St. Michael & All Angels
CHURCH IN THE PARK | LIVING, LOVING, SERVING

outLook

The magazine for the people of Hughenden Parish | **DECEMBER 2023** | FREE

In the Twinkle Lies the Tale

ALSO INSIDE: *Christmas Services* | Nature Quest | **December Recipe**

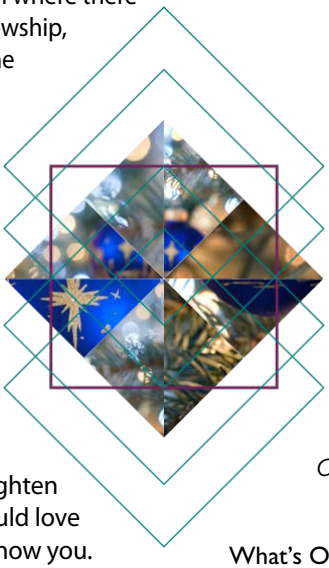
Welcome to **Your Church**

This magazine serves the parish in which our beautiful church of St Michael & All Angels is situated. Outlook aims to give you a flavour of what it is to live in Hughenden and to worship here.

There has been a place of worship and prayer on this site since the 12th century and today the church is open for anyone wishing to wander around or sit a while in its peace. We are an open, welcoming and inclusive church where there are many opportunities for fellowship, social activities and of course the possibility for spiritual growth.

Outlook is published monthly. Articles or comments can be submitted to mag@hughendenparishchurch.org.uk. The deadline is the 15th of the month. If you would like the magazine delivered then please contact Andrew Cole - 01494 305020.

We hope you find something here to interest, inform or enlighten you. We wish you well and would love to have the chance to get to know you.



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Grant us Lord, faith to believe and strength to do thy will

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www.hughendenparishchurch.org.uk

Dear Readers

Once again we are looking forward to Christmas in two or three weeks' time. As I write, in the middle of November, the weather has turned very chilly, although when the sun shines the autumn leaves look spectacular and there is still quite a lot of warmth in the sun. Soon the leaves will be gone and lights will be twinkling as darkness falls in the early evening.

How lucky we are to live in a peaceful country where we can celebrate the birth of Christ, not only at church with special services, the singing of carols and re-telling of the nativity story, but also with lights, decorations, feasts, parties and, for many, getting together with family members. However, my thoughts very much go to the Middle East and the continuing conflict there. Our TV screens daily bring us graphic pictures of the horrors of war in the land where Jesus was born. No heavenly host appearing to shepherds or anyone else this year and probably no fields for the wise men to travel across. Our hearts go out to them all, Jew and Palestinian alike, and we continually pray for peace in the whole area.

This latest war has thrown the spotlight off Ukraine, many areas of which are still in conflict and where, for many, Christmas celebrations may just be a memory of former times. Oh, how we need peace in so many places in the world. While we are enjoying Christmastide with our friends and families, let us all remember in our prayers all those, at home and abroad, who are less fortunate than ourselves.

Some lovely events are happening in the next couple of months, among them Christingle when children and adults decorate their oranges with various symbols; the Community Choir invites you to join them for 'Sing Along for Christmas'; there's a Crib Service and then the Christmas Day services later. In January there is Burns Night to look forward to. Check the What's On page of Outlook and the weekly Notices Sheet.

On behalf of the whole Outlook team, editors, designers and printers, we wish you a very happy Christmas and especial good wishes for the New Year and beyond.

Sylvia Clark
Editor

from the Vicarage

Keith Johnson

Vicar

St Michael & All Angels, Hughenden

> ***For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.***
>
> Isaiah 9:6-7

As you read these words we have entered the season of Advent, of preparation for Christmas and all that brings – celebrations with family and friends for some, more trying times for others, especially those living alone or facing challenging circumstances.

Isaiah the prophet foretold of a time when a child would be born in the land we call holy, in whom would be embodied the hopes of all the world. Not only would he be a human child, born to doting parents, but he would be God himself, taking on the form of flesh and living amongst us.

Every Christmas we celebrate the birthday of the Saviour of the World, born not in a palace, but in a stable, welcomed by Kings, shepherds, angels and bleating animals.

The hope of all humanity, a bundle of joy, born into a world which needed to hear the Good News which he carried. Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can find peace with God through faith in his Son.

As followers of the Prince of Peace, we are called to be peacemakers ourselves. As the troubles in Israel and Gaza have unfolded in the past few weeks, we have been closely following the latest news from our link missionaries Kevin and Jen Cable, currently based

at Christ Church Guesthouse in Jerusalem, looking after displaced refugees. We have also heard about the partnerships which Embrace the Middle East have forged with Christian partners within Gaza. These are perfect examples of how Christians can respond in practical ways with love and compassion.

We should continue to support the work of all those working for peace in the Middle East, and the voice of peace must be heard in government, at the highest levels, in every nation upon earth.

This Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, please join me in praying for the peace of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, for Gaza, the West Bank and throughout the Middle East.

Peace be with you.

Christmas Charities

Our Christmas collection charities this year seek to bring some good news into people's lives this winter. The rise in the cost of living over the last 18 months has hit local people, already struggling to make ends meet, particularly hard, as the following will make clear. Yet, further afield, millions of people struggle to hear and read the good news of Jesus Christ in their own native tongue. Your contribution, however small, will make a difference! Our Christmas collections this year will go to: One Can Foodbank, Wycombe Homeless Connection and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

How to donate

Over the Christmas service period, from the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols on 17 December until the end of Christmas Day, donations by the card reader will be dedicated to our Christmas collections. Alternatively, you can pay online to the church account (Name: Hughenden Parochial Church Council, A/c: 72155885, Sort Code: 40-24-17), marking your donation "Christmas Collections".

