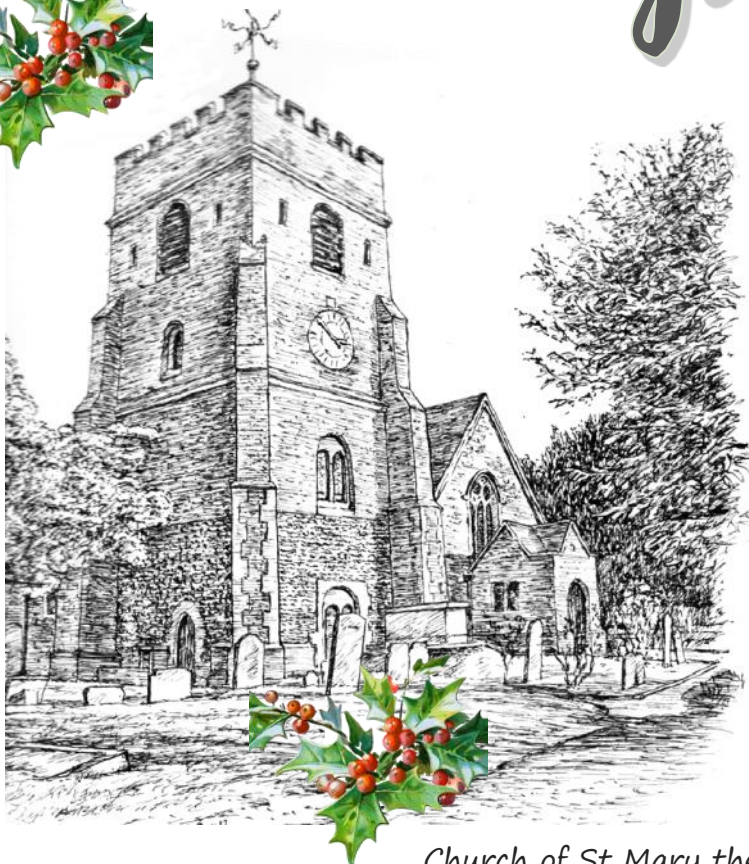


December 2022/January



Around Langley



Church of St Mary the Virgin

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

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About Around Langley

Dear Readers,

In March 2023, Around Langley will be 11 years old. I have been the editor since April 2016, taking over the mantle from Bill Birmingham. It has been a huge privilege to work on it during this time, but I shall be stepping down from the post in March 2023.

As you know, Around Langley is produced on behalf of the churches in Langley. The leaders of the churches are currently considering the future of a 'Community Magazine' in Langley.

I understand that the two main concerns are:

*'what impact does the magazine have and whom does it reach'; and,
'in the 21st Century, are paper magazines "user-friendly".'*

They are keen to have a wider consultation than with those who are directly involved in the production of the magazine. If you, readers, would like to express your views, please talk to your church leaders, or feel free to write to me and I shall pass on your messages to the priests. Thank you.

Anna Thomas-Betts

And the Light Shineth in Darkness...

There is no doubt that many people in this country, and millions more around the world, feel that they are floundering in darkness as we now approach Christmas. In many senses: literally because of not being able to light and heat their houses; or because they cannot see their way to surviving the current financial situation; or because of health problems exacerbated by NHS backlogs, to mention just a few.

Those who are familiar with the Christian faith will recall that St John depicts Jesus as a light, and in the first chapter of his Gospel, he tells us that the Light shines in Darkness. The celebration of a festival of lights is common to many religions, and around the world, of course. Maybe it is also a time when we should think of our own role in being a light for those around us, especially those floundering in the darkness of despair. And as Christmas approaches, and we think of presents and gifts, let us not forget those who will be dependent on food banks to get through the season.

This will be a Christmas Ukrainians will be spending under war and siege conditions after the Russian invasion in February., a hard time for those who struggle without water, power and essentials of life, but also with families split apart. As we remember the story of baby Jesus, having to flee his country of birth to become a refugee in Egypt, let us also remember the millions of people finding themselves in similar situation around the world.

