

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.



St Mary the Virgin

March to May 2024

The Parish Magazine for Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill



St John the Baptist



At Whitchurch Pre-School, our team is committed to providing a secure and caring environment where children can learn and develop at their own pace within a happy atmosphere.

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will@thecaringphysio.co.uk 07393351159

Officers of the Parish

Team Rector:

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01491 680252. revkevdivies-langtree@yahoo.co.uk

Team Vicar:

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Reading RG8 7DF. 0118 976 5905. jamesleach.whitchurch@gmail.com

Churchwardens:

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Organist and Choirmaster: rota

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Copy deadline for the June issue is Friday, 10th May

**Whitchurch Parish Magazine is issued four times a year,
in March, June, September and December, and can be viewed online in the
Church section of the village website, whitchurchonthames.com.**

GORING CHAMBER CHOIR PRESENTS

SUMMERTIME TO SKYFALL

DIRECTED BY **FRANCES BREWITT-TAYLOR** ACCOMPANIED BY **STEVE BOWEY**

"TOMORROW" "SUMMERTIME" "MOON RIVER" "HALLELUJAH" "SKYFALL"
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 via sarah@dragonetti.co.uk or tel. 07763 432260



Letter from the Vicar

Dear Friends,

Around this time last year I was preparing an Easter-themed tour round St. Mary's church for a class from Whitchurch Primary School. It had dawned on me that the church building was capable of telling the Easter story almost all by itself. And so I worked out a route round the church's interior that used various visual elements to pick out the key events of the story. We began with the stained-glass windows in the north aisle that depict Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, which in John's gospel is the incident that propels the narrative towards Jesus' own death. In the same aisle we looked at the needle-work re-production of da Vinci's Last Supper created by girls at a Christian school in China and thought about Jesus's last meal with his disciples. We then proceeded to the communion table in the sanctuary, where the chalice (cup) and paten (plate) with communion wafers reminded us of Jesus' command to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of his body and blood given for us on the cross on Good Friday, something we do at every service of Holy Communion. As for the cross itself, examples of this foundational Christian symbol can fittingly be found in several places around the church. Finally, we walked down the main aisle to look at a stained-glass window in the south wall to the right of the south door. Here we saw Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene on the first Easter Sunday morning. In John's gospel Mary is the first person to see the risen Jesus and know that he is alive, the wonderful news that she then reports to the rest of the disciples. This little tour is just one example of how our church buildings remind us of the story of Jesus and provide places where people of all ages can reflect, pray and worship. They have been doing this for many generations and, God-willing, will continue to do so for generations to come. As for our generation, as the current stewards of this built heritage we are responsible not just for maintaining it but for imagining how it can continue to serve God's mission in the future. We also have the privilege of discovering how the story of Jesus transforms our own lives and then finding fresh ways of telling that story and inviting others into it.

WOTsing Choir is the community choir for Whitchurch-on-Thames and Whitchurch Hill, which was formed in 2018. 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, folk songs, 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!

Our current accompanist is Tim Taylor and we always meet on the first Thursday of the month from 7.30 to 9pm. For more information about the choir, please contact Geraldine on wotsing2018@gmail.com

Wednesday Evening Compline Prayer Group at 8pm GMT

In our Compline prayer we practise faithfully the presence of God. We pray gently, humbly and without giving way to anxiety. We share our prayers and also 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 the Lord'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 261 107 9079 at 7.55pm.

Mobile: 07557 383634

Email: peter@pcfconsultancy.com

Remembering Barbara Hearn



Barbara's funeral was held at St John's Church, Whitchurch Hill on 14th February. She died aged 93 leaving four daughters, 11 grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

She had been married to Robin, who died in 2022, for almost 70 years.

They had lived in Whitchurch Hill for many years and took an active interest in the church and local community.

Barbara was involved with flower arranging and brass cleaning at St. John's.

She will be much missed by the many of us who remember her buoyant and loving personality.

Welcome May and Alastair!

At the Langtree Team Confirmation Service conducted by Bishop Gavin at St Mary's Church, North Stoke on Sunday, 28th January, Alastair Dunstan and May Archibald-Green from this parish, and living in Whitchurch-on-Thames, were welcomed into full membership of the Anglican Church. Congratulations to them both.

Dear Lord, we thank You and praise You for giving us the sacrament of confirmation. We ask You to pour out Your Holy Spirit on May and Alastair as they grow in their Christian faith.



At our annual church meeting (APCM) on April 28th, we'll have the opportunity to celebrate the ways in which God has enabled us to do these things in the past year. We'll also be considering the ways in which we can carry on resourcing the church's mission in terms of time and money. There'll be more to say about this in the weeks following the APCM. In the meantime, the next time you're in St. Mary's (or St. John's for that matter), why not pause to let the building itself remind you of the story of Jesus, whose death, resurrection and ascension are at the heart of God's good news for the world.

Every blessing,
James

0118 976 5905

jamesleach.whitchurch@gmail.com

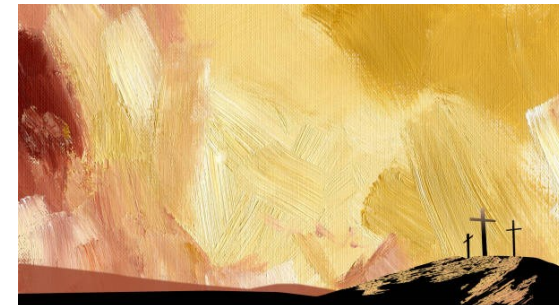
Special services during Lent and Easter

Sunday 10th March 9.30am Mothering Sunday Communion Service for All Ages at St. John's.

Thursday 28th March 7.30pm Team Maundy Thursday Communion Service at St. John's.

Friday 29th March 2.00pm Good Friday Service – An Hour at the Cross at St. Mary's.

Sunday 31st March 9.30am Easter Sunday Communion Service for All Ages at St. Mary's.



DIARY DATES

MARCH

- Tues 5th 10.30am-12 noon every week **Community Coffee Morning** in the Old Stables.
- Sun 3rd 9.30am **Parish Communion** at St Mary's.
- Wed 6th 8-9pm weekly **Compline Prayer Group** on Zoom (see p.17).
- Thurs 7th 7.30-9pm **WOTSING Choir** at St John's Church, Whitchurch Hill.
- Sun 10th 9.30am **Mothering Sunday Communion Service for All Ages** at St John's.
- Thurs 14th 10-11.30am **Ladies Bible Study** every 2nd and 4th Thursday. 2-30-4.30pm every 2nd Thursday **Afternoon Tea** at the Village Hall. All welcome, no need to book.
- Sun 17th 9.30am **Morning Worship** at St Mary's.
- Sun 24th 9.30am **Worship for All** at St John's.
- Thurs 28th 7.30pm **Team Maundy Thursday Communion Service** at St John's.
- Fri 29th 2pm **Good Friday Service - An Hour at the Cross** at St Mary's.
- Sun 31st 9.30am **Easter Sunday Communion Service for All Ages** at St Mary's.

APRIL

- Thurs 4th 7.30-9pm **WOTSING Choir** at St John's Church, Whitchurch Hill.
- Sun 7th 9.30am **Parish Communion** at St Mary's.
- Sun 14th 9.30am **Family Communion** at St John's.
- Sun 21st 9.30am **Morning Worship** at St Mary's.
- Sun 28th 9.30am **Worship for All** at St John's, followed by **Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)** in Goring Heath Parish Hall. (see p. 8)

MAY

- Sun 5th 9.30am **Parish Communion** at St Mary's.
- Sun 12th 9.30am **Family Communion** at St John's.
- Sun 19th 9.30am **Morning Worship** at St Mary's.
- Sun 26th 9.30am **Worship for All** at St John's.

See page 5 for special services during Lent and Easter.

Copy deadline for the June issue is Friday, 10th May.

Lamb. In revenge, March borrowed three days from April, and used them to produce even fiercer winds in order to pay back the shepherd for his deceit.

Easter coinciding with three stormy days at the end of March (well what did you expect - it is a bank holiday!). Personally, I always associate Easter Sunday with sunshine and bright yellow daffodils, a day that makes my heart leap like a Spring lamb because Jesus is risen from the dead. Time will tell whether folklore is right about the storms, but Easter Sunday will always be a day of joy and hope, a day of new life, and a day to come together in celebration, whatever the weather, whenever it falls.

