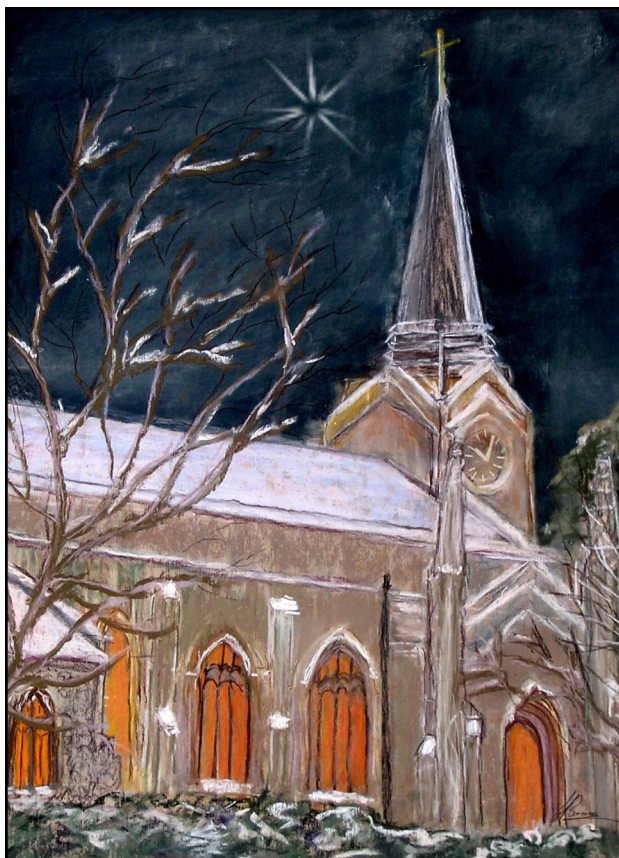




# THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST LEONARD, LEXDEN

ORDINARY PEOPLE. EXTRAORDINARY GOD.

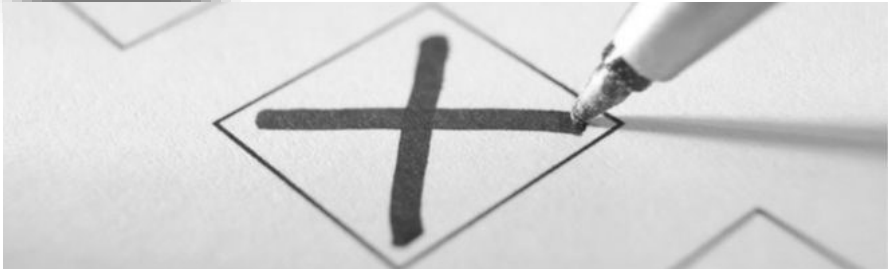


## PARISH MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2019 50p



# The Sign of the Cross



Whenever I have the privilege of voting in an election, I'm always moved by the particular mark we are asked to make on our ballot papers: an 'X', a cross. And as my pencil hovers over the various boxes, I pray that (in my flawed and limited way) I might make the right choice to honour all that the precious symbol of the cross means for the world. I vote as a citizen and I vote as a Christian.

I expect we've all been pondering hard on how to vote on 12<sup>th</sup> December. The unique constitutional and political crises of our time make this a dizzying prospect. And, sadly, at times it feels as though we're not being asked to make a free choice, but rather being manipulated into voting - this way or that - by any means possible! Yet amid the heat and noise of the campaigning, there is hope: close reading of manifestos, careful reflection and research, and taking the opportunity to speak with candidates can help us to discern.

In the "all or nothing" political atmosphere, it's also important to remember that voting *always* involves some sort of compromise. How I wish it were possible to draw a cross next to a candidate who represents *my* beliefs and priorities completely and absolutely! However, could it *possibly* be that Matt Simpkins's political vision isn't shared by everyone else!?! So, the art of living together in society (the art of politics, in other words) is the art of respect and compromise: of listening and being open to others' views, while at the same time remaining confident in our fundamental values.

Christians have some obvious fundamental values to honour, of course: those values captured in the sign of the cross. The cross tells of Jesus's complete giving of himself, and his expectation that we should love one another as he has loved us. These values - to serve each other, to refuse to treat others as inferiors, and to extend love even to our enemies - shape our lives and our choices. We strive to vote for the justice and the peace, for the order and for the respect, that we see perfected in Jesus. Aside from our faith, each of us has many other loyalties and commitments, of course. A wonderful part of human life is our relation to various groups - family, friends, nations, even political parties. Each of these groups represents something shared: experience, culture, place, and values. Groups such as nations, political parties, and families can indeed encourage values and goods: they can nurture positive character traits or pass on important stories. Many of us would say that we have received something positive from the countries and groups within which we've lived.

