

St Bartholomew's Church, Oxford Parish News



SERVICES AT ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

December				
3 December Advent Sunday	Holy Communion (8am)	Morning Worship (10am)	Christingle (4pm)	Advent Carol Service (6.30pm)
10 December 2nd Sunday in Advent	Holy Communion (8am)	Holy Communion (10am)	-	Choir Christmas Concert (7pm)
17 December 3rd Sunday in Advent	Holy Communion (BCP) (8am)	YPF Christmas Presentation and Sunday Club Nativity Play (10am)	-	Nine Lessons and Carols (6.30pm)
24 December Christmas Eve	-	Holy Communion (10am)	Crib Service (4pm)	Midnight Communion (11.30pm)
25 December Christmas Day	Holy Communion (9am)	Christmas All Together Worship (10.30am)	-	-
31 December New Years' Eve	-	Holy Communion (10am)	-	-

SUNDAY CLUB (FOR AGES 0-14)

INFANT: 3-7

JUNIOR: 8-11

SENIOR: 12-14

First Steps for toddlers and their carers meets on alternate Wednesdays during term time. For more details please contact Najen Harris, 01959 522813.

EPIC (for school years 5-7) meets on the 2nd Saturday in the month, 6-8 pm in the Church Centre.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FELLOWSHIP meet every Sunday evening during term time in the Church Centre, 6.30 - 8.00 pm.

HOLY COMMUNION Every Wednesday 10.00 am (Book of Common Prayer)

If you would like to book a baptism or wedding, please contact the Church Office 01959 523185.

Vicar's off duty day: Monday

Cover photo by Richard Worssam: Sunday Club Nativity Play
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VICAR'S VIEWPOINT



Millions of journeys will be made over the Christmas period. In 2015 an estimated 31 million car journeys were made as part of the great Christmas getaway. In 2016 the RAC estimated 28 million journeys would be made by Boxing Day. This is not to mention all the railways journeys and flights. I wonder if you have your travel plans sorted for this Christmas?

When setting out on a journey our hope is that it will be straightforward, but the nature of travelling is that we never quite know what lies ahead. Sat Navs can sometimes contribute to this. On a longer journey I sometimes find that my Sat Nav may want to cut a corner and send me up a narrow country lane, whereas it would have been easier to stay on the main road and go to a roundabout or traffic-light controlled junction rather than trying to join a busy A road which is in full flow at the other end of the country lane.

The Christmas story itself features some significant journeys, often with surprises along the way.

We can think of Mary and Joseph travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem. When Mary first received the news that she was to be the mother of Jesus and was told of his Kingdom that would have no end, little did she guess that, at journey's end, she would be giving birth in a stable.

Or we can think of the wise men who set out on a long journey from the East looking for the one born to be King. It made sense for them to go to Herod's palace first. Where else would you find a king, except in a royal residence? They needed help in understanding the ancient scriptures which pointed them instead to Bethlehem, a small village on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

The first Christians were known as followers of "The Way". Both Peter and Paul found surprises in their physical and spiritual journeys as they set out in the footsteps of Jesus. When Peter first received the call of Jesus to follow him, I suspect he never foresaw that on this journey he would end up in Rome. And it would seem that Paul fully expected to travel around Asia Minor on his second missionary journey; but instead he ended up travelling in modern-day Greece, thus bringing the Gospel to European soil.

We, too, are on a journey of faith. In the baptism service, those being baptised are addressed with these words, "In baptism God invites you on a lifelong journey...God promises to be with you, in joy and in sorrow, to be your guide in life and to bring you safely to heaven."

This Christmas, it's worth reflecting on your own journey of faith. I wonder if, looking back, you have had any surprises along the way? We can draw encouragement from the fact that those who have gone before us in faith, from Biblical times onwards, have found that despite (and even due to) unexpected events along the way, their understanding of God and his purposes has deepened and matured.

May your faith be enriched this Christmas and all your travelling go well.

Your friend and Vicar, *Richard*

DIARY FOR DECEMBER 2017

**Morning Prayer will be said in Church on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week
at 9.00 am and on Fridays in the Cranmer Room at 9.00 am**

2 9.00 am Christingle-making (Church Centre)

3 Advent Sunday

8.00 am Holy Communion

10.00 am Morning Worship

4.00 pm Christingle

6.30 pm Advent Carol Service

4 7.45 pm Homegroup (17 Leonard Avenue)

6 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) coffee afterwards

**8 Magazine material for the January edition by today, please, to the
Church Office, st.bartholomews@otford.net**

9 6.00 pm EPIC (Church Centre)

10 The Second Sunday in Advent

8.00 am Holy Communion

10.00 am Holy Communion

7.00 pm Choir Christmas Concert (in Church)

11 7.45 pm Homegroup (17 Leonard Avenue)

12 8.00 pm Homegroup (52 High Street)

13 9.30 am 'First Steps' Christmas Service (Otford Methodist Church Hall)

10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) (Rev. Chris Reed)

6.30 pm Otford Primary School Carol Service (in Church)

8.00 pm PCC (Church Centre)

14 6.30 pm Russell House School Carol Service (in Church)

15 7.00 pm Tree of Light service (St. Bartholomew's Church & then the Village Green)

17 The Third Sunday in Advent

8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)

10.00 am YPF Christmas Presentation and Sunday Club Nativity Play

**6.30 pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols by candlelight
followed by refreshments in the Church Centre**

