

Christmas 2023
Issue 21

As we return to more familiar patterns of worship, we urge everyone to continue to be cautious.

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 24 .

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

Deadline:
Sunday, 25 February
2024
(Easter Edition)

*Suggested
Contribution 75p*



The Flight Into Egypt.

Sadly, thousands are still fleeing for their lives into Egypt.

**Born in the night, Mary's Child,
A long way from your home.**

Eco Gold This Christmas



*Rev'd Canon
Dr Edmund
Newey
writes:*

As I write it's not long since we celebrated the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi with a Blessing of Animals at May Blossom Farm. Sheep, goats, rabbits, dogs and a tortoise were all present, and many other beloved animals came in the hearts and minds of those who were there. As the text of the Benedicite on the walls of St Andrew's says, 'O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever'!

The Christian faith doesn't have an unblotted copybook when it come to our treatment of animals. Sometimes the 'dominion' granted to Adam in Genesis has been read as 'domination', the right to do as we please with the creatures with whom we share the planet. But 'dominion' and 'domination' are very different things: dominion implies stewardship, husbandry and care – using our unique human gifts to allow the different but equally unique gifts of our fellow creatures to flourish alongside us. The companionship between us and the animals represented by a beloved pet is a wonderful example of this sort of mutual flourishing.

A proper Christian understanding of creation strives to discover the presence of Christ in every living thing. One of my theological mentors, Professor Graham Ward, has a lovely phrase about 'the watermark of Christ' visible in all things, if only we will lift them up to the light. In the divine light we can see that a tree praises God in its own way simply by being a tree. So does a goat or a tortoise. And so do we when, by the light of grace, we give voice to creation's praise, caring for our fellow creatures and the natural environment we share with them by our worship and service and mission.

A lovely mediaeval Christmas legend tells of the so-called 'dumb animals' being given the gift of speech on the night of Jesus's birth. The legend is beautifully portrayed in a stained glass window by John Piper in St Mary's, Iffley, near Oxford. Five animals in and around a tree speak in what, for the western Middle Ages, was self-evidently God's native tongue: Latin!

*'Christus natus est' (Christ is born),
proclaims the cockerel at the
top of the tree.
'Quando, quando?' (When?),
asks the goose below him.
'In haec nocte' (This very night),
answers the crow.
'Ubi, ubi?' (Where?),
hoots the owl
Bethlem, Bethlem',
replies the lamb.*

What a beautiful depiction this is: creation responding in harmonious unity to the coming of the Saviour. Gathered on and around the Tree of Life that is Christ, the animals point each other to his presence at the heart of all things. This is the message at the heart of Christmas: that our living Lord is with us in all that lives, if only we will honour it as we should. Our fellow creatures point us in the right direction and if we follow their lead we will win Eco Gold indeed!



*The window from
St Mary's Church, Iffley,
can be found at:
[https://commons.
wikimedia.org/wiki/
File:St_Mary,_Iffley,_
Piper_window.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St_Mary,_Iffley,_Piper_window.jpg)*

What We Can Learn From The Railway Children



*John Howes,
Worship Leader,
writes:*

There is little doubt that the television schedules this Christmas will include the film version of *The Railway Children* at some stage. This nostalgic classic guarantees a warm feeling of satisfaction and a rewarding couple of hours in front of the screen.

For those who don't know the story, it features a well-to-do London family in Edwardian times who find themselves forced to move to Yorkshire and 'play at being poor' after their father is arrested on what turns out to be false charges of spying. The children — Roberta, Peter and Phyllis — become fascinated by the steam railway not far from The Three Chimneys where they are living. The train seems to bring them hope and gradually changes their lives.

The story was written in 1905 by Edith Nesbit, who was a member of the Fabian Society, a gathering of intellectuals — including H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw — who met to talk about how society could be improved and to address some of the injustices of early 20th century Britain.

Nesbit co-founded the society and was on the committee which produced its first tract, 'Why are the many poor?' including this line: 'A few are very rich, some well off, the majority in poverty and a large number in misery'.

She was particularly concerned about the plight of children and put them at the centre of her stories, believing they had the power to change the world for the better.

So she created her vision of the perfect society and based it in Oakworth, Yorkshire — where the children first step off the train after their long journey from the capital.

Interestingly, the film begins at Christmas, opening with a charming scene of present-giving: Peter is particularly pleased with his model steam engine which proceeds to explode. This scene of family cosiness is interrupted by the arrival of two policemen to arrest their father.

