

NEWSLETTER

20th November 2025



*Created by Emma Major
Poet, writer and artist, Wheelchair driver
Lay Pioneer Minister.*

Dear Everyone - Greeting to you all

Advent is coming: Advent is a time when we prepare to celebrate 'God with us' or, as John's Gospel put it, that "the Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14). Advent is our Christian season of preparation for Christmas, lasting for four weeks starting on the 30th November. The word "advent" means "coming" which anticipates Jesus' birth and his eventual second coming.

To prepare for the celebration of Christmas through prayer, reflection, and penance. The season has themes of hope, peace, joy, and love, and also includes a reflection on the second coming of Christ.

It is a time to prepare for Christmas by reflecting, anticipating, and celebrating the coming of Jesus Christ. During this time, advent candles are lit, one each week; advent wreaths are often made and displayed; advent calendars are enjoyed, especially by children who open one window each day until Christmas, usually with a sweet behind each window.

Nwando's Sister: We were all so sorry to hear about the sudden death of Nwando's beloved younger sister, Ifeyinwa Uwechia in Nigeria. It was clearly a great shock to Nwando. We all send our love to her and her family with many prayers. Nwando is not going back to Nigeria just yet so we will have an opportunity to speak to her on Sunday and give our condolences.

News of Festus: Festus, is recovering from his knee surgery. We are all so pleased that the operation was a success. Everyone sends their love to him with many prayers and good wishes in hope that his recovery is pain free and he is on his feet soon. We send our love to Fiona and family who is caring for him. Festus is missed on Sundays as he is always there as a faithful sides-person who takes such care and an interest in us, so it will be great to see him back when he has fully recovered.

Safeguarding Awareness Sunday: This service took place last Sunday, 16th November, when churches across the country dedicated themselves to the National Safeguarding Awareness Campaign. This year the theme of the campaign was "Action Speaks Louder", which - encourages churches not just to talk about safeguarding but to take positive action towards creating safer places for children and vulnerable adults. We

are encouraged to not only reflect but also to act on improving safeguarding practices. We were all asked to make an Act of Commitment to the principles of safeguarding which is:

“As the people of God, we are called to follow in the way of Christ, to walk humbly and love mercy, and speak up about injustice so that the Church may be a place of safety and refuge for all. In acknowledging the role we all have in making our churches safer places, let us join together and pledge our commitment before almighty God”.

Florence who is our safeguarding officer then said:



“Good morning everybody. My name is Florence and I am the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) of the church. My appointment as our safeguarding officer means I am the person to go to.

Today is Safeguarding Sunday, when churches are encouraged to think about how we look after and protect vulnerable people (children and adults) in every aspect of our church life.

Below is what we as a church are doing to make sure we really are safe for everyone.

if anyone has concerns regarding training and criminal record checks of leaders including the PCC come to me.

We have a safeguarding policy on our website and all notice boards in the church. It tells us what to do if we have a concern.

We have a photography policy, and we need your consent, if you have not done it before.

Can I emphasise that protecting children and vulnerable adults is *everyone’s* responsibility (not just mine, the vicar’s or the wardens), **but it is everyone’s responsibility**.

As we are thinking about being a safer and welcoming church for everyone, let us think about how we can share the responsibility as we pray together. Psalm 91: 2 reminds us that “We will say of the Lord, You are my safe and strong place, my God, in whom I trust”.

As we gather to worship today, let us remember that we serve a God of love, who calls us to love one another as he first loved us.

Prayer (let us prayer together)

All - Compassionate God, our refuge and strength,
defender of the weak, the weary, and the oppressed,
we come to you with humble and thankful hearts.

As your children, you call us to be like you,
to speak up for the rights of all who are vulnerable.

Help us as we strive to be a place of safety for all,
May we listen to those who are hurting, learn from Jesus’ example,
and love one another as you first loved us.

