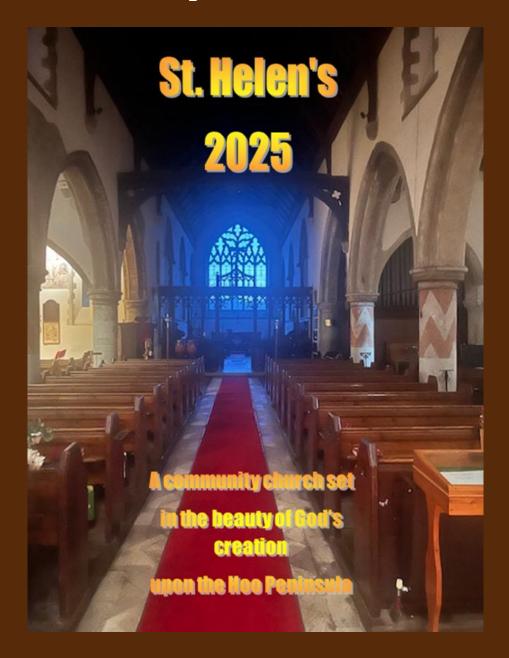
Welcome to our Weekly News Letter



A reading to carry us through 2025

For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which

God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. Ephesians 2:10 NRSV

Services this week and readings

Sunday 23rd November 2025

Christ the King Sunday next before Advent

8.30am Holy Communion10am Family Service12 noon Interment of ashes for *Jean Cowling*

MORNING PRAYER is said @ 8am Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday Mornings in the Lady Chapel <u>All Welcome</u>

Dates ahead:

- Next Sunday 30th November ADVENT 10am
 Praise Service lead by the Music Jammers!
 - 24th November Music Jam 7-8.30pm
 - 26th November 7pm Choir Pratice
- 26th November 2pm Thames Veiw Crem funeral for *Alan Billson*
- 29th November Christmas Fair 12noon - 3pm

Readings for Sunday:

Jeremiah 23: 1-6 Luke 23: 33-43 "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace".



Three-week course looking at Hope

Did you know that 600 years before Jesus was born @ Bethlehem his birth had been predicted?

Jesus offers Hope!

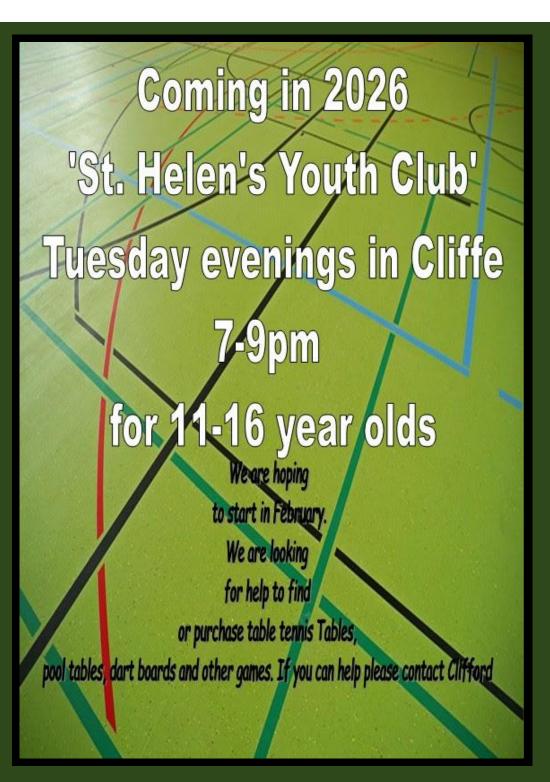
There are few emotions more powerful than hope. But these days, hope often feels hard to come by.

Open to all and free why not find out more over three Tuesday evenings here in December

7-9pm

2nd December St. Helen's House 9th December St. Helen's Church 16th December St. Helen's House

Tea & coffee provided







Saturday 29th November 12noon - 3pm



Refreshments, raffle, cakes, games, have-a-go stalls, bric-a-brac and local handmade items and of course Father Christmas!

Stallholder bookings contact Rob: 01634 221497 email kentstamps@outlook.com





with the Gravesend Borough Band

A selection of christmas music & sing-a-long carols



St. Helen's Church Buttway Lane, Cliffe



Bar & Raffle

Adults £12 Under 16s free



Tickets: 07778 959003

Buy online with QR code



SATURDAY 29TH NOVEMBER - 12 TO 3PM CHRISTMAS FAIR







SATURDAY 20TH DECEMBER - 6PM CAROL SERVICE - ST. JAMES' CHURCH, COOLING





4PM - CRIB & CHRISTINGLE (CHRISTINGLE THEME: DONKEYS)

feel free to come dressed as a donkey or bring a toy donkey!

