

A photograph of the interior of a church during a Christmas service. The view is from the back of the nave looking towards the altar. The church has a high, vaulted ceiling with a dark wooden truss system. The walls are light-colored stone or plaster. On the left and right sides, there are rows of dark wooden pews. In the center, a red carpet leads to the altar area. The altar is decorated with a purple cloth and a white cloth. Behind the altar, there are three large, colorful stained glass windows. The church is lit with warm, yellow light from candles and small lamps. People are seated in the pews, and a few people are standing near the altar.

# *Church Magazine*

for Steyning and Ashurst

*Christmas Joy*

*December 2025*  
**ISSUED FREE**  
Registered Charity No 1132913

# ALL ARE WELCOME FOR CHRISTMAS IN STEYNING & DISTRICT

(in addition to normal Sunday Services)

## The Parish Church of St Andrew & St Cuthman, Steyning (C of E)

30 November	6pm 'From Darkness to Light' Advent procession with carols
6 December	7pm Chanctonbury Chorus Concert (see p 19)
7 December	4pm Christingle Service (for families and children) 6pm 'Reflections' Quiet contemplative service for Advent
14 December	2:30pm 'Shepherds Arise' – celebration of a bygone Sussex Christmas with carols, tunes, readings and Mummers' Play (see p 20)
17 December	6:30 pm 'Voice of Christmas' music and readings from the Agnes Collective
21 December	6pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols
Christmas Eve	3pm and 4:30pm Crib Services, for families and children 11pm Midnight Mass Festal Eucharist (with carols from 10:40pm)
Christmas Day	9:30am Sung Holy Communion for Christmas
New Year's Day	10:30am Start the Year Service

## St James's, Ashurst (Church of England)

21 December	4pm Village Carol Service
Christmas Day	10:30am Parish Communion and Carols

## Christ the King Church (Roman Catholic)

Christmas Eve	6pm Vigil Mass at St Peter's RC Church, Shoreham-by-Sea 8.30pm Night Mass at The Towers Convent, Upper Beeding (carols from 8.10pm)
Christmas Day	9am Mass at St Peter's RC Church, Shoreham-by-Sea 11.00am Mass at the Catholic Church of Christ the King, Steyning

## The Hub Baptist Church, Upper Beeding

21 December	10am Christmas Celebration Service 'Mary says Yes' 6.30pm Carols and Candles
Christmas Eve	11am Carols in the Café
Christmas Day	10am Christmas Day Celebration

## 3Bs Church (Church of England)

21 December	Bramber Church 4pm-5pm Traditional Carol Service
Christmas Eve	Beeding Church 3pm Crib Service Bramber Church 11.15pm Midnight Mass
Christmas Day	Beeding Church 10.30am Informal Family Friendly Service

## Steyning Methodist Church

14 December	3pm Nativity and Candlelight Service
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# Contents

- |                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2 Churches Together at Christmas | 18 Prayers - All Souls and All Saints |
| 3 Magazine Donations             | Parish Registers                      |
| 4 Prayer Diary                   | 19 Chanctonbury Chorus                |
| 5 Pastoral Letter                | 20 Shepherds Arise                    |
| 6 Sunday Notices                 | 21 Library at Home                    |
| Reflections                      | Steyping Society                      |
| From the Editor                  | 22 Family Support Work                |
| 7 Social and Catering Group      | Pastoral Care                         |
| 8 Saint of the Month             | 23 Recipe                             |
| 9 The Unchanging Story           | Easy Fundraising                      |
| 10 My Cloud of Witnesses         | 24 An Ocean Oversight                 |
| 13 Just a Thought                | 25 Steyping Arts Society              |
| Wednesday Coffee                 | Christmas Greetings                   |
| 14 Families and Children         | 26 Services in December               |
| 16 What Three Words              |                                       |
| 17 Voice of Christmas            |                                       |
| Church Flowers                   |                                       |

**Cover picture:** From Darkness to Light  
Carol Service

## Magazine Donations

If you enjoy this Church Magazine and would like to make a donation towards the costs, we would be very grateful.

BACS transfers with reference 'Magazine Donation' can be made to: Sort Code 30-99-93, Account 03220862. If you are a UK tax payer and fill in the Gift Aid slip, we can recover an extra 25p for every £1. Alternatively, scan the QR code to donate. Thank you.



I wish to Gift Aid my donation to 'Steyping Parochial Church Council' to help meet the expenses of the Church Magazine. We suggest an annual donation of at least £12

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# Prayer Diary for December

## **7 December, Second Sunday of Advent**

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us.

## **14 December, Third Sunday of Advent**

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight.

## **21 December, Fourth Sunday of Advent**

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge.

## **25 December, Christmas Day**

Almighty God, you have given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin: grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit.

## **26 December, Stephen, First Martyr**

Gracious Father, who gave the first martyr Stephen grace to pray for those who took up stones against him: grant that in all our sufferings for the truth we may learn to love even our enemies and to seek forgiveness for those who desire our hurt, looking up to heaven to him who was crucified for us.

## **27 December, John, Apostle and Evangelist**

Merciful Lord, cast your bright beams of light upon the Church: that, being enlightened by the teaching of your blessed apostle and evangelist Saint John, we may so walk in the light of your truth that we may at last attain to the light of everlasting life.

## **28 December, First Sunday of Christmas**

Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of his divinity.

## **29 December, Holy Innocents (transferred from 28 December)**

Heavenly Father, whose children suffered at the hands of Herod, though they had done no wrong: by the suffering of your Son and by the innocence of our lives frustrate all evil designs and establish your reign of justice and peace.

*Heavenly Father, as we celebrate Christmas, we pray for those who are lonely, hungry and forgotten.*

# Pastoral Letter

‘So here it is merry Christmas, everybody’s having fun ...’

Even if you are not a devotee of the 70s rock group Slade, you are probably familiar with these words and the music that goes with them. The ‘glam rock’ approach to Christmas works when we feel optimistic and light hearted, as we can when we look back to childhood Christmas-times with a fond nostalgia. What it doesn’t help us with is a deeper search for meaning, something that becomes more elusive when our spirits are low or if we feel lonely or depressed.



I have never been able to find a button I can press that makes me happy. True joy can be elusive but, when we find it, it comes from something more profound, although it can be found there amongst the pop music, tinsel and wrapping paper. It’s called ‘love’, of course, but in our human weakness, our experience of human love can let us down; sometimes it can even leave us feeling sad or angry.

It’s for this reason that Advent season leading up to the birthday of Jesus is given as a time to reflect on our human weakness, a weakness that often leads to us to reject love, or in other words to reject God. *He came to his own home, and his own people received him not* (John 1:11). But Christians mustn’t be possessive about Christmas, since anyone who knows their need of love has the potential to enter into that deeper joy. Such joy comes from knowing that love is more about giving than receiving, and that true love – as revealed in the manger at Bethlehem and the man Jesus would grow to become – has the potential to renew everything, even us (see 1 John 4:10-19).

