

St Mary's Northchurch Newsletter



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Dec-Jan 2019

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Steps forward and steps backwards

This month's newsletter provides a chance to wish everyone a very peaceful and happy Christmas and New Year. Over the coming month a number of special services will be taking place at St Mary's at which you will be very welcome. There is a list of services provided within the newsletter alongside a notice about a forthcoming Alpha Course in 2020 and information about this will be given out at the Gingerbread Evening in early December.

Over the last few months St Mary's has been open in the day for anyone who wants to come in to say a prayer or have a time of quiet. Christmas can be a time when we come back to church after an absence or maybe for a first time visit if we are curious about what is going on. Whatever the reason there is a great sense of community and belonging that can come through singing the well-known carols and hearing the familiar story of the birth of Jesus. As a vicar it is a very special time with a combination of school services and nativities, alongside the traditional Carol by Candlelight and celebrating the Eucharist at the Midnight Mass. I have been a Vicar now for over thirty years and Christmas is always a special time. I was listening to a Bruce Springsteen song on Youtube recently and he said "the older you get, the more it means," and that made a great deal of sense.

I have been part of the church now most of my life and it is something that I have grown up with. My father was a minister and the church has always been a constant from childhood to the present. I did not have a sudden conversion in which I can say that this was the day I became a Christian, rather, it has been a process of steps forward and steps backwards, making mistakes, and meeting really good people that helped me grow and move forward. I can't imagine not having a faith and although there are many things around us that are troubling and defy easy answers and comprehension, I tend to come back

to the Christmas message that at the very centre of everything, at the beginning and the end, is a loving God.

If you are curious about the church, faith and even the mysteries of the universe you might find an Alpha Course very helpful. Please do come along to any of the Christmas services and there are special services for children. The Nativity Service is 10.00am on December 15th and there is also a children's corner and a creche. Whatever your age, and whether you are local or a visitor, it will be really good to see you.

Rev Jonathan Gordon

Christmas Services

15th December Advent 3

- 8.00am Holy Communion
- 10.00am Nativity Service
- 5.00pm Community Carols at Northchurch Social Centre

22nd December Advent 4

- 8.00am Holy Communion
- 10.00am Parish Eucharist
- 6.00pm Carols by Candlelight

Christmas Eve

- 5.00pm Crib Service
- 11.30pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

- 8.00am Holy Communion
- 10.00am Parish Eucharist

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Wed 7.00pm to 8.15pm

The Wyne—Berkhamsted Arts Centre
**Mon 6.45pm to 8.00pm &
8.15pm to 9.30pm**

BAYoga Studio, Berkhamsted High St.
Thurs 11am to 12.30pm

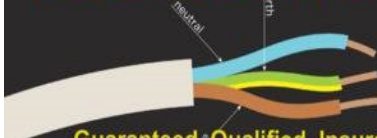
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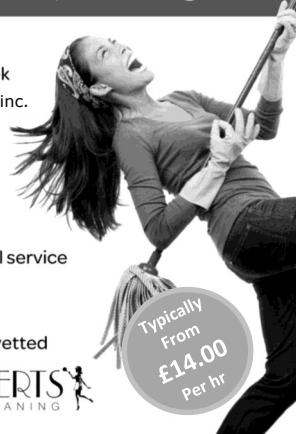
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This Month in 1888 ...

The death was announced of Mrs Eleanor Elspit Brooke of Northchurch House, Northchurch. Born in Nottingham in 1805, Eleanor Brooke was a member of the Hadden family who ran a successful hosiery business in the city. In December 1831, Eleanor married Richard Brooke, a wealthy Liverpool solicitor and well-known historian specialising in the Wars of the Roses, with several well-received books to his name. Richard Brooke died at the family home in Liverpool in 1861, aged 70, leaving his estate of £30,000 (some £3,500,000 in today's terms) to his widow. Two years later, the Hadden family purchased the Rossway estate in Northchurch and it was this that probably prompted Eleanor to move south with her son and daughter and buy Northchurch House, where she subsequently employed four servants.

