

Church Magazine

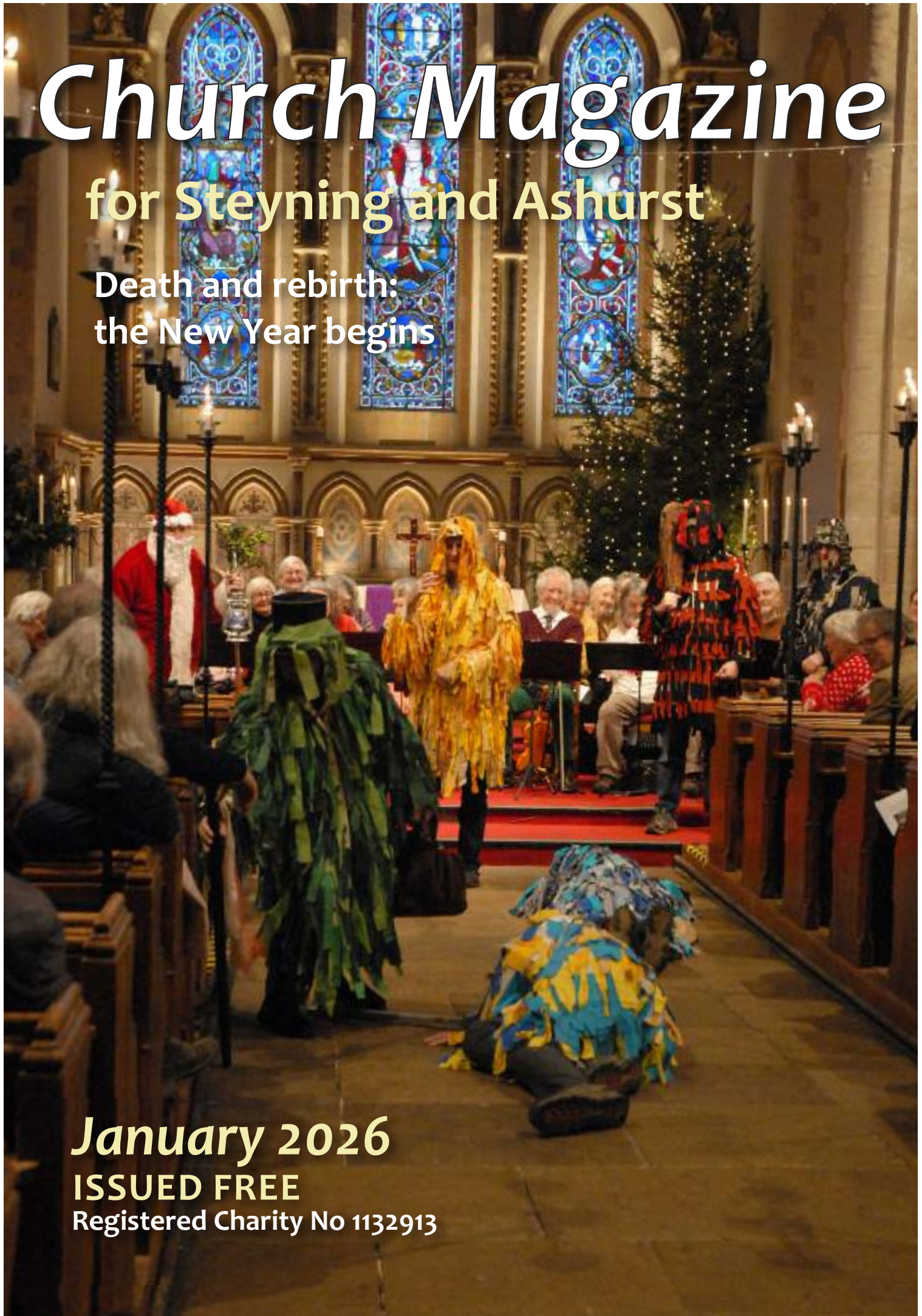
for Steyning and Ashurst

Death and rebirth:
the New Year begins

January 2026

ISSUED FREE

Registered Charity No 1132913



The Heavenly Host Arrives



The path to Steyning Primary School was lined with knitted angels on Monday 15 December, thanks to Gary's team of knitters (and the secret angel bomber). Each child could choose their own angel. The idea had a wonderful reception on social media.

Second Friday of each month, 2pm-4pm
In the Penfold Hall, Church Street, Steyning


GOOD GRIEF

Café

- Are you feeling alone?
 - Have you been affected by any kind of loss?
 - Would you like to be with people who understand and can help?
- If so, we offer a safe space where you can talk, or just listen
- Never mind how recent or how long ago - we can all be affected by loss
 - Everybody welcome, regardless of faith, any or none

Tea, Coffee and Biscuits provided
Donations welcome

Contact us at care@steyningparishchurch.org
Or phone 01903 813276

 The Parish Church of St Andrew & St Cuthman, Steyning

Next café
9 January

Church Flowers

Rota for January:

3/10 January Carol McKechnie.

17/24 January Carole Lathleiff

31 January/7 February 7th

Katherine Heather.

