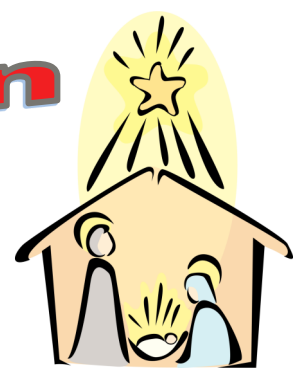




# Keeping in Touch



**December 2023 - January 2024**

**St Mary's North Mymms is an outward looking church, catering for all age groups and helping the local community to experience God's love and grow in faith**

## **Rev Penny writes ...**

*Chestnuts roasting on an open fire  
Jack Frost nipping at your nose  
Yuletide carols being sung by a choir  
And folks dressed up like Eskimos  
Everybody knows a turkey and some mistletoe  
Help to make the season bright  
Tiny tots with their eyes all aglow  
Will find it hard to sleep tonight*



This Christmas Classic, penned in 1945 and first sung by Nat King Cole, as well as so many others since, conjures up what might be for many, an idyllic vision of Christmas. Friends and family gathered in harmony to celebrate, a real fire bringing warmth and light to the room, a table laden with rich indulgent food and a stack of tantalising presents lying under the Christmas tree waiting to be opened. It's a picture of a traditional Christmas which can bring a warm glow to our hearts when we hear those first violin strains of the song. Christmas is a time for rejoicing with those we love, as well as with those we might find a bit more of a challenge! Christmas is a time when we can put aside our differences and unite in our celebration with one another.

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of a tiny baby in the town of Bethlehem, Palestine, over 2000 years ago. His mother Mary and her fiancé Joseph were refugees, having been forced to leave the familiarity of their hometown on account of a Roman census. No room for them in a warm cosy inn. Instead a cold, dirty cattle shed would be the place for this baby to enter the world. Yet, his first lullabies were sung by angels, his first visitors humble shepherds, his first gifts gold,  
Cont'd.....

frankincense and myrrh. Baby Jesus, God's own son gifted to humanity to bring light and peace and comfort and joy and hope in places of darkness: in our hearts, in our lives, in the world.

As we approach this Christmas, hopefully we might find some way to see and hear again the story of God's greatest gift to us, his son Jesus. Maybe at a school Nativity Play or a Crib Service, a Carol Service or Midnight Mass at our local church. The details of our Christmas celebrations at St Mary's Church are enclosed and we would love to see you at anytime.

The Holy Land, Jesus' place of birth is, as I write, once again mired in terrible ,conflict and suffering, with many innocents paying such a high price and, for some, the ultimate price, because of war and aggression. It might for some, feel selfish to celebrate as we do, with such extravagance, when there are so many people in the world who are cold and hungry and despairing and grieving and living in darkness with little hope. Perhaps amidst the Christmas frenzy and fun of choosing and wrapping presents, planning menus, writing cards to those we have not seen for a while, we might pause.

*Pause.... and light a candle.*

*Pause.... and say a prayer for God's peace and light to come upon all conflict areas*

*Pause.... and give thanks for our blessings.*

*Pause.... and consider if it is in our gift to make a donation to one of those charities who desperately need our help at this time to bring some joy to others this Christmas.*

*Pause.....*

Wishing you and all those you love, every blessing, peace and joy, this Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

## Churchwarden's Reunion!



Recognise these four?

Whilst Gill Peplow was on holiday down in the West Country she met up for lunch with fellow past churchwardens Martin Ferdinando, Colette Arbuthnot and Russell Perkins. What we would have given to overhear their conversation.

They all send their best wishes to everyone at St Mary's.

## Harvest Festival...



was celebrated at St Mary's with a Harvest Supper and a family service. We also welcomed the staff, pupils and parents from St Mary's School for their own Harvest Festival Service. The goods so generously donated at both services were taken to the Hatfield Food Bank. We are still accepting goods for the Food Bank. There is a box for your donations in St Michael's Room.

## November - a month of remembering



**All Souls Service**—this photo is a glowing tribute to all those we have loved and lost over the years. These are the candles lit and placed on the altar at the All Souls Service on 29th October. A quiet service of reflection much appreciated by those grieving and missing their loved ones.

