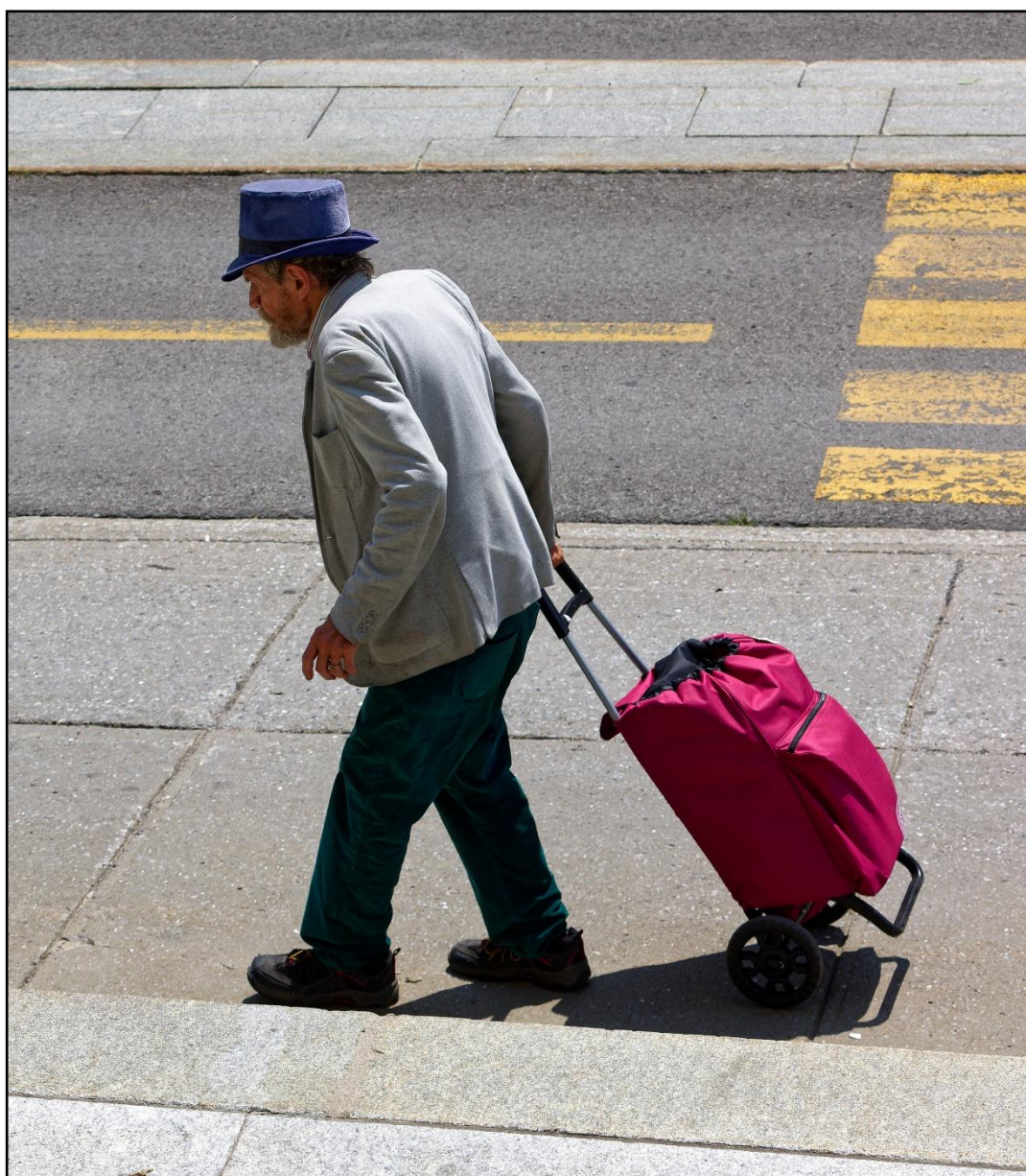


# St Mary's Parish Church Whitegate



## NEWS FOR DECEMBER 2024



## Our cover photo

Not by any means a traditional December picture! It is a photo from Jane Millinchip's new exhibition on the "gallery" wall in The Mews, entitled "Are we nearly there yet?"

We recognise the question of course, often heard from children during a long car journey or paraphrased in this season, when they ask, "How many sleeps till Christmas Day?" The thought behind Jane's choice of theme was to encourage us all, during this Advent season, to reflect on our own Christian journey.

