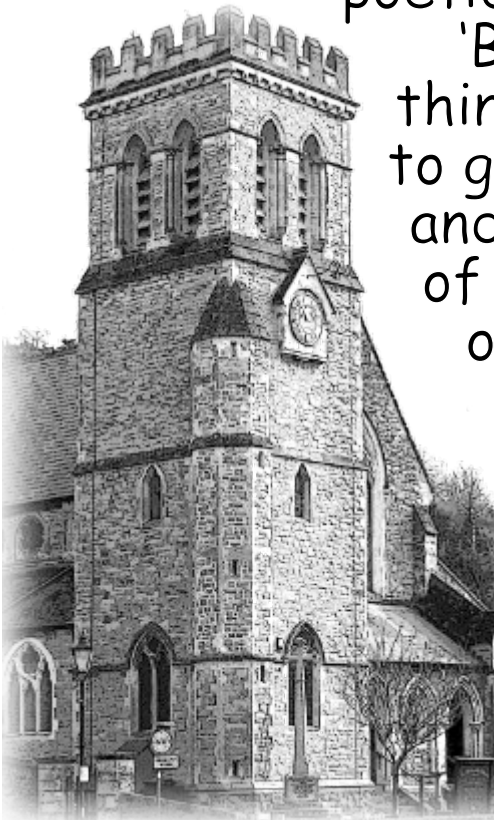


Beer Parish News

2025 November

A bumper edition to cheer us up this dreary November. All the usual items, plus a heartfelt poetic tribute to the 'Bard of Beer', things to do, places to go, and a pull-out and keep calendar of all that's being organised for a festive December. Plus the Autumn show and more...
Look inside!



St Michael's... ..and Village

CHURCH DIRECTORY

www.coastalchurch.org.uk

VICAR Rev Justin Montague coastalvicar@hotmail.com 07308 264614

Parish Administrator Helen Knight seatonchurch@hotmail.co.uk 23656

Parish Finance Officer Helen Moulding cmctreasurer@hotmail.com

Local Pioneer Minister Rev Shuna George Pritchard shuna.art@gmail.com

ST MICHAEL'S ...

Churchwarden: Penny Grant pennygrant@hotmail.co.uk 24008

Secretary: Mrs Jean Smith 07412 010245



Altar Guild: Mrs P. Bewick 21954

Mrs Y. Hawker 22191

Choir: Dr G. Butler (Practice Tuesday 5-6pm) 21375

Organist: Dr G. Butler 21375

Children's Society: Ann Stott

Families Worker: Amy Dare mrandsdare22@gmail.com

Children's Team: Gayle Chapple, Amy Dare, Jenny Ross

Worship Team: Gayle Chapple, Lynne Bees, Penny Grant, Yvonne Hawker, Angela Ould, Jenny Ross

Pastoral Team: Mrs G. Chapple (sec) 07794 838219

Mrs Y. Hawker, Mrs P. Bewick,

Mrs E. Singleton,

Mrs S. Anderson



ANNA CHAPLAINS: Mary Casey email caseymary119@gmail.com

Phone: 23656 or 07805 655335

& Sue Craker Mobile 07802 649155 email: susanawhelan@icloud.com

Safeguarding Officer: Mrs G. Chapple 07794 838219

Beer Parish News Dr Henry Jaggars, Green Bank, 9 Clinton Rise, 20858

Editor: Beer. Email: henryjaggars@btinternet.com

Area code for all phone numbers above is 01297 unless shown otherwise

In an emergency, parishioners should contact the Churchwarden (see above for phone number).

The P.C.C. of St Michael's Church, Beer, holds the copyright to articles written by its members. Please ask for permission before you use them. Other than articles written by church members, we do not own the copyright to any of the materials herein. Publication of items herein, including advertisements, does not imply endorsement by the P.C.C.

