

St Mary's Monthly Message

December 2023



A Note From David

BY THE RECTOR

Dear Church Family,

Christmas is coming and I'd like to share with you a story about a little girl named Jean Grace. One afternoon this little girl found herself standing outside an antique shop and looking at all the jewellery displayed in the window. After a short while, she went into the shop and asked to see one of the necklaces more closely. When the owner of the shop put it onto the counter, she said: "That's perfect. Will you gift wrap it for me please? They are for my sister, who looks after me, and this will be the first Christmas since our Mum died, so I wanted to give her something special". The owner then asked cautiously: "Can I ask how much money you have?" The girl emptied a whole load of coins and some notes from a jar and told him that this was all she had, and she wanted to spend it on her sister. The jeweller then picked up the necklace in such a way that the price tag was only visible to himself and not to the girl and asked what her name was, before he walked into the back room. He then returned with the beautifully wrapped gift and the girl thanked him and left excitedly.

On Christmas Eve, after the last customer had left and the man was about to lock up, a young woman rushed into the shop holding a familiar package. "Do you remember who you sold this to?" she asked. "A girl named Jean bought them for her big sister" he replied. "But how much did they cost?" she asked. "Ah, the price, I'm afraid, is always confidential between the seller and his customer" he replied. "But how could she afford them?" the sister persisted, to which the jeweller replied: "She paid the biggest price anyone could pay. She gave everything she had". As we look forward to Christmas, may we keep in mind that when God the Father sent his only Son to be our Saviour, bringing good news of great joy, our Heavenly Father gave everything he had. Jesus is the greatest gift of all time for all people! Have a great Christmas!

Every blessing, David

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*Alex Rees on faith
and ministry*

In Other News...

Dates for your Diary

*Prayers for this
month*

Alex Rees on his journey into Ministry

Alex Rees lives in Risborough with his wife, Rohini and their son, Caleb. They have been part of St Mary's community for just over 10 years having moved from Essex to take up teaching positions in Buckinghamshire. Alex is currently in his final year training with Oxford Diocese to be a Licensed Lay Minister.

Q. What exactly is a Licensed Lay Minister?

A. It is a way for the Church of England to enable those who feel called into ministry to serve God and the Church without necessarily going into ordained ministry. Three years of theological training is meant to reassure the Bishop that you know some useful things and you are then licensed to be part of the church's ministry team. Averil and Tony are already serving as LLM's in our parish.

Q. What has been your faith journey to get to this point?

A. I have both a very formal and informal church background. I was a choir boy when I was in primary school, and every time we sang for the morning service those leading the communion would pray for each of us at the altar rail. In those times kneeling before the altar I became very aware of God's presence such that I began really looking forward to that weekly blessing. As a teenager I went to a New Frontiers church (which had guitars and drums) with my older sister and her friends. That brought with it Bible weeks, youth camps and the excitement of realising I could serve God with my life. As an adult running youth groups, playing in worship bands and even teaching year 9 last thing on a Friday have all been expressions of this in different seasons of my life.

Q. What does being a Christian mean to you today?

A. It is interesting to reflect that my experience of being a follower of Jesus has changed over the years. At times being a Christian has been exciting and empowering, at others it has been about being still and reflective. God has been there in the good times and bad. Sometimes the Holy Spirit's presence is so tangible I feel no desire to do anything other than rest in that time and space. At other times my faith is not emotional at all, but I have discovered a steadiness in engaging in the rhythms of grace; the things we do every day to be open to God and his leading.

Q. What makes Christianity worth it?

A. In today's world it is so easy to imagine Christianity is one worldview among many to be chosen like a product from a shelf. Through Jesus' life and death God offers us grace, forgiveness and unconditional love; the opportunity to be adopted into family, to belong, to be called a child of God. This worldview is not a weekend club to join, I have discovered over many years that being in relationship with God is simply how life is meant to be.



Alex Rees

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20



Alex Rees with Rohini and Caleb

In other news...

Princes Risborough **Tree of Light**, Sun 3 Dec, 4pm. Supporting Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care and Rotary Charities. Remember a loved one and dedicate a Light on the Tree. The tree is situated in the gardens at the corner of New Road and Duke Street. There will be a short talk and prayers by Revd David Williams and a choir will lead the singing. All welcome. Dedication forms available from the Library or Rennie Grove or download from <http://www.rcpr.org.uk>

Churches Together Advent Service, Dec 3, 6pm Please join us for an Ecumenical Advent Service at St Teresa's Church with members of Churches Together in Risborough. The service will include hymns, prayers, readings and reflections on the season of Advent. Refreshments to follow.

Our next **Alpha Course** will run for 11 weeks, starting on Tuesday 16th January. It's a chance to discuss life and the Christian faith in an informal, fun and friendly way. It is a course for anyone, whether you are exploring questions about the Christian faith, or you are already a Christian, but want to learn more. If you are interested, or have any questions please email curate@stmarysrisborough.org.uk. Show your love for a friend and bring them along!

