



From the curate, a coffee shop somewhere in Guildford

The December/January Newsletter is here, with thanks again to Jana and the contributors to this winter publication!

The first thing for me to say is, “Happy new liturgical year!” I hope you’ve recovered from your New Year’s celebrations! With the arrival of the new liturgical year comes the season of Advent, an anglicised form of the Latin *adventa*, from *ad* (towards) and *venio* (come) – I’m sure many of you are aware of the 9th century hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus* (Come Creator Spirit). At Advent, God is no longer *coming*, God has arrived, has come towards his creation, born to a woman who, like the place he was born in, appeared to be of little significance.

I’m reminded of the poem, *The Coming*, by R. S. Thomas:

*And God held in his hand
A small globe. Look he said.
The son looked. Far off,
As through water, he saw
A scorched land of fierce
Colour. The light burned
There; crusted buildings
Cast their shadows: a bright
Serpent, A river
Uncoiled itself, radiant
With slime.*

*On a bare
Hill a bare tree saddened
The sky. Many People
Held out their thin arms
To it, as though waiting
For a vanished April
To return to its crossed
Boughs. The son watched
Them. Let me go there, he
said.*



Image [Wikimages](#) from [Pixabay](#)

going through labour pains until Christ is formed in the Church he is writing to (Galatians 4:19)! One practical way in which we might reflect on this further is by coming to the Walsingham Cell group, where we meet for Mass and to discuss a Marian topic or pray the Rosary over fish and chips. Speak to Philip Hooper for further details. **Fr Alistair**

The melancholy mood of Thomas is perhaps not suitable to a time of year where we celebrate God having come to us but with the events of the last 9 months in Ukraine, Israel, and Gaza, it is right that we remember the hope we have that God will come to those bare hills, where many people have waited and are waiting for a vanished April.



As we pray for Jesus to come into the world, it is a good opportunity for us to reflect on what it might mean for us to receive our own annunciation (a question I think each of us can only answer ourselves) and what it might mean to become the mother to the Christ being born in each other? Paul speaks of

going through labour pains until Christ is formed in the Church he is writing to (Galatians 4:19)! One practical way in which we might reflect on this further is by coming to the Walsingham Cell group, where we meet for Mass and to discuss a Marian topic or pray the Rosary over fish and chips. Speak to Philip Hooper for further details. **Fr Alistair**

I am delighted to have been accepted for training as an Ordained Local Minister

in this, our parish of St Nicolas. It means that, in three years time, I could be ordained a deacon, just as Fr Alistair is now; and a year later become a priest.

This marks the end of an eighteen month formal journey through a rigorous period of assessment by the Church of England of my suitability. I had a stage one assessment back in January, which was a series of six interviews, and then I had two days of assessment in North Yorkshire in July.

I now embark on weekly evening classes at Diocesan House in Guildford which will guide me through the academic and formational requirements to become a deacon. This is accredited and assessed by the University of Durham and has the potential to develop into a degree, following some additional studies.

There are eight of us in my study group, four on a path to ordination and four studying for lay ministry. I am sure will be pleased to know that I am flying high the banner for the Anglo-Catholic tradition.



Linda with new grandson Edward David 'Teddy'

What I am most excited about is that I will be licensed only to St Nicolas, so I will always be your priest and be here to serve God and to serve you. I will not be stipendiary and cannot go elsewhere unless bid by the Area Dean!

During my first three years of training I am asked to gather a small group of people together, called a parish support group, to be my kindly support and critics to help form me into the priest I need to be. The group will meet termly to appraise my progress and is an important part of my formation.

I will remain a member of the serving team throughout my training but over the coming months you may see me reading a few more lessons and interceding more on a Sunday morning: but I will leave the preaching to the professionals for as long as possible. I am required to lead a service during Lent and am hoping this might be a weekday Mattins with a focus on the life of one of the saints, which I hope to make a bit of a theme of mine. **Linda Sharpin**

Why I am a Christian

Veronica Woods Something terrifying happened to me a few years ago which caused me to perceive I had lost God. Subsequently I experienced the most awful existence and called out to God in prayer and all the hymns and parts of scripture I had ever absorbed as a child came to mind, but I couldn't fight it and had seemingly lost what I knew as 'self'.



Then there was an afternoon when I randomly opened my bible (newly bought) at 2 Corinthians 4:7 and this verse gave me a cord to hold onto. I was so spiritually ill I could barely read at all but this one verse gave me hope in the form of truth. A long time after I was able to read more bible chapters and saw and completely understood these as absolute truth. That's how they presented themselves to me.

Christ helped me to *know* Him in scripture so I could receive help.

⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness,"^[a] made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.



Julia Wake Mine is a living faith in My Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who died on the cross to save me from my sins. I believe that I must be a light in this dark world to show that I have JESUS within me. I also believe that sacred music plays a part in lifting my soul up to Heaven, where, one day, I will be with Him together with my many special friends and loved ones.

My dear father hand wrote this piece for my guidance through life:-

*He is a path, if any be misled,
He is a robe if any naked be,
If any chance to hunger, He is bread,
If any be a bondsman He is free,
If any be but weak, how strong is He.
To dead men life He is. To sick men health,
To blind men sight, and to the needy wealth,
A pleasure without loss,
A treasure without stealth.*

Jonathan Neil-Smith I cannot claim to have a ‘Damascus Road experience.’ I was brought up as part of a vicarage family where Christian worship was quite simply part of normal everyday life. That may sound a bit trite, but it soon dawned on me that my father’s priestly ministry was something rather extraordinary. For him he really was engaged in ‘the cure of souls’, not just through his ministry to our local community but through his ministry of healing and deliverance. So, it is really his personal example of Christian discipleship that proved so compelling. I had plenty of opportunities to fall by the wayside when away from home, but was perhaps fortunate to attend a boarding school which cleverly succeeded in making worship ‘cool’ (by abolishing compulsory Chapel); and then at Cambridge fell under the spell of inspirational ‘cathedral style worship’ at St John’s College, which served to deepen my faith still further.



Jana Phillips I feel the need to seek God and to have a relationship with this higher being. By chance I was born in Europe whose culture is rooted in Christianity and its tools to “speak to” and worship God are more understandable to me than those of a religion rooted in another culture. Importantly, this allows me to worship here at St Nicolas as part of a local and active community. Had I been born in Israel, I would be Jewish, in Palestine, Muslim, and so on. If there is one God, its nature must be to love all people with their cultures and religions.

