

December

2023



50p

St Peter's

Leckhampton Parish Church

Parish Magazine



Our Vision Statement

St Peter's Church Leckhampton
exists to love and worship God,
to serve our neighbours and
to pass on the faith in Jesus Christ.

The Parish Prayer

Loving God
Open our eyes that we might see you.
Open our ears that we might hear you.
Open our hearts and minds that we
Might respond to you and bring others to know you.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ
Our Lord who lights our way.
Amen

+++++

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part of the South Cheltenham Team Ministry

The contents of this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the PCC or the editor, but are those of the individual contributors



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In this December issue...

Reflections from the Curatage	4 – 5
Services and Readings	6
Leaving the Building	7 – 8
Parish Register	9
Notes from the Director of Music	10 – 11
Christmas at Hampton House	12
Friday Lunch with Friends	13
In Praise of Hollyhocks	13 – 15
Prison Prayer Chaplains	16 – 18
First World War Memorials & LLHS	19
The Messenger	20 – 24
Compline	33
Special Services and Events for Christmas	34

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Reflections from the Curacy

Well this is my last reflection as the South Cheltenham Team Curate. I will be licensed as a Team Vicar in the North Cheltenham Team on 31st January 2024, with responsibility for St. Lawrence in Swindon Village and St. Mary Magdalene in Elmstone Hardwicke. It is a time of mixed feelings, when we look forward with excitement to the next chapter in my ministry and also reflect on the period of my curacy. Any transition and change can be tricky, and the start of a new job, in a new area during a global pandemic was certainly a challenging experience! Curates come and go, passing through for a short time before moving onto new pastures. This is like any period in life; nothing stays the same and people ebb and flow like the seasons. It's the experience of the stay and the welcome which visitors remember.

As we look forward to Christmas, we think of the journeys made by the Holy Family. They travelled to Bethlehem for days, expecting the imminent arrival of a baby. They were unwelcomed and received no hospitality despite the difficulties they faced. The shepherds and wise men made journeys too, in faith and not certain of what they would find on their arrival. Sometimes we have to take those first steps into the unknown before the path becomes clear. As Mary and Joseph were probably anticipating a return to the family, their plans were changed and they became refugees fleeing persecution. The enormity of this shift in their lives must have felt overwhelming.

As we anticipate Christmas, and time we will spend with family and those we love, perhaps we might spare a thought for those whose festive seasons have been ruined by war, natural disaster, famine or loss. The scale of the world's troubles can seem distantly devastating and we might feel powerless to help. What we can do, is turn to our neighbours, who might be in need of support, love or a word of comfort, whoever they are. Recognition

of a problem is the start of a new chapter on a journey in a more positive direction.

As a family, we would like to say “thank you” to those people who made us welcome in South Cheltenham, who offered support and kindness at a time when we were starting afresh, amongst the practical and social difficulties of Covid. Special mention must go to Rev Gary and Dereck who have both been brilliant, from offering their DIY skills to providing advice and listening ears. A curacy is a formational experience and one which I will reflect on when I have a curate of my own in years to come.

With blessings for a very happy, peaceful Christmas.

Rev Jacqueline

Morning Prayer is live-streamed at 9am each morning (Mon-Thu) from www.stpetersleck.org or www.facebook.com/pipandjims
You can also join in person: Mon – Pip & Jim’s, Tue – St. Christopher’s, Wed – Emmanuel, Thu – St. Peter’s.

Junior Church Is Back!

Children – pre-schoolers and juniors– There are things to do in the carpeted area and on the activities table each week in church. If you have any queries or would like to be on the Junior Church team, please contact Liz Johnson via the Parish Office.

Refreshments after church. The new rota covering August to October is now on the board in the Cottages. If you can help with refreshments after the 10am service occasionally, please add your name to the list. All newcomers very welcome. Any queries please get in touch: Ro Baillie – 702617 or 07717 002752 or Joey Kerr-Wilson – 578575 or 07990 813122

Live Stream Services for December

We will be live streaming the 10am service from St. Peter's most weeks.

