

RG31

Winter 2020

The Parish Magazine of
Tilehurst St Catherine
& Calcot St Birinus



From the editor



If you've been following the St Catherine's at home morning prayer in December, you will know that we've been using 'The Jesse Tree' as an 'Advent calendar'. This comes from a Bible verse in Isaiah chapter 11 that says 'A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse'. Day by day we've reflected on people in the bible from Adam and Eve through the line of Jesse in Jesus' family tree.

It occurred to me that in editing this magazine, I follow in the footsteps of my predecessors; Phil French, Jack Smee and Stuart Poore. Yes, there were others before Phil when we had a closer association with St Michael's church, who 'planted' St Catherine's as a new congregation to serve the 1960's housing in this area.

As each editor has taken over, there have been changes both gradual and dramatic; the change in format from A4 to the present A5, the change from literal 'cut and paste' to desktop publishing, and in recent years the gradual increase in the use of colour, starting with the cover.

Looking back the black and white photos in earlier editions lose so much.

When we had to cease publication in April due to Covid restrictions, the Revs

Gill & Phil came up with proposals to move the magazine onward and shake me out of the comfortable rut that I had been in.

They were proactive in writing and commissioning stories, suggesting this 'from the editor' page and that the magazine is produced quarterly which has enabled us to continue in a Covid-safe way to print and distribute by post.

You'll have seen from the Summer and Autumn editions that these changes were in part forced on us, but we will now keep them into 2021.

With only 4 editions a year we are reducing the annual cost to £5, but with the added bonus that the magazine will be printed in colour; bonus to our advertisers too.

In the past I have aimed to print as much as possible in Black and White to keep down the cost of production and this has taken considerable juggling of copy to achieve.

I am now also printing fewer copies as Covid restrictions mean that we can no longer put a pile out for casual sales, or distribute free copies to local businesses.

Whilst we have costed in posting out all the magazines, some are still being hand delivered in a Covid-secure manner.

I do hope that you will wish to continue taking RG31 by filling in the attached pink renewal slip with payment in which ever way suits you. It would be helpful to have these back by the 31st December so that we can plan for 2021, thank you.

Tony Bartlett



Rev Gill Rowell

**"Thanks be to God for
his indescribable gift!"
2 Corinthians 9:15**

When I was little, my Mum encouraged us to write thank you letters to aunties and uncles who had given us presents, but whom we hadn't seen at Christmas. As I didn't know the aunties and uncles particularly well, this was always something which felt contrived, and there wasn't usually very much to say apart from "Thank you for...(gift)..." and "We had a lovely Christmas, hope you did too...".

Later, as an adult who sent presents to nephews and nieces, it was always a source of irritation when I didn't receive a thank you. Of course, the joy in giving is just that – in giving! "It is more blessed to give than to receive" the apostle Paul quotes Jesus as saying in Acts 20:35. Yes - but a thank you would be nice! (Yet I was gently plagued with guilt too, for that instance or two when I hadn't actually thanked my Aunt for her thoughtful gift to me. Easy to point the finger, not so easy to be perfect!)

Thankfulness is the essence of a life lived in faith. We thank God for his generosity which we receive every day we draw breath – for life itself, the beauty of creation, the clothes we wear, having somewhere we can lay our head, hot water, food, friends, for answered prayer, for his perfect timing. We try to live ethically; we pray into areas of concern. And we all know that Christmas is this particular season in the year for giving, reflecting the generosity of God's gift to us in Jesus Christ.

But let's not forget that it's a time of receiving too, and being thankful.

So don't let this Christmas pass you by without thanking God for his indescribable gift, Jesus Christ, who entered our world so that we might enter his – who, ..."came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave them the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1: 11-13).

It's been a tough year in so many ways, and yet one of many blessings too, even in this chaotic, unpredictable, sometimes sad, bizarre and uncontrollable time. Yet God's gift to us in Jesus Christ gives us hope, helps us to love, and calls us to live by faith, despite all the horridness. Let me invite you to write your own thank you letter to God this Christmas for his generosity to you as you reflect on all His blessings in the tough times; and in particular, for his indescribable gift of Jesus Christ.

Gill

He was born in the humblest of settings, yet heaven above was filled with the songs of angels. His birthplace was a cattle shed, yet a star brought the rich and noble from thousands of miles away to worship Him. His birth was contrary to the laws of life and His death was contrary to the laws of death, yet no miracle is greater than His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection and His teachings.

He had no cornfields or fisheries, yet He spread a table for 5,000 and had bread and fish to spare. He never stood on expensive carpeting, yet He walked on the waters and they supported Him. His crucifixion was the crime of crimes, yet from God's perspective no less a price could have made possible our redemption.

When He died, few mourned His passing, yet God hung a black cape over the sun. Those who crucified Him did not tremble at what they'd done, yet the earth shook under them. Sin never touched Him. Corruption could not get hold of His body. The soil that was reddened with His blood could not claim His dust.

For over three years He preached the gospel. He wrote no book, He had no headquarters and He built no organisation. Yet two thousand years later He's the central figure of human history, the perpetual theme of all preaching, the pivot around which the ages revolve, and the only redeemer of the human race.

At this season of celebration and gift-giving, let's join the wise men who 'fell down and worshipped him'. Let's remember, Christmas is about - Christ!

This thought is taken from 'The Word for Today', Daily Bible reading notes produced quarterly by UCB (United Christian Broadcasters Ltd) PO Box 255, Stoke on Trent, ST4 8YY. If you would like to receive these free (although UCB do welcome donations) notes or those aimed at Secondary School age, call UCB on 01782 911 000

Christmas: Celebrating the Incarnation

C.S. Lewis called it the Grand Miracle and the Central Miracle. He noted that "Every other miracle prepares for this, exhibits this, or results from this...The fitness, and therefore credibility, of the particular miracles depend on their relations to the Grand Miracle."

So if you can believe in Christmas – the incarnation of the Son of God: the Grand, the Central Miracle, you should have no problem believing the miracles in the Old Testament narratives or the miracle of the Virgin Birth, the miracles Jesus performed of feeding the multitudes, of His healing the sick, raising the dead, walking on water and calming the storms. You also need have no problem in believing in the bodily resurrection of Jesus and His ascension back into the heavenly realms, where He reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In other words, to believe the essence of the Christmas story is to believe the miracle that will open the pathway to faith and eternal life, a life of following this risen Jesus as your Lord. To understand and believe the truth of the Incarnation will not only transform your idea of Christmas, it will change your life now and your everlasting destiny.

Revd Dr Roger Roberts

5 Ways to Pray for 6 people

During the week of 16th-20th November we encouraged you to pray for 6 people and each day that week during morning prayer we offered a suggestion for a creative way to do this. Here's a quick summary, these descriptions are a very brief explanation of the ideas shared. You can see these morning prayers in the entirety at:

<https://tinyurl.com/5ways2pray>



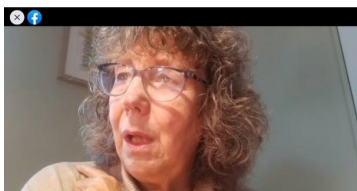
Monday: Candles - During Monday's morning prayer Gill suggested finding 6 candle and taking some time to light them, one by one and pray for one of your people as you light each candle.

Tuesday: Imaginary Café - During Tuesday's morning prayer Phil suggested taking some time out to visualise yourself in a coffee shop with Jesus. Whilst you are doing this imagine each of your 6 people coming into the café and having a conversation with Jesus as a way of offering their needs to him.



Wednesday: Dice Prayers - During Wednesday's morning prayer Stuart suggested using dice to shape your prayers. Assign each of your six people a number and throw the dice to decide which one to pray for. Then throw a 4 sided dice to decide what to pray for them 1) for their mental health 2) for their emotional health 3) for their spiritual health 4) for their physical health.

Thursday: Hand Prayers - On Thursday Tony suggested using our hands to pray for our six people. Allocate each person a finger or thumb (and your palm for the sixth). Then one by one prayer for each of them using the acronym MESH (Mental, Emotional, Spiritual and (physical) Health).



