



THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST LEONARD, LEXDEN

ORDINARY PEOPLE. EXTRAORDINARY GOD.



PARISH MAGAZINE
JANUARY 2019 50p

MAKING WELCOME



As we pass through Epiphany to enjoy the end of the Christmas season, we pause to reflect on the Holy Family's flight from Herod's brutal violence. Jesus, Mary and Joseph became refugees: "Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod."

I've always wondered what their time in Egypt was like. Matthew's lack of detail leaves lots of room for imagination! We can be sure of one thing, however: though they were strangers, they were welcomed and cared for.

St Leonard's has long been a church that describes itself as "welcoming". My experience has been that this community is wonderfully welcoming – and that is something to celebrate. It is also something that should never be taken for granted. So it's helpful to reflect from time to time on why we welcome, and what Christian welcome looks like.

God teaches us that being in relationship with others is good in itself – we don't need any other reason. We welcome people, not because we want to convince them of something or add them to a rota or to get their collection money, but simply because we value them for who they are.

It's easily forgotten that for many people coming to church for the first time is a very scary prospect – especially for those who are from a different sort of background to the majority of those gathered. It's worth trying to put ourselves in others' shoes, and we can do this by thinking about where *we* might feel uncomfortable or nervous. How would you feel walking onto a noisy football terrace, or into a packed night club, for example? Or what if you walked into an ultra-posh restaurant where everyone was happily talking at the tables – and at one table there was one seat left – which *you* had to fill? We're so used to church, it's easy to forget that even though we experience it as friendly and comfortable, it is intimidating and strange for many others.

Some are intimidated because they believe that they will be judged publicly and looked-down-upon when they come. This is the impression given by the media (and, sadly, by some Christians). Many arrive at church feeling some sort of guilt or deep sense of unworthiness. The onus is on us to show that church is where these burdens – which *all* of us bring – are lifted rather than publicly exposed! The naff cliché is that churches are packed full of goody-two-shoes moral perfectionists waiting for an opportunity to look down our noses. It's up to us to show this to be the myth that it is! We can do this by greeting newcomers as flawed and vulnerable human beings ourselves, not as judgmental moralists – people striving to extend God's welcome to others in our own limited ways. It doesn't matter who the stranger is, what they've done, nor where they've come from. All that matters is that they are here and that we honour their presence as a gift.

Surely we'd never judge or make a newcomer uncomfortable, though? Actually, a simple tut, a shared glance, a slightly grumpy word, or having a chat in a closed huddle can effectively slam the church door in the face of someone who is already nervous about being here. I know I've been guilty of these things!

It takes a lot of work to bust myths, it takes the smallest thing to confirm peoples' worst expectations and fears.

We might think of welcome as something that happens on a first meeting, but actually welcome is a long-term commitment. It might be that people coming into St Leonard's may find a few months (or even years) down the line, that it's difficult to break into some of our friendship groups. So I encourage each of us to look for someone in the congregation who has a familiar face, but whom we could get to know better. Why not invite them to something, or strike up a conversation over coffee? This really is as important as that initial welcome!

So, the challenge the refugee Jesus lays before us is this: are we willing to welcome *all* those made in his image in the same way that we would welcome him, both in the short term and beyond?

Math

JANUARY DIARY

Wednesday 2nd

10.00am Eucharist followed by coffee
10.45am Holy Communion at Woodlands
11.30am Holy Communion at Cheviot

Thursday 3rd

8.00am Morning Prayer

Saturday 5th

8.30am Men's Breakfast in the Nicholls Room

SUNDAY 6th: EPIPHANY

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
9.45am All Age Eucharist
6.30pm Evensong and sermon



Tuesday 8th

10.30am Holy Communion at Wren House
12.30pm Mothers' Union New Year Lunch at the Crown

Wednesday 9th

10.00am The Eucharist with prayers for healing, followed by coffee

Thursday 10th

8.00am Eucharist
2.30pm Constable house group (Hugh 564577)

SUNDAY 13th: Epiphany 2, Baptism of Christ

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
9.45am Parish Eucharist with Junior Church
6.30pm Evensong and sermon