This can be accessed via www.stpetersleck.org or
www.facebook.com/stpetersleckhampton

Readings for December

Date	Day	Readings
3 rd	ST NICHOLAS	Isaiah 64.1–9 1 Corinthians 1.3–9 Mark 13.24–end
10 th	2 ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT	Isaiah 40.1–11 2 Peter 3.8–15a Mark 1.1–8
17 th	GAUDETE SUNDAY	Isaiah 61.1–4, 8–end 1 Thessalonians 5.16–24 John 1.6–8, 19–28
24 th	4 TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT	2 Samuel 7.1–11, 16 Romans 16.25–end Luke 1.26–38
	MIDNIGHT MASS	Isaiah 52.7–10 Hebrews 1.1–4 John 1. 1–14
25 th	CHRISTMAS DAY	Isaiah 9.2–7 Titus 2.11–14 Luke 2.1–16
31 st	1 ST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS	Isaiah 61.10 – 62.3 Galatians 4.4–7 Luke 2.15–21

Leaving the Building

We have been given the 'green light' to complete the final phase of our reordering project, which will refurbish the nave altar area, remove some of the levels at the front, provide an update to the electrics, have a new (red) carpet fitted in the nave and chancel, and update the altar furniture.

This will require the church to be closed for a period of 9 weeks, with no access to the interior of the church during that time.

This means that we will need to worship elsewhere for a short period of time.

Our final Sunday will be Epiphany Sunday, 7th January. This Sunday will also mark the last Sunday that Rev Jacqueline and family will be with us, ahead of them moving to North Cheltenham.

We will, however, still be providing worship during this time, with 8am Holy Communion services in the Church Cottages on the 2nd and 4th Sundays, and 10am Holy Communion services at St. Stephen's on the 1st and 3rd Sundays:

Date	Sunday	Service	Time	Venue	Minister
14-Jan	Epiphany 2	H/C	8am	Cottages	Rev Gary
21-Jan	Epiphany 3	H/C	10am	St. Stephen's	Rev Gary
28-Jan	Epiphany 4	H/C	8am	Cottages	Rev Gary
4-Feb	Candlemas	H/C	10am	St. Stephen's	Bishop Robert
11-Feb	Sunday before Lent	H/C	8am	Cottages	Rev Gary
14-Feb	Ash Wednesday	H/C+ Ashing	7.30pm	St. Christopher's	Rev Lauren
18-Feb	Lent 1	H/C	10am	St. Stephen's	Rev Gary
25-Feb	Lent 2	H/C	8am	Cottages	Rev Gary
3-Mar	Lent 3	H/C	10am	St. Stephen's	Rev Gary
10-Mar	Mothering Sunday	H/C	8am	Cottages	Rev Gary

Please do continue to connect with the service you are most used to and, when there isn't one that week, please take the opportunity to join in with the worship, and find out more about, one of the other churches in the South Cheltenham Team.

There is a 10am service at all of the other churches each Sunday; there is also an 8am BCP Communion service at Pip & Jim's on a 1st Sunday.

All of this is subject to a pre-contract meeting to finalise the reordering plans, which is scheduled for 11th December. Thereafter, it is hoped that we will be back in St. Peter's for the 8am and 10am services on Passion Sunday, 17th March.

Please keep all of these plans in your prayers, and do let a Churchwarden know if you would like someone to help you with a lift to St. Stephen's.

Rev Gary.

Parish Carol Singing

Please join us on Thursday 21st December. We will begin the evening with mulled wine and mince pies in Vineries Close from 6:30pm.

Singing will start at 7pm and should finish around 8:45pm. As usual we will be collecting for The Children's Society. More details from Peter & Sally Marlow.



From the Parish Registers

We congratulate those who were recently baptised:

Posy Cain-Jones on 4th November

There were no weddings in November.

We offer our sincere sympathy to the families of those who have recently died, especially:

David Morgan Denison on 29th July aged 94

James Harold Bent on 9th October aged 63

Doreen Sylvia Brimfield on 14th October aged 95

Margaret Grace Hayward on 18th October aged 89

Diana Welding on 20th October aged 93

Judith Mary Whitman on 22nd October aged 74

AtaLoss.org is the UK's most comprehensive hub of bereavement support and information for anyone bereaved and for those supporting them. You can easily search using filters according to age, location or relationship to the deceased and find support from the many hundreds of services listed, confident that the details are accurate, up to date and offer choices from a wide range of support available. Useful things to read, helplines and a FREE live-chat counselling service are also available on www.ataloss.org to help anyone deal with their loss, whatever the circumstances and whatever their faith or none.

