

*A Place of Peace
and Reconciliation*

**Christmas 2025
Issue 30**

To find all the latest information about Sunday services and mid-week activities at St Andrew's, visit our website or Facebook page. The address is at the bottom of page 23.

We welcome items for future editions. They should be sent to John Daymond at: john.daymond1@btinternet.com

Deadline for the Easter Edition is Sunday, 22 February 2026

*Suggested
contribution 75p*



Nativity scene from Peterborough Cathedral.

**And we the life of God shall know,
For God is manifest below.**

Remedies against SADness (Seasonal Affective Disorder)



*Rev'd Canon
Dr Edmund
Newey
writes:*

As I write, the clocks have just changed and the suddenness of night's fall has once again caught me by surprise. 'The nights are drawing in' was a phrase my mother banned from the household, but am I alone in finding a measure of reassurance, even beauty, in the lengthening hours of darkness?

In the third chapter of John's gospel, Nicodemus comes to visit Jesus under cover of darkness. The seventeenth century Welsh poet, Henry Vaughan, saw this darkness as a blessing, opening room within the hectic onrush of life for us to rest in prayer with Christ:

*Dear night! this world's defeat;
The stop to busy fools; care's check and curb;
The day of spirits; my soul's calm retreat
Which none disturb!
Christ's progress, and His prayer time;
The hours to which high heaven doth chime;*

At Hallowe'en, many seem to take a perverse delight in the ghoulish and ghostly – things that go bump in the night – but the darkness of God, as pictured by Henry Vaughan, is the very opposite of this: it is 'calm and unhaunted...'

*Were all my loud, evil days
Calm and unhaunted as is thy dark tent,
Whose peace but by some angel's wing or voice
Is seldom rent,
Then I in heaven all the long year
Would keep, and never wander here.*

(Henry Vaughan, 'The Night')

So may I encourage us, as the nights draw in, to be of good cheer? May these shortening days and lengthening nights, help us ready ourselves for the brightness of the advent of Our Lord:

*O God, who hast folded back the mantle of the night
to clothe us in the golden glory of the day, chase from
our hearts all gloomy thoughts, and make us glad with
the brightness of hope, that we may effectively aspire
to unwon virtues, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

*(A Morning Prayer from the Gregorian Sacramentary,
sixth century)*

Gifts for the journey



Do you remember the little books by Roger Hargeaves. His most famous collection was *The Mister Men*. But I remember one called *Roundies and Squaries*. And the best page of all proclaimed: *Roundies count their blessings; Squaries count their money!*

There is no time quite like Christmas for reminding us to *count our blessings*. So how might we go about that? Our time is a great gift and so are the resources we have been given. We will be planning where we spend Christmas, with whom and what presents we will buy for them. These thoughts can so easily lead us into thinking that one way or another, we have got it covered.

*Rev'd Hugh Priestner,
A volunteer at
TWAM
(Tools With A
Mission)
writes:*

But nothing could be further from the truth. We are indebted to Christina Rossetti (and others) for capturing this in her Christmas poem, now sung as a Carol: *In the bleak midwinter*. Here we meet the sheer generosity of God, who took the biggest risk of all and comes to us as a defenceless and vulnerable baby. It was *enough for Him*, Mary's milk, a bed of hay and the worship of the animals. Yet His poverty is so starkly different from ours. We enter the stable, along with the shepherds and the wise men, seeing God's grace, gifted to us in Jesus. That is the most profound blessing and there is another: it is a gift of love, nothing less.

What can I give Him, poor as I am? The currency is love. So, yes, it is my heart that I resolve to give, however far I fall short.

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And I have even been given a further way of signalling God's gracious gift. The Christian charity with whom I volunteer, *Tools with a Mission* has its Christmas appeal called *Gifts for the Journey*. This is my opportunity to pay for a gift that will enable a person in East Africa to break free from poverty, by providing a kit of tools that will be refurbished and sent from our centre in Rugby. The cost of creating these kits range from £20 - £45. They provide Sewing Machines; Knitting Machines; Mechanics and Electricians Kits; Building and Carpentry; and Computer Kits. Would you join with me and respond with blessed generosity to the generosity of God that is at the heart of Christmas?

I Have A Confession To Make



*Rev'd Alison Baxter,
Associate Minister,
Mission Hub*

I have a confession to make, I am in love ... with a gorgeous 15 week old cockapoo puppy!

While he was playing in the garden the other day and I was making sure he didn't get into too much mischief! I realised that Rolo is full of a sense of wonder.

