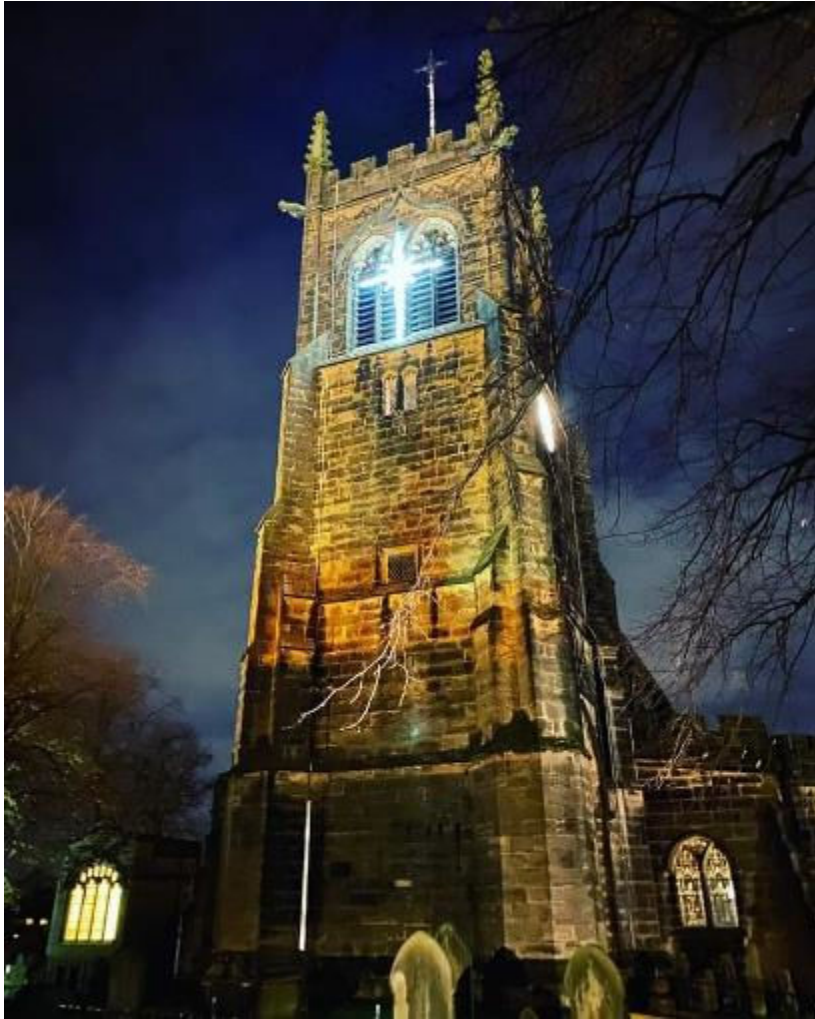


CHALLENGE



The Parish Magazine of St Mary Sandbach

December 2023 50p

Volume 59 No 698



Individual IT Tuition

Individual help
Heather Bottomley

hb-ability

Internet

E-mail

Word Processing

Spreadsheets

Tablets and iPads

Smart phones

plus Website design

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Church Information

There's plenty of information
on our new website

www.stmaryschurchsandbach.org



SandbachChurch

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December 2023

Sunday 3rd December	8.00 am	Holy Communion
Advent Sunday	10.00 am	Family Worship with Christingle
Advent Service	4.00 pm	CTiS - New Horizons Church - Wheelock Methodists
Sunday 10th December	8.00 am	Holy Communion
Advent 2	10.00 am	Parish Eucharist
Sunday 17th December	8.00 am	Holy Communion
Advent 3	11.00 am	Family Worship and Communion
	6.30 pm	Nine Lessons and Carols by candlelight
Monday 18th December	6.30 pm	A Quiet Christmas
Thursday 21st December	6.00 pm	Carols on the Cobbles

Holy Eucharist, Parish Eucharist - Order 1 Common Worship

Holy Communion - Order 2 Book of Common Prayer

The Parochial Church Council of St, Mary Sandbach
St Mary's Church, High Street, Sandbach, CW11 1AN
Charity Number 1205356

