

The background image shows the interior of a Gothic-style church. It features tall, narrow stained glass windows with intricate designs in blue, red, and gold. The architecture includes pointed arches, columns, and a high, vaulted ceiling. Light from the windows creates colorful patterns on the walls. In the foreground, there is a row of altars with Gothic arches, each containing a Star of David. Candles are visible on the altars.

Church Magazine

for Steyning and Ashurst

February 2026

ISSUED FREE

Registered Charity No 1132913

The light and love of God

Diocesan Lent Course 2026

This year's Lent Course begins a series on each of the Gospels over the next four years. The hope is that we explore the distinctive 'portrait' of Christ that each Gospel writer provides, and that, together with our Gospel readings on Sundays, builds our faith in Christ.



Diocese of Chichester

Living the Mystery of Faith

THE YEAR OF MATTHEW

The Revd Tom Robson, main contributor to the course material, writes: "I believe that the Gospel of Matthew invites us to see that Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promise and the one who brings God's Kingdom. I hope that as we journey through Lent together, our faith in him will be strengthened as we live the 'Mystery of Faith' as disciples of Christ.

"Over the next four years, we'll walk through each gospel-writer's gallery. This year in Matthew, we'll take in Jesus' birth, his calling of disciples, his authority as a teacher, his miracles, and his upcoming passion. And every Sunday, our Gospel reading will add another brushstroke to our picture of Christ. As we see Jesus fulfil God's promise we'll be encouraged and equipped to live out the Mystery of Faith."

As usual, we will have a get-together to begin the course, on **Tuesday 24 February, at around 11am in the Penfold Hall** (see weekly notices for exact timing). We hope all House Groups will be able to join us, along with anybody else who may be interested in following the course. We hope to be able to provide refreshments.



Maintaining
**Resilience,
Hope and Action**
in the
Climate Emergency

Speaker:

Rev Buff Forbes Stone,
Diocesan Environment Officer

Join us on
Saturday Feb 7th
for breakfast at 9am

The Hub

19 Church Lane
Upper Beeding, BN44 3HP

Tickets £6 from:

The Hub Cafe

The local churches

Or email: events@sdct.org.uk



Ashurst, Bramber, Buncton,
Steyning & Upper Beeding

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Cover picture: *The early morning light shines through the East window at St Andrew's & St Cuthman's on the Feast of the Epiphany (4 January)*

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 you 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.

Registered Charity No: 1132913

Prayer Diary for February

1 February, Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas – transferred from 2 February)

Almighty and ever-living God, clothed in majesty, whose beloved son was this day presented in the temple, in substance of our flesh: grant that we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts, by your son Jesus Christ our Lord.



8 February, Second Sunday before Lent

Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children.

8 February, St Cuthman (celebrated on 15 February this year)

Loving Father, who filled Cuthman with a love of the Gospel and the desire to make you a house in this place for your glory: inspire us, who honour his memory, to build up your church in hope and faith and love; as we look for the day when we and all your saints will fill your heavenly temple with our praises.

15 February, Sunday next before Lent

Almighty Father, whose son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross: give us grace to perceive his glory, that we may be strengthened to suffer with him and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory.

18 February, Ash Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness.

22 February, First Sunday of Lent

Almighty God, whose son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are, yet without sin: give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save.

Lent 2026

For this year's Lent course, Chichester Diocese will be examining the Gospel of St Matthew. We are reminded that Jesus asked Matthew, a tax collector, a member of a derided profession, to follow him, and Matthew accepted the call.

Lord Jesus, friend of sinners, we thank you that you came for those who recognise their need for you. Thank you for calling Matthew, and for calling us. Not because we are worthy to even gather up the crumbs from under your table, but because you are full of mercy.

Forgive us for the times we stand at a distance and judge. Give us your heart for those on the outside. Help us to hear your simple, powerful call, "Follow me," and give us the grace to follow. In your precious name we pray.

Pastoral Letter

God is Love and those who live in Love live in God, and God lives in them (1 John 4:16).

What, if anything, are you considering giving up this coming Lent? Is it the same thing as every year, or something different? Or perhaps, for you, Lent is an opportunity to do 'take up', rather than 'give up' something?

At its heart, Lent is not a spiritual self-improvement programme, nor a test of willpower. It is a season of grace. The practices we adopt are not meant to impress God or ourselves, but to make a little more space to let God speak to us – space for honesty, for attentiveness, for the quiet work of Love within us. If what we give up (or take up) does not help to create that space, it may be worth re-thinking.

In most European languages the term for Lent takes its name either from the fact that it lasts for forty days, or to refer to fasting. In English (and Dutch) the word is based on the old name for 'Spring' (lencten), describing lengthening days and the approach of the warmer weather. This reminds us that for the early Church Lent was primarily meant to be a season of healing, growth and renewal.

Whatever shape Lent takes for you this year, remember that it is not a solitary journey. We walk it together hopefully following Christ toward the cross and beyond it to resurrection. The aim is not perfection by Easter, but deeper trust (not spiritual heroics), and a heart a little more open to Love.

Fr Mark



Ash Wednesday Services



Image: Thays Orrico, Unsplash

To mark the start of Lent, there will be two Eucharistic Services, with imposition of ashes, on Wednesday 18 February, Ash Wednesday.

11:30am (said) in Steyning Parish Church

7pm (choral) in Steyning Parish Church

All are welcome

FROM THE EDITOR

God's unconditional love is the topic for the February Reflections Service. Love is fundamental to today's Christian message, and St Paul famously wrote, when mentioning faith, hope and love: "the greatest of all these is love". But I wonder, do we pay enough attention to the love of God and Jesus?

Going back many years to schooldays, where we had regular Religious Knowledge lessons, I don't remember love being mentioned. Indeed, in the 1950s and 60s love was something rather soppy, OK for girls, but not 'manly' enough for an all-boys school. Religious Knowledge back then was much more like history lessons, and taught in a similarly uninspiring way.

