

October 2023

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The **Messenger** Merstham & Gatton Team Ministry
the Parish magazine for Merstham

The Parish of Merstham

Merstham Parish has as its parish church St Katharine's (an 'ancient' parish church); it is part of the Merstham & Gatton Team Ministry. The other parishes in the Team are South Merstham (All Saints church) and Gatton (St Andrew's church).

St Katharine's is at the foot of Church Hill, just off the A23 to the north of the village (RH1 3BJ).

Mission Statement

We aim to be a compassionate, caring and welcoming Church, which is faithful in prayer and worship, in our search for God's Kingdom, and in our service to our neighbour.

We are here to serve you . . .

- ✠ Baptism
- ✠ Confirmation
- ✠ Marriage
- ✠ Funerals
- ✠ Home blessing
- ✠ Home communion
- ✠ Confessions
- ✠ Anointing and Last Rites

Please see the contact details on the back cover if you wish to discuss one of the above. There is no fee for any of the above apart from the Marriage and Funeral services, for which statutory charges apply.

Weekday services

Tuesday 9.15 a.m. Morning Prayer St Katharine

The **Messenger**

Merstham & Gatton Team Ministry
the Parish magazine for Merstham

I never planned to come to Merstham (part 7) — a journey in reverse

In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.

Proverbs 16: 9

Now a full three weeks into my new role as Rector – still very much glowing in the welcome, support, and encouragement we have received as a family – I am naturally very reflective as I sit to write my first reflection for the *Messenger*.

For most of my life, being ordained clergy was never on the cards, but clearly God thought otherwise. As with all our Christian lives, looking forward, it isn't always easy to discern where God is leading but looking back through our lives it is clear that He has indeed been leading, and hopefully this gives us confidence to trust where he is leading us next. So in my coming series of reflections I thought I'd retrace my steps and explore how God led me here as your priest, pastor and minister beginning with Part 7 and working backwards!

I believe I've passed through Merstham twice previously when my ministry was but a twinkle in God's eye: the first time (several times) as a

Dad driving my children to away matches against Merstham FC in the East Surrey junior leagues. The second time will have been on my solo retreat walking the Pilgrim's Way as I rattled St Katharine's door after 6pm, in the fruitless hope of a pilgrim's stamp. It reminds me a little of Jesus' disciples who, for much of their adult life before being called up, would have wandered around Galilee, Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives with no inkling of the wonders God had in store for them through their coming years as disciples of Jesus.

My own path to Merstham came through a conviction Gen and I had carried for many years that God was calling us to take the gospel to the margins to explore new ways of doing church (as God always has done through history and will continue to do until Christ returns) and to work ceaselessly to draw people into new or deepening faith to grow and sustain His Church (at least as long as we draw breath). In time this calling

I never planned to come to Merstham . . .

aligned with a sense that St Mary's in Reigate (where we were previously serving) had to share its human and material resources with its brothers and sisters in Christ in other neighbouring contexts who may not be blessed with such resources. In time a vague sense became a vision and aspiration, which became a conversation with the Archdeacon, which became a job application, which became a role – and the rest, as they say, is . . . well, all in the future still.

However, the culmination of the development of that sense of calling which was conceived and birthed in God's way and in His good timing gives me tremendous confidence and, yes, excitement that God has Merstham very much in His plans and purposes for the coming years and has honoured me with a part to play in that.

But my challenge to you, dear reader, is to ask you to reflect on what has led *you* here today? Looking back, how has God led you in the

past? What has he gifted you with today? What's on your heart? And what are the plans and purposes He has for you to serve Him and to see His Kingdom grow in Merstham? As specialised (I nearly said 'lofty') as my calling may be it is no different – precisely the same – as the way God works His purposes out through *all* His people. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door shall be opened, and God will lead you onward.

Where is God leading me next? Well, hopefully no further than our parish boundaries for the foreseeable future! But in the coming years I am really excited to serve our churches during a season of challenge and change. My prayer is that we all become more prayerful, more alert and more expectant of seeing what God is doing around us. And more than that I pray that as we acknowledge God's guiding hand in our homes and Church that this would release fresh faith in us to expect even more.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, Amen!