11.30PM - MIDNIGHT MASS

CHRISTMAS DAY - 10AM FAMILY SERVICE











Free and open to all
why not challenge the Vicar
to a game of chess or maybe it was



Reverend Green in the study with the candlestick, or just a trivial pursuit!

St. Helen's Church Cliffe The Coffee Stop

A community hub for all

Tea, coffee and cake as cheap as chips'

St. Helen's House just before you get to the church opposite parish carpark

Opening Times

10.30am -4pm

Monday - Friday

(subject to volunteers)

Free WIFI available

If you would like to give to the work at St. Helen's it couldn't be easier.

Just Scan the QR code follow the link to our page on SUMUP and donate.

All gifts are gratefully welcome and received.



Help us to keep our church <u>open</u> for another thousand years



If you would like to give to foodbank there is a shopping trolley found at the back of St. Helen's Church just drop your donations in the trolley.

For more info about St.Helen's go to 'A Church Near You' or our 'Webpage'

click one of the buttons below

www.achurchnearyou.com/church/9932

Messy Church New dates below for 2025/2026



Messy Church Dates for 2025/26 3-5pm.

Dates are:

20th September 2025 'Messy Idols' Moses and the law 18th October 2025 'Messy Coats' the story of Joseph 15th November2025 'Messy Music' Gideon's army 17th January 2026 'Messy Hair' Samson 14th February 2026 'Messy Love' a new commandment 14th March 2026 'Messy Mothers' a look at biblical mums 3rd April 'Messy Good Friday' 10.30am-12 noon 16th May 2026 'Messy Gold' King Solomon 20th June 2026 'Messy messengers' Looking at prophets

There is no charge for Messy Church, but donations are always welcome to help with the running costs.

Weekly activities

If you would like something advertised here please email cliffatcliffe@gmail.com



QR for this Newsletter share it with others

Reverend Clifford's Weekly Blog 'Two little dickie birds'



22nd November 2025

Who remembers or still sings with actions this little nursery rhyme to their children or grandchildren.

Two little dickie birds Sitting on a wall, One named Peter, One named Paul.

Fly away, Peter,

Fly away, Paul, Come back, Peter, Come back, Paul.

Originally printed and published in 1765 the two little dickie birds went through an identity and gender crisis as originally they were called Jack and Gill. The change apparently occurred sometime in the 19th century when they were then called Peter and Paul after Jesus's apostles.

Original version went like this according to: Opie and P. Opie, The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes (Oxford University Press, 1951, 2nd edn., 1997), p. 147

There were two blackbirds
Sat upon a hill,
The one was nam'd Jack,
The other nam'd Gill;
Fly away Jack,
Fly away Gill,
Come again Jack,
Come again Gill

Why then am I light-heartedly presenting to you this week, a child's fondly remembered nursey rhyme, well why not in a week that has at times been all to serious with rumours and counter rumours of what might or might not be revealed in next weeks budget as Rachel from Accounts delivers the most advertised and over expected budget for years, what shocks will be revealed, how many U turns will be exercised and how many broken promises as each and every one of us counts the costs. Whilst it might seem like our political leaders are behaving just like children in a playground what they play around with is people's lives creating unneeded anxiety that sadly becomes unbearable for so many. This then is a light blog to distract us from all the shenanigans of politics.

Fond memories of nursey rhymes, the little stories that have been sung to us over the years and to those who sang them to us. For myself I remember my mum often singing them to me but more so our Aunty Ruth, a larger than life a character, who as the main Bexley senior Midwife delivered my younger brother and sister into this world and became and still is a close family friend. Aunty Ruth in her posh voice had a wonderful way at telling little stories and singing nursery rhymes, she was just as good at telling us about Jesus and I guess is part of my spiritual journey.

The people who take time to sit and talk to us, entertain us, listen to us and generally support us in our younger life can be so influential in our wider lives. I'm aware they can be just as destructive, but this is a positive blog so lets stick with the little interactions that put a smile on our faces as we see or hear something that causes us to look back and give thanks.

Now why two little dickie birds; well as you will see I have given you a photo from the Rectory garden that shows the starlings sitting gathered on the electricity lines in the field behind us. The second photo reveals two crows sitting peacefully alongside them, are they Peter and Paul are they Jack and Gill; who knows. But this I know, each will as they do fly away and come back time and time again every day of the year. I often watch the starlings as they fly in as a flock, it is truly amazing when you think about it, within a split of a second each bird finds a place on the wire. There is no squabbling or readjusting, no pushing or barging they just land, it's the same when these same birds fly in those stunning autumn murmuration's that just leave us speechless. Just imagine if we had to put that number of aircraft into the sky at once

and make all those precision turns and dives, the Red Arrows are brilliant, but it takes hours of practice and precise instruction and very expensive impressive technology to do all the calculations. Nature simply does it; we can mimic nature, but the truth is we are a million miles away from its simplest interactions and still they say there is no God, really!

