

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.



St Mary the Virgin

March to June
2025

The Parish Magazine for Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill



St John the Baptist

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Officers of the Parish

Team Rector:

Revd Canon Kevin Davies, The Rectory, Checkendon, Reading,
RG8 0SR. 01491 680252. revkevdivies-langtree@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.
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Verger:

Kenneth Baker (contact details above).

Honorary Secretary: vacant

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Rosemary Pearce, Little Eastfield, Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames, Reading, RG8 7EJ. 07761 056125.
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Contact for the Bell Ringers:

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Magazine Editorial Team:

Wendy Ferguson, Rosemary Pearce, Angi Simpson.

Correspondence to rosemarypearcele@btinternet.com

Copy deadline for the July issue is Wednesday 5th June 2025.

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

Easter Quiz Answers

1. Passover 2. Jesus's entry into Jerusalem 3. 14
4. Barabbas 5. Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews
6. Psalm 23 7. Women 8. New clothes
- 9 Monday and Tuesday after Easter 10. Peacock



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A Holiday Cottage near Whitchurch Hill - so handy when family or friends from afar come to stay.

Call Kate or John Hatt, 0118 984 3121 or email: info@bramblythatch.co.uk



HELP WITH BRASSES

We have a beautiful church, which is part of our heritage, but due to age and infirmity the small but willing band who clean the brasses at St Mary's has dramatically contracted so that too heavy a burden is being placed on the few who remain. Please could we have some help.

Lesley Landen 0118 984 2414

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Letter from the Vicar

We shape our buildings, and afterwards, our buildings shape us.” These words, spoken by Winston Churchill in 1943, resonate far beyond the Commons Chamber in the Houses of Parlia-

ment, which had just been destroyed in the Blitz. Churchill’s insight rings true in every corner of our lives. The buildings where we live, work, play, and worship leave lasting impressions on us, from the oppressive monotony of office blocks to the majestic beauty of cathedrals, from the electric atmosphere of sports arenas to the warmth of cosy two-bedroomed homes. Have you ever stopped to ponder how the buildings you've spent significant time in have shaped your life?

Certain buildings hold special places in our hearts. Perhaps it's the home where you grew up, the pub where you've shared countless laughs over Friday night drinks, or your aunt and uncle's house, where high teas and snooker games with your cousins created cherished memories. There's also the church where you were christened, later married, and where your grandad's funeral was recently held.

This last example is particularly poignant for me. Churches have traditionally been the venues for marking life's most significant milestones—births, marriages, and deaths. Since moving to the parish of Whitchurch, I've been touched by numerous stories of how the two churches of St. Mary's and St. John's have woven themselves into the fabric of people's lives. When this happens over multiple generations, as it has with our churches, the buildings become more than mere structures. They become integral to the very heart of the community.

For many, churches are more than just buildings—they're sacred spaces, even for people who wouldn't call themselves religious. Whether it's the awe-inspiring architecture, the serene

Thames Vale Singers TVS
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 with us

Saturday 22 March 2025
 Purley Memorial Hall, Glebe Road, Purley on Thames, RG8 8DP
 From 2pm to 6pm
 With a break for tea and cake between 4.30pm & 5pm
 Followed by a performance for family and friends from 5pm

Donations welcome to help cover our costs

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100 Years Ago - the following item appeared in the St. John's Notes section of the February 1925 Whitchurch Parish Magazine:

SUNDAY SCHOOL TREAT

This was held at St. John's Room on Tuesday, Dec. 30th, and began with a tea, most generously given by Mr. C.H. Palmer, who sent a message to say how disappointed he was that he was not well enough to be present. If he had been there and could have heard the children's cheers he would have known how very much they appreciated his kindness. After the tea the room was cleared for a real old fashioned Punch and Judy Show which was provided by Mrs. Palmer, and was thoroughly enjoyed by the children.

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



atmosphere of a weekday morning, or an indescribable feeling of connection, churches help us reach beyond the mundane and touch the transcendent. They keep the memory of God alive in a culture that often forgets.

In essence, our church buildings are an invaluable treasure within our community. And one of the most visible features of this treasure is the spire of St. Mary's, an iconic part of the Whitchurch skyline that has stood as a beacon of hope and faith for generations. However, like any treasured heirloom, it needs care and restoration. The spire has weathered many storms, but now it needs our help to keep standing tall.

Over the next few weeks, we shall be launching a fundraising campaign to restore the spire. Many repairs are needed, including the replacement of the shingles. Support in this effort will not only preserve a piece of our heritage but also help to ensure that our church remains a place of solace and connection for future generations. **More details will follow, but please put the launch event in your diary now: Friday 11th April at 6.30 pm in St. Mary's Church.**

Every blessing,

James

IT'S TIME TO APPLY AGAIN TO JOIN THE ELECTORAL ROLL

This year the electoral roll has to be reformed from scratch and everyone who wishes to be on the roll and to participate in church life, for example at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, or by being a member of the PCC has to complete a new form. These are very simple and available from the Electoral Roll Officer rosemarypearcele@btinternet.com or from the vicar jamesleach.whitchurch@gmail.com

The Donkey By G. K. Chesterton

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.

With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.



Copyright Credit: n/a

Source: The Collected Poems of G. K. Chesterton (Dodd Mead & Company)

Easter Quiz

1. Which Jewish holiday is Easter connected to?
2. What does Palm Sunday commemorate?
3. How many Stations of the Cross are there?
4. What is the name of the man who was pardoned by Pontius ?
5. What inscription was placed above Jesus on the cross when he was crucified?
6. What Psalm does Jesus quote from while he is on the cross and says 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'
7. Who first saw Jesus after he arose?
8. In Italy many people go out and buy what before Easter?
9. What is Hocktide? (answers on page 18)
10. What bird is the symbol of Easter?



pre-loved items, and if you have any donations please get in touch with me at the e-mail address below. Small ornaments, small tools, china and glassware, and various household effects are the sort of thing that we will have at the Stall.

New Trustee

We will be sorry to say farewell to Geraldine and Paul Witcher who plan to move out of the area sometime soon. Paul has been a very proactive trustee for the Friends and was chairman of the Friends for a number of years. We are therefore seeking a new trustee to join us on the Committee. We meet about 6 times a year: please contact me or Sally Woolhouse for more information if you are interested.

We are always keen to welcome new Friends and 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

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.

New Bishops for the Diocese of Oxford



Our two new bishops are the Revd Canon Dave Bull and the Revd Canon Mary Gregory. Dave was Rector of the Marlow team and Area Dean for the Wycombe Deanery. He became Bishop of Buckingham following the sad death of Bishop Alan. Mary was Canon for the Arts and Reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral and became Bishop of Reading following Bishop Olivia's retirement. They join Bishop Gavin (Dorchester) as Area Bishops working under the leadership of our Diocesan Bishop, the Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft. Dave and Mary were consecrated in February.

“Stories We Share: A Celebration of Folksongs”

Goring Chamber Choir is exploring many aspects of life in its next concert. You will hear songs about love and loss, work at home and at sea, fun and nonsense.

Musical Director: Frances Brewitt-Taylor Accompanist: Olivia Canolle

Where: St Thomas of Canterbury Church, Gorin

When: Saturday 17th May 2025 at 3pm

Tickets: £15. Free for under-18s. Obtainable from a choir member, from Inspiration in Goring, from Garlands Organic in Pangbourne, or on the door.

DIARY DATES

The regular service schedule is set out on the back cover

MARCH

- Tues 4th 10.30am-12 noon every week **Community Coffee Morning** in the Old Stables
- Wed 5th 8-9pm weekly **Compline Prayer Group** on Zoom (see p 16)
- Thurs 6th 7.30-9pm **WOTSING Choir** at St John's monthly first Thurs.
- Tues 11th 12.30—2.00pm **Lent Lunch** in the Old Stables
- Thurs 13th 10-11.30am **Ladies Bible Study** and every 2nd and 4th Thurs in the Old Stables
- Mon 17th **PCC** 7.30pm Old Stables
- Tues 18th **Pray for the World** 9.10– 9.30 am and normally third Tues in the Old Stables
- Lent Lunch** in the Old Stables 12.30 –2.00pm
- Tues 25th **Lent Lunch** in the Old Stables 12.30- 2.00 pm
- Wed 26th **Friends Working Party** in St John's churchyard and every last Wednesday
- Sat 29th **Friends Quiz Night** Whitchurch on Thames Village Hall see p 13 for details

APRIL

- Tues 1 **Lent Lunch** in the Old Stables 12.30 –200 pm
- Sat 5th 10.30 -12.30 **Friends Coffee at Art Café** in the Old Stables
- Fri 11th **Spire Restoration Launch Event** 6.30pm St Mary's
- Tues 22nd **Pray for the World**

MAY

- Sat 3rd **Arrival of French visitors from La Bouille for weekend**
- Sun 18th **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** in the Old Stables following the morning service
- Sat 24th **Friends Granny's Attic stall** at Whitchurch Hill Fete

JUNE

- Sat 1st 10.30—12.30 **Friends Coffee at Art Café** in the Old Stables

It is in fact the brown long eared bat that has been detected sheltering in the spire. This little critter is known as the whispering bat as, due to its long ears and acute hearing, it has a quiet call/voice. We will need to find out whether a special licence is needed to begin work because of its presence.



Fund Raising

THE FRIENDS' QUIZ NIGHT

Sat 29th March 2025

(doors & bar open 7pm, Quiz starts at 7.30pm)

at Whitchurch Village Hall, Manor Rd

Light supper, Bar, Raffle

Come along & bring your friends for an entertaining evening!

Tickets in advance £72 per team (max 6 people)

To secure your table, book now!

Bookings & further info from Sally Woolhouse

via whitchurchfriends@gmail.com

Our Art Cafes at The Old Stables in Whitchurch continue regularly and we have hosted two since last writing. On Saturday 7th December the Art Café was supported by a local artist, Sarah Shore, who displayed some beautiful pieces of artwork, many of which were inspired by local landscapes. Thank you to all those who support us with this regular fund raiser.

Granny's Attic at Whitchurch Hill Fete 24th May

Please come and find us on the day for a treasure trove of pre-



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

Registered Charity 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.

Work Parties

At St John's churchyard great clearance of brambles has been done in the centre of the churchyard and in the north east corner. Volunteers from Sonning Common Green Gym have made two visits with significant effect, and coupled with other volunteers and regular maintenance we are beginning to make a difference.

We have decided to have monthly work parties at St John's during 2025. They will be on the last Wednesday of the month beginning on February 26th at 10 am. At St Mary's the next work party will be on February 19th, again starting at 10 am. Work parties at St Mary's will be on a more ad hoc basis as the churchyard is well tended at the moment.

Do get in touch with Sally Woolhouse at whitchurch-friends@gmail.com if you fancy joining one of these sessions, where a welcome cup of coffee is always provided at half time and many hands really do make light work!

Spire Restoration

The spire restoration at St Mary's is our main future funding project. This remains in the early stages of planning as the architects have applied to the Diocese for the work to be allowed. Once this has been agreed, quotes can be sought for the restoration work. One development that is exciting is that we have bats in the belfry! It is in fact the

Special Services for Lent and Easter

5 th March	7.30 pm	St. Leonard's Woodcote	Langtree Team Ash Wednesday service
30 th March	9.30 am	St. Mary's	All Age Mothering Sunday Service
18 th April	2.00 pm	St. Mary's	Good Friday Service
20 th April	9.30 am	St Mary's	Easter Sunday All Age Communion

N.B. These dates and times are correct at time of going to print but are subject to change. For up to date service information see our website at <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/422/>. For a weekly update on what's going on at the church, sign up for the Vicar's email – contact Rev'd James Leach at jamesleach.whitchurch@gmail.com

The Parish of St Mary the Virgin Whitchurch-on-Thames
with St John the Baptist Whitchurch Hill



LENT LUNCHES

Please come and join us for a simple bread and soup lunch at the Old Stables, High St, Whitchurch-on-Thames between 12.30pm and 2pm on the following four Tuesdays:

11th, 18th, 25th March and 1st April



Your donations will support Churches in Reading Drop-in Centre and local Church funds.





The Witchers are moving but look what they are leaving behind.....

When did you come to Whitchurch?
About 29 years ago. We were both brought up in Reading and met at the Greyfriars church youth group. After marriage our church in Calcot grew a congregation in Pangbourne Primary School and we moved to Whitchurch to be part of it. When it ended we

joined the Anglican Church in Whitchurch so that we could worship and be part of a local congregation.

You have both been very involved in different aspects of church and community life—Paul what would you say have been the highlights for you? For 20 years I was a trustee at Yeldall Manor a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in Wargrave. It was amazing to see men's lives being turned around. I was also a long term trustee for CCA Christian Community Action in Reading. They have shops providing furniture, bedding and kitchen items for people in need in the Reading area. One day I was working at my desk when I had a vision from God of a shop in Sonning Common. It rarely happens to me so I got in the car and drove over there. I found the shop, exactly as I had seen it, rang the Agent to find it had gone on the market that morning! CCA always make contact with the local church and we discovered that they had been praying to find a way into the local community. CCA leased the shop and it has been one of our most successful, providing a listening ear and vital goods—some people on benefits are provided with housing but have no furniture or cooking equipment at all. I also used my professional skills as a surveyor liaising with the Diocese and pushing forward the project to create the Old Stables as a Church room which could also be used by the community. I never thought it would be used as much as it has been.

Geraldine how has God used your skills and talents? I am a writer and teacher and have created a number of books and poems including children's stories and Bible courses published by Scripture Union. I also worked with Causeway Prospects and created and ran a Bible group for learning disabled adults in west Reading. I set up the Ladies Bible Study Group in Whitchurch as a safe place where people can learn, ask questions and be themselves in a supportive environment. I also produced the parish magazine monthly for several years.

But you have musical gifts too. Yes I have accompanied worship in church and set up our little music group as well as Wotsing, a community choir meeting at St John's which is great fun. We also helped to organise the Garden Opera at Hardwick House which was very successful.

And together you have led worship. Yes we started the All Age Worship sessions specially focussed for young families and have taken part in the Christingle services which are very popular. Paul has also been churchwarden, working with, and supporting, three different members of clergy and Chair and trustee of the Friends. *Is it right you have also worked overseas?* Yes we were asked to go and help a newly formed church in Zagreb in Croatia. They were mainly young adults who as new Christians needed help with teaching and developing the Church. We acted as "spiritual parents" and it has been an ongoing role, attending their weddings and we now know their children. We helped them to set up a charity like CCA to help the poor in Zagreb. We have also been able to use our lovely home to host missionaries, providing a time of rest and recuperation and also young people learning English - we have had more than 140 guests over the years.

And what now? We are moving to Nailsea in Somerset to be closer to our family. It is in God's hands, we are sad to be leaving but we have already be made welcome in the local church.

Thank you Paul and Geraldine, you will be greatly missed. You have given us so much, but we send you with our love and best wishes for the next stage of your adventure with God.