St Mary's Parish Magazine

November - December 2025

50p

Notes from the Editor

It's getting to be a bit like Christmas! It might have seemed a bit early to start thinking about the festive season, although supermarkets have already introduced hot cross buns into the bakery section (five months or so to go to Easter?). Nevertheless this edition of the Parish Magazine covers November and December so I make no apologies for introducing features to take us up to that special day which is 25th December.

This is a busy time at St Mary's, all starting with the feast of All Souls with Requiem Mass, Remembrance Day, the ever popular Christmas Tree Festival and more carol concerts and services than you can imagine once we get into December. (Don't forget The Snowman!) Spare a thought for all those who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make everything go smoothly.

In this edition we have some thoughts from our new curate Rev Rob Griffiths, who has quickly established himself as a valuable member of the clergy team. We are truly blessed to have such a diverse and active team to lead us at St Mary's.

Finally, although it may seem a little premature, may I take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy and blessed Christmas!

Tony King - Editor

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REFLECTIONS FROM THE CURATE

I began my time at St Mary's full of excitement and, if I'm honest, a little bit of apprehension. New beginnings are like that, aren't they – full of hope and the unknown all at once. But I needn't have worried, as from the moment I arrived, I have been met with warmth, kindness, and love.

Love. You'll often hear me speak – and you'll definitely hear me preach about love; but more than that, *God's love in action*. It sits right at the heart of what I believe ministry is all about. Jesus said, "*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*" (John 13.35). Such simple words, but what a challenge they give us – to make love visible, to live it out, not just talk about it. Talk is easy, but love that acts – that's what changes lives. I've already seen that here in so many ways: in the welcome at the door on a Sunday morning, in the laughter shared over coffee, in the quiet word of comfort when someone's had a tough week, in the prayers spoken for those who need them most. Those small, holy moments are where faith comes alive – where love takes shape and becomes something you can almost touch.

But love in action doesn't stop at the church door. The care and compassion we share inside these walls are the very gifts we're called to carry out into the community. God doesn't ask us to stay tucked away, He sends us out – to be seen, to be part of the heartbeat of the town, to show that His love still has power and presence today. When we join in with community life, when we stand alongside our neighbours, support our schools, listen to the lonely, we're living out our calling. It's not about grand gestures, but it's not something small either – it's visible, it's lasting, and people will notice.

To be rooted in faith and reaching out in love is at the very heart of our vision here at St Mary's. I already see that alive in this place every day, and it fills me with glorious hope for all that God will continue to do among us and through us.

As we keep walking together through this season, may we go on being people of love in action – rooted deeply in God and reaching out with open hands and open hearts.

Rev Rob

ALL SOULS' DAY

The doctrine of Purgatory was slow to develop in the Christian Church, but was properly codified in the 13th century and seemed to answer the problem of what happened to the mass off people who were not good enough to go straight to Heaven, nor sufficiently bad to be consigned straight to Hell. Such souls, it was argued, stayed in Purgatory until they were purified by holy fire and went on to eternal bliss, and they could be helped on their journey by the prayers and other pious actions of the living. Thus, on All Souls' Day, it was the duty of all Christians to concentrate on assisting those souls, by attending special masses, offering special prayers, and making acts of charity. The parish church bells were also rung vigorously on the day, as this holy sound was believed to help.

The whole notion of the living being able to help the dead was rejected at the Reformation, when the 'superstitious' prayers and ringing of bells were condemned, but the basic connections between the time of year, charity, and the dead, lingered on in people's minds and were reflected in several secular customs.

The most frequently documented example of the charity aspect of the season in the 17th century took the form of bread or 'soul cakes' that were distributed either to the poor or to the whole congregation. Bonfires were also popular, as in many other autumn and winter customs, but in this case they were directly relevant, echoing the purifying fires of Purgatory.

In later times, however, the main traditional activity for the season was a house-visiting custom in which groups of children knocked on doors, sang a song, and hoped for a reward. Souling was found heavily concentrated in the midland counties of Cheshire, Staffordshire and Lancashire, sharing this area with two almost identical visiting customs: clementing (on St Clement's Day – 23rd November) and catterning (on St Catherine's Day – 25th November).

