

November 2023



50p

# Life



[swcd-churches.org.uk](http://swcd-churches.org.uk)



LIFE MAGAZINE EDITOR

Roger Harmsworth [rogerwilliam@talktalk.net](mailto:rogerwilliam@talktalk.net)  
01458 445291

Articles for the December edition are due **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November**

## Editorial Notes

First, an editor's goof! As familiar as I am of the lovely Parish churches in our benefice, I wrote in my editorial for October that the front cover display was in Walton church, it was of course Compton Dundon, apologies to both, as a regular worshipper at St Andrews I should have got it right.

However, this month there is a good mix of benefice photos on the cover. The front has a display from a previous Remembrance time at the Parish church Street, a Messy Church young designers' plate at Walton, Edd and Angela Reeve at his formal welcoming as a reader, at Wells Cathedral, a night time woodland craft activity (see bottom of page 11), 2 benefice harvest arrangements, and three pictures taken at the Barn dance at Compton Dundon, (read all about it on page 10). It is good to see an article from our Curate on page 18. Please do read all that this month's edition has to offer.

Thanks to all contributors for getting all the articles to me earlier, including the editor of Manna for sending me the Bishop's letter early also.

It's amazing where this year has gone, as when we return from our holiday it will nearly be time to start on the December issue.

Roger.

## Rector's Letter

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens". Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verse 1.

Dear Friends,

As the nights draw in and the season changes, the bible verse above is a timely reminder that life is full of different seasons. Whether the seasons of the year or the seasons in our lives, we all experience times when much remains the same and times when there are changes.

Change can be tough, and I know that some people particularly struggle with it, whether the change of circumstances following the death of a loved one or a new medical diagnosis, changes can bring challenges.

Some of our churches are looking at making changes in our buildings to grow the life of the church not just for now but for generations to come. What was 'fit for purpose' a hundred and fifty years ago is, we are finding, probably not suitable for today's needs. I am grateful for the wisdom and grace of the church family as they navigate what can be difficult discussions around these changes. I am also aware that such changes will not be welcomed by everyone. Change can indeed stir strong emotion and even resistance.

The author of Ecclesiastes was all too aware of this, people have found change difficult in every generation. My prayer is that as a church family and a wider community, we can discuss such changes with courtesy and humility, recognising each other's point of view but acknowledging that we, as a church, are first and foremost here to worship God, love our communities and grow in faith. Our buildings, as with everything else, should be

servants of that mission rather than merely testaments to past seasons.

Whatever the new season holds for us as individuals or for the life of our churches, what we can be sure of is the future will be different. Only the other day whilst visiting a recently bereaved widow, she told me through her grief that she was starting a new chapter in her life. Whether you are facing a personal or other change or starting a new chapter, may God be with you and bless you.

With my love and prayers,

Ana

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

### **Midweek Prayer**

It's great that there are now two opportunities a week to gather together in prayer. As Christians, I trust we believe that prayer makes a difference and so I really hope that more can join us both at St Andrew's Compton Dundon at 9.30am and online on Tuesdays at 8.30am (praying with Christians across the deanery).

At St Andrew's it has been a real privilege with different ways of praying, whether outside, in the silence or through the use of creative liturgy. Even if this isn't your usual place of worship or you haven't been to a prayer meeting before I do commend this. God is with us!

Ana Lawrence

## Bishop's Letter

This month I am leaving Bath and Wells for a while to serve as interim Acting Diocesan Bishop in Coventry diocese. Many of you will be aware that the city of Coventry saw some very heavy shelling during WW2 which resulted in the destruction of the Cathedral in November 1940.

Since then, the new Cathedral has been built and stands alongside the old ruin as a testament of hope and possibility. A very different style of cathedral from the former, a harmony of old and new. It shows us that where conflict can destroy, peace can be found as we seek to live together as the people of God.

