

Parish Life Magazine

**Parish of Cirencester with
Watermoor and Chesterton**



**December 2024 and
January 2025**

£1

Parish of Cirencester with Watermoor and St Lawrence (Chesterton)

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Advent and Christmas

The nights have drawn in, the shops in the high street and around the market place already hinting at the coming season, trees decorated with lights and gifts for the coming season being displayed. However, we must be careful not to rush headlong into Christmas! The wonderful season of Advent provides the opportunity to press the pause button, and take stock. This year we have the opportunity to do this reflecting on the four songs in Luke's gospel. These reflections start week beginning the 25th November.



Week 1 Luke 1.46-55 - **Love**
Week 2 Luke 1.67-80 - **Hope**
Week 3 Luke 2.13-14 - **Joy**
Week 4 Luke 2.28 -32 - **Peace**

- ❖ Monday 7.30 p.m. with Revd Paul in the Forum
- ❖ Tuesday 10 a.m. with Revd Rosemary in the Forum
- ❖ Wednesday with Revd Paul at Mary Chapman's home.
47 Archery Road at 2.30p.m.
- ❖ Thursday 2p.m. with Canon Karen at the Vicarage,
41 Rendcomb Drive.
- ❖ Friday 10 a.m. with Revd Luke at St Lawrence's Church.

Advent provides such a wonderful time to prepare for the coming of the Christmas celebration. All sorts of opportunities throughout December assist us with our preparation. Not least the great Advent procession with Advent carols and hymns that mark the beginning of this special time.

The richness of the imagery, the lighting of candles, the Advent calendars, the dressing of trees glittering with illuminations, all

symbols that speak of our expectation and hope as we prepare ourselves for the Incarnation, the days of Advent lifting our hearts and minds to Jesus as we prepare a place in the busyness of our lives, preparing to welcome the Christ Child.

The four hymns of Advent give us a framework for expressing the great themes of Advent, Love, Peace, Hope and Joy.

Christmas unfolds on Christmas Eve, and then continues through right into the New Year, ending at the last of the Marylogical feasts at Candlemas. It is such a beautifully rich time in the journey of the church's year. A journey that I invite you to participate in, I know that you won't regret it.

From decorated trees heralding the coming of the light, carol services both formal and informal that express our wonder and joy, the candles that speak of sharing the light, and the overwhelming sense of receiving the Christ Child into our own hearts and lives, it is the most wonderful time of the year. As we get ready to proclaim, Immanuel, God is with us!

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and
earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.
He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.
He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red



December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.
He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.

Rowan Williams

Our prayer for Advent



Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of
darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on
the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living
and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy
Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

May the Lord (when he comes) find you ready and awake for him.
God's blessing to you and your family this Advent, and this
Christmas.

Canon Graham.

Cover Photo

The cover photo shows *Madonna and Child with Two Angels* by Fra Filippo Lippi (1406-1469) on display in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence.

Lippi's most famous piece features an extraordinary spontaneity in its portrayal. The Virgin is seated on a throne intently gazing at her son, turning towards him with hands clasped in prayer. Her expression is gentle (almost melancholy) as if she can foresee the painful destiny that awaits her son.

The composition was a success from the start, and used as a model by many artists, including the young Botticelli.

Pam Barnes



In Remembrance



This is not the article, I intended to write, the hokum of Halloween was to have been the target.

After the wonders of this Remembrance weekend, there could be no other. The service on Saturday evening, which showed ordinary people doing extraordinary things, had me in tears. There was a marvellous service at Holy Trinity on Sunday morning and I have just sat down after coming home after standing under the wall of names by the Parish Church at 11:00 am Monday morning, 11th of November.

The person I'm writing about is on no memorial. She is one of those ordinary people. It is my grandmother, Helen Tibbles of Daglingworth.

I am not ashamed to admit I am in tears as I write this. Gran had lost her husband in the First World War, her son died in his tank in Normandy, two days after D-Day. She had to take her daughter, my mum, away from a prize winning career at the grammar school at the

end of year 9. The five shillings a week she earned as apprentice dressmaker at Ormonds was needed to keep the family going. Happily, she became post mistress at Daglingworth. Mum delivered telegrams up the Duntisbourne Valley by push-bike. She retired in 1938 when mum and dad were married.

I learned a lot from Gran. Of course she was sad, but she was never bitter, rather proud of the contribution her family had made to winning the war.

In 1951 we were living at Eycot, a scattering of dwellings high above the Cheltenham Road at Rendcomb where I caught the bus to the Grammar school. I was in the first year. I faced a long steep climb in the evening, when the clocks went back, arriving in darkness.

Gran said I can put John up here in Daglingworth from Monday to Friday. It's just a few steps from my home in 'the Court' to the bus stop. He will be company for me in the dark evenings. An ideal solution.

Getting off the bus one early November evening, I saw Gran. A loyal member of the British Legion, she had been selling poppies in the same valley her daughter delivered the telegrams. She saw me and quickened her steps to join me. I saw her face turn grey. She had a fatal stroke and died. Poppies from her tray, blew all over the village. I hope she saw them.

There is no more I can write.

John Light



Everybody Welcome

Reminding us of Luke's recent 'Everybody Welcome' course at Holy Trinity Watermoor, the following notice was seen outside a church in Porthmadog, North Wales.



How do we match up? (submitted by *Rosemary Best*)

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, widowed, straight, gay, confused, well-heeled or down-at-heel.

We especially welcome wailing babies and excited toddlers. We welcome you if you can sing like Pavarotti or just growl quietly to yourself.

You're welcome here if you're just browsing, just woken up or just got out of prison. We don't care if you're more Christian than the Vicar or haven't been to church since Christmas 10 years ago. We extend a special welcome to those who are over 60 but haven't grown up yet and to teenagers who are growing up too fast.

We welcome keep-fit mums, football dads, starving artists, tree huggers, latte sippers, vegetarians, junk-food eaters. We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted. We welcome you if you're having problems, are down in the dumps or don't like organised religion. (We're not that keen on it either.)

We offer welcome to those who think the Earth is flat, work too hard, don't work, can't spell, or are here because Granny is visiting and wanted to come to church. We welcome those who are inked, pierced, both or neither.

We offer a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down their throats as kids or got lost on the country lanes and wound up here by mistake. We welcome pilgrims, tourists, seekers, doubters and YOU.

Book Review - *The Shack* by William Paul Young.

All the following thoughts and comments are entirely my own and may not be the same as yours. That's fine, we are all a little different in our views (thankfully) - that's the spice of life.



To me this is a work of outstanding fiction (remember the fiction bit) that can mirror our wants and desires if we are honest with ourselves. The author was born a Canadian to Christian missionary parents in New Guinea. He now lives in the Pacific North West of USA.

I found it to be an easy and compelling read. Very absorbing and a page turner, with several unexpected situations developing throughout.

You will cry, laugh and develop a bond with the lead character, Mack. I would encourage the reading of the forward in order to get some perspective before getting into the meat of the book (apologies to any vegetarians).

I became quite involved with the lead character (Mack) and easily fell into the trap of thinking it was a real situation, or wishing it was, in places. But I guess that's what a good fiction story does.

It may touch your concept of faith at times and set you questions about how you see your faith and how we interact with God in our daily lives not just on Sunday.

I acknowledge this book may not be your cup of tea, and I thank you for reading thus far. We all have different views and opinions, wants and desires, so please read on with an open heart and mind and enjoy it. I will endeavour not to give away any plot twists but I will share my thoughts as we go through the chapters.

The first 2 or 3 chapters set the background for the story as it continues on. Chapter 4, wow, this will be a kicker to the emotions, I found it

very emotional and moving, (maybe that's just me).

Chapter 5 is Mack's realisation of what's happened and the effect it has on the family as well as himself.

Chapters 6 and 7 is his meeting with God and the rest of the family in the flesh. This is an interesting twist on our concept of God.

In chapter 8 he is dealing with nightmares and all the questions it throws up.

Chapter 9 - personally I found this chapter a bit of a struggle to understand. The concepts it posed are well done if you get it! I am still struggling.

Chapter 10 is about all things are possible with trust. Chapter 11 - do we judge others? You bet we do! Chapters 12 & 13. This will bring you to the end. This is where Mack, (sorry, can't say. That would be a 'spoiler') but it is the final reason for the story. But it's guidance and reason for it: no lies, only love. God's love is unconditional. It's our choice to accept it.

Remember to read with an open mind and that's it's a fictional story (but good fiction in my opinion). There is a liberal thread of emotion running throughout.

It may challenge you and question some of your views. I had to read it twice to get the full benefit of it all.

Enjoy, God bless.

Roger Hester



Craft Group

These pictures of Christmas trees made from pipe cleaners by the Craft Group were submitted by Jane Winstanley.



Dr Roz Savage MP pays her respects at Cirencester Remembrance Sunday service



Liberal Democrat MP for South Cotswolds, Dr Roz Savage, joined the crowds in Cirencester on Sunday 10th November to pay her respects to the fallen from conflicts dating back to the First World War.

Alongside Cirencester's Local Councillor, Joe Harris, Roz paid tribute to the strength and dedication of our armed forces by laying a wreath during an emotive service in the town's Market Place. Hundreds of people attended the event, including acting servicemen and women,

veterans, army cadets and scout groups, as well as local school children and their families.

After attending the moving service, Roz headed to Malmesbury to join a procession alongside the Deputy Lieutenant of Wiltshire, the Under Sheriff of Wiltshire, the Mayor and town councillors, the Warden and Freemen of Malmesbury, and officers and soldiers from 9 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps.

Speaking about the event, Roz said: “Remembrance Sunday is such an important day for all of us. We remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, for our peace and for the future we all share. We must never forget their courage, nor that of the veterans who still bear the mental and physical scars from their service.”

“I was honoured to be invited to lay a wreath as part of Cirencester’s Remembrance Day programme. The service was incredibly moving, and a reminder that we are all connected by a shared history. May we honour the memory of those we’ve lost by working together toward a peaceful, sustainable future,” she added.