You can also place cash or cheque (payable to Hughenden PCC) in the retiring collection bowl at services. It would help if cash and cheques could be enveloped and marked "Christmas Collections". Thank you so much for your support.

Mission Support Group

ONE CAN
FOOD BANK + TRUST

Vulnerable families and individuals living locally need your support more than ever. Demand is at the highest levels One Can has ever seen and with the continuing cost of living crisis, it is feared that it will rise further. Your donation will help to keep the food bank running at a time of severe pressure. It will also support its other services, such as lunch and dinner clubs, and help struggling parents with young children.

Before COVID, One Can supported an average of 225 people per week, half of which were children. With the recent increase in the cost-of-living, One Can's 'new normal' is a frighteningly higher level than ever seen before. It is now supporting over 800 people per week. Please help One Can meet the need.

WYCOMBE HOMELESS CONNECTION

This winter will be the hardest people who are homeless locally have ever faced. Wycombe Homeless Connection has seen demand for some of its services more than triple.

Despite being stretched, Wycombe Homeless Connection wants to say yes to anyone who needs its help this winter. Its frontline staff and incredible team of volunteers will be offering a range of services which will include:

- Emergency accommodation for extremely vulnerable people who have no options other than to sleep on the street.
- Food and clothing and sleeping bags for rough sleepers.
- Daily drop-in sessions for all its clients to get help with finding accommodation, navigating healthcare, and connecting with other support services they need.
- Its homelessness helpline so people at risk of losing their homes can get help.
- Regular drop-in sessions for people who are sleeping rough and need to do laundry, get showered and have a hot meal.

Unless Wycombe Homeless Connection provide these vital services, more people will face losing their homes and sleeping rough this winter. Our support is needed to keep its doors open.

Wycliffe® BibleTranslators

When people have the Bible in their languages, people can come to know Jesus, believers can grow in faith, and churches can grow. The Bible is essential for evangelism, discipleship, and church growth. Jesus told his followers to take the gospel to all the world, but there are still hundreds of language groups which don't have access to God's word in their own language.

Currently over 1 in 5 people worldwide – that is over 1.5 billion people – still do not have the Bible in the language they know best. While huge progress is being made, much work and investment is needed to ensure that all people can know Jesus through the Bible in their own language.

Excitingly, more Bible translation work is in progress now than ever before – all because of the giving and praying of people like us. Please help support this essential Gospel work.

Responding to the situation in Israel and Gaza

Many of us will have been horrified both by the barbaric Hamas attacks on Israel and the effect that the Israeli response is having on many thousands of innocent Palestinian civilians. We struggle to know how to respond to the suffering that is happening on both sides of this conflict. In her talk on Remembrance Sunday, Helen addressed this struggle and recommended we support two particular appeals.

Embrace the Middle East has Christian partners on the ground in Gaza through which it works to bring much needed physical and spiritual support to suffering people in Gaza. Donations to Embrace's Gaza Crisis appeal can be made through the website **embraceme.org/gazacrisis**

EMBRACE the Middle East

In Israel, our church's overseas link partners, Kevin and Jen Cable, have relocated to the Anglican church Christchurch, Jerusalem. While they continue their ministry to St Peter's, Jaffa, remotely and online, their prime focus at the moment is helping traumatised refugees from southern Israel who are being housed in Christchurch's guest house in Jerusalem. Donations to help this work can be made via the CMJ website **www.cmj.org.uk** (There is a donation bar part way down the homepage.)

These two appeals support Christians helping the suffering on both sides of the conflict. The Mission Support Group fully supports Helen's suggestion and has already recommended that the church donates £1,000 from church funds split between these two appeals. If you would like to help people suffering in and around Gaza, please contribute online to the appeals.

Mission Support Group

ONE CAN
FOOD BANK + TRUST

Our final day to receive everyday donations is **Friday 15th December**

One Can plans to distribute Christmas hampers to clients again this year. If you would like to donate any Christmas food items (Christmas puddings, Christmas biscuits, mince pies, Christmas chocolates / sweets, pickles & chutneys, cheese biscuits, crisps / nuts) please could you do so ideally by Sunday 26th November to allow the hampers to be made up and sent out in plenty of time for Christmas.

Remember that you can put any food items for One Can in the box at the back of the church and it will be taken to One Can direct.

Thank you as always for your generosity.

Mission Support Group

Christmas List

Your local foodbank charity would gratefully receive donations of the following items:

Tinned meat meals	**Cooking sauces**
UHT milk	**Cooking oil (e.g. olive oil, 500ml)**
Tinned vegetables	**Toilet roll**
Honey / peanut butter	**Tinned potatoes**

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING ONE CAN AT CHRISTMAS!

Sorry we can't accept: Alcohol, homemade food, opened packets, out of date food, refrigerated or frozen food.

www.onecantrust.org.uk
Registered charity no. 1148626

the ploughman poet

One of the few accolades that attended my school life in a remote highland village in Scotland, was the presentation of certificates (on two occasions) for excellence in the recitation of poems by the celebrated Scottish poet, Robert Burns, who led a life as vibrant and passionate as his verses.

