

THE Parishioner

Maries song.

S.Luke.

Zacharias song.

from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to mee great things, and holy is his Name.

50 And his mercy is on them that feare him, from generation to generation.

*Egy 31.9.
*Psal. 33.
10.

51 * Hee hath shewed strength with his arme, * he hath scattered the proud, in the imagination of their hearts.

52 * He hath put down the mighty from their seats,

68 Blessed bee the Lord God of Israel, for hee hath visited and redeemed his people,

69 * And hath raised by an arme of saluation for vs, in the house of his seruant Dauid,

*Psal. 132.
18.

70 * As he spake by the mouth of his holy Prophets, which haue bene since the world began :

* Iere. 23. 5
and 30. 9.

71 That wee should be saued from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate vs.



34 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and hee spake, and praised God.

|| Or, things.

65 And feare came on all that dwelt round about them, and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Iudea.

66 And all they that had heard them, layde them by in their hearts, saying,

purified: 20 Since we haue heard prophesie of Christ: 40 who increaseth in wisdom, 46 questioneth in the Temple with the doctors, 51 and is obedient to his parents.

AD it came to passe in those dayes, that there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

|| Or, iornal led.

St Mary's Church Ash Vale



roots down, walls down

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Parish Office Mobile: 9am-5pm

07863 311165

Sunday Morning 10am Services: On Zoom & in Person!

You are welcome to Zoom in to the Sunday Morning service at 10am; simply email the Parish Administrator to receive the link, or find us on Facebook @StMarysAshVale.

After lockdown you will also be able to attend in person, with extra measures to keep everyone safe. **On arrival please sign in or scan the QR code on your NHS app, use hand sanitiser, pop on your mask and go directly to your seat and remain seated.** We must not mingle, so as to protect all those attending. (Please stay away and use zoom if you have covid-19 symptoms). **We look forward to welcoming you.**

Evensong Wednesdays 8pm

You can Zoom in to Evensong on Wednesday Nights at 8pm. Email the Parish Administrator to join our mailing list and receive the link, or find us on Facebook @StMarysAshVale. Keep in touch as arrangements evolve!

Messy Church Events :



**Sun 6th Dec St Nicholas day
Lantern Walk. Booking
essential please text Alex on
07730 609446**

St Mary's Community Centre

- Large hall & kitchen
- Small hall & sink
- Wheelchair accessible toilet

Bookings: Please contact the Parish Administrator for news. We are following emerging Government and CofE guidance.

Ash Vale Chapel, Wharf Rd

(Joint project with H-SB Methodist Circuit)

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Plus... we are hugely grateful to a small army of willing volunteers who contribute, collate, publish, email, print, bundle and deliver The Parishioner to all our readers in Ash Vale and beyond!

The Covid that stole Christmas?

A letter from Revd. Neil Lambert

Have you noticed? Whenever you turn on the television or radio lately, without a doubt you will hear someone talking about ‘Christmas is cancelled’, ‘Covid stole Christmas’, ‘Christmas is on hold’ or even coming up with 101 ways to ‘save Christmas’. The media is fixated on the issue. However, it seems to me that the real damage being done to “Christmas” in 2020 is to that commercial ideal of Christmas ‘with all the trimmings’. The culture of excess, over consumption, endless novelty and waste is being challenged this year. Faced with financial uncertainty many of us are reflecting on what the ‘real’ meaning of Christmas is, and it is about Christmas that is really important.

Well, the good news is that the real Christmas doesn’t need saving – in fact, its here to save us! The birth of our saviour Jesus Christ is a gift from God and cannot be taken away. Every Sunday throughout the year at St Mary’s we remember that God came to be among his people, in order to save us. He came in the form of a man - Jesus Christ - to show us the way. God has not abandoned his people. That baby in the manger, the same saviour who died on a cross for us and was raised from the dead, is more than capable of visiting us in a pandemic. No virus, no government regulations, no gates, shields, doors or barriers can come between us and Him.

The truth is, that the first Christmas was far from jolly. It came at one of the worst times in history for God’s people. They were occupied by a foreign force, suffering under corrupt government and looking for a saviour to bring justice and peace. The amazing thing is that God appeared, as a baby, and the first people to hear about it from the angel host were not the kings and leaders of the day, but instead a bunch of poor shepherds out in the fields watching their flock. God sent an angel choir to some of the poorest, humblest people in the community, and told them the good news before anyone else. Speaking of humble, the other central figures in the story of Jesus’s birth were similarly low in the social pecking order. Mary the mother of Jesus was a young girl, not yet married when the angel appeared to her to tell her she had been chosen to bear God’s son. Her response to the news though is pure joy, and the Magnificat, her joyful song, is one of the most beautiful passages in the whole of scripture.

Luke 1:46-56 Mary’s Song (New International Version)

And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed,⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost

thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors.”



Paintings by Sandro Botticelli “Mystical Christmas” and “Madonna Magnificat”

Two Paintings that I love by Botticelli. The first shows the Angels singing and dancing around the baby Jesus and his mum Mary. I particularly like the angels on the roof dressed in white red and green symbolising Grace, Truth and Justice in juxtaposition with the two devils hiding under the rocks at the bottom. In the next painting called “Madonna Magnificat” we Picture Mary writing her song of Praise helped by the angels in attendance while baby Jesus sits on her lap holding a Pomegranate a symbol of eternal life. Notice how beautifully Botticelli paints the hands that move along the bottom of this masterpiece.

