

PARISH CHURCH NEWS

**Ss. Peter & Paul, Clare
with St. Mary the Virgin, Poslingford**

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**No. 449
September 2025**



**St. Matthew the Apostle
Feast Day: 21 September**

Curates Camino Chaplaincy

(The Rev'd Dr Karen Smith)

Background

Having expressed an interest in being a Camino Chaplain to David Waller, the Archdeacon of Europe, I joined several zoom calls with him, 'The Friends of the Anglican Centre in Santiago de Compostela (SdC)' based in the US and the Revd Chris Stone who knew everything a person new to this ministry needed to know and shared his knowledge very generously.

These were excellent opportunities for learning about what would be involved in being a Chaplain. I had to update my Leadership Safeguarding Certification and obtain my Permission to Officiate in Europe and, on receiving that, booked my flights to Santiago de Compostela. I stayed at Casa Anglicana del Peregrino which is an Anglican Pilgrim Centre owned and operated by the Spanish Episcopal Church with funds raised by the Friends of the Anglican Pilgrim Centre. All serving Camino Chaplains are very fortunate to stay without charge at Casa Anglicana by invitation of Bishop Carlos of the Spanish Episcopal Church and with the approval of the Board of the Friends of the Anglican Centre in Santiago de Compostela, Inc., something I am very grateful for.

As part of my ministry, I was expected to advertise my presence in the house and when I would be available for Camino debriefs etc. which I did, quite often sitting in a corner of the small but pretty garden area. Because I was able to chat to people e.g. at breakfast or whilst making dinner, several people staying in Casa Anglicana wondered into Sant Fiz for services or to pray and that was lovely!

Sant Fiz:

Santa Susana in Alameda Park was Anglican Camino Chaplaincy base for years but apparently proved to be "one last hill too many" for some pilgrims! So, this year, 2025, our chaplaincy base was a new location, Sant Felix de Solovio (St Fiz), a small Galician church close to the centre of town.

Solovio was, I discovered, an ancient area in the Libredon forest, where the hermit Paio, (Pelayo, or Pelagius) lived. It was Pelayo who noticed the stars lining up in a strange way and told Bishop Teodomiro. The bishop came and looked, and they discovered the tomb of Santiago. Some traditions say that Pelayo built the first church on which Sant Fiz is now located, and others suggest Santiago built a chapel on the spot. Most seem to agree that it is one of the oldest spots in Santiago to have Christian worship and veneration of Santiago. It is mentioned in the Codex Calixtinus (a 12th century manuscript describing the four main European routes). We were given permission from the Roman Catholic authorities to use Sant Fiz for services, and we share it with other congregations. It is located next to the Mercado de Abrastos and only about 5 minutes' walk from Casa Anglicana and so it had really good footfall of 150+ visitors most days I was there, particularly Saturday.



**ANGLICAN SERVICES AT SAN FIZ
SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA
(15-26 JUNE 2025)**

- 11.30** Quiet time – light a candle, pray, reflect
- 12.30** Eucharist Service
- 13.45** Closed for lunch
- 15.00** Quiet time/receive a Camino blessing
- 15.30** Evening Prayer/Chaplaincy
- 16.00** Closed

Chaplaincy:

Please find my schedule above. I tended to get there and open the doors, switch on lights, put out the A-board and light a few candles by 10.30am most days. My service schedule was posted on the door of the church and at Casa Anglicana and many, many other places including some local shops and on several Camino Facebook pages where my posts were very well received and got lots of 'likes'. I came with 300 small flyers and personally handed these out at lunchtime: in the market and on the squares around the Cathedral.

Now I am home I have had time to reflect on my time in SdC as a Camino Chaplain, I realised it was a time of great blessing for myself and hopefully to all those whom I've met either at the start or, more usually, at the end of their pilgrimages. People came into Sant Fiz for pastoral conversations, just to 'look and see', say a prayer stood near the door, others came right in and sat down for quiet prayer, some came to light candles and pray for someone or in thanks, many came in to get a 'sello' i.e. a stamp for their Compostela and some came for a service. I encouraged as many people as possible to sign the Visitors Book and was struck by how global the visitors were... Australia, Ecuador, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Poland, Puerto Rico, UK, Ukraine, USA etc. Ukraine apparently now has their own new route! The young couple who told me about it left a sticker in the visitor book and gave me a lovely postcard of Santiago de Podolia!



