

May 2021

Around Langley



The Alms Houses

A FREE magazine published by the
Langley Churches for the people of Langley

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/around-langley

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Local Elections: Thursday, 6th May 2021

The Candidates

Foxborough

Madhuri BEDI (Independent Network); Puja BEDI (Conservative) Andrea Escott (Labour)

Langley Kedermister

Josephine Mary HANNEY (Liberal Democrats); Michael John HOLLEDGE (Labour Party) Chandra Sekhar MUVVALA (Conservative); Mohammed RIZVAN (Independent); Tammer Hatem SALEM (Green Party)

Langley St. Mary's

Christine BAMIGBOLA (Conservative); Julian Edward Jubal EDMONDS (Green Party); Bally GILL (Labour Party)

Upton

Sukh DHILLON (Liberal Democrats); Amandeep Singh GREWAL (Conservative); Gurdeep Singh GREWAL (Labour Party); Michelle LITTLE (Green Party)

Don't Forget to Vote!



Random Thoughts

It is so good that we can venture out a little now and can even enjoy eating out al fresco (in good weather!) The sad thing is that most of the world is still in the grips of the virus: sad not only because of the suffering other countries are enduring, but also because it gives the virus the opportunity to manifest itself in its many variant forms. Let us all do what we can to make global immunisation a reality.

- o -

Two years ago we celebrated the 25th anniversary of women being ordained in the Church of England. In fact, this year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ordination of a woman as a priest in the Anglican Communion. This was when the English Bishop R. O. Hall ordained the Chinese pastor Dr Florence Tim LI-Oi as a priest in Hongkong. Life was not easy thereafter for her as a trail-blazer, nor for Bishop Hall, but the example of her wonderful ministry helped pave the way to women's ordination in other Anglican Provinces.

- o -

If the Queen of Sheba was just a name to you so far, you will learn a lot from Michael Knight's piece (page 7) on the ancient history of Arabia and the regions of Yemen, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. It is fascinating to see the role of politics in the rise and fall of Christianity and Islam in that region, and its relation to the major catastrophe currently unfolding in Yemen.

- o -

Around Langley hopes that the coming month will be a 'merrie month of May' for readers.

Anna Thomas-Betts

News from Around Langley



Langley Neighbourhood Forum

Please see their website, www.langleyforum.org/ for news and updates.

Langley Community Coffee Shop



Well, it's beginning to look as though we may have some hope of starting our meetings again, probably on 25th May, provided there are no spikes in cases of Coronavirus. I hope you will have all had both vaccinations and will feel much safer in meeting up. I think people will find it a relief being able to meet with their friends and share their experiences of life in lockdown.

We are no longer able to meet in the library as the Council has taken over the room we used as our 'pantry', so we shall be holding our meetings in the hall at the back of the Holy Family Catholic Church. We are also facing the loss of six people on the rotas with some people moving away from the area like Juliet Grayson, Linda Dopson and Tina Tarrant as well as the death of Margaret Johnson. So, we need some new volunteers to serve on the team rotas. Are you able to help? We meet every

Tuesday between 10am and 11.30am. Anyone who would like to offer their help please get in touch with me on 01753541165 or just come along and experience the friendliness of the coffee shop.

One of the things people have always looked forward to has been an annual outing so we anticipate a coach trip to the coast at the beginning of July, probably to Brighton or Littlehampton. If you would like to join us, please let me know. Also, we hope to resume our armchair exercises which members enjoyed. Looking forward to meeting up again, God willing.

Sheila Papali

Urban Forest Update

Despite multiple lockdowns I am happy to say that the Urban Forest project is on schedule and has progressed significantly over this planting season. We are now moving into a very exciting stage of developing education and technology projects that we expect to be made available by autumn this year.

The two sites that were selected as pilot projects for citizen science in Slough are Foxborough and Baylis Park.

The Foxborough Labyrinth on the Hawker Hill field and recreation area in front of Linden House has been

developed to meet local requirements to create an attractive and usable space for the residents of the new development. The new space will contain a labyrinth formed by a shape of paths and mounds with wildflower that will not only look good both from the ground and the flats above, but will also attract more bees and other pollinators. We will also be installing environmental technology this summer with an antenna that helps to transmit the readings to an online platform and allow residents to monitor the health of their local environment.

