

Seek

December 2023



50p

**The Church and
Parish of St Mark
Cambridge**

www.stmarksnewnham.org

A Letter from our Curate, Bethan



Christmas cards, decorations and gifts have been in the shops for a while now, as I write this letter in mid-November. The Christmas adverts have been on our TVs for several weeks, with

images of cosy homes, snowy scenes, turkey and heaving tables, surrounded by happy families with all generations present.

Christmas cards on the shelves are covered with beautiful images and artwork, bright colours, Christmas trees, nativity scenes, angels, holly, glitter and shine. They carry all the greetings we have come to expect, "Merry Christmas," "Joy to the World," "Peace on Earth".

However, this year I'm finding the sentiment of these greetings and the emotions intended much harder to hold than usual. I don't feel very merry, and joy seems quite a hard concept. I'm unsure whether I want to sing Christmas carols and indulge in excessive feasts when the world is far from peaceful, conflict is ever present in our news, and many people don't have food for the day to day, let alone a Christmas feast.

Our world is a messy place. Over the last few years, we have been reminded of just this. Despite all the advances of science, we can still have devastating pandemics but also life changing vaccines. Despite modern diplomacy, the UN and many peace agreements, wars still take place and threaten to engulf nations and regions although at the same time people also meet together and stand up for the things they believe. Despite Foodbanks and food pantries, Living Wages and Fairtrade, food poverty still exists, and many people do not have access to the basic things they need to survive and yet meanwhile, thousands of volunteers give up their time and money to make the lives of others better.

Our individual lives can be messy too. I'm sure many of you like me will still have cards to write, presents to buy, let alone wrap(!), and plans to be arranged. Even the most organised person may have to change plans at short notice or rejoice at a gift they didn't know they were going to receive. We do not know when the unexpected might happen.

Sometimes when we remember the Christmas story and tell of the baby born in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago, we tell a tidy story. Neat and without the messiness of human lives, sanitised of both the greatest joys and the most chaotic lows. Everyone moves to exactly the right place and lines are read in the right order. All the glitter, metallics, and bright colours present, just as they are meant to be.

However, this is not the Christmas story recorded for us in the Bible. The story we find is an awful lot messier. We find ourselves in a nation under occupation, with complicated local and empire-wide politics, in a completely ordinary town with people working all the hours God sends to make ends meet, with some feasting while others beg for their dinner. We find very human relationships. There is unbounded joy as the woman, Elizabeth gives birth, at an older age. And the young teenage girl, Mary, is engaged to a hardworking carpenter. In the messiness of her life, she discovers she is pregnant, but not by Joseph but with God's own son.

Jesus is born into the messiness of our human lives. Not in a clean, sanitised, ordered hospital, or at home with all the home-birthing plans in place. Jesus is born between the animals in a house in a town Mary didn't know. Shepherds and Kings gathered round and celebrated. God entered into the messiness of humanity, taking on a frail, breakable, baby body, with all the dependence and need of any other newborn child.

The world which God entered as the person of Jesus was not a peaceful, idyllic, heavenly place but contained conflict, danger, poverty, natural disaster and injustice, much the same as our world today.

Over the next month we remember that turning point in history, where God entered into the messiness and fragility of humanity and offered an alternative. In the life of Jesus Christ we see glimpses and promises of the Kingdom of God which is to come. We see the beauty and glory that God intends for messy humanity. And we continue to see glimpses of this hope in our world today. Glimpses in the beauty of creation, the stars at

Decorating the Church for Christmas

Saturday 16th December 9.30 am



All are invited to come and help decorate the church for Christmas. Please bring as many berries and as much greenery as you can!

night, the way the light plays across the clouds at sunset. Glimpses in the kindness of a stranger, in solidarity with one another. Glimpses in the giving of cards and gifts, and the hopes of Joy to the World and Peace on Earth.

