

St Mary - **Ardley with Fewcott**

St Olave - **Fritwell**

The Chapel - **Heyford Park**

St Mary - **Lower Heyford & Caulcott**

St James - **Somerton**

The Annunciation - **Souldern**

St Mary - **Upper Heyford**

Cherwell Valley

Catch-up

DEC & JAN 2026(i)



Joy

I'm writing this whilst listening to Radio 2 following Sara Cox's incredible great Northern Marathon challenge as she runs 135 miles from Keilder Forest on the Scottish borders to the village of Pudsey in West Yorkshire to raise money for Children in Need. This week I've laughed and cried as I've listened, not only because of Sara's amazing resilience but even more due to the stories recounted from some of those helped by Children in Need when facing great adversity. One of the things which has struck me has been that even in the depths of pain human beings are able to find moments of joy.

In the Christmas services we often hear these words from the Bible:

The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people ...' Luke 2.10-11

As we look around our world, communities and even our own lives it can feel like joy for all people is very far away. However, the joy we read and sing about at Christmas is the good news of Jesus' birth as Emmanuel – God with us. In all the ups and downs of life we can all experience the reality that God is with us always. The angels announced this amazing news to ordinary, overlooked shepherds keeping watch over their sheep in the dark. Joy came to them not because their circumstances changed but because God entered their world exactly as it was. Maybe we imagine joy as something that happens when everything finally goes right. But biblical joy is different, it does not ignore grief, uncertainty or hardship. Instead it shines within, it is a joy that whispers, "God is with us, even here." In difficult seasons – whether personal or global – joy becomes an anchor reminding us that darkness does not have the final word.

As we go through this Advent and Christmas season we all have the opportunity to discover joy, not as a feeling we must manufacture, but as a gift to receive from the God who loves us all. Joy grows when we pause long enough to notice the beauty of creation, when we choose gratitude, when we extend kindness to others, when we make room in our lives for Jesus. This Christmas across Cherwell Valley Benefice there are many different carol services, Christmas events and celebrations for all ages – why not come along and discover something more of the joy, hope and peace of Christ for yourself.

The Benefice team wish all in our communities a joyful and peaceful Christmas season.
Rev Kath Cooke

Somerton Church Bell Ringing



October and November ringing practice has been at Somerton, Lower Heyford, Souldern and Launton. We have now finished ringing for weddings and blessings for the year in our benefice. As most of the ringers in our team come from outside our benefice's to help us, we joined them ringing at Launton, near

Bicester.

St Mary's church at Launton is grade I listed. The bells were recorded as being hung in 1416, and overhauled in 1907. The tower ringing chamber is rather interesting. There are six bells, the tenor weighing 7-0-5, and not much space to ring. The entrance to the ringing chamber is not for the faint hearted, there are steep steel steps outside, shown in the photograph. Then you go through a small opening in the tower.

One of the World's leading authorities on the music of bells, the late Frederick Sharpe, was born in Launton. He wrote books on the church bells, was a keen ringer, and one of few ringers to ring Double handed (two bells at the same time). None of us at Somerton can ring double handed! In 1927, he was appointed tower captain for Launton, now Michael MacArthur is the tower captain and joins us ringing.

I hope those who have heard us enjoyed listening over the year. If you would like to join us, we usually practice Thursday evenings between 7.30 – 9pm, at Somerton in the beginning of each month and other local churches in between with Lower Heyford at the end.

Neil Clare

Somerton Tower Captain

CherwellValleyBellRinging@gmail.com

Somerton Diary Dates

Christmas Fair (11am-3pm, 29 November 2025): Set up like a Victorian Christmas Market, it has an array of wonderful stalls, food and drink and not forgetting our wonderful tombola and raffle. All proceeds go towards the maintenance of our beautiful church and the village hall.

7-9pm, 1 December 2025: Making your own festival wreath with the help of local florist Wendy, cost £35 including materials, greenery, mulled wine and mince pies.

Traditional Nativity Service (4:30pm, 24 December): dubbed as the "hottest ticket in town" for those from the Valley and beyond looking for an authentic Nativity service, this is not to be missed! Make sure you arrive in good time as the Church fills up fast.

New Area Dean

After an extended term of seven years as Area Dean for Bicester and Islip, The Rev Gareth Miller has stood down. Bicester and Islip Deanery now has a new Area Dean. The Rev Peter Wright (Rector of the Bicester Team) was licensed by the Bishop of Dorchester at the November meeting of Deanery Synod held in St Edburg's, Bicester. The Revs Sarah Mortimer and Diana Glover were licensed as Associate Area Deans.