With best wishes for a blessed Advent and a joyful Christmas for you and yours.

*Fr Mark*

## Parish Office

We recently said goodbye to Pat McMullan, who has been our Parish Administrator for the last few years, and is moving to live with her family in Dorset. And we welcome Nina Humphreys as our new Office Manager. Nina and her husband Darren are regular worshippers at St Andrew’s & St Cuthman’s, where their daughter Isla sings in the choir. The office opening days are now Monday to Thursday, 10am to midday.

## FROM THE EDITOR

The really great thing, to me, about the Church of England is the way in which a single church manages to encompass such a range of beliefs and embrace a wide variety of worship styles. That's not to say there is no disagreement, but generally we are able to disagree amicably and work together.

The wide variety is particularly notable in the 6pm Sunday services at St Andrew's & St Cuthman's. Each month we have at least one said, traditional language evening prayer service. And, to gladden the traditionalists' hearts, a full-on Book of Common Prayer Choral Evensong with robed choir, hymns, psalms and anthems. Then there is the fire pit service: short, non-liturgical, with songs and prayers around the fire ending with toasted marshmallows and friendship. Then there is a contemplative service, of chants and a period of silence, following the worship of the Taizé community.

But for me the highlight is Reflections. I'm not saying it's unique, or original, but it has evolved, by us, in our church, and thanks to Fr Mark for giving us free rein with it. Each service offers different words and music, drawn from many sources and traditions, but always featuring scripture readings and a period of silent contemplation. Silent prayer has always been a part of Christianity but seems to have been neglected in the main services today. Wonderful things can happen during silence. Please consider joining us to experience some of this.

Blessings, Bill

## Sunday Notices

The weekly Sunday notice sheet, sent from the Parish Office, gives all the information about services, news and events. There is also the list of those needing our prayers. If you would like to receive this sheet please contact:

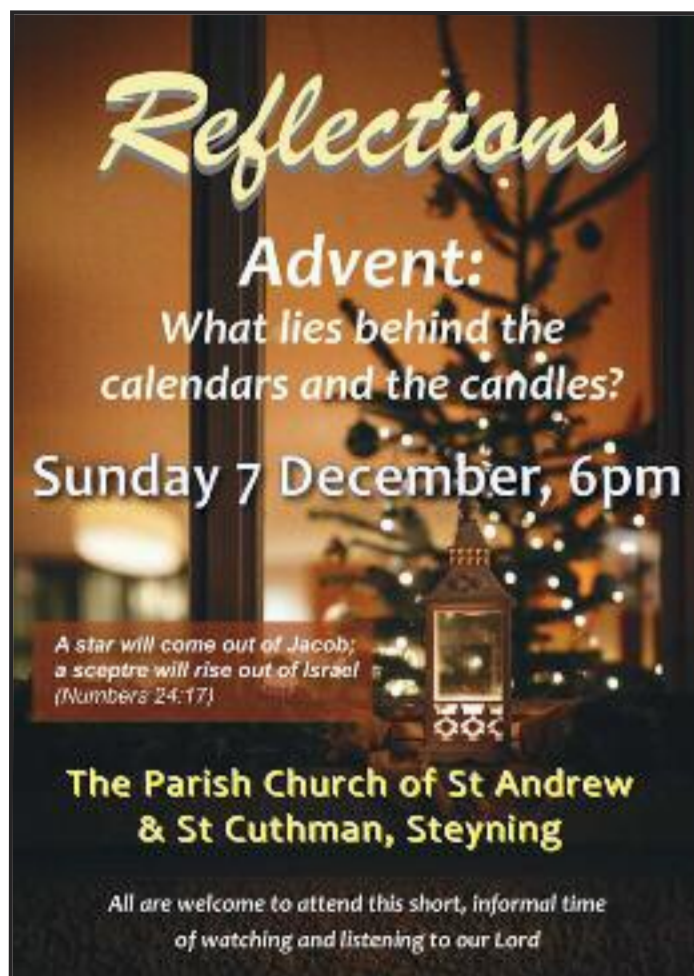
office@steyningparishchurch.org  
or ring 01903 813276

To add any new prayer requests  
contact:

prayers@steyningparishchurch.org  
or ring 01903 813276

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## Reflections Service



'Reflections' is a quiet contemplative time of about 40 minutes, with readings, prayer and music built around a 12-15 minute period of silence.



# Steypning Parish Church Social & Catering Group

Our Social and Catering Group, after much discussion, has decided the time has come to bow out gracefully and hang up our pinnies. The seven current members – Pat Edwards, Chris Fitton, Elaine Hyde, Sue Morris, Marie Sparrow, Jenny Toomey, Rosemary Windebank – are all ladies of a certain age and with medical issues.

We have thoroughly enjoyed working together, some being members of the team for over 20 years and no-one less than 15 years, and it is with much regret that we feel we can no longer carry on. Over these years, we have laughed so much and even had a few tears but we wouldn't have missed being on this team!

In years gone by, the team was much larger. Sadly, some have died, some retired, and others have left the area, and we remember the hard work they put into every event. They, too, really enjoyed the camaraderie and friendships within the team and we will never forget them.

Over the years the teams have prepared and served on many occasions: Saturday Breakfasts, Sunday Parish Lunches, Holly Fairs, Bazaars, Flower Festivals, Harvest Festivals, a summer barbeque (remembering Fr Stephen who cooked the meat element!), the Vicar's 'At Home' garden parties (with our grateful thanks to Katherine for her help and the use of her kitchen), at coffee mornings, making cakes for special occasions, the list could go on. In the last few years, we organised Quiz Evenings (our thanks to David Kirkcaldy as quiz master) to raise money for the Salvation Army and Water Aid, and also a Beetle Drive. We have been supported by willing volunteers to help when extra hands were needed – not just ladies but men too! Our thanks to them all. Lastly, but very importantly, our thanks go to all members of our congregation who supported these events, which made them such happy occasions.

*Pat Edwards*



*Just a few of the dishes produced over the years by the Social and Catering ladies  
(pictures by Pat Edwards)*

# Saint of the Month - December

## THOMAS BECKET, ARCHBISHOP & MARTYR (1118-1170)

Becket was born in London in 1118, the son of a wealthy Norman merchant. He was educated at Merton Priory in Surrey and then became a clerk to Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury. Showing promise, he was sent to study law at Bologna University. He was ordained deacon in 1154 and was appointed to the office of Archdeacon of Canterbury.

At Theobald's suggestion, Henry II appointed him as Chancellor of England in 1155 which led to great power and riches. He was a very efficient Chancellor and a close friendship with the King developed. On the death of Archbishop Theobald in 1162, Henry engineered Becket's election as Archbishop of Canterbury expecting their cordial relationship to continue. However, Becket changed his way of life completely and adopted an austere discipline, wearing a hairshirt and fasting in accordance with the Church's customs. To the King's annoyance he also resigned as Chancellor of England.

