

Englefield Parish News

December 2024 - January 2025



The Parish of St Mark's, Englefield

Rector: Rev Julia Myles

During Julia's sabbatical, all enquiries to be directed via the churchwardens

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churchwarden@stmarksenglefield.org.uk

07850 603508

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07725 171223

St Mark's Church website:

www.stmarksenglefield.org.uk

Englefield Parish Council website:

www.englefieldpc.org.uk

Front cover: *The St Mark's Christmas tree, photographed last year. This year's tree will be installed and decorated in good time for the school and church carols by candlelight. More details of all the Christmas services at St Mark's on pages 6, 7 and 11.*

Englefield Parish News

Englefield Parish News is published every two months and is distributed free to all households in the parish of Englefield. Contributions welcome, email catherinehaig@gmail.com or hand in to the Village Stores by the 20th of the preceding month.

From St Mark's House



Dear friends

Well here we are in Advent! Unlike the shops which have been Christmassy for weeks, St Mark's has been stepping slowly towards Advent as we have remembered all the saints, all the loved and departed souls, all the fallen and those who still serve, and last but not least, 'Christ the King' on November 24th. Now we await the arrival of Jesus the Christ Child, God's son in a manger, that slow build up helping us anticipate and then celebrate with meaning.

Due to my being granted a three-month sabbatical, I anticipate that I shall be celebrating Christmas in a new and different way this year. Not being either a youth worker, an ordinand or a 'professional Christian', means that Christmas will feel quite different! I hope it means I will experience the build up and the celebration of Christmas, Epiphany and Candlemas in new and different ways too. I am certain I shall miss the 'normal' Christmas as much as I welcome the 'new' Christmas and I shall miss the great gatherings at St Mark's. Please do look out for Rev Alan Gates around the village, at church on Sundays and at the Christmas services you will see advertised on the village board and St Mark's facebook and website. I know that you are in safe hands and I trust you will give him the friendly welcome and support I enjoy. Until I am back for Ash Wednesday on March 5th, Paul and I wish you a Happy Advent, Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Your Rector, Julia



Dear all

It has been my privilege to have provided ministry at St Mark's during your last interregnum and when Julia has been on holiday. It will be my joy and privilege to look after you whilst she is taking a well-earned sabbatical. I have always been made to feel welcome at St Mark's, so thank you. Please feel free to come to me with your pastoral concerns and your joyful news. For the sake of continuity it is probably best to contact me via the churchwardens. A bit about me. I am married to Margaret (for 55 years), I have two grown up children, Sarah and Matthew, and a step family of two grandsons and five great grandchildren. Our Jack Russell terrier 'Meg' completes the line up. A late starter, I was ordained in 2001 and have served in the dioceses of Chelmsford, St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Europe and Oxford. I have also enjoyed a short foray into army chaplaincy as an officiating chaplain to forces plus ten years with the Air Training Course. I am presently an associate minister at St Mary's Purley with the Bishop's Permission to Officiate within the diocese. Ecclesiology/churchmanship is not over important to me, what is important is that the worship and service that we offer is from the heart and pleasing to God.

Rev Alan Gates

Diary dates

Advent Sunday: Sunday 1st December, 10.30am, come and celebrate the start of the Advent season and enjoy a glass of sherry after the service.

Community Carols: Saturday 7th December, you are invited to join Holy Trinity Theale singing carols at Theale Christmas Market, meet at 4pm underneath the Christmas tree in Theale High Street!

West Berkshire Mobile Library: Wednesday 18th December and Wednesday 29th January, outside the Old Fire Station Nursery, Englefield, 2pm to 2.25pm.

Christmas services at St Mark's: Lessons and Carols by Candlelight, 6.30pm, Sunday 22nd December; Nativitingle, 3.30pm on Christmas Eve; Christmas Communion for all the family, 10.30am on Christmas Day (more details of all of these on pages 6, 7 and 11, and on the village and church noticeboards).

Midnight service: Christmas Eve, 11.30pm, at Holy Trinity, Theale.

Evening Praise: last Sunday of every month, 6pm at Holy Trinity, Theale, no service in December, next date 26th January.

Let's Talk Theology: Wednesday 11th December and 8th January (see page 10).

St Mark's PCC meeting: Monday 27th January, 6.30pm, in the church.