How fortunate are the children today at our C of E schools. In their collective worship and through 'Open the Book' they can see stories from the Bible played out, and put into today's context, helping them to really understand faith. And not only the Christian faith; they are taught about other faiths, so hopefully will grow up with some understanding of what we all have in common, rather than the differences and suspicions we are fed through the media. And love is common to all true faiths.

Love is certainly present in our churches. We noticed it when we first came to Steyning, and we aren't alone. In our community we remember that God loves everybody and doesn't discriminate, so we try to offer a warm, inclusive and loving welcome to all.

Blessings, Bill

Sunday Notices

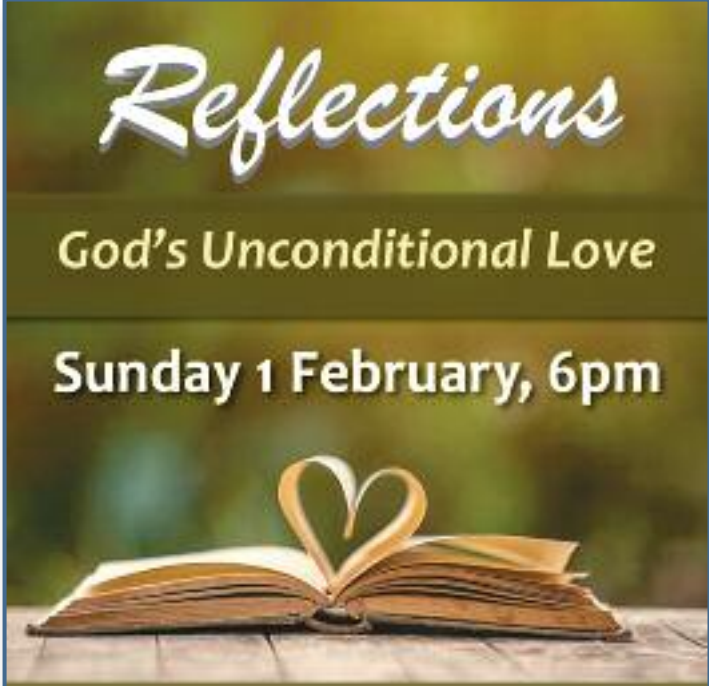
The weekly Sunday notice sheet, sent from the Parish Office, gives all the information about services, news and events. There is also the list of those needing our prayers. If you would like to receive this sheet please contact:

office@steyningparishchurch.org
or ring 01903 813276

To add any new prayer requests
contact:

prayers@steyningparishchurch.org
or ring 01903 813276

Reflections Service



Reflections
God's Unconditional Love
Sunday 1 February, 6pm

Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39)

**The Parish Church of St Andrew
& St Cuthman, Steyning**

'Reflections' is a quiet contemplative time of about 40 minutes, with readings, prayer and music, built around a 10-15 minute period of silence.

Saint of the Month

GILBERT, FOUNDER OF THE GILBERTINE ORDER, c1083-1189

Gilbert was born about 1083 at Sempringham in Lincolnshire, the son of a Norman knight and a Saxon mother. Gilbert was sent to France to study theology, being unfit for knightly service because of a physical deformity. On returning to England he became a teacher founding a school for both girls and boys in Sempringham. Later he entered the household of the Bishop of Lincoln and was ordained priest in 1123.

On the death of his father, Gilbert returned to Sempringham as Lord of the Manor but did not change his austere lifestyle and continued to give much of his income to the poor. A group of seven women asked him to help them to live a life of devotion to God. He gave them a 'rule of life' based on the rule of Benedict which emphasised seclusion and solitude.

Through the patronage of the Bishop of Lincoln the community grew rapidly. For two years Gilbert was continually travelling, founding new communities and houses; thirteen were founded in his lifetime, four of which were for men. At its height, the Order numbered 1500 members and was the only purely English monastic Order owing no allegiance to continental superiors. This brought much support and assistance from the Crown.

By the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 there were 26 Gilbertine houses throughout England. A custom was kept in the Orders' houses



called 'the plate of the Lord Jesus' whereby the best portion of the meal was put on a special plate and shared with the poor.

In 1165 Gilbert was charged with having helped Thomas Becket to flee from King Henry II after their disagreement at the Council of Northampton. It was alleged that Thomas fled to France dressed as a Gilbertine monk. Gilbert obtained pardon and immunity for himself and the Order. He resigned his office of Superior because of blindness and died at Sempringham in 1189 – it is alleged at the age of 106.

Gilbert was revered as a lover of truth and justice, charity and sobriety. He was canonised in 1202 by Pope Innocent III. His feast day is kept in the Anglican calendar as 4 February, the date of his death.

Generous Giving



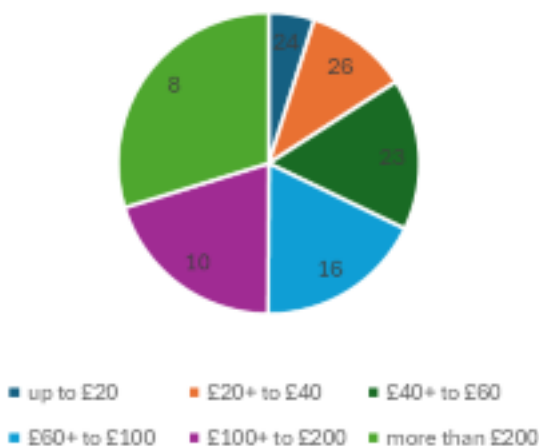
“According to their power and yes, beyond their power, they gave of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the grace of taking part in the service to the saints.... See that you also excel in this grace of giving.” (2 Corinthians 8:3-7)

Stewardship is important to the continuing life of our church to meet running costs and to resource our mission. Running costs include – but are not simply – the cost of clergy; they are all the expenditures needed for churches to impact the lives of their parishioners and welcome newcomers into God’s kingdom.

