



# St Mary's Northchurch Newsletter



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## November 2019

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## *Lessons from the Past*

A few years ago, I visited Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. Birkenau is a few miles away from Auschwitz and the entrance is by the infamous gates through which a railway track leads you into the main camp. It is a vast area. Along the parameters of the camp can be found the remains of the gas chambers and crematoriums that were destroyed in early 1945. In one part of the camp is a sign, with the words written by George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." These are words intended to warn the reader of the dangers of racial hatred and intolerance, but also encourage the work for compassion and reconciliation.

It feels very strange that nearly 75 years after the camp was liberated the world is still struggling with the reality of racism, nationalism and extremism. Yet, they remain real issues that impact on many peoples lives. A few weeks ago, black players in the England football team were subjected to racial abuse in a game against Bulgaria. Closer to home, on the news a young British Asian footballer described his first experience of going on a football summer camp and how he left in tears after being on the receiving end of racial abuse. There has also been a peak in the number of hate crimes being reported, with a 11% increase since 2013 to nearly 79,000 reported incidents. Presumably there are a number of incidents that are not reported. Each one will have its own story, but it suggests fear and insecurity can hover over and within communities.

As we come into November and the focus on remembrance, I remember reading that in history you not only have to repent of the deeds of bad people, but also the silence and indifference of the good. From a faith perspective I believe in the power of love and forgiveness, but these are not noble goals or an exercise in wishful thinking. It requires commitment and at times hard work. It is the refusal to meet hostility and hatred with anger and

resentment. The Christian life is always an invitation into a new type of mindset. Bishop Tutu once said that "when I develop a mindset of forgiveness, rather than a mindset of grievance, I don't just forgive a particular act, I become a more forgiving person. With a grievance mindset, I look at the world and see all that is wrong. When I have a forgiveness mindset, I start to see the world not through grievance but through gratitude. In other words, I start to look at the world and see what is right." It is a refusal to live in a negative way in which fear and insecurity define how we live.

Looking back on the past at Remembrance provides a timely moment to reflect on Santayana's words.

Rev Jonathan Gordon

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### It's Gingerbread House Night again soon!



Friday 6th and Saturday 7th December.

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## This Month in 1969 ...

A War Memorial was consecrated for the second time in St Mary's Churchyard. For months, the War Memorial which had been unveiled in 1920, had lain in two pieces in the churchyard having been dismantled as the large Celtic cross had become unsafe. The original base on which the cross stood had proved too small and had begun to crack.

Earlier in 1969, a Committee had been formed under the chairmanship of Fred Phillips, the Headmaster of the village school and Reader at St Mary's church, to raise funds to renovate the memorial. It was soon realised however, that to replace the engraved wording on the original base, together with the list of 46 men from 1914-1919 and the 13 names from 1939-1946, would be very costly.

After consideration, the committee decided to commission a larger replacement base with a simple new engraved dedication, onto which the original Celtic cross would be placed. The old base, still showing the names of 'the Fallen', would be suitably patched up and placed close by. The cost of the

work was £320, some £4,500 in current day terms, and represented a substantial amount of money at the time. Nevertheless, with contributions of £50 each from the British Legion and Berkhamsted Urban District Council, the restoration work began.

The stonemason commissioned was Reg Newsam, an experienced stonemason in his late thirties. Using York Bluestone, which was the nearest match he could find to the original stone, he set to work fashioning the base and adding the dedication.

The service of rededication took place immediately following the normal Remembrance Day service in the church, and was led by the Rector of St Mary's, Revd. Bernard Hughes. Following the rededication, representatives from the Northchurch Scouts and Guides, the British Legion and the Armed Forces laid their wreaths for the first time against the newly restored memorial as they have continued to do ever since.

Richard North



## The wonderful spider

Do you like spiders? Some members of my family definitely do not.

A few summers back, I was sitting outside at a table on the terrace, when one of those very little spiders turned up on the page of the book I was reading. This posed a problem, for I wanted to turn the page. If I tried to brush it away, I risked spreading it; while, if I turned the page regardless, it would be crushed between the pages. Yes, my concern was more for my book than for the spider. But I had a solution. With one mighty puff, I blasted the 8-legged arachnid into space. Then, job done, I calmly turned the page.

But the spider had not done with me. For a glint in the sunshine drew my eye to a fine thread of gossamer, bridging the gap between table and wall. There, half way along it, was the self-same spider, busily climbing back to the place whence it had been so unceremoniously ejected.

I looked in amazement. You wonderful little creature! Not much bigger than a pin-head, in that brief instant of crisis you were able to spin such a thread. And what determination, that you are even now climbing back.

We may not all believe that the Genesis account of creation is to be understood as scientific. But we cannot but notice that, creation completed, "God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good." That is an insight that runs through the Bible and challenges our attitudes to the world around us. It is good!

Even spiders? Yes. As I discovered in my moment of wonder at realising what even they can do.

That does not mean that I would have the courage to pick up the spider in the bath.

David White

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## The Way Inn Bookshop

I wonder if you have ventured into The Way Inn bookshop at the back of the Post Office just lately?

It's a place where you can find so much! At the moment you will see a sprinkle of Christmas making it's entrance. I actually love to see this happen. The shop adds something more each week, until it feels like something magical has happened, It's full of Christmas stock! Cards, Nativity sets, presents for everyone, even a Prayer Christmas Tree that customers can add a prayer to as they pass through. Then, by Christmas week it usually is filled with prayers on decorative baubles, angels or stars.

