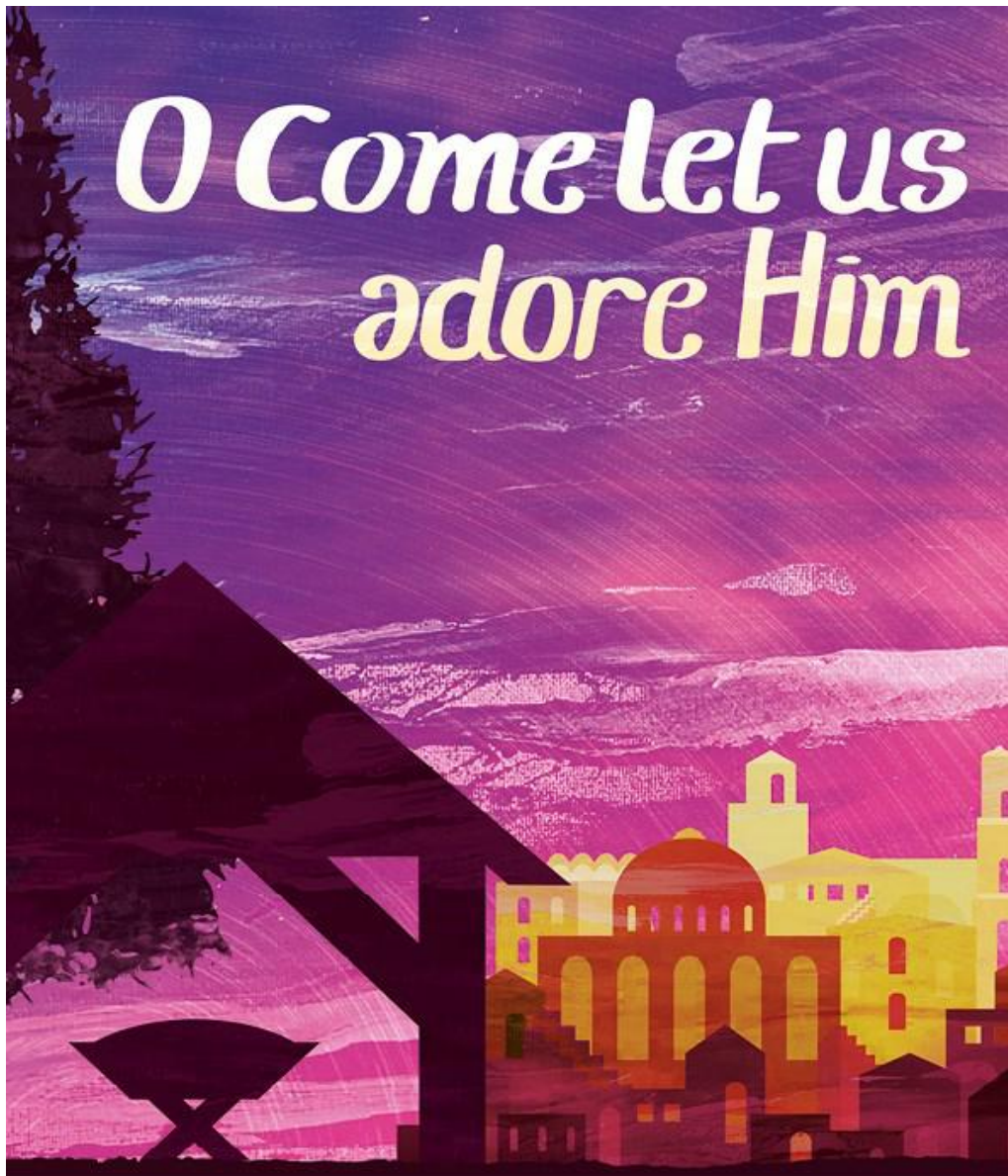


ST ANDREW'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND
HANDSWORTH, BIRMINGHAM

DECEMBER 2023

JANUARY 2024



'THE MESSENGER'

Parish Magazine

DECEMBER 2023/JANUARY 2024

50p



From the Editor

Hi, I am Eileen Lawrence, Editor of the Parish Magazine.

