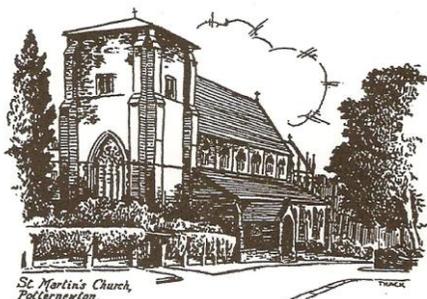


Reach Out

St Martin's Church Magazine

 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Leeds



December 2020

£ 1



Services: Sunday Eucharist at 10am
Morning Prayer Wednesdays at 10am on Zoom
Evening Prayer Wednesdays at 5.00pm via Facebook



<https://www.facebook.com/StMartinPotternewton/>

www.stmartinleeds.org.uk



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Confession or for other matters please contact Fr. Nicholas.

Reach Out

St Martin's Church aims to praise God, to share the good news,
to be a welcoming loving church serving all.
Praise, Share, Welcome, Love, Serve.
There is a place for you at St Martin's

Editor's Comment:

So December is upon us and as we approach the end of a difficult year we are not at all clear as to how we will be able to mark the special occasion of Christmas. So however you mark it and with whoever – may you have a blessed time. We hope and pray for a better New Year. Stay safe and well.



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Pastoral Letter

At this time of year, we remember three very uncertain journeys. A young, heavily-pregnant woman and her partner are called away from their home because of a bureaucratic exercise; they are forced to travel across rough countryside with nowhere to stay. Some agricultural workers have the shock of their lives out in the fields and make their way through the night to a rough shelter in a nearby town. Some experts suddenly make the breakthrough in their scholarship that they have been awaiting for years, but this means they have to travel many miles in difficult conditions, 'the ways deep and the weather sharp / The very dead of winter', as one famous description puts it.

This year, we all face an uncertain journey through December. None of us knows what Christmas 2020 will be like – whether we can meet our friends and families, and what conditions may be imposed upon our celebrations. Some among us have lost livelihoods or income, and it is difficult to imagine celebrating at all – let alone finding the money to do so. Many of us will be worrying about our health and that of our families. And some among us will be facing that awful milestone of the first Christmas without a loved one. Difficult, uncertain journeys indeed!

And yet, let's go back to those three uncertain journeys. The young pregnant woman – the Virgin Mary – gave birth to the Son of God, having put her entire faith in God and what he asked her to do. His birth changed the world for ever. The agricultural workers – the Shepherds – were the first people to see God's Son. He was revealed to them even though they were poor and lowly. And the experts – the Wise Men – found the Messiah they had been waiting for, and their encounter with Jesus revealed the God of Israel to the whole Gentile world. Those uncertain journeys led to great, world-changing things. And they changed the world because God was there with them.

This year's Christmas will be different but perhaps because of this, it can be special. When so much is uncertain, we can nonetheless put our trust in God – we don't know how much there will be of fun, food and friends, maybe, but we can hope and pray for a deeper knowledge of God's presence in our lives. Christmastime is likely to be quieter than usual, so let us take the opportunity for prayer, for reflection, and perhaps to connect with nature, hearing the birdsong, contemplating the plants and wildflowers, watching the

sunrise and sunset and marvelling at God's world. Christmas speaks of hope: of the new life represented by a baby; of the poor achieving real dignity and respect; and of experts making breakthroughs that will improve the lives of all. Like those Wise Men, doctors and scientists are working hard for our future: let us pray for them and for a better, fairer future.

Wherever your journey takes you, I wish you a Christmas filled with faith, love and hope.