SANTIAGO DE PODOLIA

Sello (stamp) & Ukrainian postcard

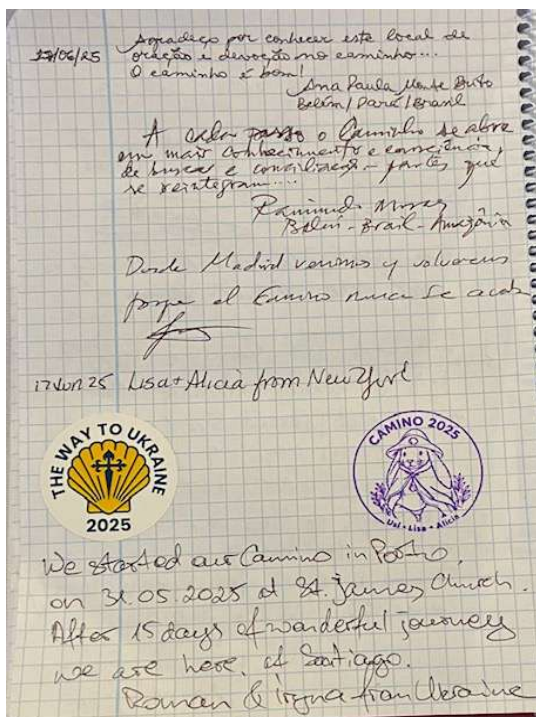
Interesting encounters included:

- The Australian Vicar and her husband who made themselves known to me on my first Sunday, they had come for the Eucharist Service. They sat down and because they did, several more people did too, much to my relief.
- The youngest Peregrino I met was a 12-year-old girl from New York who beamed with pride when I told her she was the youngest so far, so she had best sign the Visitors Book.
- The lovely family from Australia who walked the Camino Frances. Hugh was originally from Ayr and loved that I was a fellow Scot. He had a lovely wife and four great children. They asked for a photograph with me, and I asked if I could post it on the Camino All Routes Facebook page, they agreed, and it got 145 'likes' and helped get the word out!
- The German man who came in with his wife and wanted to talk about Luther and the 'meaning' of Holy Communion in the Anglican Church compared to Roman Catholic.
- The Irish lady who was staying at Casa Anglicana with her in laws who came into the church and wanted to talk about her ex-husband with a terminal diagnosis. They were still close, and she was concerned for him and their children. Her family told me how much she had appreciated my compassionate approach and my prayers with her.
- The generosity of Deacon Phyllis from the USA (living in Guatemala) who was Chaplain before me, she showed me the best routes to walk to and from the church from Casa Anglicana, where to buy bread and fruit and how to turn on the church lights and microphone etc. We even went a bus tour together to Finisterre and Muxia on my day off.
- The dedication of a lady called Brenda at Casa Anglicana who held AA meetings there in the evening. She even cooked me dinner for the first two nights, what an amazing welcome.

I even met other UK based Vicars; one from Leytonstone the Rev Canon Neil Walsh who I met in Obradorio Square - because I was wearing a dog collar, he thought 'ah ha, an Anglican!' and came running over to meet me and he also came to Sant Fiz to get a stamp and Rev Katie Smith from Hereford who I met at the Catholic Mass at the Pilgrim Centre and who expressed an interest in a ministry stint in SdC (I passed on her details to Chris).



Peregrinos queuing for the stamp, (b) people praying, (c) a page from the visitors' book



Rev Canon Neil Walsh, Leytonstone, we met in Obradorio Square, he then visited the church to get a stamp.



