



Bruton Pitcombe Redlynch Brewham Shepton Montague Wyke Champflower Bratton Seymour



Do you make New Year's Resolutions? As we approach the end of this year and the starting of a new year, it is natural to take some time to reflect and look ahead. Whether you make specific resolutions for the coming year or not, I dare say that you do have some hopes for the future and perhaps even some plans for ways to try to make those hopes a reality.

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In our life together as Church, we struggle to make time to reflect and look ahead. We are generally busy enough just keeping things going, or perhaps it is that we are distracted by the immediate demands on our time and energy. But, although I am not a great fan of Vision Days and such like, I do believe we do need to take some time to reflect on what we are doing and where we are, and also to look ahead. Simply 'carrying on' is not really what the Holy Spirit does: the Holy Spirit is disruptive, creative and fruitful; the Spirit is the energy of life and energy is not static. If the Church is open to the Spirit, as she must be, then the Church will not be static either. This is not about change for change's sake, nor is it about abandoning tradition or practice. It is about ensuring that we are in step with the Spirit, travelling in the right direction, aiming at the right goals.

If you have been reading this newsletter during 2024, you will know that we are facing a new situation in 2025 and beyond, as we are required to become financially self-supporting. The days of our parishes receiving a large subsidy from other parishes in the Diocese (which has been our reality for many years) have now ended: we are expected to meet our own costs and pay our own way without other parish churches paying for us. At the moment, we are a very long way away from being financially self-supporting. This is therefore a very good time to take a long hard look at ourselves and to ask questions about what we are doing, how we are doing it, and above all, why we are doing it. I hope you will have views about these things. Please

communicate those views to members of your PCC so that we can reflect together and have some deep conversations about how we seek to witness to the love of God in this place.



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

Pitcombe

Friends of St Leonards hosted the folk duo Good Habits who mixed virtuosic musicianship and vocal harmony with storytelling. The event in the church was very well attended and wine and nibbles were served in the interval. Good Habits are a very talented couple and they provided us with a very enjoyable evening.

We Three Talkings

Friday 6th December, 7pm in the Village Hall. *We Three Talkings* is £15 per head and in aid of Village Hall. The talks will include *Tea and*

Elephants by Philip Magor, *History of Weaving* by Charlotte Martin, and *An introduction to Ditch Cruising* by Jeremy Collyer.

Shepton Film Night

Shepton Montague Film Nights are held monthly in St Peter's Church, 7.00 for 7.30, tickets £7 or 5 for £30. Everyone is welcome and refreshments are available. It is advisable to bring a cushion!

Next: Thursday 12th December *SWEDE CAROLINE*

2024/98 minutes/15

A hilarious mockumentary which follows Caroline (Jo Hartley), a competitive giant vegetable grower, as she readies herself for the big annual National Veg Championship. When her prized marrow, named Ricky Hutton, is stolen, Caroline and her fellow growers, conspiracy theorist Paul (Richard Lumsden) and affable Willy (Celyn Jones), are led into a seedy world of crime as they attempt to find the culprit.

Directors: Finn Bruce, Brook Driver

Looking ahead: Thursday 9th January – our January film has not been selected so please look out for posters or contact Sarah Maude 01749 812 149, sarahjmaude@btinternet.com, in the New Year.

Advent Reading

Do you know what the four traditional themes of Advent are? Clue: it is not chocolate, tinsel, mulled wine and mince pies.

The Advent themes are more serious and more troubling: Death, Judgment, Hell and Heaven.

These are known as 'the four last things'. What do you know or believe about them?

Much Christian teaching and belief about the four last things is muddled and can seem very far-fetched, unattractive or unpersuasive. The time is ripe for us to look at these ideas afresh.

There is a little book that might provoke your thought and engender some serious discussion. It is 'The Love That Moves the Sun', by Paul Dominiak, a theologian at Cambridge University. It is published by Canterbury Press. He devotes about 20 pages to each of the four last things, so it is manageable.

<https://canterburypress.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225658/the-love-that-moves-the-sun>

I think I can guarantee that you will be surprised, irritated, challenged and informed by what he writes (not necessarily in equal measure!). Try something serious this Advent.

Ways to help

As all readers of this newsletter will know, the Church consists of the people who come together to share in the life of God, in worship, witness, prayer and action. The Church is not something that is supported by the people; the Church is the people.

