

St Mary's Parish Magazine



November - December 2021

50p

Christmas is for children

“But Jesus called the children to him and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’” **Luke 18:16-17**

Some thoughts from Julie Cosgrove:

I know it's not actually in the Bible, but I can picture the little drummer boy on the night Christ was born. There he was, peering around legs, sheep, and long robes. Maybe he heard the angels sing to the shepherds? Perhaps he was sleeping at the inn and awoke to the ruckus outside. Curious, he went to see what the fuss is all about. People were bringing gifts. Someone said this was the new king. The little drummer boy steps forward and offered his song, and the babe in the manger smiled at him. Barumpa, pum, pum.

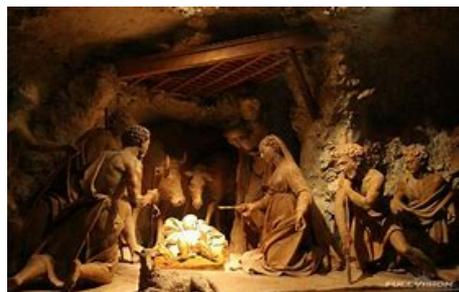
Many people say Christmas is for children. We grown-ups are too harried, too conscious of the money, too cynical to get sucked into the whole thing. Christmas bonuses go to paying down bills, or buying gifts for the kids. It doesn't matter. It's all become too commercial anyway. Bah-humbug.

Yet Jesus invites us closer to the manger. *“Don't be anxious about material things,”* He says. God loves and cares for us. Seek the kingdom first (**Matthew 6:25-33**). Draw near like a child with curiosity, openness, and faith. Embrace the season once again in its original joy.

Tony King

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REFLECTIONS FROM THE RECTORY

20/20 VISION

Thank you to all those members of St Mary's PCC who came along to the *Vision Morning* facilitated by Keith Elford at the Red Hill Centre on the first Saturday in October. It was such an invigorating change to be together in a (well-ventilated) room rather than on Zoom and have the time to discuss what St Mary's ministry might look like following the pandemic. The questions that the PCC discussed were:

- How do we feel about St Mary's?
- What's the future we're currently in?
- What is essential to being St Mary's?
- What should we preserve and what should we change?
- What next?

VISION MORNING (1)

I'm conscious that What Next? is likely to have already been discussed at PCC by the time this edition of the magazine comes out but I want to share some thoughts with the wider body of St Mary's to give people an idea of what we're thinking. As you might imagine there was a great deal of talk about concerns around restoration of the tower under the first question. A striking aim under our second question was to find a new and exciting sense of God's vision for the church. I wouldn't say we achieved that but we did find some very helpful pointers, which we will be exploring further.

VISION MORNING (2)

Around the question about what's essential to being St Mary's, our facilitator steered us towards what is the purpose of the organization. For what it's worth, my answer was 3-fold: (i) To proclaim the good news of God's love revealed in Christ; (ii) To live out the Kingdom of God; (iii) To serve people and the local community. As you might imagine there was a great deal of discussion under this heading and the following question about what should we preserve and what should we change. Those who participated are continuing to work with me and the whole of the PCC to bring a refreshed vision to St Mary's which should not only move us on from the pandemic but into the forthcoming years as well.

Watch this space ...

Vaughan

The Revd Vaughan Roberts

NOVEMBER IN WARWICKSHIRE

All Saint's Day is the 1st and All Souls' Day the 2nd of November. Souling took place not on All Souls' Day, as might be expected, but on its eve, All Saint's Day. People went round farms, singing songs, and collecting food or money. Special soul cakes were baked. In Warwickshire, seed cakes were popular. Shakespeare mentions souling in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but the custom seems to have died relatively early in Warwickshire.

'On November 5th every village had its bonfire. To collect wood for this the young men went from house to house singing. Folk had to guard their wood piles, for it was a contest which village would have the best blaze, and many stakes were filched from unwary owners.' So wrote Mary Stanton.

On 11th November the parades, at the heart of which people stood in solemn silence at 11.00 am, or paused in their activity at work or in the home, were transferred after the 1950s to the nearest Sunday. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, though, the tendency was increasingly to return to the former timing. Bedworth enjoys the distinction of being the only place in Britain which every year since 1918 has commemorated the end of the First World War at the due time on the due date.