Sam Burch (Media Contact for Dr Roz Savage)



Musings in Mark - Mark 6:3

[3] Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us? ” And they took offence at him.

And so from the lake Jesus and his disciples head home. Always a good place to go after intense activity, and he walked the 20 odd miles to his

home town of Nazareth. As was his custom he headed to the synagogue and taught, knocking his hearers silly with amazement as they listened. Then the questions started, beginning with the understanding of his wisdom and ability to do miracles, but it then moved to their knowledge of him. Mary's son, brother to friends that they knew, and slowly they talked themselves away from his wonders to his known ordinariness, and in doing so moved to that psychological place, "who does he think he is?" And suddenly he is offensive.

I'm not too sure we make that full journey, but when we have been Christians for a long time, we can lose our awe and wonder in the humanity of Jesus, failing to see who he was, what he did and taught and the amazing touch of God that he brought to the world. New Christians remind us by their enthusiasm (comes from Greek *en theos* translated "in God"), and we quietly think that they will calm down a bit like us! Forgive me if that's not you and Jesus is as exciting for you as he was at the beginning and your passion for him hasn't waned. Or even, perhaps the issue is that it was never there in the first place!

I find this story quite challenging. It is true that in the public arena Jesus is divisive- you can talk about God in a pub, but see what happens when you start talking about Jesus! But for us it should be different.

I don't think we would ever take offence at Jesus, but just as those synagogue attenders were knocked over by amazement, so may we never the lose the excitement and passion for Jesus as we walk in His Way. May we never talk ourselves out of the reality of who he is and how much he loves us.

As we journey through the Advent and Christmas seasons, let us remind ourselves again of his glory.

Rev Paul

Dear Members and Friends,



During the course of 2024 members and friends of Cirencester Mothers' Union have enjoyed a variety of speakers from our home grown poetess Pauline, to learning about the Gloucester City Mission and GARAS, Gloucester Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, both set up and kept running with a lot prayer and financial donations.

Our speaker in September, Rev. Julian arrived on his motorbike causing quite a stir! Two members stepped in at the last moment and shared photos of their recent trip to the East Coast of Canada, then in November we welcomed Joanne, herself a cancer survivor from Charlies Cancer Support, a group she set up in memory of her grandfather, when she realised there was very little support for cancer patients and their families. They now have several groups throughout Gloucestershire including Cirencester.

As well as enjoying talks members have been busy raising money for MU projects worldwide, with soup lunches, cake stalls and bring & buy sales at meetings.

All money raised is sent to the Diocesan office in Gloucester and then sent to Mary Sumner House in London, from there it is distributed to where it is needed. In 2023 Mothers' Union, directly and indirectly supported over 2.8 million people. Awareness-raising activities and outreach on important issues engaged over 15,000 people.

In Africa, literacy programmes, skills training and savings groups impacted over 50,000 women. Over 2,000 children and 1,000 adults across Britain & Ireland have benefitted from AFIA family holidays and trips, giving them respite from adversity. More than 20,000 items were lovingly distributed by MU members to refugees, the homeless, hospital patients and families.

So a big thank you to all those who have supported our fund raising events. More events are planned for 2025, so that the work of Mothers' Union can continue in these difficult times. Our meetings on the 1st Wednesday of the month in the Parish Hall, Watermoor, are open to all, members or not.

With love and prayers at this special time of the year,

Kathie Cottey

Dates:-

Wednesday December 4th. 2.30pm Parish Hall, Watermoor.

Afternoon meeting with a Christmas Theme, including a raffle for a Christmas cake made and donated by MU member Janet.

Friday December 6th. 10am until noon Parish Church Porch Cake and Christmas Craft stall

Thursday December 12th. 10.30am Corporate Communion, Lady Chapel, Parish Church

2025

Wednesday January 8th. 2.30pm Parish Hall, Watermoor.

Guest Speaker Canon Graham,
talk entitled 'Epiphany and the Light'

Thursday January 23rd. 10.30am Corporate Communion,
Lady Chapel, Parish Church

Thursday January 23rd. 7.30pm Chill & Chatter at the Vicarage,
41, Rendcomb Drive

My children love Christmas and they're already picking extra treats off the shelf when we go shopping, and telling me what presents they want. I really want to make it a special time for them, but times are tough and I can't help worrying about overspending and getting into debt.



**Stroud
& Cotswold
Districts**

What can I do to manage my finances during the holiday season, and where can I turn if I find myself struggling?

The festive season can be a financially challenging time, and often borrowing money or using a credit card to fund Christmas can seem like your only option. But there are steps you can take to keep your spending under control and avoid falling into debt. The first thing to do is make a budget and stick to it.

Consider who you're buying gifts for, what other seasonal expenses you have, and how much you can realistically afford to spend. Always keep receipts, or ask for gift receipts, in case you overspend and need to return something. And remember that household bills may be higher during this period due to colder weather and spending more time indoors.

If you've built up debt, please don't ignore bills or letters. Speak to the organisation you owe money to, as they may let you pay smaller amounts.

Pay 'priority debts' first, like rent, mortgage arrears, council tax, and energy bills. For other types of debt like credit cards or loans, gather all the information on what you owe, create a budget, and contact your creditors to set up an affordable repayment plan. This might seem scary, but it's an important first step.

