

Upton-cum-Chalvey Extra

News and views from our team churches

Advent 2024

Confirmation

The biggest event in the life of our parish this year, and possible for a few years, was surely the confirmation service which we hosted for the deanery on All Saints Sunday. Bishop Jonathan confirmed twenty-two candidates, the largest number that many of us can remember. St Mary's was full of their families and supporters. Candidates came from this parish and St Paul's Slough and St George's Britwell. St Mary's was the perfect venue for such a special event and everything about the day said, "joy and celebration." The service was a big challenge for Sharon, our Cantor, and some of our newer servers, and they came through this test with flying colours. The younger candidates met together each week for preparation by Fr Andrew and they have already met again - the nucleus of a new parish youth group.

The Confirmation was a wonderful sign of God at work in our churches. The candidates, and their faith, are gifts to us all. It was an important step in their spiritual journeys and a significant moment of renewal for our parish some of our candidates share their thoughts below.

Congratulations to Nickson, Irvin, Jenis, Jacob, Raquel, and Donna.

Raquel I was thrilled, and it was a great day in my life. It made me feel closer to God. It was a lovely experience.

Jacob My confirmation made me feel closer to my church and my religion.

Donna Confirmation to me (at a later stage of my life) meant that I was really sure that I wanted to confirm my faith in Jesus Christ/God. I have been receiving signs/nudges from God that I was ready - so when the opportunity arose to get confirmed in St Mary's - the church I attended as a young girl - it was the perfect time. Receiving the confirmation on 3 November 2024 for the first time was absolutely divine. The timing was perfect for me - I was ready within my heart to accept Jesus Christ/God.

I am most grateful to receive the Bread and Wine at communion. Receiving the bread and wine replenishes my "cup" when it needs re-filling.

The confirmation service was lovely, and it was brilliant to see so many young candidates also being confirmed.

Nickson Being confirmed is important to me because it enables me to be a part of the Christian family and also a part of Jesus' children. It helps me to improve my daily life and to be the best that I can be.

Jenis I am 14 years old. I began my confirmation classes conducted by Father Andrew. I was taught about the important milestones like the advent calendar, last supper, my importance in the Christian community among many other things. I was gifted a Bible on the occasion, and I am wanting to make myself thorough at it. Father Scott was kind enough to make me a server at St. Mary's. He is patient and approachable. Him, along with Father Andrew, made the event memorable. I tasted the wine and bread for the first time with delight and reverence.

St. Mary's, Slough.

As we move towards the start of Advent and then the Christmas celebrations we can reflect on a very busy few weeks and look forward to the coming season.

Our congregation is slowly growing and we are pleased to welcome new families and their children. Each week under the guidance of Shelein they produce some amazing pieces of arts and craft. Very often they are so busy that it is not possible to show off their work during the service. Please make time to pop over and see what they have learnt and produced. Our children are busy rehearsing a **Nativity Play** for Donkey Carols.

The timing of our service does not make it easy to socialise over lunch, but this year we were able to enjoy a bring-and-share Brunch after our **Harvest Festival** service which was enjoyed by all, and we were also able to make a sizeable food collection for the local Food Bank.

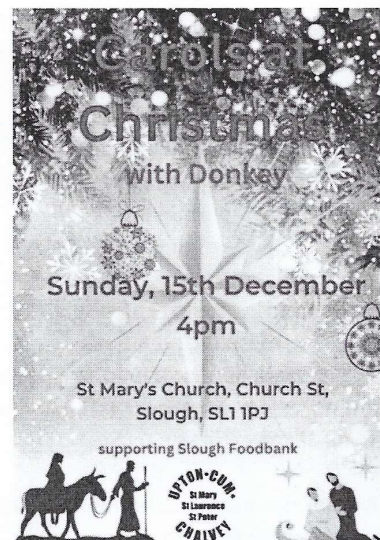
Both our local **schools** visited us recently with St. Mary's Reception celebrating Harvest. A big adventure for very small people who walked from Yew Tree Road. Year 7 from Slough and Eton visited St. Marys as part of their introduction to Christianity. Fr Andrew led the session appearing in a new guise, a Vicar, to students who were only used to seeing him in school as their Chaplain. Both schools also took part in the **Herschel Music Project** with the Dionysus Ensemble. The final concert for parents, pupils and supporters took place in church. The Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Mayor, MP, town councillors, uniformed organisations and members of the public came to St. Marys after the Act of Remembrance in the town

centre for the **Civic Service of Remembrance** and the laying of wreaths at the Town War Memorial. A service which continues to grow.

Looking ahead:

Slough Music Service are holding their **Carol Concert** on Tuesday 3rd December joined by schools from around the town you would be welcome to join parents and friends. There will be nine schools taking part this year and the standard of music is always very high. **Long Close School** will be holding their **Carol Service** on Monday 9th December. Two opportunities to enjoy and join in the Carols.

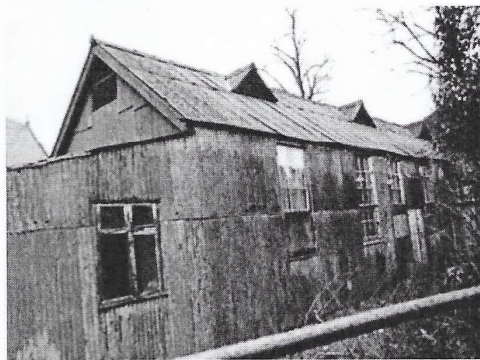
Then of course on Sunday 15th December at 4pm we will be joined by donkey, Sally again as we for the **Town Carol Service, Donkey Carols**. The service will also support Slough Food Bank. The service was advertised in the Slough Express so hopefully this will remind families who used to attend that the service has resumed after the break for Covid. **Carols in Herschel Park** will be on 22nd December t 12.30pm.



