

CROSSKEYS



The magazine for the Catholic Parish of St Peter and the Winchester Martyrs

God is with Us – Everything will be alright (Christmas Eve)

Father Mark Hogan looks back to his childhood and forwards to a joyful season full of hope

I remember the excitement I had as a child, for Christmas night more than any other. The passage of time from my birthday in mid-November until Christmas Day seemed to move at the pace of a distracted slug. And then it seemed as if the clock had stopped completely.

I would wake up about every half hour (or more?) from 3am, asking if it were ok to go downstairs and check if anything had appeared under the tree. As I got older, that excitement shifted and I looked forward to the wonder and beauty of midnight mass – mass at midnight! Wow! This must be a special day!

I don't know about you but as a child I couldn't wait for Christmas to come. Christmas was never close enough or soon enough. You wait and you wait and you wait and you wait and you hold on and you hold on and you hold on and you hope for Christmas...This childlike attitude corresponds perfectly to what all of this is really all about.

Fundamentally, Christmas is a season of hope. That is what many of us experienced as children...and that is exactly what we can easily miss out as adults in our busyness or even that cynicism that

all too often creeps into a bah humbug, 'get it over with' attitude. And perhaps this year more than any other, the burdens and the weight of the season and life itself seem heavier than ever and we need hope more now than anything else before.

In the Christian faith, hope is one of the most important character qualities or virtues of all. Christmas is about hope and growing our ability to have and to hold on, to live with hope.

Hope:

- doesn't mean wishful thinking but is based in reality.
- requires confidence.
- engages the heart and requires desire for something more.
- is about action.

Christianity is a religion of hope. It understands that we are not there yet. We haven't achieved all that God has in mind for us. In fact Christianity has nothing to say to the person who is completely satisfied with the way things are. That said, if you are completely satisfied with the way everything is right now, for you personally, for your family, for your community, for your country, for your world, then I do wonder what you've been up to in 2020...

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Welcome to Fr Anthony



Fr Anthony, who comes from Bamenda in the Cameroon, joined the parish in September. Find out more on page 3.

Peaceful Christmas and a healthy new year

Acceptance is our story in Christ

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Jesus' teaching is for people who desire more, who are confident that there is more, who act like there is more.

Of course, hope has many obstacles and enemies such as despair or indifference. Both shut us out from the sweet spot where we can most effectively and productively be living our lives. Hope is that sweet spot.

Imagine if you met a child who had stopped hoping for Christmas. How sad would that be? Imagine if that child were your child...that would be heart-breaking. Well, it breaks your heavenly Father's heart when his children stop hoping for the good things he's got it store for us. It breaks God's heart when we live without hope. And that's why 2,000 years ago at the first Christmas, God decided to do something about it.

And he begins in the middle of nowhere, in a tiny, seemingly insignificant village, and sends an angel to a man who must be questioning his hopes.

Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Who knows what hopes Joseph had for his life with Mary? Who knows what he must have been thinking when she said that the child within her had been conceived by the Holy Spirit. It does seem, though, that his world had been turned upside down and that his hopes for their future together had been thwarted. They had hit a brick wall. There was no way forward.

Her husband Joseph; being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when...divorce had seemed like the only option. He was 'a man of honour' and so wanted to cause the least amount of fuss but this was the end. He had made up his mind. But then...the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

The angel confirmed that what Mary had said was true: "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is

in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins."

The impossible had become possible; fear had been turned into courage and despair into hope. This wasn't wishful thinking. This wasn't pie in the sky. Joseph was now able to desire more, to have confidence that there was more, to act like there was more, more than he possibly ever could have dreamt or imagined. Mary wasn't just carrying a child, she was carrying God's saviour.

Matthew, the Evangelist, adds a note of commentary: "Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us.'"

Joseph now knew a new truth: God-is-with-us and everything will be alright.

Joseph knew this truth in his head and his heart. He was able to stride out into the future with hope and confidence knowing that God was with him, God was with Mary, and that everything would be ok.

When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do.

Some of you reading this, if you are honest, struggle to believe that this message is for you, that you're part of that 'us' with whom God is, that God really came for you. Maybe you think since you aren't a church person or have never been a very religious person then God didn't come for you. Or maybe you've messed up at some point, or done something you weren't particularly proud of, or maybe you've just drifted away from the idea of God. You just figure there is nothing much you can do about that, and God has given up on you.

Joseph needed to hear this great message of hope addressed to him personally, and then he had to respond, he had to get involved, he had to do what the angel of the Lord had told him to do.

Whoever you are, whatever stage or station or season of life you're in, God designed each of us to want and need ac-

ceptance. God designed us this way so that ultimately we'll be attracted to him, and seek his acceptance. And find it in Christ. **Whoever you are and whatever you do, or have done, God accepts you in Christ. And you don't have to change, or clean up your act, or jump through hoops to enjoy that status, you already do. Of course, like Joseph you have your part to play. You can't just passively receive the message of hope; you've got to activate it.** Joseph did what he needed to do and Mary "gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus."

We need to do what we need to do and we're invited to make our approach to Jesus in prayer, and you can start right now.

- Prayer is our school of hope.
- Prayer is where we can speak from our hearts to the child Jesus; where we can hold him and receive his smile and his love.
- Prayer is where we build confidence, develop desire and resolve to act like we really do believe we are accepted in Christ, that our hope is in him and that:

God-is-with-us - everything will be alright.

We are Acceptional is a new group for supporting the faith formation of people with additional needs within the diocese. This group supports the Catechesis of people with additional needs enabling them to fulfil the role given them to be members of the Body of Christ.

This includes people with additional needs themselves but will also allow catechists to explore their role in the catechesis of people with additional needs.

Support and resources will be centrally accessible while providing a confidential space to learn and develop skills while forming communities of practice.

