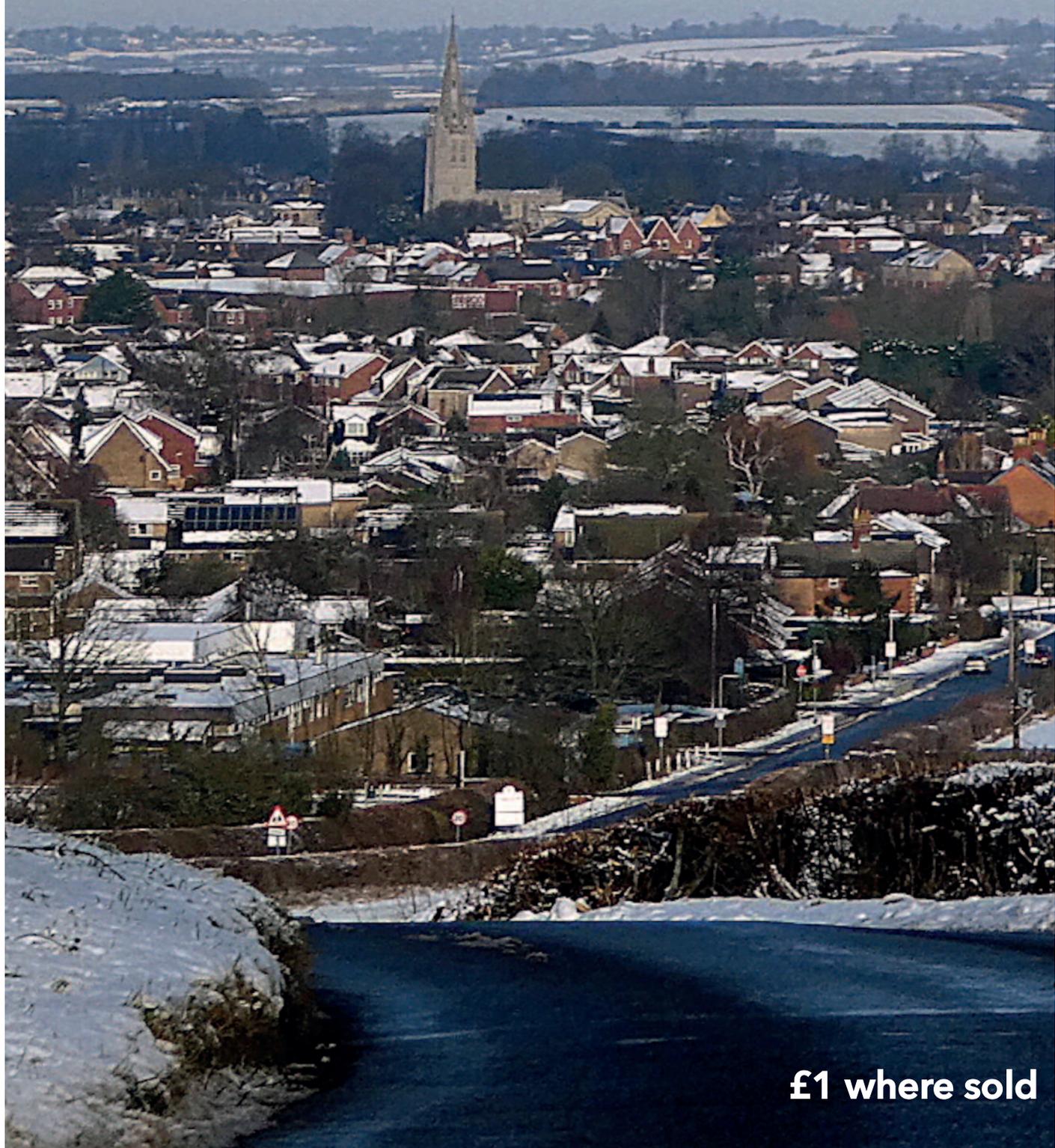




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Sharing Faith in Jesus Christ

Winter 2020



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THE LINK

Sharing Faith in Jesus Christ

The Link is the magazine of Oakham Team Ministry, part of the Church of England in Rutland. We are:

St Mary, Ashwell

All Saints, Braunston

St Peter, Brooke

St Edmund, Egleton

St Andrew, Hambleton

St Peter and St Paul, Langham

St Peter and St Paul, Market Overton

All Saints, Oakham

Holy Trinity, Teigh

St Andrew, Whissendine

You can find out more about us on the website: www.oakhamteam.org.uk

The Link is published three times a year, at Spring, Summer and Winter and is distributed to members of all churches in the Oakham Team Ministry and to local hotels, libraries and other outlets.

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Advertising rates for one / three issues.

Full colour

Full page £85 / £220

Back page £105/ £270

Half page £44 / £114

Quarter page £24 / £65

Eighth page £12 / £32

Cover picture:

Oakham from Brooke Hill

by Richard Adams.

Printed by Instantprint, Unit A,
Brookfields Park, Manvers Way,
Manvers, Rotherham S63 5DR

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Our sincere thanks too, to all those who help Beryl to distribute the magazine in these times of constraint.

From the Team Rector

Hope and Resilience

Revd Stephen Griffiths

Just when we thought life was returning to normal, new guidance and laws were introduced in September to try to slow the spread of the virus. It was perhaps over-optimistic to think that the route through this would be direct. This has become a far more complicated journey.

As we enter the winter months I'm reminded of the phrase often used by generals in both world wars 'It will all be over by Christmas'. It is always good to have something to hope for to keep up morale, but when targets are missed and disappointment comes our way we need hope's often forgotten twin, resilience.

Resilience is both a state of mind

and a way of life. It is made up of attitudes and actions. Resilient buildings and structures tend to have some flexibility built in. Bridges have tolerance to expand and contract in the heat.

Skyscrapers can bend to withstand earthquakes. The massive blades of wind turbines flex to catch the breeze.

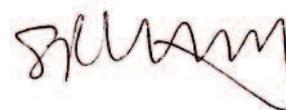
One reason why change can appear so threatening to us is that we build our identity around our present circumstances.

When those circumstances change we feel lost, anxious and hopeless. Resilience flows from finding our true identity. When we find the central core of who we are, we can adapt to change

without being toppled. Jesus talked about us becoming 'children of God'.

It is a simple but powerful message which reminds us that whatever might change in life, or prove beyond our control, we can claim an identity which can never be removed. This is the gateway to both hope and resilience.

Yours in the service of Jesus Christ,



*New every morning
Every day is a fresh beginning,
Listen my soul to the glad refrain.
And, in spite of old sorrows
And older sinning,
Troubles forecasted
And possible pain,
Take heart with the day and begin again.*

Susan Coolidge (1835-1905)

Photo by M.K. Photography on Unsplash.

Looking ahead - in hope

Ann Blackett

Today I'm thinking ahead. I'm yearning to walk along a beach somewhere and planning a day out. I'm wondering if we might celebrate Advent and Christmas this year, at home and in church, and considering options for looming redundancy. I recommend looking ahead. It takes your mind off what's happening now.

