



## St John the Baptist, Sevenoaks



# About St John's

The parish  
magazine of  
St John's,  
Sevenoaks



October &  
November  
2018

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Congratulations to Tim & Louise on the blessing of their marriage!



The Hildenborough Davids who come to St John's...

## **Services:**

Sundays	8.00am 10.00am  6.00pm	Said Mass Sung Mass with Sunday School Benediction
Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays	9.30am	Mass
Wednesdays	7.00pm	Mass
Fridays	10.00am	Mass
Please refer to the weekly Sunday Pew Sheet for confirmation and timings of weekday services.		

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	<b>Hon. Assistant Priest</b>	Fr Barry Compton	01883 371543
	<b>Reader</b>	John Robinson	356588
	<b>Pastoral Assistant</b>	Jackie Hendry	453010
	<b>Organist &amp; Choirmaster</b>	John Hendry	453010
	<b>Treasurer</b>		
	<b>Hall Bookings</b>	Jacqueline Dungay jd018e0936@blueyonder.co.uk	833415
	<b>Head Server</b>	Anne-Marie Eames serving@hotmail.co.uk	
	<b>Mothers' Union</b>	Valerie Chaili	460695
	<b>Walsingham Cell</b>	Oliver Bunting	07769 903476
	<b>Parish Administrator</b>	admin@saintjohnthebaptist.org.uk	451710

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# The Vicar writes...

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

Luke 11.1

As your parish priest one of the things, I hope, I spend my time talking about is prayer – if I don't do it enough tell me!

Prayer is something that quite often scares us and makes us feel uncomfortable. There can be a sense that prayer is the work of others rather than ourselves. The truth is very different: all of us are called to pray. The practicalities, natures and meaning of prayer, or Christian spirituality, have been the subject of vast numbers of books, articles and conferences. You can find experts in all sorts of places (some of them are even paid!). The Church is often good at complicating prayer.

The truth is it does not need to be complicated, sophisticated or clever. It needs to be heartfelt, genuine and given opportunity. Prayer is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian. Daily



prayer is not a optional add on, but rather a central part, along with our sacramental life at the Mass.

I began with that glorious quote from St Luke's gospel, as many of you will know that Jesus responds with one of the two versions of the Lord's Prayer found in the Gospels (the other is found in St Matthew's Gospel). The Lord's Prayer is at the centre of Christian prayer as it is the prayer that Jesus himself has given us. It is why we pray it at the Mass, at Morning and Evening Prayer, at home communions, at Weddings and Baptisms, with the dying, when we say the Rosary and, I hope, in our own homes. St Cyprian of Carthage commented, "What can be a more spiritual

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prayer than that which was given to us by Christ?"

There has long been a view that, when boiled down and analyzed, the Lord's Prayer deals with all areas of human existence. Tetullian, the early Christian writer, asserted that the prayer contained the whole teaching of the Gospel in a few short lines.

When one reflects on it, this is true. The prayer opens with God, and the desire that his name be hallowed. Praise of God therefore becomes the first thing that we do. We pray that his kingdom will come, praying that Earth will be as in Heaven. It is only then that we are drawn to our own needs praying 'give us this day our daily bread'. We pray for what we need that day, not in greed, but rather for what we need. Reconciliation and forgiveness are also at the centre of the prayer as we pray for the need for us to be forgiven, but only in accordance with the forgiveness we have offered to others. The prayer often ends with a doxology, 'For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory'. In this we give everything

back to God.

As such the Lord's Prayer should be at the centre of our prayer life. We should pray it at least daily, not least as it unites us together. St Cyprian comments that when we pray the prayer we are all united as one and become one. He says, "Our prayer is public and common; and when we pray, we pray not for one, but for the whole people, because we the whole people are one".

At Easter we handed round our parish prayer cards printed with the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and Glory be. In addition, they had a parish prayer on the back. Please do use these at least once a day. It will unite us with one another, and with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*Fr Robin*

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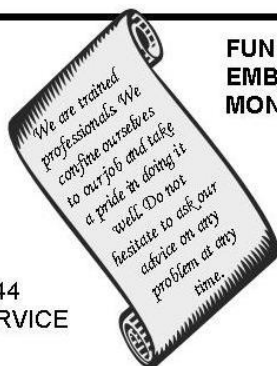
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A reminder that one is never away when on holiday!

I came across this splendid 11<sup>th</sup> century wall painting of the Baptism of Jesus by our patron in the Church Saint-Hilaire of Asnières-sur-Vègre.