Local contacts

Englefield Estate Office	0118 930 2504; office@englefield.co.uk
Englefield Estate Yard	0118 930 2538 maintenance@englefield.co.uk
Englefield Stores & Tea Room	0118 930 2479 admin@englefieldstoresandtearooms.co.uk www.englefieldstoresandtearooms.co.uk/ https://www.englefieldvillagehall.co.uk/ info@englefieldvillagehall.co.uk
Englefield Village Hall	
Cobbs Farm Shop	0118 930 4064
Theale Medical Centre	0118 930 2513
NHS online coronavirus service	111.nhs.uk/covid-19 or call 111
Royal Berkshire Hospital	0118 322 5111
West Berks Community Hospital	01635 273300
Theale Pharmacy	0118 930 2542
Lloyds Pharmacy (Calcot)	0118 938 2265
NHS dentist Dentalcare, Pangbourne	0118 984 5894
West Berkshire Council	01635 551111 (out of hours 01635 42161) www.westberks.gov.uk/ www.englefieldpc.org.uk/ www.thealeparishcouncil.gov.uk
Englefield Parish Council	
Theale Parish Council	
Englefield Primary School	0118 930 2337; www.englefieldprimary.co.uk
Utility suppliers: Electricity - SEN 0800 072 72; Oil - Ford Fuels 0148 872 829;	
Gas - National Grid 0800 111 999; Water - Thames Water 0800 714 614;	
Drainage - Total Drainage 0118 9421140	

Thank you

A personal THANK YOU from the churchwardens and myself for the wonderful way you got behind our Harvest Appeal. Together with our school we sent several large crates full of food to the West Berkshire Food Bank. The bountiful collection plate on Sunday raised a whopping £700. St Mark's gave a further £500 totalling £1,200 which has been donated to PACT. This sum has subsequently been match-funded by the Big Give and will specifically be used by Alana House in Reading, PACT's Trauma and Abuse recovery centre for women. Grateful thanks for your care of those less fortunate than ourselves. Please do continue to pray for these organisations and their clients.

Rev Julia



Baptism

Arthur James Godber Bamforth Evans, baptised at St Mark's Church on Sunday 13th October.

Church appointment

Following his curacy in Plymouth, Duncan Hollands, Peter and Denny's son, has been appointed as Vicar to the Parish of Chandler's Ford in Hampshire, comprising two churches, St Boniface and St Martin's in the Wood.

We wish Duncan and Beckie and family all the best in their new home and new job.

RIP

Peter Langham, who died on Monday 4th November in the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

Frank Whyman, gunsmith based for many years in the Englefield Estate Yard, who died on Thursday 21st November.

Margaret Bosley, mother of Andrew, one of the regular St Mark's organists, who died in November.



Congratulations to Five A Day

Many congratulations to Englefield's Five A Day market garden on being awarded a National Garden Scheme Community Garden Grant of £1,200. Berkshire County Organiser, Heather Skinner, visited the garden in October to meet up with leader volunteers, Glen and Jenny, to hear more about their work and to present them with a commemorative

plaque. The grant has gone towards the development of the Thyme Together area of the garden, used specifically to offer horticultural therapy to senior members of the community coping with the challenges of limited mobility, sensory impairment, cognitive issues and feelings of social isolation.

Cobbs at Christmas

The closing date for Christmas meat, cheese and deli orders at Cobbs is Sunday 15th December. The Cobbs Christmas lunch menu is available until December 20th and festive teas until 31st December. For ideas for foodie presents, visit the website <https://www.cobbsfarmshops.co.uk/cobbs-foodbox-store>.

And finally, many congratulations to the team at Cobbs for gaining a Highly Commended in the Lloyds British Business Excellence Awards last month!



Farewell to the Bishop of Reading

The farewell service for Bishop Olivia Graham, the outgoing Bishop of Reading, took place on Sunday 30th September at Reading Minster. The service was attended by hundreds of people, including civic dignitaries, and featured music from the Reading Gospel Choir, the Choir of St Paul's Wokingham, and the Choir of Reading Minster.

During the service, Bishop Olivia approached the altar and formally laid down her crozier, mitre and cope. She paid tribute to the staff, clergy and lay leaders who have supported her, and spoke of the volunteers whose work she had witnessed.

Bishop Olivia was announced as Bishop of Reading in July 2019, the first female Suffragan bishop in the Diocese of Oxford, and served for five years. She retired in September 2024. The Bishop of Oxford is leading the process of appointing her successor and an announcement is expected shortly.

The Englefield Snowman Trail is back!

The Englefield Estate Snowman Trail will be back for 2024. Wrap up warm and head out with family and friends and see how many you can find! The 19 wooden snowmen have been painted by local children, and will be in the Englefield Estate woodlands near Mortimer West End, Mortimer, Silchester and Burghfield Common. This year's trail will be open every day from Friday 20th December until Monday 6th January.

To help you track down the snowmen, a printable map and an online interactive map will be available on the Englefield Estate website before the trail starts. This can be viewed on your mobile device while you're out and about.



