



28 DECEMBER 2025

With prayer & faith in God we seek to engage with the community -
inside we enrich & equip: outside we give & care.



A warm welcome from Rev Sally Letman and everyone else at St Mary's!

TODAY'S LINK NEWSLETTER FOR:
28 DEC to 11 JAN 2026

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WORSHIP TIMELINE

St Mary's is open for private prayer every day.

2025

28 Dec, 9.30am, St John's, *Morning Prayer*
10.45am, St Mary's,
Morning Prayer with Christina

31 Dec, 10.00am, St Mary's, *Benefice Holy Communion*

2026

4 Jan, 9.30am, St John's, *Holy Communion.*
10.45am, St Mary's, *Holy Communion.*

5 Jan, All stars for the *Star Festival*
to Beverley for today please

7 Jan, 10.00am, St Mary's, *Benefice Holy Communion*

11 Jan, 9.30am, St John's, *Morning Prayer.*
10.45am, St Mary's, *Holy Communion,*
4.00pm, St Mary's
Star Festival service with choir.

14 Jan, 10.00am, St Mary's, *Benefice Holy Communion*

18 Jan, 9.30am, St John's, *Holy Communion.*
10.45am, St Mary's, *Family Service.*

19 Jan, 2pm, St Mary's Hall, *Compassionate Cafe*
7.00pm, The Rectory, *Bible Study Group*

21 Jan, 10.00am, St Mary's, *Benefice Holy Communion*

25 Jan, 9.30am, St John's, *Family Service.*
10.45am, St Mary's, *Holy Communion.*

7 Feb, 10-12am, St Mary's
Deanery Wedding Preparation Day

16 Feb, 7.00pm, The Rectory, *Bible Study Group*



Christmas Day - readings & reflections

New Testament Readings

Hebrews 1, 1-4

God's Final Word: His Son

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

John 1, 1-14

The Word Became Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.



There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

He 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 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.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Sally's Reflection

Hebrews 1: 1-4 and John 1: 1-14

"Heavenly Father, through weak human words, give us grace to hear your true and living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord"

Pass the Parcel: words to hang on the cross.

Beginning: today we are here in the present, with the presence of the Lord and we are given the greatest gift of all, this child who brings hope and love and an opportunity for us to begin anew in our faith and our love for all our brothers and sisters.



Light: light of wonder that lights the darkness as we turn to the Lord. The light shine in the darkness in Christ was light and it is the light of all mankind. We are witnesses of the light.

Believe: I once wrote some words in my bible, *'in faith we believe in order to understand'* - the words are by St Augustine of Hippo; Faith preceded and enables a deeper understanding of divine truth. Believing comes first and then we begin to understand and our soul is connected with the Holy Spirit.

World: We are the faith in the World; we are the disciples through our discipline. We cannot just watch and mourn our world, we, like the disciples are called to take the word of God into the world and our lives and the life of the world will be transformed.

Glory: Glory that is greater than our own comprehension, but we are witnesses of the glory and we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came for the father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus: and at the centre of the parcel, the gift of Jesus Christ, our Lord of love and like a parcel we pass it on from this day and forever.

Amen





St Mary's Church Christmas Coffee morning and Craft Fair

Jenny gives massive vote of thanks to all involved who made it such a success!

Even before the 10.00am official opening people were arriving..



During the course of the day the "Guess the Bottle" stand was run initially by a sunlit Julie, and later by a hilarious duo - Brian & Mike.



(Right) the stock on some stalls sold quicker than others - June and Jean's cakes began to deplete as soon as the doors opened.

(Left) Some were a creative delight...





(Left) the organising brain behind the event was of course Jenny's - she also put together the enormous Raffle Hamper.

(Below) the raffle prizes were so extensive that it required two cashiers, Claire and Lisa, to deal the tickets.



(Above) some of the craft stall products were of a very high order - and Gill had granddaughter Bonny to assist the sales process.



(Left) Carol & Michael's favourite site for their stand was a success once more -

(Right) While Bill's brilliantly painted (and glossed) pebbles were a great bargain at £1 each...





(Above) Mitch Kelland was the four-legged favourite of the day while (Right) the catering team at front-of-house moved the comestibles.

Rev Sally loudly: **"Another bacon bap on brown please!!"**

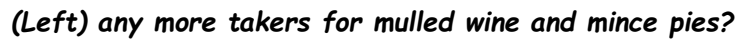
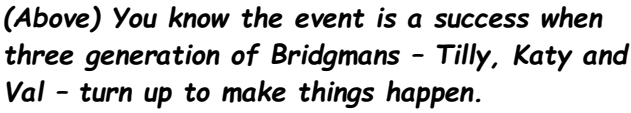


(Left) **"Here's your change sir - is that not right?"**



(Below) hard-working but still cheery - the catering team takes a moment out to be photographed:
Vivian, Pauline, Joyce, Val and Eddie





WELL DONE FOLKS!!



**NEXT SUNDAY'S MORNING PRAYER SERVICE WILL BE
LED BY CHRISTINA**

AND TITLED 'BETWEEN THE YEARS'



In Germany, the days between Christmas and New Year are called the '*days between the years*'.

