



Bruton Pitcombe Redlynch Brewham Wyke Champflower Shepton Montague



***'Must we? Should we?'***

***Can we? Shall we?'***

At a meeting of Diocesan Synod on 25 November, the Diocesan Board of Finance announced proposals to reform the way in which mission in

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**STOP PRESS!**

our Diocese is funded. This may sound dull and technical, but please do read on: this is important stuff and raises some huge questions for us.

The basic idea behind the proposals is that each benefice in our Diocese must meet the costs of the paid ministry it receives (for us, this means the Rector) and more besides. For our benefice, the proposals would require us to virtually double our income, or reduce the amount of paid ministry we receive, or expand our benefice by taking on more parishes until together we can pay the required amount. Without being melodramatic, these proposals threaten the way we currently do small, rural church.

Most of the costs of mission are paid out of the Common Fund (the remainder of these costs are met out of income from Diocesan assets and fees from weddings and funerals). The Common Fund receives its income from all the parishes across our Diocese, through the payment of Parish Share contributions. The aggregate of all Parish Share contributions each year has to add up to the total amount required by the Common Fund that year.

At present, the amount of Parish Share paid by each parish is calculated according to a formula:  $\text{£A} \times \text{B}$ .

£A is a fixed sum. There are 5 possible amounts for A, depending on which socio-economic category the parish falls into. Each parish self-declares which category it is in (reflecting its assessment of its

relative affluence). This variation in the amount of £A from richer to poorer parishes is intended to deliver a measure of subsidy from rich to poor across our Diocese.

B is the number of regular worshippers in that parish's congregation. It follows that the larger a parish's number of regular worshippers, the greater its Parish Share contribution: churches with larger congregations pay more into the Common Fund than smaller churches. This has the consequence that there is a subsidy from bigger churches to smaller churches.

There are problems with the way this formula is working.

First, most churches in our Diocese self-declare as considerably below average affluence. That, by definition, cannot be accurate, as the categories are supposed to identify relative affluence, not absolute affluence. Parishes can see that if they put themselves in a higher affluence category, their Parish Share contribution will be higher, so they declare as relatively poor.

Second, we have relatively few churches with large congregations and many with small congregations. This means that a small number of churches (20%) are paying high levels of Parish Share (relative to the rest) and these few are subsidising the vast majority of churches (80%).

Third, many parishes are not paying the full amount of their Parish Share.

Fourth, the number of regular worshippers across the Diocese is falling, such that the total amount that the Common Fund requires in order to provide ministry is being spread across a smaller number of people, resulting in higher Parish Share per capita.

By far the biggest problem, however, is that our average levels of giving are inadequate to meet our costs of ministry. Many of our regular worshippers across our Diocese are generous in the amount they give to their parishes to support the cost of ministry and the maintenance of our buildings. But many are not generous and give only a small amount, both relative to their ability to give and in absolute terms. This is a key factor in parishes' inability to pay Parish Share in full and had led to substantial deficits in the Common Fund in the last 3 years, resulting in the Diocesan Board of Finance taking steps to cut its expenditure – primarily the cost of providing paid clergy.

In these circumstances, the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) has proposed a change to the Parish Share formula. Under these proposals, the amount of Parish Share would no longer be calculated by reference to the size of the congregation (number of regular worshippers). Instead, it would be calculated by reference to the amount of paid ministry with which the relevant parish/benefice is supplied by the DBF (there is a bit more to it than this: there are some additional costs on top of this). So a benefice that is supplied with

one paid minister would pay £X. A benefice that is supplied with two paid ministers would pay £2X, irrespective of the number of people in the congregation or the number of churches in the benefice.

The basic idea behind this is that each benefice needs to be self-financing as regards the costs of its ministry: the subsidy from big church to small church would end. If the benefice cannot pay the costs of the ministry it receives, it will (it seems likely) be amalgamated with other parishes until the aggregate Parish Share contribution from that benefice reaches the required level.

These proposals would, if implemented, have far-reaching consequences for small churches like all of ours. We are currently very substantially subsidised through the current Common Fund formula. If these proposals were to be implemented in the terms currently proposed, our aggregate Parish Share across this benefice (ie the total amount paid by all our parishes together) would rise from around £44,000 in 2023 to nearly £80,000.

These proposals will now go out for consultation in Deaneries and parishes, from January to June 2024.

The expectation from our Diocese is that in the future each benefice will pay: (a) the costs of the paid ministry it receives, (b) a contribution towards the cost of central Diocesan support functions and (c) a contribution into a 'support fund' to be used to provide relief to the poorer parishes in the Diocese.

