

# PARISH CHURCH NEWS

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

**The Rev'd Mark Woodrow**

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*(Usual Rest Day: Monday)*

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*(Usual Rest Day: Saturday)*

**No. 451  
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**"In Flanders Fields the poppies blow"  
(John McCrae (1872-1918))**

## **Rector's Ramblings – November 2025**

### **(Clearing the Clutter: Our path to Advent)**

My dear friends,

As the vibrancy of autumn deepens into the muted hues of late November, we find ourselves standing on the threshold of a new Church year. The nights draw in earlier, the air has a crisp, frosty bite, and the comforting promise of warmth and light becomes ever more precious. This time of year, naturally invites us to slow down, to turn inward, and to reflect.

Soon we will step into the expectant quiet of Advent. No sooner have the Halloween decorations disappeared, and the Bonfires and Fireworks have burned out, then it seems the world around us begins hurtling towards Christmas, with decorations popping up in shops. But for us, the Church, November is a vital time to resist that rush and instead, prepare our hearts and minds for the profound spiritual journey that lies just ahead.

Advent is a season of waiting, of watching, and of hopeful anticipation. It is a four-week period where we intentionally hold two moments of God's coming in tension: we remember the joyous, historical arrival of Christ as a baby in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago, and we look forward to His glorious, final coming at the end of time.

This dual focus makes Advent an inherently active season, not a passive one. It is not just about waiting but about preparing for the arrival. And just as we take time in November to plan our calendar, perhaps write our Christmas card lists, and start thinking about gifts, we must also take this time to clear the spiritual clutter from our lives.

How might we use these final weeks of November 2025 to prepare for our Advent preparation?

Firstly, I encourage you to embrace the **Quiet**. The world is loud. Find five minutes each day, perhaps first thing in the morning or last thing at night, to simply sit in stillness. Turn off the news, silence the phone, and invite God's peace into that space.

Secondly, take a moment for **Reflection**. Look back over this past year. Where have you seen God at work in your life? Where did you stumble? Our preparations for Advent must always be rooted in a spirit of repentance - a turning around and re-alignment of our will towards God's.

Finally, think about **Hope**. Advent is the great season of Christian hope. As the world grows darker, we are reminded that our true light, our hope, is not the sun, but the Son. As you prepare your homes for the winter and the festive season, commit to doing one small act of service or kindness this November that reflects the hope and love that Christ brought into the world.

Let us enter Advent this year not rushed and exhausted, but ready and waiting. Let us use these remaining November days well, so that when we light that first purple candle on the Advent Wreath, our hearts are truly prepared to welcome the coming King.

With every blessing,

**Mark**

The Revd Mark Woodrow (Rector)

The late Poet Laureate, John Betjeman was a great lover of all things Victorian, churches in particular. The Victorians were at their best when building new churches, especially those with a High Church or Anglo-Catholic churchmanship. For example, he memorably wrote of St. Stephen's, Bournemouth, "It is worth travelling 200 miles and being sick in the coach to have seen inside this many vista'd church."

The Victorians, however,, were probably at their worst when it came to restoration and succeeded in ruining many fine mediaeval places of worship by their over-enthusiasm. The following poem is a spoof on the well-known hymn "The Church's One Foundation."

Alas, I am unable to reproduce the music here, so if you don't know the tune (though you probably *do*), then I am sure Mary or Christopher would be only too happy to play it for you. Then, when we next sing it in Clare you can do so with Betjeman's verses in mind, though, of course you must sing it to the church's words, not his. Otherwise, the Rector might think you are being very naughty!

The Church's Restoration  
In 1883  
Has left for contemplation  
Not what there used to be.  
How well the ancient woodwork  
Looks round the Rectory hall,  
Memorial of the good work  
Of him who planned it all.  
  
He who took down the pew ends  
And sold them anywhere,  
But kindly spared a few ends,  
Worked up into a chair.  
O worthy persecution  
Of dust! O hue divine!  
O cheerful substitution,  
Thou varnished pitch-pine!  
  
Church furnishing! Church furnishing!  
Sing Art & Crafty praise!  
He gave the brass for burnishing,  
He gave the thick red baize.  
He gave the new addition,  
Pulled down the dull old aisle.  
To pave the sweet transition  
He gave th' encaustic tile.  
  
Of marble brown and veined  
He did the pulpit make;  
He order'd windows stained  
Light red and crimson lake.  
Sing on, with hymns uproarious,  
Ye humble and aloof,  
Look up! And oh how glorious  
He has restored the roof!



## **CLARE CHRISTMAS FAIR 2025 – FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup> AND SATURDAY, 29<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER**

The Clare Christmas Fair has become a successful and much-loved local event over the last ten years, growing in size and reputation and bringing in visitors from far and wide.

With around 70 exhibitors in the Parish Church and the Town Hall, you'll find a wealth of ideas for your Christmas shopping. These range from decorative ceramics, glass, artworks, floristry and books to festive fare and drinks, natural beauty products and candles, clothing, various types of jewelry and sewn accessories, plus many lovely, crafted toys and other items from our talented and creative stall holders. We also like to support two local animal charities by giving them a free stall at each event. Come and see what you can find!

