

COULSDON  
PARISH  
CHURCH  
St. John



50p

February 2024

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## February

**1—Thursday**

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

**3—Saturday**

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

10.30 a.m. Mothers' Union AGM, in the Old Church

**4—SECOND SUNDAY before LENT**

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

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

**5—Monday**

7.30 p.m. PCC meets, in the Church

**6—Tuesday**

9.45 a.m. MU Service, in the Old Church

**8—Thursday**

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

**10—Saturday**

10.00 a.m. Baptism Preparation, in the Church

**11—SUNDAY next before LENT**

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

11.15 a.m. Family Service

**14—ASH WEDNESDAY**

7.30 p.m. Holy Communion with Ashing, in the Old Church

**15—Thursday**

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

**17—Saturday**  
7.30 p.m. **Croydon Male Voice Choir Concert, in the Church**

**18—FIRST SUNDAY of LENT**

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

9.30 a.m. Worship Together, in Church

**20—Tuesday**

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

**22—Thursday**

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

**25—SECOND SUNDAY of LENT**

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

11.15 a.m. Family Service

**28—Wednesday**

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

**29—Thursday**

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

## March

**1—Friday**

10.30 a.m.. World Day of Prayer Service, Congregational Church

**2—Saturday**

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

7.00 p.m. **'Shuffleboard Evening', in the Church**

**3—THIRD SUNDAY of LENT**

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

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

**5—Tuesday**

9.45 a.m. MU Service, in the Old Church

**7—Thursday**

11.00 a.m. Holy Communion, in Church

**9—Saturday**

11.30 a.m. Wedding: Usmaan Khan & Sasha Jeffrey

**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](http://www.stjohns.coulsdon.net) (or watch later) Contact the Parish Office on 01737 552461 or at [stjohns@coulsdon.net](mailto:stjohns@coulsdon.net) if you need any help with this.



## Christine writes...



### ***‘What do you mean, you are ‘A READER?’***

This is the response I get when explaining what I do. And then it gets more complicated... *‘well I trained part-time for 4 years to be a ‘lay minister’.* Sometimes then people’s eyes glaze over. Explaining the word ‘lay’ can quickly trigger a change of subject.... The simplest definition is.. *‘Well I’m not a priest’* But for me expressing my faith through ‘Reader’ ministry is so rewarding at many different levels.

Officially a ‘Reader is licensed by the Bishop to lead services of the Word, to preach and to lead bible studies, also to do pastoral care which may include funeral ministry, but the variety of ministries vary depending on your gifts and experience... (or lack of!!!).

Preparing a sermon once a month is a challenge that leads me to explore the set passages of Scripture each month. What does this passage say to me? What is the main point that I might use to enable the congregations to understand, and so relate to God more deeply in their lives? How can I bring the bible passage alive and relevant to those listening?

The selection process for any official lay ministry, in itself, is enlightening. There are so many different possibilities. Chaplaincy, Pastoral visitors, Worship Leaders, also Pioneers. I certainly did not know exactly what I might be drawn to until I started the process.

If there is an inkling that you might be drawn to something: maybe reading one of the lessons during a service, helping with prayers, singing, helping the ‘tech team’ with the cameras and live streaming, visiting people in their homes to support and encourage them, or more, then talk to someone about it. Just explore. You start by listening to the voice within you and listening to those around you who may recognize a gift,



*‘God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform’* are words of a well-known hymn and the words can help us to stop... and reflect on what God is doing in this parish during this time of vacancy, as we thank God for the past and prepare ourselves for a new incumbent and the ways that we can be part of the future life, just where we are now.

May God continue blessing us as we watch for growing signs of Spring around us.

***Christine McCutcheon  
Reader PTO. St John the Evangelist***

# FEBRUARY



## Have you been watching,

as I have, for the green shoots that tell us that spring is on the way? And then today, 23 January - grey, damp and windy—I was delighted at last to spot snowdrops in the churchyard. So here is February—a month of new beginnings—long-hidden bulbs bursting into life and the days getting longer. Maybe, after a wonderful, busy December followed by a quieter time when many of us like to shut ourselves away in the warm in January, it's time for us all to come out of hibernation and join in with all the services, events and opportunities, including a lovely new hobby perhaps (see p.16), that's on offer at St. John's.



## PLEASE COULD YOU HELP TO TIDY UP THE 'GARDEN'?



After all the wind and rain we've had recently, you can imagine what a good 'tidy-up' the Garden of Remembrance in the churchyard needs. The small group that meets on the first Saturday of each month would be delighted to have your help on **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February any time between 10.00 & 12.00**. Exercise in the fresh air in great company and there's sure to be jobs for all ages and abilities. And if you can't make it this month, how about next, on **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March**? As you can see, there's usually time for refreshments to keep you going. If you want to know more first contact Gill (01737 553596) - or just come along.