On the same day, which happens to be St Martin's, a much older ceremony, that of Wroth Silver, takes place just off the southbound carriageway of the A45 at Knightlow, between Ryton and Stretton. Just before dawn, the steward of the Duke of Buccleuch stands behind a hollowed stone – all that remains of a Cross – and asked the assembled representatives of the villages in the hundred to pay their dues, called Wroth Silver. The men come forward and make their payments, which today amount to only 46p in total. Expressed in old currency, the sums were various from one penny up to two shillings and three and a half pennies.

The fine for default was twenty shillings for every penny, or a white bull with red ears and nose. After the ceremony, all concerned visit the Queens Head at Bretford for breakfast, followed by hot rum and milk.

Knightlow Hill, we are told, is the burial place of Colbrand, the Danish

Champion slain by Guy of Warwick; Wroth Silver paid for the protection of travellers and their cattle against outlaws – and even against the Dun Cow – as they crossed Dunsmore Heath. In fact, ‘wroth’ derives from *weard* an Anglo-Saxon term meaning ward or protection, though the person receiving protection was the king: the money collected at Knightlow (and elsewhere) paid for an escort for him and animals to carry his baggage and treasure. Its conjuncture with silver is because at the time the silver penny, which could simply be cut into pieces for smaller values, was the only coin in regular use. The first king to pass through Knightlow for whom there are records was John, who received payment in about 1212. In the 17th century the rights passed from the Crown to Sir Francis Leigh, and from him eventually to the present holders, the dukes of Buccleuch and Queensbury. Although some may consider it somewhat outdated, the ceremony has endured for at least a thousand years, and has always succeeded in bringing together people from towns and villages in the Knightlow Hundred as in no other way. It is unique and is its own memorial, with only a hollowed-out stone otherwise by which to remember it.

It was believed, at Shipston and elsewhere, that the quarter in which the wind lay at midnight on St Clement’s Day (23rd November) would indicate its prevailing direction until Candlemas (2nd February). On St Clement’s Day parties of children went round ‘soliciting goodies and pence’, and chanting a variety of rhymes.

Roy Palmer

BLESSED CECILIA

According to legend, Cecilia was a noble Roman Christian who converted her husband to the faith by revealing that she was regularly visited by an angel. She insisted on remaining a virgin, and after her husband and his brother were both martyred, she too was condemned to death, first by roasting in her bath (which didn’t work), and then by beheading. As a line in Chaucer’s *Second Nun’s Tale* referred to music at her wedding and claimed she ‘*sang in her heart to the Lord*’ she was frequently portrayed as a lover of music and poetry and, somewhat incredibly, as the inventor of the organ.

PLEASE DON'T LET IT HAPPEN HERE!

After over 126 years, St. Mary's Episcopal Church will hold its last service this Sunday. The church, located on Warwick Neck Avenue, which has close to 100 members, is merging its congregation with St. Barnabas Episcopal Church on Post Road in Apponaug. The two parishes will officially become one during this Sunday's mass, which will begin at St. Mary's and proceed to St. Barnabas where it will be completed. Episcopal Bishop Geraldine Wolfe will preside over the mass.

During an interview on Tuesday, church elders from St. Mary's said the decision was made strictly due to financial reasons. The church has seen a steady decrease in parishioners over the years and despite a drive two years ago to modernize their service, attendance didn't increase enough for the church to survive.

"We have been running a deficit for several years now. This year, to balance our budget we've had to pull money out of our endowment, which dropped 30 percent this year due to market conditions. That, along with a decline in pledges due to this economic climate were the contributing factors," said Mike Marsh, the church's senior warden.

Both Marsh and Rick Robinson, the previous senior warden, said that while almost everyone in the congregation is sad to see the church close, they're approaching the situation with a positive attitude. Almost all of the parishioners, they said, were "very understanding." Both said that while a church's building is important—it's where people are christened, married, and family member's funerals are held—in the end, a church is made up of the strength and talents of its people. With that in mind, they said they see the situation as a potential for tremendous growth. "We see this as an opportunity to bring the gifts that we have—the ministries, talents, and strengths—to St. Barnabas," said Robinson. "This is an opportunity to carry out our mission, which is to bring people to Christ."

