

CHURCH NEWS AND VIEWS

Carols Candles and Crib Service

The C, C and C service on the Sunday before Christmas provided an opportunity for budding Birdingbury actors and actresses to take part in Karen's wonderfully innovative 2013 version of the Christmas Story. Matt took these photographs at the rehearsal. Sadly you can't see pictures of the costumed production: Billy's donkey 'onesie' outfit was particularly memorable!

Here's what some of the cast thought about it: Billy: *'I liked wearing the mask - I loved the whole thing!'*



Erin: *'I liked singing. I liked standing with Jessie, it was too fun!'*

Jess: *'I liked helping the younger children and being Erin's sidekick!'*



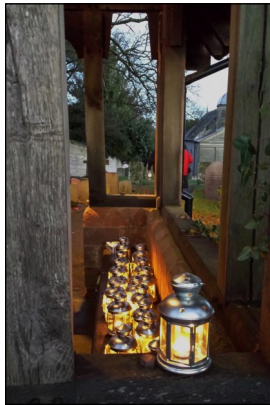
Evie: *'I enjoyed being the cat and it was nice to have a lot of people from the village there; it was fun!'*



Gaynor: *'I chuckled to see the donkey wearing bright red glasses! I was one of three rather mature angels with creaking knees hiding in the pulpit! There was "No room at the inn" and no room that afternoon in the pulpit either!'*



Photos: Matt Markham



We hope you agree that lighting the church path with lanterns feels very appropriate for this and the Christmas Eve service.

Aileen Withington

Photos: Eira Owen

St. Leonard's news and updates from Dick and Karen

Christmas at St Leonard's

We think that our shared Christmas worship this year had that elusive 'feel good' factor. It is not just about numbers, but a full church makes a difference and all three special services were very well attended. The church looked beautiful as usual. Special thanks to the Altar Guild for the arrangements of candles and greenery, to David Harrison for setting up the crib, to Tony Higgins for his help getting the tree into and out of church and to the Youth Club for decorating it.

The Carols, Candles and Crib service raised £197.20 for The Children's Society. Special thanks to all the children and adults who took part in the nativity play and to Gaynor and Mel for the tasty, seasonal refreshments after the service.

Midnight Communion had a unique, peaceful tone, which was set from the start by the lantern procession from the bus shelter to church. Thank you to those who provided and set up the lanterns for this and the Carols, Candles and Crib service.

The service on Christmas morning was joyful and informal with lots of village families and visitors in attendance. It was led by our friend Rev. David Shaw, a retired priest from Stretton. We have subsequently had lots of positive feedback about this service, for which we thank you.

It was good to see you all in church over Christmas: it was also a pleasure to welcome newcomers as well as old friends to these services.

Where do we go from here?

Reverend Barbara retired from the benefice at the end of January, so we are now in an interregnum. She goes with our loving gratitude for many years of dedicated and faithful service to us.

Difficult as this may be, 'life goes on' and important as it is, maintaining the status quo should not be seen as all we have to do in the coming months. We need to think and act positively, working together to develop St Leonard's through 2014. Whilst each interregnum is a unique and possibly unsettling experience, within our village we have lots of experience of previous interregnums to reflect and act on.

We believe there are 3 main aspects to our interregnum:

'Keeping the show on the road'

The process of appointing a new Priest-in-Charge

Enabling our church to grow

So how do these points link together and what will it mean in practice? Well, 'keeping the show on the road' is just that: making sure that St Leonard's continues to have a sustainable pattern of services. We will however be discussing how we might develop this pattern for the better. We will have the opportunity to welcome different people to lead us in Holy Communion. For other, non-communion services, we hope that some of you may feel you could join us in planning, developing, taking a part in or even leading services. We will support you with whatever additional commitments you feel you could take on.

Our search for a new priest will take some time and we expect the interregnum to last at least a year. Things don't move that quickly in the Church of England as you know! The diocese is giving us a good deal of support, but there is much to consider before we can proceed to recruitment stage.