Thanks to those who provided greenery for the Christmas decorations



Carol McKechnie

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Cover Picture: *The Sussex Mummers' Play, as performed at Steyning by the Shepherds Arise Quire on 14 December depicting death (of the Turkish Knight and the Soldier) only to be resurrected by the Doctor, representing the end of the old and start of the new. See p14.*

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 'Steyning Parochial Church Council' to help meet the expenses of the Church Magazine. We suggest an annual donation of at least £12

Title Surname Forenames

House No/name Postcode Date

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less income Tax and /or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference. Please notify Steyning Parish Church if you / cancel this declaration / change your name or home address / no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

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Prayer Diary for January

Thursday 1 January, The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was circumcised in obedience to the law for our sake and given the name that is above every name: give us grace faithfully to bear his name, to worship him in the freedom of the Spirit, and to proclaim him as the saviour of the world.

Sunday 4 January

The Second Sunday of Christmas

Almighty God, in the birth of your Son you have poured on us the new light of your incarnate Word, and shown us the fullness of your love: help us to walk in his light and dwell in his love that we may know the fullness of his joy.

Tuesday 6 January, The Epiphany

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face.

Sunday 11 January, The Baptism of Christ

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children.

Sunday 18 January

The Second Sunday of Epiphany

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory.

Sunday 25 January

The Third Sunday of Epiphany

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power.

Monday 26 January, The Conversion of St Paul (transferred from 25 January)

Almighty God, who caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world through the preaching of your servant Saint Paul: grant that we who celebrate his wonderful conversion may follow him in bearing witness to your truth.

A prayer for Christian Unity (see box on p5)

Heavenly Father, you have called us in the body of your son Jesus Christ to continue his work of reconciliation and reveal you to the world: forgive us the sins which tear us apart; give us the courage to overcome our fears and to seek that unity which is your gift and your will.

Parish Registers

Baptism

Olivia Louise Stanley

7 December

Confirmation

Timothy Charles Hendley Chase

(26 November - at Chichester Cathedral)

Interments of Ashes

Susan Hunt (Died 26-Jan-25)

8 November

Carole Anne Walls (Died 3-Jun-24) 26 November



Pastoral Letter

How long do you keep up your Christmas tree? Many decades ago, I am told, my wife Katherine's grandmother took down her tree before Christmas Day because, having been in her living room since American Thanksgiving, she was fed-up with looking at it.

You will be aware of the widespread superstition that it's 'bad luck' to have a tree in the house after 5 January. There's a certain logic to the date, given that the next day is the start of a slightly different season in the Church calendar. 5 January (if you count correctly, starting on 25 January itself) is 'Twelfth Night', the last of the twelve days of Christmas.



We do things differently in church, keeping our tree in place up and until the Feast of the Presentation, also known as 'Candlemas' which falls 40 days after Christmas and marks the end of the Season of the Epiphany. That word puts us in mind of the visit of the wise men to Jesus but, because the word means 'manifestation', we will hear a sequence of Sunday Gospels over five Sundays, each with a different focus as to how God's love and glory was 'revealed' to the world in Jesus.

The gospel readings in each year vary, and usually include the manifestation of Jesus' glory in the Miracle of the Wedding Feast (John 2:1-11), but that gets omitted this year as we skip the fourth Sunday of Epiphany to enable us to keep Candlemas on a Sunday. The focus of the Gospels for this year is as follows:

- 4 January, Matthew 2:1-12: Visit of the Magi (transferred from 6 January)
- 11 January, Matthew 3:13-17: the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan
- 18 January, John 1:29-42: God reveals to John the Baptist who Jesus is
- 25 January, Matthew 4:12-23: Jesus fulfils the prophecy to the gentiles who sat in darkness but have seen a great light
- 1 February, Luke 2:22-40: the young Jesus is presented in the Temple ('Candlemas', transferred from 2 February)

May the love of God be manifested in our lives as he was revealed in Jesus – God in man made manifest!

Fr Mark

AGAPE SERVICE FOR THE WEEK OF CHRISTIAN UNITY



Steyping and District Churches Together invite everybody to a special Agape service and meal, to be held at 4pm on Sunday 25 January at Steyping Methodist Church, 18 High Street, Steyping, BN44 3GG

FROM THE EDITOR

Here's a thought for 2026. You can't buy Jesus' love, but generosity will be rewarded.

At the December meeting of the Steyning Parochial Church Council, our main task was to set the budget for this year. The good news is that after running a deficit for the last few years (which had to be topped up from the building fund), in 2026 we look like being able to break even. I am, of course, referring to the general fund; we will need to comprehensively raid the building fund for the tower roof repairs.

As a result we are able to pledge our parish share to the diocese at 100% of the average ministry cost – not too many parishes are able to do this. So does that mean we are doing well financially? Not really. Although we want to thank all our regular donors, our position is only down to the few donors who regularly give more than average. And it's that average that we need to consider. Our own average sum per giver is below the diocesan average, and Chichester diocese is far from the most generous in total.

