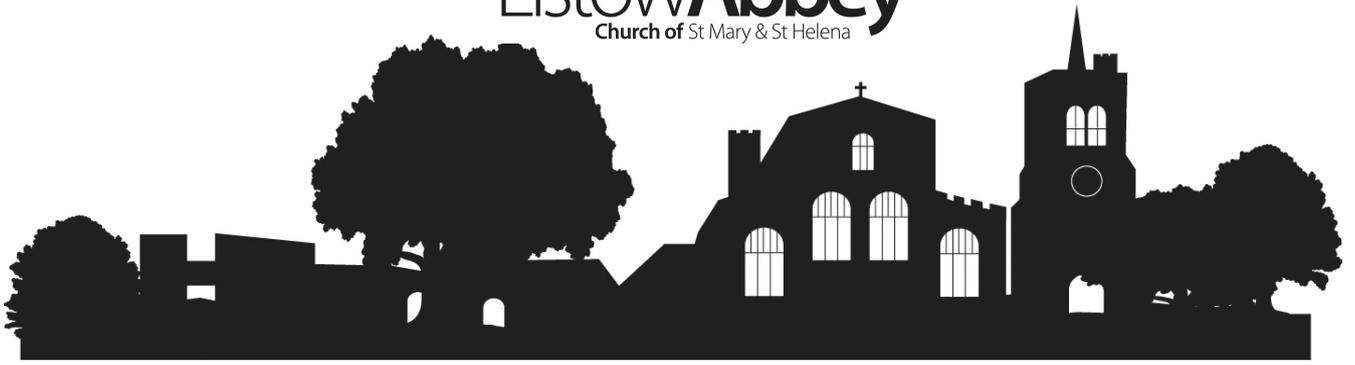


ElstowAbbey
Church of St Mary & St Helena



MAGAZINE

November / December 2019

70p

“November comes
And November goes,
With the last red berries
And the first white snows.

With night coming early,
And dawn coming late,
And ice in the bucket
And frost by the gate.

The fires burn
And the kettles sing,
And earth sinks to rest
Until next spring.”

— Clyde Watson



Church Contacts

Priest in Charge

The Rev'd Fr. Paul Messam

Abbey Vicarage, Church End, Elstow, Bedford MK42 9XT

01234 261477

vicar@elstow-abbey.org.uk

Assistant Curate

The Rev'd Kate Scott

07922 487705

curate@elstow-abbey.org.uk

Lay Minister (Reader)

Mr John Hinson

Church Wardens

Mrs Andrene Kerr-Robinson

Miss Chris Woollard

Director of Music

Mr David Ewbank

**Baptism & Wedding enquiries should be made in Church on
any Saturday morning between 10.00am – 12 noon**

The Elstow Abbey Website can be found at
www.elstow-abbey.org.uk

Find us on Facebook
[www.facebook.com/Elstow Abbey](http://www.facebook.com/Elstow_Abbey)

and on Twitter
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In the beginning was the Word

As the nights draw in, the temperatures drop, and the trees lose their leaves in a blaze of colour, the memories of summer and holidays fade and become history. When the last edition of this magazine came out, we had just returned from Pilgrimage to Iona, where we enjoyed both the present and the past in a way that is especially powerful in the 'thin' places of this world. It all seems quite distant now, both in terms of geography and time. Were it not for the photos and the shared conversations with others who were there, it would be hard to remember all that happened.