Welcome to the Christmas Issue of the magazine. This month we have Reflections from Rupinder Kanda and a Featured Interview from Chris Baker. The Saint of the Month is St Lucy, written by Alison Thorne, and Sheila Mpofo has written about her experiences in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Services have moved to the Church Hall while the heating in the church is being sorted. However the lovely Crib that we have each year has been placed in the Church. All are welcome to visit it.



I hope you have a peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024.

Eileen Lawrence.

Please note that the magazine is also online on St Andrew's website and is accessible to the general public.

St Andrew's Clergy

Vicar – Father Paskal Clement

Mobile: 07727286905. Phone: 0121 218 1988.

Email: revpaskal@gmail.com

Asst Priest: Father John Austen: 0121 554 8882

Church Warden: Carl Hart: 07967 410155.

Lay Readers

Carole Sami: 07447 889657

Alison Thorne: 07736414307

Weekday activities

Thursday:

Holy Communion: 10.00 am at Good Shepherd Hall

Coffee Morning: 10 to 12noon

St Andrew's WhatsApp Group: if you wish to join, please contact

Carl Hart: 07967 410155.

St Andrew's PCC

Chair: Father Paskal Clement

Church Warden: Carl Hart

PCC Secretary: Vacancy

Treasurer: Richard Paton-Devine

PCC members:

Mary Bairstow, John Emmins, Jan Flemming, Shebina Gill, Sonia Hyman, Alison Thorne

Director of Music—Vacancy

Church Halls Administration – John Emmins

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Church Website: <https://www.standrews-handsworth.org.uk>

Letter from the Vicar

Christmas – An Act of Love

The moment the calendar flips to December, it comes with a long shopping list, obligations, and no doubt stress. Children expect beautiful and expensive gifts from their parents. Sometimes, due to peer pressure. Parents with less income do not know how to cope with children's expectations. Christmas, which is supposed to bring joy and happiness in life and family, brings anxiety and stress.

How did we prepare ourselves for Jesus, Messiah? Regardless of what is going on in our world – war, violence, brokenness, division. But still, we await in hope. We hope for a better world and a better future. Where there will be peace, love, reconciliation and unity among people and nations.

Jesus, even before he was born, went through a tough time. The first census announced by Caesar Augustus took Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem – a 90-mile journey on a donkey, Mary carrying a nine-month-old baby in her womb. A journey full of danger and uncertainty, and the roads were uneven.

When they reached Bethlehem, there was no room for them among his own people. Jesus was born among animals in a stable. The good news of his birth was given to simple and ordinary people – the shepherd. Not to the people who were in the centre holding power and status. Three wise men saw the star and followed it, reaching to baby Jesus. Try to find your star in your daily life that will lead you to Jesus, the source of every joy and contentment.

The parents have to migrate to Egypt to save the child's life. The life of the Messiah was always in danger, even before he was born. But this Messiah changed the world and keeps changing those who trust him.

God did not spare his most precious gift – his Only Son: Jesus. But he gave him to the world—his generous act of love. God expects the same from each one of us.

I have visited housebound church members with the holy communion, ensuring they are remembered and valued. During this special (winter) time, think of the poor and needy around you and try to support them as much as possible. That will really be a Christmas for you and others.

The dawn of the New Year will be exciting. There will be an element of surprises and uncertainties. I hope and pray that you step into the new year 2024 alongside the Lord, who holds each of the next 365 unknown tomorrows in His hands.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year 2024!

With every blessing,

Fr Paskal

(Vicar)

Christmas and New Year Services

Christmas Eve. Sunday 24 December. 11.30p.m.

Midnight Mass

Christmas Day. Monday 25th December. 10.00 a.m.

Holy Mass

Sunday 31st December. 9.30 a.m.

Holy Mass and

11.30 p.m. *Midnight Service...saying goodbye to 2023*



Monday 1st January 2024 11.00 a.m.

Thanksgiving Holy Mass...welcome 2024.

Followed by bring and share lunch.