Monday 14th

7.00pm Holy Communion
7.45pm PCC in the Nicholls Room

Wednesday 16th

10.00am Eucharist followed by coffee

Thursday 17th

8.00am Eucharist

Saturday 19th

12.30pm Friendship Lunch in church

SUNDAY 20th: Epiphany 3

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am Parish Eucharist with Junior Church

6.30pm Evensong and sermon

Monday 21st

11.00am Holy Communion at Hill House

Wednesday 23rd

10.00am Eucharist followed by coffee

Thursday 24th

8.00am Eucharist

SUNDAY 27th: Epiphany 4, Presentation of Christ in the Temple

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am Parish Eucharist and Junior Church

6.30pm Evensong and sermon

Wednesday 30th

10.00am Eucharist followed by coffee

7.45pm 'Jubilee' House Group

Thursday 31st

8.00am Eucharist

Saturday 2nd February

8.30am Men's Breakfast in the Nicholls Room

SUNDAY 3rd February: 5 before Lent

8.00am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

9.45am: All Age Eucharist with Christingle

6.30pm: Evensong and sermon



January



6th January	All Age Service - Epiphany
13th January	<p>Surprising voices – Jesus accepts John’s baptism and hears his Father’s voice of approval.</p> <p><i>Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22</i></p>
20th January	<p>One Spirit, many gifts – Paul writes to the Corinthians about the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts.</p> <p><i>1 Corinthians 12: 1-11</i></p>
27th January	<p>One body, many parts – Paul reminds the Corinthians that Christians must work together like a body, whatever their background or role within the church is.</p> <p><i>1 Corinthians 12: 12-31a</i></p>
	<p>Next Messy Church: Jonah</p> <p>10th February 2019, 3-5pm</p>

STEP INTO 2019 WITH JESUS!

BISHOP STEPHEN'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE



One of the joys of 2018 was returning to Spain to walk part of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. I first completed the northern Way of St James in the autumn of 2016. It's deeply satisfying for the soul when prayer, solitude and the unrelenting tread of boot leather come together. During the pilgrimage, yellow arrows painted on lampposts guided me through mountainous terrain. I came to rely on these arrows in this unfamiliar, beautiful place.

One year yielding to another can be unsettling. We look back at the past year and think of the unexpected things that happened. We know the year ahead is full of the unforeseen but hope that our loved ones and ourselves are kept safe from harm and sadness.

We each approach the New Year in different ways. Memories of the past and expectations of the future will lead some of you to go to bed early and gladly miss Jools Holland's Hootenanny. Many of our sisters and brothers in the diocese now spend the hours around midnight in prayer and praise.

Where I walked in Spain, Christmas and the New Year pass with little fanfare. Instead, young people look to the Epiphany on the sixth of January. On the night before, children will leave their shoes on the windowsill stuffed with hay and carrots to feed the horses of Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar as they make their pilgrimage to Bethlehem to worship baby Jesus. The children hope that the Magi will leave them a present in return for horse food. They might also delight in the thought that these exotic travellers will carry them in their hearts as they come into the presence of the saviour of the world.



2019 does not come with yellow arrows painted on lampposts to help guide us through the unforeseen territory ahead. We wouldn't have a fulfilling earthly pilgrimage if we did. Perhaps the children of Spain have the right idea. They bathe in the light and joy of the Epiphany; where simply being in the presence of Jesus provides the hope and trust needed to navigate the year ahead with joy.

With gold of obedience and incense of lowliness, kneel and adore him, the Lord is his name!

+ Stephen.

COVER PHOTO - Members of the St Leonard's Youth Group in church with their cardboard boxes, ready for the Advent Sleepout. More on p 12

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR 2018



As always, the stalls were busy and the refreshments popular...

... and Father Christmas was there, of course.

It was altogether a wonderful and happy day.

THE ADVENT SLEEP OUT CHALLENGE

Well, they did it! On the night of the 7th December nine members of youth group spent the night sleeping on the floor of the unheated church, to increase their awareness of homelessness and rough sleeping and to raise money for the Church Urban Fund, which provides night shelters across England.