On New Year's Eve, in churches up and down the country, people meet for services of Holy Communion, usually at 6pm. Before watch-on-demand, these services would be held so that people would get home in time for the British TV sketch 'Dinner for One', another staple of German New Year's Eve celebrations. *But that's another story...*

Back to the services on New Year's Eve: People are drawn together to give thanks for the all the good things but also to bring before God sorrows and hardships the year might have brought.

Some might feel anxious about what the New Year will have in store, after the Christmas decorations have been packed away. And so we also meet to pray for the Lord's blessing upon us in the New Year.

Now, at St Mary's, we don't have a service on New Year's Eve, but we have one on Sunday, 28 December, 10.45am at St Mary's.

Come and join us on this Sunday 'between the years'! Please come as you are. You'll be most welcome!

Oh, and if you'd like to watch 'Dinner for One', a British programme loved by Germans you can do so here:

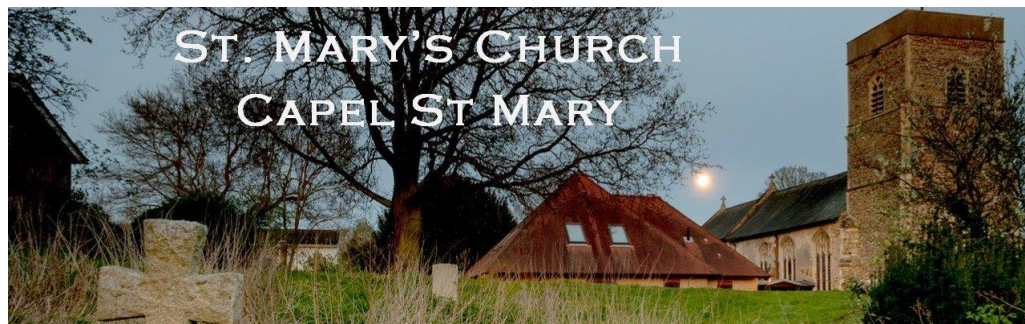
Christina

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5n7VIOrc8ZA>



Acrylmalerei von Doris Hopf
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Capel

Primary School held its Christmas Carol Service at St Mary's Church on 19 December.



All 280 pupils at Capel School packed into St Mary's on a bright sunny morning.



The children take turns to light the Advent candles (hope, peace, joy and love) - but it needs someone tall like Rev Sally to light the Christmas Candle.





As well as traditional carols such as: *O Little Town of Bethlehem, Silent Night, Holy Night* and *The First Nowell*, the children also sang modern songs beginning with:

Mary Did You Know?

Mary, did you know
That your baby boy will one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know
That your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?
Did you know
That your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered
Will soon deliver you.



Run Shepherds Run....

Run Shepherds run and see the baby!
Run, Shepherds, to Bethlehem! Run,
Shepherds, run and see the baby,
See the baby born the great I am.

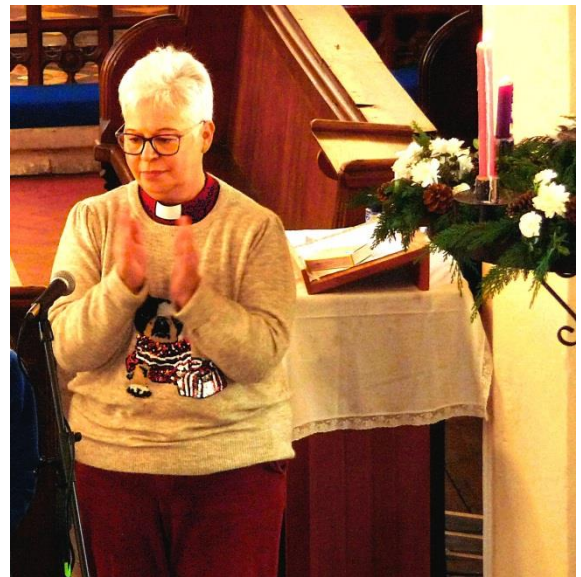
If I were there.....

If I were there on that silent night,
Would I hear angels sing praises in the sky?
If I were there, would I go with haste
With humble shepherds to seek His holy place?

If I were there, I'd find the manger
And bow before the tiny Saviour
I'd sense the peace that filled the air
If I were there, if I were there.



Rev Sally: "Children you were amazing!
"May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you this Christmas time and always".





NEWS

SPOOKY EVENING AT BURY

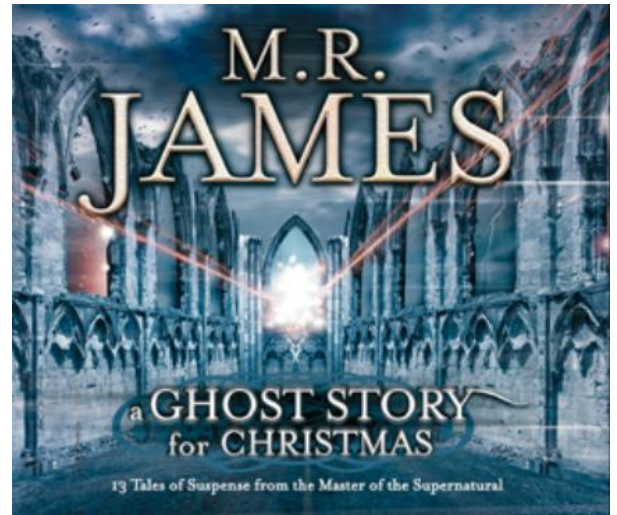
Up to St John the Evangelist church in Bury St Edmunds on 12 December to listen to Dr Francis Young give what turned out to be an intellectual discourse on the ghost stories of MR James.