Over the past few years, they have struggled with volunteers, and support, but as they go through the next few weeks, it will be the busiest time of the year and all help is gratefully received.

You might not know how this place became part of the High Street of Berkhamsted? It was started by a study group gathering together, who sent a letter to one of the churches to see if they could help. Since then every church here in Berkhamsted and the surrounding villages has been included and help achieve 29 years in business. Next year in July they will celebrate 30 years in business and a time to give thanks once again for God's hand on everything that has happened to them in Berkhamsted High Street.

There is still a need to support others and be encouraged ourselves. The Way Inn was formed at a time when there was only one tea shop in Lower Kings Road, and it was always full! It opened in a small way as a coffee shop with a Christian message, giving support to all who came in. The Post Office was part of this vision. It's a shop for everyone who uses The Post Office services, church supplies, cards, books, stationery and gifts in the High street of Berkhamsted. Over the years of being a ministry in the High Street, they have been able to help those folk who walk in off the street for a chat, filling out forms, food bank, counselling, even a cuppa and a chat, and many other situations. Some difficult, some much easier to solve.

Today they need your support in new youth to help with a

paid Saturday job, they need staff who will be gifted in sales, they need pledges of money to support the survival of this charity, which can be gift aided. They need help with expertise in finance, workers on the shop floor and with a vision for the future, and if you can't help in any of these ways, please pray for the shop and it's future. All profits of the shop have always been given out to people who need it, it's part of their care and support for this community. But lately they haven't been able to support even the most vulnerable. That's why we are asking for your help.

Their vision has always been to help those in need, support each person in a friendly manner, and to bless each person as they enter the shop, this happens without them knowing. They are blessed with a happy face and good faithful and essential products that will have been seen through any shopping experience. Something that we all want as we enter a happy, clean and well directed sales shop floor.

Christmas is coming and it will be the boost they need to aid a busy and happy time of the year. It's my favourite time and am very conscious that I could have Christmas on the shelves all year round! But I know it's not for everyone. Practically we need help in the shop, by dedicated staff that have set hours. This will make the shop run smoothly and the stock priced and put out and away, ready for others to display. Have a look in and give them your support...

Peggy Sear

### St Mary's Nativity Play

The Nativity Play this year will be on Sunday 15th December at 10am and all children are welcome. We will be practising the Sunday before and would love to have as many there as possible. However if you only come on the 15th, do still come with children already dressed in a nativity costume, and join in!



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## Concert Review: Resurrection Choir of St Petersburg

I am sorry if you missed the concert of October 6th given by the 'Resurrection' choir of St Petersburg because it was exceptional. The choir was only eight strong but with eyes closed one would have thought they were at least twice that number. The youngest member is Nikita, a tenor in his early twenties while the basso profundo Anatoliy is in his 70's.

The choir was founded over 25 years ago by the present conductor Jurij Maruk and regularly tours in Europe. On Saturday the programme included sacred works in the first half and folk songs after the interval, all of them by Russian composers.

In traditional Russian Orthodox liturgy there is no instrumental accompaniment and the deep bass (known also as an octavist because the singer reaches an octave below normal bass voices) is considered essential. Anatoliy Artamonov reached astonishing depths. All the singers

blended perfectly as a choir but were able to show their very different qualities when each one gave a solo performance. Without exception the sacred music was thrilling and moving. A group of local singers (rehearsed by Richard Grylls) joined the Russian octet for a performance of Chesnokov's Odyeyaisa Svyetom which concluded the first half. This was greatly enjoyed by the English singers and our Russian proved acceptable.

The folk songs in the second half allowed the soloists to show their more operatic and dramatic qualities. Although most were deeply sad, Down Deep within the Cellar, sung by Anatoliy, raised many smiles and laughs as the bass became increasingly drunk and amusing.

We hope they will return in 2020 – don't miss them next time. Watch this space for details!

Christina Locke

### St MARY'S CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR ROOF REPAIR FUND

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## Sunday Services at St Mary's



**3rd November**      *All Saints*

8.00am    Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.00am    Parish Eucharist  
6.00pm    Memorial Service

**10th November**      *Remembrance Sunday*

8.00am    Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.00am    Morning Service

**17th November**      *Second before Advent*

8.00am    Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.00am    Parish Eucharist  
6.00pm    Evening Prayer

**24th November**      *Christ the King*

8.00am    Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.00am    Parish Eucharist



### It's Gingerbread House Night again!

We are holding the women's Gingerbread House Night again and this year we are doing it TWICE! We sell out every time, so this year it is on Friday December 6<sup>th</sup> from 8pm and Saturday December 7<sup>th</sup> at 6pm, both in the Parish Rooms. Saturday is aimed at a younger audience, so ideal for groups of girls, with or without help depending on age, whereas Friday is our traditional women's night.

If you have never made a Gingerbread House before, it's easy and lots of fun! And if you have, you'll know they make great decorations or gifts or just a special treat for Christmas. You'll be given gingerbread slabs for the walls and roof and everything you need to decorate and package your house beautifully! Refreshments will be provided and there will be a short talk to help us think about why Christmas really is such a great cause for celebration.

So do come – and bring your friends too! Tickets £12.50. Book via the St Mary's Church website [www.stmarysnorthchurch.co.uk](http://www.stmarysnorthchurch.co.uk) or contact Alison Cheshire 07714 335 452 or Penny Coase 07957 163 893 with any queries.

### Contacts for the Newsletter

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