I think that this marrying of old and new, modern and traditional styles of architecture, helps us to consider how we fashion the life we are called to live as Christians within our school and parish communities. It is not that we put aside our differences nor require each other to conform to our own shape or form. Rather we recognise the value of listening fully to the other and learning to hear the voice of God. Determining to value the worth of each contribution and then discerning together a faithful walk with God.

This season of Remembrance encourages us to look back and to value the contributions of those who have gone before us, giving their lives in the service of others. It is not about glorifying the concept of war and conflict but the desire to establish a peaceful world for all. As we look back, so we are invited to look forward and commit to establishing a world where all have a place and where the Prince of Peace, Jesus, is our example.

Coventry is the home to the Community of the Cross of Nails. A community of reconciliation based around the cross fashioned by iron nails found within the ruins of the Cathedral following the



## Harvest Thanksgiving Compton Dundon

Harvest Thanksgiving always is a special occasion at St Andrew's and this year was no exception.

The church looked an absolute picture decorated with flowers and fruit from our gardens and hips and berries from the hedgerows. In addition, the nave altar was stacked high with the donations of non-perishable items to be given to the Salvation Army Food Bank in Street.

David Hatrey gave a lively talk based on a tin of vegetable soup which of course involved participation from the congregation. Harvest is not only the opportunity to thank God for the gift of food, but also metals, water, colour and the most precious gift of all, Life.

It was a particular joy to welcome some of the younger members of our congregation and St Andrew's would like to say a special thank you to Lauren and Ethan for taking part so well in reading and leading the prayers.

As usual refreshments were served after the service and so the morning ended with the happy buzz of conversation as everyone took the opportunity to catch up with and to listen to each other's news.  
Helen Thomas Compton Dundon



# Walton



It was lovely to hear the sound of children's chatter and laughter as they came to Walton church with parents and carers to celebrate Messy Harvest. Since I last helped the numbers attending have increased making a lovely atmosphere. Inside tables were set with crafts including an autumn tree collage, make a felt acorn, a bowl to stick fruit and vegetable shapes on with a bible text or something the child wanted to say, and so much more. That was just the beginning...The parable of the sower was shown on screen followed by singing two action songs and a prayer. The church was alive. Delicious hot dogs or cheese rolls were served by Louise and Co, which were well received. Finally, Pauline supervised a parachute game followed by a balloon game which the children loved. Sadly, all good things come to an end slowly the church emptied, with tired children clutching their treasures and full of Gods blessing. I realised how much I had missed talking with the children and how sometimes they can stun us with their questions. Not only do they learn from us but we can learn from the youngsters. If you enjoy the company of children and can spare an afternoon please join a Messy Church team, you will be surprised. Next one..... Christmas Messy Church, 5<sup>th</sup> December at Walton and 7<sup>th</sup> December at the Mission church Street.

Wendy Devenish.



## Walton Matters

One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock. Psalm 27. N.I.V.

Barn dance.

What a fun evening we had with Rough Round the Edges and Peter Bolton. Excellent refreshments thanks to Gill and Liz. Lots of entertainment, sometimes unintended but it all added to the fun of the evening. Thank you all for the preparation and running of the evening and thanks to you all for joining in.

Macmillan coffee morning.

Thank you so very much for all of your support for this event. I think everyone enjoyed the morning with lots of coffee, delicious cake and amazing conversation. You were all so generous and we will be sending at least £340 to this amazing cause. Money is still trickling in so final total will be in a week or so.

Harvest supper.

Yet more thanks go to Gill and Liz for yet again shopping and preparing a superb supper which was enjoyed by everyone there. As always, they go above and beyond and I guess they miss a great deal of the wonderful entertainment that went on through the evening. I hear tell that David and Pauline Hatrey and Jon Pengelly regaled with memories of Cornwall that amused everyone. Thank you to Andy for organising the entertainment and to everyone that helped make the evening a success.

Christmas card writing.

