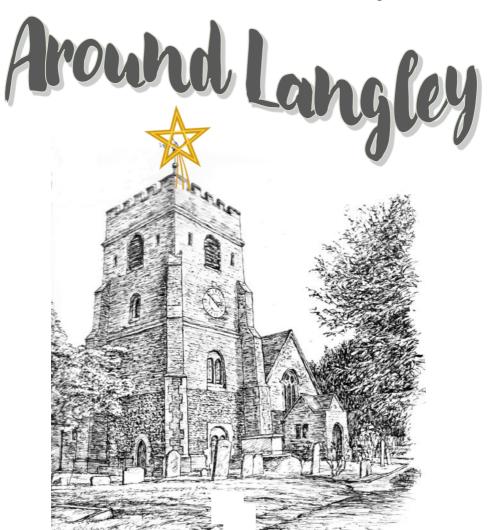
December 2021/January 2022



Church of St Mary the Virgin

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

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#### From Darkness into Light

It is nearly December (as I write this) and many a deciduous tree is still in leaf, indeed green leaf, as it has been warm for the season so far. (When all the leaves do come down, our Council won't be emptying our Green Bins, more is the pity!) Now that we have moved back to GMT, the dark evenings are very much with us, however, and daylight hours are getting smaller. In the Christian calendar, we are getting into the season of Advent, a time of waiting and hoping. Advent ends with Christmas, very much a time of lights—whether it be candle light or Christmas tree lights...—that fill our hearts with joy. Our Hindu and Sikh neighbours have also recently celebrated Diwali, the festival of lights, with much the same theme of 'light in darkness'.

COP26 did not achieve agreement on everything that needs to be done, but there is much to be grateful for, not least among them the acknowledgement of the urgency for action.

Hasn't the Pandemic brought home to us facets of darkness and light! How bleak our Christmas looked this time last year, and how the vaccines became our light on the horizon, growing in brightness as 2021 progressed. And yet, most of the world is still in darkness as regards Covid-19 vaccines. This is dangerous and damaging not only for them, but for the whole world, because the more people infected, the greater the chance of variants appearing. Let us hope that 2022 will turn darkness into light for many people around the world.

Christmas is just weeks away and we know that the Covid numbers are still high, even in our highly vaccinated country. We can but hope and pray that families can continue to meet and have a happy Christmas and New Year.

Anna Thomas-Betts

# **News from Around Langley**

# Langley Community Coffee Shop



Looking back over 2021 one is grateful to have survived Covid-19 and for all that the NHS has done for us in rolling out the vaccines and being there for us. I hadn't realized until the lockdown how important our community activities were to all of us, missing the friendship and the purpose it gave to our lives.

I would like to apologise for not being able to have the coach trips as planned. The trip to Bournemouth had to be cancelled because it was not viable with the numbers signing up, and the trip to Winchester Christmas Markets could not take place due to rising Covid numbers.

I would like to thank Linda Tabor Thomas for her interesting enjoyable workshop on 'Happiness'. Some of the things we covered in our happiness workshop the were: importance of keeping active, a healthy diet, connection and community activity, the ability to keep learning and taking notice and showing gratitude. The first three things were difficult for everyone during lockdown, so this was a timely reminder to us. And learning new things is a struggle to maintain without interaction with others.

classes although both Slough Borough Council and the Langley Community College failed to provide a trainer. We now have had to pay for the exercise sessions, but we think everyone will benefit. I hope there is sufficient enthusiasm to continue with the classes in 2022.

Here are some dates for your diary.

#### December 2021

- 9<sup>th</sup> Christmas Lunch at Wexham Park Golf Club at 12pm
- 14<sup>th</sup> Carol singing with hand bells, mince pies and quiz (last meeting of 2021)

#### January 2022

4<sup>th</sup> First meeting of 2022 18<sup>th</sup> Speaker (to be arranged)

Everyone is welcome to the Langley Community Coffee Shop - those of any faith or no faith. We try to have activities of interest as well as speakers and are open to suggestions. The meetings are held every Tuesday between 10am and 11.30am in St Joseph's Hall behind the Holy family Catholic Church in Trelawney Ave.