Every smell is new, every unexpected sound, every taste (he's particularly partial to leaves), every feeling of a feather, rolling around on the grass or concrete. It is such a joy to watch him as he explores while also trying to keep him safe.

I also had my own sense of wonder a few weeks ago when several of us from St Andrew's went on a pilgrimage to Coventry Cathedral. At one point of the day we went in to the Chapel of Unity. As we entered it we were all offered a golf ball; I had no idea why but received it anyway. We all stood around in a big circle holding our golf balls. After some teaching and history about the Chapel of Unity we were all invited to drop the golf balls on the floor at the same time.

I'm ashamed to say that my first reaction was not a positive one really but 'who on earth is going to pick up all of these golf balls'!! Especially as initially they all scattered to every corner of the Chapel of Unity. It was to my delight and wonder however that as the golf balls were all dropped on the floor and scattered to different corners, after a few seconds they all congregated together in the middle of the room.

Wow! Apparently it's because although you can't see this with the naked eye, as the floor just looks level, the room is actually formed in a bowl shape. What amazing engineering! This visual demonstration of unity seriously impressed me and filled me with a sense of childhood wonder that I've not really experienced for some time.

This year I've had the privilege of being on the national 'Growing faith strategic leadership course'

led by the Church of England which focuses on how the Church can put children and young people back at the centre of our Church. The lectures, seminars and networking I have studied have been really inspiring.

One of the things that really stood out to me amongst our teaching was by Dr Anne Richards who edited a book with Peter Privet entitled 'through the eyes of a child' in which she asks the question what is lost to us when we become an adult? We were challenged in our coaching groups to explore this and actually when we explored this we thought there's quite a lot that we have lost. Our innocence, our ability to take risks, our ability to be most authentically ourselves and most of all our sense of wonder.



Rolo

As we approach this Christmas I would love it if we could all be caught up in a sense of wonder at what actually happened when God sent his only Son into the world. Think about it, how crazy is it that the God of the universe, who

created all things, came to live among us, to be one of us, to identify with our humanity so that we could relate to him in a closer and more intimate way. Isn't that something we should be in awe and wonder about?

A sense of wonder is certainly what the main characters of the nativity story were caught up in. Mary, as she asked the Angel Gabriel 'but how can this be, I am a virgin' yet ultimately she responded 'may your word to me be fulfilled' as she grasped the wondrous occurrence. Joseph as he accepted what the angel told him that Mary really was going to give birth to Jesus born of the Holy Spirit. The shepherds as they watched their flocks in the field and were dazzled by a host of angels telling them about Jesus' birth and the wise men once they were in the presence of Jesus and all they could do was bow down in wonder.

One of the priests in our diocese, Andy March, has written a fantastic book called 'Wonder' which is a collection of Advent and Christmas reflections and poems, one of which says this:

*Wonder at love and joy and beauty
where do they come from and what
do they mean?*

*Could they be chance with no rhyme
or reason*

*or are they signs of purpose and
meaning?*

*In the midst of the confusion
come and explore for a moment with
me*

*the true story of love beyond
measure,
the reason for life and hope and
wonder.*

News From The Towers



*Christine
Homer,
Bell Captain,
writes:*

Since the report for the harvest magazine, practices and Sunday Service ringing have continued as normal. Most of the band have taken holidays during this period, so we have rung on the 5 rather than the 8 for many of the services.

Some new people have started to learn to ring and they have been using the training bell on Mondays before the normal practice. We are hoping they will soon join us in the main practice: listen out for the uneven rounds (everyone goes through that phase) and don't be surprised if the lights are on before the normal practice starts.

The electricians have replaced the stair lighting and we now have sensor-activated lights on the staircases in both towers. Extra lights have been added, which means we can ascend and descend more safely, especially important now it's dark when we arrive as well as when we leave.

It took two 'goes' to get the sensor positioning correct: after the first attempt, one of the band managed to descend the NE tower steps without the sensor detecting them!



We are now looking forward to Christmas. We have entered a tree in the Christmas Tree Festival and our handbell practices are about to start. Our annual dinner is also coming up soon.

As ever, if you are curious about what we do, you are welcome to come up for a look any time we are ringing, or we can arrange a trip up at another time for you to see the bells themselves (maybe in the daytime — you will see better then).

Archbishop of Canterbury-designate

It was formally announced on Friday 3 October 2025 that following due consideration by The Crown Nominations Committee chaired by Lord Evans of Weardale, the name having been passed to the Prime Minister and HM King Charles III that The Right Reverend and Right Honourable Dame Sarah Mullally DBE, Bishop of London has been appointed Archbishop of Canterbury-designate.



