July to October 2026



St Mary the Virgin

The Parish Magazine for Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill



St John the Baptist

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Shedquarters is a Men's Shed located in the car park of Peppard War Memorial Hall.

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Our Shed is a welcoming place. Our mission is to reduce loneliness and isolation as sometimes experienced by older people. We bring together men and women to share knowledge, learn new skills and to make new friends. We have a range of woodworking tools and other equipment for our members to use. We offer training in the use of hand and powered tools for beginners. Members are free to work on their own projects, or to join in with Shed-wide projects to raise money for running the Shed and to help the wider community too.

COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNING

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



Advertising in this Magazine The parish magazine is delivered to all homes in Whitchurch on Thames and Whitchurch Hill three times a year. The yearly rate is £50 for half a page £40 for a third and £30 for a quarter. Contact rosemarypearcele@btinternet.com



Letter from the Vicar

Dear Friends,

You'll find an update on the Save Our Spire project elsewhere in this magazine, but I'd like to take the opportunity in this vicar's letter to thank everybody who has been involved in this project whether they have donated time. money, expertise or, as in several cases, all three. It truly has been, and continues to be, a team effort and people have been incredibly generous in many different ways.

Save Our Spire is a great example of a project that can flourish only when a wide range of people bring their gifts, skills and resources together, each offering their own distinctive contribution. It brings to my mind St. Paul's description of the church as 'the body of Christ'. A body can only function properly if each part, each limb or each organ does what it is uniquely designed to do. There are no useless parts of the body – even the appendix, as scientists have recently discovered, has its part to play.

In the same way there are no useless members of the church. Everyone has their own unique part to play, their own unique contribution to make. It is sad when people underestimate the value of what they bring to the church's life, or when we attach more value to some kinds of contribution than to others. In the kingdom of God, service done 'behind the scenes' and invisibly or anonymously is just as valuable as service done 'up front'. As a vicar who usually appears 'up front' I probably need to be reminded of this regularly!

The need for everyone to play their part, from polishing the brass to serving on the PCC, is especially true in a small parish church like ours. We can only thrive if each of us does what we can for the benefit of all. So, I want to extend my thanks beyond the Save Our Spire project to everyone

who contributes to the life of the church in any way.

Every blessing,

James

Summer: A Time of Spiritual Growth

As we enjoy watching the unfolding of the summer season it is a good time for reflection. The flowering and fruitfulness we see in the countryside, as well as in gardens, parks and allotments, points us to think about patience, growth and fruitfulness in our own lives.

In the Bible summer is depicted as a time of life, growth, and divine blessings, reflecting the abundance of God's creation and encouragement of spiritual fruitfulness.

The warmer summer months give us opportunities for deeper reflection as we engage with nature. There can be times of rest, restoration and renewal. A time of quiet listening, of exploring new ways forward.

Summer is often associated with joy and celebration, family times and community gatherings, Biblical festivals like Pentecost and Harvest, opportunities to strengthen and enjoy our relationships and express gratitude for God's blessings. -a time to say, "Thank You!"





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

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 two churches and churchyards.

Work Parties

Our regular churchyard working parties at St John's take place on the last Wednesday of the month, starting at 10am and those at St Mary's are on a more ad hoc basis. The recent heat wave meant that we took a break in May but will surely resume in June, weather permitting. Thank you to all those that make a regular appearance, as many hands really do make light work. If you fancy joining one of these sessions, please get in touch with Sally Woolhouse at whitchurchfriends@gmail.com. A welcome cup of coffee is always provided at half time.

Save our Spire!

It's rather exciting to see that the scaffolding is currently being erected at St Mary's and that the work on the Spire will soon begin. The amount that the Friends have donated to the project now comes to about £20,710 which includes the interest accrued.

Fund Raising

Our most recent Art Café was held on June 6th, and our net profit was £181.50. It was a fun event, and Sue Cockeram announced the results of the auction of paintings that were so beautifully painted and donated by Alistair Dunstan a professional artist and resident at Whitchurch. A

magnificent £7,400 was raised for the appeal which was wonderful to hear and very heart warming.