We had a great discussion about some of the issues, then to make sure they were sufficiently tired we also played lots of fun games before bed - including building a huge den out of cardboard and seeing how many star jumps the Priest-in-Charge could do (45 in 27 seconds!). Rosemary joined us straight from her shift on the soup run and told us all about it, then joined us for the night. Some sleep was had by most...

It was a really enjoyable and worthwhile event, and has already raised just under their £500 target. You can still donate at

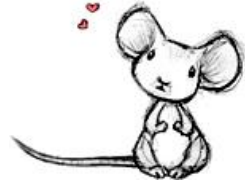
<https://sleepoutchallenge2018.everydayhero.com/uk/omg-sleepout>,

or by seeing David or Siân.

Dawn breaks over the intrepid sleepers



MOUSE TAILS



On Christmas morning, Rupert and Molly had woken early (as they did every Christmas!) “Happy Christmas, Mum and Dad!” they shouted; their parents sleepily wished them a happy ‘Christmouse’ too. The family exchanged the little cards and gifts that they been busily making in secret for the last few weeks. Mum had knitted the twins stripy scarves, matching mittens and dear little hats with fluffy bobbles. Dad had been busy scavenging and gave the twins a wonderful assortment of little bits of chocolate. All of the family agreed that their gifts were wonderful and were truly grateful that they were all together, safe, warm and with enough to eat which they knew that many other mouse families didn’t have.

As they did every year the mouse families had all gathered in the hall and once the humans had gone home to their Christmas lunches they had all trooped down to the church for their own Christmas service. This was conducted by Grandpa in front of the little crib and the mouse choir excelled themselves in singing all their favourite carols, including Away in a Manger, O Little Town of Bethlehem, and just for fun, Jingle Bells.



After the service the mice looked around the church and admired the beautiful floral displays (also keeping a look out for any treasures that could be scavenged like bits of mince pie or cake and edible berries and foliage) then they had all scampered up to the hall, where, as on previous years, the church and hall mice had fashioned a tall (for them) Christmas tree and had decorated it with bits of ribbon and tinsel that they had found and saved, along with Christmas cards that had been made and received. It all looked very festive and the outdoor and wood mice were suitably impressed.

(Continued on p17...)

(...continued from p15)

The Woods family had arrived just in time for the church service and afterwards in the hall, Mrs Woods had immediately asked where her Daisy was, as neither she nor her husband Pablo had been in church. Mum and Mrs Hall exchanged a little smile and told Mrs Wood that they had an extra Christmas surprise for her and led her to a cosy nest under the stage. "Happy Christmas Ma, here are your extra gifts!" There was a smiling Daisy and a proud Pablo cuddling their new born twins, born on Christmas Eve, a girl and a boy. Mrs Woods was weeping with joy and trying to hug everyone at once. One family at a time they all visited the the new little mouse family.

"What a wonderful Christmas gift" said a tearful Mrs Woods, holding on to her husband's arm. "What will you call them?" asked Molly. Pablo said they had decided on Eva Maria and Noel Christo to honour his parents who would never see or know about their grandchildren.

After such an emotional event the mice families continued to enjoy their Christmas feast and the new babies' heads were well and truly 'wetted' with the special drinks that were traditional at this time of year.

When everyone was full and getting tired Grandpa led them in a special prayer of thanks for loving families, good friends, plentiful food and a special thanks for the safe arrival of their Christmas twins.

CT



FRIENDSHIP LUNCH

Our next Friendship Lunch
will be on

Saturday 19th January at 12.30pm.

Please sign up on the list
at the back of the church.

TWO BISHOPS ON ONE SUNDAY



On the second Sunday of Advent we welcomed Roger, Bishop of Colchester to preside and preach at the Parish Eucharist, and with him, Amelie, Child Bishop of Colchester.