The Christmas setting is an invention of the film-makers. It does not appear in Nesbit's novel, but I do think it gives the film a wonderful beginning and highlights the family's shock as the tragedy begins to unfold: from the very best of times to the very worst.



A few weeks ago, I visited Oakworth Station on a wet and windy autumnal afternoon. At first, I thought it was closed but we pushed open the door and found the coal fire well lit in the waiting room. The stationmaster appeared, appropriately dressed in Edwardian uniform, and, correctly assuming we were fans of *The Railway Children*, proceeded to give us a guided tour of the station. He took us to the Ladies' Waiting Room where the children had entertained the Old Gentleman. He showed us where the 'scruffy Russian' had sat and where Perks, the station porter, lived. Most important of all, he showed us where actress Jenny Agutter had stood, waiting for the steam to clear, in that memorable scene where she is reunited with 'Daddy, my daddy'. Who can fail to shed a tear at this wonderful moment, treasured across more than 50 years, by people who love this film?

Part-way through our discussion with the stationmaster, the bells started ringing and he sprinted off to open the level crossing gates to let another train into the station. 'Perks must be about his business,' he joked. Alas, it was not the

Scotch Flyer seen in the movie, but a diesel train bringing holiday-makers to the station.

Why is Oakworth so special? Edith Nesbit used a real place in her story but created an imaginary community where everything worked out. This was her vision of how life could be — each person in that village helped those in need and this was not dependent on people's class or position in society, but purely on the basis of who needed assistance and who could provide it.



Jenny Agutter in The Railway Children

Perhaps we may view this as rather an idealistic view of humanity but it is not a million miles away from the very first Christian community described in Acts. In a troubling year for many people in our world, let us use this film, and everything it stands for, to remind ourselves that there is still great goodness in people which can be harnessed to make the world a better place. There are still ways to resolve our differences without resorting to violence. We are all members of the human race; ultimately we are all the same. We are all one.

We can't all go to Oakworth, and it doesn't really exist in the perfect format anyway, but we can create our own Oakworths here and now by believing in the magic of community, starting this Christmas. All aboard, everyone.

News From The Towers



*Christine Homer,
Bell Captain,
writes:*

It doesn't feel a long time since my previous article: the summer has passed quickly, and with most of our band (myself included) taking holidays during the last two to three months, we have sometimes been short of ringers. We are lucky to have a nice set of five bells to ring when we have less than eight ringers present, although I have sometimes failed to wait long enough for late arrivals before selecting to ring in the West tower on a Sunday morning, and had people sitting out each time!

As expected, we are now ringing a lot of rounds for our learners, and they are getting better at this, which is good progress. Ringing rounds unaided is the point at which beginners can call themselves 'real' ringers who are useful to a band. It is also the qualification for membership of our local ringer's guild (The Coventry Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers). There is a lot more you can learn about ringing after that, but it can all be done in smaller — and easier — steps than the initial 'learning to ring and control a bell safely' phase.

We have had another group of visitors, this time from Bristol, with the organiser revisiting the area he learned to ring in (he was taught at Bilton, and says he was a regular visitor to Rugby). They went on to ring at Coventry Cathedral after they left us.

We are still waiting to hear about a date for the training bell installation, although we've heard there has been some progress on making them in the Foundry. These are bell fittings with weights instead of a real bell, to allow training without a bell sounding outside: would you like to be one of our first trainees to learn on it? We hope we will know more before the next magazine is due.

We are now planning for Advent and Christmas: tunes on handbells, our annual dinner, an entry in the Christmas tree festival, ringing for the extra services. It's always a busy time, but good fun! I hope you enjoy the festive season too, do listen out for our contributions.

Advent and Christmas Services

Saturday 2 December, 19.30:

Manchester Carols

Sunday 3 December:

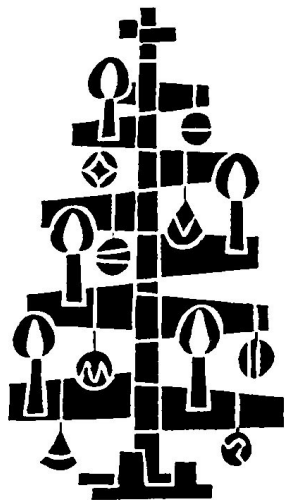
08.00 - BCP Communion

10.30 - Choral Eucharist

18.00 - Advent Carol Service

Friday 8 December, 18.00:

