The Joy of Christmas



Messy Church crib: St Mary's Brixham

"... And the coastlands wait for His teaching"

Isaiah 42:4

Moving Forward Together

Issue 28

December 2025

Brixham Mission Community Services December 2025

2025	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
	2 nd Sunday	3 rd Sunday	4 th Sunday of	St Thomas of	
Sunday	of Advent	of Advent	Advent	Canterbury	
December	7 th	14 th	21 st	28 th	
All Saints'	09:30	09:30	09:30	09:30	
Brixham	Eucharist	Eucharist	Christingle	Eucharist	
St Mary's	08:45	08:45	08:45	08:45	
Brixham	No service	Eucharist	No service	Eucharist	
	11:00	10:45	11:00	11:00	
	Eucharist	Worship	Eucharist	Morning	
		with school		worship	
SMVC	10.00	10:45	10:00	10:00	
Churston	Morning	Eucharist	Carol service	Family	
	Worship			Worship	
STCK	10:30	10:45	10:30	10:30	
Kingswear	Morning	Eucharist	Morning	Eucharist	
	Worship		worship		
CGSG	08:45	08:45		08:45	
Galmpton	Eucharist	Morning	08:45	Eucharist	
		worship	Eucharist		
Mid-week					
All Saints'	2 nd	9 th	16 th	23 rd	30 th
Brixham	Communion	Eucharist	Eucharist	Communion	Eucharist
10.00	by ext.			by ext.	
St Mary's	3 rd	10 th	17 th	24 th	31 st
Brixham	Eucharist	Eucharist	Eucharist	No service	Eucharist
10.30					

Brixham Mission Community Churches welcome you!

Welcome to 'Moving Forward Together 'Simpler, humbler, bolder: a church that is Jesus centred and shaped'

To all our readers, wishing you Peace and Joy at Christmas.



I hope that you enjoy our December magazine.

So much hard work has gone into organising so many wonderful Christmas events. In these festive events we are given opportunities for fellowship, not only with our regular friends but also with the wider community. Do look carefully at the list of events that follow later in this magazine, and see how many you are able to support.

Rev'd Philippa's reflection on Advent and Christmas gives us a focus for the season. Stephen looks ahead, with his thoughts on the journey of the 'Men from the East'. We meet and get to know Martyn Hodge, Licensed Lay Minister, and then hear about St Mary's Brixham's travelling crib. 'M' updates us on our growing Small Groups, and gives us the second part of her focus on Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist.

Looking out into our wider, troubled world, there are updates from Christian Aid, and of the Brixham convoy to Ukraine. It is always inspiring to hear of the selfless action of our local organisations.

There are the regular reports from around the Brixham Mission Community, and the magazine closes with a thank you, a thought provoking piece, and a Covenant prayer.

Thank you again for reading our magazine. $Debbie\ Perret$



CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE JANUARY ISSUE of MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER: I am grateful if you could send to Debbie Perret, BMC Administrator, at debbie.brixhammc@gmail.com, by 28 December

Picture: Messy Church Nativity, at Rowcroft shop, Brixham



Rector's Report

Dear Friends,

While everything surrounding us shouts Christmas loudly throughout December, it often helps to reflect on what the season of

Advent means to us today. Advent leads us from the fourth Sunday before Christmas up to and including Christmas Eve. We have a decorated wreath in church, traditionally with three purple candles, one pink and one white. These candles are often said to represent hope, peace, love and joy.

Hope, peace, love and joy are all important qualities to cultivate in our hearts, families, communities and as global values. But let's look closer.

The Advent candles place us directly into the story of God's people during Advent. The first candle represents the patriarchs, our Jewish fathers in faith, beginning with Abraham. The second represents the biblical prophets. They were people called by God to speak God's truth into difficult situations such as war, exile and social exclusion before Jesus was born. Perhaps you too will light a candle and reflect on how you may be called to speak God's truth into all that's perceived as 'unfair' in today's world.

