

ST PAUL'S NEWS

December 2023
January 2024



ONE POUND

SERVICES

Sunday 3rd December 1st Sunday of Advent

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President and Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Eucharist (CW)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
Lead: Daphne Pollard, Link: Chris Bassett
- 6.30 pm Service of Readings and Music for Advent
Minister: The Vicar

Sunday 10th December 2nd Sunday of Advent

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President and Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Eucharist with Baptism (CW)
President: The Vicar
Minister & Preacher: Rev. Nicholas Burton
- 10.00 am Family Christingle Service at the Church Centre
+ Zoom
Lead: Daphne Pilcher, Link: Rosemary Romano
- 6.30 pm Evensong (BCP)
Minister & Preacher: The Vicar

Saturday 16th December

- 1.00 pm Wedding at the Parish Church

Sunday 17th December 3rd Sunday of Advent

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Joint Crib Service
Followed by Shortened Eucharist (CW)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
- 6.30 pm Nine Lessons and Carols
Minister: The Vicar

Sunday 24th December 4th Sunday of Advent

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President and Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Matins (BCP)
Minister & Preacher: Rev. Nicholas Burton
- 10.00 am Family Carol Service at the Church Centre
+ Zoom
Lead: Jean Kerr, Link: Viv Littlechild
- 11.30 pm Midnight Mass
President & Preacher: The Vicar

Monday 25th December Christmas Day

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President and Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Joint Family Carol Service
Followed by shortened Holy Communion (CW)
President and Preacher: The Vicar

Sunday 31st December 1st Sunday of Christmas New Year's Eve

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President and Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Eucharist (CW)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
Lead: Wendy Anderson, Link: Liz Mankelow

Sunday 7th January 1st Sunday after Epiphany

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President and Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Eucharist with Baptism (CW)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
- 10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
- 6.30 pm Compline
Minister : The Vicar

Sunday 14th January 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President and Preacher: Rev Jane Edwards
- 10.00 am Eucharist (CW)
President & Preacher: Rev Nicholoas Burton
- 10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
- 6.30 pm Evensong (BCP)
Minister and Preacher: Rev. Nicholas Burton

Sunday 21st January 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

- 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President & Preacher: Rev Anthony Hammill
- 10.00 am Eucharist (CW)
President & Preacher: Rev Anthony Hammill
- 10.00 am Family Service at the Church Centre + Zoom
- 6.30 pm Evensong (BCP)
Minister and Preacher: Rev Anthony Hammill

Saturday 27th January

Holocaust Memorial Day

11.00 am Service at the Parish Church
Minister: The Vicar, Speaker: Tim Cripps

Sunday 28th January

4th Sunday after Epiphany

PATRONAL FESTIVAL

8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
President and Preacher: The Vicar

10.00 am Joint Eucharist (CW)
President & Preacher: The Vicar
Minister: Rev Nicholas Burton

6.30 pm Choral Evensong (BCP)
Minister: The Vicar

DIARY

Saturday 2nd December

7.30 pm Quiz Night and supper – Church Centre

Thursday 7th December

10.45/2 & 4 pm Holmewood House carol services
6.00 pm Youth Council – Ranger Dan

Monday 11th December

8.00 pm PCC meeting in the Lodge

Wednesday 13th December

10.30 am Julian Group at Chancellor House

Thursday 14th December

11.30 am Communion to Mount Ephraim House
–The Vicar

3.00 pm Parish Fellowship Christmas Quiz,
Church Centre

4.00 pm Choir Carols at Chartwell Lodge

Saturday 16th December

10.00 am Carols in the Village starting Church Centre

Monday 18th December

11.00 am Choir Carols at Rusthall Lodge

Wednesday 20th December

3.00 pm Choir Carols at Chamberlain Court

Friday 22nd December

4.00 pm Carols at Mount Ephraim House

Wednesday 3rd January

10.30 am Julian Group at Chancellor House

Thursday 4th January

6.00pm Youth Council at Mount Ephraim House

Saturday 13th January

6.30pm Fellowship Party – Church Centre

Saturday 27th January

Burns Night Function – Church Centre

Wednesdays throughout the month

9am-11am St Paul's Playtime at the Church Centre

Thursdays throughout the month

12 for 12.30 Rusthall Lunch Club
at the Church Centre
Christmas Lunch on 14th December



Fridays throughout the month

12.30 pm Community Larder at the Church Centre



Magazine Deadlines

Please submit articles for the 2024 magazines in accordance with the following deadlines.

February by Sunday 14th January

March by Sunday 11th February

April by Sunday 17th March

May by Sunday 14th April

June by Sunday 12th May

July/August by Sunday 16th June

September by Sunday 18th August

October by Sunday 16th September

November by Sunday 13th October

December/January 2025 by Sunday 17th November

The time between the deadline and magazine issue is to allow for typing, formatting, proofreading, and compiling the magazine. These all take time and have to be fitted around the volunteer editorial team's other commitments. We would therefore be very grateful if you would keep to the deadlines set. Please send items for publication to magazine@stpaulsrusthall.org.uk or to the Parish Office.

Magazines are posted on the Parish website by the 1st of the month. Photocopies of the magazine will also be made available in our churches for those who cannot access the magazine online. Please contact Ginette di Palma at the Church Office (TW 521447) if you are finding it difficult to access a copy.

From the Vicarage

Dear Friends

Thank you very much for your continued support and hard work. Special thanks to Jean Kerr and her team for organising the Parish Autumn Fayre in aid of Church Funds. A big thank you to stallholders, including the Scouts and to everyone who supported it in various ways, such as donating items, helping with setting and clearing up, attending, purchasing goods/items on sale, or praying for its success. In spite of the rain, the attendance was very encouraging – and so was the amount of money raised.

Most of you know that the Parish Fellowship is closing down and will have its final programme in January. The Women's and Men's Fellowships which merged to form the Parish Fellowship have been very vibrant in the life and ministry of the Parish. We are indebted to the members and the executive of the Parish Fellowship (previously Women's and Men's Fellowship) under the Chairmanship of Zillah Witt for their commitment to the Parish of St Paul's over so many years, organising a variety of activities, programmes and initiatives - ranging from Parish Breakfast to Mothering Sunday Posies. A very big thank you to you all.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have supported the work and ministry of St Paul's over the past year either financially or in other ways. Your contributions and support have helped to sustain the parish and enabled us to enrich the lives and work of others - in similar ways you continue to do ours as we offer them space, support and encouragement.

The cost of food stuffs has increased exponentially and, no doubt, many are experiencing economic hardship and therefore looking for ways to reduce spending. Some of you might be thinking of reducing your financial giving to St Paul's. This is understandable, but may I encourage you to ensure that whatever amount you give goes even farther by joining the Planned Giving Scheme. This is an efficient way to give, especially if you pay tax. Another way to 'stretch the pennies' is through online shopping. If you shop online, could you please do so via www.easyfundraising.org.uk because each time you shop using this site a percentage of what you spend will be donated to St Paul's – or a charity of your choice. You can access the easyfundraising website via our Parish website. I hope you will continue to support us in whatever way you feel able throughout the coming year as we live out the good news in our communities and share God's grace in its various forms.

In my previous letter, I briefly mentioned *Living in Love and Faith* (LLF), noting Bishop Jonathan's stance on the House of Bishops' decision to present to General Synod (liturgical) materials that can be used in church to bless same sex couples. Well, as you may know, General Synod met in November and debated and then voted on this issue – and the motion was carried. The official media release states that: "The Church of England's General Synod has welcomed proposals which would enable same-sex couples to come to church after a civil marriage or civil partnership to give thanks, dedicate their relationship to God and receive God's blessing." Although it is regarded as a 'divisive' issue by many, this is a refreshingly good piece of news that many in the church were hoping to receive. I am very pleased because, through God's guidance, we want to demonstrate our love for and commitment to God by 'welcoming all and affirming diversity so that irrespective of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, socio-economic status or physical ability each person feels valued for the enrichment they bring to the church community'. Of course, there is still some way to go before this proposal becomes common place but the main hurdle has been cleared. It is really a good way to start Advent.

Advent is the time of expectation as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' incarnation, and look forward to 'his final advent as judge at the end of time.' Advent gives us the opportunity to wait (patiently) on God and his activities in our lives. The angel Gabriel described/addressed Mary as 'favoured one'. We are all favoured by God – Jews, Gentiles, Palestinians, Arabs, Russians, Ukrainians, males, females, transgender, etc. etc. (Act 10:34, Romans 2:11). The question is 'do we know it?' And if we know it, 'do we believe it?' I pray that no matter how 'perplexed' you are, you will experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the overshadowing of God's powerful presence just as Mary did and, like her, be able to allow God to work in, with and through you for the benefit of humanity and for God's glory.



So in this season of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany may we allow the Christ child to be born in us afresh and:

May the Christ-child grow within you
and bring you to maturity in every way.

May he fill your life with peace,
and your decisions with discernment and sensitivity.

May you experience his strength in times of trial and adversity.

