



The Grapevine



The magazine of Christ Church la Manche
A Chaplaincy within the Church of England Diocese in Europe
Walking together with Christ: Companions on the Way
November 2025

From Father Chris

Attend to the Little Things (last words of St David)

I've been celebrating Sunday services for over fifty years now, and it would be only too easy to do everything on 'autopilot', letting experience hold everything in the correct place, allowing mind or even heart to wander far away. In simple terms the work of a priest is to bring God to people, and bring people to God: accepting that role disciplines the priest to stay awake and engaged in the moment, watchful for signs that God is present and active, maybe at work in unexpected ways.

One Sunday early in the autumn I set out for a service from which I frankly expected little – there had been a lot of hassle that week, and I was aware that key people would be absent for one reason or another. I had prepared my best, and I was busy doing my best, when I glimpsed not one but two moments where heaven broke into the routine...not for me, but for different members of the congregation. I'm not going into more detail for reasons of privacy, but for those people 'something shifted' spiritually in that moment. I noticed - I wonder if they noticed? I'll be fascinated to watch in coming weeks to see if what I saw leads to lasting change for them in terms of their Christian lives and relationships.

November begins with All Saints Day, leading into a month when we think about the saints. We can think of them as a glorious company in heaven, but we can also change our focus, and see the saints as Christian human beings leaving an example of how to serve Christ in often difficult and challenging situations. We know about the life and words of St David, Wales's (probably Irish!) Patron Saint, through a biography by his later successor Rhigyfarch, and Dewi's last words, recorded and passed down in Welsh tradition, include this slightly baffling little challenge to *attend to the little things*. On my way home after the service that day I found myself remembering those words, and maybe understanding them for the first time. I had been unexpectedly blessed by noticing a couple of tiny healing interventions by God, and realising again something we all need to remember from time to time, that *God is present and active even when we don't happen to feel it!* In other words, the objective factual presence of God is true even if our subjective and personal feelings fail to alert us to that reality.

God's message to me that day is the one I share with you now. Too often our ideas of the greatness of God get in the way of realising that God cares about the little things, so maybe we need to care about the little things as well. Little things like the spirit in which we come into His presence, little things like the way in which we treat one another, little things like taking care in offering to God the best we can bring on that day. Attention to such 'little things' is our response to the God who has time for every little thing, even us! *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (Matthew 6, vv29-30)* I came home that day buoyed up by the 'little things' I witnessed, and this has made me more determined than ever to be open to the importance of such 'little things' happening in our little churches and recognising them as signs that we are loved by God. May God inspire us all to attend to such little things, and to recognise just how important they may be.

Calling all Crafters – URGENT!

The chaplaincy Christmas Fair is fast approaching (**Saturday 29th November**) and as ever we will need plenty of gift items for sale. If you are a crafter, in any sphere, now is the time to get started, whether your gift is with knitting, crochet, card-making, sewing, patchwork, wood.....

The more items we have to sell, the happier our customers will be: and the more money we will raise for the mission of our chaplaincy.



Thursday 6th November starting at 18h00

The cost will be 15 euros per person to include aperitif, fish & chips and dessert.

Prize for the winning team.

Tickets are now on sale, so please bring your friends and join us for an evening of fun, food and fellowship!



With winter just around the corner, Picnic with the Parson is about to become **Potage with the Parson!**

The first of this season's soup lunches, with a choice of home-made soups and a dessert, will be on Remembrance Day, Sunday 9th November after the morning service at Gratot.



There will be a nominal charge to cover costs and the usual lively conversation. Do come along.

Tuesday Evenings on Zoom



The bible study group has begun to look at the book of Ruth, with a very interesting first session last month. This study will continue on Tuesdays 4th and 18th November.

Something More will meet on 11th and 25th November.

For our last session Fr Chris treated the idea of Forgiveness as a process rather than as a single event, breaking the steps of that process down to ask a series of questions about the nature of sin, guilt, conscience, forgiveness and freedom. We became deeply involved in the first, and will return to the others in the coming sessions.



