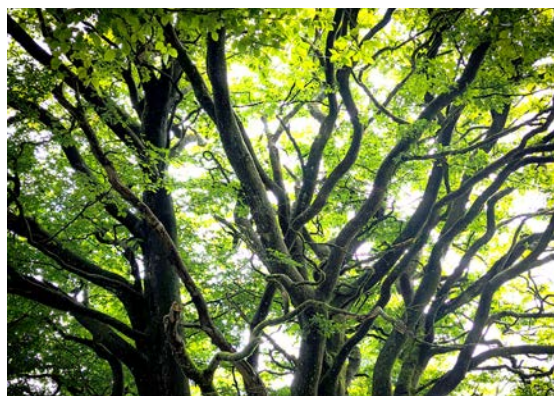




Bruton Pitcombe Redlynch Brewham Wyke Champflower Shepton Montague



Some sage words from Jean Pierre de Caussade:

To avoid the anxieties which may be caused by either regret for the past or fear of the future, here in a few words is the rule to follow: the past must be left to God's measureless mercy, the future to his loving

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*providence; and the present must be given wholly to his love
through fidelity to his grace*

(from Abandonment to Divine Providence)



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), 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

All our churches celebrated the Festival of Christmas with great joy and full churches. This is a huge encouragement to all who work so hard to keep our churches open and make them so welcoming.

St Mary's was very full again on Friday 12 January as we said a fond farewell to Malcolm Hord at his memorial service. His friend Elisabeth Balfour and his stepson Quentin Browell spoke movingly in tribute to a much-loved member of St Mary's congregation and the wider Bruton community.

Introducing Rev'd Charles Roberts and Julie Roberts, whom we are delighted to welcome to share in ministry with us in the Benefice:



Having worshipped at St Mary's for a few months, we'd like to introduce ourselves. We are Charles and Julie Roberts. I am a retired priest and Julie, my wife, is a retired nurse. We've been married for 47 years

and have two children and two grandchildren. Before retirement we were running a six parish group in the Chew Valley centred in Chew Magna, having worked before that at Bath Abbey. In the 1970s/80s we were working in South Africa where we spent eighteen very happy years. Julie was teaching, and I was a musician before training for the church there and being ordained by Desmond Tutu.

We are delighted to join the worshipping community at Bruton and look forward to getting to know you all over the coming months.



Prayers of Love and Faith

Those who attended the Sunday service on 14 January at Pitcombe, Shepton Montague or Bruton, or on 21 January at Brewham will have heard the Rector speak about the new Prayers of Love and Faith. For those who were not present, the text of what was said is available on the St Mary's website. For those who cannot access the website, a hard copy can be made available if you email or ring the Benefice office.

Please do inform yourself about this important issue. If you have views on the subject that you would like to be taken into consideration, please make them known to either the Rector or a member of your PCC, in whatever way is easiest for you. As the Rector has made clear, we need to decide whether we wish to offer these prayers for use in our parishes, and it is important that all those who have a view can have that view taken into consideration as together we find our way forwards.

Notes from an Absent Organist: Chapter 2

Our organist at St Mary's writes:

On EasterDay 2019, the world awoke to the news that bombs had exploded in churches in Colombo and other towns in Sri Lanka (not at the Ragama Basilica, mercifully) with appalling loss of life. Islamic

fundamentalists were blamed. Their motive was not clearly established, though the reason for choosing Easter Sunday was sickeningly obvious.

As people gathered for the Easter service here at St Mary's, someone gave me a sympathetic hug, knowing that I must be upset, particularly as I was due to fly out the next day. (Thank you, R..., for that kind gesture which is not forgotten.) I did fly out on the Monday, finding a sombre atmosphere prevailing across the island, with different religions and ethnic groups united in their grief. In the course of time, churches were repaired and services resumed. Communities and families stricken by the atrocities can never forget; but if the perpetrators aimed to undermine tolerance and unity in Sri Lankan society, they failed.

On Christmas Day 2023, the world awoke - or at least, one bleary-eyed organist in Bruton still recovering from Midnight Mass awoke – to a brief, less grim news item from Sri Lanka. The government there had declared an amnesty for 10,000 prisoners, who were to be released from jail on Christmas Day! I'm afraid this seems to have been a practical and economic move rather than a magnanimous gesture of support for Christianity. The total capacity of prisons in the country is only about four thousand, so it was becoming impossible to house so many inmates. Of the ten thousand liberated few will have been wicked Christians, indeed few will have been hardened criminals of any religion. In such a poor country many people simply cannot afford to pay even small fines (for traffic offences or whatever) so they are sent to prison. The cost of accommodating them is a far greater burden on the government and tax-payer than the lack of revenue from payment

of fines. The Sri Lankan government apparently recognised this. (Most countries, including Britain, face similar dilemmas; but it is perhaps outside the scope of a church newsletter to discuss the economic issues arising from criminals being kept in prison for a few years – murderers for life – and possible solutions.)

