



Parish of St Peter & St Paul, Abington
- the Church in the Park -
Welcome to our December Newsletter
2024

Rector's Pastoral Letter

Concluding the year of 800th Anniversary

How quickly the world changes. I wrote an article under the above title in advance a few weeks ago, thinking that December is going to be a very busy month. I thought I was being prepared for once! Well, so many things happened and changed over the last few weeks: A distressing report, the Makin Review, was released about abuses in the church in the past. The Archbishop of Canterbury resigned. Martial law was declared and then lifted in South Korea. Communities damaged by floods and the storm. And a tree fell in our churchyard!



How little did I know about what was going to happen when I was writing that article which is by the way now in the bin of my laptop. (I am writing a new article in between meetings). This just reminds me of just how little I know and we know about anything really. How fragile our plans are and our world is.

When I read the Makin Report (I confess I couldn't finish the reading not only because it was 250 pages long but because it was just too distressful), what stood out for me was how charming the perpetrator, John Smythe QC, was. He was a respected lawyer as his title suggests. Many people remembered him as an intelligent, eloquent, charismatic man. Who wouldn't want to befriend a man like that? But how little did they know about who he really was.

It is important to point out what's gone wrong so that we can learn from it. But it is difficult to know whether I would have been able to make the right choice had I been in the same place then. Often what we have are fragments of information. And the choice we have can be conflicting. For example, it's difficult to strike the right balance between the responsibility to minimise the risk and the principle of innocent until proven guilty. And yet, sometimes we have to make a decision based on the only information we have there.

Please don't get me wrong. I am not trying to take a side here by any means or to put forward my own view on a certain matter. We are living in a world that is being deeply polarised. The middle ground is getting narrower as people are forced to choose a side. Consequently, it becomes harder and harder for people to hold a space in between. A space for mystery, for listening, for waiting. A space where it is safe to say that we simply don't know or don't understand. A space for the Holy Spirit to hover over the water of the unknown before bringing new possibilities into the world. A space that we leave unoccupied for God to be born in the midst of our life. If that space is getting narrower, we must ask to whom or what are we handing that space over?

Recently I have been on a pilgrimage to Berlin as part of a training programme that I am taking part of. The intention of this pilgrimage was to see and feel places of suffering and failure including the ones of the Church. One thing that we all confessed during the pilgrimage was this: How little did we know. How little do we know still about the sufferings of this world, the complexity of the reality of this world.

During our free time, I visited a museum called, Topography of Terror in Berlin. This museum stands on the former site of the principal instruments of Nazi persecution and terror: The headquarters of the SS and Gestapo.

One of the things that stood out for me there was that most of those who were in the inner circle of Hitler's leadership were far from heroes of Aryanism which they promoted so eagerly. In fact, most of them, including Hitler himself, were fearful people. They struggled with issues of insecurity and anxieties. Perhaps that explains, at least partly, why they were so obsessed with this idea of supremacy.

Coming back to myself in this polarising world. If I were to draw a map of my mind then there would be a very small corner of the things of what I know. Then there would be this vast fields of things of what I don't know or don't

understand fully. And I can see how easily I can be seduced by the voices of fear that tempts me to bring clarity to that fields of unknown by choosing a side or by accepting a conspiracy theory or simply by rejecting what I see as the other or foreign. It is very powerful.

Three is another powerful deception of fear. One of the worst and yet most powerful deception that fear can throw at us is to make us to see only the problems while preventing us to see what we have achieved.

Fear tells us that there is a problem and we are in trouble. Faith tells us that there is God even in the midst of trouble and He is with us. When I look at the news and see all those things that trouble us. But when I look around me and around the life of Abington Church, I see amazing signs of God's grace and faithfulness. Of course, things are not perfect. Of course, we have works to do and things to improve. Nevertheless, I think we should be really proud of where we got to. I think we should really respect and appreciate the journey that we have taken and the miles that we have done. It's not just fortune that we are where we are. It's the grace of God but also the faithful responses of the people of God that led us to where we are.

The things we have done together this year alone: We had new believers' group, 8-weeks Sermon Series on the 800th anniversary with friends from the past, family fun afternoon, musical talents afternoon, celebration service of thanksgiving with immersion baptism, visioning exercise under the oak for 6 weeks, fete, parish BBQ, another family fun afternoon with more than a hundred of children and families, hymns of 800 years, another celebration service of rededication with confirmation, commissioning of a new Icon: Christ with the church in the park, another musical talent afternoon, three afternoon tea events with charities, another 8-weeks sermon series on Kingdom, more than 1224 butterflies decorating the church, supporting schools, care homes, supporting Baby Basics, Christians Against Poverty, Ethiopian children with Breakfast Club, Read Easy, Christian Aid... I haven't mentioned it all.

It's not the number of tasks and events that make me proud of being part of Abington. It's the generosity, dedication, patience, faith, prayerfulness, kindness, forgiveness that I saw in all of them and beyond. For that and for you, I give thanks to God.

