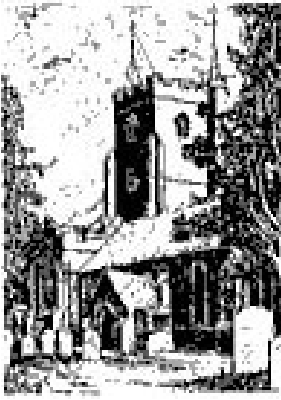


RENDEZVOUS



The Magazine of the Folkestone Town Benefice of
St Mary and St Eanswythe
with
St Saviour

Volume 52 No, 9 **September 2025** *£1.20*



Who's Who in the Parish

Clergy

Priest-in-Charge Rev Christopher Johnson

07931 804952

vicar.mefolkestone@gmail.com

St Mary & St Eanswythe's

Parish Administrator	Santa Vessey	Office Hours Monday - Friday 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.	01303 252947
		email: sainteanswythe@gmail.com	
Churchwardens	Tom Bertram,	07748 434341	01303 890986
	Andrew Plested, 201 Canterbury Road	07860 175123	01303 241124
PCC Hon. Secretary	Santa Vessey		01303 252947
	email: sainteanswythe@gmail.com		
Hon. Treasurer	} Jenny Coleman,		
Gift Aid	}		
Planned Giving	Pam Keeling		
PCC Members	Jan Clarke	Jenny Coleman	
	Marilyn Edey	Vicky Friedrich (Synod Rep)	
	Elaine Furminger	Catriona Hunter	
	Carol McBeath	Patricia Skelsted	
If you would like to get in touch with any member of the PCC please contact the Parish Office (01303 252947)			
Electoral Roll	Santa Vessey		01303 252947
Organist and Choir Director	<i>vacant</i>		
Children's Church	Clare Tomlinson		07751 423796
Safeguarding Lead	Tom Bertram	07748 434341	01303 890986
Safeguarding Officer	Caroline Hayward	cazrolinehayward@gmail.com	07876 358918
Church Day Schools	St Mary's, Warren Road	Head Teacher - Amanda Wolfram	251390
	St Eanswythe's, Church Street	Head Teacher - Claire Jacobs	255516
Church Flowers	Jan Clarke and Jenny Coleman		
Church Welcomers	Pam Keeling	tpdkeel@aol.com	
Bell Ringers	Mike Godfrey, 6 Cauldham Lane, Capel-le-Ferne		01303 242159
Rendezvous Advertising	Paul Furminger, 37 Dymchurch Road, Hythe		01303 265547
	(e-mail: epmfurminger@btinternet.com)		
Rendezvous Assembler	Andrew Plested (e-mail: andrew_plested@yahoo.co.uk)		01303 241124
Rendezvous Distribution	Catriona Hunter (e-mail: trina@monrepos.org)		01303 248006

St Augustine's Centre

Bookings:	Santa Vessey	01303 252947
	email: sainteanswythe@gmail.com	

Front Cover: St Eanswythe window in the St Eanswythe Chapel

Deadline for the next Rendezvous Edition: 20th of the month, but December 10th for the January edition. Please submit articles in 16 point text - this shows you how much fits on a page once it is reduced for printing.

Please contact Andrew Plested as above

CALENDAR

Services and Events in September 2025

Thu	4	10.30	Holy Communion BCP
Sun	7	Twelfth Sunday of Trinity	
		10.30	SUNG EUCHARIST
		19.00	Genzennial Faith @ The Pullman
Mon	8	08:30	St Eanswythe's School Stay & Play
Tue	9	18.00	Friends of St Eanswythe AGM and talk (<i>see page 11</i>)
Thu	11	10.30	Holy Communion BCP
Sat	13	10.30 - 15.00	St Eanswythe Fair
Sun	14	Thirteenth Sunday of Trinity	
		10.30	SUNG EUCHARIST with CHILDREN'S CHURCH
		16.00	Choral Evensong followed by drinks and nibbles
Thu	18	10.30	Holy Communion BCP
Sat	20	11:00	Ukrainian Hospitality
Sun	21	Fourteenth Sunday of Trinity	
		10.30	SUNG EUCHARIST
Thu	25	10.30	Holy Communion BCP
Sun	28	Fifteenth Sunday of Trinity	
		10.30	SUNG EUCHARIST



October

Thu	2	10:30	Holy Communion BCP
		14:00	St Eanswythe's School Harvest Service
Sun	5	Sixteenth Sunday of Trinity	
		10:30	SUNG EUCHARIST
Thu	9	10:30	Holy Communion BCP
Sun	12	Seventeenth Sunday of Trinity	
		10:30	SUNG EUCHARIST with CHILDREN'S CHURCH
Thu	16	10:30	Holy Communion BCP
Sat	18	12:30	Eucharist
Sun	19	Eighteenth Sunday of Trinity	
		10:30	SUNG EUCHARIST
Thu	23	10:30	Holy Communion BCP



Mailing List

We now have a regular weekly e-mailing list which is free to join. You can scan the QR code to sign up, or you'll also find a link on the homepage of our website: stmaryandsteanswythe.org

Don't forget the Donation Station!

