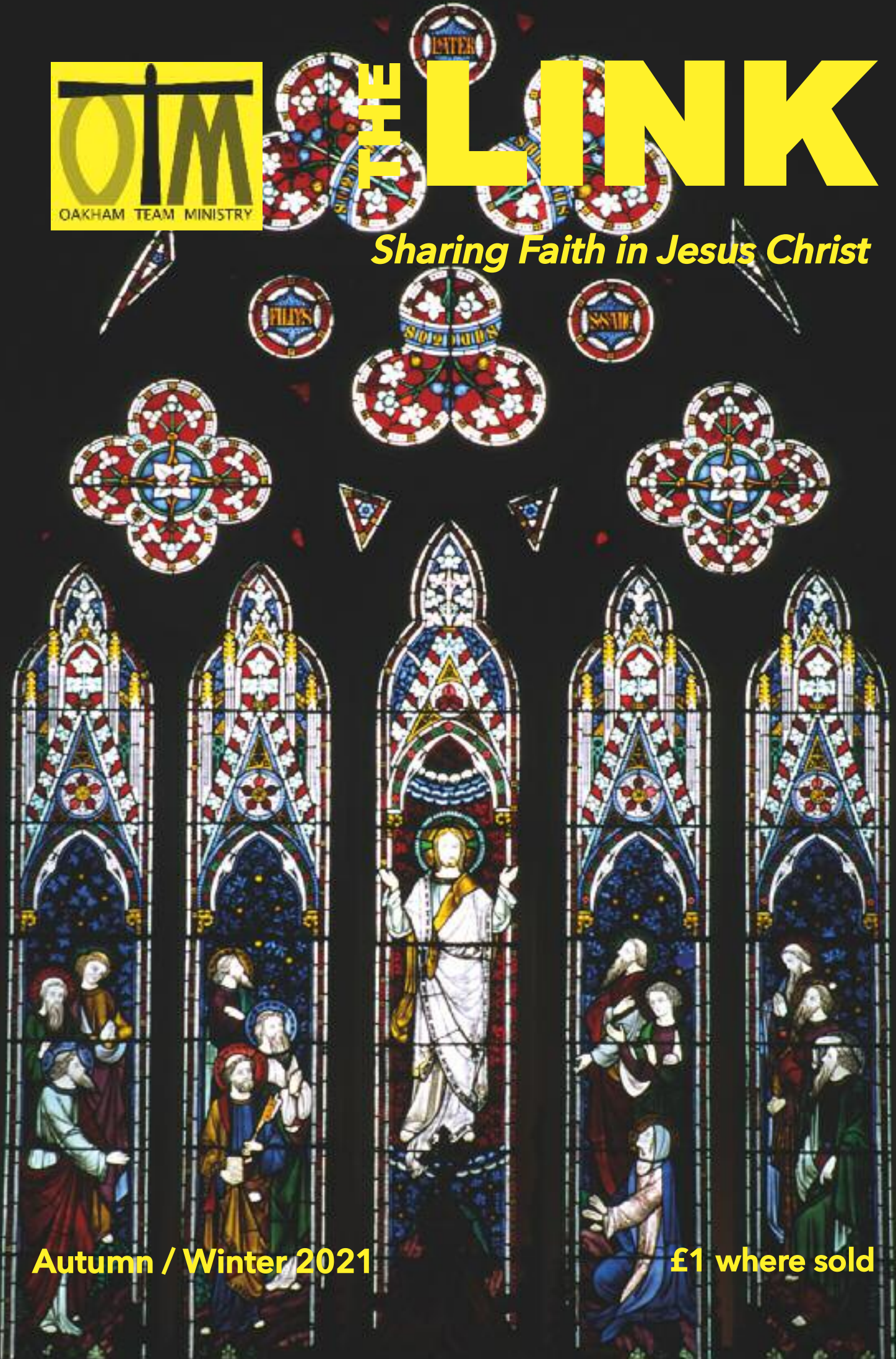




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Sharing Faith in Jesus Christ



Autumn / Winter 2021

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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.

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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

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Production

Brian Chester

01572 757600

bc@bcnewslink.com

Advertising and Distribution

Beryl Kirtland

01572 724103

adverts@link.otm.org.uk

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by Richard Adams

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Oakham Team Ministry

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Our sincere thanks too, to all those who help Beryl to distribute the magazine in town and village.

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Special times of remembrance

Revd Stephen Griffiths

Dear friends,

The season of remembrance is upon us. In September and October we remember with thanksgiving in our harvest festivals the provision of our daily bread, calling to mind the dedication of the global network of food producers and suppliers and especially those who work in our local farming community. We remember too that the cycle of sowing, tending, reaping, making, and ploughing is the story of our lives.

Thankfully we can sing harvest hymns this year. At the beginning of November we remember the saints of old (All Saints) who shone for Christ, and our dear ones (All Souls) who we love but see no longer.

Both of those special days have been somewhat eclipsed by Halloween (the eve of All Hallows/All Saints day) - a reinvention that both embraces and sugar-coats death. If you want to know what happens when we detach from our Christian roots, the modern interpretation of Halloween is a good example.

Bonfires, fireworks and guy competitions help us recall the thwarted 1605 plot to blow up our Reformed Catholic settlement - what a strange way to celebrate our history. It is one of the great 'what if' moments of our nation's story, although in an odd twist of fate the conspirators' preferred monarch

(Elizabeth Stuart) would go on to be the ancestor of a future king of Great Britain and Ireland, George I.

At cenotaphs, war memorials, churchyards, on factory floors and in shops the nation pauses to remember the pain of war. Lest we forget. The simple but enduring image of the red poppy cuts through the darkening days and speaks to our hearts and minds. December and January are dominated by Advent and Christmas, although the two seasons have been reversed in our culture.

Penitence and parties

We spend all of Advent (a season of penitence and fasting) celebrating Christmas with parties and feasting, and all of January (the church's joyful Christmas season) in penitence for our over-indulgence, trying resolutely to reform our lives. Despite this mix up the remembering goes on in church and family life.

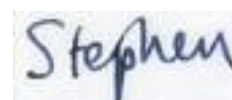
The age-old promises of a Redeemer are renewed in the majestic readings that ring out in the candlelight, and the helpless baby in the hay (straw is for sleeping on) reminds us that divine power is exercised by those who see themselves amongst the least, and the lost and the last.

There is a lot to remember in these months. It is a season of reflection

which gives us ample opportunity to piece together the story of who we are, the people who have inspired us, the events which have shaped us, and the common ground we share.

Remembering is not purely nostalgia, it is putting the wisdom of the past at the service of the present. For Christians the bread and cup that we share assure us of Christ's presence amongst us: the ultimate act of remembrance.

With my best wishes,



'It is our moral duty to do all we can'

In a statement following a stark warning by the UN Climate Change Committee, the Church of England's lead bishop on environmental matters, the Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Revd Graham Usher, said that the message of the report was loud and clear: 'Wake up world!'

