

# STOURHEAD BