

COULSDON
PARISH
CHURCH
St. John



50p

December 2023/January 2024

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DECEMBER

1—Friday

7.30 p.m. Christmas Choir Rehearsal, in the Church

2—Saturday

10.00 a.m.. Gardening Morning in Garden of Remembrance (to 12.00)

10.00 a.m. Christmas Tree Festival opens, in the Church (to 5.00)

3—ADVENT SUNDAY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion, in Church *(and live-streamed on Facebook/through church website)*

2.00 p.m. Christmas Tree Festival open, in the Church (to 5.00)

4—Monday

10.00-12.00 & 2.00-5.00 Christmas Tree Festival open, in the Church

5—Tuesday

9.45 a.m. MU Service, in the Old Church, followed by refreshments

2.00 p.m. Christmas Tree Festival open, in the Church (to 5.00)

6—Wednesday

2.00 p.m. Christmas Tree Festival open, in the Church (to 5.00)

7—Thursday

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

2.00 p.m. Christmas Tree Festival open, in the Church (to 5.00)

7.30 p.m. PCC meets, in the Church

8—Friday

10.00-12.00 & 2.00-5.00 Christmas Tree Festival open, in the Church

7.30 p.m. Christmas Choir Rehearsal, in the Church

9—Saturday

10.00-12.00 & 2.00-5.00 Christmas Tree Festival open, in the Church
7.00 p.m. Christmas Quiz & Supper, in the Church (see p. 8 & 13)

10—SECOND SUNDAY of ADVENT

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion, in Church (*and live-streamed
on Facebook/through church website*)
2.30 p.m. Children's Christmas Crafts,, in Church
4.00 p.m. Christingle Service, in Church

13—Wednesday

5.00 p.m. Oasis Academy Coulsdon Carol Service, in Church

14—Thursday

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

15—Friday

7.30 p.m. Christmas Choir Rehearsal, in the Church

16—Saturday

7.30 p.m. Downland Chorale Christmas Concert, in the Church

17—THIRD SUNDAY of ADVENT

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church
9.30 a.m. Worship Together Service, in Church
6.30 p.m.. Carol Service, in Church

19—Tuesday

9.45 for 10.00 a.m. Christmas Pram Service for Babies & Toddlers,
in Church
2.00 & 6.30 p.m. Keston School Christmas Celebrations, in Church

20—Wednesday

a.m. Oasis Academy Byron Carol Concert, in Church

21—Thursday

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church
1.20 p.m. Coulsdon C of E School Christmas Service, in Church

24—FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT

CHRISTMAS EVE

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion, in Church (*and live-streamed
on Facebook/through church website*)
2.30 & 4.00 p.m. Carols at the Crib, in Church
11.30 p.m. Midnight Communion Service, in Church

25—CHRISTMAS DAY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church
10.00 a.m. Family Christmas Celebration, in Church

28—Thursday

~~11.00 a.m.~~ **NO** Holy Communion Service

31—FIRST SUNDAY of CHRISTMAS

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion, in Church (*and live-streamed
on Facebook/through church website*)

January

2—Tuesday

~~9.45 a.m.~~ NO MU Service

4—Thursday

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

6—Saturday

10.00 a.m.. Gardening Morning in Garden of Remembrance (to 12.00)

10.00 a.m. Baptism Preparation, in the Church

7—EPIPHANY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion, in Church *(and live-streamed on Facebook/through church website)*

11—Thursday

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

14—SECOND SUNDAY of EPIPHANY

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion, in Church *(and live-streamed on Facebook/through church website)*

11.15 a.m. Family Service

2.00 p.m. Beetle Drive, in the Church

16—Tuesday

9.45 for 10.00 a.m. Pram Service for Babies & Toddlers, in Church

18—Thursday

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

21—THIRD SUNDAY of EPIPHANY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

9.30 a.m. Worship Together, in Church

24—Wednesday

2.00 p.m. Pray, Knit & Chat, in the Old Church

25—Thursday

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

28—FOURTH SUNDAY of EPIPHANY

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion, in Church *(and live-streamed on Facebook/through church website)*

11.15 a.m. Family Service

3.00 p.m. 'An Afternoon with Mary Balaam', in the Church

WHEREVER YOU ARE YOU CAN JOIN US ONLINE FOR SOME SERVICES

Follow the Parish Communion services, etc. online live as they're streamed from the Church on Facebook via our website at www.stjohns.coulsdon.net (or watch later) Contact the Parish Office on 01737 552461 or at stjohns@coulsdon.net if you need any help with this.



