



# 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*  
December 2025

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## Minister's message

**“Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”**



As we enter Advent and then into Christmastide we hear once again the familiar stories of the angel’s visit to Mary, the birth of the Christ child, the visits of the shepherds and the wise men, and we too are invited to “go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

We don’t know a great deal about the shepherds who spoke these words. They are relatively obscure actors in this story. We’re not sure if they are hired hands or tending their own flocks. They run to find Jesus, and afterwards, we don’t meet them again.

They begin in a rather ordinary space, “living out in the fields” with their sheep. When the angel suddenly appears, they are terrified! Who wouldn’t be? Then quickly they move from terror to wonder to delight and finally to joyful worship. Like the people whom the shepherds first told about Jesus, I am once again amazed at what I hear.

After the angelic choir disappears, the shepherds urge each other: “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” What else could they do? As I read the Christmas story once again I find myself responding in the same way: “Let’s go and see, let’s look again into the amazing good news of the child who has been born in Bethlehem!”

My prayer for each one of us is that, however many times we have heard this story, may it awaken in us the joy and wonder of the good news of Jesus’ birth!

A happy and blessed Christmas to you all.

*Mary Jackson*  
*Lay Minister*

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***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.

## It's not over yet!

A recent meeting of Chaplaincy ministers was reminded that Covid and 'flu infections are becoming widespread again, and that, given the high proportion of vulnerable people in our congregations, we ought to review our hygiene practices.

After discussion we agreed:

- 1 To urge those feeling at all unwell to consider very carefully whether to attend a Sunday service, for the sake of others who may be there. (This will apply to ministers as well!!)
- 2 To discontinue the physical sharing of the Peace in our services: we encourage members to shake hands with others after the service if they wish.
- 3 To provide hand sanitiser, especially on entering church.
- 4 We were reminded that personal intinction - *dipping one's own Bread in the Cup* - was identified as a health hazard at the time of the Covid Pandemic, and is specifically not permitted under C of E rules for that reason. Instead, those concerned about drinking from the Cup are encouraged to receive the Bread only.

*If you have any questions or concerns about any of this, please speak to one of the ministers.*

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Despite there being fewer participants than last time, the quiz held last month was great fun and enjoyed by all.

After giving up our mobile phones (no cheating allowed, though next time maybe smart watches will have to go too!) we had varied and interesting questions which stretched our brains and our knowledge. Many thanks to Kath and Michaela who set the questions and to Michaela who proved herself an excellent quiz-master.

During the course of the evening, aperitifs, fish & chips and desserts were enjoyed by all.

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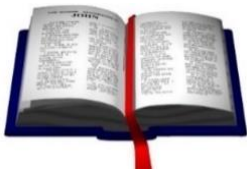
Sorry everyone, with this time of year being so busy, there will be no **Potage with the Parson** in December.



We recommence in January.

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## Tuesday Evenings on Zoom



The bible study group is continuing to look at the book of Ruth. This study will continue on Tuesdays 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> December.

Something More will meet on 9<sup>th</sup> December when we will continue our interesting talk about themes around Forgiveness. The next session will look at conscience and temptation.



## CHRISTMAS FAIR 2025



It was wonderful this year to be back in the hall for the fair, with the cafeteria once again in full swing, fairy lights strung along the walls and the bright stalls ranged at one end with a wide variety of goods for sale from marmalade and chutneys through beautifully decorated Christmas cakes to Christmas cards and gift items. With fewer people available this year to make the dozens of mince pies usually snapped up by our French friends, there were instead extra jars of home-made mincemeat, so our customers could make their own.



The last time we were able to use the hall at Christmas, the fish and chips were so popular we ran out of tables, so this year there were more tables and at the peak lunch time period most were occupied; over 50 portions of fish and chips were enjoyed in addition to vegetarian quiche and vegetable soup, both home-made. During the afternoon there was another flush of visitors who were happy to sit down with a cup of tea or coffee and sample the variety of home-made cakes available.



The total raised was a wonderful **2,075.88 euros**. Given the number of key people who were away or ill, this was a magnificent result, so many, many thanks to all those who contributed in any way, with their time and their energy, especially that tiny group who really went above and beyond. You know who you are!

