



Bruton

Pitcombe

Redlynch

Brewham

Shepton Montague

Wyke Champflower



As we enter Advent, the season when we consider the 4 'Last Things' and ponder that which is ultimate, we have some serious thinking and serious praying to do about the future of the Church in this place. As noted further below in the report about the recent meeting of Diocesan Synod,

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our finances are in a parlous state and, unless parish giving recovers substantially and quickly (which seems far from likely), further substantial cuts in our expenditure (clergy, housing) will be required in the very near future. In short, the way in which we currently are Church seems to be unsustainable, given current levels of income. It is tempting to see this as entirely an issue about money – if only we had more money, all would be well. Tempting, but mistaken. The central issue, painful as it is, is that the way in which we are Church no longer connects with our communities: they are not attracted; they do not wish to join us; they largely do not see what we do as an expression of worship to the God who is love. The fact that this is expressed in the language of 'Us' and 'Them' demonstrates the heart of the problem. Our inherited model of Church is becoming more and more distant from and incomprehensible to the society we live in and the people with whom we are called to share God's love. There are no easy answers, but it is becoming vital that we consider afresh how we are to proclaim the Gospel. We must not expect people to come to us, sing our hymns and say our prayers; we need to find ways of pointing to the love of God revealed in Jesus that make sense, touch hearts and change lives. Please pray, please think: it is urgent. 'Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus!'



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

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 from our Parishes

St Peter's, Shepton Montague is looking more than usually lovely after a successful internal redecoration. Services have resumed in the church. We are grateful to the village hall committee for use of the hall while the redecoration was taking place.

Bruton Primary School will be holding its Christmas Fair at the school on Friday 9 December (start time thought to be around 3.45 pm). Do please attend and support the school if you can.

A group of singers will be singing carols at The Newt in the run-up to Christmas, raising some funds (we hope!) for St Mary's.

We are hoping that the 'Open the Book' team will resume regular sessions at Bruton Primary School in the New Year, which is great news.

Inflation & Giving

As we all know only too well, inflation is running at around 10% - higher for some things and lower for others. This puts pressure on all our finances. Our parish finances are by no means exempt from this, as the cost of supplies and utilities increases sharply. It is to be hoped that we will also increase the amount we pay to those whose work for the parish is financially remunerated, so that they do not suffer a real-terms pay cut.

What is vital is that the amount of our personal giving to the parish is also regularly reviewed in line with our own income or overall wealth. Some of us will be in receipt of income that is index-linked (e.g. a pension), while others won't. Some of us will have received a pay rise, while others won't. There is a

fair chance that none of us has adjusted the amount of our giving to the church accordingly, meaning that the amount we give is worth less than when we first began to contribute at that rate.

Please do think hard about this: it is one of the structural weaknesses of our current system for giving that the amount of our giving is not routinely indexed or reviewed. What we give now is worth 10% less than it was last year. If our income has gone up, our giving should too.

Carol Services, revised dates

Revised Carol Service Dates

Due to the timing of the final of the football World Cup, the carol services and Pitcombe and Brewham have been rearranged to avoid a clash. The new times are:

- Pitcombe: Friday 16 December at 5.00 pm
- Brewham: Sunday 18 December at 10.30 am

Please spread the word!

The carols remain unchanged at the other 4 churches – see Diary Dates below.

Services on Sunday 1st January

The only service in the Benefice on Sunday 1 January will be the 8.00 am BCP Holy Communion service at St Mary's Bruton – all other services that day are cancelled.



Bruton Choral Society Carol Concert

Bruton Choral Society Christmas Concert

Festive Music

& Traditional Carols for all to sing

**Faelan Sydenham: Recorder
with Stringendo**

Angela Ashworth: Soprano

Geoff Allan: Baritone

Monday 19 December 7.30pm

St Mary's Church, Bruton

**£10 including a glass of wine
(children free)**

**Bruton Convenience Store, 01749 813161
or www.bruntonchoralsociety.org.uk**

After three years the Bruton Choral Society are really excited to be able to present their Christmas Concert at St Mary's Church, Bruton on Monday 19 December at 7.30 pm. The choir will be singing a number of festive arrangements and there will also be well-known carols so that everyone can join in.

The first half of the concert will focus on music inspired by the wider seasonal themes of Winter, Yuletide and Advent.

The programme includes music by Vivaldi, Corelli, Purcell, Elgar, Parry, Ola Gjeilo and Philip Stopford in addition to many Christmas favourites.

Tickets are £10 (children free) to include a glass of wine, and are available from Bruton Convenience Store by phoning 01749 813161 or online at:

www.bruntonchoralsociety.org.uk.

New members will be welcome to join us in January when we will be rehearsing the Fauré Requiem alongside a variety of French-themed music; if you are interested and have some choral experience please contact our Musical Director Barbara Jenkinson via the website, or on 01749 812708.

The Bells at St Leonard's

There are two towers in South Somerset that have light bells and a ringing chamber on the ground floor. These are at St Leonard's, Pitcombe and at Barton St David's near Keinton Mandeville. Both towers have six bells and it is intended to make them hubs for teaching would-be bellringers in South Somerset.

The art of making bells sound musical is to control them and not have them swinging randomly as you can hear all over the world. Learning to control a bell is like anything else – mistakes are made so there's a lot of bing-banging which is not pretty for the locality.

To keep the peace we are installing a simulator, an electronic system which enables the sound of the bell to be relayed through a loudspeaker while the clapper is tethered. The idea is that ringing the bell is exactly the same as normal but there is no external sound.

This Abel programme is installed already in Horsington and the original ringers of the bells at St Leonard's, which were re-hung in 2013, practised on it. Removing the tethers on the clappers restores the ring to normality.

King's School, Bruton Confirmation Service

There will be a service of confirmation for 19 students at King's School on 3 December at 6.00 pm. Please hold the candidates in your prayers.

Diocesan Synod

There was a meeting of Diocesan Synod on 26 November and Bishop Michael gave his first presidential address to Synod. His main message drew on the Gospel story of the disciples being in a boat on Lake Galilee during a storm and being fearful (Matthew 15: 22-33). Jesus approached the over the water and called to Peter to step out of the boat towards him. Bishop Michael recognised that the Church, nationally and locally, is in choppy waters and there is much anxiety about the future. But he urged us to consider this call to 'step out of the boat' in faith, rather than remaining in fear.

Topics discussed included the national Church's plans for achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and how that is being implemented in this Diocese. Synod also received a presentation on the Diocesan Board of Finance's budget for 2023 and projections beyond that date. As a result of some parishes continuing to fail to pay their parish share in full, the DBF's income is lower than projected, even taking into account the reductions during the Covid pandemic already accounted for. Consequently, the DBF has set another deficit budget for 2023 and will draw down further on reserves to plug some of the gap. This cannot be sustained beyond 2023, so unless giving from the parishes increases, it seems that further cuts in expenditure will be required beyond those that have already been applied or are assumed. Quite what this might look like is not clear, but something is going to have to change during 2023.

Generous January

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Foodbanks usually receive lots of donations in the run-up to Christmas, but far fewer in the New Year. We therefore plan to repeat our request for donations in January – 'Generous January'. There will be a box for donations at the back of St Mary's. Please give if you can (as ever, dried/tinned products only and protein is more needed than pasta).



Diary Dates

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- 1 December - 'Late Night Shopping' in Bruton
- 6 December - Shepton Montague PCC at the village hall, 6.30 pm
- 7 December - Sexey's School Christmas Service at St Mary's, 10.00 am
- 8 December - Sunny Hill Nursery Christmas Service at St Leonard's, Pitcombe, 9.00 am
- 9 December - Bruton Primary School Christmas Fair, from 3.45 pm
- 12 December - Thanksgiving service for Agneta Hickley at St Mary's, 12.15 pm
- 14 December - Upton Noble Primary School Christmas service at St John's Brewham, 10.00 am
- 16 December - Carol Service at Pitcombe, 5.00 pm
- 17 December - Carol Service at Bruton, 6.00 pm
- 18 December - Carol services at Brewham (10:30 am) and Shepton Montague (6:00 pm)
- 19 December - Bruton Choral Society carol concert at St Mary's, 7.00 pm
- 21 December - Carol service at Wyke Champflower, 6.30 pm
- 22 December - Carol service at Redlynch, 6.00 pm
- 24 December - village carolling in Shepton Montague, time tbc
- 24 December - Christingle Service at St Mary's, 4.30 pm
- 24 December - Midnight Mass at St.Mary's, 11:30 pm

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