If all our regular donors were to give an extra £2 per week we would be £10,000 a year better off (increased even further if the gifts were made through the Parish Giving scheme, with Gift Aid and the inflation increase). Just think what we could do with that in terms of mission and outreach.

You will hear more about generous giving through 2026. Meanwhile, Happy New Year to all.

Blessings, Bill

Sunday Notices

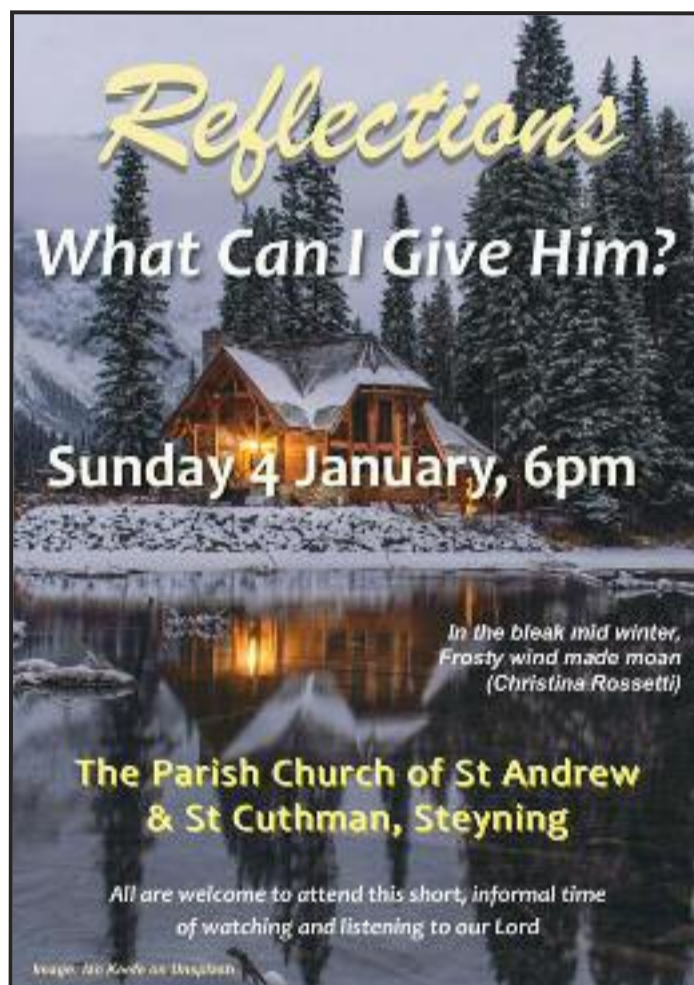
The weekly Sunday notice sheet, sent from the Parish Office, gives all the information about services, news and events. There is also the list of those needing our prayers. If you would like to receive this sheet please contact:

office@steyningparishchurch.org
or ring 01903 813276

To add any new prayer requests
contact:

prayers@steyningparishchurch.org
or ring 01903 813276

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.

Diocesan Confirmation

More than 50 candidates were confirmed by the Bishop of Chichester, Dr Martin Warner, at a special confirmation service at Chichester Cathedral on 26 November.

Among those confirmed was Tim Chase, from St Andrew's and St Cuthman's, who said: "I feel profoundly blessed for the way God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Holy Mary have carried me this far. Now, as I prepare for confirmation, I feel ready to publicly affirm the faith that has become central to my life."



Tim Chase

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
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 9 January 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*

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**



When I visit the doctor I am asked, “How are you doing?” and I have to gather my thoughts to try and put into words an answer. It’s not easy. How are you doing? How do you feel about January and all that happens in this month?

Now is the time when we are encouraged to reflect on the year that has just gone, and stop for a bit and take stock. There were surely times in 2025 where we found events unravelling a little around us, and the world seemed to stop for a moment and hold its breath, but running alongside that, we actually knew everything would march on relentlessly. Our world can push and pull us between these two poles. These difficult, unravelling times can be termed as dark periods of life, and they

can take many forms, but you will not dwell in darkness for ever. Darkness gives way to light, just as sorrow gives way to laughter and joy.

The long dark night will find a dawn. Nothing stays the same and this midwinter will give way to spring.

Genesis 8:22 says: “*While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*”

There is a most wonderful hymn that testifies to the greatness and faithfulness of God displayed in creation – in nature all around us and giving us hope.

The second verse of the hymn ‘Great is Thy Faithfulness’ says:

*Summer and winter and springtime
and harvest,*

*Sun, moon, and stars in their courses
above*

*Join with all nature in manifold
witness*

*To thy great faithfulness, mercy,
and love.*

*Great is thy faithfulness,
Great is thy faithfulness,*

*Morning by morning new mercies
I see.*

*All I have needed thy hand hast
provided;*

*Great is thy faithfulness,
Lord unto me.*

God is unchanging. He is the constant in all the uncertainties we may face, and this is the hope to hold on to.

The Holocaust survivor Corrie Ten Boom (1892-1983) wrote the brilliant book, *The Hiding Place*, which tells the story of how she and her family helped to hide Jews to protect them from the

Nazis. It is estimated that they saved around 800 lives. Eventually, an informant told of their activities and Corrie, her father and sister were arrested. Her father died shortly after imprisonment.