Rev'd Sue Thomas writes...

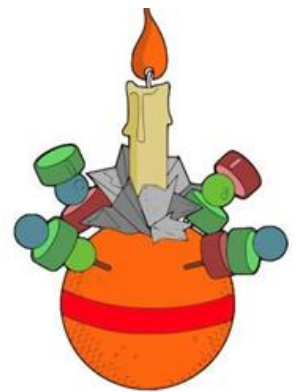
Christmas snow was a highlight of one year that I remember. When I was 7 or 8, my Dad put me on our wooden toboggan and, living on a steep hill, we sledged down to the bottom and to the shop to buy

some sweets and a newspaper. It was a cosy time, walking back home, up the steep hill together. My mum's Christmas trees were amazing. As a child she celebrated Christmas Eve because she was Viennese. So we always opened one present the night before Christmas, after singing carols at church. I wonder what your special Christmas memories are?



Of course, not everyone finds Christmas easy. It is one of the most stressful times for families, especially those who find coming together hard. It can also mean changes as to who visits whom, especially when children become young adults and have to choose between visiting their own parents or the parents of a partner. They then set up their own Christmas traditions.

Christmas traditions are handed down, and here at St John's we have traditions that define who we are as a church family. We come together to make Christingles, to join in Christingle activities, and to bring the light of Christ into our homes. Christingle activities this year will include making Christmas cards with a picture of the light of Christ on. There will be tissue covered jars to decorate, with battery tea lights to place inside. There will be edible treasures to decorate (and eat af-



ter!), with perhaps a star or angel as a reminder of the Christmas story.



Christmas is about bringing Jesus and his love into our homes, especially into those difficult moments. We love to make Christmas special, so do go out of your way to bring that specialness to your friends, family, and neighbours. Share your Christingle light, edible treats, a tea-light jar, and tell them the story of this light being Christ.

Inviting friends and family to a Crib Service really makes the meaning of Christmas real.

We hope to have a real baby in the crib at both Crib Services. I remember a neighbour of mine that I took to church. He didn't go to church, he vaguely knew about nativity scenes, but when he came to the Carol Service and looked at the empty crib (waiting for the arrival of the baby on Christmas day), he said, 'Where is the baby?' What a question, and an opportunity, to share the story of the birth of Christ, God on earth bringing his joy to all.

Bring Christmas Day joy to your friends and neighbours. Invite them to the 10am service. It is for all ages and a short service that is fun for all. We will sing some carols and share the joy of Christmas together. Will you share the joy and invite someone you know to come?



John 8:12 Jesus is the light of the world.

Have a very happy joyful Christmas!
May the joy and light of Christ shine bright in your homes.

Sue

***Assistant Priest, St John's, Coulsdon
Area Dean Croydon South***





.. Is going to be very busy at St. John's as we head towards Christmas. There are events and services for all ages – from the Christmas Tree Festival, a Quiz with Supper, the Christmas Pram Service for the

youngest, the Christingle Service preceded by a Children's Christmas Craft Workshop, a festive Worship Together service, an inspiring Carol Service – all bringing us to the joy of our Christmas Celebrations on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Please come and join us as often as you can.



Even if the weather is wintry, don't stay at home—wrap yourself, and your family, up and come and join in *ALL* that is happening at St. John's this month. Whatever your age and whether you have family with you or nearby or you're on your own, we really would love to welcome you to all these events. Who knows—your spirits may be lifted and the approach to Christmas might take on new meaning for you.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL ...



... opens on **Saturday 2nd December** at 10.00 a.m. As you can see from the calendar at the front of the magazine, the church will be open some weekday mornings, every afternoon, and most of the day on **Saturday, 9th December**, with the final chance to come and experience it on Sunday afternoon – **10th December**. And entrance is **FREE!** There will be festive refreshments on offer – especially tea, coffee and homemade cake – and activities for the children. The Festival will be open for a total of 37 hours during the week, including two weekends, so we hope you will be able to find some time to pop in and support this lovely community event at St. John's. Look forward to seeing you.

CHRISTMAS QUIZ with SAUSAGE SUPPER

Saturday 9 December—7.00 p.m.—in the Church

Always good fun, Sandra & Trevor have another super quiz lined up for us. So why not come along for a warm friendly evening guaranteed to get those little grey cells working. For just £10 supper and the quiz is included. You just need to bring your own drink, glasses and cutlery—and perhaps some cash for the raffle if you wish. Tickets must be bought or booked in advance—Parish Office at stjohns@coulsdon.net or on 01737 552461

CHRISTINGLES & CRAFTS—Sunday 10 December

On **10th December** there'll be **NO** Family Service in the morning as it moves to 4.00 p.m. for our **Christingle Service**. The afternoon will start with a **Children's Christmas Craft Workshop** in the church. Come any time between 2.30 & 4.00 p.m. for some simple Christmas craft ideas. The **Family Christingle Service will be at 4.00 p.m.** A Christingle is a 'Christ Light' and



easily made with an orange as its base representing the world. You can make your Christingles at home with the children and bring them along to light at this informal service for all ages – or you can bring the children, each with an orange, if you can, to the ‘workshop’ and we’ll help them turn it into a Christingle. Whether you have children or not, please do come along and enjoy this lovely service – it’s for the young in heart as well as the young in years! - and help us to fill St. John’s with candlelight – beacons of hope for the future.

THE CAROL SERVICE — Sunday 17 December



Our special evening **Carol Service** will be at **6.30 p.m.** on **17th December** and our ‘Christmas Choir’ has already started rehearsing in preparation. Come and join in the singing on the night – familiar, well-loved carols and maybe something new – hear the Advent stories and prepare yourself for the coming Christmas season. If you’re going to be away over the holiday this might be a good way to join in some of the local Christmas spirit before you go. We hope you will stay for coffee, tea and mince pies afterwards.

CHRISTMAS PRAM SERVICE – Tuesday 19 December

All babies, toddlers, pre-schoolers and their mums, dads, grannies, grandpas or whoever looks after them on a Tuesday morning shouldn’t miss the **Christmas Pram Service** on **Tuesday, 19th December** at 9.45 for 10.00 a.m. start in the Church! We look forward to welcoming you all as we find out what Christmas is really all about in our short time of fun and praise. There’ll be action songs, our interactive story, and we’ll all be shepherds just for a little while as we go to find out what happened in Bethlehem. Afterwards there’ll be time for chat and play, with Christmassy refreshments! Do come – even if you’ve never been before – it really is fun!. And if you have older children who’ve broken up from school they would be very welcome too.



CHRISTMAS EVE



... falls on a Sunday this year so starts off with our regular **Parish Communion** service at 9.30 a.m.

In the afternoon be sure to bring the children along to **‘Carols at the Crib’** either at **2.30 or 4.00 p.m.**.. *Why not come dressed as your favourite Nativity character?* These are very relaxed, informal and popular celebrations of the first Christmas for all ages – whether you have children/grandchildren or not – but come

early if you want a good seat! Many who don’t come to church regularly wouldn’t miss this and feel it is a lovely reminder of what Christmas is about and a good basis for their own celebrations.

AND after most of the preparations are done and the children are tucked up



in bed come and join us in the first Communion of Christmas at our **Midnight Communion Service** which actually starts at **11.30 p.m.** Forget the preparations, the worries about everything, just for a while. Come and feel the wonderful atmosphere of this very special service with traditional carols, maybe a little candlelight, and Christmas Communion or Blessing for all who want it.

CHRISTMAS DAY

For an oasis of calm, especially if you've lots to do later, why not join the early birds and all those who enjoy the words of the old **1662 Communion Service** in this quiet time of worship, with maybe a carol or two, and receive your Christmas Communion or a Blessing at **8.00 a.m.**

At **10.00 a.m.** on Christmas Morning we have our **Family Christmas Celebration** for all ages. So bring the children, the aunties, the uncles, the cousins, the grandparents and anyone else staying with you – or come on your own and be part of St. John's family – for this relaxed time of celebration and worship.



.. may be a much quieter month after the many Advent & Christmas events and services in December, but all the regular services and meetings at the usual times return. A warm and friendly welcome awaits—with hot drinks after services and during most meetings .. and sometimes we're spoilt with cake! So be bold, brave the cold (well-wrapped up) and come and join in. There are also two special Sunday afternoons this month ...

THE BEST WAY TO SPEND A SUNDAY AFTERNOON?

Why, playing 'Beetle' of course! Never played it? Not played for years? You've no idea how much fun you're missing. Come to the Church on **Sunday 14 January at 2.00 p.m.** and you'll soon get the hang of it. This is for all ages. And there'll be lots of tea, coffee,



squash and cake to keep us calm and help the afternoon along. Last year's was a great hit—and definitely a January uplifting event—with many asking when the next would be. Well here it is, so do come and join in the fun. See advert and book your tickets—you can pay online beforehand or cash on the day—and the tickets will be waiting for you to collect when you come.