The Air Ambulance Carol Concert



Sunday 24 December:

08.00 - BCP Communion

10.30 - Choral Eucharist

16.00 - Christingle Service II

23.30 - Midnight Mass

Monday 25 December:

10.30 - Festal Eucharist

Sunday 31 December:

08.00 - BCP Communion

10.30 - Choral Eucharist



Saturday 9 December:

17.00 - Lantern Parade

Sunday 10 December:

08.00 - BCP Communion

10.30 - Choral Eucharist

18.00 - Choral Evensong

Tuesday 12 December, 19.00:

Rotary Tree of Light Service

Sunday 17 December:

08.00 - BCP Communion

10.30 - Choral Eucharist

18.00 - Christmas Carol Service
of Nine Lessons and Carols

Saturday 23 December, 16.00:

Christingle Service I



Advent: A Time Of Waiting



*Rev'd Alison Baxter,
Associate Minister
with responsibility
for the Mission Hub,
reminds us of some
of the themes of
Advent:*

I don't know about you but I HATE waiting for anything! I am never good at waiting, either in a queue, waiting for an event to occur or waiting to meet someone.

I think the reason for my impatience is that in the fast paced world that we live in we are used to instant everything. A full meal can be reheated within minutes, text messages can be sent worldwide in seconds, news travels the moment it happens, and for many people almost anything they could ever want or need is generally only a short drive from their homes at the nearest superstore. All of this fosters a tendency to want what we want when we want it.

This mindset often carries over into our spiritual lives with us wanting God to act NOW!

God rarely does things according to our timeframe, and because of this we can easily get discouraged. We can sometimes think that it's because we've done something wrong and God is mad at us or that he just doesn't care.

In the Gospels we see this happening to Mary and Martha while they are waiting on Jesus to come and heal their brother, Lazarus. When Jesus finally shows up, He is accused of taking too long.

Sometimes though you just have to wait. This is what the writer of Ecclesiastes refers to:

*For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant,
and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones,*

*and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace,
and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep,
and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence,
and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.*

God has His own timing which is always in accord with His perfect wisdom.

Stories Demonstrating Waiting On God

The Bible is full of stories of people having to wait on God, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David, Daniel, Jesus, Paul and countless others. Stories that show us that God often uses our time of waiting to develop us as people.

We are shortly about to enter a time of advent, a time of waiting which we do with eager anticipation. This is highlighted by the theological themes we visit throughout this period.

Thinking what the Advent Candles mean

The first advent candle we light represents us waiting with a sense of hope. What is it that we are waiting for in hope? I know for myself it is for the conflict in the Ukraine, Gaza and Israel to be resolved. Let's be honest, this is a hope many of us have carried over the years, where there have been several times of conflict but also times of peace. In

hope we cry out to God the words of Psalm 13: *'Oh God, how long must I wait'*. Yet we need to be reassured by the words from John's gospel: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* The second candle of advent symbolizes peace. In our world that seems to be so chaotic with government policies changing all the time, with frequent culture shifts, with bad news we didn't know was going to come, it can be difficult to find peace as our foundations are often rocked.

It's so easy to equate this with the world definition of peace. The Webster dictionary definition of peace defines this state as this: *a state of tranquility or quiet: such as freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions.* Yet this is the world's definition.

The words of the serenity prayer show that a state of peace is not something we can achieve ourselves but through prayer. Specifically the words of the serenity prayer: *God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.*

We need to live one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardships as the pathway to peace and relying on the promise given to us in John's Gospel: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

The third candle of advent

symbolizes joy. Some may view joy and happiness as the same thing. A feeling of being content and filled with pleasure. However, we should remember that joy is something much more spiritual and intentional. So, what is the difference between happiness and joy?

Pablo Diaz says this: ‘Whereas happiness is shaped by external circumstances, joy is found deep within. ... Unless we are intentional in discovering the gift of joy in ordinary things, it will not happen’. I don’t know about you but for me that sounds like a lot of hard work. When I’m feeling down I’m so grateful that a sense of joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit that we can call upon God to give us.

*Love: A Powerful
Force In The World*

Finally the fourth candle of advent symbolises love. One of the most powerful forces in the world. It can be uplifting, life-changing, and sometimes even devastating. But what exactly is love?

Love can be the love we feel for our families, or friends, or our significant others. It can be the love we feel for ourselves. But could love also be something deeper? Novelist Paulo Coelho said that loving others brings us closer to our spirituality.

Understanding love better helps us understand God. ‘God and love are synonymous’, says minister Oswald Chambers. ‘Love is not an attribute of God, it is God; whatever God is, love is’.

So, my prayer for you this advent is that however you spend it that you do so, not just by opening chocolate calendars, but by pursuing these three attributes: Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

I also pray that as leader of the mission hub, along with Edmund, that we share this message with the town of Rugby. There is SO much more to Christmas and the approach to it than our secular society leads us to believe. Let’s all do our part in sharing this mission. Especially with the visitors who will come to the Church over this period.

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Some Christmas
Gift Suggestions

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To your enemy, forgiveness

To an opponent, tolerance

To a friend, your heart

To a customer, service

To all, charity

To your family, unity

To every child,
patience and a good example

To yourself, respect and peace

To creation, care

To give and not to count the cost.

.....



Bereavement Point

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Rugby, CV21 3PT

Where Your Grief Is Welcome

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Compassionatecw@uhcw.nhs.uk

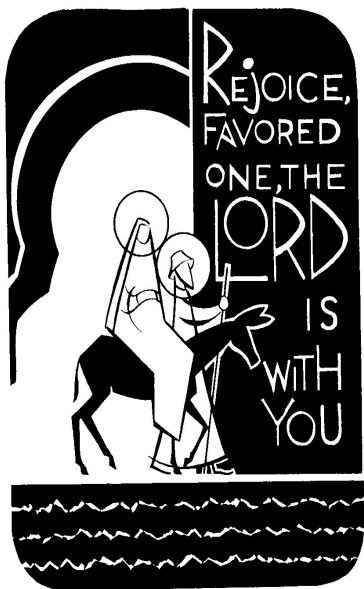


University Hospitals
Coventry and Warwickshire
NHS Trust

If Mary Had Said No . . .

If Mary had said, 'No!
Ain't no baby going to grow
inside my womb –
find some other woman to give house room
to the Son of God'.

If Mary had said, 'Hey!
You'll have to find another way.
Keep your Spirit off of me
and find a meeker woman to be
the mother of God'.



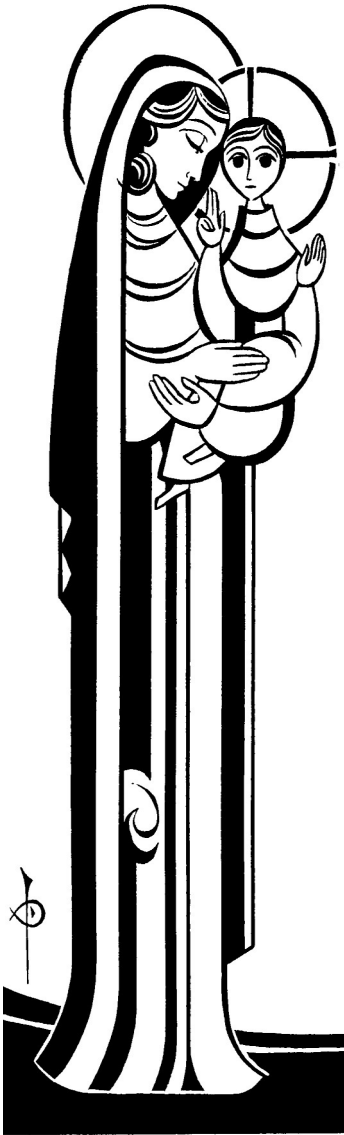
If she'd sent that angel back to the sky
I guess young Mary would have passed us by,
cos be she ever so gentle and ever so good
I'm betting that without motherhood
she'd never have made it into Scripture.
If she wanted to be in the biblical picture
she'd have to get healed to find her fame,
and chances are we'd never know her name.

If Mary had said, 'Oi!
I don't care what you're calling the boy,
he don't belong in my family –
he ain't coming between my Joseph and me,
that child of God'.

If Mary had said 'No',
Gabriel would've had to just go
if God is a God who honours free will
and doesn't force co-operation just for the thrill.
I wouldn't blame Mary for getting lairy –
the task ahead must've looked proper scary!

But...

Then would God have found another virgin –
someone meeker, weaker, with the urge
inside of her to bear the child,
someone obedient, gentle, mild –
if Mary wasn't willing enough,
if she'd summoned her feminism, told God 'tough'?