18 7.45 pm Cameo party (17 Leonard Avenue)

20 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) coffee afterwards

- 24 **The Fourth Sunday in Advent: Christmas Eve**
 10.00 am **Holy Communion**
 4.00 pm **Crib Service**
 11.10 pm **Carols followed by**
 11.30 pm **Midnight Choral Christmas Communion**
- 25 **Christmas Day**
 9.00 am **Christmas Communion**
 10.30 am **All Together Christmas Worship**
- 31 **New Years' Eve**
 10.00 am **Holy Communion**



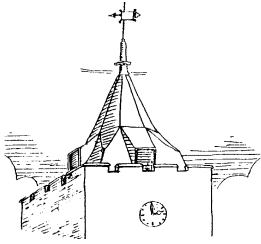
Registers



FUNERALS (Our Sympathy)

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 4th October | Edmund Alan Taylor (aged 88) |
| 31st October | George Albert Wolfe (aged 89) |
| 13th November | James "Jim" Harry Steen (aged 96) |

FROM ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH



LOAVES AND FISHES FOOD BANK

'Thank you to the congregation of St. Bartholomew's Church for their generous donation to our Foodbank. We really value your continuing support throughout the year, which is always a welcome boost to our stores. We continue to support local families who are struggling to make ends meet and rely on the generosity of our regular donors, so would like to pass on our sincere thanks and appreciation.'
Loaves and Fishes Food Bank, Sevenoaks.

ADVENT TRAVELLERS

During Advent we are running the Advent Travellers scheme, whereby different families play host to the crib figures of Mary and Joseph for one night as they travel around the village before returning to church on Christmas Eve.

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

This popular service will be held at **4.00 pm on Sunday, 3rd December**. Bring your friends, too!

CANDLELIT ADVENT CAROL SERVICE

This will be held on **Sunday, 3rd December at 6.30 pm**. You are warmly invited to this special service to mark the beginning of Advent. The candlelight of the chandeliers provides a memorable setting for the theme of Advent as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, who is the Light of the World.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

The Church Choir will present our annual Christmas Concert in church on **Sunday, 10th December at 7.00 pm (note new time)**. There will be a mixture of carols old and new, from England and many other countries, and plenty of carols for you to join in. Refreshments, in the form of wine or fruit juice and mince pies, will be available as always, and our entry price remains at £5 (children free). Come and get into the Christmas mood with us!

SCHOOL CAROL SERVICES

We look forward to welcoming local schools to church for their carol services: Otford Primary School on Wednesday, 13th December at 6.30 and Russell House School on Thursday, 14th December at 6.30 pm.

TREE OF LIGHT SERVICE

This will be held on **Friday, 15th December, starting in St. Bartholomew's Church at 7.00 pm.**, followed by the switching on of the lights on the tree on The Green. All are welcome and labels to remember those who have died may be obtained from the Parish Office in the High Street, or from the Hospice in the Weald. Donations will support the work of the Hospice.

YPF CHRISTMAS PRESENTATION AND SUNDAY CLUB NATIVITY PLAY

This will be on **Sunday 17th December at the 10.00 am service.**, The Young People's Fellowship will be contributing to a Christmas presentation and the Sunday Club will be performing a traditional nativity play.

SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

This popular choral service will be held on **Sunday, 17th December at 6.30 pm in Church**, followed by refreshments in the Church Centre.

CHRISTMAS SERVICE DATES. Do make sure you have these dates and times in your diaries!

3rd Dec. Christingle, 4.00 pm

Candlelit Advent Carol Service
6.30 pm

17th Dec. YPF Christmas presentation and
Sunday Club Nativity play
10.00 am

Service of Nine Lessons and Carols
by candlelight, 6.30 pm

Christmas Eve: Crib Service, 4.00 pm

Midnight Communion 11.30 pm
with carols from 11.10 pm

Christmas Day: Christmas Communion, 9.00 am
All Together Christmas Worship
10.30 am

A DATE FOR YOUR 2018 DIARY

Saturday 27th January Burns Night Supper - a festive evening of Scottish food and fun, in the Church Centre. Tickets from the Church Office (£20 minimum donation)

WORSHIP SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS DURING THE RE-ORDERING AND REDECORATION

The re-ordering and redecoration is due to start at the beginning of January. As from the first Sunday in January (7th Jan), all Sunday services and the Wednesday midweek communion will be held in the Church Centre.

The middle and senior Sunday Club groups will meet in the Vicarage and the junior Sunday Club group will meet in the Cranmer Room. On the 2nd & 4th Sundays where there is communion at the 10 am service, we ask that the children go straight to their groups and rejoin the adults towards the end of the service.

YPF will be held in the Church Hall.

There will inevitably be a degree of inconvenience while the work is going on, so thank you for your understanding and patience. The work is scheduled to be completed by mid-April, and we look forward to worshipping in our newly refurbished church.



"Does anyone have a light, please?"



IN MEMORIAM



George Wolfe, 1928 - 2017

George was born in 1928 at Sutton at Hone and he spent his early years in Swanley. As one of six children, family life was always busy. The family later moved to Greatness. (His grandfather worked as a green keeper at the Wildernessee Golf Course.) Then they came to Otford where George's father worked with the horses at Mitchell's Farm.

George was still at school when the Second World War broke out, but as a teenager in the later years of the war he worked for the Fire Brigade. One of his achievements was to deal with incendiary devices which had fallen on Knole House before a fire could really take hold. When he was only 14 he did try to join the Merchant Navy, travelling up to Liverpool to do so, but he was turned away because he was too young.

