

# STAMP

AUTUMN 2021

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 52

THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL  
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

# STOMP MAGAZINE

## ISSUE 52 AUTUMN 2021

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### Cover Picture: Canon John

'The Anglican Shrine at Walsingham Abbey'

A recent edition of 'Sunday' on Radio 4 featured an interview with broadcaster, journalist and self-determined atheist Simon Jenkins about his latest book, 'Europe's 100 Best Cathedrals'.

He was asked why, given his stand on religion, he was interested in cathedrals. In his reply he said he was also interested in ancient castles but admitted, somewhat wistfully, going into a cathedral feels 'somehow different'.

Following the interview listeners were invited to send in their choice of a favourite cathedral and to say what made it so for them.

There was a huge response - a number along the lines of, 'I'm not a Christian but ...' and then went on to describe some non-tangible aspects of their experiences using words like 'special', 'holy', 'godly', 'atmosphere', 'peaceful'.

In the UK we have many examples of places which have acquired an aura of 'somehow feeling different' through a long history of worship or martyrdom - 'their very stones breathe prayer'.

On page 4 the first instalment of Canon John's story of Walsingham Abbey and it's journey to become a shrine for pilgrims travelling from all over the world tells of one such outstanding example.

*Jeff Wallis*

# FROM THE EDITOR

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## INTERGLACIAL THINKING

We are now in an interglacial period. Massive ice sheets started to shrink 20,000 years ago as temperatures warmed up. 15,000 years ago the Great Northern European Ice Sheet rested against the Chilterns escarpment, topping it in places and sending ice lodes south eastwards through the Chiltern valleys. Our area's geomorphology and surface deposits reflect both glacial and periglacial conditions. Our existence has been made possible by the retreat of the ice sheet. Now that retreat is accelerating through shrinkage of the continental ice sheets in the Arctic and Antarctic. This arises from the increasing use of the fossil fuels, which have sustained us over the last three centuries. However, if we cannot contain the rise in temperature to 1.5 Celsius we are seen to be in dire straits through rising sea levels, changing climate conditions and an increase in disasters such as droughts, floods and raging fires. The answer is to move from our dependence on fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, gas and wood to the 'new energies': solar, wind turbines, tidal and wave turbines, nuclear and thermal energy and biomass.

This is the background to the pending world crisis for humanity and our ecosystem, which Robin reflects on in his timely and thought - provoking article. The answers involve us all: mega the world, macro the nation, and micro each person, each family, each building and each organisational unit. Each needs to do something positive. Robin indicates how we as a Parish might reduce our carbon footprint towards zero, indicating options, costs and a time frame. Yes, the C of E time frame may be eight years but the earlier the parishioners and the PCC consider and plan for this the better.



Food for thought – when might the ice sheets reform and extend again towards the end of this interglacial period? In a normal cycle this is forecast to be around 50,000 years ahead, but warming up the way we are could put it off to 500,000 years. However, in the meantime in the worst situation the sea levels could rise by 200 feet and how would humankind cope with that?

*GG 19 November 2021*

# WALSINGHAM IN NORFOLK PART 1

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In November I spent a few days of retreat and reflection at 'England's Nazareth' of Walsingham in Norfolk, for 960 years a key place of pilgrimage in Europe. Upon my return Jeff Wallis asked me about some of the pictures I had taken on the trip and posted on the parish WhatsApp Group and then Gordon – your illustrious editor – asked me to write a few words about my trip.

Rather naughtily I have decided that there is too much to say in one issue of SToMP and that a mini-series is required! So, here goes with part one a mixture of my thoughts and the official history.

I have visited the shrine at Walsingham since joining – a bit by mistake – the High Anglican church of St Mark, Barnet Vale back in the early 1980's. For Fr Colin and the people of St Mark's, pilgrimage - and especially the annual journey by coach to Walsingham - was as much a part of church life as the Sunday Eucharist. For me, it was a bit of a shock to the system at first before becoming an important part of my own devotion. The great thing to my mind about this small part of North Norfolk is the combination of wonderful natural countryside along with a quaint ancient village and an ecumenical coming together of Christians for a common cause and devotion.

There are two big shrines there, the Anglican one in the village and the Roman Catholic one just outside, at the end of the Holy Mile, the famous road that pilgrims originally walked in on, barefoot, from the Slipper Chapel in nearby Houghton-St Giles. As well as the two big shrines the former railway station is the Orthodox Church and icon studio, and the Methodist church building is one of the oldest in the country and Charles Wesley famously once preached in the village.

It is this melting pot of Christian witness that draws people from all backgrounds to spend time in Walsingham. To give you a potted history of the place and how it came to be so important in Europe as a place of pilgrimage, I am sharing some of the official brief history from the Anglican Shrine, below.

