

# PEWTALK

£1

December 2025



EAST & WEST TILBURY AND LINFORD PARISH MAGAZINE

Parish web site: [www.stcatherinesthurrock.org.uk](http://www.stcatherinesthurrock.org.uk)

# BITs AnD PiECes

**100 Club** - Sheila and I were away on our family holiday for the November draw. The winner was Kathy Bird who, with her family, has supported the 100 Club for several years and they have had a few wins. If you have yet to join the 100 Club and you join before the Christmas Fayre on December 6th you will have two chances to win the £50. *Norman*

**The Thurrock Gospel Choir** invite you to 'Celebrate the wonders of his Birth' at the following venues:-

*Wednesday 3rd December at 7.00 pm* at St. John's Church, Victoria Avenue, Grays, RM16 2RP,

*Sunday 7th December at 4.00 pm* at The Salvation Army, Clarence. Road, Grays. RM17 6RA

*Wednesday 10th at 7.30 pm* at Community Church, 8, Defoe Parade, Chadwell-St-Mary. Admission is free and refreshments are available.

**All our Advent and Christmas dates** are in Revd. Michèle's reflections and the December calendar and please be aware that our 'First Communion of Christmas' will commence at the earlier time of 11pm on Christmas Eve.

**While most of our events** are at St. Catherine's we will be having our usual carol drop-in on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> at St. Francis.

**As we approach Christmas** the Thurrock foodbank will, no doubt, see an increase in demand particularly when the school term finishes and free school meals will not be available. This and the general financial

pressures of the time of year always puts pressure on the foodbank's resources. If you can help with donations of non-perishable items of food these can be left at St. Catherine's on a Sunday after the service or at St. Francis either on a Wednesday between 10.30am and noon or a Thursday between 11am and 1pm. To find out what food is urgently required go to the foodbank website (see the link on our home page) and click on the 'donate food' button. Alternatively use the 'BanktheFood' app available on the Apple and Google app stores.

**As with any other public** building our churches electrical and gas services have to be inspected from time to time and the relevant safety certificates issued. As far as the gas is concerned this is carried out with the annual service of our central heating boilers. However the electricians are required to be surveyed every five years and one was due this year. After the originally appointed contractor let us down and after the resulting delay it is satisfying to report that our electrician, George, finally completed the work at St. Catherine's in November.

**As last year we will** celebrate the arrival of the New Year at St. Francis on New Year's Eve at 4pm. All are welcome to join us for food and fun as we welcome 2026.

**And as this is the last edition** of Pewtalk for 2025 may I take the opportunity to thank our contributors and distributors and wish all our readers a joyful Christmas and all the very best for 2026. For those that wish to continue to have the magazine delivered next year the £10 subscription will be collected in January...*Ed*

## A prayer for all those affected by sickness and ill-health

*Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*



## Reflections from The Rectory

Another year is drawing to a close and we turn the calendar to find the month of December. And depending on how old you are I suspect you will either greet this new month with glee or dread. Children will be looking forward to all that 'Father Christmas' may bring them and parents and carers hopeful that the wish list won't be too long!

The Christmas advertising campaigns begins in earnest whilst we are still in autumn. Supermarkets, high streets and shopping centres begin to sparkle and shine with festive lights and decorations during October and November. 'Tis the season to be jolly' we are told but for many people celebrating, buying gifts and gathering more food than we actually need may be a real challenge and cause nothing but anxiety. For many the cost of living crisis does not seem to have eased and the juggling of household finances ongoing.

And in this season when our focus should really be on love and light shining in the darkness of the winter months we still hear of wars and nation fighting against nation with little hope of permanent peaceful solutions insight. Civilians on all sides suffer the most and normal life must seem so far away.

In the churches year we move toward the Christmas season at a more leisurely pace than secular society and the season of Advent helps us to prepare for and think about the message of Christmas differently.

This year the season of advent begins on **Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November**. The word Advent comes from the Latin '*Adventus*' meaning '*arrival*'. As we journey through the weeks of advent we look back to the *arrival* of the baby born in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago and look forward to the promised return of our Saviour Jesus at a time as yet unknown.