Jane



St Martin's Virtual Chess **Every Saturday 17:00 – 18:00** **Until December 19th**





Calendar



December

Tues 1st	6.00 pm	PCC meeting on Zoom
Weds 2nd	10.00 am	Morning Prayer on Zoom
	5.00 pm	Sung Evening Prayer (also streamed on our Facebook page)
Sat 5th	11.30 am	Community Kitchen until 1:30 pm
Sun 6th	<u>The Second Sunday of Advent</u>	
	8.30 am	Morning Prayer in church
	10.00 am	Parish Eucharist (also streamed on our Facebook page)
	PM	Evening Prayer in church (time varies each week – please ask Fr Nicholas)
Mon 7th	6.00 pm	Comfort and Joy Group on Zoom
Weds 9th	10:00 am	Morning Prayer on Zoom
	10:30 am	Tots Service in church
	5.00 pm	Sung Evening Prayer (also streamed on our Facebook page)
Thurs 10th	7.30 pm	Churches Together Prayer Meeting on Zoom
Sat 12th	11.30 am	Community Kitchen until 1:30 pm
Sun 13th	<u>The Third Sunday of Advent</u>	
	8.30 am	Morning Prayer in church
	10:00 am	Parish Eucharist (also streamed on our Facebook page)
	PM	Evening Prayer in church (time varies each week – please ask Fr Nicholas)
Mon 14th	6.00 pm	Comfort and Joy Group on Zoom
Tues 15th	7.00 pm	Carol Service
Weds 16th	10:00 am	Morning Prayer on Zoom
	TBC	Holy Baptism in church
	5.00 pm	Sung Evening Prayer (also streamed on our Facebook page)
Fri 18th	7:30 pm	Quiz on Zoom – all welcome (see below for joining details)

Sat 19th	11.30 am	Community Kitchen until 1:30 pm
Sun 20th	<u>The Fourth Sunday of Advent</u>	
	8.30 am	Morning Prayer in church
	10:00 am	Parish Eucharist (also streamed on our Facebook page)
	PM	Evening Prayer in church (time varies each week – please ask Fr Nicholas)
Mon 21st	6.00 pm	Comfort and Joy Group on Zoom (ask Revd Jane for details)
Weds 23rd	10:00 am	Morning Prayer on Zoom
	5.00 pm	Sung Evening Prayer (also streamed on our Facebook page)
Thurs 24th	<u>Christmas Eve</u>	
	4:00 pm	Crib Service in Church
	11.30 pm	Christmas Midnight Mass in Church (also streamed on our Facebook page)
Fri 25th	<u>Christmas Day</u>	
	10.00 am	Parish Eucharist (also streamed on our Facebook page)
Sat 26th	<u>St Stephen, first martyr</u>	
	11.30 am	Community Kitchen until 1:30 pm
Sun 27th	<u>The First Sunday of Christmas</u>	
	8.30 am	Morning Prayer in church
	10:00 am	Parish Eucharist (also streamed on our Facebook page)
	PM	Evening Prayer in church (time varies each week – please ask Fr Nicholas)
Mon 28th	<u>The Holy Innocents</u>	
Tues 29th	<u>St John, Apostle</u>	
Thurs 31st	<u>New Year's Eve</u>	
	11.30 pm – Watchnight Mass 10.00 am (also streamed on our Facebook page)	

News

In church safety protocol (if services are in church)

- 2m physical distancing to be observed at all times except with people of your own household.
- One-way system to be observed for entry-exit and for Holy Communion.
- Please be seated on one of the marked seats, starting with the front pews.
- The wearing of a mask in church is compulsory.
- Please do not touch objects or furniture unnecessarily.
- No singing during the service, except by a cantor.
- Sanitise your hands if possible with your own hand-sanitiser just before and after removing the mask for Communion.
- Communion will be by bread alone; having sanitised their hands, the priests will deposit the wafer onto your extended hand in silence.
- If you come to the railing for a blessing, the priest will bless you in silence.
- Please do not leave the Sunday Sheet behind after the service but take it with you.

Thank you for your co-operation and patience.

Links to services on Facebook / Zoom

The Sunday Eucharist is streamed live if the service is in church; this is the link to view it at your leisure, as well as to follow live a sung Evening Prayer every Wednesday at 5:00 pm:

<https://www.facebook.com/StMartinPotterneuton/>

Join Morning Prayer on Zoom, Wednesdays at 10:00 am, or Sunday Eucharist if it is not held in church.

If you know of people who do not have a computer or a smartphone, they can listen to the Wednesday Morning Prayer service by dialling this number: 0330 088 5830 (cost of a local call; not a premium number). They will then be asked to enter the meeting ID When asked for Participant ID they should just press the hash button: # *Fr Nicholas*

Do take a look at the Facebook page regularly to keep up to date with any news. The links for joining in our services are also on there.