It strikes me that the real enemy of God is a power-hungry ego. The “poverty of spirit,” humility and love for all which Jesus personifies and preaches stand in opposition to this human trait. Christianity leads me to hope that if the superficial differences due to geography-and-culture and power-political interference were stripped away from world religions, we would find one universal message of love.

(written on the 7th anniversary of my Baptism)



Jean Woolley John 4 verse 19 says we love God because he first loved us. This is part of the reason why I am a Christian. How amazing that we are loved by God as we are. I want to walk in the way of holiness. This way isn't a technique for living nor is it merely a list of dos and don'ts, it is a person - Jesus. He is the Holy One and as I live in him and contemplate him and journey through life with him as my companion I am changed little by little to become more like him. This journey with Jesus is the key to overcoming the temptations of the world. Keeping my focus on my walk and relationship with Jesus will mean that one day I will be like him. He brings great joy and brightness into my life and a light that I can share with others.



Sally Lowe I believe that the historical Jesus was the human face of God’s love, and that through the decades that love has been mediated to me by countless people – family and friends, but also through the kindness of strangers. A pragmatic answer might be: because I was born and raised at a certain time and place. If these had been different I might have followed a different religion or none.



Donald Thompson I have believed in God since childhood despite an upbringing in a family that would have identified as ‘C of E’ but did not attend Church, even at Christmas or Easter. Through school assemblies I became aware of the rhythm of the Christian Liturgical year and this helped me find the beauty, as well as the truth, of the Gospel. My deep love of classical music eventually led me to the Bach Passions and to meditate on the redemption won for us by Our Lord Jesus Christ. Whilst believing, I did not act until I had experienced the deep emotion and profundity of the keeping of the Holy Week Liturgy for several years. In fact, until I was 50 years old! Here, was the true meaning of God being ‘with us’ in suffering and in joy. Only this kind of God connects with our suffering, yet beautiful, world and makes sense of love triumphing despite everything. So, I committed myself to Christ in baptism & confirmation at Easter 2009. As Bishop David Jenkins memorably said, “God is, as he is in Jesus, therefore we have Hope”.



December services

- Fri 1** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel
- Sun 3** **Advent I**
08:30 Mass
6.30pm Advent Carols
- Tue 5** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
- Wed 6** **St Nicolas Day**
10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Feast of Title Mass 6pm
- Thu 7** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
- Fri 8** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel
- Sun 10** **Advent II**
08:30 Mass
10:00 Mass & Healing C&P: NE
- Tue 12** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
- Wed 13** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
- Thu 14** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
- Fri 15** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel
- Sun 17** **Advent III, Gaudete Sunday**
08:30 Mass
11:00 Lessons & Carols **No Junior Church 'til Jan**
- Tue 19** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
- Wed 20** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
- Thu 21** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
- Fri 22** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel
- Sun 24** **ADVENT IV, CHRISTMAS EVE**
10:00 Mass
3pm Christingle
5pm Christingle
11:30pm Midnight Mass
- Mon 25** **CHRISTMAS DAY**
10:00 Mass
- Fri 29** 09:30 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel - C&P:NE
- Sun 31** No 8:30
10:00 Mass C&P:NE





- Fri 5** 11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel
Sat 6 4-6pm Messy Church at URC
- Sun 7** **EPIPHANY**
 08:30 Mass
 10:00 Mass with Junior Church
- Tue 9** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Wed 10 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Thu 11 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Fri 12 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
 11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel
- Sun 14** **EPIPHANY II**
 08:30 Mass
 10:00 Parish Mass
 3pm *Junior Church Party*
- Tue 16** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Wed 17 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Thu 18 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Fri 19 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
 11:00 Mass, St George's Chapel
- Sun 21** **EPIPHANY III**
 08:30 Mass
 10:00 Parish Mass with Junior Church
- Tue 23** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Wed 24 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Thu 25 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Fri 26 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
 11:00 Mass St, George's Chapel. *Monthly Lunch*
- Sun 28** **EPIPHANY IV - SCHOOL SUNDAY**
 08:30 Mass
 10:00 Parish Mass
- Tue 30** 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel
Wed 31 10:00 Morning Prayer, The Lady Chapel



Children's activities

We had a wonderful time at last month's Messy Light party at St Nics. Over 100 people attended, and we raised £300 for UNICEF. Thank you to everyone who supported the event, especially those who volunteered to help run activities.



Our next Messy Church is at Guildford URC, 83 Portsmouth Road on Saturday 2nd December at 4pm. We are also excited to announce that for the year ahead Messy Church will now alternate between St Nics and Guildford URC. See dates and locations below:

- 6 Jan (New Year) **GURC**
- 3 Feb (Lent) **St Nicolas**
- 13 April (Easter) **GURC**
- 4 May Wessex Synod Big Day Out at Hollycombe
- 1 June (Pentecost) **St Nicolas**
- 7 September (Back to school) **St Nicolas**
- 5 October (Harvest) **GURC**
- 2 November (Light Party) **St Nicolas**
- 7 December (Christmas) **GURC**



For anyone who isn't aware, my role is shared between St Nics and Guildford URC as the churches work in partnership. This is a fantastic way of sharing resources and exploring how 2 very different worship styles can work together. I run a variety of children's activities during the week at both churches for different age groups and you are most welcome in either church.

Messy Church is a fantastic opportunity to welcome new families to church and for our existing families to develop their faith in a fun and creative way. Messy Church is a joint venture between St Nics and GURC, but for a long time this has been predominantly run by volunteers from GURC. It would be great to have a team develop within St Nics as well to help support the existing team. Please do get in touch if you feel this is something you are able to help with. You do not have to help at every session.

In other news, I have been developing the children's corner in the church. We have lots of new toys and mats and I am waiting for a new storage cupboard to arrive to put it all in.

In **Junior Church** we have been working our way through the Lord's Prayer each week. We looked at the lost son for 'Our Father in Heaven', we made name badges - including one for God! - for 'Hallowed be your name' and we played Simon Says for 'Your will be done'. The children made sandwiches for their 'daily bread' and decorated cupcakes to give to someone they needed to forgive as we thought about 'forgive us our trespasses...' As we head towards Christmas now we shall pause our Lord's Prayer and allow ourselves to feel a little festive as we follow the journey to Christmas. **Nicky Geraghty**

Mission Enabler missionenabler@saintnics.com



Café Play

at St Nicolas each Wednesday from 10-11:30am.

No room for them in the inn - Is homelessness really a lifestyle choice?

On 4 November, the then-Home Secretary proposed laws to stop homeless people living in tents and suggested that homelessness was a lifestyle choice. We have asked local organisations to comment.