One of the current realities that should perhaps give us pause for thought is that several aspects of the life of the Church are contributed by people who do not come to Sunday services. This

is the case across our whole benefice. We have PCC officers, PCC members, cleaners, flower arrangers, hymn selectors, maintenance helpers, musicians, fundraisers, social events organisers, prayer groups and no doubt more besides comprising people who do not 'come to Church', or if they do, then only very occasionally.

This should cause those of us who do 'come to Church' to ask ourselves a few questions: are these people also Church; why are they willing to offer their time, talent and labour yet (for the most part) seemingly do not wish to join us for regular worship?

Viewed perhaps more positively, it is a great blessing that we are offered this help from those who, for whatever reason, do not regularly attend church services. Indeed, our continued presence as communities of faith may well depend on their goodwill and tangible support.

And we currently need more of it! There are vacancies (actual and imminent) in many aspects of our shared life. We cannot buy in services to cover these roles and responsibilities: not only can we not afford to do so, but we are not that sort of community. If we were simply to hire staff to do all the things that need doing, we would no longer be a community living a shared life to which all contribute – we would no longer be Church.

There are lots of ways in which we need help if we are to survive and thrive. If you know anyone who might be willing to offer their support

to the life of the Church, please do encourage them to get in touch with a churchwarden or the Rector. There is of course a need to try to match people to roles for which they have the necessary talents, but there is equally something potentially fruitful in starting not with the roles that need filling, but the talents we are offered. Please spread the word and encourage people to participate in Church, even if they don't want to 'come to church'.

Gluten Free!

In addition to the gluten free wafers available for anyone who needs them at Eucharist services at St Mary's, there are now usually 'GF' biscuits available with the post-service refreshments. Please ask at the altar rail or coffee table, as applicable!

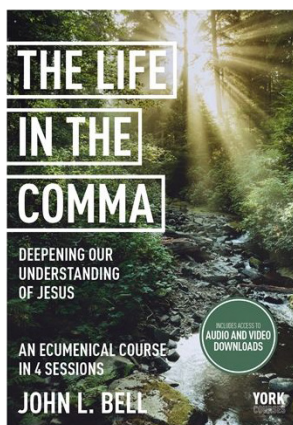
Confirmation

Three people from our benefice were confirmed in a very uplifting service in Wells Cathedral on 23 November.



Benefice Advent Discussion Group

The Apostle's Creed (the creed that we use at Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer) has this to say about Jesus: 'Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate...'. But quite lot took place between those two clauses: the comma covers all of Jesus' life and ministry bar the last 3 days.



John Bell is an ordained minister in the Church of Scotland and a member of the Iona Community. He is dissatisfied with this comma and believes there is much more to be said about the life and ministry of Jesus. He has prepared a short 4 session course for Advent, examining the way in which we present Jesus in this season – the things we say and the things we do not say.

We will use these materials in our benefice discussion groups in Advent, meeting at the Rectory on the Mondays in Advent (2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd Dec). The meetings will be at 3.00pm and 6.30pm (come to whichever suits you best), except that the evening meeting on 16 Dec will be at 6.00pm (because of the Bruton Choral Society concert – do come!) and there will be no evening meeting on 23 Dec (because of the carol service at Redlynch – do come!).

If you are coming, it would help (but is not essential) if you buy the course booklet online from SPCK: <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/>

the-life-in-the-comma-deepening-our-understanding-of-jesus. The booklet costs £14.99 and you may feel that is too expensive – that need not stop you from coming; it is fine to attend without your own copy of the booklet.

Prayer Ministry

Pray for the many Christmas services in our benefice, especially:

- For the people taking those services: Jonathan, Charles, Dan, Hilary and Mark.
- For those with responsibility for the music in our churches.
- For the true message of Christmas to be made known.

And as we enter a new year:

- Thank God for the good things we have experienced in 2024.
- Thank God that whatever 2025 holds, we have the assurance that He is with us.

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

Minnie Louise Haskins (1875 -1957)



Remembrance Day

Lest we forget



Anniversary

Our organist at St Mary's writes:

Psalm 93

v.4 The floods are risen, Lord, the floods have lift up their voice: the floods lift up their waves.

v.5 The waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly: but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high is mightier.

