

WELCOME TO OUR CHURCH COMMUNITY



*Wishing you and your loved ones
a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year*

If this is your first newsletter, welcome ... if you have any questions about the church family, the Christian faith, or about our children's work, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Our administrator Vicky is available on 07804 558160. This notice sheet covers the next week and combines:

- Notices,
- The church diary (including livestream & Zoom joining instructions),
- Prayers and readings for the services on Sunday 22nd & 29th December 2024.

Thank you from the Rector

Once again, this Christmas I pray that, against the relentless backdrop of daily depressing news, we will be reminded and reassured that hope and peace has come to earth through Christ, and that his light shines out through us as we seek His way. Bishop Martin is right in saying (overleaf) that we should not underestimate the light we emit.

Indeed I am the fortunate beneficiary of the light which has shone out through so many people in the Chadbrook benefice this year: our wardens and PCCs; our ministry team; those who clean, decorate and maintain our churches; those supporting small groups and fundraising; those supporting our ministry to young people; our organist and choir members; the bell ringers; those who welcome, lock up and run the shop; our sidesmen and vergers ... and so on. I continue more widely to be encouraged and blessed by the many Godly examples of patience, forbearance, generosity, kindness and general love which I see demonstrated so often by members of our church family. It is these things which will be our lasting legacy. As we try to share something of the goodness and love of God in our four villages - and to those to whom the church seems so irrelevant - thank you for your support ...especially when I fall short which I regularly do!

I've cried with more people than ever this year, but it has been a privilege and honour to minister here. Despite all the challenges that 2025 will inevitably bring, I am also excited because I sense a new openness in people's hearts to God. May God bless you and let us be faithful servants of Christ and hold on to the baton of faith with courage, determination, and faith. Christmas blessings all.

Revd Matthew Lawson

Bishop Martin's Christmas Message

I love the Christmas lights which people drape outside their homes. Tiny twinkling lights, like miniature stars, not casting much light around them, but carrying a hint of promise, that there is more to come. Little points of light that point to something more.

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light". As Christians we read those words in Isaiah, written around 540 BC, as foretelling the coming of Christ. More than 600 years later, the prologue of John's Gospel picks up the theme: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it...The true light that enlightens everyone, was coming into the world."

Darkness. We know what darkness is. We think of people living in the midst of war, conflict and violence around the world. We think of people living in poverty, hungry, without shelter, in other countries of course, but shockingly, here at home too. We think of people who suffer violence and abuse. We think of people facing serious illness, suffering depression, the bewildered and beleaguered, the overwhelmed.

We can all name the darkness. It is real. In Scripture the darkness is injustice, cruelty, poverty, sickness, oppression. And the darkness is also a world that has forgotten God, acting out of its collective amnesia. Christmas each year, every year, wakes the world out of its forgetfulness, to turn us from darkness. And tiny twinkling lights remind the world that the light has come into the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

We who follow the One whose birth we celebrate are those tiny twinkling lights. Like the lights on the houses, seemingly not casting much light around us, but carrying the promise, that there is more to come. We mustn't underestimate the light we emit, when we challenge injustice, care for the poor, stand with the victim, give to the poor, sit with the sick, the lonely, the depressed, and pray for every one of them. We have been enlightened by the true light, and that light shines out through who we are and what we do. Casting a little light, and carrying the promise that there is more to come, we foretell by our lives what has already taken place.

And there is more to come, and it has already taken place, that night in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. He came among us to awaken the world out of our forgetfulness of God, with a light so bright that we can see the darkness for what it truly is. And we are those tiny twinkling lights – lights to point to the one who is born to draw everyone back to God. May all our lights grow brighter this Christmas. A blessed Christmas and a light-filled New Year to you all.



+ Martin

Baby Boxes for Ukraine

While on holiday I met an amazing person called Wendy Warrington, who had been voted midwife of the year for 2023. She has an amazing ministry to Ukraine and, because of her midwifery skills, particularly to the women who are prematurely giving birth due to the conflict. She, with volunteers, personally delivers equipment and goods directly to the hospitals in Ukraine she supports. Our Connect Mother and Toddler group are right now knitting and collecting baby items such as baby wipes, creams etc so that we can pack our own Baby Boxes, which we are hoping to deliver to Manchester (the departure point) in the New Year. We have collected some amazing, lovingly made items so far, and will continue to do so until the New Year. A huge thanks also goes to all those who have contributed so far, including the Wool Patch and members of Melford Library. Please contact me if you have items you would like to contribute or they can be left with Nick at the Library. Thank you in advance. Revd Judith Offord and the Connect Volunteer Team. judithrev3@gmail.com or 01787 315689.

Archaeological Find

I am grateful that the media have reported the following - a silver amulet was found in a grave in Germany north of the Alps, dating from approx. 250 AD. On the amulet were written the words:

"Holy! Holy! Holy! In the name of Jesus Christ, Son of God. ... Protect the man who surrenders himself to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, since before Jesus Christ every knee bows."



Amen to that!

Something Special

I am delighted to report that Revd Canon Malcolm Rogers is preaching at Holy Trinity on the morning of the 12th January at 10.30am, and he is also going to be present for an informal conversation at Lawshall Church at 4.00pm that afternoon.

Malcolm was the Anglican Church's representative to Moscow when the Ukraine war broke out. Malcolm and his wife have ministered in Russia for a number of years. If you want to learn more about life in Russia, and perhaps get some new perspectives on all that is happening, and to learn how to pray more specifically - I would encourage you to come along in the afternoon for what I am sure will be an informative, interesting, and faith filled session. Indeed if you have yet to venture to Lawshall church why not do so on the 12th!?



Faith Chat

If you'd like to discuss a recent sermon, a matter of faith, a church practice or anything else of a churchy nature, please join us in a relaxed, warm, informal atmosphere at the home of Susie and David Tweed at 10.30am on Tuesday 14 January. We hope to run the group on a monthly basis. If you're interested, please have a word with Malcolm or Judith Offord (01787 315689).

Suggestions for Prayer

- We pray that the Lord would draw many to our services and would touch hearts with the good news of Christmas (who could you pray for or invite?).
- We pray for any for whom the festive season is difficult for whatever reason.
- We pray for lasting peace in the Holy Land, for a resolution to the war in Ukraine, and a ceasing of hostilities in other places of violence and hatred.
- We remember before God those who have recently died and those who mourn.
- We pray for those in need of God's presence or his healing touch including Barbara Brady, David Bremer, Robert Hawkins, baby Munroe & Gordon Wright.

Diary

Sun 22 nd	10.30am	Communion at Holy Trinity *
	4.00pm	Alpheton Carol Service
	5.15pm	Choir Practice
	6.30pm	Holy Trinity Carol Service *
Mon 23 rd	6.30pm	Lawshall Carol Service
Tues 24 th	3.00pm	Crib Service at Holy Trinity
	6.00pm	Shimpling Carol Service
	10.45pm	Midnight Mass at Holy Trinity
Wed 25 th	10.30am	Christmas Day Communion at Holy Trinity *
Sun 29 th	10.30am	Communion at Holy Trinity *
Tues 31 st	9.00am	Morning Prayer via zoom #
Sat 4 th Jan 2025	12.00pm	Wedding & Holy Trinity – Michael & Amy
Sun 5 th	9.00am	Communion at Alpheton
	10.30am	Family Communion at Holy Trinity *

* Livestream Joining Instructions

- Google the five words “Holy Trinity Long Melford Facebook” or [click here](#) to open the church’s Facebook page (scroll down a bit to see the feed).
- Please note that you do not need a Facebook account yourself in order to watch the livestream.

Christmas Services

23 rd Dec	6.30pm	Lawshall Carol Service
24 th Dec	3.00pm	Crib Service at Holy Trinity Long Melford
24 th Dec	6.00pm	Shimpling Carol Service
24 th Dec	10.45pm	Midnight Mass at Holy Trinity
25 th Dec	10.30am	Benefice Christmas Communion at Holy Trinity
29 th Dec	10.30am	Simple Benefice Service at Holy Trinity

Collect (prayer for the day)

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

First Reading

Hebrews 10:5-10

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;

⁶with burnt offerings and sin offerings
you were not pleased.

⁷Then I said, “Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll –
I have come to do your will, my God.”’

⁸First he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them’ – though they were offered in accordance with the law. ⁹Then he said, ‘Here I am, I have come to do your will.’ He sets aside the first to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Gospel Reading

Luke 1:39-55

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

Glory to you, O Lord

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²In a loud voice she exclaimed: ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!’

⁴⁶And Mary said:

‘My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

⁴⁸for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

⁵¹He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful

⁵⁵to Abraham and his descendants for ever,

just as he promised our ancestors.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to You O Christ

(Bible readings courtesy of Bible Gateway New International Version - UK (NIVUK))

Post Communion Prayer

Heavenly Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us your servants with your grace, that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Readings for 29th December 2024 – 1st Sunday of Christmas**Collect (prayer for the day)**

Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of his divinity; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

First Reading**Colossians 3:12-17**

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Gospel Reading**Luke 2:41-52**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

Glory to you, O Lord

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. ⁴³ After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.'

⁴⁹ 'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?' ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to You O Christ

(Bible readings courtesy of Bible Gateway New International Version - UK (NIVUK))

Post Communion Prayer

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home: help your Church to live as one family, united in love and obedience, and bring us all at last to our home in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**