News

Community Kitchen

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in"(Matthew 25:35)

I thank the good Lord for guiding and protecting us during the last lockdown of our community kitchen of 6 months which is the very first time this has happened since opening.

I had 6 months to reflect on how to get the clients to return to us. I then thought of one definite way of feeding them, and hoped Revd Nicholas would agree (thankfully he did) with my suggestions.

I decided on a cooked meal for each and every one of our clients. A cooked meal would be substantial and nutritious plus a KFC meal also, sandwiches, drinks, and whatever else is available along with a hot cup of soup.

My thanks go to all the volunteers who gladly wanted to return. I then got in touch with the suppliers who happily did our weekly supply.

I put in place the guidelines as before with other safety messages both for the volunteers and clients. The volunteers are wearing masks at all times, and visors, gloves, and plastic disposable aprons while serving in the front entrance.

The first week we had 21 clients turn up and they were very delighted and appreciative of what they had received. This has continued over several weeks since reopening on 26th September 2020.

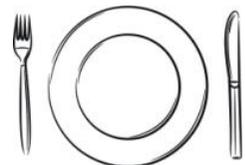
We are to go through another set of lockdown. For how long, we do not know... But at the present time we will continue until such time that we are told we can't.

Our Christmas won't be the same for any of us including our clients. Unfortunately, they won't be having a sit down traditional Christmas meal or a Christmas tree making it a nice festival atmosphere. But I'll endeavor to do my best to make it happy for them with handing out Christmas presents to each of them.

God bless all my volunteers, and wishing everyone a peaceful Christmas.

God blessing be with us all.

Emily



Remembrance Sunday

As with so many highlights of our calendar this year, Remembrance Sunday 2020 was very different from normal. With lockdown being imposed just a few days before, and the churches being closed, we marked the occasion by gathering once again on Zoom. I led the Eucharist from my kitchen and it was good to see some familiar faces online, including people who had not been able to come to church. Revd Colin gave an inspiring sermon, reminding us of our Patron Saint Martin (whose day is also 11th November). Colin reminded us of how Martin had been a soldier, but had laid down his arms on becoming a Christian and had shared his cloak with a beggar. And Colin inspired us all to work for peace, by sharing some of the human tragedies behind the names on our war memorial. Matthew played the last post and reveille from his home and Revd Brian led the act of remembrance. Maureen prayed for the peace of the troubled parts of the world today. Fr Nicholas has placed our poppy cross in church: when we return to church, we can all see it, and remember those who gave so much.

Revd Jane



Announcement – Kitchen Refurbishment

The church is applying for consent from Leeds City Council to refurbish the community kitchen at St Martin's Institute. We need to apply for consent before refurbishing the kitchen as the Institute is a Grade 2 listed building.



From All Souls

“Advent is the spiritual season of hope par excellence, and in this season the whole church is called to be hope, for itself and the world.”

Pope Benedict XVI

If you were to go to Ripon Cathedral at this season of Advent, you would be able to see some impressive hangings from each of the main pillars. They depict the Advent antiphons which are used at Evening services during the last seven days of Advent. They have been in use in the church since the 8th century, although there are hints that these were known at much earlier times.

You will see that they come to us in Latin and they describe to us the attributes of Christ. The Christ that is coming into the world as a baby, but the Son of God, coming into the world as God’s desire to show love, forgiveness and compassion. As reflected by Pope Benedict, Jesus brings us hope and his attributes that are the antiphons enable him to do this.

Here are the antiphons:-

O Sapientia – Wisdom – Jesus shows his wisdom throughout his ministry. Dealing with the criticism and the doubts that were thrown at him.

O Adonai – Lord - Jesus is Lord of all – the Son of God.

O Radix Jesse – Root of Jesse - this reveals the ancestors of Jesus which we find in Matthew’s Gospel Chapter 1.

O Clavis David – The key of David – the scepter of the House of Israel – the key throws open the door of heaven to us all.

O Oriens – Dayspring – the morning star brings light into our world – Jesus is the light of the world, a world that needs the hope that the light brings into the darkness.

