



**The Parish of
St. Martin's, Chipping Ongar
with St. Peter's, Shelley**
Charity No. 1214524.



The Reverend Hazel Aucken
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DECEMBER 2025 / JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

To be a growing church, God's gift to the community

Letter from The Rectory ...

The Gift That Keeps on Giving

Here's a trivia question for you: in which decade was the phrase 'The gift that keeps on giving' used in a commercial advert for the first time and for what product?

The phrase implies a present that brings joy and benefit long after it is given. It is a gift with a lasting impact that continues to be appreciated over time. Today it is used to sell all sorts of things, from electronics and magazines to jewellery and chocolates.

But it's also a phrase that's long been used of Jesus, and that's what I want to encourage you to reflect on this Advent and Christmas: in what way is Jesus the gift that keeps on giving in your life?



Shaped for Serving God

Do you know what your SHAPE is?

Spiritual Gifts God's unique gifts to you

Heart's Desire what motivates and excites you; what you love to do

Abilities your talents, knowledge and skills

Personality your character, personal qualities and strengths

Experience your life experiences and what you've gained from them

So my second challenge this Advent and Christmas is to reflect on these five dimensions of you: how God might give you as a gift to others?

Health and Safety

I'm delighted to report that as many of you know, Billy Stevens from the One Big Family is just the right SHAPE to become our Health and Safety Officer and has already made some

significant improvements. He's the inspiration behind moving the tealight stand away from areas where children are likely to be and keeping the gas lighter on the piano out of their reach. He's introduced fire drills ensuring that we've thought through who will do what if we have to evacuate in an emergency. He's produced a loose-leaf folder of all our current risk assessments in the vestry and made sure they are all available to PCC members online. He is most definitely one of God's many gifts to St Martin's.

One Big Family Team

I'm also delighted to report that Rebecca Church has not only joined the OBF planning team but as her day job is working for an American IT company she's also volunteered to take over the website from Peter Dudeney and promote our use of social media. She is another definite gift to St Martin's from God. Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will find her reflection on the parable of the yeast (Matthew 13.33 and Luke 13.21), which she brought to her first planning meeting and was then persuaded to give at the 16th November service, despite being completely unused to public speaking.

St. Peter's Management Group

Someone who is also God's gift to us is Cheryl Griffiths. She's actually a member of the URC down the road but lives near St Peter's and so volunteered to become one of the 'three wise men' (the others being David Irving and Monica Richardson) who together with yours truly signed up to 'Save St Peter's' from closure given that to do so we needed a lay team of at least three who would take on full responsibility for running St Peter's, including managing its finances, H&S and other compliance, building maintenance, churchyard upkeep, social events, worship services etc, etc. If you read the St Peter's reports in this Newsletter and/or Ongar News you will know they are doing an excellent job. But having reached her 80th birthday, Cheryl decided it was time to ease up a bit so whilst she'll continue to bake and organise events, she's standing down from the committee. Thankfully, God has provided another gift in the SHAPE of Jenny Day, who already provides the excellent St Peter's publicity but has now replaced Cheryl in the group, becoming our Minutes Secretary for both that group and the PCC.

Who else is God's Gift to our churches?

I've given just three examples of people who have discovered that their SHAPE means they can be a gift to our churches, but there are plenty more. Truth be told, everyone's SHAPE ensures they can serve God in one way or another, maybe predominantly in the church or maybe predominantly elsewhere, so let's celebrate them all. That leads me to my third Advent and Christmas challenge: who would you like to nominate as a gift from God to be featured in future editions of this magazine? It would be great to start a 2026 series 😊

With Christmas and New Year blessings ...



Revd. Hazel

Answer to advert question: 1920s, and the product was a radio, presumably because every time you switch it on, you receive whatever is being broadcast as a free gift.