XMAS TREE, OH XMAS TREE

St Mary's annual Xmas Tree Festival will soon be upon us, but what is the origin of this traditional Christmas decoration?

It is well known that the Christmas tree was directly imported from Germany in the 1840s by Queen Victoria's consort Prince Albert, but this is only partly true. Because of the close connections between the British and German royal families, decorated trees had in fact been a regular feature of court Christmases since at least the days of George lll, who married Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz in 1761. Christmas trees were also seen in other homes with German connections, and were already familiar to many English people. In 1829, for example, when Charles Greville, grandson of a duke, and secretary to the Privy Council, was staying at Pansanger, the Hertfordshire home of Earl Cowper, Greville recorded in his diary that on Christmas Day the Princess Lieven, wife of the Russian Ambassador, had:

… got up a little fête such as is customary all over Germany. Three large trees in large pots were put upon a long table covered with pink linen; each tree was illuminated with three circular tiers of coloured wax candles – blue, green, red and white. Before each tree was displayed a quantity of toys, gloves, pocket handkerchiefs, workboxes, books, and various articles – presents made to the owner of the tree. Here it was only for the children, in Germany the custom extends to persons of all ages.

However, it was certainly Victoria and Albert's homely Christmas tree in 1848 that caught the public's imagination and started the fashion in Britain. The famous engraving of the royal couple, with their five children admiring the bauble- and present-hung tree, appeared in the Christmas supplement of the *Illustrated London News*, and although it was there described as 'somewhat more of a German than an English custom', it stuck a responsive chord with the British middle-classes. By 1851, the same journal was running advertisements for Christmas trees, and they were increasingly appearing as normal features in illustrations and articles. Not everybody was happy with the development, however. Remembering the Yorkshire of his childhood in the 1870's, J S Fletcher wrote:

Children knew nothing about Santa Claus or about Christmas trees -

Those are German innovations which should have been left to Germans … Instead of the German Christmas tree we had the old=fashioned English mistletoe bough.

But there was no stopping the new fashion, and it gradually filtered down through the layers of society to become one of the essential features of the twentieth-century Christmas and beyond. It still retains its important role both in practice and as a recognisable symbol of the season, and most families still have a tree of some sort, whether it is a token one on the sideboard, or as tall as the room will allow, one of the latest non-drop varieties, or a synthetic one that plays a tune or changes colour!!

Steve Roud

SCOTLAND’S PATRON SAINT

St Andrew has been celebrated in Scotland for over one thousand years, with feasts being held in his honour as far back as the year 1000 AD. However, it wasn’t until 1320, when Scotland’s independence was declared with the signing of The Declaration of Arbroath, that he officially became Scotland’s patron saint. Since then, St Andrew has become an important part of Scottish society. The flag of Scotland is the saltire, also known as St Andrew’s Cross, and the ancient town of St Andrews was named due to its claim of being the final resting place of St Andrew.

The story goes that Andrew, the Galilean fisherman who was singled out to be Christ's first disciple, preached the Gospel in the lands around the Black Sea and in Greece and was eventually crucified on an X-shaped cross in Patras. St Andrew is the patron saint of other countries as well as Scotland. His association with Scotland, a land he never set foot on is based on several conflicting legends, the most interesting of which is the story of St Rule.

Three hundred years after Andrew's martyrdom the Roman Emperor Constantine, himself a Christian, ordered that the saint's bones should be moved from Patras to his new capital city of Constantinople. Before the order was carried out a monk called St Rule (or St Regulus) had a dream in which an angel told him to take what bones of Andrew's he could to 'the ends of the earth' for safe keeping. St Rule took what he could, presumably in a swift and frantic raid on the tomb, and after an epic journey was shipwrecked on the east coast of Scotland. He must have deemed that he had reached the 'ends of the earth'!

Over a millennium later, St Rule's Tower still stands among the ruins of St. Andrew's Cathedral, which in its heyday was a centre of Medieval pilgrimage. But no one knows where the relics are now. They were probably destroyed in the Scottish Reformation.

During his visit in 1969, Pope Paul VI gave further relics of St. Andrew to Scotland with the words "St Peter gives you his brother" and these are now displayed in a reliquary in St Mary's Catholic Cathedral in Edinburgh. But what these consist of is not recorded.

Despite the fact that St Andrew has stood as Scotland's patron saint for so many years, it wasn't until the 18th century that the popular celebration of his day became commonplace.

What might surprise you even more is that the tradition of celebrating on 30 November was not started in Scotland, but by a group of Scots in the USA who were keen to reconnect with their Scottish roots. It all began with the creation of the 'St Andrew's Society of Charleston' in South Carolina, which was founded in 1729 by a group of wealthy Scottish immigrants. The organisation is the oldest Scottish society of its type in the world. They became famous throughout the region for their work assisting orphans and widows in that area.

This was followed by another society, this time in New York, which was founded in 1756. 'The St Andrew's Society of the State of New York' is the oldest charity of any kind registered in New York and was founded by Scotsmen who were looking to relieve the poor and distressed in the town. From these first organisations, St Andrew's societies have spread around the world.

Recently, St Andrew's Day has become more special to Scots and is celebrated each year on 30 November. People across the country gather to celebrate St Andrew and share good times.

The day is usually marked with a celebration of Scottish culture, including dancing, music, food and drink, with parties going on long into the cold winter night.

THINGS MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME

WEATHER: “Your room looks like a tornado hit it!”

RELIGION: “You better pray that comes out of the carpet!”

TIME TRAVEL: “If you don’t sort yourself out I’m going to knock you into the middle of next week!”

OSMOSIS: “Shut your mouth and eat your dinner!”

CIRCLE OF LIFE: “I brought you into this world, I can take you out!”

ENVY: “There are millions of less fortunate children in the world who don’t have wonderful parents like you!”

RECEIVING: “You’re going to get it when we get home!”

GENEOLOGY: “Shur that door… You think you think you were raised in a barn?”

JUSTICE: “One day you’ll have kids … I hope they turn out just like you!”

LOGIC: “Because I said so. That’s why!”

STAMINA: “You’ll sit there until your spinach is gone!”

IRONY: “Keep crying. I’ll give you something to cry about!”

Share if you’ve ever heard these words from your mother’s mouth or possible said them yourself a time or two!

EMBRACING THE FIRST DAY OF WINTER

The Symbolism of Winter:

Winter is a season that often carries symbolic meaning. The cold and barren landscapes can remind us of the challenges and hardships we face in life. However, just as winter is followed by the promise of spring, our faith assures us that even in our darkest times, God is with us, bringing hope and renewal. Embracing winter can teach us valuable lessons of resilience, patience, and trust in God's timing.

Reflecting on God's Faithfulness:

As we witness the changing seasons, we are reminded of the constancy of God's faithfulness. Just as the sun rises and sets each day, so does our Lord's love and grace shine upon us. Winter can be a season of reflection, where we contemplate God's goodness and faithfulness throughout our lives. We can take this opportunity to journal, pray, and seek God's guidance, thanking Him for His provision and seeking His wisdom for the path ahead.

Finding Beauty in Stillness:

Winter's stillness offers a unique chance to slow down and appreciate the beauty that surrounds us. Amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life, we often find ourselves caught up in endless activity. However, in winter's quietude, we can experience moments of serenity and draw closer to God. Take walks in nature, observe the intricate frost patterns, or simply sit in stillness and listen to the whispers of God's creation. In these quiet moments, we can find solace and connect with our Heavenly Father in a deeper way.

Extending Love and Warmth:

Winter is a season that presents opportunities for acts of kindness and

love. Just as we bundle up to protect ourselves from the cold, we can extend warmth and compassion to those in need. It could be volunteering at a local shelter, providing warm clothing to the less fortunate, or simply reaching out to someone who might be feeling isolated during this season. By imitating Christ's love and selflessness, we become beacons of light in the world, bringing comfort and hope to others.