It's also refreshing, having spent so much of this year taking it a day at a time. At one point all I was only planning what I was going to eat so I could write a list for my wonderful shopper. Now, despite the general feeling of having to do it all again, I'm looking for ways to be careful but not confined. I'm reminded of when my Dad became ill, and we suddenly felt we couldn't look ahead to anything, scared at the thought of what might happen. 'Plan stuff,' said my friend Jane (who coincidentally has written the article on celebrating Santa Lucia in Sweden in this issue). 'You can always postpone it or cancel it. But put it in the diary'. It turned out to be good advice, and it's come back to me this year.

So there are things in the diary. Some are meetings with real people to walk or to picnic with in a Covid-safe way, or even to swim (I'm undecided about this one). The thought of something different, while keeping the risks as low as possible, brings some light into life as we head into winter. It's the hope that a wider life, even within restric-

tions, might be fulfilled, with a plan and some effort.

Where is hope, though, at this stage? Paradoxically, I feel as though hope is emerging from hiding, turning on its lights, jogging elbows. It says, 'So this is the way life is for the foreseeable'? Okay, what can we do to make it better, without making it worse?

It's likely to be small things, maybe as small as a mug of tea, and the ten minutes it gives you, feeling the warmth of the mug in your hands, looking out of the window and hearing the birds sing, not being consumed by fear, or worry, anger, or blankness. The things are still there and they may be real but they're not everything. Hope creeps in when you're not noticing and lifts your heart.

I've been watching *'The Repair Shop'*, where people bring family treasures, which have become broken or seem beyond repair, to craftspeople who fix them. All the items come with stories of the people who owned them; their present owners look into the past, telling the stories, wondering if the item can ever be the same again. Many of the items are brought in with a hope that the people who owned them can be honoured in some way by the restoration of something they loved.

Steve, a jazz pianist, brought in a vibraphone*, dirty, damaged and in bits. He explained that it had belonged to his grandfather, also a jazz musician, and that he

had played it himself as a child. He wanted his own children to have the same experience. The restorer got to work, cleaning, replacing parts, polishing, refurbishing and retuning, enjoying every minute. As Steve and his family unveiled the renewed vibraphone, it was clear he was delighted, but as soon as he and then his children began to play, there was real joy. Here was something made new, ready to be used for its proper purpose and enjoyed to the full. He took it to play with a local orchestra, and the joy spread across the room.

It's not so easy to repair what has happened this year. There has to be a time of lament, and a time for justice too, for jobs lost, chances missed, lives put on hold. However frustrated we might have been, it's been driven by hope: that things should be better. It's that hope which keeps us going even when we feel despair. We see it in the people who have given so much of themselves to care for others and keep things going.

Christmas is coming, traditionally a time of goodwill, although we might think that goodwill is going to be thin on the ground. But we hope otherwise, and that's what will encourage us to make the best we can of it. Christians would call that the loving-kindness of God, the example of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit - but hope isn't fussy. Hope lives in everyone's heart.

*percussion instrument, member of the glockenspiel family.

Photo by Ron Smith on Unsplash

From the past

Inscribed on the walls and ancient woodwork of churches, often unseen and undiscovered, are signs of the past. Many are 'prayers in stone'. Brian Chester tells of their origins and how they are now the focus of new interest.



In the choir stalls at St Peter, Brooke

In praise of graffiti

Messages from the past, many not seen for centuries, are being increasingly revealed in ancient parish churches. The 'messages' are from all ages and levels of society left by those who created works of meaning and art on walls or woodwork – works now generally described as graffiti.

The term graffiti covers a wide range of marks – some unauthorised but many, in medieval times, openly made in a public space by an individual or a group for a variety of reasons. Its origins are in the Italian word *graffiato* (scratched) and the Greek, *graphein* (to write).

Today's versions of graffiti, often applied with spray paint, bear little resemblance to those of times past where the marks were frequently statements of faith or memorial inscriptions which took planning, skill and time to complete. In the Middle Ages graffiti

was not frowned on as it may be today and churches, open to public use and providing ample areas of accessible stone walling, provided opportunities that could not be passed by.

Over the years these marks have been largely overlooked but more recently interest in them has grown in part due to the work of archaeologist Matthew Champion who initiated a survey of Norfolk churches in 2010 and published a book *Medieval Graffiti: The Lost Voices of England's Churches* in 2015. Fascination in these marks spread with (before the lockdown) an increasing number of volunteers beginning the search in, for example, Suffolk, Hampshire, Devon, Surrey, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

Facinating study

The study of early graffiti inscriptions is both worthwhile and utterly fascinating, says Mr

Champion. Writing for the journal *BBC History Extra*, he says: 'Unlike almost every other surviving record from the Middle Ages, the graffiti inscriptions have the potential to have been created by anyone and everyone; from the lord of the manor and parish priest all the way down the social scale to the very lowliest of commoner. They are, quite literally, the lost voices of the medieval church. The majority of these marks are seen as devotional or religious in nature – prayers made solid in stone.'

He continues: 'The walls of our medieval churches are full of minute testaments to faith and belief that were once commonplace. They tell the stories of life, love, hope and fear within the English medieval parish; a record that depicts sudden death and the perils of the soul that, every day, faced our ancestors. Most of all, though, these scratched mementoes by the



Right: on the Braunston roof - look carefully and the outline of two figures can be seen. Each with interesting headware. Top left: an incised memorial at Ashwell with initials and dates from the 17th century. Bottom left: Window inscription at Eggleton.

long dead tell us about people.'

The designs take many forms - ritual protection marks inscribed to ward off demons and the ever-present 'evil eye', elaborate crosses cut deep into the arches of doorways in memory of vows undertaken, or asking for God's blessing upon a new and perhaps hazardous undertaking; medieval ships complete with crew members still sailing across the stonework, images of demons pinned to the walls by deeply etched pentangles and 'demon traps' and names and dates maybe quickly written but lasting for centuries.

The Church of St Mary's at Tros-ton in Suffolk is cited as an example of where the inscribers left a multitude of marks. On the tower Oakham Team Ministry

arch sit elaborate compass-drawn designs dating back to the time when the church was first built and consecrated by the bishop. A little further up the stonework is the name 'Johed Abthorp' (John Abthorpe), who was lord of the manor in the second half of the fifteenth century. On the opposite side of the arch is a long series of dates from the turbulent time of the Civil War. Just below them are the sadly defaced outlines of two medieval ships; prayers, perhaps, for safe voyages undertaken by local churchgoers. The eastern end of the church is covered in even more graffiti, while the north side of the chancel arch is so densely covered with inscriptions that it is difficult to identify individual designs. Only two or three

things can be made out; a man in late medieval costume is shown with his hands raised in prayer, an outline of a medieval shoe and an elaborate medieval text inscription that simply reads 'Deo' (God).