"It is time to stop playing political games and take action now. We are already seeing the effects of the climate emergency around the world – and it is the world's economically poorest people who are already suffering the most. So it is our moral duty and a Christian calling to do all we can to try to turn the tide. At COP26 there will be an opportunity to act, our leaders must seize this moment and deliver real and impactful change for the future of God's creation. We don't have a spare Earth – this is our precious home." **See page 7 for 'our choices'**

Times remembered

Richard Adams

1922



Lest we forget

On 11th November every year local people gather around the memorial in the churchyard at All Saints, Oakham to remember those residents of Oakham who have lost their lives serving in the armed services in the First World War and in other hostilities since then. Although the Great War ended on 11th November 1918 it was to be almost three-and-a-half years after that before a war memorial was erected at All Saints in memory of the Oakham people who had lost their lives in that conflict.

On 6th April 1922 possibly the largest crowd of local people ever seen in the town gathered in and around the churchyard (pictured above) to hear the Bishop of Peterborough consecrate the memorial and to see it being unveiled by General Sir A E Codrington. Now in 2021 nearly 100 years on, it is interesting to look at some of the events leading up to that commemoration.

In 1919 a War Memorial Committee was set up to consider ways in which the lives of local servicemen and

women who had died in the war could be commemorated. Several suggestions were made ranging from the establishment of a YMCA in Oakham to the creation of a memorial park in the town, but it was decided that two projects should be proceeded with. The first involved the purchase of the building now occupied by Citizens Advice Rutland at the junction of High

Street and Gaol Street for the sum of £350 with further improvements costing £650 to create what became the Oakham Memorial Institute and a social centre for the town. The second proposal was for the erection of a memorial cross in the churchyard at an estimated cost of £900. This was to be designed by Sir Ninian Comper, a highly respected church architect, and ►►



2018

Times remembered

constructed by his nominated stone mason.

The Memorial Institute proposal proceeded without major problems and resulted in the establishment of the Oakham Memorial Institute which subsequently became a registered charity which owns the building and also offers small grants to local needy individuals and organisations.

The War Memorial proposals did not proceed quite so smoothly and a number of problems were encountered. Concerns were raised about the design and whether or not the incorporation of a crucifix was appropriate. When the cost of the project exceeded the budget figure the architect was approached to see whether his design could be used but the services of a local builder and stone mason be employed.

Despite the offer by Mr Davenport-Handley of free stone from his quarry at Clipsham no agreement could be reached and the War Memorial Committee decided to look for an alternative design and to notify those people who had already subscribed to the project, accordingly.

It was at this point that the Oakham Vicar the Rev J H Charles, who had always been a strong supporter of the original design, stepped in. His son James had been an officer in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry and took part in the first Battle of Ypres where he was seriously wounded. Sadly, he died on 10th January 1915 just three days after his 25th birthday. His body was brought to Oakham Cemetery where he was buried with full military honours.

The Vicar subsequently wrote to the War Memorial Committee as follows :-

I should be much obliged if you would kindly take an opportunity of placing before the War Memorial Committee a proposal which has earnestly suggested itself to me.

The more I think about it the more grievous it seems to me that the beautiful memorial should not be erected for which the Chairman secured the acceptance of all meetings. I believe that if it were erected the town would possess one of the most beautiful memorials in England If only all strong feelings could be set aside and the
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memorial erected I would be quite willing to put down the extra money needed for its erection.

My single motive is that the town should possess it and for that I would gladly make the necessary sacrifice. I have no other motive whatsoever.

I am by no means a rich man and I should solicit assistance from my own relatives and friends and from the personal friends of my dear boy who gave his life and I know that these would be glad of the opportunity of assisting in the erection of a beautiful memorial partly in his memory.

Following consideration of this letter the committee decided to accept the Vicar's offer and proceed with the original design which, thanks to his generosity, is the memorial we now have in the churchyard.

Although the war memorial is the responsibility of Oakham Town Council the Oakham Memorial Institute has on a number of occasions paid for its

maintenance and cleaning.

When the memorial was constructed in 1922 it incorporated a time capsule within which was enclosed, amongst other things, a copy of George Philips book Rutland and the Great War.

This is a wonderful tribute to those who lost their lives in the conflict and a copy was presented to every bereaved family. Copies of a 2014 reprint are available from the Rutland County Museum for £5.



Climate change

The heart-rending images of wild fires and devastating floods consuming all before them, must surely send a message to us all even to those who continue to challenge the evidence of human impact on the climate and environmental structure of the planet. The recent stark warning by the UN Climate Change Committee could not have been clearer about the threat we all face.

It's easy to point fingers at what are deemed to be offending sectors of industry. Living in a rural benefice we will be aware that agriculture has been a target of critics for loss of habitat and damage to the environment. Awareness of a responsibility for improvement has been evident among farmers for some years shown by an increasing number of on-farm schemes to bring benefit to wildlife and an overall commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

No doubt the UN conference on climate change at Glasgow (October 31 to November 12) will put a fresh focus on the world-wide picture and what governments are prepared to do to at least slow the advance to higher temperatures and the occurrence of catastrophic events.

Managing lifestyles can make a difference

But while these big issues may capture the headlines and public interest, there are those who remind us that managing our own personal lifestyles can help the environment – not least the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams when he said: “When we believe in transformation at local and personal level we are laying the sure foundation for change at national and international level.”

Making informed choices about lifestyle is all important and a journey through one of the internet search engines will yield a basket full of choices. *The Link* offers these three websites as a basis for consideration and guidance on any decisions we might choose to make.

Creation Care - <https://creationcare.org.uk/>

The Creation Care scheme aims to encourage households to make changes to care for God's earth by providing ideas for their next steps and recognising the progress made. The scheme covers seven areas of household life: worship and prayer, home, garden, travel, food, possessions, community and global engagement. Participation requires thought and commitment through the completion of a questionnaire that covers all of these areas. Achievement is rewarded through gold, silver and bronze awards.

Living Lightly - <https://arocha.org.uk/our-activities/living-lightly-take-action/>

Living Lightly runs under the umbrella of Rocha UK (ARUK), a Christian charity working for the protection and restoration of the natural world and is committed to equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the

Oakham Team Ministry

Where do we stand?



environment. The site lists a range of ten categories to explore. Each offers a wide variety of suggestions – under Worship, for example, we have: “Take your Sunday morning service to the great outdoors, in a local park or other green space. You could pick up litter as part of your act of worship.” Under the category Home is a list of practical actions “that could contribute to ‘even small, well considered lifestyle changes which can make big reductions to carbon footprint, perhaps even 90 per cent.’

Green Christian - <https://greenchristian.org.uk/>
Green Christian is a community of Christians from all backgrounds and traditions who work to care for Creation through prayer, living simply, public witness, campaigning and mutual encouragement.

The website explains: “Since we were formed in 1981 the ecological crisis has continued and deepened. We seek more urgently to live gently on the earth, encouraging one another in discipleship which accepts our impact on God's creation as a whole. Included is daily prayer, a simpler lifestyle, public witness, peaceful campaigning, encouragement to one another and the provision of resources.”

