

Newsletter

*Bruton**Brewham**Pitcombe**Redlynch**Shepton Montague**Wyke Champflower*

Advent is a time of waiting, but do we know what it is that we are waiting for?

The temptation is to reach for the easy answer and say that we are waiting for Christmas. But there is more to it than this. In Advent, we are encouraged, not least by the daily lectionary readings, to focus on what are sometimes called 'the four last things': Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell. Advent invites us to step back from the mundane, the daily routine and to consider the big and ultimate things in life.

If we do so seriously and pay attention to our feelings, we will probably discover a deep sense of yearning; a longing for things to be somehow better than they are: less darkness and pain, less brutality and suffering, more light, more love.

In Advent, we are encouraged to look forwards to that time when all things are perfected in Christ, to that (frankly pretty terrifying) time variously called the end times, the Day of the Lord, the eschaton, judgment day, the second coming. That is not an easy thing to wish for or wait for and we are bid to examine ourselves with that day in prospect.

Yet we are also looking forward to what is already here, and what we celebrate at the extraordinary feast of the Nativity: God with us. God with us in this world, the light in our darkness, the love amid the pain, brutality and suffering. And so our hearts cry the ancient Advent refrain: *Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus.*



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If you have something to contribute to a future edition of this newsletter, do please send it to the Rector.

Easy-to-follow details of how to receive this newsletter by email can be found on the St Mary's website, or email benefice@stmarysbruton.org. If you are aware of someone who might like to receive it but does not use email, please consider printing a copy yourself and delivering it to them.

News

- King's School, Bruton has begun to hold chapel services again at St Mary's, after a long enforced absence. Students will attend in smaller groups initially, but it is very good to be able to welcome them back into the church. King's also has a confirmation service at St. Mary's on 4 December, with 20 candidates being confirmed. Please pray for them all.
- St Peter's Redlynch will be holding a service of baptism on 12 December at 11.00 am and there will also be a carol service there on 23 December at 6.30pm to which all are very welcome. The future of the chapel remains under discussion.
- At St Mary's we have held a meeting with the appointed church architect to restart the project to install lavatories and a servery, and she has been instructed by the PCC to prepare an options appraisal.
- St Leonard's celebrated its patronal festival on 7 November with a service of choral evensong with Bishop Ruth attending and preaching. The St Mary's choir sang, including the very fitting anthem *Locus iste* and David Slater played the organ.
- We hope that the growing St Mary's junior choir will sing some carols at Bruton Primary School's Christmas Fair on 3 December, which will be their first time singing other than in choir practice. We wish them well and look forward to hearing them sing.
- The Rector attended a service of confirmation at Wells Cathedral on 13 November in support of two students from Bruton School for Girls, who were among 47 people, young and old, being confirmed that day. (If anyone is interested in speaking about confirmation, young or old, please speak to the Rector.) The Rector also now leads a short assembly at BSG each week for small groups of students.
- Shepton Montague PCC met on 24 November for a free-ranging discussion about ways of connecting better with the wider community and increasing participation in church services.
- Church Bridge Stores in Bruton are hosting a 'Taste of Christmas' evening event at St Mary's on 8 December (and we are very grateful to the Bruton Choral Society for agreeing to relocate their rehearsal that evening). This is a whisky / gin / wine / cheese / other delights tasting event and proceeds are very generously being donated to the toilet and servery fund. Tickets are available from Church Bridge Stores. It is rumoured that Father Christmas might be in attendance.
- The local schools are all intending to hold their annual carol services in our churches and we very much hope that this year it will be possible for these services to go ahead as planned.

Diocesan Budget and future plans



The meeting of the Diocesan Synod on 30 October, which the Rector attended, included a presentation about finance. In particular, the chairman of the Diocesan Board of Finance presented a 5 year plan for returning the Diocese to a balanced budget. At present, because (across the Diocese as a whole) parishes have not been paying their parish share contributions in full, the Diocese has experienced a £2m annual deficit. As a short term arrangement, this shortfall has been funded from the Diocese's reserves, but that is not sustainable going forward. Accordingly, on the premise that there is no likelihood of the parishes increasing the amount of their contributions to the Diocese, the Diocese is in the process of making substantial reductions in its expenditure, and intends to continue that process, so as to bring its expenditure into line with its income.