Reflection on the Parable of the Yeast

Matthew 13.33 and Luke 13.21

Hello. For those who don't know me, my name is Rebecca and I'm relatively new to this church, and church life in general. Whilst I have always believed in Jesus Christ, and in God, like a lot of the children in this room, I am also a first-time reader of the bible in full – so I'm discovering a lot of Jesus' parables for the first time, including the parable of yeast. When we were planning this service, I shared a few thoughts with Hazel, Caroline and Sally, and Hazel asked if I would share them with you as well. So here goes.

Yeast is tiny. It's almost nothing in your hand, and once it is mixed into the dough you cannot see it any more. There is no dramatic moment where the dough announces that it's rising. It simply expands quietly and steadily, until the whole thing is transformed.

I think Jesus uses yeast because he knows how easily we overlook small things. We often wait for big moments or impressive signs to show us that something holy is happening. But God loves to start small, and work in the hidden places.

Kindness works the same way. Most acts of kindness aren't dramatic or flashy. They're small things, like a friendly word when someone's having a bad day, a bit of patience during an argument, or a text message that says, "I'm thinking of you." These are quiet, unseen things that most people will never notice from the outside. But the person receiving them feels the difference.

Think for a moment about a small act of kindness you've received recently. Maybe someone listened when you needed to talk. Maybe someone showed you grace when you were tired or stressed. It wasn't huge or life changing. But it did something inside you. It made space and helped you breathe. That's yeast at work.

Jesus' parable tells us that yeast spreads. It doesn't stay neatly in one corner of the bowl. It moves through the whole mixture. And that's what kindness does. One kind action can shift the tone of an entire situation. One person choosing calm in a stressful moment can help others calm down, or a person offering compassion can inspire someone else to do the same.

One final thing about yeast, before I start to sound like the Great British Bake Off judge Paul Hollywood. It needs warmth to rise. If the dough is too cold nothing happens. Human hearts are similar. When we show people warmth, they begin to rise. When we offer encouragement instead of criticism, or give second chances instead of shutting people down, we create the conditions where goodness can grow and expand.

Rebecca Church, OBF Talk – 16th November 2025



*Morning Prayer each
Wednesday at 9 am in
St. Martin's Church*

STREETS TO BE PRAYER FOR:

30 th November - 6 th December	Greensted Road
7 th - 13 th December	Heron Court
4 th - 20 th December	High Street
21 st - 27 th December	Kimptons Close
28 th December - 3 rd January	Kings Terrace and Queens Terrace
4 th - 10 th January	Lavender Mews
11 th - 17 th January	Livingstone Close
18 th - 24 th January	Love Lane
25 th - 28 th January	Marks Avenue
1 st - 7 th February	Mayflower Way, Mayflower Court and The Johns

FROM THE REGISTERS:

Baptisms:

Confirmations:

Weddings / Renewal of Weddings Vows:

Funerals: **Barbara Wheal - St. Martin's - 11.11.2025**

Internment of Ashes / Memorial Services / Cremations:



ST. MARTIN'S ADVENT FAIR - Saturday 6th December 2025

CAKE STALL

May I call upon your baking skills and support once again to enable the Cake Stall at the Advent Fair to be its usual success?

Home-made cakes, large and small, pies, biscuits etc. will be needed to provide variety and, as well as selling our items whole, we will be selling them by the slice with a cup of tea or coffee so lots will be needed. Many thanks, as always, in anticipation of your continued support.

Sue King



COULD YOU HELP, PLEASE? We have had to purchase a new photocopier for Church use. A donation / loan to cover the cost has been made because our church funds couldn't afford to buy one. Any contribution towards the cost of £714 would be most welcome. Either direct into the church account, the SumUp machine in church, cheque or cash. All donations should be clearly marked PHOTOCOPIER. Many thanks in anticipation of your help ...



