

‘Things will soon pick up’; ‘Why don’t people come to church anymore?’; ‘it never used to be like this’; ‘Where are all the children?’; ‘What is going to happen to us?’; ‘Who will take over when we are gone?’

These are some of the things I have heard said in recent years in small rural churches like ours, as we take stock of our current situation and contemplate our future. Given the realities of small congregations with a relatively high average age and serious financial pressures, it is easy to become a bit despondent and to accept the prevailing narrative of decline and decay of the rural church.

## IN THIS ISSUE

**News from our Parishes**

**Benefice Discussion  
Group**

**Litter Pick in Bruton**

**Visit to the Religious  
Society of Friends**

**Friends of St Leonard’s**

**Sunday 29th October**

**Friends of St Mary’s**

**St Mary’s Patronal  
Festival**

**Arts Events**

**Harvest Festival & Supper**

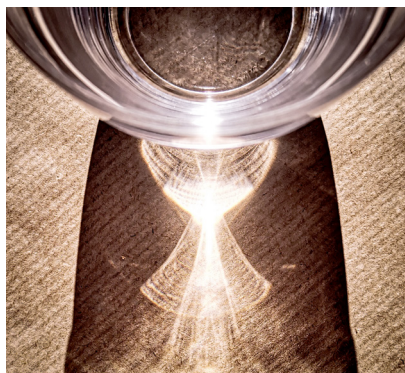
**Harvest Festivals**

**Diary Dates**

**Contact**

But ours is a Gospel of hope, and rural communities are both resilient and adaptable, as witnessed strongly by the farming community: it takes more than a few bad harvests or a disease epidemic to floor our farmers. We, the Church in rural areas, also need to be resilient and adaptable so that we can thrive and continue to proclaim the Gospel and witness to the love of God in Christ.

We may yearn for the mythical golden age of yesteryear when the pews were full and everyone knew the hymns and sang them well, when there was a large choir and we could afford to turn the heating on. But we are in a different place now. Rather than bewail the low attendance figures, the absence of children, the tentativeness of our singing and so on, we need to come up with ideas for flourishing. One thing seems certain: if we simply continue doing what we do now, there is no good reason to think that things will change. If we want things to change, so that the Church will still be a presence in our communities in the future, we ourselves need to change. The big question, of course, is how.



We also need to be careful, and prayerful, about the idea of change. If we come up with strategies and action plans and targeted innovations, we may find that we are doing nothing more than import secular concepts of progress and adaptation into the sacred space that is the

Church. Such growth strategies are often tried in churches; but given that their underlying principles are often based on the economics of the market-place, it is not entirely surprising when these fail. Our approach to change and growth needs to be different: we need it to be a response to the action of God in the world and in our lives. Our task is to make room for God's spirit and to fan the flames of that fire.



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 ([www.stmarysbruton.org](http://www.stmarysbruton.org)), or email [benefice@stmarysbruton.org](mailto: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

The Shepton Montague village fete took place on 26 August and was a great success. The setting in the Dimond's garden is picture-postcard-perfect, the weather was kind, the refreshments were delicious and the stalls many and varied. For a small village to deliver such a big fete is an amazing achievement and depends on the hard work and good will of many, many villagers, the majority of whom do not regularly attend Church. The financial results were very impressive and go a

long way to ensuring that St Peter's remains financially viable.

(Do please submit items of news for this Newsletter from your own parish – there are things happening, and we need to hear about them and share them!)

## Benefice Discussion Group

In our autumn series of Benefice discussion groups we will look



together at the Psalms. We will discuss what the Psalms are, where they came from, how we read them as Holy Scripture, their place in the Church's liturgy and anything else about the Psalms that catches our attention or curiosity.

The Psalms are certainly curious: the Rector offers a prize to the person who can provide the best explanation of the meaning of Psalm 8, verse 2 (in a translation of the competitor's choice), and a further prize to anyone who can provide an authoritative translation of the word 'selah', which sometimes appears in the Psalms (e.g. Psalm 3).

Image above: Giovannino de' Grassi Psalm 118-81, Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence

We will have 4 sessions, on 18 Sep, 9 Oct, 23 Oct and 6 Nov. As with previous series, there will be a choice of a 3.00 pm meeting and a 6.30 pm meeting on each date. Please let the Rector know if you plan to attend, and state at which of the two times you are likely to come (it is fine if you want to be flexible about which session you come to, it just helps to plan the catering and seating). All are welcome.

## Litter Pick in Bruton

### ***Mike Kelham writes:***

‘Supported by The Dove, a number of us have started a campaign to try to keep Bruton a bit tidier. We have organised four groups to each carry out one litter picking session a year. In October it is the turn of St. Mary’s church and we are looking for helpers, both young and less young. All the equipment can be provided courtesy of the town council so we just need a few volunteers to spend an hour or so on Saturday morning 7th October.

If you think you can help please email me on [mikekelham@btinternet.com](mailto:mikekelham@btinternet.com) or just turn up at the church 10.00 am. Ideally we would like about 15 helpers as we have 10 adult size sticks and five children’s ones. We also have a supply of hi viz jackets and gloves as well as black bags.

