



If you attended a Service of Lessons and Carols during Advent, or Communion on Christmas Eve, you will have heard the words, "In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1: 4-5, NRSV).

One of the common complaints about Christmas these days is how early the preparations seem to start! Traditionally the church regards the Christmas season as beginning on Christmas Eve and there are some households too who only put their decorations up on that day. Many high streets though have their big 'switch on' at the start of December and it's not unusual to see houses adorned with elaborate arrays of Christmas lights at the beginning of Advent!

Another vexed question is when does Christmas end? Strangely, if you are someone who leaves Christmas shopping until the afternoon of Christmas Eve, you're likely to see large stores taking their decorations down in preparation for the post-Christmas sales! So, for the retail industry, it's over before some of us have even started!

For most in the secular world normality begins as soon as is practicable after New Year's Day. Traditionally, we observe the 12 days of Christmas and decorations are taken down at Epiphany (6th January). For some church traditions, Christmas finishes when we remember the Baptism of Christ on the first Sunday of Epiphany.

Many people feel low during January and February: we're starved of sunlight, the festivities are over and we are left to count the cost! The church though, while slower than the rest of the community in decking its halls, sees the ancient feast of Candlemas (2nd February) as the last day of the season before we revert to Ordinary Time. Nativity scenes remain lit up until we mark the occasion when, according to St Luke, Simeon the priest and Anna the prophetess met the infant Jesus in the temple at the time of his consecration. Simeon's prophecy declared Jesus to be "a light

for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:22-40). In AD 638, Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, said in a sermon: "Our candles are a sign of the divine splendour of the one who comes to expel the dark shadows of evil and to make the whole universe radiant with the brilliance of his eternal light."

Candlemas comes 40 days after Christmas Day: that is because under Mosaic Law, 40 days after giving birth a mother would present herself at the temple for Purification (Leviticus 12:6-7). The church marks Candlemas on the closest Sunday to 2nd February which this year falls on 3rd – in our benefice it is acknowledged at our morning services and we have special evening services at Tunstall and Frinsted this year.

Candlemas remains a day of hope and light: a time to honour Christ as the *Light of the World* and to remind us that we too have that light within us. The candles represent the inner light of Christ, which He brought to share with the world.

A fitting way to end the Christmas season!

Rev. Alan



Women's World Day of Prayer 2019

This year's benefice service focuses on the people of Slovenia and will be held in **Tunstall church** on **Friday March 1st at 10:30am**.

There will be a dramatized service and a short Power Point presentation.

The service is open to all. Please join us.

Light refreshments will be served

Contact Phebe- 01795 830267 or Rosemary- 01795 421710 for details.

Services during February, 2019

Sunday 3rd February - 5th before Lent (Education Sunday)

8.00am	Holy Communion (said)	Tunstall
9.00am	Parish Communion BCP	Bredgar
9.30am	All-Age Communion	Tunstall
10.30am	Family Service	Wormshill
11.15am	Parish Communion	Rodmersham
4.00pm	Cafe Tunstall	Tunstall
5:00pm	Evening Prayer	Frinsted
6.30pm	Evening Prayer	Tunstall

Sunday 10th February - 4th before Lent

8.00am	Holy Communion (said)	Tunstall
9.00am	Holy Communion (said)	Frinsted
9.30am	Parish Communion	Tunstall
10.30am	Compassion UK Service	Bredgar
10.30am	Matins	Wormshill
6.30pm	Evening Prayer	Tunstall

Sunday, 17th February - 3rd before Lent

8:00am	Holy Communion (said)	Tunstall
9.00am	Holy Communion (said)	Milstead
9.30am	Parish Communion	Tunstall
10.30am	Informal Communion	Bredgar
11.15am	Morning Prayer	Rodmersham
6.30pm	Evening Prayer	Tunstall

Wednesday, 20th February

7.00pm	Midweek Holy Communion	Tunstall
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Sunday, 24th February - 2nd before Lent

8.00am	Holy Communion (said)	Tunstall
9.00am	Holy Communion (said)	Wormshill
9.30am	Parish Communion	Tunstall
10.30am	ExCiTe all age lay led worship	Bredgar
6.00pm	Evening Prayer	Milstead
6.30pm	Evening Prayer	Tunstall

Electoral Roll 2019

Please note that this year, 2019, a full revision of the Electoral roll is needed. This means that everyone has to re-register even if you have been on the electoral roll previously.

