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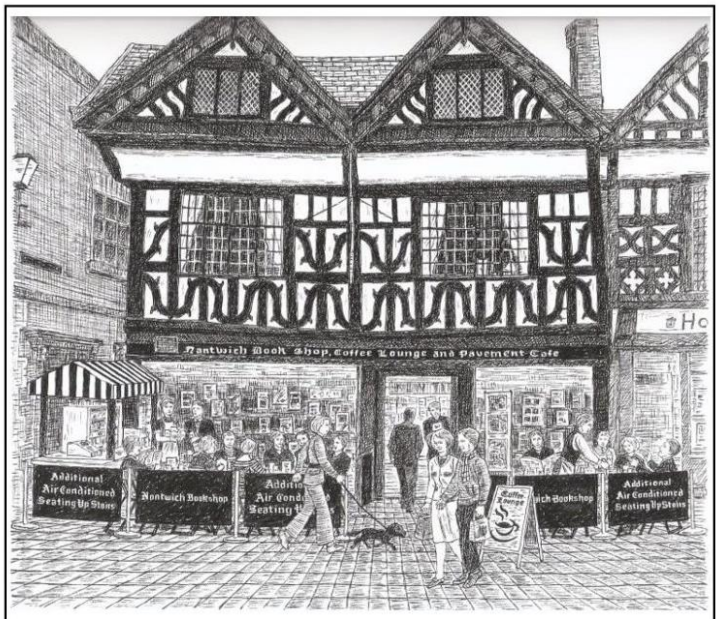
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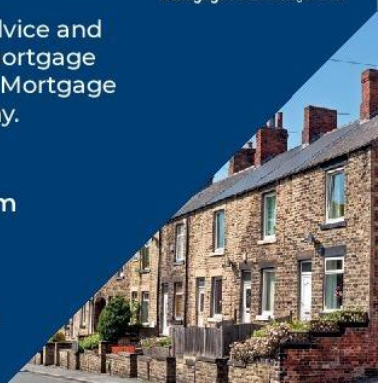
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Front cover: Troops of the Sealed Knot gather on Church Walk on Holly Holy Day, Saturday, 25th January. See p.25. Photo: Jonathan White.



From the Rector

At St. Mary's we have a service of Evensong every Sunday – apart from the occasional special service at festivals, and Compline on a fifth Sunday of the month. This is a rare provision nowadays. You can count on one hand the number of parishes in Chester Diocese that offer Evensong with such frequency.

The bells are rung every week, often all eight. Organ voluntaries are enjoyed before and after the service. A small, faithful congregation, welcomed by a sidesperson, make this their regular service of the week, and there are nearly always some visitors or occasional attenders present. A committed choir (though smaller than in the morning) leads the worship with fine singing of hymns, psalms and canticles. The minister and preacher can be one of six or more different people, with a larger rota of lesson readers. The mood is calm and peaceful, with moments of silence, if not long periods. It's a service which includes the breadth of "The Sound of the Church", the theme of our Lent Course this year (see p. 15).

It's also the service where you'll hear the widest range of Scripture. If you only attend church on a Sunday morning you will rarely, if ever, hear the Old Testament read, or the psalms sung. Only a very small number of psalms are sung as hymns.

Our other hymns and songs are relatively sanitised. The Book of Psalms, still the primary hymn book of the Church (in common with Judaism) by contrast sometimes express raw lament, hurt, anger, and even hatred.

However we're feeling, there'll be a psalm that has words for it. And if a psalm is using language we can't make our own, or think we shouldn't as Christians, we can be sure that someone is feeling that way, and these words bring the world's pain before God. Or like St. Augustine we can look for a deeper meaning. For example, if a psalm calls for the wicked to be slain, he prays "The sense in which I want them 'dead' is this: I love them that they may die to themselves and live to you".

A former bishop of Chester used to say that doctors should prescribe fewer pills and more courses of Evensong. I commend it to you, for regular or occasional use. It's a perfectly formed liturgy for human beings facing the night, or the darkness – whatever form that may take.

Mark Hart

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"From Your Valentine"



February is the month in which we commemorate St. Valentine's Day. I know there are already shelves full of cards and gifts for us to buy and give! Mark Oakley, now Dean of Southwark has written a book of his sermons – *By Way of the Heart: The Seasons of Faith*. In it he includes a sermon he preached on St. Valentine's Day some years ago. I shall quote parts of it here because like many of his writings, it is well worth reading.

We don't know much about St. Valentine except he was one of several early martyrs killed in Rome for their Christian faith and buried on 14th February. It is said that the Emperor Claudius had commanded Valentine in the year 280 to deny Christ before him. Valentine refused and so Claudius had him beheaded, but not before Valentine restored the sight of his jailer's daughter. A later addition to this story says that it was when the daughter opened a letter from Valentine that her sight came back, and she was able to read "from your Valentine" written at the bottom. So, we see that a tradition came out of Valentine's faith, love and care for people.

