

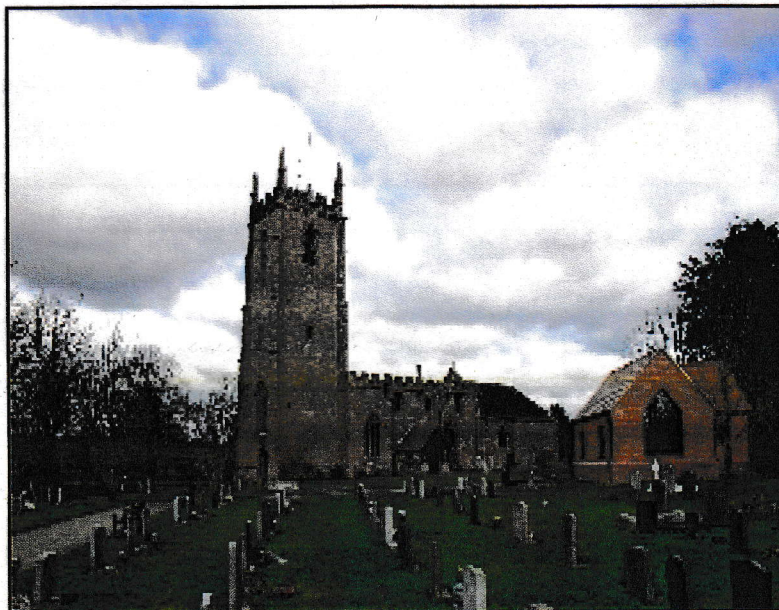
Church of St. Laurence Magazine

Parish including Birchley Heath, Ansley Common
Ansley Village, Church End

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Vicar:

Rev. John Langlands

Tel: 024 7667 5236

email: jlanglands@sky.com

Wardens:

MARGARET ANTILL

Tel: 01827 874520

MOREEN FREESTONE

Tel: 024 7638 1833

Deputy Wardens

Diana Kealey

Tel: 024 7639 5089

Margaret Oliver

Tel: 01455 822822

St. Johns Leaders

MARIE COVE

Tel: 024 7639 4114

JOHN COX

Tel: 024 7639 4802

www.ansleychurch.org

Print Centre 024 7638 6017

Rev John's Jottings - If you could have anything for Christmas, what would it be?

It was Ebenezer Scrooge, the old miser, who regarded Christmas as humbug! You might be inclined to agree when you listen to the 'I wants', the aggressive marketing, the whirr and beeps of the cash dispensers and the tills. It can seem a far cry from the real meaning of Christmas and the sentiments of 'Peace, good news and goodwill to all people on earth'. In actual fact, good news, good will and peace have nothing to do with material things.

If you could have anything in the world, what would it be?

Surprisingly most people, whether rich or poor, young or old, male or female desire such things as inner peace, contentment, making sense of personal suffering and knowing the secret of happiness.

If you find yourself caught on the frantic conveyer-belt of Christmas, wondering what it's all about and is it worth all the effort, why not step back and join us at church for a time of quiet and peace in the run up to Christmas – you might be surprised to find some of your questions answered! Of the many popular Christmas carols, as opposed to Christmas jingles, is 'It came upon the midnight clear', and how appropriate are the words:

With sorrow brought by sin and strife, the world has suffered long,
And since the angels sang have passed
Two thousand years of wrong.
For man at war with man hears not
The love-song which they bring:

O hush the noise, you men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.

(Words by Edward Sears - American reformer and slave abolitionist)

As we make plans to journey to loved ones this holiday season, think about your faith journey as well. Where has your faith been lately? And where do you want it to go? In this advent season, God still bids us to "Follow in the Saviour's footsteps." When we respond with our hearts, we will find ourselves on the paths of love, joy and peace.

