

Keeping in Touch

The Newsletter of St Mary's Church
Portchester

No 40 December 2017 / January 2018



Martin Luther and his family around the Christmas tree, 1530s.

“No room – we’re full!”

Where have we heard this before? Portchester’s proposed extra housing? Brexit issues or Bethlehem 2000 years ago?

Who knows whether the proposed 744 extra houses for Portchester will go ahead or not? One main concern if it does, is how will the infrastructure of Portchester cope? There is no doubt that a good case has been made for the strain which will be on our schools, medical centres and roads, and many of us find sympathy with this concern. It is hoped that the planners will take all this into consideration and that at some point in the future, provisions will need to be made, with the necessary financial investment in the village.

At some stage, if it goes ahead, we will all need to pull together to make sure the necessary infrastructure is there. I’m dreaming now perhaps it’s time for a Church of England school in Portchester to take the extra pupils. After all, church schools are very popular with parents clamouring to get their children in, as the ethos and discipline are attractive to some. I’ve also heard of new church complexes being built in partnership with medical practices. Two doctor friends of mine work in such situations where the ‘healing of body, soul, mind and spirit’ are offered. No harm in dreaming or planting seeds in minds.

A similar cry was heard at the time of the recent European referendum; one of the points being that there were far too many immigrants coming into the country, putting a strain on the infrastructure. Of course, the counter argument was put, that the UK would benefit from immigrants in terms of workers, particularly staffing the NHS – not to mention the interesting cultural and culinary experiences!

If Portchester is to expand its population, I hope we can make them welcome – after all, many of them will be our children and grandchildren.

There will also be the added benefit of new money coming into the village, new life, creative people, extra volunteers and people who will get stuck into our community and being a breath of fresh air.

Has anyone considered the strain these extra new people will put on the infrastructure of St Mary's Church? Already we are bursting at the seams and do not have the room for proper children's and young people's groups – let alone toilets! I wish some of those who say that St Mary's not does need any building extension, would join us on Sundays at 10.00am and see the situation from the inside.

As well as the extra houses in Portchester, Portsmouth City Council is planning on building an extra 1,000 homes in Port Solent. While not part of Fareham Borough, Port Solent is in St Mary's Parish. Someone has estimated that our 'parish' could grow by 5,000 people. Given that 6% of the population of England are members of or attend church, and that in this area where the Anglican Church is still quite strong, it is likely that half of these will attend the Church of England - 150 new people will join our congregation (and that is not counting for any extra missional/evangelistic drives).

This will certainly put a strain on our resources, especially with just one full time minister and no Curate in sight for the immediate future. But I am sure we will welcome them, and find a way to minister to them.

How ironic as we come towards Christmas – the infrastructure of Bethlehem was creaking with thousands of extra people arriving for the census. 'No room, we're full' was the cry that night, but somehow room was found, and what a difference that newcomer made to our world.

We will make room for all our visitors who will be attending our services over Christmas. What a great opportunity to reach out, and to be enriched by the friendship and goodwill of community.

Have a happy Christmas,

Your friend and busy (but happy to be) parish priest,

Ian

PS. Where is Portchester?

It seems that everyone you speak to has a different view as to what is Portchester and what is not.

In last month's newsletter I said that most of the new houses (Romsey Avenue and Winnham) were not in Portchester but in Fareham. I was then told by a local politician on Facebook that this was wrong, and that Portchester extended to the Delme roundabout. This would mean therefore, that Cams School, Cams Golf Club and the Delme Arms are all in Portchester? Is this where they would see themselves? I was quite prepared to state that I was wrong (and did so in the notices), only to have it confirmed by the Leader of Fareham Borough Council that I was right, and that the politician who stated otherwise on Facebook was wrong!

Portchester *does* stop at Hatherley Crescent and behind the Crematorium, as the Church of England parish boundary shows. In fact the Council has requested Royal Mail to formally include Portchester in the addresses of all homes in the old parish that sits within the Borough, but not the homes beyond Hatherley Crescent. However, the anomaly seems to be that in order to keep voter figures reasonably even, the council ward of 'Portchester West' extends beyond Portchester to take in part of Fareham. So I was right after all, but it doesn't take away the point that the extra houses in Fareham will certainly feel a connection to Portchester and will be a challenge on the infrastructure of our village.