Amen

Local Police Link: In conjunction with this, it is interesting, that our **police**, in a wide range of local areas, have focussed on many aspects of Safeguarding in their series of messages that they regularly send round to us. Do you have access to similar messages in your particular area? It comes under the heading of **MET ENGAGE (Community Crime Fighting)**. The messages are informative and helpful. Emailed to us, they are full of detail and about what action can be taken if we have concerns about, scam calls, violence against women and girls, latest advice on keeping children and grandchildren safe on line and many more issues. They also contain information about organisations who can help, telephone numbers and emails.

Old Testament book continues: This week it was the book of Haggai, one of the smaller prophetic books but an important one, in which 520 BC, when the Babylonian empire has collapsed and some of the exiles were allowed to return to Jerusalem, Haggai challenges the returning exiles to remember their covenant to remain faithful to God and rebuild the Temple before their homes; which they failed to do. Below is the sermon Jenny preached on the story of Haggai's warnings and the outcome. Jenny sent a photo from her mother's church after they had considered the message of Haggai, for all of us to see, which asked the question:



If you are interested in following the books of the Old Testament that we have covered or are to come, you might like to go to the website link and look at the videos of each book at your leisure. They are only about 5 minutes in length as you know, but easier to follow when you are on your own, in a smaller space, with no sound to distort them. They all follow on from each other.

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/zephaniah/>

Night Shelter: The shelter has started in our church from November 10th. We are carrying out the programme with those from our church family who have volunteered, with a number from St Jude's Hampstead Garden Suburb. It is important to have the opportunity to support those less fortunate than ourselves by volunteering to help those who have no option but to sleep in the streets or shelter in the parks and/or doorways. There are a number of ways you can help by, cooking, being a host during the evening (7pm-10pm), sleeping overnight (10pm-7pm), providing breakfast and cleaning up (7am -9am) or driving guests belongings to the next venue. You would be most welcome to help in this important way. Please let Kamran or Nehar know. (Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk) or either on the church WhatsApp.

Street Sleepers in Central London:



In connection with the above, I have written a piece about the “Service for the Homeless” who have died during the year in the area of Central London. It is held annually at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Leicester Square, to remember the lives they have lived, to show value to them and the gifts they had that could never be fully developed. St Martin’s does a great deal year-round to care for the many men and women who are homeless. The service is moving, tragic, poignant but also full of love, value, and respect for those who lived their lives on the streets often with great fortitude and courage but did not survive. (See below)

Christ the King Service: This will take place on **Sunday 23rd November at 10.am**. It is always a joyous service, one in which members of our church family wear your special clothes from your countries – if you want to do so. It shows our rich diversity but also how we are all together, one in Christ.

This will be followed by a **Bring and Share meal** to be shared with everyone and extremely enjoyable.

Reflections for November from St Paul’s Cathedral. The reflection below is written by The Revd Canon Dr Alison Joyce **who** is Rector of St Bride’s, London. She has a passion for all things historical, and her book, “Richard Hooker and Anglican Moral Theology”, was published in 2012. In her reflection called “A Month of Remembering”. She comments on how St Paul routinely addresses ordinary members of his newly founded Christian congregations as ‘saints’ and asks, that when we are together as a congregation, “Do we behold a gathering of God’s saints? And if not, why not?”

We have been doing a great deal of remembering doing the last week, thinking of all those who died in the first and second world wars as well as so many others. We continually pray for the wars, fighting, starvation, and killing of the totally innocent at the behest of those in power, to end.

Photos’s of our Remembrance at the Clock Tower in Golders Green with thanks to the great photographs taken by Sima.



Listening and Learning, Bible Study: The date of the next session is Thursday 27th November at 6.30pm

Coffee: As usual our coffee morning is from 10.30am-12noon. Do come and join us and enjoy coffee, cake and a chat.

Toddler Group: The Toddler group is up and running. It would be much appreciated and welcomed if you could think of helping out, or know anyone who might like to do so.

With Good Wishes and Love – Sally



Haggai 1: 1-10 - Sermon by Jenny

Let's pray.

Faithful, hope-giving God, as I speak may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts, and the way each of us responds, be pleasing in your sight. *Amen*

In terms of its length, Haggai is the second most minor of the minor prophets, with only two chapters. But like all the so-called minor prophets, this one punches above its weight and we'd really miss out if we skipped over it just because it's little and the end of the Old Testament is in sight.

