



**25 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:  
25 JAN to 8 FEBRUARY 2026**



## **ST MARY'S STAR FESTIVAL SPECIAL**

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## **WORSHIP TIMELINE**

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

### 2026

25 Jan, 9.30am, St John's, **Family Service.**

10.45am, St Mary's,

**Holy Communion led by Rev Sally..**

28 Jan, 10.00am, St Mary's, **Benefice Holy Communion**

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)

8 Feb, 9.30am, St John's, **Family Service.**

10.45am, St Mary's, **Holy Communion.**

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

15 Feb, 9.30am, St John's, **Holy Communion.**

10.45am, St Mary's, **Family Service Celtic Prayer**

12.00, Midday, **St Mary's Annual Parochial Church Meeting** (All welcome)

16 Feb, 2.00pm, St Mary's **Compassionate cafe**

7.00pm, The Rectory, **Bible Study Group**

17 Feb, 12.30pm, St Mary's **Luncheon Club**

18 Feb, 10.00am, St Mary's,

**Ash Wednesday, Benefice Holy Communion**

22 Feb, 9.30am, St John's, **Family Service**

10.45am, St Mary's, **Holy Communion.**



## Readings for Sunday 25 January 2026

### New Testament Readings

#### Acts 9, 1-22.

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus:

and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*

And he said, "Who art thou, Lord?!" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

And he trembling and astonished said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord said unto him, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, "Ananias". And he said, "Behold, I am here, Lord."

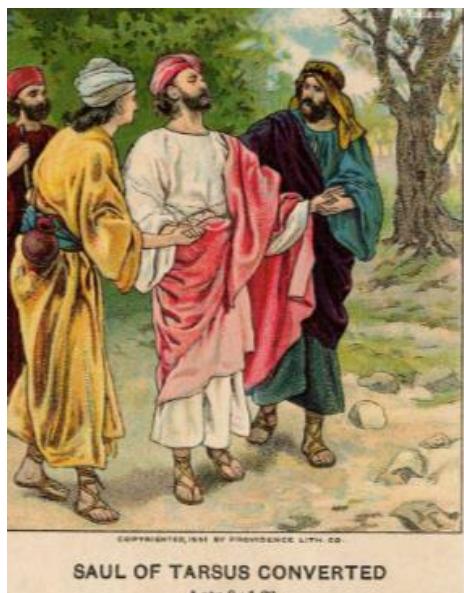
And the Lord said unto him, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth."

And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.



Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name."

But the Lord said unto him, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."



And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

But all that heard him were amazed, and said; "Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?"

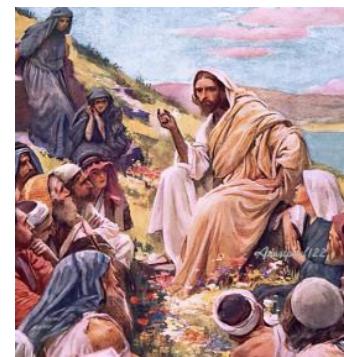
But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

## Matthew 19, 27 to end

Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a



*hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."*

## **Sally's Reflection**

Conversion of Paul

ACTS 9:1-22 and Matthew 19:27-end

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

I wonder what your priorities; your agenda is for this year, for yourself and your family?

I wonder how much striving we do to achieve the ends we want, whether its saving, worrying about family, worrying about jobs, our futures and the world?

This year as we prepare to turn to Lent; I heard Rev Pete Grieg, he of 24-hour prayer app. He said that he had taken a sabbatical because he realised, he spent a lot of time talking about Jesus but less time actually talking to him.

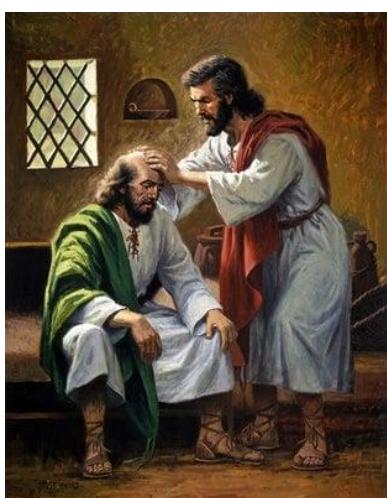
Saul had an agenda, he knew what his priority is. It is destruction. He breathes threats and murder against the disciples, anyone who followed the Way, men or women and he would bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Saul of Tarsus was a highly intelligent, superbly educated and biblically literate young man and he thought he was on the journey acting for the glory of God.