O Rex Gentium – King of Nations – Jesus ruling over all, binding all together.

O Emmanuel – God with us, come and save us Lord our God.

The antiphons show us the destiny of Jesus as he comes into the world at Christmas time.

All of us All Souls wish all of you at St Martin’s a hopeful Advent and a most blessed Christmas.

Ann Nicholl
Licensed Lay Minister



Regulars



Mothers' Union - Time to Pause

The Covid-19 pandemic is, without a doubt, a world wide disaster. National lockdowns and restrictions have however allowed us the opportunity to pause and take a step back from our headlong rush into our 'normal' daily activities. At times, decisions in our daily lives do need to be taken quickly. We may have very little time to pause, to step back, to consider things in a more measured way and to pray before we have to make a response. Although these prayers 'on the run', so to speak, may take the form of shouting 'HELP!' to God, there is a place and a need for them.

However, we can also pause when we are not so rushed. We can take a deep breath and take our eyes off the immediate circumstances so that we can reflect on the bigger picture. This can often lead to a more rational response. One long term problem which can be helped by pausing is that of the food that we waste. The waste of perfectly edible food occurs at all stages of the food chain, from the point of harvest or production through processing, packaging and distribution to retailers, restaurants and our homes. 70% of food waste occurs in the home and can account for one quarter of the food purchased. The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), suggests that 60% of food waste in the UK could be avoided.

Food is particularly important in these challenging times when so many children rely on school meals and food donations for their daily meals. Mothers' Union members are ideally situated to provide help in the redistribution of food to support those most in need. Mothers' Union members take part in our Saturday Community Kitchen which has done a sterling job of providing food to vulnerable members of our community. The charity - Fare Share provides food for the Community Kitchen. Fare Share redistributes surplus food from the food industry that would otherwise go to waste.

Pausing

When in doubt, pause
When angry, pause
When tired, pause
When stressed, pause
And when you pause,
pray.



There is nothing to stop us also pausing and praying when life is good, when we're happy and when we're enjoying the company of friends and family. After all, it is a joy to thank God for his blessings.

Articles

CONFESSIONS OF A WORKING PAUPER

An article by James Russell, pseudonym of a part-time university lecturer who lives in London, first published in *The Tablet: The International Catholic News Weekly*, 21/28 December 2019, p.10. Reproduced with permission of the Publisher. Website address: <http://www.thetablet.co.uk>

A wry smile crossed my face as I opened the curtains this morning. Overnight, Jack Frost had etched exquisite images of ferns, leaves and grass on the inside of my windows. It took my mind back to my earliest years, before my parents installed central heating in the family home, and images magically appeared on the window on cold mornings and I dressed myself huddling around a green enamel paraffin heater. Such stoves are no longer available – victims, perhaps, of health and safety regulations. So, today, I have to make do with cradling a cup of hot coffee (just half a spoonful of granules, so as to eke out the jar’s life) in my hands.

It is not that my flat lacks central heating: cold radiators hang forlornly on the walls, but, a few years shy of my sixty-fifth birthday, I am ineligible for “winter fuel payment” and face the same conundrum as many older people – heat or food? I am frequently told that the cold can always be offset by the donning of extra layers of clothes and so Michelin Man takes shape as I dress myself with vest, shirt, sweater, fleece and, finally, a rather threadbare sports jacket. With the chill in my body starting to dissipate, I can sit and enjoy the impressionistic image of the sun shining through the frosted windows created by the chronic cataracts in my eyes.

I have joined the so-called “working poor”. I receive Universal Credit to support my income but don’t conform to the media stereotype of recipients of benefits. I have a doctorate from a leading university and do some part-time teaching. Of course I apply for jobs that would augment my income – I’ll take whatever’s going – but my applications are either ignored or I am told that I am over-qualified or not physically fit enough.

The predicament I find myself in constitutes something of a perfect storm. An unexpected divorce and a sudden reduction in teaching hours undermined my financial security. I am of an age and class where dependency on government support did not occur

to me and so I racked up expenses on my credit card as I awaited an upswing in my fortunes that so far has not materialised. A good proportion of my income now goes towards servicing these debts. I have given up the pretence that I am "just getting by".