## THE CHURCH SEASON OF 'LENT' BEGINS ...

.. on **Ash Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> February**, with a service of Holy Communion with Ashing at 7.30 p.m. in the Church. As always, everyone will be very welcome to come and receive communion or a blessing. During the service there will also be the opportunity to have a cross marked with ashes on your forehead. Historically, ashes signified purification and sorrow for sins. Palm crosses from the previous Palm Sunday service are burnt to produce ashes for this service. The ash cross on the forehead is an outward sign of our sorrow and repentance for our sins – a very suitable way to start Lent.



## A BREATH of FRESH AIR ~ 'LENT GROUPS'

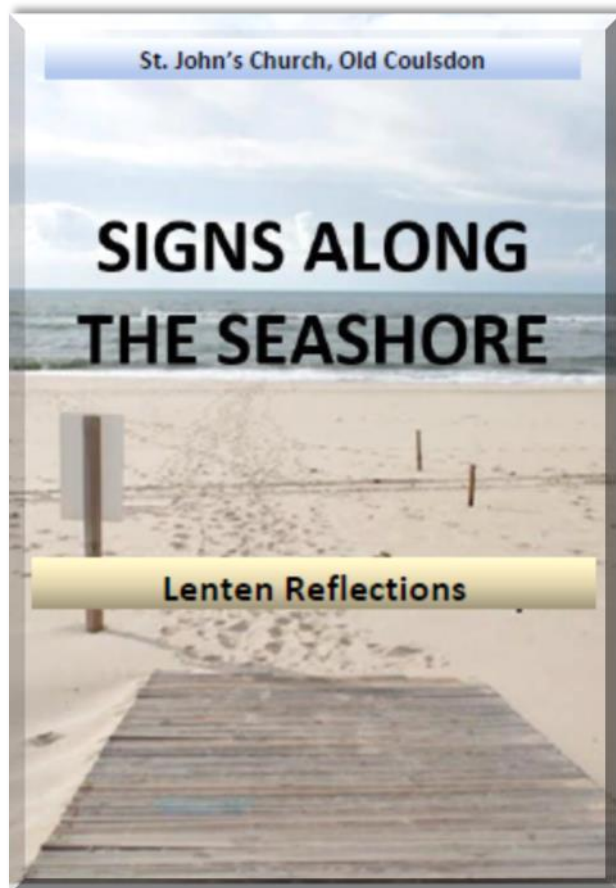
Andrew Cunnington, Vicar of All Saints Findon Valley with St.Peter's High Salvington has written this booklet and is very pleased for us to use it at St. John's as a basis for our Lent Studies.

Our parish may not be by the seashore, but how many times have we read about our Lord on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and have our own memories of visits to the seaside, maybe Worthing or elsewhere. Andrew's introduction can, I think, get us all thinking about our own faith journey, and is very meaningful as the booklet unfolds session by session.

Andrew writes: *'These are Lenten reflections that begin at the far end of Worthing Pier and draw to a close in the bustling port of Shoreham. Along the way I take time to explore familiar seaside landmarks and see where they might be leading me on my faith's journey, and I am inviting you to do the same. You can simply sit at home and read these reflections at a time and pace to suit yourself ...or you can join a home group where we will pick out some of the themes covered by each session ...'*—

So this year we are basing our Lenten reflections and discussions on '**Signs along the Seashore**'. It's a thought-provoking course—something different—a breath of fresh air! Do think about joining others at a house-group just for the six weeks of Lent. Four different groups will be meeting, once a week, during Lent: two evening and two daytime groups. We hope one of these will suit you. Please contact Carole Cad-dick on 01737 558936 or email [carolejcad-dick@icloud.com](mailto:carolejcad-dick@icloud.com) to find out details.

If you're unable to join a group, copies of the booklet will be on the Information Desk in church for you to take and follow at home—please pop £1.50 per copy in the box there to cover costs. Do come and join us on our Lenten journey towards Easter—even if you've not done anything like this before. Carole looks forward to hearing from you soon



### Session 3: Beach Huts and Shelters

**Intrigued?  
Then join us on the journey to Easter**

## WHEN WILL WE GET OUR NEW RECTOR?

As this is a question being asked of us all, I thought to write this update on the vacancy.

When Paul retired at the end of August, it became the responsibility of the PCC to compile a Parish Profile.