SPEND AN AFTERNOON WITH MARY

On **Sunday 28 January** at 3.00 p.m. in the Church, Mary Balaam invites you to the world of 'Training to be a State Registered Nurse in the 1960s'. She hopes you will find it informative, interesting and may be even fun! Tea, coffee & cake will be served to round off what promises to be a fascinating afternoon.

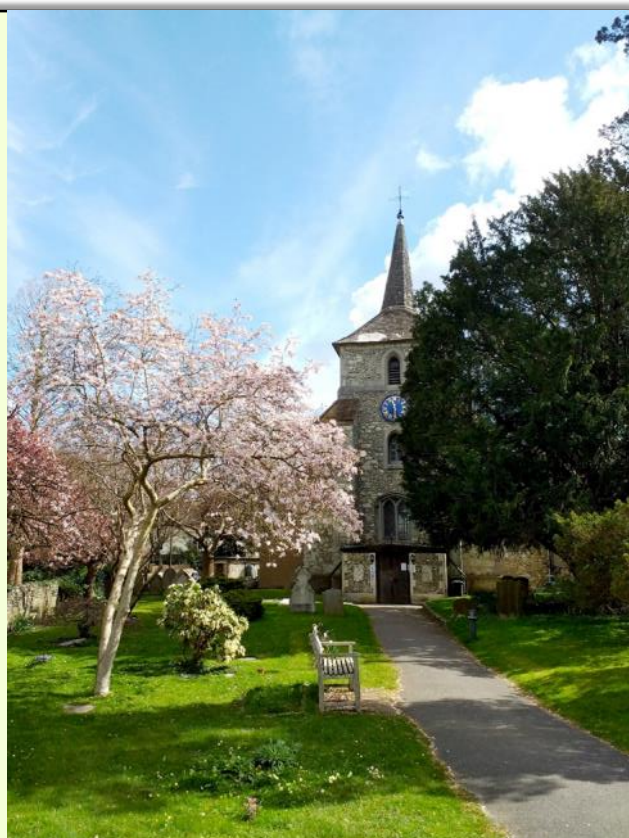


**A STOCKING FILLER?
A THOUGHTFUL GIFT?**

... **'St. John's
own
Notelets'**

On sale in aid of the Spire (& other major repairs) Fund ~ £5 per pack of 10 (five each of the two views)

Available in church
on the Information Desk



or from the Parish Office.—
01737 552461 or at
stjohns@coulsdon.net

Happy to deliver locally if
you're unable to get out or can
be posted to those who live
further afield.

START THE YEAR WITH SOME USEFUL EXERCISE!

Come and join the small group that meets once a month on the first Saturday to keep the area of the churchyard put aside as the Garden of Remembrance neat and tidy. They would be delighted to have your help and you would get some gentle exercise in the fresh air in really good company. **See you any time between 10.00 & 12.00 on Saturday 6 January**



CHRISTMAS SHOPPING ON-LINE?

Did you know that you can help St John's to raise funds at the same time???

Thank you to everyone who shops online and places their orders through the www.easyfundraising.org.uk website. Easy fundraising is a painless way to help boost St John's finances, and we've just received £80.03 thanks to people shopping online through Easyfundraising. In total £1,511.24 has been raised so far by 39 supporters. If anyone else would like to support St John's in this way, the link is <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/cause/stjohnschurcholdcoulsdon/>.

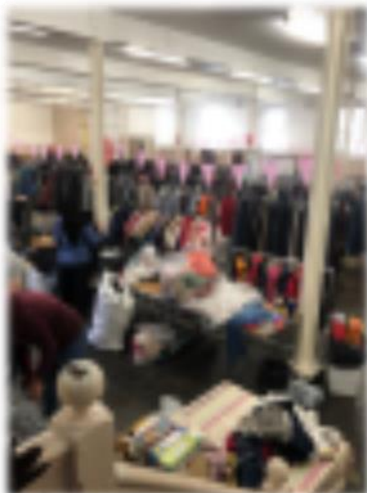
Just click on the link above, or copy it into your browser, and you can set up your account, and start shopping – **at no extra cost!** Thank you.

(Please note that, if shopping at Amazon, their website has to be accessed through Easyfundraising, and not via their donation reminder.)

Pray, Knit and Chat – PKC

This friendly little group has been meeting on a monthly basis for quite some time, producing knitted garments for children and others in parts of the world affected by conflict.