After the war George worked as a scaffolder and builder's labourer. He was both strong and agile and could readily carry a hod of bricks with one hand while climbing up a ladder. He worked for various building firms, including Marsdens, Sparrows, and Crispin & Borst. He was a hard worker and, with the exception of one week after hospital treatment, he never had time off work. He kept going until he was 65. He was known for being able to keep the bricklayers busy, keeping up with their demands for more bricks. George never drove a car, so he went everywhere by bicycle and by bus.

George met his wife, Betty, at the Horns pub in Otford. They got married in 1953 in Tonbridge, the same year as the Coronation. At first they lived with George's parents at Lower Barn Farm in Otford. George and Betty soon started a family. Then in 1955, when they already had three children, the family moved to 28 Hale

Lane, where George lived for the rest of his life. The family grew to include 8 children, 14 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren (with two more on the way). When it came to remembering the names of all the grandchildren and great grandchildren George would take the easy way out, often calling the girls "Sally" and the boys "Bronson".

George had a wide circle of friends. He would often meet up with them for a drink, either at the Rising Sun in Twitton or at the Bull in Otford.

On his retirement, George took an interest in the garden and maintaining the fish pond. Latterly he looked after Betty as her health and mobility deteriorated. Sadly, Betty died in 2009. George continued to live at home and was closely supported by the extended family. He also enjoyed looking after his pet dogs, Kipper and Ozzie.

In the end George had a brave struggle with cancer. The family supported him to the end so he could stay at home with help from the Hospice in the Weald.

George had a good sense of humour. He was a loyal friend and he was very proud of his family. He will be missed greatly.



MISSION MATTERS ...THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY



St Bartholomew's Church holds a Christingle service in December. We encourage young people and families to collect

money in a Christingle collection Candle with the proceeds being donated to the Children's Society. We support the charity in prayer and with an annual financial grant. The following outlines the valuable work undertaken by the charity.

We worked with over 13,000 vulnerable children and young people last year, while our campaign wins will bring change to more than 3 million.

Our work to tackle child sexual exploitation

We support children and young people intensively to cope with the trauma of sexual exploitation. Our specialist staff spot the warning signs and make this exploitation stop.

Young refugees and migrants

War, persecution and torture force many children to flee to this country.

Missing from home services

Our services support children and young people who go missing from home or care, or are at risk of doing so.

Advocacy services

We ensure that children in care or in the child protection system have a say in important decisions that are made about their lives.

Children affected by adult substance misuse

We are leading the way in developing programmes to identify and support children living in families where parents are affected by drugs or alcohol misuse.

Supporting young people experiencing mental health and emotional wellbeing problems

We run services around the country for young people who are desperately in need of mental health support. Our services include therapeutic support, befriending, counselling or advice.

Post adoption and care service

Our service is an 'Access to Records' service, sharing records with those who were either adopted or in the care of our homes (which we no longer run).

Young carers

No child should be robbed of their childhood, left to cope alone caring for sick family members and unable to plan for their future.

Participation

Participation means creating and promoting positive opportunities for children of all ages and abilities to get actively involved in all areas of our work.

Campaigning

We respond to government proposals, inform parliamentarians about our key concerns, and provide briefings suggesting solutions.

For more details and to find out how you can help visit:

www.childrenssociety.org.uk



FAITH IN THE FAMILY...

December: Get ready for Jesus!

Pause for thought: Take time to read the Bible story on page 14 which imagines a conversation between the boy Jesus and his relative, John – later known as John the Baptist. Perhaps the two boys loved to hear the story of the angels announcing their forthcoming births and often asked their parents for a storytelling session!

On the recent *Parentalk* course, we learned the importance of creating a sense of belonging with our children through shared memories, laughter and traditions. Family traditions and routines give a sense of security and build strong family identity. Christmas is a great time to introduce treasured traditions from your own childhood or to create new ones, especially if they point towards the birth of Jesus. Examples might include lighting an advent candle at supper every night in December, or reading a nativity storybook together each Christmas Eve. Memories of such traditions may last a lifetime!

John the Baptist was given the job of going ahead of Jesus, helping people to recognize who he was and enabling them to open their hearts and minds to him. Perhaps, as parents, we can help our children to do the same.

Jump for joy! Read the Bible story on page 14 together and think about the similarities and differences between the announcements of the two special births.

Why do you think Zechariah did not believe the angel?

How do you think he told his wife Elizabeth about the baby when he could not speak?

What do you think an angel looks like?

Do you think God can do things that seem impossible to us?

Why do you think God wanted someone to go ahead of Jesus?

The story of my birth: A week after John was born, Elizabeth and Zechariah asked some family and friends round to help name the baby. Their guests wanted to call him Zechariah, after his father, but Elizabeth remembered the angel's words and said his name should be John. Someone brought Zechariah a writing tablet, and much to everyone's surprise, he wrote down, "His name should be John." Suddenly he was able to speak again, and he burst into a wonderful song, explaining that John would go ahead of Jesus, preparing the way for him.

Have a storytelling session in which you tell children any stories about their births. Where were they born? Were they early or late? Who came to visit them? How did you choose their names?



Christmas Angels: Why not decorate your tree together as a family with some carols playing in the background. If you have an angel for the top of the tree, chat about the Angel Gabriel who announced the births of both John and Jesus.

