



St Mary
Magdalen
OXFORD

Parish Notes
December 2025

Services

Sundays

Eucharist at 8 am and 5.30 pm,

Matins 10 am High Mass at 10.30 am

Weekdays

Eucharist at 12.15 pm and 6.00 pm

Morning Prayer 8.15 am, Evening Prayer
5.40 pm

Confessions

Daily after the 12.15 pm Mass,
Wednesdays & Saturdays at 6.30 pm
Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage by
appointment with the Parish Priest

Parish Clergy

We are in Interregnum just now,
awaiting the appointment of a new Vicar.

Associate Priest

The Reverend Dr Mel Marshall
Telephone: 01865 436243
mthrmelanie@gmail.com

Administration

Parish office

admin@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

Phone: 01865 246143

Website

www.stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

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Parish: @marymagsoxford

Choir: @magschoir

Facebook

stmarymagdalen.oxford

Safeguarding

The PCC is committed to making St Mary Magdalen's a safe environment for everyone. If you have any questions about safeguarding matters or wish to report a concern, please talk to the Parish Safeguarding Officer **Peter Dockrill** or send an email to: safeguardingsmmox@gmail.com

Treasurer

"Mary Mags Oxford costs £470 per day to run and is supported by your generous donations. We have to be self-funding. This means that we do not receive any funds other than the income we raise through planned giving, fundraising, etc.

We are constantly aware how the cost of living is affecting every one of us differently. We want you to know that we appreciate every penny you give and do not take your generosity for granted.

If you would like to discuss giving options, please contact the Treasurer, Oscar Riba-Thompson at marymagstreasurer@gmail.com

Events

Carol Service

Our Carol Service by Candlelight starts at 4.30pm on Sunday, December 14th and we suggest arrival soon after 4pm if you can. This is an important opportunity for us to bring new faces into St Mary Magdalen's, and to welcome some of the many people who pass through our parish whilst shopping, or visiting historic Oxford. It is also a chance for us to make the most of the magnificent sound we have come to expect from our Director of Music, organist and choir. The high standard of music in our church has been a significant factor in our continuing growth. Please support this event and invite friends and family as well.

Church cleaning the day before!

We are holding a church cleaning session on Saturday 13th December, between 9.30am and 11.45am. Please help with this if you can; even if you have a very short time, your contribution would be much appreciated. We very much want to have the church welcoming and shining for the following Sunday afternoon then the Christmas services. Refreshments and good company are available as usual.

More Carols the day before!

From 7pm on Saturday, December 13th, the Chamber Choir Antiphon are in church performing Britten's Ceremony of Carols, along with Renaissance classics and modern takes on well-known carols.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Wednesday, 24th December: 11.00 pm Midnight Mass of the Nativity and Blessing of the Crib. Please note the earlier start time this year. Thursday, 25th December: NB - No 8.00 Mass this year; 10.30 High Mass.

Confessions at Christmas

It is the Mary Mags tradition for confession to be offered by priests celebrating midweek masses here in the week before Christmas. The schedule will be made available by email and in our online "Parish Notes" from December 12th.

After Christmas

Please note that Morning Prayer will not resume until Monday, January 5th, while 6pm Masses stop from Christmas Eve until then too.

Notices

PCC

The next Parochial Church Council meeting will be on **Tuesday, December 2nd** at 7pm in church. Please note the earlier time than usual

Together with our Patron Christ Church we have begun advertising our vacant Vicar's post with applications invited by January, It is now hoped that the process will be complete and the appointment confirmed in early May.

As we move towards the climax of this process, we ask that you hold all those involved, our Representatives, the Wardens and the PCC in your prayers. We offer for your use our Vacancy prayer.

*O God, who alone guides and guards the Church
by your Spirit. Strengthen and encourage us
in this time of uncertainty and opportunity, and inspire
those who maintain our worship, and those engaged
in the discernment and selection of a new incumbent.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.*

Intercessions

*Please pray for the long-term sick and those in special need, among them:
Sophie Brown, Eleanor Sartain, Corinna Lloyd Roe, Guy Westwood, Edward
Llewelyn Jones, Susannah, Susan Weavers, Kamal, Burns Ackerly, Karen
Jones, Graham Davies, Andrew Siantonis, Rene, Megan, Anna, Phoenix,
Barbara Duncombe, Isla, Sarah Murray. Joyce Day.*

If you would like any name added to this list (or removed from it, post recovery) ask admin@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk. Please note that unless we are advised that the illness could be protracted, names will be taken off after three months.

Sunday readings

Sunday 7th December: Isaiah 11: 1-10. Romans 15: 4-9. Mat 3: 1-12

Sunday 14th December: Isaiah 35: 1-6a & 10. Jas. 5: 7-10. Mat 11: 2-11.

Sunday 21st December: Isaiah 7: 10-14. Romans 1: 1-7. Mat 1: 18-24.

Sunday 28th December: Ecclus 3: 3-7. Col 3: 12-21. Mat 2: 13-15 & 19-23.

