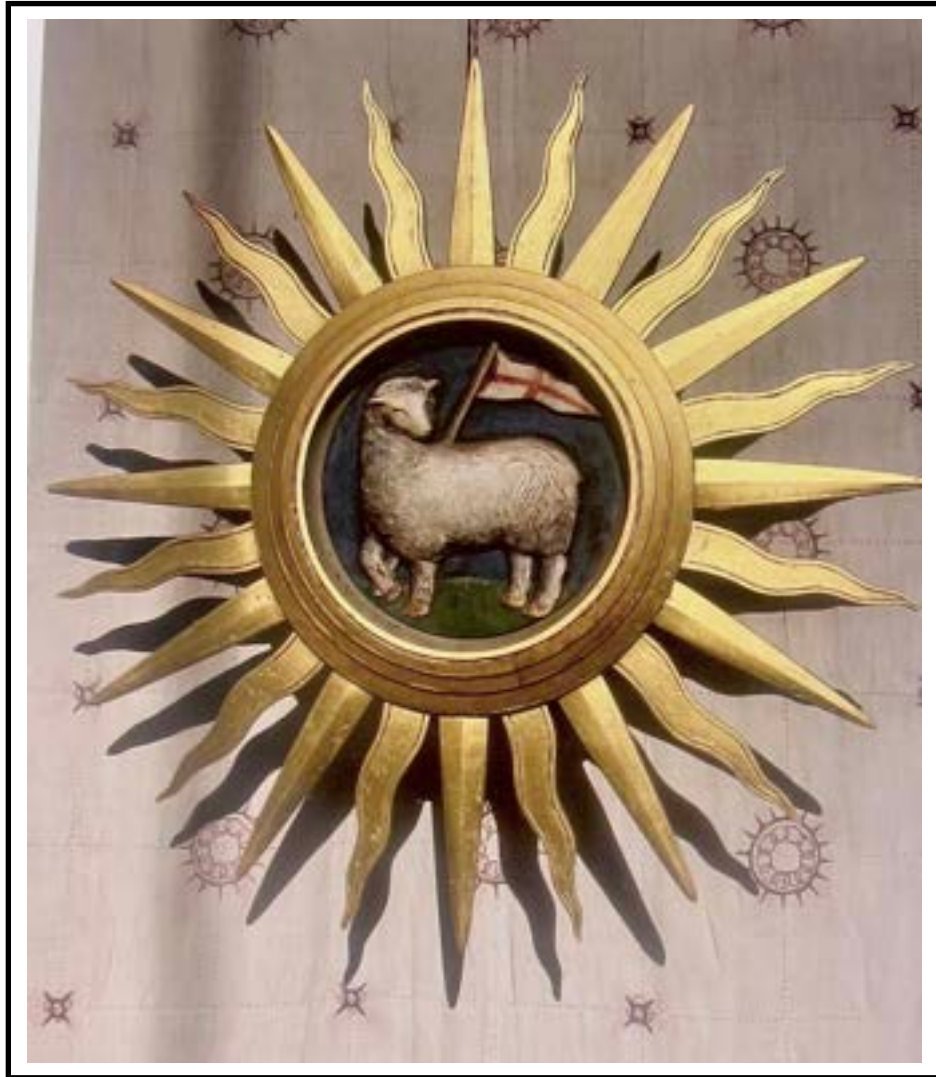


Totnes Parish Magazine

October/November 2026



The Lamb of God, in St Leonard's chapel,
in St Mary's

Free to take
suggested donation £2

The aims of this magazine were formulated by me and my two assistants (Alison Fisher and Viv Elce) and endorsed by the Parochial Church Council.

I believe we have helped to improve understanding and co-operation between St Mary's and St John's, and to provide support for the many valuable activities carried out under the auspices of our two churches.

In some cases parish magazines fill their pages with advertisements, and with recipes and gardening articles. Happily the PCC does not expect us to do this, or to be primarily a fund-raising organ (though we do cover much of the cost of printing). We restrict our coverage to religious and church-related matters.

Is this too austere a stance? Some readers have commented that the magazine is "too high-brow", but the Church of England, the country, and the world are all currently facing alarming threats. and it would be irresponsible to be less than serious at this time. We also have to do our best to make the magazine readable and entertaining.

