

Keeping in Touch

The Newsletter of St Mary's Church
Portchester

No. 41 February / March 2018



Drawing: James Hair

From Rev Ian

I write this as the Christmas tree comes down in church after Epiphany Sunday, and with the sound of ‘*We three kings*’ still ringing in my ear, I am reminded that the church’s Christmas is well out of sync with the world’s. They do Christmas when we are still in Advent, and when they finish Christmas, ours has hardly begun. Mind you, it is a losing battle to keep Advent out of Christmas, but I’m not that much of a purist that I get all ‘*Scrooge*’ about it, especially seeing the school children enjoying St Mary’s at that time of the year.

I really enjoyed Christmas this year at St Mary’s, more than I have done for many years. I think partly this was because I was more organised this time. Thank you for the many cards, and for the fact that so many of you took time to write a few lines of appreciation. The services were very well attended and it would be difficult to say which one was my favourite. We are so fortunate to have such a great team and supportive congregation, that we can put on such a variety.

Some clergy moan about the people who only come to church at Christmas, and usually have a bit of a dig at them on those occasions. For me, I hope I would never do that, because I am really pleased at the people who only come once a year – after all, most of the people of Portchester don’t come at all! So yes, it is lovely welcoming so many. Not only does it show the great support we have in the community, but at a deeper level, it shows that deep within the soul, people still want to make a connection with the real meaning of Christmas.

The challenge of the year ahead is for an ‘all year Christmas’ – not carols, trees and mince pies. But peace, goodwill, generosity, cheerfulness – please don’t pack these things away with the decorations, but hang them out all year round.

Someone sent me this:

*“When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and wise men are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
Then the work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to
release the prisoners, to rebuild the community, to bring peace
among brothers and sisters, to make music in the heart.”*

Help us at St Mary’s to make Christmas all the year round.

Your friend and pastor,

Ian

Christmas

Christmas at St Mary’s was a great success. We had possibly the largest numbers ever attending the Christmas Fayre, and one of the highest amounts of money raised – over £3,000. Well done, and thanks to everyone who helped and supported. The Christmas Fayre has real potential, and we are currently in discussion with an event organiser about doing something a bit bigger this year – a Christmas Market & Fayre. Watch this space!

The Christingle was well up on previous years, and the Midnight Mass, after years of decline, showed a big increase this year. I think we all agree that ‘*Martin Luther*’ went down very well at the Carol Services, and our grateful thanks to Derek for really getting into the part, and to the many people who offered to do extra stewarding. We are grateful to Sophie for organising neighbours from Castle Street to do the stewarding at the nativity service. This was a great link with the local community.

Several of them decided on a Christmas Card amnesty, and greeted each other on Facebook instead, donating £130 to St Mary's.

There were some lovely comments on Facebook from members of the public, and some great photos were taken and also appeared there. Trev Harman's photos were particularly appreciated this year, particularly of the church floodlit at night (thank you Tony, for seeing to this), and the large scale nativity set in the transept (loaned by *O Sole Mio* Italian Restaurant – again thanks to Tony for this contact).

Advent Posada. Jane Baker writes,

Very many thanks to all those who took part during Advent. Having read the *Journal*, the Donkey Mary and Joseph had a great time even if they had to deal with flu, and sniffles on their way, it seems that all who took part thoroughly enjoyed the experience meeting with others at this busy time and Mary and Joseph must have been exhausted by the time they reached Church on Christmas Eve. I feel that we achieved our aim to make time for Jesus in our lives at this busy time. Also we reached a number of new families. For those interested we will run this during Advent 2018 starting on 2nd of December.

Keeping in Touch

The overwhelming response both by e-mail and conversation was 'we like it exactly as it is.' Everyone said they don't want short, bullet points, or 'memo' type phrases. They appreciate that it is part of our desire to be transparent, and to let people know as much as possible about what is going on. Several people said that anyone who gets bored half way through reading it has obviously little interest in St Mary's.