Or would God have reviewed the situation,
put on hold the incarnation,
powered down the special star,
sent the wise men back to lands afar,
cancelled the booking for the animals' manger,
leaving Bethlehem with nothing stranger
than shepherds warming round a fire –
a night off for the angel choir,
a silent night in the Little Town,
nothing much really going down?

Perhaps it was good that Mary was mild
and couldn't say 'No' to bearing the child.
If she'd had the guts to stand up for her right
would there be no miracle that Christmas night?
If she'd stood her ground for womankind,
would there be no salvation for humankind?

Or...

What if Mary's 'passive humility'
was really an act of proud femininity?
What if she willingly claimed her place
in God's awesome, astounding act of grace?
What if her role in that first Advent
was a confident, assertive act of consent?
What if she wasn't being passively 'good',
but striking a blow for the sisterhood?

Maybe Mary understood
that God had a plan and the plan was good,
but that if God was going to save the world,
what God needed most was a kick-ass girl.
If earth was going to receive its King
God needed things only Mary could bring.
No use coming top in any meekness tests –
What was needed was a womb and a pair of breasts,
and a woman's courage and a hell of a faith
and a rough, tough, female kind of grace.
At the most amazing moment in history
God needed Mary – this is *her* story!

This poem was written by Catrin Harland-Davies. Catrin is a tutor in biblical studies and Director of the Centre for Continuing Ministerial Development, at The Queen's Foundation in Birmingham. She was previously the Methodist Chaplain at the University of Sheffield, where she spent many rewarding hours putting the world to rights with students, over coffee and cake. Her research interests centre around the New Testament, in particular the epistles, with a focus on the Jewish and Graeco-Roman context within which the early church came into being. She is also interested in the ways in which our biblical interpretation shapes our present-day understanding of the church's vocation, ministry and discipleship. She is also a terrible drummer, an occasional (and slow) runner, and an enthusiastic walker.

In God's Own Time



*Rev'd Canon
Sue Hardwick
writes:*

In 1898, locked in the Antarctic ice for more than a year, the crew of the steamship R.V. Belgica had but one goal: to survive the long winter night without losing their sanity. 'We are as hopelessly isolated as if we were on the surface of Mars, and we are plunging still deeper and deeper into the white Antarctic silence', wrote the ship's doctor, Frederick Cook.

The crew were pushed to the limits of endurance by the vast range of extremes and potentially disastrous events. Dr Cook's ingenuity, wisdom and knowledge has been credited for their survival. Finally, he insisted the crew saw through a mile of ice to escape to their freedom — and a heroes welcome home.

Today, the Belgica's voyage has drawn parallels with interplanetary travel in the 21st century, as space agencies study the crew's experiences while preparing for a mission to Mars. A key advisor to NASA has drawn on the Belgica's journals to plan interplanetary space missions, declaring the Antarctic winter is as good a stand-in for Mars as can be found on Earth — especially as the Belgica's crew had no quick way out, as subjects in simulators now do.

Who could have imagined, on that beleaguered ship in 1898, that their ice-trapped experiences which had narrowed down to an hour to hour fight for survival against all odds, would be resurrected over 120 years later into important insights about surviving life on Mars.

It was as if the relevance of their experiences had not stayed trapped in that ice, but was being preserved and waiting to be re-born at the right moment, the right time, to help enlighten future generations to discover previously unimaginably vast truths about God's creation.

So often we can pray passionately and fervently, with all our hearts and souls, for a particular outcome for some thing, some situation, only to feel disappointed/bewildered/with a sense, perhaps, that God couldn't have been listening ... but then to find at some, maybe much later, date that our prayer *has* been answered and maybe, too, in a way that is far more fitting and appropriate and right — in God's own wise way and in God's own time.

God's time and our human time are so often at such great variance: God's perspective and vastly grand scale versus our so-limited human idea of time.

However, we are assured that nothing we do or say is lost, or falls on 'deaf ears', where God is concerned ... how much more so our prayers.

One of my favourite poets, the fiery Welsh priest R. S. Thomas described it thus:

*Prayers like gravel
flung at the sky's
window, trying to attract
the loved one's attention. ...
I would have refrained long since
but that peering once
through my locked fingers
I thought I detected
the movement of a curtain ...**

In those far-off days, before the birth of Christ, how often and how long must believers have prayed fervently and passionately for the Coming of the Saviour of the world.

Then, one wondrous day ...

In God's own time ...