Winter gardening advice via the RHS

Susan Broughton, head gardener at Englefield, was featured in November's issue of the Royal Horticultural Society's magazine. In the 'Out and About' section, Susan highlighted what visitors can expect to see in the gardens at Englefield House this month and also explained how gardeners can get their plants, flowerbeds and lawns ready for winter. RHS members can read the piece online - or go to the Englefield website and follow the links to Latest News.



PACT Carols at the Minster

We would love you to join us on Saturday 7th December at Reading Minster for a fun-filled, family-friendly afternoon of music, performances and Christmas reflections. The event will celebrate and raise money for PACT's life-changing work with women, children, families and the local community.

Tickets available here: <https://www.pactcharity.org/support-us/carols2024/>.



Christmas at the Garden Centre

Once again Christmas is upon us. This year has been an interesting year to say the least. We have grown the number of people we support, we have increased our staff team and our customer base too, and we have new neighbours. So all in all lots of positives. We have already started our planning for next year's bedding, we have lots of customer favourites and some new varieties too, we are all looking forward to seeing what they do, all we wish for is some nicer weather at the right time of the year.

Meanwhile, we have a fantastic selection of Christmas trees, hand decorated wreaths, and poinsettias in a vast array of colours, not forgetting the lovely aroma of the hyacinths.

Once again the team would like to say a massive thank you for all your support over the last year and look forward to seeing you all again in the new year or even over the Christmas period. We will be open every day apart from the following days: Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Austin Crabbe, Garden Centre Manager



Nativingle is a combined Nativity and Christingle! It is a short, interactive service in St Mark's Church aimed especially at young families. Children might like to come dressed as a Nativity character - and everyone of any age is very welcome to come and join in the fun!

Student filmmakers on location

Students from the National Film and Television School in Buckinghamshire selected Englefield parkland as the backdrop to their new short film. The next generation of filmmakers spent a day shooting scenes for *Backseat*, a film about a young runaway from a foster home. *Backseat's* producer, Claud Cunningham, said: 'The extraordinary generosity of the Estate and its invaluable support were instrumental in bringing our film to life. The location was perfect, and being free from concerns about traffic management or public disruption allowed our director and team to focus entirely on their creative vision. We couldn't have achieved these results anywhere else.'



Englefield's Events Manager Peter Carson who works closely with the crews shooting films and TV programmes on the Estate said: 'We're passionate about supporting the next generation of filmmakers, so it was excellent to welcome the National Film and Television School to the Estate. We are thoroughly looking forward to watching *Backseat* when it's released.'



Christmas at the Tea Room

We are now fully decorated and have already started our Christmas dinners and Afternoon Teas. We really hope you are liking our decorations and they are bringing a bit of festive cheer as these cold days are settling in! Thank you to Kat, Janice and Diane as they look fantastic.

In December the Tea room will only be open 10-11.30am and then we are closed due to Christmas dinners. Please note that on days we close at 11.30am, last orders will be 11am. This is so we have enough time to turn the Tea room into Christmas mode ready for Christmas dinners at 12.30pm. On the days the Tea room is closed due to Christmas dinners, the Store will still be doing takeaway hot and cold sandwiches, paninis and pizzas along with hot and cold drinks. Carte D'or will even be available...! The marquee can be used for seating for takeaway customers for this period only but there will be no toilet facilities as the Tea room will be closed. Dogs welcome in the marquee.

The Tea room closes on Saturday 21st December and reopens on Monday 13th January. The Store will close on Monday 23rd December at 2pm and reopen on Friday 3rd January at 10am.

We wish you a very merry Christmas and a great 2025.

Liz and the Tea room ladies ♥

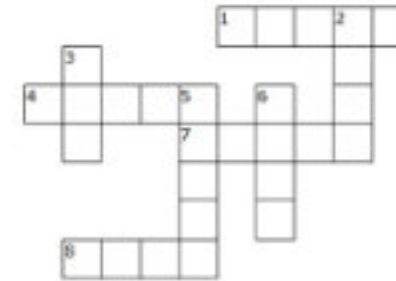


Sunday Club Advent puzzle

Be Prepared

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.
Matthew 24:44 (NIV)

Based on Matthew 24:42-44



ACROSS

1. The time of day when it is dark
4. To keep an eye on; to guard
7. The person who has something such as property
8. A particular moment in the day, such as eight o'clock

DOWN

2. A period of sixty minutes
3. A period of 24 hours
5. The place where a person or family lives
6. To have information about something; to be aware of something

TIME KNOW	OWNER HOUSE	WATCH DAY	HOUR NIGHT
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Sunday Club at St Mark's Church meets every Sunday morning during the service. There is always a friendly welcome, with a Bible story, crafts, games and free play for ages 3+ and a creche for under 3's. Adults can stay with their children if they wish and everyone rejoins the main service for Communion and the final hymn.

