

CHURCH NEWS AND VIEWS

Remembrance Day: the service in St. Leonard's

The Remembrance Service in St Leonard's, our slightly odd, unique yet beautiful parish church overlooking the peaceful River Leam, was taken by Dr Peter Kent. Many of us know Dr Kent from his position as Head Teacher of Lawrence Sheriff School, Rugby or from his other positions.

One should not underestimate Dr Kent's ability which was amply displayed in a moving, powerful, enlightening but short sermon. He talked about Lawrence Sheriff School between 1914 and 1918 and how the attitude of the boys changed as the war proceeded and the dreadful toll of death of the old boys mounted.

Whilst we may measure the awfulness of war by numbers of the soldiers who died, there are also those who suffered life changing physical and mental wounds and others indirectly affected by the war. One of whom was the war time head teacher of Lawrence Sheriff, Mr Whitehouse (before the war known as Mr Weisse) who, after the end of the war, emigrated to Canada as though by doing so he could give himself physical and mental distance from the suffering and death of the Great War.

It all seems a long way in time, distance and emotion from our beautiful, peaceful, unspoilt vale of the River Leam. We then walked to the war memorial, an ever present reminder of past conflicts.

Peter Law

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Church Café Brunch

Thank you very much to all the 30+ people who came to sample our goodies and enjoy meeting friends on November 5th. It was a bit of a crush at times but from the buzz you seemed to enjoy the opportunity to get together.

Thanks also for your very generous donations: we were able to sent £142 to Global Care towards their school project in Lebanon.

Memo to ourselves: order more bacon next time! Sorry about that. The bacon was very tasty, especially with David Glanville's homemade bread rolls. We heard someone say of our granola, fruit and yoghurt pots, 'Those look far too healthy for me'!! However, most of the 24 pots that we made were well and truly scoffed.

Eira Owen and Aileen Withington

Rev. Alison Massey's letter

Dear friends,

Christmas is often a time when we stop to reflect on the events of the year gone by. 2016 has certainly been eventful on an international and national scale, and there will have been significant events in our own circles of family and friends too. Some of those things may have left us questioning what the world is coming to, perhaps left us feeling vulnerable, disconnected or even downhearted.

As Christians, Christmas is the time above all others when we remember that God is present among us – as John's gospel says, "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness shall not overcome it" (John 1.5). The message the angels brought that first Christmas is "Peace on earth, and goodwill to all people!"

If you want to come and join the celebration of hope, light, peace, and goodness, in a world that can sometimes feel full of darkness, you are most welcome at our Christmas worship. There really is something for everyone. Whether it is Nine Lessons and Carols services and Midnight Mass (well, starting at 11pm and ending at Midnight!), which are full of drama, wonder and tradition. Celebrate@4, Christingle, Crib and family Communion services which are full of energy and celebration - and in the case of Celebrate@4, full of glitter and glue!

Everyone is welcome to celebrate Christmas with us: we'd love to see you and share the light of the world - God with us.

With love and blessings for a very happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

Ali

Tuesday Morning Prayer

On each Tuesday morning at 9 am I will be holding a short service of morning prayer somewhere in the Benefice. This will last approximately 30 minutes and anyone is welcome to join in. The Tuesdays when I will be in Birdingbury in the next two months are: Tuesday 3rd January and Tuesday 31st January.

Ali

My contacts are: email: reverendalimassey@gmail.com tel: 01788 814912 or 07837 124509 address: Clydfan, Main Street, Thurlaston, CV23 9JS
I usually work on Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday but feel free to contact me on other days if you need to talk with me.

Churchwardens news from Dick and Karen

Remembering

On Sunday 6th November five of us, including villagers who have lost loved ones in the past year, went to the annual Benefice Remembering Service at Stretton Church. We hope that hearing the name of a loved one read out, and sharing the experience with many other bereaved villagers, was a comfort at such a difficult time. Afterwards we were able to share some fellowship over tea and cake in the village hall.

Planned Charitable Giving

In recent years the Draycote Benefice churches have given £1000 annually to help the work of Tearfund in a farming community in Kenya. We are now looking to support and develop a relationship with Global Care. They are a Coventry based charity running schooling projects wherever there is an acute need. In 2015 our benefice gave £1000 to their work supporting Shack Schools for Syrian refugees in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon. We would now like to commit to this project from 2017 to 2019. We hope that this will be a mutually beneficial relationship, through which we can hopefully gain an insight into the lives of the displaced children and their mothers. If you want further information about their work, take a look at Global Care's website www.globalcare.org. We will keep you updated.

Germinate Conference

Recently Revd Ali, Karen and I went to a national conference on the theme of 'Growing and Equipping Rural Mission' at The Wellcome Centre in Coventry. I confess that I was feeling a bit negative about the prospect of giving up a Saturday for a day conference but I am pleased to say it was a very positive experience. It was good to be amongst over 200 people, many of whom had good news stories to tell of the exciting work they are engaged in across the country. We came away with lots of good ideas to muse over and put alongside the good new things we have been trying locally.

A lot of rural ministry work is co-ordinated through Geminat's national offices, which happen to be based at The Arthur Rank Centre, at the NAC at Stoneleigh. Also Revd. Jill Hopkinson, the national co-ordinator of Rural Anglican Ministry, lives in Long Itchington, so we have two good resources on our doorstep.

Harvest foot note

Thank you to everyone who donated food for the foodbank. We took a very full car boot full of your contributions to the Hope4 Rugby warehouse. 64kgs in all! Amazingly 36 churches and 31 schools from the local area donated at total of 7.5 tonnes of suitable harvest food. Whilst this is very positive, it is a powerful reminder

of just how dependent many people are on this charitable work. In the recent film, 'I Daniel Blake', there is a very moving scene set in a foodbank. If you haven't yet seen this film yet, I would urge you to do so.

Dick Withington

Rural ministry – How can we flourish in our rural parishes?

Last year BIRDINGBURY church members were invited by Coventry Diocese to contribute to open discussions about rural mission. Research tells us that church attendance is declining in many villages, buildings need maintenance, clergy are scarce and those priests usually have several parishes in their care. Some of this we see in our own local communities.

Many people from across the diocese attended these discussions, following which all ideas, proposals and good practices were consolidated into one paper for rural parishes and the diocese to consider. Some interesting and radical ideas were put forward. We are pleased to be involved in this work and hope to continue to contribute to new initiatives and ways of enriching our church experiences.

So much of what we do depends on lay volunteers who need proper training and development. We are so grateful to everyone who contributes to the life of St Leonard's in so many ways. Although our worshipping community is quite small, we believe that we are part of a much greater community working together around the village spreading God's love to our friends and neighbours. We will share some of these ideas in our next issue.

Planning for the future

We are having a church 'Away Day' on Saturday 7th January (10 - 3.30 at Bourton Village Hall) so that, together with our other benefice parishes, we can plan our ministry strategy for the short, medium and longer term, both as individual parishes and as a group of churches working together. Focussing on the Diocesan mission of 'Worshipping God, Making Disciples and Transforming Communities', we are hoping to return to our parishes with some exciting plans for our future work together.

If you have ideas to put forward, or you would like to join us on 7th January, then please speak to Dick or me.

Karen Armbrister



Christmas window 2015

Photo: Eira Owen

DECEMBER '16 and JANUARY '17 SERVICES in Draycote Benefice

Date	Place	Time	Service	Readings
Sun 4 Dec	Frankton Bourton Stretton	9.15 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion BCP Holy Communion Evening Worship	
Sat 10 Dec	B'ton/Frankton Village Hall	3.45 pm	Celebrate@4 (Christmas activities from 2.30 - 3.45)	
Sun 11 Dec	Stretton	10.30 am	Benefice Communion	
Sun 18 Dec	Bourton Frankton Birdingbury Stretton	10.30 am 10.30 am 4.00 pm 6.00 pm	Carol Service Christingle, Carols and Communion Carols and Crib Service 9 Lessons and Carols	<i>Romans Ch 1 vv 1 - 7</i> <i>Matthew Ch 1 vv 18 - end</i>
Sat 24 Dec Christmas Eve	Stretton Stretton Birdingbury	4.00 pm 9.30 pm 11.00 pm	Christingle Service Holy Communion Holy Communion	<i>Acts Ch 13 vv 16 - 2 (Andrew)</i> <i>Luke Ch 1 vv 67 - 79 (Peter)</i>
Sun 25 Dec Christmas Day	Frankton Birdingbury Stretton Bourton	9.30 am 10.30 am 10.30 am 10.45 am	Holy Communion Family Service Family Service Holy Communion	<i>Hebrews Ch 1 vv 1 - 4 (Liz.E.)</i> <i>John Ch 1 vv 1 - 14 (Aileen)</i>
Sun 1 Jan	Bourton	4.00 pm	Benefice Communion	
Sun 8 Jan	Stretton	10.30 am	Plough Service with Communion	
Sun 15 Jan	Birdingbury Bourton Frankton Stretton	10.30 am 10.30 am 10.30 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Morning Praise Morning Praise Morning Praise	<i>1 Corinthians Ch 1 vv 1 - 9</i> <i>John Ch 1 vv 29 - 42</i>
Sun 22 Jan	Birdingbury Stretton	10.30 am 6.00 pm	Morning Praise Holy Communion	<i>1 Corinthians Ch 1 vv 10 - 18</i> <i>Matthew Ch 4 vv 12—23</i>
Sat 28 Jan	B'ton/Frankton Village Hall	3.45 pm	Celebrate@4	
Sun 29 Jan	Frankton	10.30 am	Benefice Communion	

Advent and Christmas happenings

Thoughts about Advent

December can pass in a haze of 'busyness'. There is so much to do to prepare for Christmas that we can arrive at 25 December with many jobs done, but discover that we haven't prepared ourselves to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Advent means 'coming' and in the church it is a quiet, gentle time of reflection and waiting. That's why we change the liturgical colours to purple – to remind us. Usually there are no flowers, although we do have our Christmas tree as part of the 'waiting'. Our advent wreath will be in church throughout December and each week we will light one of its five candles to remember the prophets, patriarchs and the holy family.

Some of us will take part in the 'Advent Challenge' where we are encouraged to undertake daily small acts of kindness and thoughtfulness as part of our advent activity. Not overly religious, they usually revolve around demonstrating faith, hope and love. If you'd like to take part, then do contact me for information or see the website www.biblesociety.org/adventchallenge

One way you can find some quiet time during Advent is by coming to one of our candlelit advent reflections at St Leonard's. 30 minutes of gentle music and quiet thoughts in a peaceful, calming environment can work wonders for the soul.

Karen Armbrister

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Advent reflections at 7 pm in church on **Tuesdays 6th, 13th and 20th December**
(this last one will conclude with Evening Prayer)

- Sat 10th Dec – **Christmas crafts** for families of all ages from 2.30pm followed by **Celebrate@Christmas** from 4pm to 4.40pm, Bourton Village Hall
- Sat 10th Dec – **Nativity trail** commencing at the Club (see Birdsong for details)
- Sun 18th Dec – **Carols and Crib service** at 4pm followed by mulled wine and mince pies
- Thurs 22nd Dec - **Carol singing** in aid of Rugby Night Shelter. Meet outside the Club at 7pm. If you would like us to sing for you, please ring Dick on 632644
- Christmas Eve – **Holy Communion** at 11pm (Meet at the bus shelter at 10.40pm to collect a lantern to light you to church)
- Christmas Day – A short, joyful **Christmas Morning Family Service** at 10.30 am

Church events in December and January

Have your tickets ready for the music concert in St. Leonard's on Saturday
December 3rd, starting at 7.30 pm

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The Draycote Benefice of Churches
'Celebrate@4' Informal Saturday worship for ALL AGES!
Everyone is welcome....
Singing, stories, videos, drama, creative prayers
Refreshments served from 3.45pm.
Service starts at 4pm and ends by 4.40pm

Saturday 10th December is **'Celebrate@4' for Christmas** in Bourton Village Hall.

From 2.30pm there will be Christmas craft activities catering for all ages, in preparation for the service at 4pm. So come early and join in the fun!

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Leamington Hastings Infant School are holding their end of term service at
St. Leonard's on Friday 16th December at 1.30pm
You are welcome to come and join in this service.

Regular events in Birdingbury and the Benefice

Thurs 1 December 2.30 pm Service and Tea at Bourton and Frankton Village Hall
Wed 14 December 10.30 am Home Communion, Jackie Westcott's, Loen, Main St
Thurs 29 December NO Coffee and Chat in The Birbury
Thurs 8 January NO Service and Tea at Bourton
Wed 11 January 10.30 am Home Communion, Jenny Hawes', Gables House,
Back Lane
Thurs 28 January 10.30 am Coffee and Chat in The Birbury

The Christmas Story in picture books

As you may know, I am a children's picture book enthusiast. These are some of my recommendations for this Christmas - two new discoveries and two old favourites.



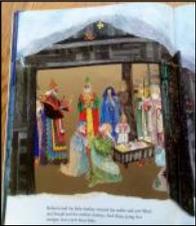
'The Christmas Story' by Robert Sabuda (pub. Walker Books 2016) is an exquisite pop-up book with the story simply told in six scenarios. A book for anyone between 5 and 95 to treasure.



'Refuge' by Anne Booth and Sam Fisher (pub. Nosy Crow 2015) has restrained and tender illustrations. It tells how Joseph and Mary found refuge in a stable and then sought refuge in Egypt to avoid King Herod. The book is dedicated 'to all refugees and those who help them'; very relevant today.



'Christmas Story' by Brian Wildsmith (pub. OUP 2007), on the other hand, is a feast of sumptuously rich colours, telling the traditional story but also including a part for a baby donkey and a girl called Rebecca.



And for very young readers, 'The Christmas Story' by Dick Bruna (pub. Simon and Schuster 2013) is still one of the simplest and best, in my view. My well-loved copy is the 1974 edition!



Aileen Withington

Photos: AW

A joyous and peaceful Christmas and a happy and hopeful New Year 2017
to everyone in our wonderful village community
from Church News and Views, St. Leonard's Church

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