Every Sunday in Advent we light a new candle on the advent wreath which helps to increase our sense of anticipation and we look forward to the 'Christlight', the white candle at the centre of the wreath, being lit in the very first minutes of Christmas Morning at the midnight communion service on Christmas Eve.



And the Christmas story which speaks of the 'Christlight' coming into the world is still so relevant to our lives today. Christmas cards and nativity scenes paint a very cosy picture with shepherds and wise men surrounding the holy family all calm and still. But the reality is that for Mary and Joseph the journey to Bethlehem was full of danger. The birth of the infant Jesus meant seeking refuge away from their home to escape the wrath of King Herod.

And in the words of warning from Simeon, the elderly prophet to Mary just 40 days after the birth of Jesus, he tells her she is destined to live with the knowledge that she will not always be able to protect her child. No jollity, no sparkle, a story instead that has realism at its heart. And within that realism the Christmas story is a story of hope. In the times of darkness there

is the light of Christ that shines and when we feel bereft of all comfort the love of God can sustain us.

During Advent we have lots of lovely services and events that you might like to come along to:

**At St. Catherine's: 'The Christmas Fayre' - Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December, 10am to 2pm.** Christmas gifts, *craft stalls, cake stall, books and bric a brac, soft toy stall, a raffle, refreshments and the 100 Club Christmas Draw.*

**At St. Francis: 'Community Support Drop-in with Christmas Carols' - Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December 11am.**

**At St. Catherine's: 'Carols & Candlelight Service' - Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December, 6pm with The Grays Town Brass Band.** *Service followed by mulled wine & mince pies.*

**At St. Catherine's: 'Christmas Eve Crib Service' - Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December 3pm.** Come and hear the Christmas Story and help the nativity figures take their place in the Stable at Bethlehem. It's a lovely service for children of all ages.

**At St. Catherine's: 'Christmas Eve Holy Communion' - Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December 11pm**

**At St. Catherine's: 'Christmas Day Celebration with Holy Communion' Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> December 10am.**

However you prepare for the Christmas season don't let yourself be overwhelmed with the busyness of it all but rather find moments in which to wonder about the gift of a small child who came to show us how to love and live with our neighbours in peace.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas.

Every Blessing to you and your families,

*Revd Michèle.*



### The Greatest Story ever told

The 'Songs of Praise' episode of 16<sup>th</sup> November explored the faith journey of the television personality and adventurer Bear Grylls who, for several years, served as the Chief Scout. I was intrigued to know more about his faith and what it meant to him. It was clear that it was a fundamental part of his life and I have since read that he has described his Christian faith as the "backbone" in his life:and is quoted as saying, "You can't keep God out. He's all around us, if we're just still enough to listen."



During the programme he briefly spoke about a book he has recently had published - 'The Greatest Story Ever Told an eye witness account' - which is not to be confused with any film or book of the same name.

In a forward the book is described in the following manner.

*"This is the true story about a man from Galilee who lived some two thousand years ago. It is told through the eyes of the people who knew him best: a mother, a sceptic, a fisherman, a friend and a woman from Magdala. Most died for their conviction that these events occurred in all their fullness. Many consider that your about to read **The Greatest Story Ever Told....**"*

With this description I was reminded of the many times that Revd. Michèle, during her sermon, has encouraged us to re-read the Bible passages set for the day and place ourselves in the situation described, to try to get a better understanding of what is really happening. This is what the book does, as each of the five parts follows the story of Jesus' life though the eyes of his mother Mary, Thomas, Simon Peter, John and Mary Magdalen.

I found the book quite a 'page turner' and although a work of fiction the Bible narrative is easy to see and not a single word attributed to Jesus has been changed.

*Chris Ford*

### **10 Fun Facts about Christmas trees**

Even before the time of Christ, evergreen trees were seen in winter as a symbol of fertility.

It was the 16<sup>th</sup> century monk, Martin Luther, who is credited with the idea of having lights on Christmas trees. He added candles to his tree, to look like stars in a forest.

Windsor Castle got its first Christmas tree in 1800, brought by Charlotte, wife of George III.

It was in 1835 that the term 'Christmas tree' was first used in English.

It was in the 1840s, when Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria, began bringing trees inside, that led to their popularity throughout the UK.

It was Woolworths who first sold manufactured Christmas tree ornaments – back in 1880.

The tree in London's Trafalgar Square has been a gift from the city of Oslo, Norway since 1947.

The world's tallest Xmas tree, at 221ft high, was erected in a Washington shopping mall in 1950.

In a survey of the nation's favourite smells, real Christmas trees came eighth, just behind the sea, but ahead of perfume.

About five million real Christmas trees are sold in the UK each year.

*These come from the website of The British Christmas Tree Growers Association (BCTGA).*

*Ed.*

### The 20<sup>th</sup> November was Social Enterprise Day

**Some of us may have come across Patrick Grant as one of the judges on the television programme 'The Great British Sewing Bee'. He is also the founder of 'Community Clothing'. The following email that Kim received from him should not be read as an endorsement of his or any other social enterprise company but rather an encouragement for us, as Christians, to think about the impact of our purchasing decisions.....Ed**

We can divide the world's businesses up into two camps; those who broadly do good (and hopefully do good broadly), and those who don't. In today's 'Fashion' industry most fall into the latter camp. In the past, without necessarily meaning to, most businesses we bought our stuff from did a whole lot of good for people here; making good quality things that increased our enjoyment of life; supporting rewarding jobs locally; creating a strong sense of community and personal and civic identity; and crucially making a large positive contribution to the broader UK economy, and to the public purse through the payment of income taxes, national insurance, business rates, corporation tax etc. We bought our clothes from businesses who were based here, made their product here, and thus our spending directly paid for our schools, hospitals, etc, and all sorts of other things we as a country are now struggling to fund. Also, the owners of those businesses lived locally, so surplus profits stayed local too.



In Blackburn where Community Clothing is based public philanthropy paid for large parts of the public realm, from the Technical School to Corporation Park. In 2025 those people who own the businesses we buy from (in fact own the great majority of the world's wealth) are concentrated in a few enormously wealthy global cities, or in offshore tax havens. Some are generous, giving large sums to charities, but spare wealth no longer flows into our local towns as it once did. Despite taking absolute bucket loads of cash from the good folks of Blackburn, Jeff Bezos, Chris Xu (Shein's owner) and their like are not spending their billions building new schools and hospitals in the borough. There's no Jeff Bezos Way in Blackburn. If we want a stronger economy and happier and healthier society we need to spend our money with brands who make a positive and direct contribution to both. But how do we know who the good guys are? Especially when the bad guys spend so much money trying to look like good guys.

One sure fire way to know that your spending will do good is to buy from an accredited Social Enterprise. Social Enterprise UK has 131,000 UK members, covering everything from supermarkets and coffee companies, to housing, beauty and health, and clothing brands. There are some amazing UK social businesses and collectively we contribute £60 Billion to our economy, and our indirect economic impact (harder to quantify) will be much greater still. These businesses are powerful forces for good and as we wake up to the reality that how we spend our money really can make a difference the movement is growing.

Happily more and more of us are now realising that giving all our hard earned cash to billionaires like Bezos may not be such a brilliant idea, unless we care more about seeing popstars going to space than being able to see a GP.

**<https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/>**



# **ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH CHRISTMAS FAYRE**

**SATURDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER  
10.00 A.M. – 2.00 P.M.**

**REFRESHMENTS- bacon rolls, mince pies etc.**

**Various stalls including:-**

**Home-made cakes, children's activities,  
Craft stall, Christmas cards, Raffle  
Books, Vinyl records,  
Christmas Bric-a-brac, and Plants.**



*At: - St. Catherine's Church, East Tilbury Village, RM18 8PB*

## The November meeting of the PCC

The Parochial Church Council met at St. Francis on 11<sup>th</sup> November with all members present. After opening prayer the minutes of the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> September were accepted. Under 'matters arising' Revd. Michèle said that she and robin planned to look at the various hymn book options while they are on holiday. There was also a discussion about having St. Catherine's open perhaps one day in the week for people to come for private prayer or just to enjoy the space. It was suggested that Tuesdays between 10 am and noon might be a time that we could manage.