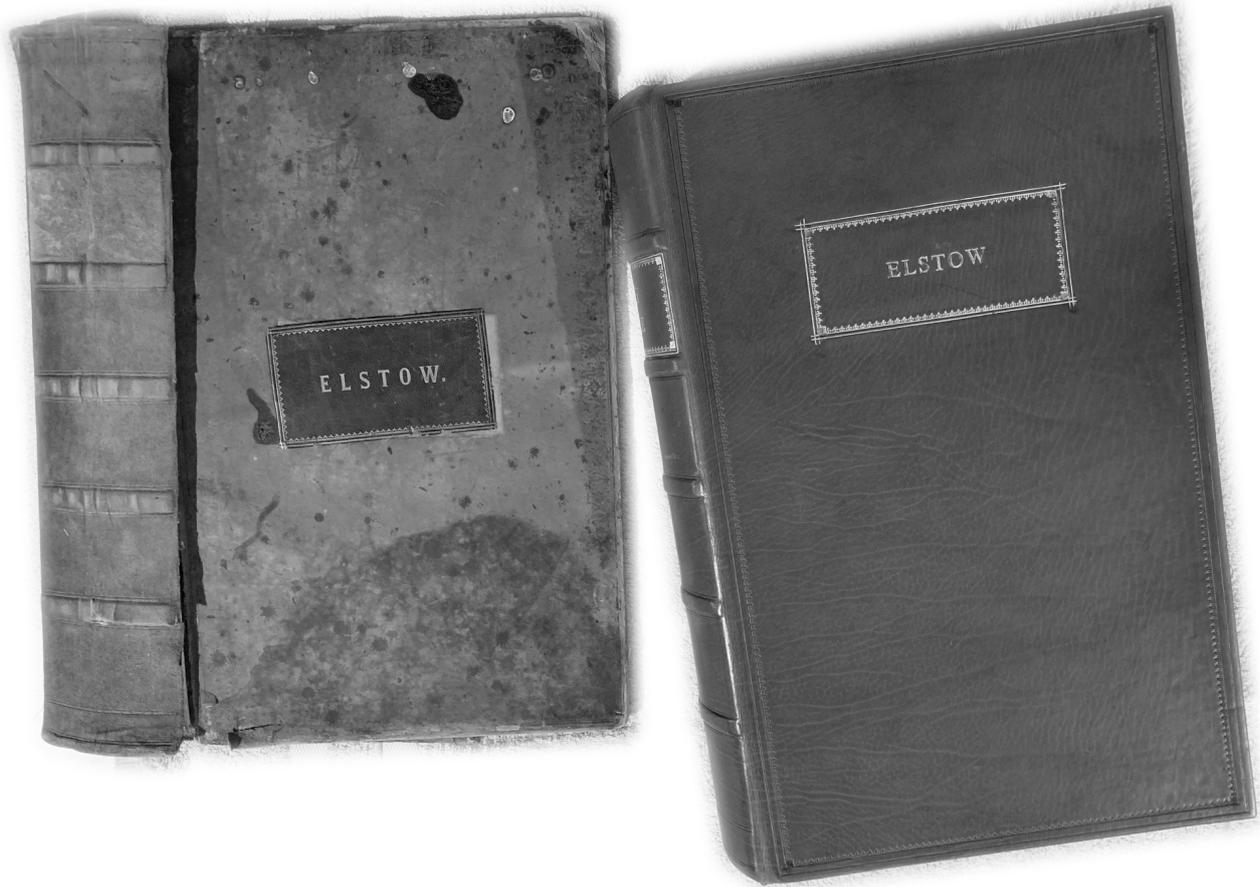
This time of year we embark on a season of collective remembering. All Souls' and All Saints' Days invite us to remember those who have gone before us. Bonfire Night reminds us in a timely fashion of the ever-present need to value and guard our democracy. Remembrance Day challenges us to reflect on the sacrifices made by previous generations, acknowledge the ongoing conflict in the world and commit ourselves to working for peace. All of these occasions are important opportunities to look back on past relationships and historical events, but they are more than just a nostalgia trip. They also encourage us to see our own lives within a wider context, to recognise the shared nature of so many of our memories and to connect the past with the present in order to shape the future.

The memories we have, particularly those we share with others, play an important role in forging and defining our identity. Families, local communities, our nation and our global context all play a part in making us who we are and giving us meaning and purpose in our lives.

