

# GOD IS NOT JUST FOR...



"Bring in the shepherd boy, the ox and ass, Bring in the stillness of an icy night, Bring in a birth, of hope and love and light. Bring the Christmas life into this house." (Wendy Cope)

I remember that in my 'gap year' when I was attached to a church in Southall, with a famous parish priest, I perhaps tried too hard to impress. I wanted the crib scene to be radically different from all its predecessors. It was a poor, multicultural, densely populated place so instead of a bed of straw in a cosy inn, I built a tall block of flats in red brick. I probably had the

obligatory star above, made up of silver-wrapped cardboard, in order to please any who might take offence from this break with tradition. But I may be imagining this!

So it was with interest that I read, very recently, of craftsmen on the streets of San Gregorio Armeno church in Naples who are well-known for adapting Nativity scenes to the times they are living in. Last year was the year of the masks, so the figurines of Mary, Joseph and the Magi were wearing them (like many of us still do). This year, apparently, they are showing which vaccinations they have had or proof if they have recently recovered from the virus...as it is a requirement for travel in Italy on most forms of public transport.

Well, it would be true to say that the first Magi were as successful with their tracking and tracing as AstraZeneca has been with its remarkable vaccination discovery and eureka moment today! But aren't all these 'gimmicks' of being contemporary or 'relevant' all the time, somewhat misplaced? I think not.

When people are quick to side-line Christian affiliation as just some kind of hobby or 'leisure activity', what we celebrate at Christmas every year is the mystery of the Incarnation: 'God coming down to earth to be with us'. It is good news for the world and our comfort and joy to know that God identifies with where we are – and this includes tidings of the hungry in Yemen, the victims of civil war in Ethiopia, the migrants clinging desperately to overcrowded dinghies. God understands the messiness and injustices of our world before we utter a word. God understands our tiredness at work, or at home and that sometimes new choices or new directions are needed. COP-26 was no gimmick but simply stating how things are and how they still could be. Such is the world and place in our hearts where God can and does enter in.

### Fr Nigel

Rector: The Revd Nigel Prior

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Photo of Nativity Scene on cover by Janice Poulson

## PLEDGES TO GO GREENER - 56 PLEDGE CARDS SO FAR!

Following the Global Day of Climate Action and the peaceful march in Woodbridge on Saturday 6 November (see photos below) we were encouraged at St Mary's Church to discuss possible actions with families and friends and each decide on three things we could pledge to do that would -

### REDUCE our impact on the world RESIST & REFUSE to buy or take more RE-USE \* RE-FILL \* REPAIR \* RECYCLE than we need

And we did! To date 56 individuals or households have written pledge cards stating our intentions to reduce our Carbon Footprint to prevent Global Warming and Sea Level Rise. Many will be walking, cycling and taking

public transport more to cut down on car or air miles. Some will change to electric cars, solar panels and ground source heat pumps – or simply turn the heating down and take shorter showers. Lots are increasing their recycling, and reusing and refilling plastic and foil containers. Food shopping for many is to be more local and more veggie, buying fewer items, produced more locally and with less waste. 'And some will only buy new clothes and books when absolutely necessary, using second-hand and charity shops. Others are switching their pension to a green plan; and talking to others including our MP about climate action.



Why not come and see the display in St Mary's Church and add your pledges to it.



"HERE & THERE"...until next YEAR!



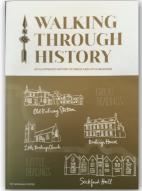
THE NAME OF THE ROSE In a very private ceremony, on All Souls' Day appropriately, a new rose "The Queen of Sweden" was kindly donated and planted in memory of The Rev'd Siw Carlsson. We hope the rose will grow and blossom in thankfulness for her ministry alongside us at St Mary's and, the Seckford Chapel.

FAREVVELLS On the Feast of 'Christ the King' we said our thank you to Andrew Garfath-Cox as our 'monthly' Organist over so many years at our Parish Eucharist. He will continue to be Secretary of the Suffolk Organists' Association so our prayers and best wishes to Andrew and Jane for a little more 'quality time' together!