Corrie and her sister were sent to a concentration camp, where they held daily Bible study and prayer in secret, despite the terrible conditions. Corrie went on to share her story, and forgave her enemies, and led people to hear about the real hope found in Jesus.

Beneath the cold earth of winter, there is life, and it will come again in Spring in glorious colour. Even when the frost grips the grass, the water is frozen over and the branches seem lifeless, a little robin bounces cheerily along.

Joy appears. Then, if you listen, there will be the chatter of tiny beaks from some tangled, intricate nest up high, and their various and glorious songs to the creator.

Stars hung in the firmament by God, shimmer against the darkest of nights, yet that is where they are most beautifully seen. All these are both a challenge and a call to look for the many blessings in the difficult seasons of life. There are many delights, if we would only stop to look.

Thirty years ago I was given a book called *Gentle Darkness*, and as I read it slowly, I began a journey of a developing understanding of what that title might mean for me. Darkness is a time when Christ is gently being the ‘vine dresser’; when he is actually pruning me and sculpting me so, by his grace, I can bear more fruit in the days to come.

For those of us who are a little older and having to live at a slower pace, we may feel that nothing much is happening as each day passes – or that could be your feeling too, whatever your age – but the Lord is doing work in our hearts and our lives by the power of his Holy Spirit, for he cares a great deal about our spiritual condition, and he gives us peace and hope.

1 Samuel 16:7 says: *“The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”*

Do not underestimate how the Lord is at work in and through us all when we trust and walk with him. He will indeed bless us in our darkest and coldest of times. But hope brings our Springtime. Each season points to our creator and saviour – and he is with us now and for ever.

Chris Fitton



Remembrance garden
(Jim Lang)

A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE AND AN UPDATE.

It has been a while, but at last, following successful cardiac procedures and with your prayers and support, life is returning to normal. We are stepping out from our low profile lifestyle that we had to adopt, and are resuming our usual activities.

Yvonne and I are very much looking forward to rejoining church events and perhaps even take part in a committee once again. **THANK YOU ALL.** *Jim Lang*

Saint of the Month for January

WULSIN, BISHOP OF SHERBORNE (c930-1002)

Wulsin (also known as Wulfsige) is said to have been born in London about AD930. He first appears in the records in 960 when he was appointed to the church of St Peter at Thorney Island (later renamed Westminster) by Dunstan, Bishop of London. He established a monastery of twelve monks and, because of their devotion and pastoral work with the poor, in 980 the church became an abbey and Wulsin was named as first abbot.

Twelve years later in 992, Dunstan, by then Archbishop of Canterbury, nominated Wulsin to the bishopric of Sherborne in Dorset. He accepted on the basis that he also remained Abbot of Westminster and this was agreed. He established a monastic chapter at the cathedral and a building programme was launched to serve the local people. Wulsin also did much to improve the endowments of the diocese.

Wulsin was a leader in the 10th century Benedictine reform

movement and it was this rule which his monks at the cathedral were required to follow. He was a disciplinarian, writing a collection of canons for the instruction of the priests in the Diocese which recommended that they adopt the same austere lifestyle which he followed.

He became revered for his sanctity of life and it is said that, as he died, he was singing "I see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God".

He died on 8 January which is kept as his feast day. He was buried in his church at Sherborne.



Sherborne Abbey, Dorset, formerly the cathedral where Wulsin served as bishop and was buried



**The Arts
Society
Steyning**

January talk

**The Honourable East India Company & East West Trade:
Chintz, Chinese Export & Chinoiserie 1600-1800
by Vivienne Lawes**

The Steyning Centre, Fletchers Croft, Steyning, BN44 3XZ
Monday 12 January 2026 10am for 10:30
Members free, guests welcome for suggested donation of £10

‘The Roadmender’ Revisited

Recently, I looked again at a forgotten (at least by me) classic of Sussex-based literature – *The Roadmender* by ‘Michael Fairless’.

Set in a part of rural Sussex conjured up by the author’s imagination, the book is a series of deep philosophical and spiritual musings on life. It doesn’t attempt to explain God, or the meaning of life itself – it’s more a series of vignettes from nature and countryside life as observed by the subject of the book. Although there is nothing to tie the location to any individual place, later scholars believed it to be an amalgamation of places, roughly between Horsham and Edburton, mostly within the Adur valley.

My first thought was how did one destined for a menial task acquire the depth of classical and Biblical knowledge that flavours the book’s pages? The first sentence gives a clue – “*I have attained my ideal: I am a roadmender, some say stonebreaker.*” Here is one who has abandoned sophistication for the simplest of rural existences. The second part of the book confirms this; the previous roadmender returns to the buzz of the city, but still hankers after bucolic peace. The final part sees a return to the country road, specifically the white gate at the road’s end, though which we all must pass when we die.