Over the last couple of months, the congregation has been invited to submit their own photographs for the display. This is another sensational body of work, guaranteed to be a talking point. Be sure to drop into The Mews to take a look. It's always open on Sunday and Wednesday mornings and on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December, there'll be coffee and cake with carols too, from 10.30 am at the Festive First Thursday Café.

### A verse for DECEMBER

Romans Ch 5:verse 5

*Hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts.*

As we approach Christmas we are in the season of Advent and the world seems to be a particularly troubled place politically, economically and in terms of armed conflict. Next year will be different - but will it be any better?

We hope it will - but do we expect it to be? That depends on what we understand by the word hope. The commercialisation of Christmas has raised our hopes for the gifts we may receive - but that hope depends on someone actually giving us that present.

As Christians we look forward to God's Gift to us. The birth of Jesus is something that has already happened, but part of that gift is the promise of what is still yet to come - Christ's second coming. As God has already sent Jesus and raised him from the dead we know that God will keep his promise. Our hope is therefore in the full assurance of the resurrection of God's people and the coming of God's Kingdom.

Until the 6<sup>th</sup> century there was little connection between Advent and Christmas. The "coming" they had in mind was this second coming as the judge of the world. The Advent season was not explicitly linked to Christ's first coming at Christmas until the Middle Ages.

May we share the hope that God has poured into our hearts with those we meet in the weeks and months to come.

JRC

## DECEMBER Diary

<b>DEC 1<sup>st</sup></b>	9.30 am 2.00 pm for 2.30  4.00 pm	<b>Advent Sunday</b> Family Service Movies in The Mews: Thomas Kinkade's Christmas Cottage Benefice Christingle Service	St Mary's The Mews  St Peter's
<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	6.30 pm 7.00 pm	Gentlemen's Christmas Dinner Christmas Wreath Making	The Plough, Whitegate Whitegate School Hall
<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsides	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	10.30 am	Festive First Thursday Café, with Andrew Millinchip at the keyboard for carol singing	The Mews
<b>7<sup>th</sup></b>	5.15 pm	Switch-on of Whitegate Christmas Lights, with carols on the Green and refreshments in the School Hall. Hosted by W&MPC.	Church Green
<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Advent 2</b> Holy Communion	St Mary's
<b>10<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsides	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>11<sup>th</sup></b>	9.00 am 10.00 am 12.00 noon	Men's Breakfast Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	Tarporley G'dn Centre The Mews St Mary's
<b>15<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am 9.30 am	<b>Advent 3</b> Morning Prayer Storytelling Service	St Mary's The Mews
<b>17<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm 7.30 pm	Bible Study at Commonsides St Mary's Choir Carol Concert	L.B. Methodist Chapel Vale Royal Abbey
<b>18<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon 2.00 pm	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP) Mothers' Union Advent Service	The Mews St Mary's St Peter's
<b>19<sup>th</sup></b>	7.00 pm	St Mary's Choir sings carols at The Plough	Beauty Bank
<b>20<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am	Whitegate School Christmas Service	St Mary's
<b>22<sup>nd</sup></b>	9.30 am 6.30 pm	<b>Advent 4</b> Holy Communion Service of Nine Lessons and Carols	St Mary's St Mary's
<b>24<sup>th</sup></b>	4.00 pm 11.30 pm	<b>Christmas Eve</b> Family Crib Service Midnight Holy Communion	St Mary's St Mary's
<b>25<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Christmas Day</b> Holy Communion for Christmas	St Mary's
<b>29<sup>th</sup></b>	10.30 am	<b>Christmas 1</b> Benefice Holy Communion	St Mary's
Please note that there will be no midday Communion service on Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> January			
<b>JAN 5<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Epiphany</b> Morning Prayer	St Mary's

## **December thoughts from the Vicar ...**

### **But first....Advent**

As we approach Christmas we look forward to carols, Christmas trees, family gatherings, good food, and a season of goodwill in the midst of dark and troubled world. It is a natural tendency to want the good things to come quickly. But first comes Advent. Preparation matters.



Do you look out for houses that put their Christmas lights up in November? This year the first one I spotted was in October. I am not entirely surprised. When we cannot wait for signs of good news it says we are living in a world of anxiety and fear. That God comes to us in weakness and vulnerability, in humility and grace, above all in deep passionate love, this is all the hope we need. It is transforming hope. If those who nurse ancient hurts and wage war could glimpse God's weakness we might take the first step towards a better world.

