

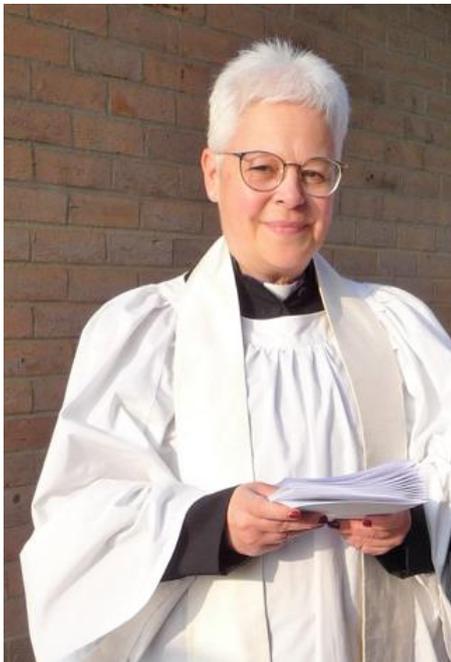


22 MARCH 2026

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

A warm "Welcome Home" from Rev Sally Letman and everyone at St Mary's!

**TODAY'S LINK NEWSLETTER FOR:
22 MAR to 5 APRIL 2026**



Inside:

- Page 2: Rev Sally's Mothering Sunday :.*
- Page 3: Service timeline*
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Rev Sally's remarkable reflection on Mothering Sunday

"How does your church - and your God mother you?"

Today we give thanks for our church - for the way it has mothered us, consoled us, with abundant love which is our salvation.

How do you feel when you sit here? Is it a moment of peace and calm, or is your mind whirring with all the things you have to do?

What is your relationship with the church? For many of us there may be past hurts, there may be questions. You may have at times in your life lost all hope.

But His space is yours.

Let's look at our church - it has a door that is always open - it has changed and evolved over the years and will continue to change and evolve. But worship has been constant, through wars and dark times in our history.

It is an imposing landmark in the village. Every time I come down Pound Lane it takes my breath away.

It is welcoming and it is **HOME!**

(Here's a church, here's the steeple, open the doors and see the people)

It is **HOME** and people and love.

Christ looked down from the cross in agony. His thoughts were for others, the prisoner beside him and his beloved disciple young John, and his dear mother - and he gifted one to the other.

"Woman, here is your son" Then he said to the disciple: ***"Here is your mother"***.

And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home. And the new church began on this day.



In our reading today from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, Paul talks of compassion - a sharing of a life in a home - and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself, to

strengthen us in our daily living, in joy and in sorrow, for the power of His presence to bind together and heal.

We are encouraged to be thankful, teach and advise, and with gratitude in our hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God.

Everything is in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through Christ.

*And that is what takes place here, amongst us, reigning over us in our church **HOME**.*

*Welcome **HOME!** Amen*



WORSHIP TIMELINE

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

2026

21 Mar, 10-12midday, St Mary's Church
Spring Clean Up

22 Mar, 9.30am, St John's, **Family Service.**
10.45am, St Mary's, **Holy Communion.**

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

26 Mar, Capel Primary School, **Easter Experience**

29 Mar, **Palm Sunday**, 9.30am, St John's, **Holy Communion.**
10.45am, St Mary's, **Holy Communion**
6.30pm, Churches together in Capel

31 Mar, 10am to 2pm St Mary's, *Spud Club*

1 Apr, 10.00am, St Mary's, *Benefice Holy Communion*

2 Apr, 7.00pm, St Mary's, Maunday Thursday, *Compline Service & Strip the Altar*

3 Apr, Good Friday, 9.30am *Walk of Witness, Churches Together.* 7.00pm, St Mary's *Compline Service.*

4 Apr, Holy Saturday, 7.00pm, *St Mary's Compline Service.*

5 Apr, Easter Sunday, 9.30am St John's, *Holy Communion.*
10.45am, St Mary's, *Holy Communion.*
With St Mary's Choir.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHURCHWARDEN



THIS SATURDAY 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 21st.

Mel Sutcliffe



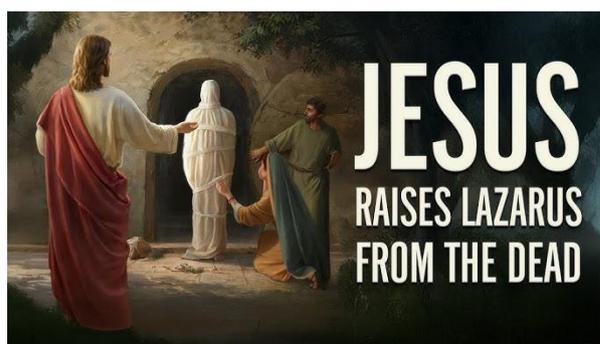
ALL HANDS ON DECK!