Hugh and Lenna from Australia who walked Camino Frances with their children (145 'likes' on Camino All Routes Facebook page. I utilised social media to publicise services)

Encounters

Three encounters that particularly struck me were:

- An encounter with a very old lady who was clearly Roman Catholic, she came in, went to the front, genuflected, then got onto both knees on the stone floor, prayed, crossed herself then came over to me, smiled, shook my hand very warmly then 'air kissed' each cheek...wow!
- The man who came into church for 3 days and sat in the back pew and just cried, on the first day I gave him a nod, the second day a tissue and on the third day I spoke to him. I asked if he would like to talk or have a blessing and he said, "I could use a blessing" (he turned out to be English) I gave him a blessing, and he did not return. I pray this means that he is on the road towards healing whatever was on his heart.
- My son! Unknown to me he walked the Camino Ingles from Ferrol and then showed up at the church for his final stamp. Well, I cried because he isn't overtly religious at all, it was an incredible 'proud mum' moment, and we went to pick up his Compostela and take some photos in the square and I showed him round the Cathedral.



My son Cameron who walked the Camino Ingles - a wonderful surprise for me!



Pilgrim Prayer and Blessing

O God, who brought your servant Abraham out of the land of the Chaldeans, protecting him in his wanderings, who guided the Hebrew people across the desert, [we ask/we thank you] that you [watch/ed] over us, your servants, as we [walk/ed] in the love of your name to Santiago de Compostela.

[Be for us/you have been for us] our companion on the walk, Our guide at the crossroads, Our breath in our weariness,

Our protection in danger,

Our albergue on the Camino,

Our shade in the heat,

Our light in the darkness,

Our consolation in our discouragements,

And our strength in our intentions.

So that with your guidance [we may arrive safe and sound/we have arrived] at the end of the Road and enriched with grace and virtue we return safely to our homes filled with joy.

School Visit

I knew I would also hold a special Eucharist service for Louie Gomez and his group of 13 school children and 3 staff from Bradford on the 26th which was a joy to pre-prepare and deliver. I gave a sermon about my own Camino and what I learned from that spiritually, emotionally and highlighted lessons for life. Louie has apparently brought many groups from the Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust to SdC, and this group were from Immanuel College.



The school visit from Immanuel College (a CoE school for 11–18-year-olds)

Publicity

To generate interest...you name it I did it, including handing out my flyers myself around the Cathedral precincts and Plaza del Obradoiro. It was wonderful to see pilgrims arrive and jump into the air thrilled that they had “done it”! Most of them were beaming with joy, relief they had made it, sadness it was over. For some, I could tell from discussion, this experience was a life reset. Some of them wanted to ‘decompress’ and share how transformational for them their pilgrimage had been, so I invited a few of them back to Casa Anglicana for coffee and cake to do just that.

Mass at the Pilgrims Office

I attended because I wanted to do my bit to deepen ecumenical relations which is a vital endeavour. A Jesuit Priest Fr Jeremy from Ireland presided as Fr Manny, the ‘usual’ Priest was apparently on the Camino. I was also able to stay and mingle over refreshments afterwards and meet people who had just finished their Caminos. It was during that I met Rev Katie Smith from Hereford, she didn’t know anything about the Anglican Chaplaincy, so I filled her in, and she expressed an interest in it. I passed her details to Chris.

Reflection, Learning and Formation

I realised that the Camino really is a life changing journey in many ways. At times it brings deep reflection and spiritual growth where pilgrims (and chaplains) can encounter the Divine. Sometimes this happens in silence and when you are by yourself and at other times, in conversation and companionship with others.

The healing that the Camino can offer can be profound. A lot of people carry a lot of pain inside and somehow that can be let go through the physical journey, the walking, the talking to others... it becomes a spiritual journey offering healing.

Whilst walking the Fisterra Camino last year as a Pilgrim I had several spiritual conversations with people about faith, life and death, their relationships, anxieties, difficult memories, praying, church and the real significance of the Sacraments etc. and I found the same themes occurred again, even more so this year when talking to people as a Camino Chaplain.

Pilgrims walk the Camino for a wide range of reasons. As a Camino Chaplain one of my main jobs was to serve those looking for spiritual support around their Camino. I found several pilgrims wanted to talk to someone about what they were experiencing/feeling inside...hurt, guilt, fear, a need to feel forgiven, to forgive, to move on, to change etc. It was in these pastoral discussions, prayers and blessings I felt the real value of being a Camino Chaplain.