For Leicestershire contact: Emily Sharman
leicestershire@greenchristian.org.uk

BC



Pictures: Fires in Greece - The Guardian. Floods in Belgium - Olivier Matthys/Getty Images

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Going crackers for Christmas

Beryl Kirtland
shows you how...



With lockdown in place, shops closed or out of bounds I developed the idea of reusable crackers for various members of the family and in some instances, the whole family for Christmas last year. There are various versions of reusable crackers available.

This version evolved from a picture shown to me with a comment, "These look straight forward."

I thought I would share the process and hope you find it easy too.

You will need:

☐ Cotton fabric approximately 16 inches by 14 inches (40cm by 36cm) (or to suit).

☐ A variety of trimmings: ribbon, bias binding, ric-rac in various widths, whatever you have to hand that will embellish your cracker.

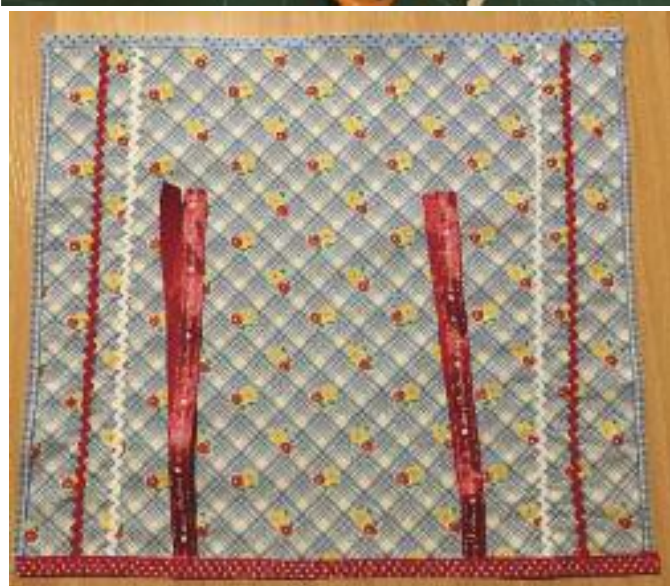
☐ Plus threads and general sewing equipment



Bind the edges of the fabric with folded ribbon or bias binding. On one of the edges incorporate two pieces of ribbon folded in half and four inches in from the edges on the long (16") side of the fabric.

Decorate as you wish.

Assemble the inside parts: the tube from the inside of a toilet roll, a piece of cardboard about two inches larger than the tube (I used old Christmas cards), a stapler and sticky tape.



Toilet roll and card



Toilet roll and card

Roll the card around the holder and secure. About 7" finished length is ideal..

Going crackers for Christmas

Ideas to put in your crackers:

Small sized gifts, trinkets, jewellery, chocolates, money. Of course there must be a joke. Google "Cracker jokes ". There is plenty of choice. Many are free to download.

Wrap your fabric around the roll with your goodies inside. Tie ribbon around each end of the roll.

Here are two of the family gifts I made, one for a family of five and one for a family of six. I covered boxes with Christmas wrapping paper. Then wrapped the whole box and crackers.



**Why are Christmas trees so bad at sewing?
Because they always drop their needles!**



Where Christmas came early



'Celebrate the coming of Christ all year round'

It is never too early, or late, to think about Christmas. Dunstable Priory held a Christmas service on 25th July which attracted 100 people, many dressed in Christmas jumpers and Santa hats. Father Christmas even showed up. The Priory's Christmas Day service was cancelled due to Covid19, but seven months later in the warm summer weather they celebrated the birth of Christ.

Their vicar, Revd Rachel Phillips, said it is important to remember and celebrate the coming of Christ all year round. Afterwards the congregation enjoyed a picnic of turkey sandwiches and mince pies.

There are many things that are 'not just for Christmas' (dogs, peace and goodwill) and now, in Dunstable at least, it seems that even Christmas is not just for Christmas.

Here in Oakham and the surrounding villages we look forward to, at last, celebrating the Christmas season with open arms and hearts after so long being constrained by Covid restrictions.

While due caution and care will continue to guide our way, the much loved sound of *Silent Night* and *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (along with many others) will hopefully echo around our churches. Maybe the year's break will sharpen our appreciation and understanding as we hear, and reflect on, the Christmas story.

**Could you
be the
missing Link?**

The Link magazine has an opportunity for two new members to join its team. Appreciated by readers in Oakham and the surrounding parishes, The Link would welcome additional input when planning content - and with advertisement sales. You will take part in a unique project that seeks to communicate with a wide spectrum of readers. Contact the Team Rector: Revd Stephen Griffiths on 01572 869483; email stephen@oakhamteam.org.uk

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It's a record

Sopranos hit a high note at Egleton

The church of St Edmund, Egleton has been home during the summer months to up to 1,000 sopranos. Being a church of modest size with a capacity to match, you may ask how the building can possibly accommodate that many sopranos with their ability to reach the highest of notes.

As it happens, these sopranos fit themselves quite comfortably in the space between the ceiling of the nave and the church roof. Each has a body of no more than 48mm in length and weighs less than a 2p coin.

They are bats - with their name derived from the high pitch of their echolocation calls which emits at 55kHz against its slightly larger cousin, the common pipistrelle which can only manage 45kHz.

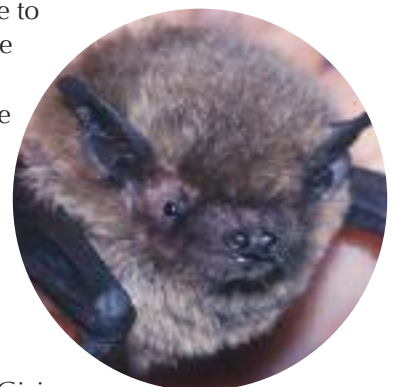
The 'maternity unit' at Egleton is exceptional as it is the biggest in the Midlands and East of England and possibly the whole country. The church is ideally placed for the mothers to nurture their young as it is close to feeding grounds along the banks of Rutland Water. For those of us who may be prone to the attentions of biting insects it is worth noting that one pipistrelle can devour to up 3,000 in just one night!

The bats and the church have co-existed over the years but in recent times concerns have emerged over pups (baby bats) falling through cracks in the ceiling and invariably perishing because they cannot find their way back to the roost. The church has also needed regular cleaning to sweep away the droppings and dust that descend from above.

Under the guidance of the lottery funded *Bats in Churches* initiative, a study has been made and agreement reached that repair work to the ceiling to seal the often very small gaps should be given priority.

The *Bats in Churches* is able to provide limited funding so the parochial church council has launched an appeal under the banner: *Help to keep these bats alive*. The aim is to raise £5000 towards the cost of the work which can only be completed in early spring before the bats arrive or mid autumn after they have left.