Bereavement Support Please contact one of the clergy if you would like to talk about a bereavement. Please visit the church Wellbeing webpage for more details.

'Notes from the Director of Music'

Are you a Scrooge or a Santa...?! Are you one of those people who 'brace themselves' annually for the far-too-early onslaught of Christmas when decorations



and advent calendars appear in the shops and supermarkets, or are you someone that can't wait for the special season of the year to arrive? As a church musician, it is very difficult as - despite the fact you may well be in the former camp as outlined above - the need to both plan for and rehearse the large amount of music for the season of Christmas renders the argument futile anyway! I had already planned the music for all the Christmas services back in August, and it means that the choir has now already started to look at the various bits of repertoire. For example, in the 9 Lessons and Carols service, there are seven different choir items, in addition to the main congregational carols (all with soaring descants...), and that is alongside all the normal Sunday by Sunday music they have, plus the extra services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The choir is certainly going to be busy!

I was asked by a member of the congregation recently how I choose the organ voluntaries at the end of each service. Great question! To confirm, then - these are planned carefully as with all the hymns and the anthems, so that they fit the theme and readings of the service. For example, Harvest saw a Postlude on the hymn 'All creatures of our God and King', All Saints saw a Postlude on the hymn 'For all the Saints', Remembrance had 'Nimrod' at the end of the service, and all the Sundays during December see organ music by different composers based on Advent and Christmas themes ('Veni Emmanuel' or 'Joy to the World', for example). The musical function of an organ voluntary at the end of a service is to contribute to 'The Dismissal' or 'Sending Out'. This follows the blessing from the priest and acclamation from the congregation 'Thanks be to God', and is a further musical expression of both praise and worship. The organ is known as the 'King of Instruments', and the majority (although, not all - depending on the theme of the service as outlined above) of the time will be playing a voluntary that has been composed purposefully to be loud! When I first started at St. Peter's, I became aware that the tradition following COVID had been for the congregation to remain seated during the organ voluntary, and - whilst delighted to have a 'captive audience' (!) - made sure to put in the printed order of service that members of the congregation should absolutely feel free and able to get up and leave as soon as they would like to at the end of the service! Organ music is not to everyone's taste, nor is the volume that it can be played at (!), so it makes sense for those who wish to remain seated to listen to the voluntary can, whilst those who would like to get a head-start on grabbing a tea or coffee in the Cottages also feel able to.

It has been lovely since I last wrote in the magazine to have been able to welcome another couple of new members to the choir. We are trying to recruit, both young and old, and will continue to do so. If you have neighbours, friends or family (particularly those with children who may enjoy singing and being part of the choir) that you can encourage to join - then do, please, get them to drop me a line. If we want to grow as a church, then that means both attracting and welcoming in new members of all ages. That work is never 'complete', so your ongoing support is vital. Thank you!

(p.s. - I would describe myself as being more of a Santa than a Scrooge....!)

Dr. Kit Perona-Wright **Director of Music**

Little Pebbles *Tuesdays 10.00 to 11.30 in the Cottages during term time.*
Please contact Lara Skinner via the Parish Office for details.

Craft-T-Time

Do join our friendly and supportive group on Wednesday mornings from 10-12 in the Cottages. All are welcome to join, even if just for a 'cuppa' and a chat.

Helen Shill coordinator

Men's Group

A reminder about the next Men's Group meeting. We will meet, at the Wheatsheaf, on Thursday, 7th December at 12:30 lunch time. It will be our last meeting before Christmas, so it would be nice if you could come along to round off the year, unless of course, you are working.

John Laurence

Christmas at Hampton House

As part of the outreach in our parish teams have been going into the care homes on a regular basis. Communion is taken monthly to Middleton House and the Glebe and twice monthly to Hampton House. The teams going into the homes are from the Pastoral committee.