Becket saw it as his duty to oppose the King in matters of taxation and the claims of secular courts to punish clergy for offences already dealt with by the Church courts. He also had to fight to retain the Church's freedom to appeal to Rome. A long and bitter struggle followed with neither King nor Archbishop prepared to compromise.

At a Council in Northampton Becket objected to the Royal claims and appealed to the Pope but was forced to flee to France. His exile lasted for six years; the archiepiscopal lands were alienated and his supporters persecuted. Becket saw the dispute as a matter of principle, the claims of Church against State - of God and Caesar.

In 1170, under threat of Papal sanctions, a reconciliation was patched up and Becket returned to England. But when he excommunicated some of the bishops who had supported the King, Henry flew into a rage and called for the removal of "this turbulent priest". Four knights who saw this as an instruction to deal with Becket went to Canterbury and demanded that he go with them to Winchester to account for his actions. When he refused, they raised their swords against him with Becket saying "I am no traitor and I am ready to die". With that the knights hacked him to death.

King Henry was forced to do public penance by walking barefoot from St Dunstan's church in Canterbury to the site of Becket's tomb. The Pope canonised him in 1173 and his shrine became the most popular place of pilgrimage in England until its destruction by Henry VIII at the Reformation. The Church keeps his feast day on 29 December, the day of his martyrdom.





# The Unchanging Story

The world feels to be in trouble and swirls around us and sometimes we feel so helpless. The Christmas story is unchanging and something we can hold on to.

It is interesting to note that the events recorded in the Bible happened to a backdrop of a very turbulent political climate and the issuing of decrees from the government. There was the demand for a census creating chaos and disruption to so many people as they had to travel many miles and therefore unable to carry on their normal daily lives. Many were temporarily homeless.

Mary and Joseph were not separate from all of this as they travelled, maybe on a donkey, we don't know as it isn't directly mentioned in Scripture. This special couple did find somewhere to stay, and it could have been with the animals and most probably in a rather large communal space, sorry to write that. Again, the scriptures do not tell of a special stable.

There was, however, an animal feeding place, and there was a new-born baby. That is all recorded and documented.

There was also a field with shepherds looking after their sheep, doing the cold night shift by keeping watch for predators or caring for the needs of their charge. Such important things keeping watch and caring – both then and now.

Then suddenly, there were angels lighting up the sky. How would you describe that? What words to use to feel



the glory of the Lord around you? This inexplicable dazzling light; a mystery; terrifying; out of my control. Yes, but the angels knew this so their first words were full of love: “Do not be afraid”. Did that sense of love and hope go so deep inside each of those shepherds so they knew they had to simply pack up and go to find the promised son of God?

Amidst the chaos of Bethlehem where there were many ordinary families, but they found this special family – how? I think this family must have radiated that same love and hope that the angels had brought to them. How could they understand what was happening – they had no answers except a deep certainty that this baby was indeed special and they wanted to go and tell others.

I wonder what happened to those shepherds? What were their stories? What difference did that encounter with the angels and the baby make for them?

That baby continued to be a man who gave everyone love in his life and his death. That was God's choice to send the baby Jesus for all people, and it is God's choice for us to be known and loved by name.

*Chris Fitton*

# My Cloud of Witnesses

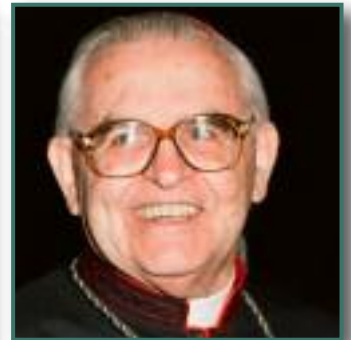
DEFENDERS OF “LIFE IN ALL ITS FULNESS” (John 10:10)

## Part I : “Justice and Peace will Embrace One Another.” (Psalm 85:10)

*In this six part series on peace and justice, I want to recall inspiring figures whom I have met, who illustrate, for me, the Jewish idea of ‘shalom’ - right relationships with God, within society and with nature. It includes peace, but is much wider and deeper than most understandings of the concept. It is also very practical. In the vision of “new heavens and a new earth” in Isaiah 65, some very down to earth, basic human needs are addressed: “they shall build houses and live in them...” (Isaiah 65: 21)*

A few months ago in church, we listened to the passage from the book of Hebrews which refers to us being surrounded by “so great a cloud of witnesses”. (Hebrews 11-12:1 – quote from 12:1). Except for six months working in a bank in Germany in a gap year and a few weeks with an oil company in my first year university holidays, I was employed for nearly 50 years working on issues of justice, peace and the environment. I want to name some of the ‘cloud of witnesses’ whom I have met, and who fill my memory with their bold stance in defence of life. In this series of short articles, I can only give headlines of what they have done. Some may be known to you, many may not, but a few minutes of web searching should help you locate most of them if you want to find out more.

In any part of the world there are people who stand up for peace, justice and the environment. I will start in Latin and Central America as the focus of this article. From Chile, I think of Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez of Santiago, who established the Vicaria de la Solidaridad to work for human rights – and who bravely denounced torture and stood up for human rights after the military coup by Pinochet. When I met him he took me

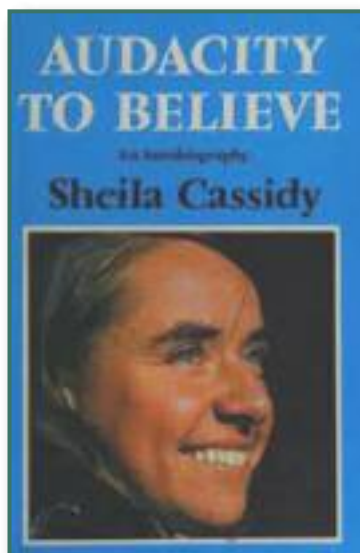


Above: Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns;  
Left: Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez  
(Wikimedia Commons)

out for a simple fish lunch. Driving to the restaurant we passed the national football stadium – which looks just like what it is, but is also seared into memory as the place where the wonderful folk singer Victor Jara and so many others were tortured to death. I think too of Sheila Cassidy, the British Australian doctor who was tortured in Chile, but lived to tell the tale in *Audacity to Believe*. After returning to Britain, she tested her vocation as a contemplative nun, then found her life’s work as a doctor in the hospice movement. We at the British Council of Churches arranged for her, a Roman Catholic laywoman, to be the preacher at the Human Rights Day service in Westminster Abbey. And perhaps the most extraordinary story is that of Adriana Borquez. Adriana was

also imprisoned in Chile and tortured. She was the last prisoner known to have seen Anglo-Chilean businessman William Beausire alive. When she lived in Oxford, she brought testimony concerning the human rights situation in her homeland, and spoke very powerfully at the Assembly of the British Council of Churches. She recounted the experience of being ‘disappeared’ by the military authorities and then emerging to go into exile in this country. She said in one of the moving poems that she wrote that she identified with Lazarus who had had no hope of returning from the grave.

