



Open Door

Advent 2023

THE OCCASIONAL MAGAZINE OF ST MARY-AT-FINCHLEY



Many congratulations to (not in order of the photo above) Chris, Danny, Neil, Leon, Mariam, Chloe, Angelina, Sarah and Adiva, members of the St Mary-at-Finchley Youth Choir who, on Saturday 18th November, sang the whole of the choral evensong with the resident choir of St Paul's Cathedral!

You can read more about this exciting day on page 9.

ADVENT – WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

Maybe you have all your Christmas shopping done, or have your decorations up. Maybe you have even had an anticipatory Christmas meal or party. Christmas starts happening in many ways long before we get to Christmas Day, or rather, the celebration side of Christmas gets going. Advent however is a season of waiting.

Part of our waiting is the well-known discipline trying to stop our children getting too excited too soon, but there is a much more theological side to our waiting. Advent looks back to the events of Biblical history through which God's plan for humanity has shone brightly – all those patriarchs in their ups and downs, the prophets with their inspiring visions and hair-raising warnings, John the Baptist that most uncomfortable companion and of course the Blessed Virgin Mary who seemed the most unlikely person to be at the centre of God's plans. We are waiting for this past to catch up with us again.

Advent is also waiting for the future, "the last things" as they are sometimes called. This is the end of time and the final establishment of the fullness of God's kingdom.

So Advent is waiting in two directions and if we find the space to be still we will feel both past and future are present because God is with us. During this season past and future are folded together into this season of Advent.

So to help you reflect on this I offer you the template for a paper chain – Fold up your piece of paper in a concertina. Draw your angel to the full width and cut round the shape. The cutting "now" links together the shapes at either end of the chain, the beginning and the end. That is a bit like Advent! (*Your FREE template can be found on page 5*)

The Rector

OUR VISIT TO THE NOAH'S ARK CHILDREN'S HOSPICE, BARNET

A beacon of light, hope, love and dedication. This is what we felt on entering the impressive building of a hospice which provides care and therapies for sick and disabled babies and children from North and Central London. The need for such a service had been recognised in the community leading to the opening of Noah's Ark in 2019. It relies on fund raising and regular contributions.

Greeted warmly by staff and volunteers, we learnt about the activities and care provided for the children and the support for their families. We were shown around the wonderful facilities provided. There are music and art rooms and a hydrotherapy pool. The children's bedrooms had special bathrooms with hoists and bubble machines. There was a huge garden with a playground. They even have their own cinema. Technology is used in many ways to give the children the very best care. The staff aim to bring fun and the opportunity for play as well as treatment for these special children.

At Christmas, we remember the Christ Child, the Light and Hope.

Noah's Ark Hospice was chosen by Polly Harman as her charity while Chairman of the Finchley Inter Church Women's Luncheon Club.

Valerie Phillips

BLUE KNEELERS

I am continuing with my series about the people named on the blue kneelers in the Lady Chapel. I am very grateful to several people who have contributed their memories including Susan Bowman, Jill and John Huckstep, Mick Nolan, Erica Payne and Sally Prescott.

Read about the trailblazers at St Mary's...

Doreen Cockerell

Doreen was the first woman lay reader appointed to St Mary's Church at a time when there was strong opposition to the ordination of women to the priesthood, or to women taking a leading role in services. Doreen had to overcome these challenges, even from some parishioners (including women) who refused to receive the chalice from her. One person recollects a visiting bishop by-passing Doreen to avoid shaking her hand. Doreen's strong faith enabled her to withstand these difficulties. She was a hard-working member of the pastoral group who was well respected.

Nancy Cockman

Nancy had the distinction of being the first lady churchwarden at St Mary's and was appointed some time before 1976, serving until 1979. Nancy was churchwarden at the time that Pat Brock was the Rector. When Pat was very ill for three months Nancy was responsible for finding someone to lead each of the five Sunday services. Knowing a great number of retired priests, she did this with great efficiency. Nancy also encountered a difficult situation when the choir threatened to go on strike because the organist at that time felt that no-one over 60 should be in the choir. As over half the choir were of more mature years the whole choir rebelled. John Huckstep and Nancy listened to their grievances and disaster was averted. The organist left St Mary's shortly afterwards! Nancy is described as a real stalwart of the church, involved in many activities, and did a lot of very useful pastoral work. She was a Sunday School teacher for the older age group for many years. In these days she would have been described as a 'people person'.