The questions for us to consider together in the first part of 2024 are:

- Must we do this? (Or can we articulate a better reform of the Common Fund formula?)
- Should we do this? (What would be the consequences of not paying in full?)
- Can we do this? (Are we able to raise sufficient income to meet these much higher ministry costs?)
- Shall we do this? (Or do we have a better idea?)

In the meantime: if you do not already pay a regular contribution to your parish, please do so if you possibly can. Too few of our regular and occasional worshippers help to meet our costs and this needs to change, whatever may happen to the Parish Share formula. If you do already pay a regular contribution: thank you, and please review the amount you contribute. Many people do not regularly adjust the amount of their giving and the effects of inflation mean that over time a fixed amount reduces in real value. Our giving needs to keep pace with our expenditure.



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

A Benefice prayer meeting was held on Saturday 18th November and we are grateful to all who prayed (in church or elsewhere) for our Benefice, and specifically our finances.

A memorial service for Malcom Hord will take place at St Mary's on 12 January at 2.00 pm.

Bishop Michael preached on All Saints Day at the Patronal Festival at St Leonard's.

St Mary's has welcomed 3 groups of pupils from Bruton Primary School to learn about baptism.

(Please keep the flow of news from our parishes coming in...)

## Bruton Choral Society

We're now very much looking forward to our Christmas Concert which will be held in St Mary's on Monday 18 December at 7.30pm. For this final event of our 30th Anniversary year we will be singing well-known festive music by Bach as well as the short cantata *Born A King* by

William Lloyd Webber, a gem of a piece. William has been somewhat unfairly eclipsed by his more famous sons, but recently his talents

The poster is for the Bruton Choral Society Christmas Concert. It features a black background with red and white text. On the left side, there are three stylized red angels playing trumpets. The title 'Bruton Choral Society' is in white, and 'Christmas Concert' is in large red letters. The program includes 'Festive Music: JS Bach', 'Born A King: William Lloyd Webber', and 'Carols for Choir and Audience'. Guest soloists are listed: Eliza Talman (Trumpet), Angela Ashworth (Soprano), Geoff Allan (Tenor), and Ashley Marshfield (Organ). The concert is on Monday, 18 December at 7.30pm at St Mary's Church, Bruton. Tickets are £12 advance (£15 on the door), including a glass of wine, with children free. Contact information for Bruton Convenience Store and the website is provided at the bottom.

**Bruton Choral Society**  
**Christmas Concert**

**Festive Music: JS Bach**  
**Born A King: William Lloyd Webber**  
**Carols for Choir and Audience**

**Eliza Talman: Guest Trumpet Soloist**  
**Angela Ashworth: Soprano**  
**Geoff Allan: Tenor**  
**Ashley Marshfield: Organ**

**Mon 18 December 7.30pm**  
**St Mary's Church, Bruton**  
**£12 advance (£15 on the door)**  
**Including a glass of wine, children free**  
**Bruton Convenience Store,**  
**01749 813161**  
**or [www.bرتونchoralsociety.org.uk](http://www.bرتونchoralsociety.org.uk)**

have begun to be recognised by the musical world. Of course there will also be Christmas carol arrangements for choir and audience alike.

We are privileged to welcome guest soloist Eliza Talman, a very talented young trumpet sensation. Eliza grew up in Frome and was educated at Wells Cathedral School; from there she won a scholarship to

the Royal Academy of Music, where she is still studying. Our other soloists will be Angela Ashworth and Geoff Allan, both members of the choir, and Ashley Marshfield will be accompanying us as well as playing solos on the organ.

Tickets at £12, to include a glass of wine, will be available from the beginning of December, from Bruton Convenience Store, 01749 813161, [www.bرتونchoralsociety.org.uk](http://www.bرتونchoralsociety.org.uk) or £15 on the door. Accompanied children are welcome free of charge.



# Christmas Services

## Christmas in the Benefice of Bruton

### Carol Services

Sat 16 Dec - St. Leonard's Carols, Pitcombe 4.00 pm

Sun 17 Dec - St. John's Carols, Brewham 4.00 pm

Sun 17 Dec - St. Peter's Carols (Shepton Mont.) 6.30 pm

Mon 18 Dec - Bruton Choral Christmas Concert at St Mary's 7.30 pm

Wed 20 Dec - Holy Trinity Carols, Wyke 6.30 pm

Thurs 21 Dec - St. Peter's Carols (Redlynch) 6.00 pm

Sat 23rd Dec - St. Mary's Carol Service 6.30 pm

### Christmas Eve

St. Mary's Holy Communion (BCP) 8.00 am

St. Mary's Christingle 4.30 pm

St. Mary's Midnight Mass 11.30 pm (Eucharist)

### Christmas Day

8.00 am St. Mary's Holy Communion (BCP)

9.30 am St. Peter's (Shepton Montague) Eucharist

9.30 am St. Leonard's (Pitcombe) Holy Communion (BCP)

10.00 am St. John Baptist (Brewham) Eucharist

11.00 am St. Mary's Eucharist



## Late Night Shopping

St Mary's will be open this year for Late Night Shopping on Thursday 7th December. There will be plenty to see (and hear), beginning with Carol Singing on Crown Green at 6.00 pm, an ambient set of music played inside the church composed for the event by local musician Isaac Mills, roasted chestnuts, mulled wine, hot chocolate, icecream (in case the chocolate is too hot), and a variety of things to buy ranging from hand-made Christmas Cards to friendship bracelets!