There is also a need for volunteers and committee members.

All good wishes to readers for Christmas and the New Year from the Langley Community Coffee Shop!

Sheila Papali

At long last we have started our exercise

# More Visions of Slough (An update of the Article in September)

Earlier this year, Slough Borough Council (SBC) undertook a re-structuring of its departments and operations, envisaging a cost-saving and (with typical modesty) 'world-class' new organisation. Along with so much else, it has been judged a failure - or, in the words of our Council Leader, "a bit botched." It did lead to 49 redundancies, and will have cost us council taxpayers another £5million+.

Following SBC's declaration bankruptcy, the relevant governmental department instigated investigations into the 'governance' of SBC, and its real financial situation. The many criticisms, recommendations of the 43 resultant two reports have been covered in the local press (and to a lesser degree, nationally). One report concluded there had been "years of inadequate governance and action" and the other "a deeply concerning picture mismanagement". Particular problems included 'closed-door' cabinet poor selection of senior decisions, officials, excessive reliance on consultants, interim managers and staff, mis-reporting of agency expenditure and investment figures, failure to collect millions of pounds owed



The Vision for Slough Central Source: SBC Facebook Page

to the council by developers, and inept large-scale speculation in commercial real estate. For example, Observatory House, the Council's £41million new palace, did not have functioning communications and is half empty, for lack of expected business tenants.

Apparently, this year's budget (2021/22) has somehow been balanced. forward. Going however, Government's vision is that half of SBC's supposed £1.2billions of assets must be sold, to reduce its debt-servicing burden and that £20 million per annum must be cut from its annual revenue budget in coming years, i.e. the money needed to run the authority and discharge its obligations. 'A big ask', in current parlance; the total budget in 2020/21 was £124 million. So far, closure of several

day care centres and reduced library services are proposed, saving perhaps £1.5 million. It's a start.

Commissioners will be appointed soon, to oversee and if necessary to overrule SBC decisions for three years. They will (hopefully) be experts, and certainly expensive; £800 per person/day has been mentioned, from other cases. Less frequent local elections are suggested, electing *all* councillors each time, to provide political stability in the coming difficult years. It might be argued that over 20 years of increasing political stability has been the root cause of Slough's dire situation.

Read our Council Leader's response to these judgements on slough.gov.uk. He is meekly receptive, and is hopeful the Commissioners won't actually interfere with his Cabinet's ongoing wisdom.

Meanwhile, SBC (like other authorities) is working on its Local Plan and Spatial Strategy to 2040, as required by Government. It includes consideration of ten possible green belt sites, two in Langley, to construct up to 5,000 new, mostly 'affordable' houses (yes, houses) of three or more bedrooms. For details, and the chance to comment (up to 17 December), see slough.citizenspace.com or slough.gov.uk

As the season of indulgence and unstinted spending approaches, of Black Friday bargains and Boxing Day binges (two extra days this year!), perhaps we should spare more than usual help and

generosity for charities supporting our fellow residents who are harmed, hopeless, hard-up or homeless. They will most keenly feel the consequences of our Council's follies. Some of the charities can actually be found in the High Street malls of Slough Central. (A fanciful thought: if Observatory House continues to lack paying tenants, perhaps our elected councillors could host a foodbank and/or night refuge there?)

What about that previously mentioned long-term vision of ADIA/British Land? So far, outline plans for the Queensmere site alone have been submitted to SBC. See Sloughcentral.com for more details and the opportunity to comment.

#### Michael Knight



# Carols by Candlelight On Christmas Eve 7pm at St Mary the Virgin

A traditional service of Nine Lessons and Carols to which everyone is invited.

Also at **Christ the Worker** 6.30pm on Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> Dec.