Readings for Sunday 22

March 2026

Fifth Sunday of Lent

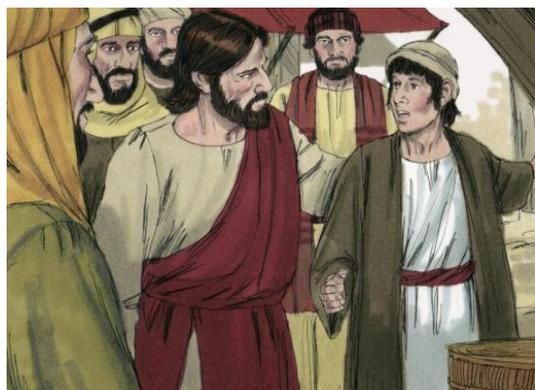


John 11, 1-45. The Death of Lazarus

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.)

So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "*Lord, the one you love is sick.*"

When he heard this, Jesus said, "*This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.*"



Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, and then he said to his disciples, "*Let us go back to Judea.*" "*But Rabbi,*" they said, "*a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?*"

Jesus answered, "*Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.*"

After he had said this, he went on to tell them, *"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."*

His disciples replied, *"Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better."* Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

So then he told them plainly, *"Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."*

Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, *"Let us also go, that we may die with him."*

Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, *"if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."*

Jesus said to her, *"Your brother will rise again."* Martha answered, *"I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

Jesus said to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

"Yes, Lord," she replied, *"I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."*

After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. *"The Teacher is here,"* she said, *"and is asking for you."* When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

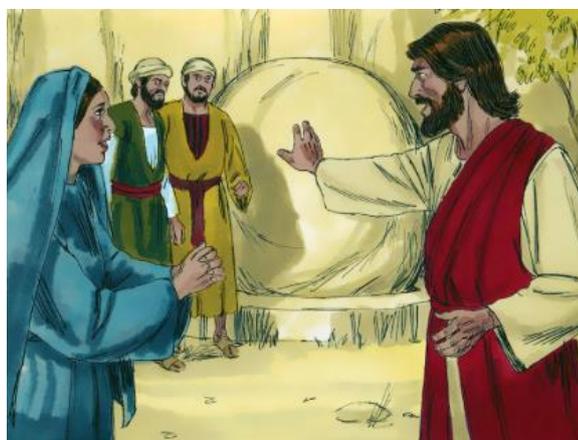
Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, *"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

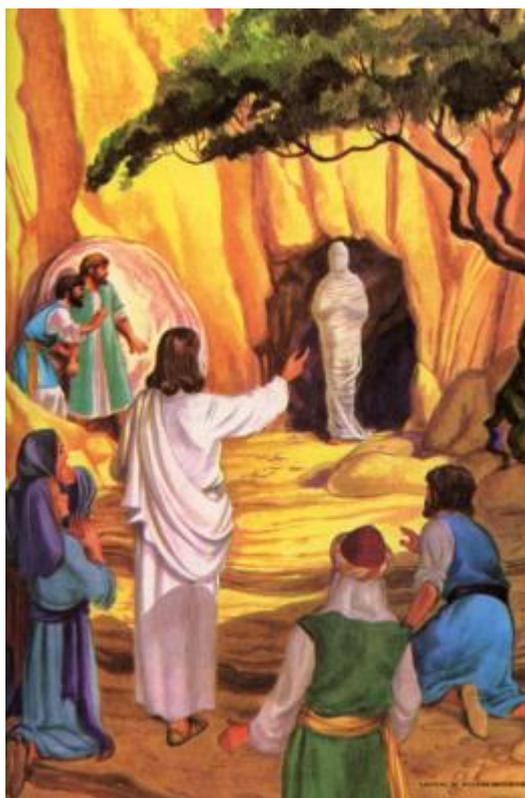
When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. *"Where have you laid him?"* he asked. *"Come and see, Lord,"* they replied.

Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, *"See how he loved him!"*

But some of them said, *"Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"*



Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead



Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

"Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, *"by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days."*

Then Jesus said, *"Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"*

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, *"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."*

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, *"Lazarus, come out!"* The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, *"Take off the grave clothes and let him go."* Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

Rev Adrian's reflection

John 11:1-45

The story of Lazarus takes me back to the time when the world was struck by the Coronavirus pandemic, also known as COVID-19. No one was exempt from catching the virus, no matter how hard we tried to avoid exposure.

Whether we were rich or poor, famous or not, we were all fair game, and most of us were naturally afraid if not for ourselves, but certainly for our loved ones, after all it was a deadly virus.

Mary and Martha's plea to Jesus, *'Lord, the one you love is sick,'* reflects the vulnerability experienced by many of us, especially during times when we were informed that our esteemed NHS was overwhelmed.

It raised concerns about whether our family members would receive the necessary care promptly should they fall ill.

