

St Mary the Virgin—North Shoebury

DECEMBER 2021



TUESDAY 21ST DECEMBER—WINTER SOLSTICE

FRIDAY 24TH DECEMBER—CHRISTMAS EVE

SATURDAY 25TH DECEMBER—CHRISTMAS DAY


SUNDAY 26TH DECEMBER— ST STEPHEN'S DAY

FRIDAY 31ST DECEMBER—HOGMANAY

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- and the December issue...

Several years ago, the Peterborough Column of the Daily Telegraph delightedly reported on a little sign that someone had spotted over a church door in rural Cheshire.

*'This is the house of God. This is the gate of heaven.
(This door is locked in winter months.)*

Well, our church is still the house of God, and hopefully this Christmas our doors will NOT be locked, but instead wide open.

Let's welcome everyone who wants to join our celebration of the best news the world has ever known – that God sent his Son into the world to die for us, so that we could call God our Father, too. What can be better news than that?



In the absence of any angels flying over our church, our magazine can play a critical role in getting the message out this month. Please help by giving a copy to someone.

Why not take a few extra copies of our magazine this month, and distribute them more widely around the community? Aim to get them into the hands of people who don't usually come to church. You could try placing them in local shops and businesses.

Finally, why not spend some time in praying for our community? It has been a difficult year for so many of us, and we all need to know the truth God is indeed there, that He loves us, and that the birth of Jesus changed the course of human history.

May the peace and joy of Christ be with you this month, as you work hard to prepare this most happy and joyful time.

With warm wishes

Your Editor

Lead Minister's Letter Advent 2021

David, a servant and shepherd of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the church of St. Mary the Virgin North Shoebury. Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Three years ago I used these words to begin my first letter to the parish and church of St. Mary's. Then, as now, I was full of optimism for the days, weeks, months and years to come. I had hopes and expectations, but as we look into the future and we may make plans, the reality is that we have no idea what is to come.

The last three years have been very difficult for us. We are not the same now as we were then. I hope we have all grown in faith. As a church we have lost members of the congregation, and we have also gained members of the congregation. We are still living in the time of a pandemic and need to continue to take precautions. As we remembered the other week, this church has been here on this site meeting the needs of those who live or spend time in this parish for at least 800 years. It lived through the Black Death and the Plague, and still survives. There is always hope in the future.

When Paul was writing, he addressed the churches that he had set up. His epistles were written to give help, advice and encouragement to those new Christians.

I sometimes wonder how different we are from those "early" churches. Paul writes about personal tensions, about helping each other, about support for each other as well as the wider community. He explains as best he can the Gospel of Christ. Those issues are relevant now as they were two thousand years ago.



Paul was a Pharisee. He knew the “Law and the Prophets” probably by heart and saw that the church had fallen into a secular form, not a holy form. The leaders were in alliance with the Roman occupiers. He saw that great change was needed to return to the faith. He was a follower of Jesus and encouraged his churches to follow his teachings. But then as now, the teachings of Jesus were a challenge.

This is the world we live in. As I have said before, it seems that not a lot has changed and yet it has.

At this time of year we are looking forward to the anniversary of the birth of Jesus. The period of Advent is a time of both preparation and anticipation. Sadly, our minds are inundated with the commercialism that now drives this season. As we look at the wonderful cosy advertisers, we still need to remember that it is about separating us from our money. People should not need expensive presents to demonstrate their love of family and neighbour. The best way we can share Christmas is to share love.

Jesus demonstrated that love, but also the cost of that love.

As we journey through this time of anticipation, please find time to consider just what our faith is about. It makes a difference in our own lives, but does it make a difference in the lives of those people we mix with?

We are God’s chosen people so let us prepare for Christmas by sharing God’s love.

God bless

Revd. David Pierce

Lead Minister at St. Mary’s Church North Shoebury

Rolling

Sign on a Scottish golf course: Members will please refrain from picking up lost balls until they have stopped rolling.





The Church garden work
party this month will be
on
Saturday
11 TH DECEMBER
from 2-4pm



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My dear Nephew Darren

After all these years, I now understand why the non-conformist denominations sit down, rather than kneel, to say their prayers. That way, no decisions have to be taken over the number, size, shape, colour, material and design of kneelers in church.

Our present set was donated by a retired Major-General in 1899 to celebrate the Relief of Mafeking, and after more than a century of use by the pious and not-so-devout has taken its toll. Like certain members of our congregation, they now look a little worse for wear. Many have sprung leaks, so that when used, a jet of flocking is emitted all over the clothes of their neighbour, who then leaves Mattins looking like a Yeti. Other kneelers have been occupied by grateful mice, who find them most congenial for nesting and who leave in high umbrage, creating chaos as Miss Mapp chases them down the aisle with her umbrella; that this provides her with the perfect excuse to leave before the sermon is, I am sure, entirely coincidental. The final straw came when my own, by some quirk in its design, now sounds like a whoopee cushion every time I kneel. It may cause the choir much amusement, but it lends nothing to the dignity of our worship.