From Brazil, I think of the witness of Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife, one of the earliest radical bishops in Latin America. Among the many memorable things he said was: “When I feed the poor, they call me a saint; when I ask why they are poor, they say I am a communist.” He is perhaps best known for his analysis of the ‘spiral of violence’, and for saying: “Personally I would



prefer a thousand times more to be killed than to kill anyone.” In spite of the death threats to him, he persisted in his work for the poorest in the slums in a country where there were estimated to be seven million street children in the 1980s. Camara’s assistant was murdered, in part as an attempt to frighten off the

Archbishop from continuing his work with the poor. When I met him, I asked whether he felt guilty that his assistant was killed, in part due to Camara’s outspokenness and siding with the poor. He said of his assistant: “He was a committed young man; he knew what he was doing and the risks involved. There is no finer thing than to give your life for the poor.” During the funeral service for his young assistant, in an unusual but very humane gesture, the Archbishop walked down into the congregation and embraced his dead colleague’s grieving mother. I told him that I thought this was a remarkable and humane thing to do. He replied: “What else could I do, she was a grieving mother?”

Another inspiring Brazilian figure was Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns of Sao Paulo. In terms of diplomatic ranking, the Cardinal Archbishop of Sao Paulo was ranked second only to the President. He used the eminence of his position to establish and protect human rights groups working in the Archbishop’s palace. He consistently denounced the use of torture in interrogating left wing opposition



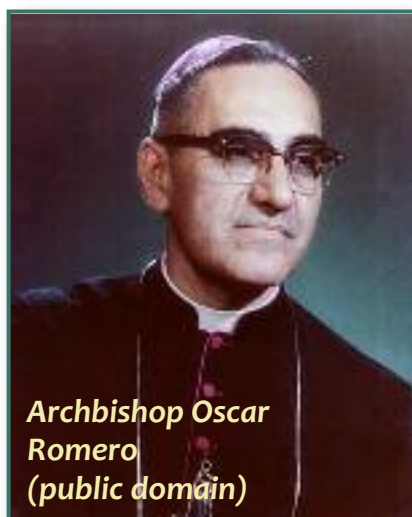
**Archbishop Helder Camara**  
([Wikimedia Commons](#), [Dutch National Archive](#))



figures, such as students and trade unionists. One of the most famous occasions was when he conducted the funeral for Vladimir Herzog, a Marxist journalist, who was murdered by the military government. Speaking to an overflowing cathedral, Arns said that the military government was worse than the people who killed Jesus: at least they had returned the body.

Also rightly revered is Archbishop Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador who was murdered in 1980 by a notorious military man at the behest of the dictatorship in El Salvador. The people of El Salvador knew he was a saint long before the Vatican began the formal process of canonisation. Less famous are Jon Sobrino and Marta Benavides. The Jesuit Fr Sobrino was travelling when his community were wiped out. This included his fellow Jesuit brothers, their housekeeper and her teenage daughter. This group of Jesuits had lived very simply, and, with the exception of Sobrino, died as many of the peasants did in El Salvador during the civil war - defenceless except for their faith.

When I heard Sobrino talk in London, he stated very plainly: "The poor are those who are close to death." He also expounded the spiritual: *Were you there when they crucified my Lord?* He said quite simply and profoundly that the first task of the church is to be there where people suffer and are killed. It is from there that you will discover what



Archbishop Oscar Romero  
(public domain)

you should do. He said, in an essay from 1991: "We have learned that the world's poor are practically of no consequence to anyone – not the people who live in abundance nor to the people who have any kind of power. The First World is not interested in the Third World. As history

shows, it is interested only in ways to despoil the Third World in order to increase its own abundance." (From: *Awakening from the sleep of humanity*, Christian Century, 1991).

Revd Marta Benavides studied abroad and was ordained as a Baptist minister in the USA before returning to her home country, El Salvador. She worked on human rights issues with Archbishop Oscar Romero when the human rights abuses were at their worst. She toured the UK and spoke movingly of the Archbishop's work and the suffering of ordinary people in her home country. More recently she has worked as a theologian, an environmentalist advocating permaculture and a feminist community organiser.

Roger Williamson

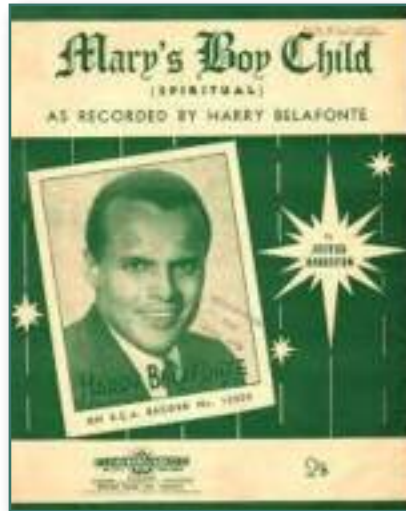
*If you are interested in reading more about the progressive Church in Latin and Central America in the 1970s and 1980s, I recommend Penny Lernoux, 'Cry of the People', Penguin 1982 and Derek Winter, 'Hope in Captivity: The Prophetic Church in Latin America', Epworth Press 1977. Next month's article will be on champions of peace and justice in other parts of the world.*

# Just a Thought: Wonder

It was the winter of 1957/58. I was working in East Reach Hospital in Taunton. Ray was teaching for a year in the wonderfully named Weston Zoyland Secondary Modern School but had digs in Bridgewater. There was a good bus service then so we could meet up a couple of times a week.

Now I'd like you to imagine the scene... It was around 9 o'clock in the evening in December 1957. Cold, bleak and with everywhere shrouded in a low mist that added to the cold. The bus station in Taunton was totally deserted, as were the streets leading to it. As Ray was waiting for the bus there came a moment seared in his memory for ever. The contrast of his surroundings and what he was hearing was so vivid that he expected a heavenly host of angels to fill the sky. As if from nowhere came the voice, loud and clear, of Harry Belafonte

singing *Mary's Boy Child Jesus Christ*, the sound echoing and filling the empty bus station. No longer alone, no longer cold and bleak, he was transported to Bethlehem, the stable, and the angels singing in adoration of the infant Jesus lying in a manger.



Who else in the area heard it we shall never know, but there are times when a moment is all that is needed to be deeply moved and to have our Faith confirmed and strengthened.

A suggestion : if you have never heard Harry Belafonte's rendition of *Mary's Boy Child* see if you can Google it. Sit quietly and imagine you are very cold in a deserted bus station in 1957.

Now listen to it with the volume up a little higher than you would normally. You may just get a glimpse of that moment.

