

St Mary's Parish Church
Whitegate



NEWS FOR DECEMBER 2023



Our cover photo

This month we feature the Advent wreath, which at this time of year always stands by the pulpit at St Mary's. The circular wreath is a reminder of God's endless love and the coloured candles help us to remember those who foretold the coming of Christ Jesus. On the first Sunday of Advent, this year 3rd December, one of the purple candles is lit during the service and each subsequent week a further candle is ignited, leaving just the white one, to be lit on Christmas Eve. It is a Lutheran tradition which has spread throughout many other Christian denominations. Like an Advent calendar, the wreath and the lighting of the candles help to mark the days of the Advent season, a period of reflection, of waiting and of expectation.

Colours of Christmas

Our next exhibition of photos in The Mews is called 'Colours of Christmas'. It features images of Christmas and winter scenes by a number of different photographers from within our congregation. The exhibition will be there for all to view whenever The Mews is open, throughout Advent and the Christmas season, from 26 November until 4 February. If you are able to call in to the Festive First Thursday Café on 7th December, there'll be coffee, mince pies and carols too.

A verse for December

Matthew Ch 24: verses 43-44

Remember this: If the owner of the house knew what time of night a thief was coming, the owner would watch and not let the thief break in. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at a time you don't expect him.

In 2023, we travel through what are known as the 'end times', that is the time between Jesus' first coming as a baby in the stable some 2000 years ago, and his second coming at some point in the future. In our verse from Matthew's gospel, Jesus reminds us that we have no idea when this will be but tells us that he will come "at a time [we] don't expect him".

In the light of the important truth that Jesus will come again, but that we do not know when it will be, each year, we take time during the 4 weeks of Advent to reflect on how we should be living our lives as we wait, and on what Jesus means when he tells us to be "ready"?

Firstly, being ready means that we should keep focused on the things of God and not be distracted, by the excitements or the problems of our day to day lives. We need to keep coming to church, reading our Bibles, praying and living the Christian life. Ironically this can be more difficult at Christmas than at other times because there is so much else going on.

And secondly it means that we should tell others about Jesus. Christmas can be a good time, with many more people than usual coming to church. But Christmas can also be a bad time, because for most people it is becoming merely a midwinter festival of light - a chance to cheer ourselves up in these gloomy dark cold days. Make sure that you keep reminding people that this is a Christian festival.

What might you do to be "ready" this Advent?

SJM

DECEMBER Diary

DEC 1st	3.30 pm	Whitegate School Fair	School Hall
2nd	5.15 pm	Whitegate Christmas Lights Switch on, with carols & refreshments. <i>Hosted by W&MPC</i>	Church Green & School Hall
3rd	9.30 am 2.00 pm	Advent Sunday Family Service Burial of Ashes	St Mary's St Mary's
4th	6.00 for 6.30pm	Gentlemen's Dinner	Red Lion Little Budworth
5th	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsideside	L.B. Methodist Chapel
6th	12.00 noon	Holy Communion (BCP)	St Mary's
7th	10.30 am	Festive First Thursday Café with carols	The Mews
10th	9.30 am	Advent 2 Holy Communion	St Mary's
12th	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsideside	L.B. Methodist Chapel
13th	9.00 am 12.00 noon 2.00 pm	Men's Breakfast Holy Communion (BCP) Mothers' Union Deanery Advent Service	Tarporley G'dn Centre St Mary's St Peter's
15th	10.00 am	Whitegate School Carol Service	St Mary's
17th	9.30 am 9.30 am 6.30 pm	Advent 3 Morning Prayer Storytelling Service Service of Nine Lessons and Carols	St Mary's The Mews St Mary's
19th	2.00 pm 7.30 pm	Bible Study at Commonsideside Christmas Concert by St Mary's Singers	L.B. Methodist Chapel Vale Royal Abbey
20th	12.00 noon	Holy Communion (BCP)	St Mary's
21st	7.00 pm	St Mary's Choir sing carols at The Plough	The Plough, Whitegate
24th	9.30 am 4.00 pm 11.30 pm	Advent 4 & Christmas Eve Said Holy Communion (BCP) Crib Service Midnight Communion	St Mary's St Mary's St Mary's
25th	9.30 am	Christmas Day Holy Communion	St Mary's
27th	<i>No midday service at St Mary's this week</i>		
31st	10.30 am	Christmas 1 United Benefice Holy Communion Service	St Peter's
JAN 3rd	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
4th	10.30 am	First Thursday Café of 2024	The Mews
7th	9.30 am	Christmas 2 - Epiphany Family Service	St Mary's

December thoughts from the Assistant Curate...