Once again, thank you to those of you who support these events by baking cakes, donating raffle prizes and by helping on the day or joining us for refreshments.

The beautiful Bank Holiday weekend meant that Whitchurch Hill Fete enjoyed a fabulous attendance, and Granny's Attic made more money than ever before! Our net profit was £487.00 which was fabulous. My thanks to all of you who contributed to our stall, and to those who helped on the day.

Also at the Fete was the Churchyard Nature Trail, devised and organised by Sally Woolhouse. This was aimed at children, but interesting for anyone who likes wildflowers and nature. Amongst the different plants to spot were Green Alkanet and the beautifully named Mouse-Ear Hawkweed, which I enjoyed identifying using the description supplied and the markers in situ. Thank you to Sally for this new event.

Membership

We are always keen to welcome new Friends. Membership currently stands at 67 members in our parish. For more information on how to join please go to the Whitchurch on Thames village website at **whitchurchonthames.com** and follow the link for the Church, or ask me, or Sally Woolhouse. Subscriptions start at a minimum of £10.00 per year and can be Gift Aided.



Sarah Dragonetti, Chair of the Friends
whitchurchfriends@gmail.com
Registered Charity number: 1168335

Bishop Gavin's visit to Thames Valley Police

Our local area bishop, Bishop Gavin, the Bishop of Dorchester is back at work. In preparation for taking on the role of Acting Diocesan Bishop following Bishop Steven's retirement he has had a sabbatical. This included a visit to Peru where he reconnected with people he had worked with 28 years ago, when he was part of Latin Link. Back in the Oxford Diocese Bishop Gavin spent a day in May with the Thames Valley Police.

The Thames Valley Police Chaplaincy provides personal, practical, and spiritual support to officers, staff, and their families, regardless of faith. Led by Lead Chaplain Revd Nicky Skipworth, the team includes volunteer chaplains across Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire



The visit highlighted the breadth of work carried out across Thames Valley Police and the important pastoral role chaplains play in supporting officers, staff and their families across the force.

Bishop Gavin said, "Policing is a tough calling, and as well as giving me the opportunity to thank those officers who I met during the day, it was also very inspiring to see the valued role that the Police Chaplaincy team play in supporting the Police, TVP's civilian staff and their families."

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 am

July 14th, September 8th, October 13th, November 10th

LENT ACTION

A very successful Lent lunch was held in March raising funds split equally between the parish and our chosen charity Teach Us Too. We thought readers would be interested to hear more about their inspirational work. Chantal Bryan, a trustee, has shared the following :

Teach Us Too was founded in 2018 by my son Jonathan following his experience of being denied literacy teaching at special school because he was severely disabled and could not speak. Jonathan was bright, curious and deeply engaged with the world, but the assumption that he could not learn to read or write meant he was excluded from the literacy teaching every other child receives.



A year and a half after being taught literacy at home he started to spell everything he wanted to say by looking at letters on an alphabet board held in front of him, and his life was transformed. Jonathan described himself as "a voice for the voiceless" and started campaigning to make sure no other child is shut out of literacy learning simply because they communicate differently.

Today, Teach Us Too works nationally to challenge the low expectations that still mean many children who cannot rely on speech are never taught to read or write. We speak with university students, schools and professionals about why literacy matters for all pupils, and we work with government officials through the Alliance for Inclusive Literacy, which we set up to bring together organisations who share this belief and to push for policy change.

Through our training, we equip schools with practical ways to make reading and writing accessible for children with complex physical or communication needs, so that literacy becomes part of everyday classroom life rather than something reserved for a few. And we share stories of good practice in classrooms, schools and trusts, as well as amplifying the voices of other non-speaking children who can communicate, to help change the wider system, so that every child — whatever their disability or communication method — is given the chance to learn, to be understood, and to express themselves in their own words.