www.coastalchurch.org.uk

St MICHAEL'S CHURCH



Coastal Mission
Community



[St Michael's Church, Beer](https://www.facebook.com/StMichaelChurchBeer)

www.coastalchurch.org.uk

Calendar for NOVEMBER 2025

Sun 2nd Nov	8:00am Holy Communion 9:30am Family Communion 4:00pm All Souls' Thanksgiving Service at SEATON (remembering those we love but see no longer)	<i>All Saints Day</i>
Tue 4th	5:00pm Choir Practice	
Wed 5th	8:30am Open the Book - at School 10:00am Reflective Prayer	
Fri 7th	10:00am Mickey' Music Makers	
Sun 9th	8:00am Holy Communion 11:00am Royal British Legion Service of Remembrance	<i>Remembrance Sunday</i>
Tues 11th	11:00am Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial 2:00pm-4:00pm Memory Church at SEATON 5:00pm Choir Practice	
Wed 12th	10:00am Holy Communion at BEER	
Fri 14th	10:00am Mickey's Music Makers	
Sun 16th	9:30am Morning Praise with Baptism TBC Safeguarding Sunday	
Tues 18th	5:00pm Choir Practice	
Wed 19th	8:30am Open the Book - at School 2:00pm Anna's Place - Simple 30 min service for older people 5:30pm Evening Prayer at SEATON	
Fri 21st	10:00am Mickey's Music Makers	
Sun 23rd	9:30am Family Communion	<i>Christ the King</i>
Tues 25th	5:00pm Choir Practice	
Wed 26th	10:00am Holy Communion at SEATON	
Fri 28th	10:00am Mickey's Music Makers	
Sat 29th	10-12 Seriously Occasional Singers – All welcome	
Sun 30th	9:30am United Service Communion 6:30pm Advent Carol Service at SEATON	<i>Advent Sunday</i>

Sunday services in Beer are often on Facebook. If you can't come to church, you can watch and hear them there, either live or later at a time convenient to you!

From Justin Rev's Ramblings

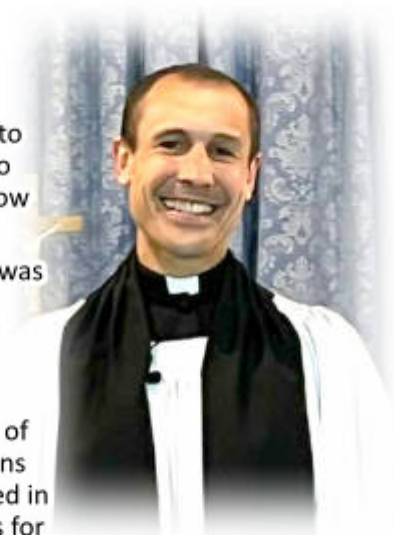
There are times in our lives when things don't go to plan or when dreams are dashed. I can speak of so many times in my life when this has happened. How do you deal with disappointment?

One of the biggest hopes I had when I was a boy, was to play professional sport, which perhaps will not surprise anyone reading this. Whether football or athletics didn't really matter - to have a job that meant I was running round either chasing a ball, chasing someone or being chased was something of an aspiration. Whilst those lofty boyhood ambitions did not quite come to fruition in the way I dreamed in a professional sense, serving in HM Royal Marines for eleven years and pushing the boundaries of my endurance in running has taken me to places beyond any expectation at home and abroad.

Last month running the length of Britain again in the opposite direction was another exciting challenge for Melissa and me to undertake. However, partway through our adventure, we both had to make the hard decisions to stop. It wasn't what either of us had hoped for or planned and so the disappointment always runs deep. We'd trained diligently, prepared well, crossed the proverbial 'T's and dotted the 'I's, imagined the sense of triumph at that infamous sign in John O'Groats — yet the journey ended differently. But I have been reminded, as I have been many times in my life in a very real way, that God often works most powerfully when our plans fall short. Melissa and I feel truly blessed we get to do this stuff and humbled by the support and generosity to us and the causes we are passionate about. A huge thank-you to so many.

Disappointment, of course, is part of all our lives. And that's true far beyond sport. Life brings all sorts of moments like that. The job we thought would be fulfilling but turns out to be a dead end. The plans for retirement that are interrupted by illness. The relationship that doesn't work out. The project, business, or dream that just doesn't quite take off. Even small things — a family holiday that goes wrong, a conversation that doesn't go the way we intended — can leave us deflated. In those moments, it's easy to lose perspective. We can become overwhelmed in what might have been or should have been, rather than what is. Yet Scripture consistently calls us to lift our eyes and look at the bigger picture.

When we face disappointment, it's easy to feel like we've failed or that we've let others down. But sometimes, stopping or changing direction isn't failure at all — it's wisdom. It's recognising our limits and trusting that God is still at work, even when our plans fall apart. There's a verse in Proverbs 16:9 that says, *"In their*



hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps." I love that verse because it reminds me that while we make plans (and rightly so), God sees the bigger picture. We only see part of the road ahead; He sees the whole map.

I have found in life, when disappointment takes hold to ask, "Alright, Lord — well what now? Where can I go, what can I learn from this?" And slowly, I begin to see that sometimes we grow more through what doesn't go to plan than through what does.

When I stopped running, I had to take stock — to pause, reflect, rest and reset. It reminded me of Elijah's story in 1 Kings 19. After his great victory over the prophets of Baal, Elijah found himself exhausted, disillusioned, and ready to give up. He lay under a broom tree and said, "I've had enough, Lord." But God didn't condemn him. Instead, He gave him rest, food, and a new sense of direction. Then God's voice came not in a storm, earthquake or fire, but in a gentle whisper in the stillness that followed.

Perhaps that's a lesson for us too. Sometimes the hardest — and holiest — thing we can do is to stop. To admit that we've reached our limit. To allow God to meet us in the quiet places, and to show us what comes next.

November is a natural time for reflection and remembering — the year begins to wind down, the days shorten, and we look back on what's been. It's a good moment to take stock: What have we learned this year? Where have we grown? What might God be inviting us to release, to reset, or to refocus on? Interesting that the new year in the church begins on December 1st!

Jesus himself often withdrew to quiet places to pray and regain perspective. When faced with difficult decisions, He looked to the Father. His strength came not from stubborn persistence but from surrender — from trusting that His path, even when it led to the cross, was held within the Father's love and purpose.

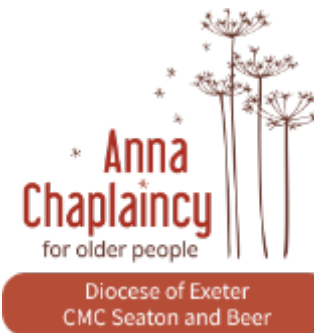
So whether your year has gone exactly to plan or not, remember this: our faith isn't measured by how smoothly the road goes, but by how we walk it with God. Disappointment doesn't mean defeat. Sometimes it's the space where grace gets in — where we rediscover what truly matters, and where we hear again that quiet whisper saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Friends, I believe our value, our worth, our identity — is not defined by the dreams we have, the races we finish or what we achieve, it is defined by Jesus Christ and who He is, what He has done, who we are in Him and the very difference that makes in our lives — everyday.

As we move toward Advent, a new year and the hope of new beginnings, may we find courage to pause, wisdom to see the bigger picture, and faith to trust that even when the journey changes, God never leaves the road beside us.

Forever Forwards.

Justin



ANNA CHAPLAINCY

ANNA CHAPLAINCY – NOVEMBER worship and events – If you have a loved one or friend you visit in one of the Seaton care homes, you might like to join us for our monthly activity and worship? Please check with the care home prior to your visit in case anything has to be changed.

Monday 3 November - NETHERHAYES 10.45 a.m.

Monday 10 November - THORNFIELD – 11.00 a.m.

Tuesday 11 November– MEMORY CHURCH 2-4 p.m. Church centre St Gregory's SEATON – For older people who find it difficult to worship in our church buildings. Worship, afternoon tea and making new friends. Interested? Phone 01297 23656

Monday 17 November – THE MANOR 11.00 a.m.

Tuesday 18 November – LYME BAY VIEW 10.45 a.m.

ANNA'S PLACE at St Michael's Church BEER. Please join us on Wednesday 19 November 2.00 p.m. Reflective café style worship with Holy Communion followed by refreshments, everyone welcome. A space for carers and those cared for at home.

Monday 24 November – THE SEATON 11.00 a.m.

Tuesday 25 November– CHECKHOUSE 11.00 a.m.

If you know someone living at home or someone who would like a one-to-one visit in residential care, please contact either Mary or Sue on their mobile numbers. Information leaflets about Anna Chaplaincy ministry are displayed at St Gregory's and St Michael's churches. Thank you for your support and prayers.

Anna Chaplain Mary - 07805655335 Anna Chaplain Sue – 07802649155

The church office - CONTACT 01297 23656

I'm pleased to report that I have my wish from last month and, as a result of the relatively warm and wet weather, have a lovely show of dahlias. We are preparing the garden for the winter, so the over-wintering

onion sets are in, as are the broad beans. Hopefully the latter will produce fruit rather than just provide food for the local mice! We are leaving seedheads, like teasels, for the birds, and ensuring that there are hollow stems in which insects can over-winter. I expect that you, like most other people, have seen myriads of ladybirds recently. We have noticed that one of their favourite over-wintering spots is inside window apertures, and several ladybirds will fall out every time we open a window.

As previously advised, The Fine Foundation Centre will stay open for visitors daily until after the half-term holiday. After that we will return the occupants of the fishtanks to the sea and set up the building so that it can be open at weekends only until New Year's Day.

One of the stories which we tell in the Heritage Centre relates to the fishing industry in the village. Over recent years new ways of working have been adopted to ensure that fish stocks are conserved and that issues relating to changing climate conditions are heeded and addressed. The local fishermen have made a short film about some of the challenges of their working practices and the film – "The Last Custodians. The Voice of the Fleet" – will be shown in the Mariners' Hall on Thursday 13th November. It will be shown as a double bill with Sir David Attenborough's exploration of the importance of the high seas "Ocean with David Attenborough". "The Last Custodians" will start at 1900 and offers an unrivalled opportunity to find out more about Beer's fishermen.

Autumn heralds the return of the Branscombe Project talks with the first, the John Torrence Lecture, being on Monday 24th November. Robert Reed will talk about badgers and different ways of farming. The Project's season of talks includes Gary Calland bringing more information, including the challenges posed by climate change, from Vindolanda and Mike Parker-Pearson returning to discuss recent discoveries at Stonehenge.

Axe Valley Heritage Association's series of talks concludes on Monday 3rd November when Nigel Daniels will talk about Axmouth Harbour. Tickets are available at Paperchain. Nigel's talk will be followed by the group's Annual General Meeting.

Beer Quarry Caves will close to the public at the end of the month and concentrate on their other important international role as one of the largest bat hibernacula. Given that Beer has been recognised as a bat-friendly community, we are always pleased to see that the greater horseshoe bats continue to use the caves. The long-eared grey bat is also an endangered species, and we were delighted to see that several have been located on Seaton Wetlands.

The Seaton Wetlands and the Lower Otter Restoration area are excellent places to observe migrating birds. Both are easy to negotiate, with accessible walkways and are "open all hours". They both have a number of bird hides. Seaton has just received a visit from a pair of spoonbills, a species which has previously settled on the Exe estuary.

Beer Village Heritage is a registered charity, and we rely on annual subscriptions and donations in order to run the Fine Foundation Centre and the Bomb Shelter. Annual subscriptions are now due and have been kept at £3 per person. You can give yours to a committee member, put it in the diver's tank in the centre or leave it at the Post Office. Don't forget to include your name and contact details. Thank you to everyone who has already sent theirs to us.

You'll find the Beer Village Heritage walks and I-Spy online via our website: <http://www.beervillageheritage.org.uk>. We apologise that some of the links on the site are still not working.

If you would like to be involved with running the Fine Foundation Centre and our other activities, please talk to our Chairman, David Morling on 01297 625045.



Both adults & larvae prey on garden pests such as aphids and scale insects. Their importance in controlling pests was noted in England as far back as 1814



Native Teazel heads, Dipsacus the seeds will be enjoyed by small birds.



BEER FILM SOCIETY

THE sea is very much the focus for Beer Film Society's November show as we offer an exciting double bill at the Mariners' Hall.

The main feature on Thursday November 13th will be the stunning documentary 'Ocean with David Attenborough' (2025, PG, 1hr 35mins), with the great man taking viewers on a breathtaking journey to show that there is nowhere more vital for our survival than the ocean.

Living in our magical village on the glorious Jurassic Coast we are all too aware of the beauty of the sea and the challenges facing those who live and work with it and that brings us nicely to our supporting feature.

'The Last Custodians: The Voice of the Fleet' is a fascinating 30 minutes documentary which unveils the stories of inshore fishing and the resident fishermen who navigate the waters across Lyme Bay, including Beer's own Jim and Marc Newton and Stephen Andrews (Radar).

In contrast to Attenborough's global angle, the Last Custodians, produced by Lyme Bay Fisherman's Community Interest Company, offers the local insight into the challenges facing the industry in this area.

At 30 minutes this feature will open our show with a short interval before the Ocean film.