## **The History of Walsingham (from the account at the Anglican Shrine)**

Even in the eleventh century, when this story begins, the village of Little Walsingham was a thriving place, located mid-way between Norwich (then England's second city) and the wealthy town of King's Lynn.

Richeldis de Faverches was a Saxon noblewoman, married to the Lord of the Manor of Walsingham Parva. He died leaving her a young widow with a son, Geoffrey. We know that Richeldis had a deep faith in God and devotion to Mary. We know too of her reputation for good works in care and generosity towards those around her.

At this time there was a great deal of interest in the Holy Land and people undertook long and often dangerous pilgrimages there. Christian armies were soon to be engaged in a number of Crusades to liberate the holy sites from Muslim control and it is believed that Geoffrey eventually joined one of those Crusades as an expression of his Christian faith.

### 1061 – The Vision

For Richeldis, however, the life of prayer and good works was rewarded by a vision in the year 1061. In this vision she was taken by Mary to be shown the house in Nazareth where Gabriel had announced the news of the birth of Jesus. Mary asked Richeldis to build an exact replica of that house in Walsingham. This is how Walsingham became known as England's Nazareth.

The vision was repeated three times, according to legend, and retold through a fifteenth century ballad. The materials given by Richeldis were finally constructed miraculously one night into the Holy House, while she kept a vigil of prayer.



### Walsingham Priory

Although we cannot be certain that this story represents all the details of historical fact, we do know that in passing on his guardianship of the Holy House, Geoffrey de Faverches left instructions for the building of a Priory in Walsingham. The Priory passed into the care of Augustinian Canons somewhere between 1146 and 1174.

It was this Priory, housing the simple wooden structure Richeldis had been asked to build, which became the focus of pilgrimage to Walsingham. Royal patronage helped the Shrine to grow in wealth and popularity, receiving visits from Henry III, Edward II, Edward III, Henry IV, Edward IV, [Henry VII](#) and Henry VIII.

Next time: Henry VIII destroys the Holy House and Walsingham enters a desolate time until the restoration of pilgrimage by both Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

*Canon John*

*Priest Associate of the Holy House, OLW.*

More photos from Walsingham Abbey :



# THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S 2030 NET ZERO CARBON TARGET

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We have now seen COP 26 come and go and probably followed it with varying degrees of interest and enthusiasm or pessimism. When coupled with the latest Inter Governmental Climate Change report it may well have inspired you, like me, to see what we can sensibly do to reduce our carbon footprint. And of course the same ought to apply to us as a Parish.

The Church of England made a commitment a few years ago to achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2030. To help achieve this commitment, the Diocese has appointed a new Environment Officer and started requesting fuel usage figures from each Parish so we can assume that the commitment is binding on us as a Parish and that the screw will start to tighten soon.

So this is a discussion paper written to encourage Parish attention and to help start the thinking about what this Net Zero Carbon commitment might mean for us.

There are of course lots of possible questions to be asked such as:-

- Is it just a target, so, like many targets, designed as a goal to be aimed at but unlikely to be actually achieved,
- or does it need to be taken seriously?
- Do Grade 1 listed buildings, like St Mary's, get exempted making it a dubious target from the start ?
- And of course the main question which is what can be done to help meet it ?



As background information, in 2020, a year when electricity use was probably lower than normal, 38% of the UK's electricity was generated by fossil fuels. So in reality, wherever we bought our electricity from, we were actually using 38% of fossil fuel generated electricity.

As far as I can see, gas will continue to be used for electricity generation until at least 2035 – the current target date for ending its use – so well beyond 2030, and depending significantly on our actually building more nuclear plants or developing carbon capture in a serious way - the latter a technology which seems to be almost as elusive as nuclear fusion.



But getting back to us as a Parish, let us assume that buying our electricity from a Company that says it only buys renewable electricity means that the electricity we use is actually zero carbon, then all we will need to do is move away from using any gas by 2030.

This is, of course, easy for St Paul's as it uses no gas, but not at all easy for either St Mary's hall or church which both rely on gas for heating.

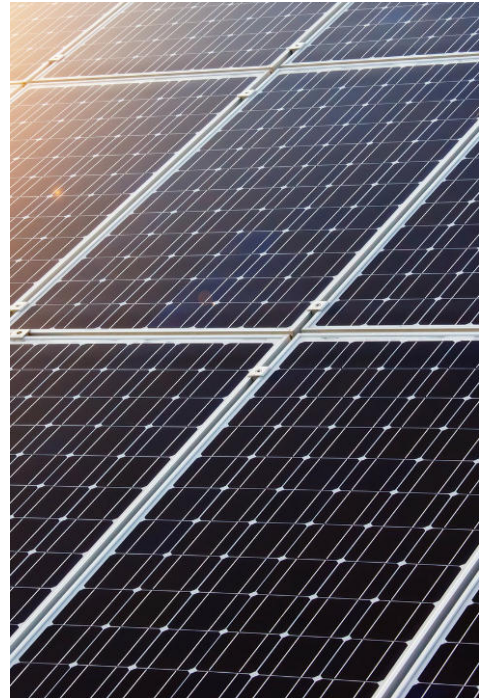
There is talk of natural gas systems being converted to hydrogen. This currently has significant challenges because it will probably need most of the existing steel infrastructure pipework to be replaced by plastic, and maybe also an increase in size to deliver the extra amount of hydrogen needed to give out the same heat as natural gas. Making the hydrogen is also energy expensive and this will further increase the need for non fossil fuel generated electricity.