As we heard in the video, Haggai's words were spoken to the Israelites who'd returned from exile. You can't fit much context into two chapters, but we can get the background if we look back at the book of Ezra. King Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Judah, destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, and taken the Israelites into exile in Babylon. Cyrus, King of Persia, later took Babylon over. He was very different from Nebuchadnezzar. He gave the Jews who were captive there his permission to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple. He even said they could take with them the articles from the original temple that Nebuchadnezzar had looted. This must have been way beyond anything they could have dreamed of. But we're told in the first two verses of Ezra that 'the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus' to give that permission. So he did.

Once they were back they started rebuilding the temple. They got as far as completing the foundations and in Ezra we read about the huge party they held to celebrate that. Then Ezra tells us that neighbouring states got worried about what the Jews were doing and started threatening them if they didn't stop. They stopped.

They did nothing more on the temple for 18 years, and spent that time farming, building houses for themselves, and generally settling back into being an independent nation. Then Haggai began to speak.

This is what the Lord Almighty says:

"These people [the Jews] say, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house.'"

³ Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai:

⁴ "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"

⁵ Now this is what the Lord Almighty says:

"Give careful thought to your ways.

⁶ You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough.

You drink, but never have your fill.

You put on clothes, but are not warm.

You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

⁷ This is what the Lord Almighty says:

"Give careful thought to your ways"

This phrase 'Give careful thought' appears five times in the 38 verses that make up the book of Haggai. That's a lot. It's that important. What God is saying through Haggai is, 'Nothing's going right for you, is it, despite all your hard work? Have you any idea why that is? If you gave careful thought to the question, the answer

would be glaringly obvious..... Look at how you're spending your time. You're concentrating on your stuff, making your lives comfortable in your posh houses, working on your farms, growing the economy. It's not working, is it?'..... But they don't get it, so he has to spell it out for them: it's 'because of my house, which remains a ruin', says God in v 9 of chapter 1: you've got your priorities all wrong.

That takes us back to Deuteronomy 28: everything the returned Jews were suffering is in the list of curses that Moses declared back then because the Israelites were deliberately rebelling against God. Disobedience to God has consequences, and that was the same then, and for the Jews returning from exile, and for us now. It's ironic that when we look at Ezekiel and other prophets speaking during the exile, we see that the Jews were homesick for the temple and longing to be able to worship there. Now they're back, and rebuilding it isn't even on their 'to do' list.

Their leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua get the point and organise the people to restart work on the temple. As soon as they do that God tells them 'I am with you'. All it takes is obedience, in this case the resetting of priorities, and their relationship with God is restored. Then they can enjoy the blessings that Moses had promised.

The same point is made in Chapter 2. The Lord says through Haggai to Zerubbabel, Joshua and all the people: *'be strong...and work'*, by which he means 'do my work', *'for I am with you.....'my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'* In other words, if you do what I'm asking, I will be with you so you'll have nothing to fear, including from the neighbouring states'. This sounds very like what King David says to his son Solomon when he gives his son Solomon the plans for the building of the first temple: *"Be strong and courageous and do the work.....for the Lord God ...is with you. He will not fail you...."*. That's in 1 Chronicles 28:20. It's obviously a message that God really wants to get across, for all times and places.

As an aside, one of the many things I've enjoyed about our journey through the Old Testament is discovering how many overlaps there are between different books. I've just mentioned how even a short book like Haggai has references to Deuteronomy, Ezra and Chronicles. We can get so much more out of reading one passage or book when we see how it relates to another part.

Another thing that we've seen right the way through the Old Testament is how it's always pointing forward to the coming of Jesus.

Haggai's final prophecy does that. In the last few verses he tells Zerubbabel the governor that God will make him like his signet ring. That sounds a bit weird, but the idea is that a signet ring could be used to guarantee a promise. In this case the promise was that a Messiah would come through the line of David. This must have sounded like wishful thinking after the exile had wrecked every aspect of life for the Jews. But Zerubbabel was part of David's line and Haggai was certain that it would be restored. He was right, even if his timing was a few hundred years out! We see in the first chapter of Matthew's gospel how the line of David tracks down to the birth of Jesus, and Zerubbabel is right in there.

