



July to
October 2025

St Mary the Virgin

The Parish Magazine
for
Whitchurch
and
Whitchurch Hill



St John the Baptist

Create Horizontal Guide.
Shift+Drag to move horizontal ruler

Chiltern Domestic Appliances

Guaranteed repairs and servicing for
Hoover, Hotpoint, Zanussi,
Bendix, Indesit & all major brands.
Washing machines, tumble dryers,
electric cookers and dishwashers.
Low call out fee and prompt attention.
Tel: 01491 638146

The Caring Physio

Personalised Home Physiotherapy - Treating you at home.
Treating you like family.

We will meet you in your home to get to know you and identify your issues and concerns. We carry out a full assessment and develop a personalised treatment package to help you achieve your goals. Helping you recover after a fall, a joint replacement, back pain, stroke rehabilitation and other musculoskeletal pain. Offering sports massage, acupuncture, exercise, guidance and advice.

will@thecaringphysio.co.uk

07393351159

2



GORING GAP ELECTRICAL SERVICES
*For South Oxfordshire and West Berkshire * Registered * Insured*

Safety Inspections * Re-wiring & Repairs * Power To The Shed
Replace damaged cables, sockets or switches * New Consumer Units
PAT Testing * New circuits or extensions * Change a light bulb ☺

CALL JONATHAN HART FOR A FREE ESTIMATE

01491 875557 - 07815 011619

or email to: enquiries@goringgapelectrical.co.uk





• Hard and Soft Landscaping • Fencing • Garden Clearance
• Garden and Grounds Maintenance • Hedge Planting
• Hedge Cutting • Grass Cutting • Turfing • Power Washing
• Winter Gritting • Licensed Waste Carrier • Insured

Call Nick - Home: 01235 859229
Mobile: 07922 701634
Email: ndrumlandscaping@gmail.com

3



Letter from the Vicar

Dear Friends,

In my last vicar's letter, to help pave the way for our Save Our Spire fundraising appeal, I wrote about some of the reasons why church buildings are special. We've now formally launched the appeal, and you can read all about it in the leaflet that accompanies this edition of the Parish Magazine. In this letter I'd like to build on what I wrote last time by exploring two ideas of what churches can be that I shared at the appeal launch event back in April.

The first idea of what a church can be is that of a 'thin place'. The concept of 'thin places' has roots in Celtic Christian spirituality, which originated in Ireland in the 5th Century AD and spread in the following centuries to Scotland, England and Wales through the efforts of missionaries like St. Columba, St. Aidan and St. Cuthbert. A distinctive feature of Celtic spirituality is being aware of the nearness of the eternal dimension in the midst of everyday life. God can be found present everywhere, even in the most mundane of daily activities. There are some places, however, where the boundary between heaven and earth seems especially thin, where it is somehow easier to catch a glimpse of 'the edge of glory'. (1) These are 'thin places'. Some people find ancient centres of Christian spirituality, like Iona or Lindisfarne, to be thin places. For others it might be somewhere in nature where they find it easier to connect with the divine, like a mountaintop or a forest. And for many it might be a historic church, somewhere where men, women and children have met and prayed with God for centuries. Churches like St. Mary's and St. John's provide a space in the heart of a community where people can momentarily step away from the busyness of daily life and open themselves to a reality that transcends the material world that we can see.

The second idea of what a church can be is that of a 'palace of memory'. Our parish, like many in this country, contains several buildings that have been around for more than 200 years. As part of that shared built

4

heritage, our churches have a special place in several respects. First, and this is especially true of St. Mary's, they are among the very oldest buildings in the parish and so they bear witness to more of the community's history. From memorials on the walls and floor to the lists of people who have been baptised in recent years you can read the names of people who have lived in the parish over several centuries. Second, our churches preserve evidence of how the community has changed over time. In St. Mary's, for example, you can find features that belong to every era from Saxon times to the present day and you can trace how the building has been adapted to meet the needs of successive generations of worshippers. Finally, churches, unlike most other older buildings, are and have always been community buildings. These 'palaces of memory' are there for the benefit of everyone, for parishioners especially, but also for all the visitors we welcome throughout the year.

These are just two of the reasons why church buildings matter and why they are worth preserving. I hope they resonate with you.