The consequence is that green hydrogen is unlikely to be available on tap for 2030. So either we need to buy it in tanks to fuel our converted boilers or we need to convert to electric heating at St Mary's.

There is much talk of heat pumps and this is a good way of heating a building if you have under floor heating, as many churches now have; but at the moment it works less well for use with existing radiators. This is because commercial heat pumps only really heat water to around 35 to 45 deg centigrade as compared to the 65+ degrees we usually have in our radiators.

So, to heat the same room, the size of the radiator will need to be at least twice as large. Also heat pumps take more electricity to recover heat when the outside temperature is colder so they become more expensive and less efficient just when you need the most heat. This means that often a top up heating system needs to be involved for really cold weather.

It could be that the mass of St Mary's church might help to smooth its heating needs in really cold weather, but realistically we would need a completely new enlarged radiator system in the church as well as the external heat pump installation: so a very significant investment.





Ground source heat pumps are more effective because the temperature of the ground where the heat is extracted rarely falls to the same low temperatures as the air above. But installing the 6 x one hundred metre deep boreholes it would take to heat the church would be a major undertaking costing around £80k - just for the boreholes, I have been told.

At the moment heat pumps produce about 3 to 3.5 times as much heat as the electricity they use.

We currently pay just over 3p per kWh for our gas and around 15p per kWh for our electricity. So if we were to change to a heat pump instead of a boiler and require the same amount of heat, this would be equivalent to increasing the amount we pay for gas to around 4.3p ( instead of 3p) so a 40% increase in price for our heating. The recent energy price increases and the talked of changes to the way the renewable energy subsidies are applied might of course help to change this.

Fair enough, you may say, in order to save the planet; but then you and the rest of us will need to finance this extra

ongoing cost of around £2000/year – plus of course the £100k investment cost of installing the heat pump system.

If this is what you feel, then please say it so that the PCC knows.

So far I have been very broad brush and possibly rather discouraging, so how do we achieve net zero carbon for the Parish by 2030?

**Let me be provocative and suggest possible ways , predicated on electricity being all produced without recourse to fossil fuels:-**

1 St Mary's Hall. We invest in an air source heat pump and increase the size of the radiators. Very possible, but a significant investment needed say £15k

2 St Mary's Church. We install radiant electric panels to heat the church during services only – say £20k depending on how many panels we opt for. Maybe we could try using the existing boilers just to keep the background temperature at say 12 degrees and supplement with radiant panels.

3 Because of St Mary's Church temperature we could decide not to use it in the colder winter months and only to use St Paul's Church or St Mary's Hall for services in those months.

4 Or if the congregations are small we concentrate the radiant electric heaters in St Mary's Chancel and/or Chapel so we can hold winter services in these areas and stay reasonably warm.

5 We could of course plan to take out the nave pews and install under floor heating, but this would be a very major expense.



6 We could say that the net zero target is just unrealistic for a Grade 1 listed building. So 2030 is not applicable to St Mary's church and we will only address the hall. For the church we will just need to carry on as we are until green hydrogen arrives to replace gas.

7 We could put solar panels on the South aisle roof in order to produce the electricity to keep the lights on during church opening hours. Solar panels could also go on St Paul's roof to contribute to the electric heating and lighting there. Very attractive and eco-friendly but needing the investment capital.

This article is intended to inform and provoke thought, and maybe planning for action too.

We hear every day that target setting without action, or buy in, is the easy way of salvaging consciences. We are probably rightly critical when we see politicians make seemingly unrealisable promises when faced with difficult choices, so how do we react when faced with our own difficult choices, as a Parish or as individuals?

The point of COP 26 was to generate commitments to take action so what do you think we should be doing? And where do you think the investment money should come from ?

Why not tell the PCC, what you think?