Graffiti in Rutland churches in the Oakham benefice, in the south chapel at St Mary's, Ashwell, there is an incised slab to John Vernam and his wife dated 1481, which is covered with names and dates from the 17th century. At St Peter's, Brooke a row of three marks can be seen in the choir stalls - all of which have survived the polish of ages, while All Saints, Oakham there is a scratched 'daisy wheel' mark close to the door of the Mayhew Room, a shape which has been

used against evil spirits by people of different cultures across the world for hundreds of years. It is very common, appearing in both sacred buildings and ordinary houses, often close to doors, windows and fireplaces – all places where evil spirits might be thought to enter. One forms part of the decoration on the font at Egleton.

While not strictly graffiti, scratch dials – rudimentary sundials – can be found on exterior walls of many parish churches. St Edmund's, Egleton, is an outstanding example, with upwards of a dozen dials marked on the south and east walls – topping the table for Rutland. These dials, also known as Mass Dials, were used by priests to indicate the time of the next service. A hole was bored at the centre and a number of lines scratched to the arc. The priest would place a short stick in the hole and its shadow would be a guide to when the next service would start. Here there's a mystery – why so many and did the dials have other purposes?

St Edmund's also has a relatively recent example of a tradesman leaving his mark with an etched note recording 'T Pitts Made These Windows 1863'. And framed on the wall to the left of the vestry door, is a piece of lead bearing the outline of a man, which was discovered on the roof in 1878.

A remarkably similar discovery was made at All Saints Braunston where the outline of two figures is clearly visible on a lead roof panel. More marks exist on other panels one of which is open to various interpretations. Braunston also has part of a gravestone set into the church wall that carries an example of a Merrill's board – for a game which, according to Wikipedia, has been played at least since the Roman Empire – while on a windowsill to the left of the south door are two small squares of holes used to play a game known as 'Nine Men's Morris'.

Graffiti marks can be found on walls, stonework, woodwork and glass. Much has been lost by

restoration work over the years but look in out-of-the-way corners of the church, by memorials, doors, windows and archways. The font and the belfry can also yield a 'find'. Locating and revealing the detail of scratch marks is aided by a torch to shine a light (LED bulb is best) across the surface under scrutiny. Searching the corners of a church will take time so a word in advance with the incumbent or churchwarden is recommended.

FOR MORE

The website <http://www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk/page11.html> gives the background to the Norfolk survey. Detailed guidance on how to search is contained in a volunteers' handbook which can be found via the site's Survey Resources, with additional material from other sources in the bibliography. Following this link to a recent short lecture by Matthew Champion also adds to the story. https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=WpX_GYURRu0&feature=emb_logo

Lauren Dartnell, who has studied medieval graffiti in churches throughout the UK (including Rutland), tells how these 'emotional moments from the past' captured her interest.

Back in 2015 I chanced upon a copy of Violet Pritchard's 1967 publication *English Medieval Graffiti* in a local charity shop, a rare find by all accounts. I already had an interest in medieval art and regularly visited churches but Violet's book encouraged me to look even more closely. My mother had recently passed away and I began to find great solace in connecting with the past. Graffiti allows one to connect with past souls, to stand in the exact same spot where a stranger stood centuries before and visually trace all that remains of the energy which once inscribed a name, symbol or prayer, a direct connection with those who may otherwise be forgotten, it's incredibly evocative. My interest in graffiti has led me on countless journeys visiting sites all over the UK and further afield and I have met some truly wonderful people along the way. Recording and studying graffiti can trigger so many different lines of research and it provides an absolute wealth of social history, sometimes filling in the gaps where records fail but more often stirring far greater questions than ever before! Emotion floods from the walls; faith, humour, fear, anger, grief, desperation and happiness, all are represented. Graffiti can offer an invaluable insight into distant ways of life but at the same time it brings the past closer, makes it real, characters spring to life and lost communities speak from the grave. Graffiti can also tell us an awful lot about how a church once was, how the structure has evolved, where wall paintings may have once been or lost shrines for instance. It tells the stories of those who built our churches, of the craftspeople, bell ringers, organ blowers, clergy, farm labourers and lords of the manor to name but a few. It documents those who went to war and those who did not return, stories of love and loss quietly span the centuries only speaking to those who care to look.

Langham's 'riot of colour'

Ann Blackett

What happens when you look



We were very blessed at the end of August to have an exhibition of paintings by Susan Osborne in Langham church. Despite the restrictions caused by Covid-19 there was a steady flow of visitors masked and ready for something new as we came out - for the time being - of lockdown. Until recently Susan belonged to the village, part of the Ministry Team and married to former curate Revd Iain who is now Rector of the Ramsey benefice in Cambridgeshire.

'What happens when you look' was the title of the exhibition, and it became an invitation to take time looking at the different paintings, from the great grey, gold and green spaces of fields and trees to flowers in a Langham garden packed together in a riot of colour.

To further invite into the images, Susan had chosen fragments of poetry to sit beside each one. 'Bright Field' (on the left in the photo above), was accompanied by lines from R S Thomas' poem of almost the same name: 'a brightness/ that seemed as transitory as your youth/ once, but is the eternity that awaits you.' It was a revelation: the words illuminated the images, and vice versa.

The combination of art and poetry was stunning and powerful, and Langham church a perfect setting for the meeting of friends after a long lockdown, and a new appreciation of what happens when we look at what's around us.

Oakham Team Ministry



Winter 2020 The Link 9

SUFFOLK AFTER LOCKDOWN

Beryl Kirtland



It has been a long year, with lockdown and limited activity. As soon as it was possible, many of us planned a break and escaped to a different part of the country, including *The Link's* advertising manager...

Shielding had ended. It was time for a change of routine and scenery. Where to go? It was only ever going to be in this country, so David and I thought we would take the opportunity to go and discover where Kevin Slingsby, our former Director of Music at Oakham, had migrated to, and so we booked a cottage near Lavenham for four nights.

On one of the warm, sunny days we took a trip to

the sea at Covehithe to visit St. Andrew's Church, the small seventeenth century thatched church built inside the ruins of an earlier and much larger Perpendicular church. Covehithe is a lonely place on the way to or from nowhere, but that was not always the case for it was once a thriving port before the sea receded in the seventeenth century.

The upkeep of such a spectacular church was no longer viable, and the parish was given permission to dismantle it and build a much smaller church using the materials from the existing one. Now it provides a memory of the vast ruins where much remains of previous times and ways with the knowledge that worship still exists in the small church held within. Well worth a visit before it is carried away by the sea.

In sharp contrast we went to the busy and picturesque medieval town of Lavenham to join the Sunday 10.15 am service at the Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, the place of Kevin's new appointment.