The other exceptional Urban Forest site is the Orchard in Baylis Park. It will showcase a large variety of heritage fruit tree species with interpretation boards, some of them developed in Slough, but will also have a beehive that will encourage pollinator activity and allow volunteers to produce some local honey. This site will also become a STEM lab for technology and bioscience and help



Aerial view of the Foxborough Labyrinth under construction

Slough young people to develop those essential hands-on skills with the help of Reading University.

As always, if you are interested in participating in the project, please get in touch via utcf@slough.gov.uk and we will add you to the email list.

Alisa Chukanova

'Walk the World' for



2020 was a devastating year for children all over the world. The coronavirus pandemic affected the lives of everyone, but it is children who will carry the scars. Rising poverty, worsening malnutrition, and lost opportunity for learning, the future is bleak.

With the world slowly opening, Save the Children are inviting you to take up the challenge of Walk the World and help children to change their future for good. There are four destinations to choose from: UK, Syria, Yemen and Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.

The members of the Slough Branch of Save the Children, based in Langley would like to make it to at least Syria, 2800 miles. But as we can't travel we are planning to do this over a period of six weeks by walking, running, cycling or swimming with a group of friends in our local area, adding up everyone's

individual miles to get to the total.

If you would like to join us please contact Liz Jones, 07930 310201 for more information. Or you can donate on our Justgiving page

<https://www.justgiving.com/team/STC-WTW-SB>

The Annual Plant Sale!



At: 196 Langley Road, outdoors.

On: Saturday 22nd May 2021

Time: 2-4pm

Vegetable seedlings, bedding plants and perennials for sale. Tea and cake will also be available.

Liz Jones (07930 310201)

Greetings from Retirement in 'Sunny Wales'

As readers will probably know, I retired as Team Rector of Langley Marish at the end of January, and Juliet and I moved to South Wales in mid-February. This area is in fact notoriously wet, rather than 'sunny', and there is a certain perverse pride locally in the changeable weather. When our daughter and family popped up from Cardiff – to meet outdoors, of course – we took a walk together in mud, rain, sunshine and finally hail. When we apologised that it was not a very nice day for a visit, they replied '[Croeso i Cymru](#)' –

'Welcome to Wales'!

On a clear day, though, we can see that we are surrounded here by four mountains; I think they do qualify for that description, rising some 350 to 400 meters above us. So far, we have walked to the top of each of them at least once, as well as through much of the woods and valleys between. I will own to giving voice to songs from *The Sound of Music* on occasion! As lockdown restrictions now gradually ease, we will have much to explore further afield, such as the Brecon Beacons just to the north; but having such wonderful walking country immediately on our doorstep has provided a life-saving break from all the unpacking and fixing up of house and garden. Look up NP11 6GS, if you want to get a sense of our surroundings.

One sadness for us has been the death of our cat, Sapphire. Visitors to the Vicarage in years past will remember two black cats with white paws that we acquired from the Battersea Home in Old Windsor not long after we arrived in Langley in 2006. Diamond left us in



December 2019 and we were not sure if her sister would even make it as far as the move. Now she is buried in the garden of Bank House and we are left wondering whether to look for a successor; it is certainly strange to be without an animal in the house after nearly 40 years.

There have been few opportunities so far to get involved in a local church or any other activities; the doors of the famous Risca Male Choir, in a grand building just down the road from us, remain stubbornly closed. But we do find people very friendly and ready to chat when we meet them out and about. We have sampled some online services (from a variety of denominations) and tried out the nearby St Mary's, but have not yet settled on a regular community or place of worship. Some clergy like to pick up opportunities for ministry as soon as possible after retirement – I am happy to take a break for now.

Instead, I have been learning Welsh through various online platforms. My favourite is aimed at primary school children – just the right level for me! Opportunities to converse in Welsh are not common in this part of the country, but it is nice to get to grips with the pronunciation and the ubiquitous bilingual signs.