Every blessing,
James

(1) 'The Edge of Glory' is the title of a popular book of prayers in the Celtic tradition by David Adam, one time Rector of Lindisfarne.

We are sad to note the deaths of three of our longstanding and valued church members—**Jackie Kingsley** and **Dalby Lenden** from Whitchurch on Thames and **David Giles** from Whitchurch Hill. Jackie and David had distinguished careers in teaching and education, as did Dalby in the legal profession. They had a warm and lively interest in the world around them and will be greatly missed from our church life.

5

DIARY DATES

The regular service schedule is set out on the back cover

July

Tues 1st 10.30am-12 noon every week **Community Coffee Morning** in the Old Stables
 Wed 2nd **Friends Working Party**, St Mary's 10.00a.m.
 8-9pm weekly **Compline Prayer Group** on Zoom (see p 16)
 Thurs 3rd 7.30-9pm **WOTSING Choir** at St John's monthly first Thurs.
 Thurs 10th 10-11.30am **Ladies Bible Study** and every 2nd and 4th Thurs in the Old Stables
 Sat 12th **Jazz in the Garden**, St Mary's House 6-8pm (see p 14)
 Mon 14th **PCC** 7.30pm Old Stables
 Tues 15th **Pray for the World** 9.10-9.30 am and normally third Tues in the Old Stables (not August)
 Wed 30th **Friends Working Party** in St John's churchyard and every last Wednesday

August

Sat 2nd 10.30-12.30 **Friends Coffee at Art Café** in the Old Stables With **Grand Draw**

September

Mon 8th **PCC** 7.30pm Old Stables
 Tues 16th **Pray for the World** in the Old Stables 9.10-9.30 a.m.
 Sun 28th **Harvest Service** 11.00a.m. followed by a simple lunch

October

Sat 1st 10.30-12.30 **Friends Coffee at Art Café** in the Old Stables
 Sat 18th **Musical Evening at St Mary's** more information to follow
 Tues 21st **Pray for the World** in the Old Stables 9.10-9.30 a.m.

Copy deadline for the November issue is Wednesday 15th October 2025

So what does a Churchwarden Do?



On 2nd June **Ken Baker** and **Rosemary Pearce** were admitted as Churchwardens at a special service in Wallingford. It is a very ancient role dating back to the 13th Century, and anyone living in the parish is entitled to vote for the people to fill these positions. The main focus of the role is to represent the lay people of the parish and to work with the Vicar to support and encourage church members and church life and to help sort out any difficulties. Churchwardens have a special responsibility for making sure that services go smoothly and for the use of the churchyard. They also have to ensure that the "moveable items" - church plate, linens etc are properly looked after and well maintained.

At the Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting there were also elections to the Parochial Church Council (PCC). This is the Church Council as opposed to the Parish Council, which has a confusingly similar name. **Jeanette Cabeldu**, **Katharine Martin** and **Graeme Pearce** were appointed as PCC members for a further term and **Nick Bion** was elected for the first time. Elections to the PCC take place on a rolling basis. The PCC meets four or five times a year to discuss matters relating to the life of the church and the maintenance and development of our buildings.



The Friends of St Mary's and St John's

Registered Charity no. 1168335
 The Friends are an independent charity and welcome members from all faiths and none. We aim to bring together the local community in support of the preservation and improvement of our 2 churches and their churchyards.

Granny's Attic Stall at Whitchurch Hill Fete

This was an even greater success than our stall in 2024 - I am delighted to report that we raised £492!! Thank you to everyone who generously donated items for this very popular stall. It's a wonderful thing to be able to re-cycle items within our community in this way.

Work Parties

The regular work parties at St John's happen on the last Wednesday of the month, and the next one will be on June 25th at 10 am which will have been and gone by the time that you receive this newsletter. Work parties at St Mary's are on a more ad hoc basis as the churchyard is well tended at the moment, the next one being held on July 2nd. Please get in touch with Sally Woolhouse whitchurch-friends@gmail.com if you fancy joining one of these sessions, where a welcome cup of coffee is always provided at half time.

Save our Spire!

The spire restoration at St Mary's is our current main future funding project and the Parochial Church Council has launched the fundraising Spire Appeal. We have currently set £20,000 aside towards the project.