I can't believe I am writing this already but it has been a custom for many years for us to start writing our Christmas cards together whilst enjoying some Christmas music and mince pies

and mulled wine. Do join us and get ahead of the game starting the festive season early together. We will be meeting in the church on Wednesday 1st November at 7.00. The more the merrier.

Flower rota.

4th November Jane Doyle

18 th November. Liz Selway

Sandra Gristock Walton

## **Operation Christmas Child**

The amazing journey of a simple shoebox gift begins with you.

Boxes are available in our churches to collect and should be returned to me (Walton), the church office any of our 4 churches by Sunday, 12th November to allow the boxes to reach those who will enjoy them by Christmas.

Since its start in 1990, more than 186 million children in need, in over 160 countries have received a shoe box showing that they are thought of, prayed for and that their lives matter to others through the work of Operation Christmas Child. With your box, simply select an age group, decide if it is for a boy or girl and then fill it with a selection of fun, hygiene and school items. Visit the charity web site for more ideas.

If you would like to support this work, but do not want to fill a box, why not donate financially to cover postage etc.? Please do so separately via the church office marking your donations 'Operation Christmas Child'.

Sandra Gristock Walton



## Final reminder of Jane Tompsett's INVITATION to celebrate her 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday

If you are planning to come on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December, have you paid £10 to Jane or Sonia in the church office to secure your seat on the coach?

The John Martin Coach will collect us from the Mission church on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December at **10.50** to take us to Exmouth for an afternoon river Exe Estuary cruise on the Stuart Line boat (EX8 1FE).

We will stop at Monkton Elm Garden centre, in Taunton for you to eat your sandwiches or buy lunch.

For those who want a cream tea, last orders to Jane are on Wed 1<sup>st</sup> November.

For those who want to go direct to Exmouth we board at 1.45 for a 2pm sailing for a 2½ hour cruise. **Please do come and help me celebrate.**



### Little Stars



Little Stars is the group which we run on a Friday morning, for adults and their babies and under 5s. We have just celebrated turning 7 years old as a community group. Currently we have an average of 12 babies and children each week. We have noticed that the children are benefiting from currently being a smaller group. They are joining in more at singing time, which is wonderful to hear and see!

Thank you for all the ongoing prayers for the families, we wouldn't be the group we are without those of you who regularly pray. Do encourage/ invite neighbours to join us. We always have room to welcome new families.

This week the children made night time woodland pictures, and you can see one on the back cover of this magazine. Julie Day.

# **More from Ana**

## **Memorial Services**

Our annual memorial services take place on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> November. An afternoon service in the Parish Church, Street (3pm) and an evening service at St Andrew's, Compton Dundon (6pm). These special reflective services are an opportunity to come and remember loved ones who have died whether recently or longer ago. If you would like your loved one's name to be read out at the service, please contact the church office.

If you have friends or neighbours who you know have been bereaved, please invite them to come along and maybe even come with them.

## **Remembrance**

We will be holding Remembrance services in three of our churches (12<sup>th</sup> November) and please note the different start times to allow for the 2 minutes silence. In addition, there will be a Remembrance parade in Street followed by an Act of Remembrance in the Merriman Park, Street to which you would be most welcome. I am delighted that this year, we as the Anglican churches in Street will be playing a full part in this.

## **Christmas Focus**

Every year the Church of England has an outward focus in promoting the Christmas message. This year, the 'strapline' is 'follow the star – sing a new song'. We are looking at ways of engaging with this in our services and events throughout the

benefice and we'd love to hear any ideas you may have. Please have a word with Ana

## **Christingle Service in Walton Church**

I am delighted that this year, we will be holding a community Christingle service on 29<sup>th</sup> November in Holy Trinity, Walton. Christingle has become popular in recent years and is a tangible way of sharing the Christian message for primary school aged children. We will be welcoming children and their families into the church for what will be a moving and interactive all age service. Please do hold everyone involved in your prayers.