In their report the churchwardens noted:-

1. that the electrical work at St. Francis had been completed and that the electrician hope to complete the work at St. Catherine's later in the month.
2. The survey of the trees in the churchyard had been completed and the meeting agreed that 'Foresters', 'Keith Archer's Tree Care' and ' Eastside Tree Care' should be asked to quote for the necessary work.
3. The heating installations at both churches had been serviced by 'Hollands Heating' and the Landlords' certificates provided.
4. Horses had again entered the churchyard, Chris, Les and Robin reinforced the fence and the farmer had spoken to the tenant.
5. The Quinquennial survey of St. Catherine's had been made by our architect, Ben Downie.

Norman then gave his Treasurer's report and in his remarks noted that our digital collection box raises a significant amount.

Val Schwar reported that three people had applied to join our electoral roll and their names would be added before our next annual meeting.

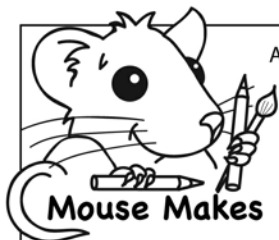
Kim Ford advised that there were no safeguarding issues to report and that all the P.C.C. members' training was up to date.

Revd. Michèle reviewed her programme since the last meeting and of particular note was her increasing involvement with the East Tilbury Primary School. She also commented that the service of Memorial and Thanksgiving for the bereaved and the Remembrance service at the Bata Memorial were both well received. Looking forward she spoke about the various Christmas arrangements and noted that our next joint service with the Linford Methodists would be on the 30<sup>th</sup> November in the morning and that in the afternoon at 3.30pm we would have an Advent communion service at St. Catherine's. As last year, our Christingle service would be on 1<sup>st</sup> February, Candlemass.

The meeting closed with the 'Grace' after agreeing that the next meeting would be on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

### **With Christmas shopping in mind**

A cheerful giver does not count the cost of what he gives. His heart is set on pleasing and cheering him to whom the gift is given. – *Julian of Norwich*



At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus,  
God's Son and our Saviour  
coming into the world as a baby,  
and we look forward to the time  
when Jesus will come again,  
not as a baby but as the  
King of kings and Lord of lords!

read

John 14:3

A baby needs clothes  
to keep warm like  
a snuggly sleep suit  
or a vest and nappy.

*What were you dressed in?*

Jesus was wrapped in

.....  
.....  
read Luke 2:7

A baby needs somewhere  
to be born like at home  
or in a hospital.

*Where were you born?*

Jesus was born  
in a stable in

.....  
.....  
read Luke 2:1-6

A baby needs  
somewhere  
to sleep like  
a crib or a cot.  
*What did you  
sleep in?*

Jesus slept in a

.....  
.....  
read Luke 2:7

A baby needs  
a name.  
*What name were  
you called?*  
Jesus was given  
a special name  
that had a  
special meaning.

read  
Matthew 1:21-23



# HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

NADOLIG LLAWEN ☆ NOLLAIG CHRÏDHEIL ☆ NOLLAG SHONA  
JOYEUX NOËL • FELIZ NAVIDAD • BUON NATALE • GOD JUL • FROHE WEIHNACHTEN



## PARISH DIARY FOR DECEMBER

All services and events may be changed in the light of any new developments.