Burns was born into a farming family in the village of Alloway on 25th January 1759. The family worked hard on the Ayrshire farm and at several others, but their lives were never made easier. Ongoing troubles with landlords and their agents fuelled the rebellion that Burns felt against authority, including the church, which later became a major theme in his poetry. Despite the challenges of hard physical labour on the farm, he received a relatively good education and developed a love for reading. Alexander Pope is notable among the number of poets who ignited his poetic impulses and influenced his work.

In 1784, following the death of his father, the family moved a few miles away to Mossgiel. Here and in the nearby town of Mauchline, the charming and attractive Burns began numerous love affairs, some of which extended to about 1790. (By the end of his short life he was to have fathered fourteen children by six different mothers.) His relationships with women provided inspiration for much of his early output.

At 27 years of age, Burns had gained literary fame across Scotland. In Edinburgh he was welcomed by a circle of wealthy and influential friends where his poems resonated with the growing literary taste for romanticism and pastoral themes. Here, his collaboration with James Johnson, contributed to the international poem-turned-song, "Auld Lang Syne." His radical political views influenced his prolific output of poems, songs and letters, including the poem, "For a' that and a' that."

However, his writing provided insufficient income and, facing financial challenges, Burns worked as an Excise Officer in Dumfries. However, over time, due to his demanding lifestyle and earlier hardships, Burns's health suffered and at the age of thirty-seven, he died in July 1796 and was buried with full honours on the same day his son Maxwell was born.

Robert Burns – the Ploughman Poet – left an indelible mark on literature, love and Scottish culture. His legacy endures through his timeless verses and spirited life.

Roger Grant
with grateful thanks to The Encyclopaedia of World Biography

St Michael & All Angels

BURNS night

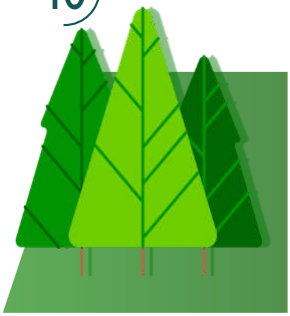
Supper and Ceilidh

6:45pm Saturday 27th January 2024
Hughenden Village Hall

live ceilidh band with caller | piper
address to the Haggis | three course meal
wine with meal | whisky toasts
cash bar | and of course ... ceilidh dancing!

Dress: Smart, tartan or Black tie
Tickets: £40 per head

Contact Roger or Julia Grant:
rogerandjulia.grant@gmail.com
07909 518985



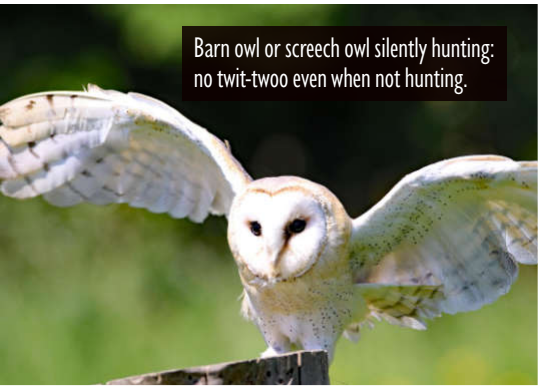
Nature Quest

"Grandad, why do owls never go courting in the rain?""I don't know. Why do owls never go courting in the rain?""Because it's too wet to woo!" Followed by cackles of laughter! (And Basil Brush would have added "Boom, Boom!")

Our NQ theme this month is Sounds: mostly natural sounds. From an early age we were introduced to moo, baa, woof, meow, cheep, clip-clop, neigh, squeak, grr, croak, grunt, hiss, oink, roar, buzz. Years later we might call those onomatopoeic simplifications. Some of us then become adept at identifying different birdsongs, (I mean more than just seagulls, kites, and cuckoos!), or learn to distinguish barking of muntjac from fox. Only experts would recognise the chirrups of the 23 varieties of UK cricket (No Keith, I don't include Somerset!). The sounds of creatures world-wide are truly amazing.

Back to the owls: Until recent times I had thought all owls world-wide would understand twit twoo. But I discover it's only really tawny owls who do this. And even more bizarre, the females sing the twit and the males respond with twoo. It's basically a love-song duet! And all the other owls use a variety of hoots and shrieks, which to me are not becoming of a wise old owl who should surely stick to twit twoo.

One night I was walking home on an unlit track beside the wood. There was a crunch of heavy footsteps in the wood, far too close for comfort. I strained my eyes but could see nothing in the darkness. My ears grew like elephant's ears, trying to locate and identify what beast might emerge. Hairs on the back of my neck were stiff. Should I run? Or would it chase me! It crashed onto the path and ambled past me: a hedgehog! Its


Barn owl or screech owl silently hunting: no twit-twoo even when not hunting.

Sperm whale, whose clicks are louder than any other animal.

prickles in the crisp dried leaves had created an outrageous noise in the stillness of night.

Some weeks ago we walked near the runway of Liverpool Airport, and noticed the different sounds of planes landing and taking off. Loud when landing, but deafening on take-off. Personally I find such a roar quite exhilarating. Perhaps I'd be less impressed if we lived near there. But it reminded me of my favourite hymn "How great Thou art" and its first verse: "I hear the mighty thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed". I love thunderstorms: to see the flash, and count how many seconds until the crash, and calculate how far away, and admire the immensity of Creation and its Creator.

If you add the sound of our planes and pneumatic drills and firecrackers to the roar of the Twickenham crowd and school playgrounds, surely humans are the noisiest creatures on Earth. Yet the truly loudest are whales: their moans and whistles and clicks can be heard miles away, (underwater). Indeed their deepest low-frequency sounds, almost too low for our ears to detect, can be heard hundreds of miles away, if not thousands.