As well as our own fair, this year we again had a stall at the St Nicholas Christmas Fair in Montmartin sur Mer. Many thanks to those who set up and ran the stall, which raised a marvellous **353.50 euros**.



## Remembrance Sunday at Gratot



The morning took our usual form in that the service began 30 minutes early, at 10h30, to allow for the two minute silence at 11h00. We were delighted that once again the local veterans' association joined us in our worship. Father Chris presided at the Eucharist. After the service, which was rounded off by hearty singing of both the French and the British national anthems, we all went out to the war memorial in the churchyard, where Donna led a brief service and a poppy wreath was laid.



After this, everyone repaired to the hall for a welcome cup of coffee and fellowship.

### JUST FOR FUN!

#### How many Christians does it take to change a light bulb?

**Charismatic:** Only one. Hands already in the air.

**Pentecostal:** Ten. One to change the light bulb and nine to pray against spirit of darkness.

**Presbyterians:** None. Lights will go on and off at predestined times.

**Roman Catholic:** None. Candles only.

**Baptists:** At least 15. One to change the light bulb and three committees to approve the change and decide who brings the potato salad and fried chicken.

**Episcopalians:** Three. One to call the electrician, one to mix the drinks and one to talk about how much better the old one was.

**Methodists:** Undetermined. Whether your light is bright, dull or completely out, you are loved. You can be a light bulb, turnip bulb or tulip bulb. Church-wide lighting service is planned for Sunday. Bring a bulb of your choice and a covered dish.

**Mormons:** Six. Five wives to replace the bulb while husband reviews church lighting policy.

**Lutherans:** None. Lutherans don't believe in change.

**Amish:** What's a light bulb?

I bought a dog from a blacksmith today.

As soon as I got him home, he made a bolt for the door!!

I didn't think wearing orthopaedic shoes would help, but I stand corrected!

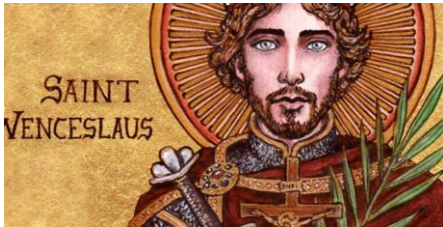
#### The Four Ages of Man

He believes in Santa  
He doesn't believe in Santa  
He is Santa  
He looks like Santa



## A Christmas carol – without Jesus??

We all love a good Christmas carol, but what would we list as the essentials of a good Christmas carol? *Mary and Joseph*? Of course. *Jesus*? Absolutely. *A stable and animals*? Probably. *Snow*? Possibly. *A good tune*? Certainly! So why do we sing 'Good King Wenceslas'? The tune is great (even if it is borrowed from a carol to welcome the spring!), but apart from lots of snow 'Good King Wenceslas' lacks all the essentials we've just listed!



'Good King Wenceslas' was written (like so many carols) in Victorian times: the author was the great priest and scholar J.M. Neale. The editors of the 1928 'Oxford Book of Carols' were pretty scathing about it: *This rather confused narrative owes its popularity to the delightful tune, which is that of a Spring carol. . . . Unfortunately Neale in 1853 substituted for the Spring carol this 'Good King Wenceslas', one of his less happy pieces, which E. Duncan goes so far as to call 'doggerel', and Bullen condemns as 'poor and commonplace to the last degree'*. Oh dear! But where did Neale get the story he turned into a carol? Who was Wenceslas, and how was he 'good'?

Good King Wencesla(u)s (a Duke, actually) was the Christian ruler of Bohemia from 907-935. He was much loved, especially by the poor and vulnerable. Perhaps modelling his ministry on the earlier Bp Nicholas of Myra, Wenceslas would quietly leave his palace at night, accompanied only by a servant, to bring practical help from his own riches to care for widows and orphans. Wenceslas was the first Christian ruler of the country, and worked hard to unite his country as a Christian nation while resisting constant pressure from neighbouring Hungarian and Saxon raiders.

The reign of Wenceslas ended in martyrdom: his pagan younger brother Boleslav lured him to an ambush and killed him in order to become Duke. Wenceslas was soon revered as a saint: a statue of him stands in the centre of Prague, and 28<sup>th</sup> September is celebrated as not only the Feast of St Wenceslas, but also as Czech Statehood Day.

