

# ***Saints Alive!***

***The parish magazine of  
All Saints Church, Kings Heath***



**December 2023  
& January 2024**



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community

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**BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM**

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# *From the vicarage*

Dear friends and neighbours,

A beautiful basket, woven with coloured cloths at a recent Iona evening service, will be present in our Advent services. This cradle is an expression of our readiness to receive and welcome and cherish Christ. Looking at its fragility and irregularity and porosity, I find I am moved and unsettled by a fact, mentioned in a news bulletin, that dropped like a stone into a pool, sending ripples through the imagination. At any one time, there are about 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza. Each day in Gaza about 120 babies are born.

As we allow that lovely, gently-made basket to hold our gaze in the coming weeks, it might stir us to pray for those women, those infants, their midwives. I am sent back to the passage in Exodus 1 describing the two brave Hebrew midwives who defied the orders of Pharaoh to kill any male infants 'because they feared God'. Their courage and perspective saved the people of Israel.

Clearly neither the government of the modern State of Israel, nor Hamas, fear God enough to withhold their hand from violence. Against a backdrop of unutterable destruction we must hold the glow of the women's courage and the irresistible human life force that outshines apparently irresistible human destructiveness. Those Jewish women in Exodus defied violence and saved a whole people. Perhaps emboldened by them, three other women saved Moses in particular (Exodus 2). Among those infants being born under oppression today, there may be future leaders of the Palestinian people. We have to consider whether current conflict might make it more likely that they will grow up sympathetic to violent elements in Palestinian communities. Moses was risk in that way. Indeed, as a young man he killed an Egyptian who was harming fellow Hebrews. Against the odds, though, he matured to lead his people in such a way as to give his oppressor Pharaoh chance after chance to change his ways and, even when escaping, did not resort to violence towards the Egyptians. Rather, they drove themselves into deadly trouble.

This moving theme in ancient Israel's history might inspire and expand the reach of our prayers in this most distressing Advent. If we pray for women in Israel and in Gaza giving birth, for Arab and Hebrew infants, and midwives, and those forced to act as midwives in emergencies without medical assistance, then not only can we pray for their safety and celebrate their raw human courage, but also pray for the future leaders being born. Menstrual blood is copious blood shed without violence. Its power in the reproductive cycle shows a livid red defiance of the violence around. The elemental fact of childbirth in war embodies hope in a bloody and yet vibrant way.

As we dwell on the final month of Mary's pregnancy, let the ordinary women of Gaza and Israel embolden us to hope and pray that they might be giving birth to the solution.

## *David*

*Our front cover photo shows the first three of the new sculpted figures – Mary, Joseph and the Christ Child Jesus – produced by Graham Jones and funded with money generously donated by the All Saints Crafters in memory of Gill Cole. David blessed these at the Children's Carol Service in 2022, and further figures will be seen in church this year.*





ALL SAINTS  
KINGS HEATH

## Christmas Services at All Saints Church 2023

Sunday 17th December

6.30pm Carols by Candlelight

Saturday 23rd December

11am-12.30pm Carol Singing on the Village Square  
(any singers and enthusiastic bucket-shakers welcome!)

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December Christmas Eve

8am Christmas Eve Holy Communion

10am Christmas Eve Holy Communion

3pm Childrens Carol Service

11.30pm Midnight Communion

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

8am Christmas Day Holy Communion

10am Christmas Day Holy Communion

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> December New Year Eve

8am New Years Eve Holy Communion

10am New Years Eve Holy Communion

# ***Well done, good and faithful servant***

***This was David's title for the order of service on 19 November, the Second Sunday before Advent, when we marked John Parkin's retirement as Reader at All Saints. We are grateful to John for allowing us to reprint his final sermon here.***

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be now and always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer.

This, the last Sunday of Interfaith Week, may well be my last sermon, not that I wish it to be, but I am beset by a weakening voice, small handwriting and slow actions, all symptoms of Parkinson's disease. So, for those of you who have difficulty in hearing me, I will stick close to the text.

There is the prospect of becoming Reader Emeritus, like Gill Cole and Mike Cheesbrough before me, as my licence as reader with permission to officiate is due for renewal in January, so this seems the right time to finish after 25 years.

I have a lot to thank Yorkshire for. For, apart from my two great Scarborough predecessors as Reader, my first encounter with Reader ministry was visiting Gill's old home in Formby and being hushed by her dad, a missionary Yorkshireman in Lancashire, who said that a candidate was taking their Reader's exam in the lounge. He was diocesan secretary of Reader training, and in those days the Reader's exam lasted 3 hours and was a bit like A-level theology.

I was originally due to preach next week and was rather wary of doing so. Why? Because, apart from the clergy being at a confirmation (first catch your bishop), it was Mike's traditional spot. Christ the King was the anniversary of his licensing as Reader.

It is also the last Sunday of the church year, so formally a week next Saturday we can throw away the old lectionaries. Or, if you have been paying attention to Margaret in Creationtide, recycle them.

So, what of the readings?

That from Zephaniah speaks of what I had formerly thought of as the end times, but which sounds very similar to what is happening in Gaza now, to name only the latest trouble spot in a troubled world.

Paul writing to the church in Thessalonica, an important Roman city, tells them that the end times will come 'like a thief in the night'. When people think all is well the blow will fall, as distinct from Zephaniah for whom it sounds to be a violent occasion.

And what of the Gospel? The parable of the talents: does it encourage slavery? I recall finding out that a talent was not a small unit of money, though some have taken a wider view of the meaning of the term. If we identify the Master as Jesus, there seem to be some very 'un-Jesus-like' comments about him in this reading, such as 'reaping where he doesn't sow' and throwing the 'worthless slave' into the outer darkness. The reference to 'after a long time' may relate to the delayed return of Jesus, the second coming, that readers at the time were expecting.

So, what can a Reader originally trained in the physical sciences claim to truly believe?

I think that theology hasn't really come to terms with the scale of the universe, both in terms of distance and time. It's still not quite a century since Edwin Hubble showed that M31, the Great Nebula in Andromeda, was some millions of light-years away and was coming towards us. Which means that in some few billion years' time it will get here, unlike the other galaxies, which seem, in general, to be receding. Until their discovery, it was possible to assume that the Nebulae were inside our galaxy, which was all there was. The large, but still finite, speed of light means that the universe can't be timeless. Hubble showed that the recession of the galaxies implied a finite age for the universe. The age of the universe is now thought to be about 13.7 billion years. Our planet is around 4.6 billion years old. If you take it to be a person of mature years, say 46 to make the maths simple, each year of their age is 100 million years for the earth.

General relativity, our best theory of the largest scales, and of gravity, and quantum mechanics, the theory of the very small, in general don't work well together in relation to the origin of the universe. However, both have been tested to awesome precision. Your smartphone wouldn't work if quantum mechanics wasn't in some sense 'true'. So, the question 'what came before the Big Bang?' may not be as meaningless as general relativity seems to make it, as it assumes that space and time came into existence at the moment of creation of the universe. How many 'Big Bangs' were there in fact? Our star, the sun, is about halfway through its roughly 10 billion-year life.

With the possible exception of those enigmatic cave paintings, most famously at Lascaux in France, which are considerably older, all we hold dear and regard as valuable – art, music, literature, science and religion – are the fruit of the 10,000 years or so since the end of the last glaciation. The last period of itself lasted 100,000 years, a mere moment against the scale of cosmic time.

I've been known to claim that theology and physics are not that different. They both ask questions to which there are no easy answers. In physics we ask questions like: 'Is an electron a wave or a particle?' In theology we consider God and creation. In both areas we don't have the correct concepts to give meaningful answers. In physics it's because of our scale; we are creatures of medium scale and speed. We are too large to need quantum mechanics and too slow to need general relativity. Moses Maimonides, and I think Classical Islamic Theology, say that there is that of God which is beyond human comprehension, and I think something similar can be said of physics. There is that famous remark that anyone who claims to understand the mystery of quantum mechanics hasn't done so.

So, I believe in God, to use a common name for the deity which other religions know by other names, responsible for all that is, and his son our Lord, and I also believe in mysteries like evolution which normally improves things by small incremental steps (eg Darwin's finches<sup>1</sup>), though there is the question of why humans made the sudden step change from nomadic life to settled urban living.

I have many memories of 25 years of Reader ministry. Surprisingly I can recall my first sermon: it was at evensong. In those days we had a robed choir, and there were often more people in the choir than in the congregation! The text was from Revelation, a challenge for any new preacher, and I recall a suggestion being made that I might prefer to change it. I couldn't think of any better alternative, so I persevered.

And I remember taking the second ever interment at the then-new Kings Norton cemetery, when I realised the truth that there is no higher ground east between Kings Norton and the Ural Mountains!

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darwin%27s\\_finches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darwin%27s_finches)

I still have the white thermal base layer that Gill spotted in Decathlon to keep me warm on such occasions.

I also remember being asked, in 2004, by Bishop Sentamu to become diocesan moderator for Reader training.

I would like to thank John Wilkinson, David Monteith and Andy Delmege for their support and kindness in my early years of Reader ministry, and David Warbrick for his support and kindness over the last few years of my ministry. I remember commenting to David that there was not much science in the All Saints Values Statement. He responded by inviting me to take part in an All Age Worship service for a question-and-answer session.

So, thank you to you, the congregation of All Saints, for putting up with all my questions over the years.

## All Saints Tea Cake and Music

Join Us on The First Thursday of Each  
Month for Tea, Coffee, Biscuits or  
Cakes

In the South Vestry of All Saints  
Church Kings Heath

Company, Warmth, and a sing a long for those who want  
2.30 pm to 4pm – Free



# ***A childhood Christmas***

***Martha Ann Brookes happened upon these seasonal memories of Margaret Shepherd's, and we thank her for sharing them with us. Margaret, who died earlier this year, was a dedicated member of the All Saints congregation for many decades and lived in Kings Heath for almost all of her life.***

I think Christmas started with the making of the puddings. My mother was not a churchgoer so knew nothing of 'Stir-up Sunday', but she probably made them about the middle of November. It was more difficult then than now. Suet didn't come in packets and raisins had to be stoned and, if there is a stickier or more boring job, tell me about it. The rest of the fruit had to be carefully washed and you had very sore fingers pushing bread through the colander to make crumbs. Once everything was mixed and we had all stirred and made a wish it was transferred to basins, covered with a cloth and tied down ready for steaming. That took place in the boiler in the kitchen. For some reason my mother did it overnight so had to creep down in the early hours to top up the water. The smell pervaded the house. Charles Dickens described it perfectly in *A Christmas Carol*, talking about Bob Cratchit's pudding: 'Hallo! A great deal of steam. The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like washing day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress next door to that! That was the pudding!'