Reformation commemoration.

The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation gave us the opportunity at St Mary's for some interesting events: The series of Thursday evening talks on church history were very well supported with about 50 people from various churches and none, attending. The series of evening services on the 'Five Solas' saw a good increase in evening congregations. It was a joy to have the ministry of the Rev Tapani Simoyoki during October, and what an amazing evening our choir and orchestra put on for Reformation Sunday with Bach's 'Reformation Cantata.' We also hit the media! Our Vicar was interviewed on BBC Radio Solent on the Gunpowder Plot, and the story of the starling who knocked down the tea lights, got into the Church Times – see article on notice boards. Thanks for your enthusiastic support. The Vicar says he has received a lot of encouraging e-mails, letters and comments.

Generous giving and use of talents

Over the past few weeks some of you have acted out the '*Parable of the talents*' in Matthew 25:14-31 and have raised a lot of money for the ministry of St Mary's. **Peter and Sue Lucas** of Portchester House, held their annual wine tasting evening on 8th November, and the collection of £280 will pay for the Christingle. **Angela Parker** produced an excellent Wedding Fayre on 11th November which made £645. The exhibitors appreciated the warm church. There was a constant flow of visitors. She is planning on doing another one on 24th March. **Tony and Jan Fuller** organised a second meal at the Italian restaurant in Port Solent, O Sole Mio which attracted around 40 guests, and with generous raffle prizes donated by the management, raised £762. **Liz Smith** ran 10 miles in the recent Great South Run, and was sponsored by many of you, as well as local funeral directors. She raised £3,250 for the Labyrinth Garden of Remembrance, which was presented to the church on 19th November by the Mayor of Fareham, Councillor Geoff Fazackarley. We would also like to

thank **Andy Rouse** of 'Blue Dot' for kindly sponsoring Liz's top which included the logos of Barclay's Bank and St Mary's. It was not all receiving, we also gave – St Mary's Church gave a cheque for £600 to the Mayor for his charities.

Winding down Stepping up.

Jan Fuller, has now decided to concentrate on her reader ministry, so she is resigning from the Treasurer's post. She is happy to work with the successor to be appointed early in the year so that next year would be a handover period.

Is there anyone out there who would be interested? If so, please have a word with Jan for a job specification. We would prefer someone with accounting and payroll knowledge. We would also like someone who is committed to their faith and to St Mary's, as the Treasurer is a member of the PCC and the Standing Committee, which means they will be at the centre of things for the development of the church's life and ministry.

Assistant Treasurer. Jan has been ably assisted by David Williams, who has indicated that he would also like to stand down. Our grateful thanks to David, but more of that to come. Sally Young, a member of our 8.00am congregation, has kindly offered to be the new Assistant Treasurer.

Financial Giving.

Jan has also submitted this article: Thank you for your generosity in financial commitment to St Mary's. The ministry and mission of our church takes place because of the spiritual *and financial* gifts we choose to offer. These are the resources that fuel our mission; and yes, it does cost money!

Believe it or not, there is more to St Mary's than just what you see on Sunday morning! All of the things we do are planned and prepared by Ian

and those who are deeply committed to our becoming who it is God is calling us to be.

The decision to give is a choice, but as a follower of Jesus, it really isn't an option! Based on what we have received, we are encouraged to give something out of thanksgiving for what God has done, and as a sign of faithfulness and commitment to be a part of the good things that God is continuing to do in our parish. We have the gift of Jesus and we are invited to respond to what God has given us with generosity of our own.

Your gift matters – it matters to you as the giver, and to the church which uses it as a resource for mission.

As 2018 approaches, we are entering a time of discerning what we will contribute monetarily in the coming year. The practice of exercising financial stewardship is a spiritual discipline and a way to grow our faith. There is joy to be found in practicing generosity and it begins with reviewing your commitment to contribute or starting from now!

Christmas and Summer (Gala) Fayres

Hazel writesThank you for helping me to make our Christmas Fayre so much this year and over the last few years. This is my last year for organising it, but Jan Fuller has said she will organise it in 2018.

