Sandon Voice

Quarterly from St Andrew's 75p for non residents

September 2025



Wardens Letter

We are now well into a second year of vacancy, a period of time when there is no priest appointed to the parish. This is a difficult situation. As church wardens we have been working to try to maintain a viable church with worship, prayer, teaching, fellowship and witnessing to the love of Christ. These are not things that need a priest to happen. But we do get asked on occasions if there is any progress. So, this is what has happened. Initially the Archdeacon of Chelmsford, Venerable Jonathan Croucher, asked the Parochial Church Councils of Sandon and Boreham to consider seeking a part time, half time, post that would be shared between Sandon and Boreham. Let's call this plan A. This was discussed carefully, and then the Archdeacon allowed the possibility of each parish seeking an unpaid priest who could use the Rectory/Vicarage in the 2 parishes. This was agreed by the Sandon PCC and pursued. But there have been no applicants for either parish. So, the current plan is to revisit plan A. And there we have it in a nutshell. To that end Revd Andy Griffiths is to discuss with the Parochial Church Councils of both Sandon and Boreham some of the detail of how this might be pursued.

On the face of it this makes it look as though this year has been a bit of a disaster. However, this could not be further from the truth. Despite the lack of priest St Andrew's church has continued functioning very well. Our Christmas morning Eucharist was led by the Bishop of Bradwell and our Easter Eucharist by Archdeacon Jonathan. Tea on the Green was a great event both this year and last. We are most grateful to the Salvation Army and this year Very Revd Dr Jessica Martin for supporting it. Both our Advent and Lent courses were well attended.

For a few years we have taken Holy Communion to Greenwood Court nursing Home as well as leading a Carol service there. This year we have been invited to do the same thing at the Chelmsford Care Centre. The staff and several residents and one relative, in particular, have welcomed this. Services there have sometimes had in excess of thirty people present.

Because we do not currently have a priest, we have been able to be much more adventurous in the content of Sunday morning services so why not get up a little early on Sunday morning and join us at 10:00 am. You will be made very welcome.

Clearly this is a testing time but a time when there can be growth. As things begin to germinate and grow in the spring, you realise how much has happened in the winter! No priest but a year in which we have developed and moved forward as a church.

Into the future we have plans to get back to praying for every road in the parish once a year so if you have things, you want prayed about, please let us know. We can always be contacted via the church website. Alternatively, some of us meet to pray at 8:30 am Sunday to Thursday each week. You would be welcome to join us, or just pop in for a chat and tell us any prayer requests you may have.

Richard and Andy



Our Church is open!

The church is open for quiet contemplation and prayer every day from about 8:30 am to 5:00 pm (exact times will vary).



A Scooter, My Steed

On the pavement it stands forlorn alone
Deserted, left by some unknown young boy
Have I nothing to do, my idle time?
Tentative I climb aboard - a single foot on
And await instructions on what to do
As I await some experience, frightening new.

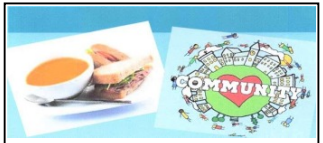
My steed with words, supplies me what to do
And in soft soothing voice calls me by my name;
Amazed, I place both feet safely on board
And hold on tight in such fearful delight;
A short ride in the clouds or so it says
Though destined for where I cannot confess.

Slowly at first on smooth tarmac we ride
To left and to right, poor shoppers abound,
An old man on scooter, an unusual sight
One holding on tight as quick pick up speed,
When then a quiet runway before my eye
And we lift up to the clouds, head to the sky

The wind on my face the speed of my steed
The blood in my veins throbs fast in the clouds
As we fly though the downy stratus high
The marvel of flight I hold on in awe
All earthly cares now gone, lost for the day
As I look down on earth, falling away.

The trip comes to end, the church clock, it chimes
On my silvered watch I look at the time
The hands had stood, remain, unmoved were they
But an hour had passed on my scooter display.
Had my epic journey been in my mind?
Had the trip that passed been head designed?
What then is dream and what is certitude,
As the scooter display showed altitude
Twenty thousand feet we had reached it showed
And all travel by air, none on the road.