Our world is a messy place. We cannot and must not forget those suffering in war zones, those who cannot eat a Christmas feast, those for whom marking their religion means persecution, for whom inhabiting their identity, race or heritage means death. But we must hold all of this in tension with the glimpses we see in the world and continue in

hope that one day peace will be on earth. We must celebrate the things we have and wonder at the beauty of the world that surrounds us.

I hope you will find a way to hold this tension and to recognise the beauty and hope in your life this season.

Happy Christmas.

Belman

The Cantus Singers of Cambridge

Conductor: Alan Howard

Advent Song

Seasonal Anthems

and Motets

*Batten, Byrd,
Gibbons, Hassler,
Praetorius,
Sweelinck,
Victoria, Walter*



*O Come, Emmanuel
Bullard*

*Saturday 9 December at 8pm
St Mark's Church, Barton Road,
Newnham, Cambridge*

Tickets £10 in advance from choir members or
cantussingerscambridge@gmail.com

(or £12 on the door). Under 18s free

Church Lighting Report

There is good progress to report!

The Lighting Project Itself

We have chosen Huttie of Swaffham Bulbeck to be our preferred contractor. They are an excellent local firm who installed the new lighting at St Barnabas Church in Mill Road. They were marginally cheaper than the other very good firm we interviewed and their quote fell within our budget.

- The church will remain open while the work is carried out.
- The roof will be cleaned.
- Our church architect has approved the details of the design.
- The Diocesan Faculty permission is now with the Consistory Court in Westminster, for the legal authority to proceed.

We are on course to install the new lights next summer, subject, of course, to what follows!

The Appeal

Many thanks to all who gave us such a promising start. Sponsoring a lamp has proved very popular. There are just a few left ! If you are like Eleanor and me, difficult to buy a Christmas Present for, why not ask family and friends to club together to buy a lamp for your church? At £150 to £200, depending on size and function, they are very good value. We are hoping to negotiate a price freeze for 2024 so they would also make a nice Birthday present.

The Cantus Singers will kindly promote the Appeal at their Advent Song Concert on Saturday 9th December, another good reason to buy a ticket.

So please keep giving so that we can sign the contract early in 2024 .

Alan Jones

Project Manager

St Mark's is in Vacancy

During the Vacancy please contact the Curate, The Revd Bethan Rodden, whose details are given below, for all queries regarding weddings, funerals, baptisms and home communions.

Please note that Bethan's day off is Friday.

07542 843983 revbethanr@gmail.com

Gombe : October's Charity of the Month

£943.01, including Gift Aid, was raised for the Diocese of Gombe in October. Very many thanks to those who donated so generously

The January Issue of SEEK

All contributions are welcome. Please send them by Wednesday 13th December to Jane Plows at janemp@virginmedia.com (350120) or contact any member of the committee.

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Re-Dedication of the War Memorial

Remembrance Sunday 2023



Representatives of all branches of the Scouting Movement, accompanied by family and friends, joined our normal congregation for our service on the 12th November, swelling our numbers to over 250.

At 10.45 am, as the service inside the church concluded, we all made our way outside to gather round the War Memorial. After the laying of the wreaths we heard, as usual, the names of those recorded on the memorial read out before the Last Post, the two minute silence and the Reveille at 11.00 am.

This year, in addition, we witnessed the re-dedication of the War Memorial after its cleaning and re-carving. It was a joy to be able to read the

names of the many men and one woman recorded there as we listened to the roll of honour being read.

This has been made possible by Alan Jones's ceaseless work in contacting the appropriate authorities, finding grants, enthusiastically fundraising and identifying the craftsmen who carried out the work.

An enormous thank you goes to Alan from all the Newnham community.

As a final act, Alan asked Matthew Beesley, who was responsible for the re-carving, to tell us about his career. It makes fascinating reading and we are privileged to have had such a skilled craftsman to do the work.

St Mark's Church Mission Statement

To be the people of God in this place and to work to make God more real for our community.