Deciding how much to give

There is no one easy answer for everyone. We are called to love God and our neighbour, and our giving is an expression of that love. We can give time, talents or money, or all three. If you are wondering how your monetary giving compares to others’, here is a snapshot of our regular donors:

Planned giving per month



Amount being given per month, in bands	Total giving per month	Number of people in each band
Up to £20	£348	24
£20+ to £40	£789	26
£40+ to £60	£1,159	23
£60+ to £100	£1,281	16
£100+ to £200	£1,441	10
More than £200	£2,126	8
	£7,144	107

In other words, half our regular donations come from 18 of our donors.

Where does our money go?

On some wonderful things – for example our families and children’s work uses about £5.18 per regular donor per week next year. Our music will use about 30p and we need about 41p for printing the magazine and other items.

More boringly, our church utility bills will use £1.26 per regular donor per week, our insurance bill will use £1.07, we will pay 5p in bank charges (so please use the Parish Giving Scheme or direct bank transfer whenever you can, rather than cash, because we are now charged for paying cash into the bank) and the Penfold Hall utility bills will use another 59p.

We pledge a sum of money each year (the ‘parish share’) to fund our vicar, his housing and associated costs, all of which are paid for through the Diocese.

These are just a few of our everyday expenses, funded by our 107 regular donors, their gift aid and the fees we receive from weddings and funerals.

In addition we have big building projects to fund – by fundraising, grants, one-off donations and legacies. But that’s another story.

The average regular weekly giving across the whole Diocese of Chichester is £18.04. The average planned weekly giving by our congregation is £14.77. If between us we could nudge up towards the Chichester average, we would have an extra £18,000 a year. Just think of the wonderful things we could do with that. And all for each of us giving an extra £3.27 a week.

How do our Church finances work?

For every £1 we receive, 66p comes from regular planned giving and associated gift aid, 18p from bank interest and rent, and 3p from collections at services.

Your generosity has enabled us to continue to serve our local community through:

- Building a vibrant link to children and families through our Families and Children’s Worker, Gary. We particularly thank those of you who have set up additional regular donations into this fund.
- Connecting with our community through regular events such as a diverse range of Sunday services, Wednesday coffee mornings and our Good Grief Café, and through various concerts and literary events.
- Offering the use of the Church Cottage for the Greening Steyning Community Fridge.
- Opening the churchyard for Steyning Open Gardens.
- Donating to local and emergency charities such as Family Support Work, St Barnabas and the Disasters Emergency Committee.

And of course it enables us to keep the church lit, heated and insured. To repeat the basic figures: for every £1 we spend, about 48p goes on our parish share, 28p on costs for our three paid staff, 4p on church utility bills and 3p on church insurance.

Tina Hobbs, Steyning PCC Treasurer

My Cloud of Witnesses

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

Part 3: UNCONVENTIONAL PEACEMAKERS

One of my early mentors was the British Quaker, Sydney D Bailey, who was converted to pacifism by a Church of England bishop who spoke in assembly at his school.

The bishop’s presentation was patriotic and bellicose – and to the schoolboy Sydney, an implausible version both of the just war theory and the message of Jesus. Sydney was certainly not naïve; he asserted that if you espouse a worldview as improbable as pacifism, you have to be at least as well informed as the people with whom you discuss, whether they are diplomats, military strategists, serving soldiers or politicians. A self-taught expert on the United Nations, he was engaged in all sorts of diplomacy and peace advocacy in his life and writing. He made a deep study of ‘How Wars End’ – the title of one of his books. (As an aside, I recall the quotation credited to George Orwell who observed: “the quickest way to end a war is to lose”.) That was not Sydney’s approach or advice!

Sydney never sought the limelight and argued that when acting as an intermediary, one should allow oneself to take the blame should negotiations break down – and should allow the conflict parties to take the credit should peace be established. As early as the 1970s, he was trying to persuade the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to use not only military tactics, but to have a political strategy and to seek

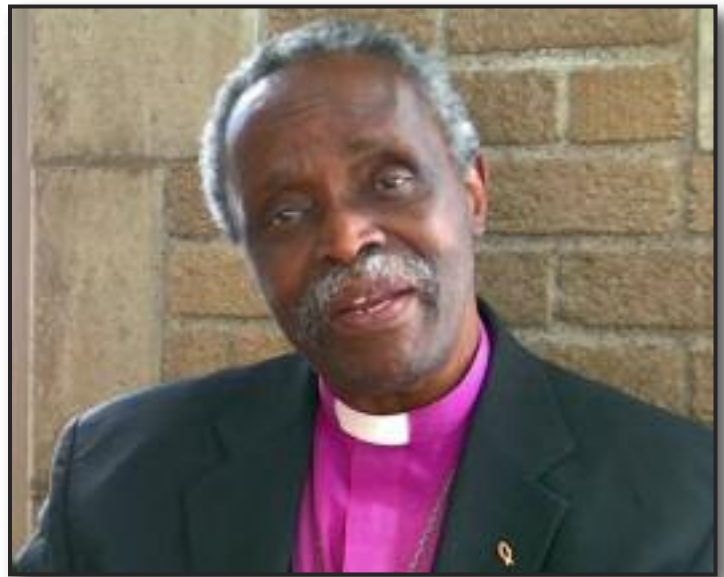


Sydney D Bailey (unknown origin, source ‘Peaceworks’ – Quaker work at the UN)

negotiations with Israel. Sydney met privately and secretly with the London PLO representative to press this case. More militant members of the Palestinian resistance objected to the more measured approach which the London PLO representative espoused. The PLO representative was murdered as a result. When his office was searched by the Metropolitan Police, a collection of Quaker leaflets and publications on negotiation and peace processes was discovered. How many missed opportunities for a negotiated settlement have passed by in this tragic conflict which is still being played out today?