Richard Simmonds 3rd July 2025



Soup & Sandwich Lunch at St Andrew's Church

1st Tuesday of the month
Meet again on 2nd September
then 7th October and
4th November

Join us for lunch for fellowship
(and food of course!!)
We would love to see you.
No cost but,
donations gratefully received
Time: 12:00 noon – 1:30 pm
Contact: Judy Cecil for more details on 01245 224747

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Stones

Fashioned, shaped in beauty stand
Gothic arch, stained glass surround
Bent to skilled hands, long since gone
Their message left without a sound
They laboured long and hard by day
No lights to guide their calloused hands
Certain of their hard won gifts
Laid out there in rock and sand.

We find it hard to understand
The hours of toil, this wonderland
How stones were moved to such dizzy heights
Candles now lit, in altars sight.

Shadows slowly meet the stone
Voices quieten, sound intoned
Tracery, where glass and stone do meet
The stone polished there at my feet
As failing light drops to the west
Stone secrets silent, a church at rest

30th May 2025
Richard Simmonds
Written in Chelmsford Cathedral

Thank you

Friends of Marsabit, Christian Aid and Tear Fund have sent thank you messages for the support that they have received from Sandon PCC.



The image has been used with permission from Jeremy at Colour Your Streets - https://colouryourstreets.co.uk

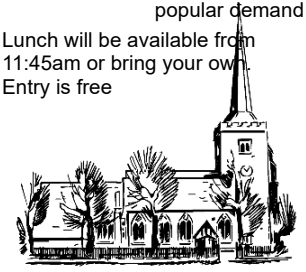
St John the Baptist Church, Danbury
2025 Monthly lunchtime concerts in the church
Fridays at 12.15pm

12th September
Primo and Secondo play piano duets

10th October
Jessica Edom-Carey (soprano) and Tim Carey (piano)

14th November
Entertaining folk duo Vicky Swan and Jonny Dyer are back by popular demand

Lunch will be available from 11:45am or bring your own.
Entry is free



WI Report

Our July meeting kicked off in style with four fans whirring away, providing a much-needed breeze on a scorching summer day. Although the heat kept some of our ladies at home, we were excited to bring our spring show into the summer, making it a delightful experience with fresh cream sponges and beautiful floral displays.

We had three fun categories for our participants: Cookery, Flower Arrangement, and Craft.

In the Cookery section, the challenge was to whip up a classic Victoria sponge using a WI recipe. The results were impressive with Julie Fisher taking home first place, Jenny Collins in second, and Pat Farrell claiming third.



In the Flower Arrangement category, contestants showcased their creativity using teacups or buttom holes as their bases. Celia Kerslake dazzled the judges to secure first place, followed by Beryle Mills in second and Pat Harper in third.



The Craft section generated the highest level of enthusiasm, inviting members to present a handmade item that had not been previously showcased at the WI. Val Pryke emerged victorious, with Anne O'Riordan in second and Fran Luke snagging third place. Each winner was honoured with a certificate and had the pleasure of posing for a photo



with our wonderful president, Kay Lodge.

After enjoying some delicious tea, we got our brains buzzing with a fun quiz, leading to an engaging and memorable meeting. While there won't be a gathering in August, we're excited about the free seaside coach trip that our committee has organized—what a perfect way to celebrate summer!

Thanks to the enthusiastic support from the members of Sandon WI, we hosted another delightful stall at St. Andrew's Church in our charming village of Sandon! The effort put in by our members was truly remarkable, with an array of homemade goodies on offer. From delectable cakes and jams to our famous orange marmalade, we had something for everyone. We even had homemade peanut butter, as well as a unique pear, fig, and ginger preserve. And let's not forget the dog biscuits!

Our stall overflowed with treats this year, featuring a scrumptious Denman tea loaf, rich chocolate sponge, moist banana cake, chewy cookies, and those beloved butterfly cakes, alongside some classic bread pudding. The children absolutely loved our sweet jars, which were a huge hit once again!



A great display at the Church Fete

Celia Jean, Karen with her grandchildren, Pat and Julie, came together as a fantastic team to showcase our treasures and raise funds for our WI. At the end of the day, we held a raffle, rewarding winners with prizes that could either be collected on the spot or arranged for later. Though the weather wasn't ideal with rain over that July weekend, we found a cozy spot inside the church among the pews, making the best of the situation.

Looking ahead, we are buzzing with excitement for our upcoming Christmas bazaar—a new venture for us! We can't wait to enjoy an afternoon filled with festive cheer in November.