Maureen Jones

## Wednesday Coffee: Penfold Hall



Do join us in the Penfold Hall, Church Street, Steyning, every Wednesday morning, any time between 10am and 12 noon. We meet in the main hall.

Several of our visitors go to church for the Wednesday

morning 11:30am service, but you can stay on chatting, too.

Elizabeth Brown and the Coffee Team

**COME IN ...  
PLEASE, FOR A  
COFFEE OR TEA  
AND A CHAT.  
10-12 noon  
IN THE PENFOLD  
HALL  
WEDNESDAY  
MORNINGS**



# Families and Children

Hello Everyone, Christmas is fast approaching and all the excitement is starting to build. Hopefully everyone has been good this year and Father Christmas will be visiting you.

We have lots of opportunities to help out with services and events over Christmas in the church. Support is particularly needed at Christingle and the Crib services. I am sure all the other services (see page 2) will need support too.

I want to say a massive thank you to the amazing donor who has generously given the full amount needed for the new notice boards that we plan to order shortly.

Also, a massive thank you to the Wednesday Coffee team who donated

money for my work with the school, enabling me to purchase two Godly Play stories



The Fire Pit Services are a different style from our normal services. They are a short service with time together at the end toasting marshmallows and getting to know each other. Our next Fire Pit service is on Sunday 14 December at 6pm. Do come and join us as we would love to see you.

**Christingle**

**Sunday 7th December**  
**Service starts at 4pm**  
**St Andrew's & St Cuthman's Church**

**Hot chocolate available from 3.45pm**

**All Welcome**

Steyning Parish Church  
 Steyning\_Parish\_Church  
 [steyningparishchurch.org](http://steyningparishchurch.org)

**Crib Services**

**For unto us a child is born!**

**24 December**  
**St Andrew's and St Cuthman's Church**  
**Services are at 3pm and 4.30pm**

Invite your friends and family to share in this divine celebration and embrace the spirit of Christmas!

Everyone is welcome to attend.

Come dressed up in a nativity costume.

Steyning Parish Church  
 Steyning\_Parish\_Church  
 [steyningparishchurch.org](http://steyningparishchurch.org)





**OPEN TO ANYONE** OF ANY AGE, the board game café runs on the second Tuesday of each month. It can be very exciting. We have been seeing some new faces over the last couple of meetings of the café. These have included some families. It is great to see that the board game café is now starting to become more intergenerational – so why not come and try us out. There is a wide variety of games for all abilities and interests. The next session is on Tuesday 9 December.



**L**ittle Stars is growing so much with each session that we are now at the point where if we had a third room available we would be needing to use it. At the beginning of November we had our largest ever number in any one session. Talking with the adults, it seems they find our group one of the best around. This is really positive to hear, and as a result we would love to hear from anyone who would like to join our rota of volunteers to help run the group.

**LITTLE STARS** meets on Mondays from 1pm to 2:45pm and on Thursdays between 9:30am and 11:30am.



**I**n November during collective worship, at the Primary School, after our prayer space morning I made a start with answering the 'Big Questions' the children had asked about faith and prayer during that morning. I will spend more time in our December collective worship, answering some more of these questions. Hopefully we may manage to answer every question.

I had a great time at the school's firework display where I got a chance to meet lots of parents and see a really good display. (For future firework display evenings: if there are any businesses that would be interested in sponsoring this event please do get in contact with the school).

We also held a Godly Play session with the reception class. It was really nice to see all the children listening and reflecting on the story of the greatest family. Also, reception had a great first ever visit to the church.

The school has the Christingle Service for key stage 1 on 3 December and the Carol Service for key stage 2 is on



10 December. We are really looking forward to both of these services.

*Blessings.*  
Gary

# What Three Words

I am sure I don't have to say that the number three is an important number in many ways. It's a prime number, of course, and a tripod provides a very steady base for a camera or a three-legged stool was indeed created many moons ago, but three is also an important number in the Bible.

When we lived in Bishop's Stortford there was a delightful young trainee priest, a deacon, connected to our church, and he always, without fault, started his sermons by saying "I have three points to make ..."! We were tasked to remember those three points, and I guess if there were four points or more we wouldn't remember them... certainly not now I am an old lady, and I would probably have trouble with three.

Why am I chatting about three? Well, now is the time of year to send Christmas cards, and I still do, though I understand why others do not. Buying charity cards helps the charity, and I tend not to send a round robin letter so I then write in each card a personal message to the recipient especially now I cannot get to see them anymore. If you do buy any cards, what do you look for? Interestingly, I found myself deciding on the charity first, then the picture, and then the words, but you might have something completely different. I hope, though that you do look at the words, especially those that are on the face of the card. I noticed this year that about 80% of all those I looked at had a three-word message along with the picture, so it became a big decision as to what three words I wanted to send.



As you read on please think about your Christmas message and especially one you would want to send in just three words, this year.

The Christmas story is all about the birth of Jesus, because through him the deeper Christmas message is about love, hope and salvation, because God sent his son to live and work among us and to die to save us all from sin. How would you sum that up if you designed your own card?

- Hope is Born
- Peace on Earth
- God With us
- Christmas brings hope

These are just some I remember.

My mother had the great good fortune to be able to attend a Billy Graham meeting in Westminster Central Hall all those years ago, but she kept some of his writings in her Bible as she never forgot his inspirational talk. I have found this quote.

"In the midst of all upheaval, crisis, difficulty, problems, and fear comes the true message of Christmas with all of its hope, goodwill, and cheer. The message of Christmas has been terribly misapplied and misunderstood for many



years. Some think of business profits, shopping, gifts, tinsel, toys, and celebration. Others think only of Bethlehem, of the star in the sky, shepherds in the field, and angels singing. Still others cynically ask, 'Where is this Prince of Peace?' in a world filled with so much trouble."

I think that quote and particularly the question is as relevant and common in today's world, as it was all those years ago, but Advent and Christmas Day allow us to find peace with God, that deep peace that was promised to the shepherds when the angels heralded their announcement: *Fear not, I bring you good news ... (Luke 2:10)* Here, the good news is that God sent his son to earth to save people from their sins.

Christmas is not a myth, or a tradition, but a glorious, happy reality. Your

traditions around Christmas Day are important, families or friends getting together are important things to do etc, even though our own daily lives, or this country and the world are far from perfect. We face challenges and struggles in our own lives or when our lives connect with others, and some of these challenges may be on a daily basis, while other struggles may get sorted, just for another to pop up.


Amidst all these changes the message of Christmas is timeless and changeless, it tells us that Jesus came to give to you and me love, hope and joy. Celebrate these three words: *Love, Hope, Joy*.

God's love is for everyone. You are not alone. You are loved, so then you can feel hopeful and joyful and find peace in your heart.