Christmas in the shops did not make an appearance until mid-November, not like mid-August today, and Woolworths seemed to lead the way. Money was tight so I cannot remember visiting Father Christmas but we did go into town to look at the displays in the big stores where every window had a different theme, and often with mechanical effects.

I cannot remember much about Christmas in the infant school. I don't think we had a Nativity play; or if we did I was never in it or I would have remembered. I do remember making decorations with strops of coloured paper looped together to make chains. I assume we also made cards to take home although I am not sure my mother would have been particularly thrilled with my non-artistic efforts. We sang carols and probably had some form of party although there is no mention in the logbooks. I have clearer memories of parties at Tilton Road Girls School when I first started teaching, but that is a different story.

My inability in the card-making line meant that they were usually bought from Woolworths but any presents came from the Co-op in Stirchley. My mother, of course, belonged to Ten Acres and Stirchley Co-op and the precious divi could be spent at the department store on the Pershore Road. We put up decorations in the week before Christmas – more of the looped chains, some holly behind the pictures and a small artificial tree decorated with baubles saved from year to year. My uncle who lived with us had an electrician friend who put up some coloured lights – magic.

Christmas morning started early with the waking question: 'Has he been?' Yes, there was the stocking filled like every other child's – an apple, an orange, some nuts, a shiny new penny and hopefully a square packet denoting a book. An avid reader even before I went to school, I had few books and welcomed any new ones. Amazingly I still have some I had then. The day followed the usual pattern with chicken for dinner – never at any other time of the year – with all the trimmings followed by The Pudding. We had a wireless so would have listened to the King and then cards for the grownups in the evening. Very much later we changed to Monopoly.



On Boxing Day we visited or were visited by my mother's two elder sisters and families. The buses must have been running, otherwise we would not have managed it, but we did stay overnight although where everyone slept is a mystery as none of us had much room and there were seven adults – my two aunts, their husbands, the youngest brother and sister and my mother – and four children with my three cousins and myself. My eldest aunt had a piano and an uncle could play so we had a singsong, and the same uncle was a dab hand at playing the spoons. Later we had a gramophone so the furniture was pushed back and we danced, although it was more of a jog on the spot in that confined space. We did not meet Christmas of 1938 as my eldest uncle was ill and died on 1 January. He had been discharged from the army in 1917 having been badly wounded and had never really been well since.

On New Year's Eve I was allowed to stay up and someone would go out of the front door and in at the back carrying a lump of coal and some bread.

The war brought the lot to an abrupt end: what with the blackout and the rationing and the bombs any celebration was confined to the home. The first Christmas I came home from evacuation as I was bridesmaid to my mother's cousin's daughter and the wedding was on Christmas Day. I remember being very cold in church but have no recollection of the rest of the day. I was back home for the second and we were in the midst of the bombing although I think we were left alone for the three days. As the rationing got harder we had difficulty in making puddings and many and varied were the ingredients to make up for the lack of dried fruit – mashed potato and carrots were two of them. I started at Kings Norton Grammar School in 1942 and I cannot remember anything special about Christmas apart from singing *O come, all ye faithful* in Latin. Even the end of the war didn't bring much more joy as the rationing and the shortages went on until the 1950s and today, of course, it is dominated by commercialism – but that perhaps betrays my age.

### ***Can you commit to leading or supporting a children's group once per month?***

We would love to have a diverse children's team that represents the wider congregation and our current children's group (for primary school-aged children) is urgently in need of more volunteers. You do not need to have any previous experience, just enthusiasm, and will not need to lead sessions, unless you would like to. Support and resources are provided. If you are interested, or would like to find out more, please email Grace: [children@allsaintschurchkh.org](mailto:children@allsaintschurchkh.org).

We are also hopeful that we will be able to bring back our Pre-school Praise group – if enough volunteers come forward!

(If you would like to help but feel unable to commit to once per month, please do still get in touch as we are hoping to put together a list of DBS-checked helpers whom we can call on on a more ad hoc basis when we have a gap in our rota due to holidays/other commitments.)

Help us welcome more families to All Saints and make a difference for the children in our congregation!

## **(Ex)-warden's musings**

Blimey – nearly Christmas again... I've just put in the order for the Christmas tree which hopefully will be delivered in time to be erected before the Kings Heath Business Association carol service and the lights switch-on...

In the last edition, I mentioned that we were going to London to see *ABBA Voyage*. It was a wonderful experience, although we got our timings a bit wrong, so with a lack of time and my inexperience at applying glitter, my facial glitterisation left something to be desired. Glitter or not, if you are an ABBA fan, I can highly recommend it. I know I'm not alone in the congregation in having to admit that I shed a few tears as it was such an emotional experience (this probably didn't help with the aforementioned glitter problem). If you are a Star Trek fan, you may have seen the film *Star Trek: Generations* which spanned the temporal gap between the original cast led by William Shatner and the *Next Generation* cast led by the fine Shakespearean actor Patrick Stewart as Captain Jean-Luc Picard (his biography entitled *Making It So* is out now, apparently). Anyway – the plot centres around a mysterious energy wave known as 'the Nexus' that travels through the universe and 'captures' people. Being inside the Nexus is described by Whoopi Goldberg's character as like being inside joy'.

Well – if you're an ABBA fan, then I think going to *Voyage* is the closest thing to the Nexus you are likely to experience without leaving the planet. It felt like being wrapped in a big warm blanket of love. I'm not normally given to waving my arms round like a maniac while dancing, but I did that night. It is very strange to see the members of ABBA, who now have a combined age of over 300 years old, leaping about on stage as they appeared in 1979. I don't know how they do it, but it certainly appeared real. It was particularly touching that ABBA appear, as they are now, at the end of the concert and walk on stage to greet the audience. They are probably as popular now as at the height of their fame. They had already released one *Greatest Hits* album before the 1976 release of *Arrival*, which included their biggest hit *Dancing Queen*. This track is played about 840,000 times a day on Spotify. It will be interesting to see what happens at next year's Eurovision Song Contest, the 50th anniversary of 1974 when ABBA burst into the world's consciousness by winning with *Waterloo*, as it will be held in their home country of Sweden.

There are about six or seven shows a week and it has now been running for 18 months, so with a capacity of over 3,000 people, more than 1.5 million people have visited it. Well, it will be less than that, as we met (and heard stories) of people who have been more than once. The venue is on old industrial land in East London near the Stratford Olympic Park, which was nice for a walk round the next day. We stayed in a 'container' hotel across the road. First time I've stayed in one of these – the rooms are inside converted shipping containers so they are very compact! Each container has three en-suite bedrooms squeezed inside! The lady on reception when we left told us about a chap who visits regularly and has been 15 times. And he is still wearing all the armbands from all the performances, up his arm. Hopefully he doesn't work in the food preparation or medical industries...

The standard shipping container size of 8ft wide (just big enough, allowing for some insulation and internal panelling, to accommodate a bed) and 40ft long has evolved based on road vehicle and railway gauge dimensions. The most common railway standard gauge was that developed by Stephenson and is remarkably similar to the standard separation between wheels on horse-drawn carts. This is probably coincidence but there may be some truth in the story that it was convenient to use tooling and workshops which made horse-drawn carts to make the new railway wagons. Hence modern road and rail vehicles are largely based on dimensions derived from old horse-drawn

vehicles. The horse-drawn cart axle width hadn't changed for centuries because all carts had to have wheels the same width apart or the wheels would be damaged by not travelling in the ruts of other carts. Of course, carts could be pulled by different numbers of horses, but the standard Roman chariot axle width was based on getting two horses side by side between the shafts. I recall a story that the solid rocket booster engine segments used on the Space Shuttle had to be sized based on the standard railway gauge as they were transported by rail to the assembly hall at Cape Canaveral. So, the story goes, the design of parts of the world's most advanced transport systems are still based on the width of two horses' backsides. I so want that to be true...

On the subject of shipping containers, in October's article, before I got carried away on the energy industry, I intended to talk about an episode of Radio 4's *More or Less* which explored some claim made by Donald Trump that 35,000 Americans died building the Panama Canal. It was in the context of justifying that America had rights over it. With the help of Matthew Parker (author of *Hells Gorge*), the episode found that (hold your breath – you may not believe this) Trump's claim was not true. The Panama Canal links the Pacific and Atlantic oceans covering over 50 miles and crossing the rocky, mountainous spine of Central America. The first attempt to create a canal in 1880 was by French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps, who also built the Suez Canal. He proposed a sea-level canal with no locks, but due to the height of the land he had to cross, earthquakes, floods, landslides and a revolution, this proved impossible to achieve. A big issue was yellow fever, malaria, typhoid and other diseases which killed roughly 25,000 (mostly Jamaican) workers, French engineers and some of their families during construction. The Americans hijacked the French plans and started trying to build a sea-level canal in 1904. They recognised the need to tackle the health issues first by dealing with water sources, vegetation and screening programmes to eradicate yellow fever deaths in Panama by 1905. Many other industrial diseases and accidents claimed lives. To estimate the total who died, the programme explained you needed to factor in the 10,000 who probably died of cholera building the Panama railway (which was needed to build the canal), the 25,000 who died in the French effort and the American construction programme where about 6,000 people died, mostly from Barbados. In total, around 40,000 people died in the building of the Panama Canal, but only around 300 of them were American citizens. So Trump's claim, like those of many of our current politicians, was a tad off the mark.

The Panama Canal is an amazing piece of engineering, which uses a series of huge sea locks at each end to raise ships over 80ft (26m) above sea level, where they proceed through canals in enormous 'cuts' (the deepest is the Gaillard Cut which is 312ft or 95m deep) and the artificial Gatun Lake. A



second lake and dam feed water to the canal and lake system to replace some of that lost each time the locks operate. The problem with locks is that they limit the size of ship that can use the canal. The original locks were 33m (about 110ft) wide and 320m (1,050ft) long at the request of the US Navy. Apparently, the first time a big aircraft carrier went through, they hadn't accounted for the deck being much wider than the hull, so as the ship went through it knocked down all the lampposts. In 2016, a project to create additional, bigger locks was

completed so now the largest vessels which can navigate the canal ('Neopanamax' vessels) are 1,200ft long and 161ft wide (366m & 49m). There are even bigger container ships which are 193ft (59m) wide and 1312ft (400m) long which cannot go through the Panama Canal but can still squeeze through the Suez Canal (usually without getting stuck). The limit on size is not just due to the transit



ALL SAINTS PLAYERS PRESENT...

# **The All Saints Theatrical Revue!**

Saturday 10 February 2024

19:30

All Saints Church Hall

Everyone is invited to start preparing acts, finding their comedy duo partner, forming their barbershop quartet, composing their latest sonnet, polishing their tap shoes and refining their juggling, ready to take to the stage.

All are welcome and no previous experience is necessary – all you need is an enthusiasm to entertain your friends...  
for one night only!

Please contact speak to Clare Noakes, either in person or via email ([players@allsaintschurchkh.org](mailto:players@allsaintschurchkh.org)) if you would like to take part or learn more!

Tickets will go on sale in the new year.

# Music matters

🎵 *On (well, near) the first day of Advent, a gift from us to you: a fun quiz for all to do...* 🎵

Well, it probably depends on your definition of 'fun', but here's a little brainteaser for our readers when you've completed the ASYP Big Christmas Word Quiz (see elsewhere in the magazine), run out of ways to cook turkey or things to say to the family members who are still eating it, watched *The Great Escape* and all the *James Bond* or *Carry On* films that you can take, and put off making or carrying out your New Year's resolutions: below are the first lines of the last verses of 30 Advent, Christmas and Epiphany hymns as they appear in our book – but what are their titles?

'All glory be to God on high, and on the earth be peace'  
All out of darkness we have light, which made the angels sing this night  
And our eyes at last shall see him through his own redeeming love  
By thine own eternal Spirit, rule in all our hearts alone  
Christ, to thee, with God the Father, and, O Holy Ghost, to thee  
Ends of the earth, see the salvation of our God!  
Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new  
For lo, the days are hast'ning on, by prophets seen of old  
Glorious now behold him arise, King and God and sacrifice  
Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness  
He made me a watchman upon the city wall  
He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove  
In his master's steps he trod, where the snow lay dinted  
In the heav'nly country bright need they no created light  
Journey ends! Where afar Bethlehem shines, like a star  
Mine are riches, from your poverty; from your innocence, eternity  
Now to the Lord sing praises, all you within this place  
Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn  
O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray  
Omega and Alpha he! Let the organ thunder  
Pray you, dutifully prime your matin chime, ye ringers  
Shout, as you journey on, songs be in ev'ry mouth  
So bring him incense, gold and myrrh, come rich and poor, to own him  
Then let us all with one accord sing praises to our heav'nly Lord  
Then may we hope, th'angelic hosts among, to sing, redeemed, a glad triumphal song  
Though an infant now we view him, he shall fill his Father's throne  
Vainly we offer each humble oblation, vainly with gifts would his favour secure  
What can I give him, poor as I am?  
Yea, amen, let all adore thee, high on thine eternal throne  
Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning

***On the subject of Christmas music, there will be carol singing in the Village Square to raise money for a local charity between around 11am and 12:30pm on Saturday 23 December and we would welcome anyone who would like to join us to sing – or to enthusiastically shake a bucket! Likewise do contact Ben & Clare Noakes (details at the back of the magazine) if you would like to sing in the choir for any of the Midnight Mass, Christmas Day or New Year's Eve services – see the flyer elsewhere in the magazine for further information about services over Christmas.***



# ***High days and holy days***

## **24 December – Christmas Eve**

How do you celebrate Christmas Eve? It has its own customs, the most popular of which is going to Midnight Mass, or the Christ-Mass. This is the only Mass of the year that is allowed to start after sunset. In Catholic countries such as Spain, Italy and Poland, Midnight Mass is in fact the most important church service of the entire Christmas season, and many people traditionally fast beforehand. In other countries, like Belgium and Denmark, people dine during the evening, and then go on to the Midnight service.

The British are behind some countries when it comes to exchanging presents – in Germany, Sweden and Portugal, the custom is to exchange on Christmas Eve – but ahead of Serbia and Slovakia, where the Christmas tree is not even brought into the house and decorated until Christmas Eve. Yule logs are not so popular since the decline of the fireplace, but traditionally were lit on Christmas Eve from a bit of the previous year's log, and then would be burned nonstop until Twelfth Night (6 January). Tradition also decreed that any greenery such as holly, ivy or mistletoe must wait until Christmas Eve before being brought into the house.

## **6 January – Epiphany**

On 6 January we celebrate Epiphany – the visit of the Wise Men to the baby Jesus. But who were these Wise Men? No one knows for sure. Matthew calls them 'Magi', and that was the name of an ancient caste of a priestly kind from Persia. It wasn't until the 3rd century that they were called kings – by a church father, Tertullian.