### COP26—what did it achieve?

The fortnight of COP26 in Glasgow, when the nations gathered to consider Climate Change, turned into 15 days in the end, with negotiations and bargaining continuing till the very end. It was an emotional Alok Sharma, the Chairman, who summarised what the meeting had achieved at the end of the Conference.

The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 was acknowledged. Quite a daunting prospect. However, and not surprisingly, the larger and poorer nations were reluctant to give up on coal, their main source of energy, so a decision could not be reached about phasing it out, although they agreed to reduce its use and bring forward definite proposals within a year. Rules to control a global carbon market also were agreed after years of wrangling. Richer nations were urged to increase their funding to poorer countries to mitigate their costs of reducing emissions and to honour their pledges of the previous COP, in Paris.

To quote the Economist: "Not the stuff of triumph, but not a trainwreck either'!



# Father Christmas is Coming to Langley!

Langley and Iver Rotary will be bringing Father Christmas to Langley with his sleigh and Christmas music to see all the children (and adults too)! His elves will be collecting money for several local Rotary-designated causes including Thames Valley Adventure Playground, Ivers Community Partnership, Slough Food Bank, Slough Homeless Our Concern and Thames Hospice. The collection will be from 6pm to 8pm.

Father Christmas will be in the Hillary Road area on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December, in the Seacourt Road area on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December and in Trelawney Road on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup>. On Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> he will be found in the Alderbury Road area. On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> he will be visiting Maplin Park and Grasholm Way and finally will reach the Castleview area on Friday 17<sup>th</sup>.



Look out for posters showing which streets he will be visiting and on the evenings he is visiting. You can follow his progress on <a href="https://www.sleightracker.co.uk">www.sleightracker.co.uk</a>

### A Christmas puzzle from Angus MacKenzie

(Answers on Page 16)



## Christmas Services in Langley



# Church of England Churches

(St Mary the Virgin, St Mary's Road; St Francis, London Road; Christ the Worker, Parlaunt Road)

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> 10am Christingle Service **St Francis** 

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> 6.30pm Nine Lessons and Carols at Christ the

Worker

6.30pm Carols and Coffee at **St Francis** 

Christmas Eve 4pm Crib Service at **St Mary the Virgin** 

7pm Carols by Candlelight at **St Mary the Virgin** 

11.30pm Midnight Mass at St Mary the Virgin

Christmas Day 9.30 am Family Communion at Christ the Worker

10am Family Communion St Mary the Virgin

10am Service of the Word at **St Francis** 

Boxing Day 10am Holy Communion at **St Mary the Virgin** 

#### Langley Free Church (Baptist), Trelawney Avenue

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> 10.30am Sunday School Christmas Production

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> 6.30pm Carol Service

Christmas Day 10.30am Christmas Day Celebration Service

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> 10.30am All age Christmas Celebration

#### Holy Family Roman Catholic Church, Trelawney Avenue

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> 2.00pm Reconciliation Service

8.oopm Reconciliation Service

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> 5.00pm First Mass of Christmas

9.00pm Christmas Mass

Christmas Day 8.30am Mass

10.30am Mass

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> 9.30 am Mass

11.30 am Mass

# Regular Weekly Service Times



#### Holy Family (Roman Catholic) (Trelawney Avenue)

In December we will be having Masses at 5pm on Saturdays and 9.30am and 11.30am on Sundays

The 9.30am Mass is live streamed on our YouTube Channel: "HOLYFAMILYCHURCHLIVE"

#### Langley Free Church (Baptist) (Trelawney Avenue)

All our services on Sundays will be at 10.30am, with the second Sunday being a Communion Service. Those attending church will be expected to wear a mask until seated. Communion will be as normal, or using individual, disposable plastic cups.

#### The Anglican Churches

#### St Mary (St Mary's Road)

8am Holy Communion (BCP, said)

11am Family Communion

#### Christ the Worker (Parlaunt Road)

9.30am Holy Communion and Service of the Word, alternating

#### St Francis of Assisi (London Road)

9.30am Holy Communion on First and Third Sundays and Service of the Word on Second Sunday. Service of the Word **at 11am** on Fourth Sunday.