Grave of Margaret Barber at St James’s – the (currently missing) name plate reads ‘Margaret Fairless Dowson’

The author’s real name was Margaret Fairless Barber. Described as an ‘English Christian Writer’, she was born in Yorkshire in 1869. When she was 12 years old her father died, and her mother, unable to cope, sent Margaret to live with relatives in Devon. She developed a rare spinal condition. Despite this, in her teens she went to a poor area of London to train as a children’s nurse,

familiarly known as ‘the fighting sister’. But her health, and her eyesight, became worse and she went to live, against her family’s wishes, with a cultured family named Dowson.

The Dowsons lived at Mockbridge House, beside the Eastern arm of the Adur, as well as in Chelsea. They effectively adopted Margaret and encouraged her writing. From her sick bed, she wrote just three books. The first was a religious novel, *The Gathering of Brother Hilarius*. The other two - *The Roadmender*, and *The Grey Brethren*, a collection of stories and poems for a young audience, were published posthumously, in 1901 and 1905. It was sad that Margaret died at Mockbridge House (in Henfield parish) before *The Roadmender* became a best seller, going through 31 impressions in 10 years.

There is a true local connection: she was buried at St James’s, Ashurst. Her epitaph reads ‘Lo how I loved thee’.

Bill Thomson

Families and Children



Hello Everyone,
Happy New Year. I can't believe the past year has gone so quickly – where does the time go?

Over the last month I have been so surprised how many people have been involved in all that goes on in the life of the church. There have been so many things happening: school services, concerts and numerous other events. All of these have happened thanks to our church community getting involved.

I wonder what will happen in this New Year? What we as a church will do and who we will engage with? My hope and prayer is that we will do even more in our community so that we will see the seeds of the Kingdom of God start to spread all around our community and beyond.

Set to launch in January is our new **Board Game Café Evening Edition** once a month. We set this up after conversations at our Hallowe'en Pitstop where parents were saying that they would be interested in our current board game café but they are still at work at the

times this runs, so we are going to trial this new adventure. The first meeting of this is Monday 26 January. Do come along as we would love to see you there.



Christingle went down well with the church having its largest ever Christingle at a height of 6ft2in. The Revd Squeaks led our talk with Simon about the Christingle and what it represents. For our prayers we stood around the church

and lit the Christingles before ending our service. It was nice to see lots of people attending and lots of new faces as well.

We had our first-ever **Angel Drop** in Steyning this year. All the lovely knitted angels found themselves new homes. It brought lots of joy to those who found them. Thank you to all those who knitted for this project, hopefully more people would like to join the knitting for next year.



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 service is Sunday 11 January. Do come and join us as we would love to see you.



Open to anyone of any age, the **Daytime Board Game Café** runs on the second Tuesday of each month in the Penfold Hall at 3:15pm. It is very exciting. We have been seeing some new faces over the last couple of meetings, some of them being families. It is great to see this 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 13 January.



The Advent Angels arrived in Steyning

Little Stars is amazing. The conversations that are happening within the group are great, the adults are becoming great friends and you can see them supporting each other on a weekly basis. Conversations around church and what we do are more free flowing. During our last session before Christmas, we gave out an age-appropriate story to each family and they seem to have gone down very well. This outreach to the community is becoming strong, and you can really start to see the kingdom building.



Little Stars meets Mondays 1pm – 2:45pm and Thursdays 9:30am – 11:30am.

Steyning Primary CofE School had the Christingle Service for Key Stage 1 on 3 December and the Carol Service for Key Stage 2 on 10 December. Both services were really good, with the children singing along and taking part. We look forward to a new term and to see what we will be collaborating on next with the school.



*Blessings,
Gary*

The Steyning Tipteerers

One of the highlights of the recent 'Shepherds Arise' event in St Andrew's & St Cuthman's Church was the performance of a Sussex Mummers' Play, shown on the front cover.

The tradition of these plays is particularly strong in Sussex. Their origin is obscure: some say they are connected with the 'Seven Champions of Christendom', accounts of the fighting prowess of various patron saints, popular in the 16th and 17th centuries. I prefer the theory that it goes back to pre-Christian times, marking winter, when nature dies, and spring, when it is revived.

The basic story that runs through all of the plays is that one or more of the characters is killed by another, and the fallen are revived. Common to most of the plays are the characters of Saint (or King) George, the Turkish Knight, the Doctor and Father Christmas, while at the end a needy character asks for gifts or money. Then all join to sing a carol.

In Sussex the mummers were often known as Tipteerers, and the plays were traditionally performed on St Stephen's Day (26 December) as well as at other times during the season. The play we witnessed in church is based on one from Ovingdean, near Brighton.

Many places had their own versions. Sompting, for instance, has two recorded. I recall one in the 1970s at the Marquis of Granby (now long gone) by the village Morris side – Morris dancers being mainly responsible for reviving the

tradition. The plays were passed on through oral tradition rather than following a written script, which probably accounts for the many versions. It was not until the 19th century that they were written.

Steyning had its own mummers' play, noted down by one of the town's

doctors in the 1880s. It was revived by the Chanctonbury Ring Morris Men in the 1960s and performed every Boxing Day at the White Horse (the tradition continues but unfortunately no longer in Steyning itself, usually in Bramber and Washington instead).