If your budget just doesn't add up and you need help to afford essentials like bills and food, see what cost of living support is available on the Citizens Advice website.

It's especially important to check if you're eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment, which will now only be paid to those who receive Pension

Credit or other means-tested benefits. If you make a claim for Pension Credit by 21 December, you might still receive the Winter Fuel Payment. If you do find yourself struggling financially during or after the holidays, don't panic. Support is out there, and Citizens Advice can help you understand what's available. We're here to help you find a way forward.

Please look at the public website first if possible (www.citizensadvice.org.uk). If that isn't possible or you need further help please call us on 0808 800 0510 or 0808 800 0511 (Monday and Tuesday 10am to 4pm; Wednesday and Thursday 10am to 12.30pm). You can also access our local website (www.citizensadvice-stroudandcotswold.org.uk) to complete our email form.

We will be closed from 1pm on 24th December until 10am on Thursday 2nd December but we will have information about how to get urgent help on our local website.

Elizabeth Hall (Chief Executive Officer)



The Magic of Handbells at Christmas

Come and hear ringers from all over the South West as we celebrate Christmas with a festival of traditional and modern seasonal music

Join in with our carols - children most welcome

Free entry - retiring collection for Gloucester Young Carers

Saturday 14th December
5pm - Cirencester Baptist Church

Further information 01837 52565

Guest appearance by the
Cirencester & Stroud Good Afternoon Choir

Handbell Ringers of Great Britain is a registered charity no 298945



Insight Gloucestershire

Supporting People Living with Sight Loss

Insight Gloucestershire is your local charity dedicated to supporting anyone affected by sight loss. This December, look out for our team on the NHS Information Bus, where we'll be sharing information about our services. Join us on Thursday, 12th December, from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm at Cirencester Market Place to learn more.

We also host a monthly hub in Cirencester, where you can connect with a Community Sight Loss Advisor for advice, guidance, and equipment demonstrations.

Drop in at The Churn Project, 14-16 The Waterloo, GL7 2PY, on the third Monday of each month from 10 am to 11 am (appointments available, call to book).

In addition, we're launching Virtual Hubs in partnership with two other local charities, offering online support groups for working-age adults, parents, university students, and young adults. Contact us to find out more and join a supportive community of peers.

Contact us on 01242 221170 to learn more about our services.

Karen Cole
Marketing and Communications Officer
0117 322 4885

Longfield Hospice – Christmas News

Charity Christmas Cards

This Christmas your greetings cards can do more than spread holiday cheer – they can provide vital care and support to those facing life-limiting conditions in Gloucestershire.

Every card you purchase helps ensure no adult in Gloucestershire faces these challenges alone.

When you purchase one of our Christmas cards, you're giving more than just a festive greeting – you're making a meaningful contribution that touches lives.

Longfield Magazine – *The View*

The winter issue of *The View* is now available, featuring stories of what our incredible supporters, staff and volunteers have been doing to support Longfield.

This edition also features our story to becoming an eco-friendly Longfield as well as the incredible story of Trizia (a much loved Longfield nurse) who sadly died in 2023.

Winter Raffle 2024

This winter you can make a difference by participating in the Hospice's Winter Raffle. Profits help us provide essential care to adults living with life-limiting conditions as well as their families and loved ones/carers, **completely free of charge.**

More information about all of this is available on the Longfield website.

Kirsty Murray (Senior Fundraising Manager)

Recycle Your Christmas Trees with Longfield Hospice in partnership with Just Helping

If you are looking for an eco-friendly way to dispose of your Christmas trees, Longfield Community Hospice can help you out with their annual Christmas tree recycling collection service in partnership with charity Just Helping.

In return for a voluntary donation, Longfield charity's team of volunteers will collect your trees from your home, at the end of the festive season, and take them to be chipped and recycled at recycling sites across Gloucestershire, including Painswick Rococo Garden, where they are chipped into mulch and reused locally, making this the most eco-friendly way to dispose of your tree.

Hoping to collect and recycle more trees than ever this year, Longfield are aiming to raise more than £72,000, which could help fund over 1,300 hours of Hospice at Home care, wellbeing, bereavement and counselling services. This is a huge operation for Longfield and last year an army of volunteers collected as many as 3742 trees over four days from households throughout Gloucestershire.

The scheme is endorsed by Stroud District Council and Gloucester City Council (working with Ubico) is also supporting the scheme by providing two recycling sites.

To arrange collection of your tree, simply visit www.just-helping.org.uk/register-tree and enter your postcode, where you can make a voluntary donation to your local community hospice. Bookings can be made from 15 November until 7th January 2025

All money raised helps to fund the hospice's vital work supporting patients, families, and carers across Gloucestershire.

Katy Easey

Music And Christmas

One could argue that music and Christmas have been linked since the very first Christmas, when the (most probably fictional) little drummer boy appeared at the manger - poor Mary.

Whether it's the latest Christmas No.1, rousing carol singing in the local church or a performance of Bach's Christmas Oratorio, there is something about music which means that Christmas wouldn't be the same without it.