I AM LEARNING from experience that medical problems often blight the lives of the working poor. I noticed a deterioration in my sight nearly a year ago and put it down to a need for new spectacles that I could not afford. Had I not been so stretched, an eye test would have identified the cataracts in their early stage and I could have quickly secured an operation. Instead, I am now listed as unfit to work and am in a long queue for a surgical procedure. I can't read or watch TV, and working on a computer has become a time-consuming process.

The zip on my only winter jacket has broken and so, when I do escape the confines of my flat, I cannot adequately protect myself from the wind and cold. Memories from my teenage years as a motorcycle enthusiast have come to my aid. I shove a newspaper under my sweater, which gives me a modicum of insulation and resistance to the wind. My phlegmy cough, which I have been unable to shake off for the last few weeks, attests to the limited effectiveness of this practice.

I walk past the window of my local cafe. There are always people inside and I see them removing their coats, enjoying the warmth. But the price of a macchiato is beyond my limited means. I try not to feel sorry for myself, but I am lonely.

I have learnt to get by on one meal a day and can support myself in the early weeks of each month as my salary and Universal Credit payments appear in my account. However, as my credit is depleted by the cost of rent, utilities, council tax, and credit-card interest payments, I soon find myself entering what I have come to think of as the "hunger weeks".

I have no food, no money to buy food and I am, without being too dramatic or self-pitying about it, starving. People talk of the shame and embarrassment of approaching foodbanks but this has never been my experience. I am accepted there for who I am.

My nearest foodbank is run by the local church and offers me a warm environment (both emotionally and physically). I enjoy a coffee and a croissant and the opportunity to talk – often for the first time in several days. I don't feel out of place in my frayed trousers and shirt from which the collar is detaching. The foodbank

is, as Simon and Garfunkel sang in "The Boxer", one of the places "where the ragged people go ... the places only they would know". I am one of them.

THE FOODBANK keeps body and soul together. The tins I take home are not necessarily what I would choose but I have learnt that that is part of being poor – a narrowing of choices, a gradual erosion of independence. A few weeks back my food parcel contained a bottle of vodka – either by accident or design. I am not a spirit drinker but a few shots allowed me to sleep in peace. For the first time in months I didn't have to turn on my bedside radio to distract me from the fears and uncertainties that now haunt my dreaming hours. The foodbank has saved me.

Two years ago, I volunteered to help a local church that was offering meals and a bed to 20 homeless men over Christmas. Little did I anticipate that not far down the line I would be spending Christmas cold, alone and hungry. I will attend Midnight Mass but, like many others, the festive meal will have to wait a few days until the local supermarket sells off unwanted stock at knock-down prices.

Days later, I will be curled up under my duvet as, outside, fireworks herald the dawn of a new year. I am luckier than many. I pray that 2020 will be kind to me and those in similar situations to mine.



Eco top tips

December – Eco Christmas ideas

1. Be creative in the gifts you give this Christmas; make sure your desire to be loving is not damaging the environment.
2. Getting ready for the festivities of Christmas. Buy as much locally produced, in season food and particularly veg as you can. Try not to over cater and waste food.
3. Wrap and rewrap. Why not reuse your wrapping paper. Take a bit of care unwrapping your presents (it adds to the gift experience), save the paper and reuse next year.
4. Enjoy the feast of Christmas! Don't forget to recycle your rubbish. Don't waste unwanted presents find new homes for them through the charity shop or on ebay.
5. Get ready with your environmental New Year's Resolution. How will your care for creation in the coming year?

Jemima Parker, Diocesan Environment Officer

Hoping for a Green Recovery

Ian Fletcher, Bradford Area Environment Champion

Covid has had a massive effect on the world, many are detrimental, but it has had a number of positive effects on the environment that show hope for the future of our planet.



The wellbeing of our planet is essential to our own wellbeing. Pope Francis recently pointed out that “we cannot expect to grow on a material level without taking care of the common home that houses us” Exploiting nature ultimately means exploiting other people.

Covid has been an indication that all is not well with the wellbeing of our planet but the actions taken to combat it have had some positive results on the health of the planet.