Yet to be Christian is to recognise that we can't privilege any of these other loyalties, *if* this means failing to honour our most fundamental loyalty: our loyalty to God, and to love other humans with the love that Jesus demands of us. And so, we strive to treat every human as precious and valuable because we believe in a God who treats each and every human as precious and valuable – created in his image and offered salvation through his son.

Elections are times when we are called to consider afresh what values our society and nation should embody and promote, *and* whether our nation has fallen away from important values it once embodied.

At this general election the stakes seem especially high. Our political situation is confused and heated. So, when you go to the polling station, please reflect and pray - remembering that, though any vote is a compromise, we mark our paper with the sign of the cross: the sign of our faith and of God's love for all humanity.



**Cover image** of St Leonard's in the snow: Frances Bonner (pastel on sandpaper)

# DECEMBER DIARY

## **SUNDAY 1<sup>st</sup> December ADVENT SUNDAY**

**8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)**

**9.45am ALL AGE EUCHARIST**

**6.30pm ADVENT CAROL SERVICE**



## **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup>**

10.00am Holy Communion at Wren House

7.30pm 'Medley' house group (Rosemary 515245)

## **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup>**

10.00am Eucharist followed by coffee

10.45am Holy Communion at Woodlands

11.30am Holy Communion at Cheviot

12.30pm Lexden School Carol Service in Church

7.30pm Advent Reflection followed by Compline

## **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup>**

8.00am Eucharist

## **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup>**

8.30am Men's Breakfast in the Nicholls Room

10.30am - 1.30pm Christmas Bazaar

7.00pm Lexden Choral Carol Concert in Church

## **SUNDAY 8<sup>th</sup> ADVENT 2**

**8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)**

**9.45am PARISH EUCHARIST with Junior Church**

**6.30pm Evensong and Sermon**

## **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup>**

2.30pm Mothers' Union and Lexden Ladies' Group Joint Carol Service in Church

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>

10.00am Eucharist followed by coffee

7.30pm Advent Reflection followed by Compline

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>

8.00am Eucharist

2.30pm 'Constable' house group (Hugh 564577)

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>

10.30am – 12.00noon Christmas Coffee Morning at 1 Acland Avenue

7.30pm Wassail in the Church Hall

**SUNDAY 15<sup>th</sup> ADVENT 3**

**8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)**

**9.45am PARISH EUCHARIST with Junior Church**

**3.00pm Messy Church - Nativity**

**6.30pm Evensong and Sermon**



Monday 16<sup>th</sup>

11.00am Carol Service at Hill House

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup>

11.00am Carol Service at Wren House

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup>

10.00am Eucharist followed by coffee

11.00am Carol Service at Woodlands

1.00pm Kingswode Hoe School Carol Service in Church

7.30pm Advent Reflection followed by Compline

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup>

8.00am Eucharist

9.30am Home Farm School Carol Service in Church

11.30am Carol Service at Cheviot

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>

8.30am Women's Breakfast in the Nicholls Room

**SUNDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> ADVENT 4**

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am PARISH EUCHARIST with Junior Church

2.30pm Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in Church in aid of Colchester CAP Debt centre

6.30pm FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> CHRISTMAS EVE**

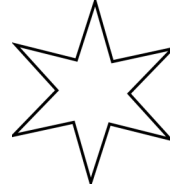
2.30pm Crib Service

\*4.30pm The Service of Light

\*6.30pm The Service of Light

11.15pm MIDNIGHT MASS

(\*Please note that these services are identical)



**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> CHRISTMAS DAY**

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am CHRISTMAS EUCHARIST

6.30pm No SERVICE

26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> December — No SERVICES

**SUNDAY 29<sup>th</sup> December CHRISTMAS 1**

8.00am No SERVICE

9.45am PARISH EUCHARIST

6.30pm No SERVICE

30<sup>th</sup> December – 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 — No SERVICES

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> January

8.30am Men's Breakfast in the Nicholls Room

**SUNDAY 5<sup>th</sup> January EPIPHANY**

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)

9.45am ALL AGE EUCHARIST

6.30pm Evensong and Sermon



St Leonard's Church

# CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December**  
**10.30 – 1.30**

**Tombola**      **Cakes**  
**Refreshments**      **Raffle**

**Paperbacks**      **Cards**

**Children's Games**

**Toys & Jigsaws**

**Gifts & Jewellery**



**All enquiries to Tom & Kathleen**  
**Scrimgeour 01206 574797**



## From the Editor

Thank you to everyone who got in touch with me to express their love and support for the St Leonard's magazine and to wish me well in the task of editing it. It was so important to hear what it means to you and I'm very grateful indeed to have such overwhelming support!