May he fill you with compassion for humanity
and a sense of purpose in all that you do.

May your whole being be always
saturated by his loving presence within you. Amen.

I wish you all a peace-filled Christmas and a New Year full of goodwill for and from everyone.

Ronnie



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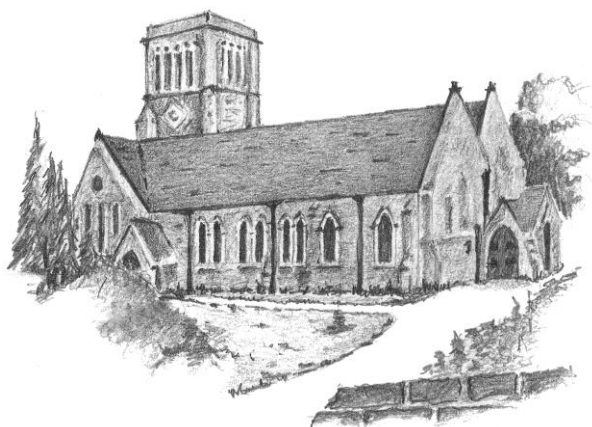
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Editorial for December 2023

Was it just me or did November go by in a flash? It feels as if it was several days short this year! Sue and I would like to give our apologies for the late publication of the magazine. What with the Autumn Fayre and singing in concerts, the preparation time was gone with too little achieved. We will endeavour to post the magazine online by 1st December and get copies available in Church on Advent Sunday. Fingers crossed!



November saw the start of a series of named storms. Fortunately the temporary roof coverings have stopped further water ingress to the vestry, but a tree in the triangle of land to the left of the drive leading to the church has lost a couple of branches to Storm Babet. There has also been a sharp upturn in the number of cases of Covid, so if you feel ill don't dismiss this as a possible cause.

The BBC visited the church during the Remembrance Sunday Service and a photo of the poppies falling from the tower was included in the South East News.



<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-67396327>

The Autumn Fayre was very successful, with just over £3000 raised to support the Church. It was also a lovely day for celebrating togetherness and community.



As our thoughts turn to Christmas, the time of peace and goodwill to all mankind, it is so sad that we have the war in Ukraine continuing, seemingly with no end in sight and with a harsh winter to endure. There is also the fighting between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, with a glimmer of hope provided by a temporary cessation of violence to allow humanitarian aid to reach Gaza and an exchange of hostages and prisoners on both sides. We can only pray that this pause also provides a chance for negotiations to replace the fighting.

Sue and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who make regular contributions to the magazine, Ronnie, Daphne Pilcher, Tim Cripps, Susan Barber, Fiona Johnson, Tim Harrold and the Churchwardens. We couldn't do it without you!

We would like to wish all our readers a very happy and peaceful Christmas and a new year filled with your heart's delight.

Deborah Bruce and Sue Hare



From The Registers

At rest – the sympathy of the Parish is extended to the family and friends of:

Audrey Heather Martin
Danielle Alfreda Baines
Jane Hollands
Geoffrey Stanley Richards



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Churchwardens' Notes



As we write, we are nearing the end of the process of making the insurance claim for the lead taken from the roof above the choir vestry. It does seem to be somewhat over complicated. The last event was a visit from the insurance assessor, who looked round the choir vestry and the outside of the church, took a few photos and left with the comment that insurance claims took some time. When everything has been ironed out, there will undoubtedly be a further delay before the work can begin. We should be grateful that Sherwood secured the roof with a tarpaulin and there has been very little water seeping into the choir vestry. Let's hope that when we write our next report early in the new year, we can inform you that the work has started. At least the decision by the PCC regarding the choice of materials to be used on the roof was painless.

We should like to thank the members of the congregation who help on the desk at the back of the church as sidesmen. We would ideally like a couple more volunteers, so that there is only one duty per month. Those who currently do more are absolutely invaluable. The duties include welcoming people to the service, handing out Service sheets and books and controlling the sound system (full training given). Please speak to Rod or myself if you would be prepared to join this team.

We are trying to put together a directory of at least three companies or tradesmen for each type of work done on the church, be it plumber, electrician or whatever. Generally we like to obtain at least a couple of quotes for work to be undertaken. If you have any recommendations of reliable traders, do let us know.

We have just received from Clive McAllister a 3 page document outlining the services between now and the end of the year. We are learning it by heart (?) and perhaps you would like to test us in the near future. We have always said that we shall be more confident after eighteen months and the fog will have become a thin mist.

Just a word of warning - Rod has attacked the brass with fervour and now has the lectern in

particular so well polished that you can use it to adjust your hair. Don't focus on it for too long or it will dazzle you! To be serious for a second, all the attention to detail during the cleaning sessions on a Thursday adds a little to the atmosphere in the church and underlines the fact that we care.

We still feel that communication could be improved, and this will continue to be one of our priorities.

Chris Reece and Rod Garcia-Fermer

Carols by Candlelight
St Paul's Church Rusthall Langton Rd
December 2023

Sunday 3rd 6.30pm
Advent Carols

Sunday 17th 6.30pm
Nine Lessons & Carols

Sunday 24th 11.30pm
Midnight Mass





Rusthall Community Cinema



Manon des Sources (1986) Cert PG

Doors open: 6.30pm Saturday 9th Dec 2023
 Director: Claude Berri
 Genre: Drama
 Runtime: 153 mins
 Starring: Yves Montand, Daniel Auteuil,
 Emmanuelle Béart



Past Lives (2023) Cert 12A

Doors open: 6.30pm Saturday 23rd Dec 2023
 Director: Celine Song
 Genre: Drama, Romance
 Runtime: 105 mins
 Starring: Greta Lee, Teo Yoo, John Magaro
 Moon Seung-ah



Au Revoir Les Enfants (1987) Cert 12A

Doors open: 6.30pm Saturday 6th Jan 2024
 Director: Louis Malle
 Genre: Drama, History, War
 Runtime: 104 mins
 Starring: Gaspard Manesse, Raphael Fejtö,
 Francine Racette



The Sleeping Beauty Cert PG

Doors open: 2pm Sunday 7th Jan 2024
 Director: The Royal Ballet
 Genre: The Royal Ballet
 Runtime: 98 mins
 Starring: Marianela Nuñez, Vadim Muntagirov,
 Kristen McNally, Claire Calvert

A Musical Note



As always, December will be a busy month of singing for the choir. We start with the Service of Readings and Music for Advent on Sunday 3rd December at 6.30pm. This year we will be singing a varied programme of carols including three carols which were completely new to everyone in the choir. The first is a carol by Errollyn Wallen called

Peace on Earth which will be sung by a few of the sopranos at the start of the service. This is an incredibly atmospheric piece of music for which Wallen also composed the text. She says she was inspired by the Bach cello suites which use different octaves to give a sense of many parts interweaving but she also wanted to create a sense of unease within the music so she uses semitonal clashes throughout the piece which makes it sound off balance.

Another of our new carols for this year is 'Nova Nova' by Iain Farrington. This piece was commissioned by St. John's College, Cambridge, for their Advent Carol Service last year. I heard it on the broadcast whilst driving up to church to rehearse for our own Advent service last year and thought it was absolutely brilliant and great fun. It did sound quite tricky but I thought we should definitely go for it this year and it has been absolutely hilarious to rehearse! We will also be singing it at Nine Lessons and Carols so we have two chances to get it right!

Nine Lessons and Carols is on Sunday 17th December at 6.30 pm so please do come along if you can to join in with some rousing congregational carols and hear the wonderful traditional readings for this service. The choir will be singing some lovely Christmas carols including John Tavener's 'The Lamb' to mark ten years since he died.

The choir will be singing carols at various places around the town during December and will also be going ice skating and to the Tunbridge Wells panto for a bit of a break from singing.

I'm sure most of you will remember Alex Robson who is organ scholar at St John's College, Cambridge, and who was our organist and member of the choir for many years. You can hear him playing the organ on BBC Radio 3 at 3pm on Sunday 3rd November when the Advent Carol Service is broadcast from his college. If you miss it then don't worry as you can listen later on BBC Sounds.

I heard the other day from Alex Aitken who is currently teaching out in New Zealand and who tells me that he is conducting the school choir for their carol service which is brilliant. He is also playing the organ for services and is singing in the Christchurch Cathedral Choir.

Since my last article we have welcomed Callan as a full member of the junior choir as he has completed his probationary period. Callan has a lovely singing voice and we are so pleased to have him in the choir.

Fiona Johnson

The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic - edited

O Thou from whom the breath of life comes,
who fills all realms of sound, light and
vibration.

May your light be experienced in my utmost
holiest.

Your Heavenly Domain approaches.

Let Your will come true - in the universe - just as
on earth

Give us wisdom for our daily need,
detach the fetters of faults that bind us
like we let go the guilt of others

Let us not be lost in superficial things,
but let us be freed from ... what keeps us from
our true purpose.

From You comes the all-working will,
the lively strength to act,
the song that Beatifies all
and renews itself from age to age.