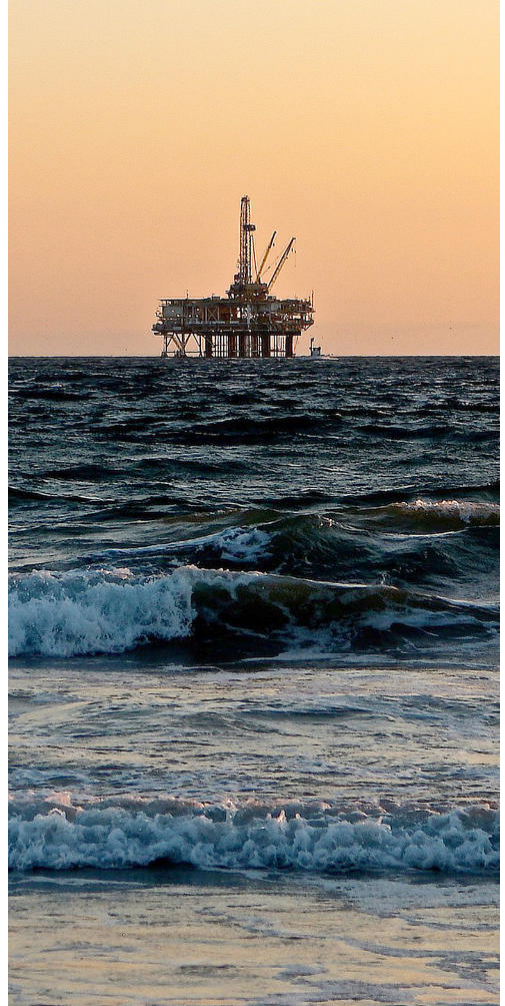
*NB:- Some of my figures may be too generalised to be strictly accurate, but I believe that they are factual enough to set the scene fairly.*

*Robin Woodd*

*Editor's PS*

*Sending Robin a copy of my editorial he made the additional point that 'in many ways more challenging an ever increasing flow of displaced people seeking a new home after escaping from the dire situation that climate change put them in?'*

*Gordon*



# ST MARY'S BELLRINGERS TRIUMPH IN COUNTY RINGING COMPETITION (AGAIN)

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*The winning St Mary's band, (L to R) Louise Flower, Jo Ainsworth, Su Gambling, Brian Crawley, David Gambling, Tom Mack*

Back in 1995 the bellringers became good enough to qualify for the County competition, the Kimpton Cup, by winning the local eliminator competition. Good enough at what? The answer is striking – which is neither dramatic nor the withdrawal of labour, but evenly spaced accurate ringing of the bells. The perfect sound is 1-2-3-4-5-6. Imperfect, and incurring faults, would be 1-2---34-5-6 – a larger gap than the others (2---3) or a smaller one (34). As the bell sounds two seconds after the rope is pulled it's not always easy to control exactly when it strikes, particularly on unfamiliar bells

- that's where the skill and some natural talent comes in. Surprisingly to those who can do it, some ringers really can't pick out their bell's sound among the others. Anyway, St Mary's were blessed (?) with a competent band of six ringers who first won the County competition in 1995. and since then we have entered most years, winning 13 times with various changes to the team over the years. The competition, held annually in September, takes place at a different church in a different district of the county. This year at Much Hadham we were drawn 4th which we quite liked

because it meant that we could benefit from hearing the first three teams but not get bored waiting.

One team, due to ring 5th, had to jump the queue to get to a wedding-ringing commitment, so we swapped positions. The 2 judges sat in the churchyard away from the waiting teams, marking every blow for precision.

After we had rung we repaired to the pub for lunch and liquid refreshment followed by the judges' assessment of our performances.

We were up against stiff competition from four other teams including our local (friendly) rivals Redbourn, and last year's winners, Tewin. We rang our test piece of 240 changes in around 8 minutes. The speed is only relevant in the overall sound of the ringing; quick ringing is sometimes prettier than slow, so although the time was measured it did not influence the result. Also, for the technical, we were the only team to include all 6 bells in the changes, the others mixing up 5 with the 6th always in 6th place.

After a nervous lunch the judges pronounced judgement. They commented on each team's ringing as a whole then announced the results in reverse order. This is an anxious few minutes, getting more exciting as other teams are named. When it came to the last two (Redbourn and us) we were holding our breath.

*David Gambling*

## WILDFLOWERS IN THE CHURCHYARD

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*Watch this space in the Spring*

A group of us planted out 320 wildflower plugs provided by Dacorum Council in St Mary's churchyard one afternoon recently.

Jenny Leslie suggested the idea and Rob Cassidy, the Dacorum Green Space and Parks manager, took it up enthusiastically and provided the plugs and will fix a sign saying Wild flower area and manage the mowing or absence of it going forward.

# EDITOR'S INTERVIEW

## JULIE POLLARD

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Born in Barnet in 1960, Julie with her parents moved to Hemel Hempstead in 1962, where she has spent much of her life. She went to school at Westwick Primary School and Adeyfield Secondary School and later to Cassio College in Watford. There she took a hairdressing course, a natural thing for her because she had been working part-time in salons on Saturdays and during school holidays since the age of 13. She then worked in salons in Abbots Langley and Rickmansworth, renting a flat above shops in the latter. Moving into the flat the 'cardboard incident' in 1981 brought her and Robert together. Robert, a fire officer getting out of a car saw her dropping cardboard onto the carpark and cheerfully remonstrated with her. They were married within the year in the Holy Trinity Church, Leverstock Green, the ceremony being conducted by the Revd John Potipher the Fire Service Chaplain and a serving officer.