Friday: Post-it Prayers - On Friday Gill suggested using Post-it notes as a prayer prompt. Assign each person a colour then put post-it notes around your house that are each of those colours. Every time you see a Post-it note you pray for the person who you have allocated the same colour as the post-it you see.

Our New Defibrillator

Background



Just over a year ago, Andy from British Red Cross ran a first aid training course for fifteen of us. Part of the course involved the use of

cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and, where available, a defibrillator. This caught the imagination of two people who were on the course, and they offered to fund the purchase and installation of an AED (automated external defibrillator) at St Catherine's.

Sudden cardiac arrest is a leading cause of premature death, in which the heart's steady rhythm is often replaced by disorganised electrical activity called ventricular fibrillation (VF). The sooner VF is treated by an electrical shock (defibrillation), the greater the chance of the person's life being saved. Immediate action by members of the public can save many lives.

An AED is a portable electronic machine that can automatically detect the abnormal heart rhythms that cause cardiac arrest and deliver the shock that is needed to save the life of a person with a rhythm such as VF.

These devices come in many shapes and sizes, so my first job was to seek expert advice from the British Heart Foundation (BHF), British Red Cross (BRC), South Central Ambulance Services (SCAS), and Tilehurst Parish

Council (TPC) who have installed AEDs at all their community halls over the last few years.

Choosing our AED

Sifting through specifications proved to be difficult because no one was prepared to recommend a particular make, model or type and they all appeared to do much the same thing, albeit at quite different costs.

In the end, Richard did a Covid-safe trawl of all the public AEDs he could see while he was on holiday in Madrid, including various hotels and metro stations, and concluded that the HeartSine Samaritan 360P is a popular choice and offers good value for money – this was reinforced when we discovered that Birch Copse School also have one, so all that was left to do then was to find a good price. This turned out to be a package offered by the British Red Cross, which includes the defibrillator, battery and pads, as well as a heated protective cabinet and ancillary equipment.

Installation

Do go and have a look at the installation – the AED itself is a lightweight marvel of electronic engineering, as well as being waterproof, dustproof and drop-proof, and comes with a ten-year warranty. It is fully automatic and assesses whether or not it can read the patient's pulse - if it cannot, it delivers a shock to the patient after giving a warning. Yes, it actually talks to you and even coaches you through the initial

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

CPR process. We will be organising some Saturday morning refresher courses in the New Year.



SCAS advised us that a publicly accessible AED, kept in an unlocked protective cabinet, is always their preferred option. After weighing up the risk of theft or vandalism against the risk of delay in treating the person who is in immediate need, we decided to site our AED as near the building as possible and leave it unlocked.

Our insurers have been informed and appear to have accepted the risk too. Now that it is connected up to the mains, it is snug and warm at low temperatures, and even lights up to be more visible at night.

Operation & Maintenance

Our AED is registered with SCAS and we are part of their network – have a look at their Save a Life app and you will find us in the middle of quite a cluster. One of SCAS's requirements is that we nominate a guardian to make sure our AED is always Response Ready, i.e. fully operational with battery and pads in date. Lynn Stevens has volunteered to do this for us – the battery and pads come in a Pad-Pak with a single expiry date, requiring one maintenance change every four years unless the pads are used.

Our AED performs regular self-checks and if a problem is detected it will set off an audiovisual alarm. Lynn will check frequently for such a warning, and take action as necessary.

Summary

Thanks are due to Chris Addison for the installation, Matt Thatcher who connected it up to the mains and very kindly donated his time free of charge, Lynn Stevens for being our AED Guardian, Jacky Major at Tilehurst Parish Council who gave us invaluable advice, Tilehurst Parish Council who donated £250 towards our costs, and of course our two anonymous parishioners who covered the rest of the cost.

It is odd in a way to spend over a thousand pounds on something that you really hope you will never need to use. However, it is a vital (literally) piece of equipment these days and it is good to know we are ready for such an emergency.

Richard Canning



Engage is a Project of The Mustard Tree Foundation. Its aim is reducing isolation and loneliness by developing positive relationships and networks in the community, Engage runs two programmes:

Engage Befriending – Enabling older people to overcome barriers to social connections through the support of a volunteer befriender.

Engage Wellbeing – Enabling adults to make positive choices to maintain or improve emotional and mental wellbeing through the support of a volunteer befriender.

Prior to the Covid pandemic our befrienders visited isolated older people. Since March 2020 we have moved to telephone befriending and extended this to provide support to any isolated individual requiring support. We envisage offering both telephone and face to face befriending again once this becomes possible.

If you can spare an hour a week and are good at engaging with people please contact us. If you know someone who would benefit from our service please also contact us.

Call us on: 07735 398 099

Email: engage@themustardtree.org

Website: <https://engagebefriending.org/>



Your home is where you feel the most comfortable and the happiest. It's the place you know the best. Why would you move away from the place you love if you are faced with needing some extra care and support when you age? If you want to stay living comfortably at home, we can help you make that choice an informed one.



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The St Catherine's Nativity

It was Gill's idea and she found some suitable drawings online for the figures, I scaled them up from a few inches on my computer monitor inches to 4 feet tall as best I could, so that Chris Addison and I could cut out the shapes from two sheets of 8 by 4 foot plywood.



Make Your Own Christmas Nativity Scene



Then plywood figures had battens and brackets fitted to the back to attach supporting stakes and then 4 coats of paint to seal the plywood. I sketched the outline of the figures with black paint and then spent several weeks mixing suitable colours, fine-tuning the designs to complete the figures.



Peter Broomfield added fairy lights, spotlights and a manger, finally Gill lent the doll for baby Jesus. Her 'selfie' is below.

Tony Bartlett



Lockdown Walkabout

As you take another Lockdown walk, how much do you look around ? How much do you notice about our Parish ?

Here's a quiz for which all answers are in plain sight - if you know where to look! There are no trick questions, and the internet is not required (although it may help).

Unsure of Parish Boundaries ? Check www.stcatherines-tilehurst.org.uk/our-parish/

Where ?

1) Where is the gnome in a phone box ?

- a) Warborough Avenue b) Heathway
- c) The Ridings

2) Where is iCollege ?

- a) Sainsburys b) Highview
- c) Little Heath school

3) Where are some West Berkshire Council offices ?

- a) Highview b) Pincent's Lane
- c) Long Lane

4) Where is Fox and Hair

- a) Royal Avenue b) City Road
- c) Hilden's Drive

5) Which copse is **not** in the Parish ?

- a) Cornwell b) Lousehill c) Withy

When ?

Some buildings have dates upon them. Match the dates with the buildings

6) Birch Farm Cottages

7) Houses at the end of Starlings Drive

8) Bluebells opposite Stoneham Farm

9) Houses at the entrance to The Ridings

- a) 1996 b) 1872 c) 1994 d) 2018

Road Names

10) Which Bird isn't in the Bird's Estate

- a) Curlew b) Lapwing c) Swift

11) How many 'Avenues' in Garston park ?

- a) None b) 1 c) 10

12) Which Royal has a local drive ?

- a) Queen Elizabeth b) Prince William
- c) Prince of Wales

13) Which Royal Residence **doesn't** have a road in Calcot ?

- a) Clarence b) Sandringham
- c) Balmoral

14) Which Racing Driver has a road named after them

- a) Clark b) Stewart c) Senna

15) Which tree **doesn't** have a road in the Parish

- a) Oak b) Yew c) Bay

Footpaths

You can't drive between these pairs of roads without driving along a third- but can you walk directly between them - 'Yes or No' ?

16) Firs Road & Partridge Drive

17) Felton Way & Lower Elmstone Drive

18) Cromer Close & Sheraton Drive

19) The Birchwoods & Avington Close

20) Clay Close & The Saddlers

Schools

Match the school with it's motto

21) Birch Copse

22) Springfield

Quiz

Set by Stuart Poore

23) St Pauls

24) Calcot Junior

a) Where we strive to be the best we can be

b) Together we plant the seeds for success

c) United through Jesus in Faith, Love and Learning

d) Born Curious, Stay Curious

New Builds

25) How many new homes on Stoneham's Farm

a) 33 b) 44 c) 66

26) Who is building the new block in Little Heath School?

a) Wates b) Taylor Wimpy c) Costains

27) How many new homes were built in The Ridings ?

a) 20 b) 25 c) 35

Play

Is there a children's playground next to these - Yes or No ?