Recently Janice Green and I had the pleasure of travelling over to West Croydon Baptist Church, taking precious bags of hand-knitted garments to the Refugee Centre which is located there.



The warm and colourful children's articles were really appreciated, and we found it to be a remarkable and welcoming place, and were confident that it would prove to be a valuable outlet for our masterpieces!

They are very happy to receive donations via the side entrance of the Church in Whitehorse Road, during their opening hours on Mondays 9.00am to 3.00pm. **Enid T.**





ST JOHN'S CHURCH

Canon's Hill
OLD COULSDON
CR5 1HA

CHRISTMAS QUIZ NIGHT

with
SAUSAGE SUPPER
7.00 p.m. in the Church

Saturday 9 December

Come with a team (up to 8) or
come on your own

Tickets: just £10 each

Book your place on 01737 552461
or at stjohns@coulsdon.net

CHOOSE CAREFULLY!

We give a lot of careful thought to choosing Christmas gifts for friends and family, but perhaps we should also think more carefully about how we wrap them up. From an environmental point of view, Christmas wrapping paper presents two main problems – firstly what it is made from and secondly how it is disposed of.

It is estimated that 8000 tonnes of wrapping paper are used in the UK each year – the equivalent of approximately 50,000 trees. It is extremely wasteful, usually being made from virgin paper, a single-use item, used once and thrown away, sent to landfill or recycling.

Approximately 227,000 miles of wrapping paper are thrown away each year in the UK – 108million rolls – roughly the distance from the earth to the moon! Certain types of wrapping paper can be recycled – if it's

plain wrapping paper, with no sticky tape attached, it is fine to put it in the recycling bin. But paper that is metallic, shiny, coloured gold and silver, dyed, laminated, glitter encrusted, has sticky tape attached, cannot be recycled, and if put in the recycling bin it can spoil the entire load. Such paper ends up in landfill – 2.3 million pounds of it, contributing to pollution from greenhouse gas emissions and causing damage to human and animal health. Over time, the glitter and microplastics pollute oceans and, ingested by animals, can eventually collect in their stomachs and be fatal.



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The “scrunch test” is the way to distinguish between recyclable and non-recyclable wrapping paper – scrunch the paper in your hand; if it remains scrunched, it's recyclable, if it springs back, it will likely have a covering of plastic film and will not be recyclable.

Wrapping up presents is part of the festive ritual and it is also part of the seasonal fun to conceal the contents of parcels under the Christmas tree. Here are some environmentally friendly suggestions:- use the “scrunch test” when buying and disposing of wrapping paper, look on-line at eco-friendly sites like Natural Collection, use tissue paper, brown paper and string, make ribbons of fabric strips, reuse gift bags, sew some fabric bags for use at Christmas and birthdays, reuse scrap paper, magazines, old maps and newspapers to create unique gift wrap.

Happy Christmas

ECO GROUP



Please join
Churches Together in Coulsdon
for
carols and mince pies
in Coulsdon Library
167, Brighton Road, Coulsdon
Saturday 16th December
10.00-11.30am

MOTHERS' UNION - *Transformation - Now!* **DECEMBER focus: God with us**

Mothers' Union is a Christian organisation that has been supporting families worldwide for over 140 years. Started by our founder Mary Sumner in 1876 in her local parish, we have grown into an international charity with over 4 million members in 84 countries. We demonstrate our faith in action. This happens as we work towards stopping poverty, stopping inequality, and stopping injustice. Our members work at grass-roots level around the world. They bring hope and practical support to millions of people every year through parenting, literacy and community development programmes.



Our prayer is that we can:

- ◆ *Transform ourselves, personally and spiritually, to live out our faith*
- ◆ *Transform the churches and communities we work with, and of which we are a part, to reflect Christ's kingdom*
- ◆ *Transform Mothers' Union to be relevant for 21st century life.*

" For with God nothing shall be impossible" - Luke 1:37

BRANCH DATES:

Tues. 5 December: 9.45am Service of Prayer and Reflection, followed by Refreshments

No Pray, Knit & Chat in December)

2024

We will not have a MU Service in January as the first Tuesday is so close to New Years Day. May I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful and healthy New Year. Thank you for your support since Nicy left and I hope it will continue until we have a new Branch Leader. ***Elaine***

Wed. 24 Jan: 2.00pm

Pray. Knit & Chat in Church - do join us!
All welcome whether you knot or not, we offer delicious cakes and good company.