Aged 22, this marriage first brought Julie into the church. Earlier in her life, aged seven she had lost her brother Simon aged five. Devastated, she would ask her parents where he had gone the reply being, 'to heaven'. Living with this and searching for answers at the age of ten she had gone to the church in Leverstock Green; the doors were locked and she turned



away for over a decade. Following the marriage and the birth of their daughter Lindsey, wanting her to be baptised in 1988 they visited Revd Robert Goff the Vicar of St Paul's in Highfield who welcomed them and agreed that the ceremony could be conducted by the Revd John Potipher. Julie remembers clearly turning up with the three month old Lindsey in her arms, being greeted warmly by Barbara Parker and from that moment 'something clicked' as she recalls in a quotation from her letter to the Autumn SToMP in 2020, 'I walked in not

knowing what to expect ... and I found something that I didn't even realise that I was looking for or that was missing from my life! The building itself is important and gives structure and a sense of belonging in the community but to me it is the people I met that make St Paul's, those who have guided and supported me on my journey and continue to do so'. Julie has found this and her faith to have been very important as her work became more arduous and demanding. She has been and continues to be active in the church, contributions having included junior church, intercessions, readings and annually for many years organising and running, as a family effort, the highly successful Christmas Chocolate and Wine Tombola at the Bazaar, later the Fair!

Career-wise Julie's life moved on remarkably from 1993 when she became a parent volunteer at the Hammond Primary School in Highfield.

This was the start of a 29 year commitment of service to the primary

school where she was greatly helped and trusted by the long-serving and highly regarded Head Teacher, M/s Porterfield. Employed from 1995, earlier she was invited to cover, as a teaching assistant, a one to one assignment for a child with special educational needs. This was followed by work as a class teaching assistant and she was encouraged to take a part-time Specialised Teaching Assistant Course, 2003/ 2004. This enabled her to proceed into a Hertfordshire University degree course on Educational Support following which, in 2005, she was invited to become the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, working with the Head Teacher. At this time also she was appointed to be the Lead Designated Safeguarding Person, a position she occupied until her retirement.

This involved all aspects of child protection, working with children and families. In 2015 she stepped down from her 10-year assignment and assumed the new role of Parent Liaison, to develop pastoral work on a private and confidential basis working with children and families. ▷



*This captures Julie's fascination for steam locomotives. For her 50th birthday the family gave her a special present, to drive the locomotive from Swanage to Corfe and back, 10 miles each way. Coached, she drove the engine to Corfe but had to become the fireman heaving coal on the way back!*

Her studies continued, taking a Diploma in Counselling Children and Adolescents in 2015 and a Diploma in Grief and Bereavement Counselling in 2020.

In 2017 she was trained in Drawing and Talking Therapy and also in Protective Behaviour. The assignments for Julie became tougher and impacted on her emotionally, especially the later responsibilities and during the extra trials of the pandemic. To absorb people's grief, to listen to their pain and anxiety, to 'learn what can go on behind some front doors', to understand, sympathise and counsel is all-demanding and can be psychologically difficult. It helped very much to be able to pray for guidance.

Julie had been spotted by her Head as an adaptable, trustworthy and competent person who, with encouragement, could take on ever more responsibility.

There has been a lot of joy, a lot of frustration and sometimes a feeling of physical sickness during the work. Now with great relief, approaching 61 and after 29 years at the Hammond, Julie decided to retire and 'have a break' and see more of her husband, Robert. Following his service as a Leading Fire Officer for Hemel Hempstead, Garston and Rickmansworth which ended in 1995 following an injury, he had been head hunted to work as Fire Safety Officer at the Pinewood Studios.

He had retired and it was time for she and Robert to be together more, to complete a garden project, to sort the house out and 'just to be'. Also there would be the continuing relaxation and excitement of caravan holidays around Britain. Especially, following Robert's work for the Pinewood Studios in the shooting in Ireland of 'The Saving of Private Ryan', they had fallen in love with Ireland, its people and the tempo and 'the stunning way of life there'. Having been there three times they plan to go again when possible.

Talking to Julie I had a great sense of the importance of a family of people caring for each other. Losing her Dad a quarter of a century ago, she is very close to her Mum, Betty who lives in Warners End and also to daughter Lindsey and son Matthew, who both live within an hour's drive away. This is well illustrated by the family's support together with season tickets at Watford Football Club for twenty five years.

In ending I cannot but comment that we love having Julie with us at St Paul's. She is part of the human fabric that helps to make us tick.