The PCC has opened a *JustGiving* page to attract donations to the appeal. Please visit: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/batsinegleton>



It is just before 4am. Dawn has yet to break although a distant cock has already crowed its approach. It is dull and dark as shapes emerge in the churchyard of St Edmund's, Egleton. More appear, some carrying bags of equipment, others clutching an early morning coffee, others a chair on which to sit and wait. Moments of expectation pass and then awareness rises as rapid clicks flow from a device pointing to a corner of the nave roof where it reaches the tower. The bats are arriving – the device is a combined detector and camera which reveals what the ear cannot hear and eye cannot see. The 'shapes' are well clad observers of a bat 'spectacular' which has caught attention by the number of these, still not fully understood creatures, that spend their summer months in the church roof. Counts put the totals at between 600 and 1,000 females and offspring that return, after a night's feeding, to swirl around the church before, by a miracle of navigation, finding their way back into sleeping quarters through the smallest of openings. By 5.30am the show is over and the 'shapes' quietly leave the churchyard to continue their day... while the soprano pipistrelles, rest.

Moments in time



A snap shot of arrangements at St Andrew, Whissendine's August bank holiday flower festival – *A Moment in Time*. A creative and colourful array of 24 arrangements ranged from historic events, key life moments to the concept of time itself. All absorbing; all beautifully crafted. The festival attracted to up 600 visitors to the church and raised £3,000. Pictured: Right – Coronation; Top – Remembrance Day; Left - Sealing of the Magna Carta.



Church clock marks time



In the 1870s a predecessor curate at Langham, Revd John Mould, who later became Vicar of Langham, presented a clock to the church which was installed in the spire of the Parish Church (curates were much wealthier then!) with an inscription referring to 1 Corinthians 7:29 'the appointed time has grown short'.

In the storms of 2014, the clock face fell to the ground, smashed and was restored but the mechanism was also affected and now the appointed time – well for the church clock at least – seems to have stopped completely – not because of the second coming of Christ but because the clock mechanism, now nearly 150 years old, is in need of repair and the people of Langham are in need of a silencing mechanism so it does not chime through the night disturbing their sleep. We have found a company, Clockwise in Lincolnshire to do this work.

We are very grateful to Langham Parish Council for their donation towards the costs of repair, but more will be needed to get this old clock going again for another 150 years or more. If anyone can help us, we would be most grateful. Donations can be left at Langham Parish Church where receptacles are available and you can see a display about the clock there.

The closing lines of Rupert Brooke's poem, the *Old Vicarage, Grantchester* declare: 'Oh, yet stands the Church clock at ten to three and is there honey still for tea?' It has been a few years since Langham Church clock stood at ten to three but very soon it will again. In advance, to all who can support us. Thank you.

Revd Simon Aley, Curate, Langham.

My faith journey

Peter Jupp, a retired minister of the United Reformed Church, now living in Oakham



I am grateful to Stephen for inviting me to write this 'Faith Journey'. Born in Hessele, East Riding, in 1943, I moved in 1946 with our family and my younger brother Harold to South Wales where I grew up.

My parents met whilst working for the Legal & General Assurance Company. When asked, occasionally, was my father a minister? I reply that life assurance provided a good parental precedent. Over tea one evening, Dad told us that a client had broken down in tears in his office whilst discussing his will. Dad said to me quietly, 'Never forget how many people are frightened of death.'

The death of my Grandfather, who lived with us, was a critical experience for me and influenced my work in death studies and in funeral reform 40 years later.

My parents were confirmed as Anglicans but transferred to the Congregational Church in Hessele. Once in Penarth, we joined Christ Church Congregational. We went to the afternoon Sunday School (250 children) with a good diet of the Bible, hymn singing and missionary stories. Holy Communion was a low priority, with services monthly following the normal service.

Minister helped to 'hear the call'

Appreciating the critical importance of the Lord's Supper had to await more ecumenical contexts at university. Christchurch's liturgical highlight was the twenty-minute sermon from our minister, a former miner and Cardiff graduate, though we could not always understand him. My mother and I used

'I have always seen the ministry of our own Church as working alongside the others'

to check on the Scripture readings afterwards to make a fuller sense. He certainly had an influence on my hearing a call to the ministry: two other Church members followed the call, one as a missionary.

Ecumenical awareness had an earlier start: aged eight, I was deputed to conduct our French au-pair to Penarth's Catholic Church; I felt no strangeness there. I have always seen the ministry of our own Church as working alongside the others. This cooperation was critical in after years when working at Thame as one Church among others in a town of 6,000, as a Chaplain within London University and in Hampstead with its active Council of Christians and Jews.

I was conscious of the world-wide character of the Church from an early age. My cousin John Riddelsdell worked in Kenya with the (now) Church Mission Society. I was particularly impressed by the life of Albert

Schweitzer, a book lent me by my mother. As a passionate reader of 'Biggles', I was attracted by a career as a flying doctor.

In making the world-wide Christian faith my own, two incidents stand out. The first was the preparation 'class' for making the Boy Scout promise 'to do my duty to God and the King...' The second was a Billy Graham meeting in my last year at school and 'going forward' to make a public commitment to serve Christ.

I had hoped to read English at university but, not having a place, I was encouraged by our school chaplain to read for Theology at King's College London. The 1960s were an exciting time in many ways. Bernard Levin charted British cultural and social change as 'The Pendulum Years'. In my second term, the Bishop of Woolwich's *Honest to God* made front-page news of Christian belief.

I heard excellent Sunday sermons (sixty minutes) from the Calvinist Martin Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel and from the more liberal Leonard Griffith at the City Temple. Yet, surrounded by Anglican and Nonconformist ordinands, I began both to hear and to resist a call to ordained ministry. My home minister, Idris Evans, will have sensed this; he lent me Morris West's *The Devil's Advocate* about an Italian priest investigating whether a Partisan might be recognised as a Catholic martyr.

My knowledge of the wider Church was enhanced by successive visits with the Student Christian Movement to Romania and Czechoslovakia.

I learned something of the oppression of Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Churches behind the Iron Curtain. Czechoslovakia also gave me my first religious experience: walking in the woods at Koinepiste, I found myself focussing on the text 'I am come that you might have life and have it in full abundance' (John 10:10). The appreciation of the role and the reality of the religious experience of others has remained ever since.

In 1965, I met Elisabeth Tebb who was reading Law at King's. Brought up as an eight o'clock communicant, her faith has been a catalyst for mine. We read the Bible together daily. We were married in 1968, blessed with two sons and remain best friends. I am grateful for her support, judgement and sharp criticism. Her professional life as a solicitor and later as an Upper Tribunal Judge in the Administrative Appeal Chambers has more than widened my awareness of human nature.

Elisabeth encouraged me to respond again to the ministerial call. In April 1966, I offered for the Congregational ministry and was accepted for training at Mansfield College, Oxford. Almost immediately, theological and Biblical teaching took on new and wider significance. We had excellent tutors and a wide base of reading. An unexpected discipline was the sociology of religion which enabled me to develop a more objective critique of social role of churches and of religions.

Two themes of my journey

As I survey my faith journey, two themes emerge as important. First, my faith journey became a professional duty with ordination in 1970. My principal pastorates have been the market town of Thame, London University Chaplaincy, Hampstead and later, Corby and Peterborough. At Thame, I discovered the delights and the pitfalls of working with a congregation. One evening, my father, accompanying me to a service at a small village church, told me afterwards, 'Never forget that all your people are volunteers.'