I also want to share with you an example of a religious leader contributing to a peace process in the national politics of their country. Dinis Sengulane is a former Anglican Bishop from Mozambique who is an inspiring example of the combination of faith, political realism, and commitment to peace and justice. I had the privilege of ‘looking after him’ for a whole morning in London in the mid-1990s. As well as sharing insights into his work, he asked me to help him with one task. He needed an episcopal ring. We went to an ecclesiastical outfitters and were shown trays of rings, starting in price at £3000 (that was 30 years ago, and you must allow for inflation!). Bishop Sengulane thanked the smart young assistant and indicated that he needed to think further about it. On the way out of the shop, he said to me: “I could not do it. That is what an ordinary Mozambican earns in 10 years”.

Bishop Sengulane played a key role in negotiations between the Mozambican government and the RENAMO rebels in the Mozambican civil war. At the end of the war, he and the Mozambican Council of Churches realised that the job was not yet done. They worked on reconciliation and post-conflict redevelopment. They insisted on operating independently of government and the rebels and devised some original initiatives. One was to institute a scheme whereby if you handed in an AK47 machine gun, you could exchange it for a bicycle or a sewing machine. Many people arrived more than once. Bishop Sengulane was asked about this, and whether it was an abuse of the



*Bishop Dinis Sengulane
(speaking at Episcopal Church in Connecticut)*

scheme. He conceded that some people might be profiting from it, but for him, taking the weapons out of circulation was the priority.

It is estimated that something like 600,000 weapons were taken out of circulation, cut up and melted down. One creative project within the overall disarmament programme involved the construction of a large sculpture assembled from the decommissioned weapons. From memory, I think the art work was about 12 feet high, depicting the ‘Tree of Life’. According to Revelation 22:2: *The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.* The earlier Old Testament source of this image (Ezekiel 47:12) is featured as the Millennium window in our church.

The metal ‘Tree of Life’ is a symbol of hope, life and peace. It is a modern illustration of “beating swords into ploughshares” (see Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3). It weighs 500kg. It was installed in the British Museum during a special exhibition on Africa in 2005. Christian Aid contributed to the financing of the project and the Tree of Life was



*The 'Tree of Life' in the British Museum
(Wikimedia Commons, by Rob Roy, Watford)*

displayed in British Cathedrals. In his BBC series *The History of the World in 100 Objects*, Neil MacGregor (former director of the British Museum) described another 'peace sculpture' from these Mozambican initiatives. Object 98 was 'The Throne of Weapons' in which AK47s featured prominently. MacGregor's book quotes Bishop Sengulane as follows: "Why should this world have hungry people? Why should this world have a shortage of medicines?"

And yet, the amount of money which can be made available, almost instantly, for armament purposes is just amazing, and I would say shocking."

Both Sydney Bailey and Dinis Sengulane were citizen diplomats who found original ways of exercising a peace ministry. It can be done!

Heroic testimony for peace still continues today. Much of it is unsung, but no less real. Most people only heard about the nightly telephone calls by former Pope Francis to the beleaguered Roman Catholic priest in Gaza in connection with the late Pope's death and discussion of his legacy. In late September, the Christian quarter of Gaza, except for the Catholic and Orthodox churches, was destroyed by Israeli government troops. The priests of both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communities in Gaza have said that as good shepherds, they will stay with their people even if it means dying with them. They have taken hundreds of the internally displaced people of Gaza, many of whom are too ill, frail or disabled to flee, into their compounds.

Peacemaking is not only the preserve of politicians and ambassadors. According to the Sermon on the Mount, all of us are called to be peacemakers.

Roger Williamson

FURTHER RESOURCES

Information about the Mozambican 'swords into ploughshares' art works made from decommissioned weapons can be found at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1764173.stm> and

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/about/transcripts/episode98/>

The latter is the story of the 'Throne of Guns' told by former British Museum Director, Neil MacGregor.

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**

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 13 February 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*

Parish Registers

Baptisms:	Zachary Kernot, 11 January Katharine Marshall, 11 January
Wedding Blessing:	Katherine Morris and Jack Young, 20 December
Renewal of Vows:	Donald and Catherine Flatt, 24 January
Interment of Ashes:	Shirley Fisher, 10 January
Funeral:	Ann Peggy Ball, 22 January
Memorial:	Malcolm Duke, 26 January



Families and Children

Hello Everyone: It's shocking that we are already on the second month of the year. It's crazy how quickly time flies. But, for the early part of this year, the best month is upon us as we look forward to Shrove Tuesday – well, eating pancakes that is. So join us on Shrove Tuesday 17 February, 10am in church, for our pancakes and coffee event.

Open to anyone of any age, the **BOARD GAME CAFÉ** runs on the second Tuesday of each month is very exciting. We have been seeing some new faces over the last couple of meetings of the board game café, some of them being families. It is great to see this now starting to become more inter-



generational. So why not come and try us out? There is a wide variety of games for all abilities and interests. The next session is 10 February.

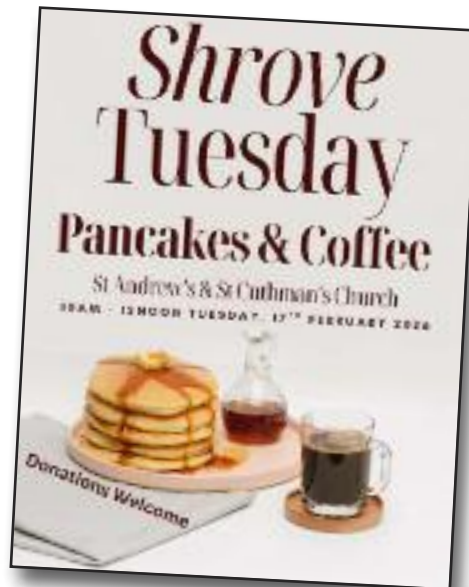


Our new board game café evening edition, once a month 6pm to 9pm, has started. Our first evening went well and we look forward to our next one on 23 February.

We are super excited that we have had five new people join the **LITTLE STARS** team, but we are still looking for two more people to join our Thursday team. Can you help out, once in every six weeks? This could be making drinks in

the kitchen, or out in the hall chatting with adults or playing with the children. It is up to you how you get involved. This is a massive outreach for the church and is a lovely group of adults and children.

