

St Martin of Tours  
Epsom

St Stephen on the Downs  
Langley Vale

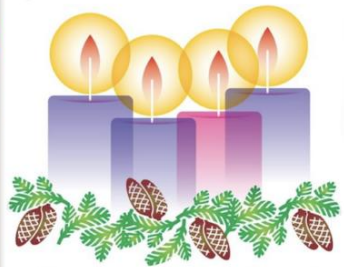
Registered Charity Number: 1134149

## WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

SUNDAY 21<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2025

ADVENT 4

4th Sunday of Advent



Blessed is the fruit of your womb.

## DIARY

### **Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December ADVENT 4**

9.30am Morning Prayer service at St Stephen's

10.00am Holy Communion service at St Martin's

6.30pm Nine Lessons and Carols at St Martin's

### **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> Christmas Eve**

10.00am NO SERVICE

3.00pm Carol Service at 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

### **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> Christmas Day**

8.30am Holy Communion at St Martin's

10.00am Christmas Day family service followed  
by a short Communion service

### **Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> Christmas 1**

9.30am Holy Communion for St Stephen's Day  
at Langley Vale Villiage Hall.

**NO SERVICES AT ST MARTIN'S AT 10AM AND 6.30PM**

### **Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup>**

10.00am NO SERVICE

### **Sunday January 4<sup>th</sup>**

9.30am Morning Prayer at Langley Vale Village Hall

10.00am Sung Communion at St. Martin's

6.30pm Evening Prayer at St. Martin's

### **Christmas Jumpers - Sunday 21 December:**

It's become a tradition at St Martin's 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**

### **Thank you**

Christmas Tea, 14<sup>th</sup> December: Elaine and I would like to thank all those who helped at the Christmas Tea. This includes all those who helped clear chairs, put up tables, put chairs back again at the end and removed the tables, those who helped lay the tables, contributed biscuits and ginger cake, washed up, swept the floor, and of course Helen who played the piano for our carols. We couldn't have managed without you, so thank you all again. We think the Tea was a success with more than 40 attending and we hope those who came enjoyed themselves.

***Mary Gilbert and Elaine Snook***

### **Thank You**

Thank you so much for your good wishes and cards for my 90th Birthday. They were all much appreciated, including the lovely cake.

***Adrian***



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

The last session to talk about Advent and the One for whom we are waiting will take place on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> 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.

**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](mailto:rob@stmartinsepsom.org) or Sarah: [wardens@stmartinsepsom.org](mailto:wardens@stmartinsepsom.org)

## **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*



## **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](#)

## **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](mailto:beth.perkins@cofeguildford.org.uk) - is also available to answer questions.

## **Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network - Save the Date! Tuesday 27th January - Sunday 1st February 2026 Festival of Friendship - Ukraine**

The Festival of Friendship - Ukraine celebrates the traditional crafts, skills, and heritage of the Ukrainian community within Epsom, with Ukrainian creatives showcasing and sharing their talents.

The Festival includes workshops, exhibitions, Ukrainian film screenings, performances by the Ukrainian choir Renaissance, bandura player Yuliia Komyshan and other musicians Organised with Epsom Library, Epsom Picturehouse, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. More details to follow.

### **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:





## 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=dLiB4jY8FRRdtFcbGBRjaVtMJ9K2Ar.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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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: 1<sup>st</sup> 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:

### **Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>**

Our vision and work for Social and Racial Justice. Our Readers and Intercessors. Local schools and nursery schools. Those living and working in Oak Hill, Oakmead Green, Old Barn Road, Pikes Hill and Pine Hill.

### **Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>**

All who offer welcome and hospitality and serve refreshments at our churches. Those to be married in our churches. Our Missions: Mercy Ships. Those living and working in Pitt Road, Portland Place, Prospect Place, Providence Place and Randolph Road.

### **Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Our Electoral Roll Officer: John Aronson. Our Church Cleaners. Local doctors' surgeries. Those living and working in Richmond Close, Rosebery Avenue, Rosebery Road, Sadlers Way and South Street.

### **Christmas Eve, Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup>**

Those recently confirmed and their growing relationship with God. Preparation for future baptism and confirmation. All who enter St Martin's in the week and pass through our garden. Church Army (supporting and empowering those most in need in UK and Ireland). Those living and working in Spencer Close, Squirrels Way, St George's Gardens, St James' Close, St Martin's Avenue and St Martin's Close.

## 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:**

Cooking Sauce - Urgent  
Powdered Milk - Urgent  
Milk UHT - Urgent  
Long Life Juice - Urgent  
Sugar - Urgent  
Hair Conditioner - Urgent  
Shampoo - Urgent  
Toilet Rolls - Urgent  
Sponge Pudding - Urgent we have none  
Tinned Meat  
Pasta/Beans with Meat  
Tinned Potatoes  
Packet Soup  
Instant Mash  
Instant Coffee  
Jam/Honey/Chocolate Spread/Peanut Butter/Marmalade  
Ketchup/Mayonnaise/Brown Sauce  
Biscuits  
Custard  
Rice Pudding  
Shaving Foam  
Male/Female Deodorant  
Washing Up Liquid  
Kids Toothbrushes and Toothpaste 0-2 and 6yrs  
Adult Toothpaste  
Nappies size 3, 5 and 6 ONLY

**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](http://www.stmartinsepsom.org) • [office@stmartinsepsom.org](mailto: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](mailto:office@stmartinsepsom.org)  
Website: [www.stmartinsepsom.org](http://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.**