Getting to know your members and

'At Thame, I discovered the delights and pitfalls of working with a congregation'

earning their trust is an enormous help especially when illness or tragedy strikes them. Building up the congregation in Thame after eight years without a minister, I discovered the importance of Bible study, church coffee mornings and regular visiting in deepening a congregation's fellowship.

I have always encouraged the work of lay preachers. In Thame and then North London I organised three door-to-door visitation programmes, borrowing university students as my team. The necessity of being 'prepared to give an account of the faith that is within you' (1 Peter 3:15) helped mature both their confidence and their faith.

At Hampstead my church secretary articulated how essential was good music and preaching not only for his personal faith but for his daily work (in the film business) '...when I am challenged on Monday mornings about 'wasting my time with church on Sundays.'

Secondly, it is important to relate that, back in 1964, I decided that I would not believe in the resurrection of Jesus; and that I would try to live a Christian life but without the confidence that there was a life after death. This had its strains. Two years later, on retreat to the Protestant community at Taizé in Burgundy, I confessed to the monk, 'I'm desperate to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Please help me.' He guided me to the key Biblical narratives of Christ's appearance to travellers, on the roads to Emmaus (Luke 24) and to Damascus (Acts 9). This proved critical. Ever since, the resurrection of Jesus has been the centre of the Christian faith and gospel for

My faith journey

me. Yes, Jesus' Incarnation and His Passion are of equal significance but, so far, His Resurrection has had the most personal effect on me.

Aware in the late 1970s of the emergence of academic texts on the role of death in society, I wrote a Master's thesis on the origins of the credal confession of Christ's descent to hell. This presses a magnifying glass to the image of our lives beyond death and also our charity within life.

Uncertain of how the resurrection of our bodies might be understood in our own times, I have found great encouragement in its potential whilst reading the forensic anthropologist Sue Black's *All that remains* (2018).

My major research work has been the history of cremation, first in England and then, with colleagues, in Scotland.

How did it come about that people who had buried their dead for centuries adopted cremation in the middle of the twentieth century? Of the several possible reasons, secularisation will be one and changing Christian beliefs another. While burial will always symbolise resurrection of the body; cremation can symbolise either a belief in the immortality of the soul or in life's total extinction.

Death always sets challenges of meaning and of worth, especially among the world's religions. So when we clergy help a family to organise a funeral for someone who has died, we must balance both the life that has gone with our looking forward in hope to its future with God. And, in John Thewlis's phrase, 'Always mention forgiveness. If you don't know why, there'll always be somebody present who does.' The task to balance belief, liturgy and pastoral care for all the bereaved is a delicate but, literally, vital responsibility. As Elisabeth and I grapple with retirement, preparing for our own eventual deaths is a God-given vocation that we seek to take with care.

Note: *Most Congregational Churches joined the Presbyterian Church of England in 1972 as the United Reformed Church.*

***Ann Blackett
reflects on the day
singing stopped
- and how we
responded to
a new 'hymn sheet'***



That last Sunday in church, back in March 2020, I looked out at the congregation from my perch in the choir stalls, wondering when we'd be back, and what it would look like when it happened. I'd seen the horrifying pictures from China on the BBC world news channel back in January, and gave guilty thanks that my parents weren't still here to worry about me, and that I wouldn't have to worry about them.

I looked at lists of volunteers and their ages at Woolsthorpe Manor (where I was working at the time) and hoped they'd all get through this, whatever it would turn out to be. I guessed, as well, that we wouldn't be doing much singing. The next week we were locked down at home, and the churches were - unthinkable - closed.

Lockdown was a great excuse to become a worshipping tourist, as parishes and organisations got themselves online. It was a very strange Easter, as Christians around the world did what they could, from the Archbishop of Canterbury in the kitchen at Lambeth Palace, to the Pope in an empty St Peter's (which is a very big church indeed) to Stephen celebrating Easter Communion in his study, and me, building my Easter garden on the windowsill on Easter Eve.

What we didn't have, though, was live singing. An airborne virus meant we couldn't sing together, and there were reports of at least one outbreak in the United States where a choir rehearsal had been one of the

first 'super spreader' events, with many cases and several deaths. For me, it had become academic - I was so stressed about the whole situation that I couldn't sing a note, which hadn't happened since I was doing teaching practice in Leicester in 1997.

It didn't take long before All Saints was live-streaming worship on Sundays and morning prayer on weekdays, at first from the vicarage and people's homes, and later from church. Kevin, our former director of music, had the technical skills to knit together individual recordings of hymn parts sung by choir members and add them to recorded services to bring a bit of normality in very abnormal times. When we did go back into church during late summer of 2020, restrictions were still very strict and we weren't able to sing, either as choir or congregation.

Family 'bubble' brought music to the church

We fell into a pattern of Sundays - mostly said, but with great contributions from the organists and, in Oakham, the Davis family bubble, able to sing and play together and bring their music into church. With no hymns, I started to feel a different rhythm to the services: which parts cried out to be sung (the psalms, morning song of praise which is the Benedictus) and how good it was to have patches of silence in the flow of words.

People held the silences together, as they might once have sung together. There were hymns played on the organ, with words in the worship booklet, so people watching the live-streamed service could sing at home, while those in the building hummed surreptitiously under their masks. There was a new focus to what we were doing, now we were back together; it felt as though we were listening more attentively, and appreciating one another more.

I was rather baffled by the idea that we could go back to singing without risk. In the past, the only times I really had flu (as opposed to all those times I rang into work saying 'I think I've got flu'), I'd recently sung at the Advent carol service in church or with the choral society, and found myself completely floored, feeling worse than I'd ever felt before. The thought that covid could be worse than flu terrified me. I was, in all truth, quite relieved that we weren't singing when we first came back to church.

In time, though, limited singing - small groups, socially distant - became possible and choir members from the parishes began to make plans. In Langham, Oakham and Whissendine the choirs were keen to come back,

but had to limit themselves to just a few singers - at first only three - and not many hymns.

Advent carols broadcast live

Our normal Team Advent and Christmas programme went out of the window but we were able to create and record the Advent Carol Service - with carols - broadcast live, and the sung Midnight Eucharist which was recorded and broadcast on the night. Pew sheets and worship booklets had been produced and circulated round the Team, so people were able to sing along the the carols, hear the readings and pray together in time, if separated in place.

There was a lot of good feedback on these live-streamed events. It wasn't just the music and the familiar services, but also the feeling of being gathered together in some way, the greetings to one another in the comments section on Facebook, and the importance of marking the season, even though we weren't in our usual places. Everyone made the best of what we had, and some also took the opportunity to virtually 'visit' Christmas in other places as well.

Not everyone had access to live-streaming, either the equipment to send it out or the desire to worship that way, and out in the villages there were socially-distanced ways to bring people together, if that's not a contradiction in terms. Whissendine held services out

of doors; and at Langham there were two 'sold out' Christmas services sung by masked and well-spaced-out choirs made up from two different groups of regular singers. Sundays were often concluded with the congregation having processed out of doors to sing in the churchyard.

