

St Martin of Tours
Epsom

St Stephen on the Downs
Langley Vale

Registered Charity Number: 1134149

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

SUNDAY 14th DECEMBER 2025

ADVENT 3



DIARY

Sunday 14th December ADVENT 3

- 8.30am** Holy Communion service at St Martin's
- 9.30am** Holy Communion service at St Stephen's
- 10.00am** Choral Mattins service at St Martin's
- 3.00pm** Christmas Tea with Carols at St Martin's

Monday 15th December

- 6.00pm** Evening of Lights at St Martin's

Tuesday 16th December

Time to Talk

Exploring the Wisdom of the Beatitudes

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God"

Matthew 5v8

If Jesus said this, then he presumably said it in Aramaic, the language of Israel/Palestine.

In this second in our series of Time to Talk on the Beatitudes as wisdom teaching, we will explore the idea of 'Sacred Unity' as a way of understanding the Aramaic meanings in this text.

This will be the last meeting on Tuesday at 4pm until the 6th January when we meet for Centering Prayer.

Wednesday 17th December

10.00am Holy Communion

11.00am Advent study group

7.30pm Advent study group (in the Lady Chapel), finishing with Compline.

Sunday 21st December ADVENT 4

9.30am Morning Prayer service at St Stephen's

10.00am Holy Communion service at St Martin's

6.30pm Carol Service at St Martin's

Scaffolding - update

Work on the ceiling over the dais has been completed and the scaffolding has been removed, so we can be 'back to normal' for services. Scaffolding remains outside the Lady Chapel and will be in place until after Christmas. Access via the north door is still possible but is not step free because of the wooden planks on the floor supporting the scaffolding. If you need help with access, please let us know. Rob: rob@stmartinsepsom.org or Sarah: wardens@stmartinsepsom.org

Putting the church back

Before the scaffolding was erected over the dais we had to



remove the two TV screens either side of it. This proved to be a four-person job - those screens are heavy! To put the screens back on the wall we had to construct our own version of scaffolding which, as you can see in the photo, included making use of some hassocks!

Rob, Chris & Sarah L

Canon Adrian Esdaile's 90th Birthday

To honour and celebrate with Adrian as he reaches this milestone there will be cake with our coffee after Choral Mattins on Sunday.

EVENING OF LIGHTS, MONDAY 15 DECEMBER 2025

This will be held from 6pm – 8pm in St Martin's Church when the church will be lit by candles and the Christmas tree lights.

This is *not* a service, nor is it a community event, but aims to provide a peaceful place in which individuals may come to remember someone they have lost. A hot drink – tea, coffee or hot chocolate – will be available at the back of the church.

Mary Gilbert and Elaine Snook





**'O Come, O come Emmanuel!
Who are YOU expecting?'**

The last two of our sessions to talk about Advent and the One for whom we are waiting will take place on Wednesday 17th December and Tuesday 23rd December at 11am, repeated at 7.30pm (the evening sessions will finish with compline in the Lady Chapel).

We hope to broadcast the evening sessions on zoom.

Howard Bluett, one of our Lay Ministers, is leading the course.

Christmas Jumpers - Sunday 21 December:

It's become something of a tradition at St Martin's to invite you to wear a festive jumper (or a festive anything else!) to Church on a Sunday in December. This year it's Sunday 21st. The charity **Save The Children** always have a Christmas Jumper Day in December so you may like to send a donation in their direction. The donation page on their website is here [Save The Children](#)

Sarah

Test of faith – Reviving religion

This 19 minute video from Green Christian is a useful encouragement for this time of climate crisis, I think, highlighting the role and relevance of the Church and its people in offering a space for seeing beyond the current worldly situation and finding a 'home' which looks to more than this. It talks about the climate crisis as a spiritual crisis.