During the pandemic, it appeared that silence signified some form of abandonment. However, John reminds us in verse five that, despite illness or fear overshadowing hope, God's love remains present and has not forsaken His children; He loves us all unconditionally.

This Sunday we will take a closer look at this passage and explore sympathy and empathy.





Let's try a new Hymn for a change -

Praise Him on the Trumpet.....

Click here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NU4GPtuM_GI

As played by Martyn pre-service last week



"Praise him on the trumpet" (often titled "Praise Him On The Trumpet, The Psalt'ry And Harp") is a popular contemporary Christian hymn and chorus written and composed by John Kennett. It was published in the 1980s and is frequently found in collections like Complete Mission Praise.





Rev Marcus Walker says: of General Synod February 2026:

They're Speaking Our Language, But How Are They Spending Our Money?

The Church of England's General Synod met in London for its February group of sessions, the first under the presidency of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally.



It was, in truth, a rather thin agenda for those concerned with the future of parish ministry, spanning everything from clergy conduct reform to a debate about floral foam. But for those of us who have spent the last five years arguing that the parish must come first, the week offered both encouragement and familiar frustration.

The Good News: The Parish Is Back in the Script

There is no getting around it: the shift we have been pressing for is now firmly embedded in the language of the Church's leadership.

Archbishop Sarah used her first Presidential Address to recommit the Church to transparency, safeguarding, and, crucially, the flourishing of the local parish and communities.

Five years ago, when *Save the Parish* launched at St Bartholomew the Great, the talk from the top was all about the Vision and Strategy, 10,000 new worshipping communities, and a "mixed ecology" in which the traditional parish was just one option among many.

Today, the incoming Archbishop has placed the parish at the centre of her stated vision from day one. That is a significant shift, and it reflects the pressure that our movement, and the thousands of parishioners, churchwardens, and clergy who support it, has brought to bear.

We should also note with encouragement that the poverty debate, marking the 40th anniversary of Faith in the City, saw Synod recommit to ending poverty and heard powerful testimony about the struggles of communities served by parish churches. Speakers highlighted the disproportionate impact of poverty on black and ethnic minority communities, on disabled people, and on rural and coastal areas.

It is parish churches that are on the ground in these communities, running food banks, visiting the sick, keeping the doors open. The debate implicitly underscored a truth we have been stating for years: without a properly resourced parish system, the Church's pastoral care is hollow.

The Bad News: The Money Still Isn't Following the Words

And yet, when it came to the debate that matters most, how the Church's wealth is actually distributed and used for mission, we saw a pattern that will be depressingly familiar to anyone who has followed our campaigns.

The Chester Diocesan Synod Motion on **Lowest Income Communities (LInC)** funding, rescued on to the main agenda from Contingency Business following an impassioned debut speech on Monday by **Save The Parish** supporter Emma Robarts (pic right), went to the heart of the issue.

It highlighted a mismatch between deprivation and current diocesan-level allocations, and called for parish-level analysis of need.

Background material presented to Synod showed that significant proportions of LInC funding may not be reaching the most deprived communities.



This is precisely what Save the Parish has been arguing: money earmarked for the poorest parishes is being absorbed into diocesan general funds rather than reaching the frontline.

What happened next? Carl Hughes moved an amendment to remit LInC funding reform to the wider review of the Church's funding framework. The amended motion, asking the Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners to "report back" on alternative approaches, was carried by a show of hands. In other words, the substantive question was kicked into the long grass. **Again.**

Readers with even only short memories will recall that only last July a similar funding question was deflected by what we described at the time as a wrecking amendment from the Bishop of Sheffield.

The pattern is consistent: the central Church acknowledges the problem, expresses sympathy, and then defers the decision to yet another review or working group.

Meanwhile the Church Commissioners sit on an endowment now exceeding £11 billion, and our core demand, that a significantly larger share of that income should flow directly and unconditionally to parish ministry, remains unmet.

As we observed after the Triennium funding announcement last year: the Church has decided to give some of the billions it was left to fund parish ministry back to poorer parishes, but by making parishes jump through hoops for funding that is much needed and could be transformative, by tying it up in its questionable Vision and Strategy..

The Rev'd Marcus Walker, rector at St Bartholemew the Great in the City of London, was ordained in 2011 and served for three years in London. Born in Jerusalem, he spent his childhood in the Holy Land, Moscow and Cairo. For four years Marcus was Deputy Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome, the Anglican Communion's embassy to the Vatican.



He is co-founder of the Save the Parish movement and acts as its Chairman.





NEWS

SHOT OF THE WEEK 1.....



Rev Rachel Webbley, rector of the team ministry at Whitstable, Kent, proceeds to lead the town's annual Sea Sunday celebrations



SHOT OF THE WEEK 2...



As our LINK photographer captured this remarkable photo of sunset in Capel on Saturday 14 March the phrases Armageddon! - or at least Arhmygosh! came to mind.