Angels and peasants and heavenly choirs. Donkeys and Magi. A stable and a palace ... such a small and unimportant part of the world, an occupied land. ... The simplicity and smallness alongside and interwoven with the vastness and time-shattering significance of the Birth of our Saviour.

And, in the centre of it all, a rough feeding trough filled with animals' straw. A baby boy, wrapped in the traditional swaddling bands, caught in the pin-point of the whole force of God's laser focus, the still eye of the storm of Life and Love, as Creation stopped and held its breath ... whilst the crowded life of Bethlehem continued to circle and swirl around.

God's Vision. God's Miracle. ... And from there His focused and concentrated beam of light, ever widening, spreading out to encompass and embrace, lighting up the world, destroying darkness. ...

Each year, we celebrate the amazing, the wondrous story of Christmas, recalling this most momentous event of our world, with our beloved and familiar traditions. And yet, each year, it all still feels as fresh and new-born into our hearts and minds and souls, as that first time.

Have a wondrous, a beautiful, Christmas!

* 'Folk Tale' in *The Echoes Return Slow*.

The Holy Family: Not Just For Christmas

*Rev'd Peter
Privett,
writes and
invites us to
'Open the vestry
door to see some
Godly Play'*



Here is the Holy Family.

When you see something like this you are usually told that you are not allowed to touch it.

But in this room this is for you. You can touch this and work with it when you need to.



Here is the Christ Child. He is reaching out his arms to give you a hug.

These words and the figures of the Holy Family are at the heart of a Godly Play space that we have here in the vestry at St Andrew's.

The family is inclusive. It is more than Jesus, Mary and Joseph. This Holy Family includes shepherds, sheep, donkeys, cows and wise ones. Behind is a risen Christ who is now able to hug the whole world, and perhaps embrace the cosmos.

So read again what I've written. Read it slowly. Read between the lines.

As you read wonder what you like most. As you read wonder what might be most important for you. As you read notice what might be about you. Read what might be behind these words. What might they be about really.

In many places the nativity figures are only displayed during this Christmas season. In a Godly Play space, they are there all the year around. Jerome Berryman, the creator of Godly play, suggests that this inclusive Holy family is: *'the matrix — the Latin word for womb — out of which new life comes. This story is the story of the re-creation of the universe ...*

The axis of life in the Christian tradition is birth — death — rebirth'.

This material and way of working with it addresses deep existential questions of where home might be for us. What relationships might nurture and support us?

How might we understand ourselves and others in the light of the Christ Child's incarnational hug? In what way does this affect our understanding of the Creator and the created world around us?

Godly Play intentionally leaves space for children to explore this process for themselves.

A young toddler may well do this non-verbally by playing with the figures and arranging them in different combinations. Their answer to the question, 'which do you like the best,' may also be non-verbal.

One very young child picked up the Christ child and held it against her heart.

Older children might be able to speak about their thoughts.

Ages ago a challenging eight-year-old suggested that the Christ Child was not necessary. It would mean that everybody would have to stop looking at him and look at one another, because when anybody really looked at another person then Christ was there.

Godly Play is not a quick fix. It encourages a lifelong process of exploration and wondering. I cannot tell you or the children what the deep meaning might be. This is something that we must discover for ourselves together.

Advent and Christmas – an Extraordinary time



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

The season of Advent and Christmas is always a special time for me, not least because my birthday falls during this time.

That said, I have never enjoyed the long dark hours we experience at this time of the year but this is also precisely why I feel Advent and Christmas time is special. It's a time where light literally shines at its most glowing within the darkness. It's a time of preparation and hope.

Advent hails the beginning of the Church's new year and is an extraordinary time at the end of a long period in the Church calendar of ordinary time.

Advent is extraordinary because it is a time of waiting, watching, expectation and preparation to welcome the extraordinary humanity of Jesus among us – this human who is fully human and fully divine.

The Prophets foretell of God's rescue for us in the coming of the Christ. The Prophets watch and they wait. John the Baptist tells us to prepare our hearts and minds to receive him – prepare a way for the Lord, make straight and clear paths.

Mary waits and watches for her son to be born. In Advent, we wait and watch for the promised coming Christ child. We wait for the Light of the world (John 1:1-5) to come.

Our move from the regular rhythms of the ordinary time which follows on from the joys of Eastertide and the salvation that Jesus' resurrection brings, is finally interrupted with the hope that the newborn King is to be born among us.

And now there is a celebration to plan and prepare for. There are presents to buy and people to invite.



It's an extraordinary time.