Thank you to everyone who submitted articles and artworks for this month's issue. We are especially privileged this month to have an edition which not only showcases the tireless and imaginative work that goes on within St Leonard's itself, but which also affords us sight of the works of Christian love and service undertaken by members of our congregation across the parish and wider town. Reading through these varied items put me in mind of the scene in *A Christmas Carol* where the Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge far away from his customary haunts to see shopkeepers, miners, lighthouse keepers and seafarers keeping Christmas; an experience which sets him thinking 'what a solemn thing it was to move on through the lonely darkness over an unknown abyss, whose depths were secrets...'

A special mention this month for the winner of the cover competition—or rather winners as I couldn't split my favourite two. This month's cover, showing St Leonard's in the snow, is by Frances Bonner. Next month's cover will be a luminous digital design by Martha Simpkins. Do keep sending me your news, articles and advertisements. I hope you all have a reflective Advent and a wonderful Christmas: "God bless us every one!"



## Woodlands Residential Home

After our monthly communion service at Woodlands on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November, we made a wreath together. This gave the residents and their carers the opportunity to be part of our own Remembrance Service as they are unable to attend in person.

The wreath was laid on the left side of the war memorial (right and detail above) and each poppy represents a loved one.

**Rosemary Elden**





ST LEONARD'S CHURCH - LEXDEN

# WASSAIL

Comrie  
Singers

&

Jubilant  
Brass

present

An evening of music, revelry,  
fun and light refreshment.

7:30 pm.

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2019

St. Leonards Church Hall

Lexden Road, CO3 4BL

Tickets

£10

bring your own  
drinks and glasses

01206

241592

# Colchester Soup Run

## ***What we do...***

The Soup Run is a service offered by a variety of churches to ensure that food is available for the hungry each night of the week. It takes place behind Primark from 8pm to 9pm. We at St. Leonard's are part of the group that operates out of Castle Methodist on Wednesdays and Fridays. We offer our guests hot soup, tea/coffee, sandwiches and usually fruit, chocolate biscuits and crisps which they can take away. More often than not there are added 'treats' like cake, garlic bread, sausage rolls, etc. We make up the food at Castle Methodist, take it by car to the site and serve from a couple of tables and from the back of the car.

We know that not all who come are homeless and some may not even be that hungry, but we are not there to judge who is, or isn't, in need. Some may even come simply for the company and that makes them more than eligible, for, as Mother Teresa often said,

***'Loneliness, and the feeling of being unwanted,  
is the most terrible poverty.'***



All are welcome and, as long as we have helped those who are genuinely in need, we are happy. We are usually able to say that we have had an enjoyable evening serving our guests. They are generally very polite and appreciative. If there is any trouble, they often police themselves as they don't want others spoiling it for them. They know we

have the right to pack up and go if things get out of hand.

## ***Colchester and homelessness...***

Many people assume that Colchester has a real problem with homelessness but many guests will tell us that they come to Colchester especially because many other towns do not offer what Colchester does. There are other organisations like the Night Shelter and Beacon House that provide much needed help. Newly released prisoners are advised to come to Colchester because of the provision.

### ***Sharing God's love...***

Our aim is not just to feed our guests physically but also spiritually. This does not mean we try in any way to evangelise. We only talk about faith if *they* raise it. We are simply there to show God's love for them. We are fortunate to have the means and opportunity to be able to carry out this ministry, and we are also privileged to know of God's love. Many only know of it by the actions of others. As Christians, we do not claim to have the monopoly on good works. On Thursday evenings a team of Sikhs from London also provide hot food, clothing and other items. It is good to see two faiths working alongside each other with the same aim.

### ***Can you help?***

We are always looking for new volunteers to help, so please let us know if you are interested. Many people come along as spectators and end up going on the rota, but there is no obligation if you just want to see it in action. We are usually on the rota once a month but a shortage of volunteers sometimes means we do it twice a month.