## **Benefice Christmas Social**

Following the success of last year, we are hoping to hold another benefice Christmas social in early December. A chance to come together as church family sharing in an evening of fun, games, entertainment, conversation, food and general silliness.

Ana Lawrence

# Listening Course

In late September and early October, we ran a 4-week benefice wide listening course as part of our commitment to be a people who are growing in faith. With an evening and daytime course option, there was something for everyone ably led and facilitated by Stephanie Shortland (Mission Church) and Jane Tompsett (Mission Church).

The aim of the course was to encourage and help participants to be better listeners with an interactive approach as well as teaching from the front.

Listening is perhaps something all of us might need to work on and develop as we seek to be Christian listeners in a world where many are not listened to.

There were good numbers of attendees at all the sessions who appreciated all aspects of the course.

Here are just some of their responses:

*“A positive experience which has given me more confidence in listening well.”*

*“During the listening course I’ve not only learnt many listening skills but have also learnt a lot about myself. It’s been really useful!”*

*“I have always been a good listener, but this course has opened my eyes.”*

*“Very relaxed and encouraging way to revisit this vital topic.”*

*“Listening to someone is to offer them hospitality”.*

*“Well presented course. Good to be reminded of the listening exercises.”*

Our prayer is that this course plus the accompanying sermon series on listening will help us all to be better Christian listeners as we seek to love our community.

Ana Lawrence

---

## **Soulful Nature**

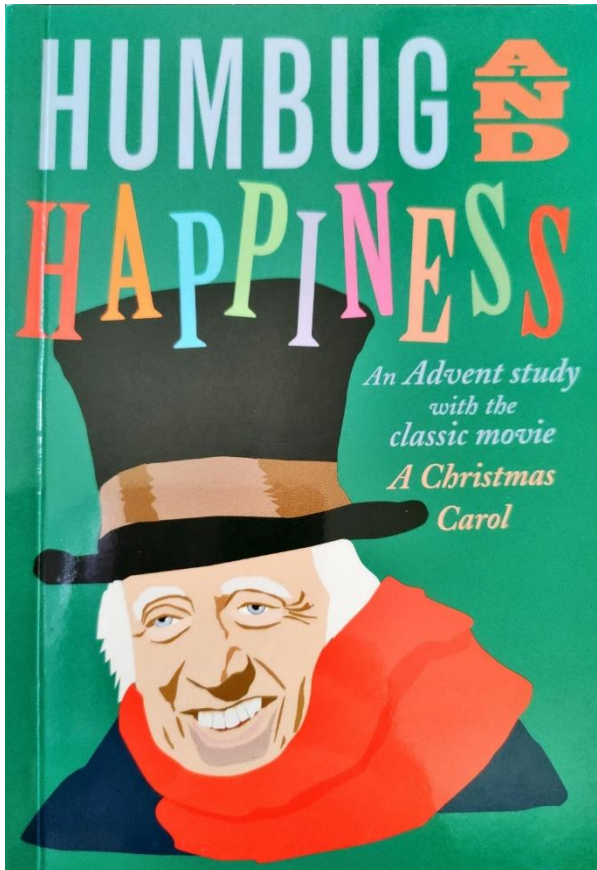
Reports about the natural world in Britain make for gloomy reading, as an aid to counter this we could learn to observe and appreciate what we have more often. As a Benefice we have been reflecting on listening, we can use the skills of concentration and paying attention used in listening to people to also 'listen' to nature. Ways of doing this are described in a book, commended to me by Jane Tompsett, called 'Soulful Nature' by Brian Draper and Howard Green. Each month has a chapter which, in short sections, describes a walk, reflecting on some of the spiritual aspects of it. At the end of each chapter there are suggestions of activities related to the chapter. If you would be interested in joining a group to discuss each chapter month by month through 2024 or would like to know more about it, please get in touch.