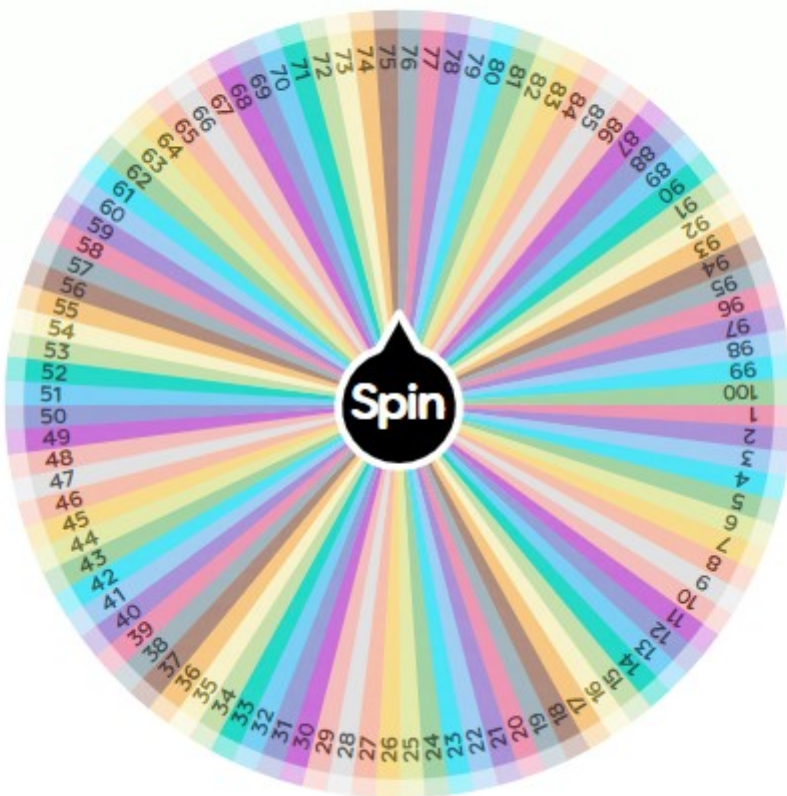
So, we have decided to have a completely new set – and therein lies the problem. Who makes them? What will be the designs? Who co-ordinates the whole project? There is enough here to occupy the combined minds of our Church Council for the next Millennium and there will be enough scheming, manoeuvring, signing of non-aggression pacts and formation of tactical truces to make the United Nations look like amateurs. Unfortunately, we do not have the ecclesiastical equivalents of the blue berets to enforce peace.. The more patriotic members of the congregation have suggested they all show the Union Jack – presumably so they can be waved at appropriate moments in our services; one belligerent individual wants to see depictions of St Michael slaughtering the dragon, John the Baptist's head on a platter and other such tasteful scenes; on the other hand, dear Miss Timmins wants them all to depict doves or small fluffy creatures, which would make the church look more like pets corner.

Cutting through these vital issues, I have suggested that the entire congregation converts to Roman Catholicism.... and then we could stand for our prayers and do without kneelers entirely.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

numbers 1 - 100



**Winning numbers
in NOVEMBER were:**

1st Prize £20.25

Number 83 LJ

2nd Prize £12.25

Number 14 JT

ST MARY'S LOTTERY 2022

Thank you everyone who has supported us through this year! The final prize for 2021 will be drawn this month—so if you have not yet won either 1st or 2nd prize there is yet hope!

We are hoping that everyone will continue into 2022 and you will receive an email inviting you to subscribe early in December. Please remember to invite friends family and colleagues to join us with the chance of winning up to £25 each month!



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25 December

Christmas throughout the Christian world?

For nearly four weeks leading up to Christmas Christians recognise a period called Advent. It means 'coming'. It is a time of spiritual preparation. 'Coming' refers to Jesus' first coming as a baby, but it also looks forward to a day when Jesus is expected to return in triumph at his 'second coming' to establish perfect justice and a new order of peace.

Originally Christians marked Advent as a time when they refrained from excessive eating and drinking. Then Christmas Day reintroduced them to the joys of feasting. Christmas celebrations lasted for twelve days, with gifts exchanged as a climax at Epiphany (6 January). Today, however, Advent is more likely to be associated with accelerating festivity, with the days following Christmas something of an anti-climax until 'twelfth night', on which decorations are removed. Many Christians worldwide are trying to revive the spirit of Advent by setting aside time to pray and address global poverty.