New applications to join the electoral roll from regular attendees at Church are also most welcome. In due course there will be application forms available in Church. If you would like any more information on joining the Electoral Roll please speak to one of the Churchwardens or myself.

Reminders will be made in the Church, magazine and newsletter as well as the website nearer the time and the application forms will be available in Church at that time.

Joanne Williams
Electoral roll officer



In Remembrance of THE LOST LIVES OF RODMERSHAM AND HIGHSTED

On Sunday 18th November Sue Shiels rounded off our commemorations in the Parish with a moving and memorable display in the village hall.

Working with the Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne, Sue had spent the past few years researching the lives of the Fallen from the parish, to ensure more was known about them than just their names.

By the end of the Great War, nearly 50 from Rodmersham and Highsted were known to be absent from the village, having enlisted or been conscripted for active service. Nineteen of them never returned home again, losing their lives either in or as a direct result of their military service. They are remembered on the War Memorial inside Rodmersham Church and in the village hall that has a memorial in its own right.

Visitors were greeted at the door by a salute from Katie Shiels, dressed as a WW1 soldier and on the inside the hall was transformed for an evocative display against a background of black backdrops, music from the war years and hundreds of poppy petals. Large, printed boards, including some with photographs, gave details of the life of each lost man and the family they left behind. Sue had researched how they would have known each other. Eleven had been pupils of Rodmersham School, six had worked on local farms, two had lived in Milstead, two at Newbury, Tonge and eleven in Rodmersham.

Where possible Sue presented further background information often of a poignant nature such as the letter to the War Office from the widow of George Chittenden, asking for any details of how her husband had died.

One item of great interest to cyclists was a newspaper report describing how John Hollands of Sandhurst (Berks) rode his safety bicycle with pneumatic tyres from Sandhurst to Sidmouth and back – 160 miles each way with his 4-year old brother, Henry in a seat attached to the front handle bars. Henry later served with the Royal Berkshire Regiment and died of wounds on 20th August, 1916, leaving a widow, Maud Holland, of Rodmersham Green.

As well as details about the Fallen, Sue provided the names of men from the village who served in the conflict and returned home. Several households had more than two members on active service, including the Hobbs, Eastman, Ruff, Worsley, Johnson, Barrett and Wells families. A map of the parish showed where these families lived and allowed us to see the impact the Great War had on just this one small community. The display was attended by over 80 people and raised over £570 in donations for the Help for Heroes charity.

If anybody would like to read the biographies that were on display, these are available from Sue on 01795 427 431.

Review of the Christmas Tree Festival 2018



There are many ways to judge the success of an event but, for me this year, one was seeing the reaction of the children from the Oaks Infant School and the Acorn Language Unit who walked the mile or so up to the Church and as they entered the front door stood with their mouths open in amazement at the spectacle before them. There were just so many trees of all shapes and sizes in all the 'nooks and crannies' and in so many different designs making each one unique.

The children's reaction was replicated many times over the course of the event. Over 1700 visitors marvelled at the display comprising 110 trees. They received a warm welcome and enjoyed refreshments and conversation with an army of volunteers who manned the event. Without this group of people the event would not have been possible and the heartfelt thanks of the Social Committee go to each individual who gave his or her time for the event.

Donations totalled £2500 and after expenses this was divided between the New Leaf Support Charity and Church funds.

This was the fifth year running that the Church has held a Christmas Tree Festival as a community event and it is



interesting to see the way in which the brief to contribute a tree has been interpreted. In my opinion, the Tunstall Christmas Tree Festival has now become a platform, in an appropriate setting, for an acknowledgement of our lives with all the joy, happiness and well-being that that entails but also the sadness and sorrow we all experience at some point.

