Issue 9:
November 2026

A candle in…

The Window

News and Views from the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames

The triquetra: a symbol of the trinity



The turning of the year: Autumn and Advent

Autumn at the Arboretum: Photo Rob Rutherford

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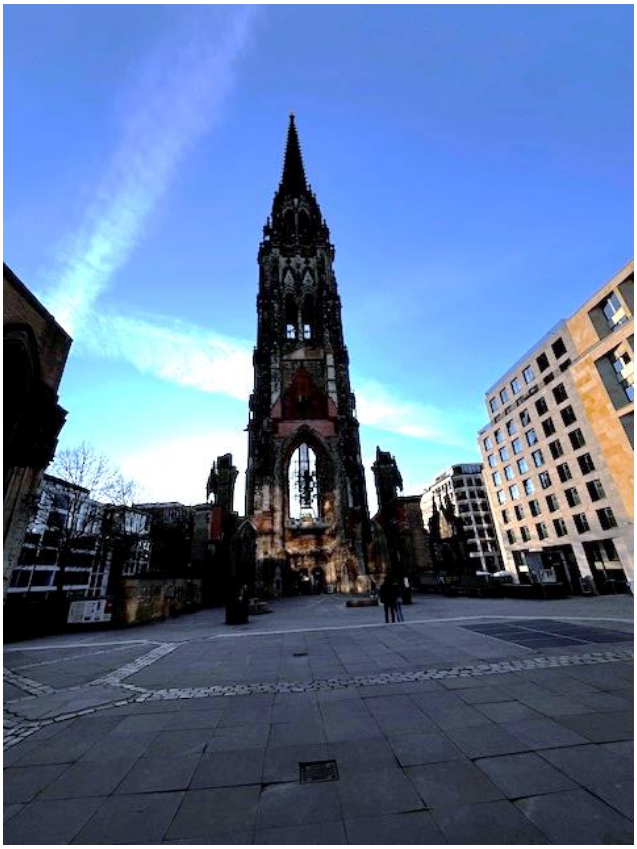
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A reflection for Remembrance after a visit to Hamburg

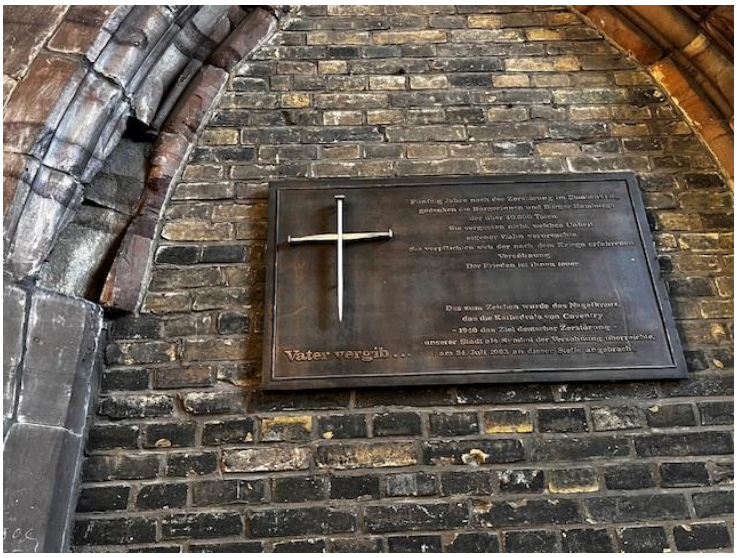
Ruth Pyke

As November brings again the season of Remembrance maybe I can share a memorial for peace and reconciliation that we encountered on our trip to Hamburg this spring.

Drawn by the lofty spire of what was once the tallest building in the world we walked towards the church of the Nikolaikirche. A wooden church had stood on this site from the 12th century, followed by a brick church which was destroyed by fire in 1842. The spire which we could clearly see was of the Gothic Revival church designed by the English architect George Gilbert Scott and rebuilt to his design in 1874. But drawing nearer we could clearly see, through the tracery of the spire and the windows, that the building was open to the sky. It had been destroyed by the Allied bombing raids between 1940 and 1945. Controversially these bombing raids targeted widespread areas of Hamburg – the docks, the industrial areas and the residential streets. 40 000 people are believed to have died during those years.