Conclusion:

As we embrace the first day of winter, let us embrace the lessons this season offers us. Winter invites us to deepen our faith, reflect on God's faithfulness, find beauty in stillness, and extend love to others. By approaching winter with a heart full of gratitude and an open mind, we can uncover new depths in our spiritual journey and draw closer to our Heavenly Father. May this season of reflection and renewal bring us closer to the light of Christ and fill our hearts with warmth and peace.

Steve Patterson

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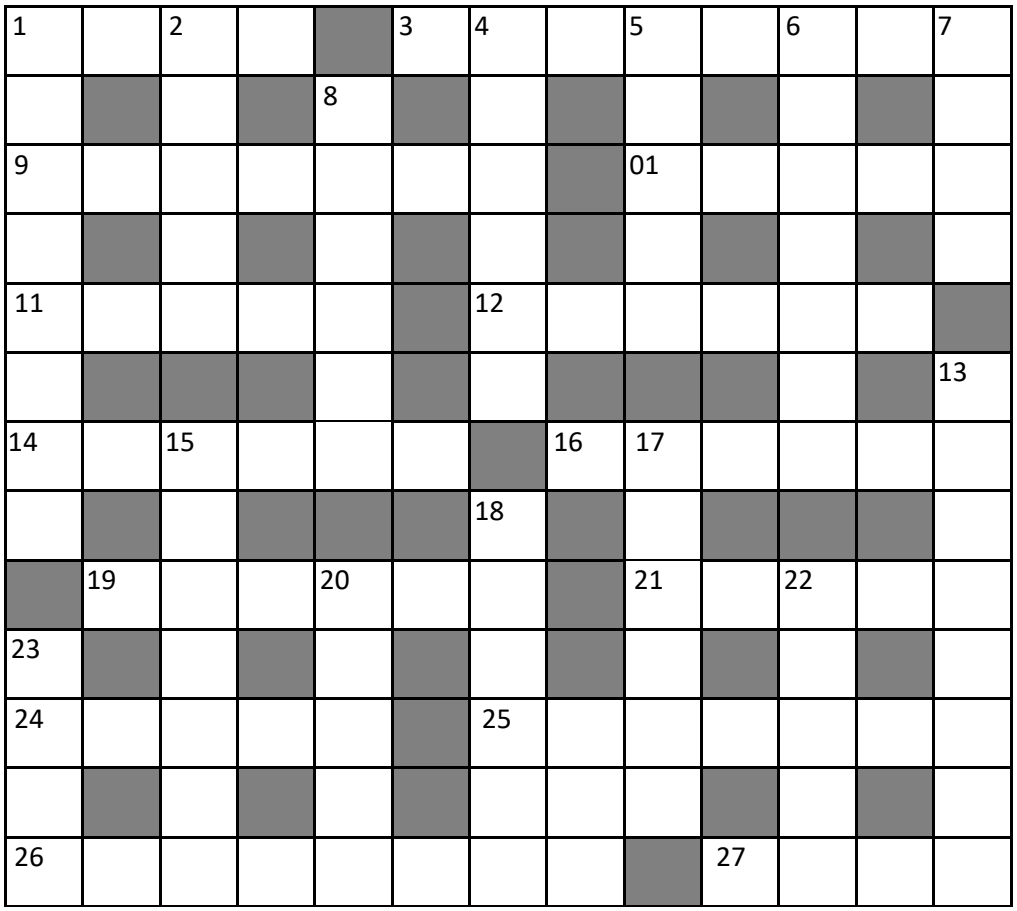
HOPE FOR THE SPRING AHEAD

Winter is not an end but a preparation for what's to come. As we embrace its silence and reflection, we ready our hearts for spiritual growth and renewal. The lessons learned during these months can guide us throughout the year, reminding us that even in stillness, God is at work within us.

So this winter, instead of bracing against the cold, let its stillness be an invitation to draw nearer to God, finding peace and purpose in the quiet.

NEVER A CROSSWORD!