Beyond the face value of the amazing spectacle of so many trees gathered in one place were reminders of the issues facing us in our world today. However, our starting point is the Christmas story and this was displayed, for example, by the 'Nativitytree' adorned with Olivewood ornaments from Bethlehem and another one comprising a set of three beautiful, free-standing, handcrafted symbolic kings.

Associated with that is all the fun and 'jollifications' of Christmas which were there in many of the trees with a profusion of baubles, bells, stars, ribbons and Father Christmases and reinforcing the air of anticipation we all have for Christmas. The ideas were simply amazing and the creativity and imagination was staggering. 'Fitted in time for Christmas', for example, was an inspired idea as was 'Bottled for Christmas', the Pyramid of Lights representing the Trinity and the 3D Sierpinski Triangle from Borden CEP School.

However, amongst these and others were trees that reminded us of the serious issues facing us today. The need for Street Pastors who deal on a nightly basis with the excesses of modern day living, the need for Food Banks and creative thinking to solve some of the problems of homelessness. We saw an example of this through The Bus Shelter Project highlighted through the medium of a pair of appropriately decorated ladders.

Few can have failed to have been moved by the stunning symbolic 'tree' invoking us to pray for all those devastated in the forest fires in Australia and California but a reminder of the issues of climate change affecting us all.

In this age of consumerism in our 'throwaway' society it was clear that recycling



is alive and thriving in Tunstall and so there were several trees demonstrating new uses for sweet wrappers and plastic bottles in the form of decorations, pot scourers and much more to form poppies, buttons to make ingenious decorations, locally gathered holly and ivy for the Needlework group to fashion a tree and discarded branches from which to hang icicles, make a nodding reindeer with flashing antlers or demonstrate the profusion of wild life in our local woods. Thus the care of our environment was not forgotten. This extended to the use of teasles to make hedgehogs which need all our help to prevent their decline and also the Sittingbourne in Bloom trees which reminded us of the need for colour through plants and trees in our lives.

Our pets were not forgotten in this Christmas Tree Festival as shown by the tree laden with dog treats and for anyone who has yet to be owned by a dog, there was a tree informing us of the joys of owning a retired greyhound. 'Sniff for Life' reminded us of the essential use of dogs in diagnosing various ailments or acting as a warning measure.

Care of our health was not forgotten and so we had a tree informing us of the measures to take in the event of a stroke and another informing us of the benefits of relaxation through engaging the senses. The tree from the Wisdom Hospice was decorated with finely crafted knitted doves which must have taken hours to make. Another tree reminded us of the need to



eradicate polio and yet another of the benefits of volunteering in our hospitals. With any spare time, the tree created by the U3A included leaflets, which rapidly disappeared whenever they were replenished, mapped out a wide range of activities for the forthcoming months. We were also invited to take up dancing and/or keep fit through the medium of other uniquely decorated trees.

As an inclusive event we welcomed the Pride Tree and also the tree on behalf of the Shane Alderman Trust reminding us that disability has no limits to what may be achieved in life.

To commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War the porch was decorated with a profusion of poppies from the Murston HeART project and there were individual trees inside the Church to make us pause and reflect upon all those involved in conflict both then and now.

As well as being a happy occasion, for many Christmas is a lonely and sad time. Several trees invited people to leave messages and at the end of the Christmas Tree Festival these were laden with tags ranging from the one from the child who wished for a unicorn at Christmas to those recently bereaved or struggling to come to terms with something that is not easily resolved, be it health or a personal issue.

One tree from all the children in a school was especially poignant as it was finely crafted from cones of silk to comprise their thoughts and hopes for their Headteacher who is unwell. Every one of the messages was special and blessed at a service held on Christmas Eve.

I could go on, but space prohibits. Suffice to say that each tree was unique and gave every one of us something to take away and reflect upon. A huge 'thank you' to everyone who took part in whatever capacity to make this a truly wonderful and successful Christmas Tree Festival especially as the brief has been translated to make it all encompassing. Whilst the idea of a Christmas Tree brings out the child in each of us, the wide-ranging scope of this event means that in our community there is limitless hope and trust for the future.

My good wishes for a very happy and healthy 2019.

Marylyn Atkins, Christmas Tree Co-ordinator.

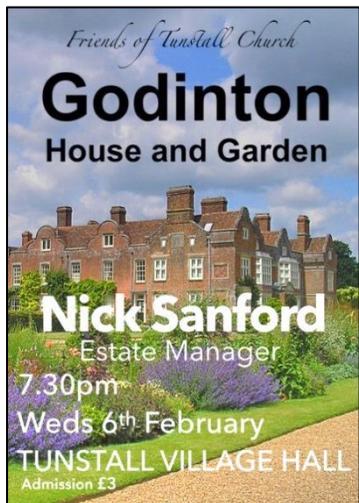
And Finally!!

It is right and proper to recognise and celebrate the gifts and talents of all who contributed in any way to the outreach of the Christmas Tree Festival. It is also right and proper to thank the person without whose vision, enthusiasm and tenacity, there would not have been the plethora of creative talent which provided such pleasure and reflection for our visitors.

Well done again Marylyn and thank you for all the phone calls etc. Your infectious enthusiasm worked wonders yet again.

The Social Committee

Friends of Tunstall Church - February Talk



Dear Friends,

Our Spring programme continues as usual on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm in Tunstall Village Hall.

February 6th Godinton House and Gardens – Nick Sanford

Nick Sanford, the Godinton Estate Manager, will talk on the history of the house and gardens. Standing in the tranquil parkland setting it has seen many monarchs come and go, uprisings, rebellions and the Civil War. There have only been two major changes of ownership in 600 years and they

have ensured that the heritage has been improved, not swept away.

A diary date for you. The Friends have arranged a visit there for **15th May**. Details later in the year.

Please recommend us to your friends to see if they would like to take in a talk or two and possibly become regulars.

David Prew - Chairman

Tunstall Village Hall



Cameo Opera Gilbert and Sullivan Night Saturday 23rd February

Great night, best ever, wonderful start to Christmas was the comments from the capacity audience as they left after Cameo Christmas Capers on 19th December.

It was a splendid evening and the memory lingers on but Christmas is now behind us and we are preparing another great night to cheer the dark days of winter. **“With Laughing Song and Merry Dance”** is the title of a Gilbert and Sullivan night arranged for **Saturday 23rd February**, 7.30 p.m. in the village hall. As always with Cameo Opera productions we can guarantee

wonderful music, zany humour, lots of comedy and a wealth of costumed characters to add to the fun.

This is a first for Tunstall but, after Cameo Opera advertised it at the end of their Christmas concert, orders for tickets have just poured in.

Early booking is advised. Tickets cost £12 to include interval refreshments and are available from Gordon on 477774 or me, Pauline, on 472218.

Pauline Panton



PASSOVER SUPPER

This year's Passover Supper will be held on

Wednesday 17th April

Midwinter Room, Tunstall Church

7.15 for 7.30pm

This celebration is part of our preparation for Easter and together we enter into the Jewish Festival that

was celebrated to commemorate the exodus from Egypt.

A traditional Passover meal will be served (including a vegetarian option on request). Please bring your own drinks and glasses.

Tickets are £6.00 and are available from Pat Tatchell - 01795 471956 tatch@blueyonder.co.uk

As numbers are limited please book early to avoid disappointment.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 18th May 2019

CONCERT BY QUODLIBET of Canterbury at 7pm in Tunstall Church.

Quodlibet are a well-known a Capella group based in Canterbury who perform an eclectic mix of music. As well as performing Church concerts, they provide tailor-made programmes for many occasions – everything from Elizabethan feasts to Wedding services. They will be performing in the Church on Saturday 18th May starting at 7pm.

Tickets, which will cost £12, will be available in late March

Sunday 6th October 2019, Harvest Supper. (*change of date*)

Thursday 5th December – Sunday 8th December 2019, Tunstall Christmas Tree Festival.