The details of the proposed reductions in expenditure are concerning and are likely, at some point, to have a direct impact on us all.

The savings of £2m per year that the DBF seeks to make by the end of the 5 year period are to be made in a number of ways. 72% of Diocesan expenditure in 2022 is referable directly (stipends and stipend-related costs) or indirectly (housing costs, training costs, costs of training of ordinands and curates) to stipendiary clergy. Only 18% of Diocesan expenditure is referable to the costs of Diocesan staff. The 5 year plan includes a reduction in Diocesan staff costs of 8.6% in 2022 alone, with further reductions being made over the remainder of the 5 year period. But that alone cannot deliver the desired savings of £2m, so the bulk of the cost saving is proposed to be achieved by reducing substantially the number of stipendiary clergy across the Diocese: a reduction of 28 available posts across the Diocese (15.7%), which is forecast to save £672,000 per year in direct costs. Added to that are the consequent savings in housing and training of stipendiary clergy, including curates and ordinands (whose numbers would also be reduced). In short, the bulk of the proposed cost savings are to be achieved by reducing the number of paid clergy. The question is where this would leave us in our parishes.

The synod expressed concern at these proposals and requested a further meeting at which they could be considered in more detail. A date for that meeting is awaited. This is something that we must think and pray about carefully; there are no easy solutions.

Our volunteers

As the Church year begins again, now is the time to say a huge thank you to all those who volunteer across the Benefice in so many ways. Some serve in official positions and some just quietly do things and some do both. All are essential and these acts of service are what make us Church. Thank you so very much - we could not manage without you.

Kneelers at St Mary's

The PCC of St Mary's has recently met to discuss how best to reintroduce the commemorative kneelers to the church and efforts are continuing to find the right way to do this. If you have any questions about this, please speak to the Rector.



Spotted in a Church magazine somewhere

- 'Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands'
- 'At the service on Sunday, Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again,' giving obvious pleasure to the congregation'



Coffee mornings at the Methodist Chapel



The regular Saturday coffee mornings in Bruton have restarted from a new location (as the Community Hall remains fully dedicated to use by the pharmacy as a vaccination centre). The Methodist Chapel is providing a very welcoming new home for this very friendly event. St Mary's has run a couple of sessions and volunteers also ran a further session in support of the Brue Bowl skate ramp project. If you would like to help with future sessions, please contact Eve Anderton at the Council Offices. If you would like to drink coffee, eat cake, buy home produce and try your luck in the raffle, just come along: 10.00 am - 12.00 noon on Saturdays.

A Prayer for the morning

Dear God,
So far today I've done alright;
I haven't gossiped and I haven't lost my temper,
I haven't been grumpy,
Nasty or selfish but
In a few minutes, God,
I'm going to get out of bed,
And that is when
I'm going to need a lot
Of help!

Diary Dates

- 7 December - Shepton Montague PCC meeting, 6.30pm in the village hall
- 8 December - a 'Taste of Christmas' at St Mary's - see under News above
- 15 December - Carol Service at Wyke Champflower (6.30pm)
- 18 December - Carol Service at Bruton (6.00pm)
- 19 December - Carol Services at Pitcombe (4.00pm), Brewham (4.00pm) and Shepton Montague (6.30pm)
- 23 December - Carol Service at Redlynch (6.30pm)
- 24 December - Christingle Service at Bruton (4.30pm)



Christmas Services

St Mary's, Bruton

- 24 December - Christingle Service at 4.30pm; Midnight Mass at 11.30pm
- 25 December - Holy Communion (BCP) at 8.00am; Eucharist at 11.00am
- 26 December - Said Eucharist (CW) at 9.00am

St John Baptist, Brewham

- 25 December - Eucharist at 9.30am
- 26 December - no service

St Leonard's, Pitcombe

- 25 December - Holy Communion (BCP) at 9.30am
- 26 December - no service

St Peter's, Shepton Montague

- 25 December - Eucharist at 9.30am
- 26 December - no service



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