

February 2019

Happy Birthday, Christingle!!

It was some time in the 1970s, I can't quite remember exactly when. News went round the village (by word of mouth in those days) that something new was happening. There would be a special service called a Christingle, with a collection to support The Church of England Children's Society. I knew a little about the Children's Society, to give it its modern, abbreviated title, since we collected funds for it each December when we sang carols around the village. And the Christingle service sounded interesting. So I went along.



I don't remember much about the service, except that the Christingles, when they appeared, looked rather strange objects, to my boyish mind. An orange with some red tape around it, four cocktail sticks pointing upwards out of the fruit, with raisins skewered upon them. And a candle in the middle, which no doubt we lit. Presumably we were told about the symbolism of the Christingle: of the orange which represents the world God has made, the fruits which represent his gifts to us, the ribbon showing us Christ's loving blood-sacrifice which surrounds the world, and his light represented by the candle shining in the darkness. I seem somehow to have 'always' known what the Christingle means. But I mainly recall thinking that the Christingle service was very different from Matins, which I usually went to, and wondering if this strange new ritual would catch on.

My village's first Christingle was one of the early ones held in the Church of England. The idea started at Lincoln Cathedral in 1968. So this Christingle season has marked the 50th anniversary of its introduction to England. Happy Birthday, Christingle!

Originating as a Moravian tradition, the Christingle was taken up by the Children's Society as a way to share Christ's message of light, as well as raising funds and awareness of its work as a charity. Many Christingle services continue as 'Children's Society' services. But the Christingle has taken on a life of its own, now popping up in churches and schools in all sorts of contexts and formats. For some people it's their annual moment to come to church.

I still feel a bit of my boyhood ambivalence about the Christingle and wonder about its attraction. I guess for the children there are the sweets (which seem to have displaced the raisins of my youth). And for the adults there's the prospect of seeing small children's faces lit by candlelight and gazing in wonder. But when I use my imagination and really think about all its symbols, I begin to see its power. I think of the world, so small. And so precious, like an orange to an eighteenth century Moravian. I think of my fortune in enjoying such an abundance of the earth's fruits. And I think of the cost of Jesus' love, its grand embrace of us all, and the light it brings to our darkness. When I really think about the Christingle I'm grateful for it, and for the pioneers who brought it here when I was small.

Perhaps you come to our Christingle every winter. It's on 3rd Feb at 10 am this year. Maybe you haven't come to one for ages, or perhaps it's just not an occasion for you. But if you'd like to join us in this anniversary season, to worship Christ, remember old times, share the wonder, or just give thanks for 50 years of Christingle, you'll of course be most welcome. May Christ's light be with us always.

Derwyn.

mothers
union



Christian care for
families worldwide

St Michael's Mothers Union

At our January Branch meeting, members were invited to share with Derek, his and Pauline's trip to Canada last year, when they visited their son and daughter-in-law who had emigrated to Victoria, Vancouver, British Columbia. Derek based his talk on 3 stages. The first was their week's stay in the magnificent Rockies. Next we joined them on their week's cruise to Alaska, with its mountains and glaciers and finally, returning to Victoria, on the Island of Vancouver, enthraling us with the harbour's floating houses, water taxis, sea planes and the horse and cart transport in Victoria itself. My goodness, what a journey!



As mentioned previously, MU members continue to support the Tiny Tots after the Wednesday morning service and, so, with the coffee fund monies were able, at the end of 2018, to donate to local charities the following:

Night Shelter £50,
Company at Christmas £45,
Contact Centre £100,
Church Bell Fund £100
Holiday Bible Week £200.

Visitors are always welcome to our meetings held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, at 2pm, in the WCC Hall.

Heather Johns. Branch Leader.

News from St Michael's School

The approach to Christmas, with fairs, Nativity performances, concerts and carol services, meant Advent was a very busy time at St Michaels School.

