



Pip and Steve and the Gang —

A newsletter for the parish of All Saints & St Philip, Maidstone, with St Stephen, Tovil.

For the week ending 4th October

As we approach the harvest festival on Sunday it really feels as though the year has turned. Harvest is a festival I've had to learn to love. For a long time, it felt like the thinnest in terms of hymns and biblical imagery, but I have discovered there is something deeply profound about marking this turning of the year with gratitude. The bringing of harvest gifts (this year dried/tinned nonperishables to add to the collection by Archbishop Courtenay's school) is more than simply an act of charity. It is an expression of hope. As the natural world around us prepares to bed in for the winter, we cast our eye backwards on all the good gifts that God has given us, and forward in hope that whatever autumn and winter may bring (literally or figuratively): we are blessed in order that we may be a blessing.

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This Week

We met as the buildings group this week, to explore what such a group might hold on behalf of the PCC. It is a wide profile including ecology, maintenance, health and safety and insurance, as well as ensuring that we have a good network of people prepared to access and give access to our buildings. It was good together our PCC this week as the trustees of this parish the working groups and the PCC will work together. I will be posting the minutes when I have them on our [website](#), but in particular it was good to discuss our upcoming governance awayday whereas a PCC we can discuss what it means to be stewards of the work of the church in this parish. This is in preparation, in part, for the work we need to do is a community of faith to explore our collective vision of ministry and witness in this place. On this, more anon.

We got the tree detritus cleared from All Saints churchyard this week, and my thanks to the parks and gardens crew Maidstone Borough Council for their efficient work. It has been an opportunity for me to meet much of their team as waves of different branches of their maintenance people have added their bit to tidy up our churchyard. There's still work to be done — some of the headstones were damaged, and falling branches have revealed, I think, just how overgrown the tree cover has become in our churchyard. Watch this space.

I will be heading down to the disability conference in Canterbury on Saturday. I was privileged to hear from a member of our congregation this week just how good we are as a community keeping an eye on those who need a little extra support. I was really pleased to hear how loved and supported people have felt when attending our worship at times when they have felt more vulnerable. Nevertheless, this parish is in an area where we have a high proportion of vulnerable individuals potentially coming through our doors, and I'm hoping that at the conference on Saturday I can get a sense of where there are still gaps in our care and in our accessibility.

Finally, this week it will be a privilege to hold a small act of worship after the morning service on Sunday to mark the terms grief at the sudden and tragic death of our erstwhile Member of Parliament and Freeman of the Town, Ann Widdecombe. Everywhere I go I hear how much she was loved and how effective she was as a constituency MP. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Next Week

This year David Freed begins his training as part of his discernment process hopefully towards ordination, I go to West Malling for training as a trainer. I'm looking forward to meeting other training incumbents and learning best practice. Meanwhile, I'm grateful for the support of the retired clergy in this parish as we gather for our little College of Clergy this week, and I'm looking forward to swelling that college by at least one!

We have some people coming from National Church Institutions to look at All Saints for a conversation about how she fits into the national picture as a Large Church. This is, I think, mostly about possible funding for our plans to reorder and refit All Saints, but I'm hoping also to get some sense and vision of how All Saints, Maidstone is part of the big picture of the Church of England.

For Prayer

Please pray for late Ann Widdecombe, for whom we are holding a memorial service on Sunday at 12 noon, and Sharon White, whose funeral we will be holding at All Saints later in October.

Pray, too, for those for whom our prayers have been asked: Daphne Holland, Pamela Hocking, Joan Bull, Rose Jarvis, Hannah Bunclark, and Debbie Maguire.

Please note the names of those on our prayer list will be refreshed each month, so do remember to let us know if you want us to keep them in our prayers.

On **Saturday 7 November**, we are sending candidates for confirmation to Canterbury Cathedral (11 AM). Come if you can, to support them, but if you cannot be physically present to pray for them in the building, please try and put some time aside that morning (and in the intervening weeks) to pray for them as they make a public declaration of their faith and discipleship.

For Action

I'm conscious there is a solid group of people who work hard both in the community and maintaining our buildings and grounds, not very grateful. The new cooker in St Philip's and the renewed noticeboard at All Saints (vestry door) were not done by the fairies! However, there is much, still, that needs doing and we need more people *on call* as it were, when we need somebody on site either at short notice or because we have a booking.

In particular, as ever, we are recruiting for our café and for help in maintaining the grounds around St Philip's. If your enthusiasm is for stratagem and planning, though, as you'll have seen above, we are recruiting for our new working groups. Do [get in touch](#) if you think you can help.

Life Events

The wedding season is done for the year, but that doesn't mean the work is done. We have one wedding thus far booked in for next year, and other couples in correspondence with us. Amongst our own congregation Richard and Colette have recently celebrated their wedding and we will be blessing their marriage during our morning service on 18 October. Do, please, try and be there to support and celebrate them.

We will be marking the funeral of Sharon White at All Saints at 10 o'clock on 14th October.

We are christening Kelsi and little baby Luca on Sunday afternoon of 25th October and will be introducing them to the family of this parish of All Saints Day, when we will present Kelsi and Luca with the candle that represents the light of Christ, and the certificates of their baptism.

Discipleship and Training

There are moves afoot to reboot our **prayer and study group**. Do get in touch if you are interested. I'll keep you updated here.

In the wider diocese:

Listening to the music of the soul



Saturday 14 November 2026



6:30pm-8pm



Cathedral Lodge, Canterbury, CT1 2EH

Join the Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford, for the second annual Michael Ramsey Lecture, exploring how music and the arts can help us engage with the complexities of life and faith. **Booking is essential and spaces are limited.**

Tickets: £6; Students in full-time education free of charge.



[Find out more and book](#)

Prayers for peace and reconciliation



Every Tuesday starting 15 September the



12:30pm



Canterbury Cathedral crypt

Jonathan Arnold, Director of the Social Justice Network, will be leading a weekly service of prayer and silent reflection for peace and reconciliation. All are welcome to join in praying for the needs of the world, our communities and our own lives.

Odds and Sods

Our Archbishop was in Connecticut this last week, and I found [this article](#) on her sermon on [last week's Epistle](#), talking about the Pharisees' question to Jesus regarding the authority he has. It's worth a read. She says, "It is clear that Jesus posed a threat to those in position of power and influence, not by lording it over them, but because he uprooted their understanding of what authority and power looked like. What those in authority should do, whom they should eat with, and with whom they should associate.

It is a lesson in expectations of privilege and authority of defence and honour and of the misuse of power for personal gain and forced declarations of defence and allegiance for show.”

Keep in Touch



<https://www.stphilipschurchmaidstone.co.uk/>



(parish): <https://www.facebook.com/p/All-Saints-with-St-Philip-St-Stephen-Maidstone-100069767707374/>

(bells): <https://www.facebook.com/AllSaintsMaidstone>



(café): @allsaintscafemairstone

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donate: <https://www.parishgiving.org.uk/donors/find-your-parish/all-saints-mairstone>

Giving

Finally, owing to the hard work of our treasurer, Terri, it's now really easy to make both one-off donations and to set up a direct debit to give to the work of the parish. Go to [parishgiving.org](https://www.parishgiving.org) and set it up there — you can even stay anonymous if you would like. More on this, anon.