Following the announcement, The Right Reverend and Most Honourable Dame Sarah Mullally will legally become the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury since St Augustine arrived in Kent from Rome in 597AD, in a legal ceremony and religious service known as The Confirmation of Election on 28 January 2026 in St Paul's Cathedral, London followed by a formal enthronement service to be held in March 2026 in Canterbury Cathedral. She will become the first female Archbishop of Canterbury in about 1400 years since the role was created. She will be elected before Christmas 2025 to the College of Canons of Canterbury Cathedral becoming Archbishop of Canterbury-elect and in the Confirmation of Election in St Paul's in January 2026 she will legally

become The Archbishop of Canterbury.

Bishop Sarah became a priest in 2006 and was appointed as the first female Bishop of London, being installed on 12 May 2018, the third most senior member of clergy in the Church of England and was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in 2005 in recognition of her contribution to nursing and midwifery. She was sworn of the Privy Council of the United Kingdom on 14 March 2018 and sits on the Lords Spiritual Benches in The House of Lords. The Archbishop of Canterbury is automatically granted a seat in the House of Lords, sitting with the Archbishop of York, the Bishops of London, Durham and Winchester.

There are 26 places reserved for Archbishops and Bishops of The Church of England, who are collectively referred to as The Lords Spiritual. They remain in the house only while they hold the office of Bishop.

A Prayer for the Archbishop of Canterbury

*Almighty and Everlasting God
the only worker of great marvels,
send down upon your servant Sarah,
called to be Archbishop of Canterbury,
and all who are committed to her care,
the spirit of your saving grace,
and that they may truly please you,
pour upon them the continual dew of
your blessing.
Grant this, O Lord,
For the honour of our advocate and
mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Advent/Christmas Services

Advent Sunday, 30 November:

08.00 BCP Communion
10.30 Choral Eucharist
18.00 Advent Carol Service

Monday, 1 December:

18.00 St Andrew's Day Festal Evensong

Tuesday, 2 December:

19.00 Rotary Tree of Light Service

Saturday, 6 December:

19.00 The Manchester Carols



Sunday, 14 December:

08.00 BCP Communion
10.30 Choral Eucharist
18.00 Sung Evensong

Monday, 15 December:

10.30 Care Home Carols
15.00 Care Home Carols



Sunday, 7 December:

08.00 BCP Communion
10.30 All Together Worship
18.00 Zoom Evening Prayer

Wednesday, 10 December:

12.00 Holy Communion
14.15 Mothers' Union Communion
16.00 Air Ambulance Concert

Thursday, 11 December:

10.15 Care Home Carols

Saturday, 13 December:

Lantern Making 12.00 to 18.00
followed by Procession

Sunday, 21 December:

08.00 BCP Communion
10.30 Choral Eucharist
18.00 Christmas Carol Service:
Traditional Service of Readings,
Anthems and Carols

Tuesday, 23 December:

09.00 Morning Prayer
09.30 Reflective Communion
13.00 Tuesday Lunchtime Concert
16.00 Christingle 1

Wednesday, 24 December:

Christmas Eve

09.00 Morning Prayer
16.00 Christingle 2
23.30 Midnight Mass

Thursday, 25 December: Christmas Day 10.30 Festal Eucharist

George Warner Remembered

*A poem written
by Simon Grenville.*

*We were in rehearsal for what
George called Drama through Faith.
A play about the birth of Christ
There was tea break and George
started chatting to us informally.
As was often his way.
'You don't have to be in Church to
pray to God you know
I do it on my bicycle riding to work.
Sue does it while she does the
hoovering.
And Edna here does it hanging out
the washing'.*

*'Here we go', whispered my friend
Trevor the arch-traditionalist
Totally opposed to women's
ordination, or any change in liturgy.
He'd still have the mass in Latin if he
had his way.*

*'More Hippy Dippy ideas from
George.
He'll be asking us to stand on our
heads next'.*

*But George, ignoring the mutinous
mutterings
from the pew that Trevor occupied,
Continued
'Prayer isn't a special thing.
It should be like opening the morning
post,
Or brushing your teeth.*



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enjoying nourishment for the Body*

A Christmas Carol



*Rev'd Sharon Crofts,
Associate Minister
writes:*

I wonder if I asked you what your favourite Christmas Carol is and why, what would your answer be?

