

The Benefice of Gloucester St George with Whaddon
St Margaret of Scotland, Whaddon
Worshipping, Caring, Pioneering ...

Newsletter for Advent 2020

Dear Friends

It is over a year since our last newsletter. Work had started on a Lent Newsletter for 2020, but it was shelved with the onset of Covid.

It is high time therefore that we got in touch with our friends, especially those who live elsewhere, and who we do not see so often. We hope that you have managed to weather these difficult and disturbing times. This letter is a short one but we wanted to tell you how things are at St Margaret's and about our plans for Advent and Christmas.



A busy and strange year

It's been a busy and difficult year. Bruce Clifford retired as our Vicar at the end of July. Anyone who has been a parish officer during a vacancy will know what that means ... even without a national pandemic to cope with! We were not even able to say a proper farewell to Bruce and Rosie, but a few of us gathered to express our deep thanks for all they had done. A common theme was that Bruce had packed a decade's worth of work into little more than five years.



The Covid effect: a socially distanced and rather sparse farewell to Bruce and Rosie, August 2020

Even without Bruce's departure the Covid alone would have made this a year like no other.

Worship through the Covid year

With Bruce's help, we were able to keep worship going on a virtual basis during the period of lockdown, and to resume on a live basis once the rules were relaxed. The technical aspects were and are complicated. We must pay tribute particularly to Hans Rackham and Pete Best. Hans has wonderful technical skills and a problem-solving attitude. Pete has done marvels in organising things and people, so that week by week we are able to offer worship to those unable for whatever reason to get to church... and for those who lack computer access and the necessary skills. And since Bruce's retirement, we have been well served by local clergy who have led our communion services in particular.

It is indeed an ill wind that blows no-one some good. We have learned a lot through virtual worship, and people have found themselves volunteering and taking part in ways they hadn't done before. That said, we can't wait to shake off the restrictions and to get back to some sort of normality and being able to SING again.

Earlier in the year we had some lovely outdoor services for Family Praise. No question of that now of course, and luckily the requirement to leave the door wide open has been relaxed.

Advent and Christmas

Allowing for social distancing, the capacity of St Margaret's is down to 20-30. The higher figure depends on a good proportion of family groups who can share a pew. Obviously our normal Carol service with a capacity crowd is not feasible. We are planning for four shortened Carol services on the Wednesdays and Sundays leading up to Christmas....with pre-booking and allocated seats. They will be fully candle-lit as usual. The booking form is attached in case you are interested.

Christmas Day too will need special precautions to ensure that we do not end up with more people than we can safely cater for. A separate form will follow in due course. The complications of Covid!

New Housing

The new area to the south of Grange Road, is rapidly taking shape, and a number of the houses are already occupied. We have prepared a welcome pack which is being delivered personally to the new residents. Their numbers will roughly triple the present population of our parish.

In the longer term there is the possibility of a far larger development of the land now known as Whaddon Fields. If this happens, it will change completely the entire parish and beyond, with development to Naas Lane. Naturally there is much concern locally about the effects on the environment and the infrastructure.

Wynstones School

Another shock early this year was the sudden closure of Wynstones School following a report by Ofsted. We have enjoyed a warm relationship with the School for many years, and the events there have been very sad for us as a church. The plan now is that the School will reopen in September 2021. There will doubtless have been many changes, but we will of course hope to forge a new relationship between the school and St Margaret's.

An historic service

It seems a long time ago now, but history was made at St Margaret's on 5th January 2020. Evensong that day was led by Fr Gerry Walsh, parish priest for English Martyrs and Matson RC churches.

Without fear of contradiction we can say that this was the first time since the Act of Supremacy in 1559 that a service at Whaddon church had been led by a Roman Catholic priest. It was a moment of great historical significance ... and yet it was also the most natural thing in the world, demonstrating the warm partnership within what we are calling the 'Church in Tuffley'.



Fr Gerry coped very well with his first Anglican evensong, and preached a stimulating sermon for Epiphany. We hope he will visit us again before too long.

Farewell to Kath Senior



Kath Senior died peacefully at home on 15th June. This was completely unexpected and a great loss to all of us at St Margaret's. For something like thirty years she was a faithful member of our congregation, and with Jilly Ponter, she loved to attend to the housekeeping of the church she loved so much. She loved her hymns and we heard some of her favourites at her memorial service. Here is a picture of her setting up for a service. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Kath Senior, as we will remember her

Thank you for your help and support and your prayers, which mean a great deal to us. May we wish you all a blessed Advent, a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Website for St George's and St Margaret's: <http://www.glos-stg-stm.org.uk>

NB: you can see our monthly magazine Crossroads on the website

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