Ephesians 3: 20

Services at St Katharine's

All services start at 10.00 a.m. unless otherwise indicated

October

1	Holy Communion
8	Morning Praise
15	Holy Communion
22	Morning Praise
29	Team Holy Communion at All Saints

November

5	Holy Communion
12	Remembrance Sunday (starts 9.30 a.m.) Remembrance at the village War Memorial (10.50)
19	Holy Communion
26	Team Holy Communion at All Saints

December

3	Holy Communion
10	Morning Praise
17	Holy Communion
22 (Friday)	Carol Service (time tba)
24	Holy Communion
31	Team Holy Communion at All Saints

Gospel readings for October

Libby Green

These notes are based on bible studies in Guidelines, the bible reading resource published three times a year by the Bible Reading Fellowship. This month's notes are credited to BRF contributors Revd Dr Elizabeth Raine, Revd Dr Peter Walker, Revd Dr David Wenham and Revd Nigel G Wright.

1 October (Trinity 17)

Matthew 21: 23-32

The authority of Jesus questioned and the Parable of the Two Sons

The chief priests and elders were very angry with Jesus because of his violent actions in the temple the previous day (verses 12,13), and they challenged him to justify his authority to teach and perform miracles. Jesus responded by challenging them regarding the authority of John the Baptist but they were trapped – if John was from God they condemned themselves for not believing in him; if they said that he wasn't from God they risked an angry reaction from the crowd.

Jesus refused to answer their question until they answered his, and went on to tell a story about a vineyard owner and his two sons. One son was rebellious but ultimately

obedient, and the other appeared obedient but then rebelled, so proving himself a liar and a hypocrite.

So it was with the religious leaders; they had the privilege of sonship and knew the right things to say, but did the wrong thing in refusing to recognise that Jesus was sent by God – a repetition of their reception of John the Baptist. The tax collectors and prostitutes, who regarded John as a prophet (the first for over 400 years) and who had also responded to Jesus's message, would enter the Kingdom of God before the religious leaders.



Gospel readings for October

8 October (Trinity 18)

Matthew 21: 33-end

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

This parable strengthens the message of the previous passage; the tenants were not only disobedient but also murderers. In this scathing critique, the chief priests (who were Sadducees, representing the establishment and strictly observing the written law when making decisions and disciplining fellow Jews) and the Pharisees (a traditionalist social movement who also taught scrupulous observance of the Mosaic Law but believed in an afterlife, with actions on earth affecting life after death), were not only likened to the rebellious sons in the previous story but were now being depicted as the rebellious tenants, and they could not have failed to recognise that Jesus's words were aimed directly at them.

It was a familiar allegory: the vineyard was Israel, Yahweh was the owner and the tenants were the nation's leaders. The slaves who were sent to collect the owner's produce were the prophets and, of course, the owner's son who was thrown out of the vineyard and killed was Jesus, who would soon be crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem. When the

owner came he would have the tenants put to death and lease the vineyard to others, who would act honourably and give him the produce which was rightly his.

Jesus went on to quote directly from Psalm 118, comparing himself to 'the stone that the builders rejected . . .' because it didn't fit and which became the keystone or cornerstone (or the capstone – the



Abel Grimmer, 1590. Private collection

word can be translated as either) and therefore the foundation of the new temple God was creating, or the stone which completed the finished building. Perhaps the word was deliberately chosen because it could

Gospel readings for October

mean both – Jesus was both the foundation and the completion. The same quotation was used to interpret the resurrection in Acts 4¹¹ (cornerstone) and 1 Peter 2⁷ (capstone). Jesus was clearly hinting

that he was the son of the owner (the Son of God) and it explained his earlier action in the temple; he had been the unrecognised son of the rightful owner looking for fruit.

15 October (Trinity 19)

Matthew 22: 1-14

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

Jesus continues with a third parable, yet again designed to reveal his own mysterious identity as well as to expose the inappropriate responses of those who should have welcomed him. Who is this Jesus? Is he just a prophet? No, once again Jesus hints that he has a unique status – the ‘son’ of the vineyard owner and now the ‘son’ of the king. Quite clearly, since Jesus is talking about the ‘kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew’s Jewish way of referring to the kingdom of God), the king is Israel’s God. So Jesus is his Son. (Walker).

Jesus’s arrival gave Jerusalem the opportunity to welcome the king’s son and celebrate his wedding. Israel, God’s chosen nation, had already received its invitation but responded with indifference, hostility and violence. The burning of their city was a veiled hint about the future destruction of Jerusalem.

But the wedding was still to take place, and the king’s slaves went out into the streets and gathered anyone and everyone they could find – both good and bad – to fill the wedding hall. Verses 11-14 seem at odds with the king’s generosity (and it has been

suggested that they may have been edited in from a different parable, although most commentators readily link them with the previous section); if brought in from the streets perhaps this underdressed man had no clothes fit for a wedding. However, David Wenham’s interpretation is that although the banquet was to continue, with the good and bad invited, sin still mattered. The man who was dressed inappropriately was not an unfortunate poor man who couldn’t afford nice clothes, but someone who wanted to enjoy the feast but couldn’t be bothered to

Gospel readings for October

change – a warning that we can only enjoy God's grace if we live in the king's way.

The image of God's kingdom as a wedding feast first appears in Isaiah 25 and is repeated in Revelation 19. For Jesus it was already taking place and the invitation to join it was for everyone.



The Parable of the Marriage Feast; Brunswick Monogrammist c1500s; (an anonymous Netherlands painter whose forte was complex pieces of art featuring secular revelry with a discreet message.

22 October (Trinity 20)

The Question about Paying Taxes

The Pharisees (who opposed the Roman occupation), the Sadducees (a sect of wealthy, pro-Roman, aristocratic priests) and the Herodians (supporters of Herod Antipas who collaborated with the Romans), were usually at loggerheads with each other. Now, however, back in the temple on the day after Jesus had driven out the traders and money changers, they were united as they actively plotted to catch him out and expose him as a dangerous revolutionary.

As Jesus continued his long series of parables, they started off by flattering him and then set the trap. Was it lawful to pay taxes to the

Matthew 22: 15-22

Emperor? They were referring to the annual census tax of one denarius paid to Caesar with the coin which bore his image, so there were overtones here of idolatry and spiritual compromise. Potentially Jesus was unable to give an answer which would satisfy all his opponents but, by asking them to produce the coin, Jesus subverted any accusation



Denarius, Emperor Tiberius, AD 14 - 37

Gospel readings for October

The Tribute Money; James Tissot 1886-94; Brooklyn Museum



that, in paying the tax himself, he was compromised. The coin would have been engraved with an image of the emperor and an inscription implying his divinity: Jesus's answer distanced

him from the anti-Roman, nationalist stance and it confounded his critics – “they were amazed and they left him and went away”.

Nigel Wright says *He seems remarkably relaxed about the whole affair, to the point of regarding payment as a non-issue. The rule of Caesar cannot be avoided but, like all governments, it is a temporary arrangement, to be abolished when God's kingdom finally arrives – so play along. Caesar should be given what belonged to him.*

Gospel readings for October

29 October (Trinity 21)

The Greatest Commandment and the Question about David's Son

In the passage immediately preceding this one the Sadducees had put another trick question to Jesus which he had deflected by exposing their lack of scriptural knowledge to the listening crowd. Now the Pharisees, the experts in God's law, took over with a question to this "upstart" teacher from Galilee about the Torah. It was a very complicated subject: we may think of the Ten Commandments but there were around 613 laws in the Old Testament – mainly in the Pentateuch – together with temple regulations and many others added by Jewish tradition. "Which is the greatest?" asked the Pharisees.

Jesus's response was to go back to basics. What was the main intention of the Law and what was God's blueprint for human existence? He quoted the Great Commandment from Deuteronomy 6, the foundational text of Israel's life – "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind (substituted by Jesus for the original "strength")" – followed by "...you

shall love your neighbour as yourself" from the moral holiness code in Leviticus 19. *Loving God with the mind suggests reflection upon who God is, what God has done, and how God can be glorified* (Wright). Everything else, Jesus said, hung on these two commandments, which give God due reverence and obedience and asks us to treat others



The Messiah; Imogen Reid, derived from a pane of glass in a 12th century church window

Gospel readings for October

as we would have God treat us- with forgiveness, mercy and grace.

Now, while the Pharisees were still gathered around him, Jesus asked them a question – “What do you think about the Messiah – whose son is he?”. When they replied “David” Jesus again showed his knowledge of scripture. He quoted Psalm 110, which is attributed to David, and asked “If David thus calls him Lord,

how can he be his son?”. Jesus knew himself to be the Messiah, that he had come from God’s right hand and would one day be Lord of all, but the Pharisees couldn’t resolve the dissonance between the Messiah being simultaneously David’s son and David’s Lord. They were defeated – “No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions”.