Sunday 7th January 2024. The Epiphany. 9.30 a.m

Holy Communion Service



SAINT OF THE MONTH

Saint Lucy

Saint Lucy's day is 13th December. My older son went to an international school in South Wales for his sixth form years and I must have been visiting him one time when I saw the Scandinavian students do a presentation on Saint Lucia.

They were dressed in white and had crowns in which were mounted real lighted candles, and they sang carrying candles – you can see a similar performance on Youtube if you google Saint Lucia in Sweden. Nowadays apparently the

candles are often battery powered electric ones. Safer, but less impressive. The stories say that Saint Lucy wore candles on her head to leave her hands free for carrying bread to the poor.

We don't know very much about Lucy of Syracuse, the origin of this ceremony. She lived in the Fourth Century and died for her faith. Her name Lucy, or Lucia, means light – hence the candles. At this dark time of year (according to the old calendar December 13th was the winter solstice – the shortest day of the year) there are many practices across several religions which encourage us to conjure up light in the darkness and look forward to the post solstice lengthening of days. This doesn't work if you live south of the equator of course – culturally, it is a bit hemispherist, to invent a word. Hanukkah in the Jewish religion is the Feast of Lights, celebrated this year on December 7th to 15th with the nightly lighting of candles and special prayers. The word Hanukkah means dedication. Diwali is another festival of light, celebrated by Hindus, Jains and Sikhs. During Diwali, people wear their best clothes, light up their homes with special lamps, and put coloured lights in their windows to show that they are celebrating. You will have heard fireworks too. Bonfire night in November may have a lot to do with the attempt to use firecrackers to hold the increasing darkness at bay, as well as the story of Guy Fawkes.

As Christians, we light Advent candles and read about Jesus as the Light of the World. The Christmas trees we bring into our homes remind us of the evergreen-ness of our faith, and we decorate them with lights. I remember as a child having real candles on our little tree – I can visualise the cheap tin holders now, surely as much of a fire risk as wearing candles in your hair! I'm sure we never left them burning unless we were in the room.

Many stories have grown up about St Lucy, perhaps because we know so little about her. One legend tells how at a time of severe famine in Sweden on the darkest day of the year people saw a boat crossing Lake Vannern. In the prow of the boat stood St Lucy dressed in white and glowing with a strange light. Coming to shore she handed out sacks of grain so that people had bread all through the winter.



Alison Thorne

Christmas

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
The Tortoise stove is lit again.
And lamp-oil light across the night
Has caught the streaks of winter rain.
In many a stained-glass window sheen
From Crimson Lake to Hookers Green.

The holly in the windy hedge
And round the Manor House the yew
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,
The altar, font and arch and pew,
So that the villagers can say
The church looks nice on Christmas Day.

Provincial Public Houses blaze,
Corporation tramcars clang,
On lighted tenements I gaze,
Where paper decorations hang,
And bunting in the red Town Hall
Says Merry Christmas to you all.

And London shops on Christmas Eve
Are strung with silver bells and flowers.
As hurrying clerks, the City leave
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,
And marbled clouds go scudding by
The many-steepled London sky.

And girls in slacks remember Dad,
And oafish louts remember Mum,
And sleepless children's hearts are glad.
And Christmas-morning bells say Come!
Even to shining ones who dwell
Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.

And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissue fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

Sir John Betjeman. c/o Alison Thorne

My Church Experience in South Africa and Zimbabwe

I was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and as a child I attended Sunday School at our mainstream church, went home to have breakfast then with my older siblings, we would go to another Sunday School that was attended under a tree run by women whose aim was to keep children off the streets.

At this 'under the tree' Sunday School, we were taught scriptures from the Gospels, mostly parables. We sang songs like 'Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong; they are weak, but He is strong. Then the refrain – Yes Jesus loves me. For each attendance at this Sunday School, one would get a sticker which earned them a place for the end of year trip to the zoo or some other outing. If the truth be told, my attendance was not for the teachings but what I could get at the end of the year but somehow the word stuck throughout my childhood.

