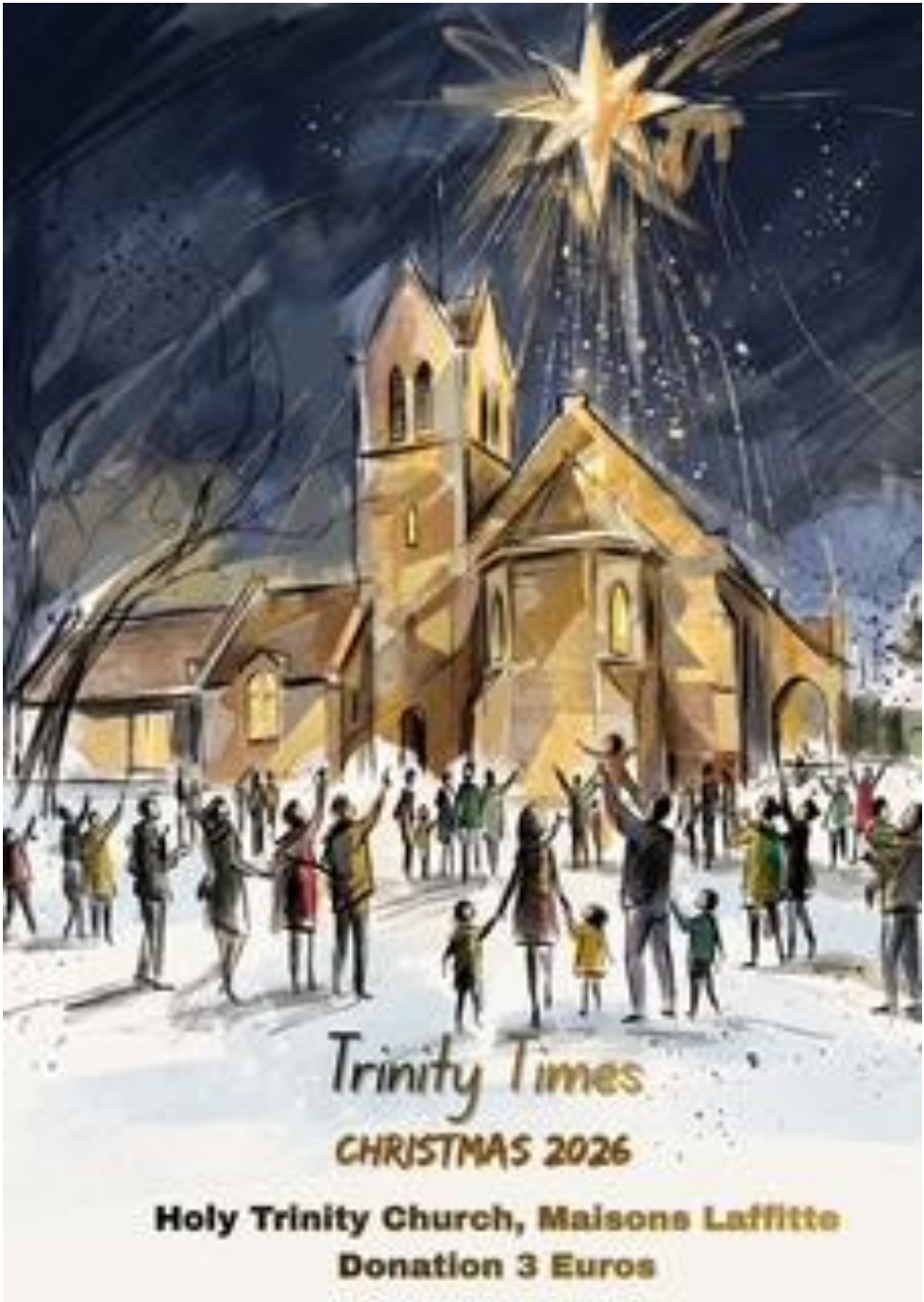

Trinity Times
CHRISTMAS 2026
Holy Trinity Church, Maisons Laffitte
Donation 3 Euros

Who Does What

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Church Council Secretary	Rachel Meuriot
Chaplaincy Assistant	Jenni Gibson office@htcml.com