There are so many ways that you can make donations or pay for our range of merchandise.

Cash and cheques can be placed in the box by the main door, and credit card payments can be made in several ways:

- by scanning the QR code on the weekly pew sheet or the back of Rendezvous;
- by clicking the Donate Button on our website; or
- by using the Donation Station adjacent to the sales table.

The Donation Station is a very easy way to donate or pay by credit card. It has a touch screen, works just like the card machines in shops and takes contactless and chip-and-pin payments. You can even add Gift Aid to your donation. If you need a hand with it the first time, just ask for help.

Why not subscribe to Rendezvous in 2025?

Save Money. **£12** for an annual subscription starting in January. Have it delivered or collect from church. Ways to pay - use the QR code on the back cover, the Donation Station in church, the Donate Button on our website, cash, or cheque inside a named envelope in the donation box. Or contact Catriona Hunter - details inside front cover.

Parking in the School Playground

We are grateful to the Headteacher of St Eanswythe's School for allowing us to use the school playground as a car park on Sundays and on other occasions.



The church is open for private prayer. The schedule is:

- 11.00-13.00
Wednesday, Thursday,
Friday, Saturday

Church Hire

For information about hiring the church, with or without use of the grand piano please contact the Parish Office

sainteanswythe@gmail.com

01303 252947

The **Woodward Hall** is available for hire for Wedding Receptions, Family Parties, Club Meetings etc. Details from Tracy Arnold at St Eanswythe's School on 01303 255516 during school hours



Priest's Letter From Father Chris



September brings us many celebrations at St Mary and St Eanswythe's! On Sunday 7th September, we'll mark the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord, and then on Sunday 14th September we'll celebrate St Eanswythe, Patron Saint of Folkestone and of our parish church.

8th September is traditionally celebrated as the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary and 12th September as the Feast of St Eanswythe (the date when tradition has it her relics were first translated to the parish church). So, with our double-patronage we get lots to celebrate in a very short space of time. As you'll see, we're marking this particularly with the Eanswythe Fair and also with special services on the 7th and 14th as the Sundays nearest their respective feast days.

But, in amongst all of the celebrations, we have a moment to give thanks for two important and special women within the life of the faith and here in Folkestone. Mary, Our Lady, is someone whose faith and dedication to God brought about the birth of Jesus, God in human flesh, and set us an example of trust and dedication, amongst so many other things. Her example is known and valued the world over.

Eanswythe has less of a global reach (though with surprisingly dedicated pockets of devotion even as far away as America and Australia!) but still offers us an example to emulate with her care for the poor in her own time. Moreover, her decision to devote her short life to prayer and God's service, rather than making the royal marriage that would usually have been her lot, gives us pause for thought and thanksgiving for what she gave to our town and its people. We can also ponder what she offers to our town today as we continue to celebrate her – especially following all the excitement and intrigue of last year's Translation and the things that we've learned about her relics in the last five years.

Whatever these two great saints mean to you, may their example inspire you and give some pause for thought!

With best wishes,

**For those who missed the Translation Service
or would like to see it again**

View the recorded service using the link
<https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjBS9ny>

Festival of

St Eanswythe

† **Dog show** † **Raffle** † **Fantastic prizes!** †

Plant stall † **Live music** † **Refreshments** † **Bric a brac**

Second-hand book and games † **Face painting** †



September
13th
2025

10:30am
-
3:30pm

St Mary & St Eanswythe Church
Church Street, Folkestone, CT20 1SE
What3Words:
keen.helpfully.iron

This summer at St Mary & St Eanswythe's Church!



Follow the trail, complete the trail and receive a special stamp!

Visit Wednesday - Saturday 11am - 1pm
or join us on a **Sunday** at 10.30am
and follow the trail after the service!



It's All About **BEING READY!**



How do YOU get ready for

- 🕯 going on holiday?
- 🕯 welcoming your friends to play or to stay?
- 🕯 attending church?
- 🕯 preparing a meal for a best friend?
- 🕯 **someone who might arrive at ANY TIME – day or night?**

We had all sorts of great ideas for being ready for all sorts of expected and UNEXPECTED situations. We were puzzled as we discussed how to be ready for that unhelpful person who didn't let us know their ETA! We decided we'd have to stay up all night!

One part of the Gospel reading for the day was about servants who stayed up all night to welcome their master home from his wedding. We put ourselves in their situation and thought that making a lantern (with a candle) would be a good way to remember that Jesus wants us to be ready to meet him.



Clare Tomlinson

Next time – 14th September -
it's all about ST EANSWYTHE!
(and it's **PARTY TIME!**)



CHILDREN'S CHURCH! @



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

SUNDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER

IT'S ALL ABOUT
ST EANSWYTHE



SUNDAY 12TH OCTOBER

IT'S ALL ABOUT
REMEMBERING
TO SAY

**THANK
YOU!**

SUNDAY 9TH NOVEMBER

IT'S ALL ABOUT
BEING ALIVE!