*Fr Robin*

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# Michaelmas

This time of year is known in the Church as Michaelmas. Some universities still use this name for their autumn term, but I suspect that outside the Church this season is now largely unknown.

That wasn't always the case. In the Middle Ages it was the custom to eat roasted goose on this day, and records suggest that this practice was widespread and more popular than the Easter and Christmas feasts. It became less widespread as time passed but Jane Austin appears to have enjoyed it, and it still seems to have been observed in the mid-Victorian period.

The choice of goose as the meat to be served on this date apparently has its origins in a now discredited story that Queen Elizabeth I was eating goose on Michaelmas Day when news of the defeat of the Spanish Armada was reported. Unfortunately history records that the Armada was defeated before Michaelmas Day and that



goose was already a very popular choice for this feast before Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne.

The name Michaelmas derives from the feast day of St Michael on the 29th September. It has special significance in our Diocese because it is the season in which ordinations take place. In fact Rochester is one of the very few dioceses in the Church of England in which ordinations routinely happen during this season.

What makes this feast particularly interesting is that St Michael is an angel. Indeed when Archbishop Thomas Cranmer prepared the Book of Common



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Prayer he underscored this fact by enlarging the name of the feast to 'St Michael and All Angels'.

We maybe accustomed to hearing, or reading, of the lives of saints who may have been holy priests or lay people, noted for particular faithfulness in service of the gospel, but angels are perhaps less familiar to us.. They are caught in quite a strange place within modern culture. Despite the decline in orthodox Christian belief the concept of angels still holds a place in the imaginations of many, and still seems to interest everyone from singers like Robbie Williams through to artists and authors.

So who is St Michael, and what are angels?

St Michael is one of four archangels, the others being Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael. The last two are mentioned in the Apocrypha, those books appended to the Old Testament in the Greek and Latin translations of the text. Gabriel is, of course, known to us from the Christmas story. You will find St

Michael in chapter 12 of the book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse as it is also known. Here, he fights against the forces of evil. You will also find him in the books of Daniel and Jude.

The word Angel derives from the Greek work for messenger, and of course we see that facet of their character in the Archangel Gabriel's appearance to Mary bringing news of the Incarnation, which we celebrate on the feast of the Annunciation on March 25th. Theologians, especially in the medieval period, have sought to explore and explain the mystery of angels, and settled on the understanding that they are spiritual rather than material beings, they were created by God before the dawn of time and have an intermediate place between God and humanity, whilst being concerned with life in both heaven and earth, including you and me and our well being.

Our own time is perhaps the period in history most marked by materialism, and so the concept of a being that has no material

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*[continued from page 9]*

existence is very challenging. And yet literally, and metaphorically, we continue to be surrounded by angels, in the decoration and adornment of our churches, in

culture, and crucially in our lives.

So this Michaelmas may St Michael and all the angels pray for us.

*Fr Matthew*

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## **Mothers' UNION**

**Christian care for families**

**St John's Branch meetings:**

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> October** - Prayer Group

**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November** - Prayer Group

*(held at 12 Holmesdale Road)*      **All welcome!**

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# General Synod – 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Just as the European Parliament moves from Brussels to Strasbourg, so General Synod always has its July Session at the University of York, with the great benefit of an air-conditioned conference hall and a splendid Choral Communion in York Minster on the Sunday. The Minster is currently Dean-less after the consecration of Vivienne Faulk as the new Bishop of Bristol.

There was much of interest, including at Question-time a re-affirmation of the traditional Catholic view on the Seal of the Confessional, a topic upon which it was admitted that the House of Bishops is currently divided. What to do if a child-abuser confesses his offending? Should the recipient priest be able/required to report the matter to the police?

In the key debate on Safeguarding on the Saturday morning, the motion was amended to include endorsing



“as an additional priority the support of safeguarding at parish level to create a safer church for all” – sad but necessary, given what has happened particularly in catholic parishes.

There were debates on Climate Change and Investment; on the need for diocesan environment programmes; on the ethics of Nuclear Weapons (where four bishops spoke outstandingly); and on the long term sustainability of the National Health Service, where the new Bishop of London, a former nurse, made her maiden speech.

The proposals of the Cathedrals Working Group for reform of the way cathedrals operate, and in particular to prevent the recurrence of the financial

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problems which emerged at Peterborough Cathedral, proved controversial and it will be interesting to see what form the proposed legislation takes next July.