St Peter's Chalvey.

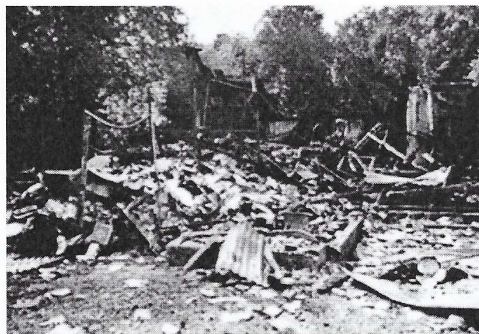
A Church Village Hall - Twenty Years in the Making.

The year was 2004, the venue, St Peter's Church Hall, which as history informs us was not to be a good year back then...



St Peter's Church Hall

Whilst old, the church hall, (with toilets) was not only a source of income for St Peter's but was also well used by groups from the local community. Regrettably, in 2004 a disastrous fire destroyed the hall to rubble.



After the fire

Twenty years on, St Peter's Church is still without a hall which has meant that the activities of the church have been severely

restricted. The loss of the hall also meant the loss of the toilets but thanks to a few volunteers' new toilets were built linked in an area between the church and the vestry in 2016.

It has often been said that our old Church Village Hall provided a sense of belonging and unity and with that in mind, the desire to rebuild a new hall still remains today. The church wants to provide a new hall, by extending and modernising the existing vestry creating a versatile space that can host a wide range of events and allowing community members to come together. Earlier in the year, a visit from DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee) took place to discuss our development proposals and plans have been designed and approved by the congregation.

So, after twenty years St Peter's Church will in 2025 have a concerted push and will be looking for help by everyone associated with the church, to support this great cause.

Christmas Services in our Parish:

Donkey Carols at St Mary's on Sunday 15th December at 4.00 pm.

Crib Service at St Laurence's on Christmas Eve at 4pm.

Midnight Mass at St Peter's on Christmas Eve at 11.30pm.

Christmas Morning Eucharist at St Mary's at 9.30 am.

On the **Sunday after Christmas** (29th December), there will be a joint service at St Mary's (10.00am) followed by Bring & Share Lunch.

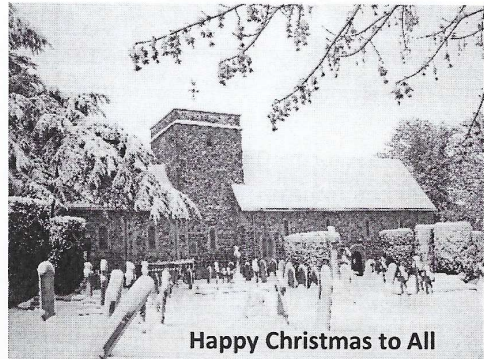
St Laurence, Upton

Coming to the end of a very busy year in which we have had changes, with a new Team Vicar and not least to our congregation with the sad death of Dave Kill, Deputy Churchwarden, Treasurer and much more. We are still catching up with his paperwork, with Jacqueline stepping in as Treasurer, Julie has been coping with other admin including Parish returns and the dreaded "F" word.

I mean **Faculties**, it has taken nearly a year to obtain permission to install new Herschel infrared heaters in the Chancel so that we can 'zone' this area for smaller meetings without having to run the gas boiler to heat the whole church. As I write, new quotes are being sought to get on with the work which will probably be sometime in early February. This will be the second phase to reducing our carbon footprint, we have already replaced all remaining lighting with LED and sensors in the vestry and toilet.

The subject of replacing our aged "gas" boiler has been broached with the Diocesan Advisory Committee, with all the arguments for and against using gas. We await their initial reaction and comments. This will be a long process so watch this space.

Another 'F' word used a lot at St Laurence's is **FUNdraising**. Many thanks to all those who have supported us in making, selling or buying our wares. Fayres attended this year included two Eton Action events, two Duck Days and our own annual Santa's Special, the latter generating £2,100 profit. At Easter we did a grand trade in silk flowers and Christ-mas saw a glut of homemade cards c/o Cyra and Cath.



Christmas **festivities** in December begin with our Dedication and Gift Day (many thanks for your donations towards general church funds). This is followed by our Christmas lunch with friends and family. 'Carols and Cake' accompanied by the Herschel Ukes will happen on 12th December 2 – 4pm. Our Christingle will take place at Candlemas on 2nd February. See the pink leaflet in church or website Diary on www.saint-laurence.com for full details of the season.

The clergy have presented us with a liturgical calendar to which the churches are adding events which will be discussed at the January PCC. Church lunches will continue, if you have any ideas for a theme or other suggestions for activities please be in touch.

The topic of **Finance** is never far from our Local Committee Meeting Agendas and we need to set our 2025 Budget. If you feel you can make a weekly giving pledge and do not yet use giving envelopes or if you can convert to Direct Debit, please have a word with Allan James, a regular pledge aids greatly with our budgeting.