

Old Malden News



The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist, Malden

February 2022

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Old Malden News

**The Parish Magazine of
St John the Baptist Parish Church Malden**
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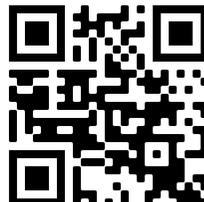
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To receive the Parish Mailing please scan the
QR code with your smart phone camera



Services for February



St John's is OPEN

St John's has now re-opened for worship so please see the Parish Mailing for details Live Streaming of services will continue so you will be able to see services live via our YouTube Channel.

Sunday 8am - Said Eucharist

Sunday 9.45am - Said Eucharist with hymns

Wednesday 11am — said Eucharist

The midday Eucharist on Wednesdays has been moved to 11am to cater for the Mothers' Union which on the 1st Wednesday of the month will have a coffee morning at 10am followed by the Eucharist at 11am .

Please make sure you are signed up to our mailing list to get up to date information regarding the services.

<http://eepurl.com/gNz4Tf> or scan the QR Code

Vicar's Letter

These January days are still short and cold enough to sap any motivation I have to do all those little jobs that need doing round the garden. The rain and the wet underline the wisdom of my decision to stay indoors. Of an evening I turn to the internet for adventure, becoming an armchair traveller as I watch various things on Youtube. During lockdown last year I discovered a series of real-time walks round various towns and cities in Sweden which opened this door to exploration from the warmth and comfort of my sitting room.

I have a confirmed aversion to heights. This is probably thanks to an experience as a child of about six when my grandparents took us to Grandfather Mountain, the highest peak in the Blue Ridge Mountains. It is famous for it's "Mile High" swinging footbridge, strung up between two peaks. I can attest that it does indeed swing as my grandfather thought it funny to make it bounce once we were halfway across. Since then I don't do heights. So it may come as a surprise that I have been watching videos about climbers summiting Mount Everest. These days it is overcrowded with amateur mountaineers queuing up and down the mountain for their turn to stand at the top of the world. They do so largely thanks to the shepherding of the Sherpa guides who practically lead them by the hand. Sadly many still die on the mountain with hundreds of bodies lying scattered in the Death Zone. And yet they still come for the challenge and adventure.

I watched with horror as a queue of climbers gingerly scrambled down a two foot cornice of snow as they came down from the summit, the rock was beside them with only the frozen snow

beneath them. Below their feet one could see the peaks of neighbouring mountains. A rope was their only life line in the battering wind as they made their way single file. It was all but impossible to overtake anyone and if one person stopped they all stopped, waiting to move before their oxygen bottles ran dry. Needless to say I will never set foot in the Himalayas! I managed to climb Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh many years ago but that was the extent of my mountaineering.

Like many people I am risk-averse. I don't like pushing my luck doing dangerous things. This winter has been mild so far. It doesn't feel like a proper winter until we get at least one dose of snow. That may come in February the coldest month. We've also been fortunate that Omicron has been relatively mild as it has spread across the country. The vaccines and previous infection has given many the immunity we need against serious illness. We are in a much better place than we were a year ago. The scientists claiming that the worst may be behind us. They may well be correct in their predictions that 2022 will see a return to normality almost as we were enjoying in 2019. With Covid now endemic and freely spreading we all face a level of risk unknown before the pandemic. Omicron is much more transmissible, the trade off being that it is less deadly as many viruses eventually become. Covid, at least for the time being, is faced with our newfound immunity and not the threat to healthy individuals as it was months ago.

As St. John's reopens we all need to evaluate what level of risk we are willing or able to take. In spite of our precautions we cannot guarantee there is no risk of catching Covid in Church. We have already had three instances of positive tests earlier last

Vicar's letter continued.

year so we must assume and act as if Covid is in the building when we meet to worship and for our activities. Personally, I found it unsettling the first time I got back on a bus in town. We've all been through that as we scurried into the shops or travelled on the train. For some coming back to Church was a big step. We are all finding our way and trying to keep to our comfort zones as much as possible. Some aren't ready to take this risk while others feel compelled to be together and see each other again. All these needs and obstacles are a balancing act that everyone will have to work out for themselves. I don't have that liberty as my role requires mixing and meeting a variety of people in different situations and places, but that is a risk that I am happy to take. Only you can decide what is best for you. No one must attend Church even if you are on a rota or have a job/task to do.