Save the date

The World Day of Prayer in 2025 will be on Friday 7th March at St Oswald's Church in Burghfield Common. The theme of the service is 'I made you wonderful' and it has been composed by Christian women in the Cook Islands. More details in the next issue.

Why give to your local Foodbank?

- 400% increase in take up since March
- 16 tonnes of food parcels a month (up from 4 this time last year)
- A growing need in Theale

DROP OFF LOCATION:
Holy Trinity Church, Theale

WHEN?
SUNDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS
10.30AM TO 4.00PM

Safeguarding Sunday

Safeguarding has been particularly prevalent in recent headlines and newsfeeds, particularly with the recent resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. On Sunday 17th November, it was Safeguarding Sunday, and this year's theme was, 'Let's talk about it'.

Safeguarding is about the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults,

- **Protecting** from abuse and maltreatment,
- **Preventing** harm to health or development, and
- **Promoting** a person's wellbeing, considering views, wishes, feelings and beliefs

Protecting vulnerable people from harm and speaking up for their rights is an integral part of our scriptural mandate as Christians (Proverbs 31:8).

We have always taken safeguarding seriously at St Mark's Church, Englefield. As with the Safeguarding team within the Diocese of Oxford, we are committed to safeguarding children, young people, and vulnerable adults so they can worship and grow in Christ safely. We value and respect everyone we work with, and our safeguarding team endeavours to be as relational, transparent and proportionate as possible (Diocese of Oxford, 2024).

Further information and helpful resources are available via the Diocese of Oxford's designated safeguarding pages of their website - www.oxford.anglican.org/safeguarding/ or by scanning the QR code shown here.



St Mark's, Englefield, Safeguarding Officer:

Any concerns you might have, the designated contact, in the first instance, is Lucy Roper. Lucy has been a member of the congregation at St Mark's for several years. She has experience with safeguarding through her current employer, University College of Estate Management, Reading, and also held the role of Welfare Officer for Reading Swimming Club and

Thames Valley Triathletes. She can be contacted on the following number 0797 0768528 or via email at safeguarding@stmarksenglefield.org.uk (these contact details can also be found on the inside front cover of every issue of the Parish News).

Let's Talk Theology

Let's Talk Theology meetings continue at 7.30pm on the second Wednesday of every month. The meetings in December and January will be online. For further details, contact carolboulter@ntlworld.com.



The poster features a dark background with white stars of various sizes scattered throughout. At the top left, the word 'Christmas' is written in a large, elegant, white cursive font. To the right of this is a circular inset image showing the exterior of St Mark's Church in Englefield. Below the church image, the text 'AT ST MARK'S ENGLEFIELD' is written in a white, sans-serif font. The main text of the poster is centered and reads: 'Dec 22nd 6.30 p.m. Candlelit Lessons & Carols followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies.' Below this, it says 'Christmas Eve 3.30 p.m. 'Nativingle' An All-Age Nativity & Christingle'. Further down, it states 'Christmas Day 10.30 a.m. Christmas Communion for all the family.' At the bottom, it says 'Everybody Welcome!' and 'Church is open each day until dusk for quiet reflection.'



From Englefield Primary School

'Sowing the Seeds for a Flourishing Future'

As always the start of the academic year has been full to the brim of fun and laughter with a whole lot of learning sprinkled in! We have welcomed our lovely new FS2 class who have settled in so well you would think they had been here forever!



Year 5 were delighted to be invited to St Andrew's School to see and hear Cressida Cowell, the author of the very popular written series and movie, 'How To Train Your Dragon'. The children were very excited to meet such a well-known author and intrigued to hear her talk about her life and her work. Cressida's top tip was to add just enough truth to your stories to make them believable.

Years 5 and 6 went on their long anticipated camping trip to Rushall Farm. They loved getting their cosy tents ready with piles of sleeping bags, blankets and teddies! Activities included den-building, tractor-trailer rides, fire-lighting, woodland art, daytime and night-time woodland walks, a great campfire with marshmallows, and raft-building for the teddies. This ended with all the children in waders in the river! We were especially lucky to see the wonderful blood moon on both nights and have our campsite lit by a shining silvery full moon.



October brought with it Harvest Festival and our children embraced the opportunity to honour our school values by showing Love of Others and gathering as much food as they could to help those in need. As a result of the generosity of our Englefield families, our food donations, added to church donations, weighed in at 180.7kg, which is

the approximate weight of a donkey! More importantly that is 379 meals for local people experiencing hardship.

Another annual October event is Bassistry Arts and once again it didn't disappoint. Each year we are visited by Marcel and Philippe who put on workshops for the children. Each group practised increasingly complicated rhythms using body sounds, learned a song with some movement and finished by using the instruments to build a rhythmic picture. In the end of day performance, everybody was happy to get up and show what they had learnt - even the parents got involved.