How well are we doing learning the lessons of love? Whoever we are. You will know that at weddings a popular reading is 1 Corinthians 13, in which St. Paul tells us what love is. It is suggested that a check as to how you are doing as a Christian is to place "I" in the reading instead of love: so "I am patient, I am kind, I envy no one, I am never rude, I am never puffed up or arrogant, I never insist on my own way, I never rejoice in wrongdoing, I am never irritable, I am never resentful." As someone once said, it took God seven days to make heaven and earth but he's still working on me!

From what seemed to be a disaster of St. Valentine's death, so the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ comes to me and you in our day and age. That is well worth sharing; and loving and caring for all those we meet.

Paul Ramsey, Reader Emeritus

Church News

Seniors' Lounge

The next Seniors' Lounge will be on **Sunday, 9th February**, 3pm in the Parish Hall - friendly company and a chat over a cup of tea/coffee and cake with a varied programme of activities and singing.

A Star is Born!



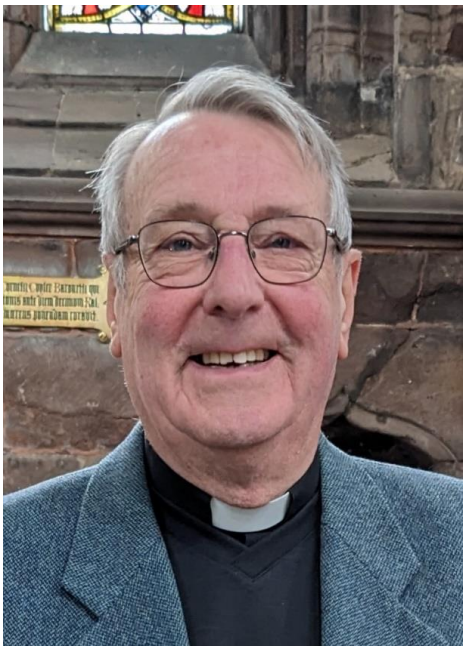
Those who worship regularly at the Sunday 10.45am service will recognise the canine member of the congregation pictured here. Bluebell (real name) is often to be found in the Crown Hotel, and is a favourite with locals and visitors alike. She is about to embark on an acting career and is making her stage debut as "Sandy" in the next production by the Nantwich Players of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* – which runs 14th–22nd February. Bluebell is hoping this foray into the world of stage and screen will catapult her career and make her famous.



Congratulations to **Anne Taylor** who celebrated her 70th birthday in December ...



and to **Alison & Neil Phillips** who celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in December. The choir and members of the congregation gathered in the Parish Hall for coffee and cake after the 10.45am service on Sunday, 5th January to celebrate with them.



Congratulations also to **Rev. Tony Long** who celebrated his 80th birthday in January.

Vacancy: Stoker of the Easter Bonfire.

Thank you to John Crumplin, pictured here in 2022, for his many years of service as gatherer of fuel and stoker of the fire from which the Paschal Candle is lit at the 6am dawn service on Easter Day. All applications to the Rector. Zero tolerance of oversleeping.



2024 Christmas Tree Festival

The 2024 Christmas Tree Festival raised a total of £24,000, a significant increase on the 2023 figure of £14,000, due to larger attendance and the extra Thursday evening event. Thank you to St. Luke's Hospice, our partners in the event, for all their hard work and expertise, and thank you to all at St. Mary's who worked hard over the weekend. The total raised is divided: £18,000 to St. Luke's Hospice, £6,000 to St. Mary's.

Electoral Roll: 2025 is a year for a complete renewal of the roll. Current members of the roll will be contacted and will need to complete an application form in order to remain a member of the electoral roll of St. Mary's Nantwich. If you are not a member of the roll and you regard St. Mary's as your church you are encouraged to join the roll. As well as providing the electorate for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, the roll is an important record of the membership of St. Mary's. Look out for the form when it is issued in February, ahead of the Annual Meeting which this year takes place on **Wednesday, 7th May**.

Restoration Project: Progress Report

Now that we have reached the New Year, it is an opportune time to bring everyone up to date with the progress on the Restoration of the North and East Elevations of St. Mary's.