My Mary Mags

*Every month we highlight a feature of the Church (**Our Mary Mags**) or invite a member of the community to describe how and why they hooked up with it (**My Mary Mags**). This month, Fr Martin Henig, who celebrates so many day time Masses for us, describes his arrival here.*



I am, by calling, an archaeologist with a passion for Roman jewellery and also the art and culture of Roman Britain, and I came to Mary Mags as a result of being awarded a Supernumerary Fellowship at Wolfson College over twenty years ago. There I found myself sitting next to a Junior Research Fellow, one Beatrice Groves, at our termly Fellowship dinner and discussing with her the fall of Jerusalem in AD70 and English literature. Bea invited me to Mary Mags where Father Peter was being installed as vicar and I became enamoured of a church which, in the words of A.N.Wilson, in his superb and unusual biography of Iris Murdoch was seemingly dominated by a seemingly impenitent Magdalen, dressed to the nines in a thickly brocaded cope, and holding up her alabaster pot of rich ointment with some triumph having discovered - as one suspected was the case for many who passed that door-that incense could be as exciting as debauchery.

That was certainly the case for me. Indeed, it was not long before I was induced to join the serving team, though I never progressed beyond Acolyte 1. My suspicion was that was because Father Peter was a little worried at what I might do if I were entrusted with the thurible. He suggested I might consider ordination, instead, because although becoming an ordinand at St Stephens House might keep me away from Mags on a regular basis for a few years, in due course I would be able to return and help out safely, officiating at weekday masses.

I continued my archaeological work throughout (and only yesterday I was examining a Roman lead font found near Aylesbury). Unsurprisingly, I am a bit of a collector of ancient churches, and apart from Mags, I serve at St Giles – my first Oxford church - and in the West Oxford benefice St Lawrence in North Hinksey and especially St Margaret's, Binsey, a very historic site sitting in the middle of an ancient Iron Age enclosure, no incense, no electricity and no running water though it does boast a famous 'treacle' well.

Poem of the Month

From Journey of the Magi by TS Eliot

A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; This Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

A year ago in this slot we looked at Rowan Williams' poem "Advent" where our ex-Archbishop seems reluctant to indulge the feelings traditionally triggered by that title. Now here is TS Eliot back in 1927, a year after converting to Anglo-Catholicism (and seven years after Mary Mags did) laying down a challenge to the feelings with which we might normally bring to bear on the Magi, their journey and their gifts. It is tricky for us of

course to disentangle our knowledge of the triumphant conclusion to their story. In the opening to his poem (for which we have no room here), Eliot offers a wonderfully atmospheric account of what a long trip on camels would have been like 2,000 years ago. There is no glamour, only 20 lines of moaning about the cold and the alienation by the Kings, the camel men and the camels. So “the voices singing in our ears” are not herald angels but those of the Wise Men themselves questioning their own wisdom.

This is hardly the first narrator in Eliot’s dramatic monologues to seem confused and bewildered. This one suddenly grows old as well to look back on the story from some distance. One can imagine them struggling to make sense of what they were approaching or even being clueless as to what they were about to see, but it is a surprise to find that looking back on it all he seems to be even more puzzled than he was before.

I suppose that most of us assume that meeting Jesus as an infant can only be a good thing, but here it is “Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.” He can see that the birth of Christ has brought the death of the old order of which he was part. He has not become a man of God, he has remained a politician. Eliot could be as efficient at stripping the joy out of things before the War as Larkin was after it. Maybe he was contemplating his own recent conversion here and wondering if it would make his own life not more straightforward but more complicated. For his Magus, no new gateway has opened up for eternal life. Instead, there is more desperate need for another gate to slam shut with no glimmer of faith shining through. If we ever envied the Wise Men, by the time Eliot has finished with us and them, we are pitying them.

December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Feria	2 Feria	3 Francis Xavier Pr.	4 John of Damascus Pr Dr	5 Feria	6 Nicolas B
	Steven our Bishop	Sarah, Archbishop-designate	Missionaries	Teachers	The homeless	Children
7 Advent 2	8 Conception of the BVM	9 Feria	10 Feria	11 Feria	12 Feria	13 Lucy VM
Parish community	Parents	Famine Relief	Ember day	Healing Ministry	Ember day	Ember day
14 Advent 3 Carol Service 4.30pm	15 Feria	16 Feria	17 Feria (O Sapientia)	18 Feria (O Adonai)	19 Feria (O Radix)	20 Feria (O Clavis)
Parish community	Those in authority	World peace	Sacristans and servers	Choir and musicians	Monthly Requiem	Religious Communities
21 Advent 4	22 Feria (O Rex)	23 Feria (O Emmanuel)	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26 Stephen M	27 John Ap Ev
Parish Community	Confessors	Emergency Services	The Oxford Winter Night Shelter	Thanksgiving for the Incarnation	The persecuted church	Theologians
28 Holy Family	29 Thomas Becket BM	30 Christmas	31 Christmas			
Thanksgiving for the Incarnation	Pilgrims	Peace in the Holy Land	Thanksgiving for the year			