Image by Andreas Böhm, Pixabay

Life Choices

For those of us who have the freedom and possibility of making choices in life, where we live what we do who we spend time with, our work our leisure and our use of time are to some degree in our hands. The harsh reality is that for so many people in our world such life choices are very severely limited due to circumstances beyond their control often with devastating consequences, hardship and suffering.

Having spent a great deal of my life working with the homeless, I am certain that living on the streets is not a welcome choice and its causes lie in poverty, abuse, eviction, mental health issues, and trauma, coupled with the woeful lack of suitable accommodation, care and support. In all my years, I can only remember one person for whom it could be said that it was a choice and that was only because of a lifetime of rejection and an inability to adjust to living indoors.

Several years ago, at the end of the Christmas Soup Kitchen in one of my parishes, I found a man on the doorstep who having returned to his tent found that it, along with all his possessions, have been stolen. Amidst the dangers and insecurities vulnerability and the weather, his tent afforded at least a very meagre shelter. I managed to find a room at an inn, but the story is a harsh reminder of the cruel realities of a world that so often doesn't care.

The literal translation of John 1.14 is, *'the word became flesh and pitched his tent among us'*. We are so used to thinking of our homes as permanent bricks and mortar, but for so many this is not the case and in addition it belies the reality of the transitory nature of our journey in this life. In his itinerant life Jesus said that he had nowhere to lay his head. For those who have nowhere to lay their heads, money and resources are of vital importance, but they are not substitutes for welcome, compassion and hospitality. These too are life choices that we are called to make as individuals and as a society. Love is the lifestyle choice that means caring to know.

Lord, show us how to show love and compassion to the homeless in our community whilst respecting their dignity and bless those who care for them and provide shelter. Amen

There are 2,900 people sleeping on the streets of the UK every night (UK Gov) and on average 10 in Guildford. Fr. Nick

How many people are affected by homelessness in Guildford and Surrey?

Shelter have provided an insight from the quarterly Statutory homelessness data. This data is for January to March 2023.

Guildford

- 44 households in temporary accommodation
- 26 children in temporary accommodation

South East

- 12,320 households in temporary accommodation
- 13,680 children in temporary accommodation

England

- 104,510 households in temporary accommodation
- 131,370 children in temporary accommodation

Since when did we think it was OK to put the blame of homeless people on themselves? How did a progressive country set this as a narrative?

With over 25 years of working with rough sleepers and people who find themselves homeless, I hope I can dispel some myths around homelessness.

The first and most important fact, is that homeless people often have trauma, some will recognise this and some will not. At Guildford Action we learn over the weeks and months and sometimes years that follow that everyone has a story and I am yet to meet anyone who is not in their current situation because of some trauma.

From endless children's homes, abuse, domestic abuse, having a parent with substance misuse issues or simply by living in absolute poverty, the stories do not differ greatly. These are not the ingredients children need to help them transition into an adulthood where they can make positive and safe choices.

Along the way, some find the pain more bearable by blotting it out with various substances. There is a distrust of services which is completely understandable as often it is the protective services who did not always do what they could to protect them as children.

Fast forward to adulthood and people find themselves homeless for all kinds of reasons. Relationship breakdown, neurodivergence, substance misuse, behaviour and sometimes feeling safer on the streets than they do in hostels.

In Guildford we have good homeless services, we have hostels who are understanding and tolerant, we have an outreach team who check on people at 6am in the morning and never give up trying to help, but this is not the story nationwide. Some areas have no homeless support services and some feel admitting there is a homelessness issue in their borough is somehow a reflection on them.

We do give out tents at Guildford Action and will continue to do so. Criminalising homeless people has not worked up until now and never will, it simply marginalises people even further.

I am not sure why, when homeless people are talked about the insinuation is they are a risk, my experience is the complete opposite. In fact, they are one of the most at risk cohorts;

Homeless people are at a higher risk of experiencing physical and sexual violence than the general population

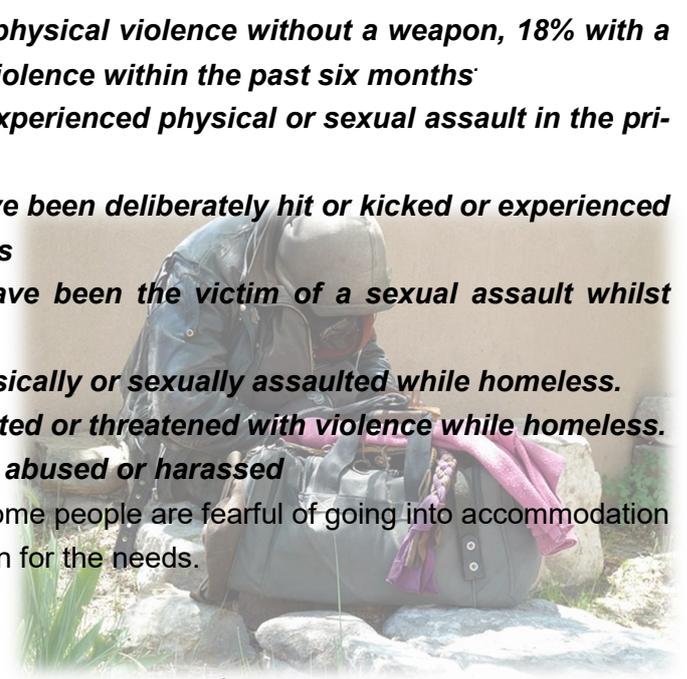
The statistics of homeless people being assaulted are as follows:

- ***48% of homeless women had experienced physical violence without a weapon, 18% with a weapon, and 18% had experienced sexual violence within the past six months***
- ***Almost 12% of homeless older adults had experienced physical or sexual assault in the prior six months***
- ***35% of current or recent rough sleepers have been deliberately hit or kicked or experienced some other form of violence whilst homeless***
- ***7% of current or recent rough sleepers have been the victim of a sexual assault whilst homeless***
- ***19% of homeless adults reported being physically or sexually assaulted while homeless.***
- ***48% of homeless people have been intimidated or threatened with violence while homeless.***
- ***59% of homeless people have been verbally abused or harassed***

We have to be patient and start to understand why some people are fearful of going into accommodation and we have to provide more suitable accommodation for the needs.

Homelessness is not the cause; it is the effect.

***Joanne Tester,
Chief Executive, Guildford Action***



Adapted from image by Brigitte Werner, Pixabay

Banning tents without alternative punishes rough sleepers

(National website 7 Nov 2023)

The Salvation Army in Guildford sends us this message

In my experience of homelessness, I can say that it is not a lifestyle choice. There are many contributing factors as to why people find themselves homeless, and poor mental health is one of these. It makes me very sad to see a homeless person and it takes time and effort to build a relationship of trust.