The story (and the carol) of St Wenceslas teaches a valuable lesson on how we should respond to the Good News of Christ by living in a way that brings Him glory. It's an especially powerful lesson for the rich, the powerful, the important: it's a reminder that with richness and privilege comes responsibility, the responsibility to care for the poor and struggling, just as Jesus had a special care for them during His ministry on earth. In a world where leaders too often claim the title of Christian yet live lives of selfishness, excess and domination, the example of Wenceslas reminds us of the Gospel teaching about the path that leads to greatness in the Kingdom of heaven. In a world where kindness in rulers is derided as weakness, Wenceslas shows that true Christian leadership combines compassion for the needy with the strength and determination to protect one's people from danger. And that's why the truth about Wenceslas is still worth telling, to remind us why our carol labels him as 'good'.

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Fr Chris

## DIARY DATES

Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> December 10h30	Coffee Catch-up La Dinette, Avranches
Tuesdays 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 16 <sup>th</sup> December 19h45 – 21h15	Bible Study on Zoom
Wednesdays 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 17 <sup>th</sup> December 10h00 – 12h30	The Baker English Library at Gratot
Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> December 19h45 – 21h15	Something More on Zoom

## SERVICES IN DECEMBER

*Covid is still around. Please respect those who are being cautious.*  
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
7 <sup>th</sup> December	Morning Prayer	Nine Lessons and Carols <b>15h00</b>
14 <sup>th</sup> December	Holy Eucharist	Evening Prayer
<b>Saturday</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> December	Nine Lessons and Carols <b>15h30</b>	
21 <sup>st</sup> December	Morning Prayer	Holy Eucharist
24 <sup>th</sup> December	Holy Eucharist	
25 <sup>th</sup> December	Morning Prayer	
28 <sup>th</sup> December	Holy Communion by extension	Evening Prayer

## READINGS FOR DECEMBER

Date	Day in the church Calendar	Psalm	1 <sup>st</sup> Reading	2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading	Gospel
7 <sup>th</sup>	Second Sunday of Advent	72:1-7,18-19	Isaiah 11:1-10	Romans 15:4-13	Matthew 3:1-12
14 <sup>th</sup>	Third Sunday of Advent	Magnificat	Isaiah 35:1-10	James 5:7-10	Matthew 11:2-11
21 <sup>st</sup>	Fourth Sunday of Advent	80:1-8, 18-20	Isaiah 7:10-16	Romans 1:1-7	Matthew 1:18-end
24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Christmas Eve</b>	98	Isaiah 52:7-10	Hebrews 11:1-12	John 1:1-14
25 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Christmas Day</b>	To be decided			
28 <sup>th</sup>	First Sunday of Christmas	148:7-end	Isaiah 63:7-9	Hebrews 2:10-end	Matthew 2:13-end

MINISTRY CONTACTS	
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Adrian Feather, Churchwarden and Chaplaincy Treasurer	02 33 58 01 35 <a href="mailto:adrian.feather@orange.fr">adrian.feather@orange.fr</a>
<b>Chaplaincy Ministers</b> - usually meet monthly with Fr Chris; please share your questions, thoughts and ideas with the Team by contacting Chris	
<b>Fr Chris with:</b>	
Donna Derrick, Licensed Lay Minister	02 33 17 19 52 <a href="mailto:ddchristchurchmanche@gmail.com">ddchristchurchmanche@gmail.com</a>
Mary Jackson, Licensed Lay Minister	02 33 48 94 15 <a href="mailto:maryjackson117@gmail.com">maryjackson117@gmail.com</a>
Adrian Grainge, Licensed Lay Minister	02 99 20 38 60 <a href="mailto:adrian.grainge@orange.fr">adrian.grainge@orange.fr</a>
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*

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

**NEXT MONTH'S DEADLINE for articles and photos is 20<sup>th</sup> December**

Please send articles and photos to: [mmupjohn@live.co.uk](mailto:mmupjohn@live.co.uk)



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

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

Trained volunteers available

**E-mail: [nord@cancersupportfrance.org](mailto:nord@cancersupportfrance.org) [www.cancersupportfrance.org](http://www.cancersupportfrance.org)**

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