Amen

From *Revelations of the Aramaic Jesus* by
Neil Douglas-Klotz

As given in Jenny Beaumont's article in the November magazine, Tony Rutherford has suggested that you might like to cut this out and stick it somewhere where you can see it often.

Remembrance Day Talk

On Remembrance Sunday the person giving the sermon or talk has to be on their toes and ready to adjust the length of what they say to accommodate the Act Of Remembrance at 11 am, the playing of the last post and two minutes silence during which the poppies fall. Because some of Wendy and Graeme's talk was omitted, it is included in full here for you to read. Editor

The theme today is LEST WE FORGET.
IN CASE WE FORGET.

As we all know this Sunday's service is when we remember those who have died because of war. But in our readings today we are told to beat swords into plough shears, Nation will not take up sword against Nation and to Love each other. In the last hymn we sang about love that never falters, ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.

During Wars many lose their lives and due to their injuries are unable to be identified. In the nave of Westminster Abbey there is the grave of the Unknown Warrior, whose body was brought from France to be buried there on 11th November 1920 - over 100 years ago. The inscription on the top reads: -

BENEATH THIS STONE RESTS THE BODY
OF A BRITISH WARRIOR
UNKNOWN BY NAME OR RANK
BROUGHT FROM FRANCE TO LIE AMONG
THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF THE LAND
AND BURIED HERE ON ARMISTICE DAY
11 NOV: 1920, IN THE PRESENCE OF
HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V
HIS MINISTERS OF STATE
THE CHIEFS OF HIS FORCES
AND A VAST CONCOURSE OF THE NATION

THUS ARE COMMEMORATED THE MANY
MULTITUDES WHO DURING THE GREAT
WAR OF 1914-1918 GAVE THE MOST THAT
MAN CAN GIVE LIFE ITSELF
FOR GOD
FOR KING AND COUNTRY
FOR LOVED ONES HOME AND EMPIRE
FOR THE SACRED CAUSE OF JUSTICE AND
THE FREEDOM OF THE WORLD

THEY BURIED HIM AMONG THE KINGS BECAUSE HE
HAD DONE GOOD TOWARD GOD AND TOWARD
HIS HOUSE.

The Commonwealth War Grave Commission based in France is now able to identify items still being discovered and with the aid of modern technology and DNA, inform families of the area their relative was in, giving support to those who still mourn the loss and uncertainty of a loved one. In fact they have only recently conducted an interment of three soldiers who fell in battle in 1916 and have only recently been discovered and identified through the work of the CWGC. They also continue to care for the many thousands of graves around the world of those who lost their lives in war. This includes the five that are to be found in our own churchyard: Privates Brooker, Holyer, and Smith and Sappers Cashford and Histed.

LEST WE FORGET

Recently people have argued, that if things from the past were bad then we should remove all record of it. If we do this, may we eventually forget. I admit that we do not need constant reminders of our failings, but we do need occasional reminders, so we do not make the same mistakes.

God gave us this world to live on and protect, so why does He allow all this fighting?

Wars are not started by God but by one person wanting something that does not belong to them. They persuade others that they are right and soon innocent people are involved in fighting friends and relatives because they have a different view.

Occasionally lessons can be learnt. Let us go back to 1899 and the two hundred- and seventeen-day siege of Mafeking during the Second Boer War, in South Africa. Lord Edward Cecil, son of the British Prime minister, was in Mafeking at the time and had formed the Mafeking Cadet Corps of boys aged 12 to 15 who acted as messengers and orderlies so releasing men to fight.

A young British Colonel was sent with a small army to help defend the town. He had started his education at Rosehill School, Tunbridge Wells, but spent most of his time avoiding teachers in the nearby woods, which were strictly out-of-bounds, stalking his brothers and cooking on woodfires. Therefore he was prepared for basic living. He liked what the Cadet corps were doing and taught them more skills. On his return to England, this young British Colonel took a group of boys from different social backgrounds to Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour where they camped from 1st to 8th August 1907. He taught them the skills he had learnt in Shadwell Woods and from the boys in

Mafeking. How to live with each other and how to survive outdoors. The start of Scouting and Guiding. That Colonel we now know as Lord Baden-Powell.

What these first boys learnt has been passed on through the two movements. Friendship, teamwork, encouragement to try different things, confidence, and self-sufficiency.

During subsequent wars members of both movements have used the skills they learnt to help themselves and others. How to cook on a fire that does not smoke, first aid skills, navigating by the stars, morse code, semaphore, stalking and tracking to name but a few.

Those left at home, too young to fight became observers, spotting enemy planes and acted as messengers like the original Mafeking Cadet Corps.

The girls were asked to collect eleven thousand cotton reels, within a week they had exceeded expectations, collecting over forty-two thousand. They later discovered that they had been used by the intelligence department in MI9 to hide maps on thin material, money, microfilm and secret, coded messages. These were then sent to soldiers on the front line, prisoner of war camps and spies. At home soup kitchens were set up in the bombed areas to help feed the homeless, many gloves, scarves, and socks were knitted to keep the troops warm. They collected empty jam jars to store preserved fruit and vegetables so there was food during the winter. Just a few of the skills learnt. When used wisely during and following bad times, these skills can help and support people, making their lives tolerable.

Some of the Leaders who were not called up to fight at the front, worked in hospitals, in MI5, as code breakers in Bletchley, as advisers in the war office and support workers when the prisoners of war were allowed home.

As I said at the beginning Lest we forget. Things learnt as a child, we may think of as fun or even pointless, but as we grow older, if remembered, can be useful, especially in peace time, to support and help each other when in difficulty. The most important thing we should remember is from the reading today. This is my command: Love each other. Talk, listen.

LEST WE FORGET.

All those who have been killed or injured mentally or physically because of war. Especially the wars that are still being fought today around the world.

LEST WE FORGET.

All those who have suffered at the hands of others. Bullies at school and work, domestic violence.

LEST WE FORGET.

The Channel Islands, the only part of Great Britain that was occupied by the Germans during the 2nd World War. There are still people there who remember the terrible feeling of hunger and being evacuated. They even have a large number of concrete gun emplacements around their coastline, a continual reminder.

LEST WE FORGET.

All the people who are the original inhabitants of a country for hundreds of years, who have taken care of the land through generations but then face invasion or displacement by those who think they have the superior right to the land.

LEST WE FORGET.

The front-line workers and all who have died during this Covid pandemic. All of us who have suffered in some way during these strange times.

LEST WE FORGET.

A message to the younger people here. You are the future, you are the future peace makers.

We all have a point of view. Let us listen more to each other. We do not have to agree but if we put our point over clearly and calmly, we may peacefully agree to disagree. At least we can remain friends. Remember we have one mouth but two ears and in God's eyes we are all equal.

Let us all Love each other with unfaltering love and follow the ways of gentleness along the paths of peace.

Wendy and Graeme Anderson



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A journey towards Lay Ministry

A big thank you to those who provided such encouraging feedback on the last article. I am always cognizant that someone providing their thoughts has taken their time to not only read the article but also to then share their views. Time, I believe, is the most precious commodity any of us have, much more so than money (perhaps an unusual view from someone who spent 25 years as a banker). Money is elastic in its supply, infinitely elastic if you happen to be a government or central bank, whereas time is truly finite. How often do we find ourselves saying or hear our loved ones say, “there are not enough hours in the day”.

So many people throughout our community have given their valuable time as part of this journey that it leaves me both grateful and very humbled. The fact I have been part of this community for less than a year makes it even more valuable (I will be a year old, tenure-wise, by the time of publication!). The depth of support has been incredible, and each instance has the same core basic tenet – a generosity of spirit which in today’s pressurised world seems increasingly hard to find. It ranges from Jenny and Ray Beaumont who sacrificed an evening whilst I lumbered my way through a theological reflection (and to whom I still owe the resultant essay!) to the members of my formation team who meet with me once a quarter and provide a critical role. It is a safe space where we can speak freely and honestly with specific focus on seven areas of my development. Those seven areas include “*A Love for God*”, “*Call to Ministry*”, “*Love for People*”, “*Wisdom*”, “*Fruitfulness*”, “*Growing Potential*” and “*Trustworthiness*”. It is by no means a short-term commitment as the hope is that the team stays together during my entire training period which still has over two years remaining. Most of my study cohorts have the benefit of having been deeply integrated into their respective communities for many years, so I am forever grateful to Ronnie, Jean Kerr, May Graves and Clive McCalister for their time and wisdom. Whilst I may not have been lying injured in the middle of the road, their willingness to help a stranger is a demonstration that the spirit of the Good Samaritan is alive and well in Rusthall.

