

St Mary's Northchurch Newsletter



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December 2018

Depending on the hospitality of strangers



It would be fair to say that there is a great deal of uncertainty about what the New Year and even the next few years will bring. Even though there is good advice from various sources to "expect the unexpected," it is a challenge to face the future with confidence when views and opinions can seem so polarised.

In November at Ashlyns School there was a concert to support the local based charity People Not Borders that in partnership with many initiatives across the country seeks to respond to the needs of refugees. At St Mary's there is a collection point for "Smiley Bags for Syria," in the church porch and it seems to be filled every week for gifts for the children. At the concert a young man from Syria spoke about his experiences. He missed home but he was so grateful for the welcome that he had been given and the support that he had received. He also spoke about his time in Calais in what was known as "the jungle." In this community that had been established there were representatives of about seven different countries and a variety of backgrounds. What they had in common is that either by war or intimidation they had left their homeland and were looking for safety. He said don't be afraid of us as we want to live our lives in safety and peace.

The story of refugees has possibly been one that has

shaped the modern era. It is a subject that has the potential to lead to polarised views. There have been a variety of responses ranging from fear and nationalism to welcome and inclusivity. When we hear the Christmas Story again in the Nativity and Carol Services one of the themes in the story is that danger and the threat of violence follow Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus. The implication in the story is that they would have been dependent, whether in be in Bethlehem or Egypt, on the hospitality of strangers.

You are very welcome to come along to the Christmas services and as we hear the familiar story and the well known carols we will pray that the underlying message of love, compassion and reconciliation will take hold of our hearts and minds.

Rev. Jonathan Gordon

Christmas Services at St Mary's

23rd December 4th Sunday of Advent

8.00am Holy Communion
10.00am Nativity Service
6.00pm Carols by Candlelight

24th December Christmas Eve

5.00pm Crib Service
11.30pm Midnight Mass

25th December Christmas Day

8.00am Holy Communion
10.00am Parish Eucharist

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An Act of Kindness

A knock came on our door. Paul, my husband answered it, he saw a neighbour with her son, he was holding a Christmas bag.

They greeted Paul, and Mum said that he had been learning at school about The act of kindness and they had made something to give to people. He handed over this package as his act of kindness.

I had been oblivious to the conversation at the door, but Paul came through to the kitchen and explained what had happened and we opened the bag together Inside were four scones, still warm and well wrapped in a serviette. We were overwhelmed by the thought that had gone into these very well presented scones and stood speechless for a while, just looking at them.

What a wonderful thing to have done for what must have been a step out of this boy's comfort zone. He had no idea how we would react and we were so surprised with the kindness he had brought to our door. I hope he went away with a warm feeling inside him as we had at the receiving of this gift.

In the last few weeks we've been remembering all who lost their lives in WW1 and subsequent conflicts throughout the world. The many families who remembered their lost loved ones and the stories of kindness that others gave to the wounded. Now, we go on, all these years later to keep a peaceful world and think about how the acts of those who died gave us a world of peace.

It's a wonderful way to think about the hope Jesus will bring into our lives over the next few weeks as we all celebrate that Act of kindness that God gave us in the birth of his son, Jesus. We'll celebrate as we always do and maybe we'll think of a neighbour who might need that Act of kindness.

We were so thankful to that young boy who gave us such kindness and we'll always be thankful and remember his act of kindness.

I don't think I'll ever forget such a kind gesture. What a wonderful thing to have done.

So thank you to that kind boy, (they tasted delicious!) and thank you to God for giving His Son.

Peggy Sear



St Mary's Christmas Cards

As part of the fundraising effort for replacing the roof of St Mary's we are selling Christmas cards with an image of the model of the church in a winter scene. The printing cost has been sponsored so every penny of income goes into the roof fund.

A pack of 5 cards and envelopes costs £7.50 and is available from Andrew Dobbie

Tel: work 01442 870100

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or email andrew@gameplaneurope.com



Update from Go20

The Go20 group is still active in Northchurch. We currently meet on Monday evenings.

We have recently been working hard to put in an application for funding for signage for the entrances to Northchurch along the lines of 'Welcome to Northchurch, Please Drive Carefully'. If we are successful we hope to involve the local community in the design of these.

We are currently prioritising the entrance from the Tring direction to slow traffic before it reaches the bus stop at Dudswell Lane.

In the future we hope to work on raising funding for similar signage on the upper part of New Road and the other points of entry to Northchurch. We are always looking for enthusiastic neighbours to join us.

If you are interested in helping please contact info@northchurchgo20.org

Remembering

November has been a time of remembering.