We have succeeded in giving a voice, in the past two years, to nearly 60 members of our church community and it is these people - and others yet to contribute - on whom the future of the magazine depends.

Our pages are read by 'outsiders': visitors to our two churches, readers in the public library and the Albert pub, and those who find a copy on the internet. We don't get much feedback from this wider readership, (it would be very welcome!) but the interest is there.



Letters to the editor

We want to introduce a 'letters to the editor' section in the magazine. Now's your chance to tell us and our readers what you would like to see in the magazine, or comment on any matter to do with the parish, or the wider Church, or anything to do with Christianity and religion which you think should be discussed in our community. We particularly want comments on things you have read in the latest edition of the magazine.

My previous article on Jesus: The Man shone a light on his understanding of human development which was ahead of its time. Another area where his teachings and life continue to hold relevance is a possible new way ahead for men. The 'crisis of masculinity' is a topic of considerable discussion in society and online.

There were two ways in which Jesus challenged the predominant male role: firstly, by offering to men a new exemplar of the submissive, suffering, obedient servant. Women did not need to learn that role, then or now in many parts of the world. And secondly, he emphasised the importance of Man the Shepherd/Farmer rather than Man the Hunter/Warrior.

The evolutionary leap forward of the Age of Agriculture began when gatherers, mostly women using their knowledge of plants and caring for the young, started to grow crops and enclosed land and animals to create settlements and permanent social communities. We still today talk about 'sowing wild oats' before settling down! Once animals were farmed and meat easily available, hunting could – and perhaps should - have become largely redundant. Yet, instead of fading away, it became the preserve of the elite while some former hunters refused to adapt to the new ways. Furious at their loss of status, they turned their cold-blooded, calculating, cunning and killing skills onto their own kind to become violent leaders, backed by a superior warrior class, taking the produce of others to consolidate their power.

Jesus' model of the farmer concerned for the safety of every creature under his care revisited this ancient social divide and overturned the age-old dominance of the Hunter/Warrior as surely as he overturned the tables of the moneylenders. The hunters' way is still used by autocratic political leaders to take control, and by others who promise to make those who are angry they have been left behind by social changes and lost their status-giving jobs, feel great again. Jesus's way of shepherding, non-competitive service and care for others offers an alternative model for men and boys today.

Helping with the cost of the parish magazine:

If you are a regular reader of the magazine the editors would be grateful if you would make a contribution to our costs. You can do this by means of the QR code.

Alternatively you can make a direct payment to the parish account: code 20 60 88, acct no. 401922 60, reference parish magazine - preferably a standing order! (We suggest £12 annually for paper copies, £5 if you receive the magazine on line.)



Michaelmas Fair. *Joy Hanson*

(Written in the person of Anna Hannaford of Penswell Rattery.)

T'were 1466 September 29 Feast day of the archangel St Nicholas and time to celebrate at Michaelmas fair at top of Brent Hill.

I raised Miss Elisabeth Gybbes early at Venton manor and we donned simple clean kirtle dresses with a kerchief over our heads and I a clean white pinny.

Up the trackway to the green at Rattery were gathered my sisters with other villagers, Fr Richard OSB accompanying us over Dry Bridge and along the trackway past a well for fresh water. I carried a basket full of fresh baked brown buns.

Up the top were gathering crowds from Brent, minstrels playing dancing melodies, and Drovers with geese for sale, Connabear family from Hood farm selling sheep's fleeces.

Some crafty ladies had made corn dollies at tuppence each! Elisabeth bought two as keepsakes. A maypole was erected and we all knew the merry dances.

Fr Richard met the priest at St Petroc's South Brent. Miss Elisabeth and I had often ridden our ponies over from Venton manor to Brent to buy provisions. We loved the tall Toll house there with its iconic bell above and list of fairs.

The fair went on all night, but when the sun dipped it became dimpsy; we walked back to Venton past the Tudor building of Marley manor, and I sensed a special sanctity about the place.

By the next spring we would be on our way to Isleworth on the River Thames, where Elisabeth Gybbes would be entering as a postulant Sister of Syon Abbey, and myself as lay sister.

Every Michaelmastide we would reminisce about the fair on Brent Hill.