The format was slightly different from the Ovingdean play. Father Christmas, as well as introducing the play, introduces each character. The Steyning play sees St George struck down by the Turkish Knight, rather than the other way round; the Turk being an associate of the Noble Captain. The Valiant Knight and the Bold Prince then enter, and a fight ensues, resulting in the Turkish Knight's demise. St George and the Turk are brought back to life by the Doctor. The Prince of Peace then declares the conflict over and Johnny Jack asks the audience to be generous with their money.

There are clear parallels with the Crusades, when the Christians and Turks were in conflict. Fortunately the Prince of Peace's words still stand, though religious conflict continues in other parts of the world.

Bill Thomson



Advent at Steyning Parish Church

Two of the many events in the lead up to Christmas 2025 - Chanctonbury Chorus Christmas Concert on 6 December (right) and the Steyning Primary School Carol Service on 10 December (below)



Recipe for January

GLUTEN-FREE YORKSHIRE PUDDINGS

This is my new go-to recipe. It can be doubled up to make toad in the hole, or use a pie dish to make a larger pudding.

Ingredients

- 100 g cornflour (cornstarch)
- 3 eggs
- 150 ml milk (dairy-free if necessary)
- 25 ml cooking oil

Method

1. Preheat your oven to 220°C/200°C fan/ 425°F.
2. Add just around 1 tsp of oil to each of the holes in the muffin tin.
3. Place your tin in the oven for 10-15 minutes until the oil is super hot, basically spitting!
4. Whilst your oil is heating, beat/whisk your three eggs into your cornflour in a mixing bowl.
5. Once thoroughly combined, gradually add your milk a little at a time. Mix together - I use a non-electric whisk for this but you could use a electric hand mixer if you like.



6. Pour your Yorkshire pudding batter into a jug so it's easier to pour into each hole.
7. Next you need to be quick! Remove your muffin tray from the oven and immediately fill each hole until just under 3/4 full (for really big yorkies or under half full for more modest but equally epic yorkies!). They should sizzle a little. Be very quick here and get them back in the oven asap!
8. Place back in the oven and bake for around 15-20 minutes until golden and risen. (Never open the oven door during their bake, this will ruin them!)
9. Remove from your oven once cooked and serve up with a delicious roast dinner (lots of gravy). Enjoy!

Becky

My Cloud of Witnesses

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

Part 2: “Justice and Peace will Embrace One Another.” (Psalm 85:10)

Last month, I wrote about the prophetic church in Latin America and some of the inspiring Christians I have met from the region. They worked for social justice and human rights in the military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s. This month, my focus is on other parts of the world and on those whose path of discipleship followed the injunction of the psalmist: “seek peace and pursue it” (*Psalm 34:14*).

I think of Martin Niemoeller, a leader of the church resistance to the Nazis who was a personal prisoner of Hitler for eight years; his successor, Helmut Gollwitzer, who took over Niemoeller’s Berlin parish when he was imprisoned; Eberhard Bethge, the biographer of Bonhoeffer; and Bishop Albrecht Schoenherr, the leader of the Protestant

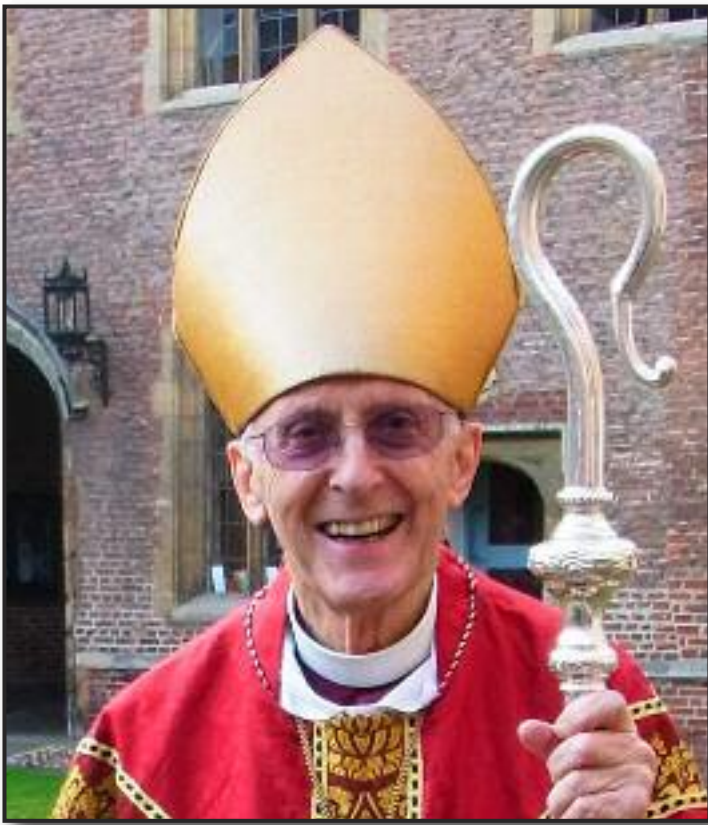
churches in East Germany. Bethge and Schoenherr were pupils of Bonhoeffer. All of those mentioned above were involved in resistance to Hitler and the Nazis; only Bonhoeffer, the friend of Bishop Bell of Chichester, paid the ultimate price.