If there is one thing we can say about autumn so far, it has to be that the weather has been crazy. Sunny and warm one day, freezing cold the next. No matter the weather there is always time to take a moment to appreciate the beauty of the world around us, which is exactly what Years



3 and 4 did when we had that spectacular thunderstorm! Now we have the pretty autumn colours to admire and let's not forget the joy that a pile of leaves can bring to an imaginative playground of children! I think we can all agree that Autumn is a particularly wonderful time of year.

Finally we would like to share how proud we are of our Englefield football team who 'smashed' their competition yesterday with an astounding six match win! They were invited to take part in the ESFA competition which, if their success continues through the county and regional tournaments, could see them being awarded the title of National Champions. Judging by their exceptional performance, they could be in with a great chance! We wish them the best of luck.



In a few weeks it will be Christmas and the children are already buzzing with the anticipation of fun and festivities, we really do have so much to look forward to! KS1 will be putting on their nativity and are already filling the school with the sound of Christmas while learning the songs for the play. We are looking forward to Christmas Fayre, Christmas hampers and our annual tradition, Christmas carols around the village on Monday 16th December. In school we will have our Christmas fun run, Christmas jumper day, Christmas dinner and the highlight of the season – the Christmas Panto! This year will be Pinocchio at the Watermill, they always make it such a magical experience for the children. As we always do we will end the term with our lovely Christmas Service at St Mark's to remember the true meaning of the season before heading home for the holidays.

Hilary Latimer, Headteacher





Winter activities at Five A Day

Garden: It has been a bit damp and chilly over the last month or so but hasn't stopped sales of our produce particularly the pumpkins and gourds for Harvest and Halloween. The early onions, garlic and shallots have been planted. Medlars have been an interesting choice for purchase this year. The flowers have been popular and a new bed is being developed for cut flowers. The brambles have been removed from some of the willow as we prepare for the popular wreath-making sessions.

Volunteers: We have had a number of new volunteers join us and everyone is contributing to the planting plan for 2025. Thank you for all the hard work and enthusiasm you all bring to the garden! We will be attending the Volunteer Bureau's annual Volunteer Fair in January at the Corn Exchange in Newbury.

Wreath-making sessions: Our wreath-making sessions have started and places are almost sold out as we continue to take pre-orders for ready-made wreaths. Glen and another garden volunteer presented a wreath-making demo at the WI in Upper Basildon which was very well received.

Corporate groups: two groups from Vodafone visited the garden in October and helped prep the growing beds.

Schools: We welcomed the schools back in early October and the last visit for this term took place on 18th November. We have had lovely feedback from Ella's Kitchen and the schools and look forward to having them return in spring. We have supported the visits for a number of years and it is so good to know the children are still getting so much from their time in the garden.



Thyme Together: The TT group are planning their own wreath-making session in early December along with a well-deserved Xmas lunch the following week. We have had more people joining and will continue to hold sessions throughout the winter months. A representative of the National Garden Scheme met Glen and Jenny to see the extension to the TT garden which they had funded and presented a plaque which

will be displayed in TT garden area (*see page 4*). If you know of anyone who might like to attend these FREE sessions please email info@fiveaday.org.uk or call 07555 184343 to express any interest.

We would like to find some more Trustees or anyone who would like to join the management team. Trustees meet twice a year working alongside the management team to oversee the charity's business plan and activities. Please do get in touch.

Finally, 5ADAY wishes you a wonderful Christmas and very happy 2025!

Wendy Cadman, Five A Day management team member and trustee

Angeline Hunt RIP

As mentioned in Richard Smith's article in the last issue of the Parish News, Angeline Hunt who died in July this year was one of the longest term residents of Englefield. She moved into the north lodge by the gates of the Englefield drive with her parents in 1965, remaining there after they died in 1969 and 1989 respectively.

Her sister, Joyce, recalls: 'Angeline had a great love for all animals, domestic and wildlife, and was frequently house-sitting for friends to look after alpacas and dogs and sometimes had friends' dogs to stay with her. She used to have a daily visit from a pheasant, looking for food, once fed he went on his way until the next day. Throughout her life Angeline always supported several animal charities, the main one being the Dogs' Trust where she used to adopt a dog. She enjoyed visits from Lady Benyon and her dog, Dodo, who always looked forward to a treat. She used to read the Englefield Parish News from cover to cover.'

Angeline was buried next to her parents in St Mark's Churchyard on 17th August.



Your life story in a beautiful book!