That generosity of spirit extends further to Tim Cripps and Tony Rutherford who between them have become responsible for the growing pile of books next to my study chair and my need to source additional bookcases. Once again, their

willingness to share their time and the benefit of their experience is deeply appreciated.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention one other person, even though he isn’t a member of this parish. In his role as my Spiritual Director, Steve became a companion on my spiritual journey, a friend who helps me discern and respond to God’s call in my life. We meet every six to eight weeks, typically for two to three hours each time, and for which he charges me not a single penny. Jesus could be said to be the model spiritual director, asking people questions that helped them to discover what they believed, what they longed for, what prevented them from pursuing what they so desired and supporting them as they explored, giving them strength to succeed and forgiveness when they fell short. It has become a bit of a cliché, but my shortcomings are entirely of my own making. My achievements on the other hand have many authors. I know that in years to come, if I manage to get close to emulating the generosity of spirit of those I have mentioned then I will not be going too far wrong.

In just three weeks’ time, my fellow students and I must go face-to-face in an ethical debate. My challenge is to make a positive Christian case against the motion “This house believes we should not eat meat”. I know for some, ethical discussions can be a source of frustration rather than inspiration, but I am looking forward to hearing how my fellow students construct their case. Ethics is a constant reminder to me that we need to hold to the humility that is needed to dialogue with people, Christian or otherwise, if we are to convince them of the truth. Debate on many topics across society today has become so toxic precisely because of the absence of any humility.

One consequence of being on this journey is I have come to realise how lucky we are as a parish. I am going to leave the last word to one of my cohorts who sent me a message after I had given her the last issue of our Parish newsletter to read:

“Wow Tim. That is a wonderful parish magazine. You are so lucky to attend such an active vibrant church.”

Amen to that.

Tim Harrold

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NRSV)



COMMUNITY LARDER

What is it?

A community larder receives surplus short date food from supermarkets to offer to people in our community.

When and where is it?

Our community larder will be in the St Paul's Church Centre every Friday between 12:30pm and 2:00pm

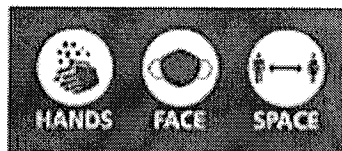
Who can use it?

Anyone can come and visit the community larder. There are no restrictions, no booking necessary, just turn up with a carrier bag to fill.

How much does it cost?

We suggest a small cash donation of £2, or as much as you can afford. For this, you can take away a bag full of quality food.

Please help us all stay safe by wearing a face mask, respecting social distancing and using the hand sanitiser provided.



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Poems for December and January

The Christmas story tells us of the unexpectedness of God: never who we think, what we think, where we think. It speaks of the need to use our eyes, our ears, and especially our hearts lest we miss God entirely.

Susan Barber

Blessings for Advent

It's not all over, this birthing,
there are always newer skies into which
God can throw stars.
When we begin to think we can predict the
Advent of God,
that we can box the Christ in a stable in
Bethlehem,
that's just the time God will be born in a place we
can't imagine,
and won't believe.
Those who wait for God watch with their heart
and not their eyes.
Listening, always listening, for angel words.

Ann Weems



Christmas Eve

It was late, and the woman pale with fear,
The husband elderly, the donkey zonked.
I wished them well, but couldn't have them here.
Travelling reps and local girls vin blanc'd
Half senseless were at full pitch in both bars,
Food flying from the kitchen and the rooms
All spoken for – not quite Harper's Bazaar's
Notion of glitz, but not just ee-bah-gooms.

These rather sweet, provincial, pious folk
Wouldn't fit in and might put people off.
Horses for courses. Nods. We hardly spoke.
They left. They're born survivors. Caesar's tough
Taxes have nearly brought me to my knees.
Why should I have to harbour refugees?

Lachlan Mackinnon

The Journey

That is not what I remember:
For me the dark watchfulness of strangers,
The tiredness of towns
Full of their own emptiness,
The desire to keep our journey secret as our gifts.

The morning we arrived
I smelled oranges in the fields,
The sun rose through the mist in a disc of gold,
Our feet scuffed the stubbled fields
And a blind man sang all alone
In the middle of the nowhere of the streets.

They were asleep too when we came,
One dusty beam of sun lancing the floor;
They were a painting already, their story
Frozen in the stone of legend –
Stranger than itself, yet made
Of nothing but its own simplicity.

We had thought God above all this
And we were wrong. We went home
Confused, following no star, wondering
Where we were going. I lay at night
Seeing the eyeless socket of the moon,
Watching the vast emptiness of the dark,
Unblinking. It was in the beggars,
The sore emptiness of hunger in the homes we
passed,
I saw my blindness.

That was the beginning of the journey.

Kenneth Steven





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If you often find yourself fumbling for the right change, perhaps you might like to pay in advance for a year's "subscription", 10 issues for the sum of £10, (you might even feel tempted to be more generous!)

Your contributions are much appreciated.

Please make cheques payable to St Paul's Church, Rusthall and send them to the Parish Office

Getting ready to welcome the Messiah and be part of the Holy Family

Fast forward through all our anxieties to Christmas Eve. We are hopefully filled with excitement. For me our two boys (young(ish) men of course) will arrive that evening and the rest of the family will join us for lunch on Christmas Day. I suspect many have similar plans. For now we remain full of excitement with many things to do. There are many distractions on Christmas Eve but on that day we focus on the great feast to come and I don't just mean tomorrow's Christmas lunch, precious as that is, but the coming of the Messiah. Many of us will, hopefully, gather at the Christmas Eve midnight service to hear the good news, at first hand, conscious that the world is in a parlous state and above all the prayer for peace seems hard to put into practice. War and violence, sadly, seem to have the upper hand. The Christmas message has long been Peace and Good Will and it used to be to all men, but in the modern world we should replace 'men' with all people, and we certainly need that now.

How do you and I live the good news that is to come? We receive it with joy. We listen to God and talk to him in prayer and we will come together to praise him. We look after our families selflessly. We are good neighbours and try to be easy to work with. But we must keep an eye on our motives and desires for we sinners make so many mistakes. Jesus Christ through his Father knew this of course. An expression from St Matthew's gospel is helpful to us. With God's grace we aim to be 'pure in heart'. We stay close to the Lord to see what we think and say and do fits in with what the Lord desires. It therefore raises questions. Would Jesus think like this? Would he say this? Would he act like this? Well, if we do then over time, with God's help, we become pure in heart. Paul tells us that this is the way the eternal God wants things to be. Now this is not easy because, as we all know, we are all sinners in some degree or another and we only have to glance at the world to see the mistakes that are made through the many sins committed, otherwise it would be the type of world that God wanted it to be.

On the fourth Sunday of Advent, which this year is on Christmas Eve, we anticipate Christmas Day and celebrate the nativity of Christ the Saviour with the lighting of the fourth candle. St. Luke gives us that touching picture of the conversation between Mary and Gabriel to bring to our minds the love which the Father has for his people. Through the blessed virgin Mary, we also have been chosen and graced with God's power.

On Christmas Day God will be here: in speech. God will speak through his Son who is the scriptural word that is preached and taught. This dialogue concerns the birth, crucifixion, resurrection and teaching of Jesus and his imminent return. God wills that all should hear the message of his Son and wants all to join and be part of this dialogue.

One of the strange anomalies of the Church's year is that after Christmas Day the next Sunday is designated as the First Sunday of Christmas. Indeed in my forty odd years in our Church I have known two Choirmasters who have refused point blank to hold the Nine lessons and Carols service until this Sunday because to put it bluntly 'it's not Christmas'. We live in more enlightened times of course and almost every Cathedral in the land holds such a service in the anticipation of the Lord's coming and that, thankfully, includes us through Fiona's wonderful leadership of the Choir.

The first Sunday of Christmas traditionally remembers that we are all part of the Holy Family. The Bible, too, has different things to say about family. For Paul, writing to the Galatians, Mary's birthing of the Christ Child opens a doorway through which the whole people of God are called to enter, where we become not just children of God, but filled with the Spirit of Christ: the one who cries to God with the intimate language of parenthood, and fills our hearts with the same cry.

Isaiah had an inkling this might happen. His imagery is brides and bridegrooms, but the message is the same: God is doing a radical new thing, beyond all expectations. Something that will draw us together, into the heart of God's very being. Perhaps it will subvert the established norms and show how little we have loved so far - how much the best is yet to come. Luke indicates Isaiah's foresight when it comes to some fulfilment as Simeon locks eyes with Christ in the Temple.

So as we stand on the threshold of another year I admit that I am no great fan of resolutions partly because I do not have the will power to keep them. However, my three score years and over ten have taught me to be attentive to the ways in which the shifts of time call us to pause and to take notice. What do we notice about being part of the Holy Family? Well, for me, there is something about that opening up of something which is touched on as Simeon meets the eye of the Christ Child, and which is still to come to fulfilment, the now, and the not yet. The readings give the clue, a new name, vindication and salvation, a light, a sword

to pierce the soul, adoption, heirs and so on. Perhaps it is because Simeon was an old man, like myself, but the glimpses I see of how things might be, could be, if we continue our walk together with this Holy Child are tantalising enough that I will step through the threshold, into the coming year, feeling something of the contentment of his gaze upon me. But there is a snag. I cannot do this alone. I am called to be part of something bigger, drawn into the heart of the Holy Family with all who have been adopted as children and heirs. So brothers and Sisters in Christ will you join me?

