



St Mary
Magdalen
OXFORD

Parish Notes
November 2023

Parish Clergy:

Current Services:

Sundays

Said Mass 8 am and 5.30 pm
Mattins 10am, High Mass 10.30am

Weekdays

Morning Prayer 8.15 am
Evening Prayer 5.40 pm
Mass 12.15pm, 6.00 pm

Saturdays

Mass 12.15 pm and 6 pm

Confessions

Please speak to Fr Peter to arrange
Baptism, Confirmation and
Marriage by appointment with Fr Peter

Vicar

The Reverend Canon Dr Peter Groves
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Assistant Curates

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Parish office:

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Website

www.stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

Notices and events

Sermons at mass on Wednesdays

From 1 November onwards, the 6pm mass on Wednesdays will include a short sermon, which will be preached by one of the clergy or occasionally by an ordinand. To begin with, each sermon will simply be on the readings of the day (All Saints' Day, in the first instance) but this new preaching slot provides an opportunity for themed sermon series in the future.

All Souls Day

The Commemoration of All Souls is observed on Thursday 2nd November. There will be a said mass of Requiem at 12.15pm, and a High Mass of Requiem at 7.30pm. There is a list, by the north door in church, of the names of those to be remembered. Please add to this list any who were not included in previous years by printing (as clearly as possible) the names of family and loved ones you would like to be mentioned.

Scripture on Saturday

Our online Bible Study sessions continue on Saturday 4th and 18th November from 10am. Anyone is welcome, no previous participation is necessary. At present we are reading the Gospel of Matthew, and continue on 4th November by looking at chapters 12 and 13.

Carol Service

Please book in your diary the afternoon of Sunday 17th December, which is the 3rd Sunday of Advent. At 4.30pm that day we will hold our annual Carol Service, always a highlight of our year and an ideal opportunity to invite friends or newcomers to visit our church and enjoy a familiar liturgy supported by our wonderful choir. The music will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Oxford University Press by presenting works found in the six volumes of the highly successful series: Carols for Choirs.

Oxford Winter Night Shelter: Manager Needed

OWNS is a project being run by Oxford churches to offer emergency night shelter accommodation for the homeless in Oxford in the winter months. The project is currently advertising for a manager, a paid position for someone sympathetic to the project's Christian values. If you know anyone who might be interested, please draw the opportunity to their attention. Details on the website www.ownsoxford.org.uk

Parochial Church Council

The PCC meets on Wednesday 29th November at 7.30pm in church.

Fr Peter's Sermon for the Dedication Festival 2023

"No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" I Corinthians 3.11

If you look at the standard histories of this church, you will find the notion that a wooden church dedicated to St Mary Magdalen stood on this site in Saxon times. There's something wonderfully appropriate about that claim being made in a city full of scholars because there's no evidence whatsoever to support it. One of the reasons that it is extremely unlikely, is that there don't seem to be any churches dedicated to Mary Magdalen in England in the Anglo-Saxon period, despite her significance in the gospel stories. In fact, our patron owes her English cult to the warlords of the Norman conquest, who divided England up among themselves only a couple of decades after an explosion of devotion to Mary Magdalen in what is now France. It was in the year 1050 that the monks of Vezelay Abbey in Burgundy claimed to have discovered her skeleton, thus creating an extremely successful and lucrative business for themselves welcoming pilgrims.

The real account, such as it is, is that in 1074 Robert D'Oilly, constable of Oxford, founded a collegiate church of St George in Oxford Castle, and St Mary Magdalen's as a chapel of ease attached to it, outside the city walls of Oxford. It was not uncommon to find dedications to the Magdalen next or close to city gates – a pious explanation is that she represents penitence, and hovers just outside the city unworthy to come in. But she was also, wrongly of course, thought to have been a prostitute, and so her churches stand close to those places just beyond the walls where sex workers might have plied their trade.

One of the many ridiculous things which I was told at my theological college is that our chapel was not a chapel but a worship space. What a limited definition that is. The Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann makes a telling distinction between space, and place. Space is the general, abstract term for that which allows physicality and location. But place is space which has history. Place is space in which things have happened, words have been spoken, love has been practised, conflicts have been fought, prayers have been offered, lives have begun, people have died. The building in which you sit is, literally speaking, a worship space, but more importantly, it is a place, a place set apart for the worship of God, a physical testimony to the existence and flourishing of a worshipping community which has been fed by the Spirit of God over ten centuries on this spot where now we still do that which we always have done – proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and offer ourselves to the Father in the holy sacrifice of the mass.

An ancient church is an awesome thing. Your prayers are joined not just with those around you, but with those before you, those before you for generation after generation, birth after death after death after birth, real people living real lives whose real lives have been centred on God and rooted in this place and the community which it has housed. This is a place which is alive with history, and like all good history, the past of this church is of interest because this church has a future which relies on its roots. The more we are built up, the more strongly we rely on our foundations.