Coming back to singing

At Oakham, the choir came back to live services on Ash Wednesday 2021, singing through Lent, joined from time to time by other members of the Laudamus choir. By Palm Sunday, although numbers were still restricted, it was looking and sounding like a normal service, except that the congregation's singing voice was silent.

All we could do was keep going, 'singing cheerful songs' to splendid organ music and a quiet murmuring from the congregation. Doing duty as churchwarden at the back of the church some Sundays, I forgot myself from time to time and sang out a loud response or alto line from behind my mask.

After the covid restrictions were lifted

New songs, old songs



in England in the middle of July, we made plans to sing together for the first time in more than a year. For Sunday 25, Peter Davis chose a selection of hymns everyone could sing with gusto at our all-age service, including 'At the name of Jesus' and 'Guide me, O thou great Redeemer'. Since then we've tried to keep to singable tunes and I've been exploring the hymn book for new as well as old words to sing to them, and the singing of the congregation is noticeably fuller than before - I don't think that's just my imagination! We listen, we prepare, we breathe in together and let the words and music soar.

And you know what St Augustine said: *The one who sings, prays twice!*

'We all sang our hearts out'



Lin Ryder, Whissendine: *All I can say about the return of singing, is that it means so much to me. At Whissendine we didn't have any zoom. Once the church was open again for a service, we started singing with a choir limited to three four people. It felt very strange singing with so few. I'm used to belonging to a larger group. Also, for us singing alone and the congregation having to stay silent made for a service where people were barely taking part, except for the spoken words behind masks. Last Sunday we had a 'Songs of Praise' with eight hymns chosen by church members. We all sang our hearts out.*

Margaret Foot, Langham: *My own experience was to choose just two hymns each Sunday and on alternate Sundays, when we had Holy Communion, to sing either an additional hymn or an anthem towards the end. It was particularly difficult to know whether the hymns should be familiar loved ones or lesser-known ones with less temptation to join in. Mostly one of each - as it seemed a good opportunity for the congregation to familiarise with new ones. With the good fortune to have a good sized churchyard and an on line recording gadget we went outdoors for congregation plus choir closing hymns as soon as permitted and the weather allowed.*

Derek Cullen, Oakham: *It is so good to hear the congregation singing again. It makes the choir feel part of the service, rather than singing at a concert.*

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Natal recalled

'You are rich. You have God'

Chris and Heather Rattenberry spent some time in KwaZulu Natal, at the invitation of the Bishop of Natal, when they left their parish in Nottinghamshire.

They ministered at a church in the city of Durban and sent stories home as they happened. This continues the series published in *The Link*



Chris and Heather relax with friends - and enjoy the view.

Two things strike you straightaway about life in South Africa. Material poverty and rich spirituality. Some people here still live in townships under rough shelters of corrugated iron. There are beggars everywhere. Unemployment is high and hits the black population much harder than other groups – though it isn't confined to them. Social inequality is a subject that we're bound to return to.

Though poverty is concentrated in the black African people, they also abound with a rich spirituality. I keep meeting with a natural and easy way of acknowledging God, of speaking of him and his ways, the blessings that he brings.

Everyone gets up early here. The church walk on Saturday morning started at 6.30am (that's right). The seafront was already buzzing and by 7.30am it was crowded. Amongst the colourful sights were five or six separate groups of African Christians baptising new believers in the Indian Ocean. There were hundreds more on a black-led church march to promote health of body, mind and spirit. Every one of them proudly wore a bright t-shirt saying who they were and what they were about.

After our walk we went to pick up a car to use during our stay. Behind the desk was a young African woman full of smiles and charm. My companion tried to haggle over the price. "He is poor. He is a pastor". "No" the girl replied. "You are rich. You have God."

Chris is Team Vicar for Braunston, Brooke, Egleton and Hambleton.

Oakham Team Ministry

Know your diocese

Peterborough Diocese has two archdeaconries
Oakham (six deaneries) and Northampton (six deaneries)

There are 350 churches
and 102 Church of
England Schools

Parish
Spotlight

For a range of statistics covering each parish church visit Parish Spotlight
<https://www.peterboroughdiocese.org.uk/places/parish-spotlight>
The diocesan website is: <https://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/welcome/welcome>



Follow the path...

Brian Chester

The use of land is often contentious. Whether for the production of food, provision of housing, roads, railways, airports, industrial developments or many other uses, there are often prolonged (and heated) debates on the rights and wrongs of each individual case.

One particular area of concentrated debate concerns 'right of access' to private land via the network of public footpaths and bridleways that criss-cross the countryside, along with the Right to Roam over specific areas of agricultural land defined by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The potential for conflict is only too real with farmers anxious to protect crops and livestock with walkers, seeking to enjoy the open air and countryside, occasionally straying from the path or failing to keep a canine pet under control.

Concerns of impact as numbers increase

Challenges experienced as covid lock-down restrictions were eased earlier this year when a surge into the outdoors resulted in mounds of litter for others to clear up, only added to concerns of the impact on the countryside of greater numbers seeking the open air. Concern among farming families also grew with the increased use of footpaths that ran close to or through farmyards or gardens.

An NFU spokesman explained:



"Many members have told us that their farmland rights of way have never been busier and we expect this to continue. We want the public to enjoy the countryside and to engage with where their food comes from.

"However, it is important that this access and engagement is achieved in a responsible way, given that much of

this land is an active working environment where farmers and growers carry out the job of producing our food."

A view underlined by the Country Land and Business Association with this comment: "The countryside is a place of work where the land,

"We want the public to enjoy the countryside and to engage with where their food comes from"

...Follow the Code

livestock, machinery, wildlife and environment must be respected – and a greater understanding of this in the long-term will benefit both farmers and walkers.”

The need for an awareness of care by those visiting the countryside was recognised 70 years ago with the introduction of a code of conduct. Produced in various forms over the years, a Code became official in 1951 and was re-launched as the Countryside Code in 2004 reflecting the introduction of new open access rights and greater public interest in walking the footpaths.

Updated again in 2014, a recent consultation by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Natural England on possible revisions to existing guidance – in which ‘both sides of the fence’ actively participated with almost 4,000 responses - has resulted in a ‘refreshed’ Countryside Code which is now recommended reading for both landowners and those seeking to explore and enjoy the sights and sounds of woodland and field.

The ‘refreshment’ has been generally welcomed especially as the desire to get out and about is expected to increase in the coming months with greater freedom of movement underpinned by the recognition of the value to health and wellbeing of exercise and an appreciation of nature.

Ramblers make a contribution

The Ramblers Association also appreciated the ‘refreshment’ with staff and volunteers putting forward views to ensure the Code ‘is welcoming for everyone who wants to walk in the countryside; gives people the knowledge and



confidence to get out and explore; encourages people to act as champions for nature’.