CHRISTMAS

Sunday 24th December	8.00 am	No service
Christmas Eve	10.00 am	Family Worship and Communion
	4.00 pm	Dress up Nativity
	11.30 pm	Midnight First Communion
Monday 25th December	10.00 am	Christmas Day Celebration
Sunday 31st December	8.00 am	Holy Communion
Christmas 1	10.00 am	Parish Eucharist
Sunday 7th January	8.00 am	Holy Communion
Epiphany	10.00 am	Covenant Service at the Wesley Centre

Registers for November Baptisms

5th November Lillie Moore



Work diligently. Give generously. Pray faithfully. Love deeply

Heaven is here

We are emerging from a quiet, reflective and sombre few weeks, with All Souls Day followed quickly by Remembrance Sunday. I found myself saying this week that now I can begin to think about Christmas. We are now entering the season of Advent, a whole new season with a different kind of reflection, a season of waiting. As we wait to celebrate the mysterious events of Bethlehem some 2000 years ago, we recall all that we have received from God through this mystery and all that we now hope for.

This waiting is often seen through images and meditations on light. As we become surrounded by accounts of the manger in a stable, characters bearing halos and angels with bright shining wings, we see the world lit up in a way previously unseen. The birth of this baby, this messiah brought light and joy into the world in a whole new way. As disciples we spend much of our life trying to discover just what that light means for the world as well as for our daily lives.

Sunday '2 before advent' found us reading Thessalonians alongside the gospel, here Paul was challenging the readers to remember that they are children of light, that they dwell in the day and not in the night. They are to strive to be people of the day.

I have shared the lyrics of a Christmas song that caught my eye as I stumbled across it. It speaks of this waiting and light. The line 'heaven is here' reminds us that it's not about the manger thousands of years ago, not just about the life (and death) of an amazing man called Jesus, but here and now in our lifetime and in the lifetimes to come.

The light that Jesus brought is heavenly and it shines bright. When the world seems dark in its brokenness, we can be

assured there will always be chinks of light. As long as we too can be bearers of this mystery, can be carriers of love and hope then the light of Christmas will shine far beyond the manger scene.

I pray you have a wonderful Christmas and that we can share in the celebrations together. May you know His light and love.

Bee

Heaven is Here by the McClures

Long we have waited with expectation
Long we have prayed with anticipation
But suddenly there is a light in the darkness
It's shining in Bethlehem
This is the moment
This is the night
Sing choir of angels
Glory to God
He's peace on the Earth
He's joy to the world
The Saviour has come down
And Heaven is here
Behold the Redeemer, God of the Ages
Behold the Messiah, mighty to save us
Oh, everyone see there's a light in the darkness
He's shining in Bethlehem
All glory and honour
Be unto the King, unto the King
We fall down before Him
And worship the King, worship the King
Heaven is here
Heaven is here
Heaven is here
Heaven is here

Regular events and services		
Tuesday & Thursday	9.30 am	Morning Prayer in church
Mondays	9.00 am	Tiddlers - starts again 8th January
Tuesdays	7.00 pm	Prayer Meeting in church
Wednesdays	11.00 am	Holy Communion
Thursdays	9.00 am	Thursday Teas (except first Thursday of month)
Fridays	5.15 pm	Choir Practice - contact Kevin Birch (760778)
First Thursday of month	10.30 am	Bereavement Group - contact Bee for details
First Sunday of the month	9.00 am	Music group practice before the service - contact Heather Bottomley (768744)

Coffee Rota	
3rd December	Stella Craven and Angela Speedy
10th December	Janet Hides and Ellie Palfreman
17th December	Jim Thompson and Iris Kenilworth
24th December	Jean Richardson and Jo Williams
31st December	Stella Craven and Angela Speedy
7th January	Kath Davies and Kath Beech



Dear God, be good to me. The sea of life is so wide and my boat is so small

From the Editor

Welcome to the last edition of 2023.

From the May Coronation edition we made some significant changes to the production of the magazine. It is now printed on the church photocopier rather than our old duplicating machine.

