



COWLEY ST JOHN  
TWO CHURCHES  
ONE COMMUNITY

# COWLEY ST JOHN PARISH MAGAZINE

£1

*Christmas Edition*



# PARISH DIRECTORY

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**Websites for Cowley St. John Parish:**

- **Main website:** [www.cowleystjohn.co.uk](http://www.cowleystjohn.co.uk)
- **Facebook Group:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/cowleystjohn.parish/>
- **St. Mary & St. John Churchyard Project:**  
[www.ssmjchurchyard.org.uk](http://www.ssmjchurchyard.org.uk)
- **‘Home’, an experimental Christian Community in Oxford:**  
[www.home-online.org](http://www.home-online.org)
- **Magazine issues:** <http://cowleystjohn.co.uk/parish-magazine>

**Church Street Addresses:**

- **St. Mary & St. John Church**, Cowley Road, OX4 1UR
- **St Alban the Martyr**, Charles Street, Oxford, OX4 3AH
- **Bartlemas Chapel**, Cowley Road, Oxford, (turn down the lane next to the vicarage at 271 Cowley Road, OX4 2AJ, and you will reach the chapel at the heart of Bartlemas Village).

**Parish Postal Address (Vicarage):** 271 Cowley Road, OX4 2AJ

## REGULAR SERVICES

### Sunday:

- **8:00am** Said Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John
- **9:15am** Sung Eucharist at St. Alban
- **10:45am** Sung Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John
- **6:15pm** Said Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John

### Monday to Friday:

- **8:00am** Morning Prayer at St. Mary & St. John
- **5:00pm** Evening Prayer at St. Mary & St. John

### Wednesday:

- **12:00pm** Silence and Stillness at Bethlehem Chapel, All Saints Convent\* (During warmer months at Bartlemas Chapel).

### Thursday:

- **10:30am** Said Eucharist at St. Mary & St. John

### Friday:

- **9:00am** Said Eucharist at St. Alban

\* All Saints 15A Magdalen Road Oxford OX4 4EN (<http://allsaintssistersofthepoor.co.uk/>)

# **SPECIAL CHRISTMAS SERVICES AND EVENTS**

## **Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December: First Sunday of Advent**

- **Carols by Candlelight: An Advent Sequence, with Hippocras and sweetmeats.**  
*5:15 pm Bartlemas Chapel*

## **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December**

- **Charles Street Carols, with mulled wine and minced pies**  
*6:30 pm St. Alban*

## **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December**

- **St. Mary & St. John Primary School Nativity Play**  
*10 am St. Mary & St. John*

## **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December**

- **Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols by Candlelight, with mulled wine and minced pies.**  
*5:30 pm St. Mary & St. John*

## **Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December**

- **East Oxford Community Choir Concert including Handel's *Dixit Dominus***  
*7:30 pm St. Mary & St. John*

**Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December: Winter Solstice**

- **Candlelit Labyrinth Walk**  
*6:30 pm St. Mary & St. John*

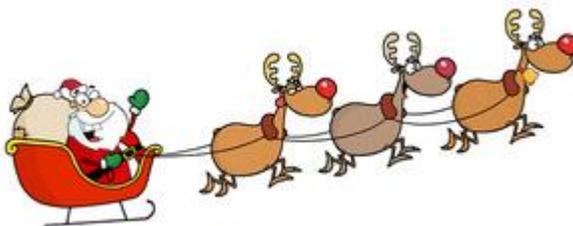
**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December: Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve**

- **Eucharists**  
*8:00 am (said) St. Mary & St. John (NB No 10:45am Eucharist)*  
*9:30 am (sung): St. Alban*
- **Crib Service**  
*4:00 pm St. Mary & St. John*
- **Midnight Mass**  
*11:30 pm St. Mary & St. John*

**Monday 25<sup>th</sup> December: Christmas Day**

- **Sung Eucharists**  
*9:30 am St. Alban*  
*10:45 am St. Mary & St. John*

*For details of these and all services see the [cowleystjohn.co.uk](http://cowleystjohn.co.uk)*



*If for any reason you are unable to get to church but would like a visit from one of our clergy, please contact us. We could bring Holy Communion or simply come and pray with you.*

## **SOME REGULAR EVENTS IN RICHARD BENSON HALL (Next to St. Mary & St. John Church)**

### **Alice's Mad Hatter Tea Parties:**

Held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month, 3-4:30pm, a friendly place where people who have experienced mental health issues in their lives can relax and just enjoy a cuppa, cake and a chat.