The group is coordinated by Jeremy LeLean Sr. Carino Hodder, and Jo Donaldson. If you are interested in joining the group or would like to know more you can contact it via email: acceptional@portsmouthdiocese.org

Stars: Symbolise the star of Bethlehem which guided the wise men to the baby Jesus.

Introducing Fr Anthony Chiatu

Fr Anthony Chiatu describes his family background in the Cameroon

I was born in Njinikom, a few kilometres from Bamenda town, to very devout catholic parents, my dad a catechist and my mum a matron to a Marian group.

I am the ninth child of 11 children, all of whom are still alive and share a very close bond.

It is important to note, almost immediately, that St Anthony's parish Njinikom, is the mother parish of the Archdiocese of Bamenda, the sister diocese of Portsmouth diocese.

It was in the womb of this parish that I learned to serve mass, assist my father in his duties as catechist, like ringing the church bell in the morning; opening and closing the doors of the church in the morning and evening of each day respectively; preparing the church for mass, act as translator (from English to my dialect) during homilies.

It was also in this parish school that I did my primary education. Later, I moved to St Paul's comprehensive catholic college Bamenda, for my secondary education.

Soon after my secondary education, although with lots of challenges, I decided,

with the help of God, to answer the Lord's calling to the priesthood.

I was accepted by my bishop to begin my journey to the priesthood in 2006. This journey ended with my ordination on 30 March 2016, in the St Joseph Metropolitan Cathedral, Bamenda.

Since ordination, I have served in five parishes as curate and manager of primary schools and as principal of a catholic secondary school in my diocese. In 2019/2020, my bishop asked me to do a masters in education in Southampton University.

When I arrived in the UK the Bishop of Portsmouth asked me to join the team of priests working in the St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth. I am grateful for all the beautiful experiences I had working at the cathedral and studying in Southampton University.

At the end of my studies, the bishop assigned me to the parish of St Peter's and the Winchester Martyrs. So far it has been a great experience working with a very supportive team of clergy and Christ's faithful.

I look forward to having a great time serving in this parish. Although I am still working on my list of hobbies, I like playing football and growing my own vegetables.



Fr Anthony in traditional costume.

Advent and Christmas mass times. Book online or phone 01962 852804

Fri 18 Dec: Night of Lights (St Peter's, 5pm - 8pm)

Sat 19 Dec: 10am – midday Sacrament of Reconciliation - individual confession (St Peter's & St Gregory's)

Mon 21 Dec: 10:30am 'Blue Christmas Service' (St Peter's and livestream.)

Mon 21 Dec: 7pm Advent Mass of Reconciliation (St. Peter's and livestream.)

Tue 22 Dec: 4pm Zoom Nativity/Carol Service for families

Thu 24 Dec Christmas Eve: 4pm St Gregory's; St Stephen's (families only); St Peter's (families only, fully booked); 5pm St Thomas More (fully booked); 6pm St Gregory's (fully booked) St Peter's (Livestream only); 8pm St Stephen's; St. Peter's (if we have sufficient welcomers/stewards); 10pm St Stephen's; St Peter's (fully booked); Midnight St Peter's (livestream only)

Fri 25 Dec Christmas Day: 8am St Stephen's; St Peter's (if we have sufficient welcomers/stewards); 9am St Thomas More (fully booked); St Gregory's; 10am St Stephen's; St Peter's (fully booked); 11am St Gregory's; Midday St Stephen's; St Peter's (if we have sufficient welcomers/stewards); 6pm St Peter's (no booking; first come, first served)

Sat 26 Dec St Stephen's Day: 10am St Stephen's (no booking; first come, first served); 3:30pm St Stephen's (no booking; first come, first served); 5:30pm St Peter's

Sun 27 Dec Holy family: 8am St Peter's; 9am St Thomas More; 9:15am St Stephen's; 10am St Peter's (livestream only); 11am St Gregory's; Midday St Peter's; 5:30pm St Peter's

Mon 28 Dec Holy Innocents: 12:15pm St Peter's (no booking; first come, first served); 7pm St Peter's (no booking; first come, first served)

Tues 29 Dec St Thomas Becket: 10am St Peter's (no booking; first come, first served); 7pm St Peter's (no booking; first come, first served)

Wed 30 Dec 6th Day within the Octave of Christmas: 10am St Peter's (no booking; first come, first served); 7pm St Peter's (no booking; first come, first served)

Thu 31 Dec 7th Day within the Octave of Christmas (New Year's Eve): 10am St Peter's (no booking; first come, first served); 7pm St Peter's (no booking; first come, first served)

Fri 1 Jan Mary, Mother of God (New Year's Day): 10am St Peter's (no booking; first come, first served)

Nuts: Nuts according to St Anthony of Padua are symbols of repentance.

Keeping connected during lockdown

Marion Sharpe shares feedback on the PeterCares initiative

By now many, if not most, parishioners will have heard about PeterCares, a parish initiative set up in March 2020 as a simple befriending project offering support by linking volunteer parishioner telephone callers with fellow parishioners.

The support provided includes a friendly chat, continued connection with the parish, information about our virtual church, practical help where requested, and a conduit for prayer requests.

Our PeterCares call team is made up of parish volunteers who have satisfied diocese guidelines and training on safeguarding. Callers are supported by experienced supervisors.

When PeterCares was started I don't think anyone envisaged how long we would be coping with the restrictions necessary to keep our parish community safe and the resultant impact on everyday life. As I write this update we are part way through another period of lockdown so our churches cannot open for public worship and our contacts with family and friends are restricted once more.

We know that many parishioners are still appreciative of a friendly call every week or so with a fellow parishioner. We asked a sample of parishioners who had received a call what they felt they had gained from contact with PeterCares. Here are some of the comments from their responses:

'Nice to feel linked to St Peter's.'

'It was great to know they are there for all those needing support.'

'Some much-appreciated very interesting and caring conversations from someone I have never met.'

'I enjoy (the fact that) someone calls. It is nice to talk to someone even for just 10 minutes.'