I hope you've noticed the significant improvement in the print quality and more importantly the clarity of the pictures. It also enables us to print a few pages in colour each month. The process is more straight forward, fully automated and if required, allows us to easily print extra copies later in the month.

The disadvantage is the increased cost of production including the continual rise in the price of paper and toner. The number of companies paying for advertisements in the magazine has decreased over the years which has reduced our income. The cover price of 50p has been in place for 11 years and we are considering raising the minimum price per issue to £1. We would very much like to hear your views on this proposal so please do get in contact with me.

I'd like to finish by giving my wholehearted thanks to the dedicated ladies of the magazine production team. Until May of this year the team would spend 2-3 hours each month collating, folding, stapling and sorting the magazines. I hope you are enjoying your retirement!

In this Issue.....

Christmas trees

Magazine history

Christmas services

Church history

2023/4 social events

Windows

Sponsorship

CTiS events

St Mary's Church

Christmas

Services

Sunday 3rd

10am

Christingle

A Family service to mark the start of Advent. It's the one with an



Sunday 17th

6.30pm

9 Lessons & Carols
by Candle Light



Monday 18th

6.30pm

A Quiet Christmas
A quiet contemplative service for those who find Christmas difficult

Thursday 12th

6pm

Carols on the Cobbles

A short service for all the family with much loved carols.

Christmas Eve

4pm

Nativity

'Festive Fred Finds the Greatest Gift'.

Christmas fun for all the family

Young and young at heart are welcome to dress up

11.30pm

'Midnight Mass'

The first Service of Christmas



Christmas Day

10am

Christmas Day Celebration

Family worship with communion

The Casson family military monument

This second article on this registered historic military monument on the southern wall inside St Mary's church, commemorating three members of the Casson family focuses on the first name engraved at the top Randal Casson

What is unusual about this plaque is that I have been unable to find any record that Randal (or all three men) ever lived in Sandbach. The connection with the parish appears to be through the marriage of William Casson and Frances Gally, née Jackson (Randal Casson's parents), and their inheritance of the Betchton House estate from Richard Jackson who died in 1837.

Randal Casson was born on 10th February 1850, in Plas Penrhyn, Wales, to Frances and William.

William Casson and his brother Thomas (father of the bottom dedication, William) made their fortune from the manufacture of English Pipe Organs 'The Casson

Positive' (The National Pipe Organ Register does not list any organ at St Mary's Sandbach as being manufactured by the company) and from the distillery of turpentine and with their money they founded Casson's Bank in Wales. This private bank was acquired by the North and South Wales Bank in 1875. William continued working for the new owners in Liverpool and it was here that Randal was educated.

On leaving school, rather than joining his father in banking, Randal chose to pursue a career in the legal profession. He entered the solicitor's office as an Articled Clerk (Trainee Solicitor) of Mr Edward Breese, in Portmadoc, (known today as Porthmadog) Wales, and it was here that he made his home. He was eventually considered one of the best legal advocates in North Wales who filled a big space in the public life of the town where he was a strong and dominant personality.

Angling Association. He enjoyed yachting and rowing and was the heart and soul of the rowing club, competing in local regattas. He and the family also took an enthusiastic interest in sheepdog trials, and he was involved in organising the Welsh National Show for many years.

After Randal was added to the Roll of Solicitors in Easter 1894, aged 40, the firm became known as Breese, Jones and Casson.

Some other significant roles he had within the community and in his career include becoming Joint Clerk Lancashire Sea Fisheries Committee in 1900 and Chair of the Archaeological association in 1903. He was President of the Agricultural committee in 1909 and in 1910 he became Patron of Portmadoc's sailors' rest and institute. He was also a staunch churchman and held the appointment of chairman and Treasurer of the Tremadoc church committee, as well as being the Undersheriff on several occasions in Merionethshire and

Caernarvonshire. He was Commissioner of Pilots at Portmadoc under Trinity House, was deeply interested in the National Lifeboat Institution and was a member of the Criccieth Management Committee for many years.

Unfortunately, in 1911 Randal had a long period of illness, which saw him step back from most of his official and public duties, and in mid-March 1914, as part of his rest and recuperation, the family left England for a long holiday in Sicily. Three weeks into the trip, Randal contracted a chill, which developed into pleurisy followed by pneumonia.