The Christmas fair, organised by the PTA, was a huge success with carols, stalls, raffles and plenty of refreshments. The Nabikabala stall raised over £150 and altogether the day raised a total of £4,600, which should go a long way to improving resources, making the school an even better place to play and learn!

The Nursery class presented their production of 'the First Nativity' to a packed audience. Children from Reception to Year 2 also put on their own production of the nativity story, with some brilliant singing and dancing. Key Stage 2 pupils had an opportunity to demonstrate a huge range of talents in their Christmas concert, 'Behind Every Door', a Victorian-style celebration of Christmas. Children from Years 3 to 6, individually and in groups, entertained a full school hall, playing Christmas pieces on a variety of musical instruments, as well as singing, and performances of poetry and comedy.



At the end of November, the Vicar presented each Year 6 pupil with a gift of their own Bible, from the school and the governing body. The Bible will remind each pupil of their time at St Michael's, and, by presenting them two terms before they leave the school, the children will be able to use them in RE lessons and as they look forward to the next stage in their lives.



The theme for the first half of the spring term in assemblies, collective worship and RE lessons is 'justice'. A 'Cardboard Home' prayer space has been created at the front of the school for children, parents and visitors to the school to have a look and perhaps write a prayer to go inside.

The whole school will be exploring prayer through a day-long Prayer Trail in the middle of February. Children from Reception class to Year 6 will be working in mixed-age house groups and will visit eight different prayer stations over the course of the day, as well as enjoying a picnic lunch. At each station there will be something for pupils to look at, think about and do, enabling them to experience spirituality in a creative and interactive way.

At the end of the day parents will be invited to explore the prayer trail with their children in the school, before ending the trail at the church where families will be encouraged to complete a prayer together.

The activities and events planned in the coming months mean the spring term will be as busy as ever for the school's pupils and staff. Preparations are also underway for the statutory church school inspection, which takes place every five years and evaluates the 'distinctiveness and effectiveness of a school as a church school', but more about that soon.



Oberammergau Passion Play and Castles and Lakes of Bavaria 5 days departing 25th June 2020

This is an update on the article placed in 2018 but since we are now in 2019 you may now be thinking of the possibility of joining the group from St Michael's which also includes members from other churches in the town. This opportunity only comes round every 10 years and so if you have never experienced this wonderful historical event then now is the time to do so.

The party commences at Stansted Airport flying to Munich and on to our 4* hotel for the duration of our stay. From there we will visit Herrsching am Ammersee and Andechs Abbey on our second day, Neuschwanstein Castle and Kunderhol Palace the next day, and then the highlight of the Passion Play the following day before returning home on day 5. Whilst away, there is an optional cruise on Lake Ammersee and a guided tour of Munich. The cost is £1,048 (plus single supplement if applicable) and so offers a very full programme at reasonable cost.

Should you require further information I will be delighted to speak with you.
Rosemary Thomson, 758389.

Why you should consider making use of the St Michael's Prayer Ministry

At the end of the Sunday 10 a.m. Eucharist at St Michael's, we are usually reminded that personal prayer 'for giving thanks, for healing or for other matters' is available from a team of two in the Lady Chapel. And it is sometimes mentioned that this service is not heavily used. If that's because nobody in the congregation has any problems, that's fine, but if it is because they don't believe it would be helpful to take their problems or concerns to the Prayer Ministry team, that's not so good. I have used the Prayer Ministry four times in the last few years, and would like to share my experience of some features that I think make it valuable:

The team members listen. At the end of your conversation, one of the team members will offer a prayer that summarises your concern and your hopes and fears. Whether or not you are confident that God hears this prayer, it will leave you confident that the team members have heard and understood what is on your mind.

It's not only about prayer. The team members have training in listening, praying with people and safeguarding. Sometimes they may offer observations such as 'Ah yes, we had a similar problem in my family' or 'Remember, long and wide separations aren't what they used to be – don't forget Skype, don't forget Facebook.' This can be very reassuring, and confidentiality is the basic rule.

It's not just for weak personalities. When some of us went to Manders Organ Builders to see how our new organ had been made, our organist Robert Stokely – who certainly has a strong personality – recounted how, at a moment when the Organ Appeal hung in the balance, he made use of the Prayer Ministry. He came away able to see his way forward, and shortly afterwards secured a large commitment of support from the Viridor waste management and recycling company. Without the Prayer Ministry, we might be without the splendid instrument we have today.

The prayer is personal but the matter doesn't have to be. If something in the news or in the wider world is upsetting you, it may help to share the burden.

There doesn't have to be a problem. "Were not all ten cleansed?" Jesus asked. "Where then are the other nine? Was no one found except this foreigner to return and give glory to God?" If something has come right in your life, a personal conversation and prayer is a good opportunity to give thanks.

The Prayer Ministry is there. If it's needed, make sure it doesn't wither away for lack of use.

Nick Galwey



Company On Sunday was set up 8 years ago with the aim of providing a home cooked meal every first Sunday of the month for anyone in our church and wider community, in the beautiful setting of the Windhill Churches Centre.

If you would like to come along and join us for good food and good company, please sign up on the sheet at the back of the church. Alternatively, you can contact Daphne Birchmore (507612), Pat Matthews (659476) or Pen Hopkinson (654121) for further details.

We look forward to seeing you in February for our first lunch of the year.

World Day of Prayer

Friday 1st March 2019 10.30am

at The Baptist Church, Twyford Road CM23 3LJ

Each year the service is put together by a different country and this year it has been written by the women of Slovenia, who are relatively new to the World Day of Prayer movement. Note that there is now a new title, "Womens" having been removed and so gentlemen are more than usually welcomed! And each year a different local church hosts the occasion here in Bishops Stortford.

At the heart of the service is an open invitation for all to come to God's table; "Come – everything is ready!" We hear the voices of some of those coming to the table: wives, mothers and grandmothers, Roma people, refugees and migrant workers. Their stories reflect the political and economic situation of Slovenia from the time it was a socialist-communist state to the present day. Whilst listening to these stories we ask forgiveness for being silent in the face of injustice, and we pray that God may open our hearts to compassion and understanding. We leave with a prayer of blessing to mutually support one another on the path to freedom, justice and peace.

We thank the women of Slovenia for this service and pray that it might be both challenging and a blessing for us all. As we participate in this service, we will be part of a great weave of prayer encircling the globe – starting as the sun rises over Samoa and ending some 38 hours later back in the Pacific, as the sun sets over America Samoa. We will be praying and sharing with people in over 120 countries and islands around the world.

I do hope this introduction may inspire you to attend this year where representatives of all the Bishops Stortford churches will have a small part to play during the service. Should anyone require a lift please do contact me on 759389 or see me in Church; there is ample parking by the Baptist Church and at the end of the event refreshments will be served to allow us all to chat to one another. It is a lovely way to spend a Friday morning!

Rosemary Thomson, Churchwarden

Country file February 2019

Welcome my dear friend to The White Cottage. Minty, my border collie, informs me it's her turn to talk to you this month, so I will leave you in her very capable paws.



Hello again, I honestly thought Mum would never give me another opportunity of talking to you, I know she hates me using her computer, she has this weird idea that dogs can't type and are not very computer literate. She doesn't realise that when I am sitting beside her I am watching her every move, and I have a fantastic memory, so let's get started.

@##/ asdf – so sorry, my big paws keep hitting all the wrong keys, let me start again.

I hope you had a lovely Christmas, I did, although, to be honest, I'm glad it's over as the house was constantly full of food I was not allowed to eat and people talking and trying to sing; when I joined in with my wolf impression, they all stopped singing and laughed at me! You humans can be very hurtful at times.

Did you know I have just celebrated my seventieth birthday? Well, ten in canine years, but three score years and ten in your calendar. I think this explains why I keep falling asleep, I can't do as much as I used to do. I feel a bit miffed, as mum said now I can draw a pension, she wants me to give her housekeeping money, what a cheek, she should pay me for all the squirrel chasing I do.