Elstow Abbey has a wonderful and rich past, incorporating not just one, but several, fantastic stories. The Abbey, in its heyday, provided prosperity to the local community, stability to the wider economy, and hospitality and support to all who needed it. John Bunyan provided, by his writings and his life-story, inspiration and transformation to many worldwide. The links between the Abbey and prisoners of war in the Far East during the Second World War act as a pertinent modern, local reminder of the potential for both good and evil in the world, and the necessity to fight for peace, justice and mercy, wherever injustice and oppression prevail.

To have the potential to be transformative, remembering needs to be more than a simple, passive recollection of an event. It requires us to be active. Active remembering is not just about preserving a memory, but is about

stewardship; about taking care of what we have in a way that remains true to the original.



We've had an excellent example of that this week, as the Elstow Bible, dating from 1844, has returned to the Abbey after extensive restoration. The Bible has been in constant use in the abbey for 175 years, and was, understandably, showing signs of wear and tear. Although still a useable artefact, rather than a museum piece, the Bible needed rebinding and quite a lot of TLC to restore it to a condition worthy of its history and importance. Generous individuals met the cost of restoration, and the restoration process revealed some fascinating local connections. It was also discovered that the Bible had already undergone restoration under the stewardship of a previous generation. The pattern of valuing the past, curating the present, and looking ahead to a better future is well-established at the Abbey.

Today we continue that tradition of building on the faith and heritage of previous generations and maintaining the Abbey as a living witness in our Hillersden Hall project. By combining the past and the present, we seek to safeguard and shape the future of this special place. We are using the past to inform and navigate the future, recapturing in the process some of the

original identity and purpose of the building and the community that inhabited it; bringing the past into the present. These days, in many ways, the world has become smaller through more extensive travel and greater shared knowledge, especially through social media. It has become easier to build connections and community across time and space.

As we look forward to Christmas, and backwards to the momentous events that inspired the annual celebration, we are called, once again to reflect on events distant in both time and place. More than two thousand years have passed since God came into the world in an unassuming town in Palestine. Jesus' birth as a homeless refugee still provides us with the opportunity to connect with God and with each other. God's coming into the world in human form is still as fresh as it ever was. God is still with us today, and always will be, whatever happens, until the end of time. This means we can look forward with hope and confidence, however uncertain and difficult the future looks from here. So, as we look back, whether with longing or regret or thanksgiving, let's not forget to look forward with hope, too.

Rev'd Kate

Scrum down!



I love rugby. Not the town, but the game - although the town is also nice.

Right now I am enjoying watching the rugby World Cup taking place in Japan. The games are exciting; the results sometimes surprising. The players display immense physical fitness and strength as two teams struggle to gain and keep possession of the ball and run it across the opposing line. Oftentimes players emerge from the "scrum"- with bloodied noses, black eyes and cut

faces. It is not a “gentle” sport, but has been described as a “sport for gentlemen”.

There is one person on the pitch that usually emerges unscathed. He manages to keep relatively clean and he controls 30 huge men with just a whistle and a quiet word. That man is the referee. Often a diminutive figure, unlike the burly players he oversees, the referee displays amazing physical fitness, speed and pace and a vast understanding of the rules of the game.

When the referee sees dangerous play, he stops the game to ensure the safety of the players. He makes tough and unpopular decisions to ensure fairness and he disciplines the players when needed. When tempers flare and conflict breaks out he steps in between men twice his size and disciplines players- who tower over him - when they commit infractions. He is definitely the one who is in control. When he speaks, everyone listens. When he stops play, everyone stops, when he gives instruction, everyone follows. He can award points against the team, send players off and even stop the whole game. He has authority. If a fight breaks out between two players he might not have the power (physical strength) to pull them apart, but he has the authority to tell them to step back and desist. They usually obey-without question or argument. Power AND authority!

In the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 28 verse 18 we read about Jesus the one who has ALL power and authority. Not just authority over 30 huge muscled sportsmen – however impressive that may be – but all authority over everything and everyone. Creation itself, rulers, powers, kings and nations.