I want to name two people as my Japanese witnesses. The first is Kosuke Koyama, who, in his book *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai* wrestles with questions from his childhood experience of the war and destruction of his home city, Tokyo: Who, or what, was it that destroyed Japan in World War II? Was it Japanese militarism, or the American bombers, or God’s judgement? He appeared unannounced one day in the early 1980s at the office of the British Council of Churches when I worked there. Paul Oestreicher, my boss and head of the international department, was not in the office. I had read some of Professor Koyama’s intriguing, original and impressive books already, such as *Three Mile an Hour God* and *No Handle on the Cross*, so I was delighted to meet him.

Professor Koyama wanted to know how and why some Anglican bishops defended the theory of nuclear deterrence. Even though I did not and do not share that conviction, I sought to explain. He thought deeply about it, then asked in what way the conditional threat to use nuclear weapons was Christian. I was unable to help him further.



Martin Niemoeller (*Wikimedia Commons/
Dutch National Archive*)



Bishop Simon Barrington-Ward
([Wikimedia](#) / [Deryck Chan](#))

When I worked at the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England, I was secretary to the committee on international and development affairs. The chairman was the then Bishop of Coventry, Bishop Simon Barrington-Ward. I liked and respected him hugely. On one occasion he told me that, because of the appalling treatment of prisoners of war in the Japanese camps, the reconciliation work of Coventry Cathedral with respect to Japan was hugely more controversial and generated a much more hostile response than the similar work with Germany. Reconciliation work is long term, personally costly and unpredictable.

Another Japanese witness was Setsuko Thurlow who, as a 13 year old Japanese girl, survived the bomb on Hiroshima. In later life, she married and lived in Canada. On a speaking tour in

the UK, I had the privilege to organise a small meeting with the international affairs and social responsibility officers of the major British churches. At the end of her moving presentation, our Baptist colleague, the Revd Don Black, informed us that he had been a young British serviceman who had to go into the hellscape of Hiroshima shortly after the bomb in 1945. He left us in no doubt that the devastation of the city was formative to his lifelong work for peace and human rights. It is a terrible sin to target and destroy a living city, whether that city is called Coventry, Dresden, Hiroshima or Gaza. The next time I heard about Setsuko Thurlow was when she gave an acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize (2017) awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

In 1986, I travelled with American social activist and peacemaker Jim Wallis during his speaking tour of the UK. If asked I could repeat for you, almost verbatim, passages of his 1986 addresses. For example, he would tell audiences or congregations about a Bible he had modified for addressing



Jim Wallis (jimwallis.org)

American audiences. He, or whoever actually did the work, cut out every reference to poverty and injustice in the Bible. He would hold the Bible up and say: “This is the American Bible, full of holes.” A long-term and persistent peacemaker, he argued that throughout history young people, mainly men, have been prepared to leave home and family, undergo arduous training and risk the danger of fighting in wars. Where, he asked, was the equivalent commitment from peacemakers? Surely it would be no less costly to train for and work for peace.

I also think of Kim Dae Jung of South Korea – Roman Catholic layman, defender of the students of the Gwangju massacre (1980), kidnapped by the Korean CIA. I visited him when he was being held under house arrest in Seoul in the late 1980s. He later became president of South Korea (from 1998-2003) and sought peace and reconciliation with North Korea. Had that succeeded, think of the danger which could have been averted and the benefits of peace to that long-divided country. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000.

South African Desmond Tutu’s life has been sufficiently documented for me just to name this great and lifelong champion of justice and peace. Even after retirement, he acceded to the personal request of President Mandela to chair the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – an emotionally gruelling experience, but a great service to his country. Less well known, but equally deserving of honour, is the Afrikaner the Revd Beyers Naudé, who with his



Dr Beyers Naudé
(Bert Verhoeff / Nationaal Archief / Wikimedia)

colleagues at the Christian Institute, defied apartheid and sought a just alternative. They were all banned when the Christian Institute was closed down in 1977 by the apartheid government. In spite of the personal danger, Dr Naudé stayed on in South Africa. He could only carry on his pastoral ministry by meeting one person at a time (a condition of his banning order). When I met him in a garden in 1983, he told me that it was the richest time of his life, because of the acceptance he felt from the black community. Archbishop Michael Ramsey cited Naudé as one of the exemplars of what it meant to be a Christian in the late 20th century. The Revd Dr Frank Chikane makes up the distinguished trio of general secretaries of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) from this time. After working for the SACC, Chikane worked as the head of the private office of President Thabo Mbeki.

If formal armies can have military chaplains, why should informal armies – those resisting injustice – not have informal chaplains? Fr Michael Lapsley, an Anglican priest exiled from South Africa, played this role to the African National Congress in exile. He paid the price. When the apartheid regime's dirty tricks squad sent him a parcel bomb, it exploded and he lost both hands. He was not alone in being singled out for this mode of attack - lawyer Albie Sachs survived being bombed to play a distinguished role in the framing of the constitution and shaping the legal basis for the life of the liberated South Africa. Academic Ruth First tragically did not survive the bomb sent to her in Mozambique.