If you feel up to it, I will take you for a walk, not too far mind you. When we come to this first hedge mum always stands and calls to her little robin. You call him, if I call, he will fly away.... Well done! here he comes. I think mum mentioned to you how he keeps coming indoors. His first home visit found him in her bedroom, even I'm not allowed there any more (I had a bit of an accident one day, so got barred!!) Just before Christmas she found the robin perched on top of our nativity crib, I have to say it looked really Christmassy. We just can't understand why he wants to keep coming indoors.



Let us stand here for a few moments and count the number of birds on the feeders, these figures will be useful for mum when she does 'The Great British Bird Count' at the end of the month. I have counted 16 goldfinches, 2 greenfinches, 4 robins, 1 sparrow, 20 blue tits, 6 great tits, 4 coal tits, 3 dunnocks, 2 pigeons, 2 blackbirds, 6 pheasants, 2 greater spotted woodpeckers, one green woodpecker, 4 crows, one starling, 20+ chaffinches, 1 wren, 2 ducks, 1 buzzard, 2 red kites and a partridge in a pear tree – joking. Sorry I can't offer you a seat, because all the seven big benches have been moved into the garage for a coat of paint. Mum says it helps preserve the wood and also gives the gardener

something to do during the winter months.

I'm sorry our garden is looking so messy, Mum never cuts anything back until March, as she likes to leave as much dead vegetation as possible for her precious little birds to peck away! Those two legged creatures get more food than I do!

Come along slow coach, it's too cold to hang around, go and pick up that football and if you kick it, I will run and catch it. I bet you can't hold it in your mouth like I do!

Oh! Quick, look across the field, there is a huge herd of deer running along the side of our hedge, what a wonderful sight, I would love to go and chase them, but I'm only allowed to do that when they come into the garden and start eating our shrubs.

Well, I think I have yapped quite enough, mum sends you her love and blessings and she hopes you enjoy the spring, which she says is just round the corner, but I can't see it, can you?

Love Minty 😊

QUIZ NIGHT 2019

**St James' Annual Quiz Evening
hosted by the Friends of St James
will be held on
Saturday, 2nd February 2019
in the St Barnabas Centre
adjacent to St James the Great, Thorley**

**Doors open at 6:30 pm;
Quiz commences at 7:00 pm.**



**Tickets: £8.00 including supper.
Bring your own drinks & glasses.**

**Teams of 8 maximum;
Not in a team? No problem, individuals welcome
to join a team on the night.**

**To book your ticket(s):
Please contact Philip Hargrave ☎ 01279 657273**

TRIP TO BURY ST EDMUNDS CHRISTMAS FAYRE

On Saturday 24th November a group of us congregated at the back of Thorley Sainsbury's bus stop for a coach trip to Bury St Edmunds.

It was a lovely bright day and the journey went well. Once we had arrived in Bury St Edmunds we were



left to our own devices to peruse the stalls and cathedral.

Despite it being very busy we were able to have a good look at all that was on offer. This ranged from flavoured gins, mince pies, fudge, mulled wine, cheese, pork pies, all of which we enjoyed sampling! Non food stalls included hand made wooden toys, beauty products, jewellery and sweet smelling room fragrances in the shape of animals (which we puzzled over until a kind lady explained their purpose!) After which we bought two!

There were two carol services in the cathedral which we could attend. We opted for the later service so we could rest our weary legs. This was the perfect end to an enjoyable festive day.

Thanks to Rosemary for organising the trip.

Claire Matthews and Chris Hooper

PS. The stall producing freshly roasted chestnuts was my particular favourite. Along with the entertaining and enjoyable way the Dean of the Cathedral conducted the afternoon carol service.

I look forward to the next 'Rosemary-organised' trip!

Ed.