'It is good to know there's someone there for you.'

'A reassurance that there is someone to listen and a connection to the church still.'

'Feeling of warmth and appreciate the calls.'

'I live alone and have had to shield for the past six months, having a chat with a PeterCarer is something I have enjoyed very much. Except for calls from my family, I can go weeks without talking to anyone in person.'

We also asked our team of callers about their experience in making calls. They have given us feedback which will be useful in determining how PeterCares develops in the future. Here are some of the comments from callers:

'The people I called were very grateful for the contact and support. One mentioned how welcome it made her feel.'

'The safeguarding modules were extremely useful and relevant. The intro-

ductory discussion with a supervisor was most helpful.'

'Some people need this continuation and there are always people in the parish who need someone to talk to.'

'I feel it's been a really vital link with people physically isolated (shielding) with an outreach arm between them and the parish. People I called were massively grateful of it. May it continue to encourage people.'

'I feel I am doing something positive and helping someone else but at the same time I get something back in return – a pick me up.'

'I look forward to making the calls and I find them very rewarding.'

In future we hope to maintain contact with parishioners who welcome a regular PeterCares call while working alongside other parish ministries.

We are aware that there may be parishioners who have not yet received a call but would appreciate one. Also, there may be parishioners who decided earlier in the year that they did not want further calls but would now like to resume calls.

If either of these situations applies please: Phone the parish office and leave your name and contact number on the answering machine (Tel:01962 852804); or email petercares@stpeterswinchester.org.uk with your name and contact number.

First Communion reflection and prayer

On the day of my FHC, I felt nervous about the whole process. I didn't know much about receiving the host earlier, but Fr Mark had explained it so well to me and all the other children – I knew what I was going to do when going to the altar. When we arrived at the Mass, we had a warm welcome and I was happy to see my teacher there.

I was also happy that the Mass was livestreamed, so that even my grandparents abroad could join us and watch me, during these times.

The preparation for this special day was very helpful! I learnt so much in so little time. It was very different when Covid-19 was happening, as the classes were not very often and were on Zoom. Each Catechism class ended with a prayer, too.

Now I feel one with God, connected and close to him. I feel I have some of him in me, as I ate the host. I loved receiving God during my First Holy Communion.

By Aiyanna Stansbie, Age 11

*Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to me.
You're such a special friend to me.
Make me strong to show your love wherever I may be.
Please be near me, close by me forever, I pray.
I'm ready, with your helpful grace, to show how much
I care, at home and everywhere.
We give you great thanks for your great glory.
You have a limitless love for us.
Keep us free from sin in thought, word and deed,
grounded in faith, with love for God and neighbour.
May I receive your virtues and goodness, and continue
to receive you throughout my life.
Let me come to you always for comfort, guidance and
wisdom.
Let everything I do be inspired by your love, goodness,
mercy, joy and peace.
May I attain a final peaceful union with You, at the
end. Amen Prayer by Aiyanna's mother.*

Mangers: The Bethlehem manger was the first tabernacle. It held the Body of our Lord.

Following a path to financial happiness

Piotr Nahajski describes the work of the parish finance and property advisory committee

"My other piece of advice, Copperfield," said Mr Micawber, 'you know. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds nought and six, result misery. The blossom is blighted, the leaf is withered, the god of day goes down upon the dreary scene, and in short you are for ever floored.'" **David Copperfield**, Charles Dickens (1850)

Mr Micawber offers useful advice for anyone, but especially those of us who sit on the parish finance and property advisory committee. There are seven of us in total, including Fr Mark, Deacon Gerard and the parish's finance manager Annette Parr. Our number includes members with professional backgrounds in management, accountancy and construction. For the last year I have served as the committee's chairman.

As the title suggests we are there to offer advice to Fr Mark on all matters related to property and finance. Our parish has more complex parish finances than most as we have responsibility for four churches and related pastoral buildings, and a portfolio of investment properties. Many of the buildings are older and require regular maintenance to keep them in a serviceable condition.

The committee's work ranges from the strategic to the practical. At the practical end, we help to pull together the annual parish budget to support the direction set by Fr Mark and the Parish's Evangelisation Strategy Group; we meet quarterly to review actual parish income and expenditure and variations from budget; we review and help prioritise maintenance activities; and we liaise closely with the diocese on property and financial matters including annual financial returns. At the strategic level we consider a longer-range financial plan for the next five years and seek to ensure that we are using our resources effectively to support our core mission: "Bringing people closer to Jesus Christ in hope and joy".

Covid impact on parish finances and investment in core mission



The Covid pandemic has put a strain on very many church communities. We too have been affected but compared to many we are blessed to have a relatively resilient financial income. Many parishioners make their donations by standing order or direct debit and have continued their giving even through the lockdowns. Others have gone out of their way to continue their giving via the envelope scheme, through the online giving facility and with cash donations. I can not emphasise how important and helpful your continued financial support has been to the parish and on behalf of Fr Mark and everyone in the parish I would like to record our sincere appreciation. We literally couldn't do it without you – so thank you.

Our property-related income has, unfortunately, been impacted during the pandemic, but overall it has continued to make a valuable contribution to our income.

At the same time Fr Mark has been making investments in pursuing our core mission of bringing people closer to Jesus Christ. We have run several Alpha courses and attended courses and events to learn more about the Divine Renovation (DR) key principles for re-energising parish communities.

In January we welcomed Allegra Mutanda as our new director of evangelisation, and she has already made a huge contribution to the life of the parish.

While making this investment we have managed to run a balanced budget for the last two years (with modest surpluses) and plan to deliver a small surplus again for the current financial year. Operating costs decreased in line with reduced income; the government's furlough scheme has been helpful from a financial perspective and we also postponed some building maintenance that was scheduled to be carried out during the spring lockdown.