### **A Place to Be:**

Held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month, 12-2pm, a friendly monthly lunch for people with dementia, their family, carers and friends.

### **Marhaba:**

Held on the last Tuesday of the month, 7pm, a collaboration between various Oxford groups that sets up a platform for sharing music between communities.

*To find out about other events, see the notices section in this magazine, visit the Parish website [www.cowleystjohn.co.uk](http://www.cowleystjohn.co.uk) or visit the church.*

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# REMEMBERING HERBERT MILLER

1879 - 1917



*On Remembrance Sunday, relatives of Herbert Miller, a parishioner of St. Mary & St. John Church who perished in the first world war and is buried in the churchyard, came to pay their respects on this the centenary of his death.*

*Eighteen family descendants, including three of his grandchildren, five of his great grandchildren and four great great grandchildren attended. Here is a biography written by family members:*

Herbert was born in the spring of 1879 in the town of Halstead in Essex. He

was the sixth child of Thomas and Emily Miller. His father worked as a

local gardener and his mother supported the family as a silk weaver. In 1891, although only 12 years old, Herbert had by now left school and was employed as a fish hawker, selling produce door to door.

A decade later and Herbert's life had moved some 70 miles west to Buckinghamshire. No longer selling fish, he had secured employment in the print trade. Herbert was now aged 22 and the daughter of a local shoemaker caught his eye and in June 1901, at Chesham Parish Church, he married Mary Ann Bone. Their first child, Sidney Charles, was born the following year soon to be followed by a daughter, Elva Emily.

Not ones to stay still, the young family then moved to Oxford where their third child, Winifred Doris, was born in 1909. Around this time Herbert was working in the print trade as a machine minder at the Oxford University Press. He and his family were living close to the city centre in the parish of St Ebbe's. Aged 32, the family had moved to 24 Essex Street, just off the Cowley Road, Oxford. Here, Herbert became a father for the fourth and final time, completing his family with a second son, Herbert James Miller.

Storm clouds were however gathering over Europe and the Great War was to start in 1914. Herbert, along with many thousands of men of his generation signed up to fight. He enlisted on 15 November 1915 to the 4th Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, serving in the 2<sup>nd</sup> /4<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Following initial training Herbert landed in France in May 1916, deployed to the Western front trenches as a sniper. During this time he was awarded the 'Mons Star', for military Service in France and Belgium.

Early in 1917 Herbert was involved in a drill training exercise in France resulting in a broken leg. Unable to fight he was bought back across the channel and then on by train to recover at a military hospital in Whalley, near Blackburn in Lancashire. In Herbert's final letter from hospital to his wife, dated 9 February 1917, he wrote of his injury "if all

goes well I shall be none the worse for it". Despite Herbert's confidence in making a recovery, he sadly died of his injuries on February 18th 1917, aged 37.

Herbert was brought back to Oxford to be buried in the churchyard of St. Mary and St. John Church, Cowley Road. His widow and their four children subsequently moved from Oxford to Hertfordshire, where they were closer to their family.

Whilst their daughter Elva, sadly died at the age of 21, the other three children Sid, Winnie and Herbert all married and had children of their own.

\*

## !!!CONGRATULATIONS!!!

Congratulations to Daphne, Janet and Phil who took part in Ride and Stride in September this year. The Ride and Stride for Churches is an annual sponsored event which takes place on the second Saturday in September. People are invited to cycle, walk or horse ride to as many



churches, chapels and meeting houses in Oxfordshire as they wish on any route of their choice, to raise money for the upkeep of churches. Sixty-four churches took part this year and Phil, Janet and Daphne raised £600. £300 of this money is going to our parish.

Congratulations to Daphne, Janet and Phil!!!

# LOVE COVENTRY

**By Gaby Hock**

I have never been to Coventry. Who would want to go there with eyes fixated on glorious Oxford and London? I always assumed it to be dull there, not to mention the nasal accent of the Brummis! However, my snobby attitude was soon to be challenged, thanks to LOVE COVENTRY, a small charity shop-come-warehouse hidden away in the heart of the city: 'all proceeds will go to refugees', it said on its website.