I'm not sure I have a favourite carol because I like so many of them, but one of them is 'In the bleak midwinter', written as a poem by Christina Rossetti, one of our well known English poets, and first published under the title of 'A Christmas Carol' in January 1872.

Rossetti's poem was initially set to music in 1906 by Gustav Holst who composed it with the intention of it being sung by a congregation. Harold Darke later composed his choral setting in 1909 and 'In the bleak midwinter' soon became a very popular carol – even being voted the best Christmas carol by choral experts in 2008.

For me, it's not the tune but the poem's words that stand out. It begins with setting a scene – a winter most unlikely or rarely experienced in Palestine but much more resonant with the English winters we all know.

The second and third verses speak of God incarnate entering into humanity and the majesty of an innocent baby born in the most humble circumstance. I wonder if, like me, you might feel at the beginning of verse two that there's a nod to Jesus' second coming here too?

Verse four then continues with the nativity story – the glory of the angels filling the skies before the shepherds — what an amazing sight that must have been – in contrast to the most intimate moments between a mother and her newborn – a beautiful kiss of adoring love.

The words that speak to my heart most, as I suspect it does for most Christians, are the words of the final verse. Jesus comes into the world to bring humanity the greatest gift we could ever

receive – the gift of God’s love, given in the person of Jesus, who will grow up and then die for us before he is raised to new life in eternal glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

This is God’s gift to us – a gift of the same, should we choose to accept it: to be agreeable to die to our sin and be raised to new life, an eternal one, in God and with God. God gifts this to us and we have nothing to do to earn it but simply accept the most precious gift that God offers in Jesus.



Christina Rossetti

In my experience it is a beautiful thing to give a gift with no expectation of the other, other than that they accept the gift we’ve given. Gifting makes us feel good doesn’t it?

The words of the last verse of Christina Rossetti’s ‘Christmas Carol’ encourage us to consider how we might respond to the wonderful gift of Jesus every Advent and Christmastide. Her question is simple and realistically succinct. The only possible thing we have to give in return to God’s gift given at Christmas is our heart, isn’t it?

Will you?

In the bleak mid-winter
Frosty wind made moan
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold Him
Nor earth sustain,
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty —
Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom cherubim
Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk
And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom Angels
Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
Which adore.

Angels and Archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air;
But only His Mother
In her maiden bliss
Worshipped the Beloved
With a kiss.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am? —
If I were a Shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man
I would do my part, —
Yet what I can I give Him, —
Give my heart.

Christina Rossetti, 1872

Mary, mother of the world



*John Howes,
Lay Worship
Leader,
writes:*

Last Advent, a friend was clearing some bookshelves and offered me an old volume of Victorian Christmas poetry. Most of it was a little too sweet for my taste, but I did happen upon a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins called *Mary Mother of Divine Grace compared to the air we breathe*. It's rather a strange and intriguing title, isn't it? What has Mary got to do with the air in our lungs?

I won't quote the whole poem here because it's rather long, but there are a few rather wonderful parts which might help you figure out what all this Christmas business is actually about. Take these lines:

*Mary Immaculate,
Merely a woman, yet
Whose presence, power is
Great as no goddess's
Was deemèd, dreamèd; who
This one work has to do —
Let all God's glory through,
God's glory which would go
Through her and from her flow
Off, and no way but so.*

Mary, being a human woman, has power greater than any goddess. She has one great work to do, to 'let all God's glory through'. What a beautiful thought. What if we thought about how we could let God's glory through ourselves and into the world?

A little bit more of the poem. According to Hopkins: 'She, wild web, wondrous robe, Mantles the guilty globe, since God has let dispense Her prayers His providence'. He seems to say that Mary takes on the sins of the world, wearing them like a cloak, as if she came ahead of the Christ figure whom we see taking on the sins of the world. Interesting.

And then Hopkins explains his title by saying, 'Men are meant to share Her life as life does air'. There is something beautiful and pure about these lines. We

are all partakers in her life of glory-fying the world, letting the glory of God into what can be dark places in our lives. This is as much of our existence as breathing the air around us.

Hopkins says that Mary is an intermediary who makes Christ accessible for us, *'And her hand leaves His light Sifted to suit our sight'*.

And his final plea to Mary goes like this:

*Stir in my ears, speak there
Of God's love, O live air,
Of patience, penance, prayer;
World-mothering air, air wild,
Wound with thee, in thee isled,
Fold home, fast fold thy child.*

The air and Mary have become one, and they are 'world-mothering', caring for the earth and everyone in it, yet retaining the wildness and unpredictability of creation.