This reminds me why Advent is important. We need to learn patience. We need to stick with the darkness and gloom and acknowledge its reality. We need to prepare ourselves to encounter afresh the alternate world this child reveals to us.

Advent is a time for pausing and reflecting. We're not always terribly good at doing this when so much needs to be done at a busy time of year. But if we forget Advent then we lose Christmas. And many people do.

### **And then.....Christmas**

As I write in late October, the weather is mild, and the leaves are falling. I suspect by the time you read these words the trees will be bare and the weather much colder. But also, as I am writing the news is filled with the suffering caused by wars. I suspect by the time you read these words that will not have changed. If anything, I fear things may have got worse. How shall we sing carols about peace on earth, a silent night, that little town of Bethlehem where God's greatest gift comes in stillness?

There is not a lot you and I can do to make a difference to the conflicts of our world. We can pray of course, prayer matters. When prayer ceases the world becomes a crueller place. In prayer we encounter a different reality and discover the things we can do. Prayer changes us; a person who prays earnestly notices different things about people and situations, and themselves. Their life connects with people in a way that reflects what they have glimpsed in prayer. These are moments when God's touch becomes reality.

I remember a bishop who was asked how his prayer life was going. He paused for a moment and then said, "Boringly faithful." What he meant was that he made a commitment to pray daily. He set time aside and made space in his day. He did this day by day, week by week, year upon year. He did it when he didn't feel like doing it. He did it when he felt no-one was listening. He just doggedly stuck at it.

What I noticed about him was that amongst the many things he did which wound people up there was one characteristic which everyone valued. If you had a problem, if life had gone wrong, he always had time, and he never jumped to conclusions. People knew he was someone they could turn to in time of trouble. That capacity was honed through his daily encounter with God in prayer. He was alert to an alternative reality, and ready to seek it in those he encountered.

In Christmas God enters our world in vulnerability and humility. This baby doesn't provide solutions and answers. In the midst of so much violence and suffering we need those moments of stillness and silence, not because we can fix our world, but because we can allow God to fix us. And people who have met with God have a tendency to make life better. Through them people sense something better is close.

One of my favourite Christmas prayers is what happens when it is all over:

When the song of the angels is stilled  
when the star in the sky is gone  
when the kings and princes are home  
when the shepherds are back with their flocks  
the work of Christmas begins:  
to find the lost  
to heal the broken  
to feed the hungry  
to release the prisoner  
to rebuild the nations  
to bring peace among the people  
to make music in the heart.

### **Thank you...**

I will make this opportunity to thank those who over the coming weeks will bring their time, skills and energy into making our church ready for the celebration of Our Lord's Nativity (otherwise known as Christmas (as the BCP says). Without your dedication and commitment our celebrations wouldn't happen. Thank you.

**Paul**



## DECEMBER NEWS FROM ST MARY'S

### □ Always a job to be done ...

As Paul pointed out in his letter last month, we must all share the load of the tasks that need doing at St Mary's, rather than load them all on the shoulders of just a small number of members of the church family.

Do please ask yourself if you could consider taking on one of the roles mentioned below, for without new volunteers coming forward, we shall not be able to continue to offer the services and the welcome that are so appreciated by everyone.

- Treasurer (this role may be shared by more than one person)
- Sunday coffee rota
- A foundation governor at Whitegate school
- A correspondent for our church insurance
- A correspondent for our church energy contracts
- Vestry supplies (ordering of bread, wine, candles)

To find out more about what's involved in any of these roles, please speak to the Vicar or one of the Churchwardens.

### □ Gill Burrows

Many people will have heard the sad news of the death of Gill Burrows on 5th November, at the age of 95.

Gill and Bob came to Grange Lane in 1960, so Gill has been an integral part of the community for over 64 years, having been an active member of the church, chair of the Parish Council, editor of the parish magazine, helping to run the WI, Mother's Union and Village Fair amongst many other local activities.

As a teacher and language examiner she was passionate about education and some people locally may still remember being taught French by her at Verdin Grammar School.

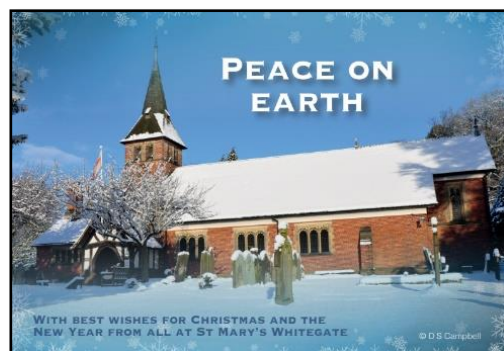
Tony and family would like to express their gratitude for such kind help and support she has received from neighbours and friends over recent years.

