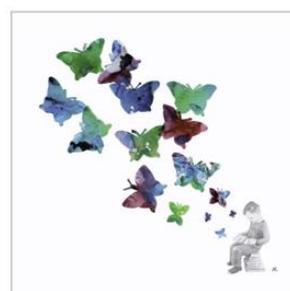


St Peter & St Paul West Mersea Newsletter – December 2020



New Beginnings!

What thoughts come to you about new beginnings as you study these pictures?



We are coming to the end of the Church year with the Feast of Christ the King. The year that begins with the hope of the coming Messiah ends with the proclamation of his universal sovereignty. The ascension of Christ has revealed him to be Lord of earth and heaven, and final judgement is one of his proper kingly purposes. The Feast of Christ the King returns us to the Advent theme of judgement, with which the cycle once more begins.

Life is full of new beginnings, new life in all its forms, new start as we move house or find new employment. New beginnings as we retire, new beginnings as we begin life anew when we lose a loved one. It is all part of God's plan for us.

Life's journey could be seen as a series of new beginnings as we pass over the hills and through the valleys of life taking on the joys and frustrations of life from one season to another knowing that there is hope in our hearts that Christ is walking with us.

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope". Jeremiah 29:11

There are many new beginnings in the bible, just recently we have been looking at Ruth and Jonah, Ruth's new beginning in a new land with her mother in law Naomi, the hardships they went through. Jonah not wanting to go to Nineveh to "announce God's judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are" (Jon 1:2) but when Jonah did go the people of Nineveh believed the message and they had a new beginning.

When you have time look up new beginnings. Here are some to start you off

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen 1:1)

"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. (Isa 65:17)

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. (2Peter3:13)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. (Rev 21:1).

What new beginnings should be for us in this coming new season?

Blessings to you all this Advent

Turn to the back page to see the artists' descriptions of the photos.....

PCC Jottings



PCC Jottings 18th. November 2020 -Zoom

The PCC opened in prayer led by our new Church Warden, Barbara Peter.

Pauline Sanderson had expressed her willingness and was co-opted onto the PCC.

The Community have been contributing well to the Porch Pantry and donations for the purchase of food have been coming to Roland Gardener, our Treasurer, in small and larger amounts.

Roland reports that due to the steady increase of giving through the Parish Giving Scheme, and the Chatters' Estate Legacy, the Church is financially sound. We still need someone to support Roland in the work of Treasurer.... Keep looking!

The installation of the audio equipment is now in place, leaving a smaller amount towards work needed for the organ and the visual aids equipment. It was decided that part of the money from the Chatters' Estate legacy would assist with this.

Another part of this legacy would be used towards work needing to be done on the Tower and the PCC agreed to move forward with the first stages of this.

We are all very aware of health and safety during this Pandemic and Cathy Roberts has updated the health and safety guidelines to include the many changes made to what we are allowed to do or not do!

Christopher Parkinson submitted a detailed report from the Witham Deanery Synod meetings. Most alarming was a report from the Chelmsford Diocesan Synod on the parlous state of their finances.

Moves towards finding a new incumbent have, very sadly, stalled for now. A Zoom meeting last week resulted in the Bishop and Archdeacon, in agreement with all the Benefice's Parish Representatives, deciding to place a new national advert in the Church Times and seek to promote the post more widely in other ways, in order to broaden the search for suitable candidates.

The Joy of Christmas – A lot of thought and preparation has been going into the plans for celebrating Christmas. There will be a large children and families' Zoom extravaganza on **Christmas Eve at 5.00pm**, transmitted from the church, with interactive participation for children, and a mix of old and newer music. Key Stages 1 & 2 in Mersea Island School will be presented with a book on the Christmas Story from 'Open the Book'. The school and whole community will be invited to apply to Alan Brook for an email link so they can join in the service from their homes. **For Zoom invitations please email admin@freshsalt.uk**

23:30 - Zoom Traditional Service of Midnight Mass. Filmed and transmitted from within the church - led by Terry Walker. No congregation. **For Zoom invitations please email admin@freshsalt.uk**

Christmas Day - 10:00 - Traditional Service of Holy Communion, held inside the church (if Government & Diocesan Regulations permit).