Activity	**Contact person**
Address List	Jenni Gibson
Book Stall	Katrin Dubreuil
Charitable Giving	Hesry Marshall
Choir	Rachel Meuriot
Coffee Rota	tinyurl.com/ TeaCoffeeHTCML
Ecumenical Group	Christine Salisbury
Electoral Roll	David Bean
Flower Rota	Fiona Dabas
Guiding	Christine Salisbury
Link	chaplain@htcml.com
Little Fishes	info@htcml.com
Organist	Joan Bauman

Activity	**Contact person**
Planned Giving	Robert Manterfield
Safeguarding	Alice Auperin
Scouting	contact@maisons-laffitte-scouts.fr
Sidespeople	Jackie Gale
Sunday Groups	LJ Desmeulles
Treasurer	Bob Hughes
Trinity English School (TES)	trinityenglishml @gmail.com
Trinity Times	Nancy Huguet
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Welcomers	Anna Danute-Dobrovolskis
Youth Group	info@htcml.com
Bible Study	
Tuesday a.m.	chaplain@htcml.com
Wednesday evening	by Zoom: http://htcml.com/

Chaplain's Corner

Our Lady of Europe and the Light of Christmas



I wonder how many of you had heard of Our Lady of Europe before I went off to Gibraltar in October to be installed as a Canon of the Cathedral? I certainly hadn't appreciated quite how much history lay behind that rather beautiful title.

Now, as we approach Christmas, I've found myself thinking about it again, because there is a connection between Our Lady of Europe and the Christmas story that I hadn't really considered before.

At the southernmost tip of Gibraltar, looking out towards the Mediterranean and the coast of Africa, stands the Shrine of Our Lady of Europe. Its story stretches back more than 700 years, and it has certainly had a colourful history. The shrine was attacked by pirates, damaged during conflicts and even used as a military store. When Gibraltar was captured in 1704, the statue of Mary holding the infant Jesus was badly damaged and taken across the bay to Spain for safekeeping. It would be more than 250 years before it finally returned to its original home. Yet through all those extraordinary changes, the image of a mother holding her child remained a focus of Christian devotion.

There is something rather wonderful about that. In a place shaped by centuries of political and military struggle, the image at the centre is not of a king or a warrior, but of a mother and her baby.

Perhaps that takes us straight to the heart of Christmas.

One of the fascinating things about the shrine is that a light was once kept burning in a tower above it, helping sailors navigate the dangerous waters around the Rock. Long before modern navigation, that light offered guidance and reassurance to those making their way through the darkness.

I rather like the thought of that—a light shining from a place dedicated to Mary, guiding people safely through uncertain waters. I wonder how many sailors, seeing that light in the distance, breathed a sigh of relief because they knew where they were.

Of course, a lighthouse doesn't calm the sea. It doesn't stop the storms or remove the rocks beneath the surface. What it does is help people find their way through them.

Perhaps that is where the Christmas story becomes rather more interesting than the familiar scene on our Christmas cards.



Mary didn't receive a promise that everything would be easy. Quite the opposite, her willingness to say yes to God led her into a future she could never have imagined. There was the bewilderment of an unexpected pregnancy, the journey to Bethlehem, the birth of her child far from home, and eventually the desperate flight into Egypt to escape Herod's violence.

Not exactly the peaceful, candlelit scene we tend to recreate in our nativity plays.

Yet through it all, Mary carried Jesus. Quite literally at first, holding him in her arms, feeding him, protecting him and doing all the ordinary, exhausting things that come with caring for a baby.

That is what makes the Christmas story so extraordinary. God didn't enter the world by removing all its difficulties. He entered right into the middle of them.

The promise of Christmas is something far more remarkable: that God has chosen to be with us in the midst of life as it really is.

That brings me back to the image of Our Lady of Europe, standing at the very edge of the continent, holding out the Christ child towards the world.

As Mary never asks us to look at her alone. Her whole story points beyond herself, towards the child she carries. Perhaps that is a rather good description of what the Church is supposed to do as well.

We are not here to pretend that the seas are always calm or that life is always straightforward. We are here to keep pointing towards the light, towards the God who came to live among us.