Boxing Day 2024 marks the twentieth anniversary of one of the most catastrophic natural disasters of all time: a massive tsunami, generated by a sub-oceanic earthquake off the coast of Indonesia, caused havoc along the coastlines of countries around the Indian Ocean as far apart as Malaysia and Tanzania. It wrought particular devastation in Sri Lanka, with three-quarters of the island's coastline reduced to a rubble of collapsed houses, smashed boats and wrecked vehicles. Over forty thousand people were killed and a million displaced from their houses, while thousands of buildings were destroyed along with at least half the island's fishing boats and large sections of road and railway line.

Near Hikkaduwa in the south-west of the island, where the railway line runs some 200 yards inland, the tsunami engulfed the packed Samudra Devi Express ('Queen of the Sea') as it headed south that morning. Seventeen hundred or more people were killed, making it the world's worst-ever railway disaster. Some months later a hideously-battered carriage, rescued from the wreckage, was put on display in a siding at Hikkaduwa station. Why? – I wonder. The local people

needed no reminding of what they had endured. Perhaps the purpose was to impress on the hoards of tourists arriving at the cheap and cheerful seaside resort the enormity and proximity of the tragedy. I was glad when it was removed a year or so later.

There was an immediate international response, on a massive scale, to Sri Lanka's plight: just as well, since the Sri Lankan government did very little, very slowly. Some scars inevitably remain, but the stricken coastal areas of the island have recovered to a considerable extent over the years.

And what is the significance of those two verses from Psalm 93? On the afternoon of Friday 31st December, 2004, I was in the Chapel at Sexey's Hospital, helping the Master, the Rev'd John Parfitt, with choir practice. When we came to the psalm we were all struck by the uncanny relevance of verses 4 and 5. Readings, hymns and psalms for December and January would have been chosen weeks in advance, and John had no way of predicting that the words of one of his chosen psalms would turn out to have such a clear connection with a global catastrophe that had occurred just days earlier. Sheer chance, I suppose, but I found the relevance eerie. Recalling that occasion twenty years on, I still do...



St Mary's Choirs

Singing is, for some, an important aspect of church life, but if this isn't true for you one thing that is universally accepted is that singing has many wonderful benefits. These range from immersing yourself in the kind of interactive learning that deepens your knowledge of maths, languages, reading, and of course the grammar of music, through to developing teamwork skills, learning how to be a mentor, and it can even help with memory loss. Singing as a group can boost confidence and self-esteem, and because it releases endorphins, it can make us feel happy! If all of this sounds like it might be for you, young or old, experienced or inexperienced, please feel free to email benefice@stmarysbruton.org and ask about it. We'd love to hear from you!



Seen & Unseen



A few months ago I didn't really know what a 'podcast' was...

I had been subscribing to a website called Seen and Unseen for a while and it mentioned a podcast called GodPod, which seemed interesting. So, on my next jog, I put an earbud in (I didn't know what they were either until recently) and used Spotify to listen to a podcast titled *AI and our desire to play God*. The subjects of the podcasts are varied and ones I have listened to include:

- The lost art of dying – this was a discussion with someone who was both a physician and ethicist.
- The cost of ambition – this one reminded me of something Jonathan said in a recent sermon.
- How to understand the apostle Paul – this one may sound a bit theological but it was interesting, even discussing whether Paul had a sense of humour. You'll have to listen to find the answer to that!

Each podcast lasts about 30 minutes.

If you want more information, the website I subscribe to is:

www.seenandunseen.com

Its strap line is:

Christian perspectives on just about everything.

It is edited and published by a team that is part of the Centre for Cultural Witness. (You may have heard of Graham Tomlin, the Centre's



Director. We looked at his book *The Provocative Church* in one of the benefice discussion groups a while ago.) Their emails include articles about topical issues.

Details of the GodPod can be found on the website, and it is described as follows:

‘GodPod is a regular podcast now hosted by Seen & Unseen, in partnership with St Mellitus College. Theologians Graham Tomlin, Mike Lloyd, Jane Williams and the occasional guest speaker get together to discuss burning issues of God, theology, life and much more, over a supply of coffee and biscuits.’

Enjoy!

Jill Pearce

Intercessions Training

We have received some expressions of interest in leading the prayers of intercession from members of the congregation at St Mary’s, but not from any of our other congregations. It’s not too late. If this is something you feel drawn to, please do let the Rector know, so that we can organise some training and guidance. This is such an important part of our collective worship and corporate prayer that it needs careful (and prayerful) preparation. Please do think whether this is something you can offer to our shared life.