Trudy, Christine and Fiona kindly undertook this exercise and presented a 41-page document for approval in December. It contains all the information that a prospective Rector would need to know about St John's Church and parish—our mission, where are we going, who we are, where we are, our school links and demographics, what services we offer and much more!



Having been approved by the PCC, the profile was sent to Archdeacon Greg and Bishop Rosemarie for their approval. Approval has been granted, so the next stage will be preparation of an advert.

An advert will then go out which will hopefully attract candidates. Rosemarie and Greg will comment on the prospective candidates with any interviews in June. They will also be given a tour of the Parish, possibly a visit to the Church School and a chat with various members of the congregation.

It is the Diocese's policy that nothing can be done to start the process to fill the vacancy until an incumbent has officially retired.

If you want to know anything else, then please speak to Ralph or Gill.

### **PRAYER for ST. JOHN'S while WE WAIT!**

**On Thursday 15 February** at 7.30 there will be the next of a series of Prayer Evenings in the Old Church when everyone is invited to join in prayer for St. John's as we travel through the interregnum and the preparations in the search for our new incumbent -to-be. Your company and support would be greatly appreciated, so please do come if you can. The following dates have been arranged as we continue: **Thursdays—21 March, 18 April, 16 May and 20 June.** Please join us as often as you can..

### **THE NEXT BIG THING ...**

... is a visit from Croydon Male Voice Choir to St. John's on **Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February** when they bring us another lively Concert. Always a treat, so take this opportunity for a 'winter uplift' and know that you will be helping to bring the refurbishment of the church spire a little closer. You can book your tickets and pay online or reserve them now and collect and pay on the night (by card or cash). Also available on the door.







A  
CONCERT  
BY



# CROYDON MALE VOICE CHOIR

Musical Director: Matthew Quinn

Pianist: Sam Prou

Soloist: TBA



## Saturday 17 February

7.30 p.m.

St. John's Church, Old Coulsdon, CR5 1HA

Tickets: £15 -book with St. John's Parish Office

01737 552461 or at [stjohns@coulsdon.net](mailto:stjohns@coulsdon.net)

## in aid of St. John's 'Spire Repair Fund'

## PRAISE with FUN at PRAM SERVICE!

If you're at home on a Tuesday morning with a little one—baby, toddler or pre-schooler—whether a mum, dad, granny, grandpa or other carer, then you really shouldn't miss our Pram Service on the third Tuesday of each month. This month we're meeting on **Tuesday, 20 February** at 9.45 for 10.00 a.m. start in the Church. We usually start with a hymn and a prayer for the adults and then the little ones



take over—choosing their favourite rhymes and choruses! We have an interactive Bible story—last month we 'followed the star' in the footsteps of the wise men including climbing over hills and mountains, and then passed around a special parcel which had something for us all to share in the middle. Finally the instruments came out for the last song ... bells, shakers, tambourines, etc. As you can see, we have a lot of fun so why not bring your little one(s) along on the **20 February** and give it a try? There are drinks and biscuits afterwards with time for

play and chat. We'd love you to join us! If you want to know more first just email Wendy at [stjohns@coulsdon.net](mailto:stjohns@coulsdon.net)



## OUR 'MODEL' EASTER GARDEN IS IN NEED OF SOME TLC!

Our Easter garden which is on view in the church each year is over 60 years old now, with some surface areas cracking or going very crumbly, other parts just need a little painting. The 'walls' that contain the flowers have a couple of areas that need replacing due to woodworm. Also the 3 figures need repairs to their feet. Generations of children have 'walked them along the path' resulting in 'broken toes'!! If you would be interested in helping us prepare it before it goes on show this Easter, I would be very pleased to hear from you.

**Christine McCutcheon** (01737 553681)



## !MOTHERS' UNION - *Faith in Action!* FEBRUARY focus: Works of Transformation



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 injus-

tice. Our members work at grassroots 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**

**Elaine writes:** I hope you had a lovely Christmas and happy New Year to you all. There are a lot of thanks to be given at the start of the New Year.

Our **Christmas tea** was very successful, although different to previous years. We were delighted that the children from Coulsdon Church of England School were able to join us and entertain us with a selection of Christmas songs, which we all enjoyed very much.



Sandra Meadowcroft then lead us in singing Christmas carols whilst narrating the wonderful story of the Christ Child's Birth. Afterwards our guests enjoyed mince pies and tea and went home with a slice of Christmas cake. My thanks to Sandra, and also John Alger who organised the music for the carols, and to all those members who helped with the refreshments. Christine McCutcheon ended our afternoon with a Prayer for Peace at Christmas.