My family then migrated to Zimbabwe (country of origin) where I attended church because it was expected of us to attend church as a family and I still attended Sunday School. I was drawn more to God when I went to a boarding school for my secondary education at St Augustine's Mission, Penhalonga, Mutare, founded by Bishop Knight Bruce in 1891. In subsequent years the Mission was run by priests of the Community of Resurrection (CR), White nuns from the Order of the Holy Paraclete (OHP) and Black nuns from Chita Che Zita Rinoyera in local language (CZR) or Holy Name Community. Those from Bulawayo (second largest city) caught an overnight train to Harare (the capital city) arriving the following morning and spend the whole day in Harare before catching the overnight train to Mutare. On arrival, there were buses hired by the school to transport us to our destination at the boarding school.

I can relate to some of the ways the services were conducted to how it is done in this country. Procession from the vestry, which was at the back of the church, led by the cross bearer, followed by those holding lighted candles then the clergy. What I enjoyed most during my years at boarding school was Easter. The service was different because it was vibrant. Next was Palm Sunday with the procession involving laying of palm branches along the way to the church and this did not only involve students, teachers, priests and nuns but locals from the surrounding villages. I recall when we would stand at attention at the ringing of the church bell for the Angelus three times a day and the Evensong on Saturdays. I was also in the church choir during Sister Shelly's tenure. During the school holidays back home, I was in the St Agnes Guild (a guild of young girls in the Anglican Church) and on Saturdays we helped the Mother's Union to clean the church which coincidentally is called St Andrew's.

I joined the Mother's Union as an adult at St Francis Church, Waterfalls Harare, where amongst other things, we undertook pastoral work of visiting the sick in their homes or in hospital and donating material things to those who were struggling. I was also secretary to the PCC which entailed travelling with the priest and chairperson of the PCC to a sister church when they were having their meetings.

Sheila Mpofo

Featured Interview: Chris Baker

Where were you born?

I was born in Avenue Road in Handsworth and have lived within walking distance of the house where I was born all of my life.

What has been your life journey so far regarding work and family life?

I have 2 sisters one older than me and one younger than me .On December 14th 1969 my brother in law introduced me to Les Baker and little did I know that 54 years later we would still be together we celebrated our Golden Wedding Anniversary in 2022.We have 2 daughters Sally and Tracey and 2 wonderful grandsons Bodhi and Kyen who are 8 and 6 and who have brought so much love into our lives over these last few years.

I went to Rookery Road School until I was 11 and then to Hodge Hill Girls Grammar School until I was 16 after which I went to Garrison Lane Training College to train as a Nursery Nurse. I did my practical training at Soho Road Day Nursery and Brearley Street Nursery School and worked in a school and nursery until 1973 when I gave up work to have my children I returned to work at St. Augustine's Primary School in Avenue Road in 1983 where I worked as a Classroom Assistant until I retired in 2011.

What are your hobbies or special interests?

I love to read and watch football and have been a Birmingham City season ticket holder for many years following them through the good times and the bad but as our song says we must Keep Right On To The End of the Road which is what I will do.

How long have you been a member of St Andrew's Church?

I have been a member of St. Andrew's church all of my life as I was baptised here when I was a baby and went to Sunday School there until I was 12 then I stopped going to church for a while however Les and I were married there in 1972 and our daughters were both baptised and confirmed there. I returned to St. Andrew's in 1977 when I was confirmed here and I have been going regularly each week since then.

Do you have any special memories of St Andrew's Church?

I have so many special memories of St Andrew's especially the barn dances, the fish chip and bingo suppers, the concerts and of course the memories of my time as a Sunday School Teacher and the Nativity Plays we held in church each year at the carol service and the day trips to the seaside we took the children on.

Do you have a favourite hymn, Bible reading or poem?

There are many hymns I love it is hard to pick a favourite. How Great Thou Art, Guide me oh Thou Great Redeemer, a beautiful version of the 23rd psalm written by Stuart Townend and also a beautiful carol called When Love Shone Down to name a few. The 121st psalm is definitely my favourite psalm though.

Do you have any favourite Saints that have inspired you?