28) Foxcombe Drive

29) Childrey Way

30) Lamorna Crescent

31) Sovereign Way

32) Swiss Cottage Close

33) Goldcrest Way

Boundaries

You can tell which council looks after which road by the road signs and bin colours. Are the following roads in

a) West Berkshire b) Reading c) Both !

34) Little Heath Road

35) Normanstead Road

36) Langley Hill

37) Westwood Glen

Pairs

38) If you know what or where the following are, you can group them into pairs ...

a) HeathLea b) Hollymont c) Westleigh

d) Jenner e) BoxGrove f) Collingwood

g) Blenheim h) Little Heath Court

St Catherine's

39) What year did Nurse Julia Le Besque lay the initial foundation stone ?

a) 1952 b) 1962 c) 1966

40) Who laid the sanctuary foundation stone in 1980

a) Archdeacon Bone b) Archdeacon Norman c) Bishop Wild

41) How many church bells does St Catherine's have ?

a) None b) One c) Three

42) How many languages on the welcome sign ?

a) 5 b) 9 c) 12

1) a	2) b	3) b	4) a	5) b	6) b	7) a	8) c	9) d	10) c	11) c	12) b	13) c	14) c	15) a	16) Yes	17) Yes	18) No	19) No	20) Yes	21) b	22) d	23) c	24) a	25) c	26) a	27) c	28) Yes	29) Yes	30) No	31) Yes	32) No	33) Yes	34) a	35) c	36) a	37) b	38) a	39) b	40) a	41) b	42) b
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Answers

Cats Cartoon Club

Saturday 5th December saw the launch of Cat's Cartoon Club. We had hoped to be watching cartoons on the big screen in the hall and eating popcorn, but due to COVID-19 it wasn't to be. Instead we decided to launch online.

We encouraged people to find some time to watch the Muppet Christmas Carol (not strictly speaking a cartoon, but an awesome Christmas film). Having watched it people were invited to join us on our Facebook page to think a bit about the film.

We thought about how the story had a lot in common with the story of Zacchaeus in the Bible:

- Both Zacchaeus and Scrooge were grumpy and greedy men.
- Both Zacchaeus and Scrooge had an encounter with someone (Scrooge met 3 ghosts whilst Zacchaeus met Jesus)
- Both were changed by these encounters

Whilst we might not think of ourselves as being as greedy and selfish as Scrooge or Zacchaeus, we all sometimes do things which are a bit selfish or a bit



greedy, so both of these stories have at least one character in them that perhaps we can relate to.

Cats Cartoon Club will be back at 10am on 2nd January when we will be thinking about Frozen, which is on BBC one on 29th December at 15.35.



If you have any questions or a favourite cartoon that you think might be a good film for Cats Cartoon Club to watch please get in touch with Phil: Curatephil@outlook.com

New for 2021

In January we'll be running the Bible course online. The Bible course is an 8 week course going through the overarching story of the Bible. We'll be meeting on Zoom at 7.45 pm every Wednesday from 13th January. For more info or to sign up e-mail Phil (curatephil@outlook.com)



Truly Transformational

Me? An alcoholic, surely not. Raised on love, hard work, discipline and independence in the counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, I was the kind of guy who felt sure that I could solve all of my problems by myself, without help and certainly without a God that others believed in.

I came to the doors of an AA meeting in June 2006 on the brink of suicide and another failed attempt at stopping drinking and taking other illegal substances.

Going to AA felt like just one more thing that wouldn't work for me, another to add to the list of things I could try to help stop the chaos that was my life. By that point I became very dependent:

- Dependent on drink and drugs
- Dependent on girlfriends
- Dependent on drinking buddies
- Dependent on others giving me a break or an opportunity

I'd lost hope. Both in life and in myself. That was to change, and I can honestly say now that going to that very first AA meeting in London was exactly what I needed and what I was looking for. I met a bunch of happy, purpose driven, faith filled men and women who through their example showed me there was a life beyond the bottle, that I could live without despair and hopelessness. That I could take part in life and bring hope others.

Armed with the facts about alcoholism and our 12 Step Programme of recovery, the members of the group guided me through the programme and enabled me to have an extraordinary spiritual

awakening. One that has stayed with me ever since. I live life on a very different plane these days – one where God is front and centre and my fellows close second.

I was told that pain is the touchstone to spiritual growth and understanding, and that recovered alcoholics are the luckiest people in the world – as they've experienced both Hell and Heaven in the same lifetime.

I am truly blessed to have found AA when I did, and to be sober today without the terrible compulsion to pick up a drink. As we say – it's the first drink does all of the damage, therefore I must work to help other people in the way I was helped because:

- It is a sense of duty
- I am paying to AA what was freely given to me
- It is a pleasure
- With each person I help, I take out a little more insurance against taking the first drink myself.
- We make no claims in AA, but we may be able to help anyone you know suffering with alcoholism.

If you would like to know more, or make contact, please use the national website:

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk or call the National Helpline: 0800 9177650

Tim

AA meet at St Catherine's every Tuesday evening (as a caring group they are allowed to meet under Covid-19 regulations, follow the guidelines and completed a risk assessment) please join me in praying for them regularly, lives are truly being saved. Gill (Vicar)

A . B .

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"In the early 1900s, my great Aunt disappeared leaving her two children to be brought up by her parents. What happened? Why did she abscond, or was her disappearance more sinister?"

"Are the Mendums of Bucks. related to those in Massachusetts, USA? How can I find out?"

"In the late 1800s, William Raven left Birmingham with the Army. He married and settled in Reading. Were his reasons financial, or to escape from something he'd rather forget?"

***Do you have unanswered questions about your family
or where you came from? I can help!***

Give Tracey Horrell a call on **07585 442185**
or find out more at **www.genetracers.co.uk**



The Thurleys, Three Mile Cross, c. 1918

Gene Tracers

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December thoughts from the Treasurer

December is the month when the treasurer looks both back over the current year and forward to the new year.

All the financial records for the current year are used to help prepare the annual accounts. This information also helps to explain what our church has been doing during the current year. However, these records can only provide information where the financial cost has been through the church bank accounts.

We are blessed to be part of a church containing generous people who freely give of their time and talents. These include those who care for our church gardens and those who provide all the songs and music – both online and in church.

At the beginning of the year six new banners were made with the words FAITH, GRACE, HOPE, JOY, LOVE and PEACE on. If you were in church between lock downs you may have seen them hanging up on the church walls.

The café is run by a group of committed volunteers under the leadership of our paid cafe manager Karen. There are many other cases where unpaid volunteers help to make our lives so much richer – so I would like to say a special thank you to all of them and to wish them a Happy Christmas.



As the new year approaches all of the files for the paper records plus computer records for the new year are prepared ready for January when a new financial year begins alongside the production of the annual report for the old year.

I would also like to say another big thank you to all of you who so generously gave both money and your time and talents to the church during 2020. You have all helped me manage the accounts during a very difficult year for all of us.

Joanne Freeman - Treasurer to the
PCC St Catherine of Siena, Tilehurst

The full accounts for 2019 can be found on the church website (details on the back page) and they will give you some idea of how much work our treasurer does both in the day to day running of the church finances and especially at the end of our financial year.

Tony Bartlett

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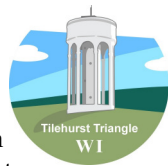
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Tilehurst Triangle WI



Tilehurst Triangle WI has now moved online for the foreseeable future. Our first Zoom WI meeting was held in October, when we had a speaker on Jack the Ripper. The excellent speaker discussed a number of the possible suspects and why they could be ruled out. It was very interesting but no one will ever know for certain who he was.

Every year, the WI discuss and vote on resolutions. The first resolution was passed over a hundred years ago on 24th October 1918 and since then WI members have campaigned on a very wide range of causes and issues. In 2020, one of the two resolutions passed was 'To Stop Modern Slavery'. We were therefore delighted to welcome Jenny Searle (from St Michael's MU) to talk to us about 'Modern Day Slavery' at our November meeting.