Over my 18 years of ministry, I have encountered the homeless in all our appointments. Here in Guildford we do not work directly with the homeless community but, occasionally, we have had a homeless person come into the hall for help.

Blessings, **Julia Adcock, Major, Salvation Army Guildford**



Zero Carbon Guildford Community fridge, which St Nics hosts every Tuesday, is for everyone to use. The volunteers were able to help me find those who have experienced homelessness.

Joan's story

Joan and her husband Chris, both in their sixties, moved out of their privately rented flat when their landlord decided to sell up. They couldn't find any alternative accommodation which they could afford, so had to dispose of their furniture and the majority of their belongings and sofa-surfed with their children and friends. Both registered disabled, Joan was able to work part-time as a cleaner but her husband's injury, sustained at work, left him too disabled to work again. They had been on the council housing list for over a year but as they hadn't lived in that borough for four years, the council disputed their right to housing help. Joan fought this incorrect interpretation of the rules and they were eventually offered an emergency shelter on condition that they give up their little dog Ellie. They'd lost their home, most of their furniture and possessions but Joan and Chris could not bring themselves to give Ellie away, she was part of the family and particularly important to Chris who stays at home. After five and a half months of insecurity, relying on the goodwill of family and friends who managed to give them an occasional hot meal, they were offered a bungalow! This was in a sheltered housing complex but they only had three days to decide whether to take it, re-assemble what was left of their possessions and make arrangements to move in. Having settled in, all went well for a while until one of the neighbours began bullying Chris and the Housing Association were not able to deal with this. It made Chris very ill. After five years he and Joan managed to swap their bungalow for a house in Guildford and are finally settled, but the long ordeal has left them both with depression and anxiety. Joan needed two lots of counselling and her distress at recalling the insecurity of homelessness was evident as she told me her story. She and her husband now have a second dog; a "therapy dog" for anxiety. Joan has started volunteering at our Zero Carbon Community fridge, which is how we met.



Ellie, part of the family

Zero Carbon Guildford also passed on stories of two young people who visit one of their other sessions and have who agreed to share their experience.

The young man's story One of four brothers, this young man was thrown out of the family home for having a problem with alcohol. The eldest brother paid for him to stay at a B&B for a few nights, then he was sleeping rough for a week. He managed to get help from a Community centre, and then the No.5 York Road shelter in Guildford, before moving on to a supervised home. He describes the time as a "very intense 16 months." The youngster now lives in a sheltered house, sharing with 3 other men who each have a problem of their own, so it is still a difficult situation. When asked whether homelessness is a lifestyle choice for him, he says, "Of course it isn't!"

The young woman's story This girl in her late teens left home for her own good following complication within her family, which needed the involvement of Social Services. She spent 6 months sofa-surfing with friends, then stayed at York Road (Woking) for two weeks before managing to get a place in a women's hostel. She was homeless for a total of a year but found help through her local borough council and Guildford Action, who she says were very helpful and who also arranged help to deal with her drug and alcohol use. Her response to whether homelessness is her lifestyle choice was, "No, you don't choose to be homeless. If I could change it all, then I would."

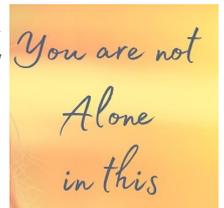
Homelessness, mental health and substance addiction



I have just looked through our database and found that out of the clients who were referred to us over the past 18 months for drug or alcohol addiction counselling, **17 were homeless.**

Many of our referrals are for people who have or had their complex needs exacerbated by being homeless and waiting for housing to become available. Clients presented with, among others, many mental health struggles such as PTSD, Bi-polar, Aspergers and substance use. The combination of all these challenges made it difficult for some of them to engage with other services, but they did engage well with our compassionate, supportive and non-judgmental addiction counsellors who are all BACP accredited. Clients were supported to contact both housing services and mental health support services.

It has become clear that whether they were made homeless through housing eviction, a family breakdown or by leaving the armed forces, these clients are often at such a low mental ebb that they are unable to look after themselves without some help.



Wendy Coad,
Surrey Drug and Alcohol Care, Telephone Counselling Service

How can we help?

On a recent Sunday we all sang Hymn 465.

The words resounded with this theme, for example:

*“But in lowly birth didst thou come to earth, And in great humility
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus; There is room in my heart for thee.”*

A friend active in a church elsewhere in the Guildford Diocese sends this account of her experience; the details have been left out not to compromise their clients' confidentiality.

The Community Cafe and Foodbank hub I was involved in at our church between April 2021-April 2023

This weekly hub was set up by our local foodbank and our church just towards the end of lockdown in 2021. Each week clients in need would come to redeem their voucher and receive a 3 day supply of food. We were able to offer some fresh food too due to the generosity of local supermarkets.

As clients came to collect their food, we also offered them a 'covid safe' cup of coffee, but it was clear that so many needed much more than just food to help them out of poverty long term. There are so many other issues at large, contributing to their situation. So many suffering from bereavement, loss, illness and mental health complications. Some had lost their homes arriving from Ukraine and some suffering with all sorts of addiction issues needing specialist help.

The hub offered a warm welcome, a listening ear and encouragement as well as coffee, cake and prayer. Volunteers listened to people's needs and tried to help by signposting them on to organisations which offer specialist help. Some would arrive anxious, worried and distressed. Some felt ashamed about coming through the doors, but found the hub to be a place of welcome, kindness and encouragement. This space has been such an opportunity to offer love, value and worth to so many who feel they have little hope.

As volunteers talked to clients, they were able to gauge the help they needed. Sometimes it was a simple matter of calling the doctor on their behalf for medication because they were too anxious to call themselves. Or helping to arrange appointments at the Citizens advice bureau for help with benefits or finances – all of which was often seem confusing and overwhelming.

The foodbank managed to organise a regular CAB member at the hub on site to offer help straight away,

which has just been amazing. The hub also has links with Rentstart and the night shelter in the winter months, both help with accommodation and housing.

Many came with mental health issues and it takes time to build trust. As people came each week and engaged with the volunteers, trust started to grow and people began to really feel like they belonged to the hub community. It's been wonderful to watch relationships develop and friendships form between clients, volunteers and others who come in for a coffee in the community. It really feels like a family.