Both the Christmas and Summer Fayres are such an outreach into the community, bringing so many. Is there anyone who can take on the Summer Fayre? It is not so daunting as the Christmas Fayre as much of the advertising is done by the Portchester Community Association Gala. If you are willing to take this on please talk to Hazel, Jan or Rev Ian. Hazel would of course assist whoever takes over, and it does not mean having to do all

the work but it does involve bringing a team and lots of support together. You could bring some new ideas too.

Steps to Recovery

After two successful years in which a lot of people have been helped and encouraged, we are making some changes to our ministry to people in drug and alcohol recovery, 'Steps to Recovery.' The Group will no longer meet on Tuesday evenings. This will be replaced by 'one to one' support, so please contact Rev Ian or Tim McIlroy if you, or if you know someone in need of this kind of support. We are hoping that the Tuesday meeting will be held at Fareham Community Church in West Street. Most of our people come from Fareham anyway, so we might as well meet there. Ian and Tim will be helping the Community Church to set up the group. It is hoped in the future to

re-commence meetings at Portchester, but we need a committed Support Worker to facilitate this, and we are currently exploring sources of funding for this post.

Mental Health Support.

So far we have not had any interest expressed in this group, which is a pity, given the growing number of people experiencing mental health issues in Portchester. The aim is to provide group support, facilitated by the Richmond Fellowship. This will be an environment where no one is marginalized or judged, and where encouragement towards healing and acceptance can be given. It will be based around the needs of the clients, but there will be plenty of help for things like cooking, self-care, walking, creative writing, etc. We have a good team ready – so if you are interested, please contact Rev Ian. We would like to start this early in the new year.

The ‘Farmer and Rule Fund’

Some people have seen this on the annual balance sheet and wonder what it means. In other churches it would be known as the ‘Vicar’s Discretionary Fund.’ This fund is used to give financial help to people in need. It is not a large fund, so only small amounts can be given. We have already helped needy families and individuals with carpets, clothes, deposit for rent, etc. Only the Vicar normally knows who the person is, and the gift is given anonymously, so no fuss made. Often a third party will approach us suggesting a person who might appreciate some help. Thanks to Bryan Jerrard’s research we now know more about this name. In his book *‘Portchester: A Community History’* (p.54-55) we read that Emily Farmer, a local artist who lived in Portchester House, and the Rule family who lived in Churchill Cottage, left money in their will ‘for the poor of Portchester’ to be administered by the Vicar of St Mary’s. At our recent evening ‘Reformation Communion’ the offering was for this special fund which boosted it by over £150. It is a worthwhile fund if anyone would like to donate something to it at Christmas time.

Theology Group. During the past few months we have been looking at the doctrine of the Eucharist, in particular what Christ meant when he said, *‘This is my body.’* We have looked at Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican views, and on Thursday 7th December we look finally at the ‘Memorialist’ view pioneered by Ulrich Zwingli at the Reformation and held today by groups like the Baptists. Our speaker, Rob Milliken is from Paulsgrove Baptist Church and the meeting starts at 10.30am in the Parish Hall.

Men’s Breakfast. The group has welcomed new members recently and there is still room for some more. Our speaker on 9th December at 8.00am is Archdeacon Gavin Collins.

ADVENT

We are now in the Church Year season of Advent, which is the four weeks running up to Christmas. For those of you who are new to the Anglican Church, and the idea of a church year, perhaps some explaining. The two main Festivals (Feasts) of the Church year are preceded by ‘Fasts’. Before Easter the season is called ‘Lent’ and before Christmas it is called ‘Advent.’ Traditionally it really was a fast, although Lent is easier to do than Advent, because of the world’s ‘Christmas’ which starts earlier than ours! Both seasons are symbolized by the liturgical colour of purple, which is worn at funerals, and suggests mourning, or at least deep reflection on some of life’s more serious issues. This means, for example, that the songs and hymns sung in church tend not to be so ‘lively’ and upbeat, and are slightly more somber and reflective. Because of this, there are no flowers in church during Advent, and we try and keep the Christmas tree at bay for as long as we can! We hope you will appreciate this, and that it will make the celebration of Christmas (and Easter) more ‘different’ and thus special.

During Advent we have two courses running. **On Sunday evenings** Derek Johnston is leading a ‘York Course’ over four weeks called “**So what are you waiting for?**” It begins at 5.30pm with a short time of worship and a brief introductory talk, followed by home-made soup and rolls (provided by Shirley – thanks!). After that it is group discussion around tables – café church style.