Future Fund Raising

I am delighted to announce that the Friends are holding another **fund-raising draw** this summer; the prize is for a 2 nights' self-catering stay for 4 at a Luxury Lodge in **Laugharne**, Carmarthenshire, the home of Dylan Thomas. The prize has been generously donated by one of our

members.

Limited to just 100 tickets at £5 each, the launch of ticket sales will be at the Whitchurch Hill Fete and the winning ticket will be drawn on Saturday August 2nd at the Friends' Art Café at the Old Stables. Please contact Sally Woolhouse if you are interested in buying a ticket.

On Saturday October 18th there will be a **Musical Evening at St Mary's**, which is a great way to relax and appreciate the beautiful and historic building of the church, as well as to join in with a community activity. Do make a note of the date in your diaries.

We are always keen to welcome new Friends. For more information on how to join please go to the Whitchurch on Thames village website at <https://whitchurchonthames.com> and follow the link for the Church, or ask me, or Sally Woolhouse. Sarah Dragonetti, Chair of The Friends whitchurchfriends@gmail.com

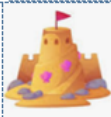


Pray for the World

Do you feel in despair and helpless about the state of the world? Come and join us to hold the needs of the world in a short period of reflection. Monthly at the Old Stables 9.10 - 9.30 a.m.

Tuesdays: 15th July, 16th September, 21st October

When did we start having holidays?



The idea of holidays started in ancient Rome. The Romans loved to celebrate religious festivals and enjoy games and sporting activities. But when Rome fell, the tradition of holidays faded away.

In the Dark Ages, (5th to 10th Century AD) travel was dangerous because of Viking raids and wars. Most people could only visit nearby villages for special events like weddings or religious days. But during the Middle Ages people began to go on pilgrimage. There were three important pilgrim routes: one to Santiago in Spain, the second to Jerusalem and the third to Rome. But people also journeyed to more local shrines e.g. in Canterbury, travelling in groups for safety.

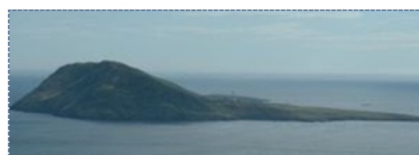
In the 18th century, artists and wealthy people started travelling across Europe again, as the Romans had done. But it wasn't until the late 19th century that ordinary people could enjoy holidays. The invention of steam trains during the Industrial Revolution made it easier for people to visit new places.

In 1871, bank holidays were introduced, allowing people to enjoy long weekends and trips to the seaside. However, most workers didn't get paid holidays until a law in Britain in 1939 gave them one week of paid leave each year.

The first package holiday was organized by Britain's Thomas Cook on July 5th, 1841. The excursion was for workers and their families in England and included tea, ham sandwiches, and a brass band. In 1950 the first mass-market package holidays by air were sold by a young man called Vladimir Raitz. The package included flights from Gatwick to Corsica, a tent on a beach, and non-rationed meals.

Whatever your holiday – a trip to an exotic place on the other side of the world or a “staycation” at home, it is an important time to recharge the batteries, to have time to reflect, to enjoy the important things of life and to refresh ourselves for the year ahead.

10



There is an island there is no going to but in a small boat the way the saints went,.....

There is no time on this island. The swinging pendulum of the tide has no clock: the events are dateless. These people are not late or soon: they are just here with only one question to ask, which life answers by being in them. It is I who ask. Was the pilgrimage I made to come to my own self, to learn that in times like these and for one like me God will never be plain and out there, but dark rather and inexplicable, as though he were in here?

An extract from "There is an island" by R S Thomas

11

Woodcote Volunteers

Office Volunteer Needed

We urgently need someone to help man the office on Friday mornings. The hours are from 9.30 - 11.00 am and you would be working alongside another volunteer, taking phone calls from clients and registering drives on the on-line booking system. Please see our website for more details and how to contact us.

Volunteer Drivers Needed

Due to a big increase in the number of requests for drives – especially to medical appointments – we are looking for a few more drivers, please. Our website has information about this role and how to find out more or apply. Expenses are paid.

Digital inclusion and support project – can you help?

