

# PEWTALK

£1

January 2026



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 on Holiday for the Christmas Fayre and the 100 Club draw on December 6th. The winner of the £50 was Carol Bonson. Carol had mobility problems earlier but thankfully is fully recovered and has hopefully enjoyed her planned cruise. A nice boost for the New Year. The second £50 winning ticket will be drawn in July so there is still time to join for £10.

*Norman*

**Chelmsford Star offered** Community Cards for use at the East Tilbury store and The Church has received a regular if small payment of money for purchases by card holders.

In September the Chelmsford Star Co-op transferred all engagements to the Central England Co-op who do not operate a community scheme. From January 9th 2026 the loyalty scheme at East Tilbury Co-op will close and the cards are cancelled. Thank you to all who helped the Church using their cards.

**Among our Christmas Cards** were ones from two of our previous parish priests. Revds. Laurence and Margaret sent greetings from their home in Northern Ireland where they are enjoying their retirement although Laurence continues to experience some health issues. Canon Paul likewise is enjoying his 'retirement' although continuing his ministry by providing service cover where needed and writes that he gains much pleasure from those that he meets in this role.

*Chris*

The deanery synod meet next at St. Margaret's in Stanford le Hope on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January from 6.00-9.00pm when it is expected that the Ven. Adam Atkinson, the Bishop of Bradwell and the Ven. Dr. Sue Lucas, the Archdeacon of Southend will outline their ideas on how parish ministry might look in the next few years in Thurrock.



**'Come and make a Christingle'**  
at  
**Candlemas**  
at  
**St Catherine's, East Tilbury**

**On Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February 3-4.30pm**

As the season of Christmas reaches its conclusion we invite you to come to this very special activity. Children attending will make their own Christingles, and after some refreshments, we will have a short service where the Christingles will be lit reminding us that the light of Christ shines in the darkness well beyond the 25<sup>th</sup> December.

You will need to book a place for your child/children and all children must be accompanied by an adult



For further information and to book a place for your child/children call Revd Michèle on 07749303622 or email: [mjmarsh@tstmail.co.uk](mailto:mjmarsh@tstmail.co.uk)



It is some 18 months since we embraced digital giving as a way of supporting the work of our church and parish. By providing a 'QR' code in the magazine, a donation button on our 'A Church Near You' page and our CollecTin at St. Catherine's just under £1,950 has been raised. **Thank you**

## 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

Have you ever wondered when exactly the 'Twelve Days of Christmas' take place?

We often sing the much loved Carol during the Christmas season but we may not give much thought to its title or its meaning.

Well, depending on when you read your copy of the January Pewtalk we may still be travelling through the Twelve Days. They begin on Christmas Day, 25th December and conclude on 5th January, counting first and last. The evening of the last day is [Twelfth Night](#) or Epiphany Eve, the next morning 6th January being [Epiphany](#).

The original 12 days of Christmas were a series of religious feast days celebrated as part of the Roman Catholic religion in medieval and Tudor England. There were 12 days of religious celebrations, feasting and entertainment. The 12 days included: Christmas Day, The Feast of St Stephen (26<sup>th</sup> Dec), The Feast of St John (27<sup>th</sup> Dec), Feast of the Holy Innocents (28<sup>th</sup> Dec), New Years Eve (31<sup>st</sup> Dec), New Year's Day (1<sup>st</sup> Jan) and Twelfth Night (5<sup>th</sup> Jan). The celebrations over this time would have included special meals, games and dancing and the singing of Christmas songs and carols.

And speaking of Carols - 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' is believed by some to have originally served as a tool to teach children the Christian faith during a time of persecution when practising Catholicism openly was restricted in England. Each of the 12 gifts in the song represents an aspect of the Christian faith. Working backwards:

The '**twelve drummers drumming**' represent the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles Creed.

The '**eleven pipers piping**' signify the eleven faithful apostles who continued to spread the Gospel after Judas's betrayal.

The '**ten Lords a-leaping**' represent the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

The '**nine ladies dancing**' symbolize the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The '**eight maids a-milking**' refer to the eight beatitudes taught by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount.

The '**seven swans a-swimming**' signify the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

The '**six geese a-laying**' represent the six days of creation.

The **'five gold rings'** represent the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Pentateuch or the Torah.

The **'four calling birds'** represent the four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The **'three French hens'** symbolize the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (love).

The **'two turtle doves'** represent the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

And the **'partridge in a pear tree'** ~ symbolizes the ultimate gift of Jesus Christ, representing God's love for us. The partridge is a bird known for its self sacrifice as it protects its young from predators and the pear tree a symbol of the cross on which Jesus died.