With Easter blessings to you all,

Revd. Romey Poston, Curate



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.

A CURATE'S CONTEMPLATIONS

The Moon and Borrowed Days

I had never heard of a Worm Moon before this year. A 'Harvest Moon', obviously; a 'Blue Moon', yes, but never a 'Worm Moon'. Apparently, it's the name that's given to the full moon in March. I thought it might have something to do with ancient folklore but no, the internet tells me it's as straightforward as March being the month when the warming soil brings our friends the earthworms back up to the surface. Simple! There is obviously a whole lunar lexicon out there I know nothing about.

Whatever we call it, the full moon in March this year is going to play a decisive role in when we get to eat our Easter eggs (if we wait until Easter Day, that is!). I had some vague idea that the moon played a part in deciding the date of Easter; sometimes 'late' and sometimes 'early', but never fully understood why. (One year at school it was so early, Easter was in term time which seemed a bit grim).

The rules say, 'Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon that occurs after the Spring Equinox'(well exactly - that's why we let other people work it out for us!). The official start of Spring, the 'equinox', is when the Sun is directly over the equator on its way North so day and night are the same length, and, strictly speaking, that falls sometime between 19th and 21st March. This year, the first full moon after that is 25th March, and the first Sunday after that is 31st March... eh, voila: Easter Sunday 2024!

The moon may be deciding that the Easter weekend from Good Friday to Easter Sunday falls on the last three days of March this year but, if folklore is to be believed, the 'Borrowing Days' will decide the weather. A rhyme, originally from Staffordshire goes: "March borrowed of April,/ Three Days, they say;/ One rained, the other snowed,/And the other was the worst that ever blowed". A Spanish folktale has it that a shepherd promised to give March a lamb if it would lighten its winds to safeguard the shepherd's young flocks. But once March had done so, the shepherd refused to hand over the

'Brambly Thatch'

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Taking part in Church Life

On 28th April 2024 we will be holding the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in Goring Heath Parish Hall after the morning service at St John's. It will be an opportunity to hear about, and discuss, different aspects of our church's life. Those who want to support and take part in the church are invited to join the church's electoral roll.

Please contact Rosemary Pearce, the Electoral Roll Officer at rosemarypearce@btinternet.com by 10th April 2024 for more information and an application form.

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### RESURRECTION, by R. S. Thomas

Easter. The grave clothes of winter  
are still here, but the sepulchre  
is empty. A messenger  
from the tomb tells us  
how a stone has been rolled  
from the mind, and a tree lightens  
the darkness with its blossom.  
There are travellers upon the road  
who have heard music blown  
from a bare bough, and a child  
tells us how the accident  
of last year, a machine stranded  
beside the way for lack  
of petrol, is crowned with flowers.

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“Being Carbon Neutral means engaging in the process of reducing emissions as part of a target-driven carbon management plan, whilst compensating for what has not yet been reduced by carbon offsetting. Being Carbon Neutral doesn't indicate a lack of ambition but recognises that the journey towards Net Zero will take time.”

Why doesn't someone cut the grass?

This church has chosen to allow space for wildlife as well as people...

Churchyards form valuable islands of wildlife habitat, providing 'stepping stones' for movement through our urban and agricultural landscapes.

Reducing the frequency of mowing in certain areas allows wildflowers to grow and set seed.



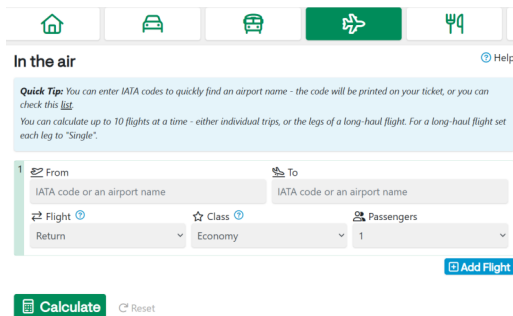
Scan the QR code to find out more:



Saving the Planet

If you *have* to travel why not think about Carbon Offsetting?

While the ideal is to reduce the amount of carbon we produce by reducing the amount we travel, the reality is that most of us travel significant distances from time to time. **Climate Stewards** – a branch of the charity A Rocha - has developed a tool to help us think through some of the implications of our lifestyles.