Dr Young is a Bury St Edmunds-based historian, folklorist, indexer, and translator. He specialises in the history of religion and belief from ancient times to the present day, provides expert indexes for academic books and translates medieval and early modern Latin.

The hosts:

(Right) Rev Andrew Miller, team rector, Northbury Churches, Dr Francis Young, Rev Alison Miller, Team Vicar, Northbury Churches.

Although the anticipation was for a "Spooky Evening's" entertainment it turned out that the spookiest event of the night was trying to find a parking place in Bury on a drizzly and misty night with car parks wreathed in gloom and blessed with broken pay machines.





The Mumfords head north

Rev Tom Mumford and Rev Laura Mumford have announced that they will be leaving their roles in Ipswich Diocese for new jobs in the Diocese of York.

Tom Mumford is vicar of the recently-created Ipswich Minster, while Laura is the diocesan

growing younger enabler.

Tom explained that his wife Laura, also a priest, had felt an "increasing sense of call to go into a parish as a vicar too. *"As a priest you work on the basis of a sense of call,"* he explained.

"Two jobs came up that seemed to work for both of us. She will be a parish priest and I will be working for a bishop up in York. We felt we had to go for it."

His new role will be supporting the Bishop of Selby in York, with his last service in Ipswich being on 8 March 2026.

During his five years, Rev Mumford oversaw the church redesignated from being known as St Mary-le-Tower to the Minster in 2025.

He added that he had also carried out 25 baptisms and more than 30 confirmations, mostly for young adults, of which he said it had been "a joy" to see them come into faith. *"It has been the most amazing five years and I leave here with the heaviest heart,"* he continued.

In 2023 Rev Laura was appointed chaplain at Suffolk's Royal Hospital School where she served until January 2025 when she took her current role as diocesan growing younger enabler.



Suffolk sees 'encouraging' rise in church attendance

Church of England Churches in Suffolk have seen a rise in congregation numbers - surpassing the overall national increase in church attendance this year.

Overall the attendance growth for 2023/2024 for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich reveal adult average weekly attendance rose by 6% on last year, well above the national rise of 1.8%.

Average church attendance for children also saw a surge, with a rise of 10% in Suffolk compared to the national increase of 0.4%.

These figures show the growth throughout the whole diocese and include the impact from growth projects in our church communities.

Gary Peverley, Diocesan Secretary said: *"We are pleased to see church attendance is growing across Suffolk, particularly as we look forward to welcoming people into our churches over Christmas. "The latest reported attendance figures highlight an encouraging trend in worship participation, particularly among children, within the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich compared to national averages. I am delighted by this news as it indicates that our commitment to our Growing In God vision is working."*



AMEN SHOEBOX APPEAL



Supporting Christian Ministries in
Developing Countries

Janet White from AMEN Trust writes:

A team of five from AMEN are in Romania this week giving out the shoeboxes and working with the partners on their Christmas outreach meetings. I have attached a few pictures that they have sent me and you can see more on the AMEN Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/share/1DKc7TgJkv/> Thank you for your donations: Happy Christmas from us all, Janet





(Right: Emma Bowyer says: *"I am pleased to say our boxes are in the hands of those who need them!"*)



COTTAGE INDUSTRY AT ST MARY'S



Christingle Makers: Jenny gets expert assistance from a willing team as a total of 50 Christingles are created for the services on Christmas Eve at St John's and St Mary's.





Let's try a new Hymn for Christmas -

Because of Bethlehem.....

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOGV5jcu2Oo>

as suggested by Martyn and played pre-service last Sunday



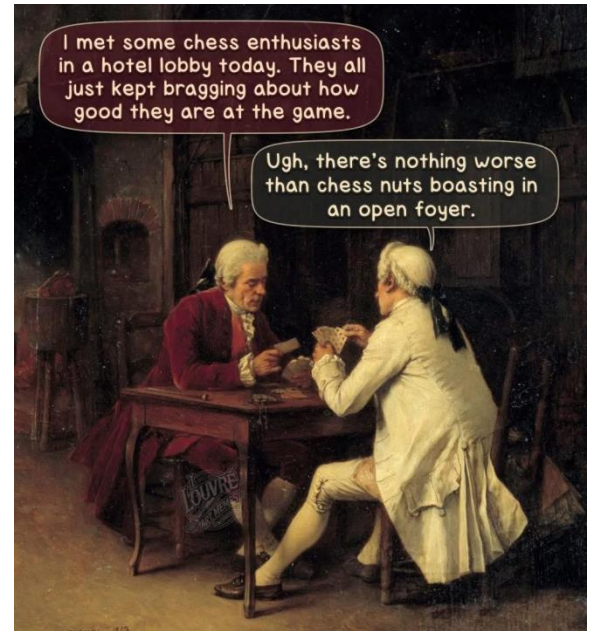
Matthew West - Because of Bethlehem

Dubbed "one of Christian music's most prolific singer-songwriters" (Billboard), Matthew West has notched 38 No.1 songs combined as an artist and songwriter and has been awarded RIAA Gold and Platinum certifications.