So, the 'Twelve Days of Christmas' remind us that the joy of Christmas is not confined to a single day but is a journey of faith, hope and love that lasts throughout the year and beyond.

The very last Festival of the Christmas season is **Candlemas**. On **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> February** to mark this special occasion we will be holding a **'Come and Make a Christingle at Candlemas'** workshop and service at **3pm at St Catherine's**. Each child (and adults if they wish) attending will make their own Christingle and be reminded of what the orange, the red ribbon, the fruits and sweets and the candle represent.

The light of Christmas stretches beyond the 25<sup>th</sup> December and helps us travel towards Lent and Easter where the story of God's love continues.

As we begin another New Year I pray that you may know God's love, peace, hope and joy in the year ahead.

**Take care, stay safe and Every Blessing for 2026,**

*Revd Michèle.*

### **Holocaust Memorial Day**

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), held each year on 27<sup>th</sup> January, marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp.

Under the Nazis, six million Jewish men, women and children were murdered, as well as millions of Gentiles. Holocaust Memorial Day also commemorates the more recent persecutions and slaughter in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

A spokesman explains: "HMD is for everyone. Each year across the UK, we bring people together to learn more about the past, empathise more with people today, and work to build a better future. Together we bear witness for communities who suffered attempted annihilation, and we honour the survivors and all those whose lives were changed beyond recognition."

This year's theme is 'Bridging Generations'. HMD says: "The responsibility of remembrance doesn't end with the survivors - it lives on through their children, their grandchildren and through all of us."

## How to keep those New Year Resolutions

We are full of good intentions at the start of each year. How come we usually fizzle out by February? Here are some tips to keep you going...



*Be realistic.* If you have several goals, don't attempt them all at once. Research has found that if you stagger your goals, you will have more success. So, for example, if this year you want to spend less money, do more exercise and spend more time with your family, start one change this month, another in February, and start the third in March.

*Be specific.* For example, don't tell yourself: Lose weight. Decide exactly how much you want to lose. When do you want to lose it by? How will you do it? If you want more time with your family, how and when will you do that? The more exact you can be, the more likely you are to succeed.

*Write it down.* There's something about committing thoughts to paper that helps to cement your resolve. Why not start some sort of journal this year, to track your thoughts, your hopes, your goals – and your successes!

*Tell other people.* If you intend to do something, tell someone, and therefore you will feel more obliged to get going with it... your pride may keep you going when all else fails!

*Focus on GAIN, not loss.* Ever notice how many resolutions are about giving something up? Why not put it the other way round - instead of saying you will eat less, tell yourself you are headed for those skinny jeans....

*Give yourself rewards.* If you are quitting smoking or sweets, for example, put the money that you would have spent in a jam jar, and treat yourself to something nice (and healthy) with it.

*Break your resolution into steps.* Some goals will take months to achieve. So, break each one down into tiny steps, and simply head for each step. Build in some time frames, to prevent you procrastinating.

*Finally, don't let failure defeat you.* You will make mistakes. But the secret is to simply get up again and to keep going. Only if you stop are you *really* defeated. None of us are perfect, and the Bible encourages us to always start again.

### The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January

This year the prayers and reflections are from the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with the Armenian Catholic and Evangelical Churches.

These resources draw upon centuries-old traditions of prayer and petitions used by the Armenian people, along with hymns that originated in the ancient monasteries and churches of Armenia, some of which date as far back as the fourth century.

They extend an invitation to draw upon this shared Christian heritage and to delve more deeply into our fellowship in Christ, which unites Christians worldwide.

## The Christmas Review

(with photographs provided by Julie Guest and Kim Ford)

### Christmas Fayre

This year our Christmas Fayre was held on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December . Our trusty volunteers had been busy setting things up on the previous Friday and all was set to welcome visitors. During the event there was a steady stream of visitors and, as in previous years, we had to send out for more bacon and rolls! Our thanks to all our stall holders and visitors as in the course of the 4 hrs we raised over £1,250 - a great result all round. Although the fund raising is much needed to keep the church running it is equally important that we all have an opportunity to 'catch up' in the run up to Christmas.

### Carols at St. Francis

On 17<sup>th</sup> December we had our annual carol service at the St. Francis Wednesday 'drop-in'. Just under 30 of us enjoyed the communal carol singing (accompanied by Bernard on the tambourine) and Revd. Michèle's reading of 'The night before Christmas'. The usual refreshments also included mince pies as a reminder of the season.



### St. Catherine's 'Carols and Candlelight'

On Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> of December St. Catherine's was the venue for our Christmas carol service with the Grays Town Band. For many this is the start of the Christmas celebrations and with the church in semi-darkness, the

light of the candles and the sound of the band there is a real sense that Christmas is just around the corner. To add to the atmosphere is the smell of mulled wine and warm mince pies. The congregation of almost 100 not only enjoyed the service but also the opportunity to chat

and catch up with friends while enjoying the refreshments.