In our teams' ministry through Compassionate Communities we support many people whose lives have been changed and not for the better. For so many people we recognise that Advent and Christmas time can be difficult; fraught with stresses and strains, people who have received bad news, folk who are facing this time of year alone – some for the first time, some consistently. Hearts are broken and lives have been changed forever.

Yet, whatever our experience, however delightful or difficult our life might be, God still comes, choosing to step into our messy world in the form of a vulnerable newborn which unites Jesus to all of humanity in that shared experience of being birthed.

God chooses to become like us – a human being subject to all that human life might deal us and ultimately to face dying and death. That the creator and source of all things would make that decision to be born as a baby and grow and live amongst us is absolutely extraordinary to me! God chooses us and yet it can seem impossible for us to imagine why it is that God gifted all of humankind this extraordinary act of love.

Is Advent and Christmas a time for family, fun and frivolity or is it a time of wonder for you?

Has this year been particularly difficult for you? Are you facing a dark Advent and Christmas time? In Advent we watch and wait for

Love to come down, touch us and live among us at Christmas.

In God's living as one of us, God fully experiences what it is to be human. He knows the ups and the downs of life. He knows what it's like to hurt and grieve and suffer and to perish. God comes to live among us to bring us hope. He is the ultimate Christmas gift. He is the one to whom we can bravely turn when we feel that life is unfair, when we are stressed, anxious, or cannot cope or go on alone.

God knows and God is always there in God's love reaching out and inviting us to come to him who will help us to find strength, comfort and peace in his presence, despite the things of the world that are tough for us to face.

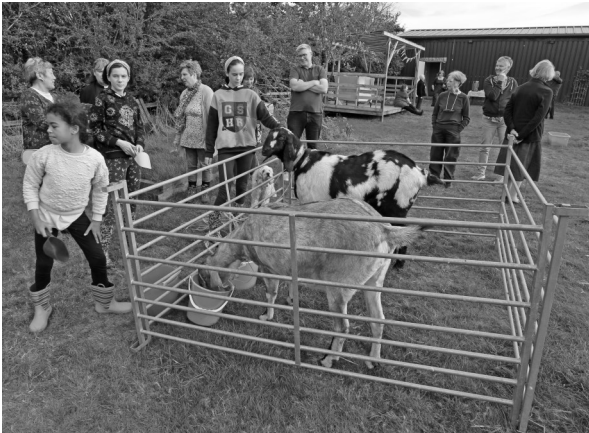
During the season of Advent, we are called to seek the light of Christ, even in the midst of darkness. We are invited to face the darkness of our own lives and in the world around us. The prophets assure us that the darkness will not overcome us. The prophets call us to watch for the extraordinary light. We are called to wait, to hope and to trust in promises made by God.

As we journey through Advent towards Christmas we invite God's light to dispel the darkness and ask for grace to set down all the burdens that darken our hearts as we look for the light. May we have the gift of attentiveness that we may truly see God's loving presence within and among us. May we ask for renewed faith so that we might be light for others at this time.

Pet Blessing Service



On Sunday, 8 October, we gathered at May Blossom Farm for a Pet Blessing Service led by Rev'd Alison Baxter. There were all creatures, great and small, including humans.



The Lord God made them all.





All thing wise and wonderful.





Community Conversations

at St Andrew's Church

On the first Wednesday of each month,
10.30am to 11.45am

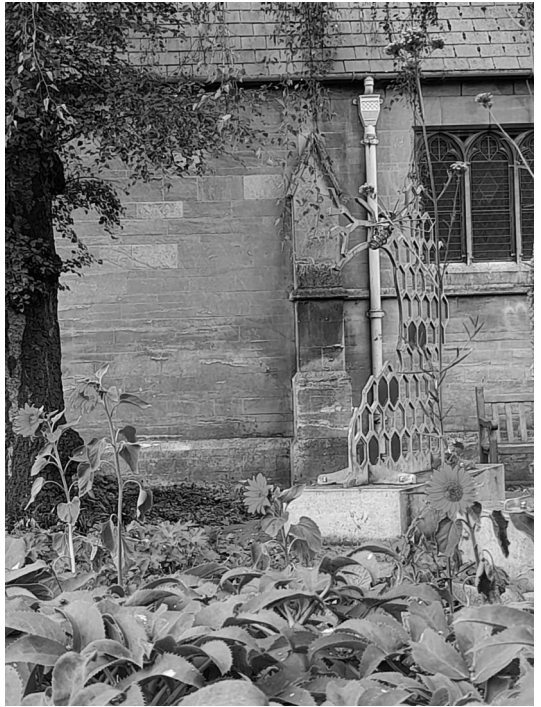
*We want to hear from you on
topics such as Loneliness,
Social Isolation, Ill Health, Grief and Loss.*

Everyone is welcome.
Join us for engaging conversation
around tea, coffee and cake.

