



11 JANUARY 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:
11 JAN to 25 JAN 2026**

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The church will be open all weekend Jan 10 & 11
- come and see over 1,000 stars round the church. Please feel free to help yourself to a star to remember this time of year and put it on your tree next year. The weekend ends with a service at 4pm on Sunday 11 January.





WORSHIP TIMELINE

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

2026

- 11 Jan, 9.30am, St John's, *Morning Prayer.*
10.45am, St Mary's, *Holy Communion,*
4.00pm, St Mary's
Star Festival service with school choir & tea and cakes.
- 14 Jan, 10.00am, St Mary's, *Benefice Holy Communion*
- 18 Jan, 9.30am, St John's, *Holy Communion.*
10.45am, St Mary's,
Family Service led by Jenny.
- 19 Jan, 2.00pm St Mary's *Compassionate Cafe*
7.00pm, The Rectory, *Bible Study Group*
- 20 Jan, 12.30pm, St Mary's *Luncheon Club*
- 21 Jan, 10.00am, St Mary's, *Benefice Holy Communion*
- 25 Jan, 9.30am, St John's, *Family Service.*
10.45am, St Mary's,
Holy Communion led by Rev Sally..
- 1 Feb, 9.30am, St John's, *Holy Communion*
10.45am, St Mary's, *Holy Communion*
- 4 Feb, 10.00am, St Mary's, *Benefice Holy Communion*
- 7 Feb, 10-12am, St Mary's
Deanery Wedding Preparation Day
(All are welcome to this deanery celebratory event)



Readings for Sunday 11 January 2026

New Testament Readings

Matthew 3, 13 to end. The Baptism of Jesus

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "*I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?*"

Jesus replied, "*Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.*"

Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.*"



Acts 10. 34-43.



Then Peter began to speak: "*I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.*"

"*You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around*

doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

"*We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the*

people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

"He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Sally's Reflection

Baptism of Christ

Matthew 3: 13 to end and Acts 10: 34-43

"Heavenly Father, through weak human words, give us grace to hear your true and living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord" Amen



Someone brought me a 'gratitude' journal for Christmas, my cup is naturally pretty full but it may me wonder what reflecting back on the past year would reveal to me of joy and sorrow that life intermingles and how I could reflect and be grateful to God.

I wonder what we expect in our lives, what we plan and what comes to fruition, do we take the time to look back, reflect and give thanks and praise?

At the beginning of a new year, we wonder, when we are young and yearn for exciting adventures and as we get older, we hope and pray that all will be well and our knees will work.

I think that often we think we can manipulate our futures, we wait for riches and love and sometimes get something rather different.

Often, we are surprised by the joys we encounter, and perhaps that is what faith does; it prepares us for the unexpected and when Jesus acts in our lives, it is often not what we ourselves had planned as we wait .

John the Baptist has been waiting for Jesus; he knows what he expects and had planned for: the dramatic arrival of a royal priest with fanfare and trumpets. Instead, we have Jesus Christ who humbly stands before John. He is a man who identifies himself with the people who are facing judgment and need to repent. People on the margins and outside and not in royal robes.

John is shocked: 'I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?' How can this King kneel before me? But he agrees and Jesus goes down into the water

and rises out of the water, he represents Israel coming through the Red Sea to freedom.

Jesus came out of the water of baptism, and received God's spirit, God's breath in a new way and a new direction and a new freedom for the repressed. The dove symbolises the way the world will come to him, not through war but it will mean the making of peace.

Then God speaks: both in Luke and Mark have, 'thou art my son' but Matthew changes it to 'This', this is my son, this is a public proclamation. Everyone will hear. This is the coronation of Israel's Messiah and he is being ordained to Ministry. Jesus is God's beloved, signifying the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship to God.

And thus we come to the prototype for our Baptism. We too are beloved, we too are prepared by baptism to journey with Christ and equipped for our own ministry.



Paul tells us that God shows no partiality; we just have to live right and practice righteousness. Baptism means the message is spreading, the anointing with the Holy Spirit and we go out to do good. We are instructed to testify that Jesus is the one chosen and ordained by God.

At the beginning of this year the themes are familiar but we are must begin

our new year knowing that God has greater plans for us, greater than we can know or believe, for our families, our church, our communities.