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



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 8 February. Do come and join us as we would love to see you.



We also have a playlist on Spotify that John has created of the songs we have sung. As we learn more they will be added to the playlist. If you would like the link to the Spotify playlist then please do get in contact with me.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH runs on the first and fourth Sundays of each month. We start in the church at 9:30 then we head off to our group where we do crafts, worship and teaching before returning to the church to join the rest of the church family for the Eucharist.

Blessings
Gary



Recipe: Roasted Cauliflower Cheese

INGREDIENTS

1 large head cauliflower, cut into florets
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.

For the sauce

20g/¾oz unsalted butter
20g/¾oz plain flour
6-8 rasps freshly grated nutmeg
250ml/9fl oz skimmed milk
40g/1½oz mature cheddar, finely grated
2 tsp Dijon mustard
15g/½oz Parmesan, or similar vegetarian hard cheese, finely grated.



2. Meanwhile, make the sauce: melt the butter in a saucepan, add the flour and cook for 1–2 minutes, or until a light golden colour. Gradually add the milk, stirring all the time until smooth, then

cook over a gentle heat for 3–4 minutes, mixing as you heat until thickened.

3. Add the nutmeg. Turn down the heat and add the mustard and cheddar cheese. Taste and add a little pepper to taste.

4. Put the roasted cauliflower into the sauce and mix to coat. Put back into the roasting dish, sprinkle over the Parmesan and return to the oven for 10–15 minutes, or until the cheese is golden-brown and the sauce is bubbling.

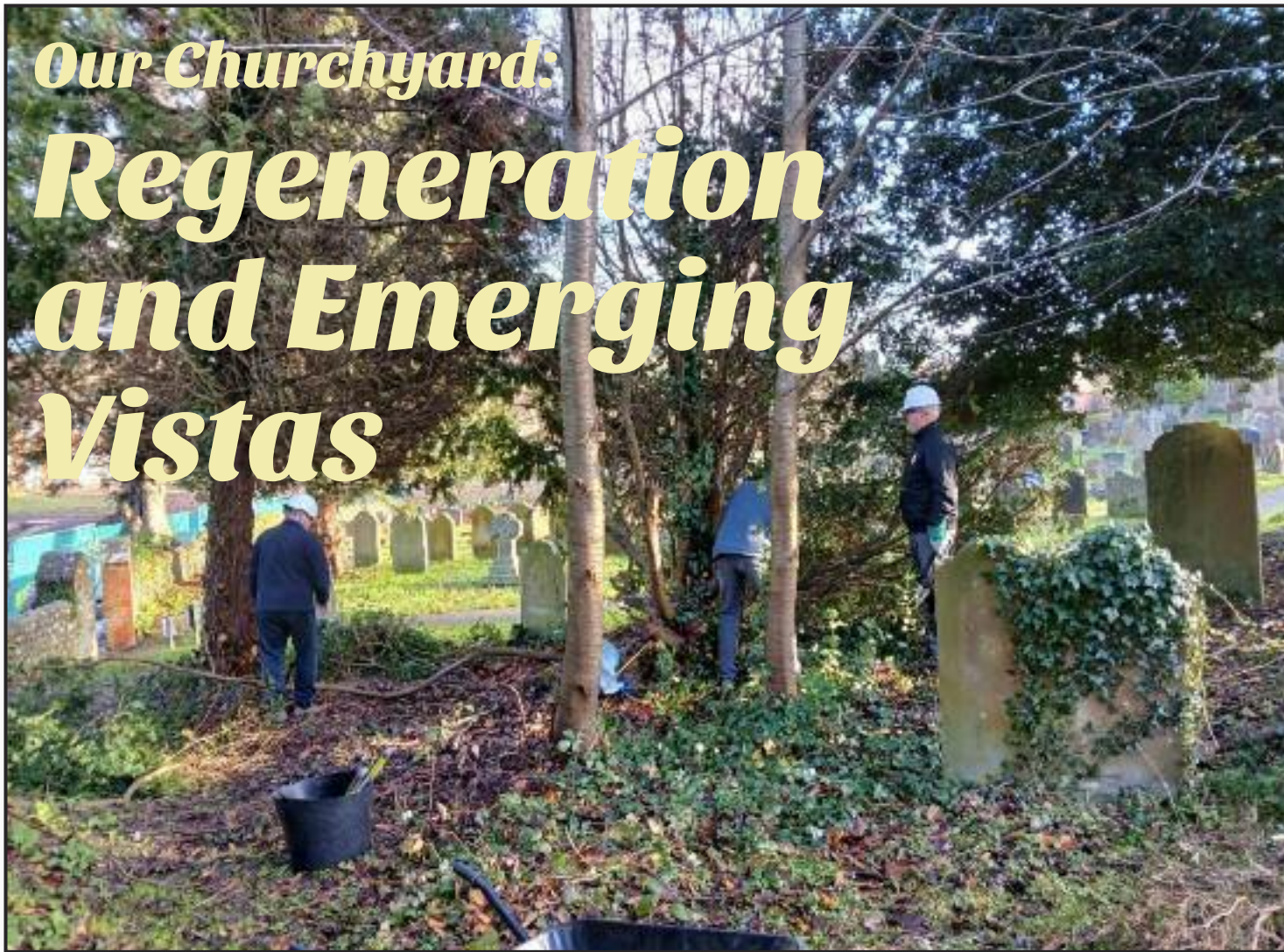
METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/180C Fan/Gas 6. Put the cauliflower in an ovenproof dish and season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Roast for 20 minutes, or until tender and starting to brown.

Becky

Our Churchyard:

Regeneration and Emerging Vistas



Our churchyard gardeners have been working tirelessly to carry out essential maintenance and oversee work agreed in our planning application. Slowly but surely you will start to see different aspects of our beautiful grounds, emerge and from behind years of growth.

Firstly, the grass was cut by Horsham District Council and has now largely been raked in. Some still sits on the ground. It's difficult to clear as we only have three bins to use. In the new year we will change some of the grass cutting, to try and accentuate flowering areas.

Secondly, Jill and Roger have planted new flora into our borders, to try and vary what species flower during the year. On top of this, our team have

planted nearly a thousand bulbs in many different sections, so let's look forward to what could be a wonderful display. At this point I would like to thank many of our congregation for buying bulbs and seeds for us; this helps immensely.

Lastly, we have worked extremely hard on the lower corner section, next



to the steps to Shooting Field. Our team have removed parts of a spruce and yew that were struggling, to reveal three cherry trees, plus introduce immense amounts of light into a previously dark area. We have also made a 'dead hedge' out of the cuttings, by driving in front stakes and then longer ones to secure the middle. This will provide excellent nesting facility for robins and wrens, plus hiding places for other animals and insects.

Our churchyard will keep changing, so please keep your eyes open during the



coming months. In the meantime I thank you for your support through 2025.

Article and pictures by Simon Knowles

If you are reading this on publication day, there is still time to...

BANISH THE JANUARY BLUES AND COME TO OUR TRADITIONAL FSW COFFEE MORNING



The Sutton Charity for Children
Since 1898

When **Saturday 31 January**

Where **The Penfold Hall,
Church Street,
Steyping**

What Time **10.00 am
until 12.00 pm**

Enjoy great coffee, cakes and conversation

There will be a wonderful prize laden raffle.

We would welcome any donations for this, perhaps from any lovely but unloved Christmas presents you may have.



Please remember the families in need in this deanery

All proceeds to the wonderful work of the FSW

Tickets £5 available at the door

Message of Gratitude

On behalf of the many, many people – including young families, visitors and the regular congregation – who attended our Advent and Christmas services and events, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks.

Thank you to those who volunteered to create or participate in the services; thanks for your time (so many precious hours in the run-up to Christmas), for your energy and sheer hard work.

Thank you to those who ensured that our church looked so beautifully festive, and to those who produced refreshments as if by magic.

Catherine Berry

Joy comes from the inside out

Last month I talked a little about midwinter, and darkness, and I thought I would like a change of beat for my February musings with you. The word Joy came to mind, but I was getting a bit stuck until two things crossed my path at Christmas. One was a memory of a story of our youngest son, and the second a carol I heard on the radio on Christmas Eve whilst making the sausage rolls with my daughter in law. Then all the thoughts and quotes kept on flooding in. So, I'll start with the carol, and we will see where it goes!

*Joy to the world; the Lord is come;
Let Earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
And heav'n and nature sing.*

*Joy to the Earth, the Saviour reigns;
Our mortal songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and
plains,
Repeat the sounding joy.*

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and
grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love.*

This is Isaac Watts' rendering of Psalm 98, which is a psalm about the coming of the Lord. I am always surprised when in the Old Testament I read about the

coming of the Lord in such wondrous detail, and in the light of our New Testament reality of Jesus Christ, we can be sure David was telling everyone about the coming of Jesus. It is a psalm about Joy in praising the Lord and worshipping God. So I wonder why Isaac Watts chose to write about joy in his carol? The psalm says “The Lord has done wonderful things” and so by thinking about these wonder-full things our hearts and minds are filled with awe and wonder and bafflement. I often think about those who have no sense of God in their lives – who do they thank for the wonder of a birth of a child, or a glorious sunset? I believe and trust that there is no blade of grass, or no flower or no colour in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice. Rejoice and give thanks always.

Before trying to enter into the meaning of Joy further, I want to introduce you to Jim and Brother Lawrence, both of whose stories coincide because they are all about living in God’s presence. Jim at 18 went to Bournemouth to train in Hotel Catering and Management. He had to find work experience as part of that course during year two. He found six months’ work in the kitchen of a Christian hotel in Kos, where his job was to wash up. At the interview he was asked why he wanted this rather mundane, hot and sweaty and noisy job that meant he didn’t get to be out front or receive any recognition by clients? He told me his reply was twofold.

1. There would be no food on plates for clients or dishes for the cooks if the dirties weren’t washed properly.

2. He knew God was at the kitchen sink too, and so he would find joy in that work, even if he couldn’t get to join in the activities and worship.

Brother Lawrence was a 17th century monk who worked in a Carmelite monastery kitchen in France. His work was the endless grind of preparation of food and all the washing up after every meal. He didn’t mind this work because he had learnt to live in the constant presence of God, worshipping at all the services and worshipping as he scrubbed the pans, finding no difference between the time he spent on his knees and the time he spent elbow deep in soap suds and grease. He was able to express this so eloquently:

“The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer... I possess God as tranquilly in the noise and clatter of my kitchen as if I were upon my knees before the Blessed Sacrament.” (Sisters of Carmel)

Joy does not necessarily wait for a peaceful moment, but it walks with us through every moment. We can carry his joy with us wherever.

Then there is someone we all know about. C S Lewis and his book *Surprised by Joy*, in which he tells us he was, for much of his life, a sceptic and an atheist, but this great academic was being pursued by a feeling, not a thing or an argument. There were moments when his soul stirred and he felt an ache, a longing, and he called this longing, joy because he knew there had to be more. He said God chased him so he found real joy.

I remember a conversation in our Home Group many Christmases ago

when we were discussing the names given to Jesus, and we tried to say if one stood out for us and maybe a reason. Advocate stood out. He is our defender before the Father, just as an advocate in the legal system stands beside the defendant before the judge, so we are seen, we are known, we are not alone. Jesus sees us, knows us and stands beside us. Why do I tell you this? I think that deep inside me there is great joy knowing that the Lord, the mighty one, the ruler and judge of all the earth doesn't just rule the earth, he stands beside me. Joy, not fear.