### The Crib Service

On the afternoon of Christmas Eve we held our traditional 'crib' service at St. Catherine's where children young and old joined together to create the Christmas tableau, in the stable in Bethlehem, as the story of the birth of the baby Jesus was retold by Bryce and Talula. As usual there was great excitement as the various animals, Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the wise men with their



camels were added in stages until, at last, the scene was complete with an angelic host and stars in the sky - all set for Christmas Day!

### Christmas services.

There were two Christmas services at St. Catherine's with the First Communion of Christmas starting at 11pm on Christmas Eve and finishing just after midnight with the lighting of the final, white candle on our Advent ring. The slightly earlier start time (not 11.30pm as in previous years) was much appreciated by those of us who were back at 10am for our 'Christmas Celebration' which completed our December programme. Our thanks are very much due to Revd. Michèle for all her hard work preparing and leading these events.



**Over the Christmas period** it was agreed that the 'cash' collections taken at the various extra services would be donated equally to St. Luke's Hospice and the Children's Society. At the time of writing the total raised stands at over £400 which includes donations towards the St. Catherine's congregation Christmas card.

*Chris Ford*

### Our long love affair with coffee



London's first coffee house opened in 1652, using beans imported from modern-day Yemen. Although many in Cromwell's Britain had doubts about this new drink, others welcomed its reviving effects - and asked for another cup.

Nearly 400 years on, coffee drinking in Britain is a vast industry. We drink 98 million cups of it every day. Even though a takeaway

flat white can now cost you more than £5 in London, still coffee has become a daily necessity for millions of us.

And nearly 400 years on, we can better appreciate why this should be so.

Coffee keeps us awake. This is because when caffeine accesses the brain, it actively blocks our adenosine-producing receptors, which run our sleep-promoting system.

Coffee makes us alert. The caffeine drives our brain towards a more excited state which allows us to process information faster.

Coffee can also improve our mood, especially during the winter, when the loss of daylight acts as a depressant.

And although too much coffee can make us jittery and even prone to heart palpitations, there is even growing evidence among neuroscientists that coffee can even help to lower our risk of neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

### Government urged to keep VAT grants for repairs

The Chancellor has been urged to retain a tax scheme for listed places of worship, as a survey, recently published, showed the majority of the UK population backs government support to help churches pay for repairs to their buildings.

A poll shows that two in five people, or 43 per cent of all adults, report having had contact with their local church. The majority of these, or 53 per cent, was for services and worship, but also 23 per cent – nearly seven million people in the UK – had contact for community support such as parent toddler groups, lunch clubs and food banks.

An estimated 2.8 million people – or four per cent of the UK population – have been in contact with their local church for a food bank. Church of England churches run or support 31,300 social action projects, including nearly 8,000 food banks, with emergency food provision and community cafés on the rise.

More than three quarters of the population – 77 per cent – said historic cathedrals and churches are local and national treasures. And two in five – 41% – said they had visited a church or cathedral simply to find a quiet space for reflection or prayer, with this figure rising to 50 per cent amongst young adults in the 18 to 34 age range.

The survey conducted for the Church of England by Savanta, shows 59 per cent of the UK population agree that the Government should help with the costs of repairing and maintaining historic churches.

The Listed Places of Worship Grant scheme was first put in place by the then Chancellor Gordon Brown in 2001 and allows for VAT grants on repairs of more than £1,000 to be claimed for essential repairs and maintenance.

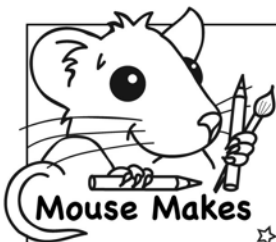
The future of the scheme is in doubt after the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) announced an interim arrangement earlier this year with a reduction in the amount of money available from £42 million a year to £23 million and a cap of £25,000 per building. The scheme is due to come to an end in March next year and there has been no confirmation from the Government on whether it will be renewed.

The Church of England is responsible for 45 per cent of the UK's Grade 1 listed buildings. More than 12,500 of its church buildings have listed status.

Current estimates show that around 260 churches and cathedrals have reported that their essential repair projects are at risk because of uncertainty over the scheme's future and big increases in costs as a result of the £25,000 limit on claims.

The DCMS Commons select committee called in July for the scheme to be made permanent and the cap on claims to be lifted, after hearing evidence from the Church of England as part of its inquiry into built heritage.