The first Christmas music is thought to have originated in early Latin hymns, including *Veni Redemptor Gentium*. Soon, Christmassy music was spreading throughout the whole of Europe faster than that one relative can knock back the leftover Christmas pudding brandy.

The first English Christmas music appeared in the 15th Century, and some of the carols that emerged in the 16th Century are still sung today: The 12 Days of Christmas and God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen being two examples.

The first carols, certainly in England, would have been sung by 'wassailers' going from house to house, and wouldn't have just been linked to Christmas, but to general festal occasions such as Harvest. Only later would carols become associated with the church and Christmas.

Over the years, with help from the Reformation and Protestantism (which encouraged more carol singing in church), the carol gained ground and soon became an essential part of the Advent and Christmas season. The Victorian era saw a huge surge in popularity for the carol and the first service of Nine Lessons and Carols was held at Truro Cathedral in 1880 - thus starting the annual tradition of listening to/watching the little cherubs at King's, Cambridge, and debating which O Come All Ye Faithful descant is better... (It's the Willcocks one.)

Since then, the carol has continued to be on the ascendent, with composers such as John Rutter continuing to write new Christmas music for choirs of all nationalities, sizes and abilities to sing.



Across the water, Germany and France have a plethora of traditional carols and songs which are well worth listening to and getting to know better. Ranging from playful, to nostalgic, to joyful, they really cover the breadth of the emotions felt at Christmas.

Some of my own fondest memories are of walking around the German Christmas markets and hearing hints of ‘Cantique de Noël’ or ‘Süßer die Glocken nie klingen’ wafting over the many brightly coloured craft and food stalls. The picture above was taken in Berlin market.

One Song To The Tune Of Another

Not all carols originally had the words/melody that we know today. The tune of Hark The Herald Angels Sing was originally written by Mendelssohn for a cantata celebrating the anniversary of the printing press, whilst the words were originally supposed to go to the tune of ‘Jesus Christ Is Risen Today’. Sing it to yourself, it works...

Christmas Music Today

Carols remain ever popular, maybe because singing them has that nostalgic element of reminding us of Christmasses spent long ago, when loved ones, now lost, were still with us. When we were younger and everything seemed so much simpler and Christmas lights felt that bit brighter.

Or maybe it's because there is something about singing these hymns of joy as a large group in a church full of candles, optimism and, if you're lucky, mulled wine.

But we cannot forget the modern Christmas music either. Elton John, Slade, Wham, Bing Crosby and Ed Sheeran also have a part to play in Christmas music. Which Christmas party or tree decorating afternoon isn't livened up by hearing the first few bars of Merry Xmas Everybody?

How many times have we laughed with Last Christmas in the background, or cried along with Chrissie Hynde's '*I miss you*' from 2000 Miles?

These songs, in the space of 2 - 5 minutes, manage to capture the same elements of nostalgia, joy and optimism that the carols do, just in a different way.

At the end of the day, Christmas music has several purposes; to celebrate the birth of Jesus and the message of joy that he brings, to get us all excited for the otherwise somewhat dreary work party, and to give that nostalgia of happy times in the past, but with the hope of a brighter future.

Thomas Hawkes



Who was St Nicholas?

St Nicholas was born during the third century in Asia Minor. His wealthy parents died while he was still young. Nicholas, a devout Christian, sold all he had and dedicated his life to helping the sick and suffering.

He was made Bishop of Myra and became known for his generosity, his love of children and his concern for sailors.



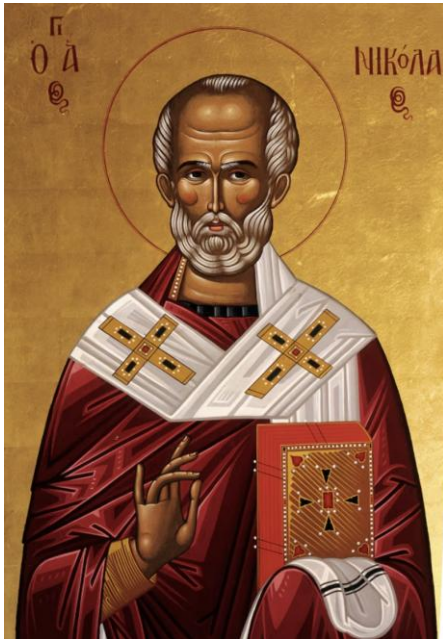
The painting above by Ambrogio Lorenzetti from about 1300 shows him secretly dropping gold through the window of a poor man who couldn't afford the dowries needed for his three daughters.

The gold fell into their stockings and shoes which had been left by the fire to dry, and the money saved them from a life of prostitution. Another story tells of how he resurrected three boys who had been murdered by an innkeeper and placed in barrels of brine.

For several hundred years St Nicholas was known throughout Europe as the secret bringer of gifts to children around December 6th (his feast day).

Pam Barnes

From St Nicholas to Santa Claus



In 1822, the American, Clement Clarke Moore wrote “A Visit From St Nicholas” (better known today as “The Night Before Christmas”) for his children. He invented the plump jolly Santa with a large white beard in a red hooded coat, riding across the sky in a sleigh driven by eight reindeer.