See next page for an example of an interesting side-track from last time's session.

JUST FOR FUN!

I lost my job as an interrogator with MI5 but I'm not sure why. I didn't like to ask.

Why did the scarecrow win an award?
Because he was outstanding in his field.

I dropped a tub of margarine on my foot two weeks ago. I can't believe it's not better.

Aiming for Alpha?

The 'Alpha Course', pioneered by Holy Trinity Church Brompton, is now the best known basic Christianity Course in the world. It is used by most denominations and is offered in multiple languages: we are sure that a number of readers will have attended an Alpha Course at some time.



The heart of the Alpha Course lies in groups meeting to gel together through sharing a simple meal, then considering a series of themes over a number of weeks with an introduction by a speaker leading to discussion of linked questions. The genius of Alpha is that it does not assume that participants have prior knowledge of Christian teaching - it is truly a 'Basic Christianity' course.

The Chaplaincy Council has been asked to consider whether an Alpha Course offered through our churches would help our mission as a Chaplaincy. The discussion in the September meeting raised as many questions as answers, so we have asked the proposed leaders to come to the next meeting on 10th November to help us discern whether this is something we should do in the next few months.

Please pray about this proposal, and please offer your comments, ideas and suggestions to any of the ministers or to any CC member, so that we can bring these contributions to the meeting and include them in our thinking.

Surprises all round!

Our *Something More* house group often diverts down interesting side-tracks, and a recent meeting was no exception, as some puzzles about baptism were revealed. Some members were surprised to learn that the Jewish community practiced a form of baptism resembling Christian baptism, but with a different meaning. If you think about it, John baptised Jesus – probably the only person in the world who had no need of it! Here are some similarities and differences:

Christian Baptism	Jewish Baptism
<i>First began?</i> Began after resurrection of Christ, completion of becoming disciple	Began after Jewish exile to Babylon (c580BC) Received by adult converts to Judaism
<i>How?</i> Immersion in water, preferably running, but pouring allowed in many churches.	Immersion in water, preferably running
<i>Form?</i> Sacramental/spiritual experience of dying/ rising with Christ, entry into eternal life	A response to a message or moment of spiritual renewal. To restore ritual purity when needed.
<i>Meaning?</i> Gateway into Christian community, needed by all, cannot be repeated	Not initiation into Jewish community, but may 'make up' for missing elements. Not needed by all. Can be repeated.
<i>Who?</i> Initiation may be open to children based on faith of parents.	Circumcision is the normal infant admission to the Covenant community

I hope this helps people to see some of the similarities and differences – hopefully it will also explain how the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist was in fact Jewish baptism. Jesus was demonstrating in a practical and spiritual way His support for, His identification with, John's message that people should turn from their sins, and prepare for the coming of God's Kingdom. That's a message we all need to hear as we look forward to the beginning of Advent!

Fr Chris

Minister's message

Let the Church Declare and Display Christ together

That was the challenge issued by Michael Oh, leader of the Lausanne movement at the Fourth Lausanne Congress in 2024, in an inspiring address that you can still watch on Youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/lausannemovement>

Lausanne is not another organisation, rather a movement for the encouragement of global mission. Founded by John Stott in the 1970's, it seeks to connect key players with new ideas for global mission in order to see the gospel made accessible to everyone; churches that make disciples in every place; Christ-like leaders in every church and sector; and Kingdom impact in every sphere of society. And over the years since its founding, four world congresses have been held, each taking the understanding of our responsibility for engaging in mission a step further, to the point where evangelism is now seen as an integral activity of displaying and declaring, best done together, as the church works in unity.

A week ago Rob and I returned from the Lausanne European leaders conference which was in a resort hotel near Valencia, in Spain. It was a fascinating time for reflection and prayer with 135 leaders from different denominations and churches in every corner of Europe, and readings in around 25 different languages.