Matins

We identified 67 of you who regularly attend the 8.00am service. All received a ballot paper, and 47 were returned, over 70%. Normally those who don't return are not bothered one way or another, and probably happy with the way things are. 14 said they did not want Matins, but 33 said they did, so again with over 70% in favour, we think Matins should stay. The largest majority (22 out of 33) wished for the first Sunday of the month, and the majority preferred a mixture of different styles as at present. Of course, when the first Sunday of the month is a major festival, (e.g. Epiphany on the first Sunday in January), it will always be Holy Communion.

Those who don't attend the 8.00am service won't have a clue what any of this is about. Sorry!

Farmer and Ruel Fund.

Last month we mentioned something about this 'Vicar's discretionary fund' to help people in need. (It is Ruel – not Rule!). An unintended and pleasantly surprising result, was that the idea touched many hearts at Christmas, and the fund received some very generous donations – several from outside the church. If there are cases of financial need, where a small amount of money might make a difference, please get in touch with the Vicar.

Title of 'Vicar'

When it was announced recently that Rev Ian had been made 'Vicar' by the Bishop, it was greeted with some surprise: '*But I thought he already was the Vicar!*' Let us explain – A Vicar or a Rector (they are now both the same) has the 'living' and cannot be easily removed from office. Because there were too many in post who were 'past their sell by date' or whose ministry was becoming counter-productive, or because there were some

changes envisaged in the parish boundary or churches being linked, the office of ‘Priest-in-Charge’ was introduced in some cases, which would allow the Bishop to move on the Priest if he thought it was necessary. When Ian was licensed in March 2013, it was as ‘Priest-in-Charge’, but the Archdeacon allowed him to use the title ‘Vicar’ as it was more commonly understood (although he legally wasn’t). By making Ian ‘Vicar’ gives a sense of stability both to his ministry and to the parish. He is now ‘Vicar of Portchester’ rather than ‘Priest-in-Charge of St Mary’s Church.’ No increase in salary, unfortunately!

Update: Heating system

The current heating in the church which is a combination of old and new radiators, is only ‘temporary’ and has been allowed to be so by Archdeacon’s license. We have had a meeting with the DAC and told them that under-floor heating is out of the question (our faculty application for this has been withdrawn) and that we would like the present system to be made permanent. They have asked us to ‘tweak’ it a bit, get the advice of a heating consultant, and make a new application, which we are in the process of doing. We will keep you updated on the progress. It was lovely to have the church so warm over Christmas (especially for the schools services). Of course on particularly cold days when the wind is blowing in from the east (as on Epiphany Sunday), the opening of the front door, with draughts from the bell tower, will mean that the church will be cold even with the heating on. There is nothing we can do about those days, but hopefully they will be the exception.

Centenary of the end of World War I

This year of 2018 is the centenary of the end of the ‘Great War’, and as the year progresses, this will give us many interesting themes to make special events out of. We already have a couple of projects in mind:

- **War Memorial.** We are hoping to create a new War Memorial for those killed in the services during World War II. A small committee of church and community members have been meeting. A design has been approved by the PCC and we are in the process of applying for a faculty. It is hoped that this will be dedicated and unveiled towards the end of the year, and we have asked for a member of the Royal Family to come to Portchester for this occasion.
- **Commemorative Booklet.** We are producing a booklet which will have the details (and photos where possible) of all those whose names appear on the World War I memorial. This will also include a list of names for the WWII memorial. We are also including poems on the theme of war and peace which have been submitted by members of the Portchester community, or their relatives. We hope to have this available in September. Many thanks to Kate Tame who is editing this, and to all who have submitted poems.

New chairs.

The late Kath Muckells left some money in her will to St Mary's, not to go into the general account, but to be used for some specific lasting memory, particularly in the fabric of the church. The PCC agreed that some new chairs were required. We are purchasing 24 nice chairs for the chancel, as the pews in it are unseemly and very difficult to move. This will help to generally tidy up the chancel. We also bought 30 new plastic chairs for overflow services (which came in very handy at Christmas), but we reckon we need to get another 30 to replace the wooden and tin ones we sometimes use. We feel that the use of chairs rather than pews works best in three areas of the church where we need to be more flexible with seating: the chancel, north transept and crèche.

