



## **22 FEBRUARY 2026**

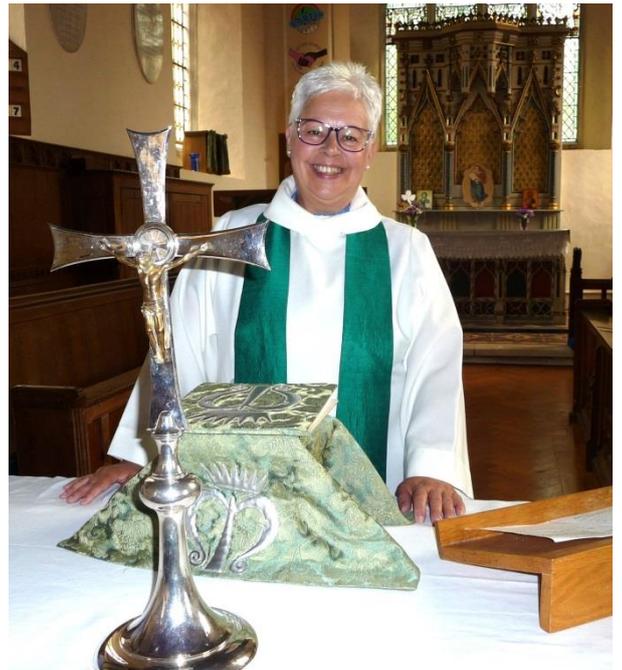
*With prayer & faith in God we seek to engage with the community - **inside** we enrich & equip: **outside** we give & care.*

**A warm welcome from Rev Sally Letman and everyone at St Mary's!**

**TODAY'S LINK NEWSLETTER FOR:  
22 FEB to 8 MARCH 2026**

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## ***WORSHIP TIMELINE***

*St Mary's is open for private prayer every day.*

### **2026**

22 Feb, 9.30am, St John's, *Family Service*  
10.45am, St Mary's, *Holy Communion.*  
6.30pm, *Churches together in Capel*

23 Feb, 7.00pm, St Mary's, *Lent Group No.1*  
"The Two Popes"

25 Feb, 10.00am, St Mary's, *Benefice Holy Communion*

1 Mar, 9.30am, St John's, Holy Communion.  
10.45am, St Mary's, Holy Communion.

2 Mar, 7.00pm, St Mary's, *Lent Group No.2*  
"The Two Popes"

3 Mar, 7.00pm, St Mary's,  
*Samford Deanery Synod.*

4 Mar, 10.00am, St Mary's, *Benefice Holy Communion*

8 Mar, 9.30am, St John's, *Morning Prayer.*  
10.45am, St Mary's *Holy Communion.*

9 Mar, 7.00pm, St Mary's, *Lent Group No.3*  
"The Two Popes"





## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHURCHWARDEN



**SATURDAY 21 MARCH 10.00am to 12 NOON**

Mel says:

As I write the weather has been grey for it seems a long time. However the snowdrops have pushed their way out and the daffodils are beginning to appear and this of course indicates that spring is getting ever nearer.

With this in mind I write to seek volunteers to help with our **Annual Spring Clean**, This year it will be held on Saturday 21 March between 10am and 12 noon. It would be lovely to get the Church and Hall looking at its best for Easter.



Paul Adams and I spend time over the year to keep the Churchyard and the inside of the church as tidy as possible along with other helpers who regularly clean the Church and Hall.

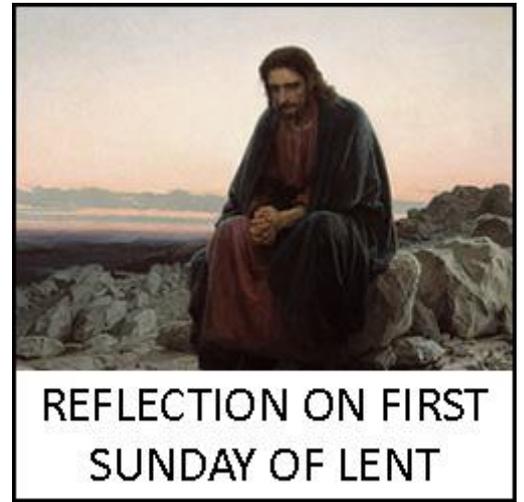
The chairs and tables are looking tired and it would be lovely to spruce them up a bit.

Please note the date and time and if you have the time and energy I would love to see you on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

*Mel Sutcliffe*



## Readings for Sunday 22 February 2026



### Old Testament Readings

**Genesis 2, 15-17 &  
Genesis 3, 1-7.**

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "*You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.*"

### The Fall

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "*Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?*"



And the woman said to the serpent, "*We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'*"

But the serpent said to the woman, "*You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*"

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

## **New Testament Reading**

**Matthew 4, 1-11.**

### *Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness*



Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

The tempter came to him and said, "*If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.*" Jesus answered, "*It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "*If you are the Son of God,*" he said, "*throw yourself down. For it is written:*

*"He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."*



Jesus answered him, "*It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'*"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "*All this I will give you,*" he said, "*if you will bow down and worship me.*"

Jesus said to him, "*Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'*"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

## **Rev Adrian's Reflection on Ash Wednesday**

Last Saturday afternoon, Rosie and I decided to take a walk and visit The Beth Chatto Gardens at Elmstead Market.

