

Bruton Pitcombe Redlynch Brewham Shepton Montague Wyke Champflower



The St Mary's Star

Everyday faith.

Our Christian faith is something that informs and underpins the whole of our lives, not just certain times in the day or week or year. When we think about what 'church' is and what 'church' is for, we naturally tend to think of Sunday services, festivals and baptisms, weddings and funerals. While all of these are important, they are not what church is, nor what church is for. If we think of church only

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as a Sunday event, the current decline is likely to continue until the time comes when we can no longer sustain these events (if you are not convinced that this is right, sign up for the new series of Benefice Discussion Groups – see below). Instead, we must think of 'church' as a way of life that we inhabit – individually and together.



The Church is a group of people called out of their former lives and called together to form a new community as disciples of Jesus Christ. This is a whole-of-life commitment; as Christians, we are never 'off duty' – all of ourselves is dedicated to the loving service of God and neighbour. We cannot compartmentalise God and must not compartmentalise our life of faith.

This is a vision that we need to re-ignite: we should expect to be more active in the life of the Church Monday to Saturday than we are on Sunday. Sunday is our day off when we take time to rest in God's presence in prayer, offer our worship and receive inspiration and fresh strength for our daily lives. If ever we think that Church is about Sunday, we need a re-think.

Between 29 January and 4 February, our Diocese is running a programme about our life of faith, and specifically about growth in faith. It is called Everyday Faith. There will be a series of resources made available online (short daily videos and written reflections). There is also a course suitable for small groups to look at together. You can find details on the Diocesan website: <https://www>.

bathandwells.org.uk/faith/everyday-faith/everyday-faith-event/. The week ends with a day-long gathering on Saturday 4 February (with a choice of 3 locations). Do think about signing up for this (you sign up on the website). Sometimes, hearing other people's stories can prompt new ideas for ourselves, either as regards our personal faith development, or as regards the life of our local church community.

If you would like to take part in a small group course here, using the materials provided by our Diocese (you can find these on the website if you'd like to know more before deciding), please contact the Rector with your availability (preferred days and times) and we'll see what we can set up.



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

Our carol services and the Christingle service were joyful affairs and on the whole very well-attended, despite last minute changes to the times of some carol services due to the football world cup final. Christmas Day services were also well attended this year. A special mention must go to Florence Tibbatts and Freddie Gasson-Hargreaves for leading the music on Christmas Day at Shepton Montague. Also to Sally, Peter and Wendy at Redlynch, who reacted quickly to a total power failure shortly before the carol service there, arranging carols by candlelight in record quick time. Michael Hillier earned much praise for

his willingness to play the (little used) manual pipe organ at very short notice! Happily, the refreshments were unaffected by the power cut.

These festival occasions are important moments to engage with our wider communities and we need to consider how to build on this so that Church, like the proverbial puppy, is not only for Christmas.

St Mary's hosted the Bruton Choral Society Christmas concert, which was a great success with a string ensemble and solo recorder complementing the voices beautifully. Who knew a recorder could sound like that!

One Planet Bruton have produced some handy tips for reducing energy use when cooking at home. The information sheet can be found on the St Mary's website in the 'Community' section.

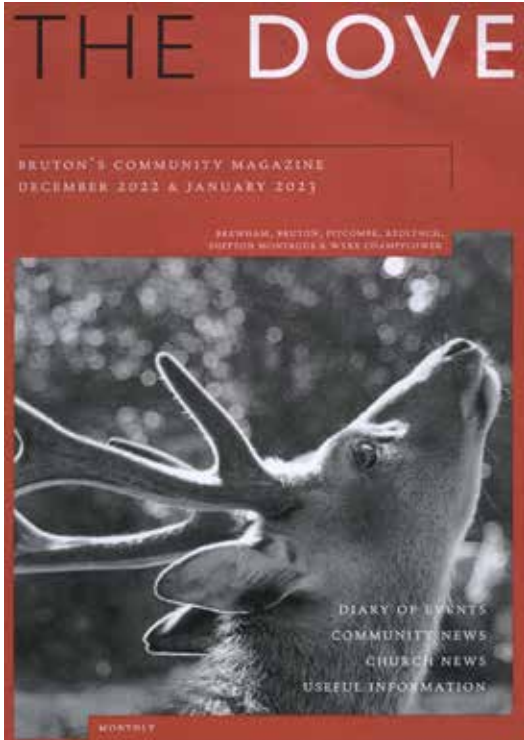
Generous January



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In the week before Christmas, Brue Larder supplied a Christmas hamper to each household that it is supporting. The hampers were full of treats donated by local businesses and individuals. After that outpouring of generosity at Christmas, January can sometimes be a lean month for foodbanks, as donations reduce. We would therefore like to make a special effort this month to support Brue Larder in its work. 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 or rice).