### Regular Church Activities at Langley Free Church

#### **Bible Study**

The two Thursday Bible Study Groups of Langley Free Church have started meeting now. One group meets in the morning and the other in the evening. The sessions are based on Biblical text, Biblical characters or the Christian perspective on contemporary issues. All are welcome. For more information email secretary@langleyfree.org.uk or phone the church, 01753 540771

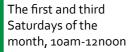
#### Mondays at LFC

Do feel free to pop into Langley Free Church any time between 10.30 and 2.30, for a chat, refreshments, games, even table tennis. 6<sup>th</sup> December sees the start of the optional 'fish and chips run', which will be on the first Monday of every month thereafter.

On December 20<sup>th</sup>, we will be enjoying some festive food, a Quiz, and a singalong to Christmas songs and carols. We will then break for Christmas and will start back on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

Contact: Chris Wheatley – 07789 838 500

# Chatcaf coffee morning @



No charge! Feel free to drop in for coffee/tea and toast and a chat!



#### Oasis at Langley Free

Wednesdays from 1.30 to 3.30pm
A time of worship and speakers, with refreshments, and occasional meals out.
Programme for December:

1st Tony Randall; 8th Christmas Memories
15th Christmas Afternoon
Programme starts again on January 5th.

Contact: Ann Portsmouth on 01753 585845

#### Craft Afternoons at LFC

There will be no craft afternoons in December, but we look forward to starting back on Saturday, 15th January 2022, 12—4pm.

We hope that you will join us for a relaxing time, a lot of chat and refreshments. If you haven't been before, or maybe would like to learn how to knit or crochet, or

something else, then do come along, as we would be only too happy to help and encourage you.

Chris and Ingrid wish you a very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

Contact: Chris Wheatley - 07789 838 500



### **Faith Matters**

## The First Epiphany

On the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, Christians celebrate the revelation of Christ to the world. Matthew, the only evangelist who reports this event, writes: "...some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. 'Where is the infant king of the Jews?' they asked. 'We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.' (See Around Langley February 2017). This is how Matthew introduces the self-identity and the universal dimension of the mission of Jesus.

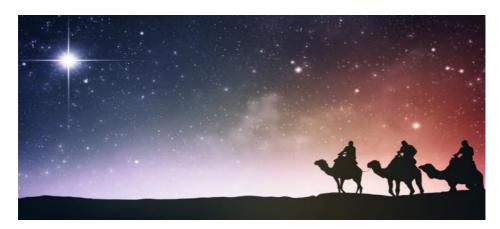
Epiphany is one of the three major Christian celebrations along with Christmas and Easter. Its unique purpose is to celebrate the divinity of Christ. Nobody knows the date of the birth of Jesus as the Gospels do not tell us, but in the first four Centuries, the birth, epiphany and baptism of Jesus were all celebrated on 6<sup>th</sup> January. However, many Christians in the Roman Empire continued to celebrate 25<sup>th</sup> December as the feast of the birth of the sun, a public holiday. To override this pagan custom, the Church decided to move the feast of the birth of Jesus to 25<sup>th</sup> December, leaving the Epiphany and the baptism of Jesus to be on 6<sup>th</sup> January.

The Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England and most other Christians now celebrate the Epiphany on 6<sup>th</sup> January, on the twelfth day after Christmas. The

Armenian church which was not in the Roman Empire (and therefore did not celebrate the birth of the sun on 25<sup>th</sup> December) did not have this problem of a pagan festival: so, faithful to their forefathers, the Armenians still celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Epiphany and the baptism of Jesus, all on 6<sup>th</sup> January!

