedding, that great celebration of a major milestone in a journey of human love. In that passage, probably not the main focus at weddings (or other times) is the phrase *"Now we see through a glass darkly... now I know in part..."*. Or, as a modern translation puts it *"We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist."* Yet there is a promise: that until we see clearly that faith, hope and love will be there and the greatest of those three is love. There is a recognition that there is more to come.

Not that the journey is always going to be easy. I am reminded of some words in Mark's gospel:

*"Jesus then told the crowd and the disciples to come closer, and he said: If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me."*

God wants us to be closer; he extends an invitation to come closer. Over the next couple of months, the next lines in the prayer will show us what can happen as we are drawn closer to God. As we are more fully immersed in this relationship of love, we learn how to respond to the Loving God to whom we are bold to pray.

*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.*

**Rev'd Steve Davies**



## ***The Bike 'n Hike team went to Northampton***



Our Bike 'n Hike team explored Northampton on foot in September, clocking up 17 churches and 11 miles. We are grateful to everyone who has kindly sponsored us: the money is shared between All Saints and the Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust which gives grants to help repair our local churches.

After a blessing from Preb. David at All Saints, we headed for the train. Northampton has a fascinating history and Malcolm devised a route with some lovely churches to visit.

*Image 1* (carved Norman grave slab): St Peter's, a very fine Norman Church dating back 900 years on the site of a Saxon monastery and palace. It is full of exquisitely carved pillar capitals and arches as this grave slab from 1150 shows.



*Image 2* (Henry Moore statue Madonna and child): St Matthew's Church at the north end of the town has some outstanding modern art treasures commissioned by a previous vicar in the 1940s and 50s. They include an enormous crucifixion painting by Graham Sutherland whose massive tapestry of Christ in Glory hangs in the modern Coventry Cathedral. This life size Madonna and Child is the work of Henry Moore - the first of his family group sculptures.



*Image 3* (icons / altar of Romanian Orthodox Church) St Michael and All Angels is a large brick Victorian church but you don't expect to find a whole Greek Orthodox altar and lots of icons inside. The building is shared by the C of E and the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Orthodox priest explained that his Sunday congregation numbers 300-400 every week - a mix of Romanian and local people they have married. It is a happy arrangement of sharing a place of Christian worship.



*Image 4* (Parish church after the rain- exterior) Northampton's parish church has something in common with ours - it went on fire. In their case it was in 1675 and the church apart from the tower, was destroyed in the Great Fire of Northampton. King Charles II paid for most of the building costs of the new church, including 1,000 tons of timber. It was based on designs by Sir Christopher Wren and opened in 1680. The organ sounded lovely as we sheltered from the rain.

The team - Abby, Katrina, Emma and Steve - had a lovely day out. You can still sponsor them, or donate to help All Saints and benefit other local historic churches. Please speak to one of us, or see the sponsor form or QR code on the notice board.

**Katrina Grant**



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