Someone recently asked me who provided the food and I explained that the soup, tea, coffee, and sugar are usually donated. Each member of the team of four brings two loaves of sandwiches with a variety of fillings, along with the extras I spoke about earlier. The team leader provides four pints of milk. On hearing that we paid for the food she felt sure that other people in the congregation who are unable to be volunteers on the night would want to know how they could help in other ways. So, here are a few suggestions:

- ✦ We would really welcome gifts of tins of soup (preferably those with ring-pull openers), packets of chocolate bars and biscuits, cakes, bags of crisps, jars of hot chocolate, bottles of squash, tins of ham/ luncheon meat, salmon /tuna or anything similar that will keep and we can use to make the sandwiches.
- ✦ If you would like to make the sandwiches for a member of the team that would be very acceptable. (See list below.)
- ✦ Any donations of money could be used to buy the bread, butter, fruit, milk and perishable fillings.
- ✦ Any unwanted sleeping bags would also be gratefully received.
- ✦ Prayers for the whole project and for those in great need are always wanted.

**We never give our guests any money**, as some would spend it on drink or drugs. If you see someone in town asking for small change, etc. the natural reaction is to want to give them something. You could always go and get them something to eat or drink, but may I suggest you give

them a bit of your time and tell them about the Soup Run instead? Many of them will already know about it, but what they really appreciate is the fact that you have even noticed them, and not walked by on the other side. They are all too often seen as scroungers, a nuisance, a blot on our streets. A kind word means such a lot, and when you talk to them and get to know them, you realise the majority are ordinary people who are down on their luck. It can happen to anyone. There but for the grace of God...

The final word comes, of course, from Jesus.

***'What you do for the least of my brethren, you do for me.'***



### **The Lexden Team**

David Allen	Wendy Allen	Chris Andrews	Carole Durrant	Rosemary Elden
Brian Root	David Watkins	Revd Maggie Whiteman	Frank Wielobob	

### **Christmas Postal Service in aid of**

# **CAP**



**30p a card**

Stamps available in church from  
**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November** or from Rosemary  
Elden (515245)  
**Any address in**

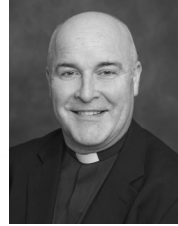
**CO3 3 CO3 4 CO3 8 CO3 9**

**Please write postcode on each card**

Last day of posting **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December**



The Church of England  
in Essex and East London  
Diocese of Chelmsford



December 2019

**Christmas message from The Right Reverend Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Chelmsford.**

## **Have a peaceful and colourful Christmas**

I was visited New Zealand in the summer – their winter. I was speaking at a conference on mission. My wife, Rebecca, came with me and like a couple of teenagers we hired a camper van and went exploring. Because it was winter many of the sites we visited were delightfully quiet and peaceful. One of the most unusual places was Wai-O-Tapu Park. It has all of the ingredients you might expect from a beauty spot; unspoilt rocks, ferns, and trees nestled around lakes. What makes this place remarkable are the weird colours. The glooping escape of geothermal gasses through mud and hissing geysers have upset the colours you would expect to see. Soil is white, rocks are orange and water is bright green or red. There is something wonderfully unsettling about seeing what is familiar in a startlingly different way.

The day after the birth of Jesus Christ, the houses of Bethlehem, the harbours of the Mediterranean and trade routes of the Middle East all looked the same. But for Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and Magi everything was startlingly different. God's familiar creation was now represented in a new and unsettling way. Jesus is baby just like any other, yet his birth, life, death and resurrection reveal Gods new creation. God reframes the entire universe from him, through him and for him.

When we visit him at Christmas we are invited to see ourselves and the whole world in startlingly new and different colours.

I wish you a peaceful and colourful Christmas.

## **Seafarers' Appeal**

We are collecting knitted hats, used playing cards and 500 piece jigsaws for the seafarers of Felixstowe.

The last date to give them to me is

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December.**

**Sheila Cook**

# LEXDEN LADIES GROUP

At our November meeting we welcomed again Dr Jane Pearson, historian and lecturer. Her subject was "19<sup>th</sup> Century Colchester doctors", but she concentrated on Dr Roger Sturley Nunn who had a practice at 11 and 12 Queen Street (next door to his father, also a doctor) between 1835 and 1882. Dr R.S. Nunn was Surgeon to the Borough and House of Correction on Ipswich Road in 1850 and Honorary Surgeon to E. C. Asylum in 1855. Dr Nunn and his family are interred in a vault marked 'R.S.NUNN', which is still visible at St. Botolph's. On the 12<sup>th</sup> February 1847, Nunn performed the first operation under ether anaesthesia in Colchester in the presence of a large audience of eminent London surgeons and local dignitaries. The operation was a success in so far as the patient experienced no pain while sedated, but unfortunately died the next day, possibly from septicaemia. The operation was reported in detail in the *Essex County Standard* and Nunn published a letter in the medical press suggesting that anaesthesia had contributed to the death. Colchester was subsequently considered the site of the first death under anaesthesia! Thank you, Dr Pearson for a fascinating talk.

On **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December**, we meet at the Cricketers for our Christmas Lunch and the following week, on **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December**, we join Mothers' Union members for our Annual Carol Service followed by tea and mince pies. All welcome!

**Margaret** Tel: 579629

## Christmas Bazaar 2019

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December**

**10.30am – 1.30pm**



Items will be welcomed for all stalls especially cakes and produce, bottles for the Tombola, gifts, toys and raffle prizes.

These can be brought to the Hall on **Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December from 10am to 4pm**, or by arrangement.

**Please phone Tom or Kathleen Scrimgeour on 574797**

# Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Our November meeting was, sadly, the last but one for the Lexden Branch of the Mothers' Union in its present form. We look forward to our final meeting this month when we will join Lexden Ladies for our Annual Carol Service in church at 2.30p.m. on **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December**.

At our Meeting, after Opening Prayers, we were very pleased to welcome Kay Abbot as our Speaker, who was ably assisted by her husband, Bill. Kay recalled her and Bill's "Love Affair with the Scilly Isles", which dates back to 1974 when access was only possible by boat, and their first family holiday there with their two sons, aged 6 and 4, and daughter "on the way"! Over the years, they have returned numerous times and, with their immediate family now numbering 16, their children enthusiastically recapture the delights of past holidays with their own children. We were interested to hear about fun on the beach; visits to all the islands, including the uninhabited Samson with its vast array of wonderful shells; the tropical Tresco Botanical Gardens; gig-racing; visits to Cromwell's Castle (north of Tresco); "family" Olympics devised by the grandchildren; sharing a boat with former Prime Minister, Harold Wilson; visiting Valhalla Museum (displaying shipwrecked figureheads); and walking at low tide from Tresco to Bryher.

I know we all found Kay's talk most fascinating. It certainly gave those of us who hadn't visited the Scilly Isles an appetite for a holiday there and brought back memories for those who had been. Thank you very much, Kay and Bill!

We were also pleased to welcome Vivien Chapman, newly appointed Deanery Chairman, to our meeting. She told us about changing times for the Mothers' Union. Do please read Matt's article on p. 23. Further information as to how our Branch proposes to meet up with each other as a Group will appear in the January magazine.

**Jean Hallett**



## December

<b>1<sup>st</sup> December</b>	<b>All-Age Eucharist</b>
<b>8<sup>th</sup> December</b>	<b>Christmas gift bag preparation</b>
<b>15<sup>th</sup> December</b>	<b>What do you see?</b> Acknowledging doubt and despair; sharing good things. <i>Matthew 11.2-11</i>
<b>22<sup>nd</sup> December</b>	<b>Taking a risk!</b> Being open to God; changing your mind. <i>Matthew 1.18-25</i>
<b>29<sup>th</sup> December</b>	<b>The light has come!</b> Thinking about how to represent the light of the world; being a child of God. <i>John 1.1-14</i>



# Going forward in hope: Farewell to Mothers' Union, hello to CAMEO!

*After much prayer and careful deliberation, our branch of the Mothers' Union has decided to transform into CAMEO (Come and Meet Each Other), a fellowship group that will gather four or five times a year. What follows is part of a sermon preached at the Mothers' Union Eucharist this October on the subject of change and hope. On behalf of Lexden, the PCC and all at St Leonard's, I would like to thank Jean Holden, Mary Hamner, Brenda Cant and the many other people who have been involved in the branch for their faithful witness over the years. Matt*

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**THE MOTHERS' UNION** has had – and continues to have – a remarkable impact across the world. Here at St Leonard's it has been a great blessing. This is reflected in our building and its furnishings, but most importantly in the life of our community: there are teddy bears lying in beds across Colchester that were made by MU members for those baptised. They are just one small symbol of the values of care, nurture, welcome, and of the building up of family life that the Mothers' Union honours. And so, at this time of change, we give thanks for the Mothers' Union in Lexden – for current members, for those who have gone before us, for all that has been shared in sorrow and joy, in fellowship and in mission.



The branch's careful reflection and consultation on what the present situation demands is an admirable response to the change around us. Today, changes in our pattern of life have put new pressures on many organisations: Scout and Guide groups struggle to find helpers, schools look desperately for governors, and churches work hard to maintain established patterns. In many families, both partners work; and those who have just retired often provide childcare for their grandchildren. All this is a challenge, yes, but also an opportunity because, across the church, the Holy Spirit is leading God's people to remould and reimagine cherished

organisations and groups. Sometimes this does mean that something comes to an end in its present form and, for those invested in it, this is a sorrowful experience. So it is for us; but, the Gospel shows us that moments such as this are simultaneously sorrowful *and* hopeful.

**WHEN JESUS INVITES US** to “consider the lilies”, he draws attention to God’s providence in nature, sustaining the life of birds and flowers and all those made in his image. He also wants to release us from unnecessary guilt: especially that most pernicious guilt which comes from thinking that everything rests on *us* and *our* efforts alone. For to think that everything rests on us and our efforts is to deny the great truth that literally everything is sustained by God. By calling us away from that guilt, Jesus also calls us away from becoming absorbed in energy-sapping activity or being beholden to things past at the expense of striving for the Kingdom of God and living as his disciples here and now. The church is the living body of Christ, but the church as a *human* institution can also be a crucifying cross, draining the energy and life from those who are called to be part of a living body sharing the Good News of salvation in Christ. In the same passage Jesus teaches, “do not worry about tomorrow”. In advising us to fix our eyes on the Kingdom and righteousness for God will provide, he isn’t offering bland, feel-good advice. Jesus says this as Lord of time and the universe, the one in whom all our futures reside. So, in Christ, arriving at a point when something ends or is transformed should be to us both a moment of real sorrow and a moment of true hope.

The closure of our branch does not mean that the things which fed and sustained the members must come to an end too. Happily, the group is now to become CAMEO (Come and Meet Each Other) - an opportunity for regular fellowship together.



**IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**, Ruth faced just such a moment. Her story is extraordinary and extraordinarily important in the history of God's relationship with humanity. Ruth leaves her culture, possessions, and all she had known and goes to an alien land. A land, Judah, where strangers were treated with suspicion. Through her love of her mother-in-law, Naomi, Ruth declares her loyalty to her new family and (astonishingly) commits herself to Naomi's God (abandoning her own gods). So many things come to an end at that point. But read on and see how the ending of one thing was also the beginning of a different thing; a wonderful thing that brought to unexpected fruition the beauty of what Ruth valued in her old life.



But what is the true significance of Ruth's story - this instant of stepping faithfully into an unknown future? Turn to the very beginning of the New Testament and the first thing you will come upon is Jesus's family tree – full of all sorts of dubious and flawed people. The real, human foundation of Jesus's life is carefully positioned as the very the first part of Matthew's Gospel. And at the centre of that foundation is Ruth – this foreign girl – from whom flowed the blood line of King David no less, and therefore the ancestry of Jesus Christ.

We may forget it, we may not be able to discern the specifics of our role in it but be assured – as faithful disciples – we *are* part of the story of God's salvation! A story the end of which we already know in all its glory and triumph.

So in saying farewell to the Mothers' Union in its present form, let us confidently celebrate what has been, let us reflect on all that is precious about what is, and then let us go forward in the faith of Christ: not worrying about tomorrow but embracing what will be in hope, just as Ruth did those thousands of years ago!

# CAP Life Skills at St Leonard's

St Leonard's has long supported the work of Christians Against Poverty (CAP), but it has been a real joy for us to host and support the very first CAP Life Skills course in Colchester.

Since September, a group of us have met weekly here at St Leonard's, and enjoyed a simple lunch together before each session. We have covered topics including budgeting, saving and spending, cooking healthy food that doesn't cost much, and looking after our own physical and mental health.

The feedback from the course attendees has been really positive, and we've been able to help them set and achieve goals to help overcome particular issues or build confidence and existing skills to make positive



changes to their daily lives. Both the attendees and the volunteers have learned a lot, and had a lot of fun. The many discussions around food, sharing tips and ideas and the practical cooking session have been particular highlights for all of us. I'm thinking of putting together a recipe book!

We're planning to run another course in the new year, so please look out for infor-

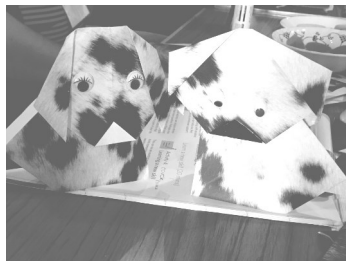
mation about that and think about whether you or someone you know might enjoy it.

