

OAK HILL GROUP OF PARISHES

(Alderton, Gt. Washbourne,
Dumbleton & Wormington)

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Star of Wonder

JANUARY 2023

Dear Friends

Happy New Year and welcome to 2023. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all who took part or attended our wonderful Carols Services, Carols in the Churchyard, our Midnight Services and Christmas Day Services – a God-filled journey! Likewise a grateful thanks for your generous donations to the various charities we support. I'm praying that you've had a wonderful Christmas, surrounded by family, friends, and the **supernatural joy** that comes from reflecting on the birth of Christ.

As a lifelong lover of stories, I love watching the children perform the nativity story in some shape or form – I managed to get to three Nativities and to the Oak Hill School Carol Service – well done to the children and to all involved in the preparation of them. This year, I was particularly struck by the Angels.

Recently a friend asked 'are there really Angels'? This brought to mind the events at St Catherine's church one Christmas morning, not so long ago. We experienced a miraculous 'Breaking of the Bread' at our Communion Service. When preparing the 'High Altar', I put a large wafer, which was intact, on the plate placed on the Altar. I then moved away from the Altar to the table where the water and the wine are kept and filled the silver cup with wine and water, I therefore had my back to the Altar; on my return to the Altar, and to my amazement, the large wafer had been perfectly broken and half of it placed on the right side of the plate and the other on the left side of the plate. I was the only person present at the Altar! I explained to the congregation what had just happened, and they were as amazed as I was; I really felt I was not alone at the Altar on that wonderful Christmas morning! An Angel, or perhaps Christ himself! During my journey to finally becoming a Priest, I have various stories of these spiritual/angelic experiences, where I have felt God talking to me through messengers. Likewise, it's wonderful when people share with me, their own experiences.

The coming of God to Earth through His Son means a tired world gets to celebrate with eternal joy... a sentiment that transcends far beyond just the holiday season!

As a new year dawns it seems as if there are lots of challenges to face. We think of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the huge implications of that in terms of loss of life in both Ukraine and Russia; climate changes; millions facing starvation because of drought; the rising food costs at markets; and as we emerge from the worst excesses of the pandemic we are mindful of the impact it has had upon our mental health.

Within our country, this winter could be difficult for many. Our churches, in communities across the country, are already reporting alarming rises in demand for foodbanks and other services which have become a lifeline. It's heart-breaking to hear of people who just a year ago were donating to foodbanks, but who are now using them themselves. Many of our churches are among the more than 3,700 public spaces which are opening up during this winter as a Warm Space for people amid surging energy bills.

People are still understandably cautious about coming out to large gatherings and many have withdrawn; many groups and activities have seen their attendances suffer as people are fearful for their health or maybe they are shielding a loved one who is vulnerable; in some areas many people for all sorts of reasons have got disconnected and disengaged from the life of the church, and yet many are looking for the 'Spiritual'.

'A cold coming we had of it. Just the worst time of the year. For a journey and such a long journey.' (Journey of the Magi, T.S. Eliot). In this poem, T.S. Eliot imagines the journey of the Magi to worship Jesus, as told in Matthew 2. This story is at the heart of our celebration of the Epiphany Season we are now journeying through. We remember the astrologers from the East following a star to find the baby: Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and ask, 'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.' (Matthew 2:1,2)

The Magi provide a powerful picture of the journey we make in searching for God in our lives. Like them, it requires time and effort (they travelled for months) and will not always be easy! As they followed the star, so we are called to pursue God's light in our lives.

What does this say to us at the beginning of a New Year; are we ready to go deeper in our relationship with God; are we like the Magi, ready to commit ourselves to pursuing Him - to His light? T.S. Eliot used the journey of the Magi to reflect on his own spiritual journey. It reveals the pain and doubts he experienced on his long and troubled journey to find the light

The message of Salvation remains the same. It's found in Jesus Christ and in His redeeming love. It's a hope that was made possible by his sacrificial death on the Cross at Calvary and His rising from the dead. Let's make no mistake about it - people still need to find peace with God and will find meaning and purpose through a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ, there is nothing more spiritual and transforming!!!

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a wonderfully blessed New Year and may you experience the warmth of God's love as you journey through 2023. Julia x

ALDERTON

BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER: the re-arranged date for Bishop Rachel to visit our group of 4 Oak Hill Churches and take the service will be on **Sunday 22nd January at 10.30am in Alderton**. Do come and join us and give her a good welcome. Bishop Rachel's first career was as a Speech and Language Therapist then she trained as a Priest and worked in London. She was ordained as the first female Bishop. She is the Bishop responsible for HM Prisons and is the Patron of the Nelson Trust in Stroud who support people who have faced trauma and addiction. She also works for a charity which raises awareness of body image anxiety in young people.

CHRISTMAS FAIR: there was a lovely busy atmosphere in the village hall for this and it was great to have such a good attendance. The children enjoyed meeting Father Christmas in his entrance grotto and playing the games. There was a wide variety of stalls with lovely products and activities and an excellent raffle. The final total raised was £2146 including the raffle and the sale of the calendars so far has raised £875 giving a total of £3020.