The PCC has just agreed to participate in an exciting new diocesan initiative called 'The Eight Qualities of Healthy Growing Churches'. This is an on-going programme formulated as a result of comprehensive research undertaken in many churches which have grown successfully in recent years. These church communities all share 8 common characteristics. These are:

- **Leadership** which identifies trains and empowers other leaders
- A commitment to **holistic, smaller groups** where closer relationships are developed through worship, prayer and outreach

- **Outreach** where we discover the real needs of a community and meeting those needs becomes an integral part of our work
- **Ministry** which values all people, helps them to identify their God-given gifts and then encouragement to use those gifts
- A community where people are committed to building loving, caring, forgiving **relationships** with each other
- **Spirituality** nurtured through deep faith and prayer
- An **organisational structure** that makes things happen and is flexible enough for change when needed
- **Worship**, whatever the style, **that energises and sustains** people and makes them want to repeat it and share it with others

We need to make these ideas more than just words. Now is a great opportunity for us to look at what we do, how we do it, and how we might do things differently, so that we can better serve both God and our community here in Birdingbury. Through this we should be able to identify our strengths and weaknesses, and a plan to work on that a new priest can help us continue to develop.

If you have any views about what you do or don't like, or what you think we should, or shouldn't be doing, then please tell us. We can only move forward and grow if we hear from you. We have a God-given opportunity to do good things together.

Love and best wishes

Karen and Dick

Please feel free to contact your churchwardens, Dick or Karen, anytime if you would like to talk to us. If you would like to talk to a priest, we can put you in touch with one. Our contact details are on p.8 of Church News.

After consultation with Karen and Dick, I am trying a new format for the centre pages. The list of services in the Benefice is here as usual, with the readings included for those who wish to look up them up in advance of, or after Birdingbury services.

Most of you on the church rotas already receive a notice of your rota duties via email, which you can print off and/ or note in your diary. Everyone, internet users or not, can also request a paper copy. This change will free up a page for items applicable to a wider readership and in addition, mean that the electronic version can be published in a better format on the village website.

Please let me know if you have any issues with this trial change.

Aileen (Church News and Views Editor)

FEBRUARY and MARCH SERVICES in Draycote Benefice Churches

Date	Place	Time	Service	Readings
Sun 2nd Feb Candlemas	Frankton Bourton Stretton	9.15am 11.00am 6.00pm	Holy Communion BCP Morning Praise Holy Communion	
Sun 9th Feb	Birdingbury Stretton Bourton	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Morning Praise Holy Communion	1 Corinthians ch2 v 1—end Matthew ch5 v 13-20
Sun 16th Feb	Bourton Birdingbury Frankton Stretton	9.15 am 11.00 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Holy Communion Morning Praise Evening Worship	1 Corinthians ch3 v 1-9 Matthew ch5 v 21-37
Sun 23rd Feb	Stretton	10.00 am	Benefice Holy Communion with Archdeacon John Green	
Sun 2nd March	Frankton Bourton Stretton	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion BCP Morning Praise Holy Communion	
Wed 5th March	Frankton	7.30 pm	Ash Wednesday service	
Sun 9th March	Birdingbury Stretton Bourton	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Morning Praise Holy Communion	Romans ch5 v 12-19 Matthew ch4 v 1-11
Sun 16th March	Bourton Birdingbury Frankton Stretton	9.15 am 11.00 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Holy Communion Morning Praise Evening Worship	Romans ch4 v 1-5 + 13—17 John ch3 v 1—17
Sun 23rd March	Stretton Birdingbury Princethorpe Frankton	9.15 am 11.00 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion Morning Praise Morning Worship Holy Communion	Romans ch5 v 1-11 John ch4 v 5—42
Sun 30th March Mothering Sunday	Princethorpe Birdingbury Stretton Bourton/ Frankton	9.15 am 11.00 am 11.00 am 11.00 am	Holy Communion Mothering Sun service Mothering Sun service Mothering Sun Service at Bourton church	Exodus ch2 v 1-10 John ch19 v 25-27

Birdingbury People

The funeral and burial of **Frank Walker**, husband of June and father of Rosemary, Richard and Robert (or Rosie, Dick and Bob), took place at St. Leonard's on 30th December. Frank and June lived at Marton Glebe Farm where he was on hand to farm the land around Davenport Farm. He and June moved to Long Itchington in 2000 but Frank continued to come every day to help Bob on the farm until the last year or so. On the way to the church the family and the hearse stopped along Stockton Road, very fittingly, to remember Frank from where he loved to watch over his fields and, in particular, his beloved sheep.

In Birdsong there is an article celebrating the long life of **Alex Johns**. We send our sincere condolences to Doreen and her family. If you have a few spare moments, Doreen would love to see you.

Mary Merrick's ashes were laid to rest alongside her husband, Alan in Birdingbury churchyard on 6th January. God bless you, Mary.