Here we get some advice on how we can speak of God's love — by showing patience, by doing penance, and by praying. These are three activities which are not easy to do, and I wouldn't say I'm very good at any of them. But Hopkins seems to open up a possible pathway for us here.

Last month, I spent some time in Yorkshire and came across this sculpture in Wakefield Cathedral. It is by Ian Judd, also well-known for depicting the great writer J.B.Priestley. The cathedral work caught my eye because Mary is depicted almost like a Buddha,

sitting cross-legged whilst hanging on to the infant Jesus. Apparently the intention behind the work is to make it accessible, and the stone has been worn down over the decades where people have touched it, perhaps seeking healing, or peace, or hope, or experience of wonder.



How many works of art are we encouraged to interact with by touching them? Not that many, and that is why Judd's Madonna and Child is so popular with cathedral visitors. It makes Mary approachable and everyday, yet retains that mysterious sense of an encounter with someone special and — as Hopkins suggests — greater than any goddess we might conjure up.

In this season of Advent and Christmas, can we find time to reflect on the mystery of Mary, both as a woman like us, but also the God-bearer who has mothered the world and helped to bring about our salvation?

Seats for the Saints

*Simon Armstead
reflects on sitting
in the pews of
St Andrew's Church*

Sitting quietly beside the pillars of buff and pink stone, St Andrew's Church holds one of our parish's most remarkable treasures; our beautifully crafted William Butterfield pews, designed with as much theological conviction as architectural precision.

St Andrew's was largely rebuilt by William Butterfield between 1877 and 1879, and we are justly proud to have one of the most complete Butterfield churches in the land. His hand can be seen everywhere: in the richly coloured sanctuary of marble and polychrome, the stencilled ceilings, tiled floors and walls, carved capitals, and oak pulpit on clustered marble columns. Even the doors bear exuberant ironwork of Butterfield's own design, every surface alive with craftsmanship and faith.

A revolution in church seating

In the 1880s, Butterfield published *Church Seats and Kneeling Boards* (1885, 2nd ed. 1886). He sought to reform the '*pew traditions*' of the past, those high-backed, box-like enclosures that separated families and fostered inequality in worship. His designs, he argued, should express reverence, and order and

serve dignified worship according to the Book of Common Prayer, not '*smells and bells*', but beauty shaped by discipline and devotion.

Butterfield's great innovation was the fixed kneeling-board. Rejecting the messy hassocks of his day (*'dirty, clumsy, untidy, and perishable'*, he called them), he designed a simple board, five inches from the floor, allowing everyone, rich or poor, to kneel comfortably and equally. It was a profoundly theological gesture as well as a practical one. As Canon T. W. Perry, Vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Ardleigh, Essex, later wrote in gratitude, '*You have made my people kneel*'.

Craftsmanship, comfort, and curious details

Every dimension of Butterfield's design was guided by reverence and practicality. The kneeling-board, raised five inches and set eleven inches from the seat in front, '*allows the worshipper to kneel at a natural, restful angle, neither straining the joints, nor so low as to soil the knees on the floor*'. The flattened pew-top '*gives a comfortable resting point for the arms*', while the seat-back supports the spine when sitting and frees the shoulders when kneeling.

Even the smallest details reveal his thoughtfulness, and a glint of humour. '*I have shown the hat of each person deposited on the further side of his own kneeling-board*', he wrote, '*entirely free of the possibility*

of its being kicked by the person to whom it does not belong'.

Butterfield's accompanying illustration shows this perfectly: gentlemen kneeling in neat rows, top hats safely stowed in the correct Butterfield-approved position.

Our St Andrew's pews embody these principles beautifully. Not only elegant in proportion and line, but still serving their purpose more than a century later. They are a quiet yet eloquent part of our story: the places where generations have knelt in Advent longing, Christmas joy, and Easter hope.