There will be light refreshments in the Community Hall or the church afterwards and if you can provide any help with those

please contact my wife, Marian, on the same email address. (We will book the Community Hall if we can as then people can wash their hands, etc before handling any food and there are the facilities required.)

Any help you can give will be greatly appreciated.'

## Visit to the Religious Society of Friends



On Sunday 30 July, a group from the Benefice were made very welcome at a meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers) in Wincanton. Two of those who attended share their reflections on what we experienced:

### *'A Secret Haven*

*Walk up the perfectly ordinary and uneventful high street of Wincanton and on looking up you may chance to see an unassuming sign for the Friends Meeting House. Enter a small passage and at the end you will find a garden, a secret and peaceful haven, beyond which is the Friends Meeting House. Quakers generally refer to themselves as Friends.*

*We were received with a warm welcome from the Friends. My experience of it was to feel immediately surrounded by a warmth of love. I felt entirely safe there.*

*We sat in silence for one hour, except for two people who spoke their thoughts as is the Friends' custom. Anyone may speak and speeches are received in silence. The seats are arranged in a circle which gives a real sense of connection with everyone else in the room. I relaxed and let my thoughts flow past as if they were floating in a dark green river.*

*At the end of the hour the Elders shook hands with everyone and we all retired to 'The Barn' for coffee and biscuits and free tomatoes from a glut in someone's greenhouse.*

*I hope we may go again sometime.'*



*'We arrived not knowing quite what to expect. We knew it was a meeting rather than a service and there would be no leader and it would be conducted in silence. A rather intriguing prospect and obviously different from the Anglican way with the priest leading the worship mainly in a written and familiar format.*

*The Meeting House was down an alley in Wincanton that I had never ventured down in the 50 years we have lived here, although I had seen the sign in the street.*

*In the meeting room were chairs and benches arranged in a circle with room for about 20-30 people.*

*There was a brief introduction to explain the format, saying we would all sit in silence but if anyone wanted to say something then we should stand up and do so and it would last about an hour which seemed a long time to keep quiet!*

*We all sat in silence and after about 10 minutes of thinking this was a bit strange I relaxed and began to find it all very peaceful.*

*After a while someone got up and expressed their concerns about the war in Ukraine and later two other people spoke but mainly we just sat still and in silence.*

*My mind wandered from what I would do if Putin walked in the room to my need to buy milk on the way home.*

*I found the whole experience very peaceful and relaxing but maybe not something for every Sunday.*

*Coffee and biscuits afterwards rounded off an interesting morning.'*

## Friends of St Leonard's

Unless you know something about silver, the name Tim Schroder won't mean anything to you. On the other hand, if you do, you'll know how lucky we are to have him talk at St Leonard's, Pitcombe



at 5.30 for 6 pm on Friday October 13.

Dr Tim Schroder is an author of books and learned articles on silver; sometime Director of the silver department at Christie's, curator of Decorative Arts in Los Angeles County museum, Trustee of the Wallace collection and Prime Warden (twice) of the Goldsmith's Company, he will give an illustrated talk entitled *Church Silver: 500 Years of Change*.

Tickets (to include a glass of wine) will be £10 in cash at the door or online to Friends of Pitcombe Church, sort code 60-04-33, account 10501789. Don't forget to give your name as a reference.

## Redlynch: Sunday 29th October

On Sunday 29 October, St Peter's Redlynch will be celebrating the harvest with a service at 11.00 am. It would be lovely if as many as possible from across the Benefice showed their support for St Peter's by attending and worshipping together. As you may know, St Peter's does not currently have regular services on Sundays and does not have the benefit of any regular income. Its viability as a place of prayer and worship is therefore very much in doubt. Your presence and your prayers will help it to survive. And the sausage rolls afterwards are legendary.

For those who are able to do so, we might perhaps walk up to the

chapel from Bruton along the footpath that starts just opposite the vehicle entrance to Durslade Farm / Hauser & Wirth and runs uphill to the East of Discove Farm, emerging through the Community Patch project right at the door of the chapel. Meet in the Hauser & Wirth car park at 10.00 am for a leisurely walk up there. If anyone would like to walk in one direction only and requires a lift, please get in touch with the Benefice office and we'll arrange transport.

If people would like to follow the refreshments after the service with more refreshments at the Monty, we could reserve a table or two...

If you have ideas for what we might do together on the 5th Sunday when there is one, do please pass on your suggestions to the Rector.

The idea is to do something different and interesting (dare we say it, even fun!) that helps to strengthen our sense of community across the Benefice.

## Friends of St Mary's

***David Stevens, the new Chairman of the Friends of St Mary's, writes:***

Some of you may have heard of The Friends of St Mary the Virgin Bruton but many will not have, largely because it has been through a period of inactivity. A new committee has recently been appointed with a view to revitalising the Friends. By way

of background the Friends were formed on 5 March 2001 and it is a registered charity. It was established at that time to fund refurbishment of the Church Bells. It has currently approximately 30 members who pay an annual fee to remain as a Friend and some make additional donations.