*Gordon Gaddes - 22 November 2021*

# THE MAP AWAYDAY FOR THE PCC OF ST MARY & ST PAUL

## NOVEMBER 2021

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This year the venue for the PCC MAP Awayday was the church of St Albans, Warners End. This served the dual purpose of putting some much-needed revenue into St Albans' coffers and providing us with a setting that emphasised the spiritual element of our planning as well as providing us with breakout places and easy access to tea and coffee.

The session was introduced by Father John, who provided us with copies of our previous MAP. Of course, the situation has changed dramatically since 2019, and the pandemic has had an impact on what we could achieve in the intervening time as well as forming the context for our new planning. But the 14 PCC members taking part were keen to get started on the challenge and split into two groups, led by Norma and Rosina, to review and discuss the possibilities.

There was lively debate and many questions and suggestions, including some which had been given to PCC people by other members of the congregations. The two groups set about the task of creating our Mission Action Plan in different ways, but finally came up with a surprising level of consensus.

The two overarching aims for both

groups were providing spiritual, friendly and practical support for all in our communities (especially the vulnerable) and that we should try to take on a project to help with climate change.

Further discussions followed in the feedback session, and then it was time to hear Revd Pete give us some background and history of the church in which we sat. He provided us with some inspiration for outreach ideas and some important questions to consider about the future of the wider Team Parish. Finally it was decided that all the flip chart papers and notes should go to Norma and Rosina to work on and to turn into a paper with suggested aims and targets for the PCC to discuss at their next meeting in January.

The next item was the very important one of lunch, which was organised by John and Penny, and the day closed with a short service led by Father John. Many thanks to him and Penny, and to all the PCC members who gave up several hours on a Saturday to help decide the direction in which we will go in the next few years.

*Norma Podmore*





## GOD IN THE SCIENCES SHOULD WE HAVE FAITH IN SCIENCE?

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*This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.*

How do you feel about science after more than 18 months of pandemic: tired or interested, impressed or cynical – or a bit of everything? The response to COVID-19 has demonstrated how ideology or worldview are hugely influential in our interpretation and use of scientific data – and at times in the process of experimentation itself. Should we trial a vaccine in Spain or South Africa? Is this treatment safe enough to administer to the general public? Should vaccination be made compulsory?

The data don't tell us what to do.

So, when we are encouraged to 'trust the science' in our ongoing response to the pandemic, or in the COP26 UN climate change conference, how can the Church respond? The whole biblical story affirms that God is the only one in whom we can have complete faith.

On the other hand, I do put a certain amount of trust in other things. I can have faith in a plane, a body of knowledge, or a person. This trust is within limits because I know that air travel involves hazards, a body of knowledge will contain some mistakes, and every ordinary human is fallible.

I trust science to some extent because it involves careful observation and measurement, collecting different kinds of evidence. Data is interpreted, and competing interpretations are tried out. ▷

We summarise our findings in general principles or mathematical equations. Scientists keep each other accountable by looking critically at each other's work. Our knowledge is always provisional. You can't prove anything scientifically because we only deal in evidence, not proof.

On the other hand, there must always be the potential to disprove a theory or it's not science. Our aim is to keep getting nearer to the truth about the way the world is. Overall, I believe this method is reliable and worth supporting, but that only God is completely trustworthy.

Psalm 8 reminds us both of the splendour of God's creation, and that He has placed us in a position of responsibility over it. Scientific knowledge can be part of what helps us to rule well. The process of doing science can be a bit like a blurry image coming into focus. The more we learn, the better we can usually see what's going on, and hopefully the easier it is to decide on a course of action.

So in answer to the question 'Should we have faith in science?' I would say yes, when used wisely and within its proper limits.



## DAILY HOPE PHONE LINE



**0800 804 8044**

**Daily Hope, a free phone line which offers prayers and support for callers, receives nearly 20,000 calls every month.**

The service, which was launched during the Covid-19 lockdown, has spent more than 7.15 million minutes on more than 550,000 calls.

The phone line originally launched in April 2020, only to continue in response to ongoing demand once restrictions were eased.

Daily Hope set up by the Church of England nationally, has also been supported by Connections, a Missional Programme to older people based at Holy Trinity Claygate in Surrey and the Christian charity Faith in Later Life.

Over the year and a half of service, Daily Hope has continued to encourage people across the country and beyond including Australia, Japan, and the United States.

Since the phone line launched, users have been able to listen to a range of audio, including the Church of England's national weekly service, hymns and daily prayer.

Many have messaged Lambeth Palace to express their thanks for the introduction of the phone line, particularly for elderly people.

# CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS

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When a boy, for several years Christmastide was an emotional and very profound experience for me in an inexplicable way. Now, more than seven decades on, the simple Christian story and message in my mind at that time might be returned to.