Don't forget you can still donate to **One Can** in the wheelie bin by the Chapter House door. Only items with a long use-by date, please.

Lighthouse is a children's holiday club which provides a week of fun, faith, crafts, games, singing, drama, and sport Over 300 children and over 100 volunteers are involved each year. The dates for 2024 are Monday 29th July to Friday 2nd August. For more information check out the Lighthouse website: <http://www.lighthousecentral.org/lighthouses/princes-risborough>

The next **Tea for All** will be on Sunday 28th January.

Good Neighbours is a Risborough based charity that provides transport to medical appointments for people unable to drive themselves or to use public transport. There is team of coordinators and drivers (who receive compensation for their mileage and parking costs) and **they urgently need to recruit more volunteers**. If you can spare a few hours once a fortnight please contact Good Neighbours on 01844 342600 or text 07751 592337.

Could you **host a couple who will soon be coming from Ukraine**, for a couple of months? Their daughter (already here) is looking to rent an apartment for all of them, but they need a stop gap until that is set up. Contact details: Pauline Aries on 07718 135055 or paulinearies@btinternet.com

Save the date



ST ANDREWS LITERATURE FESTIVAL 20+ Authors
21-22 June 2024
Great Missenden



Tree of Light



Churches Together Advent Service



Good Neighbours volunteers needed



One Can Trust



Hosts for Ukrainian refugees

Sign up for our weekly e-news by going to the homepage on our website. Receive all the news from St Mary's direct to your phone!

Dates for your Diary

Jinglers Nativity 1.00pm, 8 December

Christingle service for all the family 4:00 pm, 10 December

Monthly Lunch Club: Wednesday, 13 December 10:00am to 3:00pm.

Bereavement Drop-in: 3:00pm 11 December in the Chapter House.

Carols by Candlelight 6pm Sunday 17 December

Contemporary Carol Service 7:30pm, 20 December

Carol singing in the streets of Risborough 6:00pm, 21 December

Christmas Eve Crib Service 3:00pm 24 December

Christmas Eve Midnight Holy Communion 11:30pm 24 December

Youth Alpha: every Tuesday from 7.30pm to 9pm in the Cafe, Elim Church.

Play Cafe: every Tuesday during term time from 9.30am to 11am in church.

Services at St Mary's and St Peter's

Christmas Day Services: 8:00 am Said Holy Communion; 9:00 am Christmas Day service of Holy Communion at St Peter's, Ilmer; 10:00 am Christmas Day Family Celebration Service

Holy Communion at 8am (*said*)

Parish Communion at 9.30 on Sundays in church and live streamed to your home. See the St Mary's website for the link to our YouTube channel.

Live@St Mary's all age service at 11.15 in church. Kid's Church welcomes children to join them for activities during this service - contact the Parish Office for further info on sessions.

Mid week Holy Communion is on Wednesdays at 10.30 followed by coffee.

Carols by Candlelight St Peter's Church, Ilmer, 17 December 6.00pm

For your Prayers this month

A Prayer for those in Ministry

We pray for the leaders in our churches and ministries, that they would look to you alone to guide and direct their paths. Give them the wisdom of heaven, which is pure, peace-loving, considerate, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere.

Amen

A Prayer for Peace

In a world where worry, not peace, prevails, stir up that good news again.

This Christmas, make it real in our hearts. Never have we needed Your joy and peace more than now. Thank

You for the gift of Jesus, our Immanuel, the Word made flesh.

Amen.

We remember these families in our prayers following the deaths of Zofia Leinweber, Arthur Tinsley, Raymond Lunnon, John Powers, Lesley Gilman, Terry Clark, Timothy Edwards and Doris Green.

We uphold in prayer: David Coleman, Malcolm Cloutt, the Rolfe family, the Drewett family, Elaine Needham's granddaughter Emma, Jenny Ogilvie and Joyce Finlay and all those bereaved, suffering ill health or facing operations.

Please remember Jacob Penney in your prayers following his Thanksgiving Service in November.

Please pray for:

- all those suffering as a result of conflict in the world
- all those in our parish who face hardship this Christmas
- children and families who will not be able to celebrate Christmas together.

Copies of this newsletter are available in Church for you to collect and pass on to friends and neighbours.



Join our weekly prayer meeting on Zoom every Wednesday at 9am - Zoom invite available from the Parish Office .

We encourage everyone to pray for one another. Ask the Parish Office if you would like to receive details of prayer requests.

Prayers for Ukraine: are held weekly on zoom - Fridays @ 9.00am.

Zoom Link - Meeting ID:

714 5146 5358

Passcode:262GY9

*Contact the Parish Office
parishoffice@stmarys
risborough.org.uk*

*Telephone: 01844
273300*