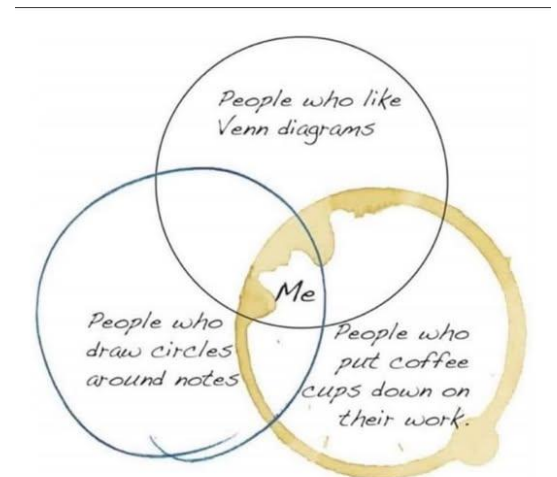
West is also a five-time GRAMMY nominee, NSAI's 2022 Songwriter-Artist of the Year, ASCAP's (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) 2023 Golden Note Award recipient, ASCAP's Songwriter of the Year recipient, and a multiple ASCAP Christian Music Songwriter/Artist of the Year winner.

He has received an American Music Award, a Billboard Music Award, K-LOVE Fan Awards, GMA Dove Awards, and has been named Billboard's Hot Christian Songwriter of the Year.





(Left) Barnsley couple say they are very concerned that reducing interest rates to 3.75% may trigger inflationary pressure while not stimulating growth to a significant degree





COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CAFÉ

At St Mary's Church Hall has its next meeting on Monday 19 JAN @ 2.00pm



Rev Sally says:

Our compassionate café has become the in-place to share our stories with each other, with people who understand what it means to lose someone you love.

There is much chatting, laughter, reminiscing and cake enjoyed by all. The café enables us to help each other - and build a community together.

Compassion

is difficult to give away because
it keeps coming back to you.



The next Café is on 19 January at 2.00pm. Do come and bring a friend.

You will leave feeling better! Rev Sally x



Rev Sally says:

Let's fill St Mary's Church with stars on Sunday 11 January 2026 for our Star-a-Thon service.

Beverley is organising the



STAR-A-THON

Although we have a good number so far - we need more to reach our intended goal of **1,000** which will transform St Mary's Church.

She says: "Can I please have the stars you are making by Monday 5 January?"

I have a supply of small wooden stars which I can pass out to anyone who is willing to decorate them in some way.

She added: "I have plenty of storage room available so let's fill at Mary's with stars for everyone to enjoy."

Meanwhile Mike Johansen is planning to create a huge star for suspending from the ceiling.





Rev Adrian has the answer:

A couple of weeks ago, a friend of mine asked me why Oliver Cromwell abolished Christmas. Well I really couldn't answer him, in spite of all the historical events of the time, so I thought I had better do some research, and this is what I discovered...

Oliver Cromwell didn't personally ban Christmas, but as a staunch Puritan, his influence most likely helped enforce parliamentary laws from 1644-1660. These prohibited Christmas, Easter and Whitsun celebrations, viewing them as wasteful and unbiblical. This led to forced-open shops, cancelled church services, and mandatory work on Christmas Day.

However, this ban ended with the Restoration of the monarchy when Charles II came to the throne in 1660. He reinstated all traditional Christian celebrations which led him to be known as the Merry Monarch.



Who invented the Christmas Cracker?



Christmas lunch or dinner would not be complete without the ubiquitous crackers.

These were first produced circa 1845-1850 by a London confectioner named Tom Smith. He had observed the French 'bon bon' sweets—almonds wrapped in decorative paper—during a visit to Paris in 1840. Upon returning to London, he attempted to market similar confections

in England, incorporating a small motto or riddle in the wrapping.

Unfortunately, these proved to be commercially unsuccessful; therefore, in 1861, he relaunched a new line called the "Bangs of Expectation," inspired by the burning of wood in his fireplace.

These sweets and small toys were designed to be opened with a crack when the wrappers were pulled from both ends. It is reported that he acquired the rights to the term "Cracker" from Brocks Fireworks.

Ouch! Who put a sixpence in my pudding!

I recall that during my childhood, there was considerable anticipation when the Christmas pudding was presented.

Initially, it was customary to flambé the pudding with the father's finest brandy, perhaps not the absolute best, but visually appealing. Subsequently, a competition ensued to determine who would be the individual to discover the sixpence hidden within their portion of pudding.




The recipient of this discovery would be crowned King or Queen for the remainder of the meal. Of course, misfortune would have entailed a visit to the dentist due to a fractured tooth.

Who put spiders on my Christmas tree?



In Ukraine, it is customary to adorn Christmas trees with spider webs, which are believed to bring good luck. Similarly, in countries such as Poland and Germany, discovering a spider or cobweb on a Christmas tree is regarded as a sign of good fortune.



Our particular hope for this nation is that a certain Russian individual may become ensnared in a spider's web of his own making, thereby bringing an end to the conflict.

Good old St Nicholas - but boo to the witches

During my tenure at boarding school, I would return to my parents' residence in Germany during the Christmas holidays.