Mary a pregnant girl with the steadfast Joseph on their way to pay their taxes, Mary caught short and the birth of Jesus in a manger. A baby lauded by the poorest and the richest, the shepherds and the kings. A family facing persecution and fearing death fleeing the country. Fast forward to Easter in the Christian calendar to the story of Jesus Christ dying on the cross. This simple story in its telling can be greatly embellished through references to the Holy Scriptures, to the missionary work and parables of Jesus Christ and the developing theology based on the spiritual experience and interpretations of St Paul.

Returning again to simplicity, what was in my mind in those early years, something which might explain the inexplicable emotion of Christmastide?

Then I had no explanation for the profound experience which always came to its climax on Christmas Eve.

Seventy years on I think I understand better, with some mature reflections and stripping away theological questions. Jesus Christ in his life, his teachings and his death for us personifies goodness, kindness, gentleness and tolerance in the face of evil. ▷

Joseph represents kindness, tolerance and steadfastness. Mary represents the miracle of motherhood. I picture her at the birth of Jesus and I picture her bereaved, a widow, standing at the cross on Golgotha and later rushing to the empty tomb. I wonder about the life she might have led and about the things that have been written about her. I remember that I thought of St Mary and of my own mother in December 2004 when writing the poem below.

### **Mother Love**

Mother love,  
love of mother,  
love by mother, love for mother  
bring to humankind  
the circle of love  
loyalty and forgiveness  
permanence and generosity  
purity and holiness  
transcendence of spirit  
all the eternal gifts of  
giving, suffering,  
weeping motherhood.

*Gordon Gaddes  
21 November 2021*

## **KEEP YOUR CHRISTMAS LEGAL!**



Curiously, there is no law to say you cannot work on the big day. The only law that protects shop workers is the Christmas Day (Trading) Act 2004, which imposes a ban on Christmas Day trading for large shops, over 280 square metres in size, in England and Wales.

If you get bored on Christmas, you can eat as much as you like, but you cannot go outside and shoot pheasants or any other game. The Game Act 1831 makes it illegal.

Christmas has other particular laws around it. It is against the law to sell Christmas crackers to anyone under 12, because of the Pyrotechnic Articles (Safety) Regulations 2015, s.31. Also, and this is frustrating for many, it is against the law to make or use a slide from snow or ice in the metropolitan area, under the Metropolitan Police Act 1839.

This, as always is a light-hearted comment and you should always take proper advice. Spare a thought and a prayer for those who are homeless or fear the knock on the door from a bailiff or debt collector. If you need advice or help, don't hang about, contact someone, one of the debt charities like Christians Against Poverty.

*David Pickup, a solicitor*

# HOW FATHER CHRISTMAS GOT WHERE HE IS TODAY

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One person you are bound to run into this Christmas season is Father Christmas. If he looks tired, just remember that he has been around a long time and gone through a lot of transformations.

Father Christmas wasn't always the red-suited, white-bearded star of the retail trade that he is today. He began life as Nicholas, born way back about AD260 in Patara, an important port on the southern coast of what is now Turkey.

When his parents died and left him a fortune, Nicholas gave it away to the poor. He became a bishop of the nearby city of Myra, where he almost certainly suffered persecution and imprisonment at the hand of the Roman Emperor Diocletian.

Nicholas was a serious theologian: he was a participant at the First Council of Nicaea, which formulated the Creed which we still say today. Nicholas died in Myra about AD343, but the stories of his generosity and kindness were just beginning.

In the UK, Nicholas became the basis for Father Christmas, who emerged in Victorian times as a jolly-faced bearded character. Meanwhile, Dutch and German settlers had taken him to America with them as Sinter Klaas and Sankt Nicklas.

It was in America that Nicholas received his final two great breaks into real stardom. The first was when the Rev Clement C Moore, a New York Episcopal minister wrote a fun poem for his children one Christmas. His 'The Visit of St Nicholas' is now universally known by its first line: 'T'was the Night Before Christmas'.

From Clement Moore we discovered that St Nicholas is round and pink-cheeked and white-bearded, and that he travels at night with sleigh, reindeer and a sack of toys on his back. It was Clement Moore who also revealed that St Nicholas enters houses down chimneys and fills children's stockings with toys and sweets.

So how did we find out that Father Christmas wears red? That was the US Coca-Cola advertising campaign of 1931, who finally released the latest, up-to-date pictures of Father Christmas: wearing a bright red, fur-trimmed coat and a large belt.

These days, it is good that Father Christmas uses reindeer and doesn't have to pay for petrol. In order to get around all the children in the world on Christmas Eve, he will have to travel 221 million miles at an average speed of 1279 miles a second, 6,395 times the speed of sound. For all those of us who are already exhausted just rushing around getting ready for Christmas, that is a sobering thought.