Saint Nicholas became Sinteklaas then Santa Claus and was adopted by Americans as the secret bringer of gifts to good children on Christmas Eve.

After the Second World War, American troops spread their version of the story all over Europe. In many countries in mainland Europe, “Santa” is rejected and the tradition of St Nicholas is continued on his feast day.

Pam Barnes

Social Events in 2025

The **Festive Tea** planned for **Sat. 7th December** 3pm-5pm in the Parish Hall, Watermoor has been postponed for this year. See below for new date.



Festive Tea – Saturday January 18th 3pm – 5pm in the Parish Hall Watermoor.



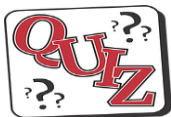
Murder Mystery – ‘*Village Fate*’– an intriguing ‘who-dunnit’ with a cast of people we know well.....

Sat. 15th February at 7pm St Lawrence Hall, Chesterton

Members of the Meysey Crucis Fete Committee are astounded and worried when news reaches them that a new Vicar has been appointed. He is a past curate whose wife, Nicki, caused immense trouble in the parish by uncovering secrets that no one wanted to be divulged.

Now back, Nicki is determined to continue unfinished business. It was only a matter of time before someone, fearful that their past may be disclosed, decides to murder her and conceal her body in the church. Another case for DCI Ivor Case and DS Jo Bluett to solve.

Come along and work as a team to solve the murder, list the clues and win a prize! Put the date in the diary.



Parish Quiz Night

Sat. 17th May at 7pm in the Parish Hall, Watermoor



Curry Night

Scheduled for August. Date to be confirmed.

The Flight into Bethlehem

Miss Jones was worried. Her headteacher had tasked her with the Infant Nativity play for the end of term. It was a situation embedded with danger and one which her more experienced colleagues avoided like the plague. Parent expectation and lobbying for the best parts was only the tip of the inevitable iceberg.



Casting was difficult and Miss Jones lay awake at night worrying over how to allocate the parts. By the end of half term she had roughed out what she thought could be a solution but was then concerned about the woke faction who often gathered at the school gate to discuss the day's events. Should the angels be of mixed sex? Probably. Should the Wise Men be wise women – that sounded a little mediaeval - or should they be kings or even queens from the East? The latter might tick two boxes. The thought was dismissed as her mind turned to the baby Jesus. The only available doll, of suitable size, was missing a leg after Wayne had been a little too enthusiastic in the play corner.

Following advice from the Deputy Head, Miss Jones wrapped the doll in a white napkin and, as long as it remained thus concealed, no one should know about its missing limb. With the casting achieved and the baby prepared, together with a crib created by the caretaker, Miss Jones was fairly confident that the Nativity Play would be a success.

The afternoon finally arrived and the class of excited infants gathered in the school hall, grouped on the low stage and facing an expectant audience. Miss Jones lifted the manger on to the rostrum while Mary and Joseph took up their allotted places immediately behind it.

The play ran smoothly until the narrator reached the point of the Infant's birth. The plan had been that the wrapped doll would be placed under Mary's cloth-covered chair, and then moved to the crib at the

appropriate cue. When the moment arrived, Mary searched in vain while Miss Jones just stared in horrified wonder. Where was the baby?

A frantic search was happening to the side of the stage. After a good deal of scuffling, a classroom assistant discovered the baby behind the leg of the baby grand piano. Grabbing it up, she lobbed it, netball style, towards the crib. In mid-flight the napkin fluttered off, to land on a waiting shepherd while the doll thudded to earth just beside the crib and spun round like a grenade. Joseph ducked and covered his head.

Unperturbed, Mary swiftly picked up the doll, grabbed the napkin from the nearby shepherd, wrapped it up deftly and placed it gently in the crib. She then turned to the audience and gave them a beatific smile. There was thunderous applause.

Afterwards, the audience complimented Miss Jones on the excellent class performance, one wag saying that he'd heard of the Flight into Egypt but never the Flight into Bethlehem.

Based on a true story. The names have been changed to protect the innocent.

Howard Gray



The Parish Electoral Roll

In 2025 we must completely revise the Electoral Roll for our Parish. This happens every six years. Those who decide to join are eligible to vote for PCC members and for representatives on the Deanery Synod. They are also able to stand for election themselves.

If you have not already submitted a new form then pick one up from the church or see our website (www.cirenparish.co.uk) and return it via the churchwardens.

Howard Gray (Electoral Roll Officer)

**CIRENCESTER BAND
PRESENTS**

**A
CHRISTMAS
CRACKER**

**PARISH CHURCH, MARKET
PLACE, CIRENCESTER**

FRIDAY 13TH DECEMBER

**IN SUPPORT OF
CIRENCESTER HOSPITAL LEAGUE OF FRIENDS**



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REFRESHMENTS



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RAFFLE



USE OF THE CHURCH BY THE KIND PERMISSION OF THE CHURCH WARDENS



BLUENOTES

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

**14TH DECEMBER 2024
7.30PM.**

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
CIRENCESTER MALE VOICE
CHOIR

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Musical Director: Amy Garry
Accompanist: Ben Humphries

WITH VERY SPECIAL GUESTS

HARMONIA

HAWKESBURY CHOIR

Directed by Katie Silvester Directed by Ben Humphries

AND PUPILS FROM STRATTON C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Parish Church of St John Baptist,
Cirencester, GL7 2NH

Wednesday 4th December, 2024

Doors 7pm, Concert 7:30pm

*Join us for an eclectic selection of choral music
including your favourite Christmas Carols*

Raffle Mince pies Bar

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Gloucestershire

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Drop in between 10am & 11am.