Julie Fisher

A Quiet Day at Othona and St Cedd's chapel Bradwell

Have we found heaven on earth?
The warmth of sunshine, the gentle breeze
The butterflies, the rustling leaves,
Listen carefully - God is speaking here.

Have we found a new garden of Eden?
Trees in blossom, lavender and bees,
the Othona garden, so calm and free
Look carefully – God is working here.

Have we found love here in community?
Time for learning, to find our way,
Time to wander, time to pray
Enjoy the place – God waits for us here.

Have we found the peace we yearn for?
St Cedd's chapel, beautiful yet bare
Filled with prayers of those who have gone before
Just be, just sit, God is with us here.

On 28th June we enjoyed a quiet day at Othona, Bradwell. Carol Ball ably led three sessions to inspire and provoke thoughts about peace; we had time to read or go for a walk or just 'be' in the garden. We shared a delicious lunch of soup, bread and salad prepared by the Othona community. We ended the day in sharing communion in St Cedd's chapel followed by tea and a slice of cake.

Thank you to Carol for leading us and to all who came along.

Judy Cecil

Life without God is like an unsharpened pencil;
it has no point. – *Billy Graham*

Because of God's grace, failure is never final. - *Anon*

Don't give up on yourself. God doesn't.
Even Moses was once a basket case. – *Anon*

A Visit to the School of Medicine at ARU.

9th July 2025

There is a bunch of folk, who have been meeting up in the Chelmsford area in recent years. They have in common a connection with Cambridge University. As it happens it is approaching the end of its life. But it went out with a bang.

Some of you will know Nick Alston, formerly Police Fire and Crime Commissioner and indeed formerly High Sheriff of Essex. He is currently a governor of the Anglian Ruskin University, ARU, School of Medicine. I will confess that it had not really produced a flicker on my radar! But it has now. Nick organised for the Cambridge connected group, (called the Cambridge Society) to visit the ARU School of Medicine. It proved fascinating and revealed some innovative thinking in the field of training future doctors.

The hospitality we received was first rate (we did pay for it), but that is minor compared to the quality of the teaching we had described to us. Initially, after a welcome drink, we gathered for a video call with Professor Jackie Kelly, Pro Vice Chancellor and Dean of the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Social Care. Although her work brings her to Chelmsford, she was in Cambridge that day to award degrees there. She was able to explain the sense of freshness that the faculty has, in particular, because it is not constrained by tradition as can be the case elsewhere.

Present, and our guide for the rest of the morning, were Professor Sanjiv Ahluwalia, Dean of the Chelmsford School of Medicine, and Georgia Tarry.

We visited the anatomy centre equipped with models of every part of the human body, IT kit which could show pictures and videos of organs and their various parts: bones, muscles, tendons, nerves and how they all connect together. The students conduct dissection in the room during term time. Adam, the lead technician, also indicated that they are doing groundbreaking work in embalming. This allows the students when they do dissections, to get a better feel for the colours that living tissue has and also for its texture.

We saw simulated wards and GP surgery rooms where students can safely practise their skills. ARU recruit ‘patient partners’ – members of the public prepared to give some time to support students in their learning, maybe just conversing at the start of the course, moving on to role playing patients with particular diseases and problems and some are also used during assessments nearer the end of the course.

To finish we were shown an amazing electronic simulation area, still in its infancy, which will be able to let students experience situations in the virtual space as a training for real life work later.

The cost of medical training is huge – £60 to 100k debt for each student. ARU have pioneered an apprenticeship scheme for some students who cannot face taking on such a debt, but it has proved difficult to fund, so only works for small numbers. One aspect they explained was training medical students to have adequate qualifications to work as carers early in the course. This allows them to gain experience around patients as they work to top up their income. Otherwise they might find work like bar work which does not contribute so obviously to their medical experience.

So, a very interesting day seeing how doctors of the future are being trained in our local area. Many other health professional courses are also available at ARU. We saw some paramedic students involved in demonstrations of dealing with emergencies, with signs making sure the public knew they were seeing ‘fake blood,’ not the real thing!
GP receptionists have training as well as physiotherapists and physician associates who assist and work under supervision of doctors.

Richard and Judy Cecil

Was the children’s summer holiday too long for you?

As our children go back to school this month, what do parents really think about the past six weeks?

More than half of all parents found the summer break too long, and a ‘challenge’ to cope with.

So says the national charity, Parentkind. Its recent poll found that more than half of parents feel that the ideal length for the summer break would be four weeks. The remaining two weeks could then be redistributed across the rest of the year.

Parentkind then asked the teachers what they would most like. A majority would support a reduction of the summer holiday, but to five weeks, not four.

A full report will be published this month (September) under the charity’s National Parent Survey.

Church Services St. Andrew's, Sandon

Services currently planned online via Zoom are shown in italics.
Also, we hope to say Morning Prayer in church at 8:30 am each morning Sunday to Thursday ie 5 mornings per week.

September

Tuesday 2nd 9:30 am Said Communion Revd Keith Anderson

Wednesday 3rd 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 7th **Trinity 12**
10:00 am Sung Eucharist Revd Hugh Dibbens

Tuesday 9th 9:30 am Said Communion Revd Jacqui Pearson

Wednesday 10th 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 14th **Trinity 13**
10:00 am Worship Together

Tuesday 16th 9:30 am Morning Prayer/Said Communion

Wednesday 17th 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Saturday 20th 12:00 pm Wedding of Steph & Sam Revd Katy Gough

Sunday 21st **Trinity 14**
10:00 am Sung Eucharist
3:00 pm Worship at Howe Green URC

Tuesday 23rd 9:30 am Said Communion Revd Carol Ball

Wednesday 24th 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 28th **Trinity 15**
10:00 am Harvest Festival

Tuesday 30th 9:30 am Morning Prayer

October

Wednesday 1st 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 5th **Trinity 16**
10:00 am Sung Eucharist Revd Hugh Dibbens

Tuesday 7th 9:30 am Said Communion Revd Carol Ball

Wednesday 8th 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 12th **Trinity 17**
10:00 am Worship Together

Tuesday 14th 9:30 am Said Communion Revd Mark Pape

Wednesday 15th 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 19th **Trinity 18**
10:00 am Agape Meal
3:00 pm Worship at Howe Green URC

Tuesday 21st 9:30 am Said Communion Revd Carol Ball

Wednesday 22nd 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 26th **Bible Sunday**
10:00 am Morning Worship

Tuesday 28th 9:30 am Said Communion Revd Keith Anderson

Wednesday 29th 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

November

Sunday 2nd **All Saints' Sunday**
10:00 am Sung Eucharist Revd Hugh Dibbens
4:00 pm Time to Remember Revd Andy Griffiths

Tuesday 4th 9:30 am Said Communion Revd Carol Ball

Wednesday 5th 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 9th **Remembrance Day**
10:00 am Remembrance Day Service

Tuesday 11th 9:30 am Said Communion Revd Mark Pape

Wednesday 12th 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 16th **2nd before Advent**
10:00 am Agape Meal
3:00 pm Worship at Howe Green URC

Tuesday 18th 9:30 am Said Communion Revd Carol Ball

Wednesday 19th 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 23rd **Christ the King**
10:00 am Morning Worship

Tuesday 25th 9:30 am Morning Prayer/Said Communion

Wednesday 26th 8:30 pm *Night Prayer*

Sunday 30th **St Andrew's Day**
10:00 am Songs of Praise

Saint Andrew's Parish Church Contacts

Rector		Vacancy
Church Wardens	Richard Cecil*+x	224747
	Andy Horne*+x	475279
PCC Secretary	Judy Cecil*+x	224747
PCC Treasurer	Nick Bobeldijk*+	471756
Safeguarding Officer	Alison Read*	474858
Electoral Roll	Liz Bobeldijk	471756
Bell Ringing	Mike Worboys	224612
Tiny Tots	Alison Read*	474858
Flower Arranging	Lesley Worboys	224612
Organist	Cathie Horne*	475279
Choir	Gill Haddington	529305
Magazine Editor	Richard Cecil*+x	224747
Parochial Church Council Members	as * above and Colin Bryan+, Christine Mennie+, Janet Terry+ and Lisa Wiseman	
Authorised Lay Preachers are shown as x.	Authorised to assist in the distribution of Holy Communion As + above and David Farrar, Valerie Grimwood, Gill Hodge and Michael Puffett	

Regular Events see pages 12 & 13 for full details of worship.

Sundays	10:00 am	Morning Worship / Communion
Tuesdays	9:30 am	Morning Worship / Communion
	7:45 pm	Ringing Practice
Wednesday (Zoom) sandon-church.info	8:30 pm	Night Prayer
Thursday (Zoom) compasschurches.org.uk	8:30 am	Compass Churches Morning Prayer
Thursday	3:00 pm	Choir Practice

Zoom services links can be found at the websites just prior to the service.

St Andrew's, Sandon

www.sandon-church.info

Editor Richard Cecil
Advertising Claire Jefferies
Distribution Manager Alison Read

Copy for December's magazine by 10th November 2025 please.
magazine@sandon-church.info



We commend to God's care at their funeral

8th July Sydney Stuart Mackay

We note too that Pat Salmon, who used to attend the church regularly, died on 18th July

We rejoice at the wedding of

2nd August Scott Kinchlea and Chloe Donovan

Howe Green URC



We have had our regular Sunday services and in July were able to remember one of our members, Jill Bellamy, when our service was taken by Mike Shelbourne and Jill's family came and joined with us to remember her. Our August service was taken by Anne Sanderson, the Minister for Danbury, Maldon and Burnham.
Our next services will be on:
Sunday 21st September when we will be celebrating Harvest - any gifts received will be given to the local food bank.
Sunday 19th October
Sunday 16th November
All our services are at 3 pm and we finish in friendship with tea and cakes afterwards.
We will be having a coffee morning on Saturday 13th September at 10.30 am, and we will also be having our harvest lunch on Saturday 11th October at 12 pm. We invite all friends and neighbours to join us.

Jane Clark

Churchyard Tidy

Please help keep our churchyard tidy.
We have Saturday Mornings once a month to work together

Saturday 13th September

Saturday 11th October

Saturday 8th November
We begin work at 10 am and finish at noon.
Refreshments supplied to keep us going.
Hope to see you

Do Not

'Do more bewitch me, than when art
Is too precise in every part'
From Delight in Disorder by Robert Herrick
(1591 - 1674)

Do not I view the greenest tree
In fullest leaf, a guarantee
Of Summers fullness in stylish dress
Clothes, bark and leaf to all impress.
Yet soon will wither in summers heat
Green to brown around our feet
The verdant greens now shed to ground
They fall to earth without a sound
One season lived in fine attire
Cut short as temperatures retire
Is not the order, life's flowering short
Yet be reborn when Spring cavorts
Sweetly ordered in its dress
Springtime green its Sunday best.

Richard Simmonds
28/29th July 2025

Next Stop - Job Centre

Her voice proclaims in certain tones
The loaded bus, commuters filled
No one stirs, no one is willed
To rise their heads above their phones.

Enveloped in book or lost in thought
Dreams of evenings plans daydreamed
Lost in a thousand things that seem
As important as workdays brought.

Tired thoughts they wander as clouds collide
People lost in minds endless games
As the driver, with authority loudly proclaims
'We stop here at the park and ride'.

Richard Simmonds 26th June 25



Farming Update

Harvest has finished earlier than planned. This has been the worst harvest we have known for 43 years since Richard has been farming. (There was a worse one in 1975.) This was due to the lack of rainfall and heat waves we have experienced which led to reduced yields. The combine has been blown down, cleaned and washed and will be serviced in the Autumn ready for next year's harvest.
Four new Suffolk rams have been brought onto the farm. They replace the ones lost due to age at the end of the lambing season. This gives a total of 25 fertile rams on the farm. On top of this, 10 non-fertile teaser rams will be introduced at the end of August to bring our 415 ewes onto heat with the fertile rams going in on 5th September with the anticipation to lamb at the end of January 2026.
The three New Zealand students, Brad, Isaac and Ben, have proved to be very successful members of our harvesting team this year. They have worked alongside Stuart, our farm foreman. We will say goodbye to these three with Isaac and Ben leaving early in August because the harvest has been completed early. They are off to visit the Isle of Man. Brad will stay with us until September time and head home to take on his father's farm. He plans to undertake some travel on his way home.
The field at the back of the village, known as Rectory field, was planted with a Legume fallow seed mix known as a NUM3 for the government funded scheme. The government pays farmers £593 per hectare for planting this. The mix contains flowering plants from late spring and during summer months. It should help manage nutrient efficiency and improve soil health as well as providing food for wildlife and reduce grass weeds.
Six Oxford Sandy Black piglets were purchased in May by Richard and Sally for the Grandchildren to encourage an interest in farming and to get them up in the morning! They are expected to be mature by the end of September. Farmers are no longer allowed to feed pigs kitchen waste due to the risk of E. Coli contamination. *Gillian*