As always, I shall return home with mixed feelings at best. One thing which will distract me from jet-lag as I take my place behind the organ at St Mary's on March 3 is the prospect of playing two unfamiliar hymns: 'Disposer Supreme and Judge of the Earth', and 'The Spacious Firmament on High'. The choir has been asked to rehearse these hymns to give the congregation a good lead. Do give them your best shot as they are among my favourites and I may well play them at my own Memorial Service. Yes, you did read that correctly: please ask me for clarification. Or ask Harry, without whose technical wizardry something seemingly impossible such as this could not come about.

More on choices of hymns and organ music next month.

Reform of the Parish Share

The December issue of this newsletter gave an explanation of proposals to reform the calculation of Parish Share. If you missed that, or have forgotten about this issue, back copies of the newsletter are available on the St Mary's website. Please do take note: this is a

potentially very significant reform for us and could result in significant changes in the shape and structure of parish ministry here.

Invitations have now been issued to clergy, churchwardens, PCC treasurers and PCC secretaries to participate in a consultation on these proposals. The topic will be considered by each PCC with a view to the Benefice Council being authorised by each PCC to submit a response to the consultation on behalf of the whole Benefice.

Parish Finance

Have you noticed what has been happening to the rate of inflation and the cost of living recently? If you receive a pension, it is likely to be linked to the rate of inflation, such that it has gone up over the last couple of years, and especially in the last year or two. If you receive a salary, have you had an increase in pay over the last couple of years, whether to reflect promotion or the increased cost of living?

When was the last time you reviewed the amount of your regular giving to your parish church? If you set up your standing order some time ago, unless you have increased it recently, it will now be worth less, perhaps much less, than when you first set it up. Some standing orders to our PCCs have not been increased for many years. If you give by cash when you attend services, are you still giving the same amount each week as you did last year, or the year before, or the year before that? If you do only give when you attend a service, please

consider setting up a standing order in place of or in addition to your cash giving - otherwise, if you are away or unable to attend on a Sunday, your PCC does not receive the gift you want to give.

All our parishes are struggling to make ends meet at the moment. Please do consider whether the level of your giving remains appropriate to your circumstances.

Prayer Ministry

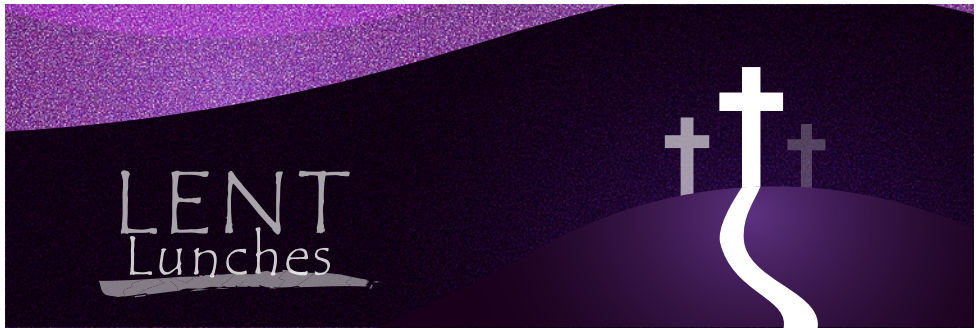
Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4: 6-7)

As we think about the things happening in our world, our country, our lives, our benefice and our church that make us anxious, why not try praying about them? There is a hymn that includes these words:

*What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!*

*What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer!*

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 request to Jonathan to pass on to us.



We are hoping to arrange shared Lent lunches again this year. If you are interested in helping organise and run these, please contact Juliet Bowell (or send a message to the Benefice office and we will pass it on). We have provisionally booked Bruton Community Hall on Wednesdays in Lent (from 15 Feb, but not including Holy Week).

It would be wonderful if this could be an event shared across the entire Benefice and also with other Christian denominations, so do please spread the word.



Arts Events

On Saturday 27 January at 7.30pm we welcome alternative folk artist ALVIRA to St Mary's with her performance art piece *Echo*.

She writes:

Our life journey of discovery is like that of an echo resonating throughout the vast halls of existence. It bounces away from us only to return; but does so changed by experience. This work explores the sounds, sentiments and movements of the echo through music, spoken word and dance.



ALVIRA will be joined on stage by Rambert-trained dancer Jo Elisabeth. In the first part of the evening's programme ALVIRA welcomes special guest saxophonist Nick Sorensen who will play solo improvisations based on folk songs.