Have you ever thought about writing a book about your life to share and enjoy with your family and friends? If writing doesn't come naturally or you simply need a helping hand, I can help...Celebrity biographies are a global phenomenon, but the lives of 'ordinary' people are no less fascinating. In fact, I would argue that a book about your life - your hopes and dreams, your struggles and achievements - is far more interesting, especially to your family and friends and those close to you. It could be a very special gift for your loved ones, something they will treasure and remember you by.

I am a professional writer with a passion for real-life stories. Over the years I've written books about many people who aren't rich or famous but have remarkable stories nonetheless. A grandmother wanted a book about her childhood in war-torn Berlin. A retired businessman was keen to recount his life in India, Kenya and the UK. A devoted mother wanted to preserve precious stories about bringing up her children and running a shop. Writing your life story can be an immensely enjoyable activity, something to get stuck into during the long winter months. Why not give it some thought and get in touch for a no-obligation chat: www.lifestoryinabook.com, katarina@lifestoryinabook.com, 07982 465351.

Katarina Sherbourne

Sunday	Sidesperson	First reading	Gospel	Prayers	Sacristan	Server	Sunday Club and crèche	Cleaners
December 1 st Advent Sunday BCP	Paula Fenwick	Lorraine Dehn	Mike Kimber	BCP	Denny Hollands	Denny Hollands	Saffy O'Sullivan Liz McKean	Peter and Catherine Haig
December 8 th 2nd Sunday of Advent	Peter Haig	Graham Harvey	John Rothery	Denny Hollands	Sue Smith	Denny Hollands	Saffy O'Sullivan Meryl Bonser	Graham and Pauline Harvey
December 15 th 3 rd Sunday of Advent	Penny Savage	Linda Price	Meryl Bonser	Dinah Perkins	Sue Smith	Paula Fenwick	Liz McKean Denny Hollands	Penny Norris and Saffy O'Sullivan
December 22 nd 4 th Sunday of Advent	Liz Marillier	D Boddy	Saffy O'Sullivan	Catherine Haig	Penny Norris	Peter Haig	No Sunday Club*	Liz McKean
December 25 th Christmas Day	Torquil MJ Peter Haig	Peter Haig	Denny Hollands	Richard Benyon	Catherine Haig	Penny Savage Peter Haig	No Sunday Club*	Angie Higgins
December 29 th First Sunday of Christmas	Pauline and Graham Harvey	Jean Rothery	Kahlen Spaulding	Penny Savage	Denny Hollands	Saffy O'Sullivan	No Sunday Club*	Penny Norris and Saffy O'Sullivan
January 5 th Epiphany BCP	Liz Marillier	Paula Fenwick	James Meade	BCP	D Boddy	Torquil MJ	No Sunday Club*	Pete and Carole Ford
January 12 th First Sunday of Epiphany	Paula Fenwick	Harry Benyon	Saffy O'Sullivan	Peter Haig	Penny Norris	Denny Hollands	Liz McKean Meryl Bonser	Peter and Catherine Haig
January 19 th Second Sunday of Epiphany	Peter Haig	Aldo Guiducci	James Bamforth	Saffy O'Sullivan	Penny Savage	Paula Fenwick	Liz McKean Denny Hollands	Graham and Pauline Harvey
January 26 th Third Sunday of Epiphany	Penny Savage	Carole Ford	Ronan O'Sullivan	Denny Hollands	Sue Smith	Peter Haig	Saffy O'Sullivan Meryl Bonser	Penny Norris and Saffy O'Sullivan
February 2 nd Candlemas BCP	Torquil MJ	Anne Edgar	Paula Fenwick	BCP	Catherine Haig	Penny Savage	Liz McKean Denny Hollands	Liz McKean
February 9 th 4 th Sunday before Lent	Pauline and Graham Harvey	Penny Savage	Richard Benyon	Paula Fenwick	Denny Hollands	Penny Norris	Saffy O'Sullivan Meryl Bonser	Angie Higgins
February 16 th 3 rd Sunday before Lent	Paula Fenwick	Torquil MJ	Dinah Perkins	Ron Marillier	D Boddy	Saffy O'Sullivan	Liz McKean Denny Hollands	Peter and Catherine Haig

Bible readings will be emailed to readers beforehand. If you swap duties, please email catherinehaig@gmail.com, and the churchwardens (paulapaloalto@yahoo.co.uk and torquilmj@newburyweb.net). An up-to-date version of this rota, including any swaps, can be found under the Resources tab on the church website.

**While there is no formal Sunday Club in school holidays, there is always a selection of colouring sheets, books and toys available in church and in the vestry.*



A safe space

She leapt out of the minibus and confided, 'This is the only space I feel safe in', adding that her mum had agreed to 'buy me a chicken if she won the lottery'. She was one of six arriving from a school for excluded primary school children. She comes every week for a couple of hours and revels in 'HER SAFE SPACE'.