My thanks too to Sandra Jefferies and her mum Pat for running the **MU Cake Raffle at the Christmas Fair** and raised £60.

Thanks also to Hazel Minter for decorating **two Christmas trees**, for MU she cut out over 80 angels depicting all the countries where MU is situated. They looked amazing and stood out amongst the green of the tree. Hazel also dressed the tree for Pray, Knit and Chat by knitting all the decorations for it. Well done.

We all owe a big thank you to Christine McCutcheon and Hazel Collis for their contribution to our **MU Service each month**. Christine

gives us a wonderful homily and Hazel prayers.

**Our first MU Service of the year** will be on **6<sup>th</sup> February**, 9.45 am in the Old Church, followed by refreshments. All are welcome.

**Pray, Knit and Chat** will be **Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> February**. Whether you like to knit or not, you would be most welcome to join us for chat and delicious cakes.

## Most importantly our MU AGM will be 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 10.30 am to 12

I would urge all members to come and hear about our previous year and also to discuss our future as a branch. So please bring your thoughts and any ideas as to how to keep our branch going.

I would be grateful for offers of cakes also for our meeting. **Elaine**

### Reflection

There is a difference between tending to a wound by covering it with a sticking plaster and actually addressing the root cause of the damage. The latter not only brings about total healing but may also ensure the wound doesn't reoccur, whilst the plaster brings some protection, the underlying pain sometimes remains. Similarly, as we



serve our communities, let's pray for the understanding, resources and supernatural power to effect total transfor-

mation, rather than a superficial, temporary covering over of issues. May our starting point be the sharing of God's transforming love in all we do and are.

### Monthly prayer

Generous, loving God, you have provided all the resources for works of transformation which create a sustainable future. Help us to use your provision well to effectively serve our communities, wherever we live in your world. **Amen**



### 17<sup>th</sup> Purley Scouts are Amazing!

You may remember the red postbox in the church in the weeks running up to Christmas where we could post our local cards for the Scouts to deliver for a donation. All were safely delivered, including one for an address in Essex (which they kindly sent on).

And then to our surprise Simon, Group Scout Leader, presented St. John's with a donation of £250 for the Spire Fund!

So not only did they give us an excellent local postal service but also donated the fruits of their efforts to help the Spire Fund grow faster.

You're amazing—thank you very much!

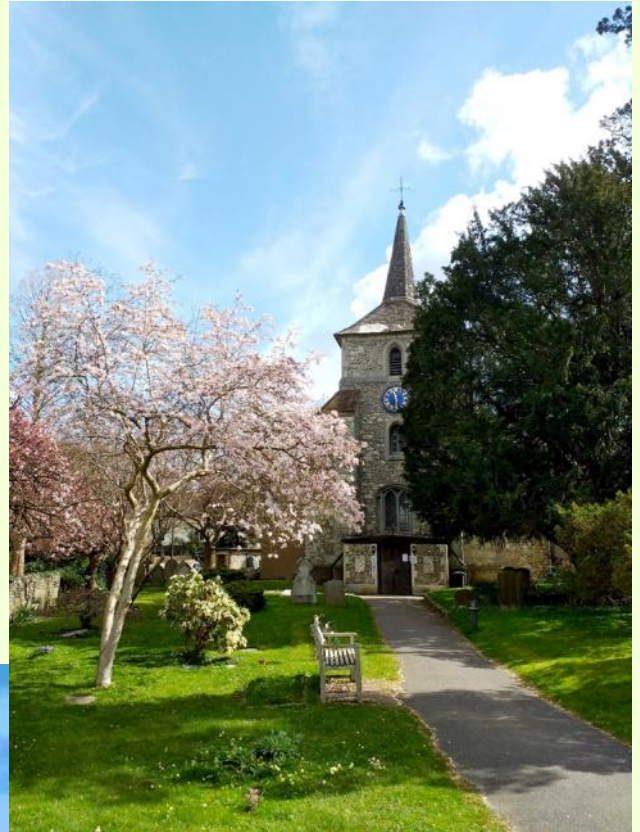
## WHAT LOVELY EASTER CARDS ...

# 'St. John's Notelets'

## WOULD MAKE!

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](mailto:stjohns@coulsdon.net)

Happy to deliver locally if  
you're unable to get out or  
post further afield.