What led me there was my Germanic post war addiction for a cheap bargain, learnt from my mother. I just had won an eBay auction for a Persian rug at a price of £62 now waiting to be collected. Little did I know what else lay in store, and I don't mean the mahogany nestle table which was thrown into the bargain for an extra fiver!

LOVE COVENTRY welcomed us in bold letters written on the front of a greyish building. A long and shabby window was lined with a whole bunch of union jacks messily arranged in a failed attempt to look decorative. Somewhat surprised, my husband and I heard beautiful Middle-Eastern music booming out from its interior, before we were greeted by Mehdi, the Iranian shopkeeper. So typical for his countrymen, he met us with a warm and courteous greeting, and soon after our VW boot was loaded with wonderful merchandise. Since we had nothing else planned for the day we decided to drive to the city centre and its landmark cathedral - to have a look.

As we drove down the ring road, over bridges, roundabouts and flyovers, I kept marvelling at the buildings and was struck by the architectural juxtaposition of small, red bricked Victorian houses that pulled on the nostalgic strings of an idealised much cosier past, and then the cheap and ugly tower blocks built in the 60's. Noticing them made my heart sink as I was reminded of the same architecture that had spoilt

the character of so many German cities after WW2. And here it was again, living testimony of that hideous war. With a wave of anger and sadness I said to my husband: “You know who we have to thank this for?” I was thinking of the unmentionable, while pointing my finger at the soulless part of the city, only to be reminded by him that every city in England: London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow etc. was bombed by the Germans. Did I need this reminder? I felt my body tense up and there was a noticeable drop in the emotional temperature at this point in the conversation. In hindsight I realise what a highly emotive subject this still is, for both Brits and Germans. The jolly shopping mood of the morning took on a different flavour.

When we arrived at the cathedral, my British husband decided to first visit the modern, reconstructed part of the cathedral to the right, while I felt drawn to the ruins on the left.

The weather was unusually warm, bright and sunny for a late October day and as soon as I entered the cathedral grounds I felt embraced by a warm and intimate glow coming off the red sand stone. What impressed me was the sheer size of the dramatic bombed out building with its architecture of high pillars, walls and glassless windows, towering above and against a crisp blue autumn sky. I felt a distinct sense of awe before I was pulled towards a large wooden cross beneath another bombed out window. Behind it was an inscription in golden letters: ‘*Father Forgive*’, and slowly but surely it began to dawn on me what this monument was all about. My heart began to crack open as I kept reading:

***A Prayer of forgiveness and reconciliation.***

*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class, Father, forgive.*

*The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own,  
Father, forgive.*

*The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth,  
Father, forgive.*

*Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,  
Father, forgive.*

*Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee,  
Father, forgive.*

*The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children,  
Father, forgive.*

*The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God,  
Father, forgive.*

*Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

\*

With tears in my eyes I walked on, by-passing the restored part of the cathedral to the right, looming large, ultra-modern, and to me, in cold contrast to the warm and softer looking ruins. A middle-aged man of small stature played an accordion, adding to the atmosphere by creating a dreamlike mood with nostalgic songs from the fifties and sixties. People old and young sat quietly on benches, broken stones and walls. Right above the entrance to what must have been the original cathedral tower, which had remained untouched by the fire bombs, it said:

*'The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former saith the lord of hosts and in this place will I give peace.'*

I kept walking without any plan, eventually being pulled towards an intact looking church: Holy Trinity towards the north of the cathedral grounds. It edged towards a large square with two or three fairground carousels including an old fashioned ferris wheel with a few people being quickly spun through the air amongst squeaky sounds of fun and laughter. It was half-term.

At the door of Holy Trinity it said: *"Come in. You will be met by a warm welcome."* And so it was. Holy Trinity was flooded in warm welcoming light interspersed by different shades of pale pinks, blues, reds and biblical figures on its stained glass windows that imbued the whole interior with an indescribable ambience of ancient mystery.

As I walked up towards the high altar, an unimposing woman in her late fifties and with a shoulder bag searched my face and asked whether there was anything I wanted to know. It soon transpired she was the church guide and so I ended up listening to a whole range of historical facts that began with the origins of this 1000-year-old church built by Benedictine monks. She also told me about the famous story of the gutsy Lady Godiva. Later on, I saw a huge painting of her, naked, with long red hair covering her breasts and pubic area as she rode on a white stallion through a medieval Coventry. With Schadenfreude I thought to myself: this was one way to dare a wealthy but mean husband to be kind to the poor. Had she been on Facebook I would have clicked like with a thumbs up.