You could make table angels to show everyone in your family where to sit for the Christmas meal. Make a cone out of a coloured circle of card and decorate the base, the hem of the angel's dress. Fold white paper in half for the wings and cut out the head of a spoon shape. Unfold and edge with a gold marker. Glue to

the join at the back of the cone. Draw a heart shape big enough to write the name of a relative on and glue to the front of the angel. Draw round a coin for the angel's head on white card and add a long neck. Cut out and draw and colour a smiling face and some hair. Snip the top of the cone so that you can insert the neck and tape in place. Place on the table so that the angels smile at your guests!



Christmas party

game: Divide into teams. Explain that each team is going to introduce a mystery guest but without saying who they are. Give each team one of the ideas below and

allow them several minutes to work out what each member of the team is going to say about them. The other team must guess who they are speaking about. For example:

Person 1: Our mystery guest is someone who works very hard at this time of year.

Person 2: He is famous for his kindness to children.

Person 3: He dresses in an unusual way.

Person 4: He lives in a very cold part of the world.

Other team: Is it Father Christmas?

Other mystery guests could be: Paddington Bear, A member of the Royal Family, Doctor Who, A well-known Disney character, Jesus.

If children help you to prepare this game for a Christmas party, chat about the way in which John introduced Jesus to the people.



Christmas Eve Crib

Service: Why not make and freeze a fish pie for Christmas Eve so that you have time to come to the Crib Service at 4pm?

The service consists

of a story that will engage the children, during which the characters from the nativity are placed in the crib. Afterwards, come forward and look at the completed scene! This is what Christmas is all about!

Get ready for Christmas! It's a great idea to go through cupboards now and make room for all the extra food/packages etc that will need to be stored. (Link this with the idea of John urging people to get rid of 'rubbish behaviour' – greed, cheating, lies, - in order to be ready for Jesus!) Stock up now on some bulky essentials, (washing powder, dishwasher tablets, etc) that you won't want to lug home with the Christmas shop!

Prayer

Chat about the things that we all do to get ready for Christmas. (For example, shopping, partying, making our Christmas lists.) Now talk about the things that would make God happy. Are they the same?



Dear God,

Thank you for the joy of Christmas. Please help us to get ready for Christmas in a way that would please you. We are sorry for the things we do that make you sad. Please help us to lead better lives and to be ready to welcome you into our hearts this Christmas.

Amen

Vicki Howie

IN CONVERSATION WITH ...SUE STEPHENSON

Linchpin of Otford's community life

As Assistant Clerk to the Parish Council, Sue plays a vital role in the smooth running of the village. Amongst her many duties she is responsible for the production of the monthly Parish Council Newsletter, the organisation of the Tree of Light at Christmas, the stopping of the traffic on Remembrance Sunday and, not least, the seasonal decoration of the village duck house! Beyond her parish council work, Sue is also active in the community, often lending a hand in the village shops and helping out at events such as the church fair and the village fete. She and her partner, Dave, enjoy supporting Otford United and can regularly be found standing on the sidelines in all weathers. Sue told me, 'Everybody knows me' adding, 'I'd help anybody out, whatever'.



Born in 1960 in Reigate, Surrey, Sue was the youngest of three children in a happy family. With two older brothers, she spent much of her childhood playing outdoors and admits to having been 'a bit of a

tomboy'. In games with her siblings she said she was always the one who had to 'play dead' and that her Sindy doll rather suffered. In compensation she was introduced to the delights of Scalextric and Action Man. Sue's father was a painter and decorator and her mother was the Chief Officer's secretary at Surrey Fire Brigade in Reigate.

Sue attended local schools in Reigate before passing her 11 Plus and going to Dorking Grammar School. She told me that she loved sport, especially hockey and netball, and that her favourite subjects were English and Geography. At sixteen, Sue left school with the aim of becoming a police officer. Although she passed the entrance tests, there was a temporary cutback in recruitment and, rather than wait, she took a job as a civilian administration assistant for the Metropolitan Police in London. Her first post was as a correspondence clerk, logging the mail in and out, as well as operating the Gestetner machine. After three years Sue moved to the Intelligence Unit where she ended up as a crime analyst and can still remember her feelings of apprehension when, each week, she would have to do a PowerPoint presentation to the senior officers. She loved her twenty years working for the police and made lifelong friends.

It was through work that Sue met her police sergeant husband, Peter; they married in 1987 and initially lived in Bexley Heath. When Peter had a bout of ill health and took early retirement he



and Sue moved to Otford – a place they knew well from the many walks they had done locally. They settled in Willow Park eventually moving

within the road to a detached house, with a large overgrown garden, in need of complete renovation - a project which they tackled with enthusiasm. With help from Sue's father-in-law they paid off their mortgage, enabling Sue to stop commuting to London and, in 1998, to start part-time work for the parish council. This left her afternoons free to share hobbies with Peter - a period of great happiness. Sadly, after a year, Peter was diagnosed with kidney cancer and, despite a successful operation, the cancer was subsequently found to have spread and Peter died at home in 2002. It was a terrible time for Sue; not only had she lost her husband but her mother, to whom she spoke daily, had died in 2000. She described how lonely she felt and how hard it was to live by herself in the 'lovely' home they had so enjoyed refurbishing. She mentioned Revd. Pat Hopkins' kindness in allowing her to inter Peter's ashes in the Garden of Remembrance and said she began to attend church but preferred to sit alone at the back and not talk to anyone.

An unsettled phase in Sue's life ensued; she sold her house and moved to Shoreham but was haunted by bad dreams about not being able to find her way home. The only thing she relished was the daily walk to work, across the golf course and fields, in all the changing seasons. Although she helped out with the Shoreham Youth Club and did some walks for charity, she was never at peace. Good friends who helped her though this time included Pat Mills and Barbara and Ron Darby.

After six years Sue moved back to Otford where life began to look up. She had friends in the village and would enjoy dropping in for a chat at some of the shops as she went home from work. Otford Florist, Denise, has become a close friend and I understand that Sue is on her way to learning floristry herself! Sue also threw herself into volunteering with Kent Police and

Age UK and, within the Church, has served on the PCC (twice), is on the Fair Committee, helps with Sunday Club and churchyard maintenance and polishes the altar brasses.

A few years ago. Sue met her partner Dave who was the Otford PCSO before Jane Wright. Together they participated in a number of events for local charity such as the Three Peaks Challenge (with Community Warden, Paul) and the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge. Sue then drove the backup car when Dave (with barber Stan) cycled from Sevenoaks to Brighton. She now fully enjoys life once again; she and Dave love watching local football matches, going on walks in winter and heading off on Dave's Harley Davidson in the summer.

Sue has a 'quiet faith' and still prefers to sit at the back of church at the 10am Sunday service – but now she is happy to talk to others and not be left alone!



Christeen Malan

ANCIENT WISDOM - MODERN LIVES

Jump for Joy!

Jesus and his cousin John were hunting for twigs to make a campfire.

"How old are you, John?" asked Jesus. "I'm eight."

"Nine," replied John. "I'm always ahead of you, remember!"

Jesus laughed. "And we both belong to the same family, don't we?"

"That's right. Our mothers are related to one another."

"But your mum - Auntie Elizabeth - she seems much older than mine," said Jesus.

"I know. My parents had me when they quite old. They'd almost given up all hope of having a baby."

"Well, an angel told my mother she was going to have me," said Jesus.

"Snap!" exclaimed John. "Except an angel told my *father* that I was going to be born."

"I know!" said Jesus. "Let's ask our Mums to tell us the family stories around the campfire tonight!"

* * *

Auntie Elizabeth began first. "Well, the angel came to Uncle Zechariah when he was all alone inside the holy temple in Jerusalem. 'Don't be alarmed,' said the angel. 'God knows that you and your wife are longing for a baby. Well, Elizabeth is going to have a baby boy at last! You must name him John.'"

"What else did the angel say?" asked John.

"He said that you would have a very important job to do when you grew up. You would get

everybody ready to welcome a new king. Oh, how we all longed for a good and wise king."

"But Dad didn't believe the angel, did he?" said John.

"Not at first," answered Auntie Elizabeth. "The angel was indignant and told him that he wouldn't be able to speak until after you were born. But sure enough, I soon found out that I was going to have a baby!"

Next, Jesus wanted his mother Mary to tell her story.

"It happened about three months before your cousin John was born," she said. "I looked up and saw an angel. I must have looked very worried, because he told me not to be alarmed."

"Just as he did to Zechariah!" added Elizabeth.

"And then he gave me the most earth-shattering news!" exclaimed Mary. "He told me I was going to have a baby boy who would be a great king. 'How can this happen - I'm not even married to Joseph yet,' I asked.'"

"You were forgetting that nothing is impossible for God!" said Jesus with a smile.

"That's right! The angel explained that the baby would be God's own son and he told me that Elizabeth was going to have a baby too!"

"Is that why you went to visit her?" asked John.

"Exactly. I wanted to share my news with someone who would understand . . ."

". . . and as soon as she arrived, the baby inside me jumped for joy!" said Elizabeth.

"That was me!" said John, grinning. "Make way, everyone, make way for Jesus the King!"

DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWS

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk Cllr.Lowe@sevenoaks.gov.uk
<http://michellelowe.yourcllr.com>



As we commemorated Remembrance Sunday on 12th November and remembered and honoured all those who sacrificed their lives to secure and protect our freedom, I thought I would take this

opportunity to let you know about the Armed Forces Covenant that was signed by both Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council.

The Armed Forces Covenant is the nation's commitment to all those who proudly protect and protected our nation with honour and commitment. It is a pledge that together we understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, together with their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in communities, the economy and society.

In Sevenoaks we have found that sometimes ex-service personnel can find themselves in a housing crisis when returning to civilian life. Our housing needs survey found a total of 252 current or ex-service personnel with a connection to the Sevenoaks District. Our holistic advice service - HERO - offers in-house expertise and has already supported several ex-service personnel to access housing, financial support, employment, training and health services. Armed forces and their families immediately take priority at the top of any of our housing lists. We have produced a housing information pack specifically for services personnel and a leaflet with all public services available to armed forces.

Our current Chairman, Cllr Larry Abraham, is ex-army himself and is the Council's Armed Forces Champion. He launched our information pack on Armed Forces Day this year in Westerham. There is more information on the Council's website at: https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/1004/armed_forces_community_covenant

I know that many people are concerned about the future of the Otford Tower and I want to set the record straight. The Council completed a number of structural works to the Tower and has commissioned an Options Appraisal to see what can be done with the Tower that will include everything from doing nothing to turning it into a visitor centre. We are waiting for the results of that survey but so far no decision has been made about the future of the Tower.