Joy comes from the inside out. Psalm 96 says: *“Let the seas roar, and all that fills it... let all creation rejoice before the Lord.”*

Picture any animal at play, or a pack of dolphins chasing and leaping through the surf. They look as though they are having fun and smiling or laughing! They look joyful and it's infectious, and for me this reflects something about our maker and that psalmist's verse. Joy is spiritual, yes, but I hope it is greater than that – more awake, more playful, more alive, and more rejoice-full.

We don't hear about a joyful complainer do we? So maybe joy and gratefulness go hand in hand. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:18: *“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”* Notice Paul says be thankful in all circumstances, not thankful for all circumstances! Not as easy to do as it is to write.

I thank God especially for the people he has put in my life, both past and present, and I pray for them with

thankfulness. I have difficulties and painful circumstances, and you will too at varying levels. But I try not to question God, and to know he is there beside me. We all know life can change in a moment, but our hope is in God because he will not change in a moment. He is unchangeable in his love for us, for ever.

A final beautiful quote to end with from Philippians 4 v 1-9:

“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Chris Fitton

DO YOU NEED HELP USING COMPUTERS, SMARTPHONES OR TABLETS?

We have two Library Digital Volunteers at Steyning Library who offer 1:1 support and encouragement to boost confidence with computer basics; from setting up an email account, downloading documents, to being safe online. They can help you set up a new device, explain what has gone wrong on your phone and also help with filling in the ever-increasing number of online forms.

To make an appointment or find out more pop into Steyning Library or contact us: tel 01903 270330, email steyning.library@westsussex.gov.uk

This service is available across West Sussex and you can find out about appointments at other libraries by contacting the Digital Support Team from Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm at: tel 0330 222 3455, email library.digital.support@westsussex.gov.uk



The Steyning Society

FRIDAY 20 FEBRUARY
7pm for 7:30

THE STEYNING CENTRE,
FLETCHERS CROFT, STEYNING

Talk by Andrew Armitage
BIRDING IN THE STEYNING AREA

What inspires people to go out at six in the morning? Andrew will talk about the appeal of birds, some birds of the Steyning area and other interesting birds in Sussex.



There will be wine or sparkling elderflower (monetary donations welcome) on arrival, as well as a Bring and Buy table with books. Free to members, £5 guests. All very welcome to attend.

www.steyningsociety.org.uk

DID YOU KNOW?

Steyning Parish Church has large print hymn books, and large print service sheets and reading sheets are usually available – all part of our drive for inclusiveness.

Kaleidoscope Singers
Conductor Zoe Peate

Brighton Chamber Choir
Conductor Ruth Kerr

Choral CONCERT

Macmillan, Eisenold, Whitacre, Pauls,
Rendall-Thompson, Hogan, Snow

Saturday 7 March, 6.00
St Andrew & St Cuthman Church,
Steyning BN44 3YU



TICKETS £15 under 18yrs £5
steyning bookshop
www.ksticket.co.uk

Remembering Gillian Downham

A thanksgiving service was held at St Andrew's & St Cuthman's last October, for the late Gillian Downham, who had died on 30 August.

Gillian was born in Small Dole on 18 May 1939. Her father was an architect, who frequently went to Africa on dam projects, and a gift he brought back kindled Gillian's love of giraffes. The family moved to the Purley area, where she met Marshall, her future husband, who joined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. When Gillian was 18 she went to Sarum College in Salisbury but kept in touch with Marshall, and they got married, living at Godstone and later in Outwood before moving to Goring Road in Steyning.

Gillian flew to Singapore to meet Marshall, and sailed back with him via the Falklands, stopping in mid-ocean to help Sir Francis Chichester who was on his round-the-world yacht voyage. She brought back a large stone as a souvenir from the Falklands, and this formed the centrepiece of Steyning's Nativity scene for many years.

Back in Steyning, Gillian taught at various schools, including the small Southdown School. She later taught part-time at Burdetts School in London. Marshall became ill and died in 1984, aged 47.

Gillian then became much involved in voluntary work, raising money for the Arthritis Society and serving on the

committee of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Association, through which she met Prince Edward. Later she became a flower arranger in the church, and led

the volunteer gardeners at St Mary's House in Bramber. She knitted baby clothes for sale, made bunting for the Steyning Festival, as well as dresses for the Steyning Grammar School 400th anniversary celebrations.

Being on her own, she moved to a smaller house in King Alfred Close, and later to a 300-year-old house in

the High Street, where she stayed until she needed residential care.

Travelling and holidays were a great love of Gillian's – with David Lawrence, whom she knew from her Surrey days and maintained close ties after Marshall's death – as well as with her family. She and David had a flat in the Algarve, and went on many other trips including a round-the-world journey.

Family was important to Gillian, and the thanksgiving service featured memories from her children and grandchildren, related by her nephew Nigel. It had been Gillian's wish that her brother Michael would speak at her funeral, but as Michael had died before her in 2018, the task passed to Michael's son, Nigel.

Grandson Thomas recalled Gillian taking him to Morocco, while a trip to Canada with Granny was the highlight for grandson Joshua. Granddaughter Sophie remembered helping Gillian in



her own garden and at St Mary's, as well as helping with the Easter flowers in church. Granddaughter Abi remembered Gillian as one who always took an interest in her, while grandson David remembered Granny for her caramel doughnuts. Two themes ran through these recollections – the 'down and upper', a road with steep hills that Gillian enjoyed driving along, and the time it took to walk down the High Street with Granny, who had to stop every couple of minutes to talk to somebody.

Daughters Nicola and Kate remembered Gillian for always being there for them, as Kate put it: "She spent her life making sure we had what we needed, not just for the present but for the future. Through sacrifice and saving she left us a legacy of love,

resilience and quiet determination. Every bit of what she gave came from her own hard work and deep care for us. After we lost Dad, she stood up, dusted herself off, and carried all three of us on her shoulders through life. No safety net, no short cuts, just pure determination, love and grit. She didn't just raise us. She built us. She never gave up on us. Not once. She gave us a life, and she gave it her all. She taught me the importance of family – to show up, to care deeply, and to put love first."