It only remains for me to wish all of you and all whom you love a Christmas filled with Joy, Peace, Goodwill and a New Year of good health and personal joy as a member of the Holy Family.

Tim Cripps

Recommended Bible Readings:

Christmas Eve:

2 Samuel 7: 1-16;
Romans 16. 25-27;
Luke 1. 26-28

Christmas Day:

Hebrews 1: 1-6;
John 1. 1-18

The First Sunday of Christmas:

Isaiah 61. 10-62;
Galatians 4: 4-7;
Luke 2. 22-40

You can access the recommended readings online by going to <https://bible.oremus.org>. Enter the passage details and select your preferred edition of the bible – New Revised Standard Version (Anglicised Edition) and King James Bible are both available. This website is free of charge.



Mention the word

Mention the word “God” and then listen to all the responses; from the reverential to the blasphemous. With all those different reactions, what hope is there for a common mind on what is Christianity?

This article is designed to accompany you on a journey of discovery or re-discovery. From the land of unchallenged assumptions to the open horizons of new possibilities, for there are many.

But first, that word; “God” or G*d, or the Holy One, or The Sacred or the Other or a swear word. I remember coming across the idea on God for the first time in the prayer known as “The Lord’s Prayer”. Sometimes is known as “The Prayer that Jesus Taught Us”. It begins with the phrase. “Our Father”. In it, God is assumed to be a father. So, for me, God was like my Dad. But even when I was young, I knew God wasn’t my Dad. So I thought perhaps God is like a father or rather, like a “good” father. And that “he” is the father of all. That is, I assumed, all of us humans - especially all Christians.

But what images of God does God the Father raise for other people? Especially those with no father, or perhaps an abusive father, or a father who has left home or a father who is not much good at the role of being a father?

It seems there are lots of images of “God” and no single one of much real help. So, let’s go to a different source. And a more ancient one too. The book is called Genesis (the beginning). The book that appears as the first part of the Bible which is known to Christians as the “Old Testament”. It is also the first book belonging to the Bible of the Jewish religion. The Old Testament is the Hebrew Bible.

Here we have an image of God as a Creator - a “being” who creates. A being who makes, who sets into motion, who is the cause of creation, and one who begins the whole developing process of life. When we consider all these features of God, we realise we cannot be limited to just one image. God as Father would not cover all these varying features.

But all this does not necessarily mean we are talking about a person, a being or a supernatural thing. Even to think of God as Creator is limited. So instead of looking for one defining feature of God, let’s see if there is some common ground. Something that underlies all these properties. To do so, let’s consider a way of seeing God that comes from the Bible itself. And this time it’s

from the New Testament: from the gospel of John: "God is Spirit".

John is writing that God is actually "spirit" - with no defining article. Not "a spirit" but spirit itself, as in the spirit of creation, the spirit of new life, the spirit of development, the spirit of what makes life tick, the spirit of creativity, the spirit of love, forgiveness, compassion.....and so on.

The 20th century New Testament scholar, J B Phillips, who set out to translate the New Testament in such a way that anyone could understand it, once wrote a book called, "Your God is too Small." The title reminds us that we can never define God in scientific terms. Which is a bit tough for those who were taught the ancient so-called proofs of God's existence and brought up to be scientists - especially chemists. And it doesn't help those brought up in another faith.

But since 1966, even physicists have had to change their minds about matter and creation, about atoms and the cosmos. It now seems that we cannot both define matter and, at the same time, know where it is. Nor can we know where something is and, at the same time, know what it looks like - at least on a sub-atomic level. Our science is too small, our knowledge is too small and our God is too small.

In other words, we will not know God in the same way that we try to know everything else about creation. But perhaps we can get closer by understanding God as Spirit. We can then relate to God as love, to God as forgiveness, God is nurturing, God is healing, God is compassion, God is creativity and God is hope. Looking at it this way makes sense as we experience love in relationships and indeed feel it in our "hearts". In this way, we can say we experience God.

In this way we can say God is in us, that God is in the best that we can be and in the honest struggle to be the best that we can be. But when we say, God is spirit, we can only try to find words for the effects of the spirit. It's risky, but when we are pushed it is useful to be able to say something rather than nothing. So in a summary of this part of our thinking, let's use a few words. Words for being, for being active, being loving, being forgiving, being compassionate and so on.

Thus, as we get closer to what God means for us, we come across the essence of God as activity. God as being itself, and - try this for size - the word we use for God can be a verb and not a noun! The apostle John said it, "God is love". So we can say God is loving. God is the actual process of compassionate loving. God is healing, forgiving, accepting, creativity and in justice.

Maybe God is best appreciated in silence. I will end this article suggesting we have a time of reflection and see how it feels. If our God is too small and cannot be defined or summed up in words or even actions, how about finding God in silence? The Hebrew Bible's story of the prophet Elisha's experience while in the cave is helpful as we begin a time of reflection. As Elisha watched and waited, God was not in the wind or in the storm, but in the silence.

Today, mindfulness is becoming popular especially in secular circles, and many of us have experienced meditation groups. Some appreciate Julian Meetings with their simple silent prayer, stillness, peace, and switching off life's rush. This is done by focusing on a word or a light or an image, an icon, a gentle piece of music and even just focusing on our breathing.

So, choose your method, choose your way to focus, perhaps light a candle, put on some quiet, slow music, or gaze at an icon. As you sit, choose your favourite way to be comfortable, and you will be opening your hearts and minds to the God as spirit. God as love, compassion, peace, justice and forgiveness.

And perhaps after the silence, you could say this aloud

"Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am.
Be still and know
Be still
Be"

Ideas for discussion -

1. What is your earliest remembered picture of what God is like?
2. How do you express your view of God today?
3. In what ways, if any, does the idea of God as a supernatural being work for you today?
4. If God is seen as loving, compassion and forgiveness etc, what difference would that make to how you live your life?
5. In what ways does the idea of God as a spiritual entity affect you? eg God is love, loving etc

Rev Tony Rutherford

The Early Days of Christianity in Britain

Up until fairly recently this country has always been described as a Christian country, but if you look back at our early history we could well have been described as pagan at various times in our early history. Christianity very definitely had its high and low periods and this has, of course, continued throughout the years. It was the influence of the Roman Empire which first brought Christianity to our shores. But before long we were being attacked by the Anglo-Saxons and the Christian Britons of Roman Britain regarded them as ferocious pirates. These Anglo-Saxons came to us sailing and rowing down the coast of north-west Europe till they came to the comparatively short crossing between the mouth of the River Rhine and the coast of Norfolk and they penetrated as far down the channel as the Isle of Wight.

On our Eastern and South-Eastern coast, they found many sandy beaches on which they could draw up their ships. There were many rivers up which they could row. A ship-load could appear, with deathly quiet, out of the river mist of the early morning, raid some prosperous Roman Villa, rush in, set fire, steal and murder and be away with the loot before anything could be done.

The Roman military authorities dealt with the danger by a chain of forts and watch towers, working in with the Roman fleet along what they called the – Saxon Shore. Remains of some these forts can still be seen. Our nearest is at Pevensey.



Pevensey Fort

However by the 5th century civil war and unrest in the Roman Empire caused the legions to be gradually withdrawn from Britain. Resistance did go on for some years, but gradually the Angles, Saxons and Jutes pushed further and further west into Britain and settled down in the new lands they had invaded and won.

They brought their gods with them – Woden and Tiw, which they worshipped in sacred groves or

clearings in the woods. Wensley in Derbyshire and Tuesley in Surrey, come from words meaning groves dedicated to these pagan gods in those localities. As the Anglo-Saxons advanced and their scattered farms each with the name of its pirate founder, spread over the land, the life of Roman Britain, organised around towns died away. Weeds grew up in the market places. The barracks, the public baths and the churches crumbled under the weather.

Monks, Nuns and Priests moved to Wales or crossed the sea to Brittany. It was only in isolated spots, such as the little monastery on the Cornish cliffs of Tintagel, could Christian worship and teaching survive, by mere remoteness. Nearly two centuries of paganism went by before Christianity began to dawn again. As Saxon England settled down, trade across the Channel, which had been continued on and off, since before the Romans, started up with the Franks, ancestors of the modern French.

King Ethelbert, King of Kent had his palace near the former Roman-British town on the River Stour which we call Canterbury. The prosperity of Kent depended so much on trade with the Franks across the Channel so it seemed a good idea for King Ethelbert to marry a Frankish princess when there was an opportunity. It so happened that the princess was already a Christian and she insisted in bringing with her a bishop to her new country. Gregory, the Pope at this time, naturally wished to bring savage Britain back to the Christian faith. Unfortunately he found that the Frankish priests, on the whole, were unwilling to try converting the wild Saxons, so he sent a mission band from Rome itself under a brave man called Augustine. Ethelbert made the missionaries welcome and on Christmas Day 597 many were baptised.