COP27 is, like COP26 was, something to celebrate—at least in part. There is a welcome recognition of the need to help the world to get through the devastation produced by Climate Change, but not enough was done about reducing CO₂ emissions—a hard ask in times of real energy shortage.

Let us hope that 2023 will be a more peaceful one for us all.

Anna Thomas-Betts



News from Around Langley

Langley Neighbourhood Forum



Christmas Carols!

There will be an opportunity for the community to join in Christmas Carols with Langley Hall Primary Academy Concert Band and choir in Harrow Market on 1st December, at 5.30pm.

There will be no Christmas Lights in Slough this year, so no ceremony of switching on of lights.

Langley Community Coffee Shop



The Coffee Shop has continued to flourish this year and we look forward to our Christmas Lunch on 6th December, and our festivities on the 13th, with 'Friends of Langley Park' Bell Ringers playing carols.

During November we had a speaker, Steve Sansom, from Health Watch, East Berkshire who spoke about the role of the organisation. Health Watch covers England and Wales through 155 localised bodies, which people and organisations can contact if they have issues with the NHS. They meet NHS leaders and budget holders and draw their attention to the issues raised to

improve services. Health Watch can also signpost anyone with a query to a source that may be able to help.

This year we were able to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee little knowing that a few months later the Queen would die peacefully– on September 8th. No one could have served their country more faithfully than she did, always there to do her duty.

The coffee shop will break for Christmas on 12th December and reconvene on 3rd January 2023. We have yet to arrange a speaker for January so please let me have your ideas for speakers. In addition, our exercise classes will continue from 10.45am until 11.15am.

So I wish everyone a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Sheila Papali

On Elm Trees

I enjoyed reading in the November *Around Langley* the poem by John Clare, with the words 'And from the glossy elm trees takes / the faded leaves away'.

In my childhood elm trees were everywhere, in woods and hedgerows, and also in ornamental avenues in parks. In autumn their yellow leaves were much appreciated.

In the 1970s came the terrible Dutch Elm Disease. These handsome trees lost



their leaves and stood like skeletons. There were so many dead trees that it was impossible to cut them all down. The trees were killed by a fungus which blocked the tiny tubes carrying the sap up from the ground to the branches. And the fungus was carried from tree to tree by a special kind of beetle.

Fifty years later you can still see lots of elm trees growing in hedgerows, and can recognise their leaves. But they are all small. I went some years ago for a country walk and was delighted to see elm trees fifteen feet high. I thought, perhaps they have developed immunity to the fungus and will grow into the fine timber trees I used to see.

But no. When I went the same way a year later these trees were dead, their gaunt branches making part of the hedge. Little elm saplings escape the beetle. But when the tree grows big enough and the bark becomes thick enough the beetle can bore in, and the deadly fungus returns.

There is a strain of elm tree that has been found to be immune, and seeds from them have been planted and are now growing in a few parks and public

gardens. So it is possible that over many years a modern poet may be able to see the yellow leaves that so delighted John Clare.

Jeremy Hurst

John Clare on Winter

*The holly bush, a sober lump of green,
Shines through the leafless shrubs
all brown and grey,
And smiles at winter be it eer so keen
With all the leafy luxury of May.
And O it is delicious, when the day
In winter's loaded garment keenly blows
And turns her back on sudden
falling snows,
To go where gravel pathways
creep between
Arches of evergreen that scarce
let through
A single feather of the driving
storm;
And in the bitterest day that ever
blew
The walk will
find some places
still and warm
Where dead
leaves rustle
sweet and give
alarm
To little birds
that flirt and
start away.*



CHRISTMAS CONCERT In LANGLEY!

Come and enjoy...



Rutter Gloria

Parry Ode on the Nativity

Sibelius The Swan of Tuonela

Vaughn Williams, Warlock,

Audience Carols...

St Bernards School

Saturday, 17th December.

7.30pm

Box Office: Sloughphil.org

Tel 0300 365 7445



SAVE THE DATE!