Giving His final instructions before returning to heaven Jesus tells His followers “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

I guess its time to obey.

Sheila Leech

“Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth”. Matthew 28.18

Does the church need to rediscover christenings?

Where does a child growing up learn to open their eyes of wonder; to ask questions about meaning and transcendence?



Statistically, the decline in religious affiliation in the UK is due, not to people losing their faith, but to successive generations being less religious than their parents. In other words, the decline in religion is due to parents not passing their religious beliefs and affiliations on to their children.

Churches have become slicker, more active, more intentional. They have had evangelistic campaigns, decades of evangelism, focussed on mission shaped ministry. But still, over the past six decades, each generation has failed to pass on a Christian faith to many of their children. The problem is not that the churches aren't sharing the faith, but that they are trying to take over the job of teaching the faith from families.

For 500 years, the Church of England's representatives have implicitly taught that family-based traditions associated with the word 'christenings' are childish, misleading or just plain wrong. A look at the language used to talk about the ritual of Christian initiation across the centuries showed that clergy spoke about this rite in a very different way to other people.

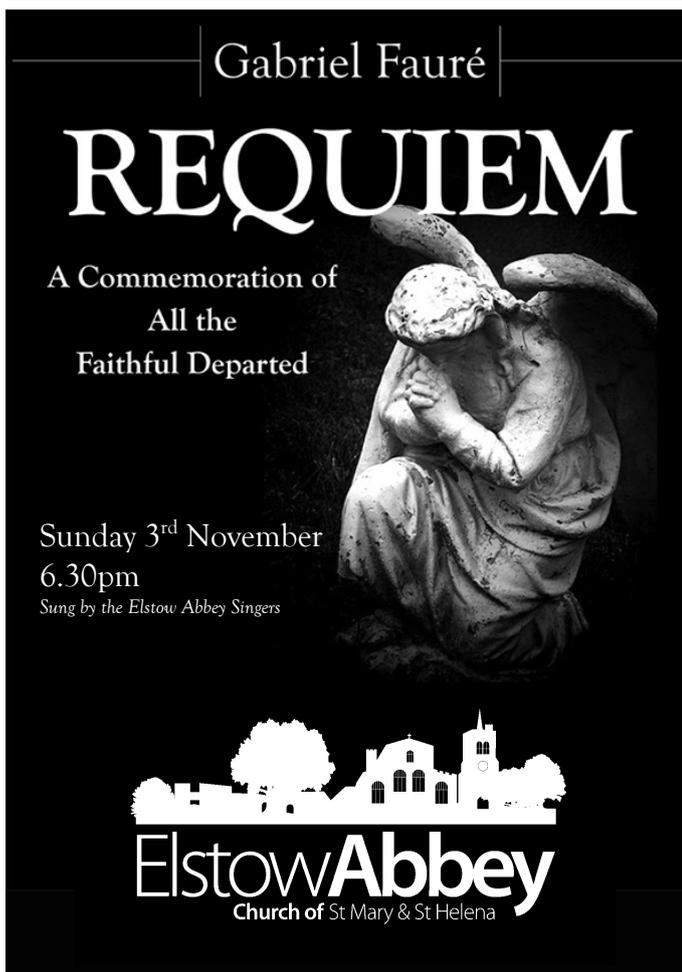
The Old English word 'christening' was very important in 16th century England. It was a word which referred to practice, to family traditions and rituals. It was an action considered to be done not just by the priest, but also by the godparents. And it was the godparents, ordinary laypeople, who children were taught in their catechism to thank for the spiritual benefits of the sacrament. Baptism, meanwhile, was a newer word in the English language, introduced by the French-speaking elite class after the Norman conquest. It carried higher social esteem, and was chosen for translations of the Bible and for discussion of the theory and theology of the ritual. Clergy referred to this rite as a baptism, lay people generally called it a christening. But over time, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the social elites gradually followed the example of the clergy, and used baptism more instead of their previously preferred word, christening. A social gulf opened up, and the word christening came to be seen as low class, common and smacking of folk religion in its most derogatory sense.