REFLECTION:

This Advent, in the joy of looking back to when the Messiah was born, let us not forget to look forward to when the King will return. We live in the time now and not yet, between the first and second coming of Christ. The story is only half told; the other half awaits. The plan of salvation is complete, yet its outworking is still to unfold. Unlike Christ's first coming, which was witnessed by a select few, his second coming will be seen by all. May we always be ready and waiting to meet our glorious Lord.

MONTHLY PRAYER

Ever-present God with us, transform us with the glory of Nativity. Illumine our lives as we behold the new-born Christ. Transform us into a people of his light, that we may reflect your glory in the shadows of life. Amen



17th PURLEY SCOUT GROUP ANNUAL CHRISTMAS POSTAL SERVICE

**Delivering your CHRISTMAS CARDS within the
Parish of St Johns Church—Old Coulsdon**

Place your cards in the post box at the back of the church and for a donation we will deliver your Christmas cards to any address within the Parish of St John's Old Coulsdon—check list of roads covered on the side of the box. You can post your cards in the box on Sundays or any weekday when the church is open up to **Sunday 17th December**

**The final collection will be at
9.30 a.m. on Sunday 17th December.**

Carol Singers needed at Croydon Hospital

We are looking for carol singers to go around the wards on **Wednesday 20th December** from 6:00pm to sing with us as we start in the Worship Centre and then disperse around the wards. Sing your favourite Carols and bring good tidings and cheer to staff and patients. Re-join us in the Worship Centre afterwards for refreshments, mulled wine and mince pies



This is an important opportunity to bring the joy of Christmas to those who are in hospital at this festive time.

More details available from Revd Andy Dovey, Lead for Chaplaincy & Spiritual Care with Bereavement Services, Croydon University Hospital—Ext 3105 Mobile 07557 140 739 Email andrew.dovey@nhs.net

HOW DUSTY is YOUR BIBLE?... .. and do you even know where it is?’

There were some wry looks around me as Revd Lisa laid down this challenge to us on Bible Sunday. Well, *do you know?*

According to the Guinness World of Records, the Bible is the best selling book of all time, with five billion copies sold and distributed world wide. It has 750,000 words and 1189 chapters.

As I listened to Lisa, I began to recall the Bibles that I owned. I knew that the oldest was the Bible owned by my grandad Ernie, inherited by me from my mum. I don't 'use' this Bible as such, its language is beautiful but ancient. It is enough for me to occasionally hold it and feel close to the grandad that I never knew. I imagine him taking it to church with him on a Sunday.

The day's reading was from Nehemiah. Immediately my Storytellers' Bible came to mind. I am a trained Open the Book storyteller and I recalled taking part as one of the characters in an Open the Book school assembly about Nehemiah. This Bible is a fabulous, accessible resource to share with children, opening their eyes to God's Word in a way that they can absorb and understand. The image



faded, and was replaced by pictures of other Bibles that I own. I recalled the part that each had played in my life, everyone of them speaking to me in their own way for that time.

I arrived home and immediately searched out all my Bibles. I have lived in my house now for a very long time and I knew my Bibles were all over the place in different rooms, bookshelves and boxes. It was a nostalgic and poignant exercise. My first Bible, my

mum bought me when I was quite young, I recalled her taking me to a Christian bookshop in Streatham and choosing it, however I don't recall ever reading it. Next came my Secondary school Bible given to me by the local Council and inscribed in the front. Again, did I ever read this except for school RE lessons? I grew up, left school and continued my journey in the Christian faith, dipping in and out of church, rarely inspired to actually read the Bible myself. I listened half heartedly in church but that was it, it held little meaning to me and my life.



My most precious Bible is the one that I have near me always and is probably the most unlikely one of all. It is a 99p copy of just the New Testament, given to me when I joined a church plant right at the end of 2015. I had worshipped at a traditional Anglican Church for around 25 years, but was inspired to visit the linked church plant after an encounter where someone had laid hands on me and prayed for me. It changed my life.

The Bible came alive to me in a way that I had never experienced before. It breathed, it spoke, it showed me things I had never before seen, I could not get enough of it and still can't. God was speaking to me and this time I was listening!

Is your Bible the Cinderella of the bookshelf, or is it living, breathing, alive and speaking to you?

Wendy J

A NEW CHURCH WITHIN A CHURCH!



"You may have noticed a lovely model of a Church has appeared in the Church. This fantastic piece of woodwork was built by David Caddick in response to a request from the Building Restoration Group to create a Money Box. Sitting on a large plinth, the model is designed to raise awareness of our Spire Appeal for funds.