Thank you to everyone who supported these events by providing or attending. There are 16 calendars left so contact Sarah Hughes if you would still like one - we hope you enjoy the photos each month.

CANDLELIT CAROL AND CHRITINGLE SERVICE: it was enjoyable singing some favourite carols in the candlelight, aided by a Christingle! The Church looked attractive with all the candles and flower arrangements so thank you to all who decorated the Church. Do go and look at the flowers - they keep well in the Church, especially at this time of the year! The collection raised £152 for the Children's Society so thank you to those who donated.

CAROL SINGING IN THE CHURCHYARD: we were very lucky with the weather to be able to be outside again this year and it was great to have a good crowd to join in the singing. And it was also lovely to have the children there to take part in a short Nativity play and to set up the crib. People seem to enjoy the refreshments of mulled wine, hot dogs, mince pies and hot chocolate. Thank you for the donations which after expenses made £113 towards church maintenance.

GREAT WASHBOURNE

THANK YOU to everyone for supporting St. Mary's Church over the last year. It was lovely that so many people were able to make the Carol singing and the Christmas Day Service, thank you to Fliss Hall for leading the service.

We wish everyone a **HAPPY and HEALTHLY 2023** and look forward to seeing you at our January services. The next **SOCIAL DATE** for your diaries is Saturday 15th April for the **FAMILY QUIZ**, please do pencil it in!

DUMBLETON

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL! But just as we leave 2022 we wish to thank everyone who has helped, supported or donated in any way to St Peter's during the past twelve months. The P.C.C. are extremely grateful to you all, the church could not function without your input. We also thank everyone who kindly donated food and gifts towards the Christmas Hamper Appeal which was sent to the North Cotswold Foodbank. Our donations amounted to 26kgs. A fantastic effort for which we have received a lovely thank you letter.

SUNDAY JANUARY 1st! Come to our **NEW YEARS DAY SERVICE** at 10.30am! This will be a very **RELAXED CAFE** Service where we will be serving **BACON BAPS, COFFEE/TEA** etc and would warmly welcome your company. Come and join us herald in the New Year.

SUNDAY JANUARY 29th! Please join us for this special **CANDLELIT** service at **4pm** to celebrate **CANDLEMAS TOGETHER WITH CHRITINGLE**. This promises to be a lovely service and it would be so nice to have some children/families take part. If your child is interested please contact Jenny Maher 01386 881474 or Gail Braham 07521750087. The Christingle part of the service is in support of The Children's Society who do great work by helping homeless and vulnerable young people.

It is hoped to have a **FUN**draising Film Night during January but no date is set as yet. So look out for a poster in the bus shelter and also the Village WhatsApp for details. From the Registers: Baptism 4th December, Grace Frances Mary Moyers.

WORMINGTON

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL. A big **THANK YOU** to everyone for supporting St. Catherine's Church over the last year. It was lovely that so many people were able to make the Carol singing and the Christmas Day Services. Thanks also to Chris Haslam for leading the Christmas Day service.

SERVICES FOR JANUARY 2023

Lectionary Year A

1st Jan 2023 1 st Sun Christmas 2 Naming of Christ White	A very relaxed and informal Service to welcome in 2023! 10.30 am - Dumbleton		
8th Jan 2 nd Sunday Epiphany White	9.00am WORMINGTON Epiphany HC	10.30am ALDERTON Epiphany HC	Isaiah 60.1-6 Ephesians 3.1-12 Matthew 2.1-12
15th Jan 3 rd Sunday Eph 2 White	9.00am GT WASHBOURNE Epiphany HC	10.30am DUMBLETON Epiphany HC	Isaiah 49.1-7 1 Corinthians 1.1-9 John 1.29-42
22nd Jan 4 th Sunday Eph 3 White	Team Wide Service - 10.30 am - ALDERTON Oak Hill Parishes welcomes Bishop Rachel to lead us in worship. Epiphany HC 1 Corinthians 1.10-18 Matthew 4.12-23		
29th Jan 5 th Sunday Eph 4 White		4.00pm DUMBLETON Candlemas/Christingle Service	Malachi 3.1-5 Hebrews 2.14-end Luke 2.22-40
5th Feb 1 st Sun 3 Lent Green	9.00am WORMINGTON	10.30am ALDERTON HC CW	Isaiah 58.1-9a, [9b-12] Ephesians 1 Cor 2.1-12 [13-end] Matthew 5.13.20

CHURCHWARDENS

ALDERTON

Mr. M. Newman, 18 Courtiers Drive, Bishops Cleeve 01242 675028
 Mrs S Reid, 4 Culls Meadow, Toddington 01242 621265

GREAT WASHBOURNE

Mrs J. Kent, Washbourne House, Gt. Washbourne 01242 620291
 Mrs Jane Harrington, Orchard View, Great Washbourne 07766 483130

DUMBLETON (PCC Secretary and Wedding Secretary)

Mrs T. Steggles, Bracklin, Main St. Dumbleton 01386 882049

WORMINGTON

Mr J. Evetts, Middle Hill Farm, Saintbury, Worcs. 07799035873
 Mrs A. Piercy, Dairymead, Wormington 01386 584416