

St. Margaret's

LOWESTOFT



'The Spire'

December & January 2024



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and the outreach work of St. Margaret's Church





Welcome to our new taster Magazine!

We hope you enjoy reading these articles,
If you do, why not pick up your full copy of the
Church magazine from
St. Margaret's, for only £1,
and read more articles in our bumper
December / January edition.



WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU TO
ST. MARGARET'S OVER THE FESTIVE SEASON!

Christmas Services

...come along & join in the festive fun!



Sunday 17th December 6pm – Christmas Carol Service

Christmas Eve 4pm – Christingle

Christmas Eve 11.30pm – Midnight Mass

Christmas Day 10am – Family Communion Service



VIEWPOINT

As our minds turn towards Christmas and the traditions we associate with it, perhaps this year with all that has happened in the middle east we might want to rethink our approach. As we reach December we are bombarded by adverts and pressures to have that *perfect* Christmas, but this is in stark contrast to the pictures we see of the violence in Israel and Palestine. As we reflect on the account of Jesus birth in Bethlehem, an area of Palestine, perhaps we need to reflect more on the biblical accounts themselves. Jesus was born to an unmarried mother – accepted in 21st century Britain but shocking in the time and culture of Jesus' birth; the stable was probably the ground floor of a house where the animals were kept; and after being visited by shepherds and kings Mary and Joseph had to flee with Jesus to avoid the wrath of Herod, so He became exiled and a refugee.

Jesus' arrival into the human world was not easy but fraught with difficulties. The situation in the middle east is fraught with difficulties.

Many of us are faced with issues we would like to change but none of these things detract from the fact that Christmas is about God's love.

And so, coming back to a time of reflection, Advent is that time not only for preparation for Christmas, but an opportunity to stop and reflect on life, death and resurrection; a time to think about Jesus' promise of his return, a time to celebrate that whatever happens, God does not stop loving us and so in Him we can have hope and look forward to what will happen tomorrow and in the future.

So, what is the meaning of Christmas? St. John sums it up in chapter 3, verses 16 & 17:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

As we look to the new year, I believe we need to focus on prayer. In preparation for this I intend to have the church open for midday prayers on Mondays and Wednesdays in December during advent. I hope this can then carry on as we look towards our lent groups where again the focus will be on exploring prayer.

Simon

View from the doghouse

I sometimes wonder if a doghouse is anything like a stable! What was the stable like that Jesus was born in I wonder? Was it draughty, and were Mary and Joseph sent there because society assumed they had done something wrong, just like I'm sent to the doghouse when I'm in trouble? Well, I think we know that story and that the stable allowed anyone to visit, poor or powerful. I think the doghouse is a bit like that too and as I seem to spend a lot of time in it, please do visit me!

As we think about Christmas journeys and the trip to Bethlehem, I wonder what wrong turns they made. I remember how I got into trouble, not only because we went to the wrong place, but well... O here is the story. The boss was invited to join some of the family for a coffee. He and I had had a meeting so when we were done, we set off at a great pace and all was going well, I managed to get him over some difficult roads and around various obstacles. So, as we hurtled along, I admit I must have lost focus, because suddenly I thought 'oh the place we are going to is to the right'. Anyway, we got to where I thought we were heading for... a pub, well that's where the boss has gone before! The only trouble was, on this occasion we weren't going there and to get there we had crossed two roads without stopping. I'm not sure what all the fuss is about as I managed to get him there without getting him run over it's just that we were not where we should have been. Oh dear, in trouble again! I was so relieved when the boss's daughter came to rescue me. They all then enjoyed some great coffee and cake - I didn't get any of that! Eventually we headed home but the boss was a bit stern, making me go back to basics i.e. not only stopping at kerbs but making me sit and wait, that is just so beginnerish! He was reminding me of the importance of following the guide dog rules. It got me thinking as we approach Christmas, I think we all probably need to go back to basics. What is it all really about, it's not food and the latest expensive gifts, but it is about the love of God engaging with us through Jesus being born in human flesh and being born in such poverty that he was and is available to all who want to visit and engage.

So, enjoy your 'back to basics' Christmas, but what I said about gifts, well I think I am the exception!

Happy Christmas

Mayne



From Remembrance to Hope



***John, Tom, Ray, Roger, John... and many more.
Happy and proud to have served.***

On Remembrance Sunday 12th November St Margaret's Church, led by Revd. Canon Simon Stokes, we remembered those who have lost their lives during times of conflict, and we also prayed for peace and to dedicate ourselves to the creation of a more humane and just society. We thought of members of our own congregation who have served in the National Services in order to maintain peace since World War II and now at my time of writing, we sadly hear more about the futility and horror of war and conflict across the globe. History repeats itself again. Power and politics, fuelled by the media, dominates our screens, our radios and our digital receivers. Good news stories get drowned in the noise and humans are confused and even anaesthetised by the images and arguments which try to justify retaliation!