Tickets £10 on door or book online/scan QR code:

linktr.ee/alvira.artist



WORKINGS IN TAPESTRY

FAELAN SYDENHAM recorder

CLARE SYDENHAM harpsichord and piano

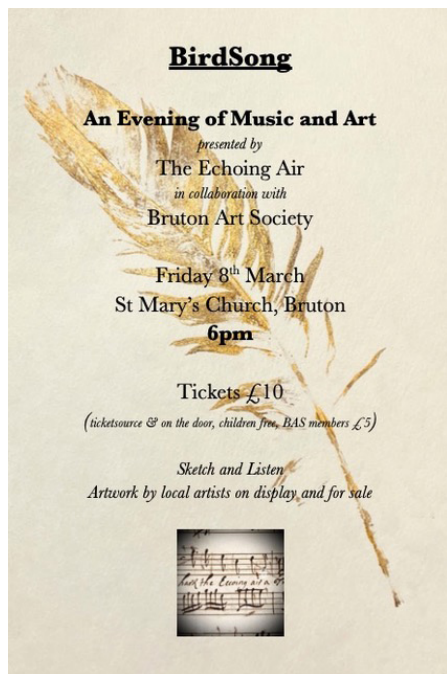
On Sunday 18 February, family duo Faelan and Clare Sydenham celebrate their long-awaited return to recital at St Mary's, Bruton. The recorder and piano duo took a musical hiatus during which Faelan completed his four-year studies at Guildhall School of Music and Drama whilst Clare organised and performed in numerous concerts and events, collaborating with local musicians, schools and organisations.

The duo is back with a colourful collection of music, exploring the august earthen power of recorder and harpsichord repertoire in the Renaissance and Baroque eras intertwined with the evocative, vibrant compositions of the 20th century. Unwind with John Ireland's musings on the Sussex pastoral landscape and float on the lofty heights of York Bowen's characterful masterpiece.

Tickets available £10 (advance) [https://www.](https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/clare-sydenham/workings-in-tapestry-recorder-and-piano-recital/2024-02-18/15:00/t-qjgjerg)



[ticketsource.co.uk/clare-sydenham/workings-in-tapestry-recorder-and-piano-recital/2024-02-18/15:00/t-qjgjerg](https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/clare-sydenham/workings-in-tapestry-recorder-and-piano-recital/2024-02-18/15:00/t-qjgjerg) or from Clare Sydenham clare.sydpiano@gmail.com or £12 on the door. Under 18's free.



On Friday 8 March at 6pm The Echoing Air vocal ensemble present *BirdSong: An Evening of Music and Art*. They will perform a celebratory programme of songs on the theme of birds, and invite the audience to sketch while they listen. Artwork created by artists from Bruton Art Society will be on display during the performance and will also be for sale.

The Guardian's Chief Sketch Writer, John Crace, will be in conversation with BBC's Ritula Shah at St. Mary's Church, Bruton on 14 March at 7.30pm. From *Partygate* and Boris Johnson's farewell to Keir Starmer



taking over Labour's leadership - John will take us on a hilarious whirlwind tour of post-Brexit Britain, and speak about his book *Depraved New World: Please Hold The Government Will Be With You Shortly*. The event is hosted by Agile Rabbit. Book your tickets (£12-£15) at: www.agile-rabbit.com.

The Gravediggers Club

A small group of dedicated labourers help with the maintenance of graves and other parts of the churchyard at St Mary's. Recently, they have been cutting back some overgrown vegetation around the perimeter wall and have uncovered some grave monuments. This not only looks much tidier, but enables anyone interested in those graves to find and tend those graves. We are grateful to the gravediggers for all that they do.

Benefice Discussion Group

The discussion groups will meet on the Mondays of Lent (starting on 19 February) at the usual times of 3.00 pm and 6.30 pm at the Rectory. We will discuss this year's Bloomsbury Lent Book 'Lent with the Beloved Disciple', by Michael Marshall. It is available from Church House bookshop (and other online retailers): <https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/> We could share the postage cost by people letting the Benefice Office know that they would like a copy and then we can place a bulk order.



Diary Dates

- 8 February: Roman Catholic Mass, 11.00 am at St Mary's
- 8 February: Film Night, 7.30 pm at St Peter's, Shepton Montague
- 9 February: Pitcombe PCC meeting, 2.30 pm at Hadsphen Farm
- 14 February: Ash Wednesday service, 6.00 pm at St Mary's
- 18 February: *Workings in Tapestry*, 3.00 pm St Mary's
- 19 February: Brewham PCC meeting, 7.00 pm at Colinshays
- 27 February: Shepton Montague PCC meeting, 6.30 pm at the village hall

Further ahead:

- 8 March: *Birdsong: An Evening of Music and Art* with The Echoing Air vocal ensemble. 6.00 pm, St Mary's
- 13 March: Bruton PCC meeting
- 14 March: *In Conversation with John Crace*, 7.30 pm, St Mary's
- 16 March: St Mary's Coffee Morning, 10am–12pm, Community Hall
- 16 March: Diocesan Synod
- 19 March: Deanery Synod
- 20 March: Wyke Champflower annual meeting

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