December can be a strange time. Amid the cries of “I just don’t know where the year has gone!” the month flies by in a flurry of activities, and what is referred to as “the holiday season” turns out for many to be the most stressful time of the year. Some people are bursting with excitement, with Christmas trees, lights and celebrations before the month has even begun. In contrast, there are those who are completely overwhelmed by the season, frantic with the pressure to create perfect celebrations. We should also spare a thought for those who struggle with cold, damp winter days and longer, darker winter nights, those who find it hard being on their own, or with unhappy memories of Christmas.

In our house, our trees go up every year on 1st December. My youngest son, Tom, counts the sleeps until the trees go up (the posh one in the living room, and the colourful, “anything goes” one on the landing), the Advent boxes go out and we set up the Nativity scene. The Christmas books, CDs and DVDs are brought back out. We write our Christmas cards, worry about what we’re giving to Auntie Margaret for Christmas, and buy enough food to feed an army, even though the shops are only closed for one day!

Before we get caught up in all things Christmassy, the church colours change to purple for Advent. Advent comes from the Latin, “Adventus”, which means “coming”. All too often, we want to race to Christmas, but Advent is an important time of waiting; to pause, take a breath, and think about what we are preparing for. We live in the “now and not yet”, where Jesus has already lived as one of us, but we await his return. When someone visits, we anticipate it. Just before Auntie Mary arrives, there is a flurry of activity – hoovering, dusting, clearing away the toys and other clutter, preparing delicious food... preparing for something is not just thinking about it, but taking action.

In this season of Advent, I often find it helpful to prepare by reflecting on Holman Hunt’s painting, “The Light of the World”. In it, Jesus is standing at a door, holding a lamp, which shines as dawn approaches. There is no handle on the door, and the rusty nails and hinges overgrown with ivy and weeds show that the door has never been opened – the door can only be opened from the inside. The door is, of course, the door to our hearts. In Advent, we pause to do a little maintenance to our doors, to oil the hinges and to clear the weeds – all those distractions in this world that get in the way of us opening the door and letting Jesus in.

The writing under the picture is taken from Revelation 3:



“Behold! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

Jesus is standing there, knocking, wanting desperately to fully be a part of our lives, but we must open the door from the inside. How much time do we take, to slow down, or stop and listen, to know that he is there? The dawn of the picture is the new day, a symbol of new life with Christ. In the picture, we see Jesus wearing a crown of thorns. It is a stark reminder of all he went through to offer us that new life. To really connect with, and be changed by Christmas, we must not limit ourselves to the sanitised version of the nativity we see on Christmas cards.

The harsh reality was a birth in a dirty, draughty stable on a cold night because every other door was firmly closed. With the cradle must come the cross. If we never look beyond the image of Jesus as an infant – to his life, ministry, death, and resurrection to deal with our sinful mess and bring us back to God, we miss the whole point of Christmas and of God’s unending love for humanity.

There are plenty of services at St Mary’s and at St Peter’s this Advent and Christmas to help us pause, take a breath, prepare, and then celebrate. We’d love for you and your loved ones to join us!

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas full of love, joy, and peace.

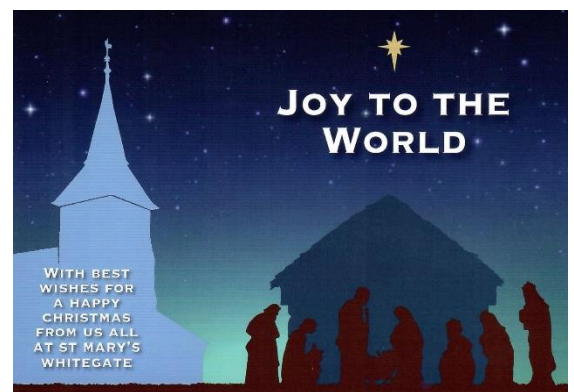
Margaret.