St. Martin's Church, Ongar

ADVENT FAIR

Saturday 6th December
10 AM - 2 PM

RAFFLE CAKES GIFTS PLANTS
CRAFTS TOYS BEAUTY VINYL
BOOKS CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

ALSO CHRISTMAS CAROL WINDOW DISPLAYS BY LOCAL
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

SPONSORED BY
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CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER
All Services are in St. Martin's unless otherwise stated

Tue	2	5.30 pm	Beavers Group meeting Hazel
Wed	3	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
		10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel
Fri	5	all day	School Carols display being prepared
Sat	6	10.00 am	to 2 pm Advent Fair
Sun	7	8.00 am	Communion
		10.30 am	The One Big Family Service
			NO Church@Home
Wed	10	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
		10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel
		6.00 pm	Confirmation Service
Thu	11	2.00 pm	Julian Meeting in St. Peter's, Shelley
Su	14	10.30 am	Communion with Hymns
		11.00 am	Church@Home*
Tue	16	8.30 pm	The Third Tuesday Club meet at The Cock
Wed	17	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
		10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel
Sun	21	8.00 am	Communion
		10.30 am	One Big Family Communion
		11.00 am	Church@Home*
		2.30 pm	Nine Lessons and Carols in St. Peter's, Shelley
Wed	24		CHRISTMAS EVE
			NO 10 am Communion Service today
		3.00 pm	Crib Service
		11.30 pm	Candlelit Midnight Mass
Thu	25		CHRISTMAS DAY
		10.30 am	Communion
Sun	28	10.30 am	Communion with Healing
		11.00 am	Church@Home*
Wed	31		NO 10 am Communion Service today

**If you haven't attended Church at Home before
and would like to attend, please contact Shirley Dudeney (shirleydudeney@btinternet.com)
for the necessary link*

Are you holding an event?
*If you don't tell Peter Dudeney it won't appear in the Calendar.
His contact details are email peterdudeney@btinternet.com - Phone: 01277 364143*



CALENDAR FOR JANUARY

All Services are in St. Martin's unless otherwise stated

Sun	4	8.00 am	Communion
		10.30 am	The One Big Family Service
		11.00 am	Church at Home*
Wed	7	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
		10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel
Thu	8	2.00 pm	Julian Meeting in St Peter's, Shelley
Su	11	10.30 am	Communion with Hymns
		11.00 am	Church@Home*
Wed	14	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
		10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel
Sun	18	8.00 am	Communion
		10.30 am	One Big Family Communion
		11.00 am	Church@Home*
Tue	20	8.30 pm	The Third Tuesday Club meet at The Cock
Wed	21	9.00 am	Morning Prayer
		10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel
Sun	25	10.30 am	Communion
		11.00 am	Church@Home*
Wed	28	10.00 am	Communion in the Chancel

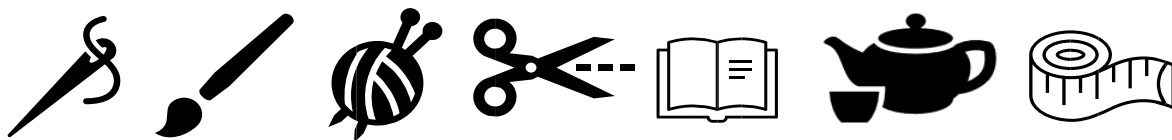
**If you haven't attended Church at Home before
and would like to attend, please contact Shirley Dudeney (shirleydudeney@btinternet.com)
for the necessary link.*

Are you holding an event?

NEW CONTACT: *If you don't tell **Sue King** it won't appear in the Calendar.*

My contact details are:-

email: susan.roger.king@ntlworld.com - Mobile: 07887 996278



SMARTYCRAFT

We are taking a break during December and January but will restart in February (19th) We hope that you all have a Very Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Peaceful New Year....

Jill and Rita

Ongar & Shelley Ladies' Thursday Group

What a Wonderful World

Linda introduced John Watkins, who was presenting us with a series of audio visual films. John's hobby has always been photography of natural history, mainly of small birds and birds of prey. He has travelled all over the world and built up some wonderful photos. He tries to present each film clip with a theme and accompany it with a suitable piece of music. He has presented films to the RSPB and natural history groups for many years and also won several awards.