Also, at the end of November – we said farewell to Marek Wysocki - our gardener who cared for our Churchyard so lovingly and expertly over the last six years. We are so sorry to see you go!

WELCOME Thank you to all who responded to the advertisement for Official Prison Visitors at HMP Warren Hill. Five Woodbridge people (with others from elsewhere) met the Managing Chaplain and OPV Coordinator. The prison chaplains are delighted to be able to offer visitors to more unsupported prisoners.

'A WALK THROUGH HISTORY' That's the title of the new 'tome' of the History of 'both' Bealings by Churchwarden, Norman Porter, which is so comprehensively (and beautifully) illustrated. It is compiled in the form of five circular walks (maps tucked in the back cover) which can be taken in person or guided by one's imagination from a comfy sofa! It is on sale for £20 from our Church Bookshop and will make a lovely Christmas/Epiphany present. But, be warned, is too big and heavy as a stocking filler!



MORE TOYS! Another thank you for all your kind donations on the second Sunday in Advent (in honour of St Nicholas) which went to two brilliant Suffolk charities.....Suffolk Family Carers and Suffolk Refugee Support.

MORE NOISE! Our heartfelt thanks to our choir member and teacher, Simon Clover, for stepping into the breach to play for and lead our Choir over the Advent and Christmas period until a new Musical Director is found. Please join us on the Feast of the Epiphany (with a special choir party afterwards) to pray for and mark new beginnings. OUR BISHOPS' CHRISTMAS CARD features a photograph from our very own Epiphany Chapel 'tapestry' painting from a former Parish in Lewisham. We are honoured!

THE SUFFOLK FESTIVAL Bishop Martin has invited a few 'movers and shakers' (along with Fr Nigel) to join a planning group for next year's huge celebration of the Queen's 'Platinum' celebrations. The emphasis will be on longer term and sustainable community projects, as well as some local parties! Please let us know your thoughts for the wider County's spiritual, social, and care needs for the year ahead.

SUFFOLK FAIRTRADE TOWNS held their Fairtrade Fortnight in October and the highlight was a live link up via Zoom to Patrick Kaberia, a tea farmer in Kenya. Twelve Suffolk schools took part, including St Mary's CE Primary School in Woodbridge. Two pupils from the school, Lawrie and Nancy Issett, also won SAFT's Fairtrade writing competition. Mike Gidney, CEO of Fairtrade will visit the school to present the prize.

NATIONAL FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT begins on 21 February and the Suffolk Association of Fairtrade Towns (SAFT) are developing an idea with Suffolk Fairtrade Towns to work together to run a county wide recruitment campaign to encourage more supporters and volunteers for Fairtrade.

ST MARY'S CE PRIMARY are seeking some new school governors to forge closer links between school and Church. If you are interested, and have some relevant skills and experience to offer, please have a word with

Veronica Howe or Fr Nigel. It is always interesting and rewarding work to nurture our children's learning and support their teachers.

OUR FIRST 'UNITED BENEFICE' CHRISTMAS MARKET A big thank you to all our stallholders and everyone who supported us in this great joint fundraiser. The proceeds will be split between both our Churches at the end of a testing financial year!





### REMEMBERING JAMES HARPER



Woodbridge folk and others from further afield came together in St Mary's on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November for a special Memorial Service to remember Dr James Harper who died of covid in April 2020.

A Deputy Head at Woodbridge School, Scout Leader, St Mary's Elder and quiet supporter of numerous initiatives, James was a friend of both church and town, a committed Christian who offered help, support and friendship wherever he could, noted Canon Penny Brown and Tony Waller in their eulogies.

Speaking at a well attended service, they told the story of a man who brought practical efficiency, enthusiasm, intelligence and humour to all his activities. James was born in Bromley, Kent in September 1933 going on to attend Bromley Grammar School, do his National Service in the RAF and have a distinguished career in the civil service before becoming a teacher in 1968. After being awarded a PhD in early French Language and Philosophy at Birkbeck College, part of the University of London, he joined Woodbridge School to teach French and Latin.