St. Andrew and St. Anthony are the 2 saints I most admire, St. Andrew because of the different people he introduced to Jesus especially his brother Peter who was the rock Jesus built his church on and St. Anthony who I have prayed to for many years when I have lost something special and who on many occasions has helped me to find them.

What developments, if any, would you like to see at St Andrew's?

The one thing I would like to see developed in our church is the Sunday School. I find it really sad that we have not had a Sunday School for a few years now and feel our children who are the future of our church are missing out on so much not being part of a Sunday School and all that means, not least memories of special times shared with friends.

Do you have a favourite place?

Once again it is difficult to choose one favourite place Sandwell Valley, Birchington in Kent, Cornwall, California all have special places in my heart and of course Walsingham such a wonderful place of peace and tranquillity.

What do you enjoy doing most?

I enjoy spending time with my family and friends and of course at my second St Andrew's watching Birmingham City play.

Chris Baker

ST ANDREW'S COFFEE MORNING

Every Thursday from 10am till 12pm in The Good Shepherd Hall. We offer tea and coffee for 60p a mug and toast 20p a slice. We have biscuits each week and sometimes cakes if people bring them in for their birthday. Carole Sami has a table selling her cards and Val Ryder has her table selling various items. It is a friendly occasion where people enjoy having a chat over

More Sayings from Margaret...

Pride goes before a fall.

A new broom sweeps clean.

Strike while the iron is hot.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

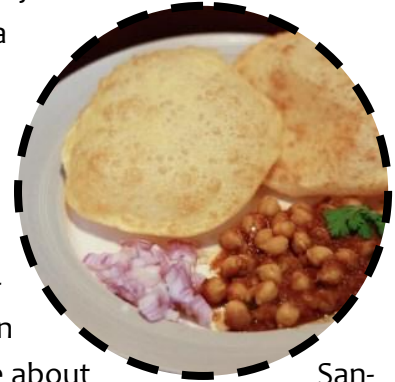
Best thing since sliced bread.

Margaret Wiwczaryk

Why is Christmas important to you?

This was the question asked by my 22-year-old recently when I sent her a message informing her that she was to attend Christmas Day Service and it was non-negotiable.

Christmas has meant different things to me over the years. Growing up in a Sikh family, it was a day where our families got together – just our family (Mum, Dad, my three brothers and I) and my mum’s sister and her husband and four kids. It was a day that meant decorations, Indian celebration food such as bhature choley (fried bread and chick peas curry), tandoori chicken, pakoras, and kebabs made from minced lamb and plenty of spices.



When I left home and eventually had my daughter, I no longer celebrated Christmas on the grounds that it wasn’t an Indian tradition or festival. And when Asha learnt about Christmas at school, more about Santa, the parties, the food and dressing up, I put my foot down and told her that Christmas was about the birth of Jesus and as we weren’t Christians, we weren’t going to celebrate it. I don’t think she minded because (1) she did all the fun things at school anyway; and (2) ultimately her birthday was New Years Day so there was always enough excitement in the run up to her birthday celebrations.

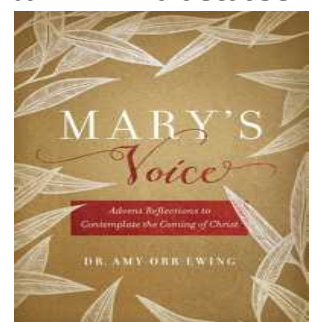


Things changed when we moved to Birmingham and started our lives as part of the Christian community ... and Asha being older and a little wily, started suggesting we should get a tiny, cute Christmas tree and pretty lights... But this was at odds with a lot of Indian and conservative Christians who insisted that Christmas trees and decorations weren’t biblical. I did my due diligence and decided what was important to me and agreed to disagree. As I told a friend recently, I have decorations be-

cause they give me joy and as it turns out my neighbours! Our family Christmas tradition is to have different themes: sometimes we dress and eat Indian food, other times we make Italian for our Christmas meal or an English roast dinner. This year it’s Mexican!