For anyone who is interested in more details about our finances the latest financial report is available on the parish website www.catholicwinchester.org.uk/aboutus. We have tried hard to make this report informative so please do have a look. The parish financial report for 2019/20 is expected to be available early in the new year.

Looking Ahead

Go make yourself a plan; And be a shining light; Then make yourself a second plan; For neither will come right. '.....Bertolt Brecht



Part of our job is to try to think and plan further ahead – even if we must do so with the humility to understand that things might not turn out exactly as we had expected. We anticipate making further investment in people to support our core mission with hopes to hire a director of worship. We know that there is major work to be done to maintain our investment properties – particularly at 8 and 9 St Peter Street – to protect our rental income.

We also hope to be able to make funds available for a redecoration of St Peter's church in time for its centenary in 2027. We hope to be able to continue on the path of renovation – the physical renovation of our church buildings and other properties but, even more importantly,

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Bells: Bells are rung to announce the arrival of the season and to proclaim the birth of Jesus.

Author to address history society

Valerie Oxenham looks ahead to a more promising future

The Winchester Catholic History Society celebrates its silver jubilee in 2021. It was founded in 1996 to encourage interest in Catholic, local and English history. The society has grown considerably since its inception and has speakers on wide-ranging historical topics without losing its core values.

This special occasion is being celebrated on Wednesday, 7 July, 2021 at Winchester College, with the kind permission of Dr Tim Hands. The Winchester College Caterers have been booked for drinks and canapés.

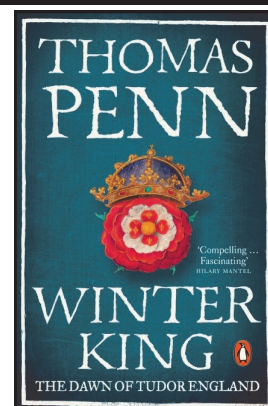
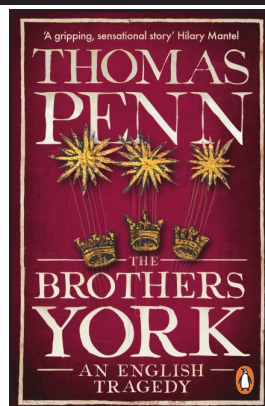
The speaker for the evening is Thomas Penn, the English historian, author and the editorial director of Penguin Press UK. He obtained his PhD in Medieval History from Clare College, Cambridge.

Thomas Penn's first book, *The Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England*, was published in 2011. This enthralling account of the life of Henry VII, the first Tudor King, won the HW Fisher Prize and was named book of the year in nine different publications.

On 7 July Thomas is speaking on his latest book, *The Brothers York: A Royal Tragedy*. This book throws new light on a dynasty that could have been as powerful as the following Tudors had it not destroyed itself, within a single generation, in a catastrophic maelstrom of rebellion, vendetta, treachery and regicide.



Entrance to Winchester College below a statue of Mary and Jesus.



Thomas Penn and the covers of two of his books.

The sheer savagery of the Wars of the Roses that began with the overthrow and murder of the anointed King, Richard II in 1400, to the death of Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, was a time of civil war of unparalleled violence between two royal houses. The three York brothers, Edward IV, George Duke of Clarence and Richard III, with all their talent, brutality and ambition are brought vividly to life. This book is not for the faint hearted.

On a lighter note, Thomas is a keen and enthusiastic cricketer and played for the Authors XI, which is composed of British writers. He also wrote a chapter for the team's book, *The Authors XI: A Season of English Cricket from Hackney to Hambledon*.

The society's honorary president, Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch, one of the world's leading religious historians, will be with us on this special occasion. Diarmaid has just retired from St Cross College, Oxford, and is now at Campion Hall. The society is grateful to Diarmaid for all his support and help.

2020 has been a difficult and challenging year for everyone. The society is hopeful that over the next two years many of the postponed and cancelled talks can be integrated in to the programme. The first three lectures of 2021 – Geraldine Buchanan speaking on Wellington to Winchester, Dr John Crook of Winchester Cathedral and Professor Andrew Bradstock's talk on *Batting for the Poor*: Bishop David Sheppard, will be on Zoom. If the situation improves, it is hoped there can be live talks from April, even if they have to run twice in the day because of possible social distancing

regulations. But who knows!

On Wednesday 12 May there is a talk for the first time on 20th century history. Rear Admiral Mike Gretton, a parishioner of St Peter's, is speaking on the Battle of the Atlantic, a subject and time still within living memory. In June the society welcomes back Dr Giles Mercer to talk on St Thomas More.

Bishop Christopher Herbert's lecture on Hans Holbein and the Reformation, originally booked for November, has provoked much interest and many enquiries for tickets, so that will be rescheduled for the summer of 2021.

Looking ahead to the autumn of 2021 the society has booked Jonathan Phillips, professor of crusading history of Royal Holloway College, University of London, to speak on Saladin and the Sacking of Jerusalem. He is the author of numerous books on the Crusades and has appeared on many television and radio programmes including CNN in the USA. Jonathan is also co-editor of the academic journal *Crusades*.

The society's trips and tours have always been popular and are an important part of the year. There are going to be complimentary guided walks of historic Winchester for members in the spring. It is hoped that the postponed tour of the remaining Wren churches in the City of London can be rescheduled for May. This was a complete sell out and there was a waiting list for tickets.

The Winchester Catholic History Society is still very much alive and flourishing, if quiet at the moment! <https://www.winchestercatholichistorysociety.com>

Candles: The Christmas candle reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world.

Harvest festival and a trolley of plenty

St Peter's School head teacher **Louise Buxton** describes this year's harvest festival celebrations

"And he said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few'. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." Luke 10:2

For us, harvest is a time of celebration, thanking God for all he has given us. It is also a time to consider those who have less than we do, and how we can share what we have.