The third candle represents John the Baptist who was Jesus' cousin and a prophet who pointed directly to Jesus. Perhaps you too will light a candle and reflect on how you may be called to point someone else towards Jesus. The third candle is pink because it represents *Gaudete* or 'Rejoice' Sunday. Perhaps you too will light a candle and reflect on something that lifts your spirits and give God thanks. The fourth candle represents Mary the mother of God. Perhaps you too will light a candle and reflect on Mary's wholehearted obedience to God. Perhaps you will say a prayer for unmarried, teenage mothers in situations of social deprivation and political oppression, like Mary.

Wishing you all the blessings of Advent and Christmas

Rev'd. Philippa

Men from the East

We travel at night, it is safer
For us and for you, We are watched
Herod is restless vengeful
Afraid of the wind that blows
We will not linger long,
Enough to pay homage to
The one true Messiah
Please accept these gifts
Your star a beacon
Of hope, a guide
Through oceans of shifting sands
Traveling light, at night,
We hold you in our hearts.



Stephen

Picture: Agatha Christie window, St Mary the Virgin, Churston

Hello, I am Martyn Hodge, part of the ministry team of LLMs, based most of the time at All Saints'.

I came into the Ministry in 2013 after a lengthy career in the Police Service and as a funeral director for Stockman and Loram in Brixham.

At All Saints' I am the safeguarding officer and PCC member. I am married with two grown up children and seven grandchildren, one of which is fostered, so you will guess by that that my wife Dee and I are very busy people.

One of my other jobs is Police Chaplain in Torbay, and I am one of the force's Trauma Reduction Management team. In these exceedingly challenging times this role keeps me and my colleagues remarkably busy.

I consider I have always had a strong faith and, in this life, I believe that God has destined Dee and me to encourage others. Hebrews 13 encourages believers to live out their faith through love, hospitality, purity, contentment and obedience to godly leaders, remembering that Jesus is unchanging, and that God equips His people to do good. Psalm 23 is a poetic declaration of trust in God as a loving Shepherd. It describes God's guidance, provision and protection, through both peaceful times ("green pastures" and "still waters") and difficult moments ("the valley of the shadow of death"). The psalmist expresses confidence that God's goodness and presence will remain throughout life and into eternity. Therefore, when you are feeling low or lost, turn to Christ and pray and trust in Him.

Martyn Hodge LLM



The Holy Family on Their Travels

St Mary's, Brixham has a travelling crib this year. The little, portable crib in its box will move from one home to another every day so that all can make the Holy Family welcome.

By the time this magazine comes out it will be on its way as it sets off at the Advent Carol Service on 30 November. The crib will then keep going until it is brought back to St Mary's on Christmas Eve at the Crib Service.

At each home the crib is passed on with a short prayer ceremony and we hope that new friends will be made as the Holy Family brings grace to each household.

Margaret Pickthorne*, LLM

SMALL GROUPS

"Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25

In the October magazine I wrote in praise of small group meetings. I am pleased to say that from that initial suggestion three groups have formed in St Mary's, Brixham and in All Saints'. Keep it up!

I would love to know that there are other small gatherings of people considering ways to meet outside church service times in order to study scripture and to pray together. It would be wonderful to start January 2026 with a few more small groups to build our community into a Mission Community of disciples keen to grow and be closer to God. Please consider how it would work with you among those with whom you worship on a Sunday. Better still, consider forming a group that invites people from every church. Margaret Pickthorne LLM

Christmas Events

St Mary's, Brixham Sunday 30 November 6.30pm

Brixham Mission Community Advent Carol Service

All Saints, Lower Brixham Tuesday 2 December 10.30am

Advent course: 'What do we believe?'