Augustine was appointed Archbishop of England with his seat at Canterbury, consecrating the ruined church of Roman times as Christ Church. In 601 this work was followed up from Rome by a second band of missionaries and a second bishopric was set up in the now Christian Kent, at Rochester, another former Roman town.

Ethelbert's nephew, king of Essex, with his capital in London, was also persuaded to accept the new faith and a bishop, Mellitus, became the first bishop of London and it was for him that St. Paul's Cathedral was built.

However things don't really change much over the years. It is easier to become a Christian but it is much harder to remain one. When Ethelbert died

in 616 Essex soon went back to its old heathen ways, backed by an equally heathen East Anglia. Only Kent kept the Faith.

A devoted priest, Paulinus, had been sent over by Pope Gregory at the same time as Mellitus. The Kentish Princess Ethelburga persuaded her husband, the powerful King of Northumbria, to become a Christian and be baptised. Once again the new faith came in with a rush with many converts also being baptised. Paulinus accompanied Princess Ethelburga as chaplain to Edwin's Court and from there he undertook the conversion of Northumbria.

The small kingdom of Lindsey, south of the Humber and East Anglia also accepted the Faith, but Wessex remained firmly heathen. In fact its king sent an assassin to try and murder Edwin. However just as things seemed to be going well and Gregory had decided to make Paulinus Archbishop of York so that England could be divided, for Church purposes, into the two provinces of Canterbury and York things seemed to go backwards.

Edwin was killed and his army destroyed in a terrific battle near Doncaster by the Kings of Mercia and Wales, both of whom were determined to stamp out Christianity in Northumbria. They very nearly succeeded until Edwin's defeat was avenged by his descendant Oswald. To bring Christianity back to Northumbria he asked help – not from Kent or Canterbury – but to a small monastery where he had been brought up on the little Island of Iona, founded by St. Columbus from Ireland.

So it was that descendants of the original Roman British Church who had converted Ireland, and during the dark centuries, had just managed to survive in the mountains of Wales were able to help restore Christianity to the north of England. Since the native churches of Wales and Ireland were monastic based they had benefitted from the much better organised Church of Rome who could contribute a wealth of books, experience in church buildings and strong administration under bishops.

This meant that they were able to bring everyone together and this was done at a great conference in 664 at the Synod of Whitby. The next year the Pope sent a keen Christian – Theodore of Tarsus as Archbishop of Canterbury. He went all over England organising the life of the Church, its services, and appointing new Bishops. It is to Bede, a Saxon monk who lived from 673 to 735, that we know so much about this time in our

history. He was a monk in the monastery of Jarrow on the Tyne.

But less than ten years after his death came the first terrible Viking attack on England. These attacks followed with increasing regularity. They attacked the island monastery of Lindisfarne in the summer of 793 and the following year they plundered Jarrow itself.



Lindisfarne Priory

And so followed the downward drop in followers of the Christian faith. These periods of up and down have continued through the centuries and are still apparent today.

Daphne Pilcher



The Fourteen Days of Tudor Christmas

Information taken from 'A Tudor Christmas' by Alison Weir and Siobhan Clarke.

Fasting 24th December

Upon waking on Christmas Eve in 1530 before the Reformation, there would have been a morning of fasting and abstinence, a meal of fish would be served but not before noon. During Advent food was prepared for the Christmas day festivities, which would be much appreciated after the restricted food available in Advent. The tradition was not to decorate the house before Christmas Eve. It was then that families would go out in the countryside to gather the green branches of holly and ivy to decorate house and Church.

Feasting 25th December

Everyone went to church on Christmas morning and celebrations were varied depending on whether you were rich or poor. The countryside was home to most people. After all the observances, a sumptuous Christmas dinner was eaten and those that had fasted were ready for a hearty meal. Christmas dinner was for all classes, brawn (a terrine of pig's head meat in aspic), fatty cuts of boar meat or pork cooked in wine and garnished with gilded rosemary, bay leaves and fruit. There was also a variety of meat, this would include larks, partridges, quails, beef, mutton, and hens. Meat was a rare luxury for the poor, pork would have been their fare, or possibly a caught bird. The better off might enjoy a chicken or goose. A Christmas pudding was made of eggs, breadcrumbs, mace, dates, saffron and suet. Leftover meat, preferably mutton, was made into Mince pies or Christmas pies.

Offering 26th December

St Stephen's Day was traditionally the day that people would go visiting friends, neighbours, and family. The English carol 'Make we merry' from 1536 describes visits like these. As told in the well-known carol 'Good King Wenceslas' the feast of Stephen, St Stephen's day, is a charity day for giving alms or leftovers to the poor. In Tudor times it was the custom for the more affluent to give "boxes" containing money to the servants, tradesmen, and the needy. These alms boxes were opened on 26th December, which became known as boxing day.

Wassail 27th December

The 27th of December is the feast of St John the Evangelist. On this day may often be seen some disorderly behaviour and feasting, for the saint had made a miraculous recovery from drinking poisoned wine. So to honour St John wine was consumed in large quantities on his feast day. Wassailing was extremely popular with everyone. The name, from the Norse 'Ves heill' and the Middle English 'wes heil', means 'your good health', the custom comes from an ancient fertility rite practised in the days of pagan tree worship. A wooden wassail bowl, decorated with ribbons, held hot ale, beer or cider, apples, sugar, spices, rosemary and a crust of bread. People would pass the bowl saying, 'Wassail' and having drunk, pass the bowl on saying 'Drinkhail'. The crust of bread at the bottom of the wassail bowl was given to the most important person in the room, the origin of the later custom of 'toasting' at celebrations.

Lords of Misrule 28th December

This day at Christmas was a time for relaxing, liberty and breaking the rules. This was an opportunity for rank to take second place in the fun and games. There were no social barriers. In the home of the King or the wealthy, eating drinking and making merry was not ruled by the King but the Lord of Misrule, whose company would include heralds, magicians and fools in fancy dress. Lords of Misrule were paid well for their services. They were at their most popular in the fifteenth century and in early Tudor England.



Father Christmas 28th December

In Tudor times it was traditional for Christmas to be represented by a figure called 'Captain Christmas' or 'Prince Christmas', one of the train of the 'Lord of Misrule'. Dating from the latter part of the fifteenth century, the carol 'Sir Christemas' embodied the medieval personification of the season, which had been established by 1400. He was a popular character in Tudor and medieval mumming plays and was called Father Christmas, Old man Christmas or Old man Winter. Wearing green and a grotesque mask and wig, he would rampage about shouting and wielding a club. This Father Christmas was exhorting his audience to behave themselves, and to maintain the old customs of Yuletide.

Gambol Revelry and Sport 29th December

This day was the anniversary of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket in 1170 in Canterbury Cathedral. St Thomas was one of the most popular saints in England and many people would have marked the feast day making a pilgrimage along the Pilgrim's Way. The public were allowed to watch the 'goodly and gorgeous mummeries' (the word meant both merrymaking and mummers' plays) usually from a safe distance – and to partake of the festive fare on offer. Pageants, masques, interludes, plays and music, devised under the direction of the Master of the Revels, carried on throughout the twelve days of Christmas. Christmas was also a time for hunting, sport and outdoor pastimes.

Carols 30th December

Music played an important part at Christmas in Tudor England. Henry VIII changed music from the medieval style to one more versatile and florid. Traditional ballads were enjoyed. Carols were being sung by groups of singers called the 'town waits' who walked the streets at night singing for the pleasure of households and hoping for gifts of food or money in exchange.

Games 31st December

There is no record of sixteenth century people gathering on New Year's eve to see the old year out and welcome in the New year. Traditionally this was a day for sport and hunting for the rich, but was rare for the people whose lives were ruled by relentless work in their waking hours. The well-off played board games such as chess or backgammon, guessing games, word games, dice and cards.

Gifts 1st January

New Years Day was most important as a Gift Giving Day. Gift giving was widespread among the wealthy and upper classes. The middle classes would send presents of capon, oranges stuck with cloves, gloves, money or pins. There are no records of the poorer classes giving gifts. It was expected in the Tudor court that every courtier and servant give the King and Queen a gift.

Mumming 2nd January

For ordinary people in Tudor times came the chance to see a Mummers' play, a tradition from the pre Christian era. The word 'Mummers' meaning masked actors. The actors wore masks as a disguise so as not to be recognised, bad luck coming to those who discovered their identity. Traditional folk plays were performed during Yuletide. From these gatherings came today's elements such as stage fights, coarse humour, gender role reversal and good defeating evil.

Old Christmas is Undone 3rd January

On the third of January the powerful and wealthy Cardinal Wolsey held a feast, a burst of cannon fire heralded the arrival of a troupe of visitors wearing disguises. The King and his entourage were invited to be seated and although Wolsey's guests had already had their fill another two hundred dishes were ordered much to the delight of the King. The poorer folk would make the most of the last few days of celebration.

Mince pie. Old Customs revived 4th January

Samuel Pepys explained how on Christmas day he and his wife had eaten plum-porridge and a roasted hen, and had sent out for a mince pie. Twelfth night was a special time for the couple as there was singing and dancing, drinking and playing of games. Twelfth night was a time for reflection and thanks, making an end to Christmas.