With best wishes,

Michelle

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. PAUL

In the October half-term, a group of us from St Bart's set off on a McCabe Pilgrimage – “a journey to a sacred place with a spiritual intent”. We joined fellow travelers, mainly from local churches, 32 people in all.

Our first port of call was Kavala (formerly Neapolis), where Paul had arrived by boat with his companions Luke, Silas and the young Timothy, after a vision in which a Macedonian man begged for Paul's help. Our hotel looked out over the modern-day harbour where a fleet of fishing boats was dwarfed by a visiting cruise ship.

On our first day, we drove through mountains to a peaceful spot beside a river commemorating the place where it is thought Paul baptized the first Christian in Europe. Lydia was a Gentile businesswoman who sold expensive purple dye. After celebrating the Eucharist, we visited the nearby Baptistery, with its colourful mosaics of Paul's missionary journeys.

At the large archeological site of Philippi, we imagined Paul and Silas being dragged before magistrates, accused of causing riots by telling lies about the Greek and Roman Gods whose temples once flashed in the sunshine on the acropolis hill high above the city. They were imprisoned here, until an earthquake caused the cell doors to spring open.

Like Paul and Silas, our next stop was Thessaloniki, now a sprawling city, with snow-capped Olympus rising beyond. We visited two churches here, richly decorated with icons, mosaics and carved waving acanthus leaves atop pillars. Preparations were in full swing for the Feast day of St Demetrius.

With trouble brewing once again for Paul, Silas and Timothy, they walked the forty miles west to Berea (now Veria), and we stayed a night in this town on the slopes of a mountain. Here, the Bereans listened intently to Paul's teaching and

carefully checked everything that he said against the Scriptures. It was good to hear this passage read beside a commanding statue of St Paul and another mosaic depicting the scene.

Visiting these places brought the Bible's stories alive for me, and the companionship of the group mirrored that between Paul and his fellow missionaries.

Vicki Howie

Due to violent opposition, Paul had to leave Berea in a hurry. Some members of the newly-founded church escorted him to the coast and then sailed with him all the way to Athens. For our part, we travelled inland on our journey south. In the mountainous interior we visited a nunnery set high on a hillside. It has been built on the site of an ancient monastery and now has a community of over 20 nuns drawn from around the world. One of them was English and she gave us a very good introduction to Greek Orthodox spirituality and life in a nunnery.

From there we travelled to an amazing collection of medieval monasteries at Meteora, perched high on limestone pinnacles that have been largely inaccessible over the centuries.



Vicki and Douglas with one of the Meteora monasteries in the background

Journeying via Delphi, home of the famous Oracle of Apollo in ancient times, we reached Athens. It was here that Paul dared to preach to the philosophers of the day about the “Unknown God” revealed through the ministry of Jesus. Amazingly, Paul’s message about an obscure Galilean carpenter’s son, crucified in the distant Roman province of Palestine, carried with it such power through the proclamation of the resurrection that it gained ground in the heart of the classical Greek and Roman civilisation such that now the temples to these other gods lie in ruins, but the message of the Gospel transformed the whole of Western society and beyond.

We visited the Areopagus where Paul engaged in this debate, and also the Acropolis which dominates the Athenian skyline with the world-famous Parthenon.

From Athens Paul travelled to Corinth. He lived here for 1 ½ years before returning to Jerusalem and then Antioch. We visited Corinth on the last day of our pilgrimage. I found it very poignant to celebrate the Eucharist in the place where Paul himself had given clear instructions in his letters to the congregation about how to conduct a communion service with dignity and openness to the work of the Spirit.



Richard and Donna with the Parthenon in the background

The pilgrimage really helped me to appreciate at a much deeper level the person of Paul and his ministry. Now, whenever I read the accounts of his journeys in the Book of Acts and his letters to the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth, I can picture the context so much more clearly. Paul’s incredible perseverance, bravery and determination in proclaiming the Gospel, together with the teamwork he shared with his colleagues, continue to resonate across the ages.

Richard Worssam

*The St. Bart’s Group
at Corinth*



OUT AND ABOUT



GIRLGUIDING OTFORD'S CHRISTMAS POST 2017

Stamps for Girlguiding Otford's Christmas Post Service go on sale on 28th November 2017 for the 35th year running and will be available until Tuesday 19th December.

The special charity post service, which is one of the longest running in the country, delivers Christmas cards with the scheme's special stamps to addresses in Otford village. Stamps cost 25p and are available to purchase in Otford library during normal opening hours or in the Parish Council office every weekday morning. Christmas cards can be posted in the special post boxes located in the same places. Otford's Brownies and Guides will collect, sort, frank and then deliver the cards over the two weekends before Christmas.

This year the money raised from the sale of the stamps will be divided between Dreamflight, a charity taking seriously ill or disabled children on holidays of a lifetime, and Kent Wildlife Trust.

Please support them by purchasing the special stamps and posting your cards early. Thank you.

Library opening hours – Monday 9am – 1pm, Tuesday 9am – 5pm, Wednesday Closed, Thursday 9am – 1pm, Friday 1pm – 5pm, Saturday 10am – 2pm

Parish Council opening hours – Monday to Friday 8am – 12:30pm



OTFORD EVENING WI

At our next meeting on the 14th of December at 7.00 for 7.30pm. in the Club Room of the Memorial Hall we are looking forward to 'A Good Laugh' with our speaker, Marianne Martin, who will get us into the Christmas spirit (together with our refreshments and a drop of something!).



OTFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL PTFA CHRISTMAS BAZAAR will take place on Saturday 2nd December 2017 from 12pm to 3pm.

There will be lots of fun things to enjoy including an outdoor Christmas market, a Winter Wonderland Grotto, festive mulled wine and hot chocolate as well as other light refreshments, face painting, silent auction, a raffle and lots of fun games for the children to play.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Otford Primary School PTFA



KEMSING SINGERS A reminder to readers that we are performing our popular annual Christmas Concert on the nights of Friday

15th and Saturday 16th December in St Edith's Hall, Kemsing at 7.30pm. It will include Christmas songs and carols, some new and some well known, and the audience will have the opportunity to join in carols. An evening not to be missed which will help to put you in the Christmas spirit.

Tickets still at £8 per head, children free of charge. Available from the Box Office 01959 523752 or from any singing member.

DECEMBER PUZZLE

Silent Night

This much-loved carol comes from Austria, where it was first sung as *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht* on Christmas Eve, 1818. It was written by Father Joseph Mohr, a young priest at St Nicholas parish church, in the village of Oberndorf bei Salzburg. As Christmas 1818 approached, he asked the local schoolmaster, Franz Xaver Gruber,

to compose a melody for his carol. Gruber was organist in the nearby village of Arnsdorf, and so was happy to oblige. On Christmas Eve they presented the carol to the church during the midnight mass. The carol went on to become loved world-wide; and the version sung by Bing Crosby is the third best-selling single of all time.



Silent
Night
Loved
Carol
Austria
First
Sung
Stille

Nacht
Heilige
Christmas
Eve
Father
Joseph
Mohr
Young

Priest
Organist
Midnight
Mass
Melody
Single
Bing
Version
Third

QUICK CANAPES!

Although supermarket party food can be very useful, it's nice to have some homemade canapes. However, I don't like spending hours on making them, so these are some suggestions for simple canapes that taste lovely and can be made in moments when you are expecting guests for drinks over the Christmas period.

Hilary Fothergill

From left to right in the picture:

1. Chicken liver pate and sliced dill cucumber (or any sort of gherkin/cornichon) on melba toast.
2. Process 100 gm of cream cheese, 100 gm smoked salmon and 1 heaped teaspoon of dill mustard and spread on warmed blinis.
3. I make pastry cases in mini muffin tins for these, but ready made croustades would be fine. Fill with very finely chopped egg mayonnaise and then top with mushrooms which have been reduced to breadcrumb size in a food processor and sweated down in butter.
4. Top slices of rye bread with cream cheese and smoked salmon and cut into bite size pieces.
5. Roll slices of Italian salami around small fingers of Brie.
6. Make prawn cocktail sauce with two tablespoons of mayonnaise, one tablespoon of cream and one dessert spoon of tomato ketchup, stir in prawns and put into small Little Gem lettuce leaves.