I would always feel a sense of longing for the enjoyment experienced by my younger siblings in early December, when St. Nicholas would make his appearance on the night of 6 December. He would distribute treats, chocolates, oranges, and toys to well-behaved children. Additionally, he visits schools, where children, in exchange for a present, recite poetry, present drawings, or sing songs.

Finally, in Norway, centuries ago, it was believed by locals that witches appeared on Christmas Eve. This belief originated the tradition of hiding brooms on Christmas Eve. Even in the present day, many Norwegians conceal their brooms to prevent theft.



Thank you Rev Adrian - now we know much more about Christmas folk lore & traditions...

[illegible]

ARE THESE FOUR THE LEAST CHRISTIAN OF OUR ANGLICAN BISHOPS?



The bishops of the diocese of Southwark accused Tommy Robinson and his *Unite the Kingdom* movement of "*corruption of the Christian faith*" and "*unacceptable*", prior to Robinson's *Put the Christ back into Christmas* carol service in London last weekend.

The Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, together with the suffragan bishops of Croydon, Kingston, and Woolwich, said in a joint statement that they were "*gravely concerned about the use of Christian symbols and rhetoric to apparently justify racism and anti-migrant rhetoric*".

"*We are better than this,*" they said, and urged those who "*may be swept-up in movements like this who don't necessarily buy-in wholesale to what is being said*" to "*think again*", and to "*choose compassion and understanding over hostility and conflict*".



In the event, the *Unite the Kingdom* rally organised by Tommy Robinson passed peacefully on 13 December, with hundreds of people attending a carol concert to "*put the Christ back into Christmas*".

Supporters of Tommy

Robinson gathered in Whitehall, donning Santa hats and Christmas jumpers, as they listened to speakers, sang carols and heard extracts from the Bible.

Hymn sheets were handed out to the crowd and a woman walked around selling St George's flags and Santa hats. Supporters held candles as it grew dark in Whitehall. Crowds cheered as Tommy Robinson was invited to the stage to give the closing remarks for the rally.

"Moments like this bring me closer to faith," he added. "We're here to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and every one of us, including ourselves, need to ask what that means to us."

Robinson thanked supporters for coming and wished the crowd a Merry Christmas. He said a website would be launched to plan next year's Christmas celebration, vowing to "fill Trafalgar Square", with people travelling from across Europe to join in the celebrations.

However, earlier, the Bishop of Kirkstall, the Rt Revd Arun Arora, warned that "*populist forces*" were "*seeking to exploit the faith for their political ends*".

"The cross of Christ is the ultimate sign of sacrifice for the other," the Southwark bishops said in their statement. *"Jesus calls us to love not just those whom we like or agree with or who look like us — but to love our enemies and welcome the stranger."*

Elite-liberal Anglicans

But these elite-liberal Anglicans have no understanding of why working-class people in Britain are angry and have come together in a sense of desperation to express their views:

The shift of some working-class men toward Christianity is primarily driven by a desire to express a strong identity, community, and clear moral framework in response to cultural and social changes they feel have left them behind.

Key factors contributing to this trend include:

- **Identity Politics**: Being consistently told their traditional values and indeed the history of their country is debunked and worthless. Christianity is increasingly viewed as an identity marker – an established pillar upon which their cultural values were based. This offers a strong group identity in a rapidly changing world;
- **Reaction Against Woke Culture**: Aligning with Christian conservative values is often portrayed by many in Britain as an "anti-woke" stance, a way for men to rebel against what they see as the virtue-signalling by a dominant, secular liberal elite;
- * **Desire for Authority and Order**: The right-wing movement and the type of Christianity it often aligns with, can appeal to those seeking clear values and a defined moral order in a world they perceive as chaotic. They see crime-ridden street of London and other large cities testament to the malign consequences of failing to uphold civic order;
- * **Community and Belonging**: Religious communities offer a strong sense of belonging and support, which can be particularly attractive to men who may feel isolated or "left behind" by broader societal shifts;
- * **Perceived Threat to Values**: Many conservative Christians feel their traditional values



are under threat from cultural and demographic changes. This feeling of being a "persecuted minority" can reinforce their commitment to their faith and their alignment with right-wing politics;

Pastor Rikki Doolan, (pic left) who was instrumental in Tommy Robinson's conversion to Christianity, and who was active at the concert said they

kept politics out of it and he would pray for the bishops who suggested they were trying to weaponise Christianity for a political agenda

The founder of the Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence, Dr Helen Paynter, (pic right) who attended the *Put Christ back into Christmas* carol concert reflected on how this defied her expectations.

She wrote: "Tommy Robinson may have said some racist things in the past. He didn't today. We can say the one thing without unsaying the other. None of us is entirely monochrome, and growth (and repentance) is possible."

She reflected: "Rather than blanket-condemning them for the things they have said and done, perhaps we should comment on particular moments, particular actions."



*"We are better than this!" said the four Anglican bishops,
ARE YOU REALLY? A less welcoming phrase offered to those seeking God guidance is
hard to imagine.
It seems to be yet another own-goal by the elite-liberal wing of the Church of England.*



Coco retires but Lance arrives in training!
A newsletter from Rev Steph and Joop:

Dear Family and Friends,

This 2025 Annual letter comes to you with our very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. In an increasingly unstable and worrying world, our prayer for you is that you will experience the reality of Emmanuel "God with us".