However, as I walk on this journey with Christ, Christmas has become an important time for reflection. I try to read an Advent devotional each year. This year I am reading, *Mary’s Voice* – a beautiful book focusing on Mary’s words and thoughts, and it includes background information on many famous paintings of Mary. And, for the first time ever, I have been lighting an advent calendar. Of course, on day one, I forgot I had to blow it out and the next thing I knew I was on day 10 already!! Back to Asha’s question – why is it important to me? Because Christ is centre in my life. The food, the decorations, the presents all come second to Him. And because he is important to me, then I want to share this part of my life with my daughter even if it means she has to get up at 0800!

Rupinder Kanda



Pondering with Mary

A reflection on Quiet Day – Saturday 2nd October 2023

I think it is fair to say meditation is an art, or a muscle that one has to train. I am not good at doing sitting and being still so I am hoping that Fr Paskal will continue to teach us!

The day's theme focused on the multiple visits centred around the nativity and in general Mary's reaction where she pondered, reflected, and contemplated the events and words said to her. Luke's gospel is wonderful in the way he captures her very real and inspiring character, making us to pause and think: do we first react and think afterwards or do we sit with God to understand what is happening. Thinking about what contemplation meant personally to me, I was inspired by the following verse, from Psalm 143: 5-6 (NIVUK)

*I remember the days of old.
I meditate on all your works.
And consider what your hands have done.*

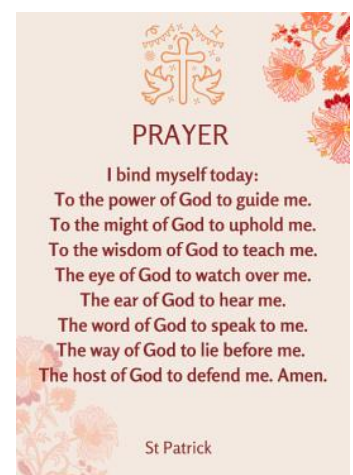
Although it was meant to be a "quiet" day, I ended up having a meaningful conversation with the vicar of St James about what it means to wait for God, which we both agreed was an active posture of prayer, not a passive one of doing nothing. We discussed God's calling and timing, his giftings that he has given us, and just because we may have the passion or skills to do something, that may not mean that is what God wants us to do. It was a timely spiritual discipleship moment.

The afternoon session, I focused on some of the readings from Luke and I was captivated by the phrase: *You have found favour with God* (Luke 1:30). Being favoured by God is more than just doing things right so that God blesses us. It encapsulates our belief that we are saved by grace and faith in Jesus. It doesn't mean that we won't have difficulties in this life (look at Noah, Moses, Daniel, and Mary), but we can be confident that we have God's ear even when we walk through dark valleys and when we weep through the night.

When Jesus said, *I am with you always*, we can be confident that we are not alone. Being favoured means we can look above our troubles, knowing that we have eternal hope in Christ where there will be neither death nor sorrow nor crying nor pain.

Rupinder Kanda.

Prayer for 2024



Lighting of the Third Advent Candle at St Andrew's and Christingle Service,
17 December 2023



Christingle

CANDLE
Jesus - he shows us what God is like

ORANGE
the world

4 COCKTAIL STICKS
4 corners of the world

RED TAPE
God's love for the world

SWEETS
the good gifts God gives us

<https://lucyathome.co.uk>

A diagram of a Christingle. It shows an orange with a red band around its middle. A yellow candle is stuck in the top. Four cocktail sticks are stuck into the orange, each with a different colored sweet (pink, yellow, green, blue). A small green star is on the top of the orange.

**Holly in Good Shepherd
Garden**

St Andrew's Sports & Community Centre



St Andrew's Sports & Community Centre is located on the corner of College Road. It is owned and managed by St Andrew's Church and is used for public activities and other church groups. The Centre is probably best known for the outdoor service that takes place on Good Friday every year.

If you wish to hire a room in the Centre for a private function, please contact **John Emmins, Church Halls Administration. Tel number - 07486 377719 or Email - enquiriesstandrewsacc@gmail.com**

These are the public activities that currently take place at the Centre.