We must never forget how, by negligence, Europe stumbled into World War 1, one of the greatest disasters of human history. The United Kingdom and its Empire suffered terribly. Yet France and Austria lost half as many dead again; Germany double that; Russia still more. Europe lost even more civilians than the 8 million soldiers who died.

Remembering can easily be just about looking backwards. But then it so easily sinks into triumphalism, the re-assuring feeling that we won because we were right.

Remembering can also bring the men and women who died into our present. Then we can sense their loss. We can feel the disgrace, the godlessness of what happened. And we realise that we owe them an explanation.

It is too late to correct the mistakes of the past. What we owe them is to explain what we are doing so that it never happens again.

After World War I, one side failed to remember what it should have learned. The other could not forget how it had

been humiliated. The result was World War 2. So we must remember how prejudice, how heedlessness of others allows animosity to build. We must remember how nationalism sees our side of the story, and forgets their side, how it demands to take control, how it will fight rather than compromise: my country, right or wrong.

Yes, we can be proud of our heroes as I am proud of my great-uncle Tom. He, an Ulsterman, was killed in France fighting Germans, of whom he surely knew little, on the first day of the Somme. Did the lad who fired the shot that killed Tom die too? And did not his mother grieve, just like Tom's mother? Unless we remember the past, we will do it all again.

In John's gospel Jesus, facing his own hideous fate, speaks of his Community of Love. That Community thinks of others, not just of itself. He promises that God will enable them to remember. And God will bring Jesus himself into their present. Jesus offers peace, but not like the world does. He does not forget.

David White



This month in December 1842

The news of the plans to re-open the former railway line between Oxford and Cambridge reminded me of the existence of another old line closer to Northchurch - the Cheddington to Aylesbury Line. Built under the direction of railway pioneer, Robert Stephenson, it opened in June 1839 as a single-track line linking a station in Aylesbury High Street with the then London and Brighton Railway at Cheddington Junction, now Cheddington station. At Cheddington Junction, the carriages from the branch line were taken into a siding where the engine, which had brought them from Aylesbury, was disconnected and a new engine, that would pull them to London, connected at the rear. Thus, people joining the train at Aylesbury in the furthest carriage found themselves in the first carriage on the journey between Cheddington and London.

Unfortunately, a tragic accident occurred near Northchurch three years after the line opened. At 11:00 on Thursday 8th December 1842, four passenger carriages, with a luggage carriage in the middle, left Aylesbury bound for Cheddington Junction. Here, the carriages were reversed and attached to an engine of the London and Brighton Railway for its journey towards London. Reaching

the embankment just to the north of Northchurch Tunnel near Dudswell, the front axle of the engine suddenly broke, and resulted in the engine and its coal tender becoming derailed and falling down the steep embankment, dragging the first passenger carriage with it. Sadly, one person was killed and another three injured. A verdict of accidental death was subsequently recorded and it was agreed that all future trains should have the luggage carriage directly behind the tender so as to reduce the risk of the passenger carriages derailing should a similar incident reoccur.

Four years later, the line was taken over by the London and North Western Railway. The Cheddington to Aylesbury Line was closed to passengers in 1953, remaining open only for goods trains, and was used mainly to transport Aylesbury ducks to the markets in London. It was closed in 1964 following the Beeching Review.

Richard North

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- * Men's fleeces, jeans and waterproof jackets (all small or medium only).
- * New small or medium men's underpants.
- * Cans of fish, nuts and dried fruit.

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If you can offer Caroline or any of our other dogs a forever home, please call in at the kennels any day between 10 am and 4 pm or phone for more details. Please note that there are restrictions on rehoming dogs to families with children under seven years of age. Full details of the rehoming process can be found on our website.

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Christmas Services at St Mary's



2nd December *Advent Sunday*

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.00am Parish Eucharist
6.00pm Advent Carols

9th December *Second Sunday of Advent*

8.00am Holy Communion
10.00am Parish Eucharist
6.00pm Evening Prayer

16th December *Third Sunday of Advent*

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.00am Parish Eucharist
6.00pm Evening Prayer

23rd December *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.00am Nativity Service
6.00pm Carols by Candlelight

24th December *Christmas Eve*

5.00pm Crib Service
11.30pm - Midnight Mass



25th December *Christmas Day*

8.00am Holy Communion
10.00am Parish Eucharist



30th December *First Sunday of Christmas*

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.00am Parish Eucharist
No evening service

Crisis

St Mary's Northchurch Annual Crisis at Christmas Lunch

Thursday 6th December 2018
from 11.00am – 1.00pm in the Parish Room

Coffee, mince pies, soup & rolls



Plus Raffles & Bring and Buy



Together
we will end
homelessness

Contacts for the Newsletter

Distribution to Valerie Clark, 862613.

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