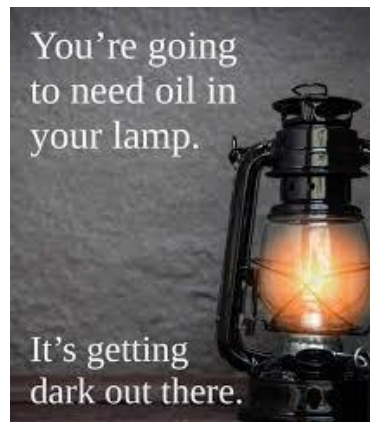
<https://youtu.be/z4MpHw-r7tg>

Helen Williams

Advent Reflections

Each week of Advent I will be putting up an Advent Reflection on the Eco Church board at the west end of church. The reflections arise from the document 'Stop Crucifying Creation' which was published in September. It's Time to Wake Up!

Helen Williams



Our Church Development Plan

Asked by the Diocese to prioritize our plans for growth, these are our top 3:



Growing children & families

Develop Ark and help Ark families become part of our family



Spiritual growth

Develop a curiosity about our faith



Grow our community outreach

Build on our musical tradition & on our racial justice work

All parishes are asked to produce a Development Plan and ours was approved by the Archdeacon in the summer. In addition to the 3 priorities above our plan also includes:

- 4: Identify how best we can improve our buildings
- 5: Increase regular giving
- 6: Improve and increase our visibility in the community.

You can find the plan with full details by clicking on the link:

[Church Development Plan](#)

Foodbank donations for Christmas

Please do look at those items listed in the newsletter that are urgently needed and consider making donations. If you leave them in the box at the back of Church I will ensure that they get to the foodbank for distribution.

Sarah

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Sunday, 21st 6.30pm Nine Lessons and Carols at St Martin's
Xmas Eve 3.00pm Carol Service at St Stephen's
(Langley Vale Hall)
4.00pm Crib Service at St Martin's
6.00pm First Communion of Christmas
at St Martin's
11.00pm 'Midnight Mass' at Epsom College
(see below)

Midnight Mass in St Luke's Chapel, Epsom College

Whether you are part of the Epsom College community or a friend from further afield, you will be most warmly welcomed
To reserve your place, please click here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/GmMx2B40Uu>

Christmas 8.30am Holy Communion at St Martin's
Day 10.00am Christmas Day family service followed
by a short Communion service

Sunday 28 9.30am Holy Communion for St Stephen's
December Day at Langley Vale Villiage Hall.
Everyone who usually attends
St Martin's is most welcome.

***No services at St Martin's at 10am and 6.30pm on Sunday 28
December.***

Church of England Racial Justice Unit approves funding for St Martin's project to create a Memorial for the Enslaved of Barbados

I am delighted to announce the wonderful news that the Church of England's Racial Justice Triennium Funding Approval Panel met on 21 November to consider our application and approved its funding. The letter sent to us states that, "The panel commended the timely nature of the work and were encouraged to see a proposal coming in from a parish. They recognised a thoughtful project that addressed the subject matter holistically."

As you know, our project involves the commission of Bajan artist Christina Peake to lead four three-hour creative workshops in February and March 2026, in order to engage with and listen to those affected by the Brathwaite memorial and past enslavement. Participants will come from the following groups: the congregation; the Brathwaite Family group; the Sutton-based African Caribbean Heritage Association (ACHA); and a Barbadian diaspora group, hopefully recruited through the Barbados High Commission.

The workshops will feed into the creative process and, after a period of reflection, into the final memorial which Christina will create. We hope that the memorial will be completed by August 2026, but, of course, the exact timeline will depend on fitting into the meetings' schedule of the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches and Churchyards) and their approval.

Rev Judith

Lumos Candlelight concerts in St Martin's **Saturday 17th January 5pm & 8pm**

Lumos candlelight concerts take place countrywide. The organisation chooses beautiful buildings and spaces for their performances, so we are delighted that they want to hold two concerts in our own beautiful building! There will be two opportunities to enjoy the 'Vivaldi & Mozart Candlelight Experience'. Details of the concerts and booking are on their website - here's a link: [Lumos concert in St Martins](#)



FOLLOW UP TO '6 Steps to the Bible.'

You may remember we ran this course during Advent and the new year a couple of years ago. The author, Peter Sills, has developed a retreat based on the course. If anyone would be interested in this, called 'Stepping into the Bible', then two opportunities are planned for the new year:

1. At Ashburnham Place, near Battle.

10th – 13th February

Booking:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/stepping-into-the-bible-tickets-1345429639269?aff=ebdsshcopyurl&utm->

[campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=](#)

2. Rydal Hall, Rydal, Cumbria

9th – 12th March.