In the age-old Christmas story, I wonder how safe the girl Mary, a little older than this, but just as vulnerable, felt when an angel appeared to her? Yes, she was pledged to be married to Joseph. Yes, she was assured that she was highly favoured and the Lord God was with her. But all the same the news that she would conceive and give birth to a son was pretty terrifying. She was told he would be great and called the son of the most high God. He would be like King David of the Old Testament but he would reign for ever and his kingdom would never end. She rightly questioned the words the angel said by protesting that she was a virgin; then said these famous words 'I am your Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled'. From her acceptance came the birth of Jesus, the most influential man who has ever lived and whose death and resurrection released his presence and power in the lives of believers.

I know at Rushall Farm my heart breaks for some of the children who come here. That same day we took a group of 10 children down to the river. Most put waders on and grabbed nets, bowls and ranging poles and the sun shone. Three were not so sure so we carried waders for them. Slowly our bowls got more and more shrimps, caddis flies, baby trout and minnows, water boatman, two big bullheads and of course crayfish. And so two more children were drawn into the river to join in the fun. Smiles replaced anxious faces and laughter and delight filled the air. One boy remained unmoved on the bank. He does not communicate, but we had to count the fish. Then an ancient cow's horn appeared, followed by a very old wet cricket ball. We pretended to play. I hit a six, he caught me out. We parted shaking hands with a photo of his trophy. His mother collected him half an hour later, a whole morning this time, and no falling out.

Young lives all three. We know that Mary's safe space became a life 'where sorrow like an arrow would pierce her heart'. What of our two? Will finding a safe space at Rushall Farm help them to better navigate through life? I really hope so, and pray that will be the case.

John Bishop
www.rushallfarm.org.uk



Saints' Days in Ordinary Time

You may have noticed the sudden appearance at Sunday service back in September, for one day only, of the white altar frontal (just visible in the picture), breaking a seemingly endless succession of green. The different seasons of the Church are marked by different colours and although the seasonal colours have official names, in different churches there may be variations in terms of the actual colour. In our case the 'green' altar frontal looks more white than anything to me, though the chalice veil and burse are definitely green, and our 'white' is very much gold.

Green is the official colour of what is called 'Ordinary Time', which is more or less that part of the year that isn't either the Christmas season or the Easter season. There's a whole slab of it starting after Trinity Sunday and running for 25 weeks, appropriately designated 'After Trinity', when nothing much happens. As John Mead Falkner in his 1910 poem of that name put it:

*We have done with dogma and divinity,
Easter and Whitsun past,
The long, long Sundays after Trinity,
Are with us at last;
The passionless Sundays after Trinity,
Neither feast-day nor fast.*

*Christmas comes with plenty,
Lent spreads out its pall,
But these are five and twenty,
The longest Sundays of all;
The placid Sundays after Trinity,
Wheat-harvest, fruit-harvest, Fall.*

The reason for the sudden flash of festal white in this sea of ordinary green is the festival of Michael and All Angels that falls on 29th September and white is the colour ordained for all the Church festivals, Saints' Days and a few other celebrations. The following week we were back to green. Of course, as this is the December issue, we are now clad in 'purple' the proper colour for Advent, though it's actually a very dark blue in our case. On the way though, after we went back to green for a few weeks to complete the 'five and twenty', then we were briefly white again for All Saints Day before we switched to that sumptuous red when we stopped being 'after Trinity' and became 'before Advent'. The original frontals for this altar, which dates from 1891, were designed by Swinfen Harris, who also designed the lych gate and the memorial cross in the churchyard, and were made by a Mrs Baker. Further ones were presented by Mrs Skipwith (wife of the Rector) in 1920. Spare a thought for the sacristans (like the verger and the sexton no longer a full-time occupation) or whoever has to keep up with all these changes.

This particular great bit of Ordinary Time after Trinity usually sees congregations drop off a bit and some features are put temporarily into abeyance. Nowadays we attribute this fall in numbers present on a Sunday to the holiday season, but things

were ever thus even before summer holidays became a thing for ordinary people, because in the year of Falkner's poem the total offertory for the four Sundays after Easter was £3-8-11½ whereas for Trinity 2 to 5 it was £1-14-7. The answer, of course, was then as it still is now for those who actually do 'feed the world' (meaning farmers, of course, not virtue-signalling pop stars) and is in the last line of Falkner's verse above: harvest.

The school year runs as it does for the same reason and the long summer holiday was even called 'Harvest Holiday' but children could also be excused from school for up to six weeks to help with agricultural work. This often happened, with attendance at the school being noted as particularly poor in May and July 1865 and again in June 1869 because boys were out at work haymaking and in the latter case also bee-minding.

