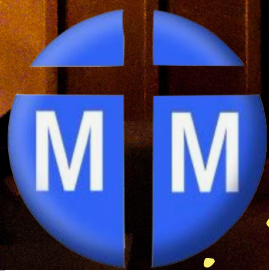


C THE GOOD NEWS

# st mary magdalene's PARISH MAGAZINE

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*February 2025*



*Dear friends,*

I write this to you with the sun streaming through the open window of my guest room in Bangalore. I am beginning the second week of my sabbatical and by the time you read this I will also have spent a week in Chennai where I will be travelling to look at the work of the Church there.

It is a great privilege to be able to step back from busy parish ministry to look, recharge batteries, gain fresh perspectives, be inspired by all that God is doing in his wider Church and hopefully return renewed and equipped for the next season of ministry.

My first challenge here is one of simply learning how to navigate my way around and function in the local culture. The most common way to get to different places is by taxi which range from rickshaws to saloons and are relatively cheap and are contactable on a phone app. Contactless money is also an increasingly common feature of life here and again this can be done on the phone. The only problem is my phone doesn't really work with these apps and getting connected has been quite a preoccupation in these early days.

One of the things that is so noticeable here is the importance of religion in so many people's lives. There are places of worship everywhere, religious messages and signs on people's homes, stickers on cars, slogans on walls and shrines on street corners for the faithful to make their devotions.

So, I was quite surprised the other day when I saw a large black sign with yellow letters proclaiming, “Doctors agnostic center”. It seemed so out of character in a country where most people have some form of religious commitment. I wondered whether Doctor agnostic was for those who had given up on God and preferred a more secular approach. It seems that we are becoming a great deal more agnostic in the west and I wondered whether this was becoming a feature in India too.



Then I moved slightly and realized that part of the sign had been obscured by a tree. Behind the tree were two additional letters - “di”. Add these to agnostic and you get a very different message. It is important to view life sometimes from different angles otherwise you may get a distorted view. The Gospels give us not one but four different views of Jesus. That way we get a wonderfully rounded and complete view of the God who comes amongst us as Emmanuel. I pray that as this year continues, we become increasingly connected with Jesus and get a rounded and balanced view of the God who loves us and wants us to find life in all its fullness.

*God bless, William*



# Farewell to Chloe Scanlan –

## Lillington Community Pantry Supervisor

In early 2022 the Community Pantry opened in Pound Lane, Lillington. The Community Pantry is a collaborative project between Feed The Hungry and Warwickshire County Council. Feed the Hungry is a Christian organisation with offices in Coventry and they share a warehouse with Coventry Trussell Foodbank, although they are two separate organisations.

A number of our congregation members volunteer at the Lillington Pantry and most of you will be aware of their aims – to quote their own words from their website they are “a solution provider for the needs of hungry individuals”. We have welcomed Chloe at our church services on two occasions, where she has spoken about the work she is involved in.



Chloe with Christine at Lillington funday





In my role as Love Lillington Action Administrator I went along to meet the team for a short meeting in the summer of 2022 and I met Chloe Scanlan. We formed a good working relationship very quickly and before I could say “garden clearance” we had our first professional referral from Chloe and Love Lillington Action volunteers were working hard to make a better garden for a Lillington family. Chloe has continued to refer many clients to Love Lillington in her time at the Pantry both to Delia Button for Grants and to myself for Action. Her love and compassion for her clients has been amazing to see and the empathy and respect she has shown to everyone, without judgement, are very special qualities which Chloe will take on to her new appointment with Feed the Hungry at their offices in Coventry. Chloe we will all miss you very much. Everyone at St Mary Mags wishes you good luck and blessings from our Lord.

*Christine Butler – Love Lillington Action Administrator*



# WHY DO WE CELEBRATE ST VALENTINE'S DAY?

February 14 has been a favourite time for lovers since records began. Although the story of the saint and the origins of the feast day are clouded by myth, February 14 has long been celebrated as the day of lovers.

The earliest version of the story dates to ancient Rome and the pagan festival of Lupercalia. Shepherds outside the city walls waged a constant battle against hungry wolves and prayed to the god Lupercus to watch over their flocks. Every year in February, the Romans would repay the god's vigilance with a festival, which doubled as a celebration of fertility and the onset of Spring. After Constantine had Christianised Rome, the Church tried to clamp down on pagan activities. Pope Galasius, in the 5th Century, needed to find a suitable replacement for the wolf god Lupercus and chose a bishop who had been martyred 200 years previously: Valentine.

The emperor Aurelius had imprisoned Valentine in 272 AD for continuing to marry Christian soldiers, despite royal decree (Aurelius needed them to fight his wars). In prison, the bishop cured his jailer's daughter of blindness, and the pair fell in love. Unfortunately, their desires were frustrated as Bishop Valentine was executed on February 14 the following year. On the eve of his death, the condemned man sent a passionate letter to his beloved, signed simply 'your Valentine'.

The legacy of St Valentine has survived long after his death. There was such an uproar over his execution among the Christian community in Rome, that the authorities had to bury his body quickly to avoid a riot. But three of his followers found his body and took him to Terni in Umbria, where he is perfectly embalmed in the Basilico de S Valentino.

Young lovers still travel to the tomb to ask his blessing, and the city throws a month-long festival in his honour every year in February. The ancient tradition of proclaiming love on February 14 remains, and St Valentine is the patron saint of lovers, people with epilepsy, and beekeepers.

SALLY DRUCE

(Excerpts taken from Country Life 2004).





# Belonging to a Home Group

Fellowship - Friendship - Welcome



Most of us enjoy having a cuppa and a chat following services. If you've ever wished that you could stay to talk for longer and get to know people more, then a Home Group is for you. Home Groups are a safe space to explore faith and discuss a range of issues.

Over tea and biscuits and sometimes a glass of wine, we share our news in the more informal setting of a home. This is a great opportunity to get to know each other better and become friends.

We are lucky enough to belong to the Cromer Road Home Group. We first met at church and now get together most weeks; through our group we have become firm friends. We talk about God, the Bible and other texts and what the word of the Lord means to us in our everyday lives. If all of that sounds hard work to you, it's not - we have fun and enjoy friendship and often music too.



What we love about being in a Home Group is the surprise that comes through different authors' perspectives. There is an unexpected joy in finding common experiences of God and Christian truths across the centuries. Julian of Norwich's 'A Revelation of Love' is a great example of this: her experiences and words written in the 14th century still resonate with us today. We choose texts to enrich our Christian lives and grow closer to each other and to God. Over the past few years, we have enjoyed reading Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Acts as well as William's reflections for Lent. Some time ago we enjoyed reading 'Turned by Divine Love' by John Stroyan, which we loved; overall themes include repentance, transformation and the power of prayer.

We hope this gives you an insight into how our own lives and our living church can be transformed by the fellowship of Home Groups; how we can learn from the past by focusing on what authors have to say and from each others' experience of God.

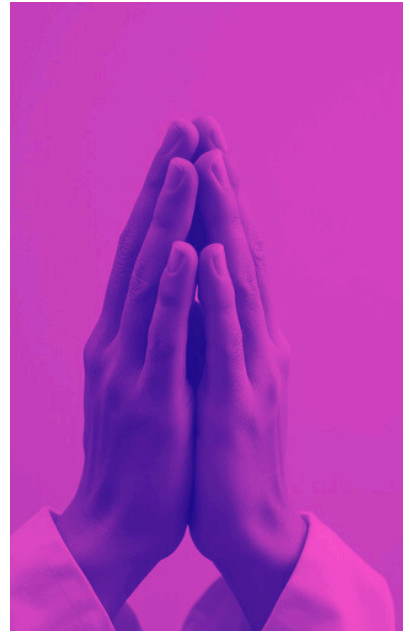
Mother Julian as portrayed at Norwich cathedral



If you're interested in joining a Home Group, come and say hello or ask Cerys about it - there are several and one is bound to suit you. You will make friends, have fun and find that much spiritual enrichment can be gained in a supported and pressure free environment. At this dark time of the year, come and be uplifted and feel encouraged in a safe space to explore faith.