Firstly, with the physical and financial progress on Phase One of the Project. The scaffolding of the north aisle and the west side of the north transept is the immediately visible fact that work is progressing. A small crane has been installed to enable the replacement stones to be lifted into position. Much of the pointing of the stonework has now been completed. New stone, from Hollington Quarry in Staffordshire, first arrived on 8th November and subsequently. Stonemasons are working on the individual shaped stones which were specified for replacement. More work than was initially specified has been identified by a detailed survey of the windows on the north aisle. The first and the fourth from the west have been found in a worse condition than was initially seen. These window frames (the tracery) both needed much new stonework. The stained-glass windows were found also not to be held securely. They will be reset in the window frames for the long-term future. The scaffolding in the church in early January 2025 is to facilitate this in a safe manner. Phase One is planned to be completed on 28th March 2025.

There are 4-weekly meetings where progress is reviewed with a joint inspection of what has been completed and is identified for what is next planned. The Church and the Preservation Trust are represented, together with the architects (Donald Insall Associates) and the contractors (Recclesia Ltd.). Recclesia have a Project Manager, and they work from the Masons' Yard which comes into its element.

Funds which the Parochial Church Council and the Preservation Trust already had, as well as a grant from the Benefact Trust, are being paid to the contractors and architects on receipt of certified invoices.

Turning to Phase Two. We have already funds promised from Garfield Weston, Nantwich Town Council and individuals who have generously donated to the Appeal. But these are nowhere near what is needed even to start work. Detailed applications to several of the national bodies which we had identified have been declined. However, we shall continue to approach any which we further identify, as well as members of the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry of which we are a charity member.

Paul Ramsey

Collaborate, Collaborate, Collaborate



The 2025 breakfasts started with a talk from Dr. Jonathan Griffiths, Associate Medical Director for Primary Care at Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB), who continues to practice as a GP two days a week. He holds many other roles including vice chair of the Royal College of GPs Mersey Faculty Board and an ambassador on the Interface Improvement Programme for Primary and Secondary Care – about which he talked to us.

Jon started by explaining that the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB is the second largest in England and now encompasses the area that previously was occupied by nine clinical commissioning groups. Jon is responsible for the clinical leadership of primary care, which is general practice, dentistry, pharmacy and ophthalmology.

He encounters what he refers to as "frustrated GPs", who feel that the interface with secondary care (hospitals) can create work unnecessarily and often leaves patients stuck in the middle. An example would be where a hospital consultant refers a patient back to their GP, when an onward referral, or sick note, or request for bloods, or explanation of side-effects of prescribed drugs could have been instigated at the hospital. Similarly, there are occasions when a GP could initiate tests before an onward referral to secondary care.

Jon makes the connection between GP appointments that could have been handled differently, freeing up GP time and thereby reducing the number of A and E visits, which could have been managed by primary care.

Jon sees this as a system problem, not just GPs being "grumpy". He emphasises that no-one is trying to be difficult, so the solution lies in working together and all parties taking ownership. The Cheshire and Merseyside ICB is pioneering some of the collaborative work looking to progress this for patients and professionals. A consensus document and position statements have been prepared, there are blogs and web pages about it. The two key messages are to treat colleagues with respect and that patients are at the centre.

As Jon acknowledges, the collaboration message is now firmly established in the work that he has been leading. The challenge now is to communicate that across primary and secondary care. It's all very well to have the principles established, but the success will be in the detail of how collaboration, better working relations and communication can be implemented. Local working groups will be essential.

As a former St. Mary's congregation and 9.30 Service band member and breakfast co-ordinator, Jon said he was very pleased to be invited to speak and to touch base with friends of old. And we were all much more informed about our local NHS.

Pastoral Work Ministry

One of the joys of my Pastoral Worker ministry at St. Mary's is being part of the team who lead regular worship services and share Christian fellowship with people living in local long term residential care or who are confined to their own home.



During the pandemic, we all experienced being excluded from church. This shocking situation had a profound effect on both those who worship regularly and those who enter the church occasionally, as they encountered a deep sense of loss, separation and isolation. Those who are confused, chronically unwell or living with dementia continue to experience that sense of loss. Many who are still unable to get to church do not have access to our streaming services and those who do use them find them helpful but not as fulfilling as being with others in person. I invite you to think about how you and your relationship with God are affected when you are unable to go into church and what you miss most of all about feeling excluded. The atmosphere of the building? Familiar prayers? Music? Thought provoking preaching? Sharing Holy Communion? Being surrounded by people sharing praise and prayer? The sense of belonging, being valued and spiritually nurtured together?



I visit and lead monthly worship at Barony Lodge, Brookfield House, Church House, Clarendon Court, Elm House, St. Catherine's and Woodeaves. Each month over 100 residents and a number of staff enjoy worshipping together. All our services are ecumenical, people come and go as they want or need and there are often "noises off"!