I have been going to Hampton House for nearly ten years with a break during Covid. I have seen the numbers attending the service rise from one or two residents to between 16 and 18. It was at their request that the team go in twice a month and our visits are warmly appreciated by staff and residents alike.

Our team are Penny Williams, Steve Whittingham and me who are commissioned to take communion to the housebound and to the homes. Sally Marlow and Jennie Hawdon also attend regularly as support. Having a team like this means that we are not over committed and can have weeks when we do not need to go, though it is such an enjoyable occasion we nearly always do!

Recently we have begun to sing favourite hymns in the service and this made me think about Christmas. Pre Covid we used to go for a short carol singing session in the evening before we sang around the streets near church. This year we thought we might combine the carol singing with our usual service adding three readings from the Nativity story so it becomes a mini lessons and carols with the short Communion service. This suggestion has the approval of Hampton House and they are looking forward to it.

This is where I am going to ask for your help. If you are able to spend an hour at Hampton House on the 22nd of December at 11am to help with the singing of the carols and to meet some very lovely and appreciative residents you will be made very welcome. Please let me or Sally Marlow know if you can come so we can take enough service sheets and communion wafers. I can also tell the home how many to expect so we have enough room!

Anne Webber.

Youth News

The Youth program can be all found here: <https://southcheltenham.wordpress.com/youth/>

FRIDAY LUNCH with FRIENDS 2023

Come and enjoy a light lunch with friends old and new

Friday 26th January

12.30 – 2pm at the home of Sally & Peter Marlow
1 Vineries Close (off Kidnappers Lane)

Donations for The Children's Society will be welcome
Please come and join us!

Leckhampton Village Hall

Quiz Night Saturday 9th December 2023 7.30pm
Licensed Bar Raffle
Max 4 people per team
To book your table call 01242 243035

Joey Kerr-Wilson,
St. Peter's Village Hall Committee Rep.

In Praise of Hollyhocks

Some plants you have seen all your life but not always noticed. When rediscovered they often gladden the heart. So it is for me with what is often referred to as an old fashioned cottage garden commoner; the stately spired hollyhock.

In earlier years I don't remember being particularly conscious of this slender staple of garden gates and stone walls. Later, when we bought a cottage in the Cotswold town of Winchcombe and walked its back lanes in high summer you could not miss the hollyhocks growing around cottage doors and leaning from quiet corners. Some of them were a startling dark maroon, almost black, not

unlike the colour of eggplant. Gorgeous. No one seemed to cultivate them. They had just seeded in sheltered places for support and sun, giving delight to all who passed by.

When we eventually moved we were happy to be given some seeds from these botanical vagrants that had been collected by a neighbour, accepting the challenge of growing our own. I was especially hoping to be able to reproduce some of those beautiful deep midnight flowers.

Alcea Rosea, the common hollyhock, is a member of the large mallow family, sharing ancestry with hibiscus, okra and cotton. It has its roots in East Asia, appearing in 9th century Chinese paintings. Travelling east it entered ancient Japanese culture becoming the symbol or mon of the ruling Tokugawa clan, the Shoguns. Moving west along the Silk Road it came to the Middle East and the gardens of

Baghdad and Damascus. The crusaders encountered it in the Holy Land and brought it back to Europe. In England Holy was combined with the old word for mallow, hoc, giving us the mediaeval 'holyhoke'.

In its long journey from the east the hollyhock was much prized for its medicinal properties as an anti-inflammatory and as a food. All parts of the plant are edible and in Turkey today the flowers can often be found in salads.

Our seeds made the short journey to our sloping garden under Leckhampton Hill and were planted in spring last year. I was pleasantly surprised to see them appear and develop. All of them. Lots of them. It seems hollyhocks are known as easy to grow and in the language of flowers stand for ambition, strength and fertility. Although modern cultivars are classified as short-lived perennials they readily self-seed and simply keep going.



Without too much thought I planted a swathe of seedling in an underused vegetable patch at the top of the garden and they grew and grew, reaching about five feet. I managed to give some to friends but still had a phalanx of green stalks. They do not normally flower in the first year but flower they did, in late August. A gentle pink. I was frankly disappointed. Where were the dark colours of *Alcea Rosea Nigra* I had so hoped for.