Appointments 11am to 1pm, call us to book.



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Registered Charity 204279

CHRISTMAS IS COMING TO WATERMOOR

Advent All-Age	10am 1st Dec
Carol Service	6pm 15th Dec
Blue Christmas	4:30pm 21st Dec
Nativity Service	10am 22nd Dec
Christingle Service	6pm 24th Dec
Midnight Mass	11:30pm 24th Dec
Christmas Morning	8am 25th Dec 10am 25th Dec

Holy Trinity

PARISH OF CIRENCESTER



Pedestrian Access
from Watermoor Rd
Car Park on
Trinity Rd

Services for November and December 2024



1st December: Toy Service, St John Baptist - 10am
Advent Carol Service, St John Baptist - 6pm
Advent All-Age service – Holy Trinity - 10am

15th December: Carol Service, Holy Trinity - 6pm

20th December: Carol Service, St Lawrence - 6pm

21st December: Blue Christmas, Holy Trinity – 4.30pm *

22nd December: Nativity, Holy Trinity, - 10am
Nine Lessons and Carols, St John Baptist - 6pm

23rd December: Singalong, St John Baptist - 3pm

24th December: Shoppers Carol Service, St John Baptist - 11am
Family Nativity, St John Baptist - 4pm
Christingle, Holy Trinity - 6pm
Midnight Mass, St John Baptist, 11.30pm
Midnight Mass, Holy Trinity, 11.30pm

25th December: BCP Holy Communion, St John Baptist - 8am
Holy Communion, Holy Trinity - 8am
Christmas Day Eucharist, St John Baptist - 10am
Christmas Day Eucharist, Holy Trinity - 10am
Christmas Day Eucharist, St Lawrence - 10am

26th December: St Stephen's Day Eucharist, St John Baptist, 12 noon

29th December: Just one Combined service for the parish, St
Lawrence, 10am

31st December: Bless the Market Place, St John Baptist, 11.45pm

*See following article



What is Blue Christmas

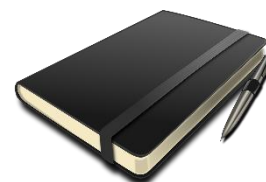


Blue Christmas (also called the Longest Night) in the Western Christian tradition is a day in the Advent season marking the longest night of the year. On this day, some churches in Western Christian denominations hold a church service that honours people that have lost loved ones and are experiencing grief. These include parishes of Catholicism, Anglicanism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Moravianism, and Reformed Christianity. The Holy Eucharist is traditionally a part of the service of worship on this day. This worship service is traditionally held on or around the longest night of the year, which falls on or about December 21, the Winter Solstice. There is an interesting convergence for this day as it is also the traditional feast day for Saint Thomas the Apostle. This linkage invites making some connections between Saint Thomas's struggle to believe in Jesus' resurrection, the long nights just before Christmas, and the struggle with darkness and grief faced by those living with loss.

The worship often includes opportunities for expression of grief, pain, and heartbreak as well as an opportunity to focus on the promise of hope found in Christ. Candles, arranged as an Advent wreath, may be lit during the service, and empty chairs may be reserved as a way of commemorating those lost during the previous year. The images of the winter solstice, including the beginning of increasingly longer days, are a significant part of the imagery used in this worship event.

From Wikipedia

Dates for December 2024 and January 2025



Daily

12 – 1pm	Eucharist - Catherine Chapel	St John Baptist
9:15 – 9:45am	Morning Prayer	St John Baptist

Monday, Wednesday & Friday

5 – 6pm	Evening Prayer	St John Baptist
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Weekdays

10am – 12pm	The Parish Forum Open (except Wednesday)
10am – 12pm	Thursdays Drop In at The Parish Forum
9am – 10am	Wednesdays Drop In at St Lawrence

**

1 Dec, Sun

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	All Age Eucharist/ Toy Service	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Non-Eucharistic Family Service	Holy Trinity
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Restore@4	St Lawrence
6 – 7pm	Advent Carol Service	St John Baptist

2 Dec, Mon

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5 – 5:30pm	Organ Vespers	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum
7:30 – 9pm	Advent Course	Parish Forum

3 Dec, Tue

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Advent Course	Parish Forum
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	St John Baptist

4 Dec, Wed

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
1:10 – 1:50pm	Organ Recital	St John Baptist
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

7:30 – 9:15pm	Cirencester Singers Christmas Showcase	St John Baptist
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5 Dec, Thu

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
6:30 – 7:30pm	Hope Cirencester Carols	St Lawrence