Chatty discussion helps memories, tears and laughter to be shared. As we sing familiar hymns, hear God's word and pray together, the Holy Spirit is with us, hearts are lifted, faces brighten and that sense of belonging together in Christ is palpable. People who are confused, sleepy, unable to hold a normal conversation or to read the service sheets may rouse to say the Lord's Prayer perfectly, to sing or mouth the words of a favourite hymn.



The joy of this ministry never ceases to amaze, delight and bless all who share in it.

Mary Harris

Mothers' Union News



We had a super time at our Annual Carol Party. Our Angel themed service was composed by Rev. David Taylor and our Treasurer, Anne Taylor. We opened with quiet reflection listening to Robbie Williams singing Angels. All readings and hymns were angel based. We also had a craft session where we made angel tree baubles. We endorsed the back of the bauble with a loving message and placed it in a bag from which we each picked one at random (not our own!) with extras going to members unable to be present. Everyone said how much they had enjoyed themselves.

We concluded with a time of fellowship drinking tea and eating stollen and mince pies and of course the raffle. Our theme for the next 3 years is *Join Us And Join In*. To find out more about Mothers' Union, have a look at St. Mary's Groups on the website or Google Mothers' Union for more information about this international Christian Charity.

We meet on the third Friday of each month in the Parish Hall at 2.15pm. We have a varied programme of events and speakers and all are welcome, even men and young people. You don't even have to be a mother!



Encounter

Encounter is an informal café style service at St. Mary's. A wide range of worship formats and activities are used including presentations, discussion, music, readings, prayers, poetry, art, practical activities and crafts. Each service is based around a theme and recent topics have included: kindness, money, St. Aidan, volunteering, faith and popular music, food, discipleship, neighbourliness, and winter. Encounter provides a great opportunity to get to know others in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.



Encounter is held in the parish hall at 7.15pm on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month. Hot drinks and light refreshments are served from 6.45pm and throughout the evening.

On four occasions during the year there is a bring and share supper around a large communal table, with a guest speaker who talks about their life and faith.

Several times a year there is an Encounter Explore which features innovative and inspiring prayer stations set up in the church to visit independently. Sometimes the Encounter Explores are at the usual Sunday evening time but twice a year they are run as full Saturdays with the option to drop in and stay for as long as you like.



Encounter is open to everyone. Do come along and experience Encounter for yourself; you will be made very welcome. If you would like more information please chat to a member of the Encounter team; Ernie Charlton, Alan Thompson, Carole Tilt and Rector Mark Hart or contact me via the parish office.

Carole Tilt, Encounter Leader

Forthcoming Events

Sung Compline for Candlemas with Concordia, **Sunday, 2nd February** at 6pm. A beautiful, peaceful, candlelit service.

There is an **Encounter Supper** by candlelight on **Sunday, 2nd February** at 7.15pm in the Parish Hall. The speakers will be Rev. David and Mrs. Anne Taylor who will talk about life and faith. This is a two course bring & share meal. Everyone is welcome; places must be booked by **Thursday, 30th January** with Carole Tilt or the Parish Office.

February Breakfast

The next breakfast will be held on **Saturday, 15th February**, 8.30am at Nantwich Football Stadium. The speaker will be Cathie Riddell, talking about the Frank Bruce Sculpture trail, at Inshriach Forest near Feshiebridge, near Aviemore. Book on the sign-up sheet at the back of Church, or call the office by midday on **Wednesday, 12th February**.

Youth Weekend Away

It's not too late to join us for our Youth Weekend Away to The Quinta (SY10 7LR.) Drop off 6pm on **Friday, 21st February**; collection 2pm on **Sunday, 23rd February**. 11-17's welcome. Cost £40pp. A great chance to get to know other youth better. Includes activities, games, worship, yummy food and a Bible theme for the weekend.

All Together Worship - Pancakes!

Join us at the 9.30am service on **Sunday, 2nd March** for our All Together Worship service, followed by refreshments, craft, games and of course pancakes! Booking required for catering purposes. No charge, but donations welcome. Finishes by 11.30am.

For Youth Weekend and Pancakes contact susie@stmarysnantwich.org.uk or 07795 696234 with any questions or to book.

Ash Wednesday is on **5th March**. There will be services of Holy Communion with Imposition of Ashes at 8am (Book of Common Prayer), 11am (Book of Common Prayer), 7.30pm (Common Worship, with hymns).

The next social event will be a **Ceilidh** on **Saturday, 10th May** at Acton Parish Hall. Details to follow.

See also **"Special Services & Events Calendar"** on p. 32.

The Sound of the Church
Lent Course 2025

From the loudest to the quietest we will learn something of the practice and the history of each sound, as well as asking how these sounds may speak of God, speak to God, speak to our souls, draw us together, deepen our faith, and shape our worship.