A seat in the nation's collection

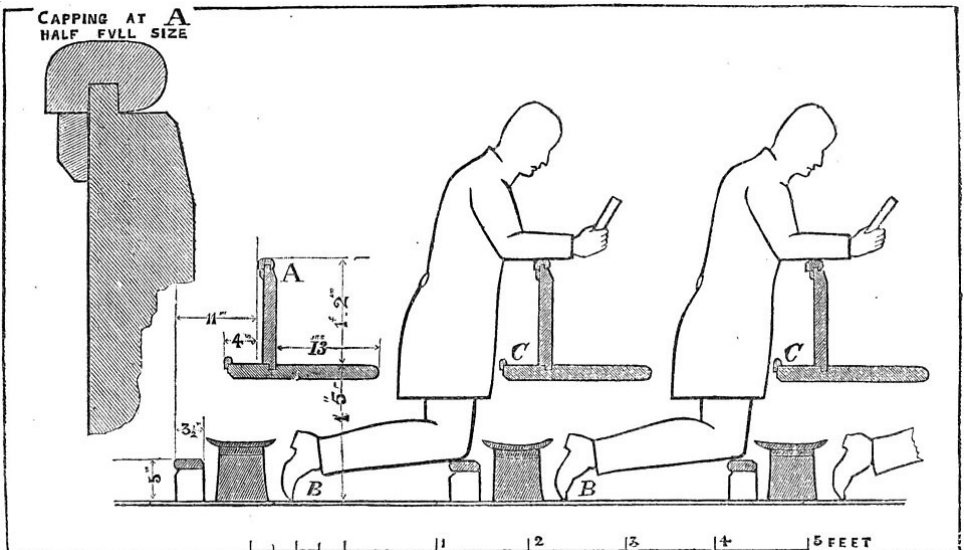
So admired are Butterfield's designs that one of the original St Andrew's pews now resides in the Victoria &

Albert Museum, London, a testament to their artistic and historical importance. A pew from our own church, among the nation's design treasures! It's rather nice to think that a little piece of St Andrew's now rests in South Kensington; our very own '*seat of learning and of faith*'.

A place to rest and to rise

This Christmas, as we once again fill these pews for carols and candlelight, may we give thanks for the quiet faith and craftsmanship that shaped them. Butterfield's vision was that even the furniture of the Church should help us to pray — that we might sit upright, kneel humbly, and stand together as one people before God.

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace'. (*Luke 2:14*)



Butterfield's designs for church seating, including a safe place for men's hats.

The Holy Land: The land of the holy



*Rev'd Canon
Sue Hardwick
writes:*

*O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see the lie . . .*

For very many years, I have dreamt of spending Christmas in Bethlehem, but commitments have never made it possible. I have dreamt of joining in the joyous Christmas walk of Christian witness; admiring the beautifully decorated Manger Square with the gigantic tree at its centre; worshipping in the Church of the Nativity built over the place of Jesus' birth; and so many other wondrous experiences and celebrations.

When I first visited Bethlehem in May 1995, then again several times since, although many checkpoints, there was no 26ft high security wall. Begun in 2002, weaving its way across the countryside and through towns and farmland, separating Bethlehem from Jerusalem and so many other places. Were Mary and Joseph alive today, I have been told, they would not be able to make their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Since my visits, more and more has separated and divided those living in this land; not only physically but psychologically, emotionally and spiritually as well. Where there are great barriers, great walls of suspicion and lack of trust and compassion are also built.

For the past two years, there have been only very muted Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem. Partly because of the lack of tourists, for whose income the town very much depends, and partly because the people of Bethlehem have not felt it right to celebrate whilst others in their land suffer so.

As I write this I mid-October, a cease-fire has been declared and Israeli hostages are being exchanged for Palestinian prisoners. There is great jubilation. Yet, at the same time, much underlying tension and suspicion that this cease-fire, too, will not hold. It seems as if the world watches and is collectively holding its breath. It is a time of much history. A time of much emotion. By the time you read this, at Christmastime, much will have happened. What that will be, only the future can tell.

*Be still, for the presence of the Lord
Is moving in this place ...*

On that first Christmas, over 2000 years ago, a tiny baby was born, in a stable, in what was then a back-water town, also in an occupied land. One tiny beam of radiant light, that would shine out to encompass a world so desperately in need of it.

*Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around.*

And each and every Christmas we are reminded that Christ is re-born every moment of every day ... renewing and restoring and healing – and showing us the way to a world filled with hope and love and joy and wonder.

*Jesus, who breaks down vast
barriers.
Who makes the impossible possible.*

Bethlehem 2025

The Christian presence is diminishing as life there becomes impossible for many to sustain.

But those who can, remain. They are like beacons of light and hope, channels of God's love to all in the Land of the Holy.

And wherever Christians are in the world, we, too, are called to be beacons of light and hope: channels of God's love in and to the world.

*How silently, how silently,
The wondrous Gift is given
When God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.*

Tips on Christmas Shopping

by Ann Evans

I love to find a bargain,
You know I really do.
Buying three very nice things
And paying for only two.

Christmas shopping I'm there
Spot me mixing and matching
With other bargain hunters
I think it must be catching.