You can see more of what we do, including stories of pupils and schools, on our website: www.teachustoo.org.uk. If you'd like to keep

in touch with our work, you can also sign up for occasional updates through the site.
Teach Us Too is a charitable trust No 1184480

Jonathon wrote the following Palindrome or Reverse poem. **You read it from the top down and then you start again and read it from the bottom line up**. It is called PMLD. PMLD stands for "Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities," describing learners with severe cognitive and additional physical or sensory needs.

PMLD

We are not capable of learning
So do not tell me
There's something going on behind the disability.
Treated as useless handicaps
Minds with nothing in there, tragically
Stuck in a wheelchair,
Disabilities visibly crippling -
Just incontinent and dribbling,
We are not
Academically able.
You should make our minds
Stagnate in special education!
We cannot
Learn to read,
Learn to spell,
Learn to write,
Instead let us
Be constrained by a sensory curriculum.
It is not acceptable to say
We have the capacity to learn.

SAVE OUR SPIRE!

ST MARY'S CHURCH, WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES

We are delighted to have started work on the renovation of St Mary's Spire. During the works, the church will be closed, and St Mary's services will be held in the Old Stables - for details please see church noticeboards in the lychgate and on the High Street. Services at St John's continue as normal.

As can be seen in the photo below the scaffolding is rising by the day and the spire will soon be covered ready for the work on the spire to commence.



Photo courtesy of Jim Donahue

A big thank you to all whose generosity and support have made this happen – it is great to see the restoration underway. We are particularly grateful to the National Lottery Heritage Fund which has contributed just over half of the costs of the project.

We are also delighted to report that the recent auction of two paintings of St Mary's Spire by local artist Alastair Dunstan raised £7400, and that one of these paintings will be on display at the Boathouse Surgery in Pangbourne for us all to enjoy as the restoration work on the spire continues over the coming months.

Following the success of the Jazz in the Garden event last year, we are pleased to be planning this year's event for 6-8pm on Saturday 18th July in the garden of St Mary's House and hope you can join us there.

Posters will be coming out soon and will be on display around the village and on the village website.

If you would like to donate to Save Our Spire, please scan the QR code shown here or contact Ken Baker at baker_kenneth2@sky.com

Thank you for your continued support.

The Save Our Spire Project Team.

Whitchurch Community Choir

WOTSing is a monthly informal community choir that comes together to enjoy a broad range of songs, hearty singing and good fun.

We meet on the first Thursday on the month in St. John's Church in Whitchurch Hill 7:30pm-9.00pm. No previous singing experience is required, and we always leave feeling good after a hearty sing together.

The repertoire includes songs from the shows, 'pop' songs and well-known traditional songs. Refreshments are provided.

New members are always welcome - please come along and join us. For further information please contact jcockeram@hotmail.com

Diary Dates

July	
Wed 1st	***Tots on the Thames*** *10.00 – 11.30 am in Old Stables, weekly during term time* ***Compline Prayer Group*** 8.00- *9.00 weekly on Zoom*
Thurs 5th	***WOTSING Choir*** *7.30 – 9.00pm at St John's monthly first Thursday*
Tues 7th	***Community Coffee Morning*** *10.30-12noon every week in the Old Stables*
Mon 13th	***PCC meeting*** *7.30pm Old Stables*
Tues 14th	***Pray for the World*** *9.10-9.30am, normally second Tuesday in the Old Stables*
Sun 15th	***Outdoor Church,*** *normally every third Sunday 4.00pm St John's followed by refreshments in Goring Heath Hall*
Sat 18th	***Save Our Spire Concert*** *6.00-8.00 p.m. in the garden of St Mary's House*
August	
Sat 1st	***Friends Coffee at Art Café*** *10.30-12.30 in the Old Stables*
September	
Mon 14th	***PCC Meeting*** *in the Old Stables 7.30 pm*
Sunday 27th	***Harvest Festival and Shared Lunch*** *- see Vicar's email for more details*
October	
Tues 31st	***Whitchurch United Charities*** *closing date for applications for educational grants for under 25s. Contact Sarah Dixon 0118 984 4262 or Whitchurchunitedcharities@gmail.com*

WiFi at the

“Not So Old” Stables



The Old Stables has moved into the 21st century. We now have WiFi!