The decision to merge needed to pass a popular vote of both churches. The parishioners at St. Barnabas voted unanimously to welcome the St. Mary's congregation. The St. Mary's Congregation voted 26-9 in favour of the merger. Marsh said that most of those who voted against the merger admitted that the merger was necessary, but just couldn't bring

themselves to go through with it. Marsh said that St. Mary's would always be a "in our hearts." Interviews with leaders of St. Barnabas Church said the parishioners from St. Mary's would be welcomed into their church community with open arms.

Robinson and Marsh said the church hopes to sell the St. Mary's to another church in need of a building. Heidi Seddon, senior warden at St. Barnabas, echoed the comments of Marsh and Robinson. "Nobody wanted to see St. Mary's close, but now we all need to go forward and make the best of this situation," Seddon said. "Our hope is to get everyone integrated as soon as possible because that's where our strength will be. In integrating our ministries." She views the merger as a "tremendous opportunity" for both churches. Seddon pointed out that a chapel in St. Barnabas Church is to be named St. Mary's, to honour the new parishioners. Seddon said that St. Barnabas currently has a congregation of "somewhere in the ballpark of 100 units". A pledging unit can equal anything from a family of five, to a single member.

Both St. Mary's and St. Barnabas lack a priest. In that situation, masses are presided over by a pool of priests who takes turns visiting the church. Seddon said that St. Barnabas hopes to find an interim priest sometime in the near future. Stephanie Shuster, a member of the St. Barnabas vestry, said she views the merger as an opportunity for growth. "We're very excited to have them join us. I think it will open opportunities that we weren't able to do before, such as youth groups, community suppers, and adult Christian education," said Shuster. "We want to provide them with a new home and we want them to feel as comfortable and be involved as quickly as possible."

Russell J. Moore Mar 26, 2009

WHEN INSULTS HAD CLASS

George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill:

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend if you have one."

Winston Churchill, in response:

"Cannot possibly attend first night. Will attend second if there is one."

JUST AS I AM



Charlotte Elliott (18 March 1789 – 22 September 1871) was an English poet, hymn writer, and editor. She is best known for the hymn *Just as I am, without one plea*.

Born in Brighton to a religious family, Elliott's childhood was passed in a circle of great refinement and piety. She was highly educated, and developed, at an early age, a great passion for music and art. At an early age, she began to be aware of her sinful nature and of her need to resist sin's enticements. She felt unworthy of 'God's Grace' while growing up and was incapable of facing a righteous and perfect God. She was continuously told by different pastors at the many churches that she visited to pray more, study the Bible more and to perform more noble deeds.

Gifted as a portrait artist and writer of humorous verse, she became a favourite in social circles where religion was not mentioned, but a severe sickness in 1821 removed her from these companions and led her to feel a need for a personal Saviour. About this time, the Rev. Dr Cesar Malan of Geneva, who was on a visit to her father's Clapham residence, Grove House,¹ asked her whether she was at peace with God, a question she resented at the time and refused to talk about that day, but a few days later she called on Dr Malan and apologised, saying she wanted to cleanse her life before becoming a Christian. Malan answered, "Come just as you are," and she committed her life to Christ on that day.¹ A letter from Malan, dated 18 May 1822, closed, "Dear Charlotte, cut the cable, it will take too long to unloose it; cut it, it is a small loss; the wind blows and the ocean is before you – the Spirit of God and eternity." This friendship became lifelong. Its beginning on 9 May 1822 was always regarded, according to her sister, as "the birthday of her soul to true spiritual life and peace".

Elliott's health was improved by a visit the following year to Normandy. But in 1829 she once more became an almost helpless sufferer, with only occasional intervals of relief. In 1833, her father died. She undertook in 1834 the editorial supervision of *The Christian Remembrancer Pocket Book*, an Annual, and in 1836 of the *Invalid's Hymn Book* – works previously conducted by a friend, Miss Harriet Kiernan, who was then in the last stages of consumption. The annual

she edited for 25 years and many of her poems appeared in it. To the edition of the *Invalid's Hymn Book* that she enlarged and edited anonymously in 1836 she contributed 115 hymns, among them the noted *Just as I am, without one plea*.

Visits to Scotland in 1835 and to Switzerland in 1837 benefited her considerably. Her sister-in-law died in 1841. Her mother, after a year's severe illness, died in April 1843. Two of her sisters soon followed. So her home was broken up, and in 1845 she and a surviving sister followed a summer's sojourn on the European continent by fixing their home in Torquay. After 14 years, however, she returned to Brighton.