We may not be able to do all the usual things we would normally do this Christmas, but in our households and bubbles we can celebrate God, who is unlimited and all powerful. One of His many gifts to us is our creativity and this year we all have the opportunity to be creative. We can send messages of love and hope to our loved ones in so many ways now using the internet, phones and cards. We can't gather for a big Christingle service but we can bring joy to one another by singing carols outside, sharing what we have, and ringing bells on our doorsteps at 6pm on Christmas eve as an act of solidarity, love and hope. Even if you haven't got a bell, shake your keys, ring the doorbell, or make a joyful noise in whatever way you choose. Let's join with the angel song and celebrate what really matters.

*“All Glory be to God on high , And to the earth be peace;
goodwill henceforth from heav'n to men begin and never cease.”*

***Wishing you every blessing this Christmas
Neil***

No, it's not cancelled...



Christingle

is coming to you!

24th December 2020 4:30pm-6:00pm
In the streets of Ash Vale, doorsteps & Zoom

Join us on Zoom for a virtual Christingle, or join our roving carol singers to bring some Christmas cheer to our neighbours too! At 6pm we will finish off with bell ringing on our doorsteps to wish the whole community a blessed and peaceful Christmas. We will be collecting donations in aid of the Children's Society online: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>

If you'd like the zoom link and a Christingle Kit to make at home, or are interested in joining with the carol singing groups outside please get in touch asap on 07730 609446 or email parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk or on facebook [@StMarysAshVale](https://www.facebook.com/StMarysAshVale)

Please note—we will be following the covid rules, so the carols will be in households, bubbles or small groups according to the laws on the day.



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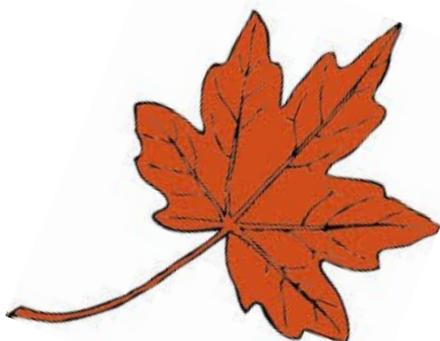
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Make a Difference this Christmas

By Alex Sanderson

With the whole world groaning under the strain of coronavirus , on top of climate change and other issues, it feels right to make every penny of our Christmas spending really count this year. Here are some ideas!



Buy local—it goes without saying, our lovely local shops and entrepreneurs need us more than ever this year! The big chains have big reserves, small businesses do not. So when you're browsing, please start with local shops and local online sellers first. Give a voucher, buy a gift, book a treatment... supporting them now means they will still be here in 2021, what a splendid gift!



Donate for Christmas Hampers—Our local Covid Support group are partnering with St Mary's doing food parcels, and this Christmas they will also be delivering hampers to local people in need. Keep an eye out for the special offers and see what you can donate! Donations needed by Sunday 13th Dec please. You can also donate online via give a little. Thank you <https://givealittle.co/campaigns/7a47190c-ad4e-4cf9-8662-da844101a41c>



Give a Christmas Tree in Uganda!

St Mary's works closely with the charity Amaha We Uganda, supporting our brothers and sisters there to sow seeds of hope, helping people to lift themselves out of poverty.

One of the big problems lately has been soil erosion. It has wiped out crops, destroyed homes and obliterated livelihoods. Re-forestation is crucial and so the AWU team are very busy setting up tree nurseries! Did you sponsor a tree last year—it's now growing in Uganda! Please support this amazing work and why not 'buy a tree' in Uganda for a loved one as a present? We will send you a Gift Certificate by email that you can personalise and email (or print and post) to give to your loved ones. Donate online and simply email alex@amahaweuganda with your donation reference for your certificate.



<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/displayCharityCampaignPage.action?campaignId=10240&charityId=1016542>

Awards, Footprints & Eco Resolutions

By Lesley Murphy

We were recently delighted to learn that St. Mary's church has been confirmed as a Bronze Award winner under the A Rocha Eco Church scheme. This is a Christian charity with a remit to mobilise Christians and Churches to care for the environment. <https://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk/>



Looking forward to 2021, there are positive things that could be done to improve our eco-credentials still further, and potentially to earn a Silver Award. Here are a few ideas that we would encourage everyone at Church and the wider community in Ash Vale to consider:

- When Covid restrictions are finally lifted and services in Church resume (yes it will happen one day!), why not try walking, cycling or car sharing to get to Church?
- Consider how you could reduce waste by making small changes to your lifestyle in line with the principles of “reduce”, “re-use” and “recycle”.
- Take the time to check the source of items in your shopping trolley and commit to increase your use of Fairtrade & ethically sourced goods.
- If you are thinking of replacing your car next year, have a look at the new options for cleaner electric or hybrid vehicles.
- Calculate your personal/household carbon footprint using one of the available online tools (e.g. www.carbonfootprint.com).
- Commit to offset your own carbon footprint by making a donation to one of many environmental projects, such as the tree nurseries being set up by Amaha We Uganda (www.amahaweuganda.org).

The national Church has a target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. St. Mary's carbon footprint has recently been calculated and a baseline has been set for 2018 which was 22.66 tCO₂. Of this, 16.94 tCO₂ is attributable to gas and electricity usage, based on actual meter readings. The remainder is due to a range of factors including car use by people attending church services, food served in church and use of paper, etc. These contributions are hard to capture precisely but have been estimated using information from St. Mary's Annual Report. As some improvements were made to the heating system at the end of 2018, and 2019 was a warm year, encouragingly, we have seen an improvement. 2019 has been calculated at 18.02 tCO₂, of which 11.46 tCO₂ is attributable to gas and electricity use.