Cherwell Valley Christmas Services

Friday 5th December

Ardley

5pm – Carols on Request

Sunday 14th December

Lower Heyford

11am - Christingle

Fritwell

5pm – Carol Service

Friday 19th December

Lower Heyford

7:15pm Carols in the Square

Saturday 20th December

Souldern

6pm – Carol Service with the choir

Sunday 21st December

Ardley

4:00pm – 9 Lessons & Carols

Heyford Park

4pm – Carols

Lower Heyford

6pm Carol Service

Wednesday 24th December Christmas Eve

Souldern

3:30pm - Carols in the Churchyard

Somerton

4:00pm – Crib Service

Fritwell & Upper Heyford

11pm Midnight Communion

Thursday 25th December - Christmas Day

Ardley & Souldern

9:30am Christmas Communion

Lower Heyford, Somerton & Heyford Park

11:00am Christmas Communion

December Sunday Services

Sunday Worship	7 th December	14 th December	21 st December	Christmas Eve/Day	28 th December
Ardley w Fewcott	9.30am BCP Holy Communion (1662)	9:30am Family Communion	4:00pm Nine Lessons & Carols	9:30am Christmas Communion	
Fritwell		5pm Carol Service	9.30am Family Communion Service	Christmas Eve 11pm Midnight Communion	
Lower Heyford and Caulcott	11am BCP Holy Communion (1662)	11am Christingle	6:00pm Carol Service	11am Christmas Communion	
Somerton	6pm Evensong	9:30am Sunday Club	11am Matins with BCP Holy Communion (1662)	11am Christmas Communion	
Souldern	10.30am Wild Worship	11am Sung Communion		9:30am Christmas Communion	
Upper Heyford	9:30am Family Communion			Christmas Eve 11pm Midnight Communion	
Heyford Park Chapel			4pm Carols	11am Christmas Communion	11am Benefice Communion

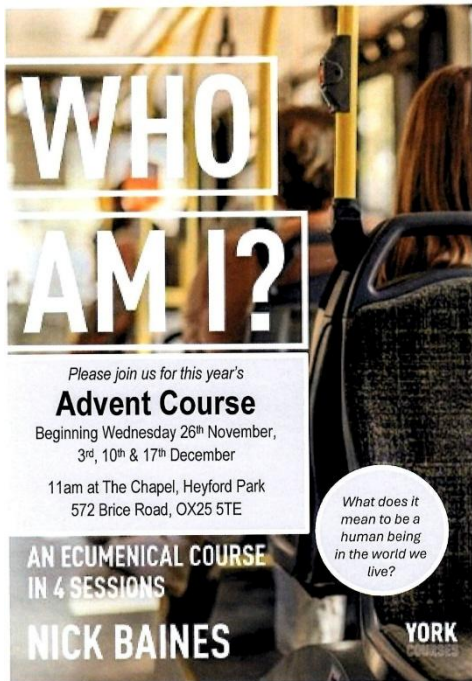
Mid-Week Holy Communion Services

Wednesdays 17th December at 10am.

January Sunday Services

Sunday Worship	4th January	11th January	18th January	25th January
Ardley w Fewcott	9.30am BCP Holy Communion (1662)	9:30am Family Service	9:30am Morning Prayer	9:30am Family Service
Fritwell		8:30am 1662 Communion	9.30am Family Communion Service	
Lower Heyford and Caulcott	11am BCP Holy Communion (1662)	11am Morning Prayer	11am Family Worship	11am Family Communion
Somerton	6pm Evensong	9:30am Sunday Club	11am Matins with BCP Holy Communion (1662)	9:30am Family Communion
Souldern		11am Communion		10:30am Family Church w HC
Upper Heyford	9:30am Family Communion			9:30am 1662 HC

Week Holy Communion Services at The Chapel, Heyford Park
 Wednesdays 7th & 21st January at 10am.



WHO AM I?

Please join us for this year's
Advent Course
 Beginning Wednesday 26th November,
 3rd, 10th & 17th December

11am at The Chapel, Heyford Park
 572 Brice Road, OX25 5TE

AN ECUMENICAL COURSE
 IN 4 SESSIONS

NICK BAINES

What does it mean to be a human being in the world we live?

YORK

Live Music on Stage!

Heyford Park welcomes
**Finalists from
 Britain's Got Talent**


(Kindly sponsored by Dorchester Living & Heyford Park Parish Council)

Northants Sings Out



Saturday 6th December – 7pm
 Doors open at 6:30pm
 Heyford Park Chapel, 572 Brice Road OX25 5TE

Tickets - £15 available at
hpcvents@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/northants-sings-out-tickets-19661829441867#?aff=oddticketcreator>



Souldern Church Choir



All you need to join us is a passion for singing!

We rehearse most Wednesdays at 7:30pm in Souldern Church

Philip Boxall: philipb013@outlook.com Clive Smith: clive.r.smith@icloud.com



Confirmation

There will be a Confirmation Service

On Sunday 22nd March
 at St Mary's Lower Heyford

If you would like to be *Confirmed* please contact a member of the ministry team for more information contact details below

The Benefice office will be **closed from Tuesday 23rd December – Friday January 2nd** although emails will be monitored and for anything urgent please ring 07889 444 616

**Bell Ringing –
Why not give it a try!**



News for the Bell Tower

'This year is the Banbury Branch of Bell Ringers Centenary, and to mark this special occasion the Branch rang a quarter peal at Somerton on 12th September.'

CherwellValleyBellRinging@gmail.com

**Mid Week
Services in Church**

Wednesdays

COMMUNION

10:00am at Heyford Park Chapel
(December 3rd & 17th Dec
& 7th & 21st Jan)

Recorded Services

Tuesdays

MORNING PRAYER

The Cherwell Valley Benefice in the Diocese of Oxford

Rev Kath Cooke	01869 872242	kath.cooke@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk
Rev Andrew Foran	07753 677 470	andrew.foran@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk
Administrator	01869 233687	barbara.mcgarra@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk

Parish Churchwardens & Contacts

Ardley	Rebecca Bazeley	07931 698 046
Fritwell	Jane White	01869 345396
Heyford Park	Cath Mullineux	01869 225764
Lower Heyford & Caulcott	Philip Boxall	07721 556 199
Somerton		
Souldern	Clive Smith	07783 367 258
Upper Heyford	Sally Anne Mildenhall	07778 431 165