All sound needs a medium in which to travel. Most sounds come to our ears through the air, but low sounds travel particularly well through water. At the other extreme, when a meteorite smashes into the Moon, we don't hear it, not just because it's a long way off, but because in the vacuum of Space there is no air or water to transmit the sound. The vast majority of the Universe has nothing to transmit sound, but here on our planet, sound is a very special feature, allowing birdsong and church hymns, pitter-patter raindrops and the baby's cry.

At the end of his tether, Elijah sought God. A hurricane blasted past. The earth shook. Fire blazed. For all this sound and power, there was no sign of God. Then slowly came the merest whisper of the voice that Elijah knew well.

Our attention is quickly grabbed by the biggest noises and the loudest voices: I love the thunder! But like Elijah, sometimes I need to let them pass by, and find verse 2 of my favourite hymn: "hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees … hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze". O Lord my God … how great Thou art.

Mike Hill
nature@hughendenparishchurch.org.uk

Double Exposure

This extract from a long early poem gives a flavour of Christmases long ago when, as a little boy, Ron would visit his North London relatives. Revisiting by train years later, old memories are revived, and as the train passes the Church of St Michael, Abbey Wood, where he was a boy server, the roots of his Christian faith are exposed.

I'll take the train,
That dirty, green, electric, London train,
perennially stinking
Of the crowds that daily slink in
To that tread-mill, that great ant-hill, and
then trundle out again.
I'll take the train a single station hop,
And suck my memories dry until we stop.

Pulling out, motor slow, humming like a top
Through marshalling yards, silver scars,
clattering over tracks,
As the 'clink, clink, clink' of shunting trucks
Reverberates down time … and it's
Christmas Eve at Grandpa Brown's,
Where grandpa's grandfather-clock chimes
down
The final Eve-left magic hours
As mothers, uncles, cousins, dads and aunts
Make Yuletide celebrations in advance.

Cheroots and Digger shag incense the air,
And bottles chink, and bright eyes wink;
And baking smells, and savoury smells,
And Christmas-coming-closer, dwells,
Then slowly climbs the stairs to where I lie.
Tortured with a wild expectancy, I wait to
catch a glimpse of Santa Claus.

And all the while the clinking trucks
chime on without a pause,
Their clinking wafting softly into sleep.

The train's pace eases as we glide past St
Michaels
And a host of angel memories take flight.
They stir the long stilled air of inner sight
As clustered pigeons fluster in a sound-
shocked square.
Redbrick and recent, the building owns
no past;
No brass to rub, no hallowed ghosts,
A little coloured glass at most.
Rubric and rhetoric, and holy echoing words
That volley round the hollow vessel mind
But seldom stay;

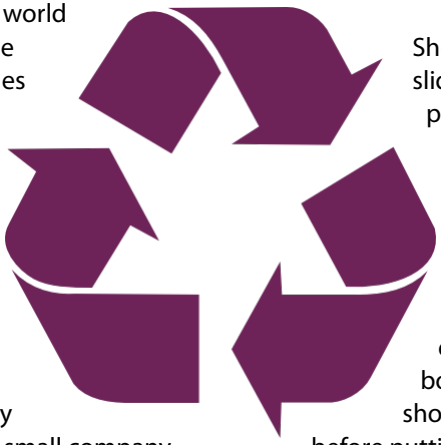
For me, by gift, by grace,
Call it what you will,
The word was made substantial in this place.
The word takes flesh and dwells,
The flesh takes form and fills,
And filling all of being, overspills.
This is incarnation,
Sweet Christmas at the very heart of things,
And consciously beheld in sudden springs.

Ron Cretchley
24.11.68

Men's Breakfast

The speaker at the November Men's Breakfast was Susan Staff, Managing Director of Aylesbury Granulation Services Ltd which deals with the recycling of plastics.

Susan began the meeting by asking 'In your opinion, are plastics the biggest pollutant in the world?' At least 80% of the audience replied 'Yes', and of course the answer was 'No'. The biggest cause of pollution in the world is us, the human race. She showed a number of slides which, in actual fact, proved surprisingly that pollution world-wide due to plastics was hardly 1%, the main culprits being oil and gas, i.e. fossil fuels.



Susan said that Aylesbury Granulation Services is a small company, operating out of Aylesbury. Among their clients, they have a number of specific customers for whom they recycle plastics. She reminded us that such companies as Sainsburys, Morrisons and other supermarkets, have collection points for such items as crisp packets, food wrappers etc which cannot be put into the domestic recycling collection. One of the biggest problems occurred when we stopped using doorstep milk deliveries where the milk was in glass bottles and started purchasing milk in plastic containers. The use of glass bottles was reduced considerably and of course, glass is 100% recyclable. One of the main problems is Tetrapak packaging which cannot be recycled and goes straight into land fill. Susan gave examples of the countries which had a poor recycling rate. However, we as a country are one of the best performers.

She produced a number of slides which showed the percentage of carbon fuels which clearly indicated that they are the principal contaminators.

Finally, Susan emphasised that plastic bottles and containers should always be squashed before putting them into the recycling bin so that more can be fitted into the collection lorry. A lot of space is taken up by air!

The next Men's Breakfast is on Saturday, 4th January 2024 when we will be hearing about the life and times of John Hampden, a statue of whom stands in Aylesbury town square.