To understand the way the Gospels reveal the divinity of Jesus, it is important to remember that they are not a history of the life of Jesus but a collection of faith documents, spelling out the faith of the different early Christian communities. The four gospels, all written in Greek, the lingua franca of the Middle East at the time of Jesus, are the product of secondgeneration Christians. Each one of the evangelists has his own way of ordering the raw material about Jesus, received most probably by word of mouth. While the core message is the same, each gospel is addressed to a different community (e.g., Matthew to Jews who knew the Old Testament, Luke to Greekspeaking people in the Middle East) that had its own cultural and socio-political background. Indeed, Paul, whose letters were written earlier, shows no awareness of the gospels.

The first Christians were all Jews, but as more and more non-Jewish people from Syria and Asia Minor and Greece were added to their number, the early Jewish Christians began to encounter Greek



civilization that had its own concepts and words to express religious experience and beliefs. The Greek word *epiphaneia* means 'the visible manifestation of a hidden divinity either in the form of a personal appearance or by some deed of power by which its presence is made known'. The Holy Spirit showed the new people of God that Jesus was not a god like the Greek and Roman gods. Nor was he like Rama or Krishna in Hinduism, human appearances (*avatar*) of Vishnu, the second divinity of the Hindu triad.

The gospels give us a sound basis for holding that Jesus was truly a man, being born and dying and naturally showing human limitations. But along with this there were unmistakeable signs of his divinity, progressively revealed in his words and deeds. Remember the words, "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58). He was killed because he was deemed to be a blasphemer, who, being man, claimed to be God. (Mt 26:64). The whole of the Christ event is the great epiphany of God's relationship with humanity.

The first of the three landmark occasions

when we get a hint of the divinity of Jesus on earth was, significantly, not to the Jews but to the world symbolized by the Magi ('the wise men' from the east) who offered Jesus incense acknowledging his divinity (Mt 2:1-12). The second was when he was baptized by his cousin John as God the Father was heard saying of Jesus: "This is my beloved Son." (Mt 3:17). The third epiphany was at the request of his watchful and sensitive mother at the wedding feast in Cana. In the Fifth century these first three epiphanies were identified as demonstrating the divinity of Christ. Other later epiphanies, as we know, are well recorded in the gospels (for example when Jesus heals the paralytic (Mk 14:6-62) and when Jesus answers the High Priest at his trial as recorded by Matthew and Luke).

So what message is being offered to us in this mysterious cosmic phenomenon, of a brilliant star guiding non-Jewish people of good will to the newly born 'King of the Jews'. The good news is that though God prepared a chosen people for his coming, when he did come, he came for all nations. It shows the impartiality and the

inclusivity of God. The chosen people did not recognise Him when he came except for a few poor shepherds. Most people did not know what was happening. The political and religious powerful few were troubled and upset. But the wise men from the east, led by the star, searched, travelled far and wide till they found the God made man. They adored him but were told to avoid meeting Herod again and to go back to their own countries by Matthew, later in the another route. gospel comes back to this theme in chapter 19.: "many who are first will be last, and the last will be first" (Mt:30) because, as we read in Isaiah, "God's ways are not our ways."

Alfred Agius

# The Creeds (6) ... the one Holy, Catholic Church

It may come as a surprise to some people that it is not only in Jesus Christ that we claim to believe. And even more of a surprise that that we don't stop with our declaration of our belief in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Creeds go on to say: 'I believe in the holy catholic Church' (Apostles' Creed) and '... in one holy catholic and apostolic Church' (Nicene Creed).

One of my friends once asked, 'Why do we

as Anglicans say we believe in the catholic church?' Of course we learn that it is the church. and universal not denomination, that the Creeds are talking about here, although even in the early Third Century, when the Nicene Creed was formulated, there was more than one denomination of Christians (e.g. Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches), with their own spiritual leaders. Nevertheless, it is quite legitimate to ask, 'why do we believe in the Church?'; do we not know how awfully people in the church, including leaders in the highest position in the church, have behaved throughout history, from the Inquisition to sexual and physical abuse?