Arts Events

For events at St Mary's going forwards we are setting up a mailing list for concerts and talks that we will be hosting. Please sign up and tell all your friends and neighbours! So far we have had several bands, the Poet Laureate, dance with music, art and photography, and there will be much more to come.

To sign up, please scan the QR code below using your mobile phone camera. Alternatively you can send us an email at benefice@stmarysbruton.org and request a sign-up that way. Please specify from the following what you would like news about:

Classical Music

Folk Music

Other Music

Talks

All Genres.



The Auguries

Finn Campbell-Notman

Opening
Sat 30th Nov
12-3pm

St Peter's Church
Redlynch, Bruton

30th Nov-15th Dec

WWW.FICANO.ART

BRUTON CHORAL SOCIETY

Musical Director: Barbara Jenkinson

Guest Conductor: Arturo Serna

Christmas Concert

St Nicholas Cantata
Benjamin Britten

Carols & Festive Music

The Bruton Ensemble

Geoff Allan: Tenor

Angela Ashworth: Soprano

Ashley Marshfield: Organ

Mon 16 December 7.30pm

ST MARY'S, BRUTON



£12 advance tickets, £15 on the door, children free
including a glass of wine

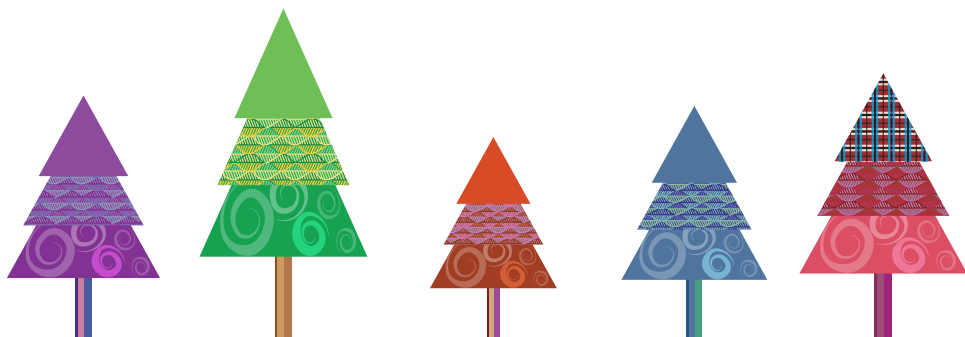
Bruton Convenience Store, 01749 813161
or www.brutonchoralsociety.org.uk

Bruton Choral Society Christmas Concert

Do get your tickets now for our Christmas Concert on Monday 16 December at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church, Bruton. Our guest conductor Arturo Serna will be leading us in Benjamin Britten's St. Nicolas Cantata. This exciting piece explores the life of the legendary 4th century saint, who was to evolve into today's Santa Claus. First performed in 1948, this was Britten's earliest piece intended for amateur musicians. The legend is certainly a colourful one, involving a miraculous birth, a terrifying storm at sea and three pickled boys who are brought back to life!

The concert will also include seasonal music by Elgar and of course some festive pieces for all to sing. We are delighted to welcome our soloists: Geoff Allan (Tenor), Angela Ashworth (Soprano) and Ashley Marshfield (Organ) as well as the Bruton Ensemble (strings and percussion).

Tickets: £12 advance, £15 on the door, to include a glass of wine, children free. Available at Bruton Convenience Store, 01749 813161 or www.bرتونchoralsociety.org.uk.





The Echoing Air

and *Music For Awhile*

perform

Handel's Messiah

St Mary's Church, Bruton
Thursday 19th December, 6pm

(doors open at 5.15pm)

Tickets: £15 on the door, or £12.50 on
Ticketsource/Bath Box Office

The Golfing Miracle

Bruce Critchley, BBC and Sky Golf commentator, discusses how professional golfers have achieved unprecedented wealth and status in recent decades £50 to £500 million in little more than a lifetime

6.30 for 7pm, Tuesday 21st January
At the Chapel , Bruton
Tickets £10
Available from ticketsource.co.uk

Bruton Late Night Christmas Shopping

Late Night Shopping this year will be on Thursday 5th December. St Mary's will be a hive of activity, with plenty to do and a lovely selection of food and drink. We can offer Glühwein, hot roasted chestnuts and mince pies, plus handmade Christmas cards, Knock the Elf of the Shelf and of course Christmas Carols!

BRUTON
SOMERSET

BRUTON LATE NIGHT CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

Thursday 5 December 2024
5.30 – 8.30 PM

Craft Stalls, Festive Food & Drink,
Carol Singing, Santa's Grotto



For more information visit brutontowncouncil.gov.uk
Follow us @bruton_town_council

Bruton Benefice Services

Season Advent/ Christmas (Purple / White-Gold)	Sunday 1st December <i>Advent 1</i>	Sat 7th December	Sunday 8th December <i>Advent 2</i>	Sat 14th December	Sunday 15th December <i>Advent 3</i>
St John the Baptist Brewham	9.30 am Eucharist (CW)				9.30 am Morning Prayer
St Mary's Bruton	8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) 11.00 am Sung Eucharist (CW1) 6.00 pm Advent Even- song*		8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) 11.00 am Eucharist (CW1)		8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) 11.00 am All Age Worship
St Leonard's Pitcombe	11.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)		9.30 am Holy Communion (BCP)	4.00 pm Carol Service	No service
St Peter's Redlynch					
St Peter's, Shepton Montague			6.00 pm Evening Prayer (CW)		
Holy Trinity Wyke Champflower					
St Nicholas Bratton Seymour		6.00 pm Carol Service			

* Advent Evensong readings: Joel 3: 9-end; Ps 25:1-9; rev 14:13-15:4

Services cont'd

Season Advent/ Christmas (Purple / White- Gold)	Wed 18th December	Sat 21st December	Sunday 22nd December <i>Advent 4</i>	Mon 23rd December	Tue 24th December <i>Christmas Eve</i>
St John the Baptist Brewham			4.00 pm Carol Service		
St Mary's Bruton		6.30 pm Carol Service	8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) 9.00 am Breakfast Service 11.00 am Eucharist (CW1)		4.30 pm Christingle 11.30 pm Midnight Mass
St Leonard's Pitcombe			No service		
St Peter's Redlynch				6.00 pm Carol Service	
St Peter's, Shepton Montague			6.00 pm Carol Service		
Holy Trinity Wyke Champflower	6.30 pm Carol Service				
St Nicholas Bratton Seymour					

Christmas Services

Advent

Sun 1 Dec St Mary's Advent Evensong 6pm

Carol Services

Sat 7 Dec St Nicholas, Bratton Seymour 6pm
 Sat 14 Dec St Leonard's Carols, Pitcombe 4pm
 Mon 16 Dec Choral Society Christmas Concert at St Mary's 7.30pm
 Wed 18 Dec Holy Trinity Carol Service, Wyke 6.30pm
 Thu 19 Dec Messiah at St Mary's 6pm
 Sat 21 Dec St Mary's Carol Service 6.30pm
 Sun 22 Dec St John's Carols, Brewham 4pm
 Sun 22 Dec St Peter's Carols (Shepton Mont.) 6pm
 Mon 23 Dec St Peter's Carols (Redlynch) 6pm

Christmas Eve

St Mary's Christingle 4.30pm
 St Mary's Midnight Mass 11.30pm (Eucharist)

Christmas Day

St Mary's, Bruton Holy Communion (BCP) 8am
 St Peter's, Shepton Montague Eucharist 9.30am
 St Leonard's, Pitcombe Holy Communion (BCP) 9.30am
 St John Baptist, Brewham Eucharist 10am
 St Mary's, Bruton Eucharist 11am



Diary Dates

December

- 1 • Advent Evensong, St Mary's, 6pm
- 2 • Benefice Discussion Groups, Rectory, 3pm & 6.30pm
- 3 • Shepton Montague PCC meeting, village hall, 6.30pm
- 5 • Roman Catholic mass, St Mary's, 11.45am
- 5 • Late night Shopping event – Bruton
- 6 • We Three Talkings, The Montague Inn, 6.00pm
- 7 • Pitcombe Christmas Party, Hadspen Village Hall
- 9 • Benefice Discussion Groups, Rectory, 3pm & 6.30pm
- 12 • Film Night, St Peter's Shepton Montague, 7 for 7.30pm
- 16 • Benefice Discussion Groups, Rectory, 3pm & 6pm
- 16 • Bruton Choral Society Christmas Concert,
St Mary's, 7.30pm
- 19 • Messiah, St Mary's, 6pm

January

- 8 • Bruton PCC meeting, Plox meeting room, 5.30pm
- 9 • Film Night (TBC) St Peter's, Shepton Montague,
7 for 7.30pm

Contact

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