In turn we have seen confidence grow in people who were once really struggling. We were able to encourage clients when they became well enough and felt strong enough to help. We have seen several of them feel confident enough to start volunteering at the hub, including helping set up and make the coffee each week, and preparing and cooking a hot lunch we offered bi-weekly last winter. As a result, some former clients now have the confidence to think about applying for jobs and going back to work.



The issue of poverty is complicated and frequently accompanied by mental health issues. There are often ups and downs on the way and recovery can be a long journey...

But it has been a privilege to share in some of these amazing people's journeys. We have seen many answers to prayer at the hub, we are so encouraged. We pray each week that God's love will fill us and touch those coming through the doors. We really feel God is with us all, carrying us through the messy stuff of life together. And it's wonderful, some have really been touched by the love of Jesus here. Praise God!! **Cathy Wise**

Image by Kev from Pixabay

Useful details should we encounter anyone in need of help

Guildford Action

Beverly Hall, 71 Haydon Place, Guildford GU1 4ND **01483 560003** (Monday-Friday 8:30-4pm)
email info@guildfordaction.org.uk <https://www.guildfordaction.org.uk/>

Surrey Drug and Alcohol Care

Telephone Helpline 0808 802 5000 (Monday-Friday 9am-7pm) leave voice message out of hours or text.
Website & Online Chat <https://www.surreydrugandalcoholcare.org.uk/>

Shelter emergency helpline 0808 800 4444 Monday to Friday 8am - 8pm
Weekends/Bank holidays, 9am - 5pm.

Citizens Advice South West Surrey (Guildford)

15 - 21 Haydon Place,
Guildford, GU1 4LL
0808 2787888 line open
Monday-Friday 10am-4pm
website <https://casws.org.uk/>

Feature compiled by
Jana Phillips



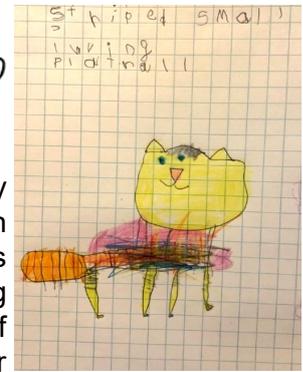
*The Flight into Egypt.
Early 20th century opus sectile,
St Martin's Church, Dorking.
Photograph © Sally Lowe*



St Nicolas' Infant School

"Living life in all its fullness" John 10:10

Value for this half term: **Unity**



THE ST NICS
Christmas Fair
2023

Join us at the school for
crafts, music, games
and delicious treats!

9 DECEMBER
11:00 AM

Governors' News: we will be sad to say farewell to **Jenna** at the end of this term in her role as parent governor. Jenna has been an active member of our governing body for many years including as chair of the board. We want to thank her for her commitment to the school and wish her well in her new job.

The governors have secured a **part time interim headteacher Mr Anthony Marsh**, who will be starting at the school in January. He will be joining the team with a wealth of knowledge and expertise as headteacher and as Director of Primary at **Enlighten Learning Trust**.

God's Gift and Our Friends in Uganda:

The whole school explored the theme of God's Gifts and Our Friends in Uganda. The children also used our value of unity to create a big piece of **3d artwork to go on display at Guildford Cathedral for Christmas!** Activities included pompom garlands using the colours of the Ugandan flag, paperchains with the children's ideas about God's gifts and a 3D Christmas tree made of boxes.



Fr Neil We will say goodbye to our dear **Emma**, our Headteacher, at the end of term. After six years of commitment through thick and thin, the turbulence of Covid, water supplies, staff changes and the challenges of the ever changing scenery of education. Amidst that, her joy of teaching the children has never diminished. Her loyalty to me in my enlivening of the rightly close relationship between church and church school has been watertight. We are now once more two sides of the same coin as we put it and for that I thank God as I do for Emma. She moves to work in a school for children who find school a difficult environment and she will be a blessing there as she has been here. She leaves with our love and prayers. ...**Looking at candles with the children**, we made a start at our Advent candles of course. We talked about where we find light and how we can pass on the baton of light like an Olympic runner. So as the evenings lengthen do look out for the lights God sends you: the smile of a stranger, the eyes of the children, the hand of a friend when we are fearful, lonely or just simply need someone else. They are all light moments. That's why Xmas lights are so important. As a Church school we stand for the heart of God and always have those opportunities to pray, to engage with God and see God at work in the everyday candle moments.

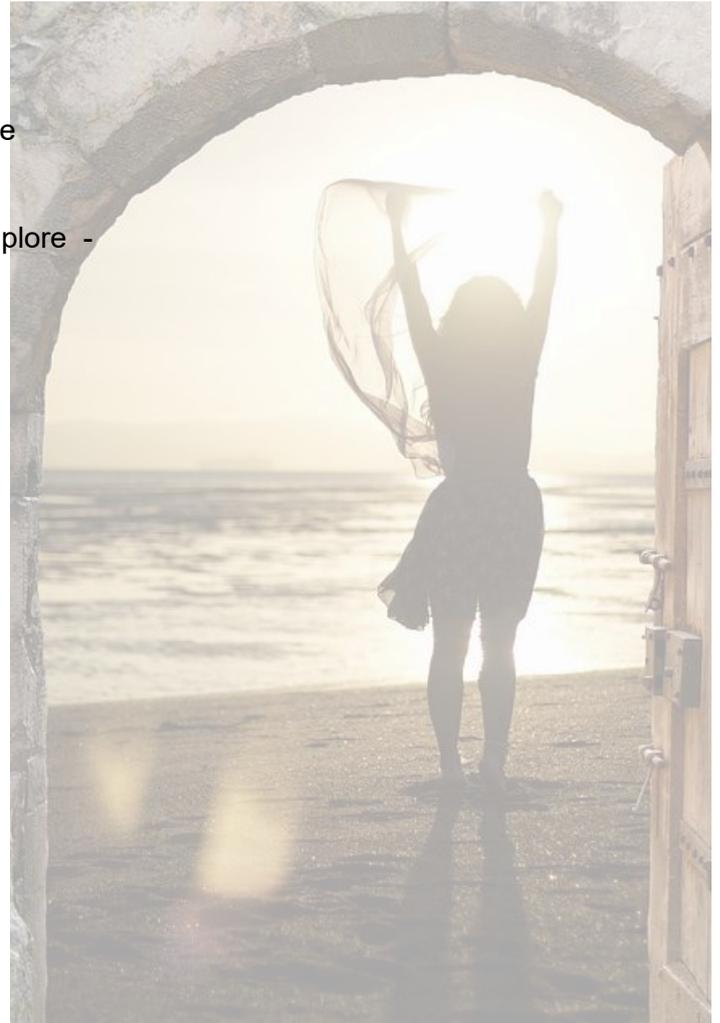


St George's altar on Remembrance Sunday. Photo by **Julia Wake**



Tim Woodford made a brief **Special Birthday** appearance in the UK at **The Britannia pub** in November: "We made a start on our Advent"

Exceedingly odd is the means by which God
 Has provided our path to the heavenly shore -
 Of the girls from whose line the true light was to shine
 There was one an adulteress, one was a whore:
 There was Tamar who bore - what we all should deplore -
 A fine pair of twins to her father-in-law,
 And Rahab the harlot, her sins were as scarlet,
 As red as the thread that she hung from the door;
 Yet alone of her nation she came to salvation
 And lived to be mother of Boaz of yore -
 And he married Ruth, a Gentile uncouth,
 In a manner quite counter to biblical lore:
 And of her there did spring blessed David the King,
 Who walked on his palace one evening and saw
 The wife of Uriah, from whom he did sire
 A baby that died - oh, and princes a score:
 And a mother unmarried it was too that carried
 God's Son, and him laid in a manger of straw,
 That the moral might wait at the heavenly gate
 While the sinners and publicans go in before,
 Who have not earned their place, but received it by grace,
 And have found them a righteousness not of the law.

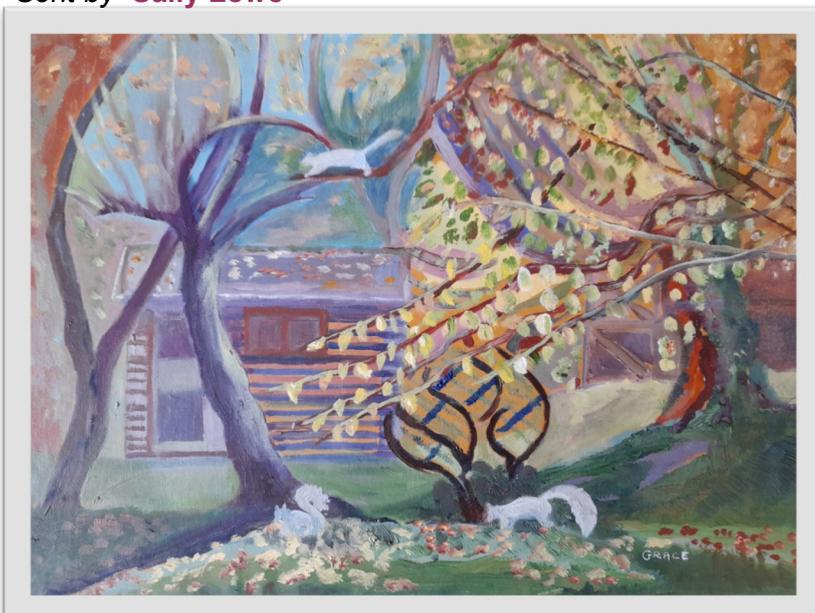


*Adapted from photo by Karin Henseler,
Pixabay*

Michael Goulder,

British biblical scholar and one-time Anglican priest, 1927-2010

Sent by **Sally Lowe**



Jacky Norman

It was with great sadness that we heard about the illness and death of Jacky Norman. Our thoughts will be with her, Fr Andrew and their family on 7 December, the day of her funeral in Dorset.

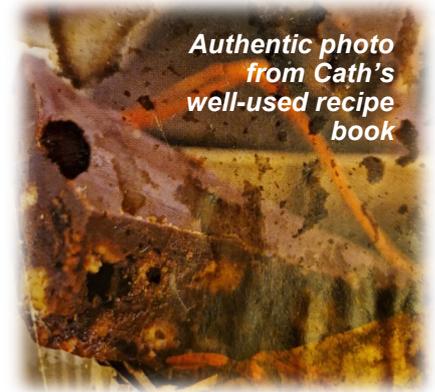


*Oil painting, Squirrels and hazelnuts at number 97 by **Grace Beckett***

With Christmas approaching, I'm turning my mind to gifting and I've been making this Tiffin for many years. It's very rich so you don't need much!

TIFFIN

- 50 grams raisins
- 75 grams dates (chopped)
- 4 tablespoons brandy
- 200 grams dark/plain chocolate
- 150 grams butter
- 3 tablespoons golden syrup
- 250 grams digestive biscuits, roughly crushed
- Grated rind of half a large orange (unwaxed)



For the topping: 150 grams dark chocolate, minimum 70% cocoa solids

1. Grease and base-line a shallow 20.5cm (8 inch) round or 18cm (7 inch) square tin.
2. Put the raisins, dates and brandy in a bowl and leave to soak for at least 30 minutes (even better overnight)
3. Melt the chocolate, 125 grams butter and syrup in a pan over a gentle heat.
4. Add the biscuits, orange rind, raising, dates and any remaining brandy. Mix well, put into the tin, cool and chill for 1 hour.
5. Melt the chocolate for the topping in a pan with the remaining butter. Pour over the biscuit layer. Chill overnight, cut into pieces and pack into boxes or bags.

The sky in December & January Rory Fenner



December The **Sun** moves from Scorpius into Sagittarius on the 22 December, Winter Solstice Day.

Mercury reaches Greatest Elongation East on the 4 December. It will not be easily seen but by New Year's Eve will be visible in the morning sky with Venus. **Venus** is still a brilliant morning object visible in the South Eastern sky before sunrise. **Mars** is still too close to the Sun for observation.

Jupiter, a month after Opposition, is still a brilliant object visible for most of the night. **Saturn** is best observed at its highest point in the sky after nightfall. **Neptune** is an evening planet in Pisces.

January 2024 The **Sun** moves from Sagittarius into Capricornus on the 20 January. **Mercury** reaches Greatest Western Elongation to give a reasonable pre-dawn apparition for the first 3 weeks of the year. **Venus** is still a very good morning object in the South Eastern sky before sunrise. Mars is still too close to the Sun to be visible. **Jupiter** is still a brilliant evening object, visible most of the night. **Saturn** is now a low-lying evening object in Aquarius but will be lost in the evening twilight by the end of January. **Uranus** lies close to Jupiter in Aries throughout January. **Neptune** is an evening object on the boundary between Pisces and Aquarius.