When it is 'not *actually* raining' (as we say here in Risca), Juliet and I are often at work in the large garden or around the outside of the house. It is rather grand in aspect, having once housed a bank

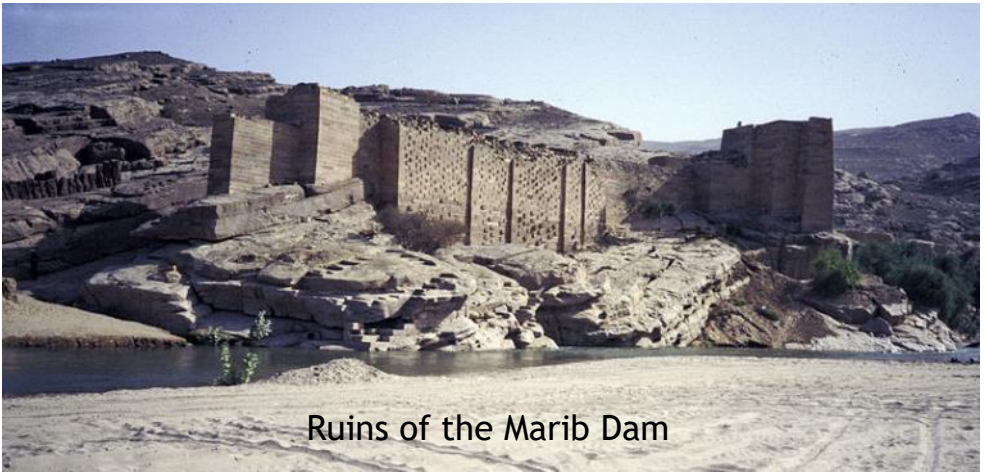
(hence the name), but is now divided into two dwellings. It is generally in good condition but there are always things to work on; thankfully we can now see the end of the huge amount of rubbish that we've had to remove from the site. When not insulating the loft, digging the vegetable patch, repairing a shed or painting the front door, there are complex Lego models (gifts from our children) to construct, books to read, and Welsh phrases to practise.

We do miss Langley, especially that sense of connection with and involvement in a community. We also miss the ethnic mix; Risca, unlike nearby Newport or Cardiff, is fairly solidly white British. But we look forward to making those connections in the near future, as well as to spending time with friends and family. We hope to be open for visitors by the summer!

Rev. Robin Grayson

A Forgotten Church, A Doomed Dam, The Birth of Islam

The new Christian faith spread quickly and widely, far beyond the Roman Empire, and often taking root in communities resulting from the Jewish *diasporas*. The variety of languages spoken by the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2) presages this, and in Acts 8, we learn that Apostle Philip met, converted and baptised an important Ethiopian in Gaza.



Ruins of the Marib Dam

In the 4th C CE, the King, of the rich kingdom of Axum, in Ethiopia, converted to Christianity, forming a Church which strongly embraced Jewish traditions, including Sabbath observance, dietary rules, and circumcision – for men *and* women (now called FGM). It should not be confused with the Egyptian Coptic Church, even though, curiously, it always sought a token Coptic bishop from the patriarchs in Alexandria. It was an early enthusiast of monasticism.

The Church endures, and its many monuments include unique temples, not cut out of the rock, like multi-story sculptures! In one of these, allegedly, rests the Ark of the Covenant, supposedly brought there by Axum's first king, Menelik, son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Strangely, it is said to be adorned with crosses, rather prematurely.

Sheba, or Saba, roughly modern Yemen, was a prosperous kingdom in Solomon's

time: on an already important trading route, fertile, and source of the widely prized myrrh and frankincense, both derived from local trees – and much later, of coffee! Much of this prosperity depended on a remarkable dam at the 'capital', Marib, originally built around 1700 BC, closer to Abraham's time than to Solomon's. It was often repaired and improved, particularly in the 7th C BC. It was some 600 metres long, 15 metres high, with huge abutments and spillways, and a 1-kilometre canal leading to the irrigation network. Much of its massive masonry remains today.

Fast forward a few centuries. In 524 CE, the ruler of Saba, converted to Judaism, celebrating with a massacre of Christians. The survivors appealed for help to the Byzantine emperor. It came instead from Christian the King of Axum, whose rulers had long coveted the wealth of Saba. Success was celebrated with a massacre of Jews, and efforts were made to extend Christian rule further in Arabia. Then,



bloody revolt, with the help of its neighbour and recent enemy, Eritrea. (Abiy Ahmed, political ruler of Ethiopia, received a Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for stopping his war with Eritrea.) Atrocities, warfare and human suffering abound, and the ancient monuments are in peril.