DECEMBER NEWS FROM ST MARY’S

☐ Christmas card from St Mary’s

If you haven’t received one already, don’t forget to pick up our card in church, in the porch or in The Mews. On the reverse, you’ll find details of all the services and other events taking place in Whitegate in December.

Warm thanks to the foot soldiers who are posting these Christmas messages through letterboxes around the parish.



☐ Men's Breakfast in December

This month's breakfast will be on Wednesday 13th, as usual at Tarporley Garden Centre at 9.00 am. Sign up in church at St Mary's or St Peter's, or contact Alan Newton on 01829 760239 or by email, acenewton513@gmail.com

☐ Could you fill an Advent Box for Mid Cheshire Foodbank?

An Advent box isn't a new idea, but it's certainly a concept that would boost the foodbank's stocks in January. We have all grown up with Advent calendars, where each day, we are given the surprise of a little picture, or even a chocolate or an even bigger treat! An Advent box turns that system on its head. Instead of receiving something each day in the run up to Christmas, we give something, a grocery or toiletry item for example. Put it in the box and by Christmas Day, our container holds a selection of goods that would be manna from heaven for someone else.



Mid Cheshire Foodbank has recently won the King's Award for Voluntary Service for the support given to those in need. Donating your Advent box to them would be a fine way of congratulating all those who work so hard to maintain and develop this much needed service. Bring your box to St Mary's at the end of December and the Mission and Giving group will make sure it's delivered to the warehouse.

☐ Mothers' Union at St Mary's

Members were treated to a fabulous craft session in November, welcoming Pam Davies and Jo Jordan to show us new skills. In The Mews, we learnt, step by step, how to make Christmas wreaths and table decorations. It was



a totally absorbing afternoon, immensely enjoyed by everyone. Pam and Jo are born teachers, gifted not only in making the beautiful displays we all admire in church, but also in passing on those skills to others.

In December we have no meeting as such, but we are sharing with St Peter's Mothers' Union the responsibility for holding the Deanery MU Advent Service, at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 13th. Led by Margaret Byrne, this service aims to offer a reflective and prayerful breathing space at a busy time in many people's lives. If you feel you would like to join us, then do come along.



Saturday
2nd 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 School Hall

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

NOW ON AT
CHESTER CATHEDRAL



One of many reasons to visit our glorious cathedral this Christmas. All around the 16th century cloister stands a forest of locally sourced Christmas trees, sponsored by local organisations and decorated on the theme of sustainability.

The trees line up below the cloister windows, the stained-glass panels called the Gallery of Saints, in which every picture really does tell a story.

□ Coming up in January

2024

Ladies' Brunch. The Gentlemen have a dinner in December, so members of the Pastoral & Fellowship committee are now planning a Ladies' Brunch on Thursday 25th January, 10.30 am – 1.00 pm at The Badger, Church Minshull. Details will be finalised soon and advertised in church, in The Mews and of course in the January edition of the NEWS, which will be out for Christmas.

Burns Night Celebration. And all will be welcome on Saturday 27th January to a Burns Night Supper. Preliminary details can be found on page 11. See the January NEWS for more information.

□ And in February ...

Symbols of Christianity. Our Lent Series for 2024 will be led jointly by two of our Curates, Jane Millinchip and John Stopford, with a session in The Mews each Wednesday, starting on 21st February.

Calling all W&MPC parishioners!



www.whitegatemarton-parishcouncil.org.uk/

Don't forget to check the Whitegate & Marton Parish Website from time to time. All manner of interesting information appears there, within the newsletter posted each month. The two items below come from the November edition.

- **Police Surgery at Whitegate Station House Café.** Our local Police Constable and the PCSO will be holding another surgery on 3rd December at 1.00 pm. Pop in to see them if you have anything you would like to discuss.
- **W&MPC Road Safety Survey.** Your help is needed. Please help to update the priority list of improvements needed to the roads in our parish. We are seeking to identify the Top 6 Road Risks, on which we can focus our efforts and push Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC) for progress.