Harvest Luncheon
Sunday, 28th September
Welcome drink
Shepherds Pie
Pudding
£10 a ticket, all welcome

A Visit from Ohio, in peace

St. Andrew's Church has many treasures, but one in particular caught my attention all the way from a library in Ohio, USA. A small wooden tablet, about 1.5 times the width size of your mobile, consists of a wide frame, covered in now flaking gilding, around a central inserted painting. This image is watercolor on vellum depicting Christ on the cross with John the Evangelist and the Virgin on either side, mourning with hands in prayer, and set in a verdant landscape. Below the painting is a rectangular space, now empty, and the entire framing is regularly punctured by holes, which probably once held beads or other ornaments. This remarkable object is a "pax" meaning peace and relates to the Handshake of Peace that is now



Rebekkah is delighted to hold the Sandon Pax.



Rebekkah shares her delight in the Pax

performed in services today. In the earliest centuries of the church, a person-to-person kiss would take place during the communion service to ensure peace among all parties present. In the late Middle Ages, objects called paxes started being used in its place: the priest would hold out the pax to members of the congregation to kiss around the time of the Consecration of the Host, and then the congregants would break the community bread together. Paxes were an integral part of the service until the Reformation, and every church had to have at least one.



The front and rear of the Pax

St. Andrew's Pax is so special because it is only one of two wooden paxes to have survived the reformation and the only one with a painting on vellum at the center (with thirty and counting paxes surviving in England in any medium). Even more surprising is its specific tie to its original location—the Sandon pax was found underneath floorboards of a nearby cottage in 1900, probably hidden away for safekeeping during the tumultuous years of the Reformation.

I am a graduate student at Case Western Reserve University studying paxes, especially how they affect devotion as they are made for intimate contact and vary widely in material and image. During my visit to St. Andrew's to view the Sandon Pax, my husband Davis and I had the honor of participating in the service (even doing a reading!). It was profoundly moving to shake everyone's hand and wish them peace during the service, knowing the pax was central to such an action centuries before, and then to pull it out for inspection and show it to everyone just a few minutes later. Imagine moving closer to the little board preparing for the kiss: as the three faces draw to yours, their miniature features become clear, the now-missing decorations would probably glitter and the gilded frame surrounds the sacred scene, gleaming in the candlelight. The image keeps Christ's central commandment to love your neighbor top of mind as you take your turn to kiss it in turn with all your neighbors, knitting hearts together as one in Christ.

If you or anyone you know has any kind of information or even vague memories related to the pax—no matter how mundane!—I would love to hear them. Please reach me at Rebekkah.hart@gmail.com

Rebekkah Hart

Editor's note: I felt it proper to be true to spelling in the USA in this case. The PCC are currently in discussion with Chelmsford Diocese about how to conserve what is clearly a special piece of history.

If You're Going to Have a Hero, Make Sure They're a Heroic Failure

I don't really "do" saints. I reckon if you put people up on a pedestal, either you'll end up feeling inadequate, or they'll let you down.

But I understand the need for role models, so let me suggest one to you: Saint Alphonsus Rodríguez, who died on October 31st, 1617.

Forced to leave school by the sudden death of his father at the age of fourteen, Alphonsus never completed his education. He got married and had three children but tragedy struck again when his wife and kids all died. In his thirties Alphonsus was driven to the brink of financial ruin.

At the age of forty, he tried to join a monastery but by now was considered too old and uneducated to become a priest. Sent instead as a servant to a Jesuit College on the Spanish island of Majorca, he worked as its porter for the rest of his life. Never promoted, never priested, Alphonsus turned door-keeping into a sacramental duty. Every time there was a knock at the door he called out 'I'm coming, Lord!' and set about welcoming the visitor as if they were Christ himself.

Over the years countless brilliant young priests passed through the college, enjoying opportunities and privileges Alphonsus himself had been denied by the tragedies of life. But instead of bemoaning his painful past, his present predicament, and the privilege enjoyed by these younger men, Alphonsus welcomed each one lavishly, without any hint of resentment or self-pity.

In fact, his welcome was so generous, his heart so ready to listen, that many later turned to him for spiritual counsel.

One of them, a 25-year-old priest named Peter Claver, met daily with Alphonsus who was by then 72 years old. Eventually the old man encouraged Peter to embark upon a great adventure to South America where he would work tirelessly for the rest of his life, caring for slaves.

Peter Claver was eventually recognised as a saint for his heroic efforts as "el esclavo de los esclavos" - the slave to the slaves.

As for Alphonsus Rodríguez, he too was made a saint, canonized not for his heroism but his humility, expressed in a life of such radical hospitality and friendship in spite of great suffering, that he too quietly changed the world.

"Not all of us can do great things," said Mother Teresa, "but we can all do small things with great love."

Like I say, I don't really "do" saints, but the life of Alphonsus reminds me to find Christ in ordinary things, to accept my current situation as a vocation from God, and to change the world in whatever quiet way I may.

Andy Griffiths
Lead Adviser for Wellbeing and Formation, Diocese of Chelmsford
Continuing Ministry Development Adviser, Bradwell Area
M 07976 673087

"Enlarge our hearts with an awareness of your grace, the knowledge of your presence, and an openness to your calling" – *Travelling Well Together.*



We meet in the St Andrew's Room on the second Wednesday of the month 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm so come along. Further information Contact: Alison 01245 474858 or e-mail: tots@sandon-church.info

Roasted Tomato and Ricotta Tart

Ingredients
350 g puff pastry sheet
350 g ricotta
zest of 1 small lemon
1 clove garlic
20 g grated Parmesan cheese
mint and basil leaves
450 g tomatoes thinly sliced
1 tablespoon olive oil.

Method

Preheat oven to 200°C or gas mark 6. Unroll the pastry sheet and put on a large tray that is lined with baking paper. Deeply score a 2 cm border around the edges and prick the base all over with a fork. Cook for 15 minutes then set aside to cool.

While the pastry is cooling, beat the ricotta in a bowl with lemon zest, crushed garlic, cheese and shredded mint and basil. Season with salt and pepper. Press the base of the pastry down, leaving the borders raised. Spread the cheese mixture evenly over the base.

Arrange the sliced tomatoes over the ricotta, season again and drizzle with oil. Cook for a further 25 minutes until the pastry is crisp and golden. Cool for 5 minutes then scatter with some extra basil leaves.

Slice to serve.

Narelle Arnold

With a Light Touch

A Day at Church of the Holy Spirit
Saturday 14th June

A day organised by the Essex Churches Healing Trust convened by Dr Geoff Clarke, a retired Christian doctor. Dr Ian Donald led us thinking about ageing well. We began reading 2 Corinthians 4:16, 'Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.' Our spirits will be renewed.

He considered middle age to be 40 to 60 years, 3rd age 60 to 80 and 4th age to be 80+. In the 3rd age we may retire, volunteer, take on new activities, provide care as grandparents and for very old relatives.

As we age, we may have physical problems, less energy, not such good memory. Many become frail, He described frailty as a running low on reserves in several areas of health so that in a crisis or challenge there are no reserves for recovery.

Dr Ian said we need to think holistically not looking at isolated problems. Research shows having a purpose and a social network is helpful. This fits well with being Christian and attending church. The purpose can be about *who* we are and the value of our being (not just doing). Good to visit church members who can no longer attend to keep social contact.

We talked about reactions to age. Some of us deny it is happening and press on; some make it a 'time for me' and get grumpy; others embrace the second half of life and let go of ego.

Maybe in a crisis we rethink and see what God has in mind for us.

Dr Ian suggested six beatitudes for ageing more gracefully:

1. Letting go, positive acceptance of being mortal, not giving in but living more knowing we are in Christ's hands, with quiet joy, with patient.
2. Learning dependency, acknowledging we live in an interdependent world, accepting care, carrying each other's burdens as in Galatians 6:1-5.
3. Humility in accepting help/care. In 2 Samuel 21:15-17 David is getting old and has to be supported in the battle. His men declare he will not fight with them again. There are times when we must let others act for us.
4. Thankfulness for help offered and given.
5. Shalom: finding peace, being settled, forgiving, accepting uncertainty and God's timing and plan. (Doctors don't want to let go of life and maybe would do well to learn a light touch in diagnosis and treatment.)
6. Be people of hope, finding dignity in moving towards eternity.

Richard and Judy Cecil

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