Following the Grant of Probate in January 1889, Eleanor's Executors decided to sell Northchurch House and its grounds by auction. Described in an advertisement in the *Bucks Herald* that month as "a most desirable freehold property comprising a comfortable red bricked country residence containing nearly 20 rooms situate in well-matured grounds... surrounded by lawns, pleasure grounds and park-like meadow land studded with trees", the Northchurch House estate stood where the current parade of shops and nearby housing now stands on the corner of Darrs Lane and the High Street. At that time, a

small plot of land on the north side of the High Street also belonged to the estate and included a row of six cottages and meadows that stretched as far as the river Bulborne. Overall the estate covered some 40 acres.

The auction was held the following May, but with the reserve price of £7,500 not being reached it was not sold. The estate was later purchased in a private sale by the Barnett family who would later make considerable changes to the property.

Richard North



Do you believe them?

I often connect a memorable phrase with a person. So it is that I associate "Grinding the faces of the poor" with Professor Black, intoning the phrase in his soft Dublin brogue, while teaching about the distribution of income – who gets what and why. The point was, do people get what they earn, or are some people simply better at grabbing a large share of the cake?

"Grinding the faces of the poor" is picture language. Two heavy millstones turn, one against the other. In go the ears of corn, to be reduced to powder. So the unscrupulous rich feed in the poor, to be reduced to powder. By "faces", it is implying the whole person. More, it is by their face that we most readily recognise someone, that they communicate. Between the millstones of economic activity, that which is most personal, someone's identity, their capacity to interact with us, is reduced to powder.

The phrase comes from Isaiah. It is part of a concise and damning condemnation of negligent and abusive government. "Tell the innocent how fortunate they are, for they shall eat the fruit of their labours?... You have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your

houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the faces of the poor?"

We are in the middle of an election. Few would deny that many in our society feel that their needs are being neglected. Leading politicians are casting spending promises like confetti as they seek to convince the voter that their rule will usher in a time of justice and righteousness.

Should we believe them? I am told that one candidate, at a party adoption meeting in our area, was so frank as to say that the party's spending promises would be quickly forgotten, after they had served their purpose of "doing what it takes" to win.

This sort of "doing what it takes" only works if people are naïve enough to believe such cynical promises. For myself, I prefer to look for those whose plans for reform seem to flow from a track record of implementing reform and to be seriously thought out. Throwing confetti just leaves a problem that others have to sweep up.

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Nick Laing's Fundraising Challenge

In April I took on a challenge to run 500 miles before the end of the year. Visioncare For Homeless People (VCHP) is a charity run entirely by volunteers to provide eyecare for homeless people. Giving a better quality of vision to a homeless person, allowing them to read properly, see those around them clearly, sounds simple but without the charity this basic necessity would not be possible for many hundreds of homeless people.

The challenge was to run the distance that it would take to run from the furthest south clinic, Exeter to the most northerly, Leeds. In all there are 8 clinics: Brighton, 3 in London, Birmingham and as I write, I've reached Manchester, with just the last leg of the route to account for. As some of you know I've not been running the real route but, in fact running locally and totting up the mileage on my running App. Basically I needed to double my normal mileage to achieve the target. It's been at times, very wet, running in Florida was very hot and I have genuinely not settled for easy routes! It would have been easy to but I have every weekend run somewhere between 7 and 13 miles including up Kings Road. Now as I begin to reach the target, I'm feeling more weary every week and would love your support for this terrific little charity. You can find out more about them on www.vchp.org.uk

If you can sponsor my efforts... go to: uk.virginmoneygiving.com and search Nick Laing

Support my 500 mile running challenge and help Vision Care for Homeless People reach more people with the gift of sight!

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Edwina

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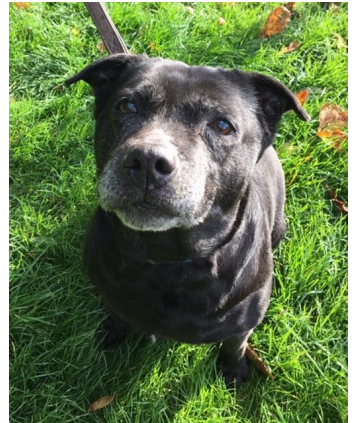
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If you can offer Susie or any of our other dogs a loving and secure home, please phone or call in at the kennels any day between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. We have restrictions on rehoming dogs to families with children under seven. Full details of the rehoming process can be found on our website, or contact the kennels. Join our Facebook group to see more photos and information.