SATURDAY 29TH NOVEMBER

10:00AM – 11:30AM

IT'S ALL ABOUT
MAKING BIRTHDAY CAKES
FOR JESUS!



CHILDREN'S CHURCH BEGINS IN CHURCH AT 10:30AM.

WE DO HOPE YOU CAN JOIN US FOR...

SINGING, MAKING THINGS, LEARNING ABOUT JESUS AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!

TO FIND OUT ABOUT IT, RING CLARE TOMLINSON 07751 423 796

(CHILDREN MUST BE BROUGHT BY AN ADULT, AND UNDER 5'S MUST BE SUPERVISED)

Company; drinks; chat
about life, God and faith.



GENZENNIAL



FAITH

A group for young(ish) adults who consider themselves Millennial or GenZ and are old enough to meet in a pub! Hosted by Fr Chris, vicar of St Mary and St Eanswythe's.

Venue: The Pullman on Church Street

(what3words: ///pilots.pockets.materials)

First drink is on the Vicar!

Any questions, Whatsapp Fr Chris - 07931 804952

Sunday 7th September @ 7pm

St Mary and St Eanswythe's Church, Folkestone

Featuring music by:

CV Stanford
SS Wesley
Benedict Preece
and some rousing hymns



Followed by:

drinks and nibbles



Sunday 14th September - 4pm

CHORAL EVENSONG

For the Feast of St Eanswythe

Singers welcome!

Please contact sainteanswythe@gmail.com for more info

Dates For Your Diary

Some forthcoming events in our church calendar. Please put these in your diary

Tuesday, 9 September	6 p.m.	Friends of St Mary and St Eanswythe AGM, followed by talk by Dr Andrew Richardson – Folkestone and District in the Kingdom of Kent
Friday, 12 September		St Eanswythe's day
Saturday, 13 September	All day	Ride and Stride
Saturday, 13 September	10.30 a.m. – 3 p.m.	St Eanswythe Festival Day – lots of fun events in church and outside
Sunday, 14 September	4 p.m.	St Eanswythe Festival – Choral Evensong followed by drinks
Sunday, 28 September	5.30 p.m.	Licensing of Lay Readers at Canterbury Cathedral
Saturday, 29 November		Winter Shelter Dedication Service
Sunday, 30 November	4 p.m.	From Darkness into Light: Advent Carol Service
Thursday, 11 December		Creative Quarter Carol Service
Sunday, 21 December	4 p.m.	Nine Lessons and Carols
Saturday, 3 January 2026		Hosting the Walk of Kings
Thursday, 14 May – Sunday, 17 May		Sacconi Quartet Chamber Music Festival

A prayer to ponder

God of eternity,
 whose glory is our destiny
 and whose peace is our lasting home,
 stir up our hearts in praise,
 that as we sing of your majesty we may know heaven's joy
 and as we attend to your silence we may know heaven's calm,
 through him in whose life God and humanity are one,
 even Jesus Christ our Lord.



*Rev M. J. Kramer
 Chaplain, Keble College, Oxford*

St Eanswythe Festival

Tuesday, 9 September, 6 p.m. – Friends of St Eanswythe's AGM.

After the official business **Dr Andrew Richardson** will be giving a **talk on *Folkestone and District in the Kingdom of Kent*** exploring what we know about this area from the late 5th to early 9th centuries AD, and the Anglo-Saxon period in general. It will look at key sites including Lyminge, Lympe, Saltwood, Stowting, and of course, Folkestone.

Saturday 13th September – Festival Day

- Lots of fun for kids, face-painting etc.
- Dog show
- Book Nook with some beautiful books – kids and adults
- Coffee and cake
- Pre-loved stall
- And more!
- Stall-holders welcome – £15 per table

Sunday 14th September, 4 p.m. – Choral Evensong

Followed by drinks and nibbles

Jenny Coleman

Marmite Update

Thank you all so very much for your generous gifts of Marmite for use in the Breakfast Club at Folkestone Rainbow Centre. It really is going down a treat. Since April you have donated 16.35 kilos of Marmite, which is just fantastic.



We've now got a good stock of Marmite in the store cupboard, so I'm going to suggest a temporary rest until the stock goes down a bit. I'll let you know when we need to start collecting again. That said, I won't turn down any Marmite that you give me!

As you know, we run a breakfast club at the Rainbow Centre every weekday. This is used by 30-40 rough sleepers and other vulnerable people who greatly appreciate the warm food and drink on offer. In addition to cereal they can choose toast with Marmite and/or baked beans, peanut butter, jam, or anything else we have to hand. We get through a lot of Marmite!

The breakfast club is volunteer lead, and we do have some vacancies. If you have a couple of hours free on weekday mornings (especially Thursdays and Fridays) take a look at <https://www.rainbow-centre.org/get-involved/how-to-volunteer/> or contact Andrew Bragg on 01303 850733 or volunteering@rainbow-centre.org

Catriona Hunter

September - Sunday and Red Letter Eucharist Gospels

Sunday 7 September – 12th after Trinity: Luke 14.25-33

None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up
all your possessions

Sunday 14 September – Patronal Festival

Special readings

Sunday 21 September – Matthew Apostle and Evangelist:

Matthew 9.9-13

*As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth;
and he said to him, 'Follow me'. And he got up and followed him.*

Sunday 28 September – 15th after Trinity: Luke 16.19-31

*Remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in
like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. (v.25)*

Red Letter Days

Monday 8 September – the Birth of the Blessed Virgin: Luke 5.1-11

*Mary said 'My soul magnifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour'*

Monday 29 September – Michael and All Angels: John 1. 47-51

*'Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending
and descending on the Son of Man'.*



*St Michael defeats Satan
Jacob Epstein, Coventry Cathedral*

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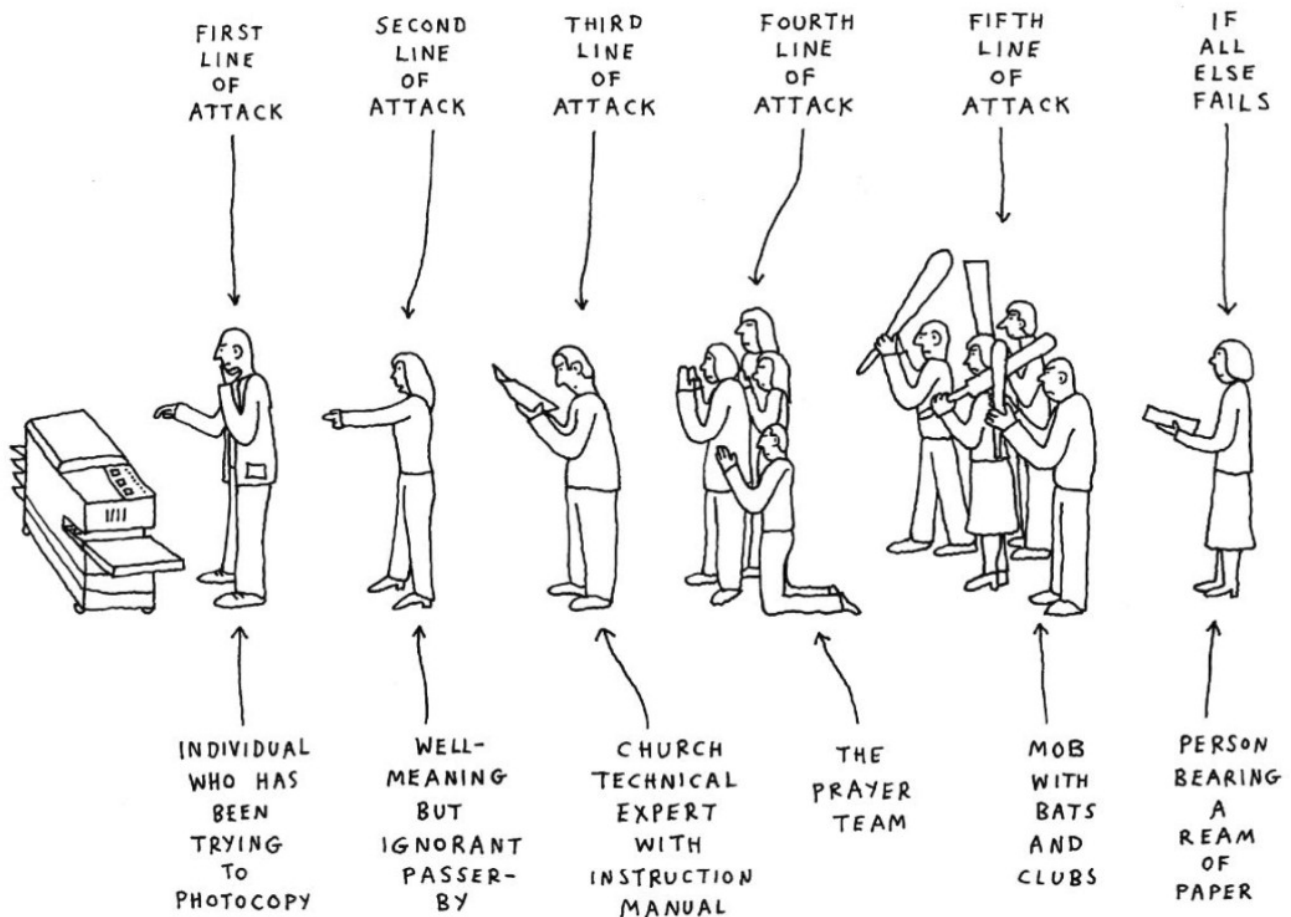
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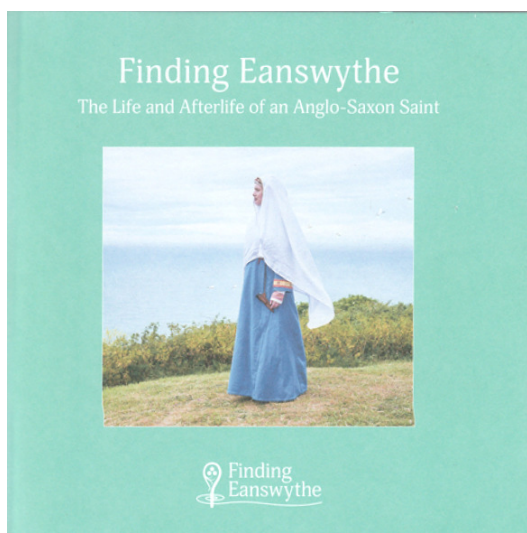
Free consultation
Call Warren on 07958 342 784
Email: imseastkent@gmail.com

THE PHOTOCOPIER



CartoonChurch.com

Finding Eanswythe



Whilst the Finding Eanswythe Project has come to a conclusion, the working group will continue with their research. This book covers the findings over the six-year programme with a series of essays covering such topics as The Legend of St Eanswythe, A Minster in the early Mediaeval Landscape, Minster to Priory, Folkestone and the English Reformation, St Eanswythe's Water, St Eanswythe's Chapel, Matthew Woodward and Eanswythe Found. All by various members of the Research Group.

This 54 page book is available from our sales table priced at **£5**.

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	3		9		5	2		
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				6	9	5		
								9

We all love our church and its beauty and we want it to look as wonderful as possible as we are expecting lots of visitors.

We are desperate for helpers with the cleaning - we have a very small and dedicated team but **WE NEED MORE PEOPLE!**

Please get in touch with Jenny Coleman

email sainteanswythe@gmail.com

What do you know about our church?

Last month you were asked to locate the first Bishop of Lichfield in our church and to find his name?

His image can be seen carved into our pulpit and his name is Chad.

This month involves the great Latin Hymn of Praise '*Te Deum*'. This was translated into English beginning 'We praise thee O God' and incorporated into Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer as part of the service of Matins. This month's question is where in our church can you see words from the *Te Deum* on display?

From the Parish Registers

Baptism *We welcome into the Lord's family*

August Keenan Lawrence Geoffrey Wilson-Perry
Hudson Jay Stephen McMorran
Carter James Cascarina Ward

Marriage *Those whom God has joined together*

August Sophie Lawrence and Marcus Donnelly



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2025 AUCTION DATES

14th & 15th
FEBRUARY

Entry deadline now closed

11th & 12th
APRIL

Entry deadline 7th March

6th & 7th
JUNE

Entry deadline 2nd May

1st & 2nd
AUGUST

Entry deadline 27th June

3rd & 4th
OCTOBER

Entry deadline 29th August

28th & 29th
NOVEMBER

Entry deadline 24th October

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Commemoration

Charles Fuge Lowder, Priest

9 September

Charles Lowder was born in 1820 and came under the influence of the Oxford Movement during his studies at Exeter College in the early 1840s. After ordination, he became increasingly drawn to a Tractarian and ritualist expression of the faith, especially after his move to London in 1851.

On 28 February 1855, Lowder and five other priests founded the Society of the Holy Cross. He became the first Master, and took up the most austere form of the society's rule of life committing himself to celibacy. The society grew quickly drawing other Anglo-Catholic priests from some of the poorest slum areas in London. Before long the society was at the forefront of the Catholic revival and was particularly influential in the second phase of Anglo-Catholicism following John Henry Newman's reception into the Roman Catholic Church.

As a curate in Pimlico and Stepney, and then as the first Vicar of St Peter's, London Docks, Lowder came to epitomise the nineteenth-century Anglo-Catholic 'slum priest'. Dedicated to the poor and destitute, he was tireless in his parish work. However, his health gave way and he died at the age of sixty on this day in 1880.

Collect

Eternal God
you called Fr Charles to proclaim your glory
in a life of prayer and pastoral zeal:
keep the leaders of your Church faithful
and bless your people through their ministry
that the Church may grow into the stature
of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God now and for ever.

Readings

OT-Isaiah 6.1-8: NT-1 Peter 5.1-4: Gospel-John 15.9-17



*Revd. Charles Fuge Lowder
1820-1880*



Bookworm: What Catriona Has Been Reading

Strangers on a train – Patricia Highsmith (1950)

Two complete strangers meet on a train. One hates his wife and the other his father. A plan is formed to murder for each other. Motiveless murders. The perfect crime. Or is it?

This is a very sinister book, full of tension and suspense. It's a story about greed and the insanity of guilt.

This was Patricia Highsmith's first novel and is perhaps her best (though I do love the Ripley series). Published in 1950, the following year it was made into a film of the same name by Alfred Hitchcock. We watched the film fairly recently, but the book is of course far better, and full of twists in the plot. An excellent read.

Our Holiday – Louise Candlish (2024)

On the face of it this is a book dealing with the tricky moral issue of rich second home owners (in this case from London) who help to support the local tourist economy, but at the same time leave their holiday homes empty for most of the year in a Dorset seaside town (though it could be anywhere) where there aren't enough affordable homes for the locals to live in. This in turn leads to tension, resentment, and criminal damage by groups protesting against the incomers.

However, there's more to it than that in this excellent story, because tragedy strikes following an act of violence. By the way, that's not really a spoiler, because we know from the very beginning that a building has fallen over the cliff and into the sea.

Ironically, one of the second home owners volunteers for a homeless charity in London. He is also breaching professional boundaries right left and centre. And there is all sorts of criminal activity going on in what initially appears to be the idyllic town of Pine Ridge.

Louise Candlish is an expert at depicting neighbourhood unrest in her suspenseful thrillers. And the cover of the book tells you that the trouble escalates to murder. This is an outstandingly good book that kept me away from all the useful things I should have been doing. I can't believe that I've allowed it to sit in my to be read pile for about a year. Believe me, once you start reading this you'll be hooked.

Small Bomb at Dimperley – Lissa Evans (2024)

The Second World War is over and shortly before Corporal Valentine Vere-Thissett is demobbed he learns that his heroic older brother has died in action and that he is now *Sir* Valentine.

His family home is Dimperley, which is crumbling away and of little architectural merit. But how to pay the death duties when even the National Trust doesn't want the house?

It's a lovely heartwarming story, with likeable characters and a bit of romance thrown in. An easy enough read that is most enjoyable. There's plenty of gentle humour too. And yes there really is a bomb, along with plenty of metaphorical ones. I've been looking forward to reading this for a while and I was not disappointed.

Catriona Hunter

Ride and Stride



Ride and Stride takes place this year on Saturday 13th September. The Pleased family (including Andrew testing the battery range of his scooter as well as keeping up with Frank on his bicycle! And Patricia who will be cycling on the roads) will once again be pounding the streets of Folkestone visiting the churches. If anyone else would like to take part either walking or cycling around the churches please contact Marilyn Edey for further details. Half the sponsorship raised will go to The Friends of Kent Churches and the rest to St Mary and St Eanswythe to help maintain our beautiful church.

As I may be difficult to find at times, what with Choir rehearsals and other matters, I would be grateful, if you are able to sponsor me, if you would speak to Marylin. Thanks, Andrew

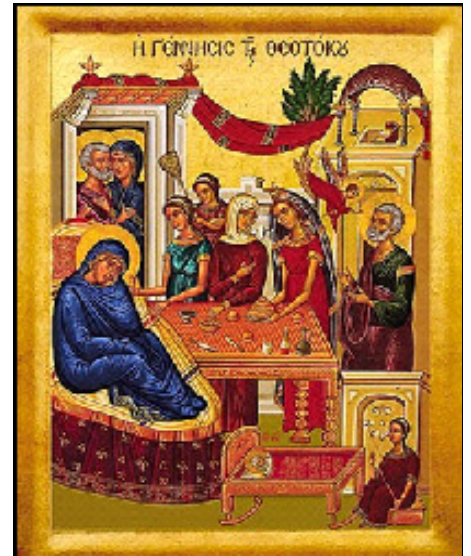


The finish last year - after Otis had woken up - He fell asleep on my lap in Castle Hill Avenue! I suspect the same will happen this year except Frank has moved up a size in bicycles.

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin – 8 September

Your Nativity, O Virgin,
Has proclaimed joy to the whole universe!
The Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God,
Has shone from You, O Theotokos!
By annulling the curse,
He bestowed a blessing.
By destroying death, He has granted us eternal Life.

By Your Nativity, O Most Pure Virgin,
Joachim and Anna are freed from barrenness;
Adam and Eve, from the corruption of death.
And we, your people, freed from the guilt of sin,
celebrate and sing to you:
The barren woman gives birth to the Theotokos,
the nourisher of our life!



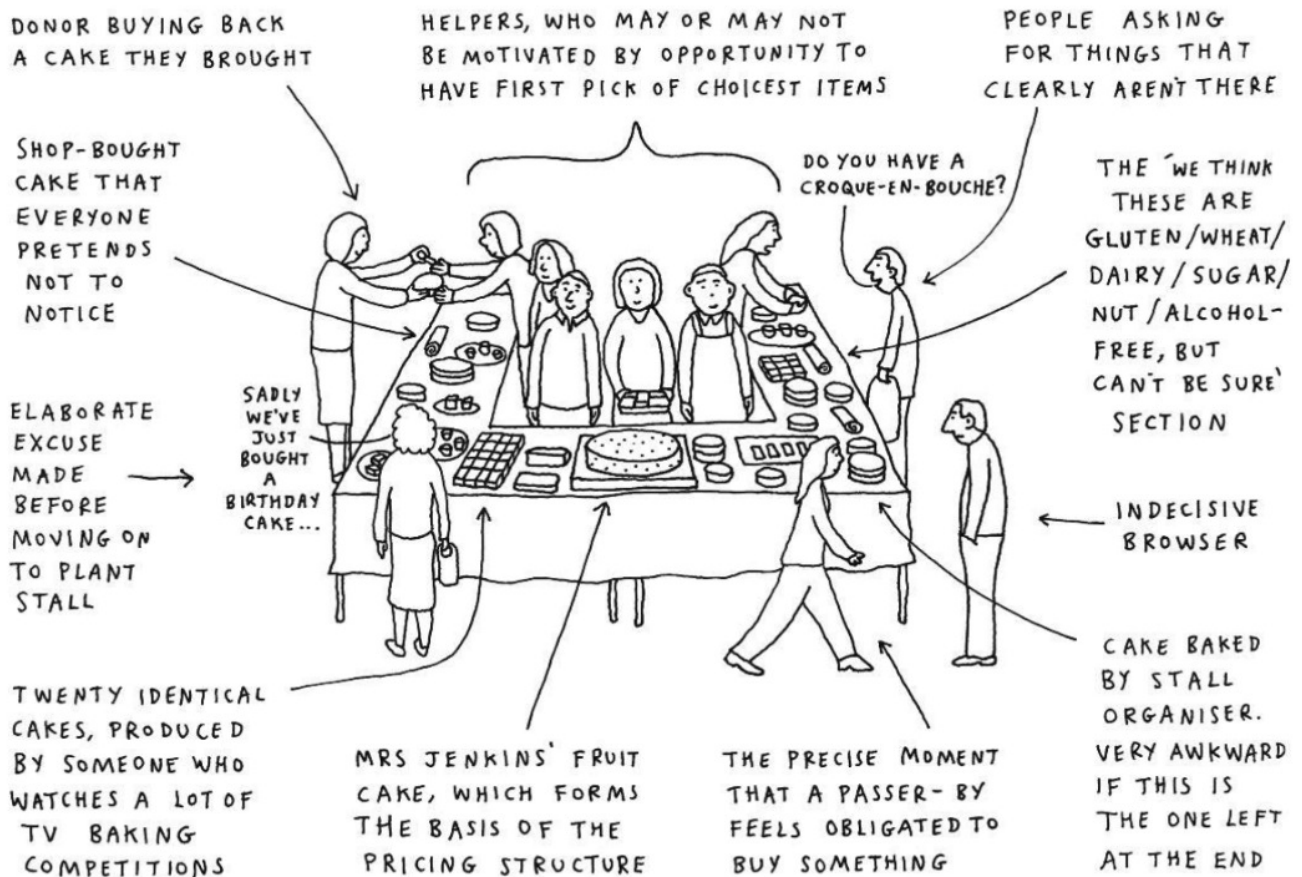
Hymns for the Feast in the Orthodox Church

Friday 12 September - Eanswythe, Abbess of Folkestone

Almighty God,
by whose grace Eanswythe,
kindled with the fire of your love,
became a burning and a shining light in the Church:
in flame us with the same spirit of discipline and love,
that we may ever walk before you as children of light;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



THE CAKE STALL



CartoonChurch.com

What would you like your legacy to be? Leaving money to the church in your will is a wonderful way to ensure that our church will be here for future generations. There are also some benefits for your inheritance tax bill, too. So, if you're thinking of adding a charitable bequest in your will, here's what you need to know.

Big or small, your donation could be of huge help in keeping our beautiful church cared for in the future.

As you may already know, like money you leave to your spouse, gifts to charities aren't taxed. And if you leave at least 10% of your estate to a charitable cause, your inheritance tax rate drops from 40% to 36%. This means that for every £100 you leave to charity; it only really costs your family £24.

Please give this some thought

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Samaritans

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The Salvation Army

Canterbury Road Folkestone CT19 5NL **Telephone:** 01303 251379

Website: www.salvationarmy.org.uk

email: folkestone@salvationarmy.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

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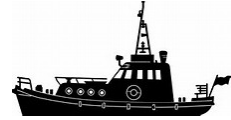
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MUSIC NOTES

The 2025-26 season of Bayle Music concerts gets off to a splendid start at 3 p.m. on Saturday 27 September at The Grand.



Our opening concert is intriguingly entitled 'From Vienna to the World' and consists of piano duets of music by Mozart, Schubert, Copland, Barber and Gershwin performed by Marianne Kelly and Heather Sargeson – four hands at one piano. Fresh from the Buxton Festival Marianne and Heather have enjoyed a distinguished career as duettists and are making their second appearance at a Bayle Music concert.

We have kept admission at £15 with children and full-time students admitted free.

We do encourage you to book in advance online as it saves time on the day. Please use the website at this address:

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/bayle-music>

You can of course pay on the day by cash or card – Wi-Fi permitting!

Doors open at 2.30 p.m..



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Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter

As I write this it is the height of summer, but all too soon the nights will start to draw in and the temperature will drop. The 2025-26 Winter Shelter, which is a collaborative project between Folkestone Rainbow Centre and local churches, will open its doors to selected rough sleepers on 1 December and run until 28 February to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the coldest months of the year. For some it will literally be a life saver.



Last year 15 guests (4 women and 11 men) were accommodated in the Winter Shelter, along with a dog and a cat. They stayed in a local B&B, in en-suite rooms, and every evening enjoyed home-cooked food, prepared by volunteers from local churches and other organisations. For breakfast the guests came to the Rainbow Centre breakfast club on weekdays, and at weekends were given a bag of supplies. By the end of the shelter period 13 of the guests were moved on into their own accommodation; the other two unfortunately did not engage with their support workers and returned to rough sleeping.

Thinking back to last year's Winter Shelter I particularly enjoyed interacting with the guests in a more informal setting. And I was enormously impressed by the high quality of the food prepared by our volunteers for the guests. Most of my evening duties were on Monday evenings which was also the night when the kind volunteers from St Mary and St Eanswythe's prepared the food for the evening meal, so it felt extra special.

The Winter Shelter guests all had hearty appetites, and who could blame them when they were presented with such delicious home made food? They welcomed second and even third portions when available. The meals that went down best when I was there were meaty hot pots, broccoli, and ice cream – with the all time favourite being sticky toffee pudding. This was greeted with great glee: "Is this what I think it is?" and then reduced the dining room to complete silence while they ate and enjoyed it. (I licked the spoon and can confirm that it was indeed yummy!)

The atmosphere in the dining room was a joy to behold. At first most of the guests sat at separate tables, and there was not a lot of conversation, but as they got to know each other they moved to sit together. There was a good vibe in the evenings, with lots of laughter, chat, and discussion of current events in the news.

Friendships formed among the guests, and there was genuine joy as they moved onto their accommodation. They also supported each other with great kindness – one guest drove another to his new accommodation 100 miles away because he would have struggled with too much luggage on public transport.

You can read some case studies of the guests in the Winter Shelter Report. Some quotations from the guests include:

- “10/10, friendly, warm, excellent food”.
- “It has meant I’ve been able to work”.
- “Roof over my head, warm, my own room – nice being able to shower and relax in bed”.
- “[The shelter] has given me a chance to re-centre and improve my mental health”.
- “Staff have been nice and welcoming”.
- “I’ve enjoyed getting to know the other Winter Shelter guests.”
- “Glad I could have my dog with me”.
- “I’ve felt safer not sleeping on the streets – food is good”.
- “Food has been good and my dietary requirements were met”.

I very much enjoyed working with different teams of volunteers each time. Some were experienced and had worked in Winter Shelters for many years, while others did it for the first time. But each evening we had a great team.

I was only peripherally involved in the move-on plans for the Winter Shelter guests but took the lead on the move-on for one guest who was successfully installed in an Emmaus community in Essex. There he will have a home for as long as he needs it, with the opportunity to live and work within a small community of previously homeless men and women.

Would you like to volunteer for the 2025-26 Winter Shelter?

Folkestone Rainbow Centre will be recruiting a small army of volunteers – if you think you might be interested in helping with welcoming the guests, chatting with them, cooking, serving food, clearing up, or driving, our Volunteer Coordinator, Andrew Bragg would like to hear from you – you can email volunteering@rainbow-centre.org or telephone 01303 850733.

There is more information about the Winter Shelter on our website <https://www.rainbow-centre.org/our-services/fcws/> and a copy of last year’s Winter Shelter Report can be found at <https://www.rainbow-centre.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Winter-Shelter-Report-2024-2025.pdf> It’s a very good read.

Catriona Hunter
Homeless Support Officer
Folkestone Rainbow Centre

A Meditation

"Brothers, sisters...

I speak to you, especially to those who no longer believe, no longer hope, no longer pray, because they think God has left.

To those who are fed up with scandals, with misused power, with the silence of a Church that sometimes seems more like a palace than a home.

I, too, was angry with God.

I, too, saw good people die, children suffer, grandparents cry without medicine.

And yes... there were days when I prayed and only felt an echo.

But then I discovered something:

God doesn't shout. God whispers.

And sometimes He whispers from the mud, from pain,

from a grandmother who feeds you without having anything.

I don't come to offer you perfect faith.

I come to tell you that faith is a walk with stones, puddles, and unexpected hugs.

I'm not asking you to believe in everything.

I'm asking you not to close the door.

Give a chance to the God who waits for you without judgment.

I'm just a priest who saw God in the smile of a woman who lost her son... and yet she cooked for others.

That changed me.

So if you're broken, if you don't believe, if you're tired of the lies...

come anyway.

With your anger, your doubt, your dirty backpack.

No one here will ask you for a VIP card.

Because this Church, as long as I breathe, will be a home for the homeless, and a rest for the weary.

God doesn't need soldiers.

He needs brothers and sisters.

And you, yes, you...

are one of them."

Fr. Robert Prevost – Pope Leo XIV

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