Our harvest celebrations were held in school in October. We were supporting the Nightshelter, so we asked our children to bring in a food donation, as we usually do ... but with one difference...in order to be Covid safe we collected the gifts in our 'Trolley of Plenty' passing from class door to class door so the children could place their gifts into the trolley. The food was then quarantined for a few days before being collected by the Nightshelter. As always St Peter's families were very generous in their donations – thank you.

'The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed...' Mark 4:30

Just as the 'Trolley of Plenty' was a first, so was the fact we couldn't hold a whole school harvest festival liturgy. So the whole school was hearing the same Gospel message as Miss Buxton wrote a liturgy that was sent to all the year group bubbles. The liturgy was based on the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

We began with a few 'Mustard Fun Facts', such as did you know:

- Mustard is one of the world's most ancient spices and oldest known condiment?
- Mustard was known for its medicinal purposes before its culinary uses. It was first mentioned as a cure in Greek's Hippocratic writings. In the form of mustard paste it was used for general



Staff and children with the donations to the Rotary shoe box appeal.

muscle relief and to help 'cure' toothaches. It also became known to stimulate appetite and digestion?

- Mustard was so enjoyed by the Romans that when they moved into Gaul (present day France) they took the mustard seed with them?
- Pope John Paul XXII loved mustard so much that in the early 1300s he created a new Vatican position of mustard-maker to the pope 'grand moutardier du pape'?
- Americans use more mustard than any other country in the world?

And then the short but powerful reading:

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

We all reflected on the following:

How has your faith and friendship with Jesus grown this year?

Have you allowed your faith to grow?

Have you helped others get to know Jesus more?

Just as the birds flew to be in the mustard tree for shelter do people want to be with you?

On the Wednesday our Year 6 children – who at present are our Student Council – met virtually with Westacre Nursing Home, Sleepers Hill. It was delightful to see our dear friends at Westacre again on the laptop. We discussed our harvest festival and theirs and the residents were able to share memories of harvest festivals from when they were children.

We then moved onto the topic of travel as we were all looking forward to half-term Well, we were off! Both the residents and students had plenty to discuss about favourite destinations.

Finally to add an element of community fun for ourselves we held a harvest festival for our class prayer tables – a real celebration of harvest and produce.

In the week previous to our harvest festival we enjoyed the harvest in another way. Since lockdown, many of us have been following Logan's Veg Patch on Facebook. Logan held a 'Guess the weight of the pumpkin' to raise money for our PTA. Rory received a £50 cash prize and £346 was raised for our PTA! A big well done and thank you to all who took part.

Following the harvest festival our families continued to be looking out for others by donating to The Rotary Club annual Shoe Box Appeal. The shoeboxes were filled with gifts for Christmas, being shared with children who are not as fortunate as we are. We collected an amazing 67 boxes.

Find out more about our school

To see what is going on at St Peter's School visit our new [website](https://www.stpetershants.co.uk/): <https://www.stpetershants.co.uk/>

Or check out our school **Twitter**: <https://mobile.twitter.com/stpetershants>

Santa Claus: Santa, a corruption of St Nicholas, who went to homes delivering gifts.

Angels and the Christmas story

Parish archivist **John Thornhill** looks back to an event 82 years ago

I love the Christmas crib – the manger with the infant Jesus, the ox and the ass, Mary and Joseph in adoration, the shepherds and lambs, the three kings with their gifts, the star – all squeezed into the stable with, possibly, a solitary angel suspended above.

That lone angel carries a great responsibility, for the Christmas story is full of angels, starting nine months earlier when ‘the angel Gabriel from heaven came, his wings as bright as snow, his eyes aflame’ to Our Lady at the Annunciation. A perturbed Joseph is assured by an angel that all was well, and an angel later warns him to escape to Egypt with mother and child. And, of course, those shepherds in the fields terrified at the appearance of an angel with ‘a great company of the heavenly host’.

Nativities sum it all up, no matter if they are small ones at home, travelling knitted cribs or larger church scenes. Photographs in the archive show the one at St Peter’s in use in the old church before the First World War; the figures being Victorian. Each year, displayed lit on the Sanctuary, they look magnificent but lack an angel, so my eyes turn to the four small angels carved on the reardos behind the altar. They can easily be overlooked among the larger statues of saints, kings, popes and bishops.

At first sight they seem identical but a closer look shows each to be different. However, they all hold up their hands close to their bodies, palms outwards, in the same slightly curious gesture – one that could be taken for alarm or surprise. In fact, it is a version of the ‘orans’, an ancient attitude of prayer. There are examples of this posture in medieval stained glass windows in this country, although its use is considerably older. It can be found in sculptures from ancient Egypt and there are many references in the Old Testament to Jewish people lifting up their hands to God in prayer.

Perhaps the best-known illustrations of early Christian use are the murals in Italian catacombs, where the orans is sometimes shown with arms held wide apart. A similar stance was being used at Mass



An angel displaying a version of the ‘orans’.

by the laity in medieval times. At a church in East Anglia at Corpus Christi in 1431, it is recorded that, “*at the elevation of high masse, all the parishners and other straungers kneled downe holdyng up their handes, and doing reverence unto the sacrament*”.

An echo of this is visible at Mass today where some people hold their arms apart, palms uppermost, like the priest, while reciting the Lord’s Prayer. Who would think such a simple gesture controversial, but it is. There are those who point to the ‘Instruction’ issued by the Vatican in 1997 on the role of the laity at Mass, which excludes the non-ordained from using gestures or actions of the celebrant. (Where

that leaves making the sign of the cross, I’m not sure.) Others believe that the use of the orans is not usurping priestly functions at all, since the Our Father is the community prayer said together by all present – laity and clergy. Perhaps the United States Bishops’ Conference has cut through it in their straightforward statement, ‘no position is prescribed in the Roman Missal for an assembly gesture during the Lord’s Prayer’.

All this liturgical debate is lost on our four little angels who continue to hold up their hands in praise to God, as, no doubt, we hope to in the next life. However, I doubt I should ever be able to look the angel Gabriel in the eye!