But not wanting to lose my earlier mood of reverence and awe, I cast a last glance onto the altar before leaving, while saying to myself: I must come here one day on a pilgrimage, when I instantly heard an inner voice reply: *"You ARE on a pilgrimage. This is it."*

With a sense of completion, I left Holy Trinity to meet my husband in the Herbert Café, who reminded me with what I would call the crowning glory of my already profound LOVE COVENTRY experience:

Reminiscing on the horrifying bombing of Dresden in the final months of WW2, I remembered that in 1994 the reconstruction of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Frauenkirche (church of Our Lady) took place. This was a powerful symbol of a collective rebirth for Germany. What I didn't know was the fact that it was the then Bishop of Coventry who was chosen to speak at the re-inauguration of this church in Dresden.

Here are his words:

*'The destruction of the Frauenkirche (church of horror) was part of the planned and horrible devastation of life and culture, a part of the madness of a world war. It makes no sense to look for the guilty today. We and our families were all involved in this madness and also its victims.'*

The bishop described the Frauenkirche as a reminder of the collective responsibility for the atrocities during the war, but more importantly its symbol of Germany's healing and the collective promise of peace.

\*

## A CONVERSATION WITH GRAEME

Fr Graeme Napier is one of Cowley St. John's Associate Priests. Due to post-graduate work at Nashotah House, Wisconsin, followed by archival research at The General Theological Seminary, New York, his presence in the parish has been punctuated by stays abroad, but he is now back in Oxford on a more permanent basis. I caught up with him over a coffee one November morning, to find out a little more about his life and his faith.

Fr Graeme was brought up Presbyterian in Ireland, but when he was recruited into an Anglican choir, he immediately took to the Anglican liturgy, the music and the intelligent preaching. Studying at Magdalen College, Oxford, he attended the services in the chapel there, where there was also no lack of such qualities. After years of discernment, he trained for ordained ministry at St. Stephen's House in Oxford. He was ordained and served his curacy in Inverness in the Highlands of Scotland. Fr Graeme was in fact the very first English-trained ordinand to be allowed to serve a curacy in Scotland. Before this time, the two churches were separate in this sense.

After his curacy, Fr Graeme ended up as Assistant Priest in Christ Church St. Laurence in Sydney, Australia. Partly thanks to the influence of evangelists Billy Graham and Peter Jensen, Sydney Anglicanism is hard line and deeply conservative. Christ Church St. Laurence was however rather like Cowley St. John: a high Anglican Church with a liberal and inclusive ethos. Historically, relations between the diocese and this remarkable Anglo-Catholic oasis were somewhat icy, but one of Fr Graeme's great achievements whilst serving there was to get the then sitting bishop, Robert Forsyth, to come to a service. This was the first visit by a bishop to the church in many, many decades! Fr Graeme also rekindled in this church an ancient tradition known as 'beating the bounds'. This involves the whole parish walking the boundary of their parish, and, crucially, meeting

and sharing hospitality with other parishes, and meeting more of the local community. Perhaps Cowley St. John should do one!

After a walkabout around Australia, including serving on an 18<sup>th</sup> century sailing ship (you'll have to ask him about that one), Fr Graeme returned to the UK and to Westminster Abbey, where he served as Minor Canon (where he was the neighbour of one of our other Associate Priests, the Reverend Canon Robert Wright).

Fr Graeme has several strands to his research work, but one of them is the Oxford Movement. I always thought that the Oxford Movement was conjured by characters such as John Henry Newman and Edward Bouverie Pusey, but talking to Fr Graeme I realised that the reality is somewhat more complex. After the American Revolution in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, which saw Britain split from its American colonies, the Anglican Church in America was cut adrift from its mother church in England. This was a devastating blow. Not only was spiritual leadership gone, but also financial support from England. It was in this post-revolutionary desperation that American theologians began to look not to England, but to the early church and the apostolic succession for their identity. The problem was they had no bishops. Samuel Seabury went to England to be consecrated bishop, but the problem was that as a post-revolutionary American, he couldn't swear allegiance to the King, a necessary prerequisite. In the end it was the Scottish Episcopal Church which consecrated him and allowed him to give episcopal succession to American Anglicanism. Following this, it was cross-fertilisation between American churchmen and those in Oxford which in part gave rise to the Oxford Movement. So, Cowley St. John parish owes its presence to the American Revolution! Hopefully Graeme will write an article for the magazine, and explain this better than me!