See Peter's website for further details, and booking for Rydal Hall:

www.peter-sills.co.uk/retreats



CHRISTMAS CARDS AND ADVENT CALENDARS

While I have had Christmas cards on display for a few weeks, now that we are in Advent I have added Advent Calendars, Advent Candles and some small votive candles to the display. There are a wide variety of cards both in design, size and cost, in packets of 10 or 20 cards. There are also lots of Advent Calendars which come with their own envelopes in case you wish to post them.

Please support St Martin's when buying your Christmas supplies as any profit from the sale of these supplies goes to the church. All the cards are sourced from a variety of charities, therefore you will be helping them as well.

Payment may be made in a variety of ways:

- Cheque: made payable to "The PCC of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Epsom" (please either hand in to the office or place in the wall safe in church)
- Donation Station: contactless payments – please use the "Christmas Cards or Cards" button
- Cash: via the wall safe in church – marked "Cards"

I will keep all items topped up but once a design has sold out I may not be able to get any further stock. Please ask me if you are looking for something in particular or more packets than are on display. *Thank you for your custom.* **Mary Holloway-Neville**

Lay Pastoral Care

Our ministry team at present includes Elaine and Mary as Pastoral Visitors. We would like more people to assist in this work of keeping in touch with people in need, not only the elderly the housebound and those now in Nursing Homes who can no longer get to church.

The 2026 Lay Pastoral Visitors' Training Course will be running over 4 Saturdays in the Spring: 28 February, 21 March, 18 April and 16 May, 9.30am - 4pm. This course is for lay leaders who feel called to serve as Lay Pastoral Visitors in their parish. The role is locally authorised, so those interested need the support of their vicar and PCC. The course is led by Ruth Cornish (Pastoral Care Lead at St Paul's Dorking) with a team of trained pastoral

tutors. Lay Pastoral Visitors have an important role to play in visiting newcomers to a church, visiting those who are sick, and praying with those who are visited.

The sessions will cover a variety of topics, including developing listening skills, exploring judgement and prejudice in our response to others, and learning from Jesus' ministry.

Please consider if you sense a call to pastoral ministry. This course may help you decide but should in any case be worthwhile. Please speak to the Vicar or one of us.

Beth Perkins, who oversees our occasional courses beth.perkins@cofeguildford.org.uk - is also available to answer questions.



PRAYER GROUPS

St Martin's offers these options for praying together:

Evening Prayer on Zoom, weekdays 5pm-5.30pm

This follows the Common Worship rite and is led by one of the regular members of the group.

See <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer> All are warmly invited to join on an occasional or regular basis. Find us at:

<https://zoom.us/j/91650281049?pwd=dLiB4iY8FRRdtFcbGBRjaVtMJ9K2Ar.1> or, if you prefer typing details directly into Zoom, use Meeting ID is 916 5028 1049 and passcode 960460.

There is an additional zoom prayer session on the 3rd Thursday at 8pm.

Centering Prayer: Every other Tuesday, 4pm in Church (Tea & biscuits from 3.45pm)

"Be still and know that I am God" *Psalms 46:10*. A small group of us meet to pray together in silence. We begin with something to reflect on - perhaps a biblical passage or Psalm. After our 20 minutes of silence, we might share something that we have noticed during our time together.

Contemplative Prayer: 1st Tuesday of each month, 11am in the Lady Chapel

A time for focussing on God's presence and allowing oneself to be filled with God's grace. It's a time of stillness and quietness. We listen to the words of God or of Jesus in contemplation.

PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH AND OUR COMMUNITY

Please remember in your daily prayers this week:

Sunday 14th

Our Mission and Evangelism Team. Our Church Finances and Our Treasurer. Our MP Helen Maguire. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council: elected members and officers. Those living and working in Hambledon Hill, Hambledon Vale, Harding Road and Hawthorne Place.

Monday 15th

Our Discipleship and Fellowship Team. Our Premises and Gardens Team. The Emergency Services: Fire, Police and Ambulance. Those living and working in Headley Road, Heathcote Road, Hereford Close, High Street and Highridge Close.