St Mary's, Brixham Wednesday 3 December 11am

Advent Course

St Mary the Virgin, Churston Wednesday 3 December 9.30am *Galmpton C of E school Christingle*

Church of the Good Shepherd, Galmpton Thursday 4 December 10am *Advent course*

All Saints, Lower Brixham Friday 5 December 7pm

Lifeboats Carol Service

Christian Community Centre, Fore St., Brixham

Saturday 6 December 10am-12pm

Christian Aid coffee &carols, Stargazy Pie, Brixham Harmony Choir

St Thomas of Canterbury, Kingswear Saturday 6 December 5.30-7pm

Kingfest, Carols by Candlelight

All Saints, Lower Brixham Tuesday 9 December 10.30am

Advent course

St Mary's, Brixham Wednesday 10 December 11am

Advent course

Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Galmpton Thursday 11 Dec 10am

Advent course

St Mary's, Brixham Sunday 14 December 3pm

Blue Christmas Tree Service

Galmpton C of E school Monday 15 December 5pm

Carols around the Village

All Saints, Lower Brixham Tuesday 16 December 10.30am

Advent course

Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Galmpton Tuesday 16 Dec 7.15pm

Carols around the Crib

St Mary the Virgin, Churston Tuesday 16 December 7pm

Quay Harmony singers

St Mary's, Brixham Wednesday 17 December 11am

Advent course

St Mary's, Brixham Wednesday 17 December 11.30am-1pm

Church open

Scala Hall, Brixham Wednesday 17 December 10.30am-12.30pm

Brixham Does Care, mince pies and carols, Furzeham School Choir

Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Galmpton Thursday 18 Dec 10am

Advent course

St Mary the Virgin, Churston Thursday 18 December 6pm

Carol Service

St Thomas of Canterbury, Kingswear Saturday 20 December 5pm

Christmas Carol Service

St Mary's, Brixham Saturday 20 December 10am-1pm

Church open

St Mary the Virgin, Churston Saturday 20 December 10am-12pm

Poinsettia Festival

St Mary's, Brixham Sunday 21 December after 11am service

Church open

St Mary the Virgin, Churston Sunday 21 December 10am

Carol service

St Mary's, Brixham Wednesday December 24 11.30am-1pm

Church open

CRIB SERVICES Wednesday 24 December

St Mary the Virgin, Churston 3pm

All Saints' Brixham and St Mary's Brixham 4pm





CHAPEL OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, GALMPTON CAROLS AROUND THE CRIB

TUESDAY 16TH DECEMBER AT 7:15

DONATIONS FROM THIS EVENT WILL BE SPLIT BETWEEN THE SALVATION ARMY AND ROWCROFT HOSPICE

- THE SALVATION ARMY
- MULLED WINE AND MINCE PIES
- BRING TORCHES AND CANDLES

RNLI Carol Concert Friday 5 December All Saints 7pm

The Concert features many traditional Carols interspersed with Lifeboat-related Poems. The programme includes songs from the Riviera Singers and the WAGS (Wives and Girlfriends of the Crew) and the Fishtown Ringers treat us to some wonderful handbell ringing.

Peter Thorp, Chairman of the Torbay Lifeboat Fundraisers, said "This has always been a very special evening in our calendar and the church is always packed with lifeboat families and other community members. Lay Minister Martyn Hodge will as usual officiate with All Saints organist Rowland Thomas leading our Carols. We can guarantee everyone a very warm welcome, some wonderful music and some festive refreshments at the end."

Peter Thorp

Blue Christmas Tree

There will be a special Blue Christmas Tree in St Mary's, Brixham again this year. Its colour will be just as just as green as any other Christmas tree, but it's there for people who will be feeling the gap of somebody missing this Christmas time — people who might be feeling "blue" at just the time when we would all like to be feeling happy. Perhaps somebody close to you has died, or you have family abroad. Perhaps somebody is in hospital or can't get home for Christmas. Perhaps there has been a family rift — or somebody has lost contact.

If this sounds like you, you are invited to come into St Mary's and remember the one missing by writing their name on a coloured label and hanging it on the Blue Christmas tree. This is your prayer – for them and for you.

The Blue Christmas Tree will begin with a **Special Carol Service at 3.00pm on Sunday 14th December**.