Chris Fitton

*The Agnes Collective are thrilled to be back and able to share some beautiful and magical Christmas music with you all again this coming December.*

# *The Voice of Christmas*



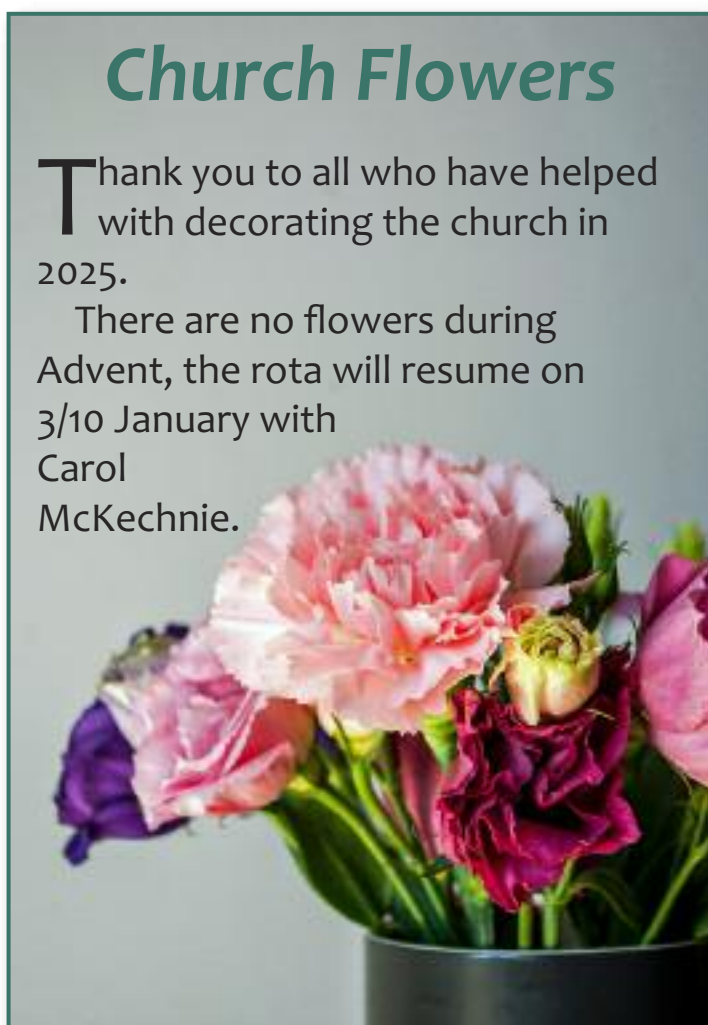
**The Agnes Collective**  
with John Tolpelt

**Wednesday 17th of December 2025**  
**@ 6.30pm**  
**St Andrew's & St Cuthman's Church, Steyning**  
Adult £17 - Child £10  
Tickets available from **THE STEYNING BOOKSHOP**  
or Email [Alexandra.Gibson@alexandra.gibson@steys.com](mailto:Alexandra.Gibson@alexandra.gibson@steys.com)

## Church Flowers

Thank you to all who have helped with decorating the church in 2025.

There are no flowers during Advent, the rota will resume on 3/10 January with Carol McKechnie.





## Prayers (inspired by All Souls' and All Saints' tide)

Dear Father, We pray today for all our souls, our living souls. It is hard to watch the daily news without feeling deeply troubled, to witness and read about the hardships of so many people, the widespread destruction of property, and the ravaging of Mother Nature: in Jamaica, Ukraine, Sudan and elsewhere; and especially when we hear about what is happening in your Holy Land.

Not only is humankind, the world's population, under threat, but humanity too – the very essence of what it means to be authentically human, a true child of God – challenged by the rise of soulless technology, the sterile world of artificial intelligence, the false intimacy of social media, and other drivers of behaviour serving the questionable pursuit and worship of success and profit, power, fame and wealth.

Help us to hear and to follow your Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts, to set aside such mercenary, self-centred values, and seek restoration of holistic, humanitarian, essentially spiritual values in our own lives, and thereby set examples for others, especially for the young.

Teach us to succeed in our endeavours, but teach us also to face life's challenges, the inevitabilities of

loss, failure and defeat, with courage and hope, with patience and perseverance.

Teach us to be kind and generous... And to care... To care about nature and the planet... To care about each other... Above all, each one, to care about and care for ourselves.

Teach us to discipline our minds, to meditate regularly and to pray. In doing so, teach us the value of silence and stillness... of being rather than doing. Teach us sacred wisdom, how to be and behave for the best for all people, without discrimination.

Teach us tolerance, how to let go of our anger and our prejudices, of possessive and controlling forms of attachment.

Teach us humility, gratitude, forgiveness and mercy.

Teach us to be frugal, to avoid waste and make do without excess.

Teach us honesty, utter respect for truth and truthfulness.

Teach us to be joyful, compassionate and loving.

Make us worthy of your fatherly love. Guide us, strengthen us, we pray, that you may help us all become saints. Amen.

Larry Culliford

### Parish Registers

#### Baptism

Sol Luke Anscombe (25 October)

#### Wedding

James Smith & Rose Bloxham (8 November)



# Chanctonbury Chorus

On 6 December, Siobhan Denning conducts her farewell concert here in St Andrew's and St Cuthman's after 44 years at the helm of Chanctonbury Chorus. It was here too the Chorus gave its first concert.

We come full circle as Siobhan chooses some of her favourites from a wide repertoire that the Chorus has sung over the years. We begin with Bach and *Jauchzet Frohlocket!* from his Christmas Oratorio. We end with excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*. And in between we span 400 years of music with pieces by Corelli and Herbert Howells and more modern but moving works by Morten Lauridsen, Will Todd and Eric Whitacre. And as Siobhan bows out so does our soprano soloist, Lesley-Jane Rogers, who is retiring from singing professionally to concentrate on composing. Her *Ave Rosa Sine Spina* has been specially commissioned and is a gift to Siobhan and the Chorus. She also provides a setting of *The Little Road to Bethlehem*. A concert not to be missed.

To celebrate the end of an era, tickets are priced at just £15.

## AND THE CHORUS LIVES ON!

When I first announced in church that the Chorus would come to an end, several people expressed sadness because a town with a choir that sings mainly classical repertoire is rare. The Chorus has clearly been valued and many people said they couldn't imagine Steyning without it. Such has been the groundswell of support that I am now able to bring you the very good news that Chanctonbury Chorus will continue to sing! As from the beginning of 2026 the Musical Director will be Liz Kirkland, our current Assistant MD. Liz has some exciting ideas and so does the Chorus and its committee but we do need your support. We need singers to sing. Most of the current members will continue but there's always room for more and you will be warmly welcomed whether you read music or not. Just talk to me and I can tell you more. We need an audience. We need financial support.

The start of a new era, in this case an era that continues the tradition of musical excellence and innovation for which the Chorus has become known, is

always a time of excitement and anticipation.

