

St Martin of Tours
Epsom

St Stephen on the Downs
Langley Vale

Registered Charity Number: 1134149

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

24th DECEMBER 2025

CHRISTMAS EVE



DIARY

Wednesday 24th 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 25th Christmas Day

8.30am Holy Communion at St Martin's

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

Sunday 28th 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 31st

10.00am NO SERVICE

Sunday January 4th

9.30am Morning Prayer at Langley V Village Hall

10.00am Sung Communion at St. Martin's

6.30pm Evening Prayer at St. Martin's

Contemplative Prayer Group

The Group meets on Tuesday 6th January at 11 am in the Lady Chapel at St Martin's. Our starting point will be Isaiah 41.1: '*Be silent before me*'. All will be very welcome. **Adrian**

Second Thoughts

Sunday 11th January at 6.30 pm 'Question time'

(refreshments beforehand from 5.45pm)

Chairman – Canon Andrew Haviland, Chaplain Epsom College
Members of the Panel:-

Dr Lynne Scholefield leads the Centering Prayer Group and is 'passionate about text'.

Revd Nick Parish – Vicar of St Martins and St Stephen's on the Downs.

Howard Bluett, whose idea 'Question Time' was in the first place
Questions can be sent in beforehand to Canon Andrew or Adrian Esdaile or invited from the floor on the future of the Church, questions of theology, prayer, liturgy or mission – or anything else!

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

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.

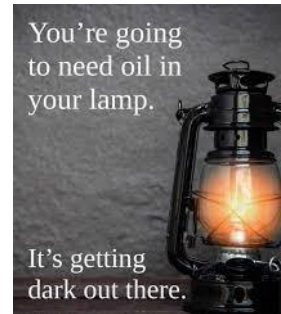
<https://youtu.be/z4MpHw-r7tq>

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 - 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 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:

Christmas Eve, 24th December

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. Our Missions: Church Army. 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.

Christmas Day, 25th December

The Vale School: children, parents, the Co-Heads, staff and Governors. Scouts (especially our 3rd Epsom (St Martin's) Scout Group), Cubs, Beavers, Guides, Brownies and their leaders. Local refuse collectors, those who deliver the post and other items. Those living and working in Station Approach Stevens Close, Strand Close, Sunnybank, and The Grove.

Boxing Day, 26th December

Our 'Second Thoughts' programme on the second Sunday at 6.30 pm. Education and training in the Parish and future courses. Our Missions: PHAB (bringing together disabled and non-disabled to create an inclusive world). Those living and working in The Hayes, The Oaks, The Parade, The Ridge, The Ridings, Tintagel Close and Treadwell Road.

Saturday 27th December

All involved in planning and leading Family services. Christian Aid and its annual collection in May and the projects it supports. Local prisons and their chaplains: Downview and High Down.

Those living and working in Upper High Street, Victoria Place, Warren Hill and Waterloo Road.

Sunday 28th December

All who are bereaved and grieving, and local funeral directors.

Our young people and teenagers – our vision for the future. Our Missions: USPG (United Society Partners in the Gospel). Those living and working in Westgate Close, Wilmerhatch Lane and Wimborne Close.

Monday 29th December

All parents and toddlers. Users of Langley Vale Village Hall: Sean Porter, Chair of the Village Hall Committee. Care and nursing homes in the Parish. Those in sheltered housing. Those living and working in Woodcote Close, Woodcote End, Woodcote Green Road, Woodcote Hurst, Woodcote Park Road and Woodcote Side.

Tuesday 30th December

Epsom College, staff and students: Chaplain Andrew Haviland. May all who enter our churches find peace and welcome. Our Missions: Epsom & Ewell Foodbank and the Leprosy Mission. Those living and working in Wootton Close, Worple Road, Wyeths Mews, Wyeths Road, Yeomanry Close and Yew Tree Gardens.

Wednesday 31st December

May the choirs who give concerts at St Martin's and their audiences feel God's presence in our church. Those in our

church family who now live elsewhere. Our borough libraries: their librarians, volunteers and those who use them. All who attend our churches and live in roads outside the Parish boundary.

Thursday 1st January

Our Vicar: Nick Parish, Yvonne and their family. Our Bishops: Andrew Watson and Paul Davies. The Chaplaincy Team at Epsom & St Helier Hospitals. Those living and working in Adelphi Road, Albert Road, Alexandra Road and Andrews Close.

Friday 2nd January

Our Curate: Judith Mitchell and her family. Our Archdeacon: Martin Breadmore and the Guildford Diocesan Staff. Our Missions: The Medaille Trust fighting against modern slavery. Those living and working in Ash Mews, Ashdown Road, Ashley Road, Aston Way, Avenue Road and Axwood.

Saturday 3rd January

Our Priest-in-Retirement: Adrian Esdaile and his family. Andris Abakuks, priest in the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church, and his family. Our Church schools: St Martin's Infant and Junior Schools: Children, parents, Governors, Heads, teachers and all staff. Our local public houses, restaurants and shops, and the staff who work in them. The Street Pastors giving help on Friday nights in Epsom. Those living and working in Barn Close, Baron's Hurst, Beaconsfield Place, Beaconsfield Road, Beech Road and Beech Way.

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:

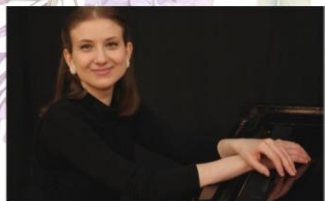
Cooking Sauce - Urgent
Powdered Milk - Urgent
Milk UHT - Urgent
Long Life Juice - Urgent
Sugar - Urgent
Hair Conditioner - Urgent
Shampoo - Urgent
Toilet Rolls - Urgent
Sponge Pudding - Urgent we have none
Tinned Meat
Pasta/Beans with Meat
Tinned Potatoes
Packet Soup
Instant Mash
Instant Coffee
Jam/Honey/Chocolate 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 • 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.**