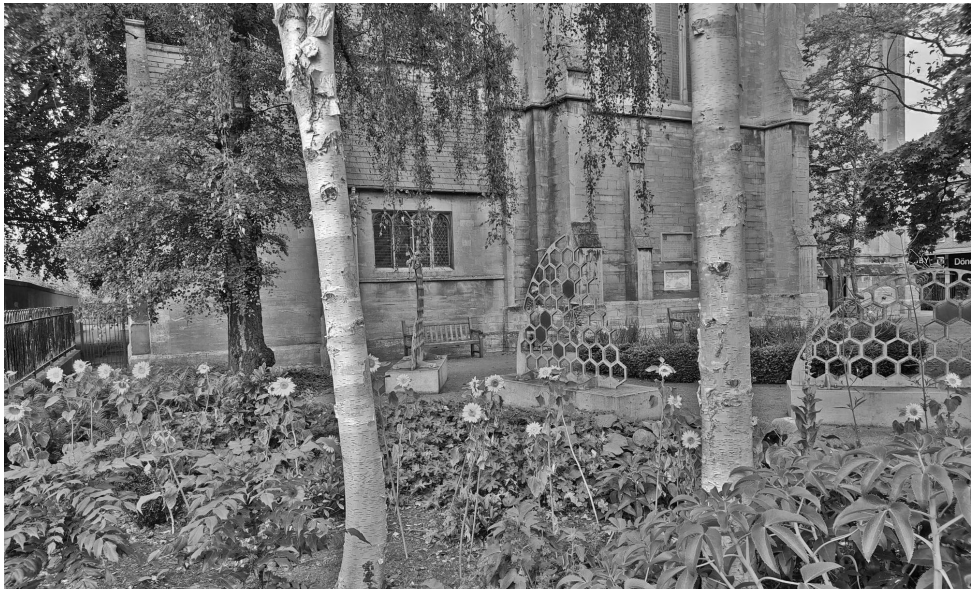
This Is A Free Event

To find out more and join us:
Call Sharon on 07342 086276
or just come along on the day

Planting Mission Seeds



When Rev'd Alison Baxter was installed as Associate Minister (Mission Hub) back in April 2023, as part of her welcome, we were invited to plant sunflower seeds, as a reminder of the kind of work Alison would be encouraging us to do. At the end of the summer, Debbie Middlemiss took these pictures of the sunflowers in the church garden.



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@uhcw.nhs.uk

Associate Minister (Mission Hub): The Rev'd Alison Baxter,
missionhub@rugbychurch.org.uk

Retired Clergy: The Rev'd Barry Collins, The Rev'd Pam Gould,
The Rev'd William Griffiths, The Rev'd Canon Graham Hardwick,
The Rev'd Peter Privett, The Rev'd Peter Beresford

Lay Ministers: Sue Goddard, Gwyneth Hickman, Sue Minton

Children's Ministry: childrenandfamily@rugbychurch.org.uk
(the email is being monitored, however should you prefer, please do not hesitate to contact The Rector as above).

Youth Ministry Lead: Magz Parmenter, sayf@rugbychurch.org.uk

Music Team:

Director of Music: directorofmusic@rugbychurch.org.uk

Junior Choir Trainer: Rachel Cliffe, youngchoristers@rugbychurch.org.uk

St Andrew's Community Singers:
Conductor: Amie Boyd amiemusic01@gmail.com
Membership Enquiries: John Howes shoparound1983@gmail.com

Parish Administrator: Kate Foster, 01788 565609, office@rugbychurch.org.uk

Community Engagement Lead: Ben Jennings. ben.jennings@rugbychurch.org.uk

Wardens: Joyce Woodings, warden1@rugbychurch.org.uk
Hash Mistry, warden2@rugbychurch.org.uk

Assistant Wardens: Ian Sheppard, asstwarden1@rugbychurch.org.uk
Bryan Acford, asstwarden2@rugbychurch.org.uk

Bell Tower Captain: Christine Homer

St Andrew's Church Website: www.standrewrugby.org.uk