I was recently asked how many trees would need to be planted to offset our carbon footprint. Not knowing the answer, I reckoned a quick online search would yield the required information but as is often the case, it proved to be a little more complicated. First, I discovered the amount of CO₂ absorbed by a tree depends on multiple factors such as species, climate, rainfall and elevation, and secondly opinions vary on the number of years that should be used in calculations. After reviewing several references I am assuming 8kg/year for a “typical” tree over 20 years, one tree will offset 160kg of CO₂, and six trees will offset 1 tonne (tCO₂). For St. Mary's church, this gives a target of 108 trees to offset our 2019 carbon footprint.

Let's work together on this on our journey towards a Carbon Neutral future.

Thought for the day

A beautiful passage that was shared in church recently—we hope you enjoy it!

Do send us your favourites, or why not write your own?

Sometimes I just want it to stop. Talk of COVID, protests, looting, brutality. I lose my way. I become convinced that this “new normal” is real life. Then I meet an 87-year-old who talks of living through polio, diphtheria, Vietnam protests and yet is still enchanted with life. He seemed surprised when I said that 2020 must be especially challenging for him. “No,” he said slowly, looking me straight in the eyes. “I learned a long time ago to not see the world through the printed headlines, I see the world through the people that surround me. I see the world with the realization that we love big. Therefore, I just choose to write my own headlines. “Husband loves wife today.” “Family drops everything to come to Grandma’s bedside.” He patted my hand. “Old man makes new friend.”

Unknown Author

Word Porn

News from Ash Citizens Advice

By Sandra Luff



I live with my two children and partner in a small semi-detached house. During the winter we use more heating and electricity as we're home more. Do you have any tips on how I can keep the cost of my energy down during the winter?

There are a few things you can do to save some money during the winter period. Check when your energy contract is due to expire. If you're at the end of your contract use energy compare by Citizens Advice to see if you could save money by switching supplier or tariff.

If you're on a prepayment meter you could save money by replacing your meter with one that lets you pay after using energy rather than in advance. Most suppliers won't charge for removing a prepayment meter, though many will run a credit check or ask for a deposit.

You may also be eligible for certain grants and benefits these could include Warm Home discount or help with energy debt.

Here are a few practical tips to help keep costs down:

- Using a timer for your heating, lowering your thermostat and using radiator valve controls could save you over £100 per year
- Changing light bulbs to more efficient ones could save £50 over the lifetime of the bulb
- Turn appliances off standby mode to save around £30 a year
- Seal cracks in floors, skirting boards and add draft excluders to letterboxes, doors and windows.
- Some energy suppliers also offer grants to allow improvements to your home, like insulation or a new boiler. What help you can get depends on your circumstances and what would help your home. You don't need to be a customer of one of these suppliers to apply but you'll need to check your eligibility. If you would like help with any of the issues above, please contact Ash Citizens Advice on 01252 315569.

Citizens Advice Ash is an independent local charity. We depend on local funding from local authorities, local charitable trusts, local businesses and private donations. Our highly trained volunteers, who give their free time to help local people, are currently working from home providing free independent telephone and email advice service. We have recent funding from the CO-OP to help us continue to provide this service post the pandemic, helping us to return to face to face services in a safe and secure environment. If you would like to support us you can do this by going to the CO-OP website and becoming a CO-OP member <https://www.coop.co.uk/membership?>

Citizens Advice Ash is open Monday to Thursday 9.30 am to 4 pm for telephone advice (01252 315569). Email advice is available via our website: www.ashcab.org.uk.

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Activity Advent

Lorraine Faires shares 24 Ideas to prepare you for Christmas 2020

I am sure everyone is bored of hearing how this year is a little different- so instead I am going to focus on our family traditions which stay the same year on year. Instead of a chocolate calendar we have an activity advent – 24 different activities to prepare for our Christmas celebration. Why not join in with ours or make your own?

1. Start a reverse advent calendar. Items for the food bank are a popular one, or you could write a happy thought down each day and “open” them on Christmas morning.
2. Try a Christmas Zumba workout!
3. Make an Origami ornament- share your best effort on our facebook page!
4. Find out about Christmas in another country- why not adopt a new tradition?
5. Make a decoration (We love using salt dough, but snowman toilet rolls or paper snowflakes are also great)
6. Join the St Nicholas Day Lantern Walk (see What’s On page for details)
7. Have a festive indoor picnic
8. Support a local business- if you aren’t buying this year, try sharing on social media or recommending to a friend!
9. Write a letter- to Father Christmas, a friend or a neighbour (everyone loves getting a hand written letter!) Let them know you are thinking of them, even if you can’t visit
10. Enjoy a mince pie or festive bake (make your own if you can)
11. Today is Save the Children’s Christmas Jumper Day- join in with your best festive outfit!
12. Make a wreath or garland (upcycle your old decorations)
13. Join in with the Christmas Hamper Zoom service (see opposite for details)
14. Make and send a Christmas card to someone who would appreciate it
15. Take a day off from the news and read a Christmassy story
16. Indulge in Christmas tunes and sing along as loud as you can!
17. Make and enjoy some Santa Bread
18. Take a walk around Ash Vale to see all the lights
19. Make a nativity scene from recycling material
20. Zoom in to Carols by Candlelight (see What’s On page)
21. Have a festive hot chocolate (We enjoy adding gingerbread men!)
22. Prepare a Christmas Eve Box- you don’t need to buy new- choose your best PJ’s, a nice bedtime story or film and maybe even a game to play. Add a yummy biscuit or two – it is Christmas!
23. Enjoy a Christmas movie
24. Join in with Christingle for the Children’s Society (see What’s On page for details)

Have a really lovely Christmas and enjoy making some special memories and new traditions this year!