We are all very aware how important it is to be digitally connected in the modern world – and how many people, particularly the elderly, struggle to get to grips with the technology. In our role as a provider of volunteer drivers we see how much our clients are affected by this. Woodcote Volunteers is therefore aiming to launch a 'Silver Surfers' type drop-in session, to be run once a month in Woodcote, specifically to address this issue. However, we do need volunteers who are able to help people unfamiliar with their digital devices to understand how to use them. Support in the set-up and running of sessions will be provided by 'Getting Oxfordshire Online' (<https://gettingoxfordshireonline.org>). To find out more, please go to our website www.woodcotevolunteers.org.uk or email info@woodcotevolunteers.org.uk.

Help with Blue Badge Applications

If you think that you, or a relative, could be entitled to a Blue Badge, we are able to offer help from a team of volunteers who have experience of the eligibility criteria and the form-filling that is required. We can help anyone in our catchment area. Please phone our office number in the first instance or email us using the address at the bottom of this article.



12

AGM

Our well attended AGM was held in the Village Hall on 16th April. We said goodbye and a heartfelt thank you to our Chair, Helena McBride, who is stepping down after four years at the helm. We are very fortunate that a very able replacement, Sarah White, has been found and we look forward to the next few years with Sarah as our Chair. We also wish to thank four other committee members who stepped down after many years of service and will now have a well-deserved break. A number of other new members were elected to the Committee and gifts were presented to two of our long-serving volunteer drivers.

Clients' Tea Party

On the afternoon of May 7th we had our monthly tea party which featured some fun bingo, with our Treasurer, Richard, acting as caller. Next month's tea party will be in the Woodcote Community Centre at 14.30-16.00 on Wednesday 4th June. Tea and cake will be provided as usual, along with a quiz.



Saturday Coffee Morning

Our next fund-raising coffee morning will be on the 31st May, in the Woodcote Community Centre. Please join us!

To Finish..

As usual, if you need a driver, please don't hesitate to give us a call on 01491 681171. We collect from Woodcote and immediately surrounding villages. One of our friendly office workers will answer the phone between 9.30 and 11am on weekdays (excluding public holidays) and you can leave a message on the answerphone at other times. Find out more about us by looking at our website: www.woodcotevolunteers.org.uk. Or visit our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/woodcotevolunteers.

13

Jazz in the Garden

Saturday 12th July 6.00 to 8.00pm

In the Garden of St Mary's House

£10 entry on gate (cash or card)

First drink free, Paying Bar and Snacks

The Old Stables Meeting Room

The Old Stables Meeting Room is a welcoming, carpeted space in the centre of Whitchurch-on-Thames available for hire by local groups and private event organizers. There are tables and chairs for up to 35 people and a well-equipped kitchen.

Hire fees start at £15 for 2 hours. For more information please contact Geoff Weir at OldStablesBookings@btinternet.com
The Old Stables Meeting Room is owned by the Diocese of Oxford and managed by Whitchurch Parochial Church Council.

14

www.thamesvalesingers.org.uk

Thames Vale Singers

Songs for a Summer Evening

Friday 5 July 2024
8.00pm Pangbourne Village Hall

Saturday 6 July 2024
8.00pm St Mary's church, Purley

Tickets: £12, under 16s: £6
On sale from: Tuesday 3 June 2025
Tel: 0118 942 4372
or email: tickets@thamesvalesingers.org.uk
or Online: www.ticketsource.co.uk/thames-vale-singers
(booking fee £0.50)

15

Wednesday Evening Compline Prayer Group at 8pm GMT

In our Compline prayer we practise faithfully the presence of God. We share our prayers and those for the world as a source of divine pleasure. As our hearts and minds return to the word, we are focused upon the love of God. We learn and receive through the Holy Spirit the abundance of God's grace. We are established internationally and ecumenically and it is a thrilling experience to flourish with Christians in other parts of the world as we embrace Jesus with tenderness and joy. Do join us if you can on

ZOOM meeting No 876 0097 2129 at 7.55pm.