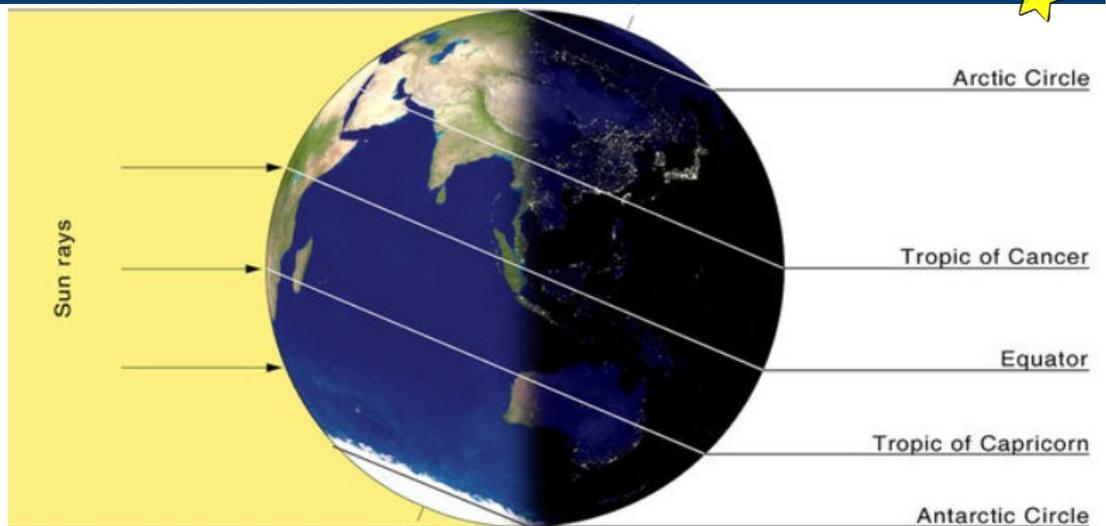


Illustration of our Winter Solstice from the website of



Jet Propulsion Laboratory
California Institute of Technology

Tuesday Group Our group has continued to meet each Tuesday morning, and members have shared a variety of activities with friendship, fun and chocolate biscuits!



Members' contributions on the subject of "Music and a Book" brought out some hidden interests and much reminiscence. Our Quiz morning, expertly masterminded by Shirley, made us wish we remembered more, but inspired some lively discussion among the members of the two teams.

This autumn we have been fortunate to hear two guest speakers and to welcome some visitors to our meetings. David Stokes, a historian and novelist, enlightened us with a most interesting talk about the life and times of King Alfred's daughter Aethelflaed. She was clearly very skilled in matters of diplomacy, and used her skills in resisting invasion by the Danes.

Another David, this time our own David Greenwood, continued the historical theme with his talk, "Stained Glass-Joy and Splendour." Drawing on his extensive travels round the cathedrals of England and Wales, David gave us an insight into the development of the art of stained glass, with examples from medieval to modern. Many Parish churches have some fine examples which are of historical significance, not least the windows of our own St Nicolas' church. Here all the stained glass was manufactured by Clayton and Bell.

Our own investigations into aspects of the history of our own town brought contributions relating to the development of the Wey Navigation, the town bridges, Bridge Street, the history of a particular house, and the impact of World War II on the town.

As our pre-Christmas guest speaker was unavailable at last minute, Chris Goodwin stepped in with a fascinating, illustrated insight into daily life in Hong Kong and Taiwan. We enjoyed some Christmas crafts and look forward to Carpet-bowls-without-the-carpet and a Christmas Party!

For the start of the New Year our programme continues to be varied, with contributions from our members. We have planned:

- 2 Jan** **Pantomime -a discussion**
- 9 Jan** **Papercraft**
- 16 Jan** **"My Favourite Opera"**
- 23 Jan** **Parks in the UK**
- 30 Jan** **A quiz for 2 teams**



Photos by Chris Goodwin

Everyone is very welcome to join us from 9:45 any Tuesday morning during school term-time. **Hilary Fletcher**

Eco news



This website with witty illustrations is a humorous way to keep up with the otherwise sad reality of **water pollution**.

Applicable to England and Wales, once on the website, simply enter your Post Code to get local information. Very useful for checking holiday locations. This website is fun to try for the hilarious graphics alone!

It is worth noting that **Zero Carbon Guildford** have a team of specialist volunteers who monitor local river quality.





The Beavers and Cubs have decorated a tree, as have St Nicolas congregation and Tuesday Group.



FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS TREES

**in aid of
Street Angels
&
Cherry Trees**



United Reformed Church, Portsmouth Rd, Guildford
Sunday 10th December – Sunday 24th December



SECRET WW2
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Guildford Museum

Saturday, 11th November 2023 – 13th April 2024. A five-month **Secret WW2** exhibition starts at Guildford Museum, Surrey, covering wartime SOE activity within a 10-mile radius of the town.

Sent by **Jenny Austin**

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communityworker@guildfordurc.org.uk



At St Nics - Christmas cards and small gifts until 18 December
Monday – Friday, 10am – 4pm.

Surrey Hills Candlelit Concert with Harp accompaniment!

The award winning Surrey Hills Chamber Choir and Surrey Hills Singers will be performing their traditional candlelit Christmas Concert in St Nicolas Church, Bury Street, Guildford on Sunday 10th December at 7.00pm, this year with a magical difference – we will be have professional harpist Heather Wrighton accompanying us as we sing.

The highlight of the concert will be a complete performance of Benjamin Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols". This was written for treble voices with harp accompaniment during 1942 and became so popular that some thirteen years later Julius Harrison rearranged the work for mixed voices. The Surrey Hills Choirs performance will quite possibly be unique as it will draw on both versions with some songs performed by the mixed voices of the Chamber Choir and others by the treble voices of the Singers.

The concert will also include other Christmas music drawn from several centuries as well as some non-seasonal works. The programme will include some of the finest compositions by Gjeilo and Sarah Quartel, as well as arrangements of traditional Christmas songs. The harp is the highlight of this year's concert and the programme will feature four other songs with harp: 'Still' by Gjeilo, 'The Earthly Rose' by Esenvalds and John Rutter's 'The Angels Carol' and 'Tomorrow shall be my dancing day'.

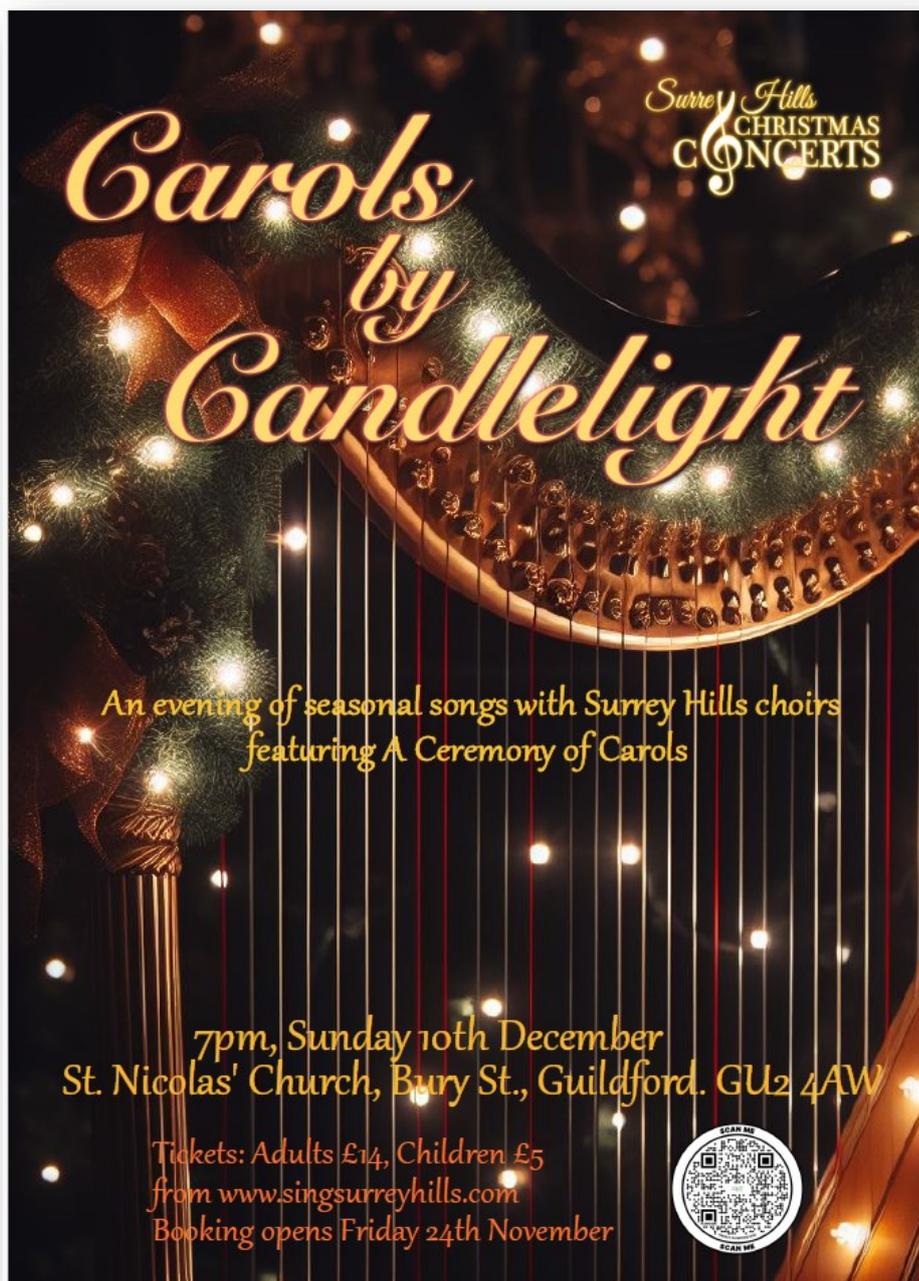
The Singers' choreography and the Chamber Choir's trademark presentation of singing from different parts of the church will also be on show and there will be the usual opportunity for the audience to join in the singing with some carols. The evening will end with the chance to chat with performers over a glass of wine and some seasonal nibbles.

Many of our regular supporters say that our concert is when Christmas really begins for them each year. The combination of uplifting music sung in a beautiful candlelit church is very special for both audience and performers.

For more information about the choirs, to see and hear them performing on video and to buy concert tickets, log onto the website at <https://www.singsurreyhill.com/post/candlelit-carol-concert-2023>

Tickets are £14 for adults and £5 for under 16s and will be available from the website from Friday 24th November at 8am. Tickets will also be available for cash or cheque on the door.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

A festive concert poster for 'Carols by Candlelight'. The background is dark with warm, glowing lights and a large, ornate harp. The title 'Carols by Candlelight' is written in a large, elegant, golden script. In the top right corner, it says 'Surrey Hills CHRISTMAS CONCERTS'. Below the title, it reads 'An evening of seasonal songs with Surrey Hills choirs featuring A Ceremony of Carols'. At the bottom, it provides the date and time: '7pm, Sunday 10th December' and the location: 'St. Nicolas' Church, Bury St., Guildford. GU2 4AW'. Ticket information is listed as 'Tickets: Adults £14, Children £5 from www.singsurreyhill.com' and 'Booking opens Friday 24th November'. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner.



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Charles Dickens'
A Christmas Carol

DECEMBER
MONDAY **18** AT 7:00 PM
2023

ST NICOLAS, GUILDFORD BURY STREET, GUILDFORD

Surrey Care Trust: Our very own Ron Searle will be hosting a one man performance of Charles Dickens classic, 'A Christmas Carol'. The performance will include period music and carols performed by Parish of Kingswood Choir, supported by Prof. David Maw of Oxford University. There will also be an opportunity to partake in a mince pie and glass of wine! We do hope you will join us for what will be a wonderful occasion that will get you ready for the festive season. Tickets £10.

GUILDFORD SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

Booking now open

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GUILDFORD AREA u3a
CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT

Wednesday 13th December 2023
2.00 pm at St. Nicolas Church,
Bury Street, Guildford, GU2 4AW

Carols, readings and festive choral music
by
Guildford u3a Choir
Singing for Fun Group
The Instrumental Ensemble

All Welcome - Admission Free



Retiring collection in aid of charity

the **occam** singers

**Music and Readings
for Advent and
Christmas**

Saturday, 16th December 2023
6:30pm
St Nicolas' Church, Bury Street,
Guildford, GU2 4AW

Conductor : Nicholas O'Neill

Tickets:
Online in advance £15 (Students £8.50)
from www.occamsingers.co.uk/Xmas2023
On the door £17



Parkinsons UK will serve refreshments with
mince pies after the concert

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Please send articles on topics that interest you and you would like to share. Email or telephone your material to:
janagp@btinternet.com,
m.07970 934325 or give to Fr Neil or Jana at church.

The next copy deadline will be Sunday 19 January and the Newsletter will cover February & March 2024.

St. Nicolas Parish Church,
Bury St, Guildford, GU2 4AW

saintnics.com
Rector Fr Neil Roberts
rector@saintnics.com
Curate Fr Alistair Milne
curate@saintnics.com
Parish Administrator
Cath Anderson
tel 01483 564 526
Editors Fr Neil Roberts & Jana Phillips

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