When I posed the question to Fr Graeme, whose graduate work at the University was in philosophy of science: 'what is your vision for the future of the church', he used the word 're-enchantment'.

Positivism, a philosophical movement in the twentieth century, only recognizes things which can be measured scientifically. More and more these days, philosophers and other thinkers are recognizing that things such as ‘beauty’ and ‘hope’ and ‘faith’ are as real as things which can be known scientifically; and Fr Graeme is passionate about our regaining our grasp on that part of reality.

Many thanks to Fr Graeme for sharing!



*Fr Graeme (middle) at the annual summer Garden Party of The General Theological Seminary, New York.*

\*

# A FUNNY THING HAPPENED TO ME IN CHURCH

**By Eileen and Len Clarke**

This month I received a lovely postcard from Eileen and Len Clarke. Len used to be churchwarden in St. Mary & St. John Church. The postcard reads:

*Dear Editor,*

*We much enjoyed the last magazine – especially the memories of the lovely Bob Morris. Keep ‘em coming to us old codgers in Torquay.*

*I enclose a bit of ephemera in case you are short of copy for the Christmas edition, and think it worth its inclusion (if not, blame that Eileen Mann, who encouraged me to pen another “funny thing happened in Church!”)*

*Much love to all at M & J,*

*Eileen and Len Clarke*

## **A Funny Thing Happened to me in Church**

There is ‘funny ha ha’ and there is ‘funny peculiar’; I leave to you, dear reader, to judge which of the two applies to the following.

The place is Eversley Church in Hampshire, known as *the Water Babies Church* because Charles Kingsley was Rector there for many years. The time is close to midnight on Christmas Eve 1962. We are ushered into a darkened interior, packed with the Midnight Mass congregation and conducted to the only seats available, in a dimly lit pew at the very rear of the Nave.

So far so good, but then things go pear-shaped. The kneeler is one of those that runs the length of the pew – only it doesn't, does it? No, the kneeler runs out just short of the end where I am sitting. So, when we all kneel, I am sent sprawling into the aisle, along with my hymn book and Service Sheet, to my consternation and the evident alarm of the Sidesmen, who conclude that I am the worse for drink!

Looking back, I have some sympathy for the Sidesmen. It was Christmas, the season to be jolly; it was dark and they were not to know that I was a Sunday School teacher; Oh, and I *had* collapsed in a heap into the aisle when attempting the simple act of kneeling for prayer.

At the time I didn't see the funny side of them treating me for the whole of the rest of the Service as a hopeless inebriate. Mind you, the rest of the family thought it hilarious that I was carefully shepherded throughout the rest of the proceedings; escorted gingerly to the Communion Rail, and 'seen off the premises' when the final Blessing had been given. My attempts throughout the Service to bestow on the Sidesmen a reassuring smile made about as much impression as Hitler's repeated assertions that he 'had no territorial ambitions'. To them, I was not just stoned but *smiling* – clearly an *unashamed* inebriate!

The moral of this story is not that Sidespersons should not rush to judgement. Nor yet, that families leaving church uncontrollably giggling and weak at the knees with laughter are irredeemably irreverent. It is, simply, as I said at the beginning: funny things happen on the way to, on the way from, and in church. And, what better place to record them than a Parish Magazine, (But, please don't tell them at Eversley – they might not think it funny!)

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# ECCLESIASTICAL ETHEL

## Agony Aunt and General Fount of Wisdom

*Dear Ethel,*

I want to find more time for prayer in my life, but I have such a busy job. I work the usual nine-to-five, but even when I get home I'm thinking about work, and getting bugged by it. I try praying before I go to sleep, to connect with God and to try and relax (hopefully), but I usually end up worrying about work instead. Even at church on Sunday, when I should be praying and giving my time to God, I end up worrying about work or shopping or all the things I have to do.

How can I make space for God? Any advice would be gratefully received.