Matthew Beesley

It was a great honour to have re-carved the inscriptions on the War Memorial, acknowledging not only the memory of each individual person represented as each one was carved in turn, but also collectively, as a part of the Newnham community. By deepening the letters by between 1.5 to 2mm, the inherently case-hardened stone could well provide their names with 200 - 300 years of continued self-protection.

I am an Accredited conservator with the Institute of Conservation, following post-graduate training 35 years ago, working primarily on secular and ecclesiastic architecture, private collections, monuments, wall paintings, and objects from European, Asian, and Far Eastern cultures from circa 5,000 years ago through to the Post-Modern period, including many UK Cathedrals, museums, and working regularly on the Allied Forces monuments in Normandy, and in several European countries.

I studied Fine Art Painting and Printmaking at Byam Shaw School of Art, London, (mid-late 1970's) followed by a traditional training in masonry, carving, and letter carving, continuing my apprenticeship at Cologne Cathedral over two years. Returning to England, I founded a ceramics and pottery class for the blind, teaching for four years voluntarily in Northampton, and also engaged as an art therapist in the community and psychiatric hospitals, also voluntarily.

Early in my conservation career I formed a ten-person team of international architects and conservators to complete the conservation of Henry VII's Chapel, Westminster Abbey, over a four-year

period. Upon completion of the project, I met her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, and my name was subsequently incorporated into the new stained-glass window in Henry VII's Chapel designed by Alfred Fisher as a celebration of the project's completion, in 1995. At the same time, I managed a team to conserve 275 monuments inside the Church of St Helen, Bishopsgate, damaged by the Liverpool Street Station bombing. In 2008, the then Charles, Prince of Wales, visited my studio to discuss the conservation being carried out on fire-damaged neo-classical statuary.

I completed an MA in Research-led Fine Art this year and am currently developing research proposals for practice-based PhD studies.

I am married to Hellen, from the Sub-Saharan Luo culture in Kenya, a Nilotic tribe, living a traditional semi-pastoralist lifestyle on the family homestead farm close to Lake Victoria, visiting as often as possible. My interest in anthropology and linguistics also led me to support a Nepali family and learn Nepali at SOAS during the past 35 years, as well as naturally learning both Luo and German, through the circumstances noted above.

I would like to thank the church and the local community, for the wonderfully engaging conversation and support given throughout this period of carving, a great range of personalities from all walks of life, perhaps mirroring in part those whose names I was carving. To Alan, for keeping faith in me during the process, an ever-abiding high-spirited presence! Thank you all.

Matthew Beesley



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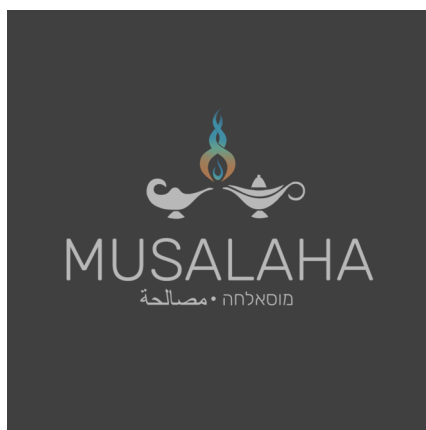
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Musalaha : Charity of the Month



The Charity for December 2023 is Musalaha, a charity I met in Summer 2022 when I participated in a pilgrimage organised by St George's College, Jerusalem in Palestine and Israel. I suggested this charity to Rachel and Sarah back in Summer 2022 when I returned, and we scheduled it for December 2023 as during Advent and Christmas we often turn our thoughts more towards the setting of the birth of Christ which we celebrate at Christmas.

Since then, this choice has become even more pertinent. The political and humanitarian situations in Palestine and Israel have become far more hostile and violent. War has been declared between Israel and Hamas, capturing millions of Palestinian and Israeli citizens in its wake and causing devastation.