Angels: Angels are God’s messengers who proclaimed the news of the Saviour’s birth.

A call to become mat carriers of Jesus

Mike Elks and Mike Slinn outline the Outreach Ministry @ St Peter's and the Winchester Martyrs

'Our VISION is that our parish will be a place where every day: We are bringing people closer to Jesus Christ in hope and joy, so that Jesus can heal our souls and bodies and restore our broken lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.'

Our parish has developed a plan that we have been introducing during the past year. We are setting out a way to grow our parish by moving it forward from **maintenance** to **mission**. Our plan considers five systems that need to be 'healthy' in order that we can do this; Evangelisation, Worship, Christian Community, Discipleship and Ministry.

As part of our parish plan for ministry, we aim to promote, enable and support the growth of Outreach Ministry in our community. We are all called to be mat carriers in our own way, according to our unique circumstances and gifts.

To be a parish of **mat carriers**, we need a VISION and for Outreach Ministry, it is that we can visualise how our VISION comes to life in the picture that is printed on our parish prayer card. It depicts, as Fr Mark has described; 'some men came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them'.

This text from St Mark's Gospel is a personal call to each and every one of us, female and male, young and not so young, to serve; **to be mat carriers** who will bring the poor, the sick and the needy to the feet of Jesus for healing.

"Each and every one of us inspires and encourages each other to recognise Christ in the lost, poor and needy and overcome all obstacles in bringing them to the feet of Christ."

"We are all responding to Jesus' call to serve as he serves and to love as he loves."

"We dream and pray that every moment in our lives will be led by prayers and actions of love and compassion."

"Through dedication to our ministry, we will be able to bring more comfort, hope and joy to those in need – more than we could possibly imagine."



To enable us to realise it, we have set some **key objectives**: –

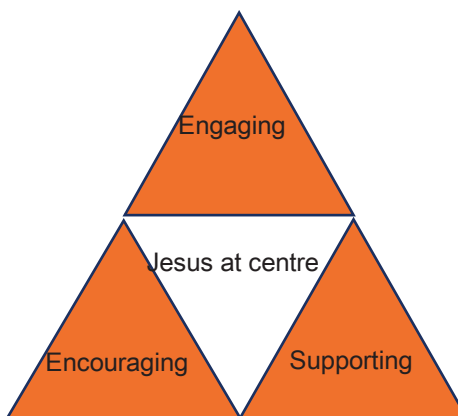
First, we want to become a parish that embraces everyone. We want to encourage a welcoming attitude to everyone we meet not only in church but throughout our daily lives. This welcome leads us to serving the needs of others, – particularly the poor, that is those suffering poverty, illness, loneliness, lacking essential resources or those seeking spiritual or corporal refuge.

And this serving can often be undertaken with other Christian communities. We can show our unity of purpose in together spreading love and care to others in Jesus's name.

Our ministry needs leaders and volunteers and we will offer support for leaders and assistance to volunteers in discerning which ministry of service suits them best.

Finally, our aim is to encourage parishioners to get involved in serving others with a target of 75 per cent involvement in the next four years.

Our model for the Outreach Ministry of service.



At the centre, "Jesus calls us to serve"

and to witness. This message is broadcast across the gospels. Think of the Sermon on the Mount. Think of Matthew chapter 25 where Jesus tells us that when we serve the hungry, the stranger, the sick and those in prison then we are serving Him.

To do this we will want to engage directly with the poor and to encourage volunteers and to provide opportunities for parishioners to serve through prayer and alms giving.

Serving starts with our own family and friends, in our own everyday personal friendships.

We aim to extend to all parishioners the opportunities for continuing this service beyond our families and friends through our existing outreach ministries and through some new ones.

Catholic Social Teaching is a foundation for our Outreach Ministry. It has four key themes...

Solidarity – we consider all communities;

Subsidiarity – as we try to help others, we need to enable them to contribute and we don't make decisions without consulting them;

Discerning – the common good for all people;

Seeking – the preferential option for the poor so that we ensure that anything we do reflects our love for the poor.

As Pope Francis put it in his latest encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* "love builds bridges, and we were made for love."

We have been in touch with many of our ministry group leaders and parish contacts and will be discussing with them how best to move forward in ensuring that our parish outward-looking Ministry of Service expands and becomes an important part of the lives of the majority of our parishioners.

We will shortly have a webpage on our parish website where information on the ministry groups will be available.

If you would like to hear more, please drop Mike Elks and Mike Slinn a note on outreach@stpeterswinchester.org.uk.

Holly: Holly stands for immortality and the red berries remind us of Jesus' blood he shed for us.

Alpha offers a platform to ask questions

Three recent participants on the Alpha courses share their experiences

Rammah's testimony

I grew up in Khartoum, Sudan, Africa, a predominantly Muslim country, and being Catholic was very difficult. It resulted in us (the Christian community) being quite fanatical about religion. We had all sorts of quirky rules and laws, including not being able to pray outside of church in any position other than kneeling which, looking back on it now, was a bit impractical. Over time and through my own circumstances, I became quite sceptical of the Catholic Church and found Catholics, on the whole, to be hypocritical.

All of this was justified of course when Catholics referred to themselves as: 'a church of sinners' – a statement that I interpreted for many years as a blanket and a blatant 'cop out'. A reason for individuals to do as they pleased while still pertaining to a higher, more noble cause. In my adolescence I had come to question everything about my faith. Gradually, so gradually that I didn't even notice, I slipped away from the Church; I aligned myself with worldly things and sought guidance from individuals I deemed to be morally 'good', even though they might not associate themselves with any faith. My wife was an example of this.