Modern day slavery is a hidden crime in plain sight. It is not something that just happens in far away places or a long time ago, but happens here in the UK and in Reading. It is estimated that there are 40 million victims worldwide and 136,000 in the UK.

Any of us could come into contact with a victim of modern slavery without realising it. There are no set signs and not always easy to spot but there are indicators to keep in mind. These include appearing withdrawn or unwilling to communicate with customers, for example in a nail bar, or working in conditions that are unsafe, such as carrying out building jobs with no safety equipment, inadequate clothing and injuries that are left untreated.

The Clewer Initiative has been set up to help Church of England dioceses to develop strategies to detect modern slavery in the community and provide support for victims.

One aid to detection are phone apps. A safe car wash app and a farm welfare app have been set up.

MODERN SLAVERY HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT IN OUR COMMUNITIES

More than 200 years after the abolition of slavery there are still an estimated **40.3 million** men, women and children trapped in modern slavery, with **136,000** victims in the UK alone.

WESEEYOU.

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU SPOT THE SIGNS

If someone is in immediate danger then call the police. **999**

Report non-emergency suspicious activity to your local police on: **101**

Ask for advice by calling:
The Modern Slavery Helpline **0800 121 700**
The Salvation Army **0300 303 8151**
NSPCC CTAC (in cases of children) **0800 800 5000**

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

WWW.THECLEWERINITIATIVE.ORG

If you use a hand car wash, by downloading the app and completing a short survey about working conditions, you can help in the detection of people working as modern slaves. The app will indicate whether there is a high likelihood of modern slavery together with information about how to report this.

(Continued on page 18)

Pick 'n' Mix

After many years of meeting as simply 'the Youth Group' our Friday night youth group has a new name; Pick and Mix, we meet every other Friday in term time at 7.45 pm and we're open to anyone between the ages of 11 and 18 who wants to join us.

The name was chosen because just like a bag of 'Pick and Mix' we come in different shapes, sizes and flavours. But, whatever your sweet of choice is, you are welcome. We are very much open to anyone of all faiths and none. You don't have to call yourself a Christian to come, but we are a Church youth group and our values do come from the Bible (Specifically Matthew 22:37-40). Which means that we:

- Respect God
- Respect Each other
- Respect ourselves

(Continued from page 17)

We can all help to stop modern slavery by raising awareness and spreading the word about signs to look out for, report any suspicions (which can be made anonymously) and keep ourselves informed.

On a lighter note, we have also had a zoom concert with singing by Andrew Geater, known by some of our members when he was in their Cub Scout pack! He is now a professional singer.

Friends and family joined in for a fun evening. Our Christmas meeting will be a little different with a demonstration of ceramic making by Pat Giles, one of our



The bulk of our meetings are set aside for socialising and having fun together. At the end of the session we have a short, 5 minute 'Word of Wisdom' which comes from the Bible.

This term has been a bit disjointed as we have needed to switch between Zoom and meeting physically but we have enjoyed playing games over Zoom, we had a fish and chip shop walk between lockdowns and even filmed a nativity play. For more information e-mail Phil: [✉ curatephil@outlook.com](mailto:curatephil@outlook.com)

members who makes beautiful ceramic items followed by carol singing.

Tilehurst Triangle WI wish you all a Happy Christmas.

Keep safe and well.

Ros Somerville
Tilehurst Triangle WI



Escaping Lockdown with a good film part 3



There's something special about sitting down with friends and family and some Popcorn to watch a film. Unfortunately, Coronavirus forced cinemas to close and meant that St Catherine's has had to put on hold our plans for regular film screenings in our Hall. Not wanting to let the virus ruin all our fun we started an

online film club, encouraging people to watch a film and spend some time thinking about its key themes. We try to choose films that are easy to access, so tend to select films that are available on the BBC iPlayer.

August's film was *The Railway Children* and it was really easy for people to join in with us. All people needed to do was:

- Watch *The Railway Children*
- E-mail us with their thoughts on the film.
- Tune into the St Catherine's Facebook page and watch Gill and Phil discuss the film in light of the thoughts that people had sent in.

We had an amazing response (both in terms of video views and people e-mailing in) which led to a really interesting and wide-ranging discussion. We discussed many different topics including 'hope', 'childhood' and 'grace'.

See opposite for some viewer comments and below for a short synopsis for the film. However, the best way get a feel for the film club is to watch the film (widely available on DVD) and then head over to Facebook:

(<https://www.facebook.com/564654663622305/videos/722725315168779>)
to see Gill and Phil discussing the film.

The Railway Children (taken from Rotten Tomatoes)

After Charles Waterbury (Iain Cuthbertson) is imprisoned on false charges of selling state secrets, his wife (Dinah Sheridan) must move to a small house near a railway station.

The Waterbury children -- Bobbie (Jenny Agutter), Phyllis (Sally Thomsett) and Peter (Gary Warren) -- occupy themselves watching the trains, even befriendng a gentleman (William Mervyn) who frequents the station.

When the children discover what has happened to their father, their new friend provides key assistance.



I thought the Mother was an absolute saint and thanks to her, the family kept praying and didn't lose hope, and ultimately it all ended happily (unfortunately, having read the book and seen the film before, that was expected!).

Jean



My thoughts on the film:

1. Don't take life for granted it can change in a second.
2. Use opportunities and learn to work with them.
3. Learn to accept kindness.
4. Always have hope.

Anne

When the children were going around asking for things for Albert's birthday, they said that "it was hard to ask for things – if you've ever tried it". Does this resonate with our prayer lives, perhaps?

Richard and Katrina



I also picked up on the "beautiful things do happen, but we spend most of our lives hoping for them" lockdown has taught me to take pleasure in the little things. It was suggested by one of our Lifegroup that we think of three things to be thankful for each day

Hilary

A Final Thought

It is a very light and joyful film that celebrates childhood. Perhaps there are lessons we can take from the Children in this film as we approach life and faith. After all Jesus says "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3). Phil



An update from Tilehurst Parish Council on Covid, Housing and Anti-Social behaviour

What a time it is. The Covid pandemic has affected all our lives in many different ways. Our hearts go out to those affected by the illness itself and to those whose work and livelihoods have been affected.

Tilehurst Parish Council which covers residents in the western areas of Tilehurst who live in West Berkshire had to quickly adapt to working in different ways when the lockdown started back in March. Our small staff team was largely required to work from home and our regular council and sub-committee meetings had to switch to remote meetings using Zoom.

Over time we have become used to working in this “remote” way and we believe that the council has been successful in being able to continue all its functions and services except where Covid restrictions have prevented us from doing so.

As the lockdown eased in the early summer, we were able to open our five playgrounds again including the Cotswold playground that we had refurbished during the early weeks of the lockdown.

While the halls were closed, our maintenance officer spent considerable time tidying up our recreation grounds and surrounding areas. This has included cutting back trees and hedges, resulting in these areas being more accessible and pleasant places to visit.

We have also worked with West Berks Covid 19 Community Support

hub to help Tilehurst residents in need of help, for example in delivering food/ meals and prescriptions.

If you need help the West Berkshire Hub can be contacted by phone on 01635 503 379 and online at <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-communityhub>. Details are also available on the Tilehurst Parish Council website - see below.

Tilehurst had seen rising incidents of anti-social behaviour long before the covid lockdown commenced but sadly this increased considerably during the summer and school closure period. It must be stressed that the vast majority of our young residents behave very well and it's always a pleasure to see the regular use of our skatepark, football pitches and other recreation facilities.

But during the summer the council was, on an almost daily basis, having to repair damage, collect excess litter, attend to fires and other serious incidents, all of which have been regularly reported to the police. We are currently obtaining and reviewing proposals to improve security at all our parks and community centres and we plan to upgrade the CCTV at all centres.

We are also in discussion with a Youth Services provider to see how we can improve services in the Parish for our younger residents. This is in the early stages of development but we are looking at possibly entering into a partnership next year.