Life in retirement in Thurston continues to be a joy and very busy. Joop has transformed our back garden into a place of joy and peace. The peace is so great that we now have a resident toad and many solitary bees.

The raised beds have facilitated gardening in clay and flint. We have feasted on home-grown vegetables and many types of squash. The grapevines have been a severe disappointment as they produced many grapes but none resembling the glowing descriptions given of their varieties. This resulted in a stern letter to somebody in Holland but they have so far not replied, we are not holding our breath.



Fragrances

The various installations of Greenhouses have moved several times but, I think, are now in their final resting places. One apple tree bore profusely but the other one went on strike. Roses flourished against the South facing garage wall and I had much joy inhaling the fragrances, even though I was not able to see the details of their glorious profusion.

Joop is still picking up stones and throwing them away, which is of course truly biblical. This area, we understand, provided flint for many a church. His one-year-old left hip is a great blessing to him and being free of pain is wonderful. His consultant stipulated only that he should not go ballooning or skiing. These restrictions are unlikely to inhibit his current lifestyle in any way.

He invested in a trombone but has struggled to find someone to teach him how to play it. One cheerful entrepreneur was offering internet lessons at £100 per hour. Joop sings lustily in the Benefice choir and has enjoyed it, though choir practise in a freezing church on a Friday night can be a test of one's commitment.

Interesting mealtimes!

Joop has been marvellously helpful to me as my sight has failed. He has had to read directions on frozen vegetables as well as all the correspondence.

We have had a few interesting meals, one which comes to mind was the time when I sprayed the sausage rolls with the Spectacle Cleaner instead of the handy little oil spray. An understandable mistake which we fortunately survived after I had wipe off the one and replaced it with the other.

Joop never complains, they were the cleanest sausage rolls on the planet.

University of the Third Age - and a new author.

I have very much enjoyed the U3A Book Group which meets in Thurston Library once a month. Though I have not always enjoyed the books we have read together, the group is eclectic and enormously stimulating. For a brief period, I was a member of the U3A Writing for Fun Group where I was introduced to the discipline of four-line poems and family memoirs. As the group has now ceased to exist, I have signed up to the Writing Group at Thurston Library, which is a new venture and begins in January.

I have submitted various short stories to People's Friend which immediately rejected them. Joop and I edit my stories and then pass them onto our friend Caroline who kindly does further editing, thereby preventing the build-up of marital tension within the bungalow. We are most grateful to her.

Women's Institute's great discussions

WI has given me much joy with its monthly meetings, feisty ladies and vigorous discussions. WI also produce during winter and spring, soup lunches for the community which are very well supported. I have started a Book Appreciation Group which meets also once a month here in a lovely bungalow.

There is no commitment to reading anything at all but it is nice if members managed to read something and can report back on it. Membership is open to anyone, especially if they are feeling lonely and need some company over a cup of coffee. We have great discussions and have agreed that if WI were running the world, it would be in a much better state than it is.

During 2025 I could have had a bed at Moorfields Hospital reserved for me for the duration as there have been many excitements and several trips to their A&E. They continue to do their utmost to keep me seeing something, in spite of my eyes not being very cooperative.

The Cornea Transplant failed and they are considering redoing it in the New Year.



Coco retires

At the end of November last year Coco retired so I have been travelling around the world with my long cane (with the ball on the end), causing great excitement amongst passing puppies. People have become good at giving me a wide berth when they see me coming and have been unfailingly helpful when asked for directions or assistance.

The great good news I have to share is that I have been introduced to a young man, aged two with golden locks and a beguiling expression, who has bonded with Coco and slept over for one-night last week.

Once we had agreed who was going to sleep in our bed and on the mat on the floor, everything went swimmingly. These hurdles safely negotiated,

Lance and I will be launched into the world as a couple training to work together from the beginning of January. Intensive training for two weeks follows and then training on my usual walks and destinations for as long as it is required, until our trainer Chantelle is satisfied that we are safe together.

Exciting journey

This is going to be an exciting journey as I have become so used to Coco and know that I can trust her absolutely. Lance has not been introduced to Church during his advanced training so I have warned Father Ben that it will be a case of the Philistines are upon us, take cover. Lance is half Labrador and Half Retriever. I have also volunteered to be a foundation governor at Thurston Primary School. I am looking forward to this new challenge and hope that I will be able to be useful.

We are always happy to welcome visitors to a cup of coffee or a meal. We are thrilled to be so close to the Cathedral where we have spent many happy hours. Fr Ben has kindly allowed me to take occasional services in the Benefice. It is lovely to be able to help him when needed. We have attended too many funerals this year but are pleased to continue visiting our old friends.