With all good wishes as you prepare for the run up to Christmas,

Rev John

December St Laurence's Church, Ansley Services

Sunday 1 st	Advent 1	10.30 a.m.	Advent Screen
		6.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday 8 th	Advent 2	10.30 a.m.	Christingle
		6.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday 15 th	Advent 3	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
		6.30 p.m.	Evensong
Sunday 22 nd	Advent 4	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
		6.30 p.m.	Carol Service
Sunday 29 th	Christmas 1	10.30 a.m.	Joint at St Wilfrid's
		6.30 p.m.	No Service

St John's Church Hall, Ansley Common Services

Sunday 1 st	Advent 1	10.30 a.m.	Family Service
Sunday 8 th	Advent 2	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday 15 th	Advent 3	10.30 a.m.	Family Service
Sunday 22 nd	Advent 4	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday 29 th	Christmas 1	10.30 a.m.	Joint at St Wilfrid's

Christmas Day

Tuesday 24 th	Christmas Eve	9.30 p.m.	Holy Communion at St John's
Tuesday 24 th	Christmas Eve	11.30 p.m.	Holy Communion at St L's
Wed 25 th	Christmas Day	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion at St L's

From the Registers

Interments of Ashes

Marlene Haywood died this year on 8th April. Her ashes were interred in a family grave on 9th October 2019.

The ashes of Benjamin Joseph Smedley, who died on 25th September were interred in a family grave on 22nd October 2019.

Following her death on 30th October, the ashes of Clarice May Hands were interred in the grave of her sister and brother in law on 19th November 2019.

Mr Andrew Melville died on 30th October and his ashes were placed with those of his wife on 19th November 2019.

Mrs Janine Hutchinson died on 6th November. Her ashes were interred in a new plot on 19th November 2019.

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families of each of those named above.

Christmas Services

Please note the arrangements for services through December, as shown above on the grid. A joint Benefice Service will be held at St Wilfrid's, Old Arley at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday 29th December. There will be no evening service at St Laurence's on that day.

Can you help?

The Christmas Tree Festival has become such a success because many individuals and groups take part. If you can offer to be a steward in the church, help with serving refreshments, help to clean or prepare before or after one of the weekends, it would

contribute greatly to another wonderful event. Please let a member of church know what you could do, or speak to Margaret Antill. (See contact details on front cover.)

St Laurence Church Ansley Christmas Tree Festival 2019

The 2019 Christmas Tree Festival will be our 14th, and each year we are always amazed at the ingenuity of many individuals and organisations that take part in this community event. With 60 trees around our ancient church, as well as other displays on the Christmas theme, the church looks very festive.

The event will commence on Saturday 7th December and will be open each weekend up to Christmas. Saturdays 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Sundays 12 noon - 6 p.m. During the event there will be hot drinks and mince pies available in the annexe. The church can also be opened by arrangement for groups during the week.

Admission will continue to be £2.00 per person and accompanied children under 12 will be free. The proceeds will be in aid of Church funds, with a donation of 20% being given to the Mary Ann Evans Hospice.

On Friday 20th December Jess and Richard Arrowsmith, with special guest Jo Maher, will be returning, but this time as part of the Melrose Christmas Tour, performing a concert of traditional English songs and music with Christmas carols included. Tickets £10 plus £1 booking fee are available from <https://www.wegotickets.com/event/474813> with light refreshments during the interval. This is really well received each year.

Visitors of all ages respond with a "Wow" as they enter the brightly lit church. Last year there were titles such as "Medical Treatments," and "Treeannosaurus Rex and Friends." There will be the usual trees that we have each year e.g. the Poppy Tree and also the Remembrance Tree, where visitors can put the names of loved ones on a star and make a donation toward cutting the grass in the churchyard. In the vestry there will be the Prayer Tree and the opportunity to light a candle. Other displays will be in some of the windows and suspended from arches and ceilings. As in previous years, there will be a crib on the altar to remind all of us that the gift to mankind of the baby Jesus is the true meaning of Christmas.

The report and photographs of last year's festival can be found at <http://www.ansleychurch.org/articles/articles.php?id=732>.

Exploring Christianity

This is a series of meetings over the next few months which anyone is welcome to attend, either as a "taster" or come to as many as you wish. Part Two of the series will be on Tuesday 3rd December at 7.00 p.m. in the Annexe at St Laurence or on Thursday 12th December at 7.00 p.m. in the Barn at Old Arley. A session lasts an hour, with a ten minute video at the beginning. Refreshments will be available afterwards if anyone wants to stay and chat.