Tuesday afternoons (except week 3) and Wednesday evenings, each session lasting 1¼ hrs. You may attend one or the other, or swop between the two days from week to week.
Venue: St. Mary's Nantwich.

Week 1: Bells

2pm Tuesday, 11th March or 7.30pm Wednesday, 12th March
led by Stefan Zientek (Tower Captain) and the Rector.

Week 2: Organ

2pm Tuesday, 18th March or 6.30pm * Wednesday, 19th March
led by Simon Russell (Organist) and the Rector.

Week 3: Song

7.30pm Wednesday, 26th March **
led by Alison Phillips (Director of Music) and the Rector.

Week 4: Speech

2pm Tuesday, 1st April and 7.30pm Wednesday, 2nd April.
led by the Rector.

Week 5: Silence

2pm Tuesday, 8th April and 7.30pm Wednesday, 9th April
led by The Rev. Brian Statham.

To book, add your name to the list at the back of church or inform the Parish Office: office@stmarysnantwich.org.uk or 01270 625268.

* Note the change of time for this session.
** 2pm Tuesday, 25th March - Lady Day Holy Communion, not Lent Course.

Christmas at St. Mary's

Starting with the Christmas Tree Festival in mid November, it was one event after another at St. Mary's: concerts, school visits and of course all the special services. Christmas itself was remarkably well attended, with the church overflowing for the All Age Nativity on 15th December, and the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols on 22nd December. And see the separate article on the Crib Services (page 21). Thank you to so many people who played their part, offering their skills and services, and making St. Mary's a warm and welcoming place for thousands of people throughout the season.



A remarkable number of people attended Concordia's concert in St. Mary's on Saturday, 7th December, undeterred by storm Darragh. "Sweet was the Song" was directed by Alison Phillips, and the pianist was John Gough.



Shown here is Concordia performing for the diners at Navio Lounge on 19th December. They also performed at Rookery Hall for their guests on a festive weekend break, and at St. Mary's Acton's Tea @ The Tower on 15th December.



The Nantwich Singers attracted a large audience for their Christmas concert held in St. Mary's on Sunday, 15th December, directed by Ian Crawford, organist Tim Sagar. Entitled "The Ivy and the Holly" the performance was a twist on the familiar and included new compositions. Their next concert is on Saturday, 29th March, 4pm at St. Mary's, including Allegri's Miserere and Duruflé's Requiem.



L to R: Daisy, James Thompson, Betty, Michael-John Parkin - waiting at the north chancel door before entering the church to lead the journey to Bethlehem in the All Age Nativity. Daisy got stage-fright and wouldn't budge from the north transept, but Betty made the whole journey.



This year, instead of a Tots' Nativity, it was decided to have a Messy Christmas Party in the Parish Hall immediately following the All Age Nativity. It was a great success with over 100 people attending, from over 45 different families.



St. Mary's Choir singing the opening verses of "Once in royal David's city" in the chancel prior to the procession around the church to the choir stalls.

For the second year, a Carol Service organised by Oxley's Funeral Services was held at St. Mary's, on Wednesday, 18th December, attended by 350 people.



The staff of Oxley's Funeral Services following the Carol Service



The Cheshire Fire Choir led the singing. The Rector led the service, and lesson readers included Rev. Mike Turnbull (Rector of Wistaston) and Rev. Peter Ennion (Rector of Barthomley).

The collection was divided between Crewe Salvation Army, Nantwich Christie Hospital Support Group, and St. Mary's.

An Amazing Mystery Solved



As usual, the crib service was not a straight nativity play. Two detectives, Chris Tingle and Holly Berry were commissioned by Herod and his soldiers to find three snazzily dressed wise men. With help from an innkeeper, Mary and Joseph's landlady, Mary's cousin Elizabeth, shepherds, angels, the wise men's servant, a ship's waiter, a Rabbi and their secretary, the detectives found the three wise men. But they didn't tell Herod and realised that they didn't need to find the child Jesus as he would find them.



This time we started the script search early and had the source decided by 1st July. Annie and local physio and Nantwich Player, Andy Leach, finessed it to the right length and tone. Andy came to the dress rehearsal and gave feedback. As director, Andrea kept us on track and ensured rehearsals were enjoyable and to time.



Order of service from Susie: *"Set stage up, get costumes out, run through service, have lunch, get ready, hide from the crowds pouring into church".*



Feedback:*"Superb performance by everyone, youngsters were unbelievable. Great script, costumes and support from the back room."*

Reflections from our director Andrea: *"I was so happy to see how the team looked out for one another - helping each other on and off stage, supporting through highs and lows. Also, everyone had such great ideas for how it should look and was responsive and took on suggestions from each other."*



Quote of the day: *"The best bit was beating up Chris Tingle".*

News in Pictures



The annual Epiphany bellringers' lunch was held on Sunday, 5th January at The Red Cow.