We were immediately struck by the resemblance to Coventry Cathedral- bombed in its turn by the German Luftwaffe. So, we were not surprised on entering this open space to find a plaque displaying a Coventry Cross of Nails with an inscription declaring a commitment to reconciliation, and an acknowledgment of the mutual hostility which caused such devastation in both Hamburg and Coventry.



Just as in Coventry Cathedral the words “Father forgive” appear at the bottom of the memorial.

Rubble was removed from the site in 1951, and in the 1990s and then in 2012 further work was done to preserve the walls, the tower and the spire. A carillon of bells was installed in the tower, and a lift to reach a viewing platform for dramatic views over Hamburg.

Further into the cathedral were information boards and a statue which caused me to reflect further and which has stayed with me since. Cast in bronze, a figure of a person in total despair sits with head in hands atop a pile of bricks. The bricks are those gathered from one of the largest POW camps with links to Bergen-Belsen where thousands were ill-treated and perished. The sculpture is entitled "The Ordeal" and is the work of Edith Breckwoldt whose childhood was spent in wartime Hamburg.

On the bronze plaque are words credited to Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

"No man in the whole world can change the truth.
One can only look for the truth, find it and serve it.
The truth is in all places."



The sculpture caused me to reflect on the desperation of all those caught up in terrible wars and conflicts, the pain that men and women can inflict on each other and the destruction caused by war and violence, but it was set amidst a building open to the heavens where none of this can be suppressed or hidden, but acknowledges the sorrow and pain, yet speaks out in determination to build relationships between countries, cultures and individuals.
The church stands as a testament to the impermanence of all we build and an opportunity to reflect on what is lasting and eternal.

A hymn which we sing regularly, but which was originally German expresses my thoughts and prayers as I reflect on this Remembrance tide and look back to that visit last spring.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
Sword and crown betray his trust,
What with care and toil he buildeth
Tower and temple fall to dust;
But God's power hour by hour
Is my temple and my tower.

ROBERT BRIDGES 1844-1930 based on the German of JOACHIM NEANDER 1650 -1680

Taking action for creation care… as members of the body of Christ

Hannah Mann: Faith Forum 25th October 2026 summarised by Rob Rutherford
Hannah is Environment Action Programme Manager for the Oxford Diocese

Hannah took as her starting point a few verses from Corinthians:
There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

In trying to solve the problems facing the environment – climate change and the loss of biodiversity – we acknowledge that we can't do it by ourselves but only by combining our God-given gifts. We need to think about what we are good at, what needs doing and what brings us joy. We need to recognise what we can do ourselves and how we can influence others but also be realistic and know there are things we cannot do.

Taking as a guide the statement 'tread lightly on the earth', Hannah outlined the many things that need attention:



Some things we can do will have more of an impact on climate change than others. Hannah showed a list of 19 actions listed by the World Resources Institute in order of their impact. Transport was at the top. See here for further details. To help nature, here are further thoughts: Be a voice for nature; make your home a haven for native plants and wildlife; respect and protect local habitats beyond your home; eat a sustainable diet; reduce, reuse and recycle (Rob adds 'repair'); buy less and shop sustainably; save water; be a nature-friendly tourist.

We all have 'buts' that become a barrier to trying something new … here are some of Hannah's responses: Find what counts; Start small and stay small; Learn as you go; Tell others; Hang on to grace.

The Diocese as a whole is making progress. There are 292 Eco Churches with 88 having reached bronze award, 54 silver and 1 gold. They are investing £10million in making vicarages energy efficient. The Bishops drive electric cars. They are trying to find creative uses for church land and they have successfully taken a motion to General Synod, introducing optional wording for confirmation and baptism services to include the fifth mark of mission, which is to 'Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'

Questions included whether there is any progress towards replacing plastics and how well soft plastics are recycled ('a grey area' – although the Co-op claims to recycle all their soft plastics in the UK); the importance of solar panels even if their use is not optimised; the threat of data centres – can we generate from renewables fast enough to keep up with their construction? Can we learn from our partner dioceses? Yes - it is already happening and work is being done to share knowledge and practice across our partners. Also mentioned was the importance of fair-trade in supporting the world-wide environmental movement.

PCC News

Eluned Hallas PCC Secretary

At our recent PCC Away Day at the Carmelite Priory Retreat Centre, it was agreed that we should let congregation members know a bit more about the PCC - what we do and the decisions we make. The PCC is made up of Clergy, Wardens and elected representatives from all three Churches. PCC members are tasked with supporting Team Clergy with the management of church affairs in the parish, promoting the mission of the church and with the Governance of the Parish – its buildings and finance. Do feel free to talk to any member about any issues on which you would like more information or to express concern.