We had a lovely short film of our natural world which was accompanied by Louis Armstrong singing 'What a Wonderful World'. He apparently sang this after a time in hospital, having had a heart attack, and he thought about all the wonderful things in nature which he had seen over the years. We also had clips of woodland ponds, birdsongs and puffins. He also showed us photos comparing the shape of certain birds in flight and the similarities of the shapes of aircraft. We have had John before, and Linda thanked him for the beautiful presentation.

There will not be a club meeting in December or January. Our next club meeting will be on Thursday 5th February 2026.

Jan Turnbull - November 2025



MESSAGE TO ALL CURRENT & NEW SPONSORS

I do hope that most of you will have had a chance to read the information about Josias, one of our sponsored children, on the notice board but if you haven't yet had the chance. Josias lives in Burkina Faso, West Africa. It is now that time of year when we ask you for sponsorship money! – by the end of November if possible please. A cheque made payable to 'Chipping Ongar with Shelley PCC' would be helpful or direct into the bank account clearly marked 'Compassion'.

Thank you so much for supporting these children over the years, it makes such a difference to their lives. If you want to read more, please go to their excellent website (www.compassionuk.org).

Anyone reading this who would like to join us, please do not hesitate to contribute as indicated above. Thank you in anticipation ... Sue

A Poem from 31.8 – SAFE

[safe-spoken-word.pdf](#)



What does it mean to feel, and be, safe?

It's holding the hand of someone you love. Or a parent's magic kiss on a grazed knee. It's a baby sound asleep in a loving embrace. That's safe.

It's when you're wrapped up warm and tight, indoors on a dark and cold night, somewhere you know, somewhere that's comfortable, where you can just 'be'. That's safe.

It's knowing you're not on your own because there's someone there at the end of the phone, to call or to text when you're feeling alone. That someone you can always rely on, that shoulder to cry on when things get tough. That's safe.

Safe can be the shield, the defence, the fortress, a lighthouse guiding you through the storm, or the harbour offering protection when the seas get rough.

Or safe can be that big red traffic sign that says stop, there's danger ahead.

And isn't that what the church is called to be? A refuge for the refugee, a sanctuary for the broken. A space for the hurting to find healing, a place for the last, the least, the lost, those on the margins and those in the centre, a place to find meaning. For God's eternal banner over me and you is love. And there is no fear in love for His perfect love casts out all fear and is safe.

We've not lived up to that expectation, we've fallen short, instead we've prioritised our own reputation, and if that's not cause for lamentation, I don't what is.

I don't mean to be the voice of condemnation; it's just time to prioritise the conversation. Giving space for those who need to, to share, to be believed, be renewed and find restoration.

If those things that were once kept out of sight, and covered up, are brought into the open. And we make space for the unspeakable things to be spoken. Their power can be broken.

Because a church that faces its shortcomings, and gives space to listen, reflects something of the kingdom of God. A church which truly loves is a church striving to be safe.

So it's time to put safeguarding on the church's agenda, to change the culture of yesterday, to pause and remember. Because safe is bold, it's the firm foundation beneath our feet, it means we can stand and take the leap of faith to have those conversations and be a church that's safe.

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News from St. Peter's Church, Shelley



St. Peter's held a very moving Remembrance Day service on Remembrance Day itself, 11th November. We were invited to come and light a tea light in memory of someone dear to us.

David Irving and Andrew Bowtle have researched those servicemen, connected to Shelley, whose names were read out, and have produced a fascinating booklet, full of details about them, entitled "Lest We Forget". This can be obtained, free of charge, from the Church.

Our next service is the Service of Nine Readings and Carols to be held on Sunday 21st December at 2.30 pm.