Watching the starlings reminds me that we haven't got a clue how half of anything in nature works or why it exists, then I don't really want to know because knowing takes away the true wonder and the mystery, what then becomes of a world that stops wondering. When two little dickie birds flew away behind my aunties back I didn't know where they went, sometimes we would bundle her, my siblings and me to see where they were; what had she done with them, where had they gone. Then she would call them back and the childhood wonder was back in the room again. For the time that we didn't know how the nursey rhyme worked it was still worth hearing and seeing again, it was magical. I don't know how the starlings manage to land perfectly again and again, why, because when I watch them I am still able to marvel that they just do.

Faith is the same, I have many questions just like everyone else, yes even as a Vicar, but it is the unanswered wonder, the mystery that builds my faith. I look around me, and I marvel at a world that still reveals God, a creator who somehow has organised life perfectly, the only imperfection comes from us because I guess sometimes we just simply want to know too much. The consequence of this is that with every positive action we make we seem to accept the negative as well. Think about our curiosity into particles, molecules and atoms, the things that bind us together through our DNA, the things we knew nothing about for millions of years and lived just as long without in truth. We now have a deep understanding how it all knits together and we have been able to do amazing things with that knowledge. At the same time, we all now live with the same threat that at the hands of humanity those very same atoms in our grasp and control have the power to destroy us in our entirety. I ask the question would we be better off not knowing? What will be the negative results of playing around with DNA, our own history tells us there will be in time.

Anyway, I'm getting too heavy again let's get back to the two little birdies.

Where did Peter and Paul go, in the biblical sense they have gone to the place where Jesus told them about, and yet they couldn't see it with their physical eyes, they had to put their faith in Jesus, in God. The mystery of heaven is just that as they devoted their lives to telling others about the unseen but lived in the reality of a life that can be experienced through love. If in the nursey rhyme flying away is death then coming back is eternal life.

Will we sit on the wall and watch and wonder, will we trust faith over fact, because through faith we will find the facts. As an adult I know exactly now how Aunty Ruth use to make the two little birds disappear with bits of sticky paper and sly of hand, returning them once again. I do not know though how or nor do I want to know how the starlings manage to fly and sit on the wire without crashing, because its enough for me to understand that there is some mechanism or communication that they use which remains a mystery, and naturally we are people who love mystery and Peter and Paul naturally find their place.

So, Peter and Paul were Jack and Gill originally, now didn't they go up the hill to fetch water, breaking a crown?

Have a good week and look out for the mystery, and in it you might just discover God

God bless,

Clifford

Please feel free to share this with others



St. Helen's

We are open every Sunday

Free worship
Free Tea and Coffee

Free just as it has always been

You are always welcome services begin

At 8.30am and at 10am

Contact Details

If you would like to be contacted by the church at anytime or the Vicar

then please download and return the contact sheet below by clicking on box, in compliance with GDPR

PDF Contact Sheet

Opening times for Church visits

We are pleased to say that we are continuing to make every effort to keep our church doors open during the week.

If you would like to visit the church then please sign and pick up a key from the Coffee Stop in St. Helen's House. Where possible volunteers might be able to show you around.

When you have finished your visit then simply return the key.

Opening Times

Monday - Friday 10.30am - close at 4pm
we make every effort to keep to these times but as you might
appreciate this is reliant on our wonderful volunteers.

Who's who page

Priest in Charge of St.Helen's:
Reverend Clifford Stocking
145 St. Helen's Rectory
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Rochester
Kent ME3 7PY
clifford2567@googlemail.com
01634 610752 or 07941056237
Day Off usually a Thursday

Church Wardens: Robin Thompson kentstamps@outlook.com 01634 221497

Paul Sutton paulsubtle@gmail.com 07740867238

Licensed Lay Minister Dave Green

pewsey54@btinternet.com 01634 220430

For any safeguarding concerns @ St. Helen's please contact our safeguarding officers:

Children's Safeguarding officer:

Julie Allen - 01634 221763

Adult Safeguarding officer:

Heather Weston -07762 401424





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Our mailing address is:

cliffatcliffe@gmail.com

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You can <u>update your preferences</u> or <u>unsubscribe</u>