In Simon Jenkins's seminal work on England's thousand best churches St Mary's Bruton is given high praise calling its tower "Somerset architecture at its most powerful". The Friends are all about preserving and enhancing the fabric of this magnificent building. You do not have to be a churchgoer or even a believer to be a Friend.

St Mary's Bruton is about to face a major fund raising period to enable, if approved, the building of a servery and lavatories. It is hoped that this expenditure will in turn facilitate wider usage of the church within the community, alongside increased fund raising activities. The Friends have a key role to play in such fundraising as it is felt that some non-churchgoers might feel more comfortable donating to the Friends than donating to the PCC. We urgently need more Friends of all ages and of any faith or no faith to join as Friends. Do please consider becoming a Friend. We really need you. To learn more about the Friends please contact myself David Stevens on 07811 121359 or [davidjstevens2802@gmail.com](mailto:davidjstevens2802@gmail.com), Hugh Wauton via email on [hughwauton@me.com](mailto:hughwauton@me.com) or Kerrin Wauton via email [kerrinwauton@me.com](mailto:kerrinwauton@me.com).

# St Mary's Patronal Festival



At St Mary's, we will celebrate our patronal festival on 10 September at the 11.00am service. The choir will lead our worship and we will see if we can offer even more impressive refreshments than usual after the service. Do come if you can.

To help us focus on Mary, here is a sonnet written by the poet Malcolm Guite and selected by Fr Justin Bailey, formerly of this parish. It addresses Mary as 'Theotokos', the God-bearer.

*You bore for me the One who came to bless  
And bear for all and make the broken whole.  
You heard His call and in your open 'yes'  
You spoke aloud for every living soul.  
Oh gracious Lady, child of your own child,  
Whose mother-love still calls the child in me,  
Call me again, for I am lost, and wild  
Waves surround me now. On this dark sea  
Shine as a star and call me to the shore.  
Open the door that all my sins would close  
And hold me in your garden. Let me share  
The prayer that folds the petals of the Rose.  
Enfold me too in Love's last mystery  
And bring me to the One you bore for me.*

## Arts Events

Film Night: the series of regular film nights continues at St Peter's, Shepton Montague with a showing of 'The unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry' on Thursday 14 September (7.30pm start).

On Friday October 6th at 7.30 in St John's Church Brewham, there will be a concert given by the Somerset

Russets who play and sing music of the county from across the decades. They also tell tales of these earlier music makers, adding to the evening's entertainment. It is a fund-raising concert, with a raffle and excellent prizes! Tickets are £10 (to include a drink) and will be on sale at Bruton

Pharmacy, the Community Office and from Ann Saxton, and the Old Red Lion". Look out for the posters.



# Harvest Fete & Harvest Supper

## An afternoon and evening of fun...

The St Mary's **Harvest Fete** will take place on Saturday 16th September at the Bruton Club from 2pm until 5pm. There will be a variety of stalls and activities for everyone. Tea and cakes will be served.



The **Harvest Supper** will follow the Fete from 6pm. There will be a Hog Roast followed by a **Barn Dance** featuring music by live band Teasing the Cat.

Tickets will be available from the Convenience Store and the Community Office - both in the High Street.

Visit [www.stmarysbruton.org](http://www.stmarysbruton.org) for updates!

## Harvest Festivals

Our harvest festivals this year will be held on the following dates:

- St John's, Brewham: 3 September, 11.00 am
- St Leonard's, Pitcombe: 17 September, 11.00 am
- St Mary's, Bruton: 17 September, 11.00 am
- Holy Trinity, Wyke Champflower: 17 September, 6.30 pm
- St Peter's, Shepton Montague: 24 September, 6.00 pm
- St Peter's, Redlynch: 29 October, 11.00 am

## Diary Dates

- 8 September: Pitcombe PCC meeting
- 11 September: Brewham PCC meeting
- 13 September: Bruton PCC meeting
- 14 September: Film Night at St Peter's,  
Shepton Montague, 7.30 pm
- 16 September: harvest celebrations at the Bruton Club,  
from 2.00 pm
- 18 September: Benefice Discussion Group meetings resume,  
3.00 pm or 6.30 pm at the Rectory
- 19 September: Shepton Montague PCC meeting

***Further ahead:***

- 3 October: Deanery Synod
- 6 October: Somerset Russets at St John's
- 7 October: Bruton litter pick
- 13 October: Friends of St Leonard's talk
- 29 October: Redlynch Harvest Festival: 11.00 am

## Contact

**Rev'd Jonathan Evans, Rector**

**8 Wellesley Green, Bruton, BA10 0DU**

**Tel: 01749 812775**

**email: [rector@stmarysbruton.org](mailto:rector@stmarysbruton.org)**

**Benefice Office**

**Plox House, Silver Street, Bruton, BA10 0ED**

**Tel: 01749 813080**

**email: [benefice@stmarysbruton.org](mailto:benefice@stmarysbruton.org)**