Tuesday 10:00 - 13:00 Saheli Hub Crafts

Tuesday 10:00 - 12:00 Home Start Family Support Group

Wednesday 17:30 - 20:30 & Saturday 14:00 - 15:00 - Temple Martial Arts

Thursday - Move for life 11:30 - 12:30 Exercise Class

Saturday 09:00 - 13:00 - Little Kickers

Please note that none of these groups/activities are run by the church.

**JOIN IN WITH OUR CHURCH SERVICES AT
ST ANDREW'S**

Our Sunday Services are as follows:-

Sunday - 10.00 am service with Holy Communion.

These Services include

FAMILY MASS EVERY: SECOND SUNDAY 10.00AM



HEALING SERVICE EVERY: THIRD SUNDAY 10.00AM



Thursday Service 10.00 am in Church with Holy Communion

We are licensed caring, hardworking and compassionate professionals who care for the elderly with

- ◆ **Complex needs**
- ◆ **Serious illness**

Personal Care

- ◆ **Dementia**
- ◆ **Disability**

We offer a friendly hand

- ◆ **Friendly companionship to alleviate loneliness**
- ◆ **Support with shopping**

Support with activities



Contact us.

@www.qualitylivingcare.co.uk

Tel: 07737273115 /

07852252480 / 01215512072

Guy Donegan-Cross, Enabler of Learning for Discipleship and Mission for Birmingham Church of England has sent the following information.



Way of Discipleship

**January 2024:
Way of
Discipleship
online.
"Becoming like Christ"**



**Becoming like Christ is a six
week course on Zoom covering:**

who Jesus is and what He came to do through His life, death, resurrection and ascension. How we change and the kind of practices that grow Christlike self-giving love in us. How God sees and uses the difficult times in our lives.

Dates:

Monday evenings, 7-9.15pm
8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th January, 5th and
12th February.

Booking form:

<https://www.cognitofirms.com/Cofebirmingham/CopyOfWayOfDiscipleshipBookingForm202223>

Or contact guydc@cofebirmingham.com

**"This is undoubtedly one of
the highlights of my week at
the moment.
I find the format very helpful
as it includes listening,
talking to others and
personal reflection."**

Wordsearch. December 2023

The story of 'Silent Night'

This much-loved carol comes from Austria, where it was first sung as *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht* on Christmas Eve, 1818. It was written by Father Joseph Mohr, a young priest at St Nicholas parish church, in the village of Oberndorf bei Salzburg. As Christmas 1818 approached, he asked the local schoolmaster, Franz Xaver Gruber, to compose a melody for his carol. Gruber was organist in the nearby village of Arnsdorf, and so was happy to oblige. On Christmas Eve they presented the carol to the church during the midnight mass. The carol went on to become loved world-wide; and the version sung by Bing Crosby is the third best-selling single of all time. **c/o Parish Pump**



Silent Night Loved
Carol Austria First
Sung Stille Nacht
Heilige Christmas Eve
Father Joseph Mohr
Young Priest Organist
Midnight Mass Melody
Single Bing Version
Third

Wordsearch. January 2024. Wise Men and St Paul meet Jesus.

The Wise Men and St Paul were both on trips when they first encountered Jesus, but how different those trips were! The Wise Men, whom we remember on Epiphany (6th Jan) were seeking the One for whom the Star shone and came to Bethlehem to worship him. St Paul, whose conversion we remember this month (26th Jan), was on his way to Damascus, seeking to kill those who worshipped Jesus. When the Wise Men encountered the Baby Jesus, they worshipped Him and gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. When St Paul, the proud, fanatical Pharisee, encountered Jesus, he fell blinded on the road, and then worshipped Him by giving Him the rest of his life. St Paul endured years of suffering and hardships in his work as the great apostle to the Gentiles. His mighty faith in Christ has kindled similar belief in many hundreds of millions of people down the centuries. **c/o Parish Pump**



- | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|---------|
| Wise | Men | Trips | |
| Paul | Encounter | Jesus | |
| Different | Epiphany | Star | |
| Shone | Bethlehem | Conversion | |
| Seeking | Kill | Baby | |
| Gifts | Gold | Proud | |
| Blinded | Road | Suffering | Apostle |