## 'The trumpets sound the angels sing ... the feast is ready to begin'



Trumpets, smoke signals, carrier pigeon, drumming, letter writing, messages delivered by rider on a horse or by carriage, using mirrors, semaphore, Royal Mail, flag signals, beacons, texting, telex, telegraph, posters stuck up in the local area, word of mouth, talking to each other! email, land line telephone, mobile phone, WhatsApp, voicemail, car phones, walkie-talkie, FaceTime, personal invitation, signal lamps, Morse code. And finally (or maybe not!) the World Wide Web, websites and social media. All these are a wonderful mix of communicating. Some methods took weeks, days or hours to reach someone but as time went on, newer methods were far quicker and much cheaper to use,

reaching their intended audience in milliseconds.



If you are a watcher of the TV series Downton Abbey, you may remember how fearful Carson the butler was of the newly installed telephone. He was initially terrified to use it but as time went on he got used to it and realised its value. His fear that it had been invented for a somehow evil purpose just melted away and he embraced it. Nowadays, we don't think twice about using

the telephone or more likely, the mobile phone.

None of this means we should throw the baby out with the bath water by no longer talking to people or putting posters up locally or sending out our church magazine. It just means we have another additional method at our disposal, that of social media.

As with any method of communicating it can be misused, much as the telephone or writing letters can be misused, by sending the wrong message out. But with sensible management it is a fantastic way of getting a message across to huge numbers of people instantly, straight to their computers or mobile phones.

At St John's, the PCC has agreed we can continue to use the platforms of Facebook and more recently Instagram, to communicate our good news and also *the* Good News into the community and wider afield.

In consequence we are now able to communicate instantly with the 740 followers of our Facebook page, sharing our 09.30 streamed service, live, straight to them, thanks to our wonderful tech team. We can also share news of what's happening at St John's, both in pictures, video and word,



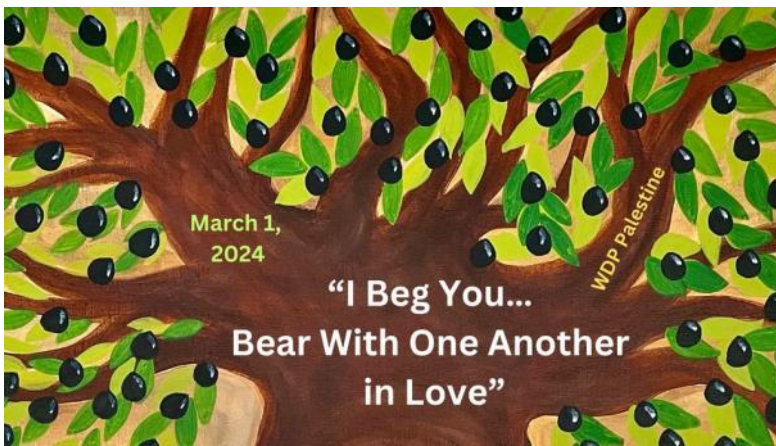
Recent statistics show that our 7<sup>th</sup> January service has so far been viewed 455 times, the 14<sup>th</sup> January Family Service photos have reached 486 people with 265 actively engaging with them, the Beetle Drive an astonishing reach of 1967 people, and the Remembrance Day outdoor service a reach of 823 with an engagement of 337 times.

You may think Facebook and Instagram are not for you, and if you do, just think about how Carson the butler first felt about the telephone, and how we all now embrace it. We are all charged with the Great Commission, to share the Good News afresh in each generation. This is one way we can ALL join in, so why not give it a try?

**Wendy J.**

**Find us on Facebook: St John's Church Coulsdon**  
**Find us on Instagram: StJohnsChurchCoulsdon**

# THE WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



The World Day of Prayer is an ecumenical movement inspired by the motto 'Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action'. It follows the example of Jesus Christ, who prayed from a place of knowledge and care for the world, and who acted from a place of prayer and connection to God.

An ecumenical group of Palestinian Christian women have prayed

and reflected together over the past several years to respond to the invitation to write the 2024 programme. Their theme is '***I Beg You... Bear With One Another in Love***', based on Ephesians 4: verses 1-7. This programme calls us to bear with each other in love, despite all difficulties and oppression.

They write: "We reflected collectively on this theme from the context of our suffering as Palestinian Christian women. We hope to inspire other women around the world to bear with one another in love during troubled times."

The Service shares stories of three Palestinian Christian women, who witness to the power of bearing together in love. Their stories illuminate the experiences of Palestinian women from three different generations. The symbol of an olive tree is used throughout the worship service. This represents the three generations through the trunk, branches, and leaves of the olive tree. Olive trees are a sign of everlasting and abundant life because they can live for thousands of years. The Palestinian people are deeply rooted in their country and this is underlined by the golden roots of the tree.



We feel sure you will wish to find out how the Palestinian women dealt with their problems, and whether those methods can still be used in today's war zone. This is an ongoing situation.