"He was much appreciated as a teacher, at least by all who wanted to learn," noted Tony Waller, a former colleague. "A scholar who loved his subject, methodical, meticulous, he set and expected high standards. His A-level students in particular held him in high regard."

Beyond the classroom James devoted himself to the church, to the scouts, to the freemasons and, in later life became a part-time Chief Librarian at the RAF club where said Canon Penny Brown in her eulogy "he helped create and administer a terrific upgrading of the library and his service was much appreciated and celebrated."

"Polite and courteous, James was a good conversationalist, smartly turned out with a good sense of humour," said Penny. "As such an engaging single man .....he was much sought after to attend dinner parties!"

According to Tony Waller "James was a model of loyalty and discretion. Apart from teaching, he had a strong commitment to the School's Scout Troop and a passion for photography." Many of us who have attended services and events in St Mary's over the years remember James with his camera!

Like Penny and Tony, we also remember him as a good friend who was always there with a word of advice and a humorous quip. "He loved God and neighbour and his faith in the promises of Christ was strong," said Penny.

James was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2018, moving from his home in Woodbridge to Bucklesham Grange the following year. After contracting covid he died just after midnight on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April with a carer on either side of him holding his hands to ensure he was never alone.

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# THE LOST CHORD

For the last forty-five years there has been just one Bob. He has been the constant, defining feature of worship at St Mary's for as long as many of us can remember. It is impossible to overstate the debt of gratitude we all owe him, not just for his music but for the mark his enduring presence over the years has left in the Christian life of this community.

I'm sure Bob would wish me to mention John Rowlands, then Rector of St Mary's, later Dean of Gibraltar, whose simple, human faith in him opened this chapter in our history. It was not for want of other candidates that those three weeks became nearly half a century. John knew from the beginning he had found the man he wanted and quietly, behind the scenes – before Bob himself

even knew – made all the necessary provisions for him to take up the post permanently. I had a strong sense of John's gentle presence with us when we sang to the glory of Christ the King at Bob's last choral evensong.



I could easily add to the many fond tales told this week of Bob's humility, service, dedication, friendship, pastoral care, fiery temper and sometimes evil sense of humour, but these are not the things we are losing with his retirement. Nor, I hope, will we stop singing his favourite anthems and mass settings. No, what passes from us this week is something much more subtle – something that many, deep in prayer, might barely have noticed.

While servers are serving or candles being lit, while the sacraments are being prepared, the altar dressed or incense offered – even just during unforeseen delays in the service – it falls upon the organist to fill the silence with an unobtrusive, unscripted, divine soundscape, creating a holy space for prayer. Despite his protestations to the contrary, Bob does this to perfection. The chords and progressions he uses, the organ stops, the suspensions and resolutions, flow not from virtuosity or technical training but vigilance, sensitivity and devotion. Over the years, these sounds have almost come to define my sense of the holy – more than any of the great works of Bach or Stanford. The moment I hear them I am transported to a timeless place of worship, unchanged since my youth, and reminded that however far I wander, geographically or theologically, this is my spiritual home. Bob, thank you for the music.

### BOB PEGNALL, ORGANIST AND CHOIRMASTER 1976 - 2021

The last forty five years have been the longest three weeks in Bob Pegnall's life...

Originally asked to stand in for just three weeks whilst a new Organist and Choirmaster was sought, forty five years later, Bob found himself still in the post, but, on Sunday 21 November 2021, Bob retired, leading the St Mary's Choir in a final evensong which included some of his favourite repertoire.

Asked how he wanted to mark his retirement, Bob suggested that, on the Sunday on which we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, the services should be to the glory of God, and not about him. And that is typical of Bob, as those of us who know him and who have had the privilege to work with him will testify. He is a very knowledgeable musician, constantly deprecating of his own abilities, ministering above and beyond the role to which he has been so fully committed.