# Music and Worship

Music and worship are by no means synonymous, but as we see in the Bible they are often intimately linked. David the Psalmist (psalm just means song) danced and sang before The Lord much to the embarrassment of his less demonstrative wife. And music is powerful as an expression of love for God with all our hearts, minds and strength and as a way of entering into His gates in all its many varied cultural expressions.



Whether it is in the traditional English choral form as exemplified by William Byrd or Thomas Tallis, or more recently John Rutter, or in the CCM field with Contemporary Christian musicians such as Delirious, Phil Wickham, Rend Collective and a personal favourite of mine contemporary Israeli band Miqedem and of course many others. All these fine artists in the now rich and varied music are available for us in worship (or just to enjoy) as Christians today.



Closer to home we have a good choice of worship at St Mary M's: Musical Director Rachael Jefferies and the choir weekly supply a beautiful traditional choral backdrop to the first service, Mike King leading the hymns on our venerable church organ.

While at the Starchurch (11.15) service Rachael and the electrifying Starchurch band aim to celebrate the endless goodness of God through Holy spirit-filled worship with our younger (and some not so young!) congregation enthusiastically dancing, drumming and kazooing the Kingdom come.

We are always looking for new members of the choir or the band so why not come and join in! ...

contact Rachael at:

[music@lillingtonparishchurch.org](mailto:music@lillingtonparishchurch.org)





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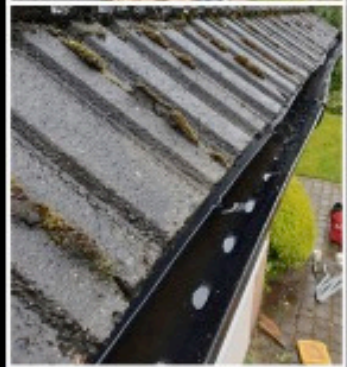
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# Ukraine Inspiration

Stephen Willson is one of numerous volunteers at the Polish Mission in Leamington Spa. Together with generous support from their sponsor LKQ Auto Parts, they have delivered 43 vehicles to the Ukraine; many filled with humanitarian aid and medication. The following is a recount of a recent journey made by Stephen, delivering one of the ambulances from the Uk to the Ukraine.

Inspiration often comes unbidden – a spark that lights a fire that travels in an unforeseeable direction. I still have a very vivid image of a chance encounter that was such a spark.

We were part of a convoy delivering four vehicles to support the war in the Ukraine. We were 'tail end Charlie'; the last one to leave the hotel. In the heavy rain the traffic light had changed and we were separated. Given the poor visibility we also failed to see that further down the road the rest of the vehicles had taken a right turn. Falling back on GPS, we followed the recommended route at a good speed, believing that we were behind. After a few minutes and a couple of cell phone calls, we realised that we were in fact ahead having taken a shortcut.

Arranging to meet up at the next services, we pulled in to be greeted by



the sight of four vehicles bearing Italian flags. Two 4x4's and two ambulances - two ambulances very similar to the one we were driving. The crew, having a break, had seen us pull up and came out to look for us, as indeed we came to them. We had no shared language, but the joy of being on a parallel mission for a shared purpose united us instantly and deeply. With big hugs and warm handshakes, we went our separate ways having admired each other's vehicles.