Simply review our existing road safety risk assessment before completing our survey. To read it in full, follow this link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycchzhwu>

Here though is a resumé of the current six priorities, in no particular order:

Risk Area 1. **Approach to Whitegate School**

Risk Area 2. **Approach to the Beeches Recreation Room**

Risk Area 3. **Cinder Hill**

Risk Area 4. **Whitegate Lane**

Risk Area 5. **Chester Lane Brook**

Risk Area 6. **Dalefords Lane & Whitegate Road (Marton Sands)**

If you feel there is a cause for concern on other roads in the parish, then do please go online to complete our survey: <https://tinyurl.com/ktudrscs>

It will be open to complete until 31st December 2023.



WHITEGATE WI

Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month; 7.15 pm for 7.30 start, in Whitegate Recreation Room. On 6th December, Lostock Ukes will be offering a great party sing-along of Christmas favourites. To know more, contact Alison: whitegatewi@outlook.com

☐ **Contacts**

Please note that only e-mail addresses for the Vicar, 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.

<p>Vicar Rev Canon Paul Dawson 01606 889995 The Vicarage, Cinder Hill, Whitegate CW8 2BH vicaragecinderhill@outlook.com</p>	<p>Churchwardens John Duthie 01606 889836 Anne Blayney 01606 74020</p> <p>PCC Secretary Roger Wilkes 01606 75738</p>
<p>Curates Rev Dr John Stopford 01606 558802 Rev Jane Millinchip 07981 981293 Rev Margaret Byrne 07368 375970</p>	<p>Treasurer John Duthie 01606 889836</p> <p>Children's Worker Teresa Finney 01606 889311</p>
<p>Safeguarding Officer Sue Whitehead 01606 852302</p>	<p>Mothers' Union Eileen Lees 01606 786895</p>
<p>Mews Lettings Andrew Millinchip amillinchip@gmail.com</p>	<p>"News" coordinator Christine Ball 01606 593260 chrisball2022@outlook.com</p>
<p>Musical Director Andrew Millinchip 07821 810772</p>	<p>Pastoral & Fellowship Committee Alan Newton 01829 760239</p>
<p>Church Flowers Pam Davies 01606 557833</p>	<p>Social & Fundraising Group John Blayney 07964 844642</p>

☐ **JANUARY 2024 NEWS:** Comments and items for the next edition of the Monthly NEWS are always welcome. Please send to chrisball2022@outlook.com by 15th December. In the meantime, the NEWS team sends very best wishes to everyone, for a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.



Movies in The Mews

Sunday 3rd December 2023

Refreshments from 2.00 p.m.

Film starts at 2.30 p.m. prompt.



NATIVITY 2

(2012)

"A funny, feel-good, festive treat"

Written & directed by Debbie Isitt and starring David Tennant, Marc Wooten, Jason Watkins, Joanna Page & Jessica Hines

A worried new teacher has to juggle a pregnant wife and a class of children on a road trip to the National 'Song for Christmas' Competition.

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: 01606 593260 or chrisball2015@gmail.com

Gentlemen's Christmas Dinner

Join us for
festive fare
in
convivial
company

Monday 4th December

The Red Lion
Little Budworth



6.00 for 6.30 pm

To book,
contact

Alan Newton
01829 760239
acenewton513@gmail.com



Join us for a Christmas
special

Festive First Thursday Café

Thursday 7th December
10.30 am – 12.00 noon

For coffee & mince pies and
carols & Christmas cheer!

The Mews, Church Green,
WHITEGATE



St Mary's Church Whitegate Social committee present:

**A fun-filled evening commemorating
the poetry of Robbie Burns**

In Whitegate School Hall/The Mews

Including:|

- a welcome drink
- a meal with Haggis & traditional vegetables
- a Scottish dessert
- Whisky
- (Vegetarian & alcohol-free alternatives available)
- Poetry, entertainment & banter

Save the date now – booking information out soon



CAROLS AT THE ABBEY

**WITH ST MARY'S SINGERS
& DECIBELLS**

**IN THE GREAT HALL
VALE ROYAL ABBEY**



**TUESDAY 19TH
DECEMBER**

7.30 PM

**TICKETS £3 ON THE DOOR
& INCLUDE MULLED WINE &
MINCE PIES**

COME AND SING