He has not only led and inspired so many with his music making, but he has taken on the pastoral love and care of his choristers, sharing in their joys and sorrows, visiting, phoning, and giving practical help in countless ways. It is hardly surprising that his service to the church and community of Woodbridge resulted in him being awarded the British Empire Medal – though he wouldn't thank me for mentioning that.

His planning and organisation have been meticulous. He wouldn't rest until every last piece of music, every last choir pencil had been accounted for and safely stored away for next time. No sooner had we settled down after one service, than an email from Bob would arrive giving detailed arrangements for the next, the font size, and sometimes even the colour of the font clearly indicating the urgency of each missive.

With two highly successful Choral Open Days, the St Mary's Choir opened its rehearsal room to the wider community, welcoming over a hundred singers on each occasion and lifting the roof of the church in exultant paeans of praise, and Bob was behind it all, not seeking the limelight, but ensuring that everything was exactly as it should be.

He has left a lasting legacy of dedicated love, service and ministry, and, although he will always be a much loved member of the St Mary's family, and still with us in the congregation, he will be much missed in the musical life of our church family and community.

At the end of each choir practice, we pray this prayer:

"Bless O Lord, us Thy servants who minister in Thy Temple.

Grant that what we sing with our lips, we may believe in our hearts;

And what we believe in our hearts, we may show forth in our lives." That prayer has been lived out to the full in Bob's Christian example in his ministry of music and song. Through his inspired musical leadership he has helped us all, choir and congregation alike, to lift our hearts and minds towards the things that are above, to our Heavenly Father; and that is exactly where Bob would want us to be looking.

Andrew Clarke

### FROM ST MARY'S PARISH REGISTER 2021

IN MEMORY • Allen Vince 10 December 2020 • John McNally 25 December 2020 • Daisy Hodgkinson 4 January 2021 • Hazel Durrant 13 January 2021 • Clive Mascord 13 January 2021 • Ingeborg Hester 22 January 2021 • Marjorie Deacon 10 February 2021 • Milly Rawlins 18 February 2021 • Stanley Ralph 25 February 2021 • Lady Margaret Glasse 26 February 2021 • Joyce Malster 9 March 2021 • Doreen Loran 13 April 2021 • Jeanette Potter 13 April 2021 • Thomas Moye 23 April 2021 • Eileen Margaret Baker 13 May 2021 • Stuart Carr 22 May 2021 • Martin Jackson 29 May 2021 • Neville Watkins 1 June 2021 • Lawrence Wiseman 2 Jul 2021 • John Pritchatt 4 July 2021 • Brigadier Denzil Cowdry 9 August 2021 • Raymond Meadows 9 August 2021 • Edna King 19 August 2021 • Richard Whitlock 15 September 2021 • Caroline Judith Shelmerdine 27 September 2021 • Marie Matthews 7 October 2021 • Dennis Hurlock 8 October 2021 • Keith Beckley 29 October 2021 • Joan Hutchison 14 November 2021 • John Midwinter 13 November 2021 • Joan Hutchison 14 November 2021 •

### MARRIAGES

Stephen Skidmore and Harriet Barnes – 29 May 2021 Simon Carter and Helen Rothwell – 3 July 2021 Graham Lazenby and Sophie O'Brien – 14 August 2021 William Campbell and Polly Robinson – 11 September 2021 David Barley and Katie Leach - 18 September 2021 MARRIAGE BLESSING