He needed to keep the glory of God before his eyes and get rid of those crazy disciples of Jesus. Suddenly he sees the glory and it is the face of Jesus Christ, struck down, blinded, and Jesus asks him a gentle question,

*'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'*

His agenda is turned upside down.



And Ananias is a believer, and Jesus speaks to him and he obeys. We never hear of Ananias again, but he was prepared to do what he was asked even though he thought it was ridiculously dangerous, he obeyed with grace and wisdom.

But Jesus says you are to be my instrument whom I have chosen.

Both men have had to listen and talk to the Lord. For both of them this situation was not on their plan.

Saul had approached what he thought was spiritual threat with physical threat. Fear makes us defensive and confrontational. Threat can make us fearful and reactive.

Think of our press today in the world, always warning threat, warning we are going to be overtaken, warning we are being cheated, warning us our priorities must change, making us anxious about our world and the effect it will have on our families.

*Two opposing ideas and attitudes; Ananias versus Saul. Courage versus aggression, peace versus confrontation.*

Through listening, through prayer and faith, Ananias follows the instructions and goes to Saul and prays over him. And Saul sees everything, the scales fall from his eyes, he is baptised, eats something for strength, and begins the mission of his life, proclaiming Jesus as the son of God; everyone was staggered at the turn around. Imagine. Suddenly his priorities have changed; they are the priorities of Christ.

In the Gospel reading, the disciples want to know what their priorities are. Doesn't Jesus know they have left everything to follow him? Their question is, 'what do we get back?'

Isn't that always our question, what's in it for me?

Jesus tells them the sacrifice will mean everything; God's Kingdom will be established with the overthrow of evil and the vindication of God's people.



Those who follow Jesus will be rescued from eternal death, the beginning and the end for all eternity. The disciples will rule with him, but the cross will show us this is to be a new order, a complete reversal of all earthly ideas of Kingship and earthly greatness.

*I wonder what the newspaper headlines will say to that?*

Amen





# WELCOME TO OUR FESTIVAL OF STARS

***LIGHT TO THE WORLD  
AS WE FOLLOW THE  
STAR***

*(Right) the organ loft becomes a cascade of stars*

*Beverley set the goal of St Mary's congregation collecting over 1,000 stars for the Epiphany Star Festival on the weekend of 10 & 11 January 2026.*



*(Right) Katie stands by the star waterfall under the rood screen.*





**(Left)** Jim's wife Sarah created a tree of porcelain stars.

**((Right))** While Katie's big white star was the very first to appear at St Mary's.



**The Star Festival service, led by Rev Sally, attracts a full house - in St Mary's church that has never seen such a spectacle.**





*(Left) Mike's brilliant white star projects its celestial light on the nativity scene.*

*(Below) St Mary's choir is joined by Capel Primary School as a series of "late" carols are heralded.*



*Martyn and Beverley, the inspirers and organisers, reveal that the total number of stars created was 1,398 – consisting of over 1,000 knitted and comprising an estimated 1.3 million stitches!*

*Brilliantly done Team Dowsett, and thank you, and what stimulation for our continued missional work in 2026!*



*Katie Ursell surveys the myriad of stars streaming over the chancel arch*

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## **Bishop Joanne to be enthroned this Saturday**

The Right Revd Dr Joanne Woolway Grenfell is to be enthroned as the 12th Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich at 2.00pm on Saturday 24 January 2026 at St

Edmundsbury Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds

Prior to her current position she was Bishop of Stepney with special responsibility for Safeguarding in the Church.

The event is to be streamed live on the cathedral YouTube site.

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## 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 says:

"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.....***





***Let's try a new Hymn for Epiphany -***

***Away in a Manger (forever Amen) by Phil Wickham.....***

**Click here:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXXpJeXCJ1w>



**As recommended and played pre-service last week by Martyn**

***Away in a Manger*** by Phil Wickham adds Phil's personal touch and style to this historic Christmas Carol.

We've all sung the classic version of this song. Phil Wickham adds beautiful variations that build on and enhance this song.