Led by John Pantry.

Numbers strictly limited to maximum socially distanced permissible in our church. **Apply for 'virtual tickets' by email, to admin@freshsalt.uk to ensure numbers can be managed and to avoid disappointment**

We are grateful to the Clergy Team, to Ian Jewitt and to Peter Easy and the Technical team for all their work in this amazing season.

Very sadly the PCC received a letter of resignation from Ian Jewitt to take effect from the New Year. We are all so very grateful for all Ian has contributed to our church and community life over the past years and he will be sorely missed .

Ian, be sure to know you will always be welcome back!



Felixstowe Seafarers' Centre



Just before the latest November "Lockdown", the Talbots drove over to Felixstowe to deliver 100 woolly hats and a dozen jigsaws.

Anita Mazur (Centre Manager) was very pleased to see us.

This Christmas-time they expect to distribute at least 500 Christmas boxes to the crews of those ships that will berth in Felixstowe docks; each box will contain a Christmas message, a selection of various personal items and a woolly hat. They have been doing this each year for many years - and this year is no different. The Centre had had to close for a short time in May/June but from July the Centre reopened and the 'Ship Visitors' now regularly make contact with ships as they berth in the port.

John Talbot
Mission Rep. Mersea Parish

Community Plant Share – A Community and Church Together Initiative



You may have already seen this plant share stand outside the church, between the noticeboards. Designed to continue the ethos of sharing in the Community, we hope that people will put any spare plants, seedlings and cuttings into the stand for people to take; and that any member of the community who would like a plant or two to fill a space in their own garden, will then help themselves. We would like to help enable everyone to enjoy the rewards of growing and gardening, especially at this time.

Please label plants and plant up in small pots if possible, so they fit in the racks. If you have a larger plant that won't fit in the rack please place it carefully by the stand so it can be reached safely from the road.

Thank you for your support. Cathy Roberts

Peter Banks was able to screen shot this wonderful picture of Alfie jumping up on to Ian's lap during a recent Zoom service



Mary Gasson has been knitting

Last Christmas I was set a challenge by Martyn's cousin, my knitting pal to knit an Advent calendar and 24 Christmas decorations to pop into the pockets.

I started this project in January and have had a couple of interruptions with eye operations hence to date it's still a work in progress with relation to assembly, However

It will be ready in time for our grandchildren Freddie and Ruby (Lauren and Alfie's children) to enjoy. Distanced delivery !!

Mary Gasson



A Contribution by Pauline Sanderson

About 5 years ago I joined the Colchester U3A and in the October Scott and I went to a Study Day at which I attended a Creative Writing Workshop.

I then met with this group monthly and we have continued to do so (apart from the months before Scott died) and I have to say it has been such a blessing. There are 10 of us in the group, which has continued courtesy of Zoom during the last 8 months and each month our leader gives us a topic to write about.

The topics we are set by the leader are diverse and sometimes challenging. To date we have had 2 Anthologies Published which are available on Amazon. We can be serious at times, but we have a lot of fun and I look forward to meeting each month. It will be wonderful when we are allowed once again to meet in person.

The U3A has a Branch in Colchester and in Stanway and both hold monthly meetings (in normal circumstances) at which we have a Speaker and again the topics are varied : _ from " The History of Seaside Postcards" to " Internet Safety" I would thoroughly recommend membership of the U3A to anyone who would like to meet new people or develop or learn a new interest. The Membership at the moment is a mere £12 per annum. So, come on and make 2021 a year for a New Beginning and Interest. All the leaders of the groups are volunteers and subjects of groups vary from Learning the Ukele to Aviation Enthusiasts; Walkers Groups and Theatre Goers; Language and Literature.

Pauline Sanderson

SNOW

Softly and silently they fall at first.
Each tiny flake beautiful, unique and separate,
Floating through the air
Like weightless feathers
Being borne along by an invisible breath.
As they fall, some fleetingly caress the barren branches of trees,
Tall and stately,
Which seem to stretch out their boughs to welcome and embrace this marvel
With the gentle touch
That vanishes as soon as it appears.

Then the light begins to fade
And the sky is tinged with purple streaks
Peeking out from behind black clouds that
Grow darker and heavier.
Until it seems they can hold their load no longer.
So suddenly the air is filled with myriad flakes
Growing thicker and heavier, falling faster
As the wind gathers speed and strength,
Taking hold of them and sending them into frenetic circles
As they hurtle to the earth.

Many will stop on the way and make their resting place on the outstretched boughs,
Earlier shunned by the ushers of the storm,
Clothing them in a pure white cloak.
As others reach the solid ground
It is as if they no longer wish to disappear
Or continue their solitary existence.
Rather they converge into each other,
Huddling together, forming a blanket of white
To cover the desolate earth.

And so it continues hour after hour
Through the dark night
Until the dawn
When the wind and the storm run out of breath.
And the air is crisp and fresh.
Calm replaces chaos
Tranquillity is restored
Turmoil is expelled.
The earth is transformed, covered with a new carpet
That is soft, clean, unsullied and beautiful.
And it seems that the world is renewed.

Pauline Sanderson. 6th October 2020.

Antigua – Alan Brook

Sometimes fate just strikes one lucky – and, quite unwittingly, so it turned out to be for me and Sue last month. Well over a year ago we had met some friends for a Trafalgar Night supper in Great Bentley. We promised then we would meet them again in October 2020, on the lovely island of Antigua, West Indies, where they live.

So as not to waver in our determination and later find any old excuse not to go, we bought our BA tickets the next day. We resolved to have an Autumnal holiday break, completely out of season, hoping against hope there would not be a hurricane to complete our experiences of tropical life!

Little did we know then our timings were to be in between lockdowns. Antigua was fortunately on the list of 'Air Corridors' to the UK. Also, in what has proven to be a record year for North Atlantic hurricanes, with recent Storms Eta & Iota breaking all previous records, the weather there was just perfect, luckily!

Checking into an empty Gatwick Departure lounge, followed by immigration into Antigua, was much simpler than previous experiences; just arrive with a "negative" Covid Test certificate and fill in one simple form! Then a swift thermometer check to the forehead; no long queues in the Arrivals Hall of the newly opened, Chinese-built, airport terminal building, then we were out to try to acclimatise to the oppressive heat. With pre-booked transport now *de rigueur* in these Covid days, it was good to recognise JB Taxi awaiting us.

The island was not wearing its usual dusty, dry and barren look. It was green and lush, with vegetation crowding out the roadside verges and overhanging everywhere. Rain had been the only gift from passing hurricanes this time.



Butterflies and birds were in great profusion too, as so much island tourist traffic and activity has been greatly reduced, as in the UK. Much more visible in the treetops, not so shy and retiring, were the White-Crowned Pigeons (locally called "Bald Pates"!). A local Jamaican car repairer told us they fetched a high price and were no longer found on his home island, as they taste so good!

Antillean Crested Hummingbirds buzzed around the West Indian Jasmine bushes (also known as "Flame of the Woods"). They keep the garden flowers well-pollinated. The mongoose family that had been seen around in previous years appeared to have moved out, but many others were seen on the roads. These attractive little creatures, introduced by sailors to rid the island of snakes, which they have done 100% successfully, are found all over Antigua and must now, one supposes, live off lizards and other small invertebrates.

Our friend, Mike invited us to a late lunch at his house in the forest (so late we ended up having to do a 'Dawn French Christmas' and eat two big meals in too short a time!). Some 40+ years ago I helped Mike stow his entire worldly possessions onto his retirement yacht as he set sail from Ipswich into the wide blue yonder. Now, yacht sold, he still lives here.

One of his local Frangipani shrubs was completely overrun by giant, black and yellow striped caterpillars. The bush by the gateway was already completely stripped bare and they were now well on their way through a second.

These huge creatures sport orange ends to head and tail, designed to confuse their predators as to which end is which. The clue is in the name – the 'horn' is on the tail. Investigation proved these to be the offspring of a "Tetrio Sphinx" Hawk moth, otherwise known as the Frangipani Hornworm, or, most appropriately, the 'Rasta Caterpillar'!

Either way, Mike's super rescue dog, Pickle (named after the famous HMS ship that brought back news of Nelson's famous victory and death), was less than impressed when they started up the steps onto the verandah towards him.





The views out over Freeman's Bay and the entrance past Fort Berkley into the Caribbean Sea towards Montserrat are always stunning, but the arrival of a lone yacht at anchor was a lovely surprise. This particularly as it was "Kudu". This first in series of the Oyster 56 was a yacht Alan had been hugely involved in, both designing and project managing the build for its original owners, over 21 years earlier. Here she was, looking as lovely as always, in her element.

Having attended the funeral of the first owner, just over a year ago, it was very poignant to meet her new owners and later, at their invitation, enjoy a wonderful day's sailing round the island. We swam, enjoyed a traditional Antiguan sailor's lunch of a cold Carib beer and one of Roti Sue's culinary creations, and saw dozens of Green and Hawksbill turtles en route, to boot.

Church on Sunday in Antigua for us has usually been early morning (07:15) attendance for Holy Communion at St. Paul's Anglican Church, in Falmouth.



There they have instigated the same kind of Covid prevention measures as you will find here in our own church. With handwashing and sanitisation station at the main entrance, an excellent screen in front of the lectern and mask wearing by all attendees. The only real differences are the huge fans blasting cool air and hymns continuing to be sung, against all their own regs, from behind the masks. They just cannot bring themselves not to sing to the Lord!

There we were delighted to meet up again with Hildreen Thomas and her two daughters, Simone & Arlene. Recovery from breast cancer has taken away much of her energy recently, but Hildreen was for many years a member of the choir there and her husband, Winston, was the church elder.



Now Winston is sadly confined to his bedroom and a small verandah at his home. He had to use a walking frame to get out to see us, since the surgery to repair his collapsed C4 & 5 vertebrae. This was paid for by a generous Oyster owner, who flew a surgeon and his team to the island specifically, once he heard Winston was too unwell to make the flight over to the hospital.

For well over 20 years Winston had always been the go-to taxi driver of choice for all Oyster personnel visiting Antigua. He is a good friend and it was hard to see him so restricted in his life, never now going to be able to fulfil his lifelong dream of getting a small fishing boat for his retirement pleasure.

An acute reminder of the very real economic effects of a national shutdown, it was difficult to discover the whole family was now living off the one income from Simone's work as a local schoolteacher. No state aid here!

As luck would have it - a wonderful break and a rare opportunity to see nature coming back to an island where it often has to take a distant, second place.

An article from Rev Martin Clarke



If you had been in church this Sunday you would have heard the words from the collect: “Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded...” at which point one year, my wife Angela suddenly panicked, remembering that it was Stir up Sunday and she had not “stirred up the Christmas pud,” so that was the first thing on the agenda when she went home!

Lunch was much later that day! The ease with which Christmas puds can be bought in supermarkets today means that for many “Stir up Sunday” has no significance. But for those of us who are steadfast traditionalists, there is a wealth of meaning in the ingredients of the pud as we stir it up and make a wish. First of all, we must remember on this Stir up Sunday, that Jesus himself stirred up people, clashing with the authorities, but also stirring people’s wills to follow him. This Stir up Sunday is also a reminder that we have come to the end of the Christian year; next Sunday, Advent Sunday marks a new beginning, and that is what Jesus came to bring about. Advent is a strange season, one meant to be for reflection and penitence; yet also one of joyful anticipation and new beginnings.