6 Dec, Fri

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
9am – 12:30pm	Mothers' Union Cake & Christmas Craft Sale	St John Baptist Porch
10 – 11:30am	Advent Course	St Lawrence
3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall

7 Dec, Sat

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
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8 Dec, Sun

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Evening Prayer	St John Baptist

9 Dec, Mon

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum
7:30 – 9pm	Advent Course	Parish Forum

10 Dec, Tue

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Advent Course	Parish Forum
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity

11 Dec, Wed

All day	Christmas Tree Festival	St John Baptist
9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

12 Dec, Thu

9:15 – 10:45am	Seedlings	St Lawrence
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10:30 – 11:30am	Mothers' Union Corporate Communion	St John Baptist
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13 Dec, Fri

10 – 11:30am	Advent Course	St Lawrence
3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall

14 Dec, Sat

7:30 – 9pm	CMVC and Bluenotes Christmas Concert	Holy Trinity
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15 Dec, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Restore @4	St Lawrence
6 – 7pm	Christmas Carol Service	Holy Trinity

16 Dec, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
7:30 – 9pm	Advent Course	Parish Forum
7:30 – 9pm	Quarter Peal	St John Baptist

17 Dec, Tue

10 – 11:30am	Advent Course	Parish Forum
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity

18 Dec, Wed

9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

20 Dec, Fri

10 – 11:30am	Advent Course	St Lawrence
3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
6 – 7pm	Christmas Carol Service	St Lawrence

21 Dec, Sat

4:30 – 5:30pm	Blue Christmas	Holy Trinity
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22 Dec, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Nativity	Holy Trinity

10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
6 – 7pm	Nine Lessons and Carols	St John Baptist

23 Dec, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
3 – 4pm	Town Crier & Vicar Christmas Sing-A-Long	St John Baptist

24 Dec, Tue

11am – 12pm	Shoppers Carol Service	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Nativity Service	St John Baptist
6 – 7pm	Christingle Service	Holy Trinity
11:30pm–12:30am	Midnight Choral Communion	St John Baptist
11:30pm–12:30am	Midnight Service	Holy Trinity

25 Dec, Wed

8 – 9am	Christmas Day BCP Holy Communion	St John Baptist
8 – 9am	Christmas Day CW Holy Communion	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Christmas Day Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Christmas Day Eucharist	St John Baptist
10 – 11am	Christmas Day Service	St Lawrence

26 Dec, Thu

12 – 1pm	St Stephen's Day Eucharist	St John Baptist
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27 Dec, Fri

3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
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29 Dec, Sun

10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
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30 Dec, Mon

31 Dec, Tue

11:15pm – 1am	Blessing The Town	Market Place
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2025

1 Jan, Wed

9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence

3 Jan, Fri

3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
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5 Jan, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	All Age Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Choral Evensong	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Restore@4	St Lawrence

6 Jan, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5 – 5:30pm	Organ Vespers	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum

7 Jan, Tue

6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	St John Baptist
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8 Jan, Wed

9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
1:10 – 1:50pm	Organ Recital	St John Baptist
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

9 Jan, Thu

9:15 – 10:45am	Seedlings	St Lawrence
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10 Jan, Fri

3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
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12 Jan, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
12:30 – 1:30pm	Baptism	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Evening Prayer	St John Baptist

13 Jan, Mon		
9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum
14 Jan, Tue		
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity
15 Jan, Wed		
9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 9pm	Full PCC	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
17 Jan, Fri		
3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
18 Jan, Sat		
3 – 5pm	Social Committee Festive Tea	Parish Hall
19 Jan, Sun		
8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Choral Evensong	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Restore @4	St Lawrence
20 Jan, Mon		
9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum
7:30 – 9pm	Quarter Peal	St John Baptist
21 Jan, Tue		
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity
22 Jan, Wed		
9 – 10am	Drop In	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
23 Jan, Thu		
9:15 – 10:45am	Seedlings	St Lawrence
10:30 – 11:30am	Mothers' Union Corporate Communion	St John Baptist

24 Jan, Fri

3 – 5pm

Cirencester Food Pantry

Parish Hall

26 Jan, Sun

8 – 9am

Eucharist

Holy Trinity

8 – 9am

Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel

St John Baptist

10 – 11:30am

Eucharist

Holy Trinity

10 – 11:30am

Eucharist

St John Baptist

10 – 11:30am

Eucharist

St John Baptist

10:30 – 11:30am

Eucharist

St Lawrence

12:30 – 1:30pm

Baptism

Holy Trinity

4 – 5pm

Evening Worship

St John Baptist

27 Jan, Mon

9:45 – 11am

Little Angels

St John Baptist

5:30 – 6:30pm

Vicars Open Office

Parish Forum

28 Jan, Tue

6:30 – 9pm

Bell Ringing

Holy Trinity

29 Jan, Wed

9 – 10am

Drop In

St Lawrence

7 – 8pm

Eucharist

Holy Trinity

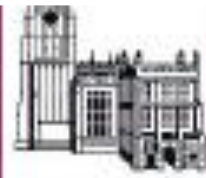
31 Jan, Fri

3 – 5pm

Cirencester Food Pantry

Parish Hall





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