As we move on there are options for worship that are safer than others. For those wishing to avoid crowds we have services at 8:00am on Sundays and 11:00am on Wednesdays for Holy Communion. Groups who normally meet in the Coffee Lounge are welcome to use the sanctuary in Church if you wish. Please let me or Graham Burley know ahead of time and heating can be provided for Church. We are also keen for children's activities to resume with Little Fishes, Children's Ministry, and Messy Church back on the regular agenda. Messy Church will count towards attendance for those looking to qualify for a school place at Malden Parochial. With luck we hope to hold a Lent group and have a full Lent and Easter as we move towards Spring. We hope and pray that things will continue to improve and we can get back to being St. John's together. Until then take care and keep safe, Michael.

Winter Aconites

An ashen sky on this icy day -
trees frosted silver in their bareness,
but still, a lone leaf on the apple tree
hangs and clings by a thread,
as wind whisks hail across the windows.

Gulls lounge on waves of air -
spring so near, yet not quite here.
Even so, tucked among mossy roots,
aconites appear dressed in green ruffs
and offer up their golden cups--
 keeping hope, love and joy alive!

Sue Burley



CHRISTMAS DAY EVENT 2021

After many changes of plan a very happy Christmas Day Event took place with 12 guests at the Hall and 11 meals delivered. Due to the ever increasing cases of the Omicron variant of Covid in the area and with most of our usual helpers on the day unable to come at the last moment, it was decided to continue to run the event with a shorter day and once again deliver meals where needed. However it was still open for those who could make their own way home mid afternoon and for those who really needed to be with others on the day for their mental well being.

The cooks coped magnificently with all the changes and managed to cook a lovely Christmas meal for those at the Hall and packed up a meal and supper bag for those at home. Thank you very much indeed to Jemma Stedman, Kate Willoughby, Gill Holditch and other members of their families who were definitely Christmas Heroes.

The other heroes were Janet Jeal and Janet Flemming who did all the washing up, and Maureen Hawkins who helped wherever needed from early morning until end of day, all with a lot of fun and laughter. Thank you also to the drivers who delivered meals which was very much appreciated; to those who donated a gift; and to all who helped finance the event including a generous donation from New Malden Rotary Club.

From a guest at the Hall: *'I very much enjoyed the Christmas Day lunch. It was lovely to be able to meet up with people again. It must have been very difficult for you and all the helpers to run it all so smoothly and well. Please thank everyone involved with giving us such a delicious lunch and pleasant afternoon. Thank you also for our supper and the present.'*

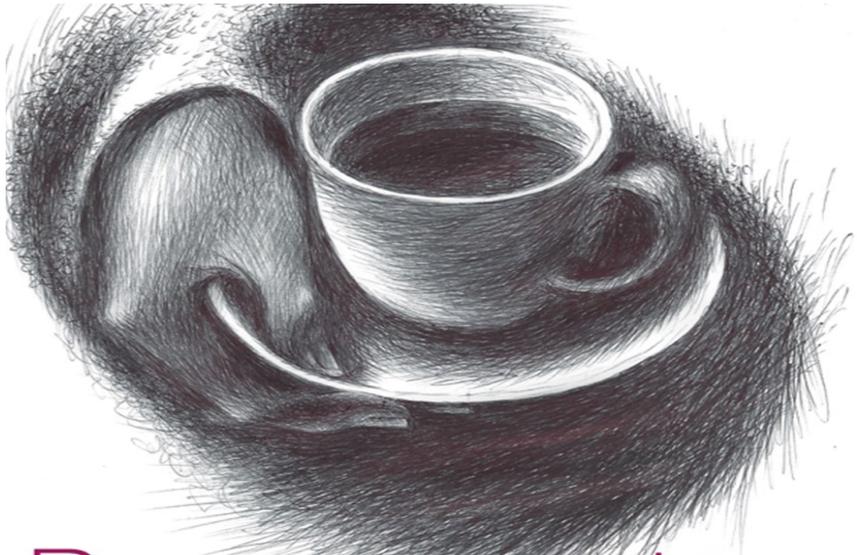
From a guest at home: *'Many thanks for the delicious meal, sandwiches and present. It was enjoyable and a real treat on Christmas Day. Although we couldn't meet up again this year your gesture turns an ordinary day into something special.'*