For example, it has brought a sudden drop in carbon emissions. We are told that levels of air pollution have dropped by nearly 50% because of measures to contain the virus. Nitrogen dioxide emissions are fading away. For some of us it has reduced the effects of asthma, it has increased the sound of the birds, it has increased our use of green spaces but of course the fear is that these benefits will be temporary. In Leeds proposals to introduce a clean air zone have been dropped, at least for the time being, because of the improvement in air quality.

We have seen the environmental advantages from reduced air travel and, during the lock down, from reduced motor travel. Use of mediums such as Zoom for meetings will continue and will have a lasting reduction on carbon emissions. Increased working from home will result in reduced commuting. The danger is however that the lessons learned during the pandemic will be forgotten as soon as a vaccine becomes available.

Throughout history, we have ignored the rationale that says that looking after our planet is essential to its wellbeing. We have chased economic gain at the expense of our own environment and at the expense of our fellow world citizens. Disasters have resulted in reduced levels of CO2 but have been followed by economic recovery that has had no regard to the planets needs

Will the same occur following Covid or will we learn from the past? Will the economic crisis that will follow the pandemic take our minds away from the environmental needs of our planet.

The best time to intervene and effect lasting change is now. Interventions are always more effective if they take place at a time of change. People may well change their attitude to a number of things, for example, working from home so why not also alter their approach to a much bigger thing - the environmental needs of the planet. Why not a lasting change to reduce travel or cutting down on food waste. There are easy wins to be had as shown by the ten pledges suggested by our Diocese.

Obviously, we would not have chosen a global pandemic to be a catalyst for change, but it has the potential to do that and we can all encourage that outcome. Pope Francis compares how we live our lives as protectors of creation to the story of the Good Samaritan. By protecting the environment, we protect the planet and we protect our fellow human beings in all parts of the world from the harm that they suffer when pollution is allowed to run riot by us. By protecting the environment, we offer hope for the future.

The Birds in your Garden – Mike Gray

We've all watched squirrels dashing around in the autumn gathering acorns and nuts and running off to bury them. Caching, as it is called, is a well-known squirrel pastime and is probably the origin of many of our oak trees. As with most types of animal behaviour, there is a lot more to it than meets the eye. Grey Squirrels, for instance, travel further and are more vigilant when burying their food if they think they are being watched. They are known to turn their backs on potential on-lookers and to create 'dummy caches', where nothing is stored.

Caching behaviour in birds is rather less obvious though; it's difficult to tell whether they are taking seeds away from a feeder to eat them in safety, or to hide them for future use, and it was this behaviour by a Nuthatch on my feeder that prompted me to find out more. But which garden birds do cache food?

Alongside Nuthatches, Coal Tits are probably the most obvious cachers, then Great Tits and corvids - Jays in particular, but also Magpies and Crows.

When a Coal Tit finds a supply of seeds in a feeder in someone's garden, it will take one, hide it somewhere, such as a crevice in tree bark, and keep coming back to do the same thing. Indeed, a small flock of Coal Tits can empty a feeder of black sunflower seeds in less than a day doing just this. If you didn't know what was going on, you might be forgiven for thinking that hundreds of them were

involved in a raid on your feeder, rather than the probable half-dozen.

As part of their caching strategy, Coal Tits will use multiple locations to hoard their winter supplies. This is called 'scatter hoarding' and ensures that if another species finds the cache – e.g. the dominant Great Tit –, then only one or two seeds will be stolen. Their memories are rather short though, probably no more than a month, so many of the cached seeds will be left to grow. Ever wondered why sunflowers pop up in strange places when you've never grown them? They use a variety of hidey-holes to help reduce this thieving.

Nuthatches, on the other hand, defend their territories, protecting their caches, and pilfering rates tend to be lower. Like Grey Squirrels, they will safeguard their stores by being cagier if a potential thief is around by storing less and eating more.

Corvids, being the clever birds they are, go further in their strategies than most others. Their ingenuity doesn't stop with simply burying their food– they'll also play the role of thief. They watch as their neighbour buries food, and when their back is turned, sneak in and nick it! Unsurprisingly, corvids also employ counter strategies to try to prevent their hoard being raided. They will try to bury their food out of sight of potential thieves, and if there's no option but to cache food in front of them, they will often return once the others have left and move it.