Placement: Rev Emmanuel Nazir

During Lent, and again for Holy Week and Easter, we will be having the Rev Emmanuel Nazir doing a placement with us. Emmanuel is currently the Curate at St James' Church, Milton, but he needs to get some experience of a different churchmanship, and so St Mary's was suggested. Emmanuel is originally from Pakistan, but from a Christian family there. He will be taking part in our services, and other events. We would like him to do some pastoral visiting, so he may well be accompanying our Vicar on some visits. If you would particularly wish Emmanuel to visit you on his own, that would be good, and please let Rev Ian know.

“Friends of St. Mary's Church”

The Trustees continue to be encouraged by the amount of interest and support that there is in the Charity and its aims. The membership is currently quite steady but the aim is to see if it can be further increased this year. Leaflets placed in the Church need to be regularly replenished. Further leafleting is planned in additional areas in Portchester in 2018 in order to reach out to the wider community.

Encouraged by the success of the first concert in November last year by the Solent Fellowship Band, the Trustees are now planning to arrange others on an annual basis. These will be widely advertised. The choice of a concert by the Solent Fellowship Band last year was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. The Bandmaster and Players were delighted at having the opportunity to play in such an iconic venue. Afterwards they expressed their wish to return in the near future. The Trustees have therefore invited the Band to return in June 2019. They have willingly accepted.

The Trustees are delighted that the Charity has been able to fund St. Mary's new sound system as its first project after just two years since formation. The Church now has in place an upgraded system with additional

loudspeakers and improved microphone facilities. This has been greatly appreciated by all users of the Church.

Whilst not aiming a membership drive at regular church attendees the Trustees wish to invite you all to attend and support the Charity's future concerts. In addition please take every chance that occurs to introduce its membership to friends, neighbours and relatives. Please recommend us to anyone who appears to support the Friends' aims and objectives. Membership is just £10 per annum. (Contributed by David Williams, Chairperson).

Duty Wardens.

There are occasions when the Churchwardens cannot be with us so they are looking for willing volunteers to help oversee the smooth running of the services, read out the notices, etc. If you are interested, please speak to Hazel Powlesland for more details. So far for 8am we have Diana Bolton, Valerie Agar, Brian Boxall and Roger Millard; for 10am we have Liz Nice, Vicki Powell, Denise Simmons, Ian Parker and Kay Walker.

Bread at Holy Communion

For some time we have alternated at the 10.00am service between having wafers and baked bread. Generally speaking, it is found that wafers are more practical, especially for those who want to dip the bread in the wine. The majority of the Ministry Team were in favour of using only wafers from now on, but bread at smaller, more informal communions, particularly in the evening. Because of the threat of flu, those handling the bread or wafers will from now on also use anti-bacterial hand wash as well as the liturgical 'ablutions' – pouring water over the celebrants hands.

Tea Room.

Our Tea Room has had another successful year. Although because of a shortage of volunteers, we had to close the Tea Room more often than before (including most Sundays), the takings were up again on previous years, taking in over £40,000, £768 more than last year. The reputation for our friendly volunteers, and delicious cake is becoming widespread with high recommendations on *Trip Advisor*. However, without more volunteers we cannot sustain this, and without extra help we cannot provide lunches this Easter or summer. Once again, we are desperately putting out an appeal for help over the Easter weekend and the months of June – September. Can you spare a few hours, particularly during our busiest time of between 11am and 2.00pm. Speak to Judy Sherry who is co-ordinating the volunteers for this, or David Williams our Tea Room Treasurer. We have also started a list for a Sunday Rota. All we are asking is for volunteers to take on a Sunday afternoon, following the tea and coffee after our 10am service. This will be until 3 at the moment and 4pm in the longer hours. If you are interested in signing up for a Sunday or 2 or 3 or would like more information please see Hazel Powlesland.

LENT AT ST MARY'S

Lent starts on **Ash Wednesday, 14th February**. However, the day before is 'Shrove Tuesday' (13th February), and we will be holding an informal all-age service at 6.30pm followed by a Pancake Party. There is no need to book and no cost, so please turn up. We hope that families will especially come to this. Please start to now bring **last year's palm crosses**. They will be burned in the service (outside this time!) and ground down to provide the ash for Ash Wednesday.

To mark the start of Lent there will be a Sung Eucharist with the imposition of ashes on **Ash Wednesday** (14th) at 7.30pm.

Bishop's Lent Appeal. 'Refugee and neighbour'

The main charity we are supporting this year is **Christian Aid**. They work directly with refugees, through local partnerships, and through linked organisations. For example, in Iraq they have been working with a partner organisation called REACH to provide assistance to families who have been displaced by violence, with the aim of helping them regain their independence. They help with vocational training, access to water in rural areas, renovation of key amenities like schools and hospitals, and events that help bring communities together. In one project, the influx of displaced families has been seen as a blessing to the existing village, and this new community has been enabled to gain an income by growing cucumbers and other vegetables in new greenhouses.

Whatever our own experience, perhaps we do all share some sense of the vital importance of having a place to belong, somewhere to call home. And along with our own need for a place in the world we can hear the call to love our neighbours both distant and near. So as well as supporting the work of Christian Aid overseas this appeal is for those charities and local groups in our area that have sought to help refugees, including those who have played a part in welcoming displaced people into their communities. Some of our own Parishes have been active in helping refugees families to settle, and many will have heard about grass roots projects and initiatives.

If you would like to nominate a local charity or community group to receive a grant this year, please contact:
rachel.houlberg@portsmouth.anglican.org

Study Groups.

Lent was originally, as well as a time of extended prayer, fasting and giving, a period when those to be baptised at Easter, underwent special courses and lectures in preparation for this. This has led to Lent being a

time when we also focus on more study. At St Mary's we are holding special groups and have produced a special leaflet for this – do make sure you have a copy of 'Learning, Growing, Changing: Lent at St Mary's'.

Praise Service: 18th February 10.00am.

Lent this year will start with a more up-beat service than we would normally start this season with. We are having a special guest speaker. **The Rev Malcolm Rothwell** is a retired Methodist minister living in Portchester. He recently took part in the London Marathon and wrote a book comparing training and running for this, to living the Christian life (a good Lent subject). He will have copies of his book on sale. Malcolm is well known in the Anglican diocese as having conducted retreats for us. There will not be Communion at this service (Communion will be held at 8.00am and 6.00pm), instead there will be **adult Baptisms** during the service. We hope that this service will be well attended, and that many of you will find the topic and speaker of interest.

Children and Communion.

At St Mary's, we have permission from the Bishop to admit children to communion after the age of seven. However, they need to be accompanied by their parents, and to have done a short course explaining the meaning of Communion. If you think your child would be interested in this, please have a word with Rev Ian or Wendy Castle, and we will organise something. They would be admitted to Communion on Easter Sunday.

Confirmation

So far we have about four adults who have expressed a desire to be confirmed, and will be so at a special service at Portsmouth Cathedral on Saturday 31st March at 8.00pm (Easter Eve). Confirmation is when you profess that the faith your parents wished to bring you into at your baptism, is now a faith you own for yourself. We don't encourage children to be

confirmed at St Mary's and the minimum age should normally be around 16. We will arrange a group to look at some subjects around confirmation, so if interested, please see Rev Ian.

Evening services.

These recommence on Sunday 18th February at 6.00pm with Holy Communion. This session's theme is '*Soulmaking: growing through your desert experience.*' We will be looking at Jesus' experience of being in the wilderness, and how we also sometimes experience a 'wilderness' in our own lives. But just as the wilderness was used to make Jesus strong, we will consider how our own wilderness times can actually make us bigger Christians on the inside. Details are on the notice board or in the leaflet, '*Lent at St Mary's ...*'

Churches Together in Portchester – Lent course.

This year's course will start on Tuesday 20th February 7.30pm at the Methodist Church and will run for the next 5 weeks. This year it is a study based on the film, 'Touching the Void' which tells the gripping true-life tale of two climbers' fight for survival when disaster strikes during an expedition to the Andes. The study guide has been written by Rev Nicholas Calver, Vicar of St John's Redhill, Surrey.

On the subject of '**Churches Together**' – this is the umbrella group which draws the four churches in Portchester (St Mary's, Catholic, Methodist and Free Church) together and organises joint events such as the Good Friday procession, Pentecost service, Lent courses and other events. As well as the minister or priest, each church sends two representatives. For many years Val Mizen and Virginia Graves have represented us on this. Virginia feels it is now time to step down, and we thank her for her long devoted service. If you would like to replace Virginia on the group, please have a word with Val Mizen or Rev Ian.

OTHER EVENTS IN FEBRUARY

The Theology Group starts up again on Thursday 1st February 10.30am – 12noon at the parish hall. Our speaker is Marcus Collie an ordinand from Portsmouth Pathway who will speak on ‘The Mystery of the Trinity.’ You don’t need to have a degree in theology or be a great intellectual to enjoy these groups! It is simply an opportunity to reflect and discuss at a deeper level. The group is growing in numbers, and we meet on the first Thursday of most months.

Our fun and fellowship event this month is a **Skittles evening** at the church on Friday 2nd at 7.00pm. It will be a ‘bring and share’ supper.

Ghana Bishop visits our Deanery.

Some of you may have heard of IDWAL which stands for Inter-Diocesan West Africa Link. This is a link between our diocese and the Anglican Church of West Africa (mainly Ghana). Our Deanery’s link is with the Diocese of Sekondi. For the past few years this has fallen into abeyance, but with the appointment of their new bishop, Rt Rev Alex Asmah, we are reviving the link. Bishop Alex will be visiting our Deanery on **Thursday 15th February** and there will be an open meeting and social event to meet him at 7.30pm at St Mary’s Church, Warsash. All are welcome to attend.

Tea and Company 2: we are proposing to run a second Tea & Company on the 3rd Sunday of the month beginning in February (18th) from 2.15pm – 4.00pm at the Parish Hall and will run monthly apart from August. We hope that this will fill the gap left by “Living with Grief” and be led by those who were on the Living with Grief team. See Jane Baker for more details.

Men's Breakfast

Our speaker on Saturday 10th February at 10.00am is **Dr Roger Hutchins**. Roger comes with a lot of pastoral experience of leading churches, but in the last few years has been a lecturer in teaching children with various disabilities. He and Ann live on a house boat at Wicor Marina and they occasionally attend our services. Our group is growing and we now have around 20 men regularly, but there is always room for more. We finish around 9.45am.

EVENTS IN MARCH

Our speaker at the Men's Breakfast on 10th March is our own **Peter Battley**, and he will lead us in a bible study topic that day. Please come and support Peter and the group.

Theology Group 1st March at 10.30am. Our speaker will be Rev Emmanuel Nazir, who from his own background will speak on the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus and relate it to the persecution of Christians in Pakistan today.

Monthly Bible Book Club

Starting in March there will be a new monthly group at Jan & Tony's house – 25 Kilmiston Drive where we will look at a different book of the Bible each month. We start on 8th March 7pm – 0pm with the Book of Esther.

Healing Services

For several months now, **Derek Johnston and Vicki Powell** have been thinking and praying about developing the healing ministry at St Mary's. This month on the 11th March at 6.00pm we will commence a series of four healing services on the 2nd Sunday of the month. These will be short services with a homily on healing, and at the end there will be an

opportunity for people to be prayed for and anointed with oil. The Vicar will lead the services and preach the homily but Derek and Vicki will play a major role in the ministry. By having it in the evening, we can offer a quieter and more un-hurried atmosphere. Healing is not just for physical needs. Sometimes people need time to talk about other issues, so Hilary Dawson will be sitting at the back of the church at the close of the service, at what we will call 'The listening post.'

Do you know that we also offer a prayer ministry every Sunday? During Communion there are always two people sitting in the north transept, and they will gladly listen and pray with you for whatever needs you have. Please avail yourself of this ministry. Don't go away from the service still carrying the burdens you came in with.

Wedding Fayre. After the success of last year's St Mary's own wedding fayre, Angela Parker will be organising another one for Saturday 24th March from 11am – 3.00pm. If you are getting married or know someone who is, please encourage them to come. Remember that the Tea Room will also be open.



HOLY WEEK SERVICES:

Sunday 25th March. **Palm Sunday** 9.45am Procession from the oak tree at Castle Street followed by all age service at 10.00am.