Dates for your diary

We have received this invitation from Leamington Hastings Church:

Come and join us
in an Ecumenical 'Songs of Praise' Service
at All Saints Church, Leamington Hastings
on Tuesday 11th February at 7.00 pm

Mothering Sunday Breakfast in St. Leonard's from 9.45 to 11am on 30th March

As a special treat for Mothering Sunday, Eira and her helpers will be serving coffee, tea and pastries in church. Details in Birdsong.

Other Benefice events for February and March

Thurs 6th Feb	2.30pm	Service and Tea at Bourton, F and D Village Hall
Wed 12th Feb	10.30am	Home Communion at Jenny Hawes, Dormers, Back Lane
Thurs 6th March	2.30pm	WWDP Service and Tea at Bourton, F and D Village Hall
Fri 7th March	7.30pm	Women's World Day of Prayer service , All Saint's, Stretton
Wed 12th March	10.30 am	Morning Prayer at The Birbury, host Valerie Smith

Soul Space for Lent will be from 6.30—7.30pm at St. Cuthbert's, Princethorpe. Dates will available shortly and will be displayed on the Church noticeboards. Watch out for information about other events for Lent coming later.

Rev Barbara's farewell letter

I write this final letter to you with sadness, but I feel that God is calling me to move on so that someone different can lead you forward in a new direction.

During my 9½ years here I have been privileged to be part of a wonderful Christian journey with you. As with all journeys, there have been some lows - but many more highs than lows! When I came here in 2004 as your curate, I was still farming full time and working about 20 hours a week whilst continuing my training under Christine Pollard. Since then God called me into full time ministry in this Benefice. Serving God can be a scary and unsettling journey and I certainly felt this when I was licensed as your Priest in Charge on 30th January 2008. Since then my role has gradually changed from being a full time farmer to becoming a full time priest.

When I made my first visit to the parishes towards the end of my theological college training in 2003, I was given a 'Parish Profile' which stated that there was 'strong lay involvement' here. I feel that this continues to be one of the great strengths of Birdingbury which I pray will continue to develop in the future. Interregnum is a time of trusting in God to help us to grow in faith and help others to do the same. I ask that you continue to prayerfully support your Readers, Elizabeth and Kevin, and Karen and Dick as they take on additional responsibilities for leading the benefice and for making decisions about your future.

I am leaving so many friends who have helped me to develop my spirituality and my ministry. It has been a wonderful joy to help bring God's love to occasions such as births, baptisms, confirmations, weddings and other joyous occasions. Being with parishioners as they pass into God's loving and welcoming arms, and hopefully bringing comfort when conducting their funerals, has been very special for me too.

I would like to thank you all for the prayers, support, help and friendship you have given me during my time here. I will continue to hold you all in my prayers and I would like to finish with the Gaelic Blessing.

*May the road rise up to meet you
May the wind be always at your back
May the sun shine warm upon your face
The rain fall soft upon your field
And until we meet again
May God hold you in the hollow of His hand.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Be with you and those whom you love,
Now and always.
Amen.*

With continued love and prayers to all of you,
Barbara

Posada journey round Birdingbury in the lead up to Christmas Day

Christmas really began in our house when we received the Posada. It was brought to us by Alex, Erin and Billy and we were to pass it on to Karen for the following evening. It was lovely to meet other villagers in such an informal way and we put the Posada on the window sill and lit the lamp so it could be seen from outside. Geoff went to the bus shelter to meet other villagers to take the Posada on its final procession to the church on Christmas Eve and candles were lit to accompany it to its final resting place. I can only encourage other villagers to join in with this Christmas tradition as it is an excellent way to meet other neighbours and for the children to become involved in such a simple but meaningful way.

Clare Dale

Anna and Jess Markham admiring the Posada when it stayed the night at their house.

Photo: Matt Markham

(Message to Matt: this photograph looks worthy of a prize in a competition to me! The light on Anna and Jess's faces and also on the candlelit nativity figures is beautiful. Ed.)



St. Leonard's contact information

Priest in Charge (vacancy)

Readers	Elizabeth Kirk	01926 633400	
	Kevin Downham	01788 811252	kevandles@btinternet.com
Churchwardens	Dick Withington	01926 632644	dickwithington@hotmail.com
	Karen Armbrister	01926 632030	karen.armbrister@btinternet.com
Parish Office	Wendy Driscoll (Mon + Thurs 9am-11am)	01926 632370	draycotegroup@tiscali.co.uk (NB Note new days and times of opening)
Ch. News Editor	Aileen Withington	01926 632644	awchurchnews@hotmail.co.uk