Desmond Tutu used to speak of the special atmosphere at the communion

service when Fr Michael Lapsley presided. Lapsley helped to found and lead the Institute for the Healing of Memories in Cape Town. The Institute continues to seek reconciliation and healing of the wounds of apartheid. His own experiences and physical wounds have helped him to access the traumas faced by many of those who come seeking wholeness.

From these peacemakers, varied as they were in terms of personality, cultural background, and institutional position, I have learned that following the example of Jesus of Nazareth can take many forms and can be costly. Few of us are likely to emulate their courage and achievements, but all of us can do something as we seek to live out our faith.

Roger Williamson

The Steyning Society

Friday 16 January

at The Steyning Centre, Fletchers Croft, Steyning.

'The Passmores and Applesham Farm'

a talk by Hugh Passmore

The story of a local farming family and its land through the centuries, told by one of its members.

The doors are open at 7pm and there will be wine or sparkling elderflower (monetary donations welcome) on arrival.

Talk will begin at 7:30.

Free to members and £5 for guests.

All are very welcome to attend.

www.steyningsociety.org.uk

Photo by Mark Gambles on Unsplash

January 2026 – The ‘No’ Year Resolution

Happy New Year! However you choose to celebrate, I hope your festive season was full of peace, joy, and mega loads of cheese. I always have a new year’s resolution and try to make them positive. Apologise less. Dance more. Wear the shoes. Before you stop reading for fear of me going full ‘live, laugh, love’ don’t worry, I’m heading somewhere.

2026 is going to be the year of boundaries. As well-meaning humans, and especially in the UK, we can be a little too agreeable, put up with stuff, get on with it. But as nature illustrates, it doesn’t have to be this way.

There are not many better boundary-setting role models than those species who ward off others as standard. Camouflage antithesis, these creatures make themselves obvious to warn incomers that they’re not to be messed with. It’s called aposematism, a defence mechanism utilised by certain species



Cinnabar moth caterpillars © Alan Price

across the board; invertebrates, plants, mammals, birds, fish and fungi. Told you I had a point.

There are a few different types of aposematism.

- Aposematic colouration: deliberately bright colours to visually warn of a toxic taste to others (whether this is true or not).

Think ladybirds, wasps and cinnabar moth caterpillars, who are bright yellow to mirror the toxic traits taken on by their favourite food plant – ragwort. Then there are cuttlefish, whose colour-changing skills give them the option of disguise or bold vibrant attack.



Selsley cuttlefish © Paul Parsons

- Olfactory

aposematism: repelling predators by producing a smell or foul-smelling substance. This dirty card is played by several species of shield bug, sometimes harshly but accurately known as stink bugs. Many plants are notable for this feature, including the strong-smelling wild garlic.

- Auditory aposematism: sound as a deterrent. Many species make alarm calls to expose a nearby predator, like a robin tick-ticking at the sight of a cat. But auditory aposematism is making a sound to directly warn of one's own danger or distaste to others. A famous example is the rattlesnake, which clatters its tail to give the heads up – “it's not worth it mate”. Closer to home, the garden tiger moth rubs its wings together to make a rasping noise to the same effect.

Symbolic or tenuous, there's no doubt these creatures have mastered the art of communicating their boundaries. In



Garden tiger moth © Alan Price

nature there's no awkwardness, no deeper meaning, no overthink – imagine! So, in nature's honour, this year I'll be saying a lot more 'no'. Hopefully with no need for any olfactory assistance.

Kerry Williams: Communications
Officer, Conservation,
Sussex Wildlife Trust



Steypning History Society

The next meeting is on Wednesday 14 January 2026. This is a talk entitled *The Vanderbilt Coach* by Alan Barwick. 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 7.30 p.m., and our presentations commence 7:45 p.m. and run through until 9p.m. Annual subscriptions: £15 per person. Visitors are welcome: £5 per person.



STEYNING PARISH CHURCH - Services for January

Every Sunday

- 8am BCP / 1662 Holy Communion Service
- 9:30am Common Worship Sung Eucharist, each Sunday with choir, except on Sunday 18 January, with the Music Group: a simpler communion service, for all ages
- 6pm Evening service:
First Sunday (4 January): Reflections, a contemplative, peaceful, evening service, entitled 'What Can I Give Him?'
Second Sunday (11 January, weather permitting) outdoor firepit service
Second Sunday (11 January): said BCP / 1662 Evening Prayer service
Third Sunday (18 January) Said Evensong – not Choral – (to give the choir a rest after a hard-working Christmas)
No Taizé service on 25 January, instead we meet at 4pm at Steyning Methodist Church for Churches Together Agape service to end the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Every Wednesday

- 11:30am Said Holy Communion (Common Worship)
(Final Wednesday, 28 January: with prayers for healing)

ST JAMES'S, ASHURST - Services for January

Sundays

- 11am First Sunday (4 January) Zoom Matins
- 10:30am Second Sunday (11 January) Epiphanytide Family Service
Fourth Sunday (25 January) Holy Communion

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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