In the twentieth century some clergy and active churchgoers began to want to restrict baptism to children of parents who were 'genuinely religious'. Preparation for baptism began to be seen as something the church needed to do, rather than relying on godparents to teach children their catechism as they prepared for confirmation later on. The assumption of most clergy and churchgoers was that the first task was to show families why everything they value about a christening is wrong: it's not about welcoming a child, it's not a rite of passage, it's not about naming, it is not a christening. And then they could teach them the right way to see things, it is about joining the church, it is about making promises to be a follower of Christ, it is a baptism.

But what has been the outcome of dismissing and discrediting the earthy, everyday lived religion which seeks to christen children and use the Church as a resource to fuel a quiet background faith which underpins family life? The Church's attitude has not been the only thing which has led to the collapse of an approach to Christianity which is based in homes rather than at church, but it surely cannot have helped. Generations of clergy have regarded the place of religion in the lives of ordinary people as mere 'folk religion'; superstitious, childish, unsophisticated. They have attempted to make the church the focus of people's religious lives rather than the family. This has contributed to the lack of motivation for parents to pass faith on to their children, and thus accelerated secularisation.

But what is wrong with 'folk religion'? If it is the religion of the 'folk', the people, surely this is exactly where faith should be and what it should be: the baptised people of God, seeking to make sense of faith afresh in their lives. Real religion is mixed up with the business of life: making a living, educating children, celebrating and mourning, loving and maintaining relationships. The Church does not reach families more effectively by sweeping aside folk religion and replacing it with a pure message of truth. Instead it would do more to grow the Kingdom of God if it saw itself as a depository of a precious cargo of stories, traditions, doctrines and rituals which acted as a well from which families can draw or a rock around which folk religion can collect. This could help to keep folk religion, the religion of the people, tethered to a bigger story, the story of God's interactions with human beings down countless generations of families. The Church should not be fighting folk religion but boosting, nurturing and celebrating it. A first step would be to rediscover and value christenings and everything they mean to families today.

Revd Dr Sarah Lawrence



A poster for a Requiem performance. The background is black with a white statue of an angel holding a child. At the bottom, there is a white silhouette of a church building.

Gabriel Fauré
REQUIEM
A Commemoration of
All the
Faithful Departed
Sunday 3rd November
6.30pm
Sung by the Elstow Abbey Singers
Elstow Abbey
Church of St Mary & St Helena



A poster for a carol performance. The background is black with a blurred image of many lit candles. The text is in white.

CAROLS
by candlelight
Festive choral favourites
& carols for all to sing
Wed 18th Dec 7:30pm
Bedford School Chapel
A magical way to
celebrate with family
and friends
Tickets: £15 (<18 £5)
Visit gaude.org.uk
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Bedford's Professional
Chamber Choir



Saint Cecelia Day Concert

(The Patron Saint of Musicians)

Friday 22nd November, 7.30pm

Enjoy the music of Soul, Motown, Blues and Pop in the glorious setting of Elstow Abbey. Guaranteed fun, giggles and tipples! (Licenced bar available)

Tickets £10 *(All proceeds to Elstow Abbey Church)*

www.elstow-abbey.org.uk



www.sophiegarner.com



For one night, in backyards, hometowns and iconic locations across the globe, people will sleep out in unison to create the world's largest display of solidarity with and support of those experiencing homelessness and displacement. The World's Big Sleep Out, aims to raise £40m to tackle homelessness.

The event will see 50 sleep outs worldwide, including events in

London, New York, Edinburgh, Brighton, Newcastle, Cardiff, Dublin, Newport, Belfast, Chicago, Amsterdam, Manchester, Madrid, New Delhi AND ELSTOW ABBEY.

Dame Helen Mirren will read a story in London while Hollywood star Will Smith will tell a bedtime story in Times Square, New York. Other big names taking part include Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, model Lisa Snowden, Olympic champion Sir Chris Hoy, singer Jamelia, author Giovanna Fletcher and presenters Kate Garraway, Cherry Healey, Angela Scanlon and Anita Rani.

Dame Helen said: "Homelessness on our streets is a real problem in the UK and for many nations throughout the world. This coupled with an unprecedented number of refugees being displaced internationally makes this a really important time to focus attention on the issue of global homelessness. I'd like to encourage anyone who cares about this issue to get involved by sleeping out, in solidarity with those who have no choice, on 7 December."

The World's Big Sleep Out campaign will play an important role in shining the political spotlight on the issues of homelessness and displacement whilst raising considerable funds to make a big difference.

The World's Big Sleep Out was spearheaded by Josh Littlejohn, who said he was "blown away" by the response so far. "It doesn't matter if you are taking part in Times Square or in your back garden with your family, by sleeping out for one night on 7 December we can simultaneously express our

compassion for homeless people who have no other choice and raise lifesaving funds to make a difference,” he said. “We can also send a message to the world’s political leaders that urgent action is required to address the human suffering that we each witness on our streets every day.”

A new charity called The World’s Big Sleep Out Trust has been established to govern the funds raised from the global event, while funds raised in the USA will be managed by Unicef USA with the support of Robin Hood Foundation.

Research by the Institute of Global Homelessness shows that there are more than 100 million people homeless and displaced around the world.

Elstow Abbey ‘Big Sleep Out’

Hillersden Hall Ruins,

Saturday 7th December 8.00pm – Sunday 8th Dec 7.00am.

1 night... 1 sleeping bag... Can you handle it?

We are challenging you to sleep outside for one night, to experience what it’s like to be homeless and be part of the global ‘Big Sleep Out’ event.

All we ask is for participants to pay £20 to take part. Of course we hope you will fundraise yourself to raise as much as possible. To register please email: info@elstow-abbey.org.uk

After you’re signed up, all you have to do is start fundraising! All money raised is split 50/50 between Bedford Smart Prebend Centre as well as provide support for refugees and displaced people worldwide.

People under 16 cannot take part individually; responsible adults must accompany them. For safety reasons, no under 10’s are allowed to participate.

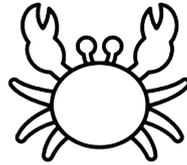




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NOVEMBER

Saturday 2nd November

9.30am Iona Morning Prayer
6.30pm Community Fireworks

Sunday 3rd November

9.00am BCP Mattins
10:00am Holy Communion
6.30pm All SOULS – Fauré Requiem

Tuesday 5th November

10:00am – 11:30am ‘Little Pilgrims’

Wednesday 6th November

11:00am Holy Communion (said)
11:30am – 12:30pm Soup and Natter

Thursday 7th November

7.00pm – 8.30pm Take a deep breath choir

Saturday 9th November

9.30am Iona Morning Prayer

Sunday 10th November

9.00am BCP Mattins
10:00am Festival of Remembrance
6.30pm Holy Communion

Tuesday 12th November

10:00am – 11:30am ‘Little Pilgrims’

Wednesday 13th November

11:00am Holy Communion (said)
11:30am – 12:30pm Soup and Natter
7.15pm WI meeting on Vestry

Thursday 14th November

7.00pm – 8.30pm Take A Deep Breath Choir

Saturday 16th November

9.30am Iona Morning Prayer

Sunday 17th November

9.00am BCP Mattins
10:00am Holy Communion
3.00pm Christening Service

Tuesday 19th November

6.30pm BCP Evensong
10:00am – 11:30am ‘Little Pilgrims’
7.30pm PCC meeting

Wednesday 20th November

11:00am Holy Communion (said)
11:30am – 12:30pm Soup and Natter

Thursday 21st November

7.00pm – 8.30pm Take A Deep Breath Choir

Friday 22nd November

7.30pm Take A Deep Breath Choirs
– St Cecilia Day Concert

Saturday 23rd November

9.30am Iona Morning Prayer
4.00pm Pilgrims Praise

Sunday 24th November

9:00am Holy Communion (said)
10.00am All Age Worship
12noon Christening Service

Tuesday 26th November

6.30pm BCP Holy Communion
10:00am – 11:30am ‘Little Pilgrims’
8.00pm RoSPA Meeting – Church Vestry