The issue of same-sex relationships has largely been “parked” pending the publication in 2021 of the House of Bishops’ Teaching Document on Human Sexuality, conveniently after the 2020 Lambeth Conference – this being a topic which is particularly divisive in parts of the Anglican Communion. There were, however, a series of fascinating seminars led by those involved in preparing this document (on which views and approaches to biblical interpretation vary widely among Synod members and biblical scholars). At one session we learned a lot about persons who are Inter-sex, that is neither male nor female, and about the mental health trauma of those primarily gay people denied a welcome and validation by churches. On the Saturday afternoon, as an act of special clemency, those who wanted to watch the England v Columbia match were allowed to skip

serious work and many, including your correspondent and the Archbishop of Canterbury, did so.

Synod’s primary role is to enact new ecclesiastical legislation, and a great deal of time was rightly spent on getting this right. The draft Church Representation and Ministers Measure moved nearer to adoption, including the vital new Church Representation Rules, affecting for example the way Parish Councils operate. Watch this space! Your correspondent spoke several times in these technical legislative debates, and there was a photograph in the Church Times of 13 July to prove it.

Your correspondent has always believed men who are over 50 should be careful about public appearances in shorts. He fears this year’s hot weather produced over-many unfortunate exposures, including from certain bishops.

*Charles George – Dean of the  
Arches and Auditor, ex officio  
member of General Synod*

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# ST KILDA - AT LAST! 'the edge of the world'

by David Ashenden



James Fisher, Naturalist and Ornithologist, wrote in 1947 *"the future Observer of St Kilda will be haunted for the rest of his life by the place and tantalised by the impossibility describing it to those who have not seen it."*

Martin Martin, a Scottish writer 250 years earlier in 1697, declared himself *"lost for words"* having visited the islands. I can now share their sentiments.

St Kilda is an archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean 46 miles from the west coast of the Isle of Harris in the Outer Hebrides and 110 miles from the mainland. It is a UNESCO double World Heritage Site for its culture and natural history, the only one in Great Britain and 1 of 24 in the world. It is a site of Special Scientific Interest, a National Nature Reserve, and a Biosphere Reserve - a very special place.

It is home to approximately 1 million sea birds, containing the world's largest colony of gannets (one quarter of the world's population), Britain's largest and oldest colony of fulmars, and the largest colony of puffins in Britain. It is the most important seabird breeding station in North West Europe.

Hirta, the main island, boasts the highest cliffs in the British Isles at over 1400ft, twice the height of Beachy Head and as high as the Empire State Building. It takes a stone, thrown from the top, 12 seconds to reach the sea a quarter of a mile below. The sea stacs are the highest in Britain, Stac Lee 545ft and Stac an Armin 630ft.

For 2000 years people dwelt on Hirta, living on sea birds and their eggs, growing crops, keeping a small number of cows and sheep and to a lesser extent fishing (the waters are dangerous and St Kildans were

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unable to swim, so fishing proved very hazardous). They did, however, visit the other islands and stacs to harvest sea birds, requiring great skill and courage landing on steep slippery rocks in the wild waters. They were an isolated community cut off from the outside world for centuries, the Ideal Society. Martin Martin described them as *"much happier than the generality of Mankind feeling the sweetness of pure liberty, free from envy, deceit, ambition, pride and the consequences that attend them"*.

It was, however, a harsh and dangerous way of life and they learned to live with tragedy due to loss of life on the cliffs and in the sea. The mourning of loved ones was only too familiar to them. The men were required to become cragsmen, which entailed descending the cliffs on ropes harvesting the birds and tying them around the waist and being hauled to the top. In order for a man to qualify as a cragsman and a



husband he had to stand on his left foot on the Mistress Stone, which is a rock protruding over the top of the cliff edge 445 feet above the sea, extend his right foot forward and grasp the foot with both hands and balance until his young lady deemed he had qualified to win her hand.

Apparently this practice had to be abandoned as they were losing too many young men!

I have had a yearning to visit this extraordinary place for some years and when my daughter Anne-Marie volunteered to accompany me it eventually became a reality on the 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt! Even in this age of easy travel St Kilda is a notoriously difficult place to reach on account of its isolation and unpredictable weather. One can be thwarted on the quayside due to a sudden change for the worse. This only adds to the intrigue...