## Brue Larder



If you would like to support Brue Larder's festive hampers, being delivered to local families in time for Christmas, they would be most grateful for any donations.

They will be delivering hampers on 22nd December, so if we could aim to leave any (non-perishable) items to the drop off point at the back of St Mary's on or before Sunday 17th December, this will give the Brue Larder team time to collect items and include them in the hampers in time for delivery.

A big 'thank you' to all who have contributed to Brue Larder through the drop off point, which became a permanent location for donations this year. Whether your contributions have been big or small, occasional, or regular, it really does help. And of course, we extend our thanks to the amazing volunteers at the Brue Larder working tirelessly behind the scenes to support our local community. If you want to know more about Brue Larder, either for their support or for volunteering opportunities, please contact: [bruelarder@brutontown.com](mailto:bruelarder@brutontown.com).

The work doesn't stop after the festive season, and understandably grocery donations tend to ease off in the new year, as so many feel the 'pinch' after Christmas, and giving isn't promoted so much in the media. However, you are in a position to do so, and would like to support a Generous January, you know where you can donate! Thank you.

# Open the Book



Open the Book is an opportunity to share Bible stories in a fun and hopefully memorable way with children in primary schools. The scheme works under the auspices of The Bible Society who provide the materials and support. I would say the most important criteria for wanting to get involved is a desire for children to know the stories in the Bible. A typical assembly lasts 10-15 minutes with someone in the team reading the story and other team members acting the story out. We try to get the children involved and there are always suggestions for this. If you don't feel acting is one of your strengths you can opt to simply read the introduction and conclusion or the story!

A team of six of us (from St Mary's and other churches) have been going into Bruton Primary School since 2017, usually about twice a half-term.

We would always welcome new people to join our team or there is another school close by that would love to have an Open the Book team visit them.

*<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book/>*

## Bruton Community Hall

The current lease of the community hall in Bruton comes to an end soon and we are in discussions with a group of people potentially willing to take on running the hall under a new lease (most of the current committee wish to stand down). We need one or two more people to make this viable. You would not need to become a trustee, just be willing to help manage the hall together with the other volunteers. If you, or someone you know, might be willing to do this, please get in touch via the Benefice office.

## Prayer Ministry

*"Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference."*

(Max Lucado)

### ***Some things to pray for as we approach Christmas:***

*Organisations and people trying to make Christmas a happier time for people in our benefice:*

- Brue Larder food bank. Pray for sufficient donations and the people who distribute the food.
- Good Company Christmas 2023: a group is hosting and cooking a hot festive meal on December 25th for anyone who needs it.
- Bruton Club Christmas meal: Thursday 28th December, a Christmas meal intended for older people.

*The many services in the churches in our benefice.*

Your prayers **WILL** make a difference.

Every Wednesday at 8.30am at St Mary's we meet to pray for our church, benefice and local issues. Anyone is very welcome to join us. If you would like us to pray for something specific you could send the

## Arts Events

request to Jonathan to pass on to us.

**Film Night:** the series of regular film nights continues at St Peter's, Shepton Montague with a showing of *Barbie* on Thursday 9 November (7.30pm start).

**Bruton Choral Society** (see page 7) will be performing their Christmas Concert on Monday 18 December in St Mary's at 7.30pm. This is the final event of their 30th Anniversary year, and they will be performing well-known festive music by Bach as well as the short cantata *Born A King* by William Lloyd Webber - a gem of a piece. Of course there will also be Christmas carol arrangements for choir and audience alike. With guest soloist Eliza Talman (trumpet), Angela Ashworth (soprano), Geoff Allan (tenor) and Ashley Marshfield (organ) it will be a wonderful and festive evening.



Tickets at £12, to include a glass of wine, will be available from the beginning of December, from Bruton Convenience Store, 01749 813161, [www.bرتونchoralsociety.org.uk](http://www.bرتونchoralsociety.org.uk) or £15 on the door. Accompanied children are welcome free of charge.