He died at Taormina on Thursday 2nd April, aged 64, and was buried the next day in one of Taormina's churchyards. The news of his death was received in Portmadoc by telegraph on the day of his burial and as a mark of respect, flags were lowered to half-mast on the town hall, public buildings, business premises and ships in the harbour, and on the Sunday a muffled peal was rung at St John's Church, Portmadoc.

Christmas is coming

It's not too late! This is "FREE MONEY" for the church and doesn't cost you, the supporters, anything to donate. It's a cashback site. Just do any on-line shopping through their website looking for the cause St Mary's Church - Sandbach.



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John Minshull

In memory of John Minshull who died 12th December 1998 from cancer age 64 years, printer by trade, John was the founder editor of this magazine from 1964 to September 1989 covering editions 1-300. All the editions were produced from the small Eachus print works that used to be on the corner of the Square (now the auction rooms).

He was a member of the youth club and also on the church PCC as well as a Sideman and Lesson Reader. He had also been a member of Round Table, 41 Club and Rotary Club and in 1998 received the Paul Harris Fellowship award for outstanding service. John was also involved in Sandbach Photography Club, the History Society and wrote the guide book on St Marys and another on Bygone Sandbach. He also started the Minshull Archive slide shows documenting how the town



has changed over the years, continued by Stephen the eldest of our 3 sons. I think John would have been so proud that the Minshull Archives are still going.

So, 25 years on and still greatly missed by all the family. We now have four great grandchildren that will never know great grandad. Rest in peace John.

All our love Pauline and the family

No Room? On the Contrary

Ven John Barton considers the Christmas story ...

This year one carol will be sung with particular poignancy. It retells the message of angels, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests” and continues:

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife,
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled,
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love song which they bring:
O hush the noise, you men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.*



The angels’ goodwill message will persist despite our clamour, for it proclaims God’s all-embracing and eternal welcome. Heaven’s doors are ever open: it is home for everyone. The final biblical vision is of an all-encompassing city: “On no day will its gates ever be shut... the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it.”

Jesus, for whom there had been no room at the inn, taught that God’s kingdom is home for every race: “I say to you that many will come from the East and the West and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” He reassured those anxious about the future: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms...”

No room? Don’t you believe it!

Christingle
3rd December 2023
10am

We would love you to come

This year we will mark the start of
Advent and the journey towards
Bethlehem with the much loved
tradition of **Christingle**.

Everything will be provided so just
come along and enjoy the celebration.



www.stmaryschurchsandbach.org



The Christmas tree recycling

The scheme helps to raise vital funds for St Luke's Hospice and small local charities in our community. For a donation we will collect your Christmas tree, take it away and recycle it for you. No hassle, no waste and no needles in your car! Collection 11-14 January 2024

Just go to the website below and register your tree:

www.just-helping.org.uk

Did you know?

Our tree collection has been running now for 12 years and we have collected 27,983 trees in that time and have raised a fabulous £430,081



Autumn Fair

The Autumn Fair was a great success. A good variety of stalls and plenty of visitors to the hall to buy produce, eat cake and chat over a cuppa.

The total funds raised for the work of the church was **£1660.**

Churches Together in Sandbach Events

Advent Service - Sunday 3rd December at 4.00 pm

New Horizons, Wheelock. Contemporary Worship, with singing led by the Worship Band.

Carols around the Christmas Tree - Thursday 21st December at 6.00 pm

On the Cobbles. We would like a really good turnout to swell the singing.

We also need volunteers to act as stewards for the event.

Please email Ian Parsons ian.parsons@aol.com to volunteer.

Christmas Day Lunch - 12.30 pm – 3.15 pm at St Mary's Church Hall

An event for people who will be lonely over Christmas. Meal at 1.30 pm with some social time beforehand.

We would like volunteers to help the event:

Transport – to pick up guests, take them to the meal and then home after it. Two people will be needed for each car. Please email ian.parsons@aol.com as soon as possible to offer your services.