In Yemen, Marib, which has a modern dam, is home to hundreds of thousands of refugees, and is defended by forces loyal to the exiled Sunni

government. It is besieged by rebel Shia Houthi forces, who control the nearby capital of Sana'a and much of the country. In a long-running civil war, the Houthis are supported by Iran, and the exiled government by Saudi Arabia and others. As in Tigray, atrocities, warfare and human suffering abound, monuments are in peril, famine and disease are rampant, on even greater scale. Yemen is home to 'the world's worst humanitarian crisis', according to the UN.

around 570, the Marib dam collapsed, not for the first time, but disastrously. Axum lost interest in Arabia, and the Arabians, most of whom anyway clung to earlier beliefs such as sun and moon worship, lost interest in Axum, inviting the Persian empire to take over, which they did.

Meanwhile, also about 570, Mohammed was born in Mecca. In the 7th C CE the Persian governor of Saba became an early convert to Islam, although the Christian presence survived. There were various theories about the dam's fateful collapse. The Qur'an says it was a punishment from God. According to some scholars, if the dam hadn't broken, Arabia might well have been Christian and Islam might never have got started.

At time of writing:

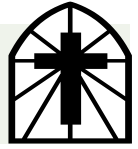
There is even a new mega-dam, this time on the Nile in Ethiopia! It brings a real prospect of conflict with downstream Sudan, and particularly, Egypt.

Many turbulent centuries later, Axum and Marib are again making news. Axum is in the Ethiopian province of Tigray, where the Ethiopian regime is suppressing a

Remember Ecclesiastes (1:9): ***The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun.***

Michael Knight

Regular Weekly Service Times



Holy Family (Roman Catholic) (Trelawney Avenue)

We broadcast a Mass over the internet each **Sunday at 10am**

People are welcome to email holyfamilylangley@yahoo.co.uk
to ask for an invitation to register.

Langley Free Church (Baptist) (Trelawney Avenue)

All our Sunday services are at 10.30am and currently recorded, the first Sunday of the month being All-Age worship. They are accessible via Youtube search: type in 'Langley Free Church'; or via our website www.langleyfree.org.uk. We are *also* live-streaming now.

The Anglican churches of St Mary (St Mary's Road) , St Francis of Assisi (London Road) and Christ the Worker (Parlaunt Road) are now generally closed for regular worship. Services will be by Zoom.

On Sundays at 11.00am there will be Holy Communion or Morning Worship. On Weekdays (Mon—Sat) morning prayer is at 8.45am

Log in details are the same, and are available on
<https://www.facebook.com/ParishofLangley/>

On Sundays beginning 9th May, we plan to have a socially-distanced communion service at St Mary's, at 8am.

All group activities in our churches are suspended until further notice. See also Parish Directory on p. 19 for contact details for churches.

So you think English is easy? Then try reading aloud these sentences.



The bandage was wound round the wound.

The farm was used to produce produce.

The dump was so full it had to refuse refuse.

We polish Polish furniture.

He could lead if he could get the lead out.

The man decided to desert dessert in the desert.

Since there is no time like the present, he decided to present the present.

A bass was painted on the base drum.

When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.

I did not object to the object.

The insurance for the invalid was invalid.

There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.

They were too close to the door to close the door.

Ascension and Pentecost

Ascension Day is a Christian festival that falls on a Thursday and it can easily be overlooked, even by Christians. Ascension marks the event, forty days after the resurrection, when Jesus publicly and visibly parted with his disciples to return to His Father in heaven, with instructions for them to remain in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit.

It is an event that had to happen. Jesus couldn't simply keep on appearing to his followers indefinitely. There had to be a cutting off point, after which they must get on with the mission that He had entrusted to them: the mission which was to *'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'* (Matthew 28:19-20).

What is significant in

Luke's account of the ascension is how he describes the disciples after they witness the Ascension; they return to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives 'with great joy'. Surely after the departure of such a good and caring friend, there would be at least an element of sadness and loss. Curiously, this appears to be an event that precipitated a great burst of worship and praise, so there must have been something special about the Ascension that gave the disciples the assurance that the best was still to come.