Before then, there will also be a one-off 'Christmas on a budget' session at **1pm on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November** in St Leonard's Church Hall. Like the Life Skills course, this will be completely free and is open to all. Children are welcome at this one too.

## Siân Simpkins

Above: Knitting remembrance poppies

Right: Origami dogs





# MOUSE TAILS

St Leonard's mouse community were all looking forward to Christmas. Grandpa had told them the Nativity story, which they all loved, and he particularly stressed the importance and joy of giving rather than receiving. The very young mice were excited in their anticipation of Christmas. Of course, mice don't 'do' money so it wouldn't be a case of who had the biggest or most expensive gifts; they had learned from an early age that receiving a gift, no matter what it was, was enough to show them that they were loved and that was a much better gift than anything else.

All of the mice were preparing for the special day; Grandpa and Dads had been busy harvesting berries and nuts ready to make the special cordials, beers and wines that they would all enjoy over the Christmas period, Mums had been giving detailed instructions to Dads about what they wanted them to scavenge for. (It has to be said that many of the items were just wishful thinking. However, the Dads would do their best!)

Younger mice had been scavenging all year and saving bits and pieces from Messy Church, flower arranging and any event where they could find scraps of treasure in order to make special cards and little gifts. Molly, for instance, had a good stash of ribbon, wool and thread; Rupert had collected bits of crayon, coloured paper and bits of wood. (There was much secrecy involved in the preparation of cards and gifts for the real gift was the surprise when they received their presents on Christmas Day.) Their Mum had been busy too, planning where their family guests would sleep and making sure that she had enough food for everyone and, when Rupert and Molly were either out or asleep, she was busy knitting or sewing their gifts. Dad, apart from going out every day to scavenge bits and pieces, made their Christmas drinks (which, of course, involved getting together with other Dads to sample and discuss the drinks...) was collecting bits of wood and fir branches to make up a Christmas tree for the Hall. All the youngsters were encouraged to make decorations to hang on the tree. Fir cones featured a lot in their

decorations but, after Bonfire Night, the young mice had lots of rocket sticks and bits of paper which hadn't been burnt and these provided much inspiration for their decorations.

The mouse choir had begun rehearsing their carol singing, accompanied by young Tommy Organ on his mouth organ (one 'wag' suggested it should be called a *mouse* organ). The Woods families were also busy collecting herbs, nuts and berries and making their fizzy elderberry wine to contribute to the traditional feast. The Hall family were busy too, making sure that the nest areas of the Hall were clean and had fresh straw ready for all their guests, whilst the Outside mice made sure that there was plenty of holly, ivy and mistletoe to decorate the Hall.

So, with Christmas preparations well under way, the mouse community could relax a little and look forward to the big day!

CT

## Friendship Lunches

Four years ago David Watkins and I held the first Friendship Lunch at St Leonard's. We were delighted to welcome 25 people and very quickly the numbers have risen to 35 as our normal number. Sharing a meal in friendship and spending time chatting in a happy environment is our aim, and we warmly welcome people from Lexden to join us. We are so lucky to have a large, very willing and happy band of cooks and servers who I can't thank enough for their help. We had hoped to run a lunch in December but my helpers and the church are a bit too busy then. So, our next lunch will be on



**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2020.**

We look forward to seeing you all in 2020.

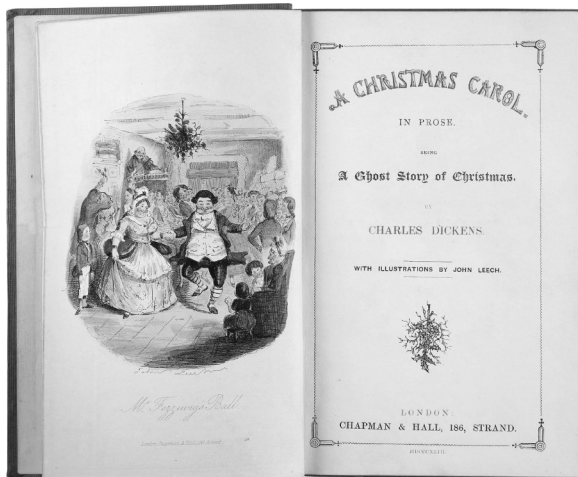
**Beverley Kettell** (01206 241592) [bev@stleonardslexden.org.uk](mailto:bev@stleonardslexden.org.uk)

# ***A Christmas Carol***

## **by Candlelight**

I am delighted that Anthony Roberts, director of Colchester Arts Centre is bringing his now-legendary adaption of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* to St Leonard's Church, at **2.30pm on 22<sup>nd</sup> December**.