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The view from Little Heath School

School has been different since September. Coming onto the site, I put my mask on, and always wear it, except when at the front of a classroom and teaching. There are now sanitising handwash stations at the entrance and exits of each school building. I carry hand sanitiser and sanitising spray to wipe down my workspace as I leave each classroom.

I used to be based in a single classroom, but to ensure that students are not mixing outside of their year group, I am now based in a different classroom for each of my 14 classes. Breaktimes and lunchtimes are staggered for each year group, so that they can get to the canteen and be outside without mixing with other year groups.

As teachers, we follow the breaktime and lunchtime of the classes we are teaching periods 2 and 4 each day. This has all taken some getting used to, but is necessary for the safety of everyone at school, and much of it has started to become habit – putting on my mask and spraying down my work surface is now as familiar as writing the date on the board at the start of a lesson.

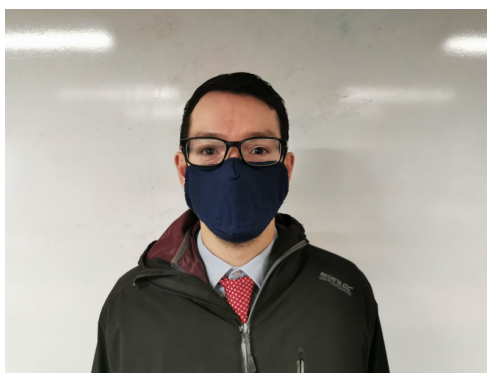
Another big change, and this one with exciting future consequences, is how we have adopted new remote learning software and approaches, with necessity mothering invention. We have had an online homework system for many years and made use of websites for revision resources, but have augmented this with live online lessons, recorded lessons, and a variety of new ways of doing things virtually and at a distance. We

have even started sometimes teaching a lesson in a classroom with students who are in whilst simultaneously streaming the presentation and teacher explanations to those students who are at home.

Even Parents Evening has moved online, with virtual meetings – and, to my delight, automatic timings, so that there is no possibility of me running over and delaying later meetings.

I was also pleased to now be able to create documents with colleagues – working on them at the same time. It is magical to see words and numbers appearing on one part of an open text file or spreadsheet as I work on a different section.

It has been an exceedingly busy time in school, but the changes have been there for a good reason, and some of the changes are likely to stay and help us to deliver learning in exciting new ways, past the global predicament.



Joe Eden
Head of RE & Philosophy
Little Heath School

Praise to Our Father in Heaven



Definition of Praise

Praise means to commend, to applaud or magnify. For us, praise to God is an expression of worship, lifting up and glorifying the Lord. It is a humbling of ourselves and centring our attention upon Him with heart felt reflections of love, adoration and thanksgiving. It magnifies our awareness of our spiritual union with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Last advent we were saying goodbye to the old decade and eagerly anticipating the arrival of a new one. The Year 2020. The year the COVID 19 virus hit the world population with a deadly vengeance.

Consequently, 'it' has dominated all our daily lives in every walk of life with many of us living with differing anxieties. A dark year with no light at the end of the tunnel.

Then...as this Advent began and we wait again for Jesus to arrive, a spark of light suddenly penetrated the gloom. The promise of a successful vaccine to help fight off the enemy.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

The church APCM postponed from the end of March was held 'virtually' by Zoom on Sunday 11th October. To facilitate those without internet access, a small group gathered in in church to follow and participate in the meeting.

Just as the birth of Jesus came to give hope and salvation to humankind for eternity, so the arrival of these vaccines give birth to hope and salvation for our immediate future - great timing for an Advent message!

At Christmas we praise God for sending us our Saviour Jesus Christ but have we done much other praising this year - have we felt like it? At this time there is much praising, quite rightly, for the scientists who have discovered and developed these vaccines to save us.

However, their scientific work from their brilliant brains are, as we believe, inspired by God and He should be praised accordingly. Wouldn't it be amazing to hear such praise and thanksgiving given to God over the commercial airwaves.

So as the up hill challenges continue into 2021 we should endeavour to praise God in all situations. When we put our grateful focus on God, we can see what He is doing and will do to keep us safe from harm.

On praising Our Lord
from morning to night
the darkness retreats
pushed back by The Light
Maranatha!

Lorraine Roberts





Magic

The rabbit from the hat, the card from up the sleeve,
The patter of the raindrops, the colour of the leaves.
That's magic!

On the theatre stage, the lady sawn in half,
Or in the park where you hear the children laugh,
That's magic!

The card that jumps out from the deck, the coin I cannot see,
The beauty of the toadstool, the texture of the tree,
That's magic!

The rings that click together, the girl who floats in air,
The waves that lap upon the shore, the birdsong everywhere,
That's magic!

The coins, the card, the rabbit, are tricks to deceive the eye,
But to feel creation's wonder,
That's the hand of God most high!

Terry Bryant

(Continued from page 22)

If you live in the Parish you might recall receiving a leaflet about the results of the Residents Survey. The results of this survey (over 900 of you took part) have demonstrated by a large majority that Parish residents do not want any further large-scale housing developments and want to protect our green spaces and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) that lies at the western edge of our Parish. The Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is now working towards completing a plan that can go to a referendum of residents in 2021.

We are determined that the plan should closely reflect the views expressed in the survey results. For more information on this and regular progress reports please see our website at <https://tilehurstpcnp.org.uk/>. We would welcome any further feedback from residents as this plan evolves.

This is a brief summary of the work of the Parish Council over the past few difficult months. If you want to know more or get involved please contact us by email - clerk@tilehurstpc.co.uk or via our website at : <http://www.tilehurstparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

Party Games

As we enter a Christmas time unlike any other, we wanted to share some games that can be enjoyed together around the dining room table, or over Zoom with those we can't be with this Christmas.

Each member of the RG31 'editorial team' has offered one game:

Categories offered by Tony Bartlett

We played this game at a house party some years ago and I since bought a version online which has score cards, a deck of cards with various categories and tiles with letters of the alphabet, but even this greatly simplified version below is fun.

Each player needs paper and pen. A category is selected, some examples would be: Parts of the body, Things made of glass, Insects, Things found in hospitals, Toys, Diseases, British towns or cities, Breeds of birds, Musical instruments, Seas Oceans or Lakes, TV programmes, etc. The set I bought has 150 different categories! Then select a letter of the alphabet; that needs a random way of selection e.g., scrabble letters in a bag?

So, say the letter 'T' is selected and the Category is 'Diseases'. Everyone has to think and write down (within a time limit) of something, e.g., Typhoid, Tonsillitis, etc. If anyone writes down something that no-one else has written down (and is judged to be eligible) they earn one point. After any number of rounds winner is the one with them most points (who is usually the one able to think outside the box and avoid the obvious!)

Mad Libs offered by Phil Price

This is a game which I've enjoyed playing with both of our youth groups at St Catherine's. It's been around since the 70s and there are loads of books available online which make it super easy. But you can make your own by picking a newspaper article and crossing out some words with a sharpie.

Players take it in turns to offer a 'word' (the books you can buy give guidance on the type of word, i.e., adjective, adverb etc.) which is written down. Once the correct number of words have been offered, they are put into the blank spaces in the 'story' which is read aloud. There is no winner as such, but if the resulting story gives everyone a good laugh then everyone's a winner!

Ibble Dibble Offered by Gill Rowell

How to play Ibble Dibble on Zoom

Each player will need to have at hand an old lipstick!

Each player is given an Ibble-Dibble based name with a number - i.e. One Ibble-Dibble, Two Ibble-Dibble and so on...

The game starts with one person who must recite the specific tongue-twister to kick things off.

For instance the rhyme for One Ibble Dibble would go something like this:

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Recipes from Karen

Warm Spiced Apple Punch

Serves 4

This is a lovely non alcoholic alternative to mulled wine.

- 1x 1 litre carton of apple juice
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 6 cloves
- Strips of orange peel
- 1 knob of stem ginger in syrup, plus 1 tbsp of the syrup (or used ground ginger)

Put all the ingredients in a pan and bring to a gentle simmer. Leave on the heat for 20 minutes for the spices to infuse, then serve.