Quiz Night

Saturday 11th February 2023

7pm at Iver Village hall

including fish & chip supper

Please contact
rcliclub@gmail.com for more
details

Slough Community Development Events in Queensmere Shopping Centre in the former B&M Store

We reported in the November issue that the Community Development Officer, Rebecca Curley, was supporting budding initiatives such as the Repair Café. Three initiatives—Repair Café where people are invited to take broken items for possible repair, an Anti-Litter Market where people can sell or buy second hand items of clothing, jewellery, household items and so forth; and an Up-Cycling place where old clothes can be renovated with fabric paint etc.—will be started on 26th November in Queensmere, in the former B&M store. This information is too late to be of use for the opening day, but the intention is to continue to open on the last Saturday of each month. Registration (free) is necessary, at www.Sloughantilitter.org.uk



COP27—what did it achieve?

COP—'Conference of the Parties'— we all know is the UN conference on all aspects of Climate change, the 27th COP held in Egypt having just finished. The main objectives of COP haven't changed: keep global temperature rises to less than 2deg C, and ideally 1.5deg, relative to pre-industrial revolution levels, strengthen the ability to adapt to change, and make financial commitments that lower greenhouse emissions. The reason this is important is that half the world's population is already now vulnerable to floods, droughts and storms, and the most vulnerable are 15 times as likely to die as a result as those unaffected.

The greatest achievement of this year's "African COP" was the setting up of a Loss and Damage Fund to help people most affected to cope with their loss, although there is some concern as to who decides how the funds should be allocated.

However, those who had high hopes for what the Conference might achieve were greatly disappointed by other developments there. It didn't help that this was happening under the economic and energy crisis produced by Putin's invasion of Ukraine. This has brought to the fore the major question about energy security, even for the West, making acute the tension between current and long term needs.

Nevertheless, the fact that the major CO₂ emitters such as China, India, Brazil and Indonesia have been 'let off the hook' as regards commitment to 1.5deg rise as well as their not having to contribute to the Loss and Damage Fund was deeply disappointing.

The other major concern was about fossil fuels. There were over 600 people at the conference representing the fossil fuel industry, with strong influence on governments. So, although the West is committed to an anti-fossil fuel stance, they are still supporting fossil fuel extraction in Latin American and African countries.

You will no doubt remember the stark warning of the UN Secretary General at the beginning of the Conference, "[We are] going to hell in a handcart, with our foot firmly on the accelerator". But commentators are not entirely gloomy. As one of them put it, *"NGOs and civil society, young and indigenous activists, philanthropy and the private sector (particularly the finance and insurance sectors), and mayors and governors played their largest role yet in driving new solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation."* (<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/fastthinking/the-big-success-and-bigger-failure-of-cop27/>)

Anna Thomas-Betts

songs

objects

events

foods

savings

carols

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3 “Hi” Spring
 “Yo” Summer
 “Hello” Autumn
 “Yay” Winter

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NIGHT NIGHT
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our planet

Special 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)





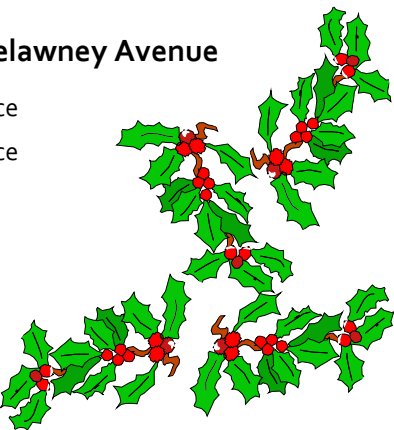
| | | |
|-------------------------|---------|---|
| Sunday 4 th | 4.00pm | Christingle Service at St Mary the Virgin |
| Sunday 11 th | 6.30pm | Nine Lessons and Carols at Christ the Worker |
| Friday 16 th | 10.00am | Christingle Service St Francis |
| Sunday 18 th | 3.00pm | Carols and Coffee at St Francis |
| Christmas Eve | 4.00pm | Crib Service at St Mary the Virgin |
| | 7.00pm | Carols by Candlelight at St Mary the Virgin |
| | 11.30pm | Midnight Communion at St Mary the Virgin |
| Christmas Day | 9.30 am | Holy Communion at Christ the Worker |
| | 10.00am | Family Communion St Mary the Virgin |
| | 10.00am | Service of the Word at St Francis |