A warning word, however, has been expressed by the National Sheep Association which believes opportunities have been missed. Chief executive Phil Stocker made these points: “Of particular concern



Care in the countryside

to sheep farmers will be the failure to advise that dogs should be kept on leads in the vicinity of livestock. To simply suggest a dog should be 'in sight' when its behaviour around livestock could be unpredictable will not prevent livestock being attacked.

"It is also a missed opportunity to inform people that the majority of our countryside, including National Parks, is farmed and privately owned and that with rights, goes responsibility. The review of the Countryside Code was much needed and is something that NSA called for, but let's hope we don't have to wait another decade before it can be looked at again."

Check list of changes

Key changes to the Countryside Code include:

- New advice for people to 'be nice, say hello, share the space' as well as 'enjoy your visit, have fun, make a memory'.
- A reminder not to feed livestock, horses or wild animals.
- To stay on marked footpaths, even if they are muddy, to protect crops and wildlife.
- Information on permissions to do certain outdoor activities, such as wild swimming.
- Clearer rules for dog walkers to take home dog waste and use their own bin if there are no public waste bins.
- New wording to make clear that the code applies to all our natural places, including parks and waterways, coast and countryside.

Guidance for owners

Land owners and managers are also reminded that there are ways to help visitors 'realise their responsibilities'.

- Keeping paths clear and waymarks and signs in good order and up-to-date to help people stick to the right routes and access points.
- Where there is public access through a boundary feature, such as a fence or hedge, create a gap if you can - or use an accessible gate or, if absolutely necessary, a stile.



- When installing completely new gates and stiles, make sure you have the permission of the local authority.
- Encourage people to respect your wishes by giving clear, polite guidance where it's needed. For example, telling visitors about your land management work helps them to avoid getting in your way.

- Rubbish attracts other rubbish - by getting rid of items such as farm waste properly, you'll discourage the illegal dumping of rubbish and encourage others to get rid of their rubbish responsibly
- Identify possible threats to visitor safety to ensure that your activities do not knowingly put them at risk.

Natural England is setting up a long-term Countryside Code

campaign to increase awareness of the Code through 2021 and beyond. The campaign will focus on encouraging behavioural change among visitors to the outdoors, by respecting those who manage the land and by adhering to the Code.

For full details visit:
[gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code)



Introducing...

Shakeel Nurmahi Assistant Curate in the Oakham Team Ministry



‘Let’s just say that Cecily and I love throwing ourselves into things’

Hello everyone. I’m delighted to offer my first contribution for *The Link*. My name is Shakeel Nurmahi, and I have recently joined the Oakham Team Ministry as a team curate.

My wife Cecily and our puppy Aslan (a Golden Labrador) moved into the vicarage in Langham back in June, shortly after we were married. June was a crazy month. Cecily and I were engaged to be married and were both living at St John’s College in Durham, where we both have been training to be vicars – that was where we met.

We finished up the term on the 4th of June. Then we moved all our stuff out of our rooms on the 5th and moved it into the Langham vicarage. We set as much of the house up on that day as we could, even doing a little bit of painting, before we headed back to Durham very late that day.

We married on the 8th and went on a short honeymoon from the 9th to the 11th. Then we moved in properly to our new home. Our puppy, Aslan, arrived the next day.

We spent the rest of the month setting up the house, house training a puppy, and more training work for Cecily via zoom. I was ordained on Sunday 27th June at Peterborough Cathedral and started as a team curate the following day. Let’s just say that Cecily and I love throwing ourselves into things.

Life in the Oakham Team has been great. The first couple of months in the team have been fantastic. It’s been great to meet lots of people at church and around the community. Some of you will have got the chance to hear more about me as we have met, but I am aware that I am yet to meet many of you, particularly during this current climate.

Introducing...

I hope that I can share a bit of who I am here. I'm 25 years old and was recently ordained a deacon in the Church of England. This moment has felt like a long time in the making, but in ways, it has also been a lifetime in the making.

I was born into a Christian family in Southampton. My mother and father were both strong-believing Christians, and so were their parents, so I grew up going to church. I went to Southampton Lighthouse International Church, a free church based in the heart of the city. It started as an Asian church, but as it grew both numerical and demographically, it became fitting to rename it as an international church. Growing up with church and faith in the home, I always had faith in my life.

I don't think I can recall a point when I didn't believe in God. But there did come a moment when I was able to articulate my faith out loud. Growing up, I would attend the New Wine Christian festival every summer. Back in 2006, I was there with my family, and I was attending the kids' sessions for my age group.

During an evening session, the leaders told us about the gospel message and it struck a chord. To be honest, I always believed that God was my God and that Jesus saves us by going to the cross and rising on the third day, but it had never clicked for me in this way, that Jesus invites us to come to him and that it is up to us to say yes to his invitation. Growing up in a Christian family, I thought I had already said 'yes,' but I took this point to confirm this belief with my own words and prayer. I was making this Christian faith that I have very much my own.

Active as a teenager

Throughout my teenage years, I was very active in church. I would play drums in the worship team, help out in Sunday school and youth group, and just got stuck in to help in any way that I could at church.

In my mid-teens, I started to get this sense from God that he wanted me to study the Bible in more depth, that I was going to use this for something more in the future, maybe some form of teaching in church or maybe in education.

Eventually, I decided to study theology which I ended up doing at Trinity College in Bristol. Trinity is an Anglican training college and I went as an independent student. My time at Trinity was my first real experience of the Church of England and it was where my journey exploring ordained ministry began.

Whilst at Trinity, I was beginning to ask myself what God was calling me to in my life. I felt that it was something to do with church leadership and ministry, but I wasn't sure if it was ordination or not. At the end of my time at Trinity, I came to the ordination service at Peterborough Cathedral to support my friend Tom, who was being ordained a deacon. After his ordination, he introduced me to Steve Benoy, the Diocesan Director of Ordinands, saying: 'this is Shakeel, he wants to be a vicar,' and I didn't have the words to deny it.

'I always had faith in my life'

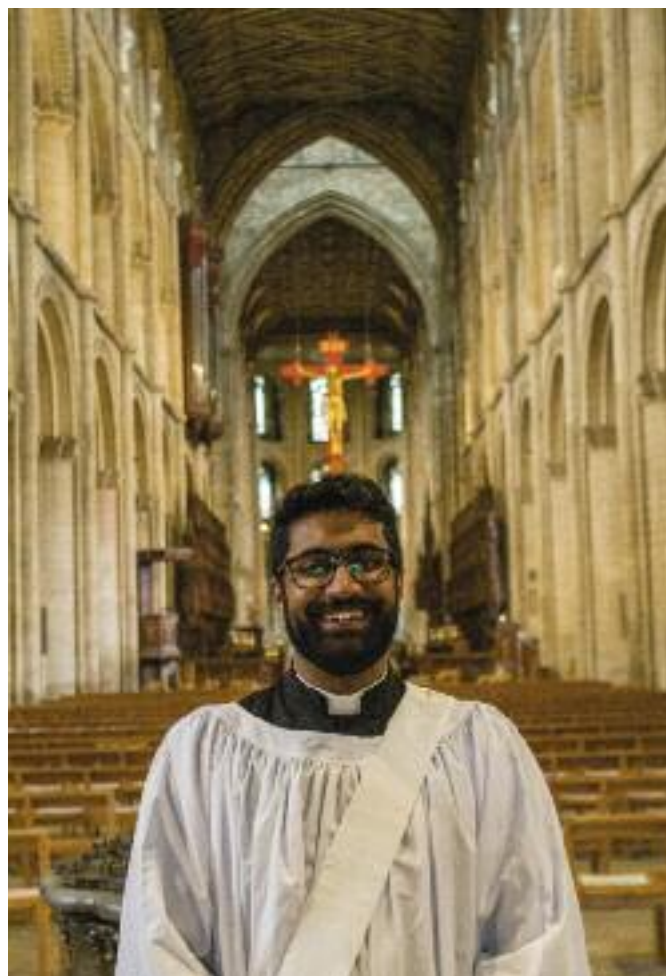
This was an incredibly revealing moment to me. I realised that God had been stirring this sense of calling to ministry and it wasn't until this moment that I felt that I articulated it. Steve invited me to do the Peterborough Diocese internship, which I signed up to do.