Gill's funeral is to take place at St Mary's Church, Whitegate at 10am on Saturday 7th December.



## ❑ Christmas wishes from all at St Mary's

Cards will be delivered to as many homes in the parish as our kind volunteers can manage and they will also be available in church and in the porch, in The Plough and at the Station Café. The cards bear our Christmas wishes on the front and on the reverse, a calendar of services and activities taking place in December. Look out for the cards and keep yours for handy reference throughout the month.



## ❑ Save your stamps for the RNIB

The Mission and Giving group is encouraging everyone to save stamps from mail arriving in December. Bring them to church in January and put them in the box on the table at the back. Pam and Mike Venables will collect them, pack them up and send them off.



The RNIB can make approximately £20 per kilo for these stamps, using that money to fund their support for people with sight loss.

The key points to remember when you save your stamps:

1. Trim each one from the envelope with approx. 1cm around the stamp.
2. Separate British and Overseas stamps and save them in two envelopes.
3. Don't include the large gold pre-printed Post Office labels.
4. Bring your stamps to church by the end of January.

Thanks for your support with this appeal.

## ❑ More Mission and Giving news

The Mission & Giving group (a sub-committee of St Mary's PCC), met recently to discuss and decide on the charity or charities we should donate to with our 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter funds this year. Having supported four local organisations in previous quarters (Pettypool Trust, Cheshire Young Carers, Joshua Tree and the Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy), it was unanimously agreed that this quarter's donation of £625 should be sent to Christian Aid, to be used to help fund aid to one of the many war-torn regions in the world today.



By donating via Christian Aid, who work with partners on the ground in each location, we can be sure that the funds will be used effectively. Their new Christmas appeal focuses on supporting families fleeing conflict, helping them to buy food and life-giving supplies. It has the arresting heading: No room for comfort and joy ... when you've left everything behind to survive.

To read more, just go to [www.christianaid.org.uk/](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/)

## ❑ Singing at The Plough

St Mary's Choir has again been invited to sing carols at The Plough on Beauty Bank. They will be there at 7.00pm on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December and supporters are always welcome.

## ❑ Chester Cathedral in December

If you and your family are looking for seasonal activities beyond our parish, then look no further than the cathedral, for there is a wealth of events on offer. Whether you are seeking services, concerts or other events, read on for a small selection ....



- ❖ **Christmas Tree Festival:** create a new family tradition by visiting the festival, running now in the cloisters till 5<sup>th</sup> January. 80 trees, decorated in the theme of Discover Christmas: what Christmas means to you.
- ❖ **Brunch or Afternoon Tea with Santa:** on Sundays throughout December, children aged 1 – 10 (with accompanying adults!) are invited to eat, meet Father Christmas and receive a gift in the glorious setting of the cathedral refectory.
- ❖ **Advent Procession:** on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December at 6.00pm, the service will move from darkness to light, marking the beginning of the Advent season. Bible readings will be interspersed with beautiful music sung by the Cathedral Choir.
- ❖ **Christmas Viennese Spectacular:** on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm, experience the enchantment of Christmas in Vienna, with the waltzes of Johann Strauss, the rhythms of Brahms' Hungarian Dance and the delights of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite, performed by musicians of London Concertante.
- ❖ **Chester Cathedral's Annual Christmas Concert:** on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm, get into the Christmas spirit with music led by the Cathedral Choir. Tickets include mulled wine and mince pies.
- ❖ **Marie Curie, Lights to Remember:** on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December at 6.00pm, Marie Curie invites the local community to join in their service to remember loved ones we have lost. It will be a service with carols, poems and readings and an opportunity to light a candle in memory of a loved one.
- ❖ **CMS Christmas Cracker:** on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm, Chester Music Society Choir and Chester Philharmonic Orchestra present their concert of carols, seasonal orchestral delights and readings, presented by Kadiatu Kanneh-Mason.
- ❖ **The Snowman film, with live orchestra:** on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> December at 2.00, 4.00 & 6.00pm.