Christmas Day is celebrated as the anniversary of Jesus' birth, although the actual date is not known. Most Christians celebrate it on 25th December. However, the Orthodox Church (the ancient churches in Eastern Europe and parts of Asia) follows a different calendar and celebrates on 7th January. Christians make a point of taking communion on Christmas Day. Many make it the first thing they do as the clock strikes midnight.

On 6th January the Christmas festival continues with a celebration of Epiphany, which means 'the appearance'. Christians remember the visit of wise men (magi) to Jesus, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The Christmas tradition of exchanging gifts originally honoured these men, who were the first non-Jews (Gentiles) to worship Jesus. It forms a reminder that in Jesus God was giving Himself for the benefit of the entire world.



Orthodox Christians use this day to recall the baptism of Jesus as a grown man. The significance of Jesus being baptised was that He identified Himself with human beings in all their need. They mark the day by praying for God's blessing on rivers, wells and water sources.

Christmas has never been just an escapist festival for Christians. Those who treat it seriously recognise that not all the world is able to face the days with frivolity or joy. The day after Christmas, Boxing Day, was historically marked as the feast of St Stephen. He was the first man to be put to death rather than give up his belief that Jesus was God. And two days later a day remembering the Massacre of the Innocents recalls Herod's attempt to destroy Jesus by killing all male babies in Bethlehem. Although not so widely marked as Christmas Day, it gives Christians the opportunity to pray for children in today's world who suffer as a result of the actions of adults.

Snowmen—Two snowmen were standing next to each other. One said to the other: "Can you smell carrots?"

HAVE YOU ANYTHING FOR THIS MAGAZINE?

Thank you to David and Francine for their contributions. If you have anything which would be of interest, please contact the editor, Craig Hunter early in the month, so that your space can be reserved.

Please send any material for the Magazine by the 17th of the month



Music for the Messiah

Have you noticed that, in the Christmas story, singing is featured on three occasions?

Firstly, after Mary was given a message from the angel Gabriel, and was visiting her elderly and pregnant relative, Elizabeth. Mary was so overwhelmed with happiness at the forthcoming miraculous births, she started to sing.

Over the years, her words, known as *The Magnificat*, have been set to music by various composers. The hymn *Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord* is one example of it. Of course, we don't know Mary's melody line, but her words express God's promise that He would rescue His people and through them save the world. Mary sings of God's mercy and benevolence on the helpless, the humble and the hungry.

Months later, in the fields of Bethlehem, shepherds were confronted with an angel and given an incredible message: the Saviour, the Messiah had been born. This was followed by a host of angels who could not help but sing glory to God. Later, the shepherds saw the baby Jesus. They then returned home: not in silence and awe, but in song. They were overwhelmed with an encounter with Almighty God! Heaven and earth had been brought together. They simply couldn't stop themselves from praising and glorifying God.

For Mary, the Shepherds and the Eastern Men too, that first Christmas brought in a time of hope: hope for the helpless, pardon for the guilty, and forgiveness for the conscious stricken. Good news for those who had had nothing but bad news!

From that time on, people have tried to express their gratitude, thanks and wonder at God's love and mercy. Over the centuries, countless poets and musicians have composed music for us to sing. At no other time in the year, is so much music used to describe and express one moment in history.

Jesus has given us hope; forgiven our sin; and continues to impart faith and heal our spiritual wounds. Isn't that something to always sing about?

O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!



St Mary's Church Hall

Week Day Regular Hirers/Activities

Monday	Strollerclase Strolling to 50's music 6-7,000 steps (3 miles) Fun, friendly, all ages, no gym kit required £4 per hour No need to book 10 -11 am & 11.15am -12.15pm Contact: Karen/Tracy 07745 154065	Barling & Lt. Wakering Women's Institute 1st Monday of month, 2 pm Contact Phyl Wickenden 01702 582185 USA Knit & Natter 3rd Monday of the month Contact: Jane 07743507511	Kels Bod Squad Ladies bootcamp 7.30 – 8.30 pm Contact: Kelle 07847 249618
Tuesday	USA – Local History 2nd Tuesday of month 10.15 am to 12.15 pm Contact: Mick 01702 622356	St Mary's Bloomers Floristry group 1st Tuesday of month 2pm to 4pm Contact: Jane 07743507511 USA – Crafting 2nd Tuesday of month 1.30pm to 3.30pm Contact Janet 07810 879673 USA – Gardening Group 3rd Tuesday of month 1.30pm to 3.30pm Contact Liz 07791 340859	
Wednesday	USA Ukulele Improvers 2nd Wednesday 09.45 – 11.45am Contact: Peter Bone 07837 562910		
Thursday	St Mary's Community Coffee Morning 10.30 am to 12 noon All welcome	USA Floristry 1st Thursday of month 1pm – 3.30pm Contact Jane 07743507511	Kels Bod Squad Ladies bootcamp 7.30 – 8.30 pm Contact: Kelle 07847 249618
Friday	Marriott's Tai Chi 11am – 12.00 pm Contact Tracey Cain 01702 290461		

Casual hire fees £12.50 p/h, £12.50 admin fee + £50 refundable damage deposit. Contact franchisejohnson@gmail.com for hire form and details. October 2021|

Dwindling wildlife in Britain

Be kind to the wildlife in your garden – what little of it remains. The UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries, and it may not even have enough biodiversity - variety of plant and animal life - to prevent an ecological meltdown.

