ELY CATHEDRAL

November, 2026.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Welcome to your 70th congregational and community newsletter. My apologies that the newsletter comes a few days late; I spent the last week of October on my annual retreat and so everything is slightly behind…

SILENCE!

My retreat was with the monks at the (Anglican) Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield in West Yorkshire. There were nine of us who had come to this retreat, spending six days together in silence, apart from an hour a day with your spiritual director, where you talked about how the previous day had gone and were given a passage of scripture to ruminate over and suggestions for avenues of prayer. Otherwise, you joined the monks at their services (Mattins, Midday Prayer & Eucharist, Evensong and Compline) and at their meals. It isn't exactly a rest but it is a wonderful chance to come back to yourself, to catch up with your prayers and return to what is most important and renew or rediscover your relationship with God. It is a very peaceful place, set in twenty acres of grounds so there's plenty of space to wander; there is also a bookshop and you are not locked in so you can always escape into the town of Mirfield if you want to!

Retreats aren't just for the clergy (four of the nine of us were lay people) and while you may not be able to spare a week, they run shorter retreats and anyone can book to come and share in the life of the monastery for any period of time throughout the year. I warmly commend this to you: the world is fast, noisy and sometimes rather toxic and we need specific times to recharge our spiritual batteries, lest we find ourselves running on empty or finding we've become a ChINO – Christian in name only.

The Community of the Resurrection isn't the only place you can visit. Have a look at the Society for Promoting Retreats' website https://promotingretreats.org/ and the Anglican Religious Life Project Visit a Community - The Anglican Religious Life Project. There are lots of places where we can step back from the world in order to return to it renewed in a spirit of loving service.

MOTHERS' UNION

On the subject of the spirit of loving service, to celebrate the **150th Anniversary of the Mothers' Union,** the M.U. Diocesan trustees have installed a birdbath in the Almonry Garden, which was dedicated by The Revd Mike Banyard (previous M.U. chaplain) on 15th October. It can be found in the further part of the garden, and is already in use by blackbirds, sparrows, a wren, pigeons and a thrush!

Members of the Mothers' Union in Ely Diocese will again be marking the **16 days of Activism Against Gender Violence** which runs from November 25th - December 12th (Human Rights Day). There will be an exhibition "The Souls of Our Shoes" in the South Transept, which uses original quotes from abuse survivors, and is poignant and moving. Members will take part in a Global day of Action, on Saturday 28th November at midday, with a Prayer Vigil in St Dunstan's Chapel, followed by a Silent Protest at the West Front of the Cathedral at 1.03pm, to mark the fact that 1 in 3 women in the world suffer Gender Abuse in their lifetime. Members of the congregation are warmly invited to join them for either event.

I'm Dreaming of a *Green Christmas*

In Autumn, Canon Jenny and a few of our congregation enjoyed a challenging book group reading Ruth Valerio's 'Say Yes to Life'. Encouraging us to think theologically about the impact of how we live and climate change, we ended the final session by challenging ourselves to 'meatfree midweek'. And thought we'd invite others to join us in this commitment! This is a small step towards eating less meat, by committing to go meat free for one (or more!) days a week. Some of us are already vegan, some vegetarian, and some will try to be 'flexiterian' more often. Consider how this might fit in with your lifestyle and speak with others for inspiration and yummy recipes.



Aside from this invitation, the group decided to challenge the community to a 'greener' Christmas. Here are three ways you might want to think about the planet, as well as our neighbours, as we look towards Christmas:



Shop Local - support smaller and independent businesses , who have a lower climate impact and pay fair wages. Or try shopping second-hand - this is a way to support charities while cutting down on what is going to landfill.

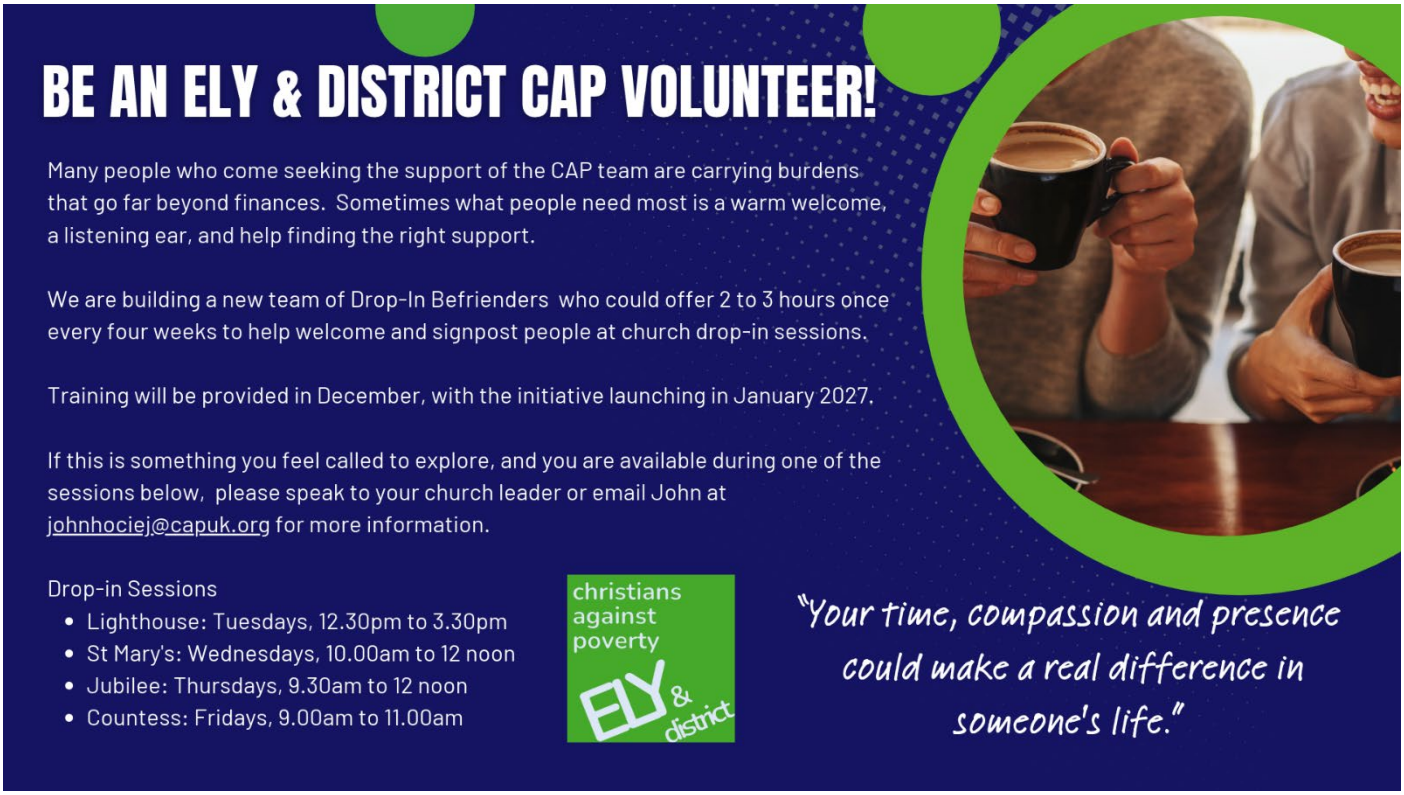


Use paper gift wrap, real ribbon, and paper tape - there are many option now for gift wrap and tape that can be recycled. Using real ribbon means that it can be reused. Or you could even use fabric - old scarves or scrap fabric and add a beautiful, personal touch.

Gift an experience or a homemade gift - something you have made, no matter how small, can be far more meaningful than adding to someone's 'stuff'. Similarly, an experience - it doesn't need to be for skydiving, a cup of coffee and cake at a favourite coffee shop can be just the antidote to beat the January blues. Or sponsor a wildlife habitat, or conservation project in someone's name — a thoughtful gift that supports the natural world.

A powerful reminder was that we don't have to change everything overnight - small but determined steps will help us to live more lightly and simply, enjoying the beauty and joy of God's creation.

Small steps
Big difference



REMEMBER

November is traditionally known as the Month of the Holy Souls, as we keep All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day. The mists and the drawing in of the nights means the outside world in a sense reflects our spiritual concerns and it is our great privilege as Christians to be able to pray for the faithful departed and witness to the world that we can afford to remember and face death precisely because it is not the end, but has been finally defeated by Jesus Christ in his own death and resurrection. I commend to your prayers, therefore, the souls of Sandy Wakely (long-term home communicant and wife of our Licenced Lay Minister Alan Wakely) who died on 3rd November, and Mavis Matthews (also a long-term member of our congregation) who died on 5th November. We pray too for their families and all who mourn them. Sandy's funeral will be here at 11.30am on 1st December.

Canon Jim Garrard's ashes were interred in a plot just north of the altar in Bishop West's Chapel at the end of October. Jim's widow, The Revd Dr Ros Lane, and Canon Reveley officiated at the short service which was attended by Ros' parents, Jim's mother and their children along with a small number of close friends and family. Do take a look at the very fine brass plate that marks the location of the ashes when you are passing the Chapel. May he, with Sandy and with Mavis, rest in peace and rise in glory.

SAINTS PRESERVE US

Finally, just to remind you that we close this month with our celebration of the *Protoclete* (now there's a word for you!), Saint Andrew the Apostle, on 30th November. *Protoclete* is Greek for 'First to be called', which is what Andrew was among the apostles. He is Patron Saint of Scotland, and also Russia and Ukraine. It is a good time then to join with him in renewing our prayer for peace between those two countries. In addition to the 8am celebration that day, there will also be a Eucharist at 12.10pm.

With the assurance of my prayers as we seek to serve the Gospel, I am,
yours ever in the Lord,

Rob

The Rev'd Dr Robert Mackley,
Canon Residentiary & Canon Pastor.