What an incredible gift we received when Jesus came to earth to make a way for us to restore our relationship with God!



## WHO IS THE MYSTERY ARTIST OF THE MADONNA & CHILD MORRISON BEQUEST?



The recently-installed picture of *Madonna and Child* which has been hung next to the vestry in St Mary's was donated by Linda and Bob Morrison after the recent passing of Linda's mother.

The Morrison's confirmed that the picture had been hanging in her bedroom for the past 50 years.

Bob explained: "before that it had belonged to the parents of Linda's father, Patrick, who lived in London. It is believed that it was purchased from an art gallery in London more than 100 years ago.

"There is a small notice on the back giving the address of the firm who framed it and it also states that it is an oil painting - not a print or copy."

For its age the frame is in excellent condition and both Linda and Bob were pleased to pass the painting onto the church rather than keep it at home. The painting is most delicately done and we at St Mary's are most grateful to the Morrisons for the bequest.

The painting is in the Art Nouveau style of art that flourished between about 1890 and 1920 throughout Europe and the US. Art Nouveau is characterized by its use of a long, sinuous, flowing lines and especially the "whiplash curve," inspired by nature (plants, flowers, insects) to create movement and harmony.

often featuring elongated female figures with flowing hair, using rich yet muted colours and gold leaf.

Although frequently portrayed in blue attire, here the Madonna is wearing red which represents the blood of humanity, signifying her role as the mother who brought God into the human world, embodying love and sacrifice.

While the couple are surrounded by leaves and small branches with a selection of singing birds, Mary picks gently at a nearby flower while Jesus offers a blessing to the viewer.

Although there is no definite clue to the identity of the artist on the painting itself, it is strongly redolent of the work of Margaret Tarrant the English artist who lived from 1888 to 1959 and whose style often lay within the Art Nouveau movement (right).

(Editor's note: Apologies - the presence of stars above Mary's head is an unintentional result of reflection of the Star Festival taking place simultaneously to the photo being taken)



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## St Elizabeth Hospice

*Linda says: I am still collecting used stamps and old British and Foreign currency.*



*These can be left at 86 The Street, or in the bin in the foyer at the doctor's surgery in the street.*

*The stamps and currency are passed on to the hospice and then purchased by collectors with the monies raised usually amounting to between £4,00 and £5,000 each year.*

*Many thanks for your continued support - Linda.*

*(It should always be remembered that over the past several years Linda's fund-raising endeavours have incredibly raised **tens of thousands of pounds** for St Elizabeth Hospice. Ed.,)*

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Rev Adrian  
says:

### **The Post-Christmas Lull**

Last week, Rev Sally and I had a conversation which focused on the sense of weariness that often comes in the period following Christmas.

Despite the passing of the Epiphany, January is notorious for making it difficult to rise in the morning with enthusiasm; genuine contentment seems just out of reach. When considering the state of the world, it is sometimes remarkable that any of us manage to get out of bed at all.

### **Addressing Fatigue: Rev Sally's Reflection**

On Wednesday, Sally shared a short sermon that posed the question: what should we do when we feel tired and depleted? How can we recharge ourselves when, unlike our mobile phones, we cannot simply plug ourselves into a power source?

### **Seeking Comfort: Prayer and Scripture**

During that gathering, many members of the congregation shared that they turn to prayer in moments of fatigue. Yet, particularly in January, it can sometimes feel as though our prayers go unanswered. This is when the guidance found in our Bibles becomes especially important.

### **Encouragement from Jesus: Overcoming Challenges**

Jesus said in John 16:33: "*In the world you will have tribulation. But take courage; I have overcome the world!*" He is promising to keep us steady when the road becomes difficult.

### **Growth Through Hardship: God's Purpose**

God allows us to encounter challenging times for a reason: these experiences cultivate perseverance, character, and hope within us. He also equips us to comfort others, as highlighted in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7: "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.*"

**Thank you Rev Adrian - we are feeling uplifted already!**

## **Post- Christmas Fatigue?**

Let's turn it into  
your productivity  
superpower.





## VIEWPOINT

### **Dr Martin Davie asks: Where has the Church of England got to on same-sex relationships/marriages?**

On 15 October 2025 the Church of England's House of Bishops issued a statement explaining that at its recent meeting it had made "*a series of key decisions on the future direction of the Church of England's Living in Love and Faith process*".

