

**November 2024 newsletter**

A few weeks ago, Matt and Florrie and I returned from a week away. As we drove up our driveway it felt so different to the driveway, we drove down the week before! There were leaves everywhere, autumn had suddenly hit! As I look out of the window the colours are amazing, there are berries for the birds on the trees and a carpet of leaves on the grass. I love autumn; the beautiful colours, the sounds of leaves crunching under my feet, and wrapping up in warm cosy clothes. For several years it was a season that I never used to get to see, as it was the time of year, I was always away living in India. It always felt strange to miss out on a season; each one has a beauty of its own, but each one also has something to teach us about God.

Autumn reminds me what an incredible creator God we have, the way things have the capacity to change and become even more beautiful. We never know what beauty will come with the changes we all face in life.

Autumn reminds it’s ok to let things go; and that there can be beauty in doing so. I was also really struck by the words of Joseph Rhea who said this

“*Autumn can draw our attention to the one man who broke through winter into an unending summer. The one who spent three days brown and dead in the dirt and came back in an indestructible green. The one who wasn’t just a leaf; he was a whole new tree*.”

I wonder what Autumn teaches you about yourself, the world we live in or the God who loves us? Perhaps this is a question we can all ponder as we look out of our windows on a beautiful autumn day, or we wrap up warm and enjoy an autumn walk.

A black and white logo

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**Jonathan Starkey** who is one of the organists at St Lawrence has very kindly offered to put on a concert for us and this is to be held at St Lawrence on Friday 15 November 7pm for a 7.30pm start. Tickets are £10 which includes a glass of wine and nibbles! Funds raised will be going into the general church fund.

A close-up of a sign

Description automatically generated**Christmas Fair!** Saturday 7 December 2024. Please do start collecting for the fair - perhaps buy a bottle of anything when you are doing the weekly shop ready for the bottle stall or ask family and friends if they have any unwanted gifts etc. Jean Welch is kindly looking after the preserves stall and so has asked for jam jars with lids please. Please drop them off at either church. Thank you.

A person holding a piece of art

Description automatically generated**Art auction** - this year Charmaine will not be making a piece of artwork to auction but instead will be auctioning a one-to-one training day with her in her glass studio in Great Sutton.

You will make a copper-foiled feather or alternative similar design to be discussed during the summer of 2025

**What’s included**

* The auction is for one person.
* You will learn how to cut and grind glass into shapes
* Taught the art copper foiling and soldering
* Incudes tuition with tools and materials in a fully equipped glass studio
* Access to her extensive glass art and design library
* Refreshments throughout, please bring your own lunch as this is a full day course.

The auction sheet will be left on the table at the back of St Thomas for you to make your bids. All funds raised will go to the Church General Fund.

**2024 Christmas Shoebox appeal**

Thanks to everyone who has donated to the T4U shoebox appeal this year and to those who have taken shoeboxes to fill at home. The great shoebox filling day will be Friday 8 November in the coffee lounge at St Thomas – all welcome. All filled shoeboxes need to be in by Sunday 10 November as they are being collected on 12 November. Thank you to Doreen for her commitment and drive to highlight this initiative – helping to bring a smile to a child’s face at Christmas time.

**Car park at St Thomas** – I attach the letter which has gone out to everyone who has a car park pass reminding them of taking precautions during the winter months particularly in snow and icy conditions.

**Pray/Bake/Read at Christ Church School**

School welcomes volunteers to listen to children read. If you have an hour or two to spare each week or every fortnight and would like to join this initiative, then please do have a word with Rachel or Gill. Prayers are always needed for our schools and for the wonderful work they do with the children and their families. Once the children are back in school, we will have some specific prayer requests. And lastly, if you would like to bake a cake(s) for a treat for our teachers then please do let me know, they are always so surprised that we are thinking of them as well as the children!

**Calling all knitters** – it’s that time of year again! We would like to distribute angels once again in the community in the run up to Christmas so lots of angels needed, please. Knitting patterns are available at the back of church.

Considering the current fuel costs etc the wardens and staff are asking that everyone be prudent with regards to heating in church. We want to provide warm and welcoming churches, but we have to be sensible and be good stewards of our funds so perhaps put an extra layer on when coming to church. The heating will be on, but we will be trying to keep it at a set temperature. Please also do ensure that lights and sockets that are left on stand-by mode are switched off.