But why were these tall flowers viewed as old fashioned? It seems my Winchcombe vagrants had for generations, in their single flowered variety, been part of the semi-wild town flora - as was the case across the country. Then in the early 1800s a Saffron Walden shoemaker, Charles Barron, cross bred a range of hollyhocks in an attempt to produce a double flowered strain gardeners would like. He sold his collection to a local nurseryman, William Chater, who using his own stock as well, finally succeeded, winning an award at the 1851 Great Exhibition.

At this point the 'Hollyhock Wars' exploded in the gardening press as to who it was who had really produced this new decorative variety. Perhaps because of the publicity the popularity of hollyhocks soared and every Victorian garden simply had to have some.

But in 1873 disaster struck in the form of *Puccinia Malvaeorum*, a fungal infection commonly known as Rust. It killed virtually every cultivated hollyhock in the country. Although Chater was able to develop a hardier plant before he died in 1885 the fashion for hollyhocks receded and they became 'old fashioned', living once more in lanes, walls and cottage gardens. Double flowered hollyhocks still feature, however, in gardening catalogues and are still called 'Chater's'.

My own squadron survived a wet winter and in this, their second year, enjoyed one of the sunniest springs on record. This June, now nearly eight feet tall, they have flowered in profusion in a glorious palette of pinks, reds and maroons, that dark nearly black colour that I was looking for.



Almost by accident we had at the top of the garden a concentrated collection of hollyhock heaven. I will never pass this cottage garden commoner without due respect again.

*They seemed a fabled city of tall spires
Wreathed, as for some high festival, with flowers
Rose-like, but more changeful in their garb
And interfaced with peeping points of green.*

Victorian enthusiast. 1837.

Peter Liver

The Gospel according to Matthew 25 v36 'Prison Prayer Champions' For the Least....

How naive of me to believe that a child's drawing for a prisoner in Wormwood Scrubs would be simply taped to a cell wall by the recipient. According to Alex South, a former female Prison Officer and author of 'Behind these doors' (Book of the Week by Radio 4), such a drawing could be withheld. Not because of a punishment towards the prisoner, but because the drawing tested positive for drugs. Similarly, this can happen with greeting cards, photos and writing paper. These tokens that we recognise of love and communication have been laced with synthetic drugs, soaked in illicit substances including opioids – all capable of being smoked once dried. I have clearly been protected from such desperate behaviour around substance abuse.

At least 70% of the population in prison suffer from drug addiction. When prisoners get hold of drugs, by whatever means, the knock-on effect causes more violent behaviour while prisoners' queue for the telephones, walk along the corridors or exercise around the yard. Often prisoners' lives are messy, chaotic and uncomfortable. 88 suicides were reported taking place in prison during 2022-2023.

During Covid-19, reports state that some prisoners remained locked in their cells for 23 hours. How many of us coped mentally during those weeks, having our freedom restricted to one walk a day and most of us in Leckhampton weren't confined to one room unless, we were self-isolating with Covid-19 symptoms.

Within the prison compound, Prison Officers are faced with the violence of gang and today's knife culture, as reprisals and honour-based killings continue to play out from civilian life.

When challenged with the question, "What are prisons for?" the Moral Maze Radio 4 26th September 2023, struggled around their answers, going off in random directions such as, "Does philosophy help politics?" All agreed though, that the prison service in Britain needs to be readdressed. We have in Europe, the highest prison population who currently serve life sentences.

Bishop Rachel would like us to open up the narrative around prisons and the justice system. Be clearer in our understanding of the processes and outcomes. The cost of a prisoner for one year is approximately £50k, re-offenders run into billions (and that is not a typing error –18 billion was quoted), all of which is paid by our taxes. She is certainly not advocating that prisons should be dispensed with but that possibly, a more holistic, joined-up approach is recognised within society and subsequent punishment systems. She is fully aware, along with others that this requires robust funding, greater resources, a change in legislation and different departments talking to one another in Parliament where the problems of crime occur further upstream.