The Living in Love and Faith (LLF) process is the process which began in 2017 to consider whether it would be right for the Church of England to bless same-sex relationships, bless or celebrate same-sex marriages, and permit those in same-sex relationships to be ordained.

#### ***Oh! now the lawyers & lawmakers are to be involved***

At its October meeting the House of Bishops considered the detailed advice which it had received from the Church of England's legal office and its Faith and Order Commission, which basically said that under Church law the introduction of 'stand-alone' services to bless same-sex civil marriages and permitting those in same-sex relationships to be ordained were both things that could not be introduced simply by a decision of the bishops, but required a formal legal process of approval involving both the General Synod and the UK Parliament.

In the light of this advice, the bishops' statement declared that they had "*agreed in principle that both bespoke service and clergy same-sex marriage would need formal synodical and legislative processes to be completed before they could be permitted*". The bishops also explained that final decisions about the matters they had discussed would be made at their next meeting in December.

#### ***"Further clarification needed"***

The next meeting of the House of Bishops duly took place on 16 December and after it the bishops issued a further statement which ran as follows: "*At a meeting at Lambeth Palace in London today, bishops discussed a series of decisions taken in principle on the direction of LLF at their last meeting in October.*

*"While those decisions were not contested, the bishops identified some areas where further clarification is needed and agreed to continue work on a letter to the Church summarising LLF and setting out an agreed position.*

*"Bishops recognised the deep hurt, particularly to LGBTQI+ people, as a result of those decisions.*

*"The House will meet again in January to finalise the text of the letter - which will take the form of a statement from the House."*

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, who chairs the LLF Programme Board, said: *'Although we recognise that having not set out a final decision today may add to the frustration and distress many people are feeling, it is important we take proper care and time on this. That is needed. We remain on course to bring proposals to Synod for consideration in February.'*

What we learn from these two statements

- The LLF process is in disarray;
- The LLF process will continue on and on;

Contrary to the fears expressed by some liberals, and the hopes expressed by some conservatives, it is also clear that the LLF process will continue (even if it is rebranded as something else).

The majority in the House of Bishops, led by the present Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, and the incoming Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally, are determined to press ahead with introducing standalone services of blessing and the ordination of those in same-sex relationships for a number of reasons:

- (a) they believe it is the right thing to do,;
- (b) it is what General Synod has voted for;
- (c) they believe the Church of England will become a laughing stock if the process in which so much money and effort has been invested is simply abandoned; and
- (d) they believe the Church of England will lose all credibility in modern British society if it is perceived to be hostile to gay and lesbian people and their relationships.

*The LLF process is therefore set to continue, with the legislation called for in the advice given to the House of Bishops probably being introduced in the General Synod in February 2028 and the legal process taking several years after that.*

Dr Martin Davie is a lay Anglican theologian who has written numerous books and articles, including a trilogy of books on Anglican theology and ecclesiology published by Gilead. He has taught at several theological colleges and has undertaken Faith and Order and ecumenical work for the Church of England. He is currently theological consultant to the Church of England Evangelical Council and Fellow of the Latimer Trust.





## NEWS



### **Jenny our PCC Secretary says:**

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. ,**

**Following our Carols in the Precinct on Christmas Eve we collected a total of £500 for Christian Aid**

**A Great Total - thanks!**





**The  
Children's  
Society**  
making childhood better

## CHILDREN'S SOCIETY BOXES

Jean Asks:

*Please would all those who have Children's Society boxes let me have them as soon as possible, Bring them to church, deliver them to 3 Days Green or ask me to pick them up from you 01473 310583.*

*Thank you in advance to everyone who contributes to this very good cause. Jean*



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## IN MEMORIAM



*St Mary's Birthdays & In  
Memoriams*



At the Parochial Church Meeting on 12 January it was decided that the publication of Birthdays and In Memoriams should cease. The principal reasons were that the former was not actively supported with any enthusiasm by the congregation and that the latter was prone to being outdated and of historic interest only.

However, following discussion with Trevor Bailey, the compiler and recorder of the In Memoriams, Trevor pointed out accurately that there are still several of St Mary's congregation who appreciate their recent deceased relatives being remembered in print once a year, *and that St Mary's history comprises its passage through time - past, present and future.*

So the In Memoriam column will continue in the LINK.

Trevor and the editor will endeavour to ensure that the In Memoriam list is maintained in as recent relevance as possible.

If any readers have any views on the above please do let either Trevor or me know.

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## **ST MARY'S PRAYER LIST**

### **Hille passes the baton**



Hille Peartree has complied St Mary's Prayer list for many years - and has just now decided to pass on the editorial baton.

Hille's pastoral contribution to those who have listed names, and those who have prayed for their loved ones, cannot be underestimated. We all owe Hille a huge debt of thanks for her work in encouraging those who are sick to record their names for prayer - and those who have concerns for themselves or family, to join the congregational list.

So the PCC has concluded that no one person will compile the list in future - which will still be present fortnightly in the LINK - and permanently on St Mary's noticeboard and Service Slides.

But it is paramount that we all contribute to adding and removing names where relevant - and thereby bring our church family to God in prayer.

We will also be assisted in the compilation process by **St Mary's Prayer Group** which meets regularly to support each other through focused prayer, offering praise, thanksgiving, and supplication for personal needs, the church, and the world, and who create a safe space for spiritual connection, deeper faith, and shared encouragement.

#### **So to remember our prayer sections:**

**Long-term sick & Housebound:** Prayers for the long-term sick and housebound focus on bringing comfort, strength, patience, and a sense of God's presence to those experiencing chronic pain, isolation, or restricted mobility. Those for whom longer-term prayers are required;

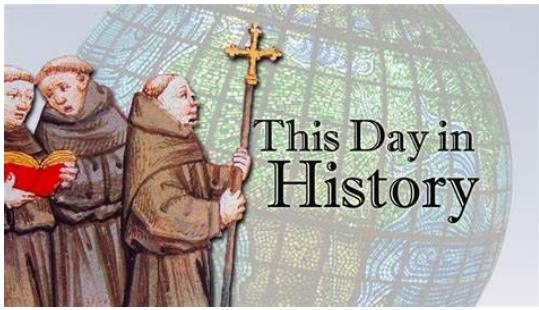
**Sick:** Prayers for the sick often seek divine intervention for physical recovery, strength for the journey, and peace of mind during times of suffering.

These can include those for friends, family, physical recovery, strength, and peace. Some examples include a prayer asking God to heal disease and guide treatments, and a prayer for physical recovery requesting aid and mercy. A prayer for strength and peace asks God to comfort and relieve the sick, and empower those who care for them.

**For those making a recovery:** Prayers for recovery from sickness often ask for physical and spiritual restoration, comfort, strength, and peace, focusing on God as the ultimate healer, with expressions like asking for dulling of pain, renewal, and trusting in His will for complete healing, emphasizing divine mercy and complete well-being.

**Those who have died:** focus on seeking God's mercy, eternal rest, and peace for the departed, with common themes including asking for forgiveness of sins, light to shine upon them, and their souls to be welcomed into heaven,





## 25 JANUARY 2022

### London: Ex-prisoner who landed £86K job with Church of England and stole £5.2m jailed for five years.



*Martin Sargeant, 53, was given a 'second chance' by the Church of England after stealing from previous employers*

An official who defrauded the Church of England out of £5.2 million and spent the profits on his lavish lifestyle travelling the world was jailed for five years.

Southwark Crown Court heard ex-prisoner Martin Sargeant, 53, was given a "second chance" after stealing from previous employers in the 1990s, landing an £86,000-a-year job with the Archdeaconry of London.

Prosecutor Joey Kwong said as the head of operations Sargeant, originally from Bournemouth, was "handsomely remunerated" for his work. But he "*defrauded the church in a persistent, sophisticated and frankly brazen manner*" over 11 years between 2009 and 2019.

Sargeant, who was clerk of the City Church grants committee charitable trust, was responsible for 33 city churches, some of which were "dysfunctional" and had no vicar. He made false applications for grants for maintenance or improvements and used funds received from large City developments near churches to defraud a total of more than £5.2 million.

The court heard that as a result of the fraud, many City churches have not been able to maintain their buildings and some have closed their doors to the public. "*It is clear that the funds were lavished on his lifestyle*," said Mr Kwong.

#### *Lavish spending*

*"By the end of the fraud, he had assets of more than £450,000 across personal bank accounts, as well as having three properties in Scotland worth approximately £1 million. He lavished money on multiple trips abroad and there was lavish spending in terms of his lifestyle."*

Sargeant's properties included six riverside log cabins, which he rented out as a business, while he made more than £600,000 of investments and spent over £1 million on credit cards. He blew thousands of pounds on clothes from fashion brands Ted Baker and Burberry and over three months in 2013 spent more than £30,000 at the five-star Soho Hotel.

Sargeant, who grew up in Bournemouth, was handed a community order in 1992 for theft by an employee and was jailed for 21 months in 1995 for offences including 19 counts of theft.

*He became head of operations in 2007 as a contractor with the Archdeaconry of London, initially earning £56,000 and rising to around £86,000 before his retirement in 2019 – a total salary of £750,000 over the period of the fraud.*

### ***How on earth did it happen?***

An independent fraud-impact report from Crowe LLP, revealed that the lack of involvement of others "*most likely contributed to the fraud continuing*".

In one instance, Sargeant "*appeared to credentialise himself through working with one church*" from 2003 as a consultant, his responsibilities increasing as he took on work with other churches. This eventually led to his appointment as Head of Operations.

The report found: "*At each point in his progression and engagement we have not been able to evidence independent checks as to his experience and references. In addition, we have not been able to evidence challenges from those in an oversight role as to the behaviours MS exhibited, although it was clear that the situation changed when Bishop Sarah Mullally was appointed in 2018.*"

The report also referred to "*a number of cultural and control environment factors which have allowed the fraud to take place*", including Sargeant's having been seen by those interviewed to be acting with the "*authority of the Bishop*" — Lord Chartres — until the latter's retirement.

*"There was also reference to Sergeant undertaking pastoral work and decisions, which were outside of his remit."*

### ***Lacking in basic supervision***

Churches operating independently or on a siloed basis contributed to the culture that led to Sargeant's exploitation, but the report puts more weight on "*a lack of transparency of financial information and decision making and an absence of independent reporting and audit*".

Moreover, "*Where issues were raised, these appear to have not been recognised for their potential significance and investigated/actioned.*"





## **MELISSA'S NATURE PAGE**

### **Pleased we've got some proper winter weather!**

We've had some proper winter weather, and I could not be more pleased.

This despite the soaring heating bill, the cost of extra firewood, the days spent working under a heated blanket on the sofa because the study costs £8 a day to heat and without a radiator on remains at a stubborn 8 degrees C; despite the chore of hoovering condensation every morning from single-glazed, metal-framed cottage windows or, occasionally, waiting for the ice on the inside of the panes to thaw.

Our narrow village lanes remain ungritted through frost and snow, unless one of my neighbours flings some salt around themselves, so getting the car to the relative safety of the B-road has meant rolling it slowly, cautiously, in low gear.

As an anxious driver I'm not a huge fan of this (I do know to steer into a skid, but tell that to my reflexes) so I ordered a big Sainsbury's shop to be delivered by their far more confident driver, and have largely been hunkering down and staying put.

#### **And I am glad:**

- glad that the bastard mosquito which bit me five times on the calf in December, for god's sake, will now, rightly, be dead;
- glad that the arable, livestock and garden pests, parasites and weeds which should be killed off by winter won't make it to spring and multiply out of hand;
- glad for the spring bulbs that require a period of deep cold in order to germinate;
- glad that the soil's structure will be broken up and made friable by frost, as it should.



Winter is a vital part of the year's cycle, one which native plants and animals have long become adapted to. We need it as much as we need spring rains and days of summer heat.

Of course, I've still been going out for walks and even the odd run, though the field paths too turned treacherous: feet churned the earth to mud and the mud there froze, melted, and refroze again.

And every time I've gone out there have been fieldfares: *chchacking* from the hedgerow oaks, feeding on the beet fields, flying in small bands overhead. '*In the bitterest day that ever blew*', wrote John Clare,

*The walk will find some places still and warm  
Where dead leaves rustle sweet and give alarm  
To little birds that flirt and start away.*

One afternoon I layered up in coat, gloves and knitted hood and headed out at about 3.30: the hour or so before sunset is one of my favourite times to walk, and one of the best times to see wildlife, too.