**News from Gemma**

October saw our first Beacon Steering Group meeting - and what a positive experience this was! Our Beacon project is now really progressing, and thanks to all who have volunteered for the steering group, we are now able to drive this forward further. It was so pleasing to see such a mix of people in attendance, with a mix of enthusiasm, experience, and determination - exactly what is needed for the group. Please do feel free to come and join us at our next meeting on the 13th November, at 7.30pm in the coffee lounge at St. Thomas' if you wish to find out a bit more about the project and where things are up to. Minutes of our meetings will be available upon request, please contact me if you wish to see a copy.

If you have any questions regarding this project then please do speak to a member of the group: Gemma (Chair); Revd Rachel Newell; Revd Gill Foster; Revd Ricky Montgomery; Judith Derby; Tim Budd; Anne Williams; Diana Burton; Molly Bunnell; Susan Mayers. Cllr John Roach is also joining the group.

A number of the staff team spent a very enjoyable day at Christ Church School for their 'Values day', looking at thankfulness. To be able to share in this opportunity, across the whole school, for a full day, is such a rewarding experience, and is so valuable for all involved. We are blessed to be able to go in to our schools and share the love of Jesus with them, and this is just one example of how we are able to do this. Have a think about thankfulness for yourselves - it links into the last two weeks we have had at both of our churches looking at generosity and gratitude, and demonstrates how we share our teaching across our community in a variety of ways.  What are you thankful for right now?

Toms Tots has been busy this half term - our focus has been on the topic 'All About Me'. We even had a paddling pool out last week - that certainly kept us all entertained! Next half-term we move on to our new topic which is 'Special times and places', and I do believe we may have some special guests coming to see us - keep up to date with our social media pages as I am sure there will be pictures for you to see who they are!!

Our food hampers went out to local families via our schools ready for half-term, and yet again we had an incredible amount of support from local businesses, our school pupils, and of course, many of you in our church family all turning up to help - thank you! It is such a blessing to see the true community effort that goes in to this food hamper project - it really is wonderful to have the support of so many people wanting to help OUR community.

To finish the month, we had our 'Light Party'.  What an evening we had! I honestly cannot thank our volunteers enough for the effort they put in to this - it was phenomenal. Games, crafts, food, dancing - this party had it all going on! We received many positive comments from members of our community, and there were lots of smiles on faces. Thanks to all involved, seeds were sown - who knows what the future will hold.....

A person and person in religious robes

Description automatically generatedFinally for this month many congratulations to Linda who was licensed as our lay reader in a service at the cathedral recently. We look forward to her sharing with us in her continued ministry.

**Dates for November 2024**

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| Sunday 3 | 10.45am | Café church at St Thomas ‘Psalm 23’ |
| Monday 4 | 5pm | ‘What’s next’ group meeting in coffee lounge for all year 6 and upwards |
| Friday 8 | 12pm | Short Service of Remembrance at Cromwell Road memorial |
| Sunday 10 | 10.45am  4pm | No service at St Thomas instead gathering at Civic Square for Service of Remembrance at 10.40am. Other services unchanged.  ABC at St Lawrence |
| Monday 11 | 7.30pm | Ignite leaders meeting in Rectory |
| Tuesday 12 | 7.30pm | PCC meeting in coffee lounge |
| Wednesday 13 | 10am  2pm  7.30pm | Holy Communion at Christ Church School – all welcome  Tea at 2 in coffee lounge  Meeting for Beacon Steering Group in coffee lounge |
| Friday 15 | 7pm | Concert at St Lawrence Church – see above |
| Saturday 16 | 7pm | The Big Quiz Night hosted by Salvation Army – take a team to join in and enjoy coffee and cake. (polite reminder Please do not take any alcohol – thank you). All funds raised will be going to TEARFUND |
| Friday 22 | 1pm | PALS lunch in church hall |
| Thursday 28 | 7pm | Wrapping and sorting for Christmas Fair |

Pastoral matters – please do let the clergy or the churchwardens know of any church family members that are sick in hospital or at home and would appreciate a visit.

I think that is it for now. Take care & God bless

Rachel, Gill & the staff team

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