The selection of a Child Bishop is a modern revival of an ancient tradition held for centuries throughout Europe, whereby on the feast of St Nicholas a young member of the church, often a choirboy, would be chosen to adopt the dress and role of the bishop, would take his seat and would carry out some of his duties, *(Continued on p23...)*

(...continued from p21)

while the bishop himself took a lower place. The young age at which St Nicholas was appointed as a bishop forms the basis for the tradition, which aims to emphasise the Christian value of humility and recognise the wisdom of youthful innocence. There is also intended to be an element of fun and subversion of normally constituted authority.

Amelie was confirmed at St Mary's, West Bergholt a year ago, alongside others from her congregation and three members of ours. The assurance with which she spoke then of her faith journey made her an obvious choice to become Colchester's Youth Bishop, an appointment lasting for a week, during which she spent her time with Bishop Roger, attended meetings and services, preached and led prayers.

Bishop Amelie's week of duties concluded at St Leonard's, where, when asked to sum up Bishop Roger's sermon, she said the message was: 'It'll be all right in the end.' - Wise words!

Well done, Bishop Amelie, and thank you, both bishops, for uniquely leading our worship on that Sunday at St Leonard's.

VM

COFFEE MORNING



Many thanks to Frances Bonner for once again inviting us to her home for a Christmassy Coffee Morning. There were mince pies stollen in abundance, a festive raffle and plenty of good company and conversation. £120 + Gift Aid was raised.

Our next Coffee Morning will be in early February by kind invitation of John and Judith Evans. Details will be in the February magazine and notices in church.

Jean Hallett

WEEKDAY EVENING PRAYER

It is very important that St Leonard's is open to its community as a place of prayer. Though our noticeboard advertises that the church is open during the mornings, we are often able to remain open during the afternoons also. During the dark winter months, however, there is an issue with ensuring the safety of visitors and those who work in the church, particularly when they are alone.

Following a discussion at PCC it was agreed that, as a trial during the coming months, St Leonard's will close in the early to mid afternoon on weekdays.

Evening Prayer will continue as usual at 5pm in church on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Mondays and Wednesdays, Evening Prayer is said by one minister alone at present, and will therefore continue without a set time to enable the minister on duty flexibility to respond to any pastoral emergencies or other duties.

MAGAZINE DEADLINE

FINAL DAY for items for the February edition:

SUNDAY 13th JANUARY

Please submit items to the Editor
email: magazine@stleonardslexden.org.uk

Please include your name with any submission.
Items from unknown sources cannot be used.

Please limit text to 500-600 words maximum.
Longer articles may be edited. Thank you

THE SEAFARER'S VERSION OF THE 23RD PSALM

Whilst on a Fred Olsen Cruise to Norway last Summer on MS Black Watch we attended an Interdenominational Service conducted by the Cruise Director during which we sang the following interesting version of the 23rd Psalm –

The Lord is my pilot, I shall not drift.
He lighteth me across dark waters.
He steereth me in deep channels. He keepeth my log.
He guideth me by the star of holiness for His name's sake.
Yea, even midst the thunders and tempests of life,
I dread no danger; for Thou art with me,
Thy love and Thy care, they shelter me.
Thou preparest a harbour before me in the homeland of Eternity.
Thou anointest the waves with oil – my ship rides calmly.
Surely sunlight and starlight shall favour me on the voyage I take,
And I shall rest in the port of my God forever.
Amen.

Tom & Kathleen Scrimgeour

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FOR THE SEAFARERS OF FELIXSTOWE

Many thanks to all parishioners who gave and made gifts. We sent:

117 Woollen Hats
34 Jigsaws (500 piece)
79 packs used Playing Cards
plus various small gifts

Thank you

Sheila Cook

HAT STANDS IN OLDEN OLD CHURCH, NORWAY



Whilst on a cruise in the Norwegian Fiords in August we spent a day in the small Nord Fjord village of Olden. Visiting the old church in the centre of the village which is the only cruciform church in the Nordfjord district and was built in 1759, we were rather intrigued to see these wooden branches mounted on the pew ends on one side only of the aisle.

We discovered that they were hat stands on the men's side only of the church! These hat stands, known as "Krekser", are made from young birch trees with the bark and some branches removed. We also liked the blackboard hymn list!

Tom and Kathleen Scrimgeour