Buy two get the third for free
And what is clever and nice
Is to select three things
All around the same price.

Look for bargain offers,
Buy lots of Christmas pud.
You might not eat till Easter
But it will still taste just as good.

Once Christmas is over
It's the January Sales.
I'll go rooting through clothing
Hanging limply off the rails.

*Ann Evans was born in Coventry.
She was a feature writer on the
Coventry Telegraph for 13 years. She
has written 38 books in a variety of
genres and has won a number of
awards as a novelist.*

*The poem was sent in by Simon
Grenville.*

‘My starry wings I do forsake, loves highway of humility take’

*Rev'd Peter Beresford
offers a fresh perspective
on Christmas*

‘Have you started your Christmas shopping yet?’ Like many others we as a family do tend to leave looking for Christmas gifts for our family and friends until December — but some people don’t.

When I worked in Harrods in the late 1960’s I remember the surprise I felt when I first noticed Christmas stock being offered for sale in October. This rarely happened in Rugby at that time. Today many of our shops here in the town have been stocking and selling Christmas goods since the autumn. Purchasing Christmas gifts on line weeks in advance has also become very popular in recent years.

It is a joy to both give and receive gifts — but, as we all know, it is too easy that the One whose birthday we are celebrating is thought about very little. As we prepare to enjoy our times of meeting and feasting it can be that He, Jesus, is left outside in the cold and the dark. How often do we all need to be reminded that ‘Jesus is the reason for the season!’

Many readers will be looking forward to coming to the various services and other events here at St Andrew’s and elsewhere during Advent and Christmas this year. Familiar

readings and much loved carols will be heard and sung afresh — but I love to have at least one carol or reading that brings a freshness of understanding and experience to the truth and wonder of Christ’s birth. For me this year it is a poem that I have ‘re-discovered’ in a book called ‘Love is my meaning: an Anthology of Assurance’. This poem, that I have slightly adapted, is by HRL Shepperd, and is quoted by Evelyn Underhill. It says everything to me about the Incarnation. I would love to share it with you:

*I come in the little things, says the
Lord.*

*Not borne on morning wings of
Majesty, but I have set my feet
Amidst the delicate and bladed
wheat*

*That springs triumphant in the
furrowed earth —*

*There do I dwell, in weakness and in
power:*

*Not broken or divided, saith our God!
In your own garden plot I come to
flower:*

*About your porch my vine — meek,
fruitful, doth entwine:*

*Waits, at the threshold, love’s
appointed hour.*

*I come in the little things, saith the
Lord:*

*Yes! on the glancing wings of eager
birds, the softly pattering feet,
Of furred and gentle beasts, I come
to meet your hard and
wayward heart.*

*In brown bright eyes that outward
peep, I stand confess on every
nest
Where feathery patience is content to
brood,
And leaves her pleasure for the high
privilege of parenthood.
There doth my Godhead rest.*

*I come in the little things, saith the
Lord:
My starry wings I do forsake,
Loves highway of humility take:
Meekly I fit my stature to your need.
In beggar's part about your gates I
shall not cease to plead
As man to speak with man — till by
such art
I shall achieve my immemorial plan,
Pass the low lintel of the human
heart.*

That last verse says everything to me about the truth and importance of the Incarnation — of the reason why, in God's love for the human race, He sent his dear Son to live amongst us - to make himself known, through the vulnerability of a fellow human being. Truly man and truly God. So let us, this Christmas, picture afresh Mary, Joseph and their baby son in Bethlehem. The shepherds and the wise men — and we too — ALL need to stoop 'under the low lintel' of the scruffy stable door, and of our human hearts, if we are to see Christ, the new-born King. 'Emmanuel, God is with us'.

May we like the shepherds and the wise men, bring our gifts — but most of all bring ourselves — to lay before him this Christmas. 'Come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!'



Second Saturday Songs

**All are welcome at 10.30am
on Saturday 13 December**

*to join Annie Boyd and
The St Andrew's Community Choir
for a sing-along of all your favourite
Christmas Carols to start your Festive Season.*

Everyone is welcome.

A Short Seasonal Story

written by John Howes

Father Peter switched off the lights in the sacristy and walked, disconsolately, through the churchyard and into the high street. Christmas Eve... and where was he?

Another poor attendance, another sermon ignored, another service going through the motions. Hark the Herald Angels sang — but for whom?

On the corner, beside the newspaper kiosk, a traveller had set up a stall roasting hot chestnuts. There were no takers.