Tuesday 16th

Our Choir, and for a new Music Director who will lead outreach into the community through the gift of music. The growth of our Life Groups, Study Groups, WhatsApp Groups. Our Missions: Operation Noah. Those living and working in Hillcrest Road, Hook Road, Hylands Close, Hylands Road, Jackson Close and Kilcorral Close.

Wednesday 17th

Our Livestreaming Team led by Rob Jeffrey. Our Sacristan Mary Holloway-Neville and chalice assistants. University of the Creative Arts, Laine Theatre Arts staff and students. Those living and working in Kiln Lane, Kingsdown Road, Laburnum Road, Ladbrook Road, Leighton Way and Leith Road.

Thursday 18th

Vocations to Ministry, ordained and lay. Churches Together in Epsom: Russell Holding (Chair). Our Missions: AMECA (for Malawi, Epsom based). Those living and working in Langley Close, Langley Vale Road, Links Road and Lintons Lane.

Friday 19th

Our Home Communion Team and those to whom they take Communion. Our Flower-Arranging Team: Yvonne Parish. Staff at local Citizens' Advice Bureau, Age Concern and Job Centre. All those seeking their help and/or in need of work. Those living and working in Longdown Lane South, Longdown Road, Lynwood Avenue, Lynwood Road, Mannamead, Mannamead Close, Middle Close and Middle Lane.

Saturday 20th

Our Deanery Synod: Howard Bluett, Alexander Rennie and John Padwick. Our Eco Church Team: Helen Williams. Our Missions: Mission to Kenya. Those living and working in Milburn Walk, Mill Road, Millers Copse, Milton Gardens and Mospey Crescent.

THE POWER OF POETRY – DECEMBER

I've chosen a poem by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928). He is known as a poet and novelist and wrote *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and many others.

His last novel was *Jude the Obscure*, a singularly depressing novel (though some of the others aren't exactly jolly!). It received a terrible reception and at that point Hardy gave up novel-writing and concentrated on his poetry. Hardy had considered becoming a clergyman but abandoned the idea and became an architect and then eventually gave that up to concentrate on his writing. He also seems to have lost his faith and became agnostic, possibly even an atheist.

The Oxen

*Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.*

*We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.*

*So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel,*

*"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.*

The poem has a quiet, nostalgic feel to it, and a certainty induced by the rhythm and the metre. It is, I think, set in an inn with a dying fire, and sitting around the fire is a group of men, some old, others, including the narrator, probably much younger. I imagine them puffing away ruminatively on pipes. The elder says they (oxen) "are all on their knees". This was an old legend which said that the oxen (cattle) would kneel on Christmas Eve in homage to the birth of Christ. Maybe this arose because of the undoubted fact that cattle rise by bending their front knees to then get up. Most other animals, including farm animals – sheep, pigs, horses – do not.

The second half of the poem does not have the same certainty: "So fair a fancy few would weave..." has a more jaunty air and the word *weave* (we weave, for instance, webs of deceit) shows that Hardy's views have changed since he was young. The poem was written in 1915, and nothing was the same again after the First World War, so the poem, a charming fancy if taken at face value, may also be a lament for the changes that were brewing. It is as though Hardy, often accused of pessimism, could foresee that the way of life that he was born into – peaceful, rustic and revolving around the seasons – was to disappear. Yet he seems to regret his more sceptic self in this instance and in recalling the memory of this gathering in the inn and the story of the kneeling oxen is "hoping it might be so".

It is not the only poem of Hardy's that ends with a ray of hope. One of my favourite poems of his is *The Darkling Thrush*. It begins on a raw winter's day when "frost was spectre grey, and winter's dregs made desolate the weakening eye of day" and there appeared to be no life in his surroundings.

But then "at once a voice arose among those bleak twigs overhead, in a full-hearted evensong of joy illimited. An aged thrust, frail, gaunt and small of blast-beruffled plume, had chosen thus to fling his soul upon the growing gloom."

Hardy thought that in the thrush's song he could discern "some blessed hope whereof he knew, and I was unaware."