I felt that my role was to be there for people who wanted to make this connection, to gently draw them closer to God. I found it particularly effective when ‘walking people in’ and when we gathered in small groups to pray and to eat, to share experiences - we were able to talk freely in fellowship as members of God’s family. There is definitely an inner and an outer journey, and to offer a ‘space and time’ for openness allowed pilgrims to outwork the joys and difficulties that led to and that they experienced on their Caminos. It facilitated healing.

I read somewhere that in Bill Bennett's film 'The Way, My Way', someone says: "You must walk with your heart in your hand." I think that is very true, being open to what the Camino offers is clearly transformational. I found occasionally that if someone shared with me, I felt led by the Spirit to share too (sensitively and appropriately in an affirmational way that kept the focus primarily on them) in return. At times this felt very profound and very joy filled.

Building an ecumenical dialogue in practice

We are all God's children called to love one another and so I tried to build inter-faith relationships in Spain in my own small way – e.g. attending the Pilgrim Service at the Cathedral. I found that lots of useful contacts have already been made with people in Santiago de Compostela e.g. Fr Manny. There is a Roman Catholic Mass in English daily at 10.30am (except Wednesdays) held in the chapel of the Pilgrims Office. On the day I went Fr Jeremy, a Jesuit, presided and made me very welcome. (The Pilgrims Office is where pilgrims go to collect their 'Compostela' certificate of completion).

Conclusion

I learned a lot about the value of physical and spiritual journeying of others and myself and the real value of the Camino. It deepened my faith and brought me a lot of joy - I would do it all again in a heartbeat...and probably will do another Camino ... and hopefully another Camino Chaplaincy too!

Thank you to all who work so diligently in the US and in the Diocese of Europe who make this ministry possible!



PCC News

Since last month's Magazine the PCC has been working on two important projects.

The first is a major overhaul and improvement of the church's interior lighting. The present system has served us well for many years, but is now defective and unsatisfactory in many ways. Meetings have been held with a company specialising in church lighting systems and a faculty application is under way. The proposed new lighting arrangements are rather too complex to be described in detail on these pages, but suffice to say that the present light bulbs are going to be replaced by the more sophisticated, adaptable and cheaper LED lighting, with facilities for modulating them. In short, a major improvement over what we have at present. Detailed literature supplied by the proposed contractor, complete with photographs and technical specifications, is available for any church members who might wish to get a better idea of what this important project involves. Please let me know, as I have a hard copy on file. However, the faculty application still needs to be approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee and no work can be started this side of Christmas. More news as and when.

The second project refers to the screen of the mediaeval parclose in the south aisle. The parclose, which was a guilds chapel before the Reformation, is an interesting and attractive historical feature of the church (and something of a puzzle to many visitors), but it needs some tender loving care, as it is, understandably after all this time, showing signs of its age. If you would like to make a contribution towards the cost of this important work, the church would be most grateful. This can be done via the Parish Giving Scheme or use the link or QR Code below. Thank you.

Can you help finance our current Projects to repair and improve our Church?

As you will have read above, the PCC are looking to make some significant repairs to the Parclose and also to improve the church lighting.

If you are in the fortunate position of being able to help with the cost of these repairs and improvements, please make cheques payable to **“PCC Clare with Poslingford”** writing “Fabric Fund” on the rear of the cheque.

Alternatively, you can make a donation to the Fabric Fund using the QR Code or via the following link:

<https://givealittle.co/c/14veuUPqGXR0EfH0HCqi2S>



THE VICARAGE GARDEN PARTY

As expected, there was a most enjoyable and successful afternoon on August Bank Holiday Monday, when we were blessed with glorious weather. In terms of visitor numbers this was not exactly the Notting hill Carnival and there was no massive police presence, but whilst we were not inundated with footfall, probably because of another event in the Country Park, there was still a pleasant, manageable flow of visitors and the stalls did good business, with the total for the day being £ 459! And thanks to everyone involved.



Like many charities, the parish churches in our Benefice are facing a significant reduction in income and giving. While St Peter and St Paul is doing all that it can to mitigate expenses, these cannot be reduced entirely and so the Church is reliant on parishioners to continue to give generously.

Did you know? It costs more than £600/month in insurance and utilities alone?

One of the easiest and most efficient ways to donate is via the 'Parish Giving Scheme,' which allows individual donors to set up a regular gift to the parish of their choice by Direct Debit.

The Parish Giving Scheme is designed to support churches to fund their mission and ministry. It reduces the burden of work on church volunteers and provides a simple and secure service to donors to give online, by phone, or by posting a giving form. Parish churches benefit from improved cash flow and a resilient and reliable funding system.

TIP #1: You can now do this quickly and efficiently (it normally takes around 15 minutes) simply by calling the following telephone number: 0333 002 1271

You will need to have the following information to hand:

- Personal bank account details
- The name of the parish you wish to donate to. The PGS code for Clare, St Peter & St Paul is 330633175
- You will need to confirm if you want to increase your gift in line with inflation each year (if you can, please say 'Yes')
- Confirm if you are eligible for Gift Aid

Alternatively, you can also sign up online:

<https://www.parishgiving.org.uk/donors/find-your-parish/clare-st-peter-st-paul-suffolk/>

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TIP #2: Donating through Gift Aid means the church can claim an extra 25p for every £1 you give. It does not cost any extra. Eligibility: Your donations qualify for Gift Aid as long as they're not more than four times the amount you've paid in tax in the tax year.

Leaving a Legacy

TIP #3: Leaving a gift in your Will is one of the most valuable and lasting ways you can continue to support the Church's mission and ministry in our community. A gift can be an expression of your gratitude and thanksgiving towards God, and can help keep our church alive and also transform its future.

FINAL TIP: Whether considering a legacy and regular gift: PLEASE DO NOT restrict your gift. The biggest challenge facing the church is not the maintenance of our beloved and historic 15th-century building, but our running costs and our need to pay the annual parish share of over £35,000! To support our parish clergy and lay ministers, train new clergy and lay ministers, provide central support function across the Diocese.

THANK YOU!

If you would like more information, please speak with Jane Turner (recently appointed Parish Giving Receiver): jturner4md@yahoo.co.uk / 07931 691547



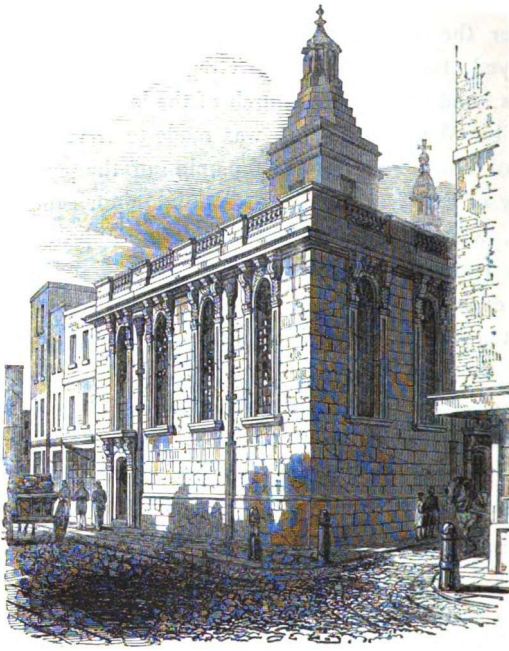
Well, here we are again – getting ready for the next Ride and Stride event on 13th September. As you probably know, the Suffolk Churches Ride and Stride is a fundraiser for the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, which helps churches with vital repairs and projects. Here in Clare, some of us, by participating and gaining sponsorship, have helped raise money, half of which goes to SHCT and half to our own church funds.

If you are able to help in any way – cycling or walking from church to church, 'church sitting' on the day (welcoming and signing forms for riders, striders and vintage car drivers), please do let me know. I shall be leaving out sponsor forms and a church sitting rota in due course. And don't forget to sponsor someone if possible!