The House Groups will be following a course written by our own Penny McIlroy entitled, ‘*The Road to Bethlehem and beyond.*’ Details of this are on the notice board, and those not normally involved in house groups are welcome to join one even just for this Advent course.

CHRISTMAS AT ST MARY'S

Christmas is always a busy but exciting time at St Mary's, as we welcome around 3,000 people to our various services. This year there will be two special features in and around the building:

- **Green floodlight.** In the past two years we have floodlit the building, but this year we will also have a green floodlight to light up the yew tree at the front of the church. This should be a great photo opportunity – so get clicking and let's see some good ones on Facebook.
- **Nativity Scene.** We are grateful to Gianni, the owner of O Sole Mio Italian restaurant in Port Solent for the loan of his life size nativity set. This will be in the north transept, and we hope that day time visitors, especially children will really love this.

School services start on 13th December with Northern Junior, with the rest of the schools coming the following week. There is a poster with all the details.

This year we will also be welcoming the 'Andy Pandy' Nursery for their Nativity Service on 14th December.

Our church services start with '**Christingle**' on Sunday 10th at 4.00pm. Again we hope to have uniformed organizations present and the band of TS Tenacity playing us in and out. All the rest of the Christmas services are advertised well. Collection boxes have been given out for the Children's Society and we ask that you return these (filled!) to the Christingle and put them in the crib.

This year's '**Reformation**' theme is one of our Christmas features. Why not? It was Martin Luther who is credited with being the one to introduce decorated trees into homes at Christmas. This custom was brought to

England by the Lutheran husband of Queen Victoria – Prince Albert, and so became part of our tradition. This year's Christmas card from the Vicar has 'Christmas Market at Wittenberg' with All Saints Church in the background where Luther nailed his Ninety-Five theses and where he is buried.

Our **Carols by Candlelight** this year will be on the theme, '**Christmas with Martin Luther.**' Instead of reflections from the clergy, there will be a series of readings from Luther's Christmas sermons from 'Luther' himself who will appear in period costume! We will sing one of his Christmas carols and of course to end it all, real '*Gluhwein mulled wine*' from Germany (thanks to Hazel who went over and got it for us). The services will be on the Sunday and Monday, and as last year, could we ask St Mary's members to come on the Monday if possible, as Sunday tends to be more popular with members of the public.

On Christmas Eve (Advent 4) there will be **no 8.00am** service this year, and the main morning service will be at the earlier time of **9.30am**. The same will apply to Christmas Day – no 8.00am and a 9.30am Family Communion. Next year we hope to revert back to having an 8.00am service.

Christmas Day Lunch. As in the past few years, Ron and Lynn are kindly putting on a Christmas lunch for anyone who might otherwise be on their own, and would prefer not to be. This will be at the Parish Hall from 12noon. Lifts to and from homes can be arranged. There is no cost for this as the food etc. has all been donated by local businesses and generous people. Helpers are always welcome (especially drivers) and you don't have to be a member of the church. But we do need to know how many to cater for, so please register with Wendy at the Parish Office.

Quiet Christmas Service. This service has grown in numbers in the past two years we have put it on, so we think it meets a need. It is for those who have been bereaved, or for whom Christmas has not been very ‘merry;’ this year. It offers a different atmosphere to the packed and jolly Christmas services we are accustomed to. It will be on Sunday 31st December at 3.00pm. Please let anyone know who you think might appreciate this sort of service.

Holiday Midweek services. Owing to school carol services and holidays, Wednesday 6th December will be the final Wednesday service until we start back on **10th January**. There will be no Morning Prayer, or Friday services during the 2 weeks after Christmas. Fridays start back on **5th January** and Morning Prayer on **8th January**.

Christmas Concert. On Friday 29th December at 1.00pm we have a concert in the church by a Dutch choir called ‘*Trajecti Voces*’. The concert will be free with a retiring offering, and we will be providing the choir with lunch at 12noon. As there are 70 in the choir, let’s see if we can get even more in the audience. You might be ready for this at the end of a week Christmas week.