For at least a partial answer to this question we need to go back to the early



An Icon of the Council of Nicea

history of the church and the time of the formulation of the Creeds. As Christianity spread, local congregations and churches started up as also did many controversies about the nature of God and, in particular, that of the Son (see Creeds (3) and (4) in *Around Langley*, September and October 2021). Who decides what true faith is? After the Apostles died and were no longer available for consultation, in the second and early third Centuries, it became clear that a focus was needed to articulate, if not interpret, faith.

To deal with these controversies and heresies, Emperor Constantine called the first Ecumenical Council of Bishops in Nicea in present-day Turkey in AD 325: it is recorded that it was attended by 318 Bishops, with participants not only from Rome and the Western churches, but also from Palestine, Persia, Arabia and so forth. Nicene Creed was born here and has remained more or less unchanged over the centuries.

That the church we believe in is 'Holy' can be easily understood in terms of the church being the body of Christ on earth, joined to himself by Christ. So the Church is 'the Holy people of God' and its members are called to be Saints. As Frances Young points out in her book, 'The Making of the Creeds', it is through the Church with all its failures that the Holy Spirit operates.

The Church is catholic in another sense also: she has been sent by Christ to the whole human race, to spread his Good

News to the ends of the earth.

The Nicene Creed also specifies belief in the 'apostolic' church. The Roman Catholic church holds 'apostolic succession' as important, recognising the priesthood of only those who have been 'lawfully' ordained by those who 'have an unbroken chain' of laying on of hands going back to St Peter, the first Pope, followed by St Linus and then a continual succession of Popes. The Church of England also lays claims to this unbroken church. chain, as reformed Interestingly, most Protestant churches also say the Nicene Creed, although their interpretation of 'apostolic' would not be the same as that of the Roman Catholics.

So do we as Christians need to believe in 'the church'? Indeed, do we even need a church to be Christian? At the very least the church is a corrective to individualism. Tod Bolsinger's book, 'It takes a Church to Raise a Christian' strongly defends Christianity corporate as а Excessive individualism movement. Bolsinger decries as "salad-bar" religion. For my part, I shudder inwardly when people use as touchstone the question, 'What would Jesus do in this situation?': I know that their answer is more likely to be based on their personal experience and probably prejudices.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral speaks of Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as the four sources for doctrinal development. When we say we believe in the holy catholic church, we are

calling on 'tradition': the collected wisdom that we find in the practices and writings of Christians throughout history. However, for Christians Reason is also important. While we call upon the wisdom and authority of the Church, we as individuals have the ultimate responsibility for our own actions.

#### Anna Thomas-Betts

#### Answers to the Christmas Puzzle, Page 8

- 1. The Holly and the Ivy 2. Seasons Greeting
- 3. Twelfth night 4. Mixed Nuts 5. Festive Season (Cs on Festive) 6. Partridge in a Pear Tree 7. Midnight Mass 8. Wrapping Paper (Wrap in [between] Paper



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St Nicholas Church, Taplow Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> December. 7.30pm

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#### WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 18th-25th January 2022



Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

"We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him." — Matthew 2:2

The resources this year are provided by the Middle East churches. The Langley Churches will again be observing this week of prayer by holding joint services in the different churches during the morning. Details available nearer the time, in churches and on their websites.

# Would you like to advertise in

Around Langley?

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richard.shircore@btinternet. com (07943 404388)

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# St Mary's Church www.langleymarish.com/stmary

Team Rector: Rev. Chris Ferris 07910 077885 rectoroflangley@gmail.com

Hall Lettings: Simona de Gregorio. tel. 07968 408813

churchcentre@hotmail.com

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

#### St Francis Church

Rev. Chris Ferris 07910 077885 rectoroflangley@gmail.com www.langleymarish.com/stfrancis

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.langley@gmail.com

# Holy Family Catholic Church www.holyfamily.co.uk

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Hall Hire: Mrs Maria Boland

All above contactable at 01753 543770 Parish Worker: Mr Kieran McKeown holyfamilylangley@yahoo.co.uk o1753 543770 kieranmcke-

own5o@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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