One might consider that there is nothing extraordinary about this visit, particularly given the time of year. The ground was notably wet despite the sunshine; much of the existing flora remained in a dormant state.



However, the signs of spring were unmistakable: bulbs emerging from the fractured earth, various types of snowdrops with their heads drooping gracefully, creating a white cover across what would otherwise appear to be quite a mundane and unremarkable landscape.

This scene provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my personal journey over the past year. Things I might have done better, promises I've not kept, etc.



This morning, as we contemplate the cool dust upon our foreheads and hear the familiar words - "*Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return*" - the narrative we have been acquainted with for numerous years from John's Gospel appears as a respectful touch on our shoulder.

Most of us here have lived long enough to know that life isn't as simple as black and white; there is always something in between, and we've seen how quickly people can pass judgment, just as the religious leaders judged the woman they brought

before Jesus.

They stood in a circle around her, holding stones, absolutely certain that they were in the right. But Jesus didn't meet their anger with anger - he bent down and wrote in the dirt, giving them time to think.

Then he said what we all need to hear: "*Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.*" One by one, starting with those who'd lived the longest, they put down their stones and left.

Like I suggested earlier, we've had decades to learn our own imperfections, haven't we? The ash on our brows doesn't shame us - it reminds us we're all on this journey together, all in need of God's kindness.

Jesus didn't turn away from that woman. He looked at her with love and said, "*Go, and from now on sin no more.*"

***That's the gift of Lent:*** a chance to unburden ourselves, an opportunity to press the reset button and start afresh, to mend what's broken in our hearts, and to walk a little lighter with God's help.

As we begin this holy season of Lent, let's hold close what we've learned through the years - to see our own faults clearly, to accept God's mercy with gratitude, and to share that same warm grace with everyone we meet.

Amen

(With thanks to Rev Adrian for the nature photos)





**REV SALLY  
INTRODUCES:  
THE TWO  
POPES**



**St Mary's LENT COURSE commences on Monday 23 February for four consecutive weeks.**

The Two Popes movie is based on a true story and inspired by the real relationship between Pope Benedict XVI and his successor, Pope Francis, after the 2012 Vatican leaks scandal and upon Benedict's resignation.

***Don't miss the brilliant acting of Anthony Hopkins & Jonathan Pryce***

***Lent Course: 'The Two Popes': 'Conscience, Conversion and the Mercy of God - The heart of Lent'***

Rev Sally stressed:

*"This Lent course focuses on the themes of dialogue in division, reconciliation, discernment, forgiveness, and finding common ground.*

*"It will explore personal faith journeys and challenging contemporary divides, with sessions focusing on specific scenes from the movie and connecting them to scripture and Christian teachings on mercy, unity, and service, while acknowledging its fictionalized elements."*

**Session 1: 23 February 7.00pm at St Mary's Rectory (not at the church as on previous occasions);**

**Session 2: 2 March at the Rectory;**

**Session 3: 9 March at the Rectory;**

**Session 4: 16 March at the Rectory.**



***Rev Sally's Lent courses are not to be missed!  
Place the dates in your diaries as soon as possible.....***





# MAJOR REPAIRS NEEDED TO ST MARY'S NAVE ROOF



*Ed Dale from St Mary's Fabric Committee explains:*



The repair works comprise the conservation-led repair of the east end of the south aisle roof to the church.

These include the opening-up of existing roof coverings, the temporary stabilisation of the affected structure, and the repair, strengthening and reinstatement of historic timber members.

That is to say the east and south fluted wall plates, Primary

Rafter, Purlin and associated rafters and decorative timber elements.

The project also includes reconstruction of the lead-lined back gutter, renewal of the zinc standing seam roofing finish, reinstatement of the displaced Solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels, and the making good of all affected internal and external finishes.

*The repairs are required to the south aisle - shown to the right of the two photos.*

*Ed added: "The work on the roof will last for up to 20 months and cost in excess of £150,000."*

## OUR RESPONSE:

As a result St Mary's congregation is determined to start a major fund-raising campaign - including reaching out to the village at large and including seeking grants from a variety of alternative sources.

The principal guiding force behind our fund-raising campaign will be St Mary's charity *The Friends of St Mary's Church*, currently chaired by Jim Kelland, which is historically dedicated to maintaining and repairing the fabric of the church. In addition a task force will be established within the *Fabric Committee*, chaired by Mel Sutcliffe, to explore fund-raising initiatives and grant provision.

*Our very first step is a brilliant new enterprise by The Friends - **Going for Gold** - See below.....*



# ***ST MARY'S CHURCH IS:***



## **The Great St Marys Melt Down**

***Jim Kelland explains this important new fundraising initiative:***

Here at St Marys, we are starting to oil the wheels of the mission that has been set before us.

Raising funds for the new repairs that the church requires are starting in earnest.

One such way you can help is to have a look around for any pieces of gold jewellery.

***We are looking literally for any odd pieces: broken items, odd earrings or cufflinks and the like,***

We are ***not*** looking for anything that is precious to you but things that you have forgotten about sitting in a drawer somewhere.

We have had our first melt and will be collecting throughout the whole process.  
May thanks in advance

***Please get searching !!*** If you have something to donate, please contact Jim Kelland on 07803133183

***In addition The Friends are running an exciting QUIZ NIGHT (see below)***





THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S

# FUN QUIZ NIGHT



Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026

7pm for 7.30pm

ST MARY'S CHURCH HALL

Teams of up to 6 people

£5 per person

Bring your own drinks and nibbles!

Register your team with Julie on

07539 249234

*Forget your stiff and starchy and predictable quizzes of old - Julie's Fun Quiz Night is very different and full of unexpected twists and turns - great fun and not to be missed!!*



## Capel Parish Nurses need our support



*Gill Durrant, chair of the Capel Nurses Trustees (pic right) writes:*

Due to retirement the Trustees of Capel Parish Nurses are seeking to appoint two new Trustees. For one of these positions a financial background is desirable. If you would like to be part of this worthwhile service please contact [treasurer@capelparishnurses.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@capelparishnurses.org.uk) for a chat and further information.



At St Mary's service Capel Nurse Caroline Ursell (pic left) laid out the duties of a trustee:

- Ensure the charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit.

*Knowing how the charity is fulfilling its purposes and benefiting the public.*

- Comply with the charity's governing document and the law.

*About being familiar with the governing document and are aware of other laws that apply to the charity.*

- Act in the charity's best interest.

*About making balanced and informed decisions, recognising and dealing with conflicts of interest.*

- Ensure the charity is accountable

*About managing risks, having and following appropriate controls and procedures.*

- Manage the charity's resources responsibly

*About using your skills and experience and being prepared in case something goes wrong.*

- Act with reasonable care and skill

*About meeting legal accounting and reporting requirements and ensuring staff and volunteers are accountable to the board.*



(Left pic - Tracey Paylor, Capel Nurse)

Capel Parish Nurses are self-financing and are registered as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and with the Charity Commission, number 1173638, since 06/2017. As a charity it is run by Trustees.

It raises funds through grant applications to a variety of grant-making bodies. It also appreciates one-off personal gifts.





## VIEWPOINT

### **New polling shows ReformUK is winning over Britain's Christian support**

*By Stuart Fox*

When we look at how people vote in elections and why they choose certain parties, analysis often focuses on age, education, location or socioeconomic status.

Less discussed in Britain is religion. But close to two-thirds of its adults are still religious - expressing either a religious identity, holding religious beliefs, or taking part in religious activities.

For the one-in-three adults in Britain who are Christian, this identity remains an important influence on their political behaviour. New polling, published here for the first time, shows how Reform UK is disrupting our previous understanding of how Christians vote in British elections.

#### ***The Tories at Prayer***

The relationship between Britain's Christian communities and the major political parties goes back centuries. The Conservative party has been very close to English Anglicanism since its emergence in the mid-19th century. Catholics and free-church Protestants (such as Baptists and Methodists) have tended towards the Labour and Liberal/Liberal Democrat parties. Even as Britain has become more secular, these relationships have persisted.

Anglicans, for example, have tended to vote Conservative even when the party was in dire straits. In the 2024 election, 39% of Anglicans voted Tory even as the party's national vote share fell to 24%.

Since the 1980s and particularly in elections since 2015, however, we have started to see changes to the Christian vote. The traditional Catholic attachment to Labour has deteriorated, as has Labour's appeal to other Christian communities such as Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians.

#### ***Disruption occurs***

Instead, driven by the rising salience of social values (attitudes towards immigration, social change and national identity) as a determinant of political support, the socially conservative leanings of some Christians of all stripes has led to increased support for the Conservatives. And those who traditionally did

so - the Anglicans - have become even more supportive. The result has been a steady coalescing of the Christian vote behind the Conservatives.



But now, new polling by YouGov for the University of Exeter reveals that this realignment is being disrupted by the growing popularity of Reform UK.

Instead of asking who people would vote for tomorrow, a nationally representative sample of 2,284 adults was asked how likely they were to ever vote for each major party, on a scale from zero (very unlikely) to ten (very likely).

While not the same as a direct question about how someone would vote in an election, the likelihood question provides a much richer measure of the strength of their support for all of the major parties.

Among Anglicans, Labour remains deeply unpopular: over half gave the party a 0. In contrast, the Conservatives still enjoy strong support among Anglicans, with 35% giving them a vote likelihood of seven or higher - the kind of support associated with voting for the party in an election.

*Reform, however, has caught up.*

Despite only 15% of Anglicans voting Reform in 2024, 38% now rate their likelihood of voting for the party as high. That's the same as the proportion who are strongly opposed to Reform - showing that while the party polarises Anglicans more than the Conservatives, Reform could win as much Anglican support as the Tories in an election.

Catholics show a similar trend. Labour's traditional support is eroding: 40% of Catholics said they had zero likelihood of voting Labour, while 29% are strong supporters. As with Conservatives for the Anglican vote, Reform is almost level-pegging with Labour for the Catholic vote at 28%. It has even supplanted the Conservatives, of whom 22% of Catholics are strong supporters.

It is not yet clear why this is happening. It may be that Reform's stances on issues such as immigration resonate with Christians' concerns to the extent that they are willing to set aside their historic party loyalties. Or it may be that Christians are as prone as other British voters to turn to Reform out of frustration with the performances of Labour and the Conservatives in office.

Among the religiously unaffiliated, 29% aren't strong supporters of any party. For Catholics, it's 26%. Anglicans are more politically anchored, however, with only 20% in this category.

While traditionally, we would have expected this to reflect Anglicans' greater tendency to support the Tories, only 17% of Anglicans are strong supporters of only that party, compared with 21% who are firmly behind Reform. These aren't swing voters; they've switched sides.

Catholics are even more fragmented. Only 13% are strong supporters of Labour alone, along with 12% and 17% who are strong supporters of the Conservatives and Reform alone, respectively.

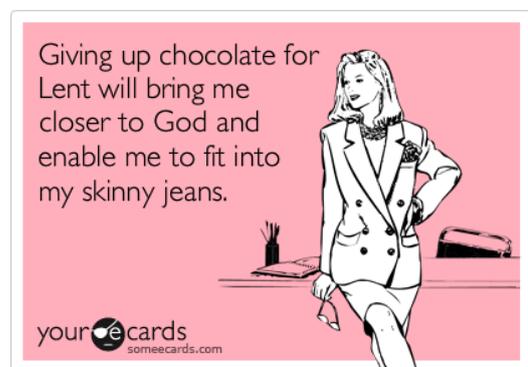
In addition, Reform is as popular as the Conservatives among Anglicans, and as popular as Labour among Catholics. This suggests it is appealing across the traditional denominational divide more successfully than either of the major parties.

If there is to be a single party that attracts the bulk of Britain's Christian support, at this point it is far more likely to be Reform than anyone else.

*Stuart Fox is Senior Lecturer in Politics, University of Exeter*

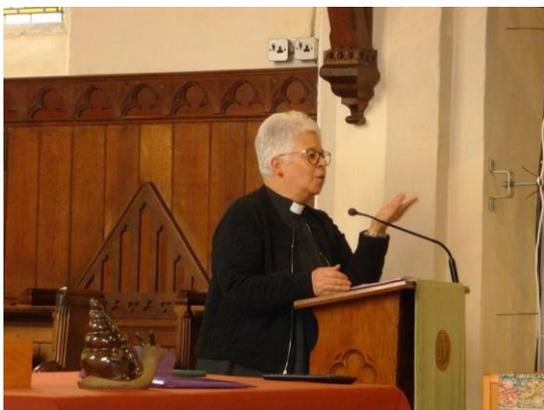


### **LET'S CELEBRATE, IT'S LENT ONCE MORE.....**





**NEWS**



***Rev Sally leads the Deanery  
Wedding Preparation Day 7  
February at St Mary's***

*"Heavenly Father, we thank You, for bringing us together and for these upcoming marriages.*

*As we plan, we ask for Your guidance and peace to fill our hearts, removing stress and anxiety.*

*Help us to focus more on the lifelong commitments we are making than on the details of the day.*

*May our love grow stronger, rooted in Your love, and may our preparations be joyful.*

*We pray for Your blessing on our future life together.*

*In Your name, amen."*



Over 21 couples attended the day which is designed to help couples prepare for the lifelong commitment of marriage, rather than just the wedding ceremony itself, by addressing topics such as communication, conflict resolution, finances, and the spiritual or sacramental aspect of marriage.

(Right) Georgina Rayment and Emma Woollard from Pretty's solicitors delivered the legal 'banns & beyond' session.

And the morning ended with time to chat as the couples met the ministers and **Sarah and Val** provided loads of home-made soup.





***Kicked into the long grass once more!***

***CofE 'Living in Love and Faith' project on sexuality is closed down - (but discussion continues)***



"Living in Love and Faith", the Church of England's long-running process on sexuality and relationships, was formally brought to a close by the general synod yesterday after failing to secure consensus on same-sex relationships. The debate has left deep divisions within the Church, with some warning of possible schism.

The only substantive change to emerge from the process was the decision to permit prayers of blessing for same-sex couples within existing services.

The decision followed a five-hour, often passionate debate. LGBTQ+ campaigners and supportive clergy expressed anger that the process was being curtailed while key questions remain unresolved — including whether to introduce stand-alone services of blessing and whether clergy in same-sex civil marriages may serve without restriction.

***On and on and on....***

Two new working groups will now be established to continue discussions. However, opponents fear the issues will return to synod, triggering further contested debates and close votes. Prof Helen King summed it up: "*The problem is it's too much of an end for some and not enough of an end for others*".

It's expected that the issue will dominate the synod elections this summer, where members are chosen for five-year terms.



The next stage is that bishops will select the people on the new working groups and decide whether or when the issues come back to synod.

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, apologised for everything and said: "*We need to bring LLF to a close so as to create the space where this work can breathe*".





## Church of England to tackle classism after working-class clergy speak out

Working class clergy in the Church of England have lifted the lid on classism, snobbery and "effortless superiority"

which made them feel they didn't belong.

In a series of candid speeches at the general synod last Friday, members discussed their experiences as working class members of the established church, in a debate prompted by Fr Alex Frost, from Burnley, (Pic below) who once managed a £9 million a year Argos store before ordination.

### No tattoos or hoodies

There was the supposition that candidates seeking ordination who left school at 18 or 16, lacked intelligence without a degree.



Workplace skills like maintaining machinery were disregarded. Tattoos, hoodies and regional accents were looked down on. Instant coffee was routinely dismissed in favour of filter, and even canapes offered at receptions, pointed to a cultural disconnect.

In meetings, one candidate was asked to take elocution lessons and another's straight talking was resisted: "*We don't know what you're going to say next*".

The raw honesty led the [general synod to vote](#) unanimously for a national strategy for working-class vocations and ministry, creating courses so people on shift patterns can take part, ensuring equality of opportunity and changing the culture so the CofE includes everyone.





## ***ST MARY'S TATTINGSTONE***

### **THE SUFFOLK WITCH TRIALS POP-UP EXHIBITION**

***21st & 22nd February, 1-4pm***

This touring exhibition (in association with Babergh District Council and Suffolk Archives) uncovers the lives of those accused during the witch trials, giving voice to the people whose stories are often forgotten.



After the infamous 1645 Manningtree witch trials, self-appointed 'Witchfinder General' Matthew Hopkins and his assistant John Stearne expanded their witch finding efforts into Suffolk and the surrounding counties.

Between 1645 and 1647 around 240 accusations of witchcraft came before the authorities in East Anglia resulting in 100 executions.

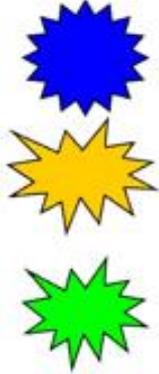
The Suffolk witch trials were some of the most widespread in England, yet many of the stories—especially those of the 60+ people accused in Babergh and Mid Suffolk — have been lost to history. With records scattered and incomplete, their voices have faded, overshadowed by the notoriety of the witch-finders who condemned them.

This project is about bringing those stories back to light. Instead of focusing on the persecutors, we're looking at the lives of the accused—who they were, what happened to them, and how these events shook their communities. These weren't witches; they were ordinary people caught up in fear and suspicion, and by exploring these trials, we can better understand a time when fear and rumour could mean the difference between life and death.





The Next Messy Church is



Saturday 28th Feb. 2026  
3.30 - 5.30pm

Preparing for Easter'

Where: Capel Methodist Church

Who can come:  
All age families

Book in at: [Maggie3@btinternet.com](mailto:Maggie3@btinternet.com)

Kids, don't forget to bring an adult.  
No charge but donations welcome



Crafts, Games  
Bible stories, Songs  
and  
A MEAL together

*With thanks to Maggie Boswell*





## COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CAFÉ

At St Mary's Church Hall has its next meeting on Monday 16 Mar @ 2.00pm



### Rev Sally says:

Our compassionate café has become the in-place to share our stories with each other, with people who understand what it means to lose someone you love.

There is much chatting, laughter, reminiscing and cake enjoyed by all. The café enables us to help each other - and build a community together.



**The next Café is on 16 March at 2.00pm.  
Do come and bring a friend.**

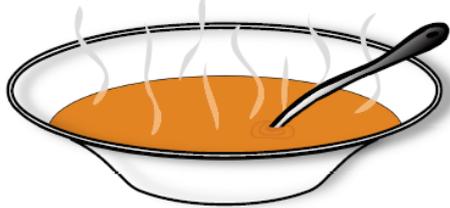
**You will leave feeling better! Rev Sally x**



St. John's Church, Gt. Wenham

Why not join us for our

# Soup & Roll Lunches



All are welcome!

14th February 2026  
14th March 2026  
11th April 2026

Midday to 1.00 pm  
£5 Donation  
gratefully received.

All proceeds to the upkeep of St. John's Church

*St John's Soup & Roll lunches*

## *St Mary's Fun Quiz Night*



THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S

# FUN QUIZ NIGHT

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026  
7pm for 7.30pm

ST MARY'S CHURCH HALL

Teams of up to 6 people  
£5 per person

Bring your own drinks and nibbles!

Register your team with Julie on  
07539 249234





**Chris Yule  
writes:**

Ipswich Chamber  
Choir will

perform an evening of poignant music in the chapel at St Joseph's College, Ipswich, IP2 9DR, on the 21 March 2026.

The concert will begin with Mark- Anthony Turnage's Two memorials, played by saxophonist Sophie Burrows. A new choral work commissioned by Sir Nick and Lady Young, will celebrate the life of former Ipswich schoolboy Alex Young, who died tragically in 2014, aged just 28.

*Carry me Home* was written by talented composer Ben Ponniah, who like Alex Young was a pupil at St Margaret's School in Ipswich. The bass soloist will be Jeremy Burrows and we will be accompanied by pianist Andrew Leach and a string quintet, led by Nicholas Ward.

Fauré's Requiem is perhaps his most gentle and consoling work, much loved by singers and audiences alike. We feel it is a fitting work to uplift the audience as the finale to this moving concert.

**Pre-concert drinks from 6.30pm.** We will welcome the young suicide prevention charity Papyrus. Their CEO Ged Flynn, an inspirational speaker, will speak briefly about the charity and provide an opportunity to make a donation supporting their valuable work. See more at <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>

**Concert 7.30pm.** Duration approx. 90 minutes including interval.

**Tickets** £20, 18 and under free, are available from our website [ipswichchamberchoir.org.uk](http://ipswichchamberchoir.org.uk) via the WeGotTickets link and from members. **Free parking** and toilets will be available.




**IPSWICH CHAMBER CHOIR**  
Benedict Collins Rice *Music Director*

Presents the world premiere of

Ben Ponniah  
**CARRY ME HOME**  
& Requiem  
Gabriel Fauré

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2026, 7:30pm  
St Joseph's College Chapel, IP2 9DR



Tickets £20 per person  
Under 18, free  
Pre-concert drinks from 6.30pm



*Beverley*

*announces a "FIRST" for St Mary's Church*

## **MAKE & MINGLE**

*Starting 8 April on a monthly basis.*

*From 1.30pm to 3.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall.*

Beverley says: "This is an opportunity for us to come together for two hours to Make and/or Mingle.

Knitting, crochet, sewing, cross stitch, tapestry, decoupage, banner making or anything you enjoy making. Bring your own craft project to do while chatting, share your skills with others and just have fun or come and have a go.

If you are not into craft making just come and enjoy some company.

Open to all - No charge just a donation towards tea and coffee.

Regards and hope to see you there! Beverley."





## **LADIES MEETING POINT – SUMMER MONTHS NEWS UPDATE**



Ondra Butler Says:

As many of you already know, we have decided this group will meet during the summer months only. Many of us are not keen on turning out on dark cold winter nights so will now meet from April through to September. We also intend to arrange a Christmas lunch out in December.

*We are now arranging the forthcoming programme and it will be circulated as soon as complete.*

We hope this arrangement will encourage more ladies to come along to enjoy an informative and pleasant evening together. Ondra



***Photo Capture:  
Some extremely strange  
fungi on an old tree trunk***





## **MELISSA'S NATURE PAGE**

### **"THE MOLLYS" - I WITNESS A STRANGE PROCESSION**

Having written a book about the joys of walking in the rain, I'm apparently no longer allowed to complain about it. But god, it's been relentless, hasn't it?

Our fields are either thick with mud, waterlogged or underwater, the lanes are 'clatty' and full of hidden potholes, and the field drains, roadside ditches and dykes are running fast and high.

My old cottage door is sticking on its wooden sill, I haven't managed any gardening and the skies for much of the last few weeks have been grey, grey, grey.



It rained the night the dancers came, a thin, icy rain that drifted down from a fathomless and starless sky.

Apart from the exterior lights of a pub, and the wavering white LEDs of the

torches carried by locals and visitors, it was a cold and pitch-black January night: many - perhaps most? - of the smaller villages in East Anglia have no streetlights, something I have grown to love.

Some 60 or so people milled around at the crossroads, chatting, wrapped up in coats and scarves and hoods. It was difficult to recognise anyone, or even to tell men from women.

*There was a sense of anticipation, but also a faint nerviness: even those of us who knew what was coming couldn't be quite sure of the form it would take. God help the stranger who stumbled across what was coming by mistake.*

***A dull, repeated drum beat; distant fires.*** Down the dark hill marched a strange procession, lit by lanterns and flaming torches: stony-faced men in antique costume, women shrouded in black with garlands of twigs and ivy on their heads.

The crowd, now silent, parted to let them pass. They took up position, the women grouped silently around their instruments: melodeons, recorders, drums, a tea-chest bass.

The men stood in a rough half-circle facing outwards, hands behind their backs, outstaring the spectators. It was time for the dancing to begin.

### ***Molly dancing - the strangest of all***

Molly is a form of folk dance peculiar to East Anglia in which farm labourers - lacking employment in winter, when the land could not be worked - would dance in rural villages in exchange for money.

Little is known about its original form, and what we have now is based partly on the scant record, the rest drawn from speculation and imagination.

'Molly' was once a word for a man who dressed as a woman, and there is always an element of cross-dressing to it; the sense of disguise also extends to facial features, which may once have been blackened with soot and are now often painted grey or dark green.

As well as the bearded, dress-wearing Molly there are other obscure roles that lend the spectacle a note of chaos and disorder not unlike the strange symbols that can arise in dreams: a '*whiffler*', a '*broom man*' and (appropriately enough) an '*umbrella man*', though he could not keep anyone dry.