Fund Raising Events

Stortford Valley Rotary Quiz

9th February 7:30pm - 10.00pm

Charis Centre, Water Lane, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 2JZ

Tickets cost £12 and include a Raffle with fabulous prizes and a delicious Ploughman's Supper with tables of eight. Bring your own drinks.

Proceeds divided between Isabel Hospice and Rotary Club's own sponsored charity, Life Education.

To book your table and for more information, please call Derek Crowther on 01279 832580.

Vitality Big Half 2019

10th March 9:00am – 3:00pm

Tower Bridge, Tower Bridge Road, London, SE1 2UP

The iconic route for The Vitality Big Half starts by Tower Bridge by the Tower of London and finishes in the spectacular setting of the Cutty Sark in Greenwich.

The route goes through four London boroughs: Southwark, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Greenwich. This is a fantastic half marathon with a festival feel the way round the route with DJs, bands, food and plenty of colour!

Join Team Isabel and receive a **FREE** Isabel Hospice running vest, fundraising advice and materials.

We have 10 guaranteed spaces available for this event - so don't miss out, sign up now!

Registration: £20 (Non-refundable)

Minimum sponsorship: £300

Contact Megan 01707 382544 to get signed up now!

Spring Celebration Lunch

13th March 12:00pm – 12:30pm

Copley's Café, Hopleys, SG10 6BU

Enjoy an afternoon with Louise Reed, actress and social historian' at Hopleys award winning gardens.

Come along to Copley's Cafe at Hopleys, SG10 6 BU from 12pm for 12.30pm.

Tickets cost £22.50 and include a drink on arrival, two course lunch and coffee!

To get your tickets, please contact Renée on 01279 755320.



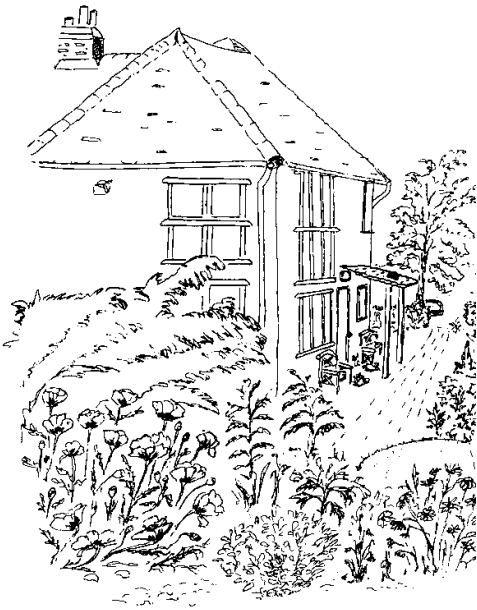
Christmas Tree Recycling raises £1440 for Grove Cottage!

A big thank you to everyone who recycled their Christmas trees at Link Road Car Park on Sunday 6 January and gave a donation to Grove Cottage. The event raised an amazing £1440 and saw over 250 trees recycled! Thank you to all our volunteers who helped on the day, to East Herts Council for all their support and especially to the team from The Tree Management Company who gave up their time and machinery for free.

Sue Fishpool, Grove Cottage Community Fundraiser said, “This is the third year that we have worked together with East Herts Council and TTMC on this project. With a donation to Grove Cottage given with every tree that is recycled we will be able to continue to give local people with a learning disability support, as well as their families and carers. Thank you so much to everyone involved”

Steve Bland, Managing Director from TTMC said: “We are delighted to be a part of this incentive that not only benefits Grove Cottage, an important local charity but recycles the trees sustainably too.”

Paint with God and Quiet Days



Next are: -

Paint with God Days

Thursday 14th February

Thursday 14th March

Quiet Days

Thursday 28th February

Thursday 28th March

Both Days are from 10.30am until 3.30pm

Please bring a packed lunch – morning coffee and biscuits

and afternoon tea and cakes provided

For more information and to book your place

please ring June on 771756

On the Lighter Side !

