

# across ROYSTON

February 2025

**Candlemas Service**  
Sunday 2nd February- 5pm  
Royston Parish Church



## **Blessing of Candles**

Please bring a candle from home to be blessed as part of this service.



Welcome to our new format of the parish magazine, which is now monthly, focused on the content that you want, available online and free. To access the online version please go to our website:

[www.roystonparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.roystonparishchurch.org.uk)

We hope you enjoy this and please feel free to share this with anyone you think might enjoy it too.

# The Treble Makers

## Does your child love to sing?

All are welcome, aged 6-13.

No experience or audition necessary.

Refreshments included for both children and grown-ups.

Led by our Minister of Music, Alexander Trigg.

Every Sunday, **11.45am - 12.30pm**



**St John the Baptist Church,**  
Melbourn Street

More information will be added to the church website shortly:

[roystonparishchurch.org.uk](http://roystonparishchurch.org.uk)

In the meantime, send any questions to Alex at

[music@roystonparishchurch.org.uk](mailto:music@roystonparishchurch.org.uk)

# Contact Information

## CLERGY

Vicar:

The Revd. Dr. Steven Sivyer      01763 243145  
Vicar@roystonparishchurch.org.uk  
(off duty on Monday)\*

Assistant Clergy:

The Revd. John Fidler      01763 241886  
(off duty on Saturday)\*

Ordained Minister

The Revd. Jim Dalgleish      01763 257499  
james.dalgleish.t21@btinternet.com

## LICENSED READERS

Emma Sivyer      07851 688610  
emma@sivyer.org.uk

Canon Reg Bailey      250637  
regbailey@aol.com

**\* Please avoid contacting the staff on their off duty days**

## LAY LEADERS OF WORSHIP

Rob Fox      Robert.fox@virgin.net

## CHURCH WARDENS

Vaughan West  
Vaughan.west@ntlworld.com

Judy Rodgers  
churchwarden@roystonparishchurch.org.uk

## CHURCH OFFICE

Joanne Wallis      07935 774633  
admin@roystonparishchurch.org.uk

## MINISTER OF MUSIC

Alex Trigg  
music@roystonparishchurch.org.uk

## PCC SECRETARY

Mike Maze      01763 245606

## PCC TREASURERS

Jonathan & Charlotte Wicks  
treasurer@roystonparishchurch.org.uk

# Lent Course 2025: Carbon Literacy for Congregations *Save the Dates!*



We have probably all seen the horrific pictures of the wildfires ravaging parts of the city of Los Angeles, reducing complete suburbs to smouldering rubble.

Scientists tell us that such events will become more commonplace, as the increased temperatures caused by global warming are causing more extreme weather (such as strong winds) and increased drying of the vegetation (meaning that fires spread more quickly).

But what can we do to play our part in reducing these problems? This year, our Lent Course offers learning about climate change, carbon footprints and how we can all do our bit to reduce our emissions of the greenhouse gases that lead to global warming.

The course is accredited by the Carbon Literacy Project who, to date, have certified over 117,000 participants in 37 countries and from various organisations (businesses, councils, hospitals, etc). Our course has been specially designed with church congregations in mind. At the end of the course, it is hoped that all participants will make two pledges for



relevant actions they will take to help make the world a better place.

There will be a total of six sessions on consecutive Friday afternoons at church from 1:30-3:30pm on the following dates:

**Friday March 7<sup>th</sup>** – Week 0: Preliminaries: Introductory documentary, Carbon Footprint calculation

**Friday March 14<sup>th</sup>** – Week 1: About Carbon Literacy and the Course, Relevance to Christians, the Science of Climate Change

**Friday March 21<sup>st</sup>** – Week 2: Carbon Footprints, Climate Justice, Action: Food, Co-benefits

**Friday March 28<sup>th</sup>** – Week 3: How is Climate Change affecting us? Climate anxiety and grief, Travel, Introduction to pledges

**Friday April 4<sup>th</sup>** – Week 4: Talking about climate change; Actions on Buildings and Stuff, Pledge ideas

**Friday April 11<sup>th</sup>** – Week 5: Declaring a Climate Emergency and Net Zero targets, Action on Money, Hope for the Future; Preparing Pledges

The course will cost £15 to cover refreshments, all course materials and the cost of applying to receive a certificate. Please speak to Steven if the fee is a barrier to your participation in the course

To book your place, go to <https://bit.ly/4hcKbRF> or scan this QR code.



# Minister's Musings

*Silicon thou art, and unto silicon thou shalt return. (Genesis 3:19 KJV – amended)*

The Prime Minister has just announced a bid push for Artificial Intelligence (AI) to be developed in our nation as I sit down and write this. Recently, an AI-generated picture won an art competition at the Colorado State Fair, and this followed on from AI successes against humans such as in chess. Then the program Cicero achieved human-level performance in the American board game Diplomacy and DeepNash mastered the board game Stratego. Maybe next Christmas Alexa will be able to send messages on our behalf instead of cards, deliver presents by drones, get our smart-oven to cook our dinner and take our Christmas services (the Church of England already has a 'skill' for them). Developments have happened throughout human history, but what is different about this is that we have set about building something that is designed to improve upon us.

A simple robot with four small mechanical legs was given the task of moving from one side of the room to the other, and was programmed using artificial neural networks and reinforcement learning so that the robot could teach itself. After a few days, the robot had learned how to take its first steps and had crossed the room. In getting the robot ready for a formal demonstration, the team examined how it was using its neural network to learn, and they discovered something unexpected: the robot had also taught itself how to read their facial expressions. Realising that observer feedback is data, AI had dedicated a neuron to processing this information. Humans instinctively recognise this choice: we have all stood around cheering on a toddler, because our feedback helps them learn how to walk.

Although Christmas has come to an end, Lent will soon be upon us, and this will begin with Ash Wednesday, and we use this time to re-examine who we are as humans. The bible tells us that we are made of the stuff of the earth (dust) and, when we die, we return to being dust (and millennia later science has backed this up). We are also made in God's image and he himself became human (which we celebrated at Christmas). Therefore, whilst we are not at the stage of creating the Terminator, Pinocchio, Frankenstein's Monster or the Snowman, we are probably far enough down

the line of creating AI that we ought to discern more about God's blueprint for us and whether the ethics that we determine from God's word should guide this rapidly-continuing advancement.

It is interesting that we call it artificial "intelligence", as we are focusing on creating minds rather than whole bodies - our reasoning of ethics still protects us from full human cloning. When we look more closely at what we are developing, AI is only mimicking those parts of the human design that the programmers reckon are worthy, and the rest is treated as if its junk code, kept away from these machines so they are not polluted by it. So what are these parts of our humanity, God's image in us that are being discarded? Intuition, conscience, emotions, uncertainty, meaning-making, story-telling, free will, mistakes, souls. Why did God give us these apparently flawed traits? We use our intuition and conscience to avoid danger and mistakes; our emotions promote healthy relationships and living as a community; uncertainty keeps us seeking out others for guidance and we hold our communities together through meaning-making and storytelling; free will gives us a feeling of purpose and enables us to have relationships with each other and God. Our so-called junk code promotes co-operation and the kind of reciprocal altruism which creates thriving communities. It is as if God knew what he was doing when he created us, even with these potential flaws.

I support the careful advancement of AI and the desire for our nation to be a leading developer. However, God has made us the way he has for a reason. Yes, we are imperfect creatures who inflict suffering on others and we are vulnerable, but I don't believe that God made a mistake when he gave us these characteristics, which also lead to many blessings. I wonder whether the developers of AI would benefit from reflecting more upon our apparent vulnerabilities before eradicating them in the pursuit of improvements upon our human condition. May we also reflect upon our perceived weaknesses and vulnerabilities as we approach Ash Wednesday and, through this, allow God's image and blueprint within us to shine.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

## EVENTS COMING UP!



**HOME START**  
Royston, Buntingford  
& South Cambridgeshire

**QUIZ Night**  
*With Licensed Bar and Raffle*

**Saturday, 22nd February**  
*arrive by 6:45 pm for a 7:30pm start*  
at  
**Seth Ward Community Centre**

Teams of up to 6 people welcome  
*(don't forget to give your team a quirky name!)*

Can't get a team together but still want to join in the fun?  
Contact us and we will include you in a team!

**Tickets: £13.50 per person**  
*(includes supper - fish, chicken, sausage or veggie option & chips)*

**\*Book your tickets by 10th February\***

Telephone **01763 262262** to book your tickets  
or email [events@hsrsc.org.uk](mailto:events@hsrsc.org.uk)  
Home-Start Royston, Buntingford & South Cambridgeshire  
Charity No. 1165385

MORE INFO  
↓  
  
SCAN ME

If you wish to make a donation to the church, then please hold your phone's camera over this image then touch the link that appears





## EVENTS COMING UP!

Like to test your general knowledge?

Then come to Royston Parish Church quiz.