### St Mary's School

The pupils and staff held a Remembrance commemoration, gathering in the hall with two minutes of silence at 11.00 am to remember all those who have lost their lives in conflict. Following the commemoration, everyone placed the poppy that they had made in the St Mary's School Remembrance Garden.



### Remembrance Sunday.

The Hope Railings were beautifully decorated by Year 5 pupils from the school in tribute to those lost in war. After a short service at the War Memorial to lay wreaths the Royal British Legion and uniformed organisations joined the congregation in the church for a moving Service of Remembrance.





One of the wonderful things about leading St Mary's Primary School is the close links that we enjoy with St Mary's Church. One of the most important factors for me when I applied to be Headteacher of St Mary's School was the fact that it is a Church school and in my first weeks in post, back in the Summer term 2022, I met with Rev Ruth to discuss how we could strengthen the links between church and school. We are very fortunate that Rev Ruth comes to visit us in school once a week, on a Tuesday morning, to lead our Collective Worship, which in addition to her being one of our school governors, makes her very much part of our school community. We also greatly value the opportunity that we have to visit St Mary's Church for school services during the course of the year. Currently we hold services in church on the last day of each term, we have a Harvest Festival Service in October and a Key Stage 2 Carol Service in December. Our End of Term and Leavers' Service in July is particularly special, because following the service the Year 6 leavers remain at the church, after the other children have returned to school, and there is a Leavers' Lunch for the pupils and parents in the St Michael's Room. We also valued being involved in the North Mymms Arts Festival which was held in September, when some of our Year 5s and 6s took part in the poetry hour. We are also looking forward to contributing to the Christmas Tree Festival and our children regularly contribute to the Hope Railings outside the church. All these events make us feel very much part of the St Mary's Church community and we are always so grateful for the warmth of the welcome that we receive.



*Adrian Petty Headteacher*



I have the privilege of being the Chair of Governors at St Mary's Primary School and it has been a real pleasure to witness the ever closer links between the school and the church. When I am at the school I realise that many of the volunteer readers are members of the congregation and Helen Lee works alongside me as a foundation governor and has also established an Outdoor Club which is proving popular amongst the children. Where we don't see the St Mary's Church community is at the school church services which is a shame as we should be there to welcome the teachers and pupils and the many parents who come to support their children and the school. You can find the dates in the church calendar on the website. For this term the Key Stage 2 Carol Service is at 4.00pm on 13th December and the end of term service is at 10.00am on 20th December. It would be lovely to see you there.

*Sheila Hoile*



# CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL 8th-10th December "CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD"

**Friday 8 December 7.30pm.**

**A Christmas Concert with Positif Chamber Choir**

*Hear and join in carols from around the world. Then enjoy looking around the trees accompanied by a glass of mulled wine and some mince pies. Tickets £12 (£5 for under 16s) available via church website, from the church office or on the door.*

**Saturday 9 December 10.00am – 4.00pm**

**Sunday 10 December 12.00pm – 4.00pm**

*Come along on Saturday or Sunday to enjoy the fun and vote for your favourite tree. There will be refreshments, crafts and produce stalls. Entry £2 – under 16s free.*

## Christmas Services 2023

### **Carols by Candlelight**

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December 6.30pm

### **Crib Service**

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 3.00pm

### **Midnight Mass**

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> December 11.00pm

### **Christmas Day Service**

10.00am

### **Christingle Service**

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January 10.00am

## Dates for your diary

**Knitting Group** - Thursdays 7th & 21st December, 4th & 18th January  
10.00am - 12noon

**Coffee Pots and Tiny Tots** - Every Wednesday in term time 10.00am - 11.30am

**Poetry Group** - Fridays 22nd December & 26th January 2.30pm - 4.00pm

**Sunday Club** - Sundays 10th & 17th December, 14th & 21st January  
during 9.30am service

**Wild Worship** - Sunday 28th January starting at 2.00pm

**Churchyard Tidy Up Party** - Saturday 27th January 2.00-4.00pm

### Baptism

19th November Albert Jay Lovell

### Funeral

2nd November Kathleen Knights

### Contact us

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