Leftovers?

Need some inspiration of what to do with your Christmas dinner leftovers, then why not try the following four?

1. Roughly mash leftover roast potatoes with any leftover vegetables (sliced Brussel sprouts, carrots, peas etc), to make a bubble and squeak.
2. Fry in a pan then serve with slices of turkey and maybe a fried egg or a spoonful of chutney.
3. Make coronation turkey for your sandwiches. Mix curry powder with mayonnaise, add chopped turkey and maybe some raisins or chopped dried apricots.
4. Add leftover turkey and/or ham to pasta. Make a simple sauce for the pasta by frying onion and garlic. Then add salt, pepper, mixed herbs, and a tablespoon or two of double cream. Mix with the pasta and meat, and maybe grate some parmesan on top.

Karen

(Continued from page 26)

"One Ibble Dibble with zero Ibble Dibbles calls five Dibble Ibble with zero Dibble Ibbles."

Then player five has to recite the rhyme replacing the numbers with the order they were given it, for example, "Five Ibble Dibble with zero Dibble Ibbles calls two Ibble Dibble with zero Dibble Ibbles."

Player two would then have a go and replacing the numbers with their order, for instance, "Two Ibble Dibble with zero Dibble Ibbles calls three Ibble Dibble with zero Dibble Ibbles."

BUT any player who messes up - pauses, stutters, gets their Dibble and their Ibbles the wrong way around, or says the number of Dibble Ibbles someone has on their face wrong has to put a dot of lipstick on their face, so that it is visible to all. This is an ibble-dibble and must be taken into account as the ibble-dibbles go round.

And so the game continues...perhaps until a pre-selected number of ibble-dibbles have been dotted on someone's face!

On the best ways for a vicar to disrupt Christmas

The Rectory,
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

I am sorry I was not alive during that wonderful four-year period when Oliver Cromwell abolished Christmas; no Christmas parties, no carol services, no cards to send and no frantic last-minute shopping. That man was a hero.

Planning for Christmas at St James' normally starts on 2nd January. By Easter, the flowers for church have been carefully chosen to be colour coordinated, and the seating plans and table decorations for the Christmas party have been allocated (with nominated reserves in case someone should inconveniently die in the intervening eight months). Long before Summer is over, the tree lights have been tested, music for the 9 Lessons and Carols Service has been chosen and the service sheets printed. Way before the dark nights set in, car parking attendants will have been found, those who are to light all the candles will have been rehearsed to perfection, and the brass lectern has had its annual polish.

We do not do spontaneity at St James the Least of All. If ever there was a service when time for something unexpected had to be allowed, its place would be announced in the order of service, how long the unexpected thing would happen for would have been decided by a committee, and who was to be spontaneous would have been allocated on a rota.

But the one person none of these well-meaning, efficient, committed organisers can control is the Rector. You could call it a staff perk.

Carols will (accidentally, of course) be announced in the wrong order; if verse 3 was to be omitted, I announce it will be verse 4. This keeps the organist on his toes while the choir hovers on the point of a collective nervous breakdown. At the Christmas supper, my introductory welcome speech and extensive grace make those in the kitchen wonder if the vegetables being boiled should better be served as thick soup.

I offer the helpful suggestion that the tree, having been installed and decorated in the chancel, may perhaps look better in the sanctuary and I turn all the heating off throughout the season, explaining that it will help the flowers to last. All Services will start five minutes early (was my watch rather fast?) so I can look disapprovingly at those still coming in while we are singing the first carol and making it clear that I think they had spent too long in the pub next door.

And so we all reach Christmas morning, with 12 months of planning having gone yet again slightly awry, with parishioners exhausted and I exhilarated at the chaos that has been created with such ease. Mr Cromwell, your spirit lives on.

Your loving uncle, Eustace

St Catherine's Gardening Club



Hello again everyone! As I write this the temperature has hardly risen above 3 degrees today, which hurt our cheeks, it was so cold, as we walked up to church. We were working in the church garden yesterday morning, which seemed crazy as it was bitterly cold, but the sky cleared and the sun came out, just taking the extreme chill off. There were several of us working.

This year there has been an incredibly heavy crop of acorns, not just in our church garden, but in the surrounding area. Paddy was sweeping them up from under our "Old Oak Tree", not an easy task as so many of them had already put down roots into the soil!! We could do with some pigs really. It seems a shame to waste the acorns and put them in the green bin. They're so heavy each of us has been taking some home to put in our own green bins to share the load. At this point I want to thank Pat Mitchell who has kindly allowed us to use her green bin recently, a great help. Lorraine Roberts and Sheila Firth did the same for us earlier in the year.

As well as the acorns, we've had the usual annual challenge of clearing the oak leaves again this year. It has taken several of us working over several weeks to clear the majority from the grass, flower beds and car park.

Richard Childs has joined us in recent months and has become a real blessing. As well as helping with the leaf sweeping, he has patiently rubbed down and re varnished all of our outdoor furniture, carefully picking times when it was dry enough to work. All the

benches and seats look so much better and well cared for now. Thankyou Richard!



Hazel has continued to develop the bed behind Gill Howgego's bench in the corner of the north lawn, giving us lovely colours from Penstemons and Michaelmas daisies. She has also joined in with whatever is needed around the rest of the grounds, as well as being our "fount of plant knowledge!". She always seems to know the best time to prune things, and has brought in many plants from her own garden.

Jo and Shirley have cleared the large grassy leaved plants (sorry, we don't know what they are!) from the far corner of the top car park, and made it ready for planting. We have also cleared some of the unwanted growth in the vicarage front garden for Gill. We rediscovered a rose there, so it will be interesting to see if any rose buds appear next year.

Thanks to Shirley, Richard and Chris, the metal shed is now painted and looks so much better. More recently Shirley had an idea for the area up against the fence near the shed. It was covered in discarded breeze blocks, and weeds, including very deep- rooted dock leaves. Paddy, Jo and Shirley worked hard to clear the area and level it.

Chris had drawn up some plans based on Shirley's idea, to create a simple bench running along there in front of the fence. It consists of two long planks of wood resting on rugged supports, basically stacks of the breeze blocks which were lying around there. Chris

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fixed the stacks together and bought and varnished the planks and it is finished, though at present it is upside down to avoid too much wet spoiling the new varnish. We have arranged a few pots at each end of the bench, which we are planting with herbs and things that smell nice. More work to do, but we're very pleased with the result so far, transforming a rather grotty area to somewhere pleasant to sit in the warmer weather.

In fact, the idea for the new bench came from a need for more seating outside. On sunny days in the summer when the café was open it was quite busy out there. Families could let the children play on the grass while the adults have cuppa and a chat, socially distanced of course!

Jo has been gradually making improvements to the buttress bed which faces the lower car park. We are just in the process of removing an old viburnum which had started to take over the bed, and was also diseased causing the leaves to be unsightly. Once the ground is cleared it will be refreshed and a new evergreen shrub planted there.

The remaining nerines were cleared from the buttress bed with the wooden cross so that the cross and bed could be decorated with poppies for Remembrance Day.

Gill also had an idea to wrap a wide red ribbon around the Old Oak Tree and to suggest that people leave stones at the base in memory of loved ones. Many of us appreciated this and took time to stand at the foot of the tree for a few quiet moments, giving thanks for the sacrifices made by so many, not only in

wars but in the recent war against Covid 19.

A couple of days ago, the wooden cross was removed and stored safely, so that a new display could go there. Tony Bartlett and Chris Addison had cut out large wooden figures, and Tony has been painting them. He has started placing them to create a nativity scene there. Pete Broomfield kindly fixed up some lights to simulate the starry night behind.

This year, for the first time, we have a Christmas tree outside, much larger than the one we usually have inside the church. Richard Canning and Chris' friend, Alan Wade helped Chris to put it up and decorate it. It stands in the corner between the garden room and the church, so it can be enjoyed by everyone who walks past. Our local community have been invited to hang decorations, prayers or wishes on the tree, and there are a few there already. We do have a smaller tree inside the church, which Val and Stuart Poore put up and decorated.