# OLD TOWN NATIVITY TRAIL 2021,

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**On the afternoon of Advent Sunday, there was a service shared by Carey Baptist Church, The Quaker Meeting House and St Mary's, to launch an initiative called 'The Old Town Nativity Trail'**

**This is an explanatory talk by The Revd Colin Cartwright of Carey Baptist Church.**

Thanks John – good to be back at St Mary's & to be part of this new initiative for this Christmas: the Old Town Nativity Trail, organised between: the Society of Friends (Quaker Meeting House), St Mary's and Carey Baptist.

John & I first talked about a Nativity Trail around the Old Town, for local children, back in September. John was very enthusiastic. And really it's John who has helped all this happen. With quite a bit of help from Rev Austin of Grovehill, who produced the artwork for us.

It seemed to me that, after last year's Christmas, overshadowed by Covid, we could do with something to bring our community together this Christmas. Something which encouraged families to get out and about and walk the local streets. And spend more money in the High Street or this end of town.

I had heard about other churches in Hertfordshire doing Nativity trails. It seemed like a great way to achieve a number of things all at once:

- to support our local shops and businesses in the Hi Street (as an EcoChurch, Carey is very big into 'keeping things local')
- to encourage families to celebrate and explore the story of Christmas
- to publicise Christmas service of churches local to the Old Town

Let me tell you how it works, in case you are wondering ! Look out for a poster like this in a shop window. Wherever a shop, or cafe in the High Street (or in the Marlowes, opposite the West Herts College) displays this poster of the Nativity, that's a place that is participating in the Nativity Trail. There, children and their families can find a blank poster, and also each of these places will have either one sticker or two. All the stickers need to be collected from the 17 places taking part. The picture on the poster needs to be coloured in by the child taking part. Then they need to post it in the special postbox provided specially by the Old Town Hall. Deadline is 12 noon on 23 December. Our three churches will then each pick one of the pictures, which will give us three prize-winners. They will each win a £50 voucher – for the Old Town Theatre, for House of Elliott and for Leisure Wheels. So remember this: **STICKERS MEAN PRIZES !**

These prizes will be presented to three happy children at Carey Baptist in the New Year. That will be on Epiphany, Thurs 6 Jan at 4pm. Hopefully, they will be able to come straight from school, accompanied by someone from the family.

As you know, the shadow of Covid is still lurking this year. But as always, we'll prepare for the worst and hope for the best. So, we are all looking forward to seeing how this first Nativity Trail goes. You could say we have made a small start. But that's the best way. Don't want to start too big ! And I'm sure we can build on this in later years. So, our thanks to the three churches of the Old Town. And to all the shops, hair & beauty salons & the cafes taking part, as well as the Old Town Hall.

Blessings,  
Colin



# LANGA TRUST CHRISTMAS DINNER



The Orangerie in the Marchmont Arms was the 1 December venue for the LTPT Christmas Dinner, attended by 27 guests.

This was a very joyous occasion. Additionally it yielded a contribution of £400 for the Christmas Appeal to support in the New Year the Langa Early Child Development Forum with food and sanitary items.

In his introduction to the evening Gordon indicated that the Trust, despite early pessimism about the effects of the pandemic on fund raising, had come very well through the last two years. This had been made possible by the continuing support of LTPT Friends, many of whom were St Mary and St Paul parishioners, as illustrated by two thirds of those present at this dinner.

A surprising and welcome aspect of the pandemic has been co-operation between LTPT and support groups in Cape Town, including the Diocesan College, the VUSA Rugby and Learning Academy, Ladles of Love, iGardi and the Langa ECD Forum.

It had just been a very happy week in which Gordon had heard that the Cheltenham College Christmas Eve Carol Service will feature LTPT as a donations beneficiary. Also LTPT's administrator, Yolisa Gqirana, the previous day had met Jean Mpati, the Forum's Chairperson, to discuss how the Appeal money will be spent.

So all in all we look forward and with faith and optimism.

## THE PARISH OF ST MARY & ST PAUL

### The Clergy

The Revd Canon John Williams 01442 265272:

The Revd Luke Geoghegan

The Revd Richard Leslie

The Revd. Diana Spink 01442 262133

Parish Office

Norma Howie 01442 253977

admin@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Church Wardens - St Mary's

Rosamund Russell Tel: 01442 217754

stmarychurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Emmeline Lambert Tel: 01442 268705

stmarychurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Church Wardens - St Paul's

Gordon Gaddes Tel: 01442 257920

stpaulchurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Rosina Gaddes Tel 07720 897037

stpaulchurchwarden@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

Hall Bookings:

For St Mary's and St Paul's Halls:

Norma Howie 01442 253977

admin@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

SToMP Magazine

Editor: Gordon Gaddes

Design: Jeff Wallis

hello@stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk

[www.stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk](http://www.stmaryandstpaulhemel.org.uk)

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