The dances themselves are heavy, rhythmic, and deliberately ungraceful: this is not Morris, with its bells and whistles and waving handkerchiefs. The dancers' hobnailed (or blakey-shod) boots strike the ground hard; the 'box-man' roams the crowd demanding money and may menace you if you haven't come prepared.

And the strangest thing of all is this: you stand there under the flaming torches, suffering the changeless rain, and you know that by day these men probably work in IT and take their kids to the football at weekends.



You know that the black-clad, ivy-crowned women are local artists, or serve on the parish council; you know that the money that's collected goes to charity and not to buy ale for ploughmen - and yet for an hour or so, as the dancers stamp and the music skirls, it doesn't feel like that. It doesn't feel like that at all.

*Melissa Harrison is a novelist, children's author, journalist and nature writer. She contributes a monthly Nature Notebook column to The Times, and also writes regularly for the Guardian and the New Statesman. She lives in Suffolk.*



## **St Mary's Hall Bookings compiled by Valerie Franklin**

**February 2026**

FEBRUARY						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.45 Candlemas Communion Rev Sally	10.00-12.30 Art Club 18.15-19.30 Brownies	18.00-19.00 Rainbows	10.00 Midweek Communion 17.00-20.00 Street Dance	9.30-10.30 Pilates 18.15-19.30 Qi Gong		10.00-12.00 Wedding Prep Day
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
10.45 2nd Before Lent Communion Rev Sally	10.00-12.30 Art Club 18.15-19.30 Brownies	18.00-19.00 Rainbows	10.00 Midweek Communion 17.00-20.00 Street Dance	9.30-10.30 Pilates 18.15-19.30 Qi Gong		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
10.45 Next Before Lent Family Service Jim/Sally APCM 12.00	10.00-12.30 Art Club 14.00 Compassionate Cafe 18.15-19.30 Brownies	12.30 Lunch Club 18.00-19.00 Rainbows	10.00 Midweek Communion (Ash Weds) 17.00-20.00 Street Dance	9.30-10.30 Pilates 18.15-19.30 Qi Gong		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
10.45 Lent 1 Communion Sally/Adrian Churches Together (Evening)	10.00-12.30 Art Club 18.15-19.30 Brownies 19.00 Lent Course 1	18.00-19.00 Rainbows	10.00 Midweek Communion 17.00-20.00 Street Dance	9.30-10.30 Pilates 18.15-19.30 Qi Gong		





NewDawn India Charity No: 1001535  
newdawnindia.com



# Lent Appeal 2026 - Giving Thanks for Education

*Sandra Davies writes:*

Those of you who have been supporting NewDawn India for many years will remember that, almost 20 years ago, we embarked on a project to build a school for the Vidiyal children.

Sadly, the land where the school was being built was subject to a compulsory purchase order in 2007 and the project was put on hold, with Vidiyal eventually receiving compensation just a few years ago.

The Vidiyal children are encouraged to attend school and are helped with their studies at the drop-in centres. However, the education they receive in school is not always of the highest quality, and the children sometimes face discrimination in the classroom.

The aim of educating children to give them a brighter future remains central to the work of Vidiyal, and the goal of creating a school where children from marginalised communities can access high quality education has remained in our sights.

In 2024 Jim's son, Jess, joined the Vidiyal team, bringing experience in education management and administration.

After detailed research to identify communities in greatest need of accessible education and assessing many potential plots, a site was purchased in September 2025. Since we shared this news with those of you who were able to attend the Curry Evening, work has progressed to develop plans and costings to build the NewDawn School.

NewDawn has retained all of the donations previously received towards a school, and the school building will be part-funded by the compensation received from the earlier project.

However, this leaves a significant shortfall to be met through grants and fundraising by Vidiyal and NewDawn.

As the first fundraising initiative for the NewDawn School, we invite you to join our Lent Appeal.

As you may know, Lent begins next week, on Ash Wednesday, and over the past few years we have asked you to use this time, as quite a few charities do, to raise some funds.

We began with 'Gift your treat' and more recently we thought about the things we take for granted, like clean water from our taps and regular waste collections - things that are not the norm for the Vidiyal families.

This year, we are asking you to *Give Thanks for Education* - whether that is formal or informal education - for a particular teacher who captured your passion for learning in school, or the way your Grandma showed you how to cook a particular recipe.

Education can mean a whole range of things to different people, and hopefully we are all still learning today - so maybe consider giving thanks for those people who we are still learning from - perhaps our children.

We have detailed plans and models of how the school will be. Initially there will be nursery and early year's classes, expanding into a full primary school and beyond as time and funds allow. Each of the individual spaces shown on the plan is costed and so our first target is to cover the construction cost of one classroom - £10,000.



**So, how can you help?** Here is a sheet for you to either print out, view online or collect from Capel Methodist Church if you are nearby.

Through the 40 days of Lent, we encourage you to give thanks for education - for those who taught you, for the things you have learned, for the education of professionals, those teaching us today - any form of education.

As you think of each one, consider a small gift to say thank you to that person or for learning that skill.

Then at Easter, total up the sums you have noted and send it, ideally by bank transfer, to NewDawn - you will find the necessary details on the sheet.

Thank you for your continued generous support of NewDawn India (One of St Mary's regular designated charities)





## PRAYER LIST FOR 22 FEBRUARY 2026

We pray for all the conflicts in the world. Also we continue to pray for David Jacob's still bravely travelling to and fro, to Ukraine.

Continued prayer support please for Becky Garland, the new East Bergholt school chaplain.

### LONG-TERM SICK AND HOUSEBOUND

Pat Gladwin, Becky Carpendale, Rachael Martin, Brenda Green, Zoe & family.

### SICK

Kevin Austin, Penny & David Thompson,  
Rev. Stephen, Molly Johannsen, Bill & Janice Hayward,  
Sandy Mansfield, Geoff Cox,  
Pauline Stark, Andrew Skinner, Barbara Rogers, Doreen Parker, Eric Doe,  
Malcolm & Chris Fenn, Peter Ellis (Methodist), Angie & Richard Heath

### FOR THOSE MAKING A RECOVERY

Shirley Streatfield, Laura Towells, Zena Steward.

### FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED

Bill Woods-Ballard

Please contact [Brian.rogerson@btinternet.com](mailto:Brian.rogerson@btinternet.com)  
For new entries - or if people have made a recovery.

With thanks to Mo Hill & St Mary's Prayer Team



# Points to Ponder

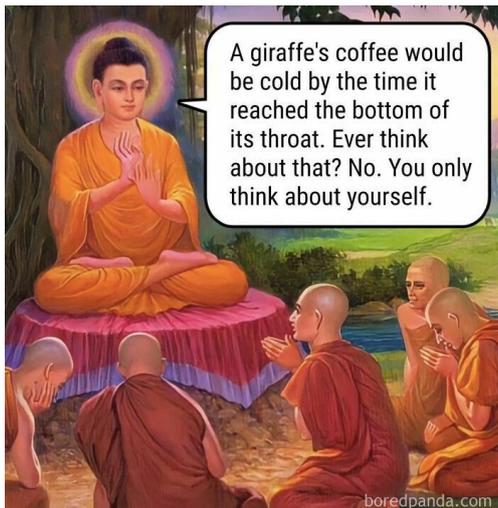


"He'll take a dozen long-stemmed roses."

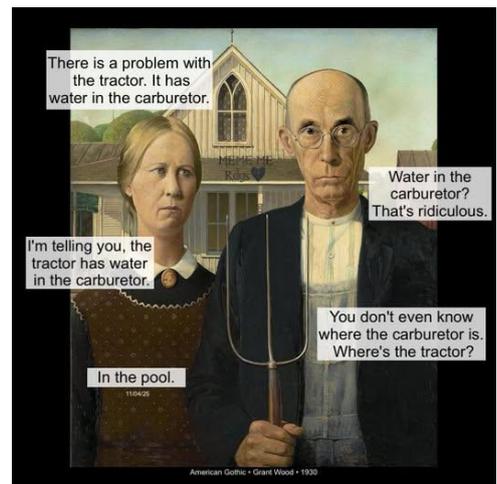
## potpourri



"UH, YOUR PROFILE SAID YOU LIKE LONG WALKS IN THE PARK."



Meanwhile at the Winter Olympics, the Cumbrian bobsleigh team are looking unstoppable!



Ancient Greeks loading their dishwasher...



# CONTACT NUMBERS FOR BENEFICE MINISTERS

Priest in Charge                      *Rev Sally Letman*                      311505

Church wardens

@ St Mary's                              *Mel Sutcliffe*                              310967

*Valerie Franklin*                      314179

@ St John's                              *John Cresswell*                              311975

*Diana Hunt*                              310441

Pastoral care

@ St Mary's                              *Rev Sally and her team*

PCC Secretary

@ St Mary's                              *Jenny Hickley*                              310991

Hall bookings

@ St Mary's                              *Valerie Franklin*                              314179

Check out our website: [www.capelstmarychurch.org.uk](http://www.capelstmarychurch.org.uk)



***AND FINALLY – WE EMPATHISE WITH THE TRIALS  
& TRIBULATIONS OF OUR WOMENFOLK.....***

***"Sorry we're going to have to cancel tonight. Hope you haven't gone to any trouble?".....***



***If you think nobody cares if you're alive, try missing a few bill payments.....***



***WANTED: Someone to brush their teeth with me because 9 out of 10 dentists say brushing alone will not prevent tooth decay. No weirdos please!***



### ***EDITOR'S NOTE***

The Link Newsletter shall continue to be published electronically on a fortnightly basis - please let me know of any news or views you may have for inclusion in the magazine.

Please be sure to forward any items for news to the editor at:

[briancrogerson@btinternet.com](mailto:briancrogerson@btinternet.com)

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<https://stmaryschurchcapel.com>

Kindly note that editorial and production attempts to reflect accurately all submissions; however apologies are readily offered for any errors in transmission.

All features & news items & opinions in The Link are introduced & published by the Editor and only the church service, readings and reflection and prayers are submitted & authorised by the Priest in Charge and the PCC officers unless otherwise highlighted in the text.