Twelfth Night cake 5th January

Christmas officially finished on the Twelfth Night, with much celebrating. There were feasts, games and performing of plays. This was a night for all the relatives to return for the end of the Yuletide season.

Valerie Pentecost



A Forgotten Artist: Amy Beatrice Atkinson 1859-1916

A Covid ramble around St Paul's Church graveyard revealed a large stepped Saxon Cross inscribed Amy Beatrice Atkinson Painter born Fakenham Norfolk July 9th 1859 died Tunbridge Wells September 18th 1916.

Intrigued to find a forgotten painter, research revealed a talented artist and traveller who had exhibited frequently at The Royal Academy and at many other galleries both nationally and internationally.

The middle child of the Rector of Fakenham, Amy had an elder brother and a younger sister and grew up in the Rectory with servants and a Prussian governess. When her father died in 1890, Amy was 31 and she inherited a large sum which enabled her to move to Newlyn, Cornwall, where she became part of the Newlyn colony of artists. They recorded the working lives of fishermen and their families and then exhibited their work in London. Competent in both oil and watercolour, Amy was exemplary in her mastery of light and shade.



'Bubbles' - a carefully observed image of a Cornish fisherman's child playing at home.

Manchester Art Gallery

After Cornwall, Amy moved to Pas de Calais, another artistic colony, where her work capturing everyday scenes was exhibited in England and France, always receiving positive reviews.

In midlife Amy's companion was the writer Anne Macdonnell. Amy had a house in Holland Park,

another mecca for artists, the most notable being her near neighbour William Holman Hunt. Anne shared Amy's home for about 10 years and they travelled together, particularly around Southern Italy 1903-7. Anne was writing a travelogue which Amy illustrated. 'In the Abruzzi' 1908 became a popular travel guide which is still in print today.

Amy died suddenly while visiting Tunbridge Wells alone in 1916. A 'well known visitor' according to The Courier, her death certificate reveals that she had recently had kidney problems and then had a sudden heart attack. Her brother Stuart came from Farnborough to sign her death certificate. She was 57.



*Woman mending the nets
Oil on canvas*

Neither Amy nor her brother ever married and although her younger sister married and had 5 girls, none of them married so there were no close relatives to promote Amy's legacy. Today her work occasionally appears in auctions and her watercolours still fetch a few hundred pounds.



After going to church, people leaving the church in the rainy weather. Oil on canvas.

Carol Mellors

Activity Pages

On the whole, December is a cheerful month full of music, but sadly the same can't be said about January. This wordsearch is all based on music in some form or another. The words are written forwards, backwards and diagonally. At the end you will be left with eight unused letters which will give you an instrument native to Scotland.

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

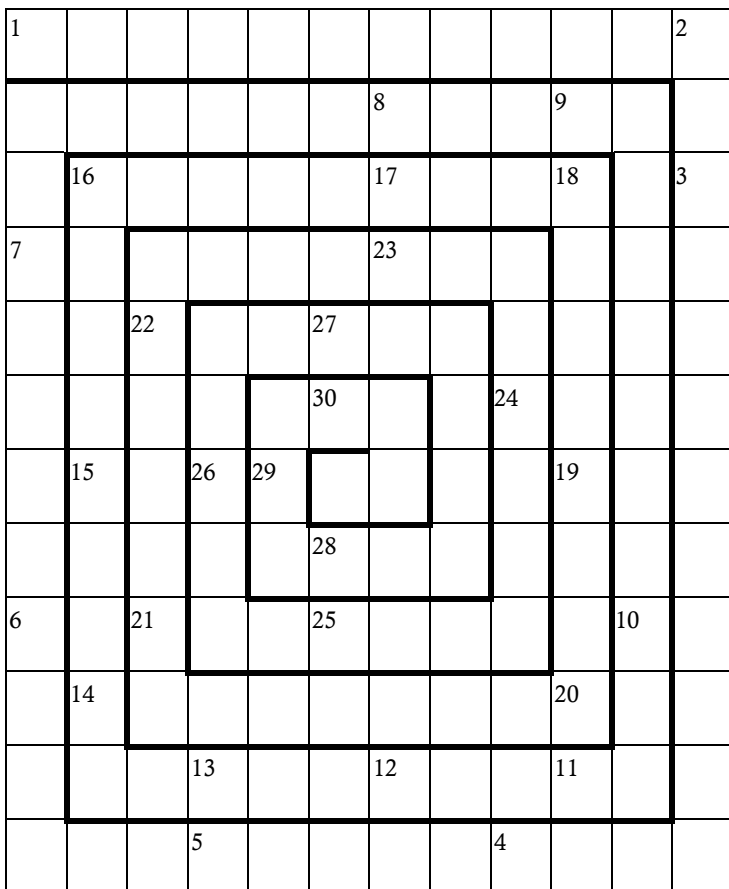
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BAND	BANJO
BASS	BELLS
BUGLES	CHOIR
CONCH	DRUM
GLOCKENSPIEL	GONG
GUITAR	HARMONIUM
HARP	HURDYGURDY
LUTE	OBOE
OCARINA	ORGAN
PANPIPES	PIANO
PICCOLO	SHAWM
SPINET	TAMBOURINE
TUBA	VIOLA

Twenty Questions to Test You

- Who wrote the book EMMA
- What is celebrated on the 4th Sunday of Lent
- What name is given to an Oxen harness
- What day in Holy Week is described as Good
- What was Peter's first name
- What building in Jerusalem was visited by Jesus at the age of twelve
- Colour of Envy
- Another name for a horned viper
- Which state in the USA is known as the Gem State
- Which giant challenged the Children of Israel
- What name was given to the French Protestants in the Middle Ages
- What is the main river of Israel
- The home of a Beaver
- Who was saved by a big fish
- Who became a pillar of salt
- What animal is the symbol of St Mark
- India's first Prime Minister
- The collective name for the Islands of the Pacific
- How many points are on the star of Judaism
- What geometric shape is used as a symbol of the Trinity

How well do you know our Christmas Carols?

In the crossword below the last letter of one answer is the first of the next. In each case you need to fill in the missing word from a line of a carol.

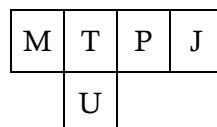
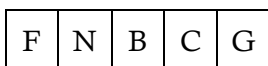
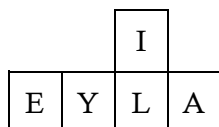
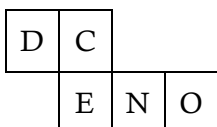
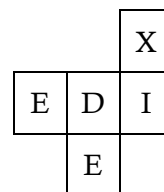
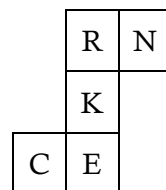
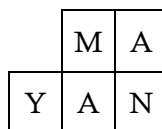
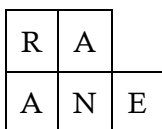
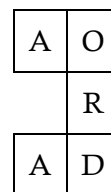
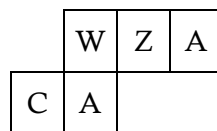
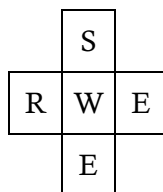
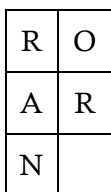
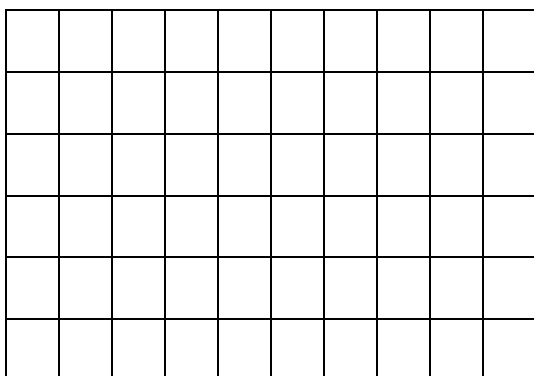


5. Gloria _____ in excelsis
6. While hosts of _____ chanted from above
7. _____ in the fields abiding
8. _____ had fallen
9. Good King _____ looked out
10. _____ through all Jerusalem
11. _____ I bring to crown Him again
12. Yet in thy _____ streets shineth
13. Christ to Thee our heavenly _____
14. Yet what I can I _____ Him
15. He came down to _____ from heaven
16. Hark the _____ angels sing
17. Outside my heart's closed _____
18. Once in _____ David's city
19. See the tender _____ appears
20. O come ye, O come ye to _____
21. Pray you, dutifully prime your _____ chime
22. The first _____ the angel did say
23. Need they no created _____
24. Glad _____ of great joy I bring
25. Above thy deep and dreamless _____
26. _____ on earth, goodwill to men
27. Jesus our _____
28. Nowhere to _____ His head
29. Round _____ virgin and her child
30. And stay by my side until morning is _____