Wind the clock on a good number of months and the thought stirred in me that this shared experience was too important not to share. So I found myself in another 10 year old ex NHS ambulance. This time I had recruited a film crew on a mission to document how boundaries create conflicts and expose the pain of those displaced during their harrowing escape. The route was via Berlin, visiting a jail for political prisoners and a graveyard desecrated for the purpose of building the wall. Next was Gorlitz on a river between Germany and Poland where I interviewed a councillor. She corrected me in that the river did not separate the communities but joined them.

Liberec brought memories of the suppression of the Prague Spring and those killed there.

Next was Katowice to meet a university professor whose family had experienced the partitioning of Upper Silesia after the uprisings in the early 1920's. What was emerging was that boundary conflicts are not new. However, the question was whether as humans we are trapped in a cycle; leaving a trail of casualties down the generations. Kosice comprised an evacuation point for those escaping the conflict in the Ukraine, and features a UN Blue Dot centre providing immediate assistance for the women and children passing through. The contrast could not have been greater between the horror suffered by the innocent, with the beauty and magnificence of the mountainous route we chose. Our destination was the marshalling point of Lejacz, some 30 miles from the Ukraine border. Our trusty steed had not missed a beat throughout, and it was with no little feeling of gratitude that we handed over our meagre gift. It is, of course, a gift to take the wounded from the front to hospitals for treatment. But simultaneously it is a tangible gesture of solidarity and support from the UK to the Ukraine. We are with them in their fight for freedom.

## Stephen Willson

Stephen is currently editing the subsequent 1,100 film clips and several hours of interviews with the intention of publishing a documentary early in 2025.

Colour me in





# What's Happening

Saturday 8th Feb  
10am to 12 noon

Coffee morning with craft activities

Saturday 15th Feb  
from 6pm

Robin & Carol's annual Quiz – Tickets from Robin or Carol Innes A fun quiz with supper included £10 each

Wednesday Feb 19th  
from 10.45am to 12.30pm

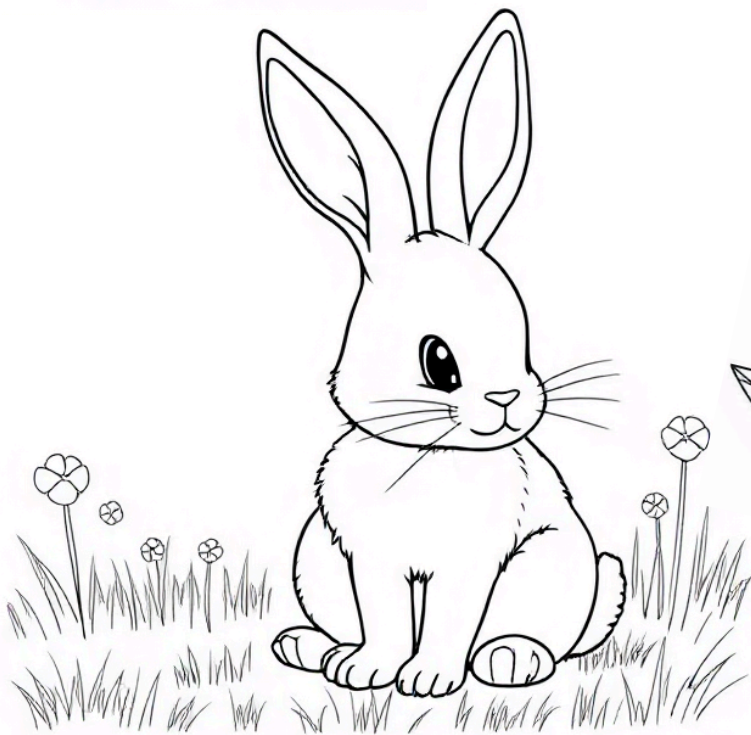
Charity Coffee morning raising funds for the Ukraine, in church after the 10am service.