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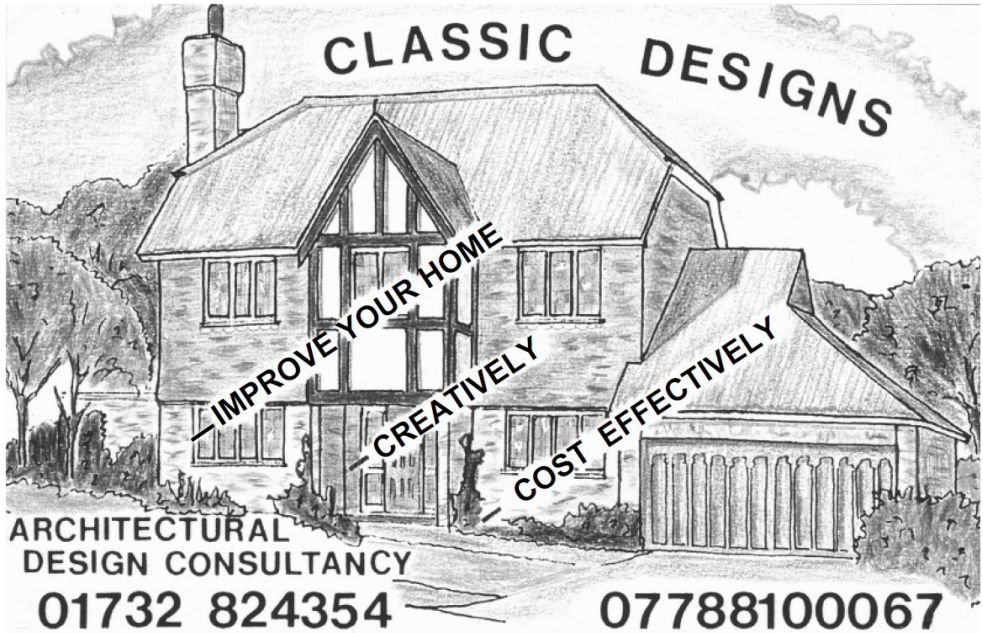
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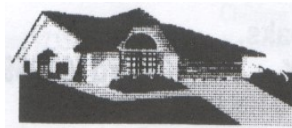
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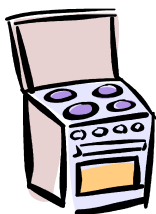
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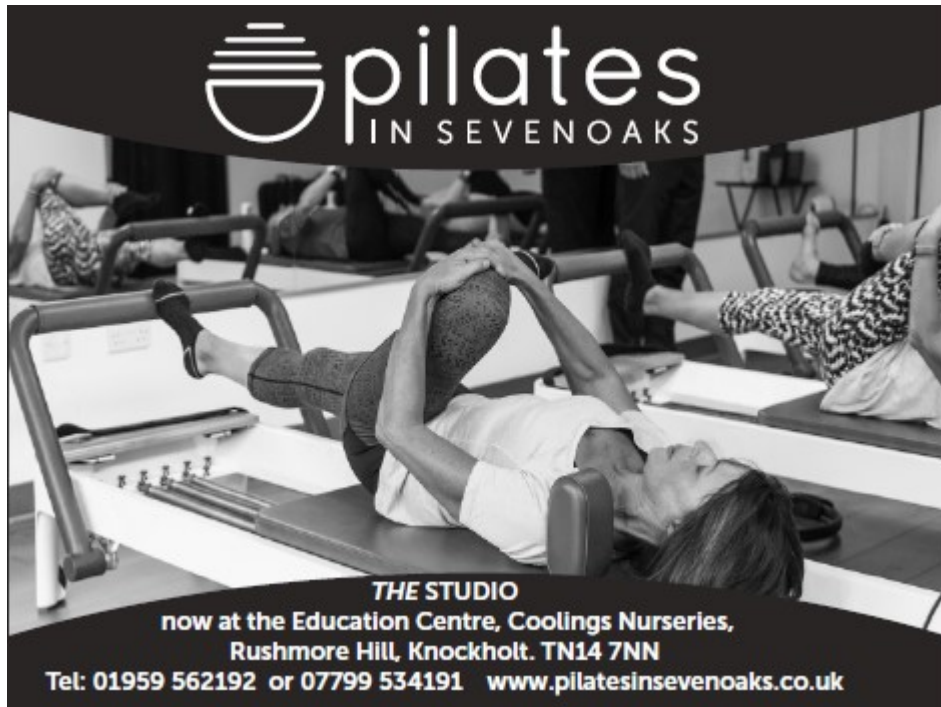
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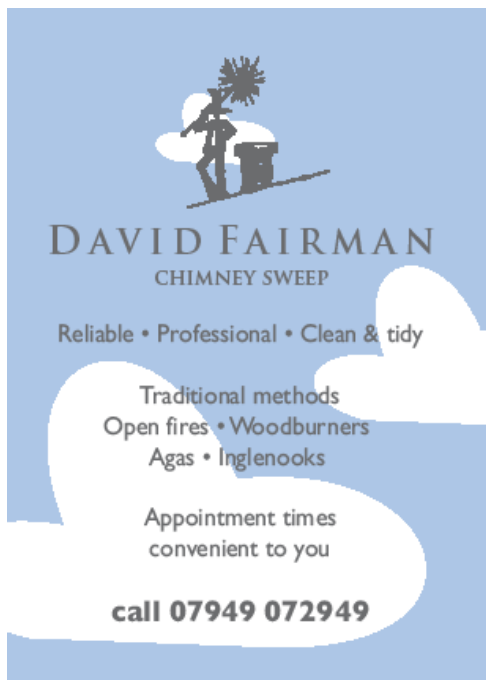
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The advertisement features a tall, ornate antique clock. The text is arranged in a structured layout, highlighting the business's specialization in antique timepieces and its membership in the British Watch and Clockmakers Guild.



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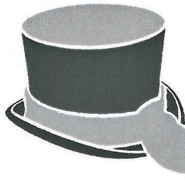
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Freewill Offering Sec: Mervyn Harris 01959 522813
Hon. Sec: Joan Beacom 01959 524304

PARISH OFFICE

Monday to Friday 10.00am-12.00pm:
Susan Reid, Clive Southgate
01959 523185
Email: st.bartholomews@otford.net

CHURCH HALL

Manager and Booking Sec: Robert Hunt 01959 523820

MAGAZINE

Editorial team: 01959 523185
Vicki Howie, Christeen Malan,
Clive Southgate, Richard Worssam
Advertisements: Deborah Vigis 01959 523331
st.bartholomews@otford.net

CHOIR

Choirmaster: Kevin Grafton 01732 452117
Practice night: Friday 8.00-9.30pm New members
always welcome

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

'First Steps' (for parents/carers with pre-school children)
Contact: Najen Harris 01959 522813

SUNDAY CLUB (Sundays at 10.00am)

Infants (3-7s)
Juniors (8-11s)
Seniors (12-14)
For all groups contact Donna Worssam 01959 523185

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FELLOWSHIP

Contact: Dawn Hallam 01959 526865

OUTREACH

Chairman of Mission Links:
Andrew Hill 01732 469538

BELLRINGERS

The Tower Captain: Bobbie Fairclough 01959 522696
Secretary: Janet Whitehead 01959 524088
Practice night: Thursday 7.45-9.15pm

CHURCH COUNCIL

The Vicar and the Churchwardens Margaret Lidbetter* and Russell Edwards, Samantha Barnett, Joan Beacom, Cindy Davies, Colin Deane,, Phil Gardner, Dawn Hallam, Andrew Hill, Mark Holmes*, Janet Hunt, Mike Jones, Nick Page, Derek Shilling#, Mags Southgate, Mark Tierney,

Ex-Officio (Diocesan Synod) * Ex-Officio (Deanery Synod)