Mobile: 07557 383634

Email: peter@pcfconsultancy.com

Community Coffee Morning

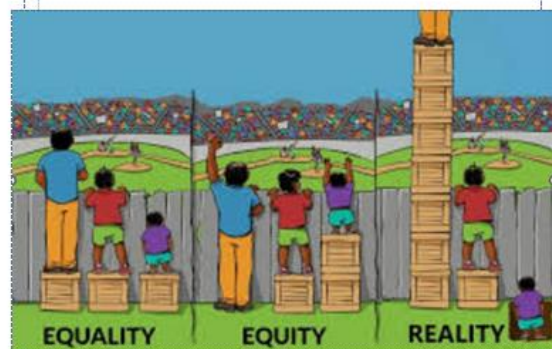
Join us every Tuesday morning at The Old Stables, Whitchurch-on-Thames from 10.30am and 12 noon for a natter and enjoy coffee or tea with biscuits.
Contact sally.woolhouse@gmail.com



16

Visit our churches

As well as being open for services our churches are also open at other times. If you would like to look around them
St. Mary's, Whitchurch-on-Thames is open on all days from 10am to 4pm
St. John's, Whitchurch Hill is open on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month from 10am to 11.30am



17

WOTsing Choir is the community choir for ~~Whitchurch-on-Thames~~ and ~~Whitchurch Hill~~. It is not a performing choir and members do not have to be able to read music, to take an audition or even to sing in tune! It is simply for people who enjoy singing. We meet once a month in St John's Church, Whitchurch Hill, but we are not in any sense a church choir. We sing songs from the shows, folksongs, pop songs, the occasional well-known hymn, but most important is that we enjoy singing, have fun and lots of laughter, and go home feeling happier than when we arrived! We always meet on the first Thursday of the month from 7.30 to 9pm. For more information about the choir, please contact Jerry on jcockeram@hotmail.com

The Whitchurch United Charities

Aims to assist local students with the funding of essential equipment, such as musical instruments and books, or any other cost associated with an educational need. Eligible students are young people from primary school age up to 25 years old and whose permanent residence is within the ecclesiastical parish of ~~Whitchurch~~. If you would like an application form and notes, please either:- email at whitchurchunitedcharities@gmail.com or phone Sarah Dixon on 0118 984 4262. **Next closing date for applications 30th September**

Advertising in this Magazine

The Parish Magazine for Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill is produced and delivered to both villages three times a year. The yearly rate for advertisements is £50 for a half page advertisement, £40 for a third page and £30 for a quarter page.

Officers of the Parish

Team Rector:

Rev'd Canon Kevin Davies, The Rectory, ~~Checkendon~~, Reading, RG8 0SR. 01491 680252. revkevdivies-langtree@yahoo.co.uk

Team Vicar:

Rev'd James Leach, St Mary's House, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames, Reading RG8 7DF. 0118 976 5905.
jamesleach.whitchurch@gmail.com

Churchwardens:

Kenneth Baker, 10 ~~Layton~~ Rise, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6FQ. 0118 943 2778. baker_kenneth2@sky.com

Rosemary Pearce, Little Eastfield, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch on Thames, Oxfordshire, RG8 7EJ 07761 056125
rosemarypearcele@btinternet.com

Verger:

Kenneth Baker (contact details above).

Honorary Secretary:

vacant

Electoral Roll Officer:

Rosemary Pearce, (contact details above)

Honorary Treasurer:

Peter Dragonetti, Covert Cottage, Hill Bottom, Whitchurch Hill, Reading, RG8 7PT. 0118 984 4711. peter@dragonetti.co.uk

Assistant Treasurer:

Kenneth Baker, 0118 943 2778

Organist and Choirmaster:

rota

Contact for the Bell Ringers:

Kenneth Baker, 0118 943 2778

Magazine Editorial Team:

Wendy Ferguson, Rosemary Pearce, Angi Simpson.
Correspondence to rosemarypearcele@btinternet.com
Copy deadline for the November issue is Wednesday 15th October 2025.

CHURCH SERVICES at ST MARY'S and ST JOHN's

1st Sunday of the month: 9.30am Parish Communion at St Mary's

2nd Sunday of the month: 9.30am Family Communion at St John's

3rd Sunday of the month: 9.30am Morning Worship at St Mary's

4th Sunday of the month: 9.30am Worship for All at St John's

5th Sundays: 10.30am Langtree Team Service in one
of the Team churches.

Coffee and biscuits are served after services: in the Old Stables
after services at St Mary's, and in church after
services at St John's. All welcome!

For more details see the Langtree Team website at langtreechurches.org
or the church website achurchnearyou.com/422.



If you would like to give to the work of the church locally you can do
so using this QR code.

You can also make a lasting gift by including a legacy in your will. For
more information contact Ken Baker baker_kenneth2@sky.com

*The magazine can be viewed online in the Church section of the village
website, whitchurchonthames.com.*