We are very excited about this double offering, which we believe is the first in our history.

Doors open at 6.30pm with the film starting at 7pm. Tickets cost £5 for members and £7 for guests and are available on the door. Card payment preferred please. The bar will be open and Baboo Gelato ice creams will be available.

Plus don't forget our EXTRA SPECIAL OFFER: Join Beer Film Society on the evening for just £15 - ensuring discounted tickets for the following 12 months - and get a FREE entry to our December film plus FREE Christmas treats.

The poster is for a double bill event by the Beer Film Society. It features two movie covers. The top cover is for 'OCEAN WITH DAVID ATTENBOROUGH', showing a profile of David Attenborough. The bottom cover is for 'THE LAST CUSTODIANS: The Voice of the Fleet', showing a group of fishermen. The poster includes the following text:

Beer Film Society
OCEAN
WITH DAVID ATTENBOROUGH

Double Bill!

THE LAST CUSTODIANS
The Voice of the Fleet

Thursday November 13th
Mariners' Hall

Doors open 6.30pm start time - 7.00 pm
Members £5.00 non members £7.00
numbers limited - to book tickets email beerfilmsociety@gmail.com

Card payment preferred

Bring your own cushions!



Our volunteers had a great time collecting on Saturday 11th October at Tesco Honiton Superstore on Lifeboat Saturday. We collected a brilliant £418.85 plus £97 in card payments and thank everyone who donated and thank Tesco Honiton for their support. Lifeboat Saturday was first held in 1891 in Manchester and was organised by Sir Charles Macara. It was the first ever recorded street collection in the world. The collection followed the worst disaster in RNLI history when twenty seven lifeboat men from Southport and St. Anne's lifeboat stations were lost at sea while attempting to rescue the crew of the barque "Mexico" on the 10th December 1886. The Lytham lifeboat was launched and rescued all the Mexico's crew.

On Sunday 12th October we held our Annual Autumn Sponsored Walk



that we now call Annual Autumn Ramble. Four of our RNLI volunteers joined me and my son Alastair for the 8.5 mile walk from the Seaton Down Hill Picnic Area, down to and along the West and East Walks, along to Axmouth, up and around the lanes and back to Seaton via Axe Cliff Golf Club. There was 548 feet of elevation and the time taken was approximately five and half hours including a picnic stop at Dowlands. At the time of writing my report we were still collecting our sponsor money and additional donations will be greatly appreciated. Alastair's

Justgiving.com page is still open at <https://www.justgiving.com/page/seatonbeerrnli2025> Alastair would love further donations to be added to his total and all support to us will be greatly appreciated.

Our lovely Shop at Beer will be closed for the winter from Sunday 2nd November and we thank everyone who has purchased from us and donated during the year. During November and December we will be out and about at Christmas Fairs at Beer, Colyton and Seaton and our Tesco Seaton Christmas Collection is on Friday 19th December. Additional volunteers are still needed at our events and events we attend and if anyone would like to volunteer with us please email for further details to wac500@hotmail.co.uk or come and see us at events. For volunteering enquiries for our RNLI Shop please contact our Shop Manager Richard Hare on 07752393640.

Best wishes to everyone.

Wendy Cummins, Secretary Fundraising/Events
Seaton Beer and District Branch RNLI



BEER PARISH COUNCIL - November Newsletter

Five years ago I became a parish councillor, to help give back something to the local community I had lived in for the past 20 years, it was something I had planned to do once I had finished working around the world for over 6 months every year. Now through a series of council related experiences and events I find myself Chairman of the council, a job I never actually sought or considered, but one I will try my hardest to fulfil, for the good of all of the village.

Having been Vice chairman for the last 2 years I have been involved in steadily helping to improve the village, I have a good understanding of the practices, procedures, finances and problems involved in running a parish council and trying to hold both County and District councils to account for their actions or lack of them.

A little of my background for those who do not know me, I come originally from a small village in Kent, where I served my apprenticeship as a Blacksmith and Agricultural Engineer. I moved to Devon in 1980 living and working in villages and once in a small town. During the recession of the mid 80's I changed career and became a commercial diver, working all over the world but always returning to Devon when on leave. 26 years ago I met Karen whilst on leave, and the rest they say is history, If any one asks, I always say I married Karen and three quarters of the village with her, as she comes from one of the oldest families in the village.