God was calling me

I ended up spending two years interning at St Andrew's Kettering whilst also going through the formal discernment process with Steve and the diocese. It was becoming apparent that God was calling me to ordained ministry. Following a recommendation at my BAP (selection panel), I went up to Cranmer Hall in Durham to begin my ordination training. I spent two years on the MA pathway learning how to be a vicar, but most importantly, God brought Cecily and I together. Two years later we are married, I'm now ordained, and we have begun our life in the Oakham Team. We are delighted to be here and cannot wait for all the great adventures ahead here in Rutland.

Every Blessing,

Shakeel Nurmahi



Get to know your churchwarden

Jo Gluning, St Peter and St Paul, Market Overton

Just six and Jo knew: 'I'm going to be a nurse'

Beryl Kirtland

I have had the great pleasure to get to know Jo Gluning, churchwarden of Market Overton's Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, the attractive medieval church surrounded by lime trees and set within the boundaries of a Roman fort.

I have great admiration for the work and unstinting commitment churchwardens and other volunteers have to their churches and their local communities. This is very apparent when talking to Jo whose family has been linked to Market Overton since the 1960's. Indeed, Jo lives in the bungalow in Berry Bushes that her parents bought.

She tells me that her father, a bank manager, in Caistor, Lincolnshire, beginning to think of his retirement coming up in four years' time saw the bungalow, couldn't resist it and purchased it there and then. With a large garden and expansive views of the Vale of Catmose towards Teigh, Whissendine and Ashwell it is com-

pletely understandable.

Jo was born in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire where her father worked in a bank and her mother taught piano. Six years later Jo's sister, Liz, was born and now lives in Melton Mowbray.

The age of twelve saw a move to Caistor for the family where Jo attended Caistor Grammar School, a time that passed but not particularly happily. Church and Sunday school was always a part of family life, a time of participating in classes when in Wisbech and a time of helping with the children and classes when in Caistor.

From an early age Jo always knew what she wanted to do when she left school. A vivid memory stems from



when she was in hospital aged six to have her tonsils out. Sitting in front of the fire in the ward together with a boy of similar age they were asked who was to go first to have the pre-med injection. The brave boy volunteered. Jo was given the tray with the stainless steel syringe in to hold while his injection took place. From that moment onwards she knew that she wanted to be a nurse which is exactly what she did.

Initial nurse training for Jo took place at The Royal Masonic Hospital in Hammersmith followed by a spinal course at Stoke Mandeville and Midwifery training. Work in Hull, Reading and Gosport followed before she joined RAF Nursing for four years. A first posting to the now defunct RAF hospital in the grounds of Nocton Hall, near Lincoln was followed by a posting to Changi Hospital Singapore, a move that was to change her life for ever for it was here that Jo met her future husband, Steve.

Married in 1968 during her posting at RAF Ely Hospital (later called The Princess of Wales Hospital) Jo's travels continued as a married service man's wife.....North Luffenham; West Raynham, Norfolk; Laarbruch, Germany;



Oakham Team Ministry

Get to know your churchwarden



The path to the church - a favourite walk for Jo.

Upavon, Devises ; Wildenrath, Germany; North Coates, Lincolnshire among others. In 1969 their daughter Rachel was born followed three years later a son, Sam. Asked about the forces and children's education Jo felt that going to many different schools was a bonus because what was lacking at one school was made up at another and a well-rounded foundation was achieved. Both children finished their education at Oakham School, Rachel not starting until the 6th form. They were able to visit and often be with their grandparents who lived at the bungalow in Berry Bushes.

Throughout all of this time from Singapore onwards there was always an involvement with amateur dramatics and musical productions from RAF Changi Theatre Club who put on three plays, a Gilbert and Sullivan opera and a Pantomime each year through to Cottesmore Players at Market Overton Village Hall.

Steve's parents 'Cherry' and Win Roberts retired mid 1960's took the short walk to the church and soon became involved. Cherry played the organ occasionally. Their ashes are in the churchyard.

Jo regarded the bungalow as the family home so when her parents were no longer alive Steve and Jo took ownership of it. From 1995 on Steve's retire-

ment they took over from where her parents had left off. In 1996 the churchwarden died and Steve took it on until 2009 when he gave it up. All of this time Jo was involved with the church choir; Laudamas Choir; the Little Angels children; on the deanery synod (so co-opted onto the PCC); church secretary and running the 100 Club. Jo also folds and distributes Market Overton's Outreach magazine containing the village and church news. I call that being involved! Not to mention any fundraising or social event that may need help.

There have been many seaside and countryside holidays and especially enjoyable were the cruises Jo and Steve shared. Sadly Steve died in April 2017 after several years of ill health. Sue Morris was a Churchwarden until three years ago when she retired. Jo took on the roll on her own with guidance from Sue and continues to the present time. Jo likes all of the church services and helps to take Sunday Morning Prayer when there is no Holy Communion.

The congregation usually numbers about 20 but going forward Jo is concerned that the younger generation are not regular worshippers which may impact on the the future vibrancy of the church.

To ask Jo about hobbies was almost

an erroneous question. With a large garden, the house and domestic duties, family, the 100 club and her church involvement I think that results in a very full life with which I am sure she would agree but she did admit to liking cross-words and a little light reading.

The community shop which opened in May 2010 is very central to Market Overton and its activities of which there are many making the village with a population of nearly 600 a delightful place to live. In 1267 the lord of the manor was empowered to grant markets to be held each week on Thursdays and a fair on the Saints day of St Peter in June, a date that is still upheld in the annual feast weekend.

There is a surgery, village hall, the Black Bull Pub, cricket, bowls and snooker clubs, allotments and a play area at the Lodge Trust Country Park.

Many village people must know Jo, the kind, dedicated, caring person I had the pleasure of spending several hours getting to know. As Market Overton's churchwarden and village stalwart many thanks from Oakham Team Ministry and the village must be gratefully given. Thank you Jo for all you do to help the church and the village.



Looking out from Berry Bushes

Oakham Team Ministry

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