Join us and support us as we set out into 2026 and beyond. We shall do it here in the home of the Chorus for almost half a century. Thank you for having us!

Nigel Hartley  
(back row bass)



# Shepherds Arise!

***Shepherds arise, be not afraid, with hasty steps prepare  
To David's city, sin on earth, ['sing' in some other versions]  
With our blest infant — with our blest infant there,  
With our blest infant there, with our blest infant there.  
Sing, sing, all earth, sing, sing, all earth eternal praises sing  
To our redeemer, to our redeemer and our heavenly King.***

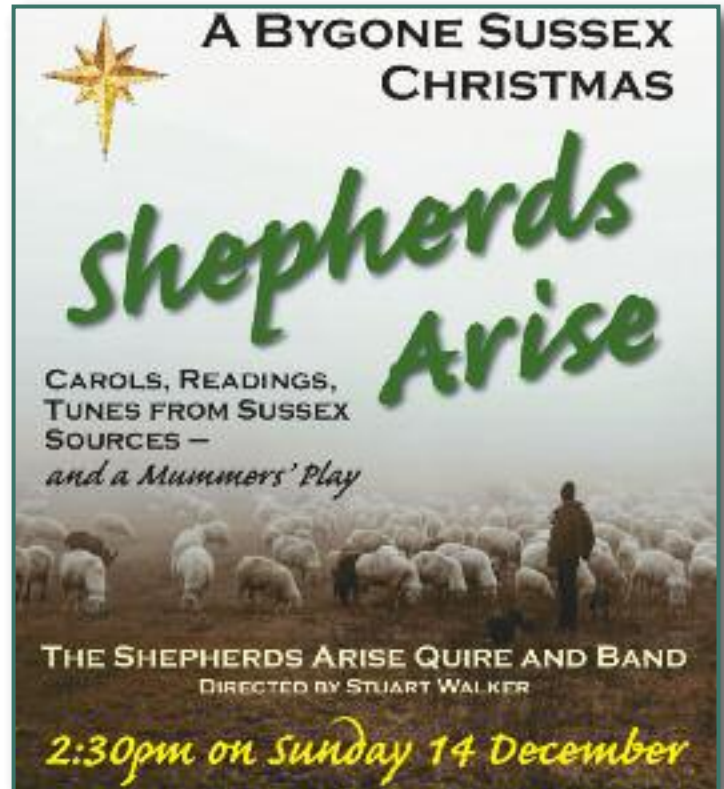
So goes the first verse of a traditional carol, as sung by the Copper family of Rottingdean, near Brighton.

This is just one of the delights on offer in St Andrew's & St Cuthman's on 14 December. We will be transported back a couple of centuries or more, to the days of the West Gallery choirs (or 'Quires' to use the spelling of the time). These bands of locals led the singing in our churches, usually, as the name implies, from raised galleries at the West end of the building. The only music originally heard in our churches was the psalms. But the West Gallery choirs helped to expand the congregational singing repertoire, by introducing hymns and carols, particularly for festivals. The verse above comes from one such carol.

The quires differed from the secular singing of folk songs in homes and inns by singing in four-part harmony, led by the tenor voices (the Coppers, mentioned above, were unusual in that their singing was – and still is – in harmony rather than unison). The singers were augmented by instruments, initially a bass instrument, of which the vamping horn from St James's, Ashurst, is a rare surviving example (the original is in Steyning Museum, but a replica is displayed in St James's).



***The Ashurst vamping horn***



Soon the quires became small orchestras, with various sizes of fiddles, wind instruments, and the odd interlopers like concertinas – anything that was available. And the repertoire of hymns expanded.

There was often conflict between the quires and the vicars – one such dispute is related by Thomas Hardy in *Under The Greenwood Tree* (his own grandfather was a member of such a choir). As a result, the priesthood welcomed the coming of organs into rural churches, relegating the quires to the pubs from whence they came.

And it's those pre-organ times that will be re-enacted on 14 December, with carols, tunes, readings – all from local sources – as well as a Sussex Mummers' Play, which tells the familiar story of death and resurrection.

We hope to have a full church so please spread the word. Entry is free, with a retiring collection. Seasonal refreshments will be available.



## Steyping Library – Home Library Direct Service

**D**o you know someone who is struggling to get out? Your local library offers a Home Library Direct delivery service which could help.

If you cannot visit a library because of age, illness, disability, mobility problems, caring responsibilities or other reasons, one of Steyping Library's DBS-checked

volunteers can bring you books, audiobooks and other resources free of charge.

Pop into the library for an application form or contact us on the details below. Alternatively, you can find a form on the WSCC library website under 'Library Access For All'.

You can use the online services such as reserving books and accessing eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines, free through your library membership.

Steyping Library - 01273 270330

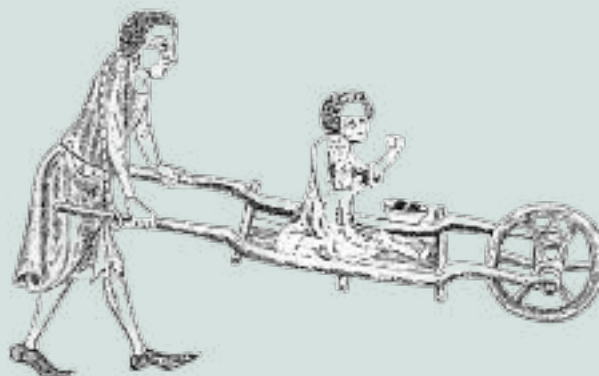
[Steyping.library@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Steyping.library@westsussex.gov.uk)



## The Steyping Society Christmas Supper 2025

**Friday 19 December at 7pm  
At the Steyping Centre,  
Fletchers Croft, Steyping.**

The evening will start with a reception at 7pm, supper will be served at 7:45 and the evening will end with jazz from the Sea Jam Quintet.



Normandy Dining, who catered for us last year, will be providing the meal. The menu will consist of chicken in a creamy bacon and mushroom sauce or mushroom stroganoff as a vegetarian option (both are gluten free), roast potatoes and seasonal vegetables, followed by butterscotch pudding with vanilla ice cream (a gluten free version can be produced on prior request). Vegan meals can be provided if specifically requested in advance. Wine and soft drinks will be served before and during the meal and tea or coffee with mints will be served after the meal.

There will be a raffle. Tickets will cost £35 each and are available from Steyping Bookshop or the Museum and can also be bought by paying into the Society's bank account.

As usual guests are welcome and you will be able to book tables (for groups of eight) or seats at a table.

[www.steyningsociety.org.uk](http://www.steyningsociety.org.uk)

# Family Support Work at Christmas



You can help needy families in Sussex at Christmas by donating food and/or gifts - see the wish lists above. Please leave items by the war memorial at the back of church. Final date for the donations is 14 December to allow time for sorting and distribution. Please ensure all food is within sell-by dates.