Prison Chaplaincy is one of the areas that Bishop Rachel is heavily involved with and she walks the corridors of power in Parliament, making speeches in the House of Lords. She will respond to political statements made, either agreeing or disagreeing with their points of view. Recently, she condemned the idea of sending prisoners abroad, as an answer to over crowded prisons in Britain.

On the 9th October, 2023, Prison prayer week, Bishop Rachel held a meeting in the Chapter House Gloucester Cathedral to see how we could support more effectively those who leave prison. I was unable to attend. However, I wrote a letter to her offering our support as a church in prayer, in short to be 'Prison Prayer Champions'.

Bishop Rachel wrote back copying in the Chaplains at HMP Leyhill open prison and HMP Eastwood Park women's prison. She loved the idea that we might support her and our prison service in prayer.

After I had visited these two main prisons in our diocese, I compiled a prayer sheet, as relevant as space permits, to help us pray. The idea of being 'Prison Prayer Champions' was discussed in November's PCC meeting and was seen as an act of support for Bishop Rachel. The prayer sheet is limited in its themes and does not address the solutions to gang culture, domestic violence, drug, gambling and alcohol addictions, sex offences or pornography, scams at every level, but rather allows us to have a narrative with God, to be open to healing and restoration and to re-create the Kingdom values that Jesus gave us as the Good News. Christ was crucified between two criminals. Luke's Gospel records a change of heart by one of the thieves and forgiveness given by Jesus. The hard-line rhetoric of Parliament is possibly not addressing the core issues.

We may feel out of our depth and comfort zone while focusing on Prisons, possibly struggling to understand how we might visit someone in prison or speak to Alex Chalk MP who is the Secretary of State for Justice. I certainly have been on a journey that has exposed my prejudices and preconceived ideas about justice and mercy and walking humbly with our God.

HMP Leyhill open prison for men has offered us an opportunity during our refurbishment at St. Peter's, to worship with the prisoners, on Sunday 11th February 2024. The chapel can accommodate 15 places and names have to be given a month in advance. No electronic devices can be brought into the prison or tobacco & chewing gum, photo Id will need to be presented on arrival. If you think this is something you would be willing to take part in, please let me know.

HMP Eastwood Park women's prison has requested volunteers who would visit a prisoner, lead Bible worship, donate any unwanted winter coats, DVDs up to age 15, finished Birthday cards or baby sit while mums' study. Musicians to lead worship on a Sunday would be a God send. Again, if these are areas you would like to be involved with, please speak with me.

In the meantime, you are sentenced to six months of heartfelt prison prayer. Prison prayer leaflets can be found in Church or on St. Peter's website. As this article is being printed in the season of Advent and Christmas, I would like to share with you a reflective story taken from a book called, 'Something more, encountering the beyond in the everyday' by John Pritchard published 2016.

A wandering holy man settled down at dusk under a tree, near a big rock, beside a path, at the foot of a mountain. He was going to spend the night there under the stars, with a stone as a pillow. His evening prayers were disturbed by a businessman who came running up to him in a very agitated state. "It must be you!" he said. "I had a dream last night telling me to come to a tree, near a big rock, beside a path, at the foot of a mountain. Here a wondering holy man would give me a priceless stone and I'd be rich for ever. I've been searching all day and I'm sure it must be you."

"Well," said the holy man, rummaging in his bag, "perhaps this jewel is the stone from your dream. I saw it on the path the other day. Do take it." The businessman's mouth dropped open. The diamond was huge. He couldn't believe it. He carried it home, bursting with delight. But the feeling didn't last, and by the end of the day, he was deeply troubled. He tossed and turned all night but he couldn't get off to sleep. He wanted to plan a wonderful new future with his amazing wealth, but somehow, he couldn't get that wondering holy man out of his mind.

Before dawn, he got up and went back to the tree, near the big rock, beside the path, at the foot of the mountain. He broke into the holy man's devotions again and he laid the huge diamond on the ground before him. "Please," he said, "can I have the special gift that enabled you to give away this precious stone?"