Even once they were back at school in the autumn there were still absences, as in October 1870 when 73 children were away in the morning and 76 in the afternoon (from a total roll of about 100, similar to today) because a high wind in the night had blown down a great many acorns that could be collected and sold to Mr Benyon's gamekeepers. Presumably the payment received should be regarded as a fee for collecting them, since otherwise it would simply be selling Mr Benyon, via the gamekeepers, something he already owned and in 1894 the Rector reminded people that *'it is not lawful and downright robbery to sell them to any other person'*. The acorns were stored in the barn at Wimbleton's and used to feed the deer through the winter. Raw acorns are poisonous to horses, cattle and dogs but our native roe and fallow deer are well used to grazing on fallen acorns and will even browse them straight from low-hanging branches. At one time some red deer, unused to acorns, were brought down from Scotland and while the mature animals coped with them well enough, the calves didn't and their stomachs swelled to alarming proportions. As the stags were also destroying every tree they could find by debarking and brashing with their antlers they were soon repatriated.

Children were also released from school in both World Wars to help with agricultural work and the school was closed on four afternoons in September 1918 so that teachers and children could collect blackberries to make jam. They also collected horse chestnuts for the government because charcoal made from these was superior to that made from wood when used in the filters of anti-gas respirators. A common agricultural task that would also have justified time off school and continued for a while after the war was 'spud-hucking' (picking up the potatoes lifted by a mechanical device), although stone-picking, in Englefield if not in Oxted, appears to have ended with the 19th century.

Richard Smith

Thoughts for the week

These reflections are just some of the short commentaries that are compiled by Aldo Guiducci each week on the readings in church. They are all available, week by week, on the pew sheets and on the church website.

'Look, he is coming with the clouds,' and 'every eye will see him, even those who pierced him'; and all peoples on earth 'will mourn because of him'. So shall it be! Amen (Revelation 1 v 7)

The return of Jesus will be unmistakable; a cosmic dislocation of life as we know it, as the Judge of all the earth suddenly appears to usher in the final judgement. In the opening passage of Revelation John sees a glimpse of Jesus as he will be when he returns in glory. Awesome in his majesty, this risen Jesus strikes terror even in those who love him.

Some readers have difficulty with John's enthusiastic approval that 'all peoples on earth will mourn because of [Jesus]'. But John isn't being vindictive here. When Christians suffer persecution the name of their God is reviled and their cause is despised. But this is not final. John records in vivid symbolic language the overthrow of the wicked and the vindication of God and of good. And he does this as someone wholeheartedly committed to the cause of God and eager that His cause is seen to prosper. So the overthrow of the wicked means the triumph of good and the vindication of Christians who had suffered so much. John exults in it.

'Watch out that no-one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, "I am he", and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.' (Mark 13 v 5b-6)

Our world today is in turmoil. There are all kinds of events happening – tensions between global powers, potential wars and actual wars. Could this be the end of the world looming? Before we get too carried away, we would do well to reflect that similar fears likely existed during the Cold War, the global hostilities of World War II, the horrors of World War I, and many more times down through the years.

What are the signs of the end times? There have been people in every generation since Christ's resurrection claiming to know exactly when Jesus would return. No-one has been right yet though, because Christ will return on God's timetable, not ours. Jesus predicted that before his return many believers would be misled by false teachers claiming to have had revelations from God. But, according to Scripture, the one clear sign of Jesus' return will be his unmistakable appearance in the clouds, which will be seen by all people (see v26, as well as Revelation 1:7). In other words, we don't need to wonder if a certain person is the Messiah, or whether these are the 'end times'. Instead, we should remain steadfast in our faith and be ready for the end at all times, because it will come upon us suddenly and unexpectedly.



The next generation of foresters

A university graduate in international development is the latest recruit to the Englefield forestry team. Charlotte Moss, 24, was helped to make the switch to a hands-on role in woodland management thanks to the Royal Forestry Society's Forestry Roots scheme. She admits her path into forestry is unusual but is extremely pleased to have joined the Englefield team and to be learning the skills she will need to make forestry her career. She explains: 'After my degree I went off travelling with a friend. I got a summer job in a campsite and met an arborist

who told me all about jobs in forestry. I had always been interested, but didn't know how to find a way into the industry.' She hopes the experience that comes with the year-long traineeship will stand her in good stead when she comes to look for a full-time job in the forestry sector.

Charlotte joins another young forester on the team at the Englefield Estate. Fin Lace, 19, completed an in-house forestry traineeship in the summer of 2024 and is now a full-time forester. Englefield Estate's Forestry Manager, Rich Edwards, is full of praise: 'It is good to see two young and enthusiastic people take an interest in forestry and demonstrate how keen they are to learn the skills necessary to manage our woodlands. We're delighted to have them both.'



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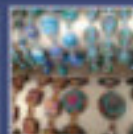
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