We were delighted to be able to meet up with some French leaders from churches in Angers, Paris and Lyons. Worship was largely in Spanish, which was a challenge for us as neither of us have ever learned it! Fortunately there were translators around when we needed them.

Our conversations were based around the theme of collaboration, seeing the global church as a body where no-one should say "I don't need you". There were five main sessions, with workshops in between and opportunities for discussion: listening together; leading together; reconciling together; serving together; and building together.



We were challenged to think about what that all means to us as congregation members of Christ Church in the Manche in 2025. Do we listen to those whose needs or contributions are sometimes ignored or drowned out by the louder voices? To what extent do we work towards the plurality of leadership as demonstrated in the gospels? Do we look towards reconciling relationships while also respecting the opinions of others? Are we willing to serve together in whatever ways God has gifted us? And what are we doing together that will help to build our two congregations, and reach out to more people here in the Manche?

As we approach the season of Advent maybe we can take some time to think about these questions and pray for guidance as to what needs to change in order for us to better declare and display Christ along with the other Christian churches in this part of France.

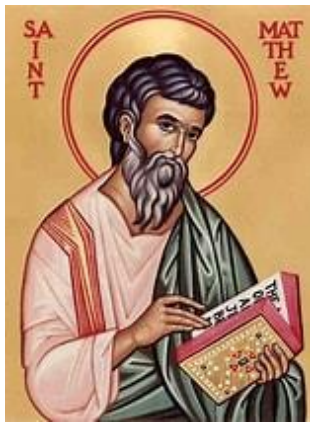
Helen Wordsworth



Harvest Festival services were well attended in both our churches last month, with gifts of suitable goods passed on to our local Banques Alimentaires. Sadly, no-one took any photographs!

Meet Matthew! - our guide for the year ahead

The last Sunday of November marks Advent Sunday – for Christians the start of a new worship year. Each year is seen through the lens of one of the three 'Synoptic' ('similar') Gospels: this year we turn to the Gospel according to Matthew. What do we know about the man behind the book?



Matthew was a tax gatherer at Capernaum when Jesus met him and called him – an event recorded in chapter 9 of Matthew's Gospel. Tax gatherers were hated figures: they operated on a kind of franchise system, paying an agreed sum to the Romans, then extracting taxes from the local population to recoup their investment and add a slice of profit on top. Other Gospels refer to the calling of a tax gatherer called Levi, son of Alphaeus – it's quite possible Matthew had two names in different languages. The Bible lists him as an apostle, along with his brother James, but says nothing more about him. Ancient legend says he began his ministry in Judaea before going to Ethiopia, where the Church still remembers Matthew as its founder: he was killed there for his faith. Uniquely, the details of his life and ministry are actually recorded in a Jewish manuscript, the Babylonian Talmud, the only surviving copy now in a museum in Switzerland.

When it comes to the Gospel bearing his name, modern experts have many different opinions. Few currently believe Matthew is the oldest Gospel, while some actually believe it was written anonymously with Matthew's name being attached later. An ancient account suggests that this Gospel was originally written in Hebrew (probably Aramaic) which would make it unique among the books of the New Testament. That ancient manuscript has not survived: our earliest copy of (part of) Matthew, written in Greek, dates from around 150AD.

Matthew is the most 'Jewish' of the four gospels, emphasising Jesus as the fulfiller of prophecy about the Messiah, and encouraging readers to see a continuity with the Jewish religion rather than a break with it. It has several unique features not found elsewhere, best known being the account of Wise Men visiting from the East.

People often ask 'why four gospels?' and the answer seems to be that each was written initially to serve the needs of a particular Christian community in a particular place – of course in those earliest days there was no 'Bible', just individual manuscripts and letters. It seems likely that Mark's gospel was born in the context of the church at Rome: Matthew would seem to be rooted in the Christian community in Jerusalem, where his sense of continuity with Judaism would make perfect sense and an original text written in Aramaic instead of Greek would seem most natural. Matthew would indeed need to have been written at an early date to fit that pattern, since the city (and presumably its church) fell in 73AD after a Roman siege. Nobody would write a Gospel for a church that no longer existed!