Elliott was a member of the Church of England. In later years, when she was not able to attend public worship, she wrote, "My Bible is my church. It is always open, and there is my High Priest ever waiting to receive me. There I have my confessional, my thanksgiving, my psalm of praise, and a congregation of whom the world is not worthy – prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and confessors; in short, all I can want I find there."

A volume of *Poems* appeared in 1863, and her brother Henry died in that year. Once only, in 1867, did she venture again from home, spending a few weeks in a neighbouring village. In 1869, she fell seriously ill but managed to recover. She died at 10 Norfolk Terrace, Brighton, on 22 September 1871, and was buried alongside her brothers in the churchyard of St Andrew's, Hove.

THE HOLLY AND THE IVY

Holly and ivy were important plants to the Druids. It was believed that good spirits lived in the branches of holly. Christians believed that the berries had been white before they were turned red by Christ's blood when he was made to wear a crown of thorns. Ivy was associated with the Roman god Bacchus and was not allowed by the Church until late in the middle ages, when a superstition that it could help recognise witches and protect against plague arose.

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

At Stoneleigh, Duchess Dudley's charities provided doles of meat and coal on St Thomas' Day (21st December). On the same day the poor throughout Warwickshire went 'a-gooding', 'a-corning' or 'a-Thomasing', as the custom was variously called. Basically, this was collecting any sort of provisions against the coming winter, and Christmas.

In some districts people specifically asked for corn (hence 'a-corning') to make frumenty. One of the many recipes for this dish says it should be made with baked wheat, sugar and dried currants, boiled in milk and thickened with flour and eggs. One of the St Thomas chants was:

*Little Cock Robin sat on a wall,
We wish a merry Christmas,
And a great snowfall;
Apples to eat and nuts to crack,
We wish you a merry Christmas
With a rap, tap, tap.*

Widows especially went Thomasing, and 'after kindly folk in the big houses dispensed refreshments many of the widows spent the night in a frosty ditch, coming to'. Children of Halford were given half a day off school to collect on behalf of the widows of their parish. At Ettington and other villages a bell at 6.00 am gave the signal for Thomasing to start. Thomasing eventually passed completely to the children, who sang for sweets and pennies.

Gifts at Christmas itself were sometimes necessities rather than luxuries. At Whitchurch 'the Gifts' consisted of a pair of blankets or sheets or a length of material. Each needy household also received a loaf of bread and a pound of meat for each member. At Knightcote and Northend the Christmas coal formerly given to pensioners is now commuted to cash, but each household still receives a loaf of bread at New Year. People in the two hamlets gave food and shelter to a John Kimbell when he was down on his luck in the 15th century. He later prospered and left a legacy of land to benefit his benefactors. The statute, erected in 1867, of another former landowner, Lord John Scott, is clothed every Christmas at Dunchurch by persons unknown, either as a joke or as an act of remembrance. On Christmas Eve mummers went round in some areas. There was a wide belief that the farm animals knelt on Christmas Eve at midnight in adoration of the Christ Child. It was also customary to go down the garden to the beehives 'to hear the bees sing their Christmas carols'.

WHAT SWEETER MUSIC

What sweeter music can we bring
Than a carol, for to sing
The birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the voice! Awake the string;

*We see him come, and know him ours,
Who with his sunshine and his showers
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.*

Dark and dull night, fly hence away,
And give the honour to this day,
That sees December turned to May,
If we may ask the reason, say:

*We see him come, and know him ours,
Who with his sunshine and his showers
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.*

The darling of the world is come,
And fit it is we find a room
To welcome him. The nobler part
Of all the house here is the heart:

*We see him come, and know him ours,
Who with his sunshine and his showers
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.*

Which we will give him, and bequeath
This holly and this ivy wreath,
To do him honour who's our King,
And Lord of all this revelling:

*We see him come, and know him ours,
Who with his sunshine and his showers
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.*

Robert Herrick (1647)

NEVER A CROSSWORD!