The ingredients of our Christmas pud also should remind us about new beginnings; one of the ingredients is diced apple and we think of the Garden of Eden in the beginning of the bible and how the apple began mankind’s downfall. The apple is also the beginning of mankind’s redemption, as featured in that beautifully moving Christmas carol - Jesus Christ, the Apple Tree. Breadcrumbs and flour remind us that Jesus thought of himself as the bread of life (St. John’s gospel) and in our eucharists we are given the body of Christ, keeping us in life eternal. Christmas pudding recipes also include a dash of alcohol and as we splash some brandy into our mixture, we are reminded of Christ’s first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee, where to save face for the just married couple, he turned a huge amount of water into the best wine the guests had ever tasted, a foretaste of the heavenly banquet promised us in the kingdom of heaven.

As we add our ingredients to the mix, we are further reminded that Christ is the bridegroom and we, the Church, the bride. Now it’s time to add the mixed fruit. And that reminds us of the words from the Collect - plenteously bringing forth the fruits of good works... Spices are added, an exotic ingredient, reminding us that Christ was anointed with costly spices by Mary Magdalene before his death, offered wine mixed with spices as he hung on the cross, and then the women came to the tomb to anoint his body with costly spices. The mixture is bound together by eggs and we are reminded by this that as we look forward to Christmas, this is just the beginning of something amazing that will lead on to the miracle of Easter, celebrated by the giving of eggs.

Finally, we give the pud a stir, from East to West, right to left, reminding us that the Wise Men came from the East, to bow in humility before the Child King. Yes, Mary and Joseph did have visitors - the shepherds and the Magi, but they were not immediate family. Due to circumstances, they were far away, and the birth was at the end of a long and difficult journey. In these Covid times, thinking of the events that led up to that royal birth, for some of us, the present situation may keep family far away from us as it did for the Holy Family.

Yet in that they were blessed by God’s holy grace, which gave us in our day the peace, joy and happiness of Christmas. Whatever your circumstances, may this be yours too.

Artists' descriptions from page 1....

I hope the pictures were thought provoking, I found these images from an online art exhibition entitled New Beginnings: <https://manhattanarts.com/new-beginnings-by-artist-members/>



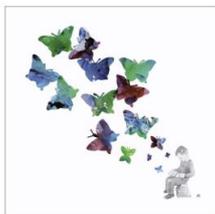
New Beginning, acrylic on canvas, 20" x 25".

"A while ago I went through a personal loss and I painted this picture with this message: On the positive and spiritual side life is death and death is a new life and spiritual rebirth. I depicted a form of a pregnant lady as a symbol of new beginnings."



Winter West Wind Mindfulness, acrylic paint on canvas, 11" x 14"

"When the overnight storm passes and the drama of daybreak displays the glory of a new day, I remember that all things are new every day. I breathe in life and grateful to continue my artistic journey."



Butterfly Dream, ink, graphite, re-purposed plastic; 12" x 12".

"Keeping up to date with the latest research and articles on our environment along with promoting environmental education is something that is important to me. "Butterfly Dream" depicts a young boy reading about nature. Learning brings awareness and a feeling of responsibility. This in turn can lead to positive behaviours. I hope that this artwork inspires thinking and new behaviours."

Notices

West Mersea

The Sunday Morning 10am Zoom Services of United Worship & Spiritual Communion will continue for the foreseeable future.

Sundays 8am Book of Common Prayer communion service. Only wafers will be offered to communicants, not wine

Wednesday 10am Holy Communion or Prayer service. The church is open for private prayer 09:30 until 12:00 Midday

East Mersea

We are opening on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday from 10am to 4pm.

Sunday Morning: 09:30 service only at present.

Great Wigborough

St. Stephen's will remain closed due to ongoing refurbishments and concerns regarding safety for private prayer.

Service times listed above are provided Government regulations allow (correct at time of going to print)

If you have any news and/or photos for our January Newsletter, please send them to Val Bocking on bocking@keme.co.uk or phone 01206 386750

Stay Safe, Keep Praying and thank God for all the positives
Val Bocking - Editor