The Church will also be open at the following times:-Wednesdays 17th and 24nd December 11.30am-

1pm and Saturday 20th December 10am – 1pm

Sunday 21st **December** – after the usual service which starts at 11am. There will be tea or coffee on hand, and someone to chat if you wish. You are very welcome.

Support for Ukraine

We can now confirm the safe handover by our 8 volunteer drivers, after their 1,000 mile plus Brixham convoy across Europe, to deliver over 3,000kg of urgent medical and humanitarian supplies in 6 vehicles including 2 ambulances to Ukraine.

Our eight local heroes delivered critical medical supplies, including antibiotics, first responder trauma kit bags and other items to help relieve the pain and suffering of the injured. Over 50 wheelchairs, hundreds of crutches and essential items were delivered. This included personal hygiene items and warm clothing to help cope with the Ukrainian winter, when temperatures often fall to minus 20 degrees.

The generosity of the Brixham community generated over £40,000, an amazing fundraising record, in just 4 months.

John Brennan Brixham Futures CIC

Matthew Apostle and Evangelist

Next year's gospel in the lectionary is Matthew. I preached the piece that follows on St Matthew's Day and felt it might be an introduction in the November and December magazines, in preparation for the change of Gospel on Advent Sunday. Here is the second part.

M Pickthorne

Part 2

Last month I described to you the layout of the mantlepiece in St Matthew's living room. Now I will explore the reason why he put those particular things on his mantlepiece. Matthew is considered to be the gospel writer who was specifically addressing Jewish Christians so for him the Law obviously matters, BUT DO NOT NEGLECT THE NARRATIVE. In a carefully constructed story key components are setting and plot — especially plot that leads us into suspense and then resolves it. But attention must also be paid to character.

Characters in Narrative

Characters in a story are defined and identified by what they *say* and what they *do* and what they *undergo*. The narrative of the gospels revolves around one particular central character: Jesus Christ. If we say that characters are understood by what they *do* and *say* and *undergo* then it is the business of the Gospel writers to describe what Jesus *did* and *said* and what he had to *undergo*.

John Fenton says that, with a gospel, what the writer is getting us to do at the deepest level is 'believe in Christ and his words and deeds', What Matthew does is help us to believe in Jesus through what he *did*, what he *said* and the things he had to *undergo*.

The main message of Matthew is that Jesus is the Son of God. In Jesus Christ as Son of God, God intersected with our human story. In the gospels we can read and know about Jesus Christ. And through knowing and understanding Jesus who is the Son of God, we can learn to know what God is like.

What did Jesus do? Jesus loved us. That is what he did. Every action of Jesus was a gesture of love. Jesus was called by God to leave his nice little life in Nazareth and to travel around teaching as many people as would listen to him. He went out into the unknown to save us from ourselves. In every act that Jesus performed there is love. In each act of healing there is love. He called Zacchaeus down from the tree – in love. He healed the blind man – in love.

What did Jesus say? The gospels in particular focus on all that Jesus said. His teaching was so vital they wanted to write down as much as they could. Jesus taught with urgency because he loves us and he does not want us to miss out on the love of God. The most concentrated chunk of teaching is recorded in the sermon on the mount which is found in Chapters 5 to 7 in Matthew (and in a different version in Luke).

What did Jesus undergo? Jesus was crucified for us. Jesus was called

to face the cross and passion. Because he loved us he endured the cross – and rose again. He had to undergo all that suffering because he loves us and wants us to turn to him. And the last word goes to a Roman centurion, a non-Jew who declares, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

The Kingdom of Heaven - For All Nations

In Matthew's gospel we are told in no uncertain terms that what God wants is for his reign to spread throughout all the earth. God desires to be the ruler we turn to. Jesus taught about the Kingdom of Heaven, especially the ways in which we could become citizens of that kingdom. And he taught that the Kingdom of Heaven is imminently arriving. God is looking to all nations to bring in his kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven extends throughout the whole world.