Peter tells us that god was with Jesus, as he went about and we are witnesses, commanded to preach, that means all of us, not just me, and then we will receive forgiveness in his name and this new year will be wonderful!
Amen



St. Mary's Church, Capel St. Mary

Star Festival

Celebrating the Arrival of the Wise Men

Come and sing the last carols of the year
with

Capel Primary School Choir

Sunday 11th January at 4.00 p.m.



What a magnificent start to the year in Debenham!



Richard says: "I've been waiting for the right light to take these shots and had to dash out this evening before the light failed. It was tricky to capture the brightness of the sky without reducing the foreground to silhouette so I used a polarising filter and kept the aperture wide to enable a short exposure. That in turn gave me a depth-of-field challenge. And all the while I was bloody freezing. Worth the effort though!"





THE HOLY FAMILY WITH ANGELS

Rev Adrian says: "Art and Faith invite us to see God's glory in the everyday."

Rembrandt's **The Holy Family with Angels** summons us into a humble moment of intimacy, where the sacred and the ordinary are sewn together.

Rembrandt is well known for his use of light and shadows, and this painting radiates warmth and gentle light given from the fire in the bottom right-hand corner: Mary, her face softened by maternal devotion, pauses from reading to gaze at the Christ Child, who sleeps peacefully in his cradle.

Joseph, often overlooked, works quietly in the background—a tender reminder that holiness thrives in the quiet rhythm of daily life.

Rembrandt's use of light draws our attention to the Child, enveloped in swaddling clothes. In this fleeting moment, Rembrandt encapsulates the paradox of the Incarnation: the King of Heaven, cradled in a working-class dwelling, encircled by the implements and textures associated with human labour.

In a world that often equates divinity with power, Rembrandt's vision suggests something different. The sacred dwells in tenderness, in the hands that work and pray, in the quiet watchfulness of love.

This year, may we, like Mary, pause to marvel at the Light that shines even in shadows—a God who chose to be small, near, and achingly human.

Rembrandt's The Holy Family with Angels. 1645. Oil on canvas, 117 x 91 cm. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg. A synopsis of Rev Adrian's sermon on 4 Jan 2026, John 1:1-18





Let's try a new Hymn for Epiphany -

Holy Forever by Chris Tomlin.....

Click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIEEgMWwxhc>

as suggested by Martyn and played pre-service last Sunday



Christopher Dwayne Tomlin is an American contemporary Christian music singer, songwriter, and worship leader from Grand Saline, Texas. He is signed to Universal's Capitol Christian Music Group. Some of his most well-known songs are "How Great Is Our God", "Our God", "Whom Shall I Fear" and "Holy Forever"





Jenny our PCC Secretary says:

Thank you for attending this year's Christmas Fair on a bright morning.

We raised in excess of £1,200 for the church which is a pleasing amount.

When we were sweeping up after the event a small item of jewellery was found. I put a post on Facebook but as yet no one has claimed it.

We also had the Christmas Readings and Carols that week so someone attending that event might have lost it. Please contact me if you think that this item is yours.

I am happy to report that donations totalling £130.04 was made to the Children's Society following the Christingle service on Christmas Eve. This has now been posted to them. Thank you for your support.

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting is to be held on **Sunday 15 February 2026** after the main worship in the hall.

If you are not on the Electoral Roll but wish to be included then please speak with me so that I can give you an application form. If you wish to join the PCC then please speak with Rev Sally or myself.

Would you like to be on the Welcomers' Rota? New members are welcome to join the team in welcoming people to our services. Interested? Please speak with



Jenny or any member of the Welcoming team to find out the morning tasks.

Jenny Hickley.

Being a St Mary's Church Welcomer can be one of the most fun and rewarding mission tasks in the church.

It is active and creative - and Welcomers know they are

contributing to the pleasure of church-goers each Sunday.

Strongly recommended - Ed.,



BC:AD

This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment
When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect

Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of Heaven.

U.A.Fanthorpe

From Christmas Poems (Entharmon 2002)

*This poem, for which we are grateful to Ed Dale for bringing to our notice,
offers an entertaining take on the Nativity and it does indeed go some way to
capturing the true wonder at the heart of Jesus' birth.
It also hints at the sheer miracle of any human birth, this fragile chance to be
alive on a green planet orbiting a vast ball of fire in the void.*





Chrissie Hart, who has contributed so many brilliant photos of varying genres to the LINK has sent us what she describes as her:

Ahhhh Moment! for the New Year

She explains: "These images were taken during a recent trip to the Kenyan Mara where I am always fascinated by the interaction between family groups and between different animal species.