The screenshot shows a web interface for a carbon calculator. At the top, there are navigation icons for home, car, bus, and a highlighted green icon for flights. Below this is a section titled "In the air" with a "Help" link. A "Quick Tip" box explains that users can enter IATA codes for airports and that the calculator can handle up to 10 flights at a time. The main form has fields for "From" and "To" (IATA code or airport name), "Flight" (Return), "Class" (Economy), and "Passengers" (1). There is an "Add Flight" button and a "Calculate" button with a "Reset" link.

Their website has a simple carbon calculator [Carbon Calculators – Climate Stewards](http://www.climatestewards.org/carbon-calculators/) www.climatestewards.org/carbon-calculators/ into which you can put details of your planned trip and which enables you to compare the impact of the different forms of transport. It also enables you to calculate the amount of carbon you are generating - on a specific trip or during more everyday aspects of living. It is then possible to donate to projects that offset your carbon usage against projects that reduce the global use of carbon. A number of companies offer a range of carbon reducing options from the planting and “farming” of sustainable forestry, to projects, often in the global south, which both mitigate carbon production and bring tangible benefits to the communities and local environment in which they are based. For example, plastic recycling, tree growing, the provision of fireless stoves. The cost of offsetting a cubic ton of carbon varies between companies, depending on the way in which the offsetting is achieved.



www.thamesvalesingers.org.uk



Thames Vale Singers

Musical Director: Katherine Walkem

Accompanist: Peter Bernard

present

VIVALDI GLORIA

with a full programme of music

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Caversham Methodist Church, RG4 8EB

Saturday, 23 March 2024

United Reform Church, Tilehurst, RG31 6HN

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Tickets: £12.00, under 16s: £6.00

On sale: Tuesday 20 February 2024

From: 0118 942 4372 or

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or Online:

www.ticketsource.co.uk/thames-vale-singers

(booking fee £0.50)



Concerts in aid of **CIRDIC** (Churches In Reading Drop In Centre)



What is Lent all about?

Lent may originally have followed Epiphany, just as Jesus' sojourn in the wilderness followed immediately on his baptism, but it soon became firmly attached to Easter, as the principal occasion for baptism and for the reconciliation of those who had been excluded from the Church's fellowship for apostasy or serious faults. This history explains the characteristic notes of Lent – self-examination, penitence, self-denial, study, and preparation for Easter, to which almsgiving has traditionally been added.

Now is the healing time decreed
for sins of heart and word and deed,
when we in humble fear record
the wrong that we have done the Lord.

(Latin, before 12th century)

As the candidates for baptism were instructed in Christian faith, and as penitents prepared themselves, through fasting and penance, to be readmitted to communion, the whole Christian community was invited to join them in the process of study and repentance, the extension of which over forty days would remind them of the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, being tested by Satan.

Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence; from the middle ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross. The calculation of the forty days has varied considerably in Christian history. It is now usual in the West to count them continuously to the end of Holy Week (not including Sundays), so beginning Lent on the sixth Wednesday before Easter, Ash Wednesday. Liturgical dress is the simplest possible. Churches are kept bare of flowers and decoration. *Gloria in excelsis* is not used. The Fourth Sunday of Lent (*Laetareor* Refreshment Sunday) was allowed as a day of relief from the rigour of Lent, and the Feast of the Annunciation almost always falls in Lent; these breaks from austerity are the background to the modern observance of Mothering Sunday on the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

As Holy Week approaches, the atmosphere of the season darkens; the readings begin to anticipate the story of Christ's suffering and death, and the reading of the Passion Narrative gave the Fifth Sunday its Name of Passion Sunday. There are many devotional exercises which may be used in Lent and Holy Week outside the set liturgy. The Stations of the Cross, made popular in the West by the Franciscans after they were granted custody of the Christian sites in the Holy Land, are the best known.

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LENT LUNCHES

These will take place at the Old Stables, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames between 12.15 and 2pm on the following four Wednesdays: **February 21st & 28th and March 6th & 13th.**

Come and join us for a simple bread and soup lunch. Your donations will support Church funds and local charity, Christian Community Action (CCA), based in Reading.

For more for more information, visit their website:
<https://www.ccam.org.uk>