Illustration of Saint Nicholas resurrecting the three butchered children, from the *Grandes Heures d'Anne de Bretagne* (created between 1503 and 1508)



My Prayer Journey

Viv Elce

The way that I pray has changed during my Christian journey, but what I do now isn't superior, or inferior, to how I used to pray – it's just different, and there is still much to learn.

My early years had a huge amount of Christian input which involved a regular time of daily prayer and praying extemporaneous prayers out loud in public. These prayers were wordy and carefully crafted with distinct sections: praise, confession, petition. Quite a skill! I was prayer secretary in my university Christian Union and continued like this for many years. I did experience answers to prayer and an awareness of God's presence on occasion, especially after I had an experience of the Holy Spirit in the heady 1970's. However, I think I mostly prayed out of a sense of duty, or simply because that's what a Christian did. This was interspersed with times of praying out of great emotional need.

I still pray today but my prayer life is far less organised and articulate than it used to be. In terms of petition, I make requests for mundane things and for my friends and family. Intercessions in church focus my prayers on wider topics. I pray less from duty and more from desire - a desire for God's presence and a deep awareness that my soul finds its satisfaction there. My prayers are no longer crafted – they are wordless or contain just a few words. I have consciously tried to drop religious language. Hopefully my prayers are now more genuine.

I long to keep in touch with God throughout the day rather than just in the morning. I have seasons of practising a form of 'centring prayer' with a spiritual mantra and lots of silence and stillness – not easy. This enables me, at times, to go into a deep place of being in God's presence and feeling him within me as well as all around me. I sometimes use a prayer rope to help me pray the Jesus Prayer, especially when walking the dog.

Meeting to sit in silence with others is very helpful and, coming back to my Anglican roots, has enabled me to reconnect with liturgy - the cries of praise in the Eucharist are wonderful.

I wonder if this might spark a conversation about how we all pray. Please send any thoughts to one of our editors.

What did small groups ever do for me?

Paul Truby

Soon after becoming a Christian in my mid-twenties, I moved to Leicester and joined a city centre church, where being part of a home group was the norm for most church members. Being both new to faith and new to the city, it suited me well. Having friends who could help me to understand and explore my faith, and to pray with and for me. In the six years that I was in Leicester we became close, and some are still friends forty years later.

However, my longest time in a small group was the thirty-five years I worshipped in a church on the outskirts of Nottingham. And for most of that time I was a home group leader.

Together we shared our joys and problems, read the Bible and discussed our understanding of it, prayed for and encouraged each other, and had barbecues. And we found that serious things can also be fun.

There is nothing like having to prepare material for study for making you clarify your own thoughts. But perhaps the biggest lesson I learnt was how gloriously different every Christian is:

- Different in age: ranging from young adults to the retired. We all learnt from each other.
- Different in background: some new to Christianity and having little knowledge of the Bible, others with years of experience of studying scripture. And it wasn't always the experienced ones who made the most useful comments or asked the most telling questions – often those that others were perhaps too embarrassed to ask.
- Different in the ways that they learn best: I soon realised that the pattern of readings and discussion questions that so many study guides employ doesn't work well for most people. Some like to dive into activities, some to have time to reflect, some to work out how it all fits together, some to focus on what it means in practice.
- Different in Christian beliefs: For example, in the group we had one who took the creation story literally and others who totally disagreed. But we learned to live with our differences, respect each other, agree to disagree, and we remained friends.

And so, it's as we share each other's lives, encountering differences, and learning to love each other through them, that we can grow deeper in understanding our faith and our shared lives in Christ.

Forthcoming events in St Mary's

Weekly events

Guided Tours 11.15 - 12.15 Tuesdays

Reading the Bible in Latin 15.00 - 1600 Wednesdays

Take Back Theatre 18.00 - 21.00 Thursdays (starting Thursday 15th)

First Sunday of the month

Choral Evensong 18.30 Sundays

One-offs

Totnes Gardens Plant Sale 08.30 - 13.00 Friday 2 October

Lyric Piano Trio, Stillness and Spirit 15.00 Saturday 4 October

St Antony & St Elias 13.00 Friday 9 October

Taize worship 19.30 - 21.00 Sunday 11 October

Sonic Ritual Event 17.00 - 23.00 Thursday 29 October

Forthcoming events in St John's

Weekly events

TQ9 Food and Well-being 9.30- 11.45 Mondays & Tuesdays

Bereavement Support Group 14.00 - 1600 Tuesdays

South Hams Citizens Advice 09.15 -13.00 Wednesdays

Managing Emotions Group (new) 12.30 15.00 Weds (starts 14th)

One-offs

St Anthony & St Elias 09.00 - 16.00 2 & 23 October

Harvest Lunch 12.00 Sunday 4 October

Friends of Palestine Film Night 18.00 Monday 12 October

Devon Parent Support Group 11.15 - 13.15 Tuesday 13 October

U3A 09.00 - 12.00 Thursday 22 October

Totnes Consciousness Cafe - 19.00 Friday 30 October



Cartoon from 'Dave Walker's 'My Pew'.

A welcome at St Mary's *Chris Reader*

I originate from the Midlands. I don't live in the Totnes Parish but I am now on the Electoral Register and I worship regularly at St Mary's.

I live in Newton Abbot, just off the A381, and about 4 years ago I was looking for a new church to attend. I drew up a list of churches within 20 to 30 minutes driving time from me and St Mary's was top of the list as I knew Totnes and where there was parking.

So one Sunday I set off for the 11.15 Choral Eucharist service. The service, led by Father Jim, was uplifting and the music most enjoyable. I did not stay for coffee and as I left Father Jim asked me if I was just visiting or did I live locally. I explained my situation and I was impressed that I had been noticed and welcomed (cynics may say it was because the congregation was so small!). So I returned. This time I stayed for coffee and members chatted to me, realising that I was new to the church. I was asked if I was on the weekly mailing list and when I replied in the negative, my email address was immediately included. I felt very comfortable and welcomed, and that has not always been true in churches that I have attended!

After a couple of months attending St Mary's services, I ripped up my list of churches – I was going to stay! I was encouraged to join the Electoral Register and the Friends of St Mary's by members of the congregation that I was beginning to know well.

In the spring of 2024, the Friends were seeking new volunteers for their Tuesday café. Throughout the winter I have a regular commitment on Tuesdays but not in July and August, so I went along to help. I was welcomed with open arms and people I knew as acquaintances became more like friends.

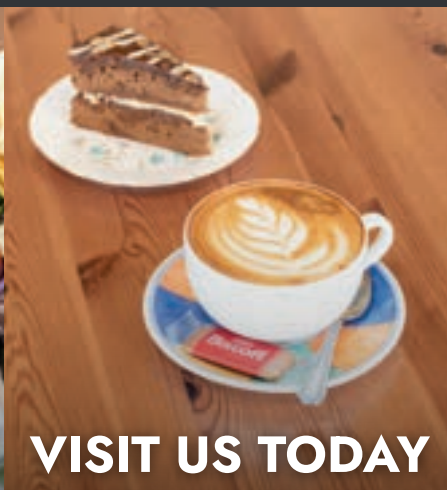
And then St Mary's closed for refurbishment so I attended St John's where we were all made very welcome.

Now we are back at the wonderful new St Mary's. There is always a need for volunteers, so if you feel like joining us, please talk to someone! The Friends are particularly in need of someone to update and maintain our website so if you have the relevant skills, please speak to one of us! To write something in the church magazine seemed to me to be the best way to say a big "Thank You" to the community that has made me so welcome.

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**900 people came to St Mary's on Heritage Day, September 19th.
They saw demonstrations of carving and replica Saxon boat-building**



Mayor Tim Bennett tries his hand with a chisel,
watched by carver William Barsley



Words from a musician of the Morley Consort



John Bruun explains how he is building a replica of a Saxon boat, a part of A Green Oak Mirror Totnes Community Boat Project



John Bruun explains his project to a larger group.

Bob the Clock *interviewed by the Editor*



The clock in St Mary's tower is faceless, but its quarterly chimes have been ringing out over the town since it was installed to celebrate Queen Victoria's jubilee in 1897

was built by Sainsbury in Walthamstow, and is the same design as the clock in Big Ben. Since 2004 it

has been kept to time by Bob Seymour. "It generally loses about 10 seconds a

week, a little more or less depending on the weather."

Bob trained as a motor mechanic (after an early interest in explosives; he damaged his right eye with a home-made bomb when he was twelve). He became interested in mechanical time-pieces ("The mechanism is similar to the gearbox of a car.") and opened a clock shop in Leicestershire, before moving to Totnes in 1989, and opening his second clock shop, in the High Street.

He is now 91, and ready finally to retire. He is probably irreplaceable as a human time-keeper, so an electronic device - paid for by the Friends of St Mary's - has been installed to do the job.

We trust that Bob, with his twinkling humour and fund of good stories, will continue for many years to visit the church he has served so well.



A doctor of medicine *and* theology writes...

Andrew Robinson

Peter has asked me to write something about how I got involved in theology while working as a GP, and how the two kinds of “calling” relate to each other.

In some ways the question isn't, why did I drift from medicine towards philosophy, but how did I end up in medicine in the first place? The short answer is that I didn't have much insight as a young man, and the careers advice at my school wasn't very good! But maybe it would have been a disaster for me to have found my niche too early. One of the things about the strange double life I led for a long time was that my philosophical and theological journey never became completely unmoored from the nitty gritty of people's actual life experience.

The trigger for my theological questioning happened in my late twenties. While looking for something to read on holiday, I picked up a book of essays by the palaeontologist (fossil specialist) Stephen Jay Gould in a second-hand bookshop. Gould's big idea was that if you re-ran the 'tape' of evolution things wouldn't turn out the same, including it being unlikely that humans would exist. Well, what is a Christian supposed to make of that?

There are many possible ways of answering that question, but the only ones I was interested in were those that took the science with due seriousness rather than just dismissing or denying it. And I discovered that you can't begin to deal with the religious implications of this sort of thing without getting embroiled in some serious philosophy and theology; which it turned out would occupy me for several decades, not just the week of that holiday!

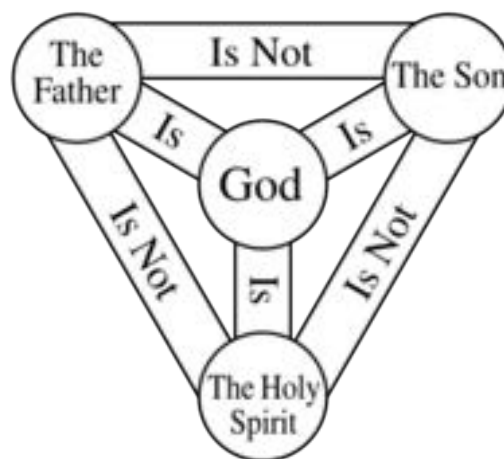
One way in which being a medical doctor may have influenced my theological work is that medicine is all about interpreting signs of various sorts. It's therefore not surprising that it was the early Greek physicians (Hippocrates & Co.) who founded a branch of philosophy called 'semiotics'. Semiotics is concerned with the nature of signs (from the Greek *semeion*), and as it turned out my theological work came to circle around questions about the nature of representation and interpretation.

One thing led to another and I became involved in an interdisciplinary international collaboration at the interface of science, philosophy and theology, centred around the science of the origin of life. My contribution was to explore the question, what is a sign? Why do we use signs and symbols at all? How do the processes of representation and interpretation work? Does a capacity to interpret the environment mark the boundary between the non-living and the living? And these questions have theological ramifications. A core Christian claim is that Jesus is the perfect representation (image) of God (e.g. Colossians 1.15), so semiotics is embedded in Christian thought from the start.

Did my theology influence the way I practised medicine? Probably no more than anyone's general outlook on life might influence their work in the secular

world. But that is theologically interesting. It would be considered medical malpractice to allow anything ‘supernatural’ into one’s methods of diagnosis or treatment. Is that because science and medicine are mistakenly excluding an aspect of reality that they ought to take into account? Or is it because God’s involvement in the world is so radically ‘incarnational’ (enfleshed, embodied) that talk of the “supernatural” is as much a theological error as it would be a scientific one?

No doubt this sort of thinking will be attractive to some and repellent to others. A difference between medicine and theology is that to learn medicine is to participate in a discipline whose practitioners all essentially speak the same language, whatever their sub-speciality. Learning to do theology is more like learning to try on different spectacles to get completely different views of the world. The theological spectacles that I find work best for me have a strongly incarnational focus, held in the frame of a semiotic (sign-based) perspective on everything.



Editor’s note.

When I was being ‘prepared’ for confirmation at the age of 15 the priest charged with this responsibility asked me if I had any questions. “Yes,” I said, “in history and science we are told to examine the evidence. In Divinity we are told we have to believe things which were written down a long time ago and for which I don’t see any convincing evidence. How can I reconcile these two kinds of belief?” My instructor launched into a lengthy explanation which I couldn’t follow. I knew my parents would be upset if I opted out so I decided to be ‘confirmed’. Since then I have been a practising Christian stumbling round in a theology twilight - till I read Andrew’s book “Traces of the Trinity”. A revelation!

Music in October and November *Mike Gibbons*

As Autumn looms, singers turn their attention to Advent and Christmas! So the next two months are not only full of music for this season but preparations begin for the December festivities. Meanwhile, the excitement and after-effects of the summer are packed away or, in the case of organs and pianos, put back in good order after a long hot spell which wrought havoc on instrument tuning.....

St Mary's Choir ended the summer with a shared Choral Evensong at Stoke Gabriel for what has become an annual visit; then returned for September's First Sunday service at St Mary's. Preparations are now underway for October's Choral Evensong. Peter King will be playing for the service that will feature the favourite Harvest anthem "Thou visitest the earth" by Maurice Greene. Then, for November's Choral Evensong, the Adult and Junior Choirs will come together for All Saints with Ian Curror at the organ. The Evensong Choir will then turn their attention to the Advent Carol Service on Sunday 29th November which is the precursor to a very busy December.

Meanwhile the Junior Choir also have a busy autumn, starting with the service on Sunday 11th October at St John's when they will be singing, marking International Chorister Day. They follow that with the November Choral Evensong at St Mary's and, in another 'first', they will be leading the December Choral Evensong in St Mary's on 6th December at 6.30pm, on their own, supported by some adults singing the lower parts. In addition, the Juniors have lots to sing in December, of which more anon. Meanwhile they have begun the Royal School of Church Music 'Voice for Life' training course which will, we hope, lead to progressive learning over several stages in coming months and years.

And, just to finish with Christmas arrangements, please put Sunday 13th December in your diary for St John's Carol Service & Nativity at 4pm, followed by Nine Lessons & Carols at St Mary's on Sunday 20th December at 6.30pm.

Glory

Oh, you gotta get a glory
In the work you do;
A Hallelujah chorus
In the heart of you.

Paint, or tell a story,
Sing, or shovel coal,
But you gotta get a glory
Or the job lacks soul.

Anon

Who does what in the parish.

Totnes with Bridgetown team

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Team Associate Priest - Rev Chris Harris: chris@totnesrectory.co.uk 07503151835
Retired Vicar with PTO - Rev John Luscombe: jnluscombe@btinternet.com
Licensed Lay Ministers -
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Parish Safeguarding Rep - Alison Fisher:

Parish Administrator - Claire Allford: totnesteamadmin@googlemail.com
Director of Music - Mike Gibbons: mike.gibbons@totnesmusic.co.uk
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saintmarysactivities@gmail.com
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Dartington: Rev Fiona Wimsett revfionadartington@gmail.com

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Rev Janet Frymann: (Stoke Gabriel) revjanfrymann@gmail.com
Rev Gill Still gillstill@yahoo.co.uk

Deacon

Sarah Prime sarahprime@btinternet.com

Licensed Lay Ministers

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Alan Hill: (Stoke Gabriel) alanpwh2015@gmail.com
Jonathan Drummond-Smith: (Berry Pomeroy)
Sally Watson: (Harberton) watsonsm@icloud.com

Sunday services in October

	4th October Trinity 18	11th October Trinity 19	18th October Luke the Evangelist	25th October Last after Trinity
Bridgetown	10.30 Harvest Festival	10.30 Morning Praise	10.30 Holy Communion 18.30 Evening Prayer	10.30 Holy Communion
Totnes	7.00 Silent Prayer 7.30 Morning Office 8.00 Holy Communion 10.30 Morning Praise 18.30 Choral Evensong	7.00 Silent Prayer 7.30 Morning Office 8.00 Holy Communion 10.30 Holy Communion 19.30 Taize	7.00 Silent Prayer 7.30 Morning Office 8.00 Holy Communion 10.30 Holy communion	7.00 Silent Prayer 7.30 Morning Office 8.00 Holy Communion 10.30 Holy Communion 19.30 Evening Light
Ashprington	11.15 Holy Communion	11.15 Harvest Festival	11.15 Holy Communion	9.15 Joint at Cornworthy
Berry Pomeroy	11.15 Harvest Festival	11.15 Holy Communion	11.15 Holy Communion	11.15 Holy Communion
Brooking (contact Sam Wernham livingspirit3@gmail.com)	Open 11-4	Open 11-4	Open 11-4	Open 11-4
Cornworthy	11,15 Joint at Ashprington	9.15 Village Worship	9.15 Holy Communion	9.15 Holy Communion
Dartington	10.30 Harvest Festival	10.30 Celtic Holy Communion	10.30 Dartington Parish Communion	10.30 Dartington Praise
Harberton	10.00 Holy Communion	10.00 Holy Communion	10.00 Morning Praise	10.00 Holy Communion
Marldon	10.00 Holy Communion	10.00 Holy Communion	10.00 Harvest Festival	10.00 Village Worship
Stoke Gabriel	8.15 BCP Holy Communion 11.00 Harvest Festival	8.15 BCP Holy Communion 11.00 Holy Communion	8.15 BCP Holy Communion 11.00 Mattins	8.15 BCP Holy Communion 11.00 Holy Communion 18.30 Choral Evensong
Telephone Service (See weekly newsletter for details)				

Sunday services in November

	1st Nov All Saints	8th Nov Remembrance	15th Nov 2 before Advent	22nd Nov Christ the King	29th Nov Advent 1
Bridgetown	10.30 Holy Communion	10.30 Holy Communion	10.30 Holy Communion 18.30 Evening Prayer	10.30 Holy Communion	10.30 Joint Service with St Mary's
Totnes	7.00 Silent Prayer 7.30 Morning Office 8.00 Holy Communion 10.30 Holy Communion 18.30 Choral Evensong	7.00 Silent Prayer 7.30 Morning Office 8.00 Holy Communion 10.30 Remembrance 19.30 Taize	7.00 Silent Prayer 7.30 Morning Office 8.00 Holy Communion 10.30 Holy communion	7.00 Silent Prayer 7.30 Morning Office 8.00 Holy Communion 10.30 Holy Communion 19.30 Evening Light	7.00 Silent Prayer 7.30 Morning Office 8.00 Holy Communion 10.30 Joint Service with St John's
Ashprington	11.15 Holy Communion	11.15 Remembrance	11.15 Holy Communion	9.15 Joint at Cornworthy	11.15 Holy Communion
Berry Pomeroy	11.15 Morning Praise	10.45 Remembrance	11.15 Holy Communion	11.15 Holy Communion	11.15 Holy Communion
Brooking (contact Sam Wernham livingspirit3@gmail.com)	Open 11-4	Open 11-4	Open 11-4	Open 11-4	Open 11-4
Cornworthy	11.15 Joint at Ashprington	9.15 Village Worship	9.15 Holy Communion	9.15 Holy Communion	9.15 Holy Communion
Dartington	10.30 Morning Prayer	10.30 Remembrance	10.30 Dartington Parish Communion	10.30 Dartington Praise	10.30 Holy Communion
Harberton	10.00 Holy Communion	10.00 Remembrance	10.00 Morning Praise	10.00 Holy Communion	10.30 Holy Communion (Patronal)
Marldon	10.00 Holy Communion Saints and Souls	10.00 Holy Communion (said) Scouts	10.00 Holy Communion	10.00 Village Worship	10.00 Holy Communion
Stoke Gabriel	8.15 BCP Holy Communion 11.00 Holy Communion 4.30 Remembering a Loved One	8.15 BCP Holy Communion 11.00 Remembrance	8.15 BCP Holy Communion 11.00 Mattins	8.15 BCP Holy Communion 11.00 Holy Communion	8.15 BCP Holy Communion 11.00 Holy Communion 18.30 Choral Evensong

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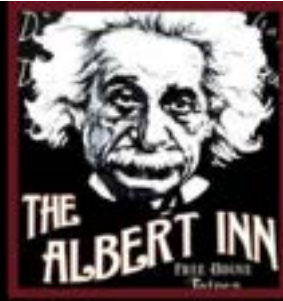
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