Langley Free Church (Baptist), Trelawney Avenue



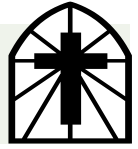
| | | |
|---------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|
| Sunday 4 th | 4.00pm | Messy Church Christingle |
| Sunday 11 th | 10.30am | Sunday School Christmas Production |
| Saturday 17 th | 6.30pm | Carol Service |
| Christmas Day | 10.30am | Christmas Day Celebration Service |

Holy Family Roman Catholic Church, Trelawney Avenue



| | | |
|---------------------------|---------|---------------------------|
| Wednes. 21 st | 2.00pm | Reconciliation Service |
| | 8.00pm | Reconciliation Service |
| Saturday 24 th | 5.00pm | Children's Service |
| | 7.30pm | Christmas Mass |
| | 10.00pm | Christmas Mass |
| | | (with carols from 9.30pm) |
| Christmas Day | 8.30am | Mass |
| | 9.30am | Mass |

Regular Weekly Service Times



Christmas Services are listed on Page 9.

Holy Family (Roman Catholic) (Trelawney Avenue)

We have Mass 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: on 5th, 12th and 19th December

On December 19th, we have Bring-and-Share Christmas celebrations. We will then break for Christmas and re-open on Monday 9th January 2023.

Happy Christmas to everyone!

Contact: Chris Wheatley – 07789 838 500

Chatcaf Coffee morning @ LFC



The first and third Saturdays of the month, 10am-12noon

3rd and 17th December, and
7th and 21st January

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:

7th Bills Bells; 14th Christmas Festivities.

We are closed then until the programme starts again on January 11th.

Details to be confirmed later.

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, 21st January 2023, 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.

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

Contact: Chris Wheatley – 07789 838 500





Faith Matters

The Beauty of Jesus Christ

"You are the most handsome of the sons of men, and grace is poured out upon your lips, for God has blessed you for evermore." (Ps 45:2)

Scripture scholars think that this psalm is a song to celebrate the marriage of an Israelite king, while both Jewish and Christian traditions understand it as celebrating the marriage of the messianic King with Israel. The early Church seems keen to reflect rather on the inter-personal relationship between Jesus and the Father. Jesus is perceived as 'the image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15) and Jesus tells Philip, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). The prototype of beauty is the very nature of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but that will always remain beyond our comprehension. Beauty created by humans, whether in visual images or human behaviour, is but a pale image of God's transcendent beauty. St Augustine calls the Holy Trinity the God who is "the Beauty of all things beautiful".

God does not want us to fall in love with created beauty if this in any way distracts us from experiencing His infinite beauty. Sin lies in preferring creatures to the creator. All creatures are God's gifts, beautiful in themselves and a reflection of

God's beauty. They are also good in so far as we can use them to lead us to Him. In this respect the celebration of Christmas, for instance, has to be seen as something beautiful and good in the context of God's plan of salvation. St Paul, writing to the Philippians (2:7) reminds them that the Lord Jesus, "emptied himself taking the form of a slave.... becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" as echoed in the Christmas hymn by the Redemptorist St Alphonsus Maria de Liguori: "O blessed God, how costly has your having loved us, been!".

Remember that at the nativity, the divinity of Jesus is totally hidden. The beauty of the baby Jesus has nothing to do with his physical appearance and we can only see it with the eyes of faith. God comes to us poor, homeless, and totally dependent on others.

We have no record of what Jesus looked like at any part of his life on earth. We only get a glimpse of the real Jesus at the transfiguration on Mt Tabor. We are told that his face "shone like the sun and his clothes became dazzling white" (Mt 17:2). It was a fleeting revelation granted to Peter, James and his brother John who needed this experience to cope with what was to come.