The service in our area, one of thousands all over the world, using the words of the Palestinian Christians, will be held on **Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March** 2024 in Old Coulsdon Congregational Church at 10.30am. There will be an opportunity to air your views over coffee (or tea) afterwards, and we hope many of you will do so.

**All are welcome, women, and men too.**

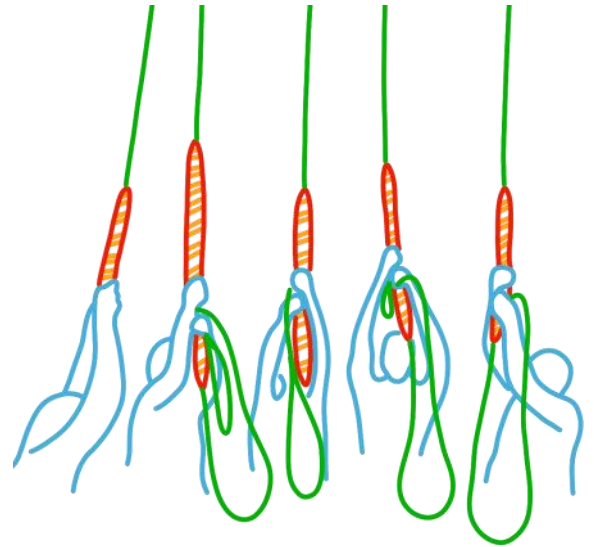
***Your local committee***



**CHURCH NOTELETS NEWS:** *"I'm pleased to report that we have now covered the printing costs with those sold to date. Please continue to support this fundraising project to help us reach our goal. They make nice little gifts at any time, as well as being just right for Easter". . Lynn (Treasurer)*

## COULD YOU be a BELLRINGER?

If you're aged between about 12 & 80 yrs. old you probably could! We are very, very short of bellringers at St. John's. So how about seeing if this could be the new hobby you are looking for? Our band of ringers has become depleted as several members have moved away. Martin Burke has recently become captain of the bellringers and is very keen to build up the band again. So this could be a good time to start learning.— especially as Martin has access to an excellent experienced instructor!



*'We're told: Most people have the ability to become a good ringer. Great physical strength is not required and people of all ages from 12 upwards are welcome. Perhaps you used to ring and would consider taking it up again? If you think you might be a little rusty, don't worry! You'll be surprised at just how quickly and easily you can pick up ringing again.'*

*'You probably already know that church bell ringing is a traditional art and an important part of our national heritage. You'll also discover it's a fun, healthy and sociable activity. **Bell ringers exercise their bodies, stimulate their minds and make new friends.** You will be joining a community of people from all walks of life throughout the UK and across the world. It may not sound like a mainstream hobby, but ordinary people like you enjoy the combination of learning skills with friends, just like other forms of sport, music and many other hobbies.'*

The regular practice night at St. John's is Tuesday and anyone interested in finding out more would be very welcome to come along to have a look—but please contact Martin Burke first to make sure the ringers are practising on a particular night and what time would be good to go. Martin may be arranging another night for newcomers to start learning.

## INTERESTED?

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Please contact Martin who'll be happy to tell you more or answer any questions—

just email:

[mrmartiburke@btinternet.com](mailto:mrmartiburke@btinternet.com)

or call: 07485 165810.



**It would be so good to have the bells ringing regularly again!**





# SHUFFLEBOARD

Table



Evening

**Sat. 2<sup>nd</sup>  
March**



St. John's Church  
Old Coulsdon ~ 7.00 pm

Super fun evening for all ages!

Book a table of up to six ~  
or come on your own & we'll  
make up teams on the night.

Tickets: £12 ~

to include a shared platter SUPPER ~  
from St. John's Parish Office at  
[stjohns@coulsdon.net](mailto:stjohns@coulsdon.net) or tel: 01737 552461

## KEEPING UP WITH TONY!

With no Parish Magazine due in January 2024, it seems somewhat strange to start writing an article when we are just half way through December, and excited about St John's Christmas Tree Festival – but perhaps that isn't a bad place to start by thanking all those involved, and especially our neighbours Melanie and Spencer Coleshill, whose Crossways Nursery on the Purley/Wallington border, has once again donated the tree that sits beside the altar. We are truly grateful and feel that Christmas is surely now on the way.