Thank you for making Christ visible in this place. That's what we celebrated on this 800th year of the first known Rector of Abington, the constant witness of

God's faithful people to the love of Christ for his people. It is a joy and privilege to take a small part in that great chain.

With love in Christ

Jun

Abington Christmas Charities

: Hope Centre, Northampton & Embrace the Middle East

During this Advent and Christmas, we will be supporting Hope Centre Northampton as our local charity and Embrace Middle East as our global charity. All collections made to the church will be directed to these charities.

You can do so either by using the card reader machine or using the marked envelopes.

St Peter & St Paul Abington "the church in the park"



We are collecting money to be split between two charities this Christmas – further information on each is below



We work with Christians in the Middle East (in Egypt, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon and Syria) to tackle poverty and injustice. Where there is a need for support for health, education and community projects we, with our partners, respond bringing vital services to those at risk of marginalisation and exclusion.

www.embraceme.org

Hope supports Northampton people through homelessness and periods of hardship. We provide crisis support (such as warm clothing, blankets and sleeping bags) and help people to help themselves, by running workshops, community projects and weekly Food Clubs that provide support for as long as needed.

www.northamptonhopecentre.org.uk/

To donate, place cash/cheques inside an envelope marked 'Christmas'. We have a card reader at the back of the church or use this QR code to visit our Give A Little page.

<https://givealittle.co/c/AbingtonChristmas2024>



Thank you for your generosity.



Northampton Hope Centre: Tree of Hope

1. Select a tag: Select a tag that represents a donation amount or item(s) you want to contribute.

2. Make Your Donation:

QR Code: Scan the QR code to make an online payment.

Cash Donation: Place your cash donation in the envelopes provided and put it in the Hope donation bucket next to the tree.

Card Donation: Use the church card machine, selecting the 'Tree of Hope' campaign and make your donation by card.

Items: Place any items you have in the box next to the tree.

3. Celebrate Your Contribution: Feel good knowing you're making a positive impact through the Giving Tree!

St Peter and St Paul Abington "the church in the park" invites you to



Follow The Star
CALM and BRIGHT

Please join us celebrating
Christmas at Abington

Angelic Advent-ure Trail
*A self guided trail around the Churchyard following the story of Grace as she starts her official angel training.
Open all day 1st December to 5th January*

Celebration Concert, Christmas Music from the Messiah
4pm Sunday 1st December

Make your own Christingle Service 3pm Sunday 8th December

Lessons and Carols Service 6pm Sunday 22nd December
Followed by mince pies and refreshments

Crib Service 3pm Tuesday 24th December

Midnight Service 11.30pm Tuesday 24th December

Christmas Morning Family Eucharist 10am Christmas Day

All our services and activities are open to everyone and free to enjoy. We look forward to welcoming you.

For more information, or to contact us, please see details on our website
www.abingtonchurch.org.uk



Preachers for this month

22 Dec: Revd. Jun

24 Dec: Revd. David Spiers, Superintendent Minister of Methodist Circuit

25 Dec: Revd. Tracy

29 Dec: Liz Kelly, Anna Chaplain

Readers and Intercessors for this month

Date	Readers	Intercessor
22 Dec	Alan Sutton, Richard Wardropper	Rhiannon George
24 Dec	Dianne Ward, Christ Waters	Peter Gompertz
25 Dec	Owen Warr, Richard White	Hilary Hodge
29 Dec	Mark Beesley, Alison Barnes	Liz Kelly

Important: Joint Service on Sunday 5 January 2025

There will be no 10 am service at church as we have joint Service with Park Avenue Methodist Church at the methodist church building. However there WILL be a service at church at 8.15 am.

Children and Young People Update

Children and Young People December Update

Forest Church met at the end of October and nearly 45 children and adults came to join in the activities. We started outside and were invited to look for 'special treasure' - stones with pictures on them. Then we looked at them and compared the pictures. Once in church, Revd. Tracy asked us what we had found and we talked about how things change at different times of the year. We were asked to think about the changes in our lives and to remember that God is always with us. We thanked God for the wonderful gifts of people and places that we build special memories with. God is with the people that we love, always. Even when we cannot see them anymore. We then went out into the churchyard and placed lights on many of the grave stones, to remember those people that we love.

Thank you Revd. Tracy for leading Forest Church and to Malcolm and Lizzie who served the refreshments. We look forward to more Forest Churches in 2025.

Exciting news to share! Abington Youth Church met for the first time at the Parish Rooms on Sunday 24th November at 4 pm. This was led by Revd. Jun and Revd. Tracy and we were delighted that 9 young people from the church family came along. We met for a time of worship, games, and fellowship. Hilary, Charlotte and Rhiannon served us a delicious meal which was much appreciated. It was a very promising start for AYC and we look forward to meeting during 2025, as we worship God, explore faith and journey together. **Dates of AYC are 26th January, 2nd March, 6th April, 20th July and 28th September.** If you know of any secondary school children who would like to join us at AYC, do please invite them.