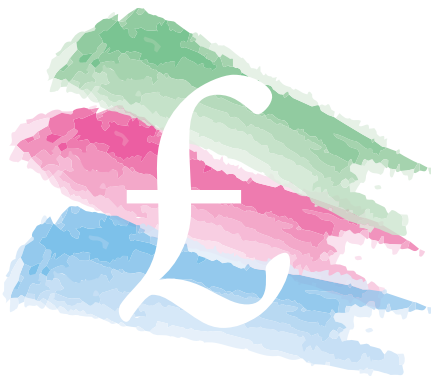
The Dove Magazine



The Dove has been placed 8th out of a field of 450 in the annual parish magazine awards. Huge congratulations to the dedicated team who produce such an excellent magazine. As a church community, we are enormously fortunate to have a magazine of such a high standard produced and distributed for us and to be permitted to have articles and details of services etc published in it. Most parish churches have to produce their own magazine without much help from the wider community – we are blessed indeed

to have Elisabeth Balfour and her team doing such an excellent job and we thank them for letting us have space on their pages.

Our Giving



The last edition of this newsletter contained a piece drawing attention to the need to review regularly the level of our personal giving to the Church, due to the impact of inflation on the value of that gift. Most people's income increases over time – pensions are usually increased by reference to inflation and those

in paid income generally receive annual pay rises (even if not as much as hoped for!). However, most of us do not regularly review and increase our giving to the Church. Small wonder, then, that our income fails to keep pace with our expenditure. Please do look at the level of your giving and consider whether it remains appropriate to your circumstances.

Giving by standing order is far more effective than giving in the collection plate on a Sunday, and much easier to administer for our treasurers, so please do consider setting up a standing order if you have not already done so. Your parish treasurer will be able to give you the necessary bank details.

Discussion Groups

Our Benefice Discussion Groups will resume on Monday 16 January. In this series of meetings, we will discuss Graham Tomlin's book 'The Provocative Church', which poses some challenging questions about what Church is and what we are (or should be!) doing when we meet together.

This series will run for five weeks, meeting on Mondays at the Rectory and beginning on 16 January. We will hold an evening session at 6.30 pm and will also hold an afternoon session at 3.30 pm for those who would find that more convenient (but only if there is sufficient interest).



We will hopefully run another series of meetings in Lent, details tbc.

Benefice Sunday - 29th January



Continuing with the idea of having a social event of some kind when there is a 5th Sunday in the month, this month (bearing in mind the possibility of poor weather at this time of year) we propose breakfast

coffee and pastries At the Chapel on Bruton High Street. Meet at 8.45 am for companionship and refreshment.

For those who would like to attend a church service in the morning, there is the option of the 8.00 am BCP Holy Communion service at St Mary's, Bruton beforehand or a trip to St Mary Magdalene, Upton Noble for BCP Matins at 10.00 am afterwards.

If you are not a morning person, all is not lost. We will be having a Benefice Choral Evensong for Candlemas at St Mary's, Bruton at 6.30pm that day as well, followed by a glass of wine / soft drink. Please come along to that (whether you had breakfast and went to church in the morning or not!).

Diary Dates

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- 18 January – Bruton PCC meeting, Plox meeting room at 5.30 pm
- 29 January – Benefice 5th Sunday, breakfast At the Chapel at 8.45 am
- 29 January – Choral Evensong for Candlemas, St Mary's at 6.30 pm

Further ahead:

- 3 February – Pitcombe PCC meeting, venue tbc at 2.30 pm
- 4 February – Everyday Faith event, Wells at 10.00 am
- 20 February – Brewham PCC meeting, Colinhayes at 7.30 pm
- 21 February – Shepton Montague PCC meeting, Village Hall at 7.00 pm
- 22 February – Ash Wednesday, Eucharist with ashing, St Mary's at 6.00 pm

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