Monday – Wednesday series of three **Holy Week** reflections at 7.30pm from Rev Emmanuel Nazir followed by Compline led by the Readers.

Maundy Thursday – 29th March 7.30pm. Eucharist of the Last Supper followed by one hour Vigil (for those who wish to stay).

Friday 30th **Good Friday**. 12.00pm Three hour meditation led this year by Derek Johnson.

Saturday 31st 8.00pm **Confirmation** and Easter Vigil at Portsmouth Cathedral

Sunday 1st April – **Easter Day**

6.00am Sunrise Service

7.00am Breakfast in the New Room

8.00am Holy Communion

10.00am Parish Eucharist (with special children's activity)

(No evening service)

APRIL

‘A Different Day’ on Tuesday 17th April there will be a day-long event in the church particularly for the elderly, and those who don't get out much. It will include social activities, quiz, fish and chip lunch, crafts and an opportunity for prayer and worship. These days are now well established in the city of Portsmouth churches. If you are interested in attending or helping out, please see Jan Fuller.

APCM (Annual Parochial Church Meeting)

The 'AGM' of St Mary's Church will be held on Sunday 15th April at 11.30am after the morning service. The first part is the 'Annual Parish Meeting' which can be attended by any resident of Portchester and is for the purpose of the election of Churchwardens and receiving the accounts of Portchester Parish Hall.

This usually lasts just around 10-15 minutes, after which we have the 'Annual Parochial Church Meeting' which can only be attended by those on the Electoral Roll of St Mary's Church, who alone can speak, vote or hold office. Among other items, we elect the members of the PCC and Sidesmen (Welcomers).

Electoral Roll. This is the nearest we have to a membership at St Mary's. There are currently over 320 names on the Roll. If you have been attending St Mary's for a while, and feel that this is now your church, we would invite you to come onto the Roll. Currently we have over 50 regular attenders who are not on the Roll. We will be writing to you and inviting you to join, or you may speak to Denise Simmons who has forms.

Election of Churchwardens and PCC Members. Several members are due to come off this year, so we are looking for some new members. You might also want to consider representing St Mary's on the Deanery Synod. The next few years will be very challenging at St Mary's with the possibility of extending our building and employing more staff. We need people on the PCC who will be committed, will support the Vicar and work hard to ensure the success of our church. It is not our custom at St Mary's to receive names from the floor on the day, so we invite you to stand or nominate someone at least two weeks before the meeting. Forms will be available soon.

Finally, Rev Ian writes personally

In March I will have been with you 5 years. Doesn't time fly! I have to say that I have been very happy here. Portchester is a lively community to be part of, and St Mary's is a great congregation: loving, caring and supportive. I have not had any real fall-outs with anyone, and only one person (that I know of) has left the church in all that time, to join another outside Portchester because they got 'nothing' out of my ministry. The church has grown numerically, financially, and I hope, spiritually also. So what of my future? The clock ticks for me, time and tide wait for no man. No one knows the future, and I take nothing for granted, but if all goes well, I've probably got about another 5 or 6 years of active ministry in me. If I am to leave here for another job, it would probably be this year. If not, I'm likely to be here for the next few years. I don't particularly sense any calling to leave, and if certain projects are embarked upon (additional service, extra staff, building extension) then I would want to stay to see these established. If they don't happen, it doesn't mean I'll leave (after all, I've been here 5 years without these things). A great deal depends on the support I receive. By support I mean attending the services regularly, giving financially, and allowing me to be creative and try out new things. Support does not necessarily mean agreeing with me! But it means to disagree kindly and lovingly, and still support St Mary's. What I'm saying is, that if you think I'm a good Vicar, then you need to support me, and not take me for granted – as I hope I don't take any of you for granted. Let's see if we can help build (not a big church) but 'big' people – soul making! Let's build, not man's empire, or an ecclesiastical bureaucracy, but God's Kingdom, and work together to make a difference to people's lives and our community.

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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321380 E-mail: stmaryoffice@btconnect.com

Vicar: Rev Dr Ian Meredith

The Vicarage, 164 Castle Street, Portchester, PO16 9QH

Tel: 02392 375422; E-mail: irev@ymail.com