***This is a very important issue for our parish as St. Catherine's is a grade 1 listed building and we are aware that there is a considerable amount of repair work required in the coming years. The re-development in 2015 benefited from this relief which helped considerably with the costs.....Ed***



## Mouse Makes

### DID YOU KNOW ?

Stars shine different colours, the colour we see depends on the temperature of the star. The hottest stars shine **blueish-white**, then **yellowish-white**, **yellow, orange** and the coolest stars shine **red**.

## WISE MEN FROM THE EAST

The Wise Men came from a land far away, they had seen a star that shone brighter than day.

The star was a sign of the birth of a king, so they followed that star to pay homage to him.

They found him in Bethlehem as the prophets foretold, they gave him three gifts: myrrh, frankincense and gold.

The star led to Jesus our saviour and king, let us join with the Wise Men and go worship Him!



Read the story of the Wise Men in **Matthew 2:1-12**

S B E T H L E H E M J O I Y  
 T K J E S U S K I N O W W C  
 A G O E P I P H A N Y O I V  
 R I U M E S S I A H G R S I  
 K F R A N K I N C E N S E S  
 I T N G O L D M Y R R H M I  
 N S E I J V S I G N B I E T  
 G O Y A C H R I S T C P N M

Can you find these words in the word search?

WISE MEN • MAGI  
 STAR • SIGN  
 JOURNEY • BETHLEHEM  
 VISIT • JESUS • MESSIAH  
 CHRIST • KING  
 GIFTS • GOLD • MYRRH  
 FRANKINCENSE  
 WORSHIP • JOY  
 EPIPHANY

## PARISH DIARY FOR JANUARY

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)



4 Jan	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Epiphany</b> Holy Communion at St. Catherine's	10.00am
5 Jan	Bible Study and Fellowship Group at St. Francis	10.30am-noon
7 Jan	Mid week Communiuon at St. Francis <i>Then the community support 'drop-in'</i>	10.00am 10.30am-noon
8 Jan	Foodbank at St. Francis	11.00am-1pm
11 Jan	<b>Baptism of Christ</b> Holy Communion at St. Catherine's Service of Holy Baptism at St. Catherine's	10.00am 12noonfs
14 Jan	Morning Prayer at St. Francis <i>Then the community support 'drop-in'</i> Deanery synod meeting at St. Margaret's, Stanford le Hope	10.00am 10.30am-noon 6.00-9.00pm
15 Jan	Foodbank at St. Francis	11.00am-1pm
18 Jan	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany</b> 'Worshipping Together' at St. Catherine's	10.00am
21 Jan	Morning Prayer at St. Francis <i>Then the community support 'drop-in'</i>	10.00am 10.30am-noon
22 Jan	Foodbank at St. Francis	11.00am-1pm
25 Jan	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany</b> Holy communion service at St. Catherine's	10.00am
26 Jan	P.C.C. Meeting at St. Francis	2.00pm
28 Jan	Morning Prayer at St. Francis <i>Then the community support 'drop-in'</i>	10.00am 10.30am-noon
29 Jan	Foodbank at St. Francis	11.00am-1pm
1 Feb	<b>Candlemas</b> Holy communion service at St. Catherine's 'Come and make a Christingle at Candlemas' at St. Catherine's	10.00am 3.00pm



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 December

**Baptism**

None

**Weddings**

None

**Funeral**

19 December

Margaret Joy Dobson

**Committal of Ashes**

None

### Christians in the Holy Land

The Parish has for some time supported Christians in the Holy Land. Our support and prayers has helped families facing a challenging Christmas with some relief providing medicines, food and the reassurance that they are not forgotten. There is still more to do even with the fragile cease fire in Gaza.

Christmas is a special time for fun and excitement for all the family and despite the problems many children in the Holy Land were looking forward to the season and for the first time since 2022 there was a Christmas tree in Manger Square Bethlehem..

As we celebrate the coming of the Light of the World may we reflect that same light into the lives of those who need it most.

*Norman*

### What, oh what, is that person's name?!

Do your New Year Resolutions include the forlorn hope that you will be better at remembering people's names in 2026?

Many of us – and not only those of the older generation – have difficulty remembering names. It's not just TV personalities and so on, but people we meet in the street. We know exactly who they are, we see them every week in church or the supermarket, we know what job they do and which school their children go to. But as for their name – it's a blank.

Help is at hand, however. Not to solve the problem, but at least to name it. 'Anomic aphasia' is the clinical name for the inability to remember a name, even when we can remember everything else about someone.

There is also the strange truth that the cure for anomic aphasia comes spontaneously, often in the middle of the night, when that elusive identity pops unbidden into our memory. We must be sure, of course, to put the light on and write it down, because for sure it will be gone again with the morning light!

## The Priest in charge

REVD. MICHÈLE MARSHALL

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Telephone: 01375 671754

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## 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

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## 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

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

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

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