Melissa Webb (Reader for St. Peter's Church, Leckhampton) mobile: 07840 701981



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First World War memorials

In the chapter on Leckhampton in Arthur Mee's *Gloucestershire*, written in 1938, he refers to 'three pathetic wooden crosses from the Great War'. They were burial markers brought over from the battlefield Flanders and commemorate Alfred Enoch, Harold Summers and Victor Hunt. The men have no known graves but are commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. By the 1960s the cheap timber of which the crosses were made had become rotten and they were replaced. With the passage of time these too had deteriorated, as John Elkin noticed recently as he was walking his dog in the churchyard. An ex-serviceman himself, with a practical bent, he felt that something ought to be done and offered to renovate the crosses. He completed the task in time for Remembrance Day last month, when the crosses could be appreciated, complete with poppies attached.

These photographs show the crosses before and after being magnificently refurbished.

Eric Miller



Leckhampton Local History society meetings for January, February and March will not be held in church as it will be closed for reordering work. The LLHS committee will announce alternative plans in due course.

Parish Giving Scheme

A great way to support St. Peter's is through the parish giving scheme, which enables you to give, and for St. Peter's to receive, a monthly donation towards the mission and ministry of the church and parish. This is administered through the Diocese of Gloucester, so every penny comes back to St. Peter's and is gift-aided also. This provides the church with a regular income and a means with which to plan ahead. It is especially important in 'times like these' when services, bookings and income are reduced. For further information, email Peter Marlow: peter.marlow@softcopy.co.uk or check the Stewardship page of the church website: www.stpetersleck.org.

You can now enrol in the Parish Giving Scheme by phoning 0333 002 1271 to set up a regular donation. All you need is your bank account details and our parish code *LKPT*.

You can also support St. Peter's by making an online donation at:
<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/7930>

There is still the opportunity to make a donation towards the new furniture, which is part of the reordering! It is now under construction by Waywood Furniture.



And going for Gold

The Messenger, December 2023

Christmas message from Bishop Robert

Saint John proclaims that the light, the word of God in Jesus Christ, shines in the darkness.

I don't know about you, but as I look at our world at the end of this year in Israel and Gaza, in the Ukraine, in the lives of so many struggling in this and all nations, the darkness seems often very dark indeed. But John goes on, 'the

darkness did not overcome it'. This is the good news that we tell in our Advent preparation and Christmas celebration as we join with John the Baptist in bearing witness to the light, the baby born in the stable to live among us, who will open his arms on the cross, face darkness and death, and live! We have seen how St John goes on to say God's glory, 'full of grace and truth'.

This is why I pray that even as we face the darkness of this winter, we may celebrate with every fibre of our being and all the resources we can muster the wonder of this season. Not setting aside all that troubles us but bringing it to the heart of what we do so the world may know that in Jesus Christ it is love that will win, and that this is our greatest and surest hope.

May God grant you joy in your celebration as we tell again the good news of the Word made flesh, of the birth of the promised one who brings life to us all.

Follow the Star: Join the Song

Churches across the Diocese of Gloucester are looking forward to welcoming everyone to services and events this Christmas, many of which will be filled with wonderful music.

The Church of England's Christmas campaign, Follow the Star: Join the Song, highlights how singing can help draw us closer to God and each other through the journey from Advent to Epiphany. Singing and hearing carols can enable people of all ages to get in touch with the wonder and the truth of the Christmas story.

Visit [A Church Near You](#) to find details of Christmas services and events in your area. Here, you can search for:

Christingles – a popular family service where you decorate an orange and light a candle to think about Christian themes

Advent carols – traditional carols and Bible readings

Crib services with a retelling of the Christmas story

Christmas tree festivals or tree-decorating events

Midnight mass – a late-night communion service

Christmas Day celebrations – join in and celebrate the birth of Jesus with your worshipping community

Your local church would be delighted to welcome you along to share in the joy of the season! Visit: achurchnearyou.com

Keep connected with news from the Diocese of Gloucester

Every Friday, get a free WhatsApp message with our top three inspiring stories, videos or events, straight to your phone. Visit: gloucester.anglican.org/sign-up-for-onediocese-whatsapp-messages

Help the homeless with Gloucester City Mission's winter appeal

Each year, Gloucester City Mission gives out 750 pairs of men's and women's underwear to people who are homeless, costing the charity £6,000. Their Undies Under the Tree appeal asks if you can donate a new pair of boxer shorts or briefs, size 8 to 14, that they can then distribute to rough sleepers or through their Restore Clothes Bank.