## Pastoral Care Team



Would you, or anyone you know, like a member of our team to:

- Offer a listening ear, or chat if you are lonely
- Give a phone call to help ease a heavy burden
- Be there just to listen to your concerns or worries?

Please don't hesitate to be in touch and feel free to email:

[care@steyningparishchurch.org](mailto:care@steyningparishchurch.org)  
or call 01903 813276.

Someone from the team is ready to be there at your side either by phone or in person.

Our next grief café is in the Penfold Hall on Friday 12 December from 2pm until 4pm. Please feel free to join us if you are in need of support following a loss of any kind. Tea and coffee and biscuits are served in safe surroundings.

*Judie Thomson, Pastoral Care Co-ordinator*





# Recipe for December

## MINCE PIE ETON MESS

300ml tub whipping cream  
3 mince pies, broken into small pieces  
6 mini meringues, broken into small pieces  
1 orange, zest only  
1 tbsp black treacle, to garnish; or grated milk; or dark chocolate

### Method

1. Put the whipping cream in a large mixing bowl and whisk to medium peaks.
2. Add the broken mince pies and meringues and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the orange zest. Gently fold to combine but only lightly.
3. Spoon into small serving glasses, then drizzle with the black treacle and sprinkle with the remaining orange zest.



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## Easy Fundraising – for our Church

**D**id you know that whenever you buy anything online – from your weekly shop to your annual holiday – you could be raising free donations for St Andrew's & St Cuthman's with easyfundraising? There are over 8,000 retailers on board ready to make a donation – including eBay, Argos, John Lewis & Partners, Booking.com and M&S – and it won't cost you a penny extra to help us raise funds.

1. Go to <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/saint-andrew-and-saint-cuthman-steyning/> (or scan the QR code below) and join for free.
2. Every time you shop online, go to easyfundraising first to find the site you want and start shopping.
3. After you've checked out, the retailer will make a donation to St Andrew's & St Cuthman's at no extra cost to you whatsoever.

There are no catches or hidden charges and St Andrew's & St Cuthman's will be really grateful for your donations. Thank you for your support. Over £400 has been raised from 15 supporters, with £41.19 paid for the last quarter. You could help us increase that even further. If you haven't signed up yet, it's easy and completely free. Please sign up and help us raise more by scanning the QR code.





# An Ocean Oversight



*Newhaven wave* © Peter Brooks

December has a real indoors vibe. Short days, finishing work in the dark and inconsistent weather doesn't exactly motivate us to get out, even if we know it's good for us. This poses a challenge for connecting with wildlife, which we know can increase people's desire to protect the natural world. Despite many species hibernating or migrating, there is still so much to see. To throw yourself in at the deep end, I encourage you this winter to explore our beautiful Sussex coast.

That said, in reviewing my parish magazine articles of this year, I realise

I've not included any marine species. This is awkward. If our marine team find out they'll be livid. But also, we work hard to connect people with blue spaces, promote the value and wonder of the ocean and fight for its protection, so how could I have overlooked it?

The marine environment has long since suffered from a lack of attention in the conservation world and beyond. At the risk of sounding like I'm defending myself, in a way it's understandable. We're terrestrial mammals, desperately under-resourced for the aquatic. We seek warmth, dryness, a firm foundation underfoot, and can align more easily with perils of the warm-blooded – and things with a face.

Many of us value coastal connections; beach trips, swimming, travel to warmer waters. But our oceans are not a luxury. They are a lifeline. A critical feature of our ecosystem, which we and all other life on earth could not survive without. Our disconnect with the ocean environment is contributing to its demise, and we must turn it around.



*Nudibranch (Facelina auriculata)*  
© Alexander Mustard

There is something fascinating about the unknown of the big blue, and once you start to investigate, you realise how truly epic it is. Although much is out of sight from land, the diversity of healthy UK waters has such colour and vibrancy, from royal blue lobsters to 90s-neon corkwing wrasse, and other-wordly nudibranchs.

In winter it's wild. The drama of furious waters, crashing waves and freezing sea-spray. Watching, huddled in layers, a freezing cold nose and the promise of hot chips after a winter's-walk. Heading to the water's edge for stone-sprinkled sand and shell treasure discoveries. And there's nothing like a stomp along a windswept beach to galvanise a slumped after-Christmas-dinner bunch.



*Corkwing wrasse © Sally Sharrock*

So, this December, why not skip a shopping trip, dodge the odd social occasion, push that deadline. Instead, head to the sea. And I'll submit many a marine article in 2026. Promise.

*Kerry Williams, Communications Officer,  
Conservation, Sussex Wildlife Trust*

## **Steypning History Society**

**T**he next meeting of the Steypning History Society is on Wednesday 10 December 2025.

This is a talk by Brian Lavery, entitled 'Press gangs in Sussex'.

As usual, our meetings are held at the Steypning Centre, on the second Wednesday of each month from September through to May.

You are welcome to arrive at the hall from 7:30pm, our presentations commence at 7:45pm and run through until about 9pm.

Annual subscriptions: £15 per person.  
Visitors are welcome: £5 per person.

## **Christmas Greetings**

***The clergy, churchwardens  
and PCCs of St Andrew's &  
St Cuthman's and St James's  
send their best wishes to all  
our readers for Christmas and  
New Year, and hope to  
see you in 2026.***



# STEYNING PARISH CHURCH - Services for December

## Every Sunday

- 8am 1662 Holy Communion Service
- 9:30am Sung Eucharist each Sunday with full choir, except on Sunday 21 December, with the Music Group: a simpler communion service, for all ages.
- 6pm Evening service:  
First Sunday (7 December): Reflections, a quiet, peaceful evening service, for Advent.  
Second Sunday (14 December) firepit service (outside, unless wet)  
Second Sunday (14 December): said BCP / 1662 Evening Prayer service  
Third Sunday (21 December) Instead of Choral Evensong, we hold our annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols  
Fourth Sunday No Taizé service on 28 December

## Every Wednesday

- 11:30am Said Holy Communion (Common Worship)  
(Fourth Wednesday; with prayers for healing)

# ST JAMES'S, ASHURST - Services for December

## Sundays

- 11:00 am First Sunday (7 December) Zoom Matins
- 10:30am Second Sunday (14 December) Family Service  
Christmas Day: Holy Communion and carols
- 4pm Third Sunday (21 December) Village Carol Service  
*No Holy Communion service on 28 December*

## See Page 2 for additional Christmas services

### VICAR OF STEYNING ST ANDREW'S & ST CUTHMAN'S AND RECTOR OF ST JAMES'S ASHURST

The Revd Mark Heather LLB BA , Tel: 01903 879877

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01903 813276; [office@steyningparishchurch.org](mailto:office@steyningparishchurch.org); [www.steyningparishchurch.org](http://www.steyningparishchurch.org)

Office Manager: Nina Humphreys

Parish Office open: Monday to Thursday 10am to midday