Cecil Rixon

Cecil owned a large electrical shop in Camden Town. He became a churchwarden in the early

1960's and he and his wife, Joan, are remembered as being very friendly and helpful. John Huckstep says it was because of the welcome Cecil accorded to them, that he and Jill were drawn to St Mary's. Cecil was very involved in the collection of newspapers from parishioners, the sale of which raised funds for the church. This was a project which meant a lot of physical work, piling high the lorry which came to collect the newspapers each Saturday morning. He also made a major contribution to the well supported annual Spring Fair held in the church hall which was a chief source of fund raising.

Erica Payne has written:

Loreen Taylor 1914 -2000

'My mother started attending the 8am Holy Communion at around 1960. Her sons, Brian and Philip joined the choir under Steve Lloyd and so she then attended the later morning service. Both my brothers eventually became head choirboy. Her eldest son Anthony became a server. Philip also became a campanologist when Ian Campbell was Tower Captain at the same time as Alex, a blind bellringer. I also later joined the bellringers!

After some years my mother started the Social Committee with Margaret Morgan and a band of helpers (Pam Walker, Margaret Lazarus, Nan Beasley, Joan Richards, Winifred Threadgold, Norah Brooks etc) organising Lent lunches and various social events. She also began a series of coach outings to notable places in the Hertfordshire Countryside which continued for several years and always included a 'refreshment' stop. In 1979 she became a Churchwarden alongside John Harvey and remained in post until 1984, serving under Pat Brock. During this time there was the reordering of the Church, including the re-siting of the choir, the carpeting of the chancel and the installation of a lower communion rail and a new altar. The ciborium given in her memory is used regularly at Holy Communion services. Loreen remained a faithful member of the Church until her death in 2000.'

Gladys Vendy

FROM THE PASTORAL GROUP.

Verily I say unto you, in as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me (Matthew 25:40).

So is my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:11)

These are words of the Lord Almighty from the Holy Bible.

Pastoral care is what we extend to our brothers and sisters, not only in actions but through our words and our thoughts. It is thus desirable to be encouragers and empower our brothers and sisters in need.

NEEDS

Needs come in different dimensions, be it befriending or just lending a listening ear to people in adversity. A problem shared is a problem half solved.

You might ask how do I know the needs of my brethren? The answer lies in our being active listeners and vigilant observers. Discerning our brethren's disposition requires our getting to know them and being observant enough to notice any change in them, be it in their actions, expressions or requests. Some might not even be aware of a change in themselves as they are often too preoccupied in their difficulties to be aware of the change and effects it has on them and indeed how they are affected. If we are lucky enough for them to express to us the need for help, we should not delay in offering suggestions that would be beneficial, even if we don't have the solution. Just signposting to where help might be available is great enough a way of empowering them to seek solutions.

SIGNPOSTING

In the church, are available resources in terms of available services that can be tapped into. Recently, a list of resources for the aged was made available for people to consider, even if just to raise awareness of these available resources.

Most times, the impact of this our seemingly negligible service might make a great impact to the lives of the needy.

Suffice to say the Pastoral Group is also

available to seek help from, as is the Leadership in the Church - be it the Rector, officials or the elders in the church.

People are often too shy to share their problems with a third party but should not be too restricted or private to browse around the leaflets and resources left in the church for assistance or signposting.

We should also always remember the story of the Good Samaritan and never walk past

any brethren in difficulty. By caring for others, God has promised to bless us in appreciation of our assistance to his creations.

His creations are not limited to solely to human beings. As long as we nurture His creations - plants, animals and His garden and nurture all living things, to include the climate and environment, we are practicing Pastoral care. The act of Nurturing is pastoral in as much as it glorifies God's creations. Similarly, our awareness of our carbon footprint is another long-term practice of Pastoral care to humanity.