‘You’re out late’, said Father Peter. ‘I’m waiting, father’, said the seller. ‘Something special is about to happen’.

‘What?’ asked the priest, perplexed. ‘Up there’, said the man, pointing to the heavens.

Jesus? Santa? What could he mean? thought Father Peter.

‘A shower, Father. A meteor shower. Look! Here it is!’

Father Peter looked up. Glories streamed from heaven afar, something more splendid, more awe-inspiring than he’d ever seen. Light from millions of years ago poured into the sky.

It didn’t prove his faith was true. It didn’t make his sermon come to life.

But it caused him to wonder. To wonder whether some great hand had flung these stars into place. And for Father Peter, on this Christmas night, that was enough. For now.



Bereavement Point

at St Andrew’s Church



Where Your Grief Is Welcome

Meets on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Tuesdays
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To find out more and join us,
telephone 07342 086276

or email: sharon.crofts@rugbychurch.org.uk



University Hospitals
Coventry and Warwickshire

Parish news in pictures



Ukrainian Women's Choir sing at the Service on Ukrain's Independence Day.



Parish Pilgrimage to Coventry Cathedral on Sunday, 26 October 2025

Abseiling for Myton Hospices

*Sarah Stott writes
about her experience
of abseiling down
Coventry Cathedral*

When I arrived at Coventry Cathedral it was like a festival experience, having performers singing, various stalls and everybody having a fantastic time. After checking in and being stamped on the hand, I went off into the cathedral to gear up. There were about nine other people which had been slotted in at the same time, so the atmosphere was friendly but you could feel the anxiety too.

The trainers helped us to secure our harnesses, gloves and helmets and then we were directed to climb the 120 steps up to a small hatch. Once the climb was achieved there was a small set of ladders which led onto the roof. This was the first moment of me being fretful and I thought, I am going onto a roof! Throwing myself into it I threw myself over and landed on the metal roof. I tried to gather my bearings and thought to myself, this is really real now.

Hanging around for a bit so the other group got down first, we had a group photograph with the spire as the backdrop and had a last minute safety check to see if everyone was alright and then we filtered between the three instructors.

Accepting my fate and having been called, I then went forward and the instructor got me hooked up to the



lines. He then instructed me on how the rope works and how to grip it and was told to go around the wall and find the piece of 2 by 4 which was secured to another line. This was the second time I hesitated, as I had to place my trust in a stranger with my life and finally managed to find my footing in the end and hung off the side of the building.

The photographer, Simon Coates, was going around cheering people up and hanging over the roof to get action shots and hopefully managed to get a relaxed smile out of me.

The instructor was also fantastic and helped me relax and helped me follow the instructions until I found solid ground. I really enjoyed myself and the experience. I would definitely do the same thing again.

With the generosity of others I had managed to raise about £230 and I want to thank everybody that helped support a really worthwhile cause.

Who's Who at St Andrew's

- Rector:** The Rev'd Canon Dr Edmund Newey
01788 574313 mobile: 07414 904931
rector@rugbychurch.org.uk *Note: Day off Saturday*
- Associate Minister (Compassionate Communities):**
The Rev'd Sharon Crofts, sharon.crofts@rugbychurch.org
- Associate Minister (Mission Hub):** The Rev'd Alison Baxter,
missionhub@rugbychurch.org.uk
- Retired Clergy:** The Rev'd Pam Gould, The Rev'd Canon Graham Hardwick,
The Rev'd Peter Privett, The Rev'd Peter Beresford
- Curate:** The Rev'd Dr James Sampson-Foster,
james.sampsonfoster@rugbychurch.org.uk
- Ordinand:** Helen Bryant, helen.bryant@rugbychurch.org.uk
- Lay Ministers:** Sue Goddard, Gwyneth Hickman, Sue Minton
- Community Engagement Lead:** Joanna Bryan, joanna.bryan@rugbychurch.org.uk
- Director of Music:** William Uglow, directorofmusic@rugbychurch.org.uk
- Young Choristers' Trainer:** Rachel Cliffe, youngchoristers@rugbychurch.org.uk
- St Andrew's Community Singers:**
Amie Boyd amiemusic01@gmail.com
- Administrator:** Kate Foster, 01788 565609, office@rugbychurch.org.uk
- Wardens:** Joyce Woodings, warden1@rugbychurch.org.uk
Hash Mistry, warden2@rugbychurch.org.uk
- Assistant Warden:** Ian Sheppard, asstwarden1@rugbychurch.org.uk
- Bell Tower Captain:** Christine Homer



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