WHEN: Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February, 7 for 7:30 pm

WHERE: Royston Parish Church

WHO: Teams of up to 8, £8 per person

To register a team or interest in joining a team, contact:  
Duncan Rodgers email: [duncanrodgers66@gmail.com](mailto:duncanrodgers66@gmail.com)

Licensed Bar

Bring your own nibbles. Opportunity to enter a raffle on the night.

All proceeds in aid of church funds.




**SAMUEL**



**TEA TIME PRAISE!**




**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> February 3.30 pm**

**ALL WELCOME!**

 **Family & Elderly Shoebox Appeal**  
A Big Thank You to

**St. John the Baptist Parish Church**

**25,633 Shoeboxes!** for helping us to deliver Christmas Shoeboxes to some of the poorest people in Eastern Europe. Every box contained a smile from you to them.

Link to Hope  
Link House,  
Ferring Street, Ferring,  
West Sussex, BN12 5JP

[www.linktohope.co.uk](http://www.linktohope.co.uk)  
[info@linktohope.co.uk](mailto:info@linktohope.co.uk)  
T: 01903 529333

Big Charity No: 100022

## Heath Watch with Holly (the little dog)

*Welcome to the Thirty-seventh in a series of dog walking diaries, documenting the flora and fauna on the beautiful heath as the seasons change.*



## November and December 2024

It was a wet start to November and little pleasure was to be found walking in the cold and damp, the only appealing things to mention are the carpet of leaves which had fallen to the ground and had started their decay, each one unique, their colours ranging from green through yellow to orange and brown and the huge bunches of mistletoe which by now were visible on the trees. I noticed many spent fireworks from the 5th November celebrations. Later in the month when the news informed us of heavy snow and extreme cold weather in the north of the country it became increasingly cold here too, though not as bad. The leaves froze and made a crackling sound when we walked on them, the rookeries were noisy and as I've said before the sound of a rookery is one of my favourite sounds in nature and there were some lovely bright days when I watched red kites and buzzards flying and hovering against the bright blue sky.

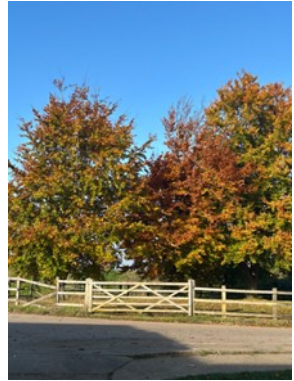


Around the middle of the month we had a full moon, the November full moon is called the Beaver Moon, possibly because beavers are busy at this time making their winter dams or alternatively because at this time of year the native Americans are setting beaver traps, I much prefer to think that it's the former. Then we had "Storm Bert" and windy conditions which Holly dislikes even more than she does the cold, and towards the end of the month there were frozen puddles in the car park. I noticed how busy the blue tits, great tits, and occasionally some of the less common members of the tit family were becoming.

December started much the same as November, cold winds and rain forming a prelude to Storm Darragh (Storms are named in alphabetic order, I missed storm Conall altogether perhaps it didn't reach this far)! December's full moon is called the Cold Moon.

No matter how damp and dreary the weather gets the keen golfers take to the golf course, sometimes we stand and watch them take their shots.

The Christmas tree man was back again selling trees in the paddock by the car park, a familiar and welcome sight. One day, following bad weather first thing, many dog walkers took to the heath at the same time, there were so many dogs, many play together, some like Holly show their displeasure by barking loudly as if their personal space has been invaded. It is good to pass time with other dog walkers.



Seagulls were plentiful, it used to be said that this was because the weather was bad at the coast but I rather think they come from the local landfill sites.

The grass doesn't grow in the winter and the stripes were still visible from when it was last mown which was quite a few weeks before.

Walking the dog on Christmas day has an atmosphere different to all other days, even the dogs appear to know that things are different. It was a mild day this year so we took our time, wandering leisurely and spending longer talking to others.

The month ended with some cold wet days, the small birds were busy finding food, I noticed a lot of wrens and leaf buds were starting to appear on the trees or as the local people used to say, "the trees are getting fat", spring is on the way.

More next time.....



## MISSION OF THE MONTH ROYSTON HOME-START

Royston Home-Start is a charity which has been helping local families since 1983.

Being a parent has never been easy. It can be lonely, frustrating, heart-breaking and overwhelming. Life-changing events can happen to anyone.



Royston Home-Start support families in Royston and surrounding villages, Buntingford and surrounding villages, and the villages in South Cambridgeshire in the SG8 postcode.