The Away Day allowed members to get to know each other better and discuss how we can move forwards together in service of our congregations, Parish and the wider community. The day started with prayer and a bible study on Acts 11.1–26 and finished with worship in the Priory chapel. Discussions were friendly and wide ranging. Immediate actions were perhaps less well defined but we had plenty of food for thought and ideas for the future as we move forward together in God's service.

A small cross-church group is looking at improvements to the Parish Centre to bring the facilities into the 21st Century – looking particularly at first at energy efficiency and accessibility. The first practical result is a project to upgrade the Cavity Wall Insulation – for which we have received Diocesan grant funding. The team is now looking at fully accessible toilets and possible improvements to the kitchen facilities. We know these works will benefit all the groups who meet and work there. If you have any thoughts or would be interested in joining the team - do speak to the Rector or Rob Rutherford (St H) or Roger Cox (St N).

The PCC next meets on 18 November. Do speak to one of the Wardens or a PCC member if you would like any items discussed.



Castlemilk Moorit sheep – (a 'primitive' breed) at Harcourt Arboretum
Photo: David Bevington
The connection between the PCC and sheep is certainly not intended! RR

The St Birinus Fellowship gains new members!



The St Birinus Fellowship was founded by a former Bishop of Dorchester, with the support of the Rector of Dorchester Abbey, as a modest way to recognise people who have given exceptional service to their church and community over a number of years. This year amongst the recipients were: Linda Hobbs (St Helen's), Jenny Smith (St Nicolas') and Sue Scott (St Michael's) who between them have given many years of service to our Parish and churches. We thank them.
Photograph: Linda, Archdeacon David Tyler, Sue, Bishop Gavin, in front the Rector and Jenny Smith.

Photographer: Alex Scott?
Dorchester Abbey 20th September 2026

November 16th: the Feast Day of St Edmund of Abingdon

Remember we have published articles about St Edmund of Abingdon before! So we won't repeat ourselves. Try to find them! All previous issues are online. Yes, I know we don't yet have an index….

This medieval wall painting from All Saints Church in Shorthampton, Oxfordshire – a tiny hamlet near Charlbury - *may* depict St Edmund of Abingdon.



Photo and information from David Bevington

Theatre at St Helen's!

On Saturday 12 December at 2pm, St. Helen's Church is delighted to warmly welcome nationally acclaimed theatre company LAMPS for their Christmas show "Heavenly Realms". Festive fun for all the family from age 8-800! A re-telling of the nativity.

Join the OAPs (Old Angel Pensioners) of retirement home Heavenly Realms as they get ready to celebrate Christmas and share memories of the very first one. Hold on to your halo and enjoy a 'holy' new take on the Nativity story, with acting, music, puppetry and poems!

Tickets: £15 for adults, free for accompanied U16s, available at The Bookstore in Abingdon, via Ticketsource or on the door.

Doors open 1.30pm, show start time 2.00pm. There is an interval with festive refreshments.

About LAMPS

Lamps Collective is a group of professional writers, actors, and musicians whose Christian faith underpins their lives and work.

LAMPS productions seek to:
inspire, challenge, and entertain
provoke thought about the nature of God and life
resource the church, refresh its members, and reach out beyond its walls.

LAMPS is an acronym which stands for Love, Acting, Music, Poetry and Stories – all things close to our hearts!

Music at St Michael's



On Sunday October 18th a good audience was treated to a recital by Christopher Britton (flute) and Malcolm Pearce (piano)

The programme included music by both Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Johann Sebastian Bach. Also, Charles Widor (who didn't just write for the organ) , Sir Herbert Hamilton Harty and others.

Their encore was a fun arrangement of 'Tea for Two'

Events in November and Beyond

Compiled by Louise Heffernan



Abbey Chamber Concerts at St Nicolas' Church
November 8th 3.00 – 4.00pm
Mozart and Thuille – Quintets for piano and winds
Mozart and Thuille Quintets for piano and winds Lynette Stulting piano, Pavlova Winds
£13.00
https://abbeychamberconcerts.org/event/mozart-andthuille-quintets-for-piano-and-winds/



Oxford Centre for Spiritual Growth
November 21 @ 10:30 am - 1:30 pm
'Re-imagining Christmas'

St Michael at the North Gate Church
Cornmarket Street Oxford, OX1 3EY

Saturday talks led by author Nick Page.
-Talks to include an exploration into "Dickens Christmas"
Get Tickets £10.00 – £25.00
https://www.ocsg.uk.net/events/

Quiet Garden Day at **Aston Tirrold Centre for Reflection**, Spring Lane, Aston Tirrold, OX11 9EJ

Saturday 28
November 10 am - 4 pm.