In the footsteps of Thomas Becket



Archbishop Sarah Mullally starts a 140-kilometer (87-mile) pilgrimage on 17 March from St. Paul's Cathedral in London to Canterbury, in preparation for her celebratory installation. The archbishop will be joined by her husband, Eamonn, an IT and enterprise architect who also narrates walking tours of London



TIME FOR A FISH SUPPER....

Richard captures a Grey Heron perusing the goldfish in a neighbour's pool



ST MARY'S SELECTED CHARITIES FOR 2026

St Mary's Charities' Committee met in March and after deliberation and discussion with the Parochial Church Council selected two local charities for support in 2026.



Parish Nursing supports people and communities to whole person healthcare. It does not do what the NHS does, but aims to complement it, and the one precious thing that the Parish Nurses can offer you is time! Time to let you explain your health issues, time to talk to someone who understands and can offer support - through its staff or volunteers or by connecting you into existing agencies, activities or support groups.



This could be in your home or elsewhere. We have two Parish Nurses, as well as non-health professional and DBS-checked, volunteers.

Parish Nursing can help tackle health issues in our local community and help reduce isolation, prevent ill-health, deterioration, or oversee recovery by providing additional support to individual carers and groups. Support from Capel Parish Nurses is available to anyone living in and around Capel St Mary regardless of age, background or beliefs.



Lighthouse *For a brighter future, free from domestic abuse*



Sally Winston, Lighthouse's chief executive tells the LINK: "2025 was a very busy year for Lighthouse. Once again we have supported over a thousand women and children coming to our Refuge and Women's Centre. This is a clear indicator that domestic abuse continues to be a major issue within our society.

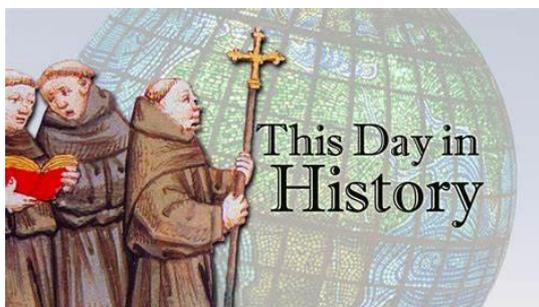
"Yet despite evidential demand funding has continued to be one of our main challenges, with fewer grants being available and the Cost-of-Living Crisis taking its toll. We have however been very fortunate to have amazing community support whether that be through individual, group or business giving.

"Our domestic abuse training has gained in reputation with the consequence of many businesses making us their charity of the year and raising much needed funds. But the need for longer

term sustainable funding is essential if we are to be able to continue with all the work that we do, and this is our core concern moving forward into the coming year.

"Yet we remain positive, we have to be in order to provide the best possible service to women and children who have often experienced the most horrific domestic abuse and violence. We pride ourselves on being innovative, looking for gaps in service provision and as such over the past year we have developed our children's service, a new Neuro Diverse Freedom Programme and reached out to groups in the community who may not find it easy or possible to access the Centre directly.

"We offer courses both face to face and online depending on the need of the individual and where necessary will deliver on a one-to-one basis where a woman or young person may find it difficult to meet in a group setting."



22 MARCH 1666

SAMUEL PEPYS BEMOANS "THE RUIN OF THE WHOLE KINGDOM"

Quaedam nunquam mutantur: Some things never change.

London: Public matters in a most sad condition. Seamen discouraged for want of pay, and are become not to be governed.

Nor, as matters are now, can any fleet go out next year. Our enemies, French and Dutch, great, and grow more, by our poverty.

The parliament backward in raising, because jealousy of the spending of the money.

The City less and less likely to be built again (*after the Fire*) everybody settling elsewhere, and nobody encouraged to trade.

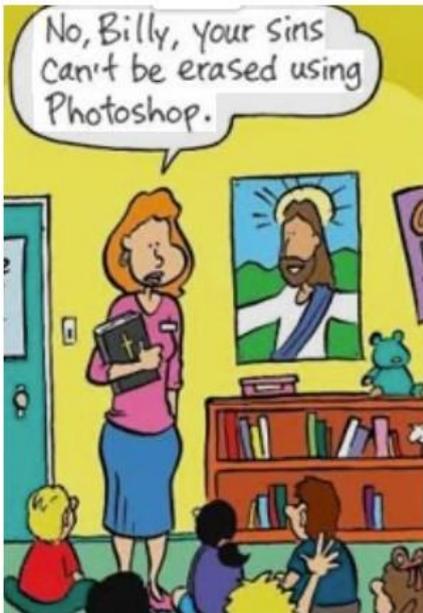
A sad, vicious, negligent Court, and all sober men there fearful of the ruin of the whole Kingdom this next year - from which good God deliver us.

Among other things Sir R Ford did make me understand how the House of Commons is a beast not to be understood.



And did tell me how Sir Allen Brodericke and Sir Allen Apsly did come drunk the other day into the House and did both speak for half an hour together - and could not be either laughed or pulled or bid to sit down and hold their peace - which I am aggrieved at with all my heart.

SAMUEL PEPYS: CLERK OF THE ACTS TO THE NAVY BOARD



Funnies with many thanks to Rev Adrian





St Mary's Tattlingstone – the next chapter....

Lyn Tomlinson, churchwarden says:

"St Mary's Church has been at the heart of Tattlingstone for centuries; a place of worship, gathering, and shared history.

Now, with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we are beginning an exciting new project to protect and celebrate this special building and the stories connected to it."



OFFICIAL OPEN WEEKEND

28th – 29th March

Time tbc

Venue: St Mary's, Tattlingstone

Come and join us in the Church for the official opening and a chance to see the completed work and the reconfigured space at St Mary's.

TATTINGSTONE HISTORY EXHIBITION

28th – 29th March

Time tbc

Venue: St Mary's, Tattlingstone

Discover the fascinating story of the church and its place in the life of the village. Through images, documents and artefacts, the exhibition aims to bring to life centuries of heritage and community.



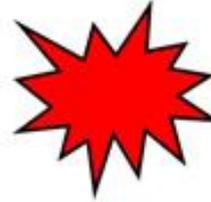


Palm Sunday



Special Visit from

Landseer Road Puppets



Saturday 28th Mar. 2026

3.30 - 5.30pm

Palms and Crosses

Capel Methodist Church

Fun for all the family

Book in at: 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



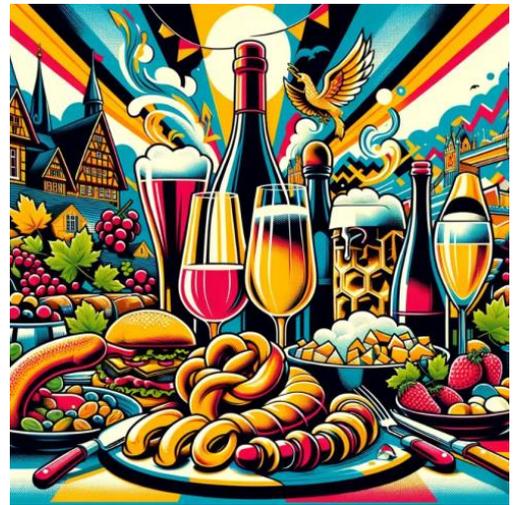


The Friends of St Mary's
Registered Charity Number 286971

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH

Is holding a new wine tasting evening celebrating the wines of Germany & Austria.

10 April 2026 at St Mary's Church Hall



Jim Kelland says: "The entry price stays at £20 each - so please contact me on 07803 133183 for tickets."

The evening starts at 7.00pm with a welcoming drink and gets fully under way at 7.15pm. Tasties and culinary goodies with an Austro-German flavour with thanks to Sarah.



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



THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S

FUN QUIZ NIGHT

*St Mary's Fun Quiz
Night*

Friday 27th 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





*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



DO YA WANNA BUILD A SCARECROW?

For the 2026 Capel St Mary Scarecrow Trail - Thursday 25th to Sunday 28th June



It can be as sophisticated or simple as you like and there are no themes so anything goes. Here are some of the Scarecrows from the last few years that got voted for as Favourite Scarecrows, and the positions they achieved - "No rest for the wicket" 1st, "Men at Work" 2nd (as you can see, just some inflatable Mr Men, a ladder, and some clever imagination), "Take It Off" 2nd, "Thank you for bringing this in" 1st, "Who came to tea?" 3rd (Pretty simple but the children loved it. In case you hadn't guessed, it was the Tiger).

If you have made a Scarecrow in the last two years, we will be contacting you in April to ask if you would like to make one again this year.

If you haven't made one before but would like to have a go, please either Message me, Jim Hill, on 07951 411720 or email me at jim.hill1@live.co.uk NB Don't miss out the "1" or your email will disappear into the ether and you will NOT get a failure notification. Please provide your name, street address, mobile number and email. Myself or my wife Mo, will then be in touch to answer any questions you may have. Any contact information you provide will be held for Scarecrow Trail use only.

Jim Hill

The Friends of St Mary's

Registered Charity Number 286971

With thanks to Jim Hill



LADIES MEETING POINT – 2026 NEWS UPDATE



Ondra Butler Says:



As you know we have decided to meet during the summer months only this year. Hopefully this will encourage more ladies to come along, as we appreciate that turning out on dark cold winter evenings is not so appealing. The committee remains the same and volunteers for prayers, vote of thanks and refreshments would be appreciated.

The charge for membership will be £5, plus £2.50 per meeting. Guests will be charged £4. These charges will hopefully cover ongoing expenses. Below is the planned programme and we hope that you and any friends will support this group.

2026

- | | | |
|----------|--|---------------------------|
| APRIL 7. | Truffle Making. | <i>Val Bridgeman</i> |
| MAY 5. | The Role of a Parish Nurse. | <i>Caroline Ursell</i> |
| JUNE 2. | Women of Felixstowe. | <i>Catherine Buchanan</i> |
| JULY 7. | The Canary Girls -
Munition workers | <i>Sandra Gold-Wood</i> |
| AUG 4. | More Royal Occasions. | <i>Ken Stone</i> |
| SEPT 1. | AGM & Fish & Chip Lunch | |
| DEC 1st. | Christmas Lunch | |





Diane launches Alpha Dog Supplies - A 100% natural treat company for healthier, happier pets

Diane explains:

Dog owners today have a huge range of options when it comes to treating their furrier family members to a tasty snack, but not every item on the shelf at the local pet store is born equal!

From rawhide and dyed chews to highly processed treats - many highly processed items can pose notable risks to dogs including choking, blockages, and stomach upsets. Not to mention the comparatively few natural, high-protein options on the menu.

This is where Alpha Dog Supplies comes in. Built on a simple philosophy - natural products, ethical sustainable choices, and a love for dogs - Alpha was born from a passion for natural nutrition and honest values, combining modern convenience with good old-fashioned service.

All of our treats are made from 100% natural hypoallergenic ingredients, ethically sourced, and sustainably produced in Britain and the EU. Our eco-friendly, biodegradable packaging ensures caring for our dogs never comes at the planet's expense.

Founded by lifelong dog lover Diane, Alpha draws on over 30 years of experience caring for dogs - especially her beloved Rottweilers.

"My journey began in a small pet shop and dog grooming parlour, where I fell in love with the sense of community and connection between owners and their dogs," she explained. "Since then, I've spent many years fostering, rehabilitating, and providing palliative care for Rottweilers - over twenty have shared my home and my heart."

"With four dogs at home, I understand the care and trust that goes into choosing the right products and as a vegetarian, I care deeply about where things come from and how they're made," Diane added.

See below.....



ALPHA DOG SUPPLIES

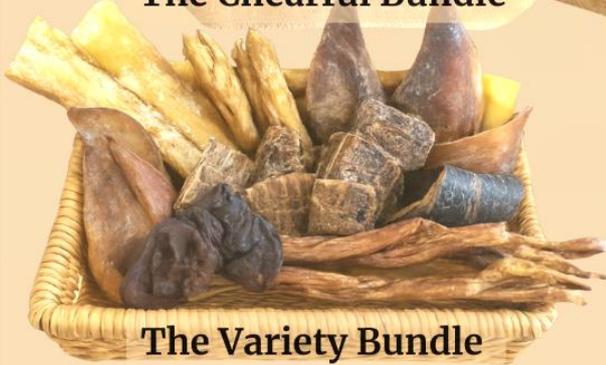


Natural Chews Worth Wagging For!



The Cheerful Bundle

Variety for Your Dog
Up to a six week supply of hand-picked natural chews.



The Variety Bundle

Safe Feeding Guidance
Includes a simple guide to support healthy digestion.

Better Value
Enjoy great savings compared to buying individual chews.

UK/EU
Sourced

Ethically
Sourced

Hypo-
allergenic

100%
Natural

Low
Fat

Air
Dried

Explore Our Natural Chew Bundles Today
www.alphadogsupplies.co.uk





"Pull me up when I don't strike the right tone": Bishop Joanne's speech to synod in Stowmarket

Misuse of power

At the beginning of February, I visited Rome as part of an all-party parliamentary group delegation to the Vatican.

Standing inside St Peter's Basilica, overwhelmed by its grandeur, I gazed at the inscription which runs around the inside of the cupola. "*Tu es Petrus*" it states, reminding us of the account of how the apostle Simon is given a new name and is commissioned to build Christ's church:

"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt 16:18).

But although we may easily forget it when we gaze upon the majestic, awe-inspiring sight of St Peter's, or that of Canterbury Cathedral, or even our own beloved St Edmundsbury Cathedral, the rock upon which Christ's church is founded is not about those kinds of stones.

In comparison, the stone upon which God will build the church is a huge foundation stone - the sort of stone that is hewn out of the side of a cliff. And as St Peter knew, the foundation stone of our church and our faith is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

God's kingdom is not about religious symbols, or the wealth and resources which underlie grand building projects, or the traditions which give religion its sense of permanence and authority. God's kingdom is not heralded by displays of might.

Instead, as Jesus teaches us in Chapter 13 of Mark's gospel, God's kingdom is about a reign of justice and peace, which may be marked first by war and natural disaster, before the fruits of a new age can be ushered in.

My Vatican visit and recent world events have prompted me to think hard about power.

When it comes to safeguarding, all our churches have failed.

We have let abusers operate in our midst. We have turned a blind eye. We have failed to pay attention to the systems and processes that help to keep the most vulnerable safe. We have failed to hear, believe, and care for victims and survivors of abuse. We have failed to draw victims and survivors adequately into the co-creation of new ways of being.

In the Church of England, our safeguarding improvements in the past 10 years in both policy and practice show our commitment to change. Responding well to victims and survivors is a core part of this.

But we must never be complacent, and all churches must be committed to restoring right relations both with those who have been hurt and with God.

My predominant reflection from my visit, one which applies as much to the Church of England as to the Roman Catholic Church, is that when we hide behind our institutional identity or rest in the grandeur of our buildings and other structures, we are furthest away from Jesus, our gentle, wounded Saviour.

At the heart of many safeguarding issues is not just sexual or other abuse, but the misuse of power. Those who abuse power do not like to be questioned. They do not like to have to account for their position or their decisions. They hide behind words, rituals, and buildings.

In Lent, though actually at all times, we need to deepen the self-examination and repentance that should already be at the heart of our own practice of faith, so that when we become too comfortable with the power and status that we hold, we are brought firmly to our knees.

In particular, I want to invite you to challenge me.

I've enjoyed taking up my place in the House of Lords as one of the Lords Spiritual - though I have to say, it felt a bit like being on a film set walking into the chamber. But if I ever appear to be getting used to it or start thinking that I belong there, then please put me firmly back in my place.

Please ask me why I am doing the things I do. Pull me up when I don't strike the right tone.

Challenge me on theological matters when we disagree - including on some of the difficult matters which we will discuss later in our agenda. Point out when I appear to hide behind tradition or ritual. Nudge me when I am not listening well enough.

I will need to take responsibility myself for working at all these things. But I want you to know that, even though I will undoubtedly find it uncomfortable, I know that I will need to welcome and pay attention to what you might be saying.

If we have started from proper self-examination and humility, churches and church leaders can have a role to play in interrogating the way power is used in the world. That includes people of faith asking difficult questions about the inadequacy of the current proposed legislation around assisted dying.

It includes ethicists and theologians examining the morality and legality of the USA and Israel's strikes on Iran. It includes us as the established church of this country asking questions of our monarchy and our politicians in relation to abuse, trafficking, and the abuse of power.

From our knees, we have the possibility of posing valuable and even sharp questions into the maelstrom of our current age. A humbled church will be one which is learning to use its power well, including on behalf of those who are voiceless.

This goes beyond institutions and traditions. It's about staying close to the kingdom values which Jesus wanted to see taking hold among the people he loved.

Bishop Joanne was addressing Diocesan Synod at Stowmarket on 7 March 2026.





MELISSA'S NATURE PAGE

A sudden dazzle of sunshine and a small bird* *announcing spring

A tug-of-war has been taking place between the armies of winter and the forces of spring.

A couple of warm, sunny days brought the first brimstone butterflies out of hibernation and had me switching my oil-filled radiator off; then came a run of grey, dull days and some gusty winds that moaned

and whined around the eaves of my cottage, after which the temperatures fell and I got under my heated blanket again.

But winter won't return, however much it feels like it: white cherry plum petals speckle the village lanes, and along the farmland hedgerows the blackthorn is coming into bloom.

It's light when I wake, the hawthorns are frilled with green leaf buds and - best of all - our local chiffchaffs are back.



If you don't know about chiffchaffs, let me introduce you, for this is a bird of two halves: utterly boring by at three separate metrics, completely and utterly wonderful by one.

They're the consummate LBJ, or 'little brown job' - well, a grubby olive green, technically, but visually they're totally unremarkable, just really nothingy to look at - which barely matters anyway as they are usually quite difficult to see, lurking about in trees and more or less indistinguishable from a leaf.

On and on it goes

Chiffchaffs are also as common as muck, and they're not even declining: they can't claim the dubious glamour of rarity, hyper-localisation, or being in peril. And finally, their song is among the most boring of the entire avian kingdom, a regular, mindless DINK DINK DINK DINK DINK DINK: the original monkey with a miniature cymbal.

No melody, no variation, no inflection; on and on it goes, right across the UK (for they are nothing if not democratic in their distribution): in urban parks, suburban gardens, woodland and open countryside, all summer long.

But that's where things start to get magical, because that repeated chirp is the soundtrack only to the warmer months.

Like swifts, swallows, whitethroats, cuckoos and many other species, chiffchaffs clear off again after they've bred here, disappearing in late summer and heading off for warmer climes where there are more bugs for them to eat.

But of all our many summer visitors, they're pretty much the first ones to return (or the first that most of us will notice, anyway), arriving here in mid-March, just as the world starts really waking up after winter - from which moment that familiar dink dink dink can be heard again.

They're heralds of good weather, little shouty promisers of spring: the advance guard of a huge wave of migratory birds that move around the globe to follow blooms of insects so they can breed where there's enough food to eat to raise their chicks.



A sudden dazzle of sunshine

By August we may well be sick of them mindlessly dinking, but in March, when we're all tired of winter and longing for sunshine, the sound of a male setting up shop in a copse of trees - well, it's like a sudden dazzle of sunshine, or a shot of vitamin C.

So this year, listen out for chiffchaffs and note down the date you first hear one. And then, next March, you can keep an eye on the forecast for a favourable wind direction, and get ready to welcome them back for the summer again.

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.





PRAYER LIST FOR 22 MARCH 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,
Rosie Waller.

FOR THOSE MAKING A RECOVERY

Shirley Streatfield, Laura Towells, Zena Steward.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED

Bill Woods Ballard, Mark Easton.

Please contact brian.rogerson@btinternet.com
For new entries - or if people have made a recovery.

With thanks to St Mary's Prayer Team



St Mary's Hall Bookings

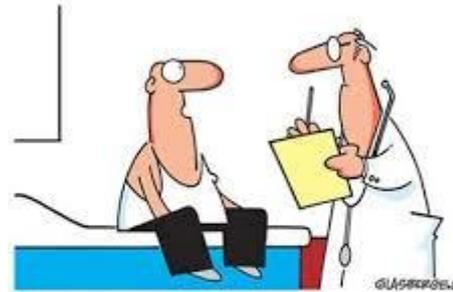
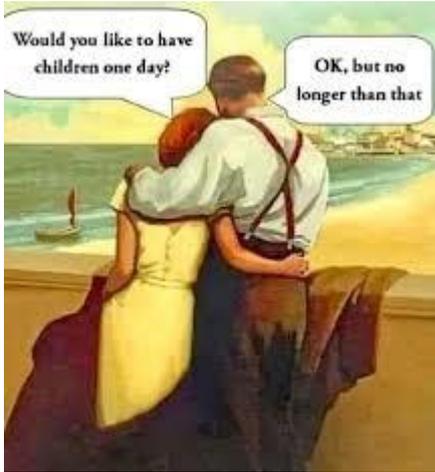
As compiled by Valerie Franklin

MARCH 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lent 2 Communion Rev Sally	10.00-12.30 Art Club 18.15-19.30 Brownies	18.00-19.00 Rainbows 19.00 Deanery Synod	10.00 Midweek Communion 17.00-20.00 Street Dance	9.30-10.30 Pilates 18.15-19.30 Qi Gong		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Lent 3 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
Lent 4 Family Service Mothering Sunday Rev Sally	10.00-12.30 Art Club 14.00 Comp Cafe 18.15-19.30 Brownies	12.30 Lunch Club 18.00-19.00 Rainbows	10.00 Midweek Communion 17.00-20.00 Street Dance	9.30-10.30 Pilates		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Lent 5 Communion Rev Adrian	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	19.00 Quiz Night	
29	30	31				
Palm Sunday Communion Rev Sally/Rev Adrian	10.00-12.30 Art Club	Spud Club 10.00- 14.00				



Points to Ponder



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, Mo Hill 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



***AND FINALLY- HOW WE INTERPRET THOSE CONFUSING
MEDIEVAL PAINTINGS***

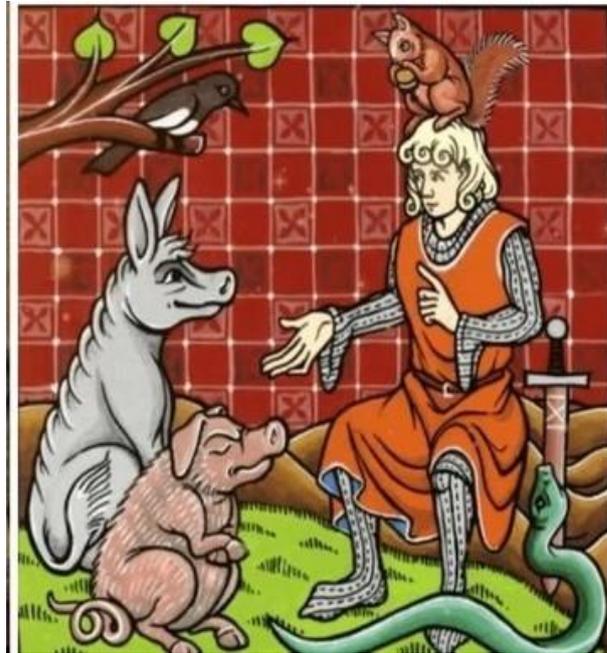
***When you need to seal all doors and windows to avoid disturbance from
flying babies....***



Am I dreaming - or is that Mark Zuckerberg behind me?.....



*When you explain your idea, and they seem to be listening,
but you get the feeling they do not really understand the
point....*



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.