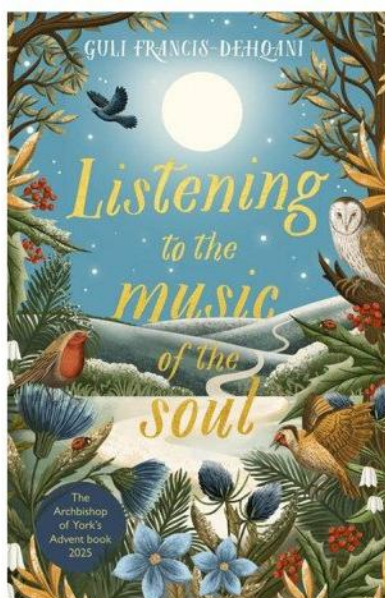
If you are intending to be at the service and would like to chose a Carol from the current Bethlehem Carol Sheet, to be sung at the service, please contact me, Monica Richardson, on 07717 877575, with the details.

Julian Meetings – Second Thursdays at 2 pm

Our Julian Meetings continue on the **second Thursday of each month at 2 pm**. We share a short commentary and music, followed by **45 minutes of silent meditation** and then time for tea, cake and conversation. Newcomers are very welcome.

Stay in touch - If you would like to know more about life at St. Peter's, please contact **David Irving** on **07950 267880**.

Monica Richardson



Bishop Guli's 'Listening to the Music of the Soul' is this Advent's Big Church Read

Bishop Guli's new book, 'Listening to the Music of the Soul', is the Archbishop of York's chosen Advent Book for 2025 and this year's Big Church Read for Advent.

Drawing inspiration from Mary's Magnificat — "My soul magnifies the Lord" — 'Listening to the Music of the Soul' explores how faith, beauty and courage shape our response to life's joys and sorrows. Born in Iran and forced into exile after the Revolution, Bishop Guli reflects on her own story of loss and hope, connecting it to the themes of Advent: exile, fear, and the transforming power of grace.

Each chapter links to a piece of music, inviting us to consider the melodies that sustain us as our lives unfold.

The Big Church Read will be publishing a series of four videos to guide church groups, organisations and individuals through this Advent journey. Bishop Guli introduces the Big Church Read on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBdiFZp3v6Y> (copy & paste into your browser)

Unable to get to church?

Well why not go to?

A Church @ Home



Want to know more?

Well, contact Shirley Dudeney

shirleydudeney@btinternet.com

**for more information
and the Zoom Link**

HOME COMMUNION ... Is there anyone who, for one reason or another, cannot be in Church as they used to be? For those of you who would like it, we can offer home communions. If this is something you would like, please contact either myself, Sue on 01277 362723 or Shirley on 01277 364143, and we can arrange a convenient time to bring the sacrament to you.



ST. MARTIN'S, CHIPPING ONGAR

Times of Services & Private Prayer



Sunday Services

First & Third Sundays - 8 am - Holy Communion

**First & Third Sundays - 10.30 am - One Big Family for All
(non-Communion)**

Second, Fourth & Fifth* Sunday - 10.30 am - Holy Communion
*With Healing

Wednesday

9 am - Morning Prayer

10 am - Holy Communion

St. Martin's Church is usually open for Private Prayer each day between 9.30 am and 5 pm or until dusk whichever is the earliest (12 noon on Saturdays).

Please adhere to any notices displayed

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU!

Please do remember to visit us on the 'A Church Near You' website <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/>

OUR 2025 / 2026 TEXT TO REMEMBER



Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



THE TUESDAY CLUB



... meets at ...

The Cock

on the

Third Tuesday of the month at 8.30 pm

Come along and enjoy good conversation and banter

ALL WELCOME !

PARISH VISION

To be a growing Church, God's gift to the community.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

In the light of God's call and our situation here, our mission is:

to be a more evident presence in our community, witnessing to God's love for all;

**to be God's hands and feet within the Church and beyond through
worship and prayer;
listening and serving;
acceptance and welcome;**

**to be a people who are growing towards a closer relationship with God,
creation and each other.**