Driving through the lovely 'Wool Town' you reach the Parish Church, one of 500 churches in East Anglia, and considered by many to be the finest. It sits in a commanding position on high ground above the vil-



lage with the tallest west tower in Suffolk at 141 feet (43 metres). The bells were ringing. The tower holds eight bells, which are famous in the ringing world, especially the tenor, weighing 23 cwt, made in 1625 by Miles Grave of Colchester.

The lines of large pom-pom box bushes in the churchyard planted in the 1920s were not my favourite feature, but different! Sight of the South porch (pictured right) soon made up for that for it is richly decorated with fan vaulting and bearing the De Vere family arms.

Organ's melodic tones

Observing all the necessary Covid-19 requirements we were made welcome and shown to our socially distanced seats. Filling our ears was the melodic tones of the organ in a way so familiar to us. Indeed, it was Kevin playing the introit while the choir assembled in the north aisle to sing for the first time since the beginning of March and lockdown. Looking around we were able to absorb the magnificence of the history surrounding us.

To celebrate the Tudor achievement at the Battle of Bosworth, the De Veres who were close to the throne and wealthy headed up a consortium of clothiers who agreed to demolish most of the existing church and build a splendid new church.

In 1486 began the building of the tower and the late Perpendicular style nave, aisles and side chapels. (Considered to be of the finest built in that style.) Building continued until 1525 resulting in a nave of 7 bays over 150 ft. in length and 70 feet in width lit with large perpendicular windows. In the north aisle is the Sprynge family chapel (or enclosure) to protect the remains of the younger Thomas Sprynge and his wife, the Sprynge family being one of the great benefactors. The protecting parclose, or screen, is a fine example of carved tracery reputed to possibly be the best in the country.

In the south aisle stands the Spourne parclose also with a beautiful screen.

There are two chapels: the



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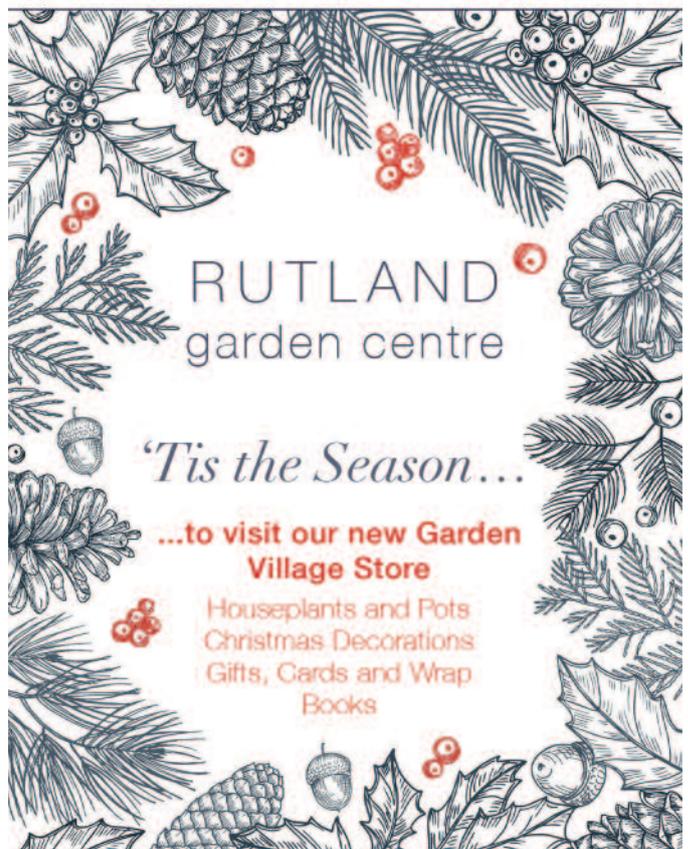
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Branch Chapel, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, which now serves as the Rector's vestry and also contains the organ, and the Lady Chapel, which is probably the most beautiful part of the church with Georgian glass depicting the Life of Christ. Today this chapel is well used for smaller services, for private prayer or lighting a candle.

The only remaining part of the pre-1480s church is the chancel which is now nearly hidden by the newer chancel aisles and chapels and not accessible to us on our visit as part of the Covid precautions.

Kevin told us that the choir stalls are particularly attractive, with misericords over 600 years old, one showing a pelican with her chicks, another depicting a man holding a pig. The lighting with the red shades make it quite atmospheric. The marble reredos

behind the altar appeared similar to our own at All Saints Oakham.

Church life in Lavenham has taken a similar pattern to our own, with a service on Sunday, evensong at nearby Preston St. Mary, and other short services on Zoom. A 'drive-in' service had been held on the adjacent cricket field in August as part of a music festival.

After the service we met with Kevin and the Rector, the Revd. Stephen Earl (*pictured above*). It felt like a 'proper' Sunday talking to Kevin while he sat at the organ. With 2130 pipes the 4-manual and pedal 'Father' Henry Willis organ, first built in 1885, was transferred to Lavenham in 1996 after the church of St. Swithun in Bournemouth was made redundant. Recent additions have been made from Hadleigh Baptist Church and Oundle School.

Kevin's experience as an accomplished musician, organist and choir leader with his wealth of knowledge of Anglian church music already shone through.

As we were in our Team Ministry here, Lavenham will be fortunate to have Kevin's skills as accompanist, conductor, teacher and expertise in music technology. We will miss him but I am sure that living in Horringer, near Bury St. Edmunds, where his roots



are he will enjoy the much shorter drive to his church, choir and organ!

Leaving our cars parked near the church the three of us walked into the town appreciating our surroundings and the warmth of the September day.

A delicious, leisurely lunch at a Greene King Pub was the perfect conclusion to our meeting with Kevin. David and I then wandered into the Market Square only to wish the lime washed timbered Guildhall and Little Hall were open to view but happy that we could see half-timbered houses in the lanes that formed part of the history of the 14th richest town in Tudor England.

Before getting into the car to return to our cottage we took a walk around the whole of the outside of the church. The church grounds are spacious and well kept. Although only cremated remains have been allowed in a Garden of Remembrance since the 1960s there are some interesting memorials and features.

Our resolve is to come back to Suffolk to discover more of the Wool Towns, Bury St. Edmunds, Newmarket, Ipswich, the Suffolk coast and the picturesque eastern county, the first place to see the sunrise and, of course, to maintain a link to Kevin and his musical activities.

Light in the Darkness

Jane Elliott tells of a visit to Sweden for a Christmas celebration

Setting off for a week's holiday just a fortnight before Christmas may seem like a strange choice, but for my daughter and I it was the culmination of a dream. We had a long-held desire to see the celebration of St Lucia's Day in Sweden.

In many Swedish households someone, often the oldest daughter of the family, will rise early on 13 December, St Lucia's Day, put on a long white dress, tie a red sash around her waist and don a crown of candles (often battery powered these days for safety). She will carry a tray of coffee, *pepparkakor* (very thin gingerbread biscuits) and *lussekatter* (saffron buns) around to members of her family.