St John's Christmas Social

You are invited to this social event on Friday 13th December in St John's Hall. There will be carols, bingo and friendly, enjoyable company. Please bring your own food. There is no charge for this event.

Prayer Meeting

The next prayer meeting will be in the Annexe on Tuesday 28th January at 2.00 p.m.

Remembrance Sunday

After heavy rain the previous day, it was a relief that Remembrance Day was bright and sunny, though cold. The Reverend James Martin led the service. Some passers-by joined us as wreaths were laid before we returned to the warmth of the Annexe for a hot drink.

Spurgeon's Coffee Evening and Bring and Buy

Thank you to all who supported this event. A very pleasing total of £427 has been sent to Spurgeon's for their work with children and families in the UK. The website www.spurgeons.org.uk has further details of their work.

Shoe Boxes Appeal –Samaritan's Purse

Twenty brightly decorated and gift filled shoe boxes were taken to a local collection centre in Coventry by the deadline given. They will provide joy and be appreciated by children around the world who would receive very little, if anything at this festive season.

Fundraising

A total of £60.27 has been received by the church from "easyfundraising". You can use this link when buying on line. Participating retailers give a small percentage to the charity you name. If you would like more details, please speak to Margaret Antill.

Thank you

Many thanks from the PCC and the church congregation are expressed to the family and friends of the late Marcia Sutton for the donations that have been given in her memory. The church has received £200.50 from the undertakers and this has been put into the fabric fund as agreed with the family.

Christmas Cards

In recent years some church members have presented their Christmas greetings to all church members on a single card. You may like to do this too. Donations could be made to church funds or another charity of your choice, instead of sending individual greetings. The cards will be displayed on the bench at the centre of the church.

Reports next month

Reports on the Christmas Raffle at St Laurence Church and the Christmas Fair at St John's Hall will be in next month's magazine.

We wish all our readers peace and joy this Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Prayer Requests

If you would like someone or a particular situation remembered in prayer at our Sunday Services, both at St. Laurence's and at St. John's, please hand the slip below to a member of the church congregation or contact a warden. Phone numbers are on the front cover of this magazine. Please remember that a visit can be arranged to anyone who is sick, but the wardens do need to know, so again please ring.

Please pray for who is.....

I have always loved the night sky, especially seeing the moon as it passes through its phases and before I close the bedroom curtains at night, I look out to see if I can see the moon. During the second World War when the siren went off and we had to troop down the garden to the air raid shelter, my Dad got really angry when I pointed out with delight the full moon which lit up the whole garden. "Silly girl," he said, "That is a fighter's moon." Being so young I didn't understand what he was talking about, but he meant the light from the moon made it easier for the enemy pilots to see their targets.

Sarah Breedlove whose parents were slaves in America in the 19th Century, was orphaned at 6, married at 14, and widowed at 20 years old. For many years she worked as a washer woman, struggling to support herself and her daughter. Then she had an idea – it was a recipe for a hair treatment. She worked away in her washtub with soaps and ointments until at last she found a formula which would result in soft, shiny hair. She moved to Colorado – she called her formula 'Brilliantine'. Sales flourished and she became well respected.

When we were having a very wet spell in mid November, I found that this old pigeon was having the time of his life. We had a small puddle on our garden path and it was as if he was dancing in the water. He was there ages and I wished I had a camera to record him.

They say you shouldn't live in the past, but enjoy the present and look forward to the future. But let's face it. If over the years people hadn't told of their memories or written them down, the past would be a great void. Every generation has special memories of loved ones and schooldays. Those of us who are older have memories over long periods of time. Photographs are one way to look into the past without boring everybody.

As winter unfolds and we look forward to the festive season, let us remember those, like our Saviour before them who had nowhere to lay his head, and thank God for those special people who forgo their own Christmas to care for those less fortunate.

May you have a wonderful Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year!

Marie Cove