Saturday 8th March  
10am to 12 noon

Coffee morning with craft activities



Colour me in



# Hire our Octagon!



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**BAPTISMS**

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**WEDDINGS**

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**FUNERALS**

Ruth Fauchon

**SERVICE DETAILS****SUNDAY WORSHIP – February 2025**

2 Feb.	Presentation of Christ	9.30am 11.15am 6.00pm	Holy Communion (in church & on line) All Age Communion (in church) Evening Service (in church)
9 Feb.	4 <sup>th</sup> Before Lent	9.30am 11.15am	Holy Communion (in church & on line) Worship for All (in church)
16 Feb.	3 <sup>rd</sup> Before Lent	9.30am 11.15am	Holy Communion (in church & on line) Worship for All (in church)
23 Feb.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Before Lent	9.30am 11.15am	Holy Communion (in church & on line) Sunday Club (in church)

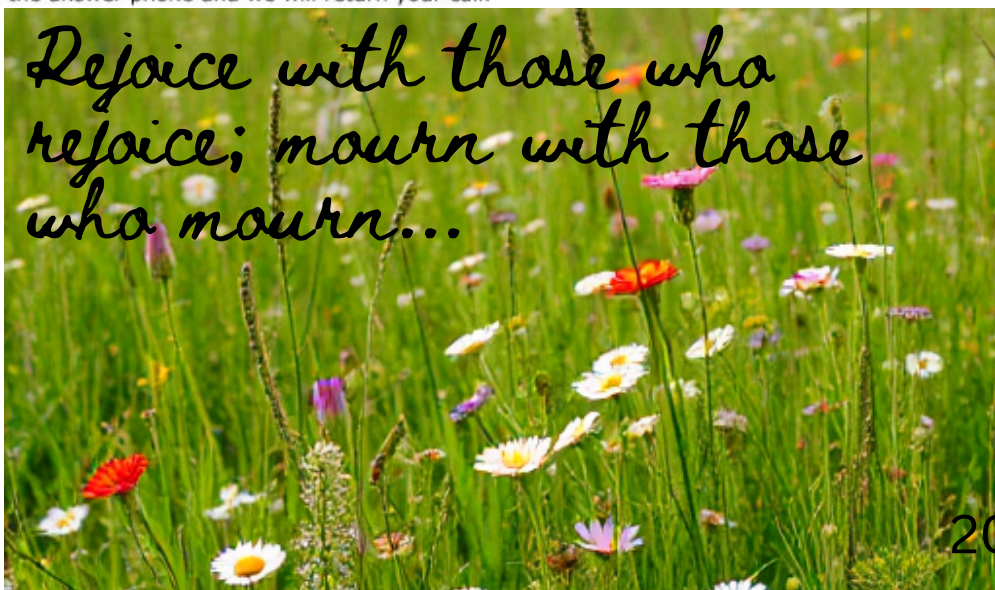
**Weekday Services in February****Wednesdays**

Holy Communion **in church** and online at 10.00am on  
5, 12, 19 & 26 February

*Services are streamed live  
but are also available afterwards on the website*

**For Funeral, Baptism and Wedding enquiries**, please contact Revd. Cerys Smith on  
07813782512 or email [curate@lillingtonparishchurch.org](mailto:curate@lillingtonparishchurch.org)

**For general enquiries** please contact the church office by telephone on 01926 470449 or  
email [office@lillingtonparishchurch.org](mailto:office@lillingtonparishchurch.org). Outside of office hours, please leave a message on  
the answer phone and we will return your call.



Robin & Carol's Annual Quiz

# 'Love is in the Air'

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>  
February 2025

6.00pm in the Octagon,  
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# Church Services

## Sunday

**9.30am** Holy Communion Service

(1 hour service with robed choir)

**11.15am** All Age Service

(40 minute service with children at its heart)

## Wednesday

**10.00am** Holy Communion Service

**OR** you can now join us via our website:

[www.lillingtonparishchurch.org/streaming](http://www.lillingtonparishchurch.org/streaming)

or follow us on Twitch:

[www.twitch.tv/lillington\\_parish\\_church](http://www.twitch.tv/lillington_parish_church)