Sue Ripley (Street) SWCD Eco Church Group  
sripley63@btinternet.com



## Humbug and happiness

Dear All. As our thoughts turn toward advent, I would like to offer an Advent course based on the Charles Dickens novel A Christmas Carol. The course is called Humbug and Happiness by Sheila Jacobs. It is based on the Alastair Sim version of Scrooge. We will watch the film over four weeks and have an informal



conversation based on the questions in the book. Including a light lunch. The course will begin on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November at 12pm in Street Mission Church. Please do let me know if you would like to attend. If you **would** like to lead one of the four sessions do please also get in touch! Please book with Sonia in the office for catering. Rachel Pengelly (Curate).

Afternoon Tea

Thursday November 16th

2-30pm till 4pm

Mission Church Street

There will be a craft activity  
followed by tea, cake and fellowship.

All Welcome

Do please come and join us.

Delyth Wride and the Team

Afternoon Teas

We are trying to sort out the programme for next year. We are looking for anybody who could offer to do a talk or activity for thirty to forty minutes. This includes people from Walton and Compton Dundon, who are welcome to join us at any of our Afternoon Teas.

Please contact Delyth Wride on 07855093719  
or alternatively email me on

[delythwride@gmail.com](mailto:delythwride@gmail.com)

I will be happy to hear from you.

Delyth Wride and the Team

# My Faith Journey

I was born into a non-Christian family so my faith journey began at the age of 10 when I joined the Boys Brigade. Later we moved to Southend and I joined the Boys Brigade at Shoeburyness Baptist Church. It was a lovely church, very lively and a real church family. I learnt more and more about the Christian faith there and around the age of 16 I started to take God seriously. I committed myself to Him and I was baptised a couple of years after that. It was a wonderful evening – with seven of us baptised during the same service. When I was a student, I was also heavily involved with the Baptist society in the University. They were a great group of Christians and it was a tremendous environment to explore the faith.

Later there was then a period when I drifted away from the church. My faith had taken a back seat - we moved a couple of times in quick succession and just lost touch with the church. But, although I drifted away from God, I don't think I ever completely lost my faith.

Then around 1990 we were living near Merriman Park. We used to pass by and saw the Mission Church gradually being built and quite soon after the new building opened, we decided to try it out. I immediately loved the Mission Church – it just seemed perfect for us. My faith was re-kindled quickly and I committed my life to Jesus again. And if there is a silver lining in my time away from the faith, it is that I found God twice – the first time as a teenager and the second time as an adult.

My main contribution to the church now is through music and in recent years that has been part of my faith journey. In the mid-2000s I started to feel very strongly God calling me to use the musical abilities I had for Him (up until then my involvement in the music had been quite limited). I was doubtful at first because it meant stepping outside my comfort zone. But as I responded

to that call, I kept feeling it more and more strongly and it has been a real blessing to me to be able to play with some great musicians across the Benefice and to be able to contribute to the worship in the church. Ian Jones

---

## **A Golden Prayer**

Blessed are they who bring back memories of yesterday.

Blessed are they who understand my faltering footsteps and shaky hand.

Blessed are they who know that my ears must strain to catch the things they say.

Blessed are they who seem to know that my eyes are dim and wits are slow.

Blessed are they who looked away when the cup spilled at my table today.

Blessed are they with a cheery smile who stop to chat for a little while.

Blessed are they who never say "You've told that story twice today".

Blessed are they who make it known that I am loved, respected and not alone.

Blessed are they who know I am at a loss to find the strength to carry my cross.

Blessed are they who in loving ways ease the days on my journey home.

Amen. A prayer card found in a book which had remained unopened for the best part of ten years until mid October and considered apt for the listening course.