Another church father, Origin, assumed that there were three – to correspond with the gifts given. Later Christian interpretation came to understand gold as a symbol of wisdom and wealth, incense as a symbol of worship and sacrifice, and myrrh as a symbol of healing and even embalming. Certainly Jesus challenged and set aright the way in which the world handled all three of these things. Since the 8th century, the Magi have had the names Balthasar, Caspar and Melchior.

(adapted from [www.parishpump.co.uk](http://www.parishpump.co.uk))

We are always pleased to receive contributions for *Saints Alive!* –thanks to everyone who has supported the magazine during 2023.

There is no magazine in January, but if you have any comments, suggestions, ideas for articles or would like to submit something for inclusion in the February edition or beyond, please contact Ben & Clare Noakes, Editors:

E: [magazine@allsaintschurchkh.org](mailto:magazine@allsaintschurchkh.org) T: 07967 730156 / 07929 593097

***Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!***

through the canals, as obviously they also need to be unloaded in ports. The latest designs intended for the Europe to China/Asia region are designed to travel slower, adding between two and six days to journey times, but reducing the carbon dioxide emissions per container by 50% compared to typical ships on the Europe-Asia route.

Something to ponder, while you listen to *Dancing Queen*, if you end up stuck behind a container truck in a motorway queue somewhere this festive season, is that the biggest container ships have 23 containers stacked side-by-side across their beam, about 25 stacked end to end along their length and 8 or 9 stacked high on deck as well as those below decks. That is a lot of Christmas presents...

**Chris Pearce**  
**Ex-churchwarden**

## ***The ASYP Big Christmas Word Quiz 2023***

Our annual festive fundraising quiz was a winner last Christmas, so we have a new quiz this year! It's a fun activity which can be easily shared with friends and family while supporting the running costs of the All Saints Youth Project. As with all charities, the current economic climate makes fundraising both a necessity and a challenge.

This year's quiz is now available electronically on the ASYP website [allsaintsyouthproject.org.uk](https://allsaintsyouthproject.org.uk) or direct by email from [tedhammond74@gmail.com](mailto:tedhammond74@gmail.com).

Last year we raised over £1,000 and this year our ambitious target is £1,500! Please join in the fun and enter the quiz this year. We suggest a minimum donation of £3 but your added generosity would be greatly appreciated. However, it is equally important that you share the quiz as widely as possible with family and friends: the wider we share the quiz, the more people will have an opportunity to support this wonderful work and raise funds for the charity.

Donations can be made through the ASYP website or by bank transfer – details are on the quiz.




Once again there is a prize for the winner (£30) and the runner-up (£20), plus all entries will be entered into a prize draw for one of three £10 M&S vouchers.

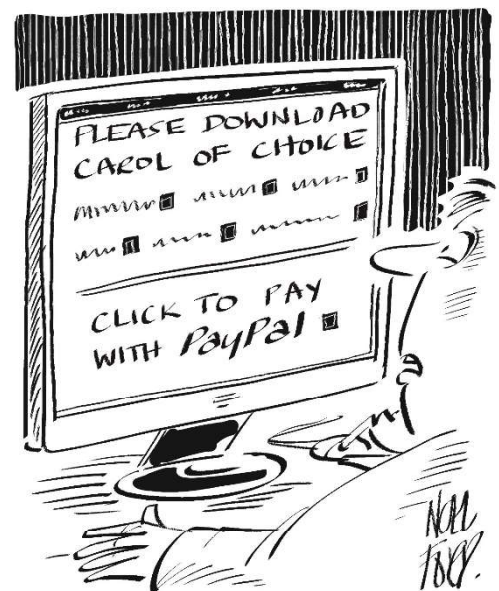
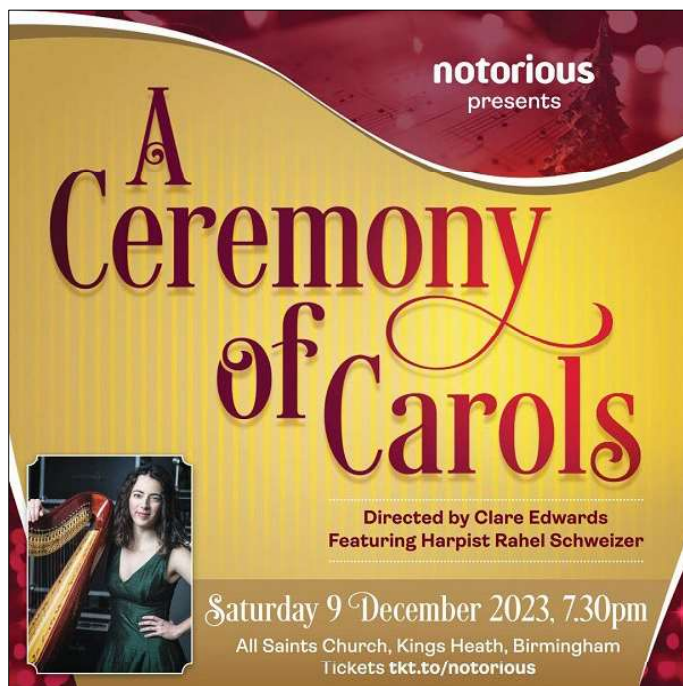
**Lindsey & Ted Hammond**