The Jews really needed this encouragement. They knew that the new temple couldn't be anywhere near as magnificent as the one Solomon had built, so were feeling like giving up. But Haggai encouraged them to do what they could, even if that felt inadequate. He saw things from a much longer perspective. In Chapter 2 vv 7-9 through Haggai God says: *'I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,'* *'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house'* This is pointing towards the end of time when God's kingdom comes in all its fullness, for all nations, and will be infinitely more glorious even than Solomon's temple. We can read all about that in Revelation, the last book of the Bible.

This is not just an encouragement for the Jews in Haggai's time. If we fast forward into the New Testament we see Jesus teaching very clearly that we, his followers, are called to be builders as well – of his kingdom, not of a physical building. When Haggai speaks God's promise 'I am with you' it sounds very like the great Commission at the end of Matthew's gospel, when before Jesus physically leaves his disciples and ascends into heaven he tells them: 'I am with you always, to the very end of the age'. God says through Haggai that he's with the Jews as they rebuild the temple, and Jesus promises to be with his disciples as they, we, build his kingdom. It can be tempting to look at the world around us and react like the Jews did in Haggai's time, feeling despondent and like it's not worth trying because it's all too difficult. But as followers of Jesus it's our job to do what we can to bring his kingdom closer. No-one ever said it would be easy, but if we don't try, nothing will change. God's promise to the Jews as they rebuilt the temple - 'I am with you' - is just as much for us as kingdom-builders as for them then as temple-builders, and it's the best encouragement we could wish for.

Haggai is about priorities, and particularly about the need to think very carefully about the choices we make, as individuals, and as a church. Do they or don't they match God's priorities? Are we just giving him our leftovers? Are our choices helping build God's kingdom? If not, why not? And what are we going to do about that? In Haggai's words, those questions need careful thought.

Part ii Safeguarding

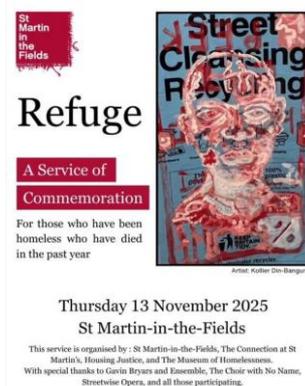
One aspect of those choices that needs careful thought from all of us, as we've heard from Florence and Kamran, is how seriously we take safeguarding. For all sorts of sad and disturbing reasons it feels like we're constantly hearing about safeguarding, in the Church and many other institutions. We hear it so often that we forget why it's so important. It's too easy to treat it as a tick-box exercise – do this training, agree this policy and put it on the noticeboard. Job done and now we can forget about it.

But we're followers of Jesus, and we're called to help build his kingdom, so we absolutely can't forget about it. If we give careful thought to safeguarding we'll see that it's a responsibility for all of us, not just our leaders, because it's about how we each behave towards people who are less able to look after themselves – children, young people and adults. Florence has mentioned this church's safeguarding policy. As well as telling us what to do if we suspect there's been some sort of abuse, it reminds us that we are to treat anyone who is in any way vulnerable with respect, kindness and sensitivity to their needs, and keep them safe. That's how Jesus treated people on the edge of society, the poor and the vulnerable, and we're all called to follow his example. It's a really important way of helping build God's kingdom, of showing people outside the church that God's ways are different. We shouldn't need to be reminded about this, but life is not that simple, and none of us (preaching to myself as always) is perfect, which is why we need to give careful thought to the policies and procedures. It's dangerously wrong, to say 'Oh, that sort of thing would never happen at our church'. It could.

Giving careful thought to our ways and our priorities, including safeguarding, is never an optional extra. It's how we build God's kingdom!



Service for the Homeless who have died in the past year: St Martin-in-the Fields.



Every year I try to attend a service at St Martin-in-the-Fields that commemorates the increasing numbers of men and women who do not survive sleeping in the streets for that particular year. It is organized to show value to their lives, to name those they know and have supported; to show respect to them, hold up their courage, tell their stories and recognise the gifts they had but were never fully utilized. A 150 people by name and 58 unnamed, were remembered who died this year, with no place to live but in the streets.

The Service reflects on the struggles they faced but also their gifts they had, which were so many, and gives thanks for their lives. The average life expectancy of those sleeping on the streets is 45 for men and 43 for women.

Unfortunately, I could not attend this year in person but joined by live-link. The church was packed. The 150 known names were read out by different members of the support services who knew them, plus another 58 whose names were not known. This year's number had gone up by 60 from last year. Their names were read out in groups of 10, with a prayer in between each group, followed by silence to think of them. One person's particular life story was talked about each time as representing that of the others; how they came to their situation; the gifts they had; how they supported each other; the way each tried to survive. Heartbreaking. Many coming from this country, others as refugees full of hope. Organisations representing those who support the street sleepers were present. These were "The Connection", housed at St Martins, who carry out a great deal of work to help in so many different ways. They cook meals, provide clothing, showers, time to rest and socialise and have outings to the sea-side once a year. "Housing Justice" who care for street sleepers was represented. The "Choir with No Name" made up of street sleepers, was another, who come together to make music at St Martin's - and what a beautiful choir it is. The "Street Wise opera" another organisation containing the homeless, sang throughout the Service. The poet called, "Surfing Sofa", himself homeless, who started a support group around the Westminster area with others like himself, read one of his poems called, "Till the Day We Meet Again", that started with the lines, " We have so many empty homes not used- so many people without a home.....".

(It was pointed out that there are over 600,000 empty homes sitting empty in England alone (Source House of Commons Library) .

Notably and most memorably, the musician and composer, Gavin Bryers, with his ensemble, played his composition inspired by hearing a homeless man singing to himself in the street that he recorded (with permission) to which he wove accompanying music with the voice of the man singing throughout, "Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet". This is always the most moving piece to listen to. You can hear it on this link.

https://youtu.be/U_ZIPhTSZSM?si=zSTkLoybGOVZMhJ It makes me weep.

In the background, cascading down, from the Altar was a blanket of remembrance of 1,474 squares made by people from different parts of the country with each square representing those who died in towns in 2023. These were sent to St Martin's and sewn together by people from "Connections".



Hanging above it was an art installation by the artist, Collier Vin Den Gura, of painted canvases made out of Westminster refuge sacks on a washing line, representing humanity hung out to dry.

While Gavin Bryer's piece was playing the congregation was asked come forward to receive a card of remembrance to take away and pray for those who were remembered. Finally, the Revd Lucy Winkett from St James's Piccadilly, who preached the sermon, said at the end, "It is such a privilege to be here and we welcome one another, to hear the stories of those we are remembering, but, to be honest, do we not wish that this church did not need to hold this service, do not we wish that this church did not have to be full remembering people who had died? Sometimes inside for humans, it can feel like a war zone, it can feel we have been laid waste and decimated. But the people we are commemorating today are with us, in their energy, their compassion, with their joy, with their rage, their gifts, that this service is necessary. But Jesus is saying "come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest". Jesus is saying this as an invitation for everyone".

I doubt that anyone present and those watching did not come away with anything but full and heavy hearts for those who could not be there as their lives on the street had ended it. As the Revd Richard Carter said, "London is one of the richest capital cities in the world and this is a reminder we should be doing more".



**A Month of Remembering
'For all the saints'**

Reflections for November from Alison Joyce



November begins with All Saints' Day, so every year at about this time, I find myself reflecting anew on the nature of sainthood.

As traditionally depicted in Christian imagery, saints are always easy to spot: just look for the gleaming halo. Unlike the rest of us, these holy figures appear to be different kinds of being altogether: a perception endorsed by tales of their miraculous powers and morally impeccable lives.