So this Christmas, whether life feels wonderfully joyful or rather more complicated, I hope you will remember that little light once shining above the waters at Gibraltar.

It couldn't change the sea, but it could help people find their way.

The child Mary held in her arms came to do something greater still.

He came to be the light of the world.

With my love and prayers for a peaceful and blessed Christmas,

Charlotte

From Maisons-Laffitte to the Rock: A Very Canonical Adventure!

You may have noticed that our very own Reverend Charlotte Sullivan has recently acquired an extra title and is now known as Reverend *Canon* Charlotte Sullivan. But what does this mean, and should we be worried that our Chaplain is about to disappear off to Gibraltar permanently?

Fear not! Charlotte is staying with us. Becoming a Canon is a great honour, recognising her distinguished service within the Diocese in Europe. She has been given the stall of ***Our Lady of Europe*** at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Gibraltar, and becomes a member of the Cathedral Chapter. Along with the new title comes the right to wear Canon's vestments, preach in the Cathedral, but also the requirement to undertake to uphold its statutes.

You can watch Charlotte doing all of this in the video:
Reverend Canon Charlotte Sullivan's Installation

Of course, since Our Lady of Europe doesn't travel particularly well, Charlotte had to make the journey to Gibraltar to be formally installed in her new seat. Having been invited to accompany her, I found myself boarding a plane to Málaga one October morning for the start of a very Gibraltarian adventure.

Gibraltar is a fascinating place: imagine someone picking up a medium-sized town from the Home Counties and dropping it onto the very bottom tip of Spain! The familiar UK high-street shops are there, but the streets have a distinctly international feel, with around 15,000 Spanish nationals crossing the border to work each day.

We were warmly welcomed by the Dean, Ian, his wife Sally, and members of the Cathedral congregation. Sunday's Service of Collation and Installation was a moving occasion, with an excellent sermon and some wonderful singing. I was even invited to join the Cathedral choir! Singing in a cathedral choir had been a childhood dream of mine, so it just goes to show that we should never give up on our dreams. You never know when one might come true!

But before the big occasion, we managed to pack in enough adventures to fill a small expedition diary.

We climbed the Mediterranean Steps to the top of the Rock, 426 metres above sea level. Calling them "steps" seems a little misleading. By the end, we had scrambled up the equivalent of 71 floors, using steep steps cut into the rock and a conveniently placed rope to haul ourselves upwards. The view at the summit was largely hidden by the famous levanter cloud, which can sit over the Rock for days without actually producing any rain. Still, the sense of achievement was enormous!

We also explored the Great Siege Tunnels, edged across the Windsor Suspension Bridge, and encountered Gibraltar's famously bold macaques (keeping a respectful distance seemed wise). We encountered an archangel in St Michael's Cave, successfully ordered sausage, egg and chips from a Spanish waitress, and even walked across the airport runway to reach the Spanish border. Not your average weekend away!

All in all, it was a wonderful mixture of fellowship, faith, adventure and a little physical exertion. Charlotte's new title is a well-deserved recognition of her ministry, and it was a privilege to share in such a special occasion.

So, what was the first and greatest impression I was left with?

God can see where we need to be and will get us there in his own time.

The second is like it:

Never underestimate what can be achieved with a good pair of walking shoes!

Rachel M.



St. Michael's Cave



Holy Trinity Cathedral, Gibraltar



Council News: Looking Ahead at Holy Trinity

The Chaplaincy Council gathered on Zoom on Monday 2 November, with a varied agenda and plenty to keep everyone busy.

Two important topics were high on the list:

- Safeguarding remains a vital part of our shared life as a church, helping to ensure that Holy Trinity continues to be a safe, welcoming and supportive place for everyone. The Council had an opportunity to consider some questions and reflect on how we continue to meet our responsibilities in this important area.

- There was also time to focus on the Legacy fundraising campaign and consider the next steps in planning for the future of Holy Trinity. Looking ahead is an important part of caring for our church: it means thinking not only about what we need today, but also about how we can sustain our community, our buildings and our mission for generations to come. There will be more to share as these plans develop!