Anthony Carroll and Neva Craven – 7 August 2021

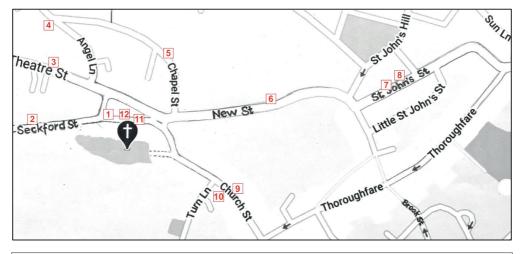
# At the heart of Christmas

# FAMILY NATIVITY TRAIL IN THE CENTRE OF WOODBRIDGE

from Friday 24 December - Epiphany, Thursday 6 January

You can download the map with the scenes marked on from our website.Follow the story through twelve scenes of wellknown **Christmas Carols**, starting at the first scene on Market Hill. Look out for the **At the heart of Christmas** logo and numbers in house windows. Our website is www.stmaryswoodbridge.org







**Gallery East** is a contemporary art gallery showing work by East Anglian artists as well as artists from around the UK.

Our current exhibition **FLUX**, a solo exhibition by Norfolk artist Kate Giles, will be on until Friday 24 December. We will then be closed until Saturday 29 January 2022, but there will be an exhibition of work on the walls by some of our best selling artists during January and appointments can be made to see and buy work. We will be online as usual www.galleryeast.co.uk.

Thanks to everyone who has supported us over the last year; these have been challenging times for us all and we feel fortunate to have come through with a spring in our step.

We wish you all very happy festive times and a Happy New Year. Susie and Cathy

Gallery East 24 Church Street, Woodbridge IP12 1DH



December Sun 12th ADVENT 3 10am Sung United Benefice Eucharist
6.30pm Compline Tues 14th 10.30am Morning Prayer at the Seckford Chapel
Thur 16th 10am Said Eucharist
Fri 17th 9.45am St Mary's CE Primary Christmas service in Church
7.30pm Lessons & Carols by Candlelight at Gt Bealings with St Mary's Choir <b>Sun 19th</b> ADVENT 4: 10am Sung United Benefice Eucharist 6.30pm 9 Lessons & Carols by Candlelight
Mon 20th 6.30pm Carol singing "around and about" starting from St Mary's
Tues 21st 10.30am Said Eucharist at the Seckford Chapel Wed 22nd 6.40pm Open Air Carol Service in Whisstocks Place with our Church Choir
8pm Son et Lumiere at Tide Mill
Thur 23rd 10am Said Eucharist – followed by Coffee & 'Making of Christingles'
CHRISTMAS EVE 5pm United Crib Service and Christingle at Woodbridge 8pm First Family Communion at Great Bealings 1 1pm Mass for Midnight at Woodbridge
CHRISTMAS DAY 8am BCP Christmas Communion 10am United Benefice Festival Eucharist
BOXING DAY 11am Said Benefice Eucharist on the Feast of St Stephen
Thur 30th 10am Said Eucharist
Fri 31st Opm Short 'United Service' & Prayers for the New Year
2022 highlights
January Sun 2nd 9.30am New Year Family Communion at Great Bealings 11am New Year Parish Eucharist at Woodbridge
Thur 6th FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY 10am Said Eucharist (joined by Key Stage 2 Children from St Mary's CE Primary) 7.30pm Benefice Sung Eucharist & Carols (followed by Choir party)
Tues 18th - Tues 25th Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
Tues 18th 10.30am Said Eucharist in the Seckford Chapel
5.30pm PCC Eucharist and Meeting
Thur 27nd 10.30am -12 Noon 'Open Doors' Coffee Morning in SMH
February Sun 6th FEAST OF CANDLEMAS & PROCESSION OF LIGHT
Thur 24th 10.30am -12 Noon 'Fairtrade' Coffee Morning in SMH
March Wed 2nd ASH WEDNESDAY beginning of lent

- 10am Said Eucharist with 'Ashing' at Great Bealings 7.30pm Sung Eucharist with 'Ashing' at Woodbridge
- Wed 23rd National 'Day of Reflection' (as last year)
- Sun 27nd Mothering Sunday (& Early Evening Prom Concert)
- Thur 31st 10.30am -12 Noon 'Open Doors' Coffee Morning in SMH

BENEFICE OFFICE 01394 388820 parish.office@stmaryswoodbridge.org www.stmaryswoodbridge.org