If you need further details, please see me. Mary Owen

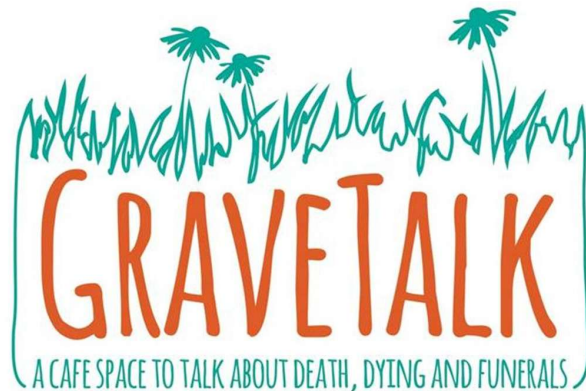
St. Mary Magdalen, Old Fish Street Hill

John Betjeman (1906-1984)



On Winter evenings I walk alone in the City
When cobbles glisten with wet and it's foggy and still;
I am Rector's warden here. But more's the pity
We haven't the Charity children now to fill
Our old west gallery front. Some new committee
Has done away with them all. I beg your pardon,
I omitted to tell you where I am Rector's warden ---
At St. Mary Magdalen's church, Old Fish Street Hill.

Unfortunately, the London Conflagration
Of sixteen sixty six was a moment when
The Roman style in general estimation
Was held so high that our church was rebuilt by Wren.
It is just a box with a fanciful plaster ceiling
Devoid of a vestige of genuine Christian feeling,
And our congregation is seldom more than ten.



It's not easy to think about your own funeral. Talking about death, dying and funerals raises big questions that we need to face at some point, but it's hard to talk to family and friends. The Church of England has been helping people think about these questions for centuries. GraveTalk is a café space, organised by your Parish church, where people can talk about these big questions. The conversation is helped along by GraveTalk conversation cards – 52 questions covering five key areas.

We meet in Clare Parish Church, where everyone will be welcomed by Revd Mark and then invited to sit at tables with three or four others. The GraveTalk cards will be on the tables, and each group picks a question and uses it to start a conversation. It doesn't matter if you only use one question, or work through all of them! The purpose is to talk and listen. Light refreshments are offered throughout the event, which lasts about an hour, or longer if needed.

We will also be joined by representatives for local funeral directors who will be available to answer any questions about the practical aspects around what happens when someone dies.

The event is FREE and open to all.



HARVEST APPEAL 2025

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Stour Valley Benefice - Services for September 2025

Sunday, 7th September

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Stoke by Clare: | 09:00 | Holy Communion | <i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i> |
| Cavendish: | 10:30 | Morning Prayer | <i>Led by Barbara Hill</i> |
| Clare: | 11:00 | Holy Communion | <i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i> |

Sunday, 14th September

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Stoke by Clare: | 09:00 | Morning Prayer | <i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i> |
| Hundon: | 09:00 | Holy Communion | <i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i> |
| Cavendish: | 10:30 | Holy Communion | <i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i> |
| Clare: | 16:00 | Evensong | <i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i> |

Sunday, 21st September

St Matthew the Apostle - Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Stoke by Clare: | 09:00 | Holy Communion | <i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i> |
| Cavendish: | 10:30 | Morning Prayer | <i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i> |
| Clare: | 11:00 | Holy Communion | <i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i> |
| Poslingford: | 16:00 | Evensong | <i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i> |

Thursday, 25th September

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Stoke by Clare: | 19:00 | Harvest Festival | <i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i> |
|-----------------|-------|------------------|-------------------------------------|

Saturday, 27th September

| | | | |
|---------|-------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| Hundon: | 13:30 | Wedding | <i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i> |
|---------|-------|---------|---------------------------------------|

Sunday, 28th September

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Stoke by Clare: | 09:00 | Morning Prayer | <i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i> |
| Cavendish: | 10:30 | Holy Communion | <i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i> |
| Clare: | 11:00 | Morning Prayer | <i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i> |
| Hundon: | 18:00 | Evening Prayer | <i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i> |

Saturday, 4th October

| | | | |
|--------|-------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Wixoe: | 18:30 | Harvest Festival | <i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i> |
|--------|-------|------------------|-------------------------------------|

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**The closing date for contributions to the Magazine is now the 25th of the month
(for inclusion in the next month's issue)**