St John's Knitting and Crochet Group will meet on Thursday 24th February from 2pm in the Church Coffee Lounge.

In January we celebrated our 14th birthday –so help to keep our tradition going by coming along to have an afternoon of chat and craft. Beginners always welcome.



Bereavement Café

Thank you to everyone who supported the Bereavement Cafe through the Co-op community Charity scheme! You raised over £1,100! The next meeting will be in the coffee lounge at St. John's on Tuesday 15th February 2:00- 3:30pm. We have been very fortunate to be trained and supported by Princess Alice Hospice, who will continue to work with us to provide this needed service for our community.

I hope that you enjoyed the quiz – here are the answers!

- 1 Susanna Clarke – Piranesi
- 2 S J Bennett
- 3 Never by Ken Follett
- 4 Beautiful World – Where are you?
- 5 Petruccio
- 6 J K Rowling
- 7 Scott's Journey to the Pole
- 8 St Trinian's
- 9 Cloud Cuckoo Land
- 10 The Rainbow
- 11 Elizabeth, Jane, Lydia, Mary, Catherine (Kitty)
- 12 Nicholas Nickleby
- 13 Scarlett
- 14 Zadie Smith
- 15 The Man who died Twice
- 16 The Lincoln Highway
- 17 The Promise – Damon Galgut
- 18 Heron's Cry
- 19 Toymaker
- 20 100 Years of Solitude
- 21 Autopsy
- 22 Orphans of the Storm – Celia Imrie
- 23 Stephen King
- 24 Geoffrey Archer
- 25 Pevensie

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‘Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold’ John 10.16

The implication of these words of Jesus have always interested me.

I grew up at a time when relations between the main Free Churches and the Church of England were cautious and with Roman Catholics non-existent. At university, however, I had Roman Catholic friends, one of whom intended to become a nun, yet whatever the clergy might tell us we shared something in common in our commitment to Christ and his Church. Over the years it has been a joy to be part of increasingly good ecumenical relations. It is easy to feel the wheels of change turn slowly, but they turn nonetheless. When we moved to Worcester Park in 1970 we as Baptists were welcome at worship in St John’s but could not share in communion fellowship. How glad we were when the Church of England changed that rule! For us, that made a great difference when in old age we needed a church close to home.

When we shift the focus away from the theologies that divide, within as well as between faith communities, we find that the different faiths have much in common in how they motivate many adherents to good works. In times of crisis and emergency appeals the various aid agencies, secular and religious, co-operate. We do not have to give up our own faith in order to work together to help. When a London Christian, an elderly pacifist, was held hostage in Iraq, the local mosque was quick to contact his church and offer support. The minister told me, ‘I never thought I could pray with a Moslem - and then found myself doing just that *in Trafalgar Square!*

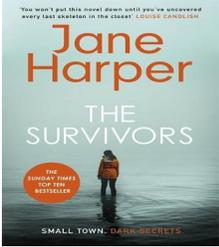
Once I attended a conference arranged by a secular organisation concerned with severe learning disability on the right to spirituality, which needed advocacy as some care and social workers had little sympathy with that need. It was a wonderful conference: Moslems, Jews, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and others were for once all ‘on the same side of the table’ and could meet as allies in a common cause. There is much that people of faith could share if only they would seek that rather than count their differences.

Receiving Christmas cards from Hindu and Moslem friends in recent years has been a surprise and joy (and I see my diary prompts me with dates for Eid and Divali). As one Moslem neighbour put it, 'We both know there is only one God: so we can pray for one another, each in our own way'. The Hindu says 'You see God in three person, we see many forms of the divine but these are ultimately aspects of one overarching deity'. She both seeks and offers prayer at times of particular need. Other sheep?

Faith Bowers



St John's Reading Group February 2022



Despite St John's being closed once again due to 'Covid' – we had our fail-safe rescue by holding our meeting on Zoom. Not the same of course – but at least we were able to 'meet', albeit electronically.

We discussed Jane Harper's latest novel '**The Survivors**'. Ms Harper is a popular author with the group and we have read *The Dry*, *Force of Nature* and *the Lost Man* – all set in Australia.

This time, Ms Harper leaves the desert for a coastal town in Tasmania – beach, rocks, boat wreck, sand and sea. Keiran and his partner Mia and their young daughter, Audrey, return to the small coastal community where he lived with his parents and brother. When a body is found on the beach, the guilt felt by Keiran re-surfaces. His brother Finn and friend Toby drowned whilst supposedly trying to rescue Keiran and at the same time, another young girl loses her life too although the full truth of how she died was never investigated. The mystery is unravelled.....

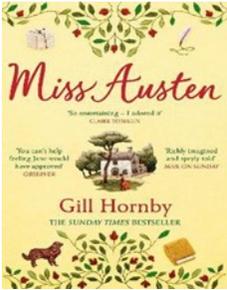
Scores ranged from a 1/10 to a 10/10 with an average of 6/10. A very general view was that it was not as good as Ms Harper's previous novels but an interesting read nevertheless.



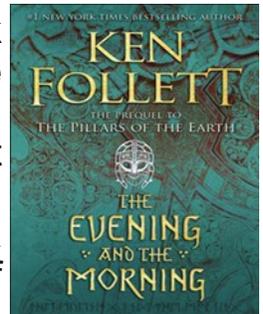
Our choice for February is '**The Vanishing Half**' by Brit Bennett – a book which was Shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction 2021. It follows the story of identical twins, Stella and Desireé who grow up in a small black Southern

community but who run away when they reach the age of sixteen. Their lives then take completely different paths as the novel explores race, identity and gender. An excellent read so far....

The choice for the March meeting is **Miss Austen** by Gill Hornby. Widely acclaimed, this book, set in 1840, follows Jane's sister Cassandra in her attempt to preserve her sister's reputation. Cassandra goes in search of Jane's (reimagined) lost letters and Ms Hornby tells her story with great empathy and wit, establishing Cassandra as an 'Austen heroine'.



Looking further ahead, the following book will keep us all busy for a while: it is **The Evening and the Morning** by Ken Follett. This is a prequel to the brilliant must-read novel Pillars of the Earth (1989) which is about the building of a cathedral in the fictional town of Kingsbridge and set in the 12th century.



The Evening and the Morning is set in 997CE at the end of the Dark Ages with England facing attacks from the Welsh in the west and the Vikings in the east. Chaos ensues. As this novel has 912 pages in the paperback edition – we may have to read this over two months – we shall see!

A recent article in the arts column of The Times suggested some 'alternative' explanations of comments made by book critics. I set out a few more of them here:

Reading group continued..

An intellectual feat: deathly prose, but admire the 100 pages of notes. Has index.

A meditation: Rambling essay, no thesis, stuffed with extraneous, clever-me literary references.

A conversation starter: buy before the author gets cancelled and it's withdrawn from sale.

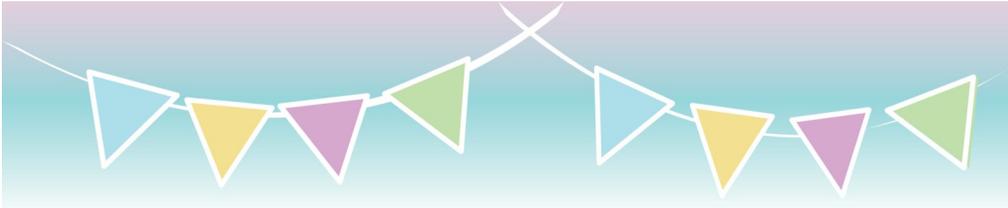
Darkly funny: not funny.

A writer at the top of their game: past it, old, about to be dropped.

Master storyteller: writes the same novel every year, too successful to be edited.

Our February meeting will be on Thursday 3rd February at 8.00pm (hopefully) in the Church Coffee Lounge. Happy Reading!

Marilyn



Vintage Afternoon Tea

Sunday 13th February

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SNAPSHOTS FROM THE LIFE OF A CHOIRBOY

My parents were married in April 1932 and quickly moved in to their new house in Highdown. I was born in October the following year. When I was five I attended the church school (probably the only local school at the time). My first teacher was Mrs Greenhouse (actually Greenhaugh) and I remember the classroom vividly. It had a coal fire and a traditional blackboard and easel.

As I approached the age of eight I can remember one of the clergy or it may have been the organist and choirmaster, Geoffrey Sayers, attending the school in search of boys for the choir. Those who volunteered, including me, were invited to attend the church one evening for an audition. I passed! Thus begun my career in the choir.

Choir practice for the boys was on Wednesday evenings and for the full choir, Friday evenings. These were taken very seriously but were also very enjoyable. Our new vicar the Revd. Kenneth Needham Ross was very keen to have good music. There were about twelve to fourteen boys about eight men and three ladies. Every Sunday we accompanied Sung Eucharist at 11am and sung Evensong at 6.30pm. As time went by Fr. Ross, very gradually, introduced more and more "High Church" ceremonies and experimented with the music. For example he introduced Plainsong for some occasions. I can also remember a performance of Bach's St. Matthew Passion. At that time we had a deputy organist, Shirley Sylvester, so the Geoffrey Sayers could conduct. A particular highlight was being invited to sing at weddings for which we were paid. I seem to remember it was half-a-crown each but this may be wishful thinking.

During my time as a choirboy the church was very well attended

such that in addition to the Vicar we had two Curates, a Deacon and a Deaconess. Kenneth Ross was very keen to cover the whole Parish and I can remember regular services being held In Green Lane School to serve this remote part of the Parish. There were also several open air services in the same area.

Of course, Easter and Christmas were highlights of the year and on these occasions extra seating was brought into the Church but even then some of the congregation had to stand. The music and the atmosphere at these services was amazing.

JOHN ROWE



Snowdrops: Botanical name - Galanthus

Snowdrops flowering are a sign that spring is not far away, they are historically associated with “Candlemas” which is part-way between Christmas and Easter.

Whilst there are 19 species of Snowdrop, the most common species in the U.K. is *Galanthus nivalis* - *Galanthus* means “Flower of Milk” and *nivalis* means “snow”. The various species of *Galanthus* often flower at slightly different times.

A picture of *Galanthus elwesii* “*monostrictus*” taken at Kew Gardens on 6th January 2022; this species flowers particularly early.

Snowdrops originate from around the Mediterranean and the Middle East and were introduced to the U.K. in the 1700s. Today, both Turkey and Georgia are big producers. Snowdrops propagate either through seed or through bulb splitting and these methods often produce dense clumps of plants.

The flower is composed of two whorls of three petals each, the inner whorl is often marked with green.

Snowdrops produce a substance called “galantamine” which, according to the ancient Greeks, was an antidote to poisons although it’s not clear which poisons! It is, however, used today for medicinal purposes as it can be helpful in the treatment of Alzheimer’s Disease and other various memory impairment diseases, although it is not a cure.

I thought you might like to know that a person who is very interested and keen on Snowdrops and who also may collect them is known as a “galanthophile”.

Snowdrops are common in the Parish and I expect you’ll see lots of them in gardens during February.



With things opening up again please help raise much-needed donations for St John's Old Malden - Repairs Fund when you plan ahead and arrange things to do! From booking staycations and getaways to tickets for concerts or other fun activities, remember to use #easyfundraising to raise FREE donations for us. Book now: <http://efraising.org/fx3w1QPP7u>

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