In January FNL took the opportunity to meet downstairs to bake scones! Cheese ones, chocolate chip ones and raisin ones. Not a full photo as they were eaten too quickly!





Airman's Grave

The annual service was held on Sunday 12th January at the grave of Lt. Arthur Lesley Brown, the American airman who died on 14th January 1944 when his P47 Thunderbolt crashed by the Weaver near Shrewbridge Road.

The service was led by the Rector, and the Mayor of Nantwich, Cllr. Stuart Bostock, read the citation. Army Cadets, Air Cadets and the 4th Nantwich Brownies (who tend the grave) were in attendance.





A parade marched from Brookfield House, led by Jim Atherton of the Nantwich and District Branch of the Royal British Legion.

Beetle Drive

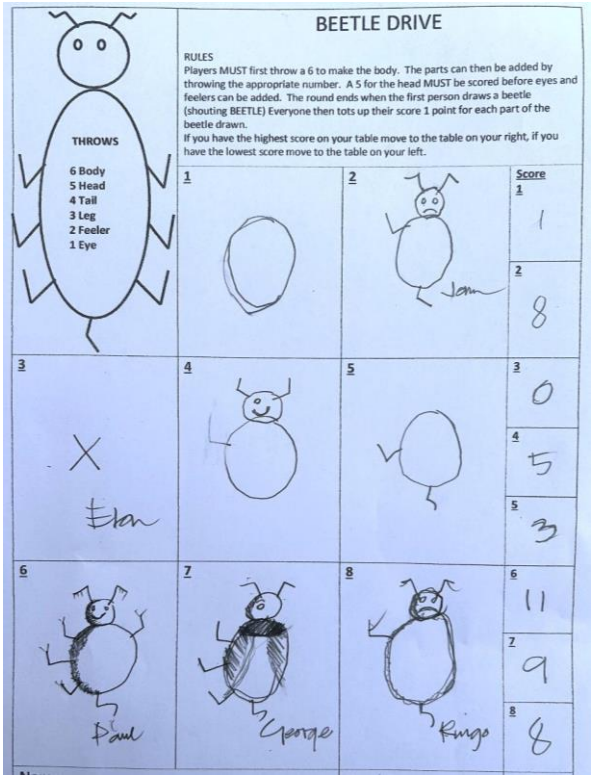
The beetle drive was a fantastically successful evening planned and organised by the refreshed social events committee (Rector Mark, Wendy Beastall, Caryl Boxhall, Andrea Howell-Jones and Geoffrey and Judith Pearson). As well as making as much noise as possible (encouraged by Geoffrey, who called the games), the aim of a beetle drive is to draw your own beetle (body, head, six legs, a tail, two antennae and two eyes) as quickly as possible on rolling the correct numbers on a die. Tables of four compete and those with the highest and lowest scores move tables.



There were many competitive dice-throwing techniques in evidence aimed at quickening the time between throws to maximise opportunity to draw a beetle. The overall winner was Rev Paul North.

There were also table winners for beetle questions. How many UK species of beetle? (over 4,000). How many world-wide species of beetle? (about 1.5 million). And there seemed to be some competitive artistic beetle drawing in evidence.





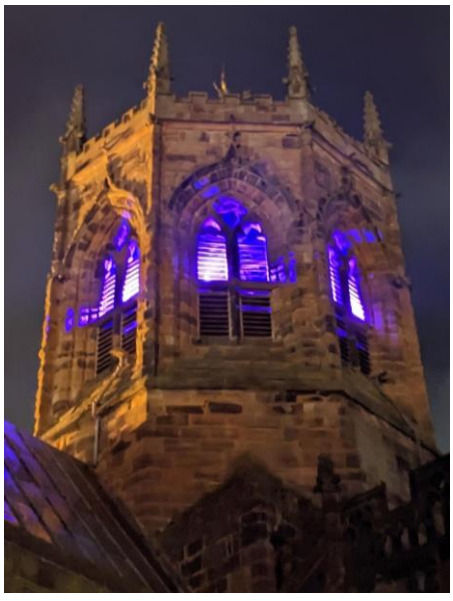
The fun and games were accompanied by a fish and chip supper. A great start to social events for 2025. People of all ages attended and said that they would attend again. Check page 32 for future social events that are planned for 2025.

Holly Holy Day

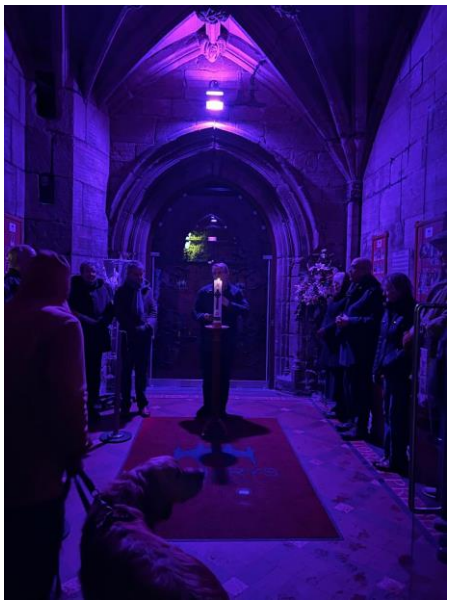
It was fine winter weather for Holly Holy Day this year which took place on 25th January, the anniversary of the Battle of Nantwich (1644). St. Mary's played its part by hosting a talk by Keith Lawrence, offering tours to visitors, providing the church grounds for the troops to assemble, and bell-ringing which included reverse rounds (thought to have been used in times past to warn of impending danger) and firing. The Rector led the prayers at the wreath laying ceremony at the cenotaph.



Musketeers fire in unison into the air after the wreath laying ceremony. Photo: Jonathan White.



The bells were rung from 7.30pm on Holocaust Memorial Day, Monday, 27th January, the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, then at 8pm about 25 people gathered as the tower was lit purple and a candle lit in the south porch (as part of the national "Light the Darkness" moment), and prayers were said.



Weekly Services & Groups

The church is open for all our usual regular services, and open to visitors Monday-Saturday, 9.30am-4pm. The 9.30am and 10.45am Sunday services continue to be live-streamed on YouTube most weeks.

Sunday	8.00am	Holy Communion
	9.30am	All Age Worship (Communion 1st Sunday)
	10.45am	Holy Communion
	6.00pm	Evensong
	7.00pm	Encounter (1st & 3rd Sundays)
Tuesday	8.30am	Morning Prayer
	10.00am	Mums & Tots in the Parish Hall
	3.45pm	SING!@St.Mary's in the Parish Hall
Wednesday	8.30am	Morning Prayer
	11.00am	Holy Communion
Thursday	8.30am	Morning Prayer
	10.00am	Little Fish Toddler Group in church
	7.00pm	Bellringing practice in the Tower
Friday	8.30am	Morning Prayer
	10am-1pm	Place of Welcome in the Parish Hall
	7.00pm	Choir Practice in church
	7.30pm	FNL
Saturday	8.30am	Morning Prayer

Readings for February

2nd February *(Presentation of Christ)*	Hebrews 2: 14-18 Luke 2: 22-40
9th February *(4th Sunday before Lent)*	1 Corinthians 15: 1-11 Luke 5: 1-11
16th February *(3rd Sunday before Lent)*	1 Corinthians 15: 12-20 Luke 6: 17-26
23rd February *(2nd Sunday before Lent)*	Revelation Ch. 4 Luke 8: 22-25

Is Easter Late this Year?

No it's not late, it's just later than it can be.

The date of Easter depends on the phase of the moon. There are complicated calculations and history behind the fixing of Easter. For the western churches Easter Day is on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the equinox on 21st March. For the eastern Orthodox churches, who follow the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar which is followed in the west, the date of Easter is different, as is the date of Christmas.

You may notice that this year Lent, which is six weeks before Holy Week, starts in March, not February. Shrove Tuesday, the day on which we eat pancakes before Lent starts, is therefore also in March.

Pancakes are symbolic of the eating up of the rich food in our houses before our Lent fast, which starts on Ash Wednesday. This later date is reflected in the dates of our February activities listed in this magazine.

Many people celebrate Valentine's Day on 14th February. St. Valentine was a 3rd-century Roman saint, commemorated in Western Christianity on 14th February. From the Middle Ages, St. Valentine has been associated with a tradition of courtly love. He was a clergyman, either a priest or a bishop, in the Roman Empire who ministered to persecuted Christians. He was martyred on 14th February.

Another well known saint commemorated in February, on the first of the month, is St. Brigid of Kildare in Ireland. She is the second Irish saint of fame along with St. Patrick. They, and the church in Ireland, followed the Eastern tradition and were not Roman Catholic until they were conquered by the Normans in the twelfth century.

Our other celebration in the church's year in February is the celebration of Candlemas. This is to commemorate the presentation of Christ in the Temple by Mary and Joseph. It is based on the account in Luke's gospel, chapter 2, and occurs on 2nd February. Christians in many parts of the world regard this as the end of Epiphany and they do not take down their Christmas decorations until Candlemas.