Advent heralds a busy period within the Church; Christmas Tree Festival, Crafts & Christingles, School Carol Services, Lessons and Carols plus the two Crib services on December 24th and Christmas Celebrations on December 25th. So many visitors with hopefully loose change to fill the Money Box.

We are very grateful to David for creating this model."

Churchwardens

CATCHING UP WITH TONY!

It is Armistice Day and the Two Minute Silence has just been observed in front of the Mansion House at the beginning of the Lord Mayor's Show. A beautiful moment when the City of London came to a complete standstill and silence. A wonderful start to what many doomsayers expected to be a difficult day for the police, Muslims, Jews, and Christians throughout the land – what a pity that the “Far Right” tried to hijack a peaceful pro-Palestine march later in the day.

Remembrance Sunday dawned with the weather looking a little ‘iffy’, but it brightened up and the hard work our Wardens put in to the arrangements ensured that it all went very well. We were able to welcome the Army, Royal Air Force, Scouts and Guides uniformed groups, local dignitaries and invited guests, as well as regular and occasional members of our congregation. The count which went into the register stood at 477, but I estimate the number of attendees as being closer to 500 as many arrived well after the service had started.



Rev Sue – delivering her sermon from the pulpit



The Rt Hon Chris Philp gives the first reading

We were delighted to see Chris Philp MP again, and to listen to Rev Sue's wonderful sermon – especially the way in which she included the young people in its message – as they are, after all our future.

The church service was followed by another round the war memorial when wreaths were laid, and the young uniformed groups paraded so smartly – arriving and departing with military precision. Wendy – bless her – handed out 250 orders of service to casual visitors – and the rain held off. Huge thanks must go to all those members of St John's who either made themselves available on the day or undertook specific jobs. Well done to the ‘sound team’ who set up all the equipment at the war memorial, the four singers who led the congregation so beautifully, our Wardens who worked closely with Rev Sue, and Wendy, and finally to the five young Scouts who did the collection which totalled nearly £470. Big thanks to you all.

The invited guests and dignitaries were then welcomed to a reception, very kindly hosted by Carole and David Caddick in their lovely cottage, before we again repaired to the war memorial to welcome some horses, representing the many millions of their kind along with dogs who gave their lives in service during the two World Wars. What a special moment that was too; Rev Sue spoke with feel-

ing, one of the stable folks laid a purple wreath, and each horse was given a carrot. A truly lovely end to what was a wonderful morning.



This lovely old boy only had one eye

With the rain that's sheeting down at the moment I can't do much about the fallen leaves outside, so I'll have a quick word about the churchyard – which again missed its monthly visit from the 'Gardening Club' due to more foul weather. If we get a couple of dry days there are a lot of leaves covering the brick path which could be cleared by someone with a bit of spare energy and/or time, but in the meantime we must give thanks for surviving all that nature has thrown at us recently with storms Agnes, Babet, Ciaran, and Demi (but she missed us luckily). After a brush with college students in the week, I almost felt we had turned a corner when I did my usual Saturday morning wander round, and found no rubbish. What I did find though was a lunch box, a scrunched up tissue, a drinks bottle, and a used vape – in the rubbish bin ☐ – it was the Green bin though and I had to tip it up to get the bits into the black bin – but maybe we're making progress, especially as on another day when I was doing a bit of mowing, one of the college students arriving en masse with his mates, gave me a fist bump!



*Fallen leaves and Honey Fungus surrounding the dead Ginkgo tree
We'll be very sad to see it go*

N.B. Tree surgeons are now expected on 1st December to undertake the work mentioned in a previous issue of the magazine. I might try to borrow their big back-pack leaf blower to have a clear-up whilst they're doing their work.

All that remains for me this year is to wish all our readers the most wonderful Christmas. May the joyous message of Christmas fill your hearts with peace, the warmth of love, and the blessings of hope. Have a blessed and Merry Christmas and may God be with you.

Tony

COULD YOU ADD JUST ONE MORE ITEM TO YOUR SHOPPING LIST?

The Purley Food Hub writes: The month's (November) total us **past 42,000 meals provided in 2023** so far, with December busiest month - still to come. .



Traditional ingredients top our December food list—Items that are as useful as we can provide for a traditional Christmas meal for our clients and their families make up the Food Hub's December food list, also reflecting our current stock shortages. **Tins of plain chicken and ham, packet and tinned potatoes, tinned peas and carrots** top the month's most wanted list, followed by **tins of dessert fruit, puddings, jellies and packet custard, bottles of squash, jars of red jam (strawberry/raspberry), Christmas biscuits and children's chocolate/sweet treats** would add a welcome festive touch!