The Council also reviewed matters arising from reports on church finances, strategy and outreach, with updates on the various activities that keep our community connected and growing. The Chaplain's report offered a chance to reflect on recent events and initiatives, including the Women's Retreat, TLC, Summer Salads, the Garden Party, and activities for our children, young people and young adults. There is certainly plenty happening beyond Sunday services!

Looking after our church buildings was another item on the agenda, with discussion of the eco-audit and the ongoing plans for the presbytery and church renovations. The Council also turned its attention to preparations for the Christmas fête and services — no doubt a timely reminder that the festive season has a habit of arriving sooner than we expect.

As always, your Chaplaincy Council's aim is to keep Holy Trinity thriving, welcoming and well prepared for the future, while supporting the many people and activities that make our church such a special community. We are looking forward to sharing more news again soon.

Rachel M.

THE LEGACY CAMPAIGN

HONOURING OUR HERITAGE, SECURING OUR FUTURE

Thank you to everyone supporting our Legacy Campaign!

We're delighted to have raised €28,000 towards our €200,000 target for essential repairs and renovations to the church and vicarage. Your generosity is making a real difference, and we're grateful for every gift.

Our Legacy Team is also planning fundraising events for 2027 - watch this space for updates!

Thank you for being part of Holy Trinity, and for all that you have brought to its story.

With every blessing,

Rev'd Canon Charlotte Sullivan

Our regular Planned Giving remains enormously important in supporting the day-to-day life and ministry of Holy Trinity. If you don't currently give regularly, or feel able to increase your existing giving, we would also be very grateful for your support.

Please pray for peace



George's memories on fundraising for HTC

My wife, Christine, and daughter, Julia (aged 14) and I arrived in Maisons-Laffitte in August 1986. Whilst looking for a house we had seen signs to 'The English Church' and so turned up there the following Sunday, where we were very warmly greeted, the more so when we said we intended staying for at least 10 years. In fact it turned out to be 28!

Christine immediately joined the Sunday School teaching team, having done that for many years in England - no security vetting needed then of course – and Julia the youth group. Christine also enthusiastically took part in the very first mincemeat-making session that year, now an annual event, and soon took over the jam, pickle and Christmas pudding stall for all our time here. Also that year, the Chaplain announced that because we had very quickly repaid most of the loan from ICS for building the upper hall, they would write off the rest of the loan (about 18%)!

Having been Chairman of the Planned Giving team in England, I rashly mentioned it to the man who ran it here. He returned to Britain not long afterwards and of course asked me to take it on. Steve Salisbury and I ran several campaigns to raise awareness, including the notorious one where we put standard stamps on letters of more than 20 g, both of us being new to France then, so forcing many recipients to trudge to their post office to pay a fee and then collect a begging letter. Happily the local Postmistress had intercepted those for 78600 and they were corrected. As someone said, it showed we needed the money.

Retreats at Houlgate, a delightful seaside town, were stimulating and fun, despite the rooms being very basic until they were completely refurbished, many years later. One year we heard Ilona Wicker say in ringing tones, "I bet the bishop has a mirror in his room", to which came the stentorian reply, "Oh no, he hasn't" and we all collapsed in giggles.

In 1993, Council decided to employ our first youth worker but we could not afford a rented flat or bed-sitter, so they asked whether anyone had something suitable. No one else offered, so we said we had a tiny room over our garage, which had been lived in by someone before we bought the house. He had moved to a small newly-built flat in the town. So, after a coat or two of paint, that room was used by most youth workers until we moved back to England in 2015. Three of its occupants were ordained after leaving. One is now the Precentor of Salisbury Cathedral, another the Vicar of Hertford, having been our Vicar until two years ago, and I've lost touch with the third. He was running a church in Leicester at the time of HTML's 100th birthday but resigned a year later.

In 1995, we celebrated our 75th anniversary. A year of events was organised by Christine, culminating in a grand dinner in a marquee in the garden on a beautiful evening with many former members also present. Sadly, my mother booked a local hall in England for the same date for her large 90th birthday party. Christine kindly decided, contrary to my wishes, to come to England for that. She was truly putting marital duty first.

One of the events during that year was an auction of promises which went very well and raised a considerable sum of money. But not everything went smoothly thereafter. Jack Wicker had volunteered to take someone to Charles de Gaulle airport and meet them on their return. One couple bought it and used it when flying to the USA. That was fine, but for the return they told Jack the date they were leaving Boston. So he got up early one morning to get to CDG in time, only to discover, after waiting some time there, that he had to return the following day. I offered tuition in Word and a friend took it up. But it turned out that she and her husband didn't have a computer but had bought a word processor without Word or WordPerfect. So first I had to read its manual and then make 3 trips, 15 km in each direction, to try to teach it. She then decided to give up.

In 1997 Council suggested we should ask the British National Lottery, which had been set up 3 years earlier, for help with our plan to build a second hall, now known as Trinity Hall. They replied that all requests had to be sponsored by a body in the UK, so we asked the Diocese to do so. Not having heard anything for some time we asked what had happened. The Diocese, who hadn't thought of this idea, replied that they were allowed only one request and had decided, to no one's surprise, that the cathedral in Gibraltar should be chosen. Needless to say they hadn't had the courage to tell us. In retrospect, I now realise we should perhaps have tried again the following year.

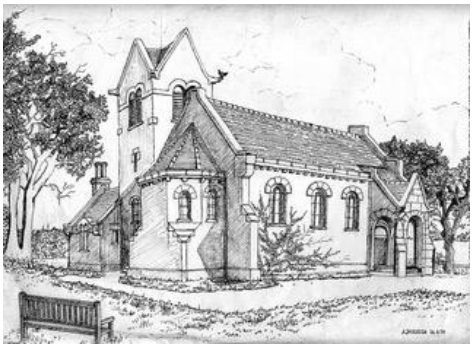
To celebrate the Millenium, Council agreed that a history of the church should be prepared, since it had started in 1900 in the chaplain's house, 6 avenue Lesage, before moving to a small purpose-built building near the market, in what is now allée Sir Barry Lynham. Having been used as a house for many years, it was demolished some years ago and replaced by a block of flats. The history was entrusted to a lovely lady who had been a librarian and she did an amazing job, apart from one thing. Although using a computer, she treated it as a typewriter, putting in hard returns and typing page numbers for every (A4) page instead of letting the computer do all this automatically. As it had been agreed to publish it as an A5 booklet this led to considerable extra work when Christine and I edited it. We also added appendices and an index.

The glass in the rose window at the back of the church was plain when the church was built and Francis Leigh, who had been baptised in the small church in 1909, dearly wanted to have it replaced by stained glass. We finally had sufficient funds to do so about 2002 and Council asked for proposals.

Two were received and the current design was selected. The new window was designed, created and installed in 2003 by a lady living in Brighton and was very much appreciated. Francis did indeed live long enough to know that it had been installed, though she was immobile and unable to see it. She died two weeks later.

A Guide Company and a Scouts Group had been formed by our Australian chaplain in 1983, and both lasted for many years. In 2004, David Bean organised a committee to support British Guides in the Ile de France and one of the first things he did was to produce a quiz for that year's Christmas. He carried on doing this for five years, but then fed up with criticism of his clues from Stephen Hopkins and me he suggested I should take it over, which is why I still send a new one every year, though in France, as in England, it is to support the church now. (I've added this because I feel that some of you may wonder why someone in England sends an annual quiz).

George H.



Sketch—1970



Foundation stone

We were all saddened to learn of the passing of Patrick Gautier-Lynham on 11 October 2026.

Patrick and his family have been important members of Holy Trinity for several generations. His grand-father, Percy Lynham, a race course trainer, was one of the founders of our church.

Patrick served for many years as a sidesperson, until his illness prevented him.

He was often seen on the welcome desk of the summer and Christmas fêtes at the church and was very involved with Marly-Le-Roi's twinning association.

He wrote an interesting aritcle about the history of our church, which can be found in the Centenary edition of Trinity Times.

Our condolences to his wife Martine, his family and his friends.



Ilya and the Icon
A short story by Chandra Laizeau

Ilya stomped his heavy boots on the steps of the mansion, leaving behind filthy sludge. The ice had thawed days earlier as winter reluctantly wept into spring, unveiling the ugly reality hidden beneath. He hated this time of year. The bitter-cold wind made its way under his threadbare coat. He gave a resigned sigh. It would be months before spring flowers would do their trick and fool them all again.

Ilya had only been in his uncle's house once before, years ago. He had vowed never to return. He scanned the ornate door, the brass lion knocker grinning fiercely. Just as he reached his hand up to the knocker, the door opened. A servant dressed in black gestured for him to enter. After ushering him into a dimly-lit drawing room, the man left Ilya without a word.

When the solicitor had informed him of the bequest, Ilya had scoffed cynically. “Stingy in life, stingy in death.” Now, he scowled at the cold and imposing fireplace, “What a waste of time.” His thoughts were interrupted as a door on the right opened and in walked the solicitor. He carried a small rectangular package wrapped in brown paper, approximately a foot in height and eight inches wide. “As per instructions of your uncle's will, that bequeathed to you this icon.” he said, handing it to Ilya. “Icon?” repeated Ilya, incredulous. “Yes, icon.” the solicitor confirmed. “I must leave you now. Georgi will see you out.”

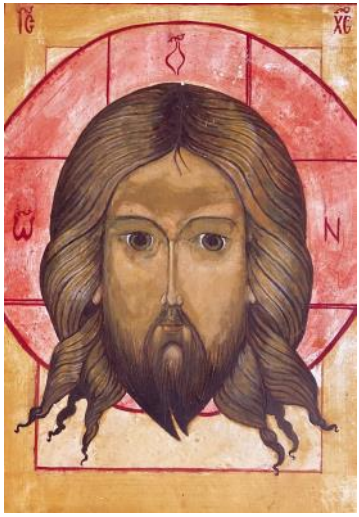
On the other side of town, Ilya's home was more shack than house. Pushing open the door, he stepped into the cold, dank interior. Ilya hadn't had money for firewood for several days. He sat down in a lone armchair facing an empty fireplace and began untying the twine on the package. With a rip of paper, the face of Jesus stared out at him: elongated nose, long scraggly hair and beard, small mouth, large brown eyes. The face was encircled with a red halo. “Not even gold-plated,” grumbled Ilya, “Nothing but wood.” He had an idea. “Why not burn it for fire? The thick, heavy wood should keep a steady ember for most of the night. Might as well be of some use.” With this, Ilya crumpled up the brown paper, took some twigs and kindling, and laid them in a crisscross pattern like an altar in the firebox. He placed the icon on top and grabbed some matches.

He struck a match, moving it toward the kindling. It went out. He struck a second match. It went out. A third match. Same fate. He stuck his head into the firebox looking up the chimney. Where was the draft coming from? As he pulled his head out of the fireplace he came face to face with the Jesus on the icon, the eyes watching him intently. “Don't look at me like that!” he growled, “I know you're not real.” He struck another match, this time careful to cup his hand around the flame until it reached the kindling. Once again, the flame died. Over and over, Ilya lit one match after another, only to have them fizzle out. He collapsed back in the armchair and stared at the icon.

“What do you want from me?” he shouted. The face of Jesus remained unchanged.

Just then, Ilya noticed something strange. The room was completely warm. He held his hands out toward the fireplace. It was unmistakable: the icon was heating the whole room. He pulled the icon out of the fireplace. Warm to touch, the icon cast a soft glow throughout the room. Ilya placed it on a shelf in a corner, the icon corner, which had been empty for years. Contemplating the icon, Ilya thought he saw his uncle's face. He moved closer to inspect. His father's face appeared. Closer still, his own face emerged, eyes warm and soft, a smile he barely remembered. Sitting back down in the armchair, Ilya reached into a drawer and pulled out a Bible. Dusting it off, he began to read. The light from the icon illuminated the pages. He smiled. Spring would be early this year.

Chandra L.



Icon painted by Chandra’s son (Raphaël) in the traditional method: praying during the painting and using traditional pigments, egg yolk, and specially selected wood.



The Trinity Times committee
wishes our readers
a very Happy Christmas
and
a Peaceful New Year.

Holy Clean! A Little Christmas Magic, with Tina

From sparkling bathrooms to homemade marmalade:
a greener Christmas starts at home!

Following the enthusiastic response to my last article about Nancy Birtwhistle's marvellous Pure Magic toilet cleaner, I'm delighted to report that my journey into greener living continues. Rather like the Christmas story itself, there are a few more miracles to share!