Brian Clark

Hanbury Hall & St Andrew's Church, Ombursley, Worcestershire

I have written before about the Landmark Trust, which rescues and restores quirky buildings. We recently stayed at Lock Cottage, on the Birmingham - Worcester canal. Whilst we were confined to barracks by Storm Babet, which caused torrents of water to hurtle down the Tardebigge flight and, in consequence, flooded all the roads out of the village except for the road to The Queen's Head, we did manage a visit to Hanbury Hall.

Owned by the Vernon family from the 1570s until the line died out 400 years later, the original Thomas Vernon was a successful lawyer. He was able to boast to the Bishop of Worcester that he had made over £100,000 in his lifetime, then a very considerable sum indeed. What the Bishop said in reply is not known, but Thomas' Will left significant sums for the poor of the two adjacent parishes to the Hall.

The current Hall dates from the 1700s. History relates that it went through the usual vicissitudes of plenty and neglect; the unusual element here was that the last Vernon, Sir George, was childless, having separated from his wife Lady Doris in 1930. Sir George then purported to

adopt his parlour maid, Ruth Powick. Despite that being rejected she continued to live in the Hall until 1940, when she died. Lady Doris then moved back in and persuaded the National Trust to take on the building which, by the 1950s was in a dreadful state.

The National Trust did so, because of a donation and because of the unique wall and ceiling paintings. Now fully restored, they are both extraordinary and exquisite. Jane will write an article setting out their history. They were painted by Sir James Thornhill , who also painted the ceiling fresco at Blenheim Palace and the ceiling at Greenwich Palace.

We also visited Ombersley, in order to see St Andrew's Church. Built in the 1820s, to the design of the architect Thomas Rickman, it had 820 rented and free seats all contained in box pews which survive. Some of the pews were removed in 1982 to create a "narthex", a space for meeting and feasting.

One pew has its own fireplace and belonged to the Lord of the Manor, powered by a coke burning stove. The wood for the pews came from the Sandys estate, (remember Duncan Sandys, Government Minister and Churchill's one time son in law?) the mausoleum for the family now being contained in the 13th century chancel, surviving from the original church and now situated in the grounds of the churchyard.

There is an exquisite Spanish chestnut organ case for the 1829 organ, still used after two restorations, the second in 1962.

It made us reflect on the extraordinary diversity of church architecture and the need to preserve it.

Christopher Tyrer

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Our speaker on 7th November was Helen Foster of the One Can Trust who explained how the Trust works. Food donations are made from members of the public (you have probably seen the collection boxes outside houses) and from shoppers who donate items into the large collection crates in supermarkets. Many supermarkets also have a collection point where One Can collect items each week and bread is always donated at the end of the day.

At the present time there is a growing need for food as the numbers of people and families requiring help rises. As soon as food comes onto the shelves of the One-Can store, it goes out again for people who desperately need it.

Helen said there were many ways in which people could help by volunteering at One Can such as sorting through donated food, packing or delivering parcels or fundraising and she urged people to volunteer if they possibly could.

Our December meeting on Tuesday, 5th will be our annual Advent Communion Service which will be held in church at 2.00 pm, with refreshments in Church House afterwards. At this meeting we will be collecting gifts for the Women's Refuge in Wycombe. Suggested items are special biscuits, chocolates, sweets and other treats, plus toiletries for the refuge. As always, visitors are very welcome to join us.

Sylvia Clark

Joan Steel

As this edition of Outlook was being prepared, the sad news came through of the passing of Joan Steel. Joan has been such a familiar figure at church and the Mothers' Union, as well as around Hughenden where I believe she had lived for something like 55 years. She was a woman of many parts. Married to Hugh for over 60 years, mother to four children, including twins, school teacher, Church Teas organizer, correspondent for Valley Wives, calligrapher, helper in the Village Shop, lately a member of the Hughenden Community choir … and much more. Others will have many more memories of Joan.

Joan was a staunch member and supporter of the Mothers' Union, being a Facilitator for the MU Parenting Course. Some years ago she was MU Leader and during that time was responsible for the creation of the Mothers' Union Garden which, under her guidance, was transformed from a piece of overgrown land into the garden we know today. Each year she made a large number of delicious mince pies to be enjoyed after the MU Advent service. Joan will be very sorely missed by members of the Mothers' Union. God bless her - may she rest in peace.

God *in the Sciences*

Follow the star

Jesus' welcoming committee included Eastern scholars who learned about His birth through their study of astrology. I can't help thinking that the arrival of these people at Bethlehem is a link between a very early form of science (albeit mixed in with their own form of religion) and Christian faith. What better way to discover God than to explore the world and follow the evidence wherever it leads? But what exactly was the star of Bethlehem? Scientists have investigated this question over the centuries, coming up with a variety of answers.

First, there is the idea of a supernova: the massively bright explosion caused by a dying star. On rare occasions a supernova can be seen from Earth with the naked eye, remaining visible for several months. We now know that Herod the Great died around 4BC, so the actual date of Jesus' birth must be a little earlier. The supernovae that might match this timing were one in the Andromeda galaxy between March 8BC and September 7BC, and another in the constellation of Capricorn in the Spring of 5BC.

Next, comes a planetary conjunction. The alignment most commonly associated with the star of Bethlehem was between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7BC, but not everyone is sure whether this would be extraordinary enough to be the 'star' mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the bright astronomical object that drew the Magi could have been a comet. This idea came from Sir Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Oxford astronomer WG Waddington, who found that a comet was recorded by Chinese astronomers between March and May, 5BC. Humphreys then speculated that the 'no room at the inn' scenario came about because Jesus was born during Passover, and the Magi visited Jesus in May or June.