Having no Swedish friends we were not in a position to see this aspect of the tradition, but there are also public celebrations. Not knowing where best to go we made the obvious choice and headed for the capital city, Stockholm. Here we stayed, very comfortably, right in the centre of the city aboard *af Chapman*, an old sailing ship moored alongside the Youth Hostel and part of their accommodation. We were between two islands, Skeppsholem (Ship Island) and Gamla Stan (Old Town) where the city first developed. Stockholm is, as we were to discover, a city of islands.

Cakes and elves

We began our St Lucia's Day in the proper way with coffee and *lussekatte* from the Youth Hostel's café. *Lussekatte* are buns flavoured with saffron, the dough rolled into strips and curled around, often in an S shape. The name means 'Lucia cats', although you need a vivid imagination to see a cat on your plate. They were delicious and a second one each seemed essential before setting out to experience the rest of the day. Before travelling we had asked the Swedish Tourist Board where best to see St Lucia's Day events and were recommended to go to Skansen, the world's oldest open-air museum, which first opened in



Picture: Ola Ericson/imagebank.sweden.se

Little girls all over Sweden dress up as Lucia on 13 December.
Picture: Lena Granefelt/imagebank.sweden.se



1891. This is on the island of Djurgården, an easy walk from our base on Skeppsholmen. We arrived before opening time and were rather alarmed to see long queues, but relieved to find that our annual passes (we had been on a previous day of the holiday and found that an annual pass cost very little more than two single entry fees and gave discounts in the shops and cafés) allowed us quick entry.

On getting in we soon met our first 'Lucia procession'. Lucia was accompanied by 'maidens' dressed in white and carrying a candle each, 'star boys' in long white robes with tall pointed hats decorated with stars and a number of *tomte*. Tomte are a sort of elf thought to live on Swedish farms, who could be helpful as long as they were treated well. They are generally depicted wearing grey with a red hat. They sang - and then we were allowed to explore.

We headed first to the Seglora Church. This wooden building dates from the early 18th century and came from the western Swedish province of Västergötland. As we entered we found that it was lit entirely by candles which would be seen as a health and safety nightmare in Britain but, as we have seen with their approach to the coronavirus pandemic, they do things differently in Sweden.

It felt very warm inside, and that was before an-

other Lucia procession arrived. This Lucia had a crown of lingonberry leaves on her head (if you've ever eaten meatballs in IKEA you will have been offered lingonberry sauce with them) with real candles alight in it and her maidens carried real candles as well. They were obviously a choir and gave a very peaceful and moving concert. As most of the words were in Swedish we could not understand a great deal, but noticed that several of the songs mentioned Lucia, and they did sing a couple of carols in English.

Lucia from the 1940s

Our next visit was to the Brage Hall, a building with a rather limited history. It was built as a beer hall at the Stockholm Exhibition of 1897 and immediately afterwards presented to Skansen! Here we saw a Lucia performance from the 1940s, all in Swedish, but quite visual, so very entertaining.

The range of characters was greater, with three bakers and a chimney sweep included. Two of the younger maidens played at being bored during the singing and got up to tricks such as blowing each other's candles out. At one point they played pat-a-cake, until the sweep came up behind them and made them jump. One tomte kept creeping around,

waving to children in the audience, and having to be called back to his place. He got up to further mischief later when the bakers went round offering pepperkakor to children and he followed, trying to grab one.

The beginning of Christmas

The final event we attended was a talk 'Lucia - a tradition in transition'. Like most traditions, the way that it is celebrated evolves as time goes on. Why do Swedes celebrate the day of an Italian saint? In truth no-one really knows. The date of her feast day, 13 December was the shortest day (and therefore longest night) of the year in the Julian calendar, although this changed to 21 December when we adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752. Some say that it was King Cnut (he who sat on the beach and proved that he could not stop the incoming tide) who decreed that Christmas should start on 13 December which is when today's Swedes regard it as starting - it goes on until 13 January (St Cnut's Day).

The symbolism of Lucia carrying lighted candles on her head is appropriate for the longest night and gives hope of the light returning. Some believe that this is a reconstruction of what St Lucia did in her life to enable her to carry food to persecuted Christians hiding in the caves, while others see the crown of candles as a representation of a halo.



Breakfast on St Lucia's Day. Picture: Jane Elliott

The celebration of St Lucia's Day began in western Sweden and was not common in other parts of the country at the start of the 20th century.

It seems that its spread across the nation, and indeed to other countries with Swedish populations, began with Artur Hazelius, the founder of Skansen, wanting to show 'old rural customs' and putting on a Lucia celebration there in 1892.

From then the custom was gradually adopted in schools and churches and became the special Swedish event that it is today.

We had worried that coming to Skansen might have been a slightly artificial, touristy occasion, but found that we had come to the epicentre of Swedish St Lucia.



Picture OTW / imagebank.sweden.se

A Lucia Celebration in Stockholm

Do not be afraid

Revd Chris Rattenberry

Chris Rattenberry is Team Vicar in the Oakham Benefice, with responsibility for Braunston, Brooke, Eggleton and Hambleton. With his wife Heather, he spent some time in KwaZulu Natal, at the invitation of the Bishop of Natal, when they left their parish in Southwell and Nottingham. They ministered at a church in the city of Durban and sent some reflections home. This is an adapted version of one of those reflections.

We are finding our feet here in Natal. We are staying in a sort of flat. We have a bedroom, bathroom, living room and kitchen in a separate part of a house lived in by a church member. So, we are comfortable. But the city of Durban is not a comfortable place. It is vast, the population approaching four million. The level of crime and anxiety about crime is through the roof. The house we are living in is surrounded by barbed wire and there are bars on the windows.

We have hired a car to get around and a friend has loaned us his satnav. Travel is complicated by the ongoing process of changing the road names so that they no longer commemorate white colonial figures but rather outstanding people from Zulu history. There is also the rapid development of the infrastructure here which means lots of roadworks and redirections. Driving here is terrible and we have



Seeing the sights...

witnessed accidents and the aftermath of several more already. Your life is seriously at risk from the moment you set off.

We have been to youth meetings, made hot drinks for passers-by, taken communion services, visited a nursery school, been to the Botanical Gardens, done Messy Church and played crab football with Sunday School. This week we have lunch with the bishop and prize-giving at Heather's link school in Greytown. Lots of variety. But we have been taken firmly out of our comfort zone – the culture and behaviour here is often very different from what we're used to.

On the other hand, we've met with a warm and loving welcome – and many reminders of the presence of God, who says to his people, 'Do not be afraid'. We were in a supermarket in Durban when we met two people who had visited our church a



Offering drinks and prayer

couple of years previously! Familiar faces in a strange land. On another occasion, when we left our local Spar shop, we were amazed to find a scripture printed on the receipt. Not only that, it was words from 1 Peter 3: 'Do not fear what they fear; do not be afraid'. **Q**

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Notes from a Coeliac Sufferer

(with apologies to Bill Bryson) Helen Parker

As a coeliac (with intestinal intolerance of gluten) I have to be careful what I eat and the ingredients I use, a problem shared by increasing numbers of people - but not to be confused with the followers of fashion diets!