Jesus' birth, let alone the beauty of this event, is not mentioned in the gospels

according to Mark and John. And the two different accounts in Matthew and Luke respectively, cannot be fully reconciled with each other. They are two different accounts addressing two different audiences. Strictly speaking they are not meant to be history but faith documents, expressing the faith of the early church. The essential beauty of Jesus Christ is directly tied to his holiness, his complete otherness, the extent of his love. We need God's grace, and our openness to it, to discover the beauty of Jesus, to fall in love with the lover and not be distracted by the beauty of his gifts.



St Augustine in his "Expositions of the Psalms" has the best-known writings that dwell on the beauty of Jesus at every stage of his existence, from his pre-existence before the incarnation, to his public ministry, his miracles, his teachings and, paradoxically for some, also during his passion and death. There is then the beauty of the risen Jesus and his ascension into heaven. A book entitled "The Beauty of Jesus Christ" published in 2020 by the Jesuit theologian Gerald O'Collins fills out richly the scheme of St Augustine on this subject, but also adding the themes of the baptism of Jesus, his transfiguration and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the Church's history Christian theologians have been largely busy with

exposing what is true and good based on God's self-revelation. This was often needed to rebut opposition from non-Christians but also to help the faithful live authentically their Christian life. By focusing on the pressing issues of truth, goodness and justice, scant attention has been paid to beauty when writing about Jesus Christ. Even as late as the publication of the sixteen documents of Vatican Council II in 1965, the themes of the 'truth' and the 'good' dominate while the theme of 'beauty' occurs very rarely.

A notable change has come about with the teaching of Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (the Joy of the Gospel). In this, one of his early teaching documents, he highlights how we can encounter Jesus Christ through 'the way of beauty'. The Pope writes: "Promulgating Christ means showing that to believe in and follow him is not only something right and true but also something beautiful. Beauty is a means of touching the human heart and enabling the truth and goodness of the Risen Christ to radiate within it. The incarnate Son is the revelation of infinite beauty."

I live in the hope that one day, maybe soon, my deepest longing, "...when can I enter and see the face of God?" (Ps 41), will come true.

Alfred Agius

The Light of the Nations

After the festivities of Christmas, comes a beautiful season—that of Epiphany—also known as Theophany (revelation of God) in the Orthodox church. ‘Phany’

has its roots in Greek meaning revelation, but the pre-fix ‘Epi’ could be a variety of prepositions, “upon,” “on,” “over,” “near,” “at,” “before,” “after” etc. So Epiphany just means manifestation or revelation: in religious terms we mean revelation of God, much as Theophany.

It is interesting to note that in the very early days of Christianity, Epiphany was considered the significant season, with Christmas being just one part of the season of revelation of God to the world.

In the Eastern, Orthodox, Church, the great emphasis in this season is on Jesus’ own baptism, when explicitly we have God’s own voice telling the world that Jesus is His beloved Son, as well as the vision of the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus from heaven. We couldn’t ask for a more revelatory event!

Although the phenomenon of Epiphany in the Bible could be anything from God appearing to Moses in the burning bush to the Transfiguration of Jesus, we most commonly associate it with the twelfth day after Christmas, when we commemorate the wise men visiting baby Jesus and offering him gifts.



Of course, the figures of the wise men being brought to the crib has a satisfying sense of conclusion to our Christmas celebrations, but the Gospel readings set in our Lectionary are about the Baptism of Jesus.

The profound significance of the wise men coming to worship baby Jesus often illudes us. Messiah was anticipated to bring *Jewish people* freedom from oppression. But here we have gentiles coming to worship the new King. So right from his birth we are told that Jesus was born not just for the Jews, but for the whole world.

The theme of God being God of all people should not have been a surprise to the Hebrew people. After all, Isaiah tells us how it was not through raising a hero from their own midst, but through Cyrus of Persia, that God brought about their release from exile. The prophet Malachi proclaims that the Lord says, ‘from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations’.