People interpret the biblical account of Jesus' birth in all sorts of ways, but there's very little argument from serious historians that Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. Whatever the true explanation for the 'star of Bethlehem' may be, there's plenty of evidence that an astronomical event could have happened at the time of His birth.

I think it makes perfect sense that if God was going to enter His own creation and take on the form of one of His own creatures, it should be marked by a very significant physical event!

Dr Ruth M Bancewicz
From the Parish Pump

Give the Gift of Time this Christmas

Florence Nightingale Hospice Charity is launching a Christmas Appeal called 'Give the Gift of Time this Christmas' to ensure that local people with life-limiting illnesses, and their families, get the help and support they need this Christmas and beyond.

A key message from the appeal is to explain that just £25 will pay for an hour of a nurse's time to provide care and reassurance to a patient and their loved ones at Christmas time.

The Charity is asking people living in Buckinghamshire and its borders to consider making a one-off donation or becoming a regular monthly giver by visiting **fnhospice.org.uk/christmasappeal**

A relative of a patient recently said, ***"When we, as a family, heard the word 'Hospice', it scared us. We thought that's it then, this is the end, what a sad, depressing place it will be.***

"But we couldn't have been more wrong. From the moment we stepped through those doors, a beautiful and calm sense of relief enveloped us. The kind, friendly, reassuring, happy, smiling nurses and doctors just put us at ease straight away."

Florence Nightingale Hospice Charity would like to thank all its supporters for any help they can give during this season of goodwill.

Florence Nightingale
HOSPICE CHARITY

Hughenden Community Singers

SING-ALONG for Christmas

2nd December at 7.30 pm
in Hughenden Church

An evening of festive, upbeat music and refreshments with the Hughenden Community Singers.

No tickets required.

CHRISTMAS at hughenden church

Christingle Service

10th December
3.00 pm

A service that tells of the importance of Jesus Christ through the symbolism of a Christingle.

In support of the Children's Society.

Candles for **Ukraine**

You may remember that I appealed for half-used candles of any shape, size or colour with any form of decoration, last year for recycling in Ukraine via the charity In Light Ukraine. The candle wax is used for heaters for warming food for the Army and also for providing warmth and light. In addition, I understand that civilians are using the recycled candles for light.

Sadly, Ukraine is still in a similar situation this year and our donations of old candles will be very much appreciated. Many of us use candles over the Christmas season so if you have finished with them in January, please will you think about donating them to the Oxford-based charity. Supplies continue to be sent to Ukraine by truck on a regular basis. I am still volunteering at Christ Church Cathedral once a month, so I am able to deliver them to the collection point at the Cathedral.

The response was fantastic last year and for several months I had to load them into my shopping trolley from the car to take them into the Cathedral! You spread the word to various organisations in the area, the response was overwhelming. Thank you!

I will place a box at the back of the Church in December for donated candles and will endeavour to empty it regularly. If you have any queries or you would like them collected, please email me at bafwillson@gmail.com More information and updates about In Light Ukraine can be found at: **inlightukraine.com**.

Barbara Willson
Mothers' Union

Foam Free Flower Design Demonstration

As mentioned a few weeks ago in the Church Notices, I am very aware that the floral foam we use is not good for the environment. Although it makes flower arrangement much easier as flowers tend to stay where they are put, it does not bio-degrade when it comes to the end of its life. Instead it breaks down into tiny pieces which, in many cases, find themselves on the seabed, thence into the stomachs of various forms of marine life including, of course, fish.

As we are striving to become an ecologically friendly church, I am hoping to dispense with floral foam altogether. Therefore, I have booked an afternoon in Church House on Friday, 19th January 2024 at 2.00 pm at which Carol Bennett will be demonstrating flower designs without using foam. Carol is an Area Demonstrator for the Bucks, Berks & Oxford area of NAFAS (National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies) and I am sure will give us some useful and inspirational ideas.

After the demonstration tea/coffee and home-made cake will be available – and maybe a little wine! Do come along and bring your friends. There will be a £5 per head charge to help with expenses and it would be very helpful if you could let me know if you are able to come. My email address is: sylviaclark919@btinternet.com and my telephone number is 01494 562801 or mobile 07570 876530.

I very much look forward to seeing you.

Sylvia Clark

BOOK-ENDS

Welcome to my bookshop; a pop-up shop just open for the festivities. Please do come in.

A book is surely the perfect gift. Not too big and really re-usable; again and again if required. A paperback is not too heavy if you have to post it. It is easy to make it look enticing; very simple to wrap. There is plenty of paper around now that does not have a plasticy coating … or be more imaginative: find a small person who would like to potato print on brown paper (actually I still like doing that!) or use newspaper as wrapping paper, with ribbon or string around it, it would look very appealing and bookshoppy. If you are able to hand deliver your gift then you could add a cake box with a pastry or a muffin in it … and even a small packet of coffee or a favourite tea. Truly perfect. Please, look around the shelves.

In the winter it is always comforting to read a recipe book. Why not try **Farmer's Wife by Helen Rebanks**. You can find that comfort here as well as peeping through the doorway and glimpsing the life of a twenty first century farmer's wife. Things are complicated these days with organic farming, health issues with eating highly processed foods, vegetarian and vegan agendas. Helen Rebanks and her husband James (look up his books if you don't know them) farm in a very traditional, sustainable way. Their take on the situation is that we should be eating less meat whilst being prepared to pay more for what we do buy. An interesting read interspersed with some good recipes.

Look over here. I've had to give books on landscape and nature more shelf space over the last couple of years. The interest in them has grown amazingly. This one is fascinating: **The History of the Countryside. The Classic History of Britain's Landscape, Flora and Fauna by Oliver Rackham**. Maybe it is

the right gift for someone who isn't so interested in fiction but would enjoy reading about history and nature, in particular how the British countryside has changed over time … and why.

You have a friend or relative who has been struggling in some way? This may be because of a troublesome personal situation or due to worrying about the state of the world or a combination. This book is gentle: **Wintering by Katherine May. The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times**. It does not preach 'pulling yourself together' instead it takes a meditative approach which suggests that we should accept that our situation and our moods will ebb and flow, they will turn like the seasons in the year and sometimes we will indeed be 'wintering.'

Oh, you say you live near Princes Risborough? You'll know the work of **Kevin Crossley-Holland** then? No, well you have a treat in store. Try his memoir **The Hidden Roads**. This is a gentle and evocative picture of a middle class childhood lived in the 1940s and 50s, in the Chiltern Hills. He has written much else as well, often published for children but never mind that. His Arthur trilogy is a great read. Maybe this should go on your own Christmas wish list.

Here's a suggestion for your friend who enjoys a good story: **The Lost Bookshop by Evie Woods**. On a quiet street in Dublin, a lost bookshop is waiting to be found. It is charming and uplifting. That will work for Christmas, won't it?

Oh yes, of course, here's the children's section. A grandson who is 8? Well, I will take you straight to the shelf of **Michael Morpurgo** stories. I love everything that he writes, don't you? There is a new book called: **The Puffin Keeper** which I'm sure will be just what you're looking for. Also, one of my favourite authors, **Shirley Hughes**, sadly died a few years ago but there are so many wonderful stories. How about **Snow In The Garden**? It is a lovely Christmas book with gorgeous illustrations. I think your 4-year-old God-daughter will love it.

Thank you so much for your custom. I hope you have found everything that you wanted and maybe something you didn't even know that you wanted! The coffee shop is just round that corner. Yes, the smell of fresh coffee is good isn't it? Sorry, mind the cat. For some reason she likes to curl up in doorways. Very unhelpful.

… would you like chocolate on your cappuccino? The lemon drizzle cake is very good or there's an apricot Danish?

You can of course sit on the sofa in my virtual bookshop and click away … but it would be better to support your indie bookshop if you are fortunate enough to have one … otherwise Waterstones needs your business too. Amazon will undoubtedly survive without it.

Happy Christmas and happy reading. I hope somebody gives you just the book that you will love.

Susan Brice

December Recipe

My family loves pre-dinner snacks such as dips, crisps, nuts etc, so much so that my 5-year-old granddaughter recently said to me "I only like my crisps with hummus (middle Eastern dip) Grandma"!

I have noticed though that crisps are one item that seem to have gone up in price terribly in the last few years, with an average bag of crisps now costing over £2. So this is an ideal aperitif to make at home with Christmas coming up, or can be served with cheese. This recipe will make two batches of 15 and can be prepared in advance to cook when needed or frozen before cooking.

Julia Grant

Cheesy Sage & Sesame Biscuits

INGREDIENTS

180g plain flour

½ tsp baking powder

½ tsp smoked paprika

½ tsp salt

150g unsalted butter

130g Parmigiano Reggiano (Parmesan) finely grated

2 tsp finely chopped sage leaves

1 egg beaten

4-5 tbsp sesame seeds

METHOD

1. *Combine the flour, baking powder, paprika and salt in a bowl.*

2. *In a mixing bowl, place the butter and cheese and thoroughly beat until smooth, then gradually incorporate the dry ingredients and sage to form a smooth dough.*

3. *Halve the dough and on a lightly floured surface, roll each piece into a 4cm diameter log. Wrap each in baking parchment and chill for one hour. When chilled, brush both logs with the beaten egg and roll in the sesame seeds to coat. Chill for another hour or can be wrapped and frozen ready for another time.*

4. *Cut the log into 15 x 1cm rounds. Preheat the oven to 200C, gas mark 6. Put the rounds on a lined baking tray, spaced slightly apart. Bake for 12 to 14 mins until golden (you may need to do this in batches). Remove from the oven and cool and then store in an airtight container for up to 7 days or can be frozen at this point.*

God and the Arts

'The Virgin of the Lilies' by Carlos Schwabe

During this year we have been exploring how art can celebrate the wonder of this world. This month with our Lady and Jesus we stand above the world: high on the clouds with a glorious path of tall, elegant lilies that lead like a stairway to the earth beneath. This is 'The Virgin of the Lilies' by Carlos Schwabe. He was born in Germany and then lived in Switzerland and France, painting this canvas in 1899 when he was 33 years old.

It is like a scene caught when we look out of the window in an aeroplane. We can see the earth beneath and spot hills and valleys, roads and settlements, and a river weaving its way through the countryside. Mary and Jesus are haloed in a lunar-like radiance. The lilies are symbols of purity and obedience, the qualities that will take them to that scene at Bethlehem which we give thanks for at Christmas. The heavenly light shining out in the painting brings hope and joy to the world below, transforming lives with the wonder of the Saviour's birth.

Jesus holds three nails in his hand as a sign that His life will be tempered by rejection, suffering and death. But the lilies growing tall and straight in the skies are signs of new life and resurrection. The light come down to earth at Christmas can never be extinguished. That light and love are expressed in this vivid, moving painting of Carlos Schwabe as they are caught up in the carol of Christina Rossetti we sing at this time:

Love shall be our token, Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men, Love for plea and gift and sign.