\*

*Ethel Writes:*

Goodness gracious, you poor dear! Thank-you so much for writing in with this issue. Your problem would appear to be a lack of work-life balance. We work to live, we don't live to work. The amount of time you are at work is not so much the problem. It's the energy the work is taking from you. Here are several suggestions of things you could think about to get yourself back in balance:

- 1) Give time and space to a hobby. Exercise is a great way of refreshing the mind and body and burning off those worries, so why not take up a sport or go jogging (assuming you are able). Remember, you don't have to be sitting quietly to pray. You can

- pray when you're jogging, or stretching, or on a bicycle. If you do the more traditional prayers you can even get a rhythm going.
- 2) Volunteer in the evenings / weekends. There are so many worthy causes in Oxford, and so many ways you can spend your free time well. If you make time for volunteering, you may find just the act of getting out of the house and meeting new people helps you forget about work. Remember also that prayers don't have to be words. Doing things in the name of God is a form of praying.
  - 3) Think about your career. Is this the career you want? Does it fulfil you? Often, we don't get so much choice about what we do, because the bills have to be paid, but if a job is making you miserable, is it worth it? Can you find an alternative position which you would find less stressful?
  - 4) Go on a retreat. There are so many wonderful retreats around Oxford. Take a few days off, leave your computer contraptions behind with their b-mails and g-mails, their ace books and their interminable bleeping, and spend some time in quiet and in peace. Your worries will subside, and you'll have time and space for God.

Remember above all that God understands. He is infinitely wise and infinitely loving and so knows how you struggle. Indeed, why not begin your prayer by asking God to help you to pray?

A big Harbottle hug from me to you!

Ethel

\*

## A CARER'S PERSPECTIVE

Carers (close relatives and friends) of people with mental illness experience their own distress seeing their loved one's distress, with too many of them becoming depressed themselves. For my part, at first I was shocked, confused and very frightened. I suffered a period of weakness, lethargy and forgetfulness which I now know to be depression following long term anxiety.

Witnessing the onset of another person's mental breakdown or depressed state can be very frightening and totally disruptive to normal relationships. It is disorienting; the generally accepted conventions of everyday discourse no longer apply, because the person you love behaves unpredictably and differently from their normal self. They may withdraw into themselves and not speak, or in contrast become cross, violent or impulsive, either way causing the carer huge anxiety and self-questioning – why is this happening? What might I have done to cause or contribute to this strange behaviour? What can be done to alleviate the distress? Where can I turn to for help? There are no easy answers to these questions and even professionals find them difficult to deal with. Even when help is found (and officially it should be provided by the health service) the referral system is slow and often ignores carers – they, after all, are not the immediate concern. This is partly due to rules of confidentiality and partly to the fact that staff are judged on targets such as the number of people with mental health problems that they can help. Carers learn to cope better through self-help, or support groups which help them to understand mental illness, its causes, its treatments (medication and talking therapies), future prospects, and how they can behave in the most helpful way. What is more, they get to answer some of their own many burning questions, and learn that they are not on their own – there are many other people undergoing similar distress. In the same way those who are experiencing the mind-changing episode can experience some benefit from meeting others who have shared that experience.

## A POEM BY G.K. CHESTERTON

Our earthly rulers falter,  
Our people drift and die;  
The walls of gold entomb us,  
God take away our pride.

From all that terror teaches,  
From lies of tongue and pen,  
From all the easy speeches  
That comfort cruel men,  
From sale and profanation  
Deliver us good Lord.

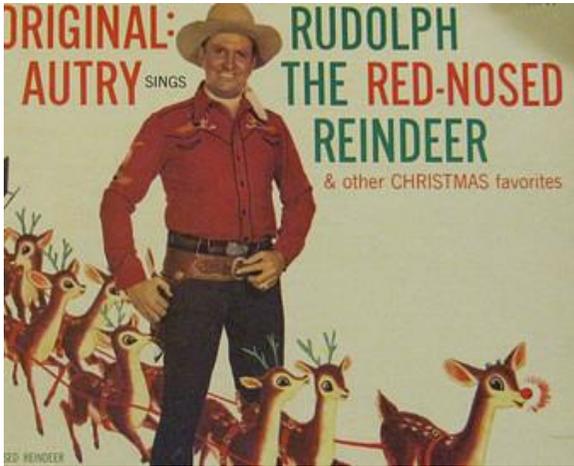
Bind all our lives together  
Aflame with faith and free,  
Lift up a living nation  
An offering to Thee.