Rice

A man who had been dating a girl for a number of years took her out to a Chinese restaurant. As they studied the menu he asked: 'How would you like your rice, fried or boiled?'

She looked at him sadly. 'Thrown.'

Be my Valentine

Young man: Do you love me?

Young lady: Yes.

Young man: But can you live on my income?

Young lady: Certainly. Though - what will you live on?

February 2019 Calendar

1 st	Friday	10.30am	USPG Support Day WCC CH
3 rd	Sunday	8.00am	Holy Communion (said)
		10.00am	Christingle Service
		11.15am	Sung Eucharist
		1.00pm	Company on Sunday Lunch
4 th	Monday	10.00am	Craft Group WCC CH
		2.00pm	MU Committee Meeting WCC1
		7.45pm	Finance Committee Meeting WCC1
5 th	Tuesday	11.00am	Staff Meeting WCC CH
		8.00pm	Alpha 4 Home Group 1 Chestfield Close
6 th	Wednesday	10.00am	Holy Communion
		10.45am	Tiny Tots
7 th	Thursday	9.45am	Church Home Group WCC CH
		8.00pm	Families Missioner Working Group WCC 1/2
10 th	Sunday	8.00am	Holy Communion (said)
		10.00am	Parish Communion
		12.30pm	Holy Baptism
		6.00pm	Evensong
11 th	Monday	7.45pm	PCC Meeting WCC CH
13 th	Wednesday	10.00am	Holy Communion
		10.45am	Tiny Tots
		2.00pm	MU Meeting WCC CH
14 th	Thursday		Prayer Trail Day
16 th	Saturday	9.00am	Marriage Preparation Course WCC CH
		4.15pm	District Bell Ringing

17 th Sunday	8.00am	Holy Communion (said)
	10.00am	Parish Communion
	6.00pm	Choral Evensong
18 th Monday	10.00am	Craft Group WCC CH
19 th Tuesday	8.00pm	Alpha 4 Home Group 14 Marshbarns
20 th Wednesday	10.00am	Holy Communion
	10.45am	Tiny Tots
21 st Thursday	9.45am	Church Home Group WCC CH
	7.45pm	Finance Committee Meeting WCC1
24 th Sunday	8.00am	Holy Communion (said)
	10.00am	Parish Communion
	6.00pm	Evensong
26 th Tuesday	11.00am	Staff Meeting WCC CH
27 th Wednesday	10.00am	Holy Communion
	10.45am	Tiny Tots

NB. Friday 1st March World Day of Prayer (see p.11)

Consider the Birds

By Nigel Beeton

Consider the birds of the air
They do not store up what they eat
They need not to worry or care
Or tweet with a worry-filled tweet.

God looks after them, O it's true!
He grants them their insects and grains
He gives all their feathers their hue;
And shelters them all from the rain.

But at certain times of the year,
When birds have to eat, or they freeze –
Though God clearly holds them all dear,
Assistance from us will Him please.

So think of the birds of the air,
And, after your breakfast is chewed,
Get up, get a coat, get out there
And give the poor darlings some food!

PARISH REGISTERS

Baptisms

We welcome into the Lord's Family:

Harry Thornton	25 th November
Harriot Sissons	25 th November

Wedding

We congratulate and offer our best wishes to:

Elizabeth Bramley and Michael Channon	15 th December
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Funerals

We extend our love and prayers to the family and friends of:

Veronica Gainsford	13 th December
Anne Jeanes	15 th December
Debbie Revill	16 th January
Elaine Wilson	17 th January

Interment of Ashes

We extend our love and prayers to the family and friends of:

Bryan Bennett	22 nd December
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The next magazine will be the issue for

March 2019

The deadline for items for inclusion will be

Sunday 10th February

Please send all contributions to Robert Oliver

email: r.oliver2803@gmail.com (Tel: 07918 121372)

Items can also be left either in my tray or the parish office.

Please include photographs when appropriate. - Thank you