Musalaha means "Reconciliation" in Arabic and is a faith-based organisation that teaches, trains, and facilitates reconciliation mainly between Israelis and Palestinians from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, but also international groups, based on biblical principles of reconciliation. It was founded in 1990. Since its creation, an Executive Board of Palestinian and Israeli community leaders have led this organization by promoting, facilitating, and teaching reconciliation and unity within our society and internationally.

A representative from Musalaha UK will be at our service on the 10th December to tell us more about the charity and for a short Q&A session during coffee.

We will be supporting the charity through Musalaha UK who work in 5 key areas to support the work of Musalaha in the Holy Land:

Praying: We have a prayer team underpinning everything that we do.

Organising: We put on a range of open events throughout the year, often bringing over speakers who are directly involved in the work of reconciliation in the Holy Land.

Presenting: Our team delivers talks, presentations, workshops and seminars around the UK.

Educating: We publish a variety of publications and produce video presentations on issues surrounding conflict and reconciliation.

Fundraising: Our fundraising efforts exist to support the work of Musalaha in the Holy Land - all Musalaha UK staff work on a voluntary basis.

There is a promise in Isaiah that "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." The work of Musalaha seeks to find an alternative to the violence and bloodshed we continue to see in the Holy Land and seeks to promote reconciliation and understanding, beginning with the smallest building blocks of genuine relationship and meetings between individuals from different groups.

Therefore, at this time when we perhaps feel so helpless in knowing how to engage productively in the conflict in the Middle East, please consider supporting Musalaha as the Charity of the Month.

Bethan Rodden

<https://www.musalaha.uk/donate/>

St Mark's Advent and Christmas Calendar

Each Sunday there are services in church at 8.00 am and 9.30 am,
as well as a service each Tuesday at 11.00 am (not on the 27th Dec)

Sunday 3rd December

- 12.30 pm Christmas Lunch
- 7.00 pm Wolfson College Carol Service

Tuesday 5th December

- 3.30 pm Messy Church

Saturday 9th December

- 8.00 pm The Cantus Singers : Advent Song (page 3)



Saturday 16th December

- 9.30 am Decorating the church for Christmas.
All welcome. Please bring greenery.



Sunday 17th December

- 8.00 am Holy Communion
- 9.30 am Parish Communion and Junior Church
- 5.00 pm Carol Service

Sunday 24th December - Christmas Eve

- No morning services
- 4.00 pm Crib Service
- 11.15 pm Midnight Communion

Monday 25th December - Christmas Day

- 8.00 am Holy Communion
- 9.30 am Christmas Day Communion

Sunday 31st December

- 11.15am Joint Service at Grantchester

Friday 5th January

- 7.30 pm Words and Music (see below)



News from the Arts and Events Team

Words and Music

a concert of readings, songs and musical items created by
St Mark's for St Mark's

on Friday 5th January at 7.30 pm

further details to follow

The Holy Family with a Shepherd



Luke's Gospel does not tell us how many shepherds went to Bethlehem to worship the newborn Jesus. Traditionally three are often depicted in art and nativity plays. Titian's painting in the National Gallery, London is unusual in that only one is portrayed in the main scene.

It is an early work painted around 1510 (Titian lived to 1576) and ingeniously combines two Christmas themes: the Holy Family in a landscape and the Adoration of the Shepherds. The solitary shepherd is positioned in the lower right of the picture, a young man in an implausibly clean and bright white robe with a red top which is balanced on the left by Mary's white headdress and the sheet the newborn Jesus is resting on. The colours of Mary's clothes, blue, which is traditionally associated with her, and red are vivid. Jesus appears more as a toddler than a baby and is looking downwards, perhaps asleep. Behind Mary at the far left of the painting are an ox and ass, traditionally featured in nativity scenes but here hardly discernible in the darkness.