Leave your donations before Christmas Eve under the Giving Tree in the Eastgate Shopping Centre or at participating churches and schools. Visit gloscitymission.org.uk to find out more and for ways to donate.

Can you host a meal this December?

To Stroud-based charity The Long Table, the real magic of Christmas lies in sharing a meal. Host a meal in your worshipping community between 9 and 17 December and, together, all the meals shared will create The Longest Table. All the events will build connections and communities, as well as raise money so that even more people are fed. To host your event, sign up to receive your resource pack: thelongtableonline.com/the-longest-table

Top tips for a greener Christmas

1. Choose natural decorations. Holly, ivy trails, pinecones, rosehips.... Take a bag on a walk and see what you can find.
2. Use old Christmas cards to make your own gift tags.
3. Create homemade gifts, like biscuits, or buy gifts from a charity shop – you'll be amazed at what can be found.
4. Give the gift of time. Gift cooking for someone once a month for a year, taking them for a coffee, babysitting, cleaning....
5. Recycle wrap right. To find out if your wrapping paper is not recyclable, do the 'scrunch' test. If it springs back, it isn't recyclable. And always remove the sticky tape before recycling.

For more tips, visit A Rocha's website: arocha.org.uk/our-twelve-tips-for-a-greener-christmas

Events and training

More details for all these events at gloucester.anglican.org/events

Christmas Carol Service at Saul Junction

Gloucester and Sharpness Canal

9 December, 6pm to 8pm

Waterways Chaplaincy and Stroudwater Team of Churches invite you to 'follow the star' to a canalside, traditional Christmas Carol Service, with the Frampton Silver Band. Mulled wine and mince pies. Come by boat or car. Please bring a torch.

The Christ-mouse family trail

Gloucester Cathedral

9 December to 7 January 2024

Join the Cathedral mice as they tell the story of the first Christmas. Find where they are hiding around the building and collect your prize once you've found them all!

Handel's Messiah

Tewkesbury Abbey

16 December 2022, 7pm

Handel's Messiah sung by the Tewkesbury Abbey Schola Cantorum. Tickets £15-£20. To book: [ticketsource.co.uk/whats-](http://ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/gloucestershire/tewkesbury-abbey/handel-messiah/e-bklkgd)

[on/gloucestershire/tewkesbury-abbey/handel-messiah/e-bklkgd](http://ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/gloucestershire/tewkesbury-abbey/handel-messiah/e-bklkgd)

Family Crib Service

Gloucester Cathedral

23 or 24 December, 2.30pm

The Family Crib Services are some of the Cathedral's most popular – expect beautiful music, traditional readings and plenty of festive cheer, all within the beautiful surroundings of the Cathedral. All are welcome to this informal family service.

For more information on all the services and events at Gloucester Cathedral this Christmas, visit: gloucestercathedral.org.uk/whats-on/advent-and-christmas-2023

Thinking of coming to church for the first time, or the first time in a long time,

this Christmas? Visit: churchofengland.org/faith-calling/what-we-believe/advent-and-christmas/what-expect-church-christmas

Have a happy Christmas!

Have your say

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Happy Christmas



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Compline for Advent

St Peters Church 7pm

5th December led by Anne Webber

12th December led by Anne Webber

19th December led by Melissa Webb

SPECIAL SERVICES & EVENTS for CHRISTMAS

*Sat 16th December - Crib Decorating
2pm - Decorating the crib with story
and crafts*

*Sun 17th December - Carol Service
6pm - Christmas Carol Service*

*Thur 21st December - Carol Singing
7pm - Carol singing around the
village*

*Sun 24th December - CHRISTMAS EVE
3pm - Nativity Service
5.30pm - Crib Service
11pm - Midnight Mass*

*Mon 25th December CHRISTMAS DAY
10.00am Holy Communion*