May you and yours celebrate Jesus, the Prince of Peace, when you come together at Christmas. The Lord be with you. Luv, Joop, Steph and Coco

"The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision" - Helen Keller
Rev Canon Emeritus Stephne van der Toorn and Canon Emeritus Coco (retired Guide Dog)
56 Ghent Field Circle, College Park, Thurston, Suffolk IP31 3UP
Mob (Steph): 077 7157 4702 / Mob (Joop): 078 5981 4248
Email (Steph): revstephvdtdt@googlemail.com / Email (Joop): joopvandertoorn@gmail.com





Happy Birthday in January to:

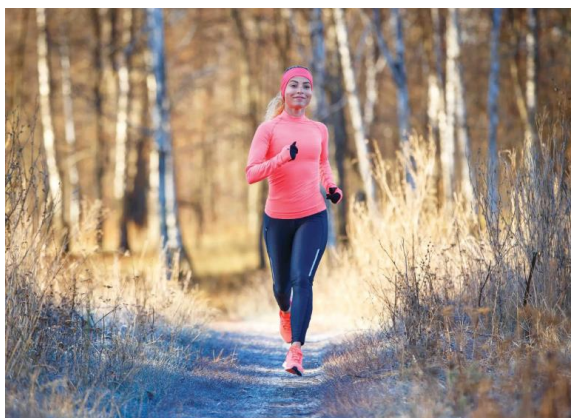
4 January Aiden Williams
 Kevin Pearson
12 January Geoffrey Boyle
23 January Thomas Cowgill
 Sharon Pendorf



With thanks to Trevor Bailey



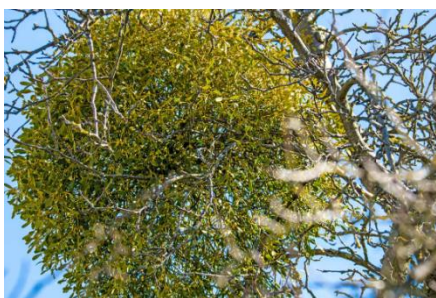
All Brightness Above as Melissa goes for a run



I set out for a run on a day that, despite all the recent wet weather, began in mist and ice. Minus one, and thank the cold, blue heavens for it: closing in on midwinter and only the second proper frost we've had.

Turning off the icy lane I ran on muddy field paths and tracks which the overnight frost had hardened. I had gloves on, and once my pace was up and my breathing had stabilised I felt fine. Mist cloaked the trees and the wet, low-lying fields near the river, and the air felt fresh and still.

Here and there, especially in the newly bare branches of poplars, balls of mistletoe were revealed like huge, airy baubles: most were in the same tree as last year and the year before that, back and back to before I came here.



Mistletoe, a parasitic plant which is almost impossible to propagate by hand, is becoming more common, which is interesting given that it's increasingly harvested in bulk to be sold in Christmas markets.

Mistle thrushes (named for their love of the plant) and their visiting cousins the redwings and fieldfares eat mistletoe berries, but they swallow them whole; the seeds do pass through in their droppings and germinate, but, it seems, at a much lower rate



than those fastidiously wiped from blackcaps' bills.

Now that Suffolk's woods and copses are unclothed the square flint towers of the village churches can more easily be glimpsed across the fields. In winter it's clear how many of the older tracks and field paths align with them: ancient arteries of faith and duty, landmarks for travellers moving from place to place.

As I ran the light rose and colour crept into the world. The beet campaign is still underway and I passed a huge red harvester guarding a vast mountain of dirty roots ready to be loaded into lorries later in the day.

On the short stretch of road I take between fields the tarmac was thick with mud from the tractors and trailers going in and out, and I thought of the neighbour who complained to me, last year, about the mud it left on his sports car. I don't think I managed a particularly eloquent reply, but I suspect the look on my face was enough.



The river was high but back in its channel after the recent flood, and on the wet water-meadows the scrapes recently dug for wintering waders were wide and silver. As I came back into the village the ice had vanished from the lanes and robins and great tits were carolling in a weak winter sun.

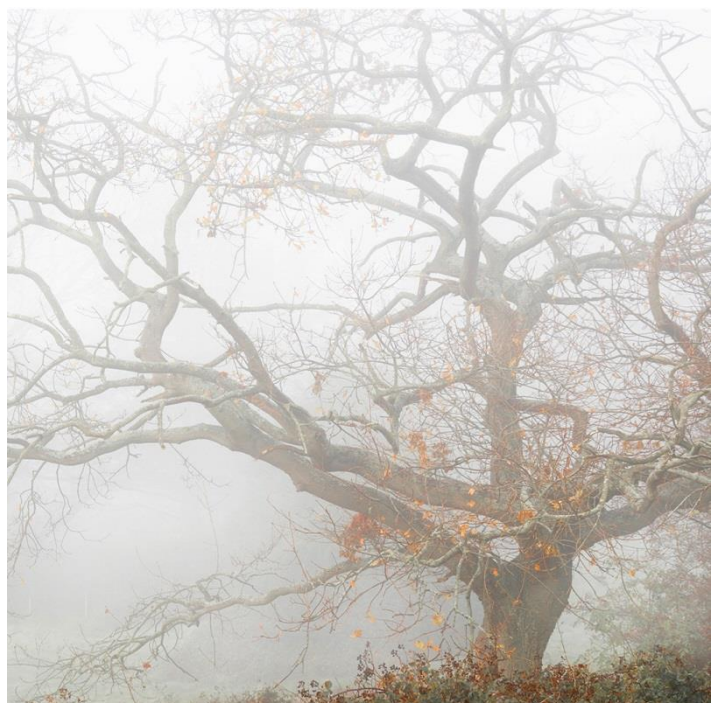
The ditch beside the road gurgled with water; the world was "*all brightness above and glittering reflections below*," as Adrian Bell wrote of a similar Suffolk morning in December 1956: "*Full dykes flashed: half-flooded marshlands seemed littered with flakes from the sky.*"

Back at my cottage I scattered mealworms for the tribe of sparrows sitting hopefully in the winter jasmine. They were squabbling over them before I'd even closed the door.