As well as the traditional mulled wine and mince pies on offer on both days to help raise funds for the Church, we have the church cafe where you can warm up with some delicious hot tea or coffee and cake before continuing with your browsing and gift shopping. There will be food stalls on Market Hill on Saturday too.

There will also be various entertainments on both days, culminating in the Christmas Lights Switch-On on Market Hill at 6pm on the Saturday, when there will be even more than usual to see and hear including Father Christmas, and Face Painting by The Artful Dabber on Saturday, and from c3.30pm, there will be dancing by Hells Bells Morris; live music from Serena Grant and from Ellie; a stilt walking, fire and juggling display; a roundabout - and the Children's Parade and competition prize giving and then the big Switch-On followed by a special performance from excellent London rock/pop/indie cover band The Spark – so make sure you stay around for that!

The Fair will be open on Friday 28th November from 5 – 8pm and on Saturday 29th from 10am – 7pm.

More information and details will be available on the website - **[www.clarechristmasfair.co.uk](http://www.clarechristmasfair.co.uk)** – and will be posted on Facebook and Instagram nearer the time.

Do put the dates in your diary so you and your family don't miss out - we very much look forward to seeing you!



# CLARE Christmas FAIR



**FABULOUS CHRISTMAS GIFTS  
FESTIVE FOOD AND DRINK**

**FRI 28th November 5 - 8pm  
SAT 29th November 10am - 7pm**

*at St. Peter and St. Paul's Church  
and Clare Town Hall*

**CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH-ON**

**SAT 29th November 6pm**

Entertainment on Market Hill from 3.30pm

Music

Hot  
Food

**Father Christmas**



**FREE ENTRY • PRIZE DRAW**

Save the dates for all your Christmas Services!



## **Special Christmas Services in your Parish Church and across the Benefice**

### **Saturday 13th December 2025**

6pm in St Peter & St Paul, Clare – Carols by Candlelight

### **Tuesday 16th December 2025**

7pm in St John the Baptist, Stoke by Clare – Carols by Candlelight

### **Friday 19th December 2025**

6pm in St Mary the Virgin, Poslingford – Carols by Candlelight

### **Sunday 21st December 2025**

4pm in All Saints, Hundon – Carols by Candlelight

5pm in St Mary the Virgin, Cavendish – Carols by Candlelight

### **Wednesday 24th December 2025 (Christmas Eve)**

2pm in St Peter & St Paul, Clare – Family Crib Service & Carols

3pm in All Saints, Hundon – Family Crib Service & Carols

4pm in St John the Baptist, Stoke by Clare – Family Crib Service & Carols

5pm in St Mary the Virgin, Cavendish – Family Crib Service & Carols

7pm in St Leonard, Wixoe – Carols by Candlelight

11.30pm in St Peter & St Paul, Clare – Midnight Mass

### **Thursday 25th December 2025 (Christmas Day)**

9am in St John the Baptist, Stoke by Clare – Family Christmas Eucharist

11am in St Peter & St Paul, Clare – Family Christmas Eucharist

**For more information visit: [www.stourvalley.org.uk](http://www.stourvalley.org.uk)**





## ADVENT ACTIVITY AND COLOURING SHEET

30 November

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

# JOY IN CONNECTION

‘The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High ...”’

Read Luke 1.26-28,46-50



### Challenge

At first, Mary is ‘deeply troubled’ by the angel’s message that she will bear God’s Son. She may have felt very alone, and frightened of what others might think of her. When the angel leaves, Mary goes straight to connect with her cousin Elizabeth, who is also pregnant. Elizabeth is delighted to see Mary, and soon Mary is sharing her joy and amazement at what God has done for her.

This week, think about how Mary went from being alone and afraid to finding joy in connecting with God and with family. Where you might find joy in **connection**?

### Prayer

Lord Jesus, light of the world, thank you for Mary’s song of praise and her example of connecting with you, which brought the world a joyous gift. Amen.

For more ways to prepare for The Joy of Christmas – including the *The Grumpy Owl* and the *Joy of Christmas* – visit [cofe.io/TheJoyOfChristmas](http://cofe.io/TheJoyOfChristmas)

 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND **JOY**



## **Stour Valley Benefice - Services for November 2025**

### **Sunday, 2nd November**

#### *All Saints Sunday*

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by Mrs Sarah Smith</i>
Clare:	11:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i>
Clare:	15:00	Service for All Souls/Saints	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>

### **Sunday, 9th November**

#### *Remembrance Sunday*

Stoke by Clare:	10:00	Act of Remembrance	<i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i>
Cavendish:	10:45	Act of Remembrance	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Hundon:	11:00	Act of Remembrance	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Poslingford:	Noon	Act of Remembrance	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Clare:	15:00	Act of Remembrance	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>

### **Sunday, 16th November**

#### *The Second Sunday before Advent*

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Holy Communion & Baptism	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Clare:	11:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Poslingford:	16:00	Evening Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>

### **Sunday, 23rd November**

#### *The Feast of Christ the King*

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Wixoe:	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:	11:00	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Hundon:	16:00	Evening Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i>

### **Sunday, 30th November**

#### *The First Sunday of Advent (Year A Begins)*

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Benefice 5th Sunday	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>

### **Sunday, 7th December**

#### *All Saints Sunday*

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 Mark Woodrow</i>
Clare:	11:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>

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