My involvement with special diets began as a necessity in my late twenties when I was suddenly very unwell. I learned of investigative work being done in Cambridge, and there as a hospital patient became involved in a non-medical role as a nutritionist and recipe developer, latterly fundraising to support more advanced research.

The valuable experience gained in the family business - Kinton's Bakery - with my father's encouragement and also support from the professional food world helped me develop palatable gluten-free and wheat-free recipes.

When I say palatable I am sure that many recently diagnosed coeliacs had the experience of tasting their first gluten-free loaf and thinking this is awful. Baking without wheat flour is indeed a challenge but with a little adventurous experimentation quite ac-

ceptable results can be obtained. Husband John usually has to try them first and give his honest opinion - not always positive the first time round! He isn't coeliac but admits that some of my cooking isn't half bad (as opposed to all bad!)

Gluten can be found in the most unlikely of food products so when shopping it is very important to check the labelling. Most manufacturers now highlight allergens in bold in the ingredients list, which makes things a little easier, but do remember your glasses as the print can be quite small!

I enjoy making bread with gluten-free ingredients, such as rice flour, chick pea flour, cornmeal, potato flour and soya flour, and make them more interesting by adding different ingredients.

Today I baked a 500g loaf with the addition of two tablespoons of sesame seeds, two tablespoons of sunflower seeds and one tablespoon of poppy seeds to produce a variation on a seeded loaf.

If John is helping he likes to make savoury additions such as garlic granules and grated cheddar cheese and even a crumbly

red Leicester, although he has learnt that you must be careful with this so as not to increase the moisture content - he has ended up with a few soggy loaves! Flat breads are also easy to make, with onion or olive toppings and a melted cheese to finish.

If we get some bright autumn weather why not try this chilled tomato soup with your bread.

Chilled Tomato Soup

Ingredients:

225g Greek yoghurt

10 ml olive oil

600 ml tomato juice

To taste - lemon juice, curry powder, chopped chives

Beat the yoghurt in a bowl until smooth, add the olive oil and stir in the tomato juice. Flavour to taste with the lemon juice, curry powder and herbs. Cover and chill and serve cold with a sprinkle of chopped chives.

This will serve 4-6.

If you haven't used all of your bread, a summer pudding works well with a gluten-free loaf and of course bread and butter pudding.

I hope this has been useful.

Bon appétit!



A new resource

Everyday Faith

Revd Stephen Griffiths introduces a forthcoming resource for All Saints Oakham designed to help us put faith into action through the everyday things of life. The months of lockdown emphasised the importance of this way of living out our faith. It is a spiritual practice that always was central to the Christian faith and it's important we retain these lessons for the future.

When Jesus Christ calls us, and we respond in faith, he gains access to every part of our life. One by one Jesus knocks on the door of every room of our life. He longs to transform every aspect of who we are and what we do. As we welcome him into our lives, he shows us God's purpose and plan for us.

The Apostle Paul prays for the church, *'that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.'* (Philippians 1:9-11)

Everyday Faith is a tool to help us bear the 'fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ' as we cooperate with God in every area of life every day of the week. God's redemption and transformation of the world flows through our relationships, our work, our rest, our joys, our sorrows. As we grow in Christian maturity we discover that the everyday tasks of life are filled with opportunities to love and serve God and those around us. The ordinary things are more important than we thought.

Everyday Faith helps us to take a closer look at four areas of the Christian life:

Praying – engaging with God as children of a loving heavenly Father

Learning – being renewed in our thinking as we walk in the light of Jesus

Serving – discovering and responding to the needs of others

Sharing – giving away our time, our talents, our treasure, and our faith

Each area is important to the others, and together they help us to fulfil our Christian calling as individu-

als and as the body of Christ. The four areas of praying, learning, serving, and sharing form the basis of what some people might call a 'rule of life'.

'It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.' (Philippians 2:13)

Everyday Faith has been designed as a shared journey of faith as we grow as disciples of Jesus

'Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.' (Philippians 2:4)

God asks us to support and encourage one another as members of our church and community. Without the support of others, we often lose our way and feel isolated.

You might share your **Everyday Faith** journey with someone at home, a close friend, a small group, or a member of the church ministry team.

Everyday Faith focuses on four areas of life praying, learning, serving and sharing.

Each section contains an introduction and some suggestions about how to embed good habits in everyday life. In the final version participants will be asked to make a commitment to those habits and review them after a year.

Everyday Praying

Our relationship with God is sustained by prayer.

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything with prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.' (Philippians 4:6)

It is our Father's delight to hear the prayer of his chil-



dren as we show our dependence on him. Prayer is not a fixed formula but a conversation. We can bring everything to God in prayer. Nothing is 'off limits', God is interested in every aspect of life.

Talking to God is only possible because Jesus has joined us to God. That is why we often pray 'in Jesus' name' or 'through Jesus Christ our Lord'. Jesus encourages us to pray 'our Father' and the bible speaks of the Holy Spirit encouraging us in our prayers. Prayer then is a precious gift of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.



In Everyday Praying you will find ideas for praying at home, at work, in creation, on journeys, at mealtimes etc. and signposts to other resources that will help deepen and expand our life of prayer.

Everyday Learning

'Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice.' (Philippians 4:8-9)

We often pray for our churches to grow and for the world to be a better place. For that to happen we need to grow ourselves. As our faith matures we are more likely to engage creatively with our community and gain in confidence in sharing our faith. Learning about God deepens our relationship with him and helps us to grasp more fully his plan for the world and our part in it.



It is not just the job of the ministers of the church to teach the faith. We all play a part in helping ourselves and helping others to grow in faith. Learning can happen anywhere at any time. The Everyday Faith project will help us all connect to the right material in the right format.

Everyday Serving

Serving others is the natural outworking of our Christian faith.

'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.' (Philippians 2:3-4)

Oakham Team Ministry

The apostle Paul describes a church made of people who follow the example of Jesus Christ who 'made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.' (Philippians 2:7)

Whilst we will never fully imitate the loving service of Jesus, we can form good habits of loving and helping others. Each of us has opportunities in everyday life to help others, often just need the confidence and discipline to do this. Everyday Faith will help us identify and grow into the areas of service that God is calling us to.



Everyday Sharing

'In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from this first day until now.' Philippians 1:3-4.

The Christian life is founded on a relationship with God. God shares his life with us through Jesus Christ and asks us to open our hearts to him. Paul writes to the Philippians about the encouragement which comes from being united with Christ and from fellowship with the Spirit (Philippians 2:1). It is this unity and fellowship which brings the church together and holds the church together.

It is expressed through praying and working together, supporting one another, sharing our resources and sharing our faith with others.

Everyday Faith will help each of us find the right way to connect with others in the church and provide practical suggestion for sharing our faith.