My career change developed and I rose through the industry to become a Senior manager/superintendent working on diving and life support systems engineering, and was responsible for commissioning many high profile projects and new build vessels, valued in the tens of millions of pounds. So I have a great deal of experience in delivering, very high value projects that have to be brought in on time and in budget.

During my initial time on the council I spent many hours, looking at the Transfer of Assets project, proposed and supported by a previous chairman and the council. Even at first glance it was obvious the sums did not add up, and due to the make up of the council at that time, I was the only dissenting voice, having got in by accident on the third attempt, I was asking many awkward questions and getting few answers. As time went on however increasing amounts of information was made available to me from other

sources, and this forced the Chairman into the formation of a working group of councillors and residents. It very soon became apparent that this scheme would only lead the village into vast long term debt, and many of the assets were in fact horrendous liabilities with long lists of, costs, covenants and restrictions attached to them.

The new parish council after the 2023 elections, is now a completely different organisation, many of the old councillors resigned before the election and several of those who were re-elected resigned before the first meeting. The new council quickly cancelled the original asset transfer scheme, and a smaller affordable proposal has been put forward to EDDC, and we wait to hear from them, but nothing happens quickly.

Aside from the normal challenges of running a council, there have been changes in legislation which have needed to be acted upon, compliance with the Data Protection Regulations have meant that a new email system for councillors had to be introduced, and the Parish council website is being updated to bring it into line with the latest regulations and hopefully allow better access for everyone.

The village and its clubs and organisations face a problem of getting new members, when you look around the village it is always the same people doing a multitude of jobs for many different organisations, and none of them are getting any younger. What is needed is that the younger generations 18 to 55 year old bracket step up and volunteer to help keep these organisations going. For example, everyone has said how good the flower displays in the village are. This is totally down to the Horticultural Society who do all of the planning, planting, maintenance and the fund raising to make it happen every year themselves. This is not as some people say, "What we pay our council tax for", Let me assure you, your council tax does not include funding the flower displays in Beer, so if you want the village to continue looking beautiful step up and help them.

Everyone enjoys the Regatta, the Regatta committee also requires new members to keep it running, the existing committee has worked extremely hard to ensure it continues and bring back some of the events that were shelved by Elf and Safety, or insurance concerns, so if you want the regatta to continue they to need your help.

...continued

Beer Rebels the group of volunteers who keep the Jubilee looking good, and the Beer Brook Coven who regularly help clear weeds and debris out of the brook, all need help a couple of times a year to keep the village clean and tidy

All of the village organisations including the parish council are trying to get new younger members, who will provide some continuity into the future, and we are nearly always met with the same excuse "we are all far too busy". Well here is a wake up call. If you the younger residents want the village to continue as you have known it in the past, now is the time to step up and volunteer to help. Any help will be very much appreciated. These are not idle speculations but facts. It will be too late when the people who help run them now are gone. Events in the village can take months of planning and the older members of organisations in the village have a vast wealth of knowledge of how to do what, when and how. There are a few younger residents who are tapping into this wealth of knowledge but the village and its organisations need more,

Before I end, I must take this opportunity to say a very large thank you to Martin Richards who due to personal reasons has resigned from his second stint as Council Chairman, He has been a parish councillor for over 25 years and the village owes him a debt of gratitude for all he has done and achieved.

I must also thank the outgoing Village clerk Mrs Nicky Ingarfield, who has gone above and beyond what her normal duties were, and was instrumental in sorting out the new email system. As well as liaising with EDDC on a vast range of issues including the very successful Beer Eats sessions.

The parish council will remain as it has been for the last couple of years, friendly and open to all, if you have a problem, please contact the Clerk Mrs Tess Nishino by email or letter, or better still come to the monthly council meeting and have your say in person. Or come to one of the regular council surgeries, held during the Horticultural Societies sales in the Mariners Hall. If we can action something to help we will, but many issues and complaints are beyond our remit, I can assure you however that they will be passed on swiftly to whoever is responsible, and if we do not get a reply in a reasonable time, it will be chased up.

There are a lot of challenges on the horizon, balancing the books with less and less funding from district and county council levels is certainly one. Making sure that the village is prepared for what happens when Devon becomes a unitary authority, and making sure that our voice is still heard is another.