You may have seen a few new faces in Junior Church? We are very pleased that **Jane Pinches and Val Beattie** have both agreed to help on an occasional basis. Thank you to all the wonderful JC volunteers who are so committed in supporting the children and helping them as they grow in faith.

We also had a very lovely Christingle service and thank you all who supported The Children's Society through this. Do read about Louise and the difference the organisation has made to her life by downloading www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Then finally, we welcome you to the **Crib Service on Christmas Eve at 3 pm.** The story has been written by Susie McKay and can also be enjoyed as a **Christmas Trail in the churchyard.** To hear the Nativity story told in a new and imaginative way, please do join us!

Cathy Tinsley

Children and Youth Missioner - **01604 816680 (this is a new home number)** or 07516 979223 and children@abingtonchurch.org.uk

Abington Pastoral Team

News from Abington Park View Care Home

On 30 October, the residents enjoyed the Messy Vintage afternoon. The theme was, 'Jesus, the way, truth and life.' Each person decorated a blank outline cross with pictures, stickers, and drawings to illustrate their life story. and we talked about our families, hobbies, holidays, interests, former jobs, and thought about what Jesus means to us? Here are some of the beautiful crosses that were produced.



We ended with this prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for showing us the way to live. Help us to follow you all our days, to believe in your truth, and to live life to the full. **Amen**

Revd Tracy celebrated Holy Communion for twelve residents on Wednesday 13 November and she was joined by Liz, Jackie and Jane who helped with the hymns and reading.



Sadly, nine residents have died during 2024, and on 27 November we held a service of remembering, during which a candle was lit as each person's name was read out. It was a moving service, and we hope it has given the staff and residents a proper chance to say goodbye. As Christians, the Resurrection of Jesus gives us hope that we will meet our loved ones again, and that in the meantime, we believe they are safe with him.

To find more about ways to support our elderly and local care homes, please contact Liz Kelly, Lay Pastoral Minister and Anna Chaplain. Her contact details are lizmk@outlook.com and telephone 01604 636947 or 07745 604591.

News from St Christopher's

Dear all, just a few things to point out for December. (The new calendar is out now)

The board is up in the Chapel for Christmas cards, so that where residents would like to, they can send one card to everyone and make a donation to the Children's Society for the cards they would otherwise have bought. And thank you to everyone who has paid for the wreath making and table decoration workshops.

Bishop John will visit us and lead our worship at the chapel on Fri 20 December at 10.30 am. Please also don't forget our carol concert on **Fri 20 December at 2.30 pm.**

To avoid large quantities of money being passed round, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day meals will be invoiced for this year, rather than asking people to pay with cash. (Unless anyone would rather pay cash.)

The New Year's Day activity – Who Wants to be a Millionaire – has been added to December's calendar so that those who would like to can save the date in their diary. It does require booking, and the forms will be given out the week before. The cost will be £5 for a buffet tea including a glass of wine.

Please keep an eye on the calendar, there's so much going on!! We hope you enjoy it all.

Kind regards, Celia and Lisa Mac

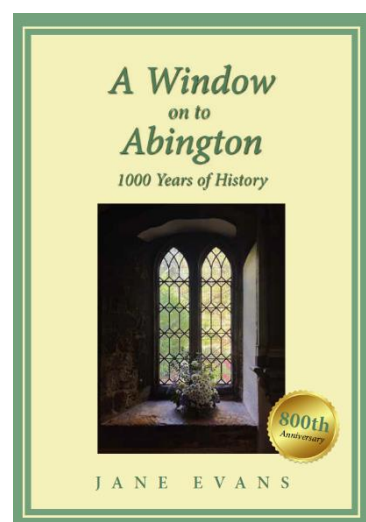
Prayer Requests

Each week at church we pray for people in need and also for schools, colleges and universities attended by our young people, as well as places of employment, where members of the church family work.

If you would like to make a prayer request, please see Cathy Tinsley, who is responsible for compiling these requests, or email her on cathytinsley18@gmail.com

Abington History book

Abington history book is now available for purchase. (£9.99). You can purchase it from the church or directly from Jane. Any further enquiries please contact Jane Evans.



[Draft Minutes from the last PCC Meeting](#)

Please click the title above to access the link.

Zoom Compline

This is a weekly service at 7.00pm on Tuesdays. In case you don't know, Compline is a quiet, reflective service at the end of the day and includes an open prayer time, so we are able to continue to support one another. The joining details are: Meeting I.D. 815 8020 8528. Passcode 409450 Please talk to Liz Kelly if you want to know more about this and to receive a weekly invitation by email, which enables one-click joining. Her contact details are: lizmk@outlook.com or telephone on 07745 604591.

Parish Newsletter Contribution

Please send your stories and photos to Revd. Jun, rector@abingtonchurch.org.uk by 23rd of each month.