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Christmas Services at St Mary's



1st December *Advent Sunday*

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.00am Parish Eucharist
6.00pm Advent Carols

8th December *Advent 2*

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.00am Parish Eucharist

15th December *Advent 3*

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.00am Nativity Service
5.00pm Community Carols at Northchurch Social Centre

22nd December *Advent 4*

8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.00am Parish Eucharist
6.00pm Carols by Candlelight

Christmas Eve

5.00pm Crib Service
11.30pm Midnight Mass



Christmas Day

8.00am Holy Communion
10.00am Parish Eucharist



29th December *Christmas 1*

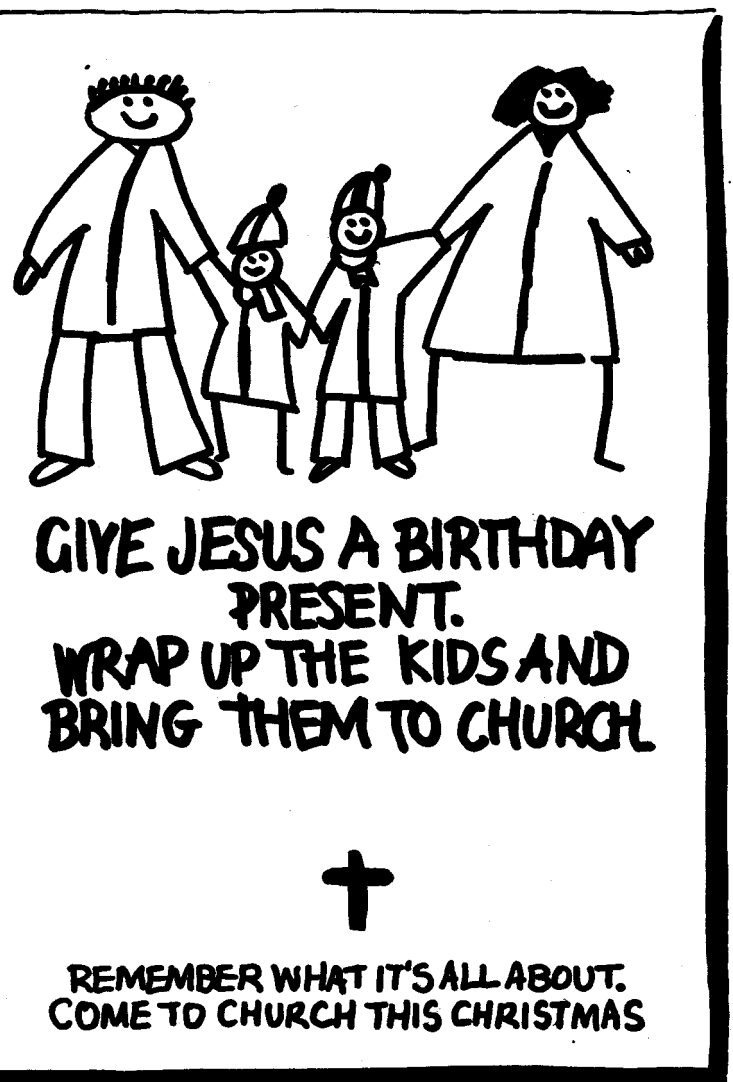
10.00am Morning Prayer

northchurch social centre

You are warmly invited to **Community Carols** at 5pm on Sunday, 15th December at Northchurch Social Centre.

Join us for an hour of festive readings and carols from clubs, societies and churches in our village, followed by tea, coffee and mince pies

For more information about the Social Centre, events and hire, visit www.northchurch-social-centre.co.uk



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Distribution to Valerie Clark, 07821 896734 . Advertising & editorial by email to the Editor, Jill Hipson Jill.hipson@live.co.uk.

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