Tim Stevens



ANNA'S PLACE

Special 30 minute
worship for
Older People
Followed by Refreshments
Music and Memories,
Wednesdays from 2pm
at St Michael's, Beer:

November 19th
December 17th

Anna
Chaplaincy
for older people
Diocese of Exeter
CMC Seaton and Beer

Memory Church

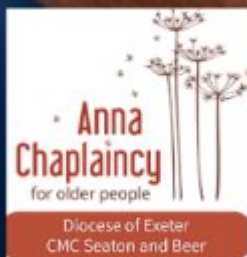
For Older People and their Carers:
A Place to Meet, Relax & Worship
together.

Tuesday 11 November
Tuesday 9 December



2nd Tues of
the month
2-4pm

St Gregory's
Church Centre,
Colyford Rd
Seaton EX12 2DF



Dementia Supportive
Disabled Facilities



Contact: Mary Casey caseymary119@gmail.com
Anna Chaplain or
to book your place Church office: 01297 23656
seatonchurch@hotmail.co.uk

Advent: Feasting or Fasting?

This year Advent starts on Sunday 30th November.

Many a child – and adults too – will excitedly open the first window of their advent calendarto reveal an angel, a candle, perhaps a mini mars bar or even a mini bottle of gin!!



Advent is a time where the paths of the secular and the sacred often appear to diverge, perhaps only coming close again on Christmas Eve - in the wonder of a lit Christingle candle or the quiet of a midnight communion.

For those of us who try to follow Christ, navigating Advent can be a tricky time.

Traders keen to sell us some Christmas magic, start the run up to Christmas as soon as the shelves are cleared of their 'Halloween' ghouls... Friends and family, clubs, and schools, juggle their pre-Christmas diaries, to fit in all the parties, plays and preparations.

And all to welcome the Christ-child.

The origins of the Advent season and tradition date back to the 4th and 5th centuries. Advent originated as a preparation period often for baptism at Epiphany - a time of fasting and penance known as "St. Martin's Lent" (or Martinmas or Old Halloween) which began on November 11th.

It was our own Pope Gregory in the 6th century who composed many of the prayers and antiphons for Advent. By the 8th century the period was shortened to 4 weeks and church traditions developed to symbolise the themes of penance and hope.

Navigating the Advent season can be a tricky balancing act: making space to remind ourselves of the wonder of God coming to us in Jesus, whilst taking steps to share that very message of hope in our busy, materialistic world.

On the one hand, it is tempting to withdraw completely. We try to follow Jesus who lived counter-culturally, our church buildings are places of sanctuary and our worship includes the quiet prayers and traditions of those who have walked the Way before us.

And yet....are we not all called to bring Christ's good news afresh to each generation? And if not in the run up to Christmas, then when?

And so, I believe we can – and should – tread a middle path as we prepare as a church family for our celebration of Christmas.

Let's welcome the world into our churches at this time of joy (but for some, sadness). Let's fill the church with sparkles of light – a nod to the festivities which surround us, but more importantly a signpost to the coming hope we have of God with us, and Christ's return in Glory!

There is a lot going on during Advent this year, so please do invite your friends and family to join our Advent journey! Rev Shuna

All poets must die (Sunshine Time mix)

*In loving memory of Michael Walton
aka The Bard of Beer*

There used to be a tunnelled path through the old poet's wild garden
which I always felt free to use

and hanging within a bush at the top of the path
there was a dragon-embossed gong
which I'd faithfully strike
three times
so that the sprites of the place knew that I was coming down
and later
three strikes more
to inform them I had safely returned

and then a little further down from the gong
tied to the perpendicular branches of one of the firs
were four or five knotted sea-ropes
threaded through sea-forged hagstone holes
dangling like the spines and skulls of once-hallowed trolls

You could barely see the walls and windows or even the roof of his house
so shockingly and impressively overgrown his property and home

There was just a well-trod path to a humble garage door

I often wondered where he slept
and how he dwelt inside that place and time

Oh, there was more than a touch of liminality
and perhaps even insanity
to his shaggy kingdom
of joy and woe and brambles
woven so freely and so fine

The first time I ever met him
was half way along the path one night
(I was going up – he was coming down)
I almost jumped out of my skin with both fright and delight

Suddenly before me this bright tiny man not quite of this world
bushy white wizard-king-beard
and either side of his crown unfurled
two shocks of white unruly hair

and as he passed by
a falsetto voice
fluttered and trilled and disturbed and charmed me