2018

Next year promises to be a very exciting one for St Mary’s as we hope to develop several new discipleship and mission activities. With each copy of this month’s *Keeping in Touch* you will receive a church calendar for 2018. It might be helpful if you do not throw this out with your Christmas cards and magazine but kept it for the year. Often we reach events in the year for which some people said they knew nothing about!

Café Church. Our last Café Church to ‘Renew the Vision’ did not work well – we were too rushed, the serving of food got a bit chaotic, the

presentation was rushed and there was no time for discussion, as a baptism family were waiting to get in! Sorry!

We are going to have another Café Church on **Sunday 21st January** at 10.00am. This time there will just be a short 30 minute service with no Communion (there will be Communion in the early evening at 4.00pm). We will not be serving breakfast, but will just have pastries already on the tables, so all that will be served will be drinks. There will be no Baptism after it, and we hope to finish by 11.30am. Could we ask for a good turn out that day, as we really want to get the church motivated and supportive of our vision.

Confirmation. There are a few of you who have enquired about being confirmed. This is the service in the Anglican church where you renew the promises for yourself, which were made on your behalf by your parents and Godparents at your Baptism. It is a public profession of your faith, and allows you to (legally!) take Communion in the Anglican Church. There will be a service at Portsmouth Cathedral on Easter Eve – **Saturday 31st March** at 8.00pm. However, if you still would like to be confirmed but can't manage that day, there are other occasions. We would like to begin a group meeting starting in the New Year for those interested, so please see Rev Ian as soon as possible.

Communicating – Pompey Chimes

Our monthly diocesan publication will be changing from newspaper format to magazine format in 2018. We give these out at all age services, and we hope you will take one to be inspired and kept up to date with what is happening around our small but vibrant Diocese of Portsmouth with its 140 parishes. Don't take one if you are not that interested, as they cost us £1 each and we always run out so that other folk are not able to get one.

Finally, Rev Ian writes again....

Communicating - “Keeping in Touch”

This newsletter you are reading was initiated by me soon after I arrived here. It was born out of a desire to help create an open and transparent atmosphere at St Mary’s, so that everyone knew everything that was happening. By communicating in this way, I also hoped that we could encourage maximum support for our events and activities. In the main, I think it is appreciated and your support has very much encouraged me.

It is not meant to be a magazine as such, for example it does not have recipes, poems, rotas, and ‘*As I was looking through my study window I saw a little bird, and thought*’ and similar. For it to evolve into a magazine would be costly in terms of printing and distribution. If anyone would like to start a magazine (and edit it!) they are welcome. Perhaps something of a more general nature for all the parish would be interesting, even if just occasionally (as an addition to this or alongside it).

Who writes it? Basically all of **you** who have an event you wish to publicise – often they are literally ‘cut and paste’ from your e-mails. I edit it and contribute other bits of information, as I am able to see the life of the whole church and tend to know most of what is going on. However, I am aware that there are many areas of St Mary’s where I am not regularly present and don’t organise, so if that is your group – why not contribute something regularly.

Who delivers it? It is distributed on the last Sunday or first Sunday bi-monthly and about a third of the copies are taken by members present that day. Others take copies for friends not present. I also put a bundle in my car, and if I am passing your house, I will pop it through the letter box. However, as the number of copies are growing (as the congregation and contacts list grows) this is becoming more difficult. We are forming a team

of local distributors from the February issue onwards and if you would like to help, please let me know.

There is no subscription or cost, it is free, but if we sense that you are not that interested in St Mary's, you will soon not be getting one put through your letter box. If we then hear howls of protest from you – we will be delighted to know that you are still interested, and normal services will be resumed.

I would appreciate some feedback. For example, does it come out too often or not often enough? Does it say too much or too little? One person said it says too much and they get bored reading it and stop half way through. That is not you – or you would not be reading this! Others read it avidly, and some scour every word. But if you would prefer it in memo or bullet point style, rather than my prose – again please let me know.

Thank you again for reading this, and for supporting what you can, and for helping to make this church a happy place for me to minister in, and a great community to serve.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

St Mary's Parish Church

Portchester Castle

Sunday services: 8.00am; 10.00am and 6.00pm

(Baptisms 12.30pm)

Weekdays: Morning Prayer, Monday – Friday 9.00am – 9.20am

Wednesdays – Holy Communion 6.30pm – 7.00pm

Fridays (Parish Hall) 10.00am – 10.40am

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