My journey to Alpha began through a Journey in Faith course that my wife took. She had always considered herself a Catholic despite not having been baptised formally. But she was a good person. One day, she told me about a kindness she had shown to an elderly lady near our flat in London. The lady, as my wife described it, looked confused on the street and appeared to have wet and soiled herself. My wife interceded for the lady, bringing her to our home, changing her and paying for her onward journey. My wife then explained that as she helped the lady into the taxi and waved her goodbye, the lady turned to my wife and said, 'Thank you, my dear. I am Jesus.'

It made me ashamed! Ashamed to think how I would have acted in her place. Had it been me passing by, would I have done the same? Could I accept Jesus in any form? What does it mean about me if I don't?

And so, when my wife asked me to attend her Journey in Faith (JiF) classes it began my realignment to the Catholic Church. After a wonderfully run JiF by Nick and Alison, I reached out to Fr Mark to offer my help in the church in any way I could. I was transitioning into a different career, felt the joy of becoming a new father and really wanted to reconnect once again with the church and the church community. Fr Mark asked if I'd like to help support the Alpha initiative and suggested that I take the course first – which I did. I had a lot of questions about my faith and I needed factually-based, historically-rooted answers. In Alpha, I did not find these answers. Instead, I found something that was for me far more important – a platform to question and get at least eight different perspectives back on a solution to that problem. All with hints about where to probe further. Best of all, the reassurance that the question, however obtuse, was valid, welcome, and, respected.

Alpha runs over 11 weeks and focuses on a few core topics with discussions that follow being led by the participants and only loosely guided by the host. Each member is a real person. We all had our baggage, our fears, our hang-ups, insecurities, and unique faith story. I was then able to co-host on the Alpha course alongside a great host. Each participant arrived at the course, as I did, from all different walks of life.

Our discussions, on or off topic, were all light-hearted. At times, they touched on personal subjects but that is how the Church is. It is made of real people. We shared openly each week and each of us walked away a little wiser and a little more at peace. Particularly during the Covid-19 lockdown, Alpha acted as an immeasurable mode of support and a source of relief. I understood that Alpha is not a programme where you are told who God is and what He wants of you. Alpha is a beginning of a journey to re-evaluate your faith standing and allow yourself some time to be open to God. Open to let Him speak to you through like-minded people. Even as a co-host, the shared conversations and shared experiences have enlightened, guided, and touched me in a very profound way.

Alpha genuinely is for anyone and everyone. However, if like me, this isn't the parish you grew up in, and you attend

church week on week and leave without really getting to know the community, particularly during this period of isolation and separation, I speak directly to you now. Alpha is a wonderful introduction to the community of St Peter and the Winchester Martyrs and a great way to become more familiar with it.

Lastly, I've given a substantial amount of thought to that statement 'a church of sinners'. My opinion now is that – it is not just sin that unites us, it is that, in a world that desperately seeks and clings to low moral conscience and increasing tolerance for the inhumane, we hold ourselves to an impossible standard in the name of our saviour, Jesus Christ. So, just as we would seek out support in our family life and in our work life, Alpha can prove to be that support for the ever more challenging spiritual journey we are taking.

Sarah's testimony

Alpha was something I had heard mentioned during the notices at the end of mass but hadn't really paid it much attention. I was able very easily to dismiss it as something I couldn't possibly commit to each week. It went on the list of all the other things that would be a nice idea but I really didn't have time for. However, as so often happens, God had other plans...

One of my sons was starting the confirmation programme, part of which involved them undertaking the youth Alpha series, and parents of candidates were invited to form a group and follow the same sessions. In all honesty I was just glad of the excuse to spend enjoyable Sunday afternoons sitting and chatting with other parents, some of whom I'd known for years. I was even more pleased when I arrived at the first session to find it involved cake! Anything involving cake is a winner in my book.

I'm not sure any of us had an idea what to expect or what was expected of us but the programme is well designed so that people can watch the videos or listen to the talks and respond in their own way, to say as much (or as little) as they like. As the weeks went on, we witnessed some remarkably powerful messages both in the videos and within the group and from those first tentative discussions we developed a bond, making meaningful connections.

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Christmas tree: It stays green all year to signify the everlasting hope and life eternal.



Rammah, Sarah and Christian.

Continued from page 10

tions and sharing experiences.

Before the next series of Alpha I was fortunate enough to be asked to return as a helper, again the issue of committing to a whole evening each week was something I was unsure of. Even more worrying for me was what would I be able to contribute? I was convinced I wasn't holy enough or knowledgeable enough to be of any use but I took that leap of faith and said yes. This time it was the full Alpha experience! Sharing a meal as well as the talk and the small group discussions. There was also the retreat day which I hadn't encountered before. A truly rewarding and enriching experience that gave us all a chance to be still, to reflect, and to ponder our relationship with Christ.

Then, in the spring, Covid hit. Among the devastation it seemed a small thing that Alpha may be shelved but the superb organisers made the seamless transition to complete the last few sessions online. Our group was already well established and while we missed our weekly meet ups in person, we were glad of the opportunity to meet virtually, to share our anxieties and find comfort in each other.

To contend with the 'new normal' the 'new Alpha' was to move entirely online. I have to admit I was dubious. I felt the whole aspect of welcoming and sharing was the personality of Alpha, that our physical presence was intrinsic to its success. I was sure we would struggle, particularly as Zoom isn't the most relaxing of forums! Surprisingly I was wrong, or maybe not so surprisingly when you consider all that the Holy Spirit is capable of.

We weren't constrained by physical boundaries and so welcomed guests from around the country, people didn't have to leave their homes on rainy evenings or worry about parking, and the conversations flowed as naturally as ever they did before. We talked of love, loss, grief and joy. From Aliens to Zacchaeus and everything in between. No question was good or bad and no answer was right or wrong. Admittedly you may not get all the answers you desire; questions will still be there. I am still searching but through Alpha comes a realisation that there will always be questions and we will always be searching – that is okay.