At the lunch: Hosts to make people feel welcome and help to serve the food; Helpers with the clearing and washing up. Please email Bee Boyde as soon as possible revbeeboyde@gmail.com to offer to help.

We plan to provide each guest with a small Christmas gift (cost about £5.00). Please email Mark Thompson wmarkthompson@gmail.com if you would like to buy and wrap a gift.

Fantastic response and progress

Progress. By the time you read this we hope to have completed the large door on the cobbles side of the hall. There will be no more work now until the spring time.

If anyone is interested in helping in the spring could you please contact Brian Day (763716) or John Bottomley (768744).

Donations so far - we've reached the HALF-WAY mark.

11/20 large windows. 5/8 small windows. 1/3 large doors and 0/3 small doors.

Thanks to everyone who has made a donation so far. If you would like to sponsor a window or door, half a window or part of a window please do give your clearly labelled donation to one of the church wardens or place in the donations box in church.

giftaid

Post

Here's a reminder of the last Christmas posting dates for the UK.



2nd Class including signed-for: **Monday 18th December**

First class and Tracked 24: **Wednesday 20th December**

Special Delivery Guaranteed: **Friday 22 December**

21st December - Winter Solstice

A Midwinter festival has been a part of life since pre-Christian times. When the hours of daylight are fewest, the warmth of the sun weakest, and life itself seemingly at a standstill, our ancestors, the pagan peoples of Europe and Western Asia, kept festival by lighting bonfires and decorating their buildings with evergreens.

Perhaps they believed that the dying sun could be enheartened by fire and the life of the buried seed assured by the presence of evergreen branches.

With the advent of Christianity, the Spring gods became identified with Christ, and the birthday of the sun with the birthday of the Light of the World.

The early church father Tertullian did not approve of Christmas decorations. "Let

those who have no light in themselves light candles!... You are the light of the world, you are the tree ever green..." But by the time of St Gregory and St Augustine, four centuries later, this had changed. Pope Gregory instructed Augustine not to worry about harmless outward customs, as long as the right God be worshipped through them. And so many Anglo-Saxon customs were never discarded, but simply endowed with a new significance.

By 1598 one John Stow of London wrote how: ‘

Against the feast of Christmas, every man’s

house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holme, ivie, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the yeare afforded to be greene.’



Image by Freepik

A strange place for a sundial

For the last two years John Higgins has been carrying out some in-depth research into the history of St Mary's. He hopes to complete the project next year. In the meantime, he has penned some short articles on various aspects of the church's history that will appear over the coming months.

A few yards from the south door of the church is a stone pillar, about 4 feet high, with weeds growing around its base. It goes unnoticed by most people who pass by, but is of significance in the history of the church. It is, in fact, what remains of a free-standing churchyard cross, probably in its original location.

In the 6th and 7th century, wooden crosses were erected to mark meeting points for worship, visited by priests. If a mission proved successful, the wooden cross would be replaced by a stone one at which masses would

be said and around which burials would take place.



These early crosses almost invariably come before the building of a church on the same site.

Other churchyard crosses come from the medieval period (10th to 16th century) and would be found in most churchyards. They were intended to be a memorial to the dead of the parish and were also used for events like the procession on Palm Sunday. The cross at Sandbach is thought to be from the medieval period but the shaft is made from a different, and better, stone than the base. This suggests that the base may have been made at an earlier date. It is cut from a massive piece of gritstone and formed into two steps. This gritstone is comparable with that from which the pieces of Anglo-Saxon cross shafts, which stand near the west door of the church, are made.

Following the Reformation (16th century) many churchyard crosses were mutilated, being thought of as

idol worship. The ancient crosses in the market place are believed to have been torn down in the 17th century for that reason. In the 17th century there was, in fact, legislation which said that any remaining crosses should be cut off at 4ft. 6 inches above the ground. The one in the churchyard has been cut off at this height. Many of these former crosses were converted to become sundials and the remains of a sundial can be seen on the top of the one by the south door.

We shall never know, but it is conceivable that this spot may mark the place where Christianity was first brought to the settlement we now know as Sandbach. Now, there's a thought!

The importance of this churchyard cross is shown by it being listed in 1999 as a Scheduled Monument (number 1016852) by Historic England.