*(Abridged by John Purves)*

\*

# STORY BEHIND THE SONG ‘RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER’

By Ian Fergusson



Bob May, a struggling ad. writer in Chicago in the 1930s, was facing a tough Christmas looking after his four-year-old daughter, Barbara. His wife Evelyn had terminal cancer, and Barbara was asking why her mum wasn't like other mums. Bob wanted to do something hopeful to teach his daughter of the

good in the world.

Lacking money, he created a homemade picture book based on Rudolph's story of being picked on, and then saving Christmas. The book was discovered by Bob's colleagues and eventually became a smash hit, making him \$4 million.

His brother in law Johnny Marks set the story to music and cowboy Gene Autry sang it.

The line about Rudolph going down in history was certainly true!

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## **GLEANINGS: A gathering of random thoughts from various sources**

**By John Purves**

*Repentance and forgiveness are really very positive virtues. To repent and forgive pleases God greatly. Consider the parable of the prodigal son.*

Peter Blake “The devout prayers of thy church.”

*To mourning homes God's meekest angel gently comes;  
No power has he to banish pain,  
Or give us back our lost again.  
He mocks no grief with idle cheer,  
Nor wounds with words the mourner's ear.  
But ills and woes he may not cure  
He kindly trains us to endure.  
Bear up, bear on, the end shall tell  
The dear Lord ordereth all things well.*

John Greenleaf Whittier, Angel of Patience

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*Animal respect is universal in time and space, yet Christians and Muslims seem to have abandoned it. We use animals but seem to have lost touch with that elemental instinct to accord them status, and imbued with individual significance. And that is a loss.*

Penelope Lively

*The human body lies at the heart of society in the developed world. Adorning, adapting, decorating, pampering, fetishising and above all displaying the body is a core activity in our culture.*

James Attlee. "Losing the key"

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*Take no thought for what you shall wear*

Jesus of Nazareth

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*Fading is the worldlings pleasure, all his boasted pomp and show, solid joys and lasting pleasure, none but Sions children know.*

John Newton

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*The great goal of want-less-ness which is the only happiness in this life.*

Adrian Bell

*The white man's love of possession is a disease with them. They make many rules that the rich may break but the poor must obey. They take tithes from the poor and weak to support the rich who rule them.*

Chief Sitting Bull of the Sioux 1876

\*

*Toil is praise and love is prayer.*

Anon

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I have come to light the lamp of Love in your hearts,  
To see that it shines day by day with added lustre.  
I have not come on behalf of any exclusive religion.  
I have not come on a mission of publicity for a sect or creed or cause,  
Nor have I come to collect followers for a doctrine.  
I have no plan to attract disciples or devotees into my fold or any fold.  
I have come to tell you of this Unitarian faith,  
This spiritual principle, the path of Love,  
the virtue of Love,  
the intelligence of Love  
the compassion of Love  
the perception of Love  
the beauty of Love  
the duty of Love  
the obligation of Love

*Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba*

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# BEING CHRISTIAN

**By Claire Malone Lee**

For the Cowley St. John Lent groups this year we studied Rowan Williams' 'Being Christian' together. I found it full of light and delight and amazingly accessible, but was stopped in my tracks when I read one sentence in it, on page 28.

It has taken me a long time to try to describe the problem the sentence poses. Rowan Williams implies a comparison. He says, 'Are you capable in the light of the Bible itself as a whole of responding more lovingly and faithfully than ancient Israel?'

This particular comparison is particularly odious. The history of denigration of the Jewish people in western Christendom is a history we normally sweep under the carpet. But we forget it at our peril. The question as framed by Rowan Williams reverberates with that old antipathy that grew as Christians and Jews separated, and as Christians appropriated the virtues of the Hebrew prophets with their scalding criticism of their people, leaving the Jews with the vices that the prophets were criticising.

The problem in Rowan Williams' sentence lies in his implied description of ancient Israel as faithless. The strange thing is that Rowan Williams himself makes clear that this is nonsense. He draws our attention, on page 37, to the prophet Hosea. He imagines Hosea as reflecting on the clear word of God calling Israel to faithfulness and resistance, and how easily this can be turned into an excuse for human violence. What we inherit, as Christians, in the Hebrew scriptures is a story of ancient Israel warts and all, in which the prophets of ancient Israel, they who are part of ancient Israel, still challenge us as Christians and challenge our society, its social inequality, its inhumanity, its injustice. These prophets are not separate from ancient Israel. Ancient Israel wrestled with how to be faithful and modern Judaism continues to

wrestle with this. As a Christian, I must not use the categories of contempt of my Christian forebears for the supposedly 'faithless' Jews to make me think I am in a better place, but I need to accept the challenge of the prophets of ancient Israel as a challenge to me to change my mind about what God expects of me.