Elsewhere on a 'green' theme, the Garden of Remembrance was beginning to look slightly neglected due to





the bad weather, but the December meeting did see one attendee – our new friend Julie who turned up on a morning with freezing fog to work **on her own**. We are so grateful Julie and sorry that you had no company. The previous day had been very busy though when a team from W J Kent Tree Surgeons in Coulsdon arrived to undertake important work in the churchyard. Mainly just tidying up, but the old Yew in the middle has looked to be in distress for a number of years, and so, after advice, the crown height was reduced by 4-5m, the crown radius by 1.5-2m, and the dead wood removed. It is hoped that by these actions it will rejuvenate itself. Then very sadly four of the dead Box shrubs were removed exposing in three cases damaged grave-

stones. We could easily clear up those areas, and with a bit of compost put in something attractive in time for next year.

An advantage of having contractors in the churchyard is that they have tools – and these guys very kindly allowed us the use of a petrol powered leaf blower. What a difference that made to the autumn clear-up, and enabled us to get most of the leaves blown into heaps for later collection.

*Just a few of the tons covering our grass* →



Unfortunately I missed the January 2024 meeting of the churchyard working party, but during a break in the weather had a go at tidying up the area previously occupied by one of the Box shrubs.



Someone had already started on the brambles and ivy, and there is a lot more to do, but I did manage to uncover the section of brick path that has been buried for so long. Some more help, some compost, and sympathetic planting could make this corner beautiful once again.

A sad – but happy occasion happened on 23<sup>rd</sup> November when Enid and I, along with Jen Griffith and her Mum were invited to a Service of Celebration for the life of Thelma Carroll at St Alban’s Church, Hindhead. Many of our readers will remember Thelma and her husband John, who, before his retirement, was Vicar of Christ Church, Purley. John and Thelma were a wonderful couple helping so many of us on our journeys of faith. Together they founded the charities Emmanuel International <https://www.eiuk.org.uk> and Umoja Boys which cares for ‘street’ kids in Kenya. The family’s children Ray and Joy led the trib-

utes, and Joy's husband Rev. Jim Wallis gave an outstanding address. Joy was one of the first women to be ordained as a priest in the Church of England, and worked as a vicar in London for 10 years. She was also adviser, inspiration, and role model for the television series 'The Vicar of Dibley'. Since moving to the United States – where she married Rev. Jim - she has become licensed as a priest in the Episcopal Church. Rev Jim is an American theologian, writer, teacher, and political activist, and also worked as a spiritual advisor to President Barack Obama – and from what we saw in Hindhead a great speaker. The whole service was prepared and choreographed by Thelma herself, so I think it will be appropriate if I record some of Thelma's own words.

**“One day you'll hear that I've died.  
Don't you believe it.  
On that day I'll be more alive than ever before!  
I've just changed my address.”**

A very special lady, and despite what John called his friend “Al” (Alzheimer's) being in attendance, we felt that he recognised us as friends from St John's.

Moving on we were all sorry when Rev Sue was unwell, but delighted to see her back for the Christmas service of Readings and Carols. Great too to see and hear our Christmas Choir led and directed by Karen Jackson. That was a wonderful evening, and a packed church. The choir processed in – and out, the singing was certainly up to the sort of standard that Rev Paul and Nicy inspired, and we were fortunate to have the services of Eileen as both piano and organ accompanist.



Unfortunately Enid and I weren't present for the main Christmas services as we spent those few days with our daughter in Wiltshire. The plan was to attend the Christmas Eve service at All Saints, West Lavington, but following suggestions from one of their church wardens re parking, a recce on the way to Jo's convinced us that the lanes were so narrow it would be impossible/unwise to leave the car there, when villagers almost all attend on foot. So we went to the same church as last year at St Peter's, Great Cheverell - but this time for

Christmas morning; again no parking, but the nearby pub kindly allows churchgoers a bit of space 'out front'.

Christmas over it was back home for a couple of days before heading west again down the A303 for New Year with a very old friend in Cornwall. Another tiny village – Bathpool – with no shop, no pub, and no church (the nearest one at North Hill having closed permanently a year or two ago) so not quite where we'd like to live, but we had a very pleasant time – even if the weather was foul! We did venture out over Bodmin Moor on New Year's Day, passing the Jamaica Inn – romanticised in Daphne du Maurier's book of the same name. We'd forgotten that there is always a long cross country race on this day, and therefore encountered countless mud soaked runners looking very tired, cold, and wet – but we also