Next year, we will mark nine hundred and fifty years since that original Norman foundation. The vast breadth of time during which God has been worshipped here is hard for us to comprehend. But as with our worship itself, that which is beyond our comprehension is nevertheless the object of our celebration. And in the coming year we will be marking that celebration in various ways. We have, for example, commissioned a mass setting from the highly distinguished choral composer Cecilia McDowall, whose works are heard in churches, chapels, cathedrals and concert halls throughout the world. We hope to produce a book featuring sermons preaching in this place over many centuries – beginning well before the Reformation. We will shortly be installing a new statue of Our Lady of Walsingham to stand at the east end of the north aisle. That aisle was built in part as a memorial to the Oxford Martyrs, so feted by those who wish to keep the Church of England fiercely Protestant. They aren't so keen on Our Lady, but fortunately for all she remains keen on them.

We will also be expending significant time and resources on the churchyard which surrounds us. Our tired looking railings will be repaired and repainted, the trees will be pruned and reduced, and the churchyard garden redesigned to make the very most of its wildflower beauty. We will open it for access and restore and improve the monuments it contains. All this will cost money, of course, and we have already had something like £50,000 pledged towards this project. We will need more, and in the coming months we will be asking for your help.

These physical developments will be a gift to the city which we serve, reminding us that we are a parish church, and our parish, though small, is no ordinary place, but one which attracts the devotion and attention of people throughout the world. The beauty of Oxford is too often taken for granted, and as custodians of this place we have a duty to maintain and contribute to that beauty.

That contribution is much more than aesthetic, however. It is easy for us to think only of what goes on inside and not of the world around us. Improving our own site for the benefit of others is a gift which reminds us of the call to give, to look beyond our doors and gates and walls and railings. The dedication of a holy place is a public setting apart, a devotion of something to the purpose of worship. But the dedication of a building, ancient and inspiring as it may be, is an act as empty as a dying church if it is not the extension of the dedication of people's lives, the

genuine worship which Jesus requires, that which is offered in spirit and in truth. The building we construct has many aspects- physical as well as spiritual – but its shape and form and content are dictated in advance by the foundation which is laid, the foundation which cannot be anything other than Jesus Christ.

Each time we enter this building we are aligning ourselves once again with the geometry of Christ, with the shaping, the ordering, the pattern of life which has no interest in itself, no thought for insular defence, but is an outward looking pouring of love which defines the life of God himself. For a church at the centre of a city, the privilege of looking inwards, coming to Christ to be nourished at the altar, is not only a privilege but a charge. It is our responsibility to take that nourishment and look outward, go forth in strength and in health beyond these walls and take the presence of Christ to every aspect of our lives. The sacrament does not remain on the altar – it is given to you and to me, given that we might be fed, given that we might become and might be the body of Christ in the world.

Intercessions

Please pray for the long-term sick and those in special need, among them:

Jo Laity, Sr Mary Bernard, Sophie Brown, Pamela Rogers, Sophie, Adrian, Ann, Alison, Johanna Merz, Maggie, Michael, Gordon Scott, Michael Starford, Helen Bell, Jenny, Beryl Dryden, Susan Barnes, Roy Dicker, John O'Leary, Jennifer Larcombe, Bob Guthrie, Eleanor Jamison, Anna, Phoenix, Elwyn Knight, Bernard Bishop, Francis O'Gorman, Andrew Linzey, Sancha Maya-Rai

Sunday readings

Sunday 5th November: Malachi 1.14 – 2.2 & 8-10; I Thessalonians 2.7-9 & 13;

Matthew 23.1-12

Sunday 12th November: Wisdom 6.12-16; I Thessalonians 4.13-14; Matthew 25.1-12

Sunday 19th November: Proverbs 31.-10-13, 19-20; I Thessalonians 5.1-6;

Matthew 25.14-30

Sunday 26th November: Ezekiel 34.11-12, 15-17; I Corinthians 15.20-26, 28;

Matthew 25.31-46

November 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 All Saints Day	2 All Souls	3 Feria	4 Charles Borromeo, B
			Steven our Bishop	The faithful departed	Justin our Archbishop	Pastors
5 31st Sunday of the Year	6 Feria	7 Feria	8 All Saints of England	9 Feria	10 Leo, Pp Dr	11 Martin B
Parish community	The Gatehouse	Famine relief	Our country	Sacristans and servers	Theologians	World peace
12 Remembrance Sunday	13 Feria	14 Feria	15 Albert B Dr	16 Margaret of Scotland	17 St Hugh	18 Feria
Parish Community	Peace in the Holy Land	Churches Together	Healing ministry (anointing at 6pm)	Oxford's hospitals (anointing at 6pm)	Our church and parish	Choir and musicians
19 33rd Sunday of the Year	20 Feria	21 Feria	22 Cecilia VM	23 Feria	24 Feria	25 Catherine of Alexandria VM
Parish Community	The newly baptised	Helen and Douglas House	Musicians	The PCC	The homeless	Christians in the Middle East
26 Christ the King	27 Feria	28 Feria	29 Feria	30 Andrew, Ap		
Parish Community	Christian Aid	Oxford City Council	Colleges in our parish	The people of Scotland		