Mobile data and telephone access at the Old Stables has always been patchy so we have now installed our own Wi-Fi router. A local company, CountrySide broadband, has installed a new system to provide public access internet as well as connection for church administration.

The network will be called ‘Old Stables’ and the public access WiFi code will be on the wall for all users.

When the spire works at St Mary’s are completed in September, the coverage will be extended to the church itself via a radio signal.

A Holiday Prayer



“Gracious God, as we enter this holiday season, we thank You for the gift of life, love, and the joy that comes from being together. May Your presence fill our hearts with peace and gratitude. Help us to celebrate with a spirit of joy, embracing the moments we share with family and friends. Let us remember those in need and extend our blessings to them. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

Wednesday evening Compline at 8pm by Zoom

Compline is the final prayer time of the day. We follow the Wednesday lectionary. Typical contents include; prayers of preparation and forgiveness, a Psalm, Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis a Bible reading, a short teaching commentary, Lord's Prayer and a prayer of protection with two praise songs. There is a final time of shared prayer and reflection, as the Spirit moves us. We reach the continents of Europe, Africa and South America sharing God's love and praying for those Christians in the world who suffer. Join us by Zoom in your own home each Wednesday evening at 8pm. You are warmly invited to participate with friends across the world, so please send an email to Peter Ferguson – peter@pcfconsultancy.com who will add you to the distribution list and send you weekly invitations with Zoom joining instructions. So, you can join when you can.

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*.

100 Years Ago: The following item by the Rev'd E.P. Baverstock appeared in the June 1926 Whitchurch Parish Magazine, the month after the 'General Strike' which saw some 1.7 million workers come out on strike in support of coal miners facing longer hours and lower wages. It gives a fascinating glimpse of how a national crisis was viewed by the Rector of the time:

Wonderful. "And he shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace." How well we remember the words of Isaiah which are read to us at Christmas; and how welcome they sound as we recall the message which was broadcasted to us on May 12th. On that day the 'General Strike' was called off, and we breathed freely once again. Wonderful! That just describes my feelings, and I hope they are shared by many of our readers.

Once again God has declared how wonderful He is in His dealings towards the children of men. That is the first wonderful thing, but there are other things to make men marvel. It is wonderful to have a King who is described in history books as a 'limited monarch,' and yet we know that in George the Fifth we have a man who exercises a moderating influence amongst all sections of the people in whose hands lie the power of government. It is wonderful to have had a leader in the government who, although he had not as a young man in academic circles given great promise of future attainment in things political, proved himself to be the man for the hour. Lastly how wonderful to find the same spirit of loyalty which the great war called forth ready to be manifest when the country's national life was in danger from evil forces at home. And then to come out of those fateful 9 days, after much patience and good humour, with little rioting and no bloodshed. "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes." Truly at a time like this one cannot but be proud to be called an Englishman

Harvest Time

For the promise of harvest
contained within a seed,
we thank you.
For the oak tree
within an acorn.
The bread
within a grain.
The apple
within a pip.
The mystery of nature,
gift wrapped
for us to sow,
We thank you.



Officers of the Parish

Team Rector: Revd Canon Kevin Davies, The Rectory, Checkendon, Reading, RG8 0SR. 01491 680252 revkevdavieslangtree@yahoo.co.uk

Team Vicar: Revd 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 Laytom 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: rosemarypearcele@btinternet.com

Church Services at St Mary's and St John's

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

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

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

4.00pm Outdoor Church at St John's

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

5th Sundays: 10.30 am 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/42

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

Registered Charity Number 1213356

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.