# **Bruton Choral Society**

## **Christmas Concert**



**Festive Music: JS Bach**

**Born A King: William Lloyd Webber**

**Carols for Choir and Audience**

**Eliza Talman: Guest Trumpet Soloist**

**Angela Ashworth: Soprano**

**Geoff Allan: Tenor**

**Ashley Marshfield: Organ**

**Mon 18 December 7.30pm**

**St Mary's Church, Bruton**

**£12 advance (£15 on the door)**

**Including a glass of wine, children free**

**Bruton Convenience Store,**

**01749 813161**

**or [www.bرتونchoralsociety.org.uk](http://www.bرتونchoralsociety.org.uk)**


On Tuesday 19 December, there will be a chamber performance of **Handel's Messiah** at St Mary's, 6.00 pm. Doors open at 5.30 pm, and there will be no interval (the concert has a running time of an hour and a half). Refreshments will be available beforehand. Tickets are £12, concessions are available, and children are free.

[www.ticketsource.co.uk/booking/t-qjxpeal](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/booking/t-qjxpeal)

# CONCERT

*Come and celebrate Christmas with beautiful music...*

## Handel's MESSIAH




A rare intimate chamber performance of Handel's great work, 'Messiah', featuring world-class musicians.


December 19<sup>th</sup> 2023, St Mary's Church, Bruton, 6pm.

Doors open at 5.30pm, no interval, 1.5hrs running time, abridged version.

Tickets £12, concessions available, children free. Refreshments available beforehand.

Tickets purchased here: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/booking/t-qjxpeal> or on the door.





Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

# CONCERT



## Benefice Discussion

The Advent series of discussion groups will meet on the Mondays of advent (4th, 11th, 18th Dec), at the usual times of 3.00pm and 6.30pm, except that there will be no evening meeting on 18th December due to the Choral Society concert taking place that evening. We will be looking at the biblical account of Christ's nativity.

## Christmas Lunch Events

Two events are being organised in Bruton this year for those who might like to join with others for a meal at Christmas. This might be because they would otherwise be on their own and would like some company, or because they are struggling to provide a celebratory meal for themselves for any reason.

One event is being run by 'good company', the Community Interest Company running in Bruton. This is on Christmas Day itself, from 12.00 pm – 2.00 pm. This will be a traditional Christmas lunch, held at Mill on the Brue, and it is for anyone who would like some company or is struggling to provide a Christmas meal. There is no charge for the lunch (the cost is being covered by donors), but pre-booking is essential. Details can be found online: <https://www.goodcompanychristmas.com> or speak to the Rector. People need to be referred in order to get an invitation, so do please speak to the Rector if you, or anyone you know, might be interested.

Another Christmas Meal is being offered by the Bruton Club (formerly the Unionist Club). This is intended for older people and takes place on Thursday 28 December. This will be a full roast dinner and is expected to start at around 1.00 pm (TBC). This is also a free event, with the cost being covered by the Bruton Club. Please keep an eye out for further information, but again, pre-booking will be essential.

Both these events need volunteer helpers if they are to happen. Please do consider whether you might be able to lend a hand setting up, serving or clearing up afterwards. Details of what help is needed when can be obtained from the organisers. We will include more details about both events next month.

## Carol Services

*Our carol services this year are as follows:*

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| • <b>St Leonard's:</b>                 | Sat 16 December, 4.00pm   |
| • <b>St John Baptist:</b>              | Sun 17 December, 4.00pm   |
| • <b>St Peter's, Shepton Montague:</b> | Sun 17 December, 6.30pm   |
| • <b>Holy Trinity:</b>                 | Weds 20 December, 6.30pm  |
| • <b>St Peter's, Redlynch:</b>         | Thurs 21 December, 6.00pm |
| • <b>St Mary's:</b>                    | Sat 23 December, 6.30pm   |



## Diary Dates

- **3 Dec:** Advent Evensong, St Mary's at 6.30 pm
- **4 Dec:** EGM of the Friends of St Mary's, 5.30pm
- **5 Dec:** Shepton Montague PCC, Village Hall at 6.30 pm
- **7 Dec:** Late Night Shopping in Bruton
- **8 Dec:** 'Three Talkings', Shepton Montague village hall at 7.00pm
- **18 Dec:** Bruton Choral Society Christmas Concert, St Mary's at 7.30 pm
- **19 Dec:** The Messiah, St Mary's, 6.00 pm
- **25 Dec:** good company Christmas Lunch, Mill on the Brue at 12.00 pm
- **28 Dec:** Bruton Club Christmas Meal at Bruton Club

## 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)**

## STOP PRESS!

Some of those who attended our Advent Evensong asked where they might be able to get a full copy of the text of the lecture about which the Rector spoke in the homily ('Joyful Rebellion' *The Tablet* lecture 2023, given by John Casson).

You can watch the lecture itself or read an abridged version as published in the magazine *The Tablet* by going to the website for L'Arche: <https://www.larche.org.uk/joyful-rebellion-the-tablet-lecture>