Please see our weekly newsletter for the latest Information. It can be found on our

Website: [www.stcatherinesthurrock.org.uk](http://www.stcatherinesthurrock.org.uk)

3 Dec	Holy Communion at St. Francis <i>Then the community support 'drop-in'</i>	10.00am 10.30am-noon
4 Dec	Foodbank at St. Francis	11.00am-1pm
6 Dec	Christmas Fayre at St. Catherine's	10.00am-2pm
7 Dec	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent</b> Holy Communion at St. Catherine's	10.00am
10 Dec	Morning Prayer at St. Francis <i>Then the community support 'drop-in'</i>	10.00am 10.30am-noon
11 Dec	Foodbank at St. Francis	11.00am-1pm
14 Dec	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent</b> Holy Communion at St. Catherine's	10.00am
17 Dec	Morning Prayer at St. Francis <i>Then the community support 'drop-in'</i> with Christmas Carols at	10.00am 10.30am-noon 11.00am
18 Dec	Foodbank at St. Francis	11.00am-1pm
21 Dec	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent</b> Holy Communion at St. Catherine's 'Carols and Candlelight' at St. Catherine's with Grays Town Band and followed by mince pies and mulled wine	10.00am 6.00pm
24 Dec	<b>Christmas Eve</b> 'Christmas Eve Crib service' for children of all ages at St. Catherine's First Holy Communion of Christmas at St. Catherine's	3.00pm 11.00pm
25 Dec	<b>Christmas Day</b> All age Christmas Communion at St. Catherine's	10.00am
28 Dec	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Christmas - Holy Innocents Day</b> Holy communion service at St. Catherine's	10.00am
31 Dec	<i>New year's Eve celebration at St. Francis</i>	4.00pm



If you would like to support the work of the parish and the churches of St. Catherine and St. Francis, this QR code will take you to our 'Give A Little' donation page.

### 'Life Events' during November

#### **Baptism**

None

#### **Weddings**

None

#### **Funeral**

None

#### **Committal of Ashes**

None

### Our Community Payback Team

I feel the need to describe them as 'Our Community Payback team' simply because they seem to treat St. Catherine's churchyard as their own. Every three weeks they turn up with their supervisor, Simon, and get cracking. Although faces change as some members of the team leave and others join, the 'vibe' is the same - "This is our favourite". As the weather has changed with cooler and wetter conditions the grass cutting, which is their major task, can be dealt with in less time. And so they look for new challenges the most recent of which is to repair / restore some of the older kerbed graves. Over the years these have been damaged by animal activity, the weather and even accidental damage during churchyard maintenance.



These two pictures show the transformation which the team made to one of the graves on the south side of the church. They also repaired two others that are adjacent to this one. Both Les and I as the churchwardens, Revd. Michèle, and I am sure all that visit the churchyard, are very grateful for the contribution that the team make to enhance the beauty of this place. Thank you very much!

*Chris Ford*

## The Priest in charge

REVD. MICHÈLE MARSHALL

The Rectory

24, Somerset Road, Linford

Stanford-le-Hope

Essex, SS17 0QA.

Telephone: 01375 671754

email: [mjmarshall@fastmail.co.uk](mailto:mjmarshall@fastmail.co.uk)

## The Usual Service Pattern

- ◆ 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday's, 10am at St. Catherine's, Holy Communion
- ◆ 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday's, 10am at St. Catherine's, Family Service and at 3.30pm at St. Francis, a service of Café style Holy Communion.
- ◆ 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays a joint service with the Linford Methodist congregation

Wednesdays 10.00 a.m. at St. Francis 1<sup>st</sup> of the month Holy Communion,  
other Wednesdays, Morning Prayer

For Baptisms, Weddings or Funerals please contact Revd. Michèle Marshall

## Our Churchwardens

CHRIS FORD T: 01375-675863

E:- [chris.pewtal@outlook.com](mailto:chris.pewtal@outlook.com)

LES SCHWAR T: 07758-461380

E:- [leslie.bowles2@gmail.com](mailto:leslie.bowles2@gmail.com)

## PEWTALK Editor

Chris Ford

44, Northumberland Road  
Linford, SS17 0PU

T: 01375 675863

E: [pewtalk@talktalk.net](mailto:pewtalk@talktalk.net)

## St. Francis Centre

The centre is available for hire at very reasonable rates. To discuss availability please contact Sheila King at:-

[sheila.king9987@gmail.com](mailto:sheila.king9987@gmail.com)

## Copy Dates for Pewtalk

*20<sup>th</sup> December 2025*

*22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026*

*20<sup>th</sup> February 2026*