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*Ascension Day up the tower earlier this year*

## **A BLAST FROM THE PAST: ST ALBAN'S UNITED**

Back in the 1930s, St. Albans had its own football team known as 'St. Albans United'. Check out these photographs of footballers from the period. Does anyone recognise anyone?







## PRAYER CALENDAR: December 2017

N.B. Since publication of the January edition is delayed until 14<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the first two weeks of the January 2018 prayers have been included here.

**Daily Collect for use during December:** *Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee by plenteously rewarded.*  
(Collect for “Stir up” Sunday, Book of Common Prayer).

<b>Sun 3</b>	<b>Advent Sunday</b>
Mon 4	Theologians
Tue 5	Postmen and delivery services
Wed 6	St. Nicholas prayer “Help us to ask for less and offer more.”
Thur 7	Peace in our time, O Lord
Fri 8	That we may be Godly and quietly governed
Sat 9	Philosophers
<b>Sun 10</b>	<b>Advent II Bible Sunday</b>
Mon 11	The Oxford and Cambridge University Presses
Tue 12	Social Services
Wed 13	St. Lucy
Thur 14	Midwives and maternity care
Fri 15	The Fire and Ambulance Services
Sat 16	Actors and Broadcasters

<b>Sun 17</b>	<b>Advent III</b>
Mon 18	Parks and Recreation Places
Tue 19	Allotments, especially Elder Stubbs
Wed 20	Ember Day. Our theological colleges
Thur 21	St. Thomas, Apostle and Martyr.
Fri 22	Ember Day: For more vocations to the ministry
Sat 23	Ember Day: For vocations to Readership and lay ministries.
<b>Sun 24</b>	<b>Advent IV Christmas Eve</b>
<b>Mon 25</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>
Tue 26	St. Stephen
Wed 27	St. John the Apostle
Thur 28	Holy Innocents
Fri 29	Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, Martyr 1170
Sat 30	The Elderly and Infirm
<b>Sun 31</b>	<b>Christmas I</b>
Mon 1	Circumcision of Christ. New Year's Day
Tue 2	Church Music and Choirs
Wed 3	Teachers
Thur 4	Jurors
Fri 5	Mental Health Services
Sat 6	The Epiphany

<b>Sun 7</b>	<b>Epiphany I</b>
Mon 8	Prisoners and Prison Chaplains
Tue 9	The housebound
Wed 10	The homeless, especially the work of 'The Porch.'
Thur 11	Parents, Grand-parents and Great-Grandparents
Fri 12	Babies and young children
Sat 13	St. Hilary and all students
<b>Sun 14</b>	<b>Epiphany II</b>

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## NOTICES

### Greyfriars Choir Carol Services

*All Saints and St. John's Home Carols: Saturday 16 December at 5.30pm* in All Saints Chapel (Conventual Franciscans), St Mary's Road, East Oxford.

*Greyfriars Carols: Sunday 17 December at 3pm* in Greyfriars Church (OFM Capuchins), Iffley Road, Oxford.

## NEXT ISSUE

The deadline for the next issue is *Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December, Midnight*. The deadline for submissions is always midnight on the last Sunday of the Month, and publication on the first Sunday of the month, but due to people being away over the Christmas and New Year periods, publication of the January issue will be on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2018. Electronic submissions are to me, Daniel Emlyn-Jones, [daniel\\_ejnew@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:daniel_ejnew@yahoo.co.uk) (underscore between 'daniel' and 'ejnew'). Please put handwritten submissions in the Cowley St. John Parish Magazine pigeon hole by the St. Mary & St. John back door.

I will be in Singapore from 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017 – 10<sup>th</sup> January 2018. For handwritten submissions outside this time, please email me photographs of your submissions using a smartphone. If you don't have a smartphone, find a friendly person who does. They can easily photograph your submission and email it to me in a jiffy.

Soft copies of the Parish Magazine can be found at:

<http://cowleystjohn.co.uk/parish-magazine>

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