They support local families with children aged 9 and under who may be struggling with issues such as post-natal depression, isolation, physical and mental health problems, relationship problems, multiple-aged children, bereavement, and many others.

They provide a volunteer-led Home Visiting Service, and three specialised Family Support Groups in Royston, Buntingford and South Cambs..

Every Home-Start volunteer is trained to work alongside the family to overcome the challenges in family life, building up the parents' strengths and providing the support they need.

There is also a School Readiness Programme which supports families to prepare their children for school.

It is possible to volunteer to work in Royston Home-Start as a Home Visiting Volunteer, a Family Support Group Volunteer, a Fund-Raising Volunteer, or a Trustee. Details can be found on their website. To get in touch :

You can ring on: 01763 262262

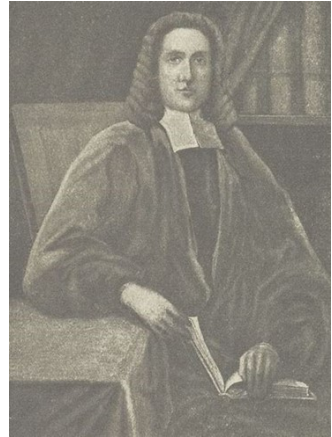
Email at: [admin@hrs.org.uk](mailto:admin@hrs.org.uk)

*As a church, St. John the Baptist is committed to giving 10% of our regular income to charities and missions. Royston Home-Start is one of those we regularly support.*

## CHRISTIAN OF THE MONTH THOMAS BRAY

*Commemorated by the Church of England on February 15th.*

Thomas Bray (c.1658-1730), an Anglican clergyman, is known as the founder of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), both of which survive to this day. He was responsible for the organising of the Anglican church in the colony of Maryland. His passion for mission was partly carried out by his establishment of parish libraries, with 80 in Britain during his lifetime, and 39 in the colonies.



Bray was born in modest circumstances in Marston, Shropshire, educated at the local grammar school and as scholar at Oxford, and first became a parish priest in the Midlands.

He was a devoted scholar whose own library contained works by George Herbert, Lancelot Andrewes, William Laud and many others.

In the 1690s he wrote his *Catechetical Lectures*. Catechizing by teaching and discussion was serious work with different groups, and Bray compiled collections of prayers from the Bible, Psalms and Prayer Book for his students and confirmation candidates to study.

His book sold well, attracted much attention, and impressed the Bishop of London, Dr. Compton, who was also diocesan of all the colonies. The colony of Maryland had endowed an established Church with numerous parishes like those in England and wished to have a priest to superintend all the parishes. They asked Compton to send out as his Commissary an experienced priest, and he sent Bray, who agreed - on condition that funds were raised to supply the Maryland clergy with books. Bray had discovered that only "the poorest sort" of clergy, those unable to buy the necessary books, would go abroad. This led to the founding of the SPCK in 1698, an educational mission to supply religious books.

He travelled to Maryland in 1699, where he organised 30 Anglican parishes, preached against slavery and the treatment of native American, and established 17 parish libraries. On his return to England he extended his scheme to establish parochial libraries in every deanery in England and Wales, to supply a reservoir of theological books, which were to be loaned to the clergy. His aim was to establish a reading and informed clergy, and convenient centres.

In 1701 he helped secure a Royal Charter to establish the SPG. The final years of his ministry were spent as rector of St. Botolph's Aldgate, London, where a memorial plaque can be seen.

He continued his work in education, writing, the dissemination of Christian literature, prison reform and many other worthy causes. He died in 1730 having received little recognition in his own time, but leaving a legacy which has taught and inspired clergy and missionaries ever since.



**Can you spot the new arrival at our Nativity Scene?**

# Sunday Services for February 2025

## Services to be held in Royston Parish Church

2nd February	9 am	Said Communion Service
	10.30 am	Sung Communion Service with Choir, Children's Church followed by refreshments and Treble Makers
	5.00 pm	Candlemas Service
9th	9 am	Said Communion Service
	10.30 am	Sung Communion Service with Choir, Children's Church followed by refreshments and Treble Makers
	12.30 pm	Baptism service
	3.30 pm	Tea Time Praise!
16th	9 am	Said Communion Service
	10.30 am	Sung Communion Service with Choir, Children's Church followed by refreshments and Treble Makers
23rd	9 am	BCP Holy Communion Service
	10.30 am	Sung Communion Service with Choir, Children's Church followed by refreshments and Treble Makers
	12.30 pm	Baptism Service