Melissa Harrison is a novelist, children's author, journalist and nature writer. She contributes a monthly Nature Notebook column to The Times, and also writes regularly for the Guardian and the New Statesman. She lives in Suffolk.



In her *Misty Furze Wood*, Chrissie captures beautifully the pure essence of winter in Suffolk





In Loving Memory

IN MEMORIAM

With thanks to Trevor Bailey

5 Jan	Albert (Bob) Bridgman	2021
	Martin Cornell	2021
6 Jan	Thomas Christopher O'Malley	2001
7 Jan	Judith Sutcliffe	2020
10 Jan	Val Ann Company	2017
	Brian Arthur Toll	2018
11 Jan	Beryl Sydney Durham	1998
	Peter Joseph Hearne	2018
	Paul Cowell	2021
14 Jan	Charles Henry Goddard	2005
15 Jan	Brian Francis Poulter	2024
16 Jan	Annie (Nan) O'Malley	2016
18 Jan	Margaret Annie Flaxman	1995
20 Jan	Alan Trevor Crisp Binney	1997
	Ernest George Campbell	2008
23 Jan	Charlie Lushey	
24 Jan	Carol Aubert Rew	2016
25 Jan	Dennis Blair Ross	2011
26 Jan	Colin Grunbaum	2004
29 Jan	Evelyn Alice Blacksell	2004
	Margaret Elizabeth (Jo) Bush	2018

*In Loving
Memory*

*In Loving
Memory*





Continued prayer support please for Becky Garland, the new East Bergholt school chaplain,

Pat Gladwin, Becky Carpendale, Rachel Martin, Brenda Green

Kevin Austrin, Zoe and family,

Penny & David Thompson, Rev Stephne.

Molly & Mike Johansen, Sandy Mansfield,

Geoff Cox, Pauline Stark, Andrew Skinner,

Barbara Rogers, Doreen Parker, Eric Doe,

Malcolm & Chris Fenn, Esme Booth, Trevor Bailey, Zena Steward,

Peter Ellis (Methodist), Laura Towells, Angie Heath

Shirley Streatfield, Sylvia Lambert

June Balaam

Please contact Hille at hillepearz@gmail.com

If people have made a recovery

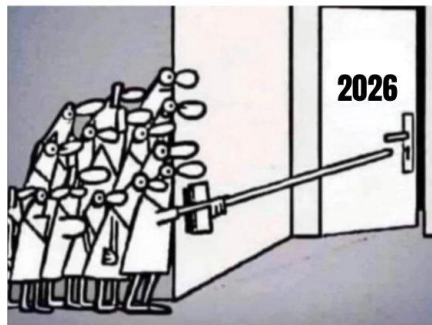




Jesus: "Happy New Ear"



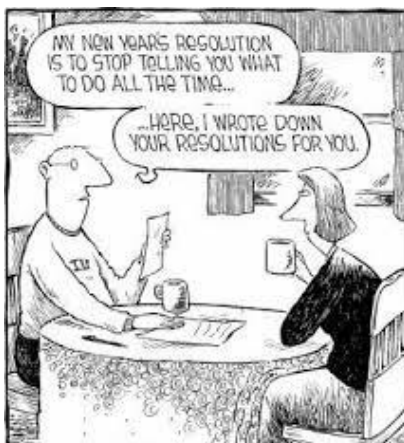
2026 can't be worse than 2025... right?



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(See John 2:1-11) 12-31-1998
HEY JESUS, I HOPE TO SEE YOU AT THE NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY ... I'M BRINGIN' LOTS OF WATER



CONTACT NUMBERS FOR BENEFICE MINISTERS

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Church wardens

@ St Mary's Mel Sutcliffe 310967

Valerie Franklin 314179

@ St John's John Cresswell 311975

Diana Hunt 310441

Pastoral care

@ St Mary's Hille Peartree
hillepearz@gmail.com

PCC Secretary

@ St Mary's Jenny Hickley 310991

Hall bookings

@ St Mary's Valerie Franklin 314179

Check out our website: www.capelstmarychurch.org.uk



AND FINALLY.....

You think you are introverted! Wait till you never meet me.....



When the staff meeting is about to end - and someone asks another question.....



When I reply "maybe" as someone asks me out today....



EDITOR'S NOTE

The Link Newsletter shall continue to be published electronically on a fortnightly basis - please let me know of any news or views you may have for inclusion in the magazine.

Please be sure to forward any items for news to the editor at:

briancrogeron@btinternet.com

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Kindly note that editorial and production attempts to reflect accurately all submissions; however apologies are readily offered for any errors in transmission.

All features & news items & opinions in The Link are introduced & published by the Editor and only the church service, readings and reflection and prayers are submitted & authorised by the Priest in Charge and the PCC officers unless otherwise highlighted in the text.