Jesus had promised that when he left them, he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them (John 14:16). Jesus had to leave them, paradoxically, so that he could be with them in a more complete

way. In human form, he was confined to one time and place, but through the presence of the Holy Spirit, he is no longer confined to the physical world, but can be with all believers

simultaneously, at all times and in all places. So, the disciples waited in Jerusalem, not in sadness at the loss of a good and



caring friend, but in joyful expectation of God's presence with them.

Jesus had described the Holy Spirit as Counsellor, Comforter and Guide – available every day and all day, so the disciples were anticipating the joy of the presence of God that would remain with them permanently. The Ascension had to happen before the Holy Spirit could come. The event is described in the Acts of the Apostles (1:6:11). The Ascension demonstrably signifies the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus, and the beginning of the story of the Church. Jesus ascended in order that we, like the disciples, may receive His Holy Spirit.

So, after Ascension Day, the Church waits with eager expectation for the great day of Pentecost, for a renewed outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. Pentecost Sunday, is a day of celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, recalling the founding of the Christian Church. It is therefore rightly known as the Church's birthday. Despite its great importance, sadly, Pentecost (or Whit Sunday) gets forgotten by the world at large.

In passing, we note that Whit Sunday like Easter is a peculiarly English name for the day. Whit Sunday literally mean 'White Sunday' – wherein candidates for baptism would appear dressed in white clothes, as a symbol of purity. This custom has continued until recent times in the rite of Confirmation, when girls would wear white dresses. But Pentecost is the older, and more appropriate name of the day,

which takes us right back to its origins. Literally, it means fifty, reminding us that Pentecost falls fifty days after Passover.

Jesus had told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem, until the Holy Spirit came upon them. It was on the day of Pentecost, as we read the story in Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles, that the Holy Spirit came, affirmed them in their faith, filled them with his presence, and sent them out to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. The symbol for Pentecost is fire, representing the tongues of fire that touched those first disciples as the Holy Spirit came upon them, and symbolic also of the rapid spread of the gospel, like wildfire, across the Roman Empire.

Pentecost was, and still is, a Jewish festival, celebrating the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. It is therefore no coincidence that God should choose this day to give the Holy Spirit to His Son's followers. The Holy Spirit represents a new kind of law, however, no longer written on tablets of stone, but on the human heart; no longer a series of commandments, but the law of the Spirit – primarily the law of love. The law of love challenges us to reflect on our attitudes and behaviour and urges us to endeavour to live in obedience to God and bear much fruit, the fruit of the spirit as Paul reminds us (Gal. 5:22 being love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control).

Rev. Shola Aoko

A Changing Church

Church Historians would agree that the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) was the most important event in the recent history of the Catholic Church. It can be rightly described as a call for renewal within the Church. It triggered changes but it also gave rise to a considerable resistance to change from a significant minority. I saw the reaction to changes in the Church typified in my own parents. My father was uneasy, sceptical, my mother was overjoyed at the novelty, embracing with gusto the changes.

The person to set the ball rolling for the Council was an octogenarian, Pope (now Saint) John XXIII. It looked like a bolt from the blue, for the Pope had been thought of as a conservative. But what many did not realise was that he had been a professor of Church History and an ambassador of the Holy See in Bulgaria, a non-Catholic country during WW2. He called those who opposed his convocation of the 3,000 plus bishops at the Council "prophets of doom" and he emphasised that in the modern world, the Church needed updating.

But was the Council really a bolt from the blue? A study of what preceded Vatican II, can help us appreciate that the Council was in fact the result of movements that were increasingly pressing for changes within the Church. At one level the Church had the trappings of a political entity. It had its ambassadors; it had

signed concordats with Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and with Franco's Spain; to appoint bishops in British colonies a nod from Whitehall was necessary. The Vatican welcomed American involvement in Europe to stem the expansionist aims of Soviet Communism and it got rewarded with "Permanent Observer" status by the United Nations.

But many wondered: is this the kind of church Jesus founded, the "little flock" (Lk 12:32)? Theological, biblical and liturgical movements were already in ferment, with the Church supporting a slow shift in theology from an over-emphasis on dogma to a more Biblical approach. The nature of the Church as the 'people of God' rather than a structured institution, was highlighted. Liturgical experiments, which sometimes got out of hand, were on the increase. No, the reforms of Vatican II did not fall from the sky.