I turned at one point and saw that behind me a vast, dense cloud was building and flattening at its apex so that it loomed over the now-distant tower of the village church like a Hokusai wave.

Then, as my route took me slowly back towards the village the light began to change: I was now under the cloud which was turning the sky a strange, bilious colour.

I took out my phone to take a snap and found that the screen was struggling to adapt to the ambient conditions, too, cycling manically from bright to dim, warm to cool.

The cloud looked yellow to me, but when I filmed it it was bright pink; then an icy wind got up and within moments, flakes of snow began to whirl around me as it let go its cold burden.

*It was a strange, intense experience.*

A day or two later we had about an inch of rain overnight, melting the snow and pushing our little river up and over the banks into its watermeadows. I went out with a friend and her dog, our route taking us across it on the road bridge; on one side the river's course was no longer legible, lost among silt-brown channels and lakes.

We found we couldn't re-cross it to get home: not at the wooden footbridge, nor at what I still call the 'cow bridge', though there have been no cows on that part of the meadows since a year or so after I moved in.

We had to walk to the next village and take another road bridge back.

*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

## January and February 2026

### JANUARY

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

### 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		



## **PRAYER LIST FOR 25 JANUARY 2026**

We pray for all the conflicts in the world. Also we continue to pray for David Jacobs, still bravely travelling to Ukraine.

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

### **LONG-TERM SICK AND HOUSEBOUND**

Pat Gladwin, Becky Carpendale, Rachel Martin, Brenda Green, Zoe and family

#### **SICK**

Kevin Austrin, Penny & David Thompson,  
Rev Stephne. Molly Johansen, Sandy Mansfield,  
Geoff Cox, Pauline Stark, Andrew Skinner,  
Barbara Rogers, Doreen Parker, Eric Doe,  
Malcolm & Chris Fenn, Peter Ellis (Methodist), Angie Heath.

#### **FOR THOSE MAKING A RECOVERY**

Shirley Streatfield, Laura Towells, Zena Steward

#### **FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DIED**

Joanna Carrick (Red Rose Theatre founder)  
Phyllis (Phyl) Tebb (Sue Dales' Mum)

Please contact Hille at [hillepearz@gmail.com](mailto:hillepearz@gmail.com)

If people have made a recovery



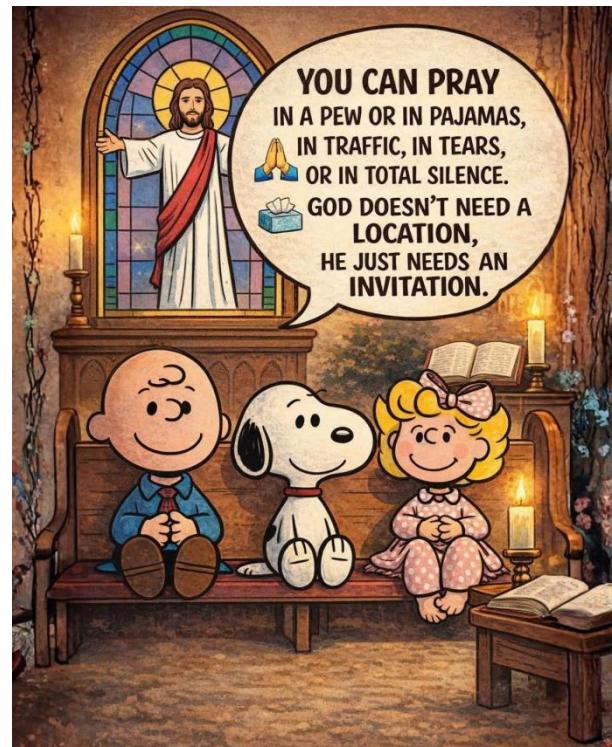
## Points to Ponder



Looked outside our house this morning and found a couple of feet of snow.



English is full of funny contradictions:



# 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.....**

*On those occasions you feel really stupid - just remember that Little Red Riding Hood couldn't figure out that a talking wolf wasn't her grandmother.....*



*In medieval times motor-boating wasn't as much fun as it was cracked up to be.....*



**In the Victorian era birth control was somewhat hit and miss....**



### **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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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.