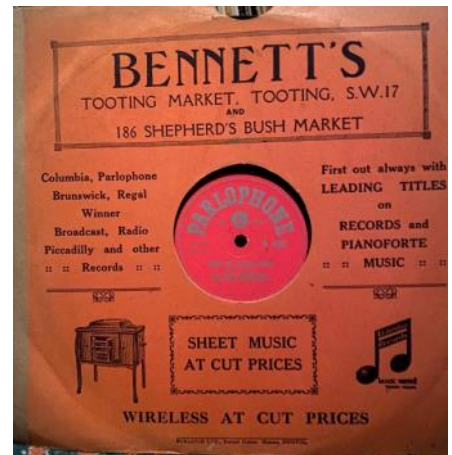
knew that they finished in the pub before a roaring log fire, so it wasn't so bad. That evening we enjoyed a trip down a musical memory lane as we sorted through a collection of old 78 records and were able to play some of them on his music system. That music was decades old, but the scary thing was that we could all remember the words. Have a look at these –



*Leave the dishes in the sink, Ma”  
Spike Jones and his City Slickers*



*“ Freight Train”  
The Chas McDevitt Skiffle Goup*



*... and this is how we used to buy our music – long long before streaming – which was what ribbons and kite tails did in the wind!*

These records of course were in use long before 33rpm vinyl LPs, but I and I'm sure many of our readers will remember the thrill we felt when taking a new LP out of its cover and putting it carefully on the turntable. We can all remember the first one we bought (mine was “The Louis Armstrong Story with his Hot Five”) but can anyone recall their first download? I'm starting to ramble so here's a thought – “With the country and the world apparently in dire straits, how is it that all those who have the answers to our problems drive taxis or work in hairdressers?” – and a prayer (courtesy of the You Version Bible app).

Father God, our world desperately needs Your peace.

Let our conversations flow with grace and love.

Show us how to better live in peace with others and seek goodness.

We want to reflect Your peace Lord in a world that thrives on conflict.

In Jesus' name Amen

**Tony**

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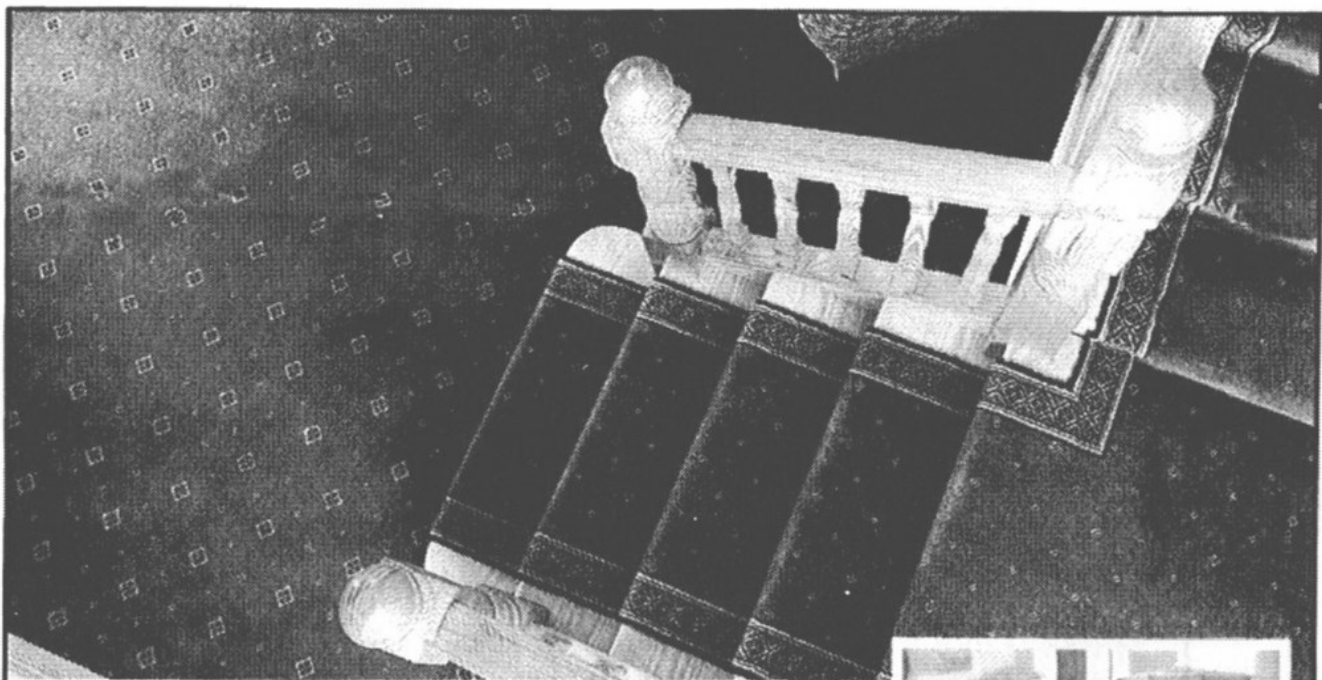
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