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						10						
11								12				13
14				15						16		
17		18				19		20				
21							22					
23							24					

ACROSS

1. Heavenly body upsetting to sailors. (4)
3. Queen of the bravest heroes. (6)
8. Country where liar gets drugs. (6)
9. Its about a nomad getting lost initially. What a nut! (6)
11. Roughly have directions to the skies. (7)
12. Law bringer has little time with cardinals. (5)
14. Abraham's nephew first to leave on train? (3)
15. The simple disciple? (5)
16. Where a mammal lost its tail? (3)
17. She put on a record for her flock. (5)
19. Ten real ways to live for ever. (7)
21. Non-clerical singers? (6)
22. Attracted to light but found a cardinal in March and April, say. (6)
23. It returns with Seth in a muddle to get church taxes. (6)
24. Does Noah's son point to the edge? (4)

DOWN

1. Hired help raves about books. (7)
2. An eel slithers about to get anointed. (5)
4. Wise king or lone Scotsman? (7)
5. Academic dress for gangsters, perhaps. (5)
6. Brother Edward contains his embarrassment. (3)
7. Saint going commando, we hear! (8)
10. How Hagar's son has his meal cooked. (7)
13. Appear not so much, reportedly, to have no join. (8)
15. Roughly presume the best. (7)
16. Can and must go into a private room. (7)
18. Sort a note about a Middle Eastern country. (5)
20. Sharpen up! There's a hundred in for the patriarch. (5)
21. What the arsonist did to the bed in Paris? (3)

THOUGHT FOR FOOD

Leftover turkey fricassee

Make the most of leftover roast turkey with this creamy fricassee. It's delicious served with potatoes or pasta, and ideal for using up turkey from Christmas dinner

Ingredients

- 50g butter
- 100g chestnut or button mushrooms, quartered
- 1 tbsp plain flour
- 100ml white wine or dry sherry
- 200ml chicken or turkey stock
- 150ml double cream or crème fraîche
- 800g leftover boneless cooked turkey, chopped into chunks or shredded
- small bunch of parsley, chopped (optional)



Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cook: 15 minutes

Serves: 4

Heat the butter in a deep frying or sauté pan until sizzling, then add the mushrooms and fry for 4-5 mins until softened. Sprinkle over the flour and stir until a paste forms. Cook for a few more minutes.

Splash in the wine or sherry and let it bubble for a minute, then stir in the stock and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and stir in the cream. Season, then stir in the turkey. Simmer until the turkey is heated through, then remove from the heat and stir in the parsley, if using. Serve with pasta, mash or rice. And of course a glass or two of something chilled!

ONE WAY TO WORSHIP CHRIST AT CHRISTMAS



“They saw the child and his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him”
(Matthew 2:11)

Do you worship God with your words and actions? Do you worship Him with your heart?

Because we have nine grandchildren, we try to make our family Christmas gathering a time of focusing on Christ. One way we have found very effective is to act out the Christmas story.

We have as many actors as there are family members (and others who have come for the Christmas dinner). Because we have as many as 17 people, we have a lot of sheep. We put the names of the biblical characters and animals in a hat and everyone picks one. Then everyone has 10 minutes to find his or her costume and props from anywhere in the house.

We gather in one room and the narrator begins to slowly read the Christmas story, usually from the Living Bible so the children can understand. The costumes are usually very creative, from the camels wearing real saddles, the kings wearing up-side-down silver or gold trophies on their heads and even our Dalmatian dog being recruited to be one of the sheep. One year a new grandchild was the baby Jesus.

We have fun and laugh a lot. But when it comes to the part where the wise men come and see the Child and His mother and bow down and worship Him, we become quiet.

One year, a non-Christian guest, playing the part of a king, also knelt down and worshiped. As I watched him, I silently prayed that soon and very soon, he would worship Jesus with his whole heart.

He has not yet given his heart to Jesus. But we keep praying for him.

The Bible tells us that when we pray according to God's will, He will answer. Soon this man WILL worship the Lord with his whole heart.

Who are you praying for?

Father, there are thousands of people who have heard the Christmas story and have not yet begun to worship You. Father, we pray that this year You would open the eyes and hearts of those we have been praying for. We pray that they would become true worshippers of Jesus Christ.

Amen

Katherine Kehler

AND FINALLY

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

ACROSS 1 Star 3 Esther 8 Israel 9 Almond 11 Heavens 12 Moses 14 Lot
15 Simon 16 Sea 17 Sheep 19 Eternal 21 Laymen 22 Months 23 Tithes 24 Shem

DOWN 1 Servant 2 Anele 4 Solomon 5 Hoods 6 Red 7 Nicholas 10 Ishmael
13 Seamless 15 Supreme 16 Sanctum 18 Egypt 20 Enoch 21 Lit

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