John Higgins

St Mary's Events



- * **Sunday 3rd December**
Christmas Lunch 12pm
- * **Saturday 3rd February**
Bingo night
- * **Saturday 9th March**
Quiz Night
- * **Saturday 4th May**
Ceilidh

If anyone would like to organise a social or fundraising event then please book the Hall through the office.

Coffee morning

Saturday 2nd December 10am - 1 pm

St Johns Church, Sandbach Heath

Cakes and mince pies. Hampers and wine

£4 per person

Almighty Father,

Thank you for your indescribable gift of Jesus – the Light of the world. Thank you that He brought light and life to all who received Him during His life on earth and that He still brings light and life to all who receive Him.

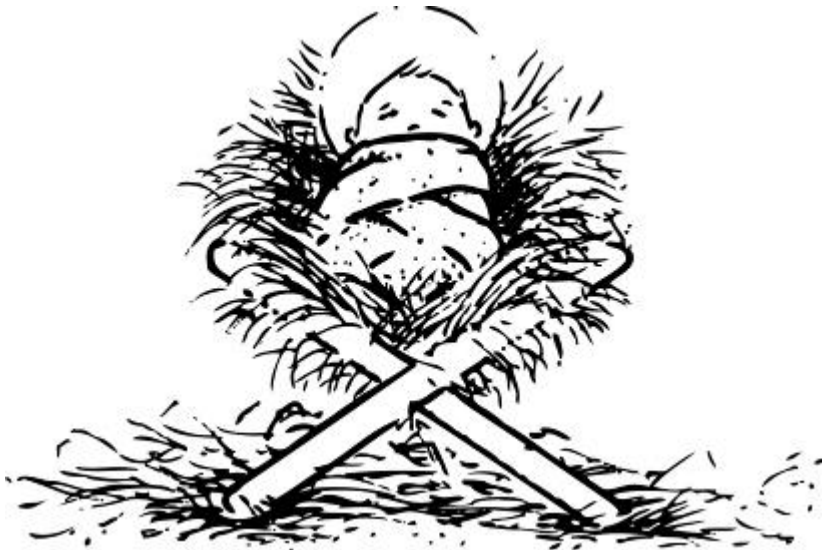
Lord, how this broken world needs your light today. As we rejoice and give thanks for Christmas, we pray that the light of Jesus will pierce the darkness of self-interest and hatred – and change the hearts of those who do not love you or their neighbours.

We pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit you will deliver your people from evil, and that Your kingdom will come on earth as in heaven. Thank you, Father, that because of Jesus, light will always shine in the darkness and the darkness will never be able to extinguish it.

Glory and thanks and praise to You Father God, this Christmas and always. In Jesus' saving and powerful name.

Amen.

By Daphne Kitching



What's happened in the last 13 years

This fourth article, looking back into the recent history of the magazine, looks to October 2011.

Many in the parish went to Chester Cathedral on the 22nd October to be part of the service when the Readers of the diocese met to renew their commitment to lay ministry and celebrate the licensing of a number of new Readers, including Jane Colley. The day after in St Mary's Sandbach she preached on the day's readings - St Paul's First letter to the Thessalonians 2:1-8. Here is the first and last part of that sermon.

"First of all I want to say a big "Thank you" to those who shared in body and/or in spirit in the service at the cathedral yesterday afternoon, and for so many messages of encouragement. As Christians we are a pilgrim people and it is a great joy when we can journey with each other.

The Warden of Readers was asked by Bishop Keith if we candidates were well versed in the Holy Scriptures and doctrines of our faith – and I shuddered to think of the yawning gaps between the fragments of my

understanding – and I hope you will bear with me as we face the challenges of God's word.

Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians is of interest not least because it is one of the earliest dated documents of the New Testament. So I think of these gentile Christians, with no Old Testament background to underpin their understanding of God; no Gospels or Acts of the Apostles to flick back to check the accounts of Jesus and his disciples; and possibly only written fragments and the

word of mouth stories to depend on. How affirming that Paul says that he and his companions know that the Thessalonians are chosen by God because they received not just the spoken message of the gospel but also the Holy Spirit and power.