Leader: Sue Sheppy on the theme *Great Expectations*. Refreshments are provided, but please bring a packed lunch. A donation of £10 would be welcome. To attend it would be helpful to email: atquietgardendays@gmail.com in advance. All are welcome.

Advent Carol Service, 5.30 pm at St Helen's church, Sunday 29 November followed by mulled wine & mince pies. All welcome.



St Helen's Christmas Market will be on Saturday 28th November.









Please come to:
A **celebration of the 40th Anniversary of AKMA's Ordination to the Priesthood.**
Saturday, 5th December 2026, at 1:30 pm, on the Feast of Clement of **Alexandria, Teacher and Church Father, at St Helen's Church, Abingdon.** The preacher will be the Revd Damian Feeney.
Reception to follow. Any questions, contact Margaret at margaretbadam@gmail.com

St Nicolas Day Lunch
Sunday 6th December

All are invited to join the annual St Nicolas Day Lunch at The Cosener's House. The menu and booking slip
for this is now out. Cost is £37 for three courses (plus welcome drink, coffee and
mince pie) or £30 for two courses. Please return your booking slip* to Jenny
Smith (treasurer@stnicolasabingdon.org.uk) or Eluned
(contact@stnicolasabingdon.org.uk) by 22 November
The menu and *booking slip is on line at https://abingdonparish.org.uk/StN/downloads/2026ChristmasMenu.pdf .

Hard copies of the booking slip also available in church.

ADVENT LABYRINTH WALKS

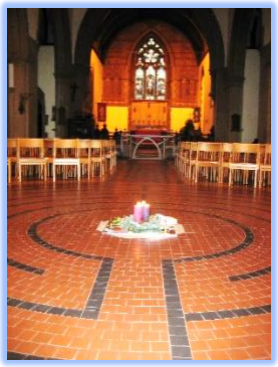
St Michael and All Angels' Church, Park Road, Abingdon, will be open

11 am – noon on

Tuesday 1, 8 and 15 December

Walk the labyrinth or simply enjoy the sacred space. Material for reflection will be available on a different Advent theme each week.

A short prayer will be said at the beginning and end of each session, but feel free to come and go as you please. Entry will be through the south porch.



SAVE THE DATES!
The Revd Naomi Gardom's Licensing, Wednesday 6th January 2027 7.30pm.

Corporate Confirmation Service, Sunday 31st January 2027 10.30am.

Details of Christmas Services to follow in December's magazine

A Tree Puzzle

Rob Rutherford

Match the trunk to the leaves to the name!

 A1	 B1	Paper-bark maple C1
 A2	 B2	American Sycamore C2
 A3	 B3	Giant sequoia C3
 A4	 B4	Beech C4
 A5	 B5	Oak C5

Puzzle Answers:
Don't peek!

Quiz Answers:
Here are the matches:
A1 B5 C4
A2 B3 C1
A3 B1 C2
A4 B2 C5
A5 B4 C3



Robin, Andrew and Helena Day did another charity bicycle ride on their amazing borrowed bicycle. This time to support the Newman Trust (see here for details).

"We rode from our home on a very cold day to Marcham Army Barracks (ex RAF Abingdon) and did two circuits of the old airfield, escorted by David Bevington who stayed with us all day to help.
We rode up the perimeter track to the north and hit a 20mph headwind coming at us. It made it very hard going!

On getting to the end of the runway we turned onto it and got blown along by a tailwind (we didn't have to pedal but did and found we were racing along at possibly 25mph and soon covered the whole length of the runway in no time!
We had a great time; all enjoyed the day and rode home happy and tired."

In the region of £1400 to £1500 was donated. Thank you, donors, and also Jeannette Thomas who helped to find them!