Joseph is the prominent figure in the composition located in the centre, his head slightly higher than the other figures. Again, this is unusual. In most

nativities he is a background figure, sometimes shown asleep. The reason is that the painting was surely made for a patron with a special veneration for Joseph, whose cult was vigorously promoted in northern Italy at this time; altarpieces commissioned by confraternities dedicated to Joseph often give him similar prominence. However, Joseph's clothes are less vivid than those of Mary and the shepherd. Joseph and the shepherd both bear rough wooden staffs giving the two figures a certain rustic kinship.

Dawn is just breaking in the background and to the upper right an angel descends to tell the shepherds gathered on a hillside of the birth of Christ. The background landscape is exquisite with the dark foil of a rocky bank and shrubs and weeds silhouetted against the sky.

One of the joys of wandering through the National Gallery and other museums is coming across paintings such as this and being able to reflect quietly on them. This Christmas why not take the opportunity to do so if you get the chance.

Chris Hammond

Foodbank Donation Point in the Newnham Co-op



Have you spotted the new Foodbank Donation point in the Newnham Co-op? This was introduced recently by Simon, the Manager, and gives us another way of donating to the Foodbank. It is in addition to our collection in church on the first Sunday of the month, and at 19 Kings Road and 1 Millington Road on the Thursday **after** the first Sunday.

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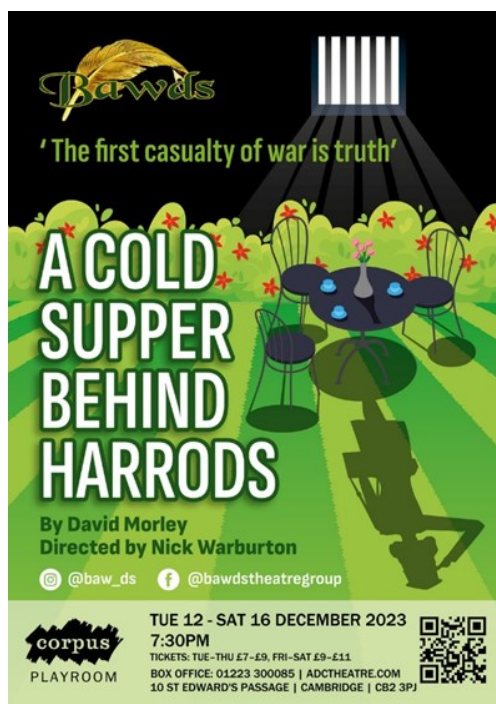


A Cold Supper Behind Harrods

Directed by Nick Warburton

a new play by David Morley

12th to 16th December at the Corpus Playroom



What should you do about acts of betrayal and murder, fifty years after the event?

Let sleeping dogs lie?

Relentlessly pursue the truth? Or seek revenge?

Set in 1997, over fifty years after the war that brought them together, David Morley's taut psychological drama brings together three agents of the Special Operations Executive – Churchill's secret army – who meet to record interviews for a television documentary investigating the murder of their colleague at the hands of the Gestapo.

As Leo, Vera and John wait to be interviewed in a beautiful English garden, pleasantries give way to deeper, darker subjects and a web of self-deception, lies and guilt begins to emerge.

In an era when 'alternative facts' replace actual facts, we are reminded that the first victim of war is the truth.



A Bawds production



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St Mark's Charity of the Month programme

Many thanks to all of you who came up with suggestions for our charities for 2024. We looked at all the proposals at a meeting on the 17th October and agreed on the following list, a good mix of local, national and international causes.