What's on? Your regular events at a glance:

Sunday services 10am: Weekly church service (in person or on Zoom) at St Mary's. Email parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk for the link or text 07730609446 (zoom only during lockdown)

Monday Coffee Zoom 11am: Join the #ChapelKids and #LittleLambsLibrary parents & carers for a coffee chat online via zoom. No agenda just a chance to chat, offload, and share a laugh. Text Alex for the link 07730 609446 All welcome.

Wednesday Toddlers 11:30am: #ChapelKids & #LittleLambsLibrary are getting together outdoors (with social distancing) weather permitting, and on zoom if wet. You can also join our Facebook Messenger chat to keep in touch and find others to meet up with. Contact Alex on 07730 609446 for details (zoom only during lockdown).

Wednesday Evensong 8pm on Zoom, contact parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk for details and zoom links.

Wednesday Chapel Craft 8pm-10pm at The Chapel on Wharf Rd or via Zoom, contact Kirsty for details. Kirsty.denman@googlemail.com (zoom only during lockdown)

San Rocco Chapel Art Club meets on Zoom on Thursdays. Contact Rev Neil for the link. revneil@me.com

Thursdays 10:30am-12:00 Baby Plus at St Paul's Tongham with Claire via zoom online. Singing, chat and activity ideas. For details contact: communityworker@stpaulstongham.org.uk

Thursday Café at St Mary's 10:30am Please let us know you are coming so we can put out enough seats revneil@me.com (Closed during lockdown but get in touch and we will let you know when we re-open)

Thursday Alpha Course at St Mary's: An opportunity to explore the Christian faith in a small group, and ask questions! Contact Jackie for details 07863 311165 (via zoom only during lockdown)

Film Fridays at The Chapel 6.30pm — contact revneil@me.com for details & booking — numbers are limited so booking is essential. (Closed during lockdown but join the email list for news once we reopen)



St Mary's invites you to

We love our beautiful cover this issue, a Christingle Orange by Dan Austin. We will be celebrating Christingle out in our community on Christmas Eve this year. Please join us! We wish you a peaceful and blessed Christmas.

Sun 29th Nov 10am – Advent Service on Zoom

Start Advent with beautiful music & worship for the season. For details email parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk

Sun 6th Dec – St Nicholas Day Lantern Walk

Enjoy a socially distanced lantern walk from The Chapel on Wharf Rd to St Mary's and see St Nicholas! (Slots available starting from Chapel 3:30pm — 6:30pm) Please dress for the weather and bring a lantern or torch. **Booking is essential.** Text / phone 07730 609446

Sun 13th Dec 10am—Service & Christmas Hampers

Zoom church service and the opportunity to donate towards hampers for local people in need. For Zoom details contact parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk For hamper donations (to give funds or donate items) please contact us on 07730 609446 or the local Covid Support group.

Sun 20th Dec 6:30pm – Carols by Candlelight

Join us from home on Zoom (if restrictions permit we will also have limited tickets in church, booking essential). For Zoom details & to enquire about tickets please email parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk



o celebrate Christmas

Thur 24th Dec 4:30pm— Christingle Carol Singing

We can't gather in church for Christingle, so we will come to you! Look out for carol singers out and about in Ash Vale, and join in with the fun on Zoom. Christingle donations are welcomed for the Children's Society, and a link will be shared on Facebook & Zoom. At 6pm we will be finishing with everyone bell ringing on their doorsteps too! Email parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk for links.

Thur 24th Dec 11:30pm – Midnight Mass

Church Service to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will be on Zoom (and some seating in church if regulations allow). Contact parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk

Fri 25th Dec 10am – Christmas Morning Service

This is our main Christmas Day Morning Service on Zoom (and some seating in church if regulations allow). Contact parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk for details.

Gifts to help our neighbours. We would like to encourage everyone to 'buy local' in 2020, to donate for Christmas hampers here, and also to support our twinned communities in Uganda with Christmas Trees for Christmas.

www.amahaweuganda.org **Thank You.**

All events are subject to change due to Covid-19 safety rules. Please keep in touch via our mailing list for weekly notices by email parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk or keep an eye on Facebook @StMarysAshVale **St Mary's Church, Ash Vale, GU12 5JE**

Walking The Wall for Food-Share

By Kirsty Denman

Hi – I'm Kirsty and I've been part of the Ash & Ash Vale Community for nearly 12 years now. During lockdown it was wonderful to see the community around me fly into action to support those in need. I wasn't able to help as much as I would have liked to. I was at capacity – both mentally and physically – working at home from the kitchen table, home schooling and supporting two young girls. But I never ever took for granted just how fortunate we were. There was a regular salary coming in, we were healthy, we were fed, and both of our employers allowed us the flexibility we needed to look after the girls.

By August life felt like it was getting more normal. The kids were heading to school, the husband was able to commute and work from his office, and I was now looking like I was actually going to get an hour or two ON MY OWN for the first time in what felt like YEARS!!!! BUT - I had a growing niggle in the brain that I needed to do something; something to recognise how fortunate we were as a family. I had another niggle that others in the community were still having an incredibly hard time. But what could I do? How to help?

I'd always hankered after completing a walking challenge one day so in a moment of madness (only one glass of wine was involved) I thought I'd make my own and walk the equivalent miles in a month. I picked Hadrian's Wall – all 84 miles of it. A challenge but not an insurmountable one. And the foodshare of the St Marys' and the Ash, Ash Vale & Ash Green Coronavirus Support group felt like the right thing to support. They were, and still are, supporting over 20 families with weekly food parcels.