We should not be surprised... our **Bible Study group** has been reading the Book of Esther which was written about 400 to 500 years before Christ. For me it has ceased to become a tale about a beautiful queen who was brave enough to put her life in danger to save her people and more about how human beings continually make decisions based on outdated laws. The king's first wife was divorced because she didn't obey her husband's commands. The monarch had wealth and power over a large territory stretching from India to Egypt, but takes advice from different counsellors who turn out to be at loggerheads with each other and a lot of decisions

are based on rumour and fear of being attacked. There is no mention of them turning to God for guidance and prayer. It is the only book written with no direct reference or mention of God, although it is supposed to justify the sovereignty of the Lord God for the Jews. In Deuteronomy Chapter 5 they were given the 10 Commandments and in Chapter 6 v 5 to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and with all your strength' and in Chapter 7 v 2 they are told to drive out many nations and 'destroy them totally'!!! This was Old Testament thinking and deep rooted in the people at the time of Esther.

Is History repeating itself in 2023? Jesus knew and experienced the torture and pain from his enemies... what did he say? As Christians, our Bible Study group finds hope and guidance in all the pages of the Old Testament. As Gerda points out we **can** find God at work in the book of Esther ... we have more to read and should avoid negativity.

On November 11th the World watched thousands of peaceful marches in London including a Lord Mayor's Show which included the military, floats from 7,000 guilds and trades like scientific instrument makers and nurses, charities and exhibits from other countries like Nigeria; but the news the next day focussed only on the violent behaviour of a few people and the 126 who were arrested?!

We should be proud that Britain does not dwell on violence and evil, but in many ways demonstrates cultural and diverse expressions of faith with Joy, Dignity, Love, Justice and Hope.

'Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light;
And where there's sadness, ever joy.'

Peace be with You



Jennifer T

A Christmas Reflection

What is the first thing you think of when you think about Christmas?

Is it getting the chance to spend some quality time with your family? Is it the present that you will find under the tree on Christmas Day? Or is it the array of treats you will enjoy throughout this time, such as Christmas dinners, mince pies, or the daily chocolate from your Advent Calendar?

So, how many of you answered - the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

Christmas is a time that is filled with lots of joy. However, it is also very easy to get lost in the secular and commercial side of Christmas and it is not uncommon for people to become distracted from the true meaning and focus of Christmas.



Every year we celebrate Christmas and the older we get the more familiar we become with the Nativity Story. As a result of our familiarity, we may become more relaxed, and less awe struck by this new presence of God in our lives. Do you remember when you were a child eager to play the role of Mary or Joseph in the Nativity play? When we were little, we were captivated to hear that a tiny baby would bring salvation to Humanity.

As adults we have now, through familiarity, to have somehow lost our childlike love for the Nativity story and we may take this miracle and precious gift for granted. So, this Christmas, while you enjoy the familiarity of your own personal traditions, I invite you to also take some time to quietly reflect and meditate to return to that excited child captivated by that incredible Story. To want to be a part of the 'play' again, and to remember the real meaning of Christmas, the birth of our Saviour, the most precious of all God's gifts.

Let that childlike happiness help us to revisit the Nativity Story in a new familiar way, let it bring a sense of freshness and comfort and help us to reconnect with God, just as we did as children.

So, this Christmas, 'Come let us adore Him' in a blessed new light.

Happy Christmas to you all!

Christine Leech.

Another Walk from Malcolm Howes...

The Royal Burial Ground – Sutton Hoo

To get there follow the A12 south and turn left at the roundabout sign posted Melton. It is well signed from here, just follow the direction towards Bawdsey. It was a warm early October Sunday, bright and sunny. On arrival the main carpark was full. We did find the overflow carpark, which was not quite the same standard, bumpy and dusty, but plenty of space. Parked up and heading for the main entrance, a car driven rather fast and raising dust bottomed out badly on a 'pothole' to which I raised a wry smile!

The site is now owned and run by The National Trust, so prices have gone up. The gift shop and exhibition hall are all near the entrance. The walks being our main objective.

From the entrance we passed a skeleton replica of the burial ship, and on to Tranmer House where Edith Pretty and the family lived. This hunting lodge is worth a look if only for the wooden panels covering the walls. From here the footpath goes east towards the burial mounds. This roped off area contains seventeen mounds. The royal mound having now been rebuilt to its original height, to see the effects of erosions over time. Many of the mounds have been robbed back in the early days. It is worth a mention that some of the mounds have not been explored as it is a policy of archaeologists to leave things for future generations with improved methods. Continuing round the mounds is a metal viewing tower, (not here on my last visit) I just had to climb it, as did

several others on this busy day. It had a definite swaying movement higher up. The view is worth it, as, looking across the River Deben, the Post Office building can be seen at Martlesham and to the left Felixstowe container port.

Feet back on the ground we proceeded on the Valley walk through a lovely, wooded area, steep in places, and along a path and back up towards the entrance, gift shop, and picnic area to enjoy a late lunch.

The High Hall exhibition is definitely worth a look.

Our final walk took us round a field into more wood, and along the River View walk that brought us to a superb viewing area overlooking the Deben. A place to sit and spend a little time. An enjoyable day made better by good information from very helpful volunteers.



Happy Walking, yes, even in Winter.

Malcolm Howes



We hope you've enjoyed the read!
Don't forget to pick up your full December / January edition from church
and read more interesting articles.
Happy Christmas from all at St. Margaret's and we look forward to welcoming you to
St. Margaret's during the festive season.