Booking is essential for all events, save for the Services. For details & bookings, go to **[www.chestercathedral.com/events/](http://www.chestercathedral.com/events/)**



# Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December

**5.15 pm on Church Green**

Whitegate & Marton Parish Council  
invite you to

- ☆ Switch on Christmas Tree lights
- ☆ Carols round the tree
- ☆ Refreshments in the School Hall





# **CAROLS AT THE ABBEY**

**WITH ST MARY'S CHURCH CHOIR  
& DECIBELLS**

**IN THE GREAT HALL  
VALE ROYAL ABBEY**

**TUESDAY 17TH  
DECEMBER**

**7.30 PM**

**ADMISSION £5**

**& INCLUDES MULLED WINE  
& MINCE PIE**

**COME AND SING!**



❑ **January NEWS:** Comments and contributions for the next edition of the Monthly NEWS are always welcome. Please send copy to [chrisball2022@outlook.com](mailto:chrisball2022@outlook.com) by 15<sup>th</sup> December.

## Contacts

*Please note that only e-mail addresses for the Vicar, the Treasurer, the Safeguarding officer, the News coordinator & the Mews Lettings officer are shown in the online version of the monthly News. If you need the e-mail address of one of the other Contacts, please phone them to ask for it.*

<b>Vicar</b> Rev Canon Paul Dawson 01606 889995 The Vicarage, Cinder Hill, Whitegate CW8 2BH <a href="mailto:vicaragecinderhill@outlook.com">vicaragecinderhill@outlook.com</a>	<b>Churchwardens</b> Anne Blayney 01606 74020 Sandra Paskin 01606 882031 <b>PCC Secretary</b> Roger Wilkes 01606 75738
<b>Curates</b> Rev Dr John Stopford 01606 558802 Rev Jane Millinchip 07981 981293 Rev Margaret Byrne 07368 375970	<b>Church Flowers</b> Pam Davies 01606 557833 <b>Children's Worker</b> Teresa Finney 01606 889311
<b>Safeguarding Officer</b> Sue Whitehead 01606 852302 <a href="mailto:safeguardingwhitegate@outlook.com">safeguardingwhitegate@outlook.com</a>	<b>Mothers' Union</b> Eileen Lees 01606 786895
<b>Mews Lettings</b> Andrew Millinchip <a href="mailto:amillinchip@gmail.com">amillinchip@gmail.com</a>	<b>"News" coordinator</b> Christine Ball 01606 593260 <a href="mailto:chrisball2022@outlook.com">chrisball2022@outlook.com</a>
<b>Musical Director</b> Andrew Millinchip 07821 810772	<b>Pastoral &amp; Fellowship Committee</b> Alan Newton 01829 760239
<b>Treasurer</b> John Duthie <a href="mailto:treasurerwhitegatepccoutlook.com">treasurerwhitegatepccoutlook.com</a>	<b>Social &amp; Fundraising Group</b> John Blayney 07964 844642

## Movies in The Mews

Church Green, Whitegate

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2024

Refreshments from 2.00 p.m.

film starts at 2.30 p.m. prompt.



### Thomas Kinkadee's CHRISTMAS COTTAGE (2008)

"CAPTURES THE HEART OF  
CHRISTMAS"

"A FANTASTIC PERFORMANCE BY  
PETER O'TOOLE"

Directed by Michael Campus and starring Peter O'Toole,  
Jared Padalecki, Aaron Ashmore & Marcia Gay Harden

Inspired by a true story, the film recounts the events behind  
artist Thomas Kinkadee's painting, "Christmas Cottage"; a  
tale in which necessity is truly the mother of invention.

Sub-titled for the hard of hearing.

Suggested donation £5.00 per person

Book by signing up on the board in church, or contact Chris Ball:  
01606 593260 mob: 07786 132938 [chrisball2015@gmail.com](mailto:chrisball2015@gmail.com)

## Gentlemen's Christmas Dinner



THE  
PLOUGH  
Beauty Bank  
Whitegate

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December  
6.30 pm



Sign up & pre-order on the notice boards in  
St Mary's and St Peter's or contact Alan  
Newton: [acenewton513@gmail.com](mailto:acenewton513@gmail.com)  
01829 760239



### Wreath Making

Come and join us in Whitegate Primary School hall  
for this fantastic, adult-only event

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 7.00 pm

Tickets

£40 each

Scan the QR code to purchase



Join us for a Christmas  
special

### Festive First Thursday Café

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December  
10.30 am – 12.00 noon

For coffee & mince pies and  
carols & Christmas cheer!

The Mews, Church Green,  
WHITEGATE