Nigel Porter and Sarah Squire

	Charity	Proposer/Organiser
January	Cambridge Churches Homeless Project	tbc
February	Caring Together	Stuart Evans
March	Gombe	Andrew Watts and Perrin Hardy
April	Hearing Dogs for the Deaf	Jane Plows with Oscar and his dog, Rosie
May	Christian Aid	Susan Chester
June	Macmillan Cancer Support	Tina Wilson
July	Umoja	Susan Wagner
August	JMECA - The Jerusalem and the Middle East Church Association	Revd Bethan Rodden
September	Cambridge Sustainable Food	Barry Read, St Marks Eco Church group
October	Gombe	Andrew Watts and Perrin Hardy
November	SSAFA	Miles Elliott
December	Embrace the Middle East	Andrew Chester

Regular Groups

Monday Bible Study

10:00am, alternate weeks – contact: Sue Wagner, 01223 563435

Tuesday and Thursday Home Groups

7:30 pm, weekly – contact: Andrew Watts, aa.watts@hotmail.co.uk or Mike Thompson, michaelangelot99@gmail.com

Prayer Meeting

11.00 am every Friday at 10 Stukeley Close – contact: Anne Howie, 01223 356140

Choir

The choir normally sings on the first three Sundays of the month at our 9:30 am service. Rehearsals are 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm on the first and third Fridays of the month and from 9:00 am on Sundays.

The Confirmation Service

Sunday 29th October 2023

The Rt Revd Dr Dagmar Winter joined us at St Mark's on the 29th October to conduct a joyful service of Holy Communion with Confirmation.

The five confirmation candidates from St Mark's were joined by Pamela Clark from Brampton (she had been prevented by Covid from being confirmed in her own locality a few weeks earlier).

After she had confirmed each candidate the Bishop invited all the congregation to join in this prayer :

Defend, O Lord, these your servants
With your heavenly grace,
That they may continue yours for ever,
And daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more
Until they come to your everlasting kingdom. Amen

and at the end of the service she presented each of the candidates with a lighted candle, saying,

God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and has given us a place with the saints in light.

You have received the light of Christ:
walk in this light all the days of your life.

and the whole congregation joined her in saying,
Shine as a light of the world to the glory of God the Father.

The five candidates were

Judith Hinsley

Laurence Smith

Barend van Kooten

Johannes Marcus von Kooten

June Woolhouse

Services at St Mark's Church, Newnham in December

Communion (BCP) at 8.00 am every Sunday

3rd December at 9.30 am	Parish Communion
at 7.00 pm	Wolfson Advent Carol Service
10th December at 9.30 am	Morning Worship and Junior Church
17th December at 9.30 am	Parish Communion and Junior Church
at 5.00 pm	Carol Service
24th December at 4.00 pm	Crib Service
<i>Christmas Eve</i> at 11.15 pm	Midnight Communion
25th December at 8.00 am	Communion
<i>Christmas Day</i> at 9.30 am	Christmas Communion
31st December at 11.15 am	Joint Communion Service at Grantchester

Tuesdays

Communion (BCP) every Tuesday at **11.00 am (not 26th December)**

Messy Church at **3.30 pm** on 5th December

Full Christmas details can be found on the centre pages of Seek.

Seek is printed by Chris and Barbara Wright situated in St Neots

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Prayers for Advent and Christmas

O come, O come, Emmanuel
(*Advent Antiphon*)

God for whom we watch and wait, give us courage to speak the truth, to hunger for justice,
and to suffer for the cause of right, with Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Jan McFarlane)

God in Trinity, eternal unity of perfect love: gather the nations to be one family,
and draw us into your holy life through the birth of Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus
Christ.

(*Malcolm Guite*)

Moonless darkness stands between.
Past, the Past, no more be seen!
But the Bethlehem-star may lead me
To the sight of Him Who freed me
From the self that I have been.
Make me pure, Lord: Thou art holy;
Make me meek, Lord: Thou wert lowly;
Now beginning, and alway:
Now begin, on Christmas day.

(*Gerard Manley Hopkins*)

O make me pure of heart and help me see,
Amongst the shadows and amidst the mourning,
The promised comforter, alive and free,
The kingdom coming and the son returning,
That even in this pre-dawn dark I might
At once reveal and revel in your light.

(*Malcolm Guite*)

Chosen by Perrin Hardy



St Mark's Church in December 2022