That is the finding of new data by the Natural History Museum. It says that the UK has an average of only 53 per cent of its natural biodiversity left, well below the global average of 75 per cent.

Worldwide, scientists warn that the variety of plant and animal life of earth is dwindling fast. It will have a serious impact on human life: “those systems have lost enough to mean that we have to be careful about relying on them functioning in the way that we need them to.”

Beware raw sewage

If you are thinking of doing any wild swimming dips over the Christmas break, bear this in mind: more than half of England's major rivers are polluted with raw or partially treated sewage.

This is partly because water companies have been allowed to release raw sewage into rivers and seas as part of a 'combined sewer overflow' – a legacy of Britain's Victorian drainage systems. It has allowed for rainwater and liquid waste to be combined in the same tanks.

This overflow into waterways has acted as an escape valve, stopping floods in homes and streets. The overflow option is meant only for an emergency, but in fact, it took place more than 400,000 times last year.



CONTACT DETAILS

For all enquiries, including weddings, baptisms, blessings etc.
please, in the first instance, contact Pat Fitch.

01702 585289

Phone numbers are all area code 01702 unless stated

Lead Minister	Revd. David Pierce	07305 710265 david@revdavidpierce.net
Churchwardens	Craig Hunter	07932 503644 chunter2009@hotmail.co.uk
	Tony Pond	07960 678219 tonypond899@gmail.com
Hall Bookings	Phyl Wickenden	582185
	Francine Johnson	589244
PCC Secretary	Michelle Waters	589026
Church Finance & Gift Aid Secretary	Francine Johnson	589244
Electoral Roll	Sue Arnold	586453
Church Diaries & Flowers co-ordinator	Wendy Shipperley	588319
Social, Hall & Fundraising	Francine Johnson	589244
	Phyl Wickenden	582185
Readers, Chalice Assistants & Sides persons Rota Parish Magazine	Churchwardens Craig Hunter	07932 503644 chunter2009@hotmail.co.uk
Churchyard Safeguarding Officer	Tony Pond Pat Fitch	585289

THE CHURCH WEB SITE

www.stmarynorthshoebury.org.uk



Christmas Quiz 2021 - £10 prize

In the event of a tie a draw for the winner will take place.

Entry fee £1.

Quiz completed by:

Name:

.....

Telephone

No.....

Whilst every effort has been made to check the accuracy of this quiz we cannot be held responsible for errors. If an error is found that question will be withdrawn so that it does not impact on anyone's result.



1	26 = L of the A	Letters of the Alphabet
2	7 = D of the W	
3	1001 = A N	
4	12 = S of the Z	
5	54 = C in a P of C	
6	9 = P in the S S	
7	88 = P K on a K B	
8	13 = S on the A F	
9	32 = D F at which W F	
10	18 = H on a G C	
11	90 = D in a R A	
12	20 = R in the T T	
13	7 = S on a F P P	
14	3 = B M (S H T R)	
15	4 = Q in a G	
16	24 = H in a D	
17	1 = W on a U	
18	6 = D in a P C (outside L)	
19	57 = H V	
20	11 = P in a F T	
21	1000 = W that P is W	
22	29 = D in F in a L Y	
23	64 = S on a C B	
24	40 = D and N of the G P	
25	76 = T in the B P	
26	10 = G B on a W	
27	2 = U P is an E	
28	6 = F on a C	
29	1000 = K in a T	
30	3 = C in a F	
31	100 = W B	
32	1 = M and H D	
33	6 = F in a F	
34	40 = D T	
35	8 = F in a M	



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Christmas Services at St Mary

Sunday 19th December

Carol Service 4:00pm

Lessons and Carols all your favourites to get in the mood before the celebrations.

Christmas Eve

Crib Service 4:00pm

Telling the Christmas story.

Please bring a donation for HARP & The Foodbank

Midnight Mass 11:30pm

The joyous celebration of the birth, hang up your stockings when you get home before celebrating the feast with family and friends.

Christmas Day

Parish Eucharist 10:30am

A gentle start to the day, have a moment's peace before it all gets frantic

Boxing Day

Parish Eucharist 10:30am