The Council produced sixteen documents twelve of which relate to how the Church understands itself, its structures, its worship, the training of its members, the Bible and Evangelisation. The other four are about the Church looking outwardly: Ecumenism, Interfaith Dialogue, Religious Freedom and the Church in the Modern World. A new way of looking at things runs through all these documents.

Basically there is a shift away from an imperialist and exclusivist church to that of the Church as the pilgrim people of God, recognising the signs of the times. A typical prayer of the Church that reflects



The Vatican

the spirit of the Council is the following:

“We pray for all nations: that they may seek the way that leads to peace, that human rights and freedom may be everywhere respected, and that the world’s resources may be generously shared.”

Post-conciliar documents, like the encyclicals of Pope Francis show a marked difference to pre-conciliar documents, in content and vision. They speak of the joy of the gospel, the love of God’s creation, a poor church for the poor, universal brotherhood.

The Catholic Church has seen the Church of England make substantive changes in recent years like introducing the General Synod, a deliberative and legislative body, in 1970 and later ordaining women priests and bishops. The Catholic Church made only minor changes in these areas by comparison. Pope Francis has

increased significantly the number of women in Vatican posts and appointed nine cardinals as his personal advisors. He has reactivated a consultative General Synod for the universal Church, recently appointing the first woman (a French nun) undersecretary of the Synod, with voting rights.

Will Covid-19 change the Church? Yes and no. Some people might prefer to sit comfortably at home watching a zoom or webinar mass – missing the whole point of being Church. The eucharist is not a TV show but the people of God united physically together with the priest before God. On the plus side, Covid has woken up the church to the evangelising opportunities the media offer. It also gives people the opportunity to admire so many beautiful churches and works of art around the world. Housebound people too can follow church services from their home.

At the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council Pope John XXIII quoted Karl Barth referring to a saying attributed to St Augustine: “The Church is always in need of reform.” St John Henry Newman’s words ring true today: “To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often.”

Alfred Akins

He who is without bias...



The American thinker Brian McLaren defines:

“Confirmation Bias: the human brain welcomes information that confirms what it already thinks and resists information that disturbs or contradicts what it already thinks.”

“Complexity Bias: the human brain prefers a simple lie to a complex truth.”

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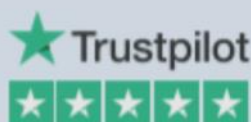
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Spring

NOTHING is so beautiful as spring—

*When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.*

What is all this juice and all this joy?

*A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden.—Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.*

Gerald Manley Hopkins



Dee S Clark



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Parish Directory

St Mary's Church

www.langleymarish.com/stmary

Rev. Shola Aoko 01753 547025 shola_aoko@yahoo.co.uk

Churchwarden: Mrs Joy Raynor 01753 676011 joyraynor@aol.com

Churchwarden: Anna Thomas-Betts: 01753 822 013 a.thomasbetts@gmail.com

Hall Lettings: Simona de Gregorio. tel. 07968 408813

churchcentre@hotmail.com

St Francis Church

www.langleymarish.com/stfrancis

Rev. Shola Aoko 01753 547025 shola_aoko@yahoo.co.uk

Hall Hire: Mrs Joy Raynor 01753 676011 joyraynor@aol.com

Licensed Lay Minister: Mr Bill Birmingham 01753 548646 billbirmingham@gmail.com

Christ the Worker Church

www.langleymarish.com/c-t-w/

Rev. Shola Aoko 01753 547025 shola_aoko@yahoo.co.uk

Hall Lettings: Simona de Gregorio. tel. 07968 408813 ctw.langleym@gmail.com

Parish Administrator: Mrs Dalletta Reed 01753 541042 langleymarish@gmail.com

Holy Family Catholic Church

www.holyfamily.co.uk

Parish Priest: Canon Kevin O'Driscoll

Deacon: Rev. Graham Jones

Hall Hire: Mrs Maria Boland

All above contactable at 01753 543770 holyfamilylangley@yahoo.co.uk

Parish Worker: Mr Kieran McKeown 01753 543770 kieranmckeown50@yahoo.co.uk

Langley Free Church

www.langleyfreechurch.org.uk

Pastor Rev. John Bernard 01753 473219 pastor@langleyfree.org.uk

Hall Hire: 01753 540771 bookings@langleyfree.org.uk

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