So, we should learn to always utter words of encouragements and blessings. "*God bless you*" is a pastoral way of ending all conversations. The words we utter in good faith will not return to us empty but achieve that for which it was sent. The power of the spoken word, therefore, should not be underestimated.

As we journey through life, our happiness should be through being encouragers through the spoken word as guided by the Holy Spirit. It's not the great things we do that matters most but the little ones done in good faith and cheer.

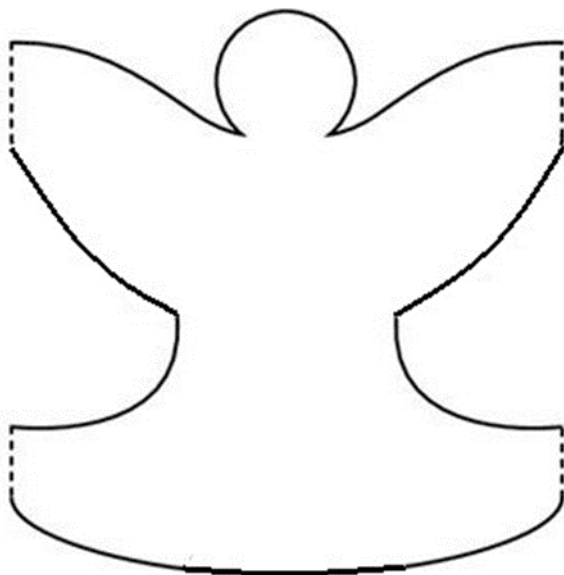
A smiling face sometimes does much more than uttered words and encourages people to open up to us.

Here at St Mary's in Finchley, we practice being our brother's keeper and one hopes this is the practice amongst all congregants.

Deji Mekanjuola

Your Advent paper chain templates from page 2

Fold up your piece of paper in a concertina. Draw your angel to the full width and cut round the shape. The cutting "now" links together the shapes at either end of the chain, the beginning and the end. That is a bit like Advent!



REMEMBERING STELLA OKONKWO

“A sweet friendship refreshes the soul” – Proverbs 27: 9

I count myself a rich and lucky person to have been blessed throughout my life with a bounty of wonderful friends.

Many have supported me in tears and laughter throughout five decades of living in Finchley and worshipping at St. Mary-at-Finchley.

Now, I have to prepare to say goodbye to one of the dearest - Stella Okonkwo.

Like many friends, we became close through our children and the local church primary school.



Stella arrived here from Nigeria to begin a new life with her children, Oge, Tagbo and baby Chinenye in the late Seventies/early Eighties

I had four sons – one of whom was the same age as Tagbo. They were in the same class and, as dutiful mothers, we suggested they make friends with each other.

They each gave the same reply: “ But I don’t want to.....” Eventually, the Mums’ advice was heeded and Tagbo and Lyndon have enjoyed a long and happy friendship through the decades – and across the continents.

Stella and I were members of one of St. Mary’s first long-running study groups, led by our late curate, the Revd John Hannah. We enjoyed many years of diligent studies together and hearty laughter was always on the agenda.

But it was her unstinting devotion to my family, here and in the Black Country, which I will treasure forever.

Rest well dear friend – you will not be forgotten.

“Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart.” – Eleanor Roosevelt

Lynn Radnedge



LEAF

This Autumn leaf marks the end of a journey through life on earth.
Here lies, almost embedded into the palm of my hand, a fallen leaf from Summer's tree,
"Platanus"
its name and type,
Five jagged edges with curled in tips is its identifiable form.
How much does man compare with leaf – once green and fresh and wild?
This leaf, product of a huge and solid tree, nurtured and sustained by its firm green stem until at last it dropped
when time prevailed.

I ponder as I hold this gentle leaf, whose life began in Spring and ended when Autumn dawned and snatched it from its caring stalk.
Five lobes with five veins running from stem to tips, like veins that crawl down from wrist to palm.
This humble hand of mine now holds almost a mirror image of itself attached, not to stem, but to my wrist which connects to my elbow, my shoulder and my body – as my trunk.
This hand will alter as life's seasons change.

My fingers, now stretched out, will gently curl inward through wear and tear and the years stroll by and they can curl no more.
So has this leaf, still stuck to its stem,
Curled its lobes into itself until too stiff and dry to curl once more.
When I lay it back on sacred grounds,
The stars will twinkle and bark-wrapped candles will glow in celebration of the life of the "Platanus".
As time dictates, it will submerge and slowly sink into the depths of that soft soil that living mortals tread long before being interned.

When spirits rise from buried souls and soar towards the gates of Heaven,
Let's pray they meet in awesome wonder Our Lord
who made and loves us all.

DAPHNE SOLOMON



FINCHLEY INTER-CHURCH WOMEN'S LUNCHEON CLUB

The luncheon club was founded in September 1965 by a group of Christian women who decided that there should be a regular opportunity for women of all Christian denominations (CE, RC and Free Churches such as Methodists, Baptists, URC etc) to get to know each other and to learn more about each other's churches.

In those times, many married women did not go out to work and it was agreed that the middle of the day was the most suitable time to meet. It was decided to hold lunches on the third Monday of alternate months – January, March, May, July, September and November in St Mary at Finchley's Church Hall in Hendon Lane. Thus, a Luncheon Club was formed.

The club has celebrated 20th , 25th , 40th , 50th Anniversaries and is nearing it's Diamond anniversary. Numbers have varied from the heyday of over 100 members (and a waiting list), to around 50 today, from more than a dozen churches in the area. Members are mainly of mature years, but we would welcome younger members, which might be possible now that working from home is changing the social mores.

We meet for lunch at noon followed by a speaker or have a quiz or enjoy conversation and finish by 2pm. We have an annual service and each year invite ministers from local churches to our pre- Christmas lunch. Lunch is a light, but wholesome fare, prepared by a team of members and costs £5. The club's constitution (rules) sets a clear framework for organisation. Each year a chairman is elected and chooses a charity to support. This year, The Noah's Ark Children's Hospice in Barnet has been chosen and members have visited it to see their work.

Members pay an annual subscription of £10 which covers insurance, use of the hall and administration costs. An Annual General Meeting is held in July to hear about the year's activities, receive reports from the chairman, secretary, registrar, treasurer, catering co-ordinators and to approve the accounts, as well as to listen to suggestions about the future running of the club from the members.

We welcome people, who are considering joining, to come as guests to a luncheon meeting.

If you would like further information please contact the Secretary, Gladys Vendy (St Mary at Finchley church) gladysvendy7@gmail.com or call on 020 8446 2907.

Gladys Vendy

Music News from Alison Smart Fisher, Director of Music at St Mary's



Congratulations!

In this photo, we see the four Bronze medal holders at the end of the service in which Alison presented them with their medals (Sunday 11th June 2023).

They are (*back row*) **Sarah Alao**. Front row right to left: **Chloe Chan, Neil and Adiva Carvalho**

More Congratulations!

On Saturday 7th October, St Mary-at-Finchley hosted a day of **Voice for Life** exams for the RSCM (Royal School of Church Music) and fielded 6 candidates, all of whom passed: 2 Bronze: Chris, Danny; 4 Silver: Angelina, Leon, Adiva, Mariam. We are very proud of their achievements!

As you will see from the front page of Open Door, the successful candidates were presented with their certificates during a special Awards evensong in St Paul's Cathedral on Saturday 18th November at 5pm. The picture shows 7 out of the 9 choir members.

During evensong, they sang the whole service with the resident St Paul's choir. There was a lovely choice of music including Amy Beach's anthem: *Peace I leave with you* (text from John 18), which the adult choir sang as an anthem during November in a Sunday morning service here at St Mary's.

If you'd like to sing in the choir, please contact Alison. We're particularly interested to hear from sopranos. Alison's email is: alisonsmartfisher@gmail.com

Barnet NHS Thank You Concert 2nd December 2023



From Facebook:-

A super start to Christmas here at [#stmaryatfinchley](#) with a fabulously international evening. Bravi tutti! And special thanks to the choirs and all our visitors and performers.

Bravo [#emmanuelhammond](#) for creating a wonderful atmosphere for everyone to enjoy.