Well, that's about all the news from your church grounds team for now. Do please consider joining us, the more the merrier! Jo Day 942 1481 or Chris Addison 07966 105056 would be delighted to hear from you.

We would like to wish you many blessings in 2021.

Jo Day

"I grow plants for many reasons: to please my eye or to please my soul, to challenge the elements or to challenge my patience, for novelty or for nostalgia, but mostly for the joy in seeing them grow."

David Hobson

The 'our' number

English is tricky, even for 'natives'... Example: what is a "Lord"? or, examine "literally true" "Literal" can imply ONE SIMPLE MEANING with few hints! For example, "Happiness" might hint at rejoicing in sin! Or It could mean rejoicing in God's unconditional love? Is a "sinner" a happy sinner - OR someone trying to do better?

PRIDE? "I'm better'n you!" isolates! Even in "secular mode", that's an illness. (And YOU'd outdo ME tomorrow, you old so-and-so!) But PRIDE in useful work could just hint at "Satisfaction"?

ENVY? Oh, I'll come to that later. A few "Christian" preachers rant about hate, doom etc. Does that increase the "R Number" (does it draw many to our Church?) Does "denying your Faith" stop recruitment?

Warning; this fable could annoy you - just laugh, kick it around! ----- A Christian was taking urgent insulin to a desperate diabetic friend.

An "Evil Agent" stopped him and said he'd kill him IF HE DIDN'T DENY HIS FAITH! (Like a British spy saying: "Heil Hitler"?). What to do? He had to deliver that insulin ... Discuss.

Years later, at the Pearly Gates, he cried to St. Peter, saying he couldn't come in - he'd denied his Faith! Peter said: "You lied then, right? OK, a bit naughty. But I've checked! Over your 71 years, your everyday brightness and strength inspired "envy" in TEN potential recruits; Their "envy" drew them in, TEN new strong Christians! You boosted our 'R number'! I'd better let you in, my boy." -----

"Never deny" could mean: "IMake unbelievers 'catch' or 'envy' your faith, forget looks and fashions! Boost our 'R-number' if you can!" The "Evil Agent" did NOT seem a likely catch. Your thoughts?

Phil French

Miscellaneous observations during the Christmas season...

Putting on weight is the penalty for exceeding the feed limit.

People say it's the thought that counts, not the gift, but couldn't people think a little bigger?

Christmas: The time when everyone gets Santamental.

Every year, Christmas becomes less a birthday and more a Clearance Sale.

Christmas is in my heart 12 months a year, and thanks to credit cards, it's on my Visa card statement 12 months a year as well.

Some of these new toys are so creative and inventive. This year they have a Neurotic Doll. It's wound up already.

You might as well do your Christmas hinting early this year.

Christmas is the season when your neighbour keeps you awake playing 'Silent Night'.

Father to three-year old: "No, a reindeer is not a horse with TV antenna."

Christmas is a time when people get emotional over family ties, particularly if they have to wear one.

Spotlight on Steph and the Mothers' Union



Steph Walklate quietly gets on with things, preferably quietly in the background, serving St Catherine's Church in many ways.

She wears lots of hats - she assists Karen in the Café Siena kitchen; is one of the singers leading our worship on Sundays; is on our readers rota, and the church cleaning rota, and is our Parish Gift Aid secretary. And she is also Secretary of the Mother's Union. Phew!

Steph was a civil servant in her younger days, she moved Tilehurst to work for the Department of the Environment. Roy lived next door, and their common love of cats brought them together - Steph had come home one day when it was raining and couldn't find her two cats - Roy had given them shelter in his

flat. That was in the March and they were married the following October, both 32.

They had three children - Alex, Amy and Johnny - and started coming to church when they wanted Alex Christened. Rev Chris Parsons visited them, and suggested they might like to try coming to church - which they did.

The warmth and welcome they received at St Catherine's meant they kept coming, and have done so ever since. Steph says she can't not attend church on a Sunday now, it's really important to her. (She doesn't regard herself as a "full on" sort of Christian - but about $\frac{3}{4}$ strong!)

The Mother's Union

In 1987 Steph joined the Mother's Union (yes, 33 years ago). When asked what motivated her to join, Steph simply said - "because I was asked"! Steph confessed that she paid her subs in the early years but didn't attend many meetings - until she retired!

Then, 6 years ago, she was asked to join the Committee, which she did, and soon after that it was suggested she take over the role of Secretary - and so Steph found herself in a key role within St Catherine's Mother's Union.

Steph supports the MU because it upholds family values and helps those who are struggling by reaching out to them in lots of different ways.

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There is the “Away from it all” scheme, where a family in tough times can be nominated to have a bit of a break.

Fundraising for various charities is always ongoing. The St Catherine’s MU make up emergency toilet bags for when people go to hospital, with the basic necessities such as soap, flannel, toothbrush, to tide them over should they have to stay in overnight. Also “angel pockets” – special blankets to wrap stillborn babies in so that grieving parents can hold them in something special. The MU undertake many knitting projects too!

Also they participate in an Oxford Diocese initiative to send Christmas cards to inmates at Bullingdon Prison (with prescribed words) and on Mother’s Day they do the same – but send empty cards so the inmates can send them to their own mothers. And when someone is baptised, the MU send a card on their first anniversary, and also on the third and final reading of banns to couples getting married.

There are many excellent bakers in the MU and they provide superb catering, at all sorts of events based at St Catherine’s.

In terms of regular activities, in normal times there is a monthly meeting on the

second Wednesday of each month, at 8.00 pm, with a speaker. Also a monthly Bible study and fellowship.

The MU Memorial Service in October is for anyone who has lost someone with tea and cake afterwards – an opportunity to chat. This is much appreciated, especially by those recently bereaved. A carol service with a variety of readings is held each year with mulled wine and mince pies.

St Catherine’s MU has 46 members (3 new this year). Cost of membership is £35 for 2021.

I asked Steph if her faith had grown over the years, and she shared a couple of stories; one was that when she had chemotherapy she felt God’s presence very close to her. The other was how, as a little girl, she had desperately wanted to win a big teddy bear at the fun fair to give to her sister. But she went home disappointed – and prayed in earnest that she could still win it and promised God she would go to church if she did.

Unusually, her parents took the family to the fun fair again – and Steph won the teddy bear! We are so glad that she did (although I think she may have ended up coming to church even if she hadn’t)!

Gill Rowell

Mothers’ Union Prayer Chain - Prayer in Emergencies

A call to one of the following numbers will start a chain of prayer straight away

Hilary Smee ☎ 0118 941 2895

Evelyn Bartlett ☎ 0118 967 8659

Jo Day ☎ 0118 942 1481

Lorraine Roberts ☎ 0118 942 6189

Shirley Horsnell ☎ 07872 315 506

Friday delivery

When the second lockdown came into effect on 5th November, closing Café Siena at St Catherine's Church was a hard decision. Many of us look forward to every Thursday and Friday, not only for a home-cooked meal but, most importantly, to see our friends and have a conversation over tea, coffee and cake.

We started to think about how we could keep the café going and, having read the Government guidance through a few times, we realised that we were still allowed to do a takeaway or delivery service. Our Café Manager, Karen, was keen to give it a try and so was born The Friday Delivery project.

The first week (13th November) we delivered over 25 hot lunches to church members, Friday Friends, Tuesday Get Together members and café friends.

The feedback was very encouraging and the delivery team seemed to get quite a buzz out of it too. We have delivered a similar number of lunches each Friday since.

The project became a fantastic opportunity to see people's faces (socially distanced, of course), have a brief conversation to check how they and their families are, and how they are coping with the restrictions.

We charge £5 for a hot meal and pudding, with a veggie option of jacket potato with beans, cheese or tuna. Karen plans the menus well in advance so we can give our clients plenty of notice – to date she has prepared cottage pie, chicken casserole, sausage casserole, Somerset chicken, beef

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Introducing Caroline Heron



My memories of Brussels, my birthplace, are entirely my older sister's. We then came to South London where I was blessed with a loving home, whose walls were ever expanding to accommodate other children, some staying for all their childhood years. I came to faith as a teenager and benefited from the learning I gained at my university Christian Union.