As usual, Anthony will be performing with his long-term musical collaborator, Jamie Cunliffe.



Entry to this exciting event is free but there will be a retiring collection in aid of Colchester CAP Debt Centre.

This will be a lovely event, with the church lit by candles and decorated for Christmas, which should add to the atmosphere that Anthony and Jamie are so skilled at creating when they perform Dickens' great Christmas masterpiece.

This will be a great way to start the festive period whilst supporting our local CAP Debt Centre, so do please put it in your diaries and come along.

**Siân Simpkins**



## Poets' Corner

Christmas hath a darkness  
Brighter than the blazing noon,  
Christmas hath a chillness  
Warmer than the heat of June,  
Christmas hath a beauty  
Lovelier than the world can show:  
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,  
Brought for us so low.

Earth, strike up your music,  
Birds that sing and bells that ring;  
Heaven hath answering music  
For all Angels soon to sing:  
Earth, put on your whitest  
Bridal robe of spotless snow:  
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,  
Brought for us so low.

*Christmas Eve*

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)



# Film Review:

## *Official Secrets* (2019)



‘Spies, lies and a drama that resonates ‘was how the *i* newspaper summed up this gripping film. This ‘unabashedly political movie’, in the words of the *Wall Street Journal*, is based on the book *The spy who tried to stop a war* (2008) by Marcia and Thomas Mitchell. It is the true story of Katharine Gunn, who, in 2003, was working as a Mandarin translator at the intelligence agency GCHQ in Cheltenham.

One day Katharine receives an email from the NSA (National Security Agency) in Washington asking for Britain’s help in a ‘dirty tricks’ campaign. They want to find incriminating evidence on countries represented on the UN Security Council, in order to blackmail them to support the UN resolution in favour of the Iraq war. Katharine makes the courageous decision to leak this memo to the press – a clear breach of the Official Secrets Act punishable by a long period of imprisonment. The memo reaches the desk of a journalist on *The Observer* whose editor is supportive of Tony Blair and the Iraq war and only authorises publication when he is completely convinced of its authenticity. After publication, M15 sets out to find who is responsible for the leak at GCHQ and Katharine confesses to being the leaker. This results in her being charged with a breach of the Official Secrets Act and being brought to trial at the Old Bailey. We think we are in for a long trial when she pleads ‘not guilty’. However, the prosecution barrister announces that the prosecution will not be offering any evidence, so the trial collapses and Katharine is freed! According to the film, the revelations about the leaked memo would have been too politically embarrassing for the then government.

Katharine made the very difficult decision that sometimes loyalty to a greater good (in this case the need to prevent a war) overrides loyalty to a particular government, and she was prepared to pay the price for acting on her conscience. Let us hope and pray that we never find ourselves in a similar situation.

The part of Katharine is brilliantly played by Keira Knightley, who, in the words of *The Daily Telegraph*’s film critic, ‘is captivating as a woman who does the moral thing at the risk of losing everything’.

**Hugh Beavan**



## COFFEE MORNING

Yet again, Frances Bonner has very kindly agreed to host our Christmassy Coffee Morning and has invited us to her home, **1 Acland Avenue**, on **Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> December** from **10.30am to 12noon**.

We very much look forward to meeting up there. Frances will warmly welcome us with coffee and mince pies and there will be a Raffle.

Do come along and enjoy each other's company.

**Jean Hallett**



## MAGAZINE DEADLINE

Deadline for items for the **JANUARY 2020** edition:

**SUNDAY 15<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER**

Please submit items to the Editor

email: [magazine@stleonardslexden.org.uk](mailto:magazine@stleonardslexden.org.uk)

Please include your name with any submission  
and limit text to 500-600 words maximum.

Longer articles may be edited. Thank you.

[A note on copyright: previously unpublished images and writings you produce are fine to reproduce in the magazine and will be appropriately credited. Works by others usually become copyright-free 70 years following the end of year of the author's death so please bear this in mind when submitting items for inclusion!]



## A CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

**New and Traditional Carols**

**Lexden Choral Society**

**with**

**CRGS 6<sup>th</sup> Form Choir**

**and**

**Abbacadabra**

**Audience Participation**

**Followed by**

**Christmas Cabaret with light refreshments**

**ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH, LEXDEN**

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

**at 7.00 pm**



**Tickets –£12.00 (Students/U-18s £8.00)**  
light refreshments – (wine not included)

**From: Mann's Music/Phone 01206 543280**  
**lexdenchoral.org/ or at the door**