



ST DENYS BULLETIN

September 2026



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The Oude Kerk – Amsterdam

Visiting churches and cathedral whilst overseas is normally a source of great pleasure but the visit to the Old Church in Amsterdam was surreal. The church was founded in 1213 – so not as old as our church – and was consecrated by the Catholic Bishop of Utrecht. The Reformation in the Netherlands followed the lead of Jean Calvin and in 1578 the old church became a reformed (Calvinist) church – and it still is. In typical Calvinist fashion all evidence of its Catholic past has been erased. The interior is a sterile whitewashed space without ornamentation. Actually, that is not strictly true – a superb baroque organ (built in 1724 but its 4th rebuild was in 2010) sits over the west door. The Dutch composer and organist Jan Sweelinck (1562-1621) began his musical career in this church when he succeeded his father as organist at the age of fifteen. The organ together with some interesting misericords are the only decorative objects in the church. A large pulpit dominated the north side with a few large elevated (and canopied) pews for the most important people (one was for the churchwardens, another for the mayors or Burgemeester, another for the principal merchants). There were some other blocks of pews in declining grandeur the further from the pulpit you got. Clearly status was important here. Much of the floor was empty, which was probably necessary as the entire floor is identically sized gravestone. Most do not have names on them, but they all have a number so the identity of the person interred can be identified from the plan. There are 2,500 gravestones under which are buried nearly 60,000 Amsterdam citizens – the entire church is basically a cemetery. The last interment took place in 1865. In one of the pews near the organ (the cheap seats) I saw a large open book its pages yellowed with age. I took a closer look assuming it would be a Bible or psalm book (music) – it was neither. It was a telephone directory! Why it was there eludes me. Although signs stated that there would be a service on Sunday there was nothing of the usual paraphernalia of a living church: no bibles or hymnbooks, crosses or candles, not even an altar or communion table! It was cold, sterile, and austere. Clearly the sermon was important – everything was orientated towards the pulpit – and the church building was little more than a space for listening to the sermon without getting distracted. Worship here was serious business in much the same way that making money was serious business for the merchants who dominated the city. The Burgemeester who occupied the City Hall (now the Royal Palace) had the best places in the church. It was the embodiment of the 'Protestant Work Ethic' as described by the sociologists Weber and Durkheim.

But as I wandered around the building, I kept wondering where God was? Nothing in this space lifted my eyes from the things of this world to the spiritual realm. Perhaps if I had been there when a service was in progress I would have felt differently, but in a word-based service (and being unable to understand Dutch) I doubt it. I did wonder how large (or do I mean small) that Sunday congregation would have been. The Church of England is often called a Protestant Church – and it is, in the sense that it is neither Roman Catholic nor Orthodox. But it is not really a Protestant Church either. Sometimes it is called a via media – a middle way – but that diminishes its unique integrity. The Church of England embraces some aspects of reformed Protestantism and some aspects of Catholicism, holding them together in a way that is uniquely Anglican. The history of the Church of England tells the story of the doctrinal struggles between those who desired greater reform and those who wanted to return to the old ways. The Church of England although recognising the importance of the sermon – of proclaiming the Word – has never put the pulpit at the centre. The Centre for Anglicans is the Eucharist – the ceremony, beauty, and mystery of the Word made flesh in bread and wine and offered freely to us by God's grace. It is this frequently repeated act in this place that makes this space a house of prayer, and why even when the church is empty people enter through these doors and encounter the divine, finding comfort and hope in a confusing world. *Fr Philip*

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The church is open daily from 9am

During 2025, it cost £2330 per week to run the church

Psalm 122.1

I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'

REMEMBERING HEATHER MASTERS

As many will know, our sister Heather died on 12th July. On behalf of Heather's family, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to everyone at St. Denys' who was involved in the arrangements for her Thanksgiving Service held on 7th August, which was very well attended and was a great tribute to her.
Stella and Jill Butler



Funerals and Memorial Services

Please remember in your prayers

Clifford Peter Jackson 74 years
Joanne Kathryn Price 63 years
Heather Masters 84 years
Margaret Roberts 89 years
Mary Elizabeth Teesdale 90 years

An Ancient Jewish Prayer

Blessed are you, our God, King of the Universe, who has such beauty in His universe.

William Alvey School Bishop's Visitor Update (Beryl Risdell)

In just a few more days the new school year will begin in September and the children and staff return to school after the long summer holidays. The end of last term and the whole holiday have been extremely hot and we have all found the heat very difficult to cope with I think.

The last few times I visited in July there were some more Rotary Stars Good Citizens Awards – one for each year group – for various good and helpful deeds awarded and their parents were invited to be there as well. The school held a French Day and in the Assembly that day each year group had learnt a song and sang it to us all in French and the words were explained so we knew what the song was about! Everyone was wearing red, white and blue (even me) the colours of the French flag.

The year 6 leavers who are going to secondary schools in September always perform a musical show in the school hall with all involved and for parents and friends to attend. There were also Sports Days and various class outings. Schools are always busy but Summer Terms especially so!

Just before the holidays began the whole school filled St Denys Church for the annual Alvey Day Service when the year 6 leavers remember and tell us about their time at the school. Then they lay flowers on the tomb of William Alvey in the chancel. I hope you saw the flowers! The Vicar leads the service, the Head reviews the year and reminds us of the story of William Alvey starting the school in the 1700's and there are lots of hymns and music from the choirs and the whole school as well as individual children who are learning musical instruments. I have the honour of reading the Bishop's Letter sent to all church schools in the Diocese every term end. This time it was from Bishop Jean of Grimsby, who is new to the diocese.

I have now completed 13 years and 1 term as Bishop's Visitor and this is Update number 128 that I have written for the Bulletin. I have only missed one or two when I forgot the deadline date! I began after Easter in 2013 when Mr Jackson was in his last term as Head before retiring. Then in September 2013 Mr Tapley arrived and stayed for 10 years. The Vicar also came in 1913 in October. Mr Farrington has now completed 3 years as Head.

It has been a pleasure and an honour to visit the school all these years, but I am now wondering if it is time to step down and hand over to someone else to carry on.

Please remember the school in your prayers. Here is the Alvey Blessing

*Blessing and laughter be yours,
The love of a great God,
Who names you and holds you,
While the earth turns and the flowers grow,
This day, this night,
This moment and forever. Amen.*

Church Services

(Morning prayer is usually at 8.45am on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday)
Said Communion every Wednesday at 10am (1st Weds of the month is BCP)

SEPTEMBER

Sunday, 30th August

10am Trinity XIII

Wednesday, 2nd September

10am BCP

Sunday, September 6th

10am Trinity XIV

Wednesday, 9th September

10am Said Communion

Sunday, 13th September

10am Trinity XV

Wednesday, 18th September

10am Said Communion

Sunday, 20th September

10am Trinity XVI

Wednesday, 23rd

September

10am Said Communion

Sunday, 27th September

10am Trinity XVII

3pm Civic Service

Wednesday, 30th

September

10am Said Communion

Sunday, 4th October

10am Harvest



heritage open days

Heritage Open Day

Free entry

Sleaford Almshouses
Corner of Eastgate and Carre Street, NG34 7DQ

Saturday 12th September, 2pm

Join us at the rarely opened Almshouse Chapel for talks by historians Dr Simon Pawley and John Dale on the past and present chapels and a former resident from the Crimean War.
No advanced booking required!

Sleaford & District Civic Trust

sleafordcivictrust.co.uk | www.heritageopendays.org.uk/

FROM THE CHURCHWARDENS

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday, 18th September, 2pm start

OLD FASHIONED BEETLE DRIVE

Yes, a Beetle Drive is planned, followed with bacon baps plus teas and coffee. £5 per head. Feel free to bring a friend and family.

Sunday, 4th October

Harvest Lunch which will follow on from the Harvest Festival Service.

Saturday, 21st November

QUIZ NIGHT 7.30pm Maximum six people per team. Open to all.

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE Hope everyone has had a lovely summer and managed to cope in the very hot weather. As you are probably aware from your own gardens many plants and shrubs have suffered due to the lack of rainfall and subsequent arid conditions. This has impacted on the Garden of Remembrance within the churchyard and we are sad to report three shrubs perished as a result of an insect infection plus a small fir bush succumbed to a lack of moisture. These have been removed and it is our intention they will be replaced when better weather permits.

EVENTS As previously mentioned in the Bulletin the Celebrate Wimbledon Pimms & Prosecco event wasn't the success we had hoped for. However, due to having a surplus amount of stock we were able to open the church to sell Pimms and Prosecco during the Market Place Beach event organised by NKDC. On this occasion we raised £135 for church funds, but more importantly, due to the main West Doors being open it was wonderful to see so many

families come into the church and have a look around and light a candle in memory of a loved one. We feel this is just as important as simply "raising funds" due to the fact most of these visitors rarely visit the church.

GUTTERS During August we took the opportunity to clear some of the guttering around the church. The South Transept gutter - the worst of them all - was cleared and some of the North Transept. Unfortunately rain, yes RAIN, stopped play. An opportunity to finish off the job will be taken on 19th of September, 10am. If anyone wants to help in this task simply turn up armed with a dustpan and brush. Please wear soft shoes, ie trainers or such like, and a healthy head for heights. Access to the various roofs is via several spiral staircases plus a dose of clambering over various obstacles.

SOUND SYSTEM

The company which manages our sound system undertook some minor adjustments recently and one of their tasks was to increase the volume of the choir mics in the Chancel. Some members of the congregation recently commented that the choir sounded very muted following a previous adjustment and we trust the situation has now improved.

CHURCH CLOCK

Most of you have observed the church clock has stopped. A bit like Monty Python's parrot, it has expired. Our clock restorer is aware of the problem and will be on the case during the early part of September, when it is hoped everything will be back to normal, including the quarter and hour chimes.

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COMMUNICANTS' GUILD

The Guild will be meeting **in Church on Tuesday 15th September at 2 p.m.** for a service of Holy Communion.

You are very welcome to join us.

UPCOMING EVENTS in the church

Miller Magic Big Band – A Tribute to the Swing Era Saturday, 12th Sept at 7pm Tickets £10

Sharon Lyons and Kerry Scotia Ensemble – Saturday, 10th October 8pm Tickets £20

Lincolnshire Heritage Day – Saturday, 19th September 2pm – Learn about the Carre family Free entry



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