Individual Jays can collect and store as many as 5,000 acorns, which for subordinate birds can be particularly arduous. Research shows that a dominant Jay will not just hide food, but will raid the caches of a social inferior despite its presence, so a subordinate Jay has to be much more secretive about where it hides its food, and only becomes a thief when dominant birds are some distance away.

Jays can store acorns several kilometres from where they are gathered, although most are cached within a few hundred metres. Taller trees are often used, making rediscovering their stores easier as they are less likely to get covered in snow or leaf fall, or be otherwise obscured.

If you would like to join in and count the feathered occupants of your garden, please contact me or visit the BTO Garden BirdWatch website (www.bto.org/gbw): **Mike Gray** or gbwmike@gmail.com



SAINT OF THE MONTH: Francis Xavier 3rd December

Just over twenty years ago Val and I were privileged to spend a holiday with some Indian friends touring southern India. Like most tourists we began in Goa and there, as well as the beautiful beaches, we found one of the strangest sights we had ever seen. In the old Portuguese cathedral we found ourselves looking at the perfectly preserved corpse of a man who died nearly 450 years before. He was, in fact, the saint whose memory is honoured on the 3rd of this month and in the church his body is placed in glass case high on a plinth for all to see and reverence.

To my knowledge the reason why Francis Xavier's body has stayed intact remains a mystery. But what is no mystery is the man himself. Francis was one of the great Christian adventurers. Born in Spain in 1506 he became one of the first band of seven "Jesuits" who vowed to "evangelize the heathen". His vow took him across the sea to Goa and there he set up his base. From there he set out to spread the Gospel not only in India but eastwards to Malaya and then on to Japan. Finally he tried to take the Gospel to China but, at the age of 46, he died of a fever before entering that country and his body was brought back to Goa where, as Val and I saw so vividly, it still remains.

These bare facts, of course, do scant justice to an incredible man. He was, first and foremost, a man of deep spirituality who experienced such a feeling of closeness to God that he was heard to pray that he might be spared such intense joy in God's presence as he found he could hardly bear it!

Yet he was also a very practical man. His letters to his fellow workers are full of practical advice from housekeeping problems to how to rebuke highly-placed officials (he was especially good at this apparently!). He was a highly effective teacher turning the elements of the Christian Gospel into easily remembered poems and setting them to popular tunes of the day. Apparently he had most of the populace singing his songs in the street!

When you think of the difficulties and dangers of travel in the 16th Century, Francis Xavier must have been a tremendously tough man. Yet his loving nature shone out so strongly that one of his companions was moved to say that "his look was so bright and joyous that it kindled in men an inexpressible desire to serve God".

The preservation of his body may seem somewhat ghoulish to us today but the man himself deserves to be remembered as a marvellous example of what a truly Christian life can be like.

Brian Pearmain

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Readings



December 6th	2 Peter 3:8-15a Mark 1:1-8
December 13th	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-end John 1:6-8, 19-28
December 20th	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 Luke 1:26-38
December 27th	Isaiah 61:10-62:3 Luke 2:15-21
Christmas Eve – Dec 24th	Isaiah 62:6-end Luke 2:8-20
Christmas Day – Dec 25th	Isaiah 52:7-10 John 1:1-14
New Year's Eve – Dec 31st	Numbers 6:22-end Luke 2:15-21

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

From the book: *Peace of Heart in All Things*, by Brother Roger Shutz, founder of the ecumenical community of Taizé, GIA Publications

Among the children who often come to the prayer services in Taizé, one day there was a brother and a sister. The little girl, totally absorbed, kept her hands folded; her lips whispered a few words. The little boy, his hands over his eyes, remained silent. With or without words, their faces and gestures expressed the beauty of an inner life.

From the Registers

Baptism:

4/11/2020 – Tianna Brown



Transport

Would you like to come to Church services when they start up again but cannot get there by yourself? Please let us know and we will try to come up with a way of getting you here to worship with us.

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Community Kitchen

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