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The place has a beauty and immensity, the evidence of the lost way of life and the power of its heritage is all around - the ruined dwellings of the village, the 1400 cliets scattered all over the islands for storing birds and their eggs, also peat and turf, the church, the school, the graveyard, the manse and the flock of primitive sheep dating back to the Bronze Age, running completely wild and found nowhere else in the world. It brings wonderment at a society's ability and tenacity to survive over 2000 years in such a harsh and dangerous environment isolated from civilisation. It was civilisation that eroded and finally destroyed this society with the evacuation of the remaining 36 inhabitants in 1930, bringing to an end a unique culture and way of life.

Having explored the village we scaled the steep hillside to the Gap. The Gap is reached suddenly, and with some disbelief as the grassy hillside ends abruptly in a cliff plunging vertically over 540 feet into the sea. The hills on St Kilda have no backs. From here the views are stunning. Looking behind us was Village Bay, with an aerial view of all we had seen at close quarters and the exquisite outline of the rocky outcrop of the Dunn island which shields the bay from the fierce Atlantic storms. Looking out to sea, the amazing island mountain of Boreray and its sea stacs were clearly visible. A short walk towards the summit of Conachair, the highest point of the island, brought into view the full height of the highest cliffs and one can only marvel at the Cragmen of long ago on their ropes wrestling with seabirds on the cliff face to ensure the survival of the community. Another unique feature of St Kilda is that the cragsmen's feet had evolved over the years to have thick, highly-developed ankles and insteps with wide and extended toes adapted for climbing the cliffs in bare feet.

It was now time for the descent in order for us to board the boat for our trip around the island and the stacs.

This started with our departure from Village Bay along the edge of the Dunn, the beauty of which we could now view at close quarters.

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This was inundated with puffins, mostly airborne, reminiscent of a swarm of bees - an unforgettable sight! We then entered rougher waters to view the majesty of the cliffs of Conachair, this time from sea level, then on to the sea stacs where the sea becomes like a cauldron where tides and currents meet. Anne-Marie's skills (first acquired on last year's visit to the Shiant Islands) on operating a camera, a camcorder and holding on to counter the swell of the sea are second to none and we have the footage and slides to prove it! It was as much as I could do to manage my binoculars and hold on!

*"Lost for words"* describes one's emotions when looking up from the base of a 630 feet sea stac covered in gannets and fulmars, the sky thick with their constant movement and the noise of their calling. It was as if they were putting on a show just for us - but of course they are doing it all the time and are quite unaware of our insignificant presence. This is their territory, not ours - a sharp reminder of one's own mortality.

As we left we stayed on deck to see the dramatic effect of distant clouds gradually engulfing the archipelago and finally, there she was - gone!





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# Pilgrimage to Santiago

In July Carole and I walked the final 116 km (72 miles) of the 'Camino', the pilgrimage route to Santiago in north west Spain. In the middle ages people came from all over Europe to visit the shrine of St James in Santiago. Acts records that St James, one of the apostles closest to Jesus, was executed by Herod Agrippa. There is a tradition that his body was miraculously brought to Spain and was discovered in the 9<sup>th</sup> century in a marble tomb on the site of what is now Santiago.

In recent decades there has been a major revival of pilgrimage to Santiago and today over 300,000 people a year come to Santiago on foot, on horseback or by bicycle. Many of them start from the French border, a distance of 738 km, or from even further afield, carrying their belongings on their backs and staying at the many pilgrim hostels that offer cheap accommodation along the way. By comparison ours was a pilgrimage for softies, walking a much shorter distance and staying in well-appointed hotels to which our baggage was delivered each day.

Nevertheless, we experienced some of the tribulations and joys of pilgrimage. Walking up to 18 miles a day was a hard slog at times and many of our group of around 30 were challenged at some point. But we helped and encouraged one another and all of us made it to Santiago. Though we came from a wide range of Christian traditions, we gelled well together and learnt much from one another as we exchanged life stories and talked about our faith. It was a joy also to share the path with pilgrims from all over the world and particularly heartening to see the large numbers of young people among them. And it was a pleasure to walk through the beautiful Galician countryside. Our route took us through rolling green hills and oak forests and through ancient stone built settlements with gardens of roses. We stopped regularly for refreshment at the many cafes and restaurants along the way and to collect stamps in our pilgrim passports.

Religious observance was of course an important part of the pilgrimage. At the start of the walk Carole and I attended Mass at the Roman Catholic church in Sarria. Though the Mass was conducted in Spanish, it was easy

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for anyone who worships regularly at St John's to follow. Each morning we began our walk with a pilgrim prayer and each evening we said the office of Compline. At Portomarin we celebrated an Anglican Eucharist in a 13th century church built by the knights of St John that from the outside looked more like a castle than a church. We visited many of the small Romanesque churches built alongside the pilgrimage route and invariably containing statues of St James and Our Lady.

Santiago was the objective and highpoint of our pilgrimage. It is a handsome city with the cathedral at its centre. We visited the cathedral and its treasures, including the silver casket containing the relics of St James, and on Sunday morning attended the pilgrim Mass. When we arrived, the large square outside the cathedral was filling with groups of young people, some of them arriving barefoot, and by the time the Mass began the enormous cathedral was full to overflowing.

At the end of the Mass we witnessed the swinging of the 'botafumeiro', the great thurible of the cathedral that, suspended on long ropes from the dome over the crossing and under the control of eight red robed men, swung from one transept to another reaching almost up to the ceiling. It was an impressive sight.

The pilgrim Mass was a fitting climax to our pilgrimage and we count ourselves fortunate that, unlike medieval pilgrims, we did not have to turn round and walk all the way home. We returned with wonderful memories and with an illuminated certificate in Latin testifying to our achievement in walking at least 100km of the 'Camino'.

When I come to St John's I am reminded of our journey as I look up at the great east window, where St James is portrayed carrying his pilgrim staff and wearing a cap adorned with a scallop shell, the symbol of the pilgrimage to Santiago.



*David Bonner*

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# The Stewardship Campaign: An Update



Further responses to the stewardship questionnaire have continued to come in over the summer. Though we are waiting for the final calculations to be made, the initial results look very encouraging, with a significant boost to planned giving as well as a number of one off donations and offers of help with work around the church. Thank you to all who have felt able to contribute in one way or another.

If you have not yet responded to the questionnaire, it is not too late to do so. Or, if you would simply like to discuss ways in which you could use your time and talents to help out in the church, please speak to one of the churchwardens or to one of us.

*The Stewardship Committee*

*(David Bonner, Humphrey Pring, Robin Williamson)*

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## Bible Study Group

The Bible Study group will recommence on **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October** at 8pm at 19 Hitchen Hatch Lane, Sevenoaks. We will be looking at the book of Isaiah.

If you would like to join the group, or just find out more about it, please speak to Fr Matthew.

All welcome!

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# Money Matters

## Income and expenditure January – August 2018

### **Income**

Cash collections, stewardship envelopes, standing orders, donations	£21,409.70
Tax reclaim 2016	£6,535.93
Hall hire	£4,749.10
Fees special services	£3,092.00
Rent 14, Quaker Hall Lane	£4,200.00
Refreshments	£244.18
Investments	£14,165.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>£54,396.92</b>

### **Expenditure**

Parish share (includes portion for 2016)	£33,390.00
Clergy expenses (includes Messy Church, Travel and courses)	£1,534.86
Church services	£1,793.72
Organists, Piano & Organ, maintenance, Royal School of music	£2,700.20
Council Tax	£3,344.95
Insurances (includes Fire, and Alarm)	£3,825.24
Office	£4,252.33
Cleaner	£1,448.44
Gas, electricity, water	£6,312.22
Refreshments	£59.75
Charities and grant	£3,421.00
Building Works	£10,097.05
Refunds	£256.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>£72,435.86</b>

Most of the building work was paid for from money held in the Diocesan repair fund

*Jacqueline Dungay, Temporary Treasurer*

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## Pub lunches

12.30pm -  
3pm

The next **Pub Lunch** will be on  
Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October at the Cock Inn, Ide Hill.  
Please ask Terry, John or Marigold for  
further details.

## Men's Night - Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October, 7pm

A gathering for an evening of good food and drink at Marco  
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## **At St John's Church**

### **3.30pm - 5.30pm**

Thursday 18th October 2018

Thursday 6th December 2018

Thursday 24th January 2019

Thursday 21st March 2019

Friday 18th April @12noon

Thursday 23rd May 2019

Thursday 4th July 2019

St John the Baptist Church, Quakers Hall Lane, Sevenoaks,  
01732 451 710

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**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2018**  
**Harvest Thanksgiving**



**Remembrance Sunday**  
**11<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

As you will all know, this day will mark 100 years since the Armistice and the ending of the Great War.

On this occasion the 8am Mass will be offered as the Mass of the day and the 10am Mass will be of Requiem, in particular for the souls of those from this parish killed in the Great War.

Please encourage others to attend on this important occasion.