When Gillian's dementia made life difficult, she moved first to Sussexdown, then to Skylark House in Horsham. David, who had moved to West Chiltington to be nearby, visited her almost every day and was with her when she died.

Special Services in February

PATRONAL CHORAL EVENSONG

Our next Choral Evensong will take place on 15 February, when we will celebrate our Patronal Festival of St Cuthman with a special service.

ASH WEDNESDAY

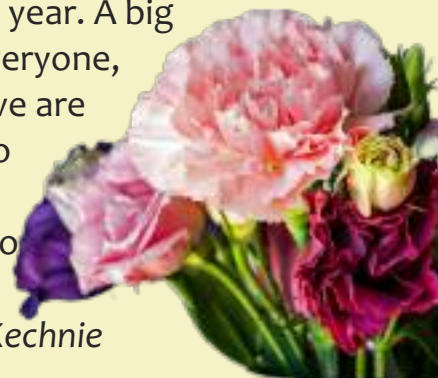
On Ash Wednesday (18 February) we will celebrate Holy Communion at St Andrew's & St Cuthman's at 11:30 as usual, and additionally at 7pm. These services will include the imposition of ashes. If you have your palm crosses from last year, please bring them to church on the preceding Sundays so they can be burned to produce the ashes.

Church Flowers

Thank you to the Flower Team for their assistance, and their skills with the amazing Christmas decorations in the church. The garlands were a new venture and an exciting one of which we hope were enjoyed by many. Thanks to Ben Warner for the main tree, and to the sellers of trees and wreaths in the lay-by between Beeding and Dacre Gardens for the smaller trees by the pillars.

We have a flourishing team of volunteers who all contribute to maintaining fresh flowers in the church throughout the year. A big thank you to everyone, and of course we are always happy to welcome any newcomers who enjoy flowers.

Carol McKechnie



A Bundle of Winter Wrens



Wren © John Bean

Someone once told me if you think you've seen a mouse it's probably a wren. These diminutive brown birds make a habit of hopping about the undergrowth in stop-motion fashion, feeding on insects, spiders, and occasionally berries and seeds. Despite being the UK's most numerous breeding bird, they can be inconspicuous.

The similarity promptly ends when they open their mouth. Though weighing under 10g, the Wren's voice is bold and loud; a long, high-pitched whistle and trill, cutting through crisp morning air and reaching above that of larger songsters. If you watch a Wren singing, you'll notice the effort on its small body – beak wide and tail upturned.

Woodland understory is an ideal nesting habitat for wrens, and males establish clear territories in early spring,

using that powerful voice. They build five or even six nests to try and attract a female and will aggressively deter other males that dare approach.

However, when the chill of winter comes around, the male changes his tune. A balmy summer of successful shouting may have shown that a tiny body is no barrier to being heard, but it won't help with heat loss on cold nights.



Wren in nest © Alan Price

So, the male starts collecting bedfellows. Flitting out on short trips, he again utilises his song, letting females and other males know they are welcome to join him for a platonic sleepover, starting after dusk and ending before dawn.

“Oh, that stuff I said in spring? Water under the bridge.”

They gratefully accept, bundling into moss and leaf-lined woven grass, squidding tiny wings and bellies together to make room for just one more. Beaks in, bums out. Most consist of small gatherings, but records of dozens have been logged, and one count in the 1960s numbered 61 wrens.

Not just super cute, the warmth-sharing of these communal roosts might be lifesaving. Although as anyone who shares a bed will know, there can be a waste of energy caused by the wriggling of others. Shuffling for space, preening, defecating in the roost; entirely unacceptable sleepover etiquette.



Wren and blossom © Roger Wilmshurst

When warmer days thankfully return it's back to spring rules, and the male begins to banish other males from the roost, cosy winter cuddles forgotten until the cold starts to nip around tiny feet once more.

Next time you hear a winter wren having a good yell, be sympathetic. It's survived the night, thank goodness, but it's had a terrible night's sleep.

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

Steypning History Society

The next meeting of the Steypning History Society is on Wednesday 11 February 2026. This is a talk entitled *Hobart's Funnies*, by Graeme MacPherson. 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 9pm. Annual subscriptions: £15 per person. Visitors are welcome: £5 per person.



'Hobart's Funnies' was a name given to specialised WWII military vehicles, such as this Churchill tank with bridge layer (Murgatroyd49, Wikimedia Commons)

STEYNING PARISH CHURCH - Services for February

Every Sunday

- 8am 1662 Holy Communion Service
- 9:30am Sung Eucharist each Sunday with choir, except on Sunday 15 February, with the Music Group: a simpler communion service, for all ages.
- 6pm Evening service:
First Sunday (1 February): Reflections, a quiet, peaceful evening service, entitled 'God's Unconditional Love'
Second Sunday (8 February) firepit service (outside by the tower, or in church porch if wet)
Second Sunday (8 February): said BCP / 1662 Evening Prayer service
Third Sunday (15 February) Choral Evensong, BCP / 1662, with choir and organ, to celebrate the Patronal Festival of St Cuthman (see page 23)
Fourth Sunday (22 February) Taizé service

Wednesdays

- 11:30am Said Holy Communion (Common Worship)
(Ash Wednesday, 18 February, with ashing; Last Wednesday, 25 February, with prayers for healing - see p5)
- 7pm Ash Wednesday (18 February) Holy Communion with ashing (see p5)

St JAMES'S, ASHURST - Services for February

Sundays

- 11am First Sunday (1 February) Zoom Matins
- 10:30am Second Sunday (8 February) Family Service – 'From Candlemas to Lent'
Fourth Sunday (22 February) Holy Communion for First Sunday of Lent

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

Parish Office Address: Penfold Hall, Church Street, Steyning, BN44 3YB
01903 813276; office@steyningparishchurch.org; www.steyningparishchurch.org

Office Manager: Nina Humphreys

Parish Office open: Monday to Thursday 10am to midday