I love Matthew's gospel, its richness and sense of continuity, and I'm looking forward to preaching the churches through it as your Chaplain during the coming year. I hope you will come to love Matthew's gospel as well!

Heavenly Father, Your Son chose to dine with tax collectors and sinners such as St. Matthew. As we remember him, grant that we might rejoice that Christ still chooses to dine with us sinners in His own feast of forgiveness. Lord, in Your mercy, Hear our prayer.

(Lutheran Synod of South Missouri)

Fr Chris

Please don't forget to pray daily for our church

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for calling us to be a Church under the banner of your Name:
may we look to you today and find clear vision for tomorrow.

May our life together bring you glory,
as you make of us a living invitation to enter the joy of your Kingdom. Amen.

DIARY DATES	
Tuesday 4 th November 10h30	Coffee Catch-up La Dinette, Avranches
Tuesdays 4 th and 18 th November 19h45 – 21h15	Bible Study on Zoom
Wednesdays 5 th and 19 th November 10h00 – 12h30	The Baker English Library at Gratot
Thursday 6 th November 18h00	Quiz with fish and chips
Sunday 9 th November	Potage with the Parson at Gratot after the morning service
Tuesdays 11 th and 25 th November 19h45 – 21h15	Something More on Zoom
Saturday 15 th and Sunday 16 th November	St Nicholas Christmas Fair Montmartin sur Mer
Saturday 29th November 10h00 – 18h00	Chaplaincy Christmas fair at Gratot

SERVICES IN NOVEMBER		
<i>Covid is still around. Please respect those who are being cautious.</i> In particular, please think of others and wear a mask if you come to church while you have a cough or cold or feel unwell. Services may be subject to change depending on availability of ministers.		
DATE	GRATOT 11h00	AVRANCHES 16h00
2 nd November	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist
9 th November	Holy Eucharist 10h30 start	Evening Prayer
16 th November	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist
23 rd November	Holy Eucharist	Evening Prayer
30 th November	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist

READINGS FOR NOVEMBER					
Date	Day in the church Calendar	Psalm	1 st Reading	2 nd Reading	Gospel
2 nd	All Saints Day	149	Daniel 7:1-3,15-18	Ephesians 1:11-end	Luke 6:20-31
9 th	Remembrance Sunday	17:1-8	Job 19:23-27a	2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-end	Luke 20:27-38
16 th	2 before Advent	98	Malachi 4:1-20	2 Thessalonians 3:6-13	Luke 21:5-19
23 rd	Christ the King	46	Jeremiah 23:1-6	Colossians 1:1-20	Luke 23:33-43
30 th	Advent Sunday	122	Isaiah 2:1-5	Romans 13:11-14	Matthew 34:36-44

MINISTRY CONTACTS

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Wardens	
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Chaplaincy Ministers - usually meet monthly with Fr Chris; please share your questions, thoughts and ideas with the Team by contacting Chris	
Fr Chris with:	
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Revd Dr Helen Wordsworth	



Useful websites

If you know of any other websites which might be of use to our readership, please let us know

https://europe.anglican.org/	The main Diocesan website
http://anglicanfrance.fr/	Anglicans in France
https://www.achurchnearyou.com/christ-church-manche-normandy	Our Chaplaincy website
www.rfi.fr/en/	French news and current affairs public radio station, good for latest news in English

NEXT MONTH'S DEADLINE for articles and photos is 24th November

Please send articles and photos to: mmupjohn@live.co.uk



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Contact us for support if you or a loved one is affected by cancer.

Meetings on 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month in the salle at
Notre Dame du Touchet, 50140; 10h00 – 12h30

Trained volunteers available

E-mail: nord@cancersupportfrance.org www.cancersupportfrance.org

ENGLISH-SPEAKING ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, 1 Place de Collegial, Mortain

Mondays 10h30 - 11h30, Fridays 18h00 - 19h00

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