One Just Giving page later and I was off! I was walking the equivalent length of Hadrian's wall in September. To help the miles seem a bit easier to complete I decided to read a guide book of the wall and chart what I would have been walking past if I was actually there. Key things I learnt are that there is far less wall than you think, its beautiful countryside up there, and that the Romans carved a surprising amount of phallic graffiti into the wall! (my girls giggled lots at those pictures)

I was totally overwhelmed by the donations that my friends and family and the St Mary's family gave. It made the miles so much more meaningful and helped to drag my bum off

the sofa to keep on track. I do however want to give a particularly enormous "THANK YOU" to the two anonymous donations of £500 and £100 – I truly hope you fully appreciate the massive difference that will make.

I handed over a staggeringly huge £1200 last week to the foodshare and could not have been prouder – prouder of my friends and family for the donations, proud of the husband and kids who coped with less of me in September, and prouder of the community that I now feel a bigger part of.



Christmas Cake Recipe

By Victoria Fox

Ingredients:

225g Plain Flour
225g Butter
225g Soft dark brown sugar
225g Currants
225g Raisins
225g Sultanas
0.5 tsp Cinnamon
0.5 tsp Cloves
0.5 tsp Freshly Grated Nutmeg
125g Chopped Almonds
125g Mixed Peel (Optional)
125g Glacé Cherries (Optional)
Rind of one lemon
Rind of one orange
4 Large Eggs, Beaten
1-2 Tablespoons Brandy



Method:

Grease and line an 8 inch spring-form cake tin.

Sift flour with spices. In another bowl beat butter with sugar till light and fluffy. Add the citrus rinds and gradually add beaten egg. Fold flour and spice mix in alternately to the fruit and nuts. Finally add Brandy.

Pour mixture into cake tin and make a slight well in the centre. Bake on bottom shelf of oven at 145°C for about 3 and a half hours. After cooking turn off oven and leave tin, in the oven to cool.

Once fully cooled, prick cake with a skewer and add 2 tablespoons of Brandy/Rum of your choice, wrap in brown paper and tinfoil and a couple of days before Christmas cover with marzipan and Royal Icing.

***You can find Vicki on Instagram:
@vixxihibiscus***



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Wednesday morning

The Community Centre Tongham
Michelle 07871 355095

Wednesday Afternoon & Evening

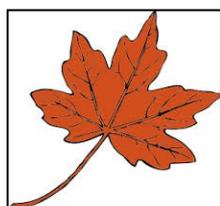
Ash United Football Club
Mel 07720 687660

Wednesday Afternoon & Evening
Thursday morning

Princes Hall Aldershot
Micki 07799 323436

Thursday afternoon & Evening

Shawfield Day Centre, Ash
Olivia 07734 654253



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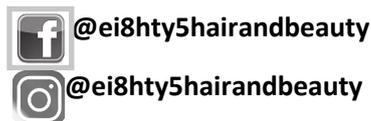
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Saving Christmas: Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 2:8-14

By Helen Lambert

The pandemic that has dominated our lives for most of this year has challenged many people to re-evaluate their priorities. This has not been exclusively negative – it has, at times, enabled us to catch a glimpse of what could be, perhaps even what should be, in a re-imagined world. Whether you have had to respond to loss or hardship, or have perhaps simply had more enforced time for reflection, are there things that you view differently now than you did at the start of the year?

As we approach Christmas, what do you hope for? What do you fear? Amidst the uncertainties that surround our plans, could this be a long-awaited opportunity to understand anew what Christmas is all about? All around us, there is talk of “saving Christmas” – but the Bible makes clear that we have got this all wrong, for Christmas is all about the dawning of God’s great plan to save us!

These two readings from the Christmas story make this clear to us, both in messages brought by angels. Through their familiar words we hear of the identity and the life-purpose of the child Jesus who was about to be born that first Christmas.

What does the angel tell Joseph will be Jesus’ purpose in life (Matthew 1:21)? And how do the angels describe the role he will have to the terrified shepherds in that awesome encounter on the night of Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:11)? As Matthew makes clear to us, the meaning of the name “Jesus” is “the one who saves”! This is really what we celebrate at Christmas – that we have a Saviour, one who was born for the sole purpose of rescuing us!

A few lines earlier in the book of Luke, we read that this was part of God’s plan from long ago as he had been telling his people through the Old Testament prophets: “Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. He has sent us a mighty Saviour from the royal line of his servant David, just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago.” (Luke 1:68-70).

What does the idea of Jesus as a Saviour mean to you? From the beginning of time, God has been revealing himself to humanity, desiring all people to live in relationship with him, wanting to pour out his love on them, and showing us how to live in ways that bring about good. We too are invited to know this revelation, love and way of life. However, since the beginning of time, we have thought we knew best, have preferred our own ways and independence from God – even chosen to follow other “gods”. We see the results of these choices in the world around us, with our news pages dominated by stories of hate, injustice, violence, envy and broken relationships. As we turn our gaze away from our screens and inwards towards ourselves, we see that our lives are also far from perfect – and yet we know in our hearts that another way must be possible.

Christmas reminds us of the invitation to choose a different life, to seek the forgiveness and empowerment that comes from following Jesus, the One who came to make it possible. We do not have to be stuck in the world as we see it, the “Prince of

Peace” (Isaiah 9:6) has come save us into a different life with different priorities, to enable us to have peace with God and with one another.

Amazingly, this invitation extends to us all, however we see ourselves. It does not depend on anything we have done, or not done, but on the love that God has for each one of us. This is why the angels call Jesus the Saviour – for he came for the sole purpose of bringing us back to God and each other. As the apostle Paul tells Titus, “When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy...” (Titus 3:5)

So, whatever restrictions and compromises we may face over the coming weeks, what a relief that we don’t have to worry about “saving Christmas” – Jesus has already done it all!

Matthew 1:18-23

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. 20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).



Luke 2:8-14

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com> (NIV translation)

Suffer the little Children and great big Animals to come to me

By Mike Jacobs

Christmas Eve in 1972 was a Sunday. This is why the Sunday School at the Ash Vale Methodist Church planned a special Christmas procession on that Sunday morning. The idea of Mary and Joseph accompanied by a group of shepherds and the three Wise Men travelling to Bethlehem, appealed to the children and so a plan was hatched to produce something the people of Ash would remember and talk about for years to come.

I, as a new Sunday School Teacher, was one of the team elected to ensure the planned procession took place. My daughter, a newly recruited pupil at the Sunday School was also excited to help.

Many suggestions were considered and rejected. The shepherds should have some sheep and if possible lambs with them. Wasn't a new born lamb one of the gifts presented to the Baby Jesus? Enquiries were made but it transpired that sheep, and especially lambs, were not available, so this suggestion had to be shelved.

However, someone was found who could walk with the children whilst playing an accordion. For the next five weeks he, and the children practised their Christmas Carols.

We found an animal refuge that was prepared to lend us a Donkey for the day and they would deliver and collect the Donkey to meet our timing.

So on that Sunday Morning a transporter was met by forty, or so, Sunday School Children at the end of Wharf Road and a Donkey was off loaded.

Now every donkey I had ever seen, and certainly all the pictures I had seen in the Children's Bible were of a creature that was about half the size of a small pony. In the Children's Bible, Mary was the only rider and she overflowed on all sides of the steed. The donkey that lumbered out of the transporter was huge. About five feet tall with enough space on his back to accommodate the whole Sunday School. We opted for Mary and Joseph together with three companions to ride and the rest of the 'tribe' to follow singing Christmas Carols.

Arriving at the Church we were met by the Minister, Bernard, who had thoughtfully brought a bucket and spade with him, in case of accidents. The idea was that the Children should celebrate Christmas and still be there when worshippers arrived for the morning service at 11.00 o'clock. And of course so would Mary, Joseph, the three Kings, Shepherds and, the Donkey.

Entry into the Church was simple enough, the doors were wide enough and it just needed a turn to the right and all would be well. This was when Neddy displayed his thespian independence. As soon as his front half was in, he stopped. He became rooted to the spot. I experienced my first example of an immovable object. We pushed, we pulled we pushed again, we offered carrots and pulled but to no avail. Neddy was not going in any further. But our attempts to put him in reverse were also no good. He had decided that he was there and was going to stay there. Front legs, head and shoulders in the Church and rear quarters firmly filling the doorway. Then, oh catastrophe, the congregation started to arrive. No way to get past this impenetrable blockage so they had to use Minister's door and so were able to take part in the Service. Bernard was very amused but we faced the problem of getting Neddy out when his transport arrived to take him home.

Snow on Ash Ranges in the 1980's

By Pat Scott

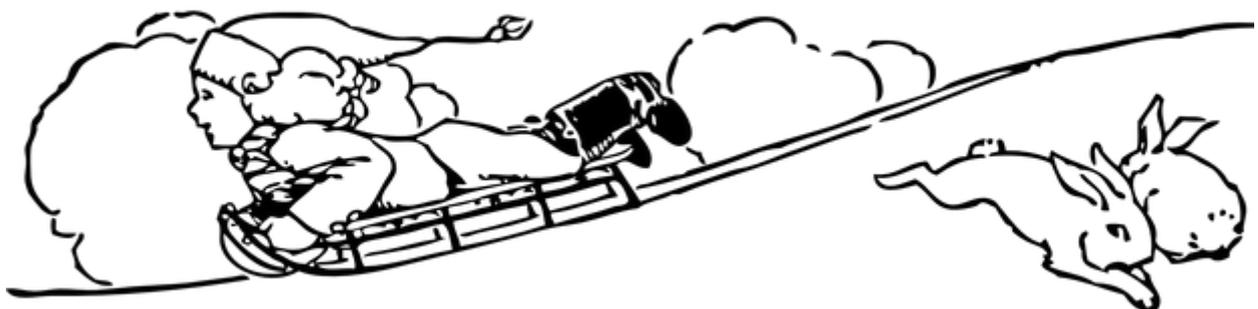
During the snowy winter of 1981/82 here in Ash/Ash Vale, along with everywhere else in Southern England, we awoke one day to find there had been a huge snowfall overnight and everyone was totally 'snowed in'! There was no way in, or out of Ash & Ash Vale, all roads were impassable until the snowploughs reached us with grit etc. For that day we were all 'cut-off'! Those who did try to drive to work, found the roads where impassable & had to return home. This was a day I shall never forget!

What a wonderful day of fun and laughter the day turned out to be! Everyone (young or older, with or without children) made for the ranges! We all took everything we could find to have fun! We wore our boots, wellies, thick coats, gloves, mittens, and hats to keep our ears warm. Sledges, toboggans, tin trays, and even ski's were the 'order of the day'! . There were numerous snowball fights (between children & children, plus adults and adults!), several snow-men (or "snow-people" to be politically correct these days!) were built and children just enjoyed rolling in the snow, especially down the butts (but no damage was done, the snow was so thick)! Everyone mixed in with the fun, regardless of their age.

A couple of the menfolk built a fire (in a sheltered snow-hole) and managed to get a decent fire going. They then found sticks/branches, planted them in the snow with a line of string attached to make a 'drying line' for drying gloves!

As the kiddies (& adults) gloves became soaked through, they would take them to the fire, take them off and they were 'pegged' onto the line to dry out! In exchange they received another 'dry'ish pair of gloves, any gloves that fitted!