ACROSS

1. Need to dig up the garden! (4)
3. A letter to the French missionaries. (8)
9. Abraham's son and his male counterpart. (7)
10. Gail gets nothing about these sayings. (5)
11. Abraham's father loses heart. (5)
12. Persuades office workers in time. (6)
14. Church leaders – the older ones! (6)
16. Fiery remains and a sheep found in the monastery. (6)
19. Female and males going up in smoke. (6)
21. A watch that's Greek to me! (5)
24. Lovely ladies, we hear, up the tower. (5)
25. Hire Pam or Joseph's son. (7)
26. Is seer a hit with this Hebrew tribesman? (8)
27. Vermin returning to be seen in the East? (4)

DOWN

1. Steps Eli took to get some letters. (8)
2. In the air or there about. (5)
4. I leapt about for the governor. (6)
5. Men seen about in Jerusalem. (5)
6. This boat is not so heavy. (7)
7. A guarantee that's all at sea? (4)
8. Pastor of the RAF? (6)
13. Mabel and me have right problem with the undertaker. (8)
15. Harold lied about Samson's lover. (7)
17. Also others have comfort. (6)
18. Accept as despatched. (6)
20. Sum up with hesitation this thinker. (5)
22. In praise of latex production. (5)
23. God's band? (4)

THOUGHT FOR FOOD

Chicken stuffed with herby mascarpone

Ingredients:

- 3 tbsp mascarpone
- 1 tbsp finely chopped rosemary
- 1 garlic clove
- crushed
- 2 chicken breasts
- skin on
- 4 slices prosciutto
- splash olive oil
- juice of half a lemon

Serves: 2
Preparation time: 5 minutes
Cooking time: 20 minutes

Heat oven to 200C/fan, 180C/gas 6. Mix the mascarpone with the rosemary, garlic and seasoning. Place the chicken breasts on a board and lift, but don't detach, the skin. Put a spoonful of the mascarpone mix under the skin of each breast. Wrap 2 slices of prosciutto around each, as neatly and tightly as you can, to keep the filling enclosed.

Heat a non-stick frying pan, add the olive oil and quickly brown the chicken on both sides. Transfer to a roasting tin, then finish off in the oven for 15-20 mins until just cooked.

Add the lemon juice to the roasting tin and stir over the heat, scraping off any crispy bits. Spoon the juices over the chicken and serve with potatoes and green beans.

A dry white burgundy would go nicely with this.

THE WINTER SOUL

The winter of the soul . . .
is a cold and lonely season
when it doesn't understand
the intention or the reason.

The bitter winds that come,
chills it to the marrow
with each gust that blows
it feels like a poison arrow.

The freezing rain and sleet,
seizes up its every tear
they become like icicles
encased with all its fear.

The winter soul can't take,
the ills, the weight, the loss
unless the soul is willing
to keep clinging to the cross.

For it is in this icy season,
the soul can find His warmth
and nestle in the comfort
of what God will bring forth.

So, if the battered soul,
is to survive this frosty time
it must be willing to soar
and over each blizzard climb.

Winter in the soul . . .
is a cold and lonely season
but it can find great peace
knowing God has His reason.

Deborah Ann Belka

LUNCHTIME RECITALS AT ST MARY'S

Fridays 1:15 – 2:00pm

14th November Oliver King – *organ* (St Mary's, Saffron Walden)

12th December Colin Lapus – *organ* (St Mary's Warwick)

Admission free – retiring collection

AND FINALLY ……..

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

ACROSS **1** Eden **3** Apostles **9** Ishmael **10** Logia **11** Terah
12 Tempts **14** Elders **16** Ashram **19** Flames **21** Omega **24** Bells
25 Ephraim **26** Asherite **27** Star

DOWN **1** Epistles **2** Ether **4** Pilate **5** Salem **6** Lighter **7** Seal **8** Father
13 Embalmer **15** Delilah **17** Soothe **18** Assent **20** Muser **22** Abba **23** Exalt

Who's Where in The Warwick Team

Contacts in our partner churches in the Warwick Team include:

All Saints
Revd Sharon Jones (Team Vicar) 492073

St Nicholas
Revd Linda Duckers (Team Vicar) 496209

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Alex Matheson	
Bell Ringers	492783
1st Warwick St Mary's Rainbows/Brownies/Guides	403185
Choir	403940
Friends of St Mary's Choir	07549 534339
St Mary's Scholars	403940
St Mary's Study Group	07799 682872
Flowers	857351
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