I have always worked in IT – entering it by chance, getting my first job offer in IT after many unsuccessful interviews, following an interview that I incorrectly thought was for general management. As I approach the end of my working life, I can truthfully say it has been very demanding – but never ever boring!

I came to Reading when I married my husband. We were only going to stay a short while to provide continuity for my stepchildren's schooling - here I remain as a widow some 30 years later!

Looking forward to see what God has for us over the coming year.

Caroline

I am not sure who is more surprised, you or I, that I am St Catherine's new church warden! I've seen such a tradition of faithful church wardens since becoming a member of St Catherine's 5 years ago - it is a hard act to follow. I will very much need God's guidance in the role.

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lasagne, and chicken, ham and leek pie, along with bread pudding, lemon sponge cake, mincemeat and apple tart, fruit scone, mini cheesecake and Christmas cake for pudding.

Lynn, Maureen, Sonia and Steph have been helping Karen in the kitchen and the delivery team comprises Gill, Ella, Hazel, Jo, Rosemary, Shirley and Val P. We are very grateful to them for the time and enthusiasm they bring to the project and for helping to keep the café running economically.

Many of our clients live by themselves and say that having a hot, freshly-cooked meal delivered to their door makes a big difference to their day and their week.

Therefore, Covid rules permitting, we intend to continue deliveries after Christmas (from 8th January), at least until we open the café again.

We pray that day is not too far away, and that we might be able to continue a delivery service of some sort in parallel.

Richard Canning

Twenty members and friends were welcomed to a different Carols and Readings Evening this year by Moira and Gill.

Rita and Steph put together readings from the Annunciation to the Birth of Jesus in modern language as told by Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds and Wise Men, from their perspective.

The emotion and wonder came across by our readers, helped by the thoughtful and joyful carols. They had been selected by Roy and Joanne handled the technology.

Altogether a meaningful and enjoyable evening – thank you.

Gill closed with prayers and the blessing and Moira presented her with a lovely poinsettia for her support and our appreciation.

Sheila Bryant



Some thoughts for the year ahead...

It is what we do with our solitude that makes us fit for company. - *CS Lewis*

Friendship flourishes at the fountain of forgiveness. - *William A Ward*

There is nothing stronger than gentleness. – *Ralph W Sockman*

Love your neighbour, yet pull not down your hedge. - *George Herbert*

Our days are happier when we give people a bit of our heart rather than a piece of our mind. – *has been attributed to Ritu Ghatourney*

Speak your kind words soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late. - *Anon*

I know where I am. I've been lost here before. - *Anon*

We tolerate shapes in human beings that would horrify us if we saw them in a horse. - *W R Inge, a former Dean of St Paul's.*

Once we knew how widespread Coronavirus would be, I decided to volunteer to be a vaccine triallist. At first the trials wanted young people but this was extended to all ages up to 84.

I heard nothing for 6 months and then received two newsletters. Suddenly last month I was called for a medical examination and possible vaccine.

I went to a clinic on the other side of Reading where I read all the material that they provided and filled in lots of medical details. Luckily I do not take any medication and am healthy.

I was at the clinic for four and a half hours and saw different doctors and nurses who explained the vaccine and answered my questions. I was weighed, measured, listened to via a stethoscope and had a blood sample taken. I also had the swab test to ascertain if I had the virus – I didn't!

Finally I had the vaccine and was told to wait there for half an hour in case there were any side effects. I felt fine and was allowed to go. Half of the vaccines are placebos and half are Phase 3 of a vaccine. Next week I will return for the second jab and then will go back four times again for check ups.

It was a painless procedure but tiring as there were waits between the different procedures and I had no idea what would happen next.

Everyone I saw was kind, professional and informative and I am happy to have hopefully contributed to finding another successful vaccine.

A Vaccine Volunteer

Christmas Cards

This December we have, with the help of friends and members of St Catherine's church, delivered over 1,600 Christmas Cards to people in the Parish with Christmas greetings from St Catherine's. We're sorry we couldn't deliver them to everyone!

It's been a difficult year, and we wanted to bless as many people as we could, especially those who live on their own, or who won't receive a card this year.

My huge thanks to Stuart and Tony who helped design and produce the cards, and the delivery team who walked 1,000's of steps to deliver them.

Carols under the (virtual) Oak Tree

Inside the Christmas cards was a flyer which gave details of our Carols under the (Virtual) Old Oak Tree, hot on the heels of our actual Carols under the Old Oak Tree. Last year, a couple of hundred folks or so attended, followed by hot chocolate and mince pies – a real community event and something very special, great to catch up with friends and neighbours.

This year we are inviting folks to choose a carol and say why – so we can include the community in a different way. It won't be the same as singing in the cold – but it will be nice to be able to sing as loud as we like in the comfort of our homes – and celebrate the spirit of Christmas together - even if we can't see each other! Do join us – Sunday 20th December at 6.00 pm on our Facebook page.

Gill

Centre Manager

As many of you may know, I was appointed Centre Manager at St Catherine's in November, a new role along with Parish Administrator. When the job of Centre Manager was being considered I was not thinking it was for me. However, someone suggested that I might like to apply, so after some thought I did, was interviewed and got the job!

My role is mainly to develop the use of the hall and café area and continue to increase the already positive relationships between ourselves and all users who hire our space.

We want to share our facilities with the wider community and in doing so, be a blessing to everyone who uses this building, creating a vibrant community hub which people are keen to visit and use. As we look forward to next Spring and a return to perhaps "more normal" times, we hope to have more events,

exhibitions and concerts. Some of you may have ideas, so do please share them!

In these challenging times we are fortunate that some hall users are still allowed to meet and it has been interesting getting to know the hall users better. Our refurbished hall and kitchen are greatly appreciated and have been very favourably compared to other spaces they have hired in the past.

Of course, this is not a solo effort: as always we are working as part of a great team: with Eve Combes, our new Bookings Clerk, Jean Almond for Invoicing and Stuart Poore our Parish Administrator, as well as liaising with Gill and the Churchwardens.

So, as the New Year approaches we look forward with confidence: welcoming back our regular bookings and attracting some more new ones.

Sonia Ludford



Parish Administrator



My new role of Parish Administrator covers many of the things which you might expect an Administrator to do within a Parish!

This includes

- Being one of the first points of contact for enquires from the public or external organisations
- Dealing with mail - both physical and electronic
- Designing & printing of posters, flyers & tickets

- Updating the web site & social media feeds
- Keeping noticeboards & office tidy
- Assisting in preparation of service & course materials - such as service booklets or handouts.

There are many other tasks done by other hard-working members of our congregation - but if any of them fall ill, or need a break, then I need to ensure all the essential administrative tasks are still done.

Stuart Poore

Who's Who in the Parish



Vicar
Rev Gill Rowell
☎ 0118 942 7786
✉ rowellgill@gmail.com



Curate
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☎
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Churchwarden
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St Catherine's Hall bookings

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Cornwell Centre bookings

Tilehurst Parish Council ☎ 0118 941 8833 ✉ bookings@tilehurstpc.co.uk

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We welcome contributions of articles or letters for future issues from anyone living in, or connected with the parish. All contributions for the next (Spring) edition must be received by the editors by the 14th March.

Contributions may be sent to magazine@stcatherines-tilehurst.org.uk

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ST CATHERINE OF SIENA

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Churches continue to be alive and active, but our buildings had to close and look very different now they have begun to re-open.

Our online content pictured below continues.

Morning Prayer

With Gill, Phil,
Stuart or Tony
Monday - Friday
10.00 am

To follow and participate
in this online service down-
load

'At Home Morning Prayer'
from our website



Sunday Service - Sunday 10.00 am

Each week you'll see and hear
different people leading, preaching,
reading and leading prayers.

Our singers and musicians add
a variety of hymns and songs.

To watch the live-streams of these services on Facebook go to
www.facebook.com/st.catherines.tilehurst (you do not need an account to view - if
asked to login or join, you can click 'Not Now').

Once shown on Facebook, all our videos can be found again on our Web Site
www.stcatherines-tilehurst.org.uk