"We often spend hours just sitting observing and I feel very privileged to spend time with them.

"The Lion, known for its hunting prowess and sheer power when taking down large prey, is also surprisingly gentle and tactile with members of its pride. (Above) here a young cub, no more than two or three months old, is showing affection to its mother whilst (below) one of its siblings is getting a telling off from Dad!"

Thank you Chrissie - for those amazing photos. I know you are due to fly to Lapland in Sweden shortly in a quest to photograph the wildlife there. We hope you will share some results with us when you return. Ed.,





COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS CAFÉ

*At St Mary's Church Hall has its next
meeting on Monday 19 JAN @ 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.

SATURDAY 31 JANUARY 2026 - I AM MARK

Stefan Smart's I AM MARK is an inspirational concept: a wonderful solo dramatisation of St Mark's Gospel, that really brings the gospel alive.

Stefan gives the audience a unique opportunity to experience the incredible story, in a similar dynamic way to the first century witnesses.

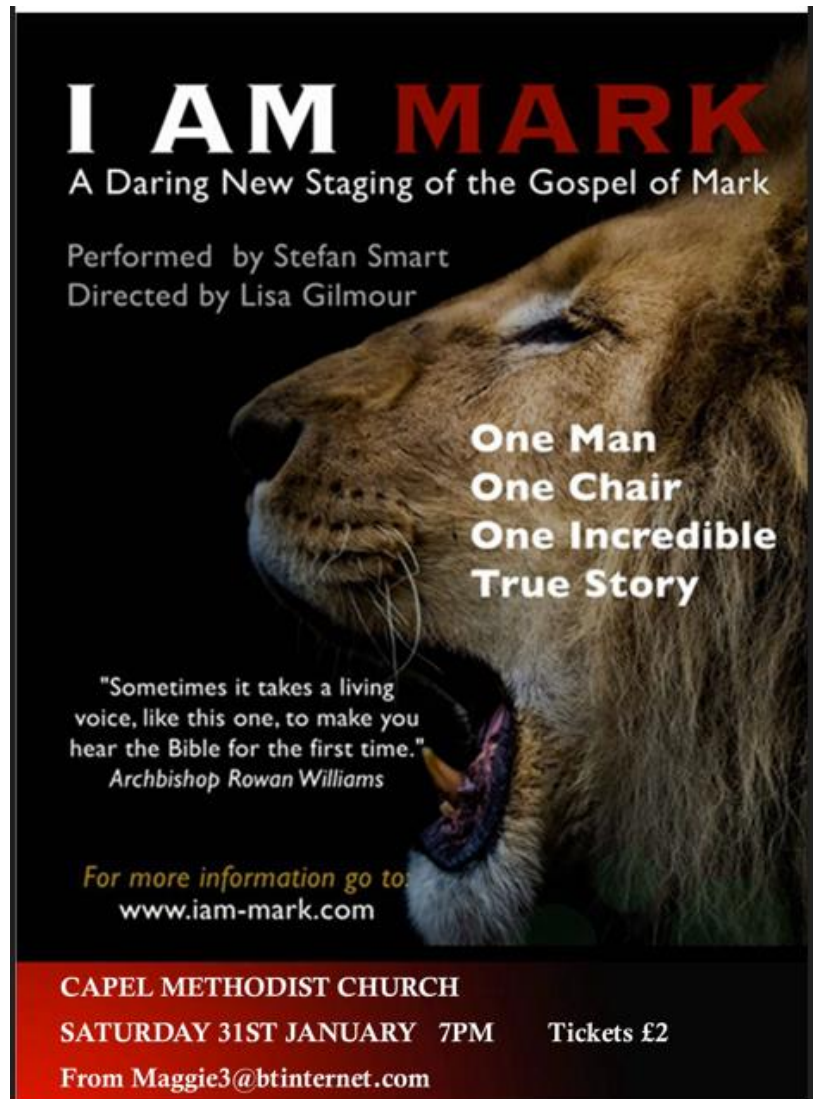
I AM MARK is the Gospel told, without comment or commentary.

As such it appeals to audiences across the theological spectrum and has been performed to critical acclaim across the globe.

Archbishop Rowan Williams
Said: *"Sometimes it takes a
living voice, like this one, to
make you hear the Bible for
the first time."*

Emma Fowle, Premier
Christianity

Magazine: "A truly immersive experience."





VIEWPOINT

MPs tell incoming archbishop to halt £100 Million Reparations Plan

By Rev [George Conger](#)

A cross-party group of 27 Members of Parliament and peers have called on the Archbishop-designate of Canterbury, the Rt Hon. Sarah Mullally, to intervene and halt the Church of England's proposed £100 million slavery reparations fund.

In a letter first reported by The Sunday Times of London (28 Dec. 2025), the parliamentarians warn that the plan—known as "Project Spire"—risks setting a "worrying precedent" by encouraging other institutions to divert charitable resources to political or symbolic causes.

The signatories, led by Shadow Home Office Minister Katie Lam and including senior Conservatives Chris Philp, Claire Coutinho, and Neil O'Brien, say the scheme represents a "misuse" of funds legally designated to support parish ministry and the upkeep of the Church's historic fabric.

"At a moment when churches across the country are struggling to keep their doors open - many even falling into disrepair - it's wrong to try and justify diverting £100 million to a project entirely separate from those core obligations," the letter states.



"Project Spire" was launched following an internal investigation by the Church Commissioners that uncovered financial links between the Church's historic endowment and companies involved in transatlantic chattel slavery during the 18th century.

In response, the Commissioners announced a £100 million fund dedicated to "*healing, repair, and justice*," aimed particularly at communities historically affected by slavery.

The investment was designed to grow over time and support educational and economic initiatives among marginalised groups.

A Church Commissioners' spokesperson defended the initiative, telling The Sunday Times that "the Church Commissioners, as a 320-year-old Christian in-perpetuity endowment fund, has committed £100 million to set up a new investment fund to support healing, justice and repair, in response to the discovery of its historic links with "*Transatlantic African chattel enslavement*."

The spokesperson added that the plan aligns with the Church of England's Fourth Mark of Mission—to "seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation."

Critics of the plan argue that the Church Commissioners' legal obligations under charity law restrict the use of endowment income to specific ecclesiastical purposes, including parish support, clergy pensions, and the maintenance of church buildings.

Diverting funds to reparative or political projects, they suggest, could open the Church to judicial challenge and broader financial risk.

"The Church has a long and complex historical record, one that includes both moral failures and courageous leadership in the abolitionist movement," the MPs wrote. "To reduce this history to a simplistic narrative of guilt does a disservice both to truth and to the Church's own legacy."



Lord Biggar (pic right), emeritus Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford and an Anglican priest, has mounted one of the most sustained historical critiques of Project Spire.

In a detailed commentary, he argues that the Commissioners' own rhetoric runs "way ahead" of the evidence when it claims that the Church's *"immense wealth has always been interwoven with the history of African chattel enslavement"* and that the transatlantic slave economy *"played a significant role in shaping the Church we have today."*

Lord Biggar notes the Queen Anne's Bounty investments in South Sea annuities are far more ambiguously connected to slavery than Project Spire documents suggest, and that the historical panel advising the Commissioners fails to quantify how much of the Church's wealth in fact derived from slavery linked instruments.

He and other scholars associated with the History Reclaimed initiative conclude that Project Spire rests on "unsound history," and warn that it encourages sweeping, unfounded accusations of collective guilt against both the Church and the nation.

A central plank of the conservative critique is that the Church's record on slavery is not one of simple complicity, but of grave sin alongside significant repentance and leadership in abolition.

Lord Biggar points out that the Commissioners' narrative is almost entirely silent about Anglican clergy and lay evangelicals who spearheaded the anti-

slavery movement, including the Clapham Sect and other churchmen whose theological convictions drove the political campaign that ended the slave trade and, eventually, slavery itself.

Historically, only a minority of Britain's wealthier classes had direct financial links to slavery, while millions of ordinary Britons had no stake in the trade and in many cases actively supported abolitionist efforts.

To portray "*everyone in eighteenth century Britain*" or "*the Church as a whole*" as structurally complicit, Lord Biggar argues, is both historically inaccurate and ethically unjust, because it imputes guilt to people who neither consented to nor benefited from the slave economy.

The reparations push raises deeper theological questions about sin, guilt, and the nature of the Church's mission. Lord Biggar contends that Project Spire reflects what he calls a modern "*lust for self-condemnation*," in which institutions seek moral absolution by publicly denouncing their own supposed systemic wickedness rather than practising ordinary faithfulness in word, sacrament, and pastoral care.



According to The Sunday Times, the signatories have asked Dame Sarah Mullally (pic left) to clarify her stance before her confirmation as Archbishop of Canterbury next month. "*A clear signal from you now that the focus of the Church under your leadership will be the strengthening of parishes, not the pursuit of high-profile and legally dubious vanity projects,*" the letter continues, "*would reassure the many worshippers, clergy, and members of the public who have contacted us with their concerns.*"

The controversy has emerged at a delicate moment for Bishop Mullally, who will become the first woman to hold England's highest clerical office. With parish closures accelerating and attendance figures falling, she faces the immediate challenge of balancing the Church's commitments to social justice with its duty of care to struggling congregations.

The Rev Canon George Conger serves as editor and chief news writer for Anglican Ink and has been called by the Daily Telegraph the most knowledgeable reporter covering the Anglican world today



ST MARY'S HALL BOOKINGS FOR JANUARY

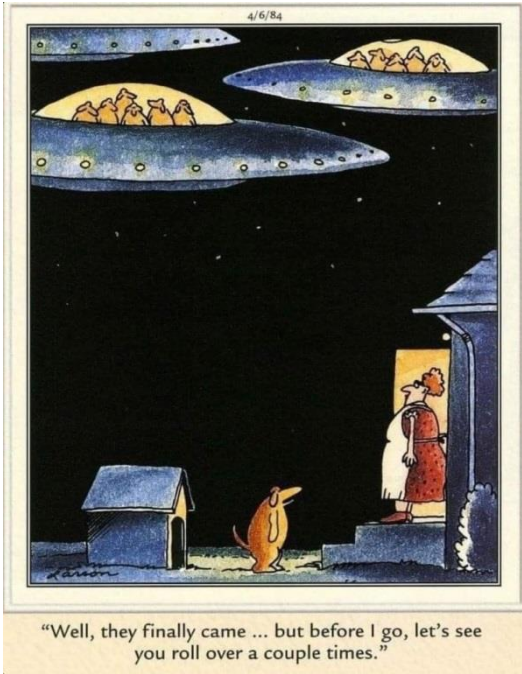
With thanks to Valerie Franklin

JANUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4 10.45 Christmas 2 Communion Rev Adrian	5 18.15-19.30 Brownies	6 18.00-19.00 Rainbows	7 10.00 Midweek Communion 17.00-20.00 Street Dance	8 9.30-10.30 Pilates 18.15-19.30 Qi Gong	9	10 Star Festival – all day
11 10.45 Epiphany 1 Communion Rev Sally 16.00 Star Festival Service	12 10.00-12.30 Art Club 18.15-19.30 Brownies	13 18.00-19.00 Rainbows	14 10.00 Midweek Communion 17.00-20.00 Street Dance	15 9.30-10.30 Pilates 18.15-19.30 Qi Gong	16	17
18 10.45 Epiphany 2 Family Service 14.30-17.30 Irish Set Dancing	19 10.00-12.30 Art Club 14.00 Comp Café 18.15-19.30 Brownies 19.00 Bible Study	20 12.30 Lunch Club 18.00-19.00 Rainbows	21 10.00 Midweek Communion 17.00-20.00 Street Dance	22 9.30-10.30 Pilates 18.15-19.30 Qi Gong	23	24
25 10.45 Epiphany 3 Communion Rev Sally	26 10.00-12.30 Art Club 18.15-19.30 Brownies 19.00 Bible Study	27 18.00-19.00 Rainbows	28 10.00 Midweek Communion 17.00-20.00 Street Dance	29 9.30-10.30 Pilates 18.15-19.30 Qi Gong	30	31







These contractors are installing the steel pillars in concrete to stop vehicles from parking on the pavement outside a Sports Bar downtown. They are now in the process of cleaning up at the end of the day and anxious to go home.



How long do you think it will be before they realize where they parked?



To all those superb makem folk on Wearside - we're only joshing!

CONTACT NUMBERS FOR BENEFICE MINISTERS

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@ St John's John Cresswell 311975

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PCC Secretary

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Hall bookings

@ St Mary's Valerie Franklin 314179

Check out our website: www.capelstmarychurch.org.uk



AND FINALLY.....

When you ask a cardiac nurse to hang the Christmas garland.....



When the ceremony has been over for hours and you remember you didn't take the baby out of the water after baptism.....



*When you order Pineapple Pizza but it's the Middle Ages
and you are in Italy....*



*When you try a new exercise machine at the gym but
you don't know how it works so you look really dumb*





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

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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.