So I can remember my astonishment at discovering, in the New Testament, that St Paul routinely addresses ordinary members of his newly founded Christian congregations as 'saints' – as in his letter to the Romans: 'To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints.' (Sadly, this crucial detail is lost in some modern translations.)

When we survey our regular Sunday congregations, are we dazzled by the abundance of haloes? Do we behold a gathering of God's saints? And if not, why not?

At the root of the language that we use about sainthood, sanctity, and also sacraments, is the notion of being 'set apart'. Followers of Christ believe we are called to be in the world but not of the world. Because God takes something utterly ordinary and mundane - which may be bread, wine, water, your life, or my life; and through the power of his love and grace transforms it into something remarkable.

Every congregation I have known has had its saints. These are people who, however broken and vulnerable (and, interestingly, they were frequently both of those things), possessed a quality of simple goodness and compassion through which the light of Christ shone.

Which is why, each November, starting with All Saints' Day, I find myself remembering with thanksgiving the saints of God who have blessed my own life through their example, their wisdom, and their integrity. And I am reminded that the call to sainthood is one that beckons us all.



How We Are

As always, we send our love and prayers to all those who are sick. Please continue to pray for them that they gain in strength and good health; that God's healing hands may be upon them.

Pray also for those who are grieving because of the loss of a loved one. We pray for Nwando at the sudden loss of her younger sister Ifeyinwa. We think of Tim and his father, Cecil. We pray for Ibezim Okeye and his family mourning the death of his younger sister.

Please pray for Festus who is recovering well from a knee operation and give thanks for it. We pray for Daniel, for Keith, Relia and Myfanwy; for Anita Houghton, Chuba Agbim, Eunice Adiele, Gideon Onwutalu, Sir Edmund Onochie, Rose Ochwada. Keep Kelly's father John in your prayers. We give thanks for the recovery of Poppy.

We hold all the above in our hearts that they may be filled with God's healing love.

Please continue to let us know of family members and friends who are sick and would welcome our prayers, either by WhatsApp, email, Kamran@gg-pc.co.uk or by phone, 020 8455 1873

Topic: Church Wardens' Personal Meeting Room

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/8585545365?pwd=em85aDF5ZmJ5ZkVlb0xDaDhY2paUT09>

Meeting ID: 858 554 5365

Passcode: J4FbKf

Reader:

Intercession:

Hospitality:

Eucharist Minister:

AV Desk:

Contact details:

Parish Priest: Revd Kamran Bhatti Office Tel: 020 8455 1873 Website: www.gg-pc.co.uk

Date	Bible Passage	Readers	Intercessor	Refreshments	Eucharistic Minister	AV Desk	Wardens on duty	Service leader	Preacher
23/11/25 Christ the King Bring & Share	Zechariah 2:10-13 Revelation 22:10-17	Sim	Jenny	Chinwe/ Cynthia	Sally/ Tony	Onyeka	Ifey/Shaniv	Nehar	Rev Ibezim
30/11/25	TBC	Andrew	TBC	Alexis	Ifeyinwe/ Onyeka	Shaniv	Nehar/Sohail	Rev Ibezim	Rev KB
07/12/25	TBC	Elizabeth	Tony	Nora	Nehar/ Nwadi	Daniel	Ifey/Shaniv		Rev Ibezim
14/12/25 Crib Service	TBC	Sohail	Jenny	Bilan	Daniel/ Ezim	Dozie	Nehar/Sohail		Sunday School
21/12/25 Nine Carols & Lesson	TBC	Nwennaka	Simon	Silvia	Tim/ Naila	Ruth	Tony/Bilan		TBC
24/12/25 Christmas Eve	TBC	Dozie	Nehar	Christina	Sally/ Tony	Onyeka	Ifey/Shaniv	Rev KB	Rev Aled
25/12/25 Christmas Day	TBC	Keith	Rose	Cynthia/ Chinwe	Nehar/ Nwadi	Shaniv	Nehar/Sohail	Rev	Rev KB
28/12/25	TBC	Abi	Kai	Naila	Ifeyinwe/ Onyeka	Daniel	Tony/Bilan	J	Rev Ibezim