I am certain no child (or adult) went home that day with their own gloves, but no-one cared! It was a day nobody who was involved in will ever forget and will probably not happen again? The 'Community Spirit' was definitely shown on that day.





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Henry the “Vegetarian” Cat

My mother loved runner beans. Tepees of Bamboo canes littered the garden with rampant columns of runner beans. Her favourite variety was “As Long as Your Arm” which cropped well in our area. Then one year “THE PROBLEM” arose. Something was eating the beans! Whatever was munching away could reach only to a certain height. It was as if someone had taken a pair of shears and given the bean pods a short back & sides. One day, well into the bean season, my mother was cutting a cabbage and turned to see Henry (a neighbour’s cat) calmly chewing away at a runner bean on the vine. The culprit was caught in the act!

My mother had a word with Henry’s owner who promptly took Henry to the vet, after an expensive consultation and series of tests, Henry was declared as fit as a cat can be, it was just that he liked raw runner beans!

Now, our gardens had only 3ft chain link fencing to mark boundaries. Neighbours’ cats regarded every garden on the estate as part of THEIR patch. This was not too much of a problem because the cats, with the occasional help of one neighbour’s Jack Russel Terrier, kept mice and rats (attracted by the presence of chickens in most gardens) under control and were regarded as beneficial: - generally. Cat Henry was a master of his trade: from the moment he arrived on the scene as a kitten until his demise as a cat of many summers, mouse and rat problems were virtually non-existent but seemingly he had this one fault. My mother decided that a workman was worthy of his hire, and that a few lost beans were worth the dearth of vermin. So the next year she put up an extra wigwam or two to make up the difference. Henry was happy, my mother was happy and unfortunately we got served even more runner beans. Just as Henry broke the rules of “catdom”, this Christmas the rules will be different. We will be doing the unusual; things always done “this” way will have to be done “that” way, and, unless things change, large family gatherings will not be taking place. Zoom and its likes will be doing overtime. Even turkeys are feeling the pinch: turkey farmers have put their turkeys on a diet because the farmers reckon that there will be a great demand for smaller size birds for the smaller Christmas gatherings. Thankfully smaller birds make for less cold turkey/soup/stew/stock to follow Christmas.

As for what 2021 will bring? THAT is really in the gift of the scientists and Covid19. No matter what, enjoy “the 2020 Covid Christmas” and as it becomes part of our folklore, you will be able to truly say “I know ‘cos I was there.”

HAPPY CHRISTMAS

Scrivener



Lockdown in a Winter Wonderland

By Stephanie Farry

It may feel like we've got a long journey ahead of us to spring. Many people will have Christmas or other festivities to look forward to, but others won't – and for some, this time of year is always hard enough, even without lockdown. What are some of the things we can do to keep ourselves going?



The Greater Good Science Center publishes a monthly happiness calendar packed full of science-backed ideas for how to improve our wellbeing every day. Their November calendar is all about hope for the future, and includes such highlights as connecting with nature, defining your own area of expertise, learning how to detect fake news, journaling and reading inspiring stories from others. I particularly like the first on that list, as recent research in the US has found that going on an 'awe walk' – deliberately seeking surroundings that give you a positive sense of wonder, vastness and reverence – can boost positive emotions among older adults.

The Danish concept of *hygge* is about creating cosy, comfortable spaces – think enjoying a mug of hot chocolate by candlelight, or reading a book while you listen to the rain outside. Taking time to enjoy these simple experiences seems to have much in common with the popular concept of mindfulness. It doesn't have to involve finding the time to slow down, which for many of us doesn't feel at all realistic, but can just be about acknowledging and being more intentional in the everyday things we're doing.

Recent research from Norway found the mindset with which we approach the winter itself affects our wellbeing. Rather than thinking about 'getting through' winter, it could be better to focus on finding the things that are special about it – in other words, adopting a 'positive wintertime mindset'. What are some things you enjoy doing that you can only do at this time of year? What beauty can you find in the soft light outside, or the sensation of cosiness indoors? Can you bring out special crockery or cushions, play different music, or watch seasonal films that you just don't fancy at other times of year? If it's difficult to think of the positives, try to 'reframe' any negatives in the language you use with yourself – the cold could be refreshing, rather than biting.

There are lots of reasons why the next few months may not be easy for us, and everyone has their own challenges to face. It's encouraging to think that a secret of living well in this time might be simply to focus on celebrating things that are special and enjoyable about the season, allowing them to crowd out the less positive associations with darker nights and cold mornings. Anyone for a frosty walk, followed by tea and hot buttered toast?

Big smile, small self: Awe walks promote prosocial positive emotions in older adults: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2020-69974-001>

Greater Good Science Center Happiness Calendar: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/your_happiness_calendar_for_november_2020

Winter is Coming: Wintertime mindset and wellbeing in Norway: <https://internationaljournalofwellbeing.org/index.php/ijow/article/view/935>

“Twas the lockdown before Christmas...”

Here’s a fun poem (based on a familiar Christmas classic!) written by Ben and Mike to raise a smile. Do send us your favourites and funnies for the next edition too, we love to read them!

‘Twas lockdown before Christmas when all
through the house
Everyone huddled as quiet as a mouse.
The boots were gathered by the door in a crowd
Though only our once-daily walks were allowed.

The children were nestled all snug with their
phones,
like blue-lit, wide-eyed standing stones
And mam in her ‘jamas, looking so fine,
Had just settled down with a large glass of wine.

When out in the street there arose such a clatter
I sprang from my chair to see what was the
matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash
Tore open the curtains and threw up the sash.

The neighbours all out on their doorsteps stood
Clapping & whistling in coat, scarf and hood.
My light-blinded eyes were immediately drawn
To a large painted rainbow on Mr Smith’s lawn.

It was the 8 o’clock flash of appreciation
For brave, kind key workers across the nation.
Doctors and nurses, paramedics, police,
Emergency services, teachers and carers not
least.

Back inside, red-cheeked, and ready for a pee
A sudden concern: is there paper left for me?
I admit to feeling a little bit guilty
When my gaze fell on 50 rolls of quilty.

Later on, waiting for the sauce to simmer
I reflect on Brexit, could it look any grimmer?
Politicians cheated and grafted and lied
and we’re swept along on a calamitous tide

Perhaps when they meet Michel Barnier
Their masks will be golden, and by Cartier.
Anyway, don’t wear it down on your chin
You’re better off tossing it straight to the bin.

Normally, this is the time of year
With an early mince pie and a tall glass of beer,
Thoughts turn to Christmas cards, and seasonal
greetings –
At least it’s more fun than endless Zoom
meetings.

I settle back down into the sofa’s embrace
Put a card in my lap and address the blank
space:
“A very Merry Christmas and Happy New year
too,
Not much to report here – how’s lockdown for
you?”



Useful Numbers – Help is at hand!

Here are some of the useful numbers you may need if you need support in Ash Vale. If you think we are missing a number please let us know.

Local Churches:

St Mary's, Ash Vale – 07863 311165 (Parish Administrator's Mobile)

The Chapel, Ash Vale – 07730 609446 (Project Manager's Mobile)

St Peter's, Ash – 01252 331161

Holy Angels, Ash – 01252 321422

St Paul's, Tongham – 01252 782790

Local help and support during the Covid-19 crisis:

Ash, Ash Vale & Ash Green Coronavirus Support group (volunteers doing shopping & prescription runs & emergency food parcels) – 07843 489796

Ash Parish Council – 01252 328 287

Ash Citizens Advice – 01252 315569 or 01252 314711

Ash Vale Health Centre – 01252 317551 (Out of hours phone 111, in an emergency dial 999)

Guildford Borough Council Covid-19 Community Helpline – 01483 444400

Community Wellbeing Team - 07769 642053 / 07901 513652

Safe & Settled Team - 01483 444476 for those needing help at home on arriving back from hospital or needing some help to manage at home.

If you need to talk to someone : national helplines

Samaritans (24/7 service) – 116 123 or text SHOUT 85258

National Domestic Abuse Helpline – 0808 2000 247

www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/ (run by Refuge)

The Men's Advice Line, for male domestic abuse survivors – 0808 801 0327

The Mix, free information/support for under 25s in the UK – 0808 808 4994

National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline – 0800 999 5428

PAPYRUS—Young suicide prevention society, 0800 068 4141

Childline for children 0800 1111

Alcoholics Anonymous—0800 917 7650 (24/7)

Narcotics Anonymous—0300 999 1212

Cruse Bereavement Care— 0808 808 1677

The Parishioner Magazine: Alex (Editor) 07730 609446 Contact me in the first instance and I can put you in touch with the right person in our amazing volunteer team.



Carols by Candlelight

Sunday 20th Dec 2020, 6:30pm



Join us on Zoom for a virtual Carol Service, hosted both in St Mary's Church and also in our community via zoom link. Let's celebrate together—if you would like to volunteer your family to a reading or carol please get in touch!

If covid safety regulations permit on the night, we will also have some limited (socially distanced) tickets available to join us in church, we will know nearer the time. Contact us to enquire & for the zoom link: parishoffice@ash-vale.org.uk



What's inside?

The Covid that stole Christmas? – (p3&4) A letter from Revd Neil Lambert
Christingle is coming to you! – (p5) Save the date - Christmas Eve 4:30pm
Make a difference this Christmas – (p8) by Alex Sanderson
Awards, Footprints and Eco Resolutions – (p9) Eco news from Lesley Murphy
Thought for the day – (p10) How do you see the world?
News from Ash Citizens Advice—(p11) Keeping warm this winter
Activity Advent – (p14) discover some new family traditions! By Lorraine Faïres
What's on – (p15) Your regular weekly events at a glance
*St Mary's invites you to celebrate Christmas! - Centrefold for your fridge! *
Walking the Wall for Food-share – (p18) inspiration from Kirsty Denman
Christmas Cake Recipe – (p19) get Christmassy in the kitchen with Vicki Fox
Bible Study—Saving Christmas – (p22&23) by Helen Lambert
Suffer the little children (and great big animals) to come to me – (p24)
wonderful memories from by Mike Jacobs
Snow on Ash Ranges in the 1980s – (p25) by Pat Scott
Henry the vegetarian cat – (p27) By our much loved *Scrivener*
Lockdown in a Winter Wonderland – (p28) by Stephanie Farry
Twas the lockdown before Christmas—(p29) lockdown laughs from Ben and Mike
Useful Numbers: Help is at hand! – (p30)
Carols by Candlelight (inside back cover) Join us for a special Christmas Celebration.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

We welcome fun, informative and local interest items!

The copy deadline for the Feb/March 2021 issue is Wed 6th Jan 2021

Emails please to: parishioner@ash-vale.org.uk

In these unusual times we are minimising the risk to our readers and volunteers by printing only on request, and by sharing *The Parishioner* far and wide via email, website and social media instead. If you or someone you know would like a paper copy please pick one up at St Mary's or call / text 07730 609446 ***Best wishes & stay safe!***

The Parishioner seeks to explore and reflect upon a wide variety of local issues whilst recognising that not everyone will agree with the views expressed. These do not necessarily reflect the views of all the members of St Mary's Church nor those of its Parochial Church Council.