David Yemm

# **SOME UPDATES FROM OUR MISSION PARTNERS**

## **Tearfund – supported by Street**

At a recent PCC meeting we agreed to support a project in Nigeria as part of a Tearfund partnership agreement. This project is summarised below

Waste can be a huge challenge. It can threaten every aspect of life, from health to home, to work. By March 2024 Tearfund's local partner, Transfer of Appropriate Sustainable Technology and Expertise (TASTE), aims to improve living standards and the local environment for six communities in Plateau State, Nigeria. So they can live free of the illnesses and impacts of waste that can hold people back

The project will help local communities to improve access to water and sanitation for example by building toilets and training in good hygiene practises. More details of the project are available from PCC members.

## **Mfuwe Anglican parish, Zambia – supported across the benefice.**

Father Samson Mwanza, the parish priest, has been in touch with pictures of the work being undertaken to repair and improve one of the churches in the parish, St Agnes, where cracks had appeared in the walls

We would love to share other updates from our mission partners but are still in need of church members willing to act as the link person between each mission partner and SWCD Churches, to gather and disseminate this information. If this is something that you could do, please do get in touch

Kevin Lawrence  
For the benefice Charitable Giving group

# **CHRISTMAS SHOPPING ON-LINE? YOUR PURCHASE COULD RAISE FREE FUNDS FOR YOUR CHURCH.**

Whether you are a forward planner or a last-minute dasher, the Christmas shopping season will soon be upon all of us. Increasingly, many of us do some or all of our purchasing online and, if this is you, please consider registering with and using the Easyfundraising website, choosing your church as your chosen charity. <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/>. Through this site, shopping with a wide range of retailers automatically generates a donation to your chosen charity. Whether you are shopping for Christmas, holidays, insurance, ordinary household items or something else, why not give it a go?

We already have separate Easyfundraising charity accounts set up for all three of our parishes with just a few of us in the church already using Easyfundraising, it has already raised several hundred pounds in free donations and would raise far more if more people got involved. It's simple, its quick and its free!

This is just one of many ways you can support the life and ministry of our churches financially. On our church website all the options are listed on the 'Giving' pages at <https://swcd-churches.org.uk/Groups/304053/Giving.aspx>, or speak to your Church Treasurer

Kevin Lawrence

For the benefice stewardship group

# Be a Foxhole Friend

‘TWO CAN ACCOMPLISH MORE ...’ Ecclesiastes 4:9 TLB

---

Before you get into a foxhole with someone, understand:

1. Foxhole friends are few. During the Civil War Abraham Lincoln once received a request to pardon a soldier sentenced to be executed for desertion. The man didn't have a single letter of support vouching for him. Next morning the officer was shocked to hear Lincoln say that the testimony of a friend had sealed his decision to pardon the man. When the officer reminded the President that the request had come with no letter of reference, Lincoln simply stated 'I will be his friend' then signed his pardon. If you have such people in your life value them, they are rare indeed.
2. Foxhole friends provide strength before and during the battle. Even before the battle, simply knowing that someone believes in you and will fight for you is uplifting. Epicurus said 'It is not so much our friends' help that helps us, as the confident knowledge that they will help us.'
3. Foxhole friends see things from the same perspective. Five-year-old Tracey asked her dad if she could play at the house of a friend. He told her she could as long as she was home by 6 o'clock for dinner. When 6 o'clock rolled around Tracey was nowhere to be seen. After about 25 minutes, Tracey opened the front door. Her father, working to control his impatience, asked where she'd been. 'My friend's doll broke right when I was supposed to leave for home.' Her dad said, 'And I suppose you were helping her fix it?' Tracey replied, 'No, I was helping her cry.' What was Tracey? She was a foxhole friend! Are you?

*From the daily readings in 'The Word for Today'. This booklet of devotional readings is published every three months and is available free of charge through the generosity of supporters, from: UCB Operations Centre, Westport Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 4JF. Tel: 0845 60 40 401. Email: [ucb@ucb.co.uk](mailto:ucb@ucb.co.uk)*

*UCB is short for United Christian Broadcasters, who also produce Christian radio and TV programmes available on DAB digital radio, TV and online. Details at [ucbmedia.co.uk](http://ucbmedia.co.uk)*