Michael Burgess
From the Parish Pump

What's On at St Michael & All Angels

December

2	7.30 pm	Sing-along for Christmas: Church
5	2.00 pm	Mothers' Union Advent Service: Church
10	3.00 pm	Christingle Service: Church
17	3.00 pm	Carols at Naphill Village Hall
	6.00 pm	Nine Lessons & Carols: Church
24	9.00 am	Choral Communion: Church
	3.00 pm	Crib Service: Church
	4.30 pm	Carols by Candlelight: Church
	11.15 pm	Midnight Communion: Church
25	9.00 am	Choral Communion: Church
	11.00 am	Family Communion: Church
31	**10.00 am**	**Combined Communion: Church**

January

6	8.30 am	Men's Breakfast: Church House
27	6.45 pm	Burn's Night: Hughenden Village Hall

1st & 3rd Sundays

9.00 am **Choral Communion**
11.00 am **Service of the Word**
6.00 pm **Evensong (Sung)**

2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays

9.00 am **Matins (Sung)**
11.00 am **Family Communion**
6.00 pm **Evensong (Sung)**

Tuesdays

11.00 am **Holy Communion (Said)**

One morning service is usually live-streamed on Sunday. Find it on our website, or on the church YouTube channel: youtube.com/hughendenchurch

Regular Groups

Hughenden Community Singers

Mondays from 7.30 to 9.30 pm. No need to be able to read music or to have sung before, and no auditions. Under-18s welcome with parents. Contact Liz on 07768 790029 or evmoseley@btinternet.com

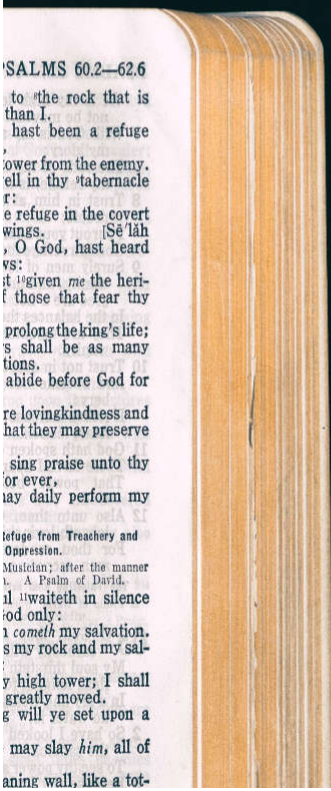
Friendship Morning

This is a get together in Church House on the third Thursday each month at 10.30 am. Primarily for those who are bereaved, who live on their own or who are lonely. The emphasis is on companionship and the atmosphere is light and cheerful. Contact Penny Austin on **01494 529596.**

Tiny Tots @ St. Michael's

Tiny Tots @ St. Michael's meets every Thursday in term time from 9.30 - 11.30 am in the North Room. Come for chat, play, craft and refreshments. Included, every second Thursday of the month, will be the Tiny Tots Service, a time of fun worship in church. For details contact Helen Peters - **helen.peters@peters-research.com**

December Lectionary



3rd : First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64: 1-9
1 Corinthians 1: 3-9
Mark 13: 24-37
Evensong: Psalm 25
Isaiah 1: 1-20
Matthew 21: 1-13

10th : Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40: 1-11
2 Peter 3: 8-15a
Mark 1: 1-8
Psalm at 9.00 am: 85
Evensong: Psalm 40
1 Kings 22: 1-28
Romans 15: 4-13

17th : Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61: 1-4 & 8-11
1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24
John 1: 6-8 & 19-28

24th : Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7: 1-11 & 16
Romans 16: 25-end
Luke 1: 26-38

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 52: 7-10
Hebrews 1: 1-12
John 1: 1-14

25th : Christmas Day

Isaiah 52: 7-10
Titus 2: 11-14
Luke 2: 1-20

From the Parish Registers

The Departed

Sylvia Gladys Kinch, aged 95

Who's Who at St-Michael & All Angels

Keith Johnson
Vicar

Home: 01494 257569
Mobile: 07772 642393

keiththevicar@gmail.com

Day off: Friday

Helen Peters
Associate Minister

Home: 01494 716772
Mobile: 07792 118357

helen.peters@peters-research.com

Day off: Monday

Parish Office
Administrator: **Lynn Brooks**

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

07928 536543
office@hughendenparishchurch.org.uk

Licensed Lay Minister	David Tester	563354	Church Flowers	Sylvia Clark	562801
Churchwardens	Julia Grant	565746	Captain of Bellringers	Andrew Ottaway	07899 986644
	Frank Hawkins	565050	Safeguarding Officer	Roger Grant	07909 960938
Parish Clark & Verger	Arthur Johnson	521471	Crèche Rota	Agnes Dodwell	07958 568538
Church Notices & Website	Ben Brice	445899	Social & Outreach	Antony Rippon	07747 643270
PCC Secretary	Susan Brice	445899	Mothers' Union Parish Link	Louise Stallwood	712705
PCC Treasurer	Brian Morley	528633	Hughenden Village Hall	–	07815 163269
Organist & Choirmaster	Neil Brice	445899	Naphill Village Hall	Norma Clarke	563116
Servers	Andrew Cole	305020	Friendship Morning	Penny Austin	529596

All numbers are High Wycombe area code (01494) unless otherwise stated.

OUR VISION IS

to know God's love, and to share that love with everyone.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:16-19

Our aim is that all may know Jesus Christ, become his lifelong followers, and grow into mature members of the Church.

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

Our Church family will actively contribute to the life of our local community. Our Church activities & facilities will be accessible and we will welcome all with warm and generous hospitality.