The early Christians also had to be disabused of their belief in their own 'chosen-ness' as the people Jesus came to save! It took Peter's vision of God asking him to eat 'unclean' animals and his subsequent realisation that God was asking him to baptise the household of Cornelius, to help them understand that Jesus came to save the whole world. Later we have Paul travelling widely making disciples of gentiles.

We should not forget that the vast majority of Christians in the world are not of Jewish heritage. When our carols talk about the 'white arms of Mary' and our art galleries are full of European-looking

madonnas and babies, sometimes it is easy to forget that we are the 'gentiles', and the 'nations' that prophets and psalmists talked about.

So Epiphany is a time for us to give thanks to God: for the way he revealed himself gradually through the ages so that we may have glimpses into his nature; for Jesus in whose life we see the glory of God; for the apostles who recognised it as the glory of God; and for the people who brought Christianity to us, showing us that Jesus is the Light of the whole world.

Anna Thomas-Betts



WEEK OF PRAYER for CHRISTIAN UNITY

**18th–25th January
2023**

Be-Longing: Praying for Unity amongst Injustice

The resources this year are provided by the churches in Minneapolis, where George Floyd was murdered by a police officer. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland is making this an opportunity in our country now to remember Stephen Lawrence, 30 years after his murder. Details available nearer the time, in churches and on their websites.

Answers to Puzzles on Page 8

1. Driving Home for Christmas [Drive "in" Home + 4 Christmas];
2. Hole-y Night;
3. Stocking [Stock + ing];
4. Seasons Greetings;
5. Tinsel [Tin-Sel ,Fr.];
6. Opening Presents [Open-in-present];
7. Peace on Earth [Ps-on-earth]
8. Twelfth Night

'Brightest and Best...'

Epiphany has inspired some beautiful hymns and music. Travellers from exotic places offering precious gifts to a baby in a manger conjures up rather lovely images for us, even though we have nothing much to base our pictures on of the men richly clad in silk and brocade and wearing crowns! Also, importantly, the adoration of Jesus by those wise men, who travelled great distances to see baby Jesus, and then knelt down and worshipped him, seems to trigger in us the desire to worship him as well.

Hymn-writers lead us gently through this story on to what it might mean for us. In an earlier issue of the magazine (February 2019) we had an article focussing mainly on the famous hymn, 'O Worship the King in the Beauty of Holiness' by J S B Monsell. The beauty of holiness is such a profound and haunting theme.

Epiphany hymns are also appealing because of their allusion to a star guiding us and dispelling darkness (especially in winter time) as in Bishop Heber's hymn, 'Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning'. Both these hymns refer to the gifts of the wise men, but interpreted in the first as 'gold of obedience' and 'incense of lowliness', and then going on to say:

Truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness

These are the offerings to lay on his shrine.

In Heber's hymn, he asks if our offerings

should be of gems and pearls, and myrrh from the forest and gold from the mine.

But then he firmly reminds us:

*Vainly we offer each ample oblation
Vainly with gifts would his favour secure
Richer by far is the heart's adoration
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.*

These thoughts are reminiscent of the Parable of the Pharisee and the Widow with their offerings at the Temple, of course.

The hymn ends with the prayer:

*Brightest and best of the Sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and
lend us thine aid ...*

Anna Thomas-Betts

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Around Langley

If so, you may like to consider sponsoring us and give us £5 a year towards the costs of the magazine.

Please make a donation at any of the sponsoring churches.



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, 11th Dec.*

Christingle Service

**at St Mary
the Virgin**

**Church, Langley on
Sunday 4th December, 4pm**



This is 'the service for children that welcomes the whole community.' It will be a candle-lit service for families and children, to set us on our way towards Christmas and to raise money for Children's Society to support children in need.

Dee S Clark



B.Sc(Hons) MChs Dip.pod.med.

*Member of The Society of Chiropodist
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Parish Directory

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: Angus MacKenzie 01753 541042 langleymarish@gmail.com

St Francis Church

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

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

www.langleymarish.com/stfrancis

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Holy Family Catholic Church

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Parish Priest: Canon Kevin O'Driscoll

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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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