Everyday Faith is not an 'advanced programme' for especially keen Christians. It is a rediscovery of what Christianity has always been:

the expression of our faith in the everyday things of life. Please look out for the Everyday Faith booklet and resources later in the year. For more information please contact Stephen on stephen@oakhamteam.org.uk or call 01572 869483



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My faith

What my faith means to me

Graham Peel

Graham and Elaine Peel are members of the congregation at All Saints, Oakham. Here Graham writes about his journey in faith, accompanied by Elaine, through a variety of parishes and situations.

'In the Church of England we have been committed to localism for centuries. Every inch of the country is part of an Anglican parish, and parish churches are woven into the fabric of their communities.' These words, in a recent article by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, were reflected in the name of my birthplace, Church Street, later named Garbett Street, in honour of the then Archbishop of York.

My family in Stoke were 'C. of E.' and at a young age I became an altar server. Looking back, I realise just how high church the services were. There were lots of bells, incense and genuflections, and over our red cassocks we wore lace-trimmed surplices. This all sowed a seed which, even now, continues to grow.

Late teenage and younger adult years saw a break from regular churchgoing, but in 1963 John

Robinson's *Honest to God* landed in the bookshops and caused a sensation.

The newspapers were full of it, the *Observer* running a big headline: 'Our Image of God Must Go'. I still have this article and a very battered copy of the book (the sixth impression within a month), which I found, as a student, to be gripping, offering a way forward from my childhood way of understanding the Bible.

It is difficult now to imagine the uproar this book caused, but it certainly kept me interested in religion, during what I look back on as my invaluable 'fallow time'.

An unexpected link with the Roman Catholic Church came when I met Elaine at university and we were married shortly afterwards. Our wedding and our children's baptisms all took place in a Catholic church, Elaine being a regular attender.

But churchgoing really came together when we lived in Nottingham and started to go to Derby Cathedral. In those days the Cathedral had

a superb clergy team, including two Honorary Chaplains to the Queen, and the music was equally inspirational. Here, the more open invitation to Holy Communion and the encouragement of women priests appealed to us both, especially now to Elaine. Her family were strongly Catholic but, as Gerard Hughes said in his book, *The God of Surprises*, 'God has no grandchildren'.

We were both warmly welcomed in Derby, but it was with the arrival of the new Provost (later Dean) that our involvement blossomed. Elaine, in earlier years organist in Nottingham, now played a key role in the Cathedral's thriving Vestments Embroidery Group. She became editor of the Cathedral's monthly magazine, led intercessions, and gave talks on Radio Derby. After being chalice assistant, I became Deputy Warden then Cathedral Churchwarden.

The new Dean, later Bishop of Gloucester, was Michael Perham, one of the country's leading liturgists and a key member of the group which prepared Common Worship. We were all given a clear exposition, through his sermons, of what *Common Worship* would involve. The Dean's sermons were



always wonderfully thought through, often precursors of his many books about liturgy

But then the Cathedral clergy as a whole regularly delivered sermons of the highest quality, prompting many debates over our Sunday lunch. There were some very grand services - the Duke of Devonshire would come to these and the Queen came to open a new Centre.

The Bishop of Derby, Jonathan Bailey, was Clerk of the Closet, the Queen's Senior Domestic Chaplain. At the same time there were regular lunches for people often on the margins of society, and the pastoral work was most supportive. There were strong links with the University's Multi-faith Centre, and with the Open Centre, based in the city with an aim of promoting racial and religious harmony. Friends from other faiths and civic dignitaries often came to services, and the Cathedral had good links with the local media. We both enjoyed the purposeful group teamwork which helped to play a part.

Ordinations, of course, were a feature of Cathedral life and, amazingly, I was probably Churchwarden on duty in 2004 at the Revd Stephen's ordination. Obviously a vintage year! At one ordination service, as children seemed to be overflowing, Jessica, my churchwarden colleague, a talented and rather grand amateur Shakespearean actor, turned to me and declaimed: 'My dear, our clergy are FAR too fertile!'

A quieter aspect of our life which came to the fore at that time was retreats. For many years Elaine and I went with a Cathedral group to the Franciscan friary in Alnmouth, Northumberland, which looks out over a lovely bay. Cathedral life was very stimulat-

ing but also very demanding. To share the routine of the life of the friars, to have more time to read, reflect, pray and listen to talks, was a great blessing.

After nearly 20 years in Derby, Elaine and I were appointed Parish Administrators at a church near to our Nottingham home. At St Leonard's in Wollaton we again had an outstanding priest, Jerry Lepine, now Dean of Bradford.

He created a stimulating environment with a lively congregation, many of whom we soon got to know well through our work in the office. I was subsequently invited to become Churchwarden, and spent a lot of time learning at first-hand about lead theft! Being called out in the middle of the night and clambering on to the roof to survey the damage became regular events. Referring back to the first paragraph of this article, this mattered so much to our local village community that we raised £15,000 within a fortnight as part of our appeal for a replacement roof of a different material.

At Derby Cathedral, I had been much involved in new arrangements to welcome people. Whilst usually a pleasure, this could be challenging for churchwardens during services if people affected by drugs or drink came in for help. This did not happen in Wollaton, but at Midnight Mass, with a noisy pub next door, it was comforting to know that the friend sitting next to me at the service was one of the country's top police marksmen! Again though, it was good to set up at St Leonard's some of the Welcome arrangements which are still in place in Derby.

When Elaine and I came to Oakham in 2015 our long Christian journey, though not always in a straight line, had been central to our lives together. Following early

retirement from careers in education, prompted by a serious illness for Elaine, church life has offered us many opportunities. We have never felt that we could just leave things to other people if we had the time and ability to offer support. There is always a question of how to balance out busyness with spiritual development, something especially to the fore as churchwarden.

Often Elaine and I went midweek to a quiet service at Greasley, the D. H. Lawrence family church. We enjoyed our retreats and listened to a lot of music, not least Choral Evensong. Yet looking back it seems that the busyness, driven by our Christian commitment, was an integral part of that spiritual development. In Oakham, until Covid-19, we have been involved with the Summer and Autumn Fayres and been privileged to write Christian Corner articles in the *Rutland Times*. An extra bonus has been attending the meetings of the Rutland Theological Society.

I recall Bishop Jonathan, in his final sermon in Derby, encouraging 'a mature Christianity'. Whilst himself more traditional, he saw value in the challenging writings of John Robinson, Don Cupitt and David Jenkins. Cupitt wrote of the impossibility for believers of 'an ultimate harmony of moral and spiritual values', a view with which I have some sympathy. I am quite content to follow a faith in which there is room for mystery and loose ends. I somehow combine a preference for high church liturgy with a more liberal theological outlook. But then life is full of non sequiturs, diverse pathways which for Elaine and me have been encouraged and enhanced in - to use a John Betjeman phrase - a 'most tolerant and all-embracing Church'.