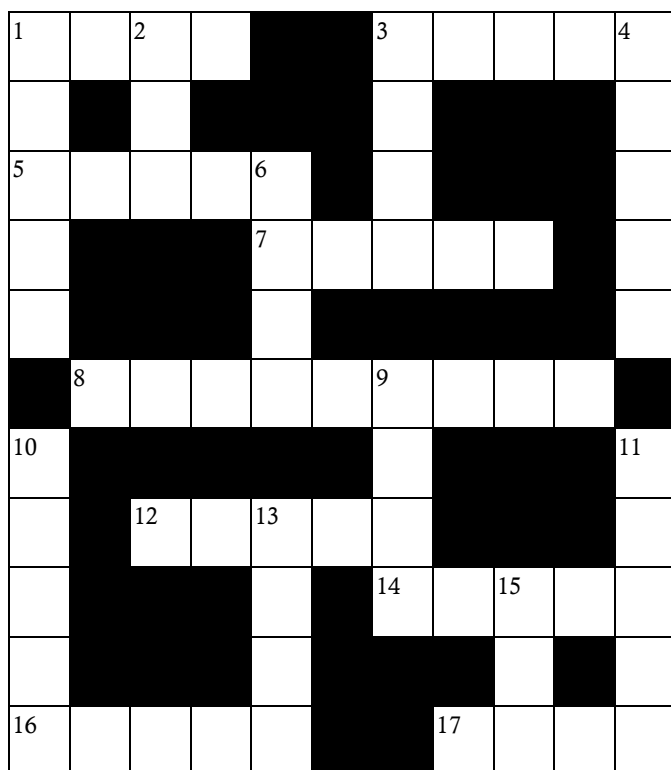
1. _____ to offer have I
2. No _____ may hear His coming
3. Hail the sun of _____
4. Thus spake the _____ and forthwith

A Country Cross-Jig

Fit the five letter shapes into the grid. When the diagram is complete the columns contain the names of ten world countries.



Try this Crossword with Food Connections



Clues Across

1. Floury bread rolls
3. Fruit which can be for jam making, but do remove the stones
5. Goes with mustard
7. General name for macaroni, spaghetti etc.
8. Nice on toast for breakfast
12. Sweetening agent
14. Fruit which appears in boxes, particularly around Christmas
16. This form of apple is often served with pork
17. What about a nice piece of Dundee

Clues Down

1. Rashers of streaky
2. Jack Horner had a Christmas one
3. Small green vegetables
4. Golden is sweet and sticky
6. Tinned meat
9. Cooking fat
10. Type of roll with a name linked to another country
11. Meat or fish in a jar
13. Type of flesh which sounds like sport
15. A drink

Farmyard Friends – Riddle-me-Rees

1. My first is in cake, but not in bake
My second is in both sea and lake
My third's not in high, but it is in low
My last is in foot but not in toe
2. My first is in both little and large
My second is in both boat and barge
My third is in mat but not in rug
My last is in both beetle and bug
3. My first is in both fish and fowl
My second is in both robin and owl
My third is in each and also in all
My last is in both castle and hall
4. My first is in both me and my
My second's in oats but not in rye
My third is in both near and far
My last is in tare but not in tar

New Year Resolutions

Perhaps you make some, but often they don't seem to last very long. What about making one of your resolutions for 2024 to read the Bible every day. Here is a quiz to get you started.

1. Name of Simon Peter's brother (John 1 v 40)
2. At a wedding feast Jesus changed water into _____ (John 4 v 46)
3. Name of brother of Moses (Exodus 4 v 14)
4. Jesus Christ the same _____, and today, and for ever (Hebrews 13 v 8)
5. Whom did Paul call his son (2 Timothy 1 v 2)
6. Servant of King Ahab (1 Kings 18 v 3)
7. A Jewish girl who became Queen of Persia (Esther 2 v 17)
8. A boy whom God called four times (1 Samuel v 3)
9. Name given to a Roman officer in charge of 100 soldiers (Matthew 8 v 5) – not all versions of the Bible use this term
10. On what mountains did the Ark come to rest (Genesis 8 v 4)
11. An earthly story with a heavenly meaning (Matthew 13 v 24)
12. First garden mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 2 v 8)

ANSWERS

Wordsearch based on music

The eight remaining letters give you Bagpipes

Twenty Questions to Test You

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1 Jane Austen | 2 Mothering Sunday | 3 Yoke | 4 Friday |
| 5 Simon | 6 Temple | 7 Green | 8 Asp |
| 9 Idaho | 10 Goliath | 11 Huguenots | 12 Jordan |
| 13 Sett | 14 Jonah | 15 Lot's Wife | 16 Lion |
| 17 Jawaharai Neehru | 18 Oceania | 19 Six | 20 Triangle |

Christmas Carol Crossword

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Frankincense (We Three Kings) | 2 Ear (O Little Town of Bethlehem) |
| 3 Righteousness (Hark the Herald) | 4 Seraph (While Shepherds Watched) |
| 5 Hosanna (Ding dong merrily on high) | 6 Angels (Christians Awake) |
| 7 Shepherds (Angels from the realms of glory) | 8 Snow (In the bleak midwinter) |
| 9 Wenceslas (Good King Wenceslas looked out) | 10 Sing (See Amid the Winter Snow) |
| 11 Gold (We three kings) | 12 Dark (O Little Town) |
| 13 King (As With Gladness) | 14 Give (In the bleak midwinter) |
| 15 Earth (Once in Royal David's City) | 16 Herald (Hark the herald angels) |
| 17 Door (No room for the baby) | 18 Royal (Once in Royal David's City) |
| 19 Lamb (See Amid) | 20 Bethlehem (O come all ye faithful) |
| 21 Matin (Ding dong merrily on high) | 22 Nowell (The first nowell) |
| 23 Light (As with gladness) | 24 Tidings (While shepherds watched) |
| 25 Sleep (O Little Town) | 26 Peace (It came upon the midnight clear) |
| 27 Emmanuel (Hark the herald) | 28 Lay (No room for the baby) |
| 29 Yon (Silent Night) | 30 Nigh (Away in a Manger) |

Country Cross-Jig

Reading from left to right the vertical columns are:

France Norway Brazil Canada Greece Sweden Mexico Turkey Panama Jordan

Crossword with Food Connections

Across

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|---------|---------|-------------|----------|
| 1 Baps | 3 Plums | 5 Cress | 7 Pasta | 8 Marmalade | 12 Sugar |
| 14 Dates | 16 Sauce | 17 Cake | | | |

Down

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| 1 Bacon | 2 Pie | 3 Peas | 4 Syrup | 6 Spam | 9 Lard |
| 10 Swiss | 11 Paste | 13 Game | 15 Tea | | |

Farmyard Riddle-me-Rees

- | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 Calf | 2 Lamb | 3 Foal | 4 Mare |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|

New Year Resolution Bible Quiz

- | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| 1 Andrew | 2 Wine | 3 Aaron | 4 Yesterday | 5 Timothy | 6 Obadiah |
| 7 Esther | 8 Samuel | 9 Centurion | 10 Ararat | 11 Parable | 12 Eden |

A happy new year is the greeting we give to each other on the 1st of January. The old year has gone and a new one has begun. It fills us with happiness. Spring is not far away. But don't let us forget that only a few days ago it was Christmas. Amid the fun we had at Christmas hopefully we also remembered the real meaning of Christmas. We were celebrating the time that Jesus was born on this earth.

Unfortunately we all tend to have very short memories. As we start this new year don't let us forget to thank God for all that He has done for us. We will be faced with new opportunities so let us ask God for His help during the year and may we all make a firm resolve to put God first in our lives in 2024.

General Information

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Miss Daphne Pilcher 521691

Churchwardens

Mr Rod Garcia-Fermer
Mr Chris Reece
Contact via email to Churchwardens@stpaulsrusthall.org.uk

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Mrs Mione Palmer 667951

Youth Council

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Enquiries to Parish Office 521447

Rusthall St Paul's Primary School

Executive Headteacher – Mrs Liz Mitchell 520582
Head of School – Mrs Lyndsay Smurthwaite 520582

CHURCH ELECTORAL ROLL

All worshippers who are baptised members of the Church of England, and aged over 16, should have their names entered on the Electoral Roll. This entitles them to attend and vote at the Annual Parochial Meeting. Forms for enrolment will be found in the Parish Church or the Parish Office and should be sent to the Vicar.

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St Paul's Parish Fellowship

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Mrs Vreni Gould (Secretary) 522185

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Rusthall Community Larder

Bjorn Simpole 07900 906294

Rusthall Community & Youth Project

Barry Edwards 680296

Rusthall Village Association

Alex Britcher 07967 011467

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Council Clerk: Alison Stevens 520161

Rusthall Bonfire and Fete Committee

Annie Softley 548366

Friends of TW and Rusthall Common

Clive Evans 534040



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Parish Administrator - Mrs Ginette di Palma

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The Office is open on weekday mornings (except Tuesdays) between 10 am and 1 pm.