So, with the first candle we hear the story of the nativity. Only in Matthew's gospel do *foreign* magi attend the birth. They were people from the nations beyond the boundaries of Israel. They are foreigners who came to worship Jesus and yet, Matthew wrote for specifically Jewish readers. He is telling us that the days of the geographically limited chosen race are over. The chosen people come from all nations and all people can be chosen - but they have to respond. The magi responded in worship.

With the final candle Matthew records the final words Jesus spoke to his eleven disciples who remained faithful, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of *all nations*, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." So, the first and the last candles relate to each other.

It is in Matthew that at the crucifixion a man from the nations outside Israel, a Roman centurion at the foot of the cross, saw and believed. He responded to what he saw. And even Jewish Matthew considered his response legitimate and worthy to be written down.

So it was a non-Jew who declared, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

The Kingdom of Heaven has come to the whole world. No one needs to miss out. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John saw the good news in the person of Jesus Christ. In their descriptions of what he *did* and *said* and had to *undergo* they made him known. They had to – his continued presence in their lives was too good to keep a secret. They responded by going out to *all nations*.

If you have known and experienced the love of Jesus you are called to go out with the good news of the Gospel, the Kingdom of Heaven has come to the whole world. Simply reading the Gospels is not the end. It is the beginning.

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

A reminder of a thought on Advent and Christmas

We start the rhythm of the church's year once more as we begin the season of Advent when the days are at their shortest. But that is when we have the most exuberant celebration of Christmas. A few days after the shortest day we declare on Christmas Day that "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:5)

Lord, support us all the day long,
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes,
and the busy world lies hushed,
and the fever of life is over, and our work is done.
Then in thy mercy grant us a safe lodging,
and a holy rest, and peace at the last. John Henry Newman

M Pickthorne

We believe in life before death. We wish you all a blessed Christmas and all the very best for the New Year. Thank you all for your continued

wonderful support of Christian Aid throughout 2025.

ristian -

We are now looking forward to seeing you all at our annual Christmas Coffee and Mince Pie morning in the Christian Community Centre on Saturday 6 December. It promises to be a fun morning with entertainment from both Stargazy Pie and the Harmony choir.

As you all know the heart of Christian Aid's mission is to love our global neighbours through practical support, advocacy, and solidarity. This Christmas, we are asking your support for families fleeing conflict to buy food and life saving supplies in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

£14 could buy a pair of solar lamps that comfort frightened children at night. £36 could fund personal hygiene kits for a family of six. £68 could fund pots, cups, bowls, plates and spoons for a family who've lost everything. Advent invites us to hold fast to hope – even when the world feels uncertain. Prince of Peace, as a baby you had no safe place to rest.

We pray to you today for all children forced to flee violence. We lift to you families and communities enduring instability and fear. In this season of hopeful expectation, we pray for those who do not know what tomorrow will bring. Challenge us, Lord, to live out your call to seek peace and pursue it. Heal our divisions and inspire us to act with justice and love. Amen

Have a blessed Christmas and thank you again for all you have done praying, acting and giving.

Marie, Lindsay and Mary

'For all the saints...'
November began with All Saints' and All Souls' services, the latter of which was an opportunity for all members of churches in the BMC to



remember loved ones. During the service, as well as the list of names, there was an opportunity for everyone present to light candles in memory of those they hold dear but see no longer. The candles were appropriately spread out on a wooden cross and remained lit for the remainder of the service.

'Let there be peace on earth...' The annual Festival of Remembrance took place on November 5th, and, notwithstanding the bangs and explosions of fireworks, was enjoyed by all who attended.

The Town Band, Brixham Orpheus Choir, the shanty group *Harbour Buoys*, the choir from Brixham C/E Primary School (with a very poignant song) and Jan Lobb, who led the community singing, created a thoughtful atmosphere to add to the ceremonial element featuring the colours of the various armed organisations, the presentation of a medal to Standard Bearer Ronnie Carter for long service, and the presence of local dignitaries. Martin Hodge LLM, Royal British Legion Chaplain, led the short service at which Rev'd Philippa preached.