A reminder that you can sign up for the regular All Saints email newsletter here:

**<https://landing.mailerlite.com/webforms/landing/o7a2q4>**

## From the registers

	<p><b>We congratulate:</b></p> <p>Logan Thomas Holland, baptised at All Saints on 3 September</p>
	<p><b>We remember and give thanks for:</b></p> <p>Mary Cushnie, whose funeral took place at All Saints on 17 October          Steven Jarratt, whose funeral took place at All Saints on 19 October          John Ritchie, whose funeral took place at Robin Hood Crematorium on 27 October          Patrick Sullivan, whose funeral took place at All Saints on 8 November          John 'Roger' Barlow, whose funeral took place at All Saints on 28 November          Dorothy Jones, whose funeral took place at All Saints on 29 November</p>
	<p><b>We remember and give thanks for:</b></p> <p>Margaret Shepherd, whose ashes were buried in the Memorial Garden on 15 October</p>



We've got online carol-singers again!

## Live music in the Café

There are regular live music events in the Café on Fridays between 7 and 9pm.  
 Entry is free, and refreshments are available from the counter.

The general pattern is as below, but is sometimes subject to change:

1st Friday of the month  
 2nd Friday  
 3rd Friday  
 4th Friday  
 5th Friday (if there is one)

Open Mic with Brumside Radio  
 Strings and Things  
 The Café Band  
 Voices  
 Oz and Bod play Blues

# Accessing and paying for the magazine

The *Saints Alive!* magazine is available in digital form on the All Saints website at <https://allsaintschurchkh.org/about-us/publications/>, with hard copies available to pick up from the back of church each month. The suggested donation for each issue is £1, but cost should not be a barrier to anyone in the church reading the magazine in either online or printed form. Cash donations can continue to be made via the slot at the back of church; alternatively a standing order can be set up to pay in advance for a year's-worth (10 issues) of the magazine – please see the form below – or a cheque made payable to All Saints Kings Heath PCC can be sent to the Parish Office (address is on the back page). The form gives the individual the ability for their payment to go towards one of three areas – please select the General Purpose Fund (GPF) and delete the other two. The church's Charity Commission Number is 1145723. Finally, if you or someone you know would like a copy of the magazine posting out each month then please contact us as below to arrange this.

**Ben & Clare Noakes**  
Editors

[magazine@allsaintschurchkh.org](mailto:magazine@allsaintschurchkh.org)  
07967 730156 / 07929 593097

STANDING ORDER MANDATE AND BANK PAYMENT INFORMATION	
<i>(Please detach and send to your bank) or use for Internet Banking Payments</i>	
To: The Manager	
Address: _____ _____	
Postcode: _____	
Please pay to HSBC PLC, Kings Heath Birmingham Branch	
Sort Code: 40-11-15	
For the credit of:	
The PCC of Kings Heath Parish All Saints Church	
Account Number: 71801163	
the sum of £ _____ First payment on _____ / _____ /20	
and monthly / weekly thereafter on the same date until cancelled by me, or on.....	
Reference: G.P.F. V.D.F. M Garden Magazine <i>please delete the ones that do not apply</i>	
<b>Please cancel any previous mandates to this beneficiary on this account number.</b>	
Name: _____	
My Sort Code: _____ My Account Number: _____	
Signature: _____ Date: _____	

If you bank online, you will be able to use the details below to set up a standing order:

<b>Name:</b>	The Parochial Church Council of All Saints Church	<b>Account no:</b>	71801163
<b>Reference:</b>	GPF (magazine)	<b>Sort code:</b>	40-11-15

If you have any problems or questions about setting this up, or the church's finances in general, please contact Steve Brittle, Treasurer on 01905 772171 or [zena\\_steveb@btinternet.com](mailto:zena_steveb@btinternet.com).

# Who's Who

## **Worship** *(for clergy see back page)*

Children's Worship Co-ordinators	Grace Storey	07813 322697
Youth Group (year 7 upwards)	Jenny Warbrick	0121 444 0260
Music Co-ordinators	Ben & Clare Noakes	07967 730156 07929 593097

## **Church upkeep**

Vergers	Liz Haskins	c/o 0121 444 0760
	Paul Smart	c/o 0121 444 0760
Sacristan	Bernice Mattis	c/o 0121 444 0760
Altar Linen	Wendy Ross	0121 444 1423
Head Server	Tony Price	01564 824420
Electoral Roll Officer	Tony Cocks	0121 441 2945
Parish Magazine	Ben & Clare Noakes	07967 730156 07929 593097

## **Finance team**

Treasurer	Steve Brittle	01905 772171
Expenditure Officer	Vacant	
Income Officer	John Watling	c/o 0121 444 0760
Insurance & Investments	Tony Cocks	0121 441 2945
Gift Aid	Philip & Martha Ann Brookes	0121 444 5655
Envelope Giving Scheme	Martha Ann Brookes	0121 444 5655

## **Groups, clubs and organisations**

All Saints Ramblers	Des Workman	0121 572 3553
	Christine Powell	
Badminton Club	Des Workman	0121 443 5292
	Steve Brittle	01905 772171
Bible Reading Fellowship	Des Workman	0121 443 5292
Lunch Club	Elizabeth Turner	0121 604 6086
Meditation Group	Daniel Wilson	0121 449 9869
Safeguarding & Child Protection	Eira Jones	c/o 0121 444 0760
Traidcraft	Gill Parkin	0121 604 6127

**Planned giving:** All are invited to join the planned giving scheme, contributing by Direct Debit (Parish Giving Scheme), Standing Order or Weekly Envelope. Taxpayers – please sign a Gift Aid declaration for reclaiming of tax and use of payroll giving if possible. Contact the Finance Team for further information. The church's Charity Commission Number is 1145723.

**Parish Office:** For enquiries about baptisms, baby naming services, banns and marriages, please contact the Parish Office: 9.30am-3pm Monday-Friday or via [parishoffice@allsaintschurchkh.org](mailto:parishoffice@allsaintschurchkh.org).



**Ministry to the sick:** Visiting the sick at home or in hospital – please inform the Ministry Team of anyone who is sick. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved and oil is kept for ministry to the sick.

**Ministry of healing:** Laying-on of hands and anointing – last Saturday in the month at 9:15am as part of Morning Prayer, occasional Sunday evenings (as announced), and at home or in hospital as requested.

**Communion of the sick:** At home or in hospital, as requested, communion is taken, monthly, to the long-term sick or housebound.

**Other ministries:** For blessing of homes, celebrations of anniversaries, thanksgiving after childbirth, confession and counsel, please contact the Ministry Team.

***Parochial Church Council (PCC)***

<b>Officers</b>	Lay Vice Chair	Secretary	Treasurer
	Martha Ann Brookes 0121 444 5655	Tony Cocks 0121 441 2945	Steve Brittle 01905 772171
<b>Members</b>	Jim Andrew	Margaret Healey-Pollett (Reader)	Claire Wesley (Reader)
	Margaret Andrew	Chris Pearce	Daniel Wilson
	Philip Brookes	Vivien Tilsley	Sarah Wilson
	Tim Cuthbertson	David Warbrick (Vicar)	Des Workman
	Brian Miles	Chris Watts	Sheila Workman

***All Saints Community Development Company (ASCDC)***

Chair	Sarah Wilson	c/o 0121 444 0760	<a href="mailto:office@allsaints-cdc.co.uk">office@allsaints-cdc.co.uk</a>
Projects Co-ordinator	Andy Savage	c/o 0121 444 0760	<a href="mailto:andy@allsaints-cdc.co.uk">andy@allsaints-cdc.co.uk</a>
Facilities Manager	Dave Priday	07732 137772	<a href="mailto:david@allsaints-cdc.co.uk">david@allsaints-cdc.co.uk</a>
Administrator	Angela McDermott	0121 444 0760	<a href="mailto:angela@allsaints-cdc.co.uk">angela@allsaints-cdc.co.uk</a>
Hall & Room Bookings	Angela McDermott	0121 444 0760	<a href="mailto:angela@allsaints-cdc.co.uk">angela@allsaints-cdc.co.uk</a>

***All Saints Community Projects (ASCP)***

Chair	Mary Miles	0121 449 0851
All Saints Youth Project	Vicki Willinger	0121 443 1842

***The Robin Centre for Older People***

Centre Manager	Paula McGrath	0121 444 8111
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# Ministry Team

Vicar	David Warbrick	4 Vicarage Road, 0121 444 0260
Assistant Curate	Tariro Matsveru	c/o 0121 444 0760
Churchwardens	Vacant Vacant	
Licensed Readers	Margaret Healey-Pollett Claire Wesley	c/o 0121 444 0760 0121 444 2778
Reader Emeritus	John Parkin	0121 604 6127
Pastoral Care Team	Juliet Bick, Becky Frall, Margaret Healey-Pollett, Tariro Matsveru, Wendy Ross, Lu Skerratt-Love, David Warbrick, Jenny Warbrick, Des Workman	0121 444 0260
Safeguarding Co-ordinator	Eira Jones	<a href="mailto:safeguarding@allsaintschurchkh.org">safeguarding@allsaintschurchkh.org</a> 07497 781681
Prayer Circle	(for confidential prayer requests)	<a href="mailto:parishoffice@allsaintschurchkh.org">parishoffice@allsaintschurchkh.org</a> 0121 444 0260

## Worship

***We have reopened for our Sunday services (said at 8am, sung at 10am and an evening service at 6:30pm), and 11:30am Wednesday service.***

***We will continue to provide an online order of service via the website and newsletter for those at home.***

***Up-to-date information can be found at [www.allsaintschurchkh.org](http://www.allsaintschurchkh.org) and we look forward to seeing you again soon.***

### ***All Saints Church, Kings Heath***

*2 Vicarage Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 7RA*

*Administrator: Angela McDermott*

*Parish Office: 0121 444 0760*

*[parishoffice@allsaintschurchkh.org](mailto:parishoffice@allsaintschurchkh.org)*

*[www.allsaintschurchkh.org](http://www.allsaintschurchkh.org)*



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND