

Services at the Parish Church

Sundays 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) 10.00 am Parish Communion (CW)
Thursdays 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) 3rd Sunday 10.00 am All Age Communion

Christmas @ St Andrew's

Advent Taizé Service

Thursday 5 December, 7.30pm

A quiet service with, music, silence, readings and candle-lighting



Get Ready for Christingle

Saturday 7 December, drop in 10.30am – 12 noon

Children's crafts, Christingle-making and snacks to prepare for Sunday

Soham Comrades Band Christmas Concert

Saturday 7 December, 7.30pm



Christingle Service

Sunday 8 December, 4pm



Traditional Candle-lit Carol Service

Sunday 15 December, 6.30pm

Soham Community Carols

Thursday 19 December, 6.30pm

in the churchyard with Soham Comrades Band

Crib Service

Christmas Eve, 4pm

Come dressed as your favourite Christmas story character if you want to



Midnight Mass

Christmas Eve, 11.15pm

Christmas Day

Holy Communion (BCP), 8am

All Age Communion Service, 10am



Come and join us at St Andrew's Church as we celebrate Advent and Christmas with a variety of services and events: from the quiet reflection of a Taizé service to a singalong with brass band and from the crib service and Christingle for children to the more adult candlelit carols or Midnight Mass. The church will be decorated with greenery and of course a Christmas Tree and a warm welcome awaits you. More details can be found inside this issue and on our website www.standrews-soham.org.uk or our Facebook page.



We were delighted to announce at our 10am service on Sunday 17 November that Hannah Richardson will be licensed as Assistant Curate to the Benefice of Soham in Summer 2020.

Hannah is in her final year of ordination training at Westcott House in Cambridge and will be ordained Deacon at 10.30am on Sunday 5 July 2020 in Ely Cathedral.

Please pray for her as she prepares for the move, and for our parish as we look forward to welcoming her amongst us.

Christingle and the Children's Society

Our Christingle Service is on 8 December at 4pm. All children and grown-ups welcome. There is also a drop-in 'Get Ready for Christingle' session in church on Saturday 7 December from 10.30am - noon. Children accompanied by a grown-up are welcome for snacks, fun, crafts and chat.

The Christingle Service helps to raise money for The Children's Society. We also give out collection boxes for them that can be filled with loose change. If you have one of these boxes, please can it be returned by the end of December? We can then issue you with a new one if you like. Either bring it to a church service at St Andrew's or call Dawn on 01353 723134 to arrange collection.

Crib Service

Another service popular with children is our Crib Service at 4pm on Christmas Eve. Take a break from the preparations and bring them to hear the story of Christmas. Children may dress up as a character from the Christmas Story if they wish.

Donations to the Restoration Appeal



St Andrew's Restoration Appeal received an amazing boost on Monday 4 November when we were presented with a cheque for £1500. This very generous donation came from the 2019 Soham Pumpkin Fair, where our appeal was one of the beneficiaries. A huge thank you to the Pumpkin Fair Committee, and to everyone else involved.

We would also like to thank the Co-op for choosing the St Andrew's Restoration Appeal as one of the beneficiaries of their Community Fund and to all who picked St Andrew's as their local cause. We have received £1815.67 from this. And, of course, thank you to individuals who have donated to the fund since it was launched. If you'd like to donate to the Appeal, here's how to do it:

Via JustGiving:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/st-andrews-church-soham-restoration>

Via Electronic transfer:

Account name:	Soham PCC Development Fund
Sort Code:	20-29-68
Account No.:	60786128

Via post:

Send a cheque made payable to Soham PCC Development Fund to The Vicarage, 27 The Oaks, Soham, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5FF

Thank you!

Christmas Brass Band Concert

Soham Comrades brass band will be performing a Christmas Concert with Burwell Community Choir at St Andrew's Church, Soham. Saturday 7 December, 7.30pm in church. Tickets £6 on the door or from 01353 721920

Carols by Candlelight

B On Sunday 15th December we have our traditional candlelit carol service with readings from the Bible and poetry between carols sung by choir and congregation. With mince pies afterwards.

Community Carols

T Soham Comrades Band will be back at 6.30pm on Thursday 19 December to lead the community carols in the churchyard (in church if wet). All are welcome to join in this singalong of popular carols with refreshments served afterwards. Bring a torch if you have one. This event is organised by Churches Together in Soham. Look out for knitted angels around the town in December which are helping to publicise the event.





☆ **Soham Museum coffee morning**, 1st Saturday of each month, drop in between 10am to 12 noon at Soham library. All welcome.

☆ **Soham Museum History Group** presents 'The Old West River' with Mike Petty. Thursday 2nd January at 7.30pm at Berrycroft Methodist Church Hall. Admission £3, free to members.

☆ **Soham Mens Shed**: Thursdays 10.00 - 16.00 at South Angle Farm, Soham. (Over mill bridge, and the railway line, then turn right and follow your nose, we are the first building on the left) We are affiliated members of Mens Sheds UK and promote men's positive health and wellbeing.

☆ **Soham Foodbank** Thursdays 9.30 – 11am at Millbrook House, Lode Close.

☆ **Posability** Exercises and rehabilitation for people suffering from Parkinsons, stroke, MS etc. Wednesdays 10am – 12 noon at the Walter Gidney Pavilion, Soham Recreation Ground.

PARISH REGISTERS

Funerals

8 November

Valerie Thompson

19 November

Anne Hall

Wedding Blessing

23 November

Penny and Terry Sennitt

Christmas Giving Tree

The Soham Christmas Giving Tree, supplies presents to local children who may not be getting very much or even anything at all this Christmas. But thanks to the wonderfully generous people of Soham, that will change for approximately 70 of those children. In association with the Soham Food bank and local schools and kindly supported by our High Street Co-op branch. The tree, with labels of age/gender of child, will be in the co-op from Tuesday pm until Sunday 8th December. Please note:



* all presents MUST be handed to a member of staff.

** Presents can be wrapped or left unwrapped

*** Loosely attach the original label to the gift (as it will be replaced with a named tag)

THANK YOU for supporting this again, now in our 5th year!

St Andrew's 200 Club

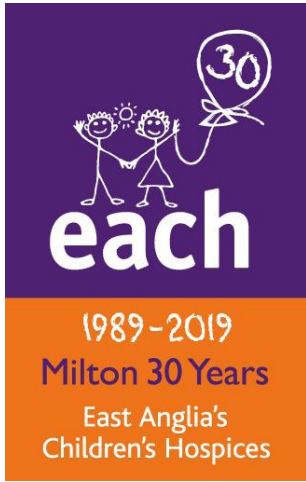
The 200 Club winners for November are: Sharon Wright, £5 & Molly Smith, £10

Items for the February Edition of LodeStar

A Reminder: For many years now, the price of LodeStars has remained at 30p, which unfortunately no longer covers printing costs.

From February 2020, copies will be priced at 50p per issue, which we hope might also allow them to be produced in colour. Watch this space!

Volunteers Needed



Caring for a child with complex needs or a serious illness can be physically and emotionally draining.

It also takes a lot of time, which for families at East Anglia's Children's Hospices (EACH) is often more precious than anything.

That is why the charity is appealing for volunteers to support families in their homes as part of the EACH Help at Home service.

Whether you could spend a couple of hours a week or even an hour a month doing some cleaning, washing and ironing, or perhaps a little bit of DIY, the good cause wants to hear from you.

Volunteer Co-ordinator Charlotte Redmond said: "There are so many families in the Cambridgeshire and general East Anglia area who would benefit from some practical support in the home to allow them to get on with the things that really matter, such as spending time with loved ones.

"We are in desperate need of volunteers to give just a little of their time to support our families. Anyone who can give a couple of hours of their time to help would be very welcome."

If you would like to find out more, please contact Charlotte on 07889 251385 or by emailing charlotte.redmond@each.org.uk You will need an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check for this role which we will supply.

News from Wicken Fen

Groups of winter thrushes are creating colourful sights and chattering sounds around the reserve. Corvids can be seen swirling overhead, particularly in the later afternoon just before dusk. The first short-eared owls and hen harriers have now arrived too, so it's a great time for wildlife watching. You can join us for a Winter Wildlife Safari with our rangers on 1st December or 26 January and take a guided walk looking for wildlife out in the wider reserve – see <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen-nature-reserve/whats-on> for details.

We're excited that a new artwork is being constructed at Wicken Fen, created by artists Heather Peak and Ivan Morison of Studio Morison. It has been commissioned by Cambridgeshire based Wysing Arts Centre as part of the region-wide arts commissioning programme: New Geographies. New Geographies aims to bring contemporary art to unexpected places in the East of England.

The Wicken Hayrick is a sculptural structure; a pavilion; that has been created specifically for Wicken Fen Nature Reserve. The artists hope that visitors to Wicken Fen will enter into the work to sit, contemplate nature, and to read or write. We hope you'll come and experience the hayrick soon.

Work on our café expansion project is now underway. Our new mobile café unit (affectionately named 'Doris') is looking very smart. We've got a new coffee machine so we can now make barista coffee. Do pop in and try one – bring your own cup and you'll receive 25p discount on your hot drink and help us minimise the number of compostable cups that we recycle.

Our Learning Team are preparing for Father Christmas's return to the Fen! Our event includes a festive trail, meeting Father Christmas and receiving a gift, and making Christmas crafts using natural materials in our winter wonderland. Tickets are selling quickly so book soon - see <http://bit.ly/WickenFatherChristmas>

A lovely crisp, wintery walk is one of the best ways to escape from the hectic run up to the festive season or walk off the excess between Christmas and New Year. Don't forget that we are open every day of the year except Christmas Day, so pop in to see us and stretch your legs.

A View from the Vicarage



Silly beasts

So here it comes – my busy time!

On the plus side, at least I'm not a member of Alton Town Council. Christmas trees, it appears, are going out of fashion: one Hampshire town has moved on to squirrels. A 16-foot skiing marmot has recently been installed outside Alton's 19th Century Assembly Rooms. Its booking runs until January, and it's clad in earmuffs and mittens. 'It's recycled. We got it cheap from Camden' was the explanation. I wonder if that cut the mustard: £4200 is, after all, quite a bargain...

Clutching at straws as I do at this time of year, it struck me there might be a sermon in it. Something I look forward to on Christmas Eve is seeing who – and what – rolls up to the Crib Service. Last year, amid hosts of debutante angels and a caravan of pigmy camels, one dad arrived in a donkey hat. He'd disappeared from view by the time the moment came to escort the Marys down the aisle: you need the pluck of a 6-year-old to do that, and fortunately we had one. He merited an Oscar. 'Come dressed up as your favourite Christmas story character if you want to' means what it says: two Marys; three Josephs? Does it really matter? It's Christmas, after all, and what's the odd Gruffalo between friends/angels?

Given the gaggle round the manger – shepherds, Christmas elves, magi, the lot – a marmot wouldn't look too out of place, so there's a challenge for this year's Crib Service if you want to take me up on it. But I'm bound to have forgotten by then: you'll probably need to explain the skis... If I were preaching (which I won't be, not until Midnight Mass), I might hark back to the Carol Service (Sunday 15 December, 6.30pm). A poem at that will mention 'silly beasts'. 'Silly' in the 1500s meant 'simple'. 'Simple beasts', in other words: a Bethlehem Basics ox and an ass. Only the baby had breeding (on his Father's side).

I rather like 'silly beasts' – it fits well with a 6-year-old in a donkey suit, shepherds squinting under tea towels, grinning Gruffalos and dads whose bravado isn't, after all, quite as big as their long donkey ears. It's all a bit silly, but isn't that at least part of how it should be, especially in a church full of children? Wouldn't Baby Jesus have chortled in the manger? Wouldn't Mary have smiled when he smiled? Wouldn't Joseph have watched over them, and all but wept for joy?

I'm reserving judgement on the marmot – I'd like to think most of us have more important things to think about, especially this December – but if Alton's Town Clerk was right when she said 'Christmas is not just about the traditional now. Everything is pretty secular in its outlook', then we Christians need to jump to. What can we do to redress the balance? Maybe for us in Soham



it means popping into Soham Books sometime between now and Christmas Eve. How about buying an Advent calendar that tells the Christmas story, and finding a child to give it to? Richard and Joy have some lovely ones. How about asking them to recommend a Christmas story book where Jesus gets a mention, or fetching the nativity set down from the attic and putting it where people can see it. Our Nativity will be going in early at church this year (though Jesus won't arrive until Midnight on Christmas Eve): St Andrew's School's Year 2s are making a special trip to see it. It'll certainly be in place by 13 December: anyone and everyone is welcome to drop by.

If I was Alton's vicar I'd be praying for inspiration: our 'busy time' it may be, but surely it's not difficult to upstage a squirrel.

With every blessing for Christmas when we get there. *Eleanor*