Dot Roxby

From the Registers: December 2024

Holy Baptism

We welcome you into the Lord's family

8th Kyle Jones

Holy Matrimony

Bless these thy servants

21st James Cowap & Olivia Jeffrey

Funerals

May they rest in peace and rise in glory

2nd June Rowland (85)
13th Joan Crawford (87)

"it was never about the kingfisher"



There was elaborate and delicious cake at the lunchtime launch of local poet Helen Kay's Chapbook of poems titled "it was never about the king fisher" in the Nantwich Museum. Published by independent publisher Dithering Chaps, Helen's collection of poems begins with people struggling to survive everyday living then progresses through a carefully crafted patchwork of nature, healing and touch towards the thrill of new things happening. It's available from *www.ditheringchaps.com* or from Helen herself, *hekay1958@gmail.com*



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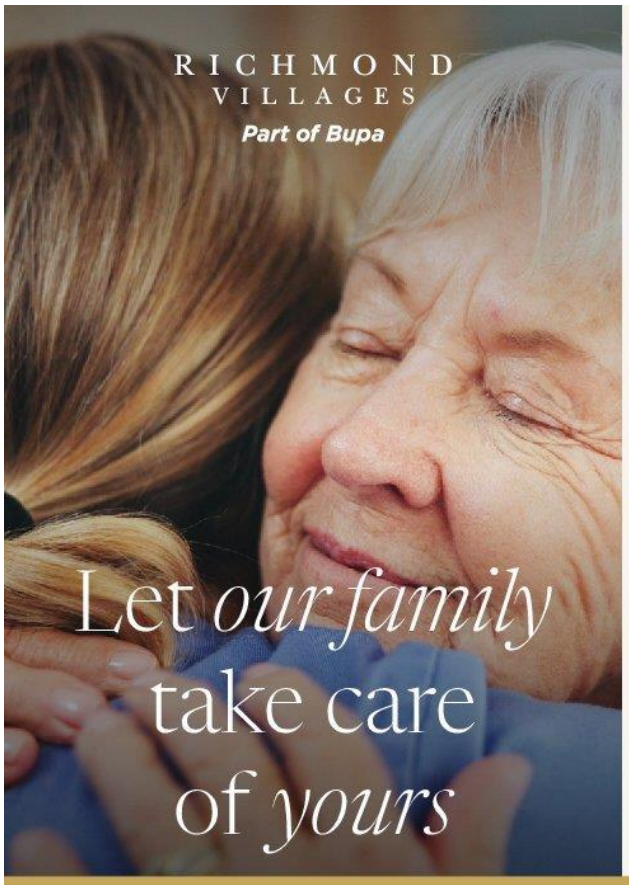
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Special Services & Events Calendar February-May 2025

February	1st	Candlelight Concert in Church, 7.30pm
	2nd	Sung Compline for Candlemas with Concordia, 6pm
	2nd	Encounter Supper, 7.15pm
	15th	St. Mary's Breakfast at Nantwich Football Club, 8.30am
	26th	Sound Bath in Church, 7.15pm
March	2nd	9.30am All Age Worship followed by Messy Pancake Party
	2nd	Encounter Explore in the Parish Hall, 7.15pm
	5th	Ash Wednesday Holy Communion, 8am, 11am & 7.30pm
	9th	Choral Evensong, 6pm
	11th	Afternoon Lent Course begins, 2pm
	12th	Evening Lent Course begins, 7.30pm
	15th	St. Mary's Breakfast at Nantwich Football Club, 8.30am
	22nd	Candlelight Concert in Church, 7.30pm
	25th	Mothers' Union Lady Day Communion Service, 2pm
	29th	Nantwich Singers Concert, 4pm
	31st	Easter Experience in Church (4 days)
April	5th	Encounter in the Parish Hall, 7.15pm
	5th	Nantwich Choral Society Concert in Church, 7.30pm
	12th	Spring Fair in the Parish Hall/Church grounds, 10am-2pm
	13th	Palm Sunday
	17th	Maundy Thursday Holy Communion and stripping of the altars, 7.30pm
	18th	Good Friday 10am All Age Worship 12noon-3pm The Three Hours led by Bishop Sam
	20th	Easter Sunday 6am Dawn service; 8am, 9.30am, 10.45am Communion, 6pm Jazz Mass, 7.15pm Encounter in the Parish Hall
	21st	Nearly Dan Concert in Church, 2.30pm
	30th	Sound Bath in Church, 7.15pm
May	7th	Annual Parochial Church Meeting, 7.30pm
	8th	Summer Lunchtime Concerts begin, 12.15pm
	10th	Ceilidh at Acton Parish Hall
	14th	Celebration of the Beatles with church, band & string quartet
	17th	St. Mary's Breakfast at Nantwich Football Club, 8.30am
	17th	Come & Sing: Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat
	18th	Encounter Supper
	24th	Encounter Explore Day in Church, 11am-4pm