If you would like to give just one item—or more - on the above list to the Food Hub, goods can be left in the wooden box in St. John's porch and these will be taken to the Hub in time for Christmas

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CHRISTMAS FAIR

As a bit of a bystander at the 2023 St John's Christmas Fair I'd just like to put on record a few words of praise for our Churchwardens and all those who helped/ participated in any way. It was a real team effort; not only in the planning, set-up, running, and clearing away afterwards.

Here are a few pictures for the archives:-



Thursday night and the 'workers' have got the tables and chairs arranged – still to do is the bunting, table cloths, and good things to sell



A few hours later and we await the 'punters'



Starting to buzz, money being spent, and lunches being eaten.



– but certainly not least – the Christmas Elves - having already said good-bye to Santa.



Tony

THANK YOU FOR AN AMAZING AFTERNOON!

Thank you to everyone for whatever part you played in enabling St. John's to have a fantastic Christmas Fair. Every single gift of your time, talents, muscle(!) and goods to stock the stalls – whether large or small – enabled the church to offer a warm welcome to the local community – and we are very grateful. Thank you also to everyone who came along to shop and have fun. The church looked wonderful and many lovely comments were heard as people were leaving. Not only did we have a grand afternoon but a wonderful total of £3,500 has been received for church funds. We will let you know the final total after some expenses have been paid. Well done everybody and thank you again!

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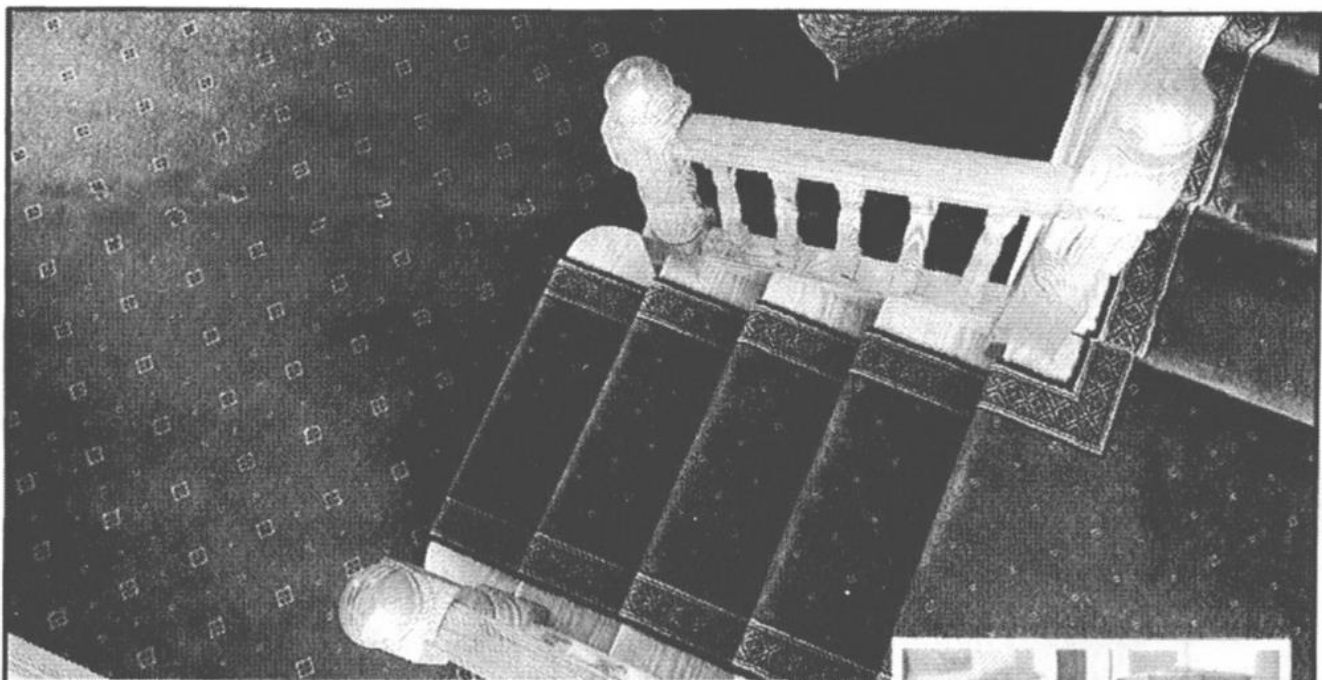
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