And so what can we take from this reading to think about? The first is a reminder to continue living the gospel and sharing the gospel irrespective of other circumstances. It doesn't sound as if Paul ignored brick walls he came up against, but that he didn't waste energy dealing with them or get caught up in feelings of personal failure. He certainly refused to give up just

because things didn't go the way he wanted. Rather it's a matter of share what you can, encourage those you can and be prepared to move on". Secondly there is a reminder to keep a check on ourselves – we may see trickery, deceit, flattery, or greed around us in society but as Paul says “we speak, not to please mortals but to please God who tests our hearts.”

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, can we say in our community of Sandbach, “we were gentle among you.... So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves.”

Christmas Eve Nativity

We look forward to welcoming as many families as possible to our Nativity on Christmas Eve in the church at 4pm.

Please dress up (parents as well) and take part in the Nativity story with carol singing.

And there were shepherds

Luke's story of the birth of Jesus is brilliantly told – the angel's visit to Mary to tell her she would be mother of the long-promised Messiah, the old priest in the Temple told by another angel that his wife would have a son to be called 'John', who would prepare the people of Israel for that event, and then Mary and Joseph making the 60 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, as required by the Roman census. When they got there, no room at the inn, and they settled instead for a convenient stable, where Mary gave birth to a boy child.

Suddenly, Luke changes the tone. 'And there were shepherds ...' – that's what he actually wrote, just like that. 'And there were shepherds', doing exactly what shepherds do, looking after their flocks by night. But this night was different: yet another angelic message – a call to abandon their sheep and go into

Bethlehem to see the baby Messiah. They were given directions and a 'sign' to identify Him. He would be lying in a feeding trough. Well, at least they would recognise that.



And why the shepherds, in this glorious story of our salvation? Because the event needed witnesses, and the chosen witnesses would be this bunch of scruffy, smelly shepherds straight from the sheep-pen. Nothing could speak more eloquently of God's purpose than that. This was not a Saviour for the strong, rich and powerful, but for everybody. The carpenter and his wife guarded the Saviour of the world and the very first witnesses were not kings or priests but a handful of shepherds.

David Winter

From the Archives



In the top image a snowy view of No 59 a grade II listed building on High Street next to the Old Hall. In the lower image we go back to 1910 when it was Bridge House a Collegiate School for girls aged 8 to 17. Built in 1850 and most likely designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott it had tennis courts at the rear. **Stephen Minshull**

SMILE Lines

What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire? – Frostbite.

December is the month when the family begins to discuss what to get Dad for Christmas. Some argue for a shirt; others hold out for a pair of socks. But the argument usually ends in a tie.



One cold winter night, during a violent storm, a mother was tucking her small, frightened little boy into bed. She was about to turn off the light when he said with a tremor in his voice: "Mummy, will you stay with me tonight?"

Mummy smiled and gave him a reassuring hug. "I can't, dear," she said, "I have to sleep with Daddy." A long silence – and then came his shaky reply: "The big coward!"



Church Contacts

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Weddings	smcsandbach@gmail.com	07771 391667
Organist & Choirmaster	Kevin Birch kevinbirch60@gmail.com	760778
Magazine Editor	John Bottomley jandhbottomley@gmail.com	768744

Challenge

If you have any information or events that need publicising, or you would like to write an article, please contact the editor.

Articles must be received by **Sunday 17th December**

www.stmaryschurchsandbach.org

Donations

If you would like to donate funds for the running, repairs and mission of St Mary's then please use one of the following methods:

- Standing Order
- Contactless machine in church
- QR code (using JustGiving)

More details are available on the website:

www.stmaryschurchsandbach.org/donate

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Magazine deadline December edition

**Sunday 17th
December**

Griffiths & Booth Funeral Service

**FUNERAL DIRECTORS & MEMORIAL
CONSULTANTS**

Chapel of Rest
24 hour Service

Floral Tributes
Memorials

60 The Hill
Sandbach

17 Macclesfield Rd
Holmes Chapel

01270 765783

01477 532427

We're short of Bell Ringers and are
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