Wednesday 27th November

11:00am Holy Communion (said)
11:30am – 12:30pm Soup and Natter

Thursday 28th November

7.00pm – 8.30pm Take A Deep Breath Choir

Friday 29th November

7.30pm – Grace Community Church Carol Service

Saturday 30th November

9.30am Iona Morning Prayer

DECEMBER

Sunday 1st December

9.00am BCP Mattins
10:00am Holy Communion
3.00pm County Women's Institute Carol Concert

Tuesday 3rd December

10:00am – 11:30am 'Little Pilgrims'

Wednesday 4th December

11:00am Holy Communion (said)
11:30am – 12:30pm Soup and Natter

Thursday 5th December

7.00pm – 8.30pm Take A Deep Breath Choir

Friday 6th December

10.00am – Bedford Schools Christingle Service

Saturday 7th December

9.30am Iona Morning Prayer
10.00pm BIG SLEEP OUT

Sunday 8th December

9.00am BCP Mattins
10:00am Holy Communion

Tuesday 10th December

6.30pm BCP Evensong
10:00am – 11:30am 'Little Pilgrims'

Wednesday 11th December

11:00am Holy Communion (said)
11:30am – 12:30pm Soup and Natter

Thursday 12th December

7.15pm WI meeting on Vestry

Saturday 14th December

7.00pm – 8.30pm Take A Deep Breath Choir

9.30am Iona Morning Prayer
12noon Community Christmas Dinner

Sunday 15th December

9.00am BCP Mattins
10:00am Holy Communion
3.00pm The Mayors Civic Carol Service

Tuesday 17th December

10:00am – 11:30am 'Little Pilgrims'

Wednesday 18th December

11:00am Holy Communion (said)
11:30am – 12:30pm Soup and Natter

Thursday 19th December

7.00pm – 8.30pm Take A Deep Breath Choir

Saturday 21st December

9.30am Iona Morning Prayer
4.00pm Christingle Service

Sunday 22nd December

9:00am BCP Mattins
10.00am All Age Holy Communion
6.30pm Nine Lessons & Carols

Tuesday 24th December

2.00pm Crib Service
4.00pm Crib Service
11.30pm Midnight Mass

Wednesday 25th December

10.00am Christmas Day Holy Communion

Saturday 28^h December

9.30am Iona Morning Prayer

Sunday 29th December

10:00am Holy Communion
6.30pm Evening Prayer (said)

OUR WORSHIP TIMES

Elstow Abbey welcomes people of all ages and backgrounds and provides traditional Anglican services as well as those with a modern style of worship.

SUNDAY SERVICES

9.00am BCP Mattins

*The traditional Prayer Book (Morning Prayer) service.
The service lasts about 25 minutes.*

10.00am Holy Communion with Sunday School

*A Common Worship service with hymns, choir and a sermon.
The service lasts about 60 minutes.*

6.30pm BCP Evensong

*The traditional Prayer Book service with sung responses, hymns and a sermon.
The service lasts about 45 minutes.*

SERVICES FOR THE 4th SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

9.00am Holy Communion (said)

A simple said service lasts about 25 minutes

10.00am All-Age Worship

*Led with a worship band, short talk and involvement for all ages.
The service lasts about 45 minutes*

6.30pm BCP Holy Communion

*The traditional Prayer Book Communion service with hymns and a sermon.
The service lasts about 45 minutes.*

WEDNESDAYS

11.00am Holy Communion (said)

A simple said service with a short talk lasts about 30 minutes.

EVENING SERVICE WHEN THERE IS A 5th SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

6.30pm Taizé Worship

A service of prayer, song and contemplation