So with Christmas on the horizon, let us also hold on to the hope that was born with Jesus Christ. I wish you all a very happy Christmas-tide. **Mary Gilbert**



FOODBANK REQUESTS

This week we need the following:

Instant Mash - **Urgent**
Squash - **Urgent**
Long Life Juice - **Urgent**
Chocolate - **Urgent**
Sponge Pudding - **Urgent**
Sugar - **Urgent**
Crisps - **Urgent**
Savoury Biscuits - **Urgent**
Instant Coffee - **Urgent**
Washing Powder - **Urgent**
Washing up Liquid - **Urgent**
Hair Conditioner - **Urgent**
Male/Female Deodorant - **Urgent**
Pasta/Beans with Meat
Tinned Meat, Tinned Potatoes, Tinned Vegetables
Dried Pasta in Sauce, Cooking Sauce
Milk UHT, Powdered Milk
Honey
Ketchup/Mayonnaise/Brown Sauce
Hot Chocolate, Porridge
Custard, Rice Pudding
Shaving Foam, Adult Toothpaste and Toothbrushes
Toilet Rolls, Nappies Size 6 ONLY

STEWARDSHIP – MAKING YOUR DONATION

For general and stewardship giving you can give online via the Charities Aid Foundation. Donations can be either a one-off donation or a regular donation using direct debit. To make a donation either:

1. Click on the following link:
<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/13377>
OR
2. Use your smart phone and scan the QR code below:



Christmas Services

14 December, 3-5pm

Christmas Tea with carols

Cake, company and carol singing
around the tree

Christmas Eve

Family Crib Service 4pm

Perfect for all ages!

21 December, 6.30pm

A Service of Nine Lessons & Carols

A traditional service of readings,
anthems & carols

Holy Communion 6pm

An early evening service as we wait to
greet the Christ Child

'Midnight' service 11pm
in the chapel at Epsom College

Christmas Day

Holy Communion 8.30am

Using the traditional liturgy of the
1662 Prayer Book

Christmas Day Praise 10am

An informal & joyful celebration
(A short Communion follows)



**St Martin
of Tours**

Church Street
Epsom, KT17 4PX

**St Stephen
on the Downs**

Rosebery Road
Langley Vale, KT18 6AF

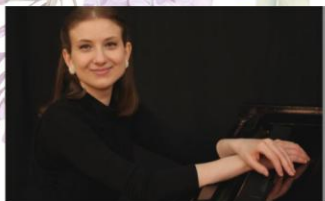
stmartinsepsom • office@stmartinsepsom.org • www.stmartinsepsom.org • 01372 722 567

FREE!

Music @ St Martin's

Spring 2026

Saturday afternoons at 4.30



Saturday 31 January
Mariia Zhornikova - piano
*plays Debussy, Granados and works by
her fellow Ukrainians*

Saturday 21 February
Redhouse Rhythm & Blues
*Entertaining and popular duo Chris
Hollingshurst & Danny Wignall return
to our series*



Saturday 28 March
Hammers & Pipes
*Peter Lutton shares his enjoyment of
playing our fine piano and organ*

Saturday 18 April
Women of English Song
*Soprano Christine Cunnold and pianist
Richard Harker explore some of the best
music of female composers*



**St Martin
of Tours**

Church Street
Epsom, KT17 4PX

Admission to the recitals is free but we ask for donations
to enable us to continue offering great music
at St Martin's

You can also use our QR code to support
the series at any time.

 [stmartinsepsom](https://www.facebook.com/stmartinsepsom) • www.stmartinsepsom.org • office@stmartinsepsom.org • 01372 722 567

Registered Charity No 1134149

Submitting an item for the newsletter:
Please ensure that all items are emailed to the office marked
‘For Newsletter’ in the title by
12 noon on Wednesday, to be included for that week.

Parish Office:
The parish office is open from 9.30am – 12.30pm every
Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
Church House, Church Street, Epsom,
KT17 4PX Phone: 01372 722567
E-mail: office@stmartinsepsom.org
Website: www.stmartinsepsom.org

If you would like to be added to our mailing list so that you
receive the newsletter and orders of service weekly, please
email the parish office. Please contact clergy and lay
ministers via the office.