For those who missed the previous instalment, in the Spring edition of TT, Nancy is the former Great British Bake Off winner whose practical tips have gradually worked their way into my everyday life. She has almost become a household companion, popping up whenever I need a solution to a cleaning conundrum, a recipe or a clever way to reduce waste. I seem to be turning to her for all sorts of things!

Pure Magic has earned its place in my cleaning cupboard, but it's not the only success. I've also been using her Basic Magic, her cream cleaner and her home-made laundry detergent, all with great results. There's something rather satisfying about making your own products, particularly when they work so well. Fewer plastic bottles, fewer unnecessary ingredients and, hopefully, a little more money left for Christmas presents!

But Nancy isn't just about cleaning. Her books are full of ideas for a more sustainable home, and her two-minute pastry is a particularly tempting example. I'll admit that the convenience of ready-rolled supermarket pastry is hard to resist, but imagine making your own in about two minutes! It's wonderfully simple, tastes delicious and means you can avoid the packaging and some of the additives found in shop-bought alternatives. For mince pies, festive nibbles or a quick tart when unexpected guests arrive, it's a little kitchen revelation. Once you've tried it, you might wonder why you ever bothered with the supermarket version.

Nancy also has some lovely ideas for homemade Christmas gifts. There's something special about giving a present you've made yourself, whether it's a jar of something delicious or a thoughtful little creation. Last year my family all received home made bath salts and rice-filled microwaveable hand-warmers, both of which went down a treat. Home-made items bring a personal touch to gift-giving, avoid some of the excess packaging and can be much kinder to the purse.

If you're already looking ahead to the New Year, keep an eye out for Seville oranges in January. Nancy's Instagram reel walks you through her award-winning marmalade recipe which is a wonderful way to turn these gloriously fragrant seasonal fruits into golden jars of sunshine.

I can also vouch for its popularity: the marmalade sells out fast at our summer fete! So, if you fancy getting involved, you'd be very welcome to join me in a little marmalade-making session. It's a lovely way to spend time together, learn something new and help raise funds for our church and the causes it supports. Who knew that a few oranges, some sugar and a little teamwork could do so much good?

As we prepare for Christmas, perhaps we can take inspiration from these small, practical changes. Caring for creation doesn't have to mean grand gestures or expensive purchases. It can start with a homemade cleaner, a batch of pastry or a jar of marmalade made with love.

So, this Christmas, why not try a little green living? You might save money, discover a new favourite recipe and do your bit for the planet along the way.

Holy Clean! Who knew that caring for creation could be such fun?

For more inspiration, you can find Nancy's books, recipes and tips at: [nancybirtwhistle.co.uk]
(https://www.nancybirtwhistle.co.uk/).

Tina O.





Rev'd. Vivian Sockett — our former curate — was licensed

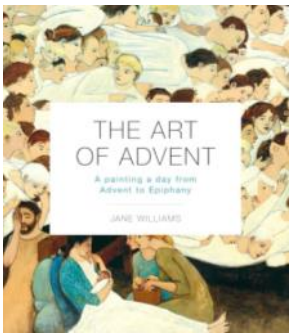
as the Chaplain of Christ Church in Lille on 10 October 2026.

May the Lord bless her and keep her

and shine His light

on her ministry.

The policy of this magazine is to publish articles of interest provided they are neither illegal nor immoral. The content of the magazine does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial committee.



This Advent we are journeying together through The Art of Advent by Jane Williams – exploring a painting and a short reflection each day as we prepare for Christmas.

We're sharing thoughts, questions and encouragement in our dedicated WhatsApp group.

If you haven't joined yet, come and be part of it:

https://chat.whatsapp.com/D4qalqJ64i5F0SAz8volaz?mode=gi_t

Books are available too! You can get your copy from the church bookstall; it is also available in ebook format.

Looking forward to sharing this Advent journey with you!

https://htcml.com/advent-journey-2026/

A Cantus Choir concert in aid of the Church Legacy fund



Dates for your Diary

Sunday services:
9.15 am and 11.00 am

https://htcml.com/



The Trinity Times committee would like to thank Jane Drew for the beautiful cover design of this issue.