Working towards a greener church

Jill Gunn {jill@gunn.org}

Judith Hanson {judithvoices@yahoo.co.uk}

Nature Conservation Group Event in October

We are gathering again at 10.00 a.m. on Saturday 28 October to plant bulbs in Mrs Puckle’s Garden (behind the Church Room) and to carry out an informal wildlife survey in the churchyard as a follow-up to our success back in the early summer with *Churches Count On Nature*.

All are welcome. Don’t worry if you haven’t joined us for a while or will be new to the group – we very much look forward to seeing you.

Please meet on Church Hill near the kissing-gate entrance to St Katharine’s Church. If you have tools suitable for bulb planting, please bring them. If not, don’t worry – we shall have some. We don’t know what the weather will bring, so please bring suitable footwear.

Refreshments will be served in the Church Room afterwards. We hope to see you there.

Working towards a greener church

Another Volunteer Group possibility

St Katharine's has been contacted by John Leighton, a teacher at the Royal Alexandra and Albert School, who runs a 'volunteering' group.

He is seeking worthwhile projects that a group of some 15 students, aged 11-16, could do for about two hours on Saturday mornings. He is asking if he could bring such a group

to St Katharine's at some point in the future to (for example) use garden tools to maintain areas of the grounds. We are letting him know we are interested, and John Callow will talk with the Working Party and the Nature Conservation Group to agree possibilities.

On Tuesday 19 September we had a guided tour of a unique garden in Shirley (near Croydon).

The Wilderness Garden sits in the grounds of an MHA Care Home in Shirley Church Road. It was first created by Revd William Wilks, vicar of Shirley (and former secretary of the Royal Horticultural Society), between 1904 and 1923. After his

death the garden was left to grow wild.

MHA bought the land for a care home and decided to retain this unique portion of the garden. Over recent years head gardeners and willing volunteers have worked hard



Working towards a greener church

to restore it to its former glory. Within it are rare and unusual areas including bog, acid and wildlife areas.

One aim is to ‘waste nothing, recycle everything’ and an excellent example of this is their dead hedges. (A dead hedge is a barrier constructed from cut branches, saplings, and foliage so the

garden has no need to arrange for council collection of garden debris.)

The Wilderness can be easily accessed by Care Home residents and staff along permanent walkways. This unique reclaimed land is open on special days throughout the year, offering access to a hidden heritage garden in South London.

The Wilderness Garden can be found at 17 Shirley Church Rd, Croydon CR9 5AL. Please check opening times via their website, which is at <https://www.mha.org.uk/the-wilderness>

‘What’s stopping us stopping climate change?’

The Surrey Climate Commission and the Institute for Sustainability hosted this event on 28 September at the Leatherhead Theatre to consider what’s blocking the change and discuss what can be done.

Following our Prime Minister’s rowing back on key green pledges recently this event has become even more relevant. We hope to report more next month.

The Merstham & Gatton Team website is at

mgmtmchurches.org.uk

Working towards a greener church

Lorna Roche visit

Lorna is a member of the Walker family, many of whose members lived in Merstham and are buried in the churchyard. Meadowside in Quality Street was the house where some of them lived.

Andrew Walker was her great-grandfather. She makes occasional

visits from her home in Witney to tend the family graves and was very keen to learn more about our Eco plans when she came to the churchyard recently. She hopes to be returning regularly, and to learn more when she can.



A Rocha UK Easy Eco Tip for October

Provide food and shelter for wildlife now and in preparation for next year. Clean all your bird feeders to avoid the spread of disease to winter migrants and put up a nest box well in advance of the breeding season. A nest box could also prove a cosy spot for small birds to spend the night on particularly cold winter nights ahead.

Saturday 25 November — St Katharine

25 November is traditionally St Katharine's Patronal Festival

To mark the occasion there will be an art exhibition during the day and our usual St Katharine's Supper in the evening, both held in the Church Room

10.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.

**Selling Exhibition of watercolour paintings
by Libby Green**

The framed paintings will be unpriced and each will be available to buy in return for a donation of £50 or more. All money raised will go to the St Katharine's Fabric Fund as a contribution towards fitting out the new church extension.

Coffee, tea and cakes will be available all day

from 7.00 p.m.

St Katharine's Bring and Share Supper



Our annual parish meal to celebrate our patronal saint, St Katharine

This will be followed by Compline at around 9.00 p.m.





The All Saints

Dog Show & Craft Fair

Sunday, 8th October

Crossways Green, Battlebridge Lane, Merstham

Entrance to the Green: Free – Pay to enter the dog show

Food & Drink Vans on site for refreshments

including our Cider Shack & Spiced Wine Tent



Dog Show starts at 1.30pm

profits in aid of Many Tears Rescue Charity

Classes: Cutest Puppy, Best Adolescent, Prettiest Bitch, Handsome Dog, Golden Oldie, Best Rescue, Best in Show + Super Sausage Catcher.

£3 per entry

Register on the day or, preferably in advance, by emailing
allsaintsdogshow@gmail.com

Come and get early Xmas gifts from our range of Craft stalls

A GREAT AFTERNOON OUT FOR ALL!



Trusted Tradespeople

Central heating and domestic gas work

Carnvale Ltd

Nic Mills

Chaldon

07904 389891 / 01883 346217 or carnvaleltd@yahoo.co.uk

I should like to recommend Nic Mills of Carnvale Ltd. based in Chaldon and Checkatrade approved, who I have used for servicing and repairing my gas boiler for a number of years. He is a very reliable and likeable chap.

[John Turner]

Carpentry and wood-working

Wooded Hill

Steve

Dorking

07740 948411 / 0800 6444411 or info@wooded-hill.co.uk

Steve has done several extensive pieces of work for us, including making our new gates and laying part of a parquet floor. We would recommend him highly for anything that involves working with wood.

[Chris & Libby Green]

Computer supplies

INKplus Merstham

Vince

[{inkplus.merstham@gmail.com}](mailto:inkplus.merstham@gmail.com) or 07812 381588

Vince used to have a shop in South Merstham. He still supplies all types of printer cartridges and some other stationery associated with computers.

If you phone him with your requirements he will deliver to your door at a time convenient to you, and he has a card machine for payment.. I have found this service very useful.

[Judith Hanson]

Trusted Tradespeople

All building work, especially carpentry

G E Woolacott & Co.

Craig Woolacott

Oakley, North Station Approach, South Nutfield RH1 4JF
01737 822407 (mobile) 07801 011247

Craig is really reliable, punctual, professional, does all areas of building work, especially good at carpentry. He built our garage about 15 years ago, plus numerous other jobs.

[John Callow]

Electrician

Electriserv

Mark Lervy

Alpine Road, Redhill RH1 2HY
07738 490871

Mark was very helpful when the main electricity supply cable to our house failed. He came out on a Saturday evening between Christmas and New Year and made a temporary repair, returning a few days later to complete a permanent repair.

[Chris & Libby Green]

Flowers

A & S Flower Studio

4 Brighton Road, Lower Kingswood KT20 6SY
01737 831444

I have been using A & S for some years and regularly order our church flowers though them, as I find they are of excellent quality. I would highly recommend this very reliable family-run florist. Flowers for every occasion – birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, funerals – have a look at their website. Same-day local delivery available on orders placed before 2pm.

[Maggie Kippen]

Clergy and staff

Team Rector

Revd Nigel Griffiths

Licensed reader	Christiana Agwuegbo	642477
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Merstham PCC

Churchwardens	Simon Beirne	01883 347500
	Chris Green	644145
Hon Secretary	Ann Beirne	01883 347500
Hon Treasurer	Dan Hopcroft	643944
Sacristan	Libby Green	644145
Electoral Roll	Ann Beirne	01883 347500
Gift Aid Secretary	Dan Hopcroft	643944
Safeguarding Officers	Maggie Kippen, Simon Beirne	

St Katharine's

Tower Captain	Jack Pease	07443 033294
Churchyard	John Callow	644753
Church Flowers	Maggie Kippen	832757
Church Cleaning	Libby Green	644145
Church Room lettings	Chris Green	644145
Bible Reading Fellowship co-ordinator	John Turner	646201

Parish magazine (The Messenger)

Editor	Chris Green	644145
	mersthammessenger@yahoo.co.uk	

Bellringing practice (St Katharine's)	Wednesday, 7.45 – 9.15 p.m.
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Beavers (age 6 - 8)	Jack Pease
	peasealt@gmail.com

Beavers start at the age of six and the Merstham Colony works closely with the church.

Unless otherwise stated, all addresses are in Merstham and all telephone numbers on the 01737 exchange