Oakham Team Ministry

Get to know your churchwarden

Sitting on my terrace I am blessed with panoramic views of Rutland Water. I moved here with my husband and two small boys 44 years ago and this is not what we saw when we arrived.

To my six-and four-year olds' delight there were diggers going up and down five days a week and at the end of the day and at weekends they raced down to see what new fossils had been uncovered. What a delight.

The house was a strangely converted old school with a loft ladder to get to the attic where we all slept. With imagination and the skills I had acquired in upholstery and antique restoration classes near where we had lived in Penn, the house has been gradually transformed into something more conventional. It still has its old school bell in the eaves which children love to ring and many of the school's pine cupboards still showing signs of the old ink pots.

I was born on the borders of Cheshire and Lancashire during the Second World War, near my grandparents' home. My grandmother was a great Christian influence in my early years, as she came from a family of Methodist missionaries. We spent days preparing for endless fundraising bazaars to help fund work in India, and observed her strict Sunday rituals.

She could turn her hand to mending most things, including the old sofa and chairs. She was a frugal cook and a keen gardener, I feel I am a chip off the old block.

When I was 13, I went to Roedean but with only one academic talent, maths, as I was severely dyslexic so classed politely as 'a slow learner'.

However, I managed to do well



'I never look back to count the years I have been churchwarden'

Miranda Hall, St Andrew, Hambleton

enough to go on to teacher training in Home Economics after a year in France, returning there when qualified to gain a Cordon Bleu Paris.

My teacher training in Manchester covered cooking, nutrition, a lot of science and needlework. I had been turned down by Athol Crescent* in Edinburgh as they did not want left-handed teachers! I had one year teaching in a rough area of London, sneaking in an Easter holiday job in the kitchens of the Dorchester before, with a stroke of luck, being offered a teaching and demonstrating position with the London Cordon Bleu. It lasted five years, opening a varied career for the next 35+ years of teaching cookery at home, writing and demonstrating all over the country.

If you ask who my closest friend is, I have known Mary Berry for nearly 50 years. We were neighbours in our pram pushing,

toddler picnic days with nursery school runs together, and shared many holidays, first with our children and in later years our wonderful husbands who were devoted friends too.

I was lucky that when Peter and I left Penn that my mother still lived in that area and then later one of our sons too. Catching up with regular visits still remains easy.

It was Mary who helped me become a magazine cookery and nutrition editor, she told me when I was offered the job 'you will have to do it saying "I give my children cake for tea and you give yours raw carrots"'. She introduced me to her publisher and I started writing books. In turn when she lost William in his late teens and could not face leaving home and husband to work, she followed my example of teaching from home.

I never look back to count the

years I have been churchwarden. I started as just a member of the PCC mainly with fundraising projects. My love of needlework remained and with guidance I was able to wash and restore the William Morris hangings in the church. My upholstery experience enabled me to get a team of volunteers together to cover the many tapestry and prie-dieu kneelers.

I then found the amazing Ruth Chamberlin, who taught gold thread work embroidery, and under her guidance was able to restore all the 1890s altar frontals, burses and communion veils.

This task is now completed. It has been a labour of real love for about 20 years (pictured right).

There are a marvellous and very experienced team who help look after St Andrew's Church, all completely dedicated to keep perhaps the most important church in the county in a good state of repair. It is one of the oldest churches in Rutland, much of it dating from the twelfth century, and formed part of the dowry of the Queens of England.

In the 1890s it received an astounding Victorian legacy of stained glass windows and Arts and Crafts features as well as the textiles I worked on.

Fundraising is difficult at present for all churches so one has to look forward to better times and come up with innovative ideas for the present. Like my grandmother, organising fundraising events has always been a rewarding pleasure for me, a way of getting to know many in the small village of Hambleton and find what interests and talents they have.

Hambleton remains a vibrant village of delightful, caring people. In these times of lockdown caused by Covid-19, people have



been incredibly supportive of others here, and the many who walked round the village found me passionately gardening and stopped for a chat. Despite losing my husband four years ago I have never been allowed to feel lonely, quiz nights and wine tasting on zoom were arranged and walks with villagers and friends. I kept fit in the garden growing as many veg as possible and doing zoom classes of Tai chi and webinars of arts lectures.

The most life-changing year of my life was in 2005-6 when I was asked to be High Sheriff of Rutland. High Sheriffs are chosen for their commitment to their county although the role is partly one of encouraging law and order. My commitment had been almost entirely in helping chari-

ties with my cooking, mostly by demonstrations or catering. When people asked what I had done for my county to receive such an honour I always said "I cooked my way there".

Peter and I both enjoyed the year enormously and got to know so much more about the County of Rutland, its strengths and challenges. It was a great privilege.

A great delight in life are my four grandchildren who range from 5-18 years. Like my sons, they are all keen cooks and it has been a joy to teach them. One should always make the most of the talents one has in life. They are a blessing to pass on and share with others.**Athol Crescent – formerly Edinburgh College of Domestic Science, now part of Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh.*

Christingle

Brian Chester

'Holding the light of the world'



Covid-19 restrictions pose so many unknowns for the Christmas season in 2020, but there is one service that has an enduring attraction for children while embracing fundamental elements of the Christian faith. That service is called Christingle.

The idea came to this country from the Moravian Church in what is now Germany. It began in 1747 when Bishop Johannes de Watteville gave children a lighted candle adorned with a red ribbon, to represent Jesus, the *Light of the World*, and the joy which had come into the earth when Jesus was born. That simple act ignited interest that spread to countries around the world via Moravian missionaries.

A Moravian presence was established in England in the early 1700s although it was more than 200 years later that the Children's Society held its first Christingle service in Lincoln Cathedral 1968 and its popularity grew from there.

There are several possible sources for the origin of the word Christingle – one pointing to an old Saxon word for fire - 'ingle' – meaning fire or light; another suggests it derives from the German for angel – 'engel' – so Christ-angel; or it may be an English version of Christkindl – little Christ child.

With the encouragement of the Children's Society and its long and strong connections with the Church of England, Christingle is now a fixed event on the calendar of many churches for the Christmas season through to the Epiphany. Services include a collection to support the work of the Children's Society which raised £1.3 million in 2018.

Children often help in the preparation of the Christingles, each one using an orange, a candle, a piece of red ribbon, four cocktail sticks and an assortment of small pieces of fruit, nuts or sweets.



The candles are lit during the service, sometimes with the congregation gathering round the crib to sing *Away in a Manger*. Always a telling moment. And the things which make up the Christingle: orange, candle, ribbon, sticks, fruit and nuts – what do they mean?

- **The orange** represents the world.
- **The lit candle** represents Jesus' light in the world, bringing hope to people living in darkness.
- **The red ribbon** is a symbol of Jesus' love and the blood he shed when he died for us.
- **The sweets and dried fruit** represent the fruits of the earth, nurtured by the sunshine and the rain. **The four sticks** - the four corners of the world. **For more information visit:**

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/fundraising-and-events/christingle/what-christingle>

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