'O God, our help in ages past...' Remembrance Sunday was well-attended, although a large number of the regular congregation took part in the parade and service in Brixham harbour and at the War Memorial. The thoughtfulness of the service in church led to much conversation at fellowship afterwards.

'O Come, O Come Emmanuel...' will resound on Advent Sunday at the two BMC services, in the morning at Churston for a Eucharist and in the evening at St Mary's for the Advent Carol Service.

Saturday mornings coffee in the hall, *Mummy & Me*, Messy Church and Youth Group all welcomed new members during November as the church continues to '*reach out to welcome in*.'

THANK YOU! GREAT TEAMWORK!

 $\mathcal{L}\mathcal{W}$

Messy Church, St Mary's, Higher Brixham

PEACE was the theme for Messy Church this November, when we thought about how we could all help to bring peace in our families, our community, our schools, among our friends. We were lucky enough to have Cecilia from BATs to make *doves of peace* from milk bottles with us that all could take home.

Messy-churchers also...made doves that flutter; drew round their hands to make peace lilies; wrote prayers on a dove; played a game about peace; drew round their hands on flags to illustrate countries that are still not at peace, and made them into a wreath; threaded a wooden cross to take home and listened to puppet 'Humphthree' explain that the ultimate 'peace-offering' is Jesus.

Our thanks, as always, go to those who give up time to help sow the seeds of the gospel. And **thanks to our wonderful kitchen team**.

All are welcome to come and enjoy the 'messiness' of Messy Church for Christmas at our next meeting after school on Friday 12 December

For further information please contact Lindsay 07813 311613 or Lesley 01803 845036

Bless you all!

 $\mathcal{L}\mathcal{W}$

Thank you

So we are coming to the end of 2025. It's certainly been a year I will never forget. Which is why I am asking for this short message to be included in December's magazine.

I want to thank everyone for their thoughts, support and prayers during this year, following the passing of my daughter Joanna in May.

Thank you to everyone who came to her celebration in June at St Mary's. 'Dancing Queen' has certainly taken on a new meaning!

So thank you all for everything from myself and my daughter Sarah.

God bless you all in 2026

Helen Kelly

Making a Stand

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of themcame to be. Psalm 139

Some subjects are difficult to discuss, provoking division and anger. Abortion is such a one. Sex-selective abortion is happening in the UK. Interpretation of the current law varies between different bodies.

A child is not a plaything or an accessory to family life. Abortion because a child is of the 'wrong' gender has potential repercussions on the structure of our national society. The Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, has described the practice as "simply appalling".

You can make your views known by writing to your MP or by using the Right to life website: hello@carolinevoaden.com or Liberal Democrats 43, Fore St, Totnes TQ9 5HN 01803 866013 or House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Righttolife.org.uk

Alison Crozier

If Only

When Heaven Invades Earth is a book title. It made me think:

'Thy Kingdom come' we pray.

A Covenant prayer begins:

'I am a child of God made in your image and likeness' and includes 'You call me to be witness to your presence, 'Boldly, courageously, gently'.

It ends' 'What is true in heaven, may it be seen in me within the dance of the Trinity of love Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.

Jesus, the Messiah, came, taught, died on a cross and rose from the dead.

Heaven has already invaded earth. What remains is not when God acts but only if and when Jesus, the Messiah, came, taught, died on a cross and rose from the dead.

Heaven has already invaded earth. What remains is not when God acts but only if and when I (and you too) will cooperate.

Thank you to Alison Crozier, who kindly gave us these thoughts.

Dates for your diary

FORTNIGHTLY

Friday 7.00-9.00pm in term time St Mary's Youth Group 11-18s

WEEKLY

Thursday 9.30-11.30am St Mary's church hall Mummy & me

Friday 9.15-11.15am in term time Barn Chapel Stay & play

WHO WE ARE

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ST MARY'S, HIGHER BRIXE	 IAM						
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ST MARY THE VIRGIN, CH	 JRSTON						
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ST THOMAS OF CANTERBU	JRY, KINGSWEAR						
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