I can't tell you exactly what you'll get out of Alpha, everyone's experience is different. For me it was all about fellowship and faith; that 'Church' is not a building that I visit each week, it is a body of people, a community. That faith isn't a finite product, it isn't something you are given at your baptism that remains static your entire life. Rather, faith is a journey, it is life on constantly shifting sands that we navigate throughout our time on earth but in the certain knowledge that we are not alone on that journey – God is with us.

Christian's testimony

As a parishioner of St Peter's, I would often hear of Alpha being advertised, mainly through the parish newsletter or through speakers at mass, but for some reason I never really gave much thought to signing up for it and perhaps I had already closed my mind off to it, thinking that it was for other people and not for me. Then I received an invitation from Fr Mark asking if I would like to attend

Alpha and, on this occasion, I felt moved by the Holy Spirit to accept and so I signed up; and how glad I am that I did!

I can truly say to you; Alpha was a magnificent experience and from week one onwards I couldn't believe that I hadn't signed up for it sooner. It gave me the opportunity to discuss and share my faith with others, something I hadn't had before and to forge friendships in an informal and relaxed way – friendships that may never have been formed in other circumstances.

But for me, the wonderful thing about Alpha was the consistent message of hope, love, forgiveness and mercy that our Lord Jesus wishes to shower on each and every one of us, if we allow him to do so. It was a very humbling and powerful experience to watch the videos and to see the power of God, working through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, transform the lives of so many. It reaffirmed that no one, no matter how far we may have fallen or where we are on our journey of faith, is excluded from the love and mercy of God.

I quickly came to realise how effective Alpha can be in spreading this and the wider Gospel message and bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through the sharing of our faith. And so I would like to encourage all of you to sign up for the next Alpha or to invite others to attend so that all can have the opportunity to invite our Lord Jesus Christ into their lives and hear the words, *'behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him and him with Me'* **Revelation 3:20**

Presents: Christmas gifts reminds us of how God gave us the gift of His Son.

Parish mourns the loss of Wini Meikle

The parish lost another stalwart of over 45 years with the unexpected death of 81-year-old Winifred (Wini) Anne Meikle on 1 October at Royal Hampshire County Hospital, Winchester.

Wini was born on 7 May, 1939, the daughter of Cornelius and Florence McGuinness, in Stamford, Connecticut, and sister to Neil, and later twins Kevin and Brian. She was educated at St John's School, Stamford. As a young girl she loved to jitterbug, even appearing on American television, including in 1954 the legendary *Ed Sullivan Show*.

She went on to study at St Mary's College, (Notre Dame) Indiana, where she took her first degree in Christian culture, and her Masters at Michigan State University, and later became a teacher in California and Lansing.

In 1974 she married widower Briton Alan Meikle, who worked for IBM in New York, and later they moved to Twyford, England, where they raised Wini's daughters Kristine and Mary Ellen and Alan's sons Ian and James as one united



Wini Meikle.

family.

Wini continued to teach and became immersed in village life, and also that of St Peter's parish. Her many roles included organising catechism programmes, security vetting of helpers, a reader, running a confirmation programme, chairing school governors, and was involved in various other church initiatives including silent auction bazaar, bridge lunches, welcome

committee, volunteering at the parish centre and most recently with PeterCares.

Fr Mark Hogan celebrated a requiem mass at Twyford Parish Church on 22 October, which because of Covid was limited to 30 family and friends, followed by interment in the churchyard.

At the service, in a eulogy, her daughter Mary Ellen said that she painted the world with vibrancy, she spread joy by bursting into song, with a unique colour of boundless energy and love. Her life's lesson was that: "It's all within your grasp but you have to try...she also fed us chocolate cake, her answer to any of life's challenges."

Her son Ian read quotes from tributes sent from America by her twin brothers of their childhood memories, and also by life-long friend Mary Ellen Graham who described her as a cheerful optimist living in the moment with a ready impish humour and a gift of faith.

A granddaughter Charlotte read an extract from a poem *Joy and Sorrow* by Kahlil Gibran, and grandson Ben read from Ecclesiastes, chapter 3:1 to 8. Fr Mark read the gospel from John chapter 6:37 'All that the father gives me.'

Although there was no singing, during the service the organist played: *All things bright and beautiful, The Lord is my shepherd, Make me a channel of your peace, Lord of the Dance and Mack the knife*. As well as Alan and her four children she is also survived by daughter-in-law Julie Meikle, son-in-law Harry Scarff, and grandchildren Charlotte, Ben, Ellie, Louis, Amy and Jack

Donations in her memory can be made to the Winchester Hospice Appeal.

Keeping account of parish finances

Continued from page 5

our own spiritual renovation. We want to know Christ better and learn (once more) how to remain with him, walk with him, worship him, serve him and follow him as his disciples. Then we can become an authentic place of hope, compassion and joy, for others and for each other. All of this will need time, commitment, perseverance, our gifts, our faith, our money and our love. We will need to invest in our beautiful church buildings and other properties and to make more investments in people

At the moment we can't see how we are going to achieve all this and stick to Mr Micawber's timeless advice, but we are working on it. We will continue to manage our expenditure carefully; we are looking at opportunities to ensure that we are maximising returns on our properties (consistent with our core mission); we are considering raising funds for major repair projects from the sale of an investment property which generates a

modest return relative to its market value; and we are working with the diocese to identify the best technology to enable cashless giving. We anticipate launching a new fund-raising campaign in the new year to support these initiatives, and Fr Mark will be talking more about that nearer the time. Of course, there is no need to wait until the new year; if you have been thinking about setting up a regular donation, or reviewing your existing gift, now would be a most helpful time to do so.

For details, please refer to the website www.catholicwinchester.org.uk/supportus.

Finally, we aim to provide parishioners with regular communications on our finances and the opportunity to ask questions. We had planned a finance open meeting for spring of this year, but that was cancelled due to the emerging Covid situation. If possible, we will try to arrange another meeting in spring 2021.

CROSSKEYS

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Wreaths: The wreath is a circular, never-ending symbol of eternal love and rebirth.