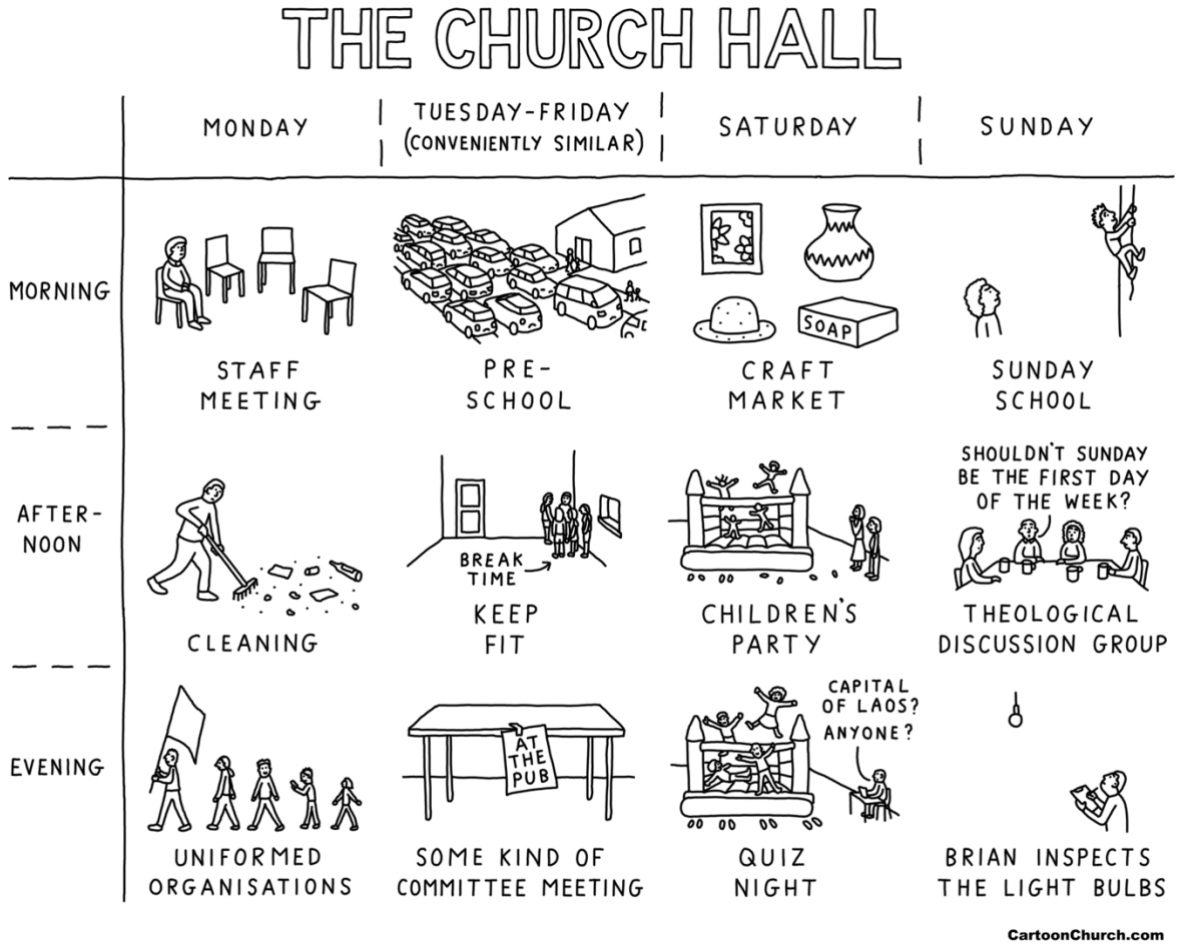
Useful Weblinks:

Services: for the latest news see the Parish Website:
https:abingdonparish.org.uk

for Church of England links: services, daily readings etc
https://www.churchofengland.org/

FOOD BANK. The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support. Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm. **Abingdon Foodbank South** serves the people of South Abingdon on Wednesdays between 12.30 and 2pm and is based in Preston Road Community Centre. It is a full service – not just a distribution point. Any food donated in the marked boxes in Waitrose will go to the Foodbank. Any food donated at Tesco goes to the SOFEA run Community Larder based at Trinity Church centre on Fridays.
You can also donate money by sending a cheque made out to *North Abingdon PCC Christ Church*, clearly marked *'for Food Bank'* or via the Foodbank website https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/ or the Parish office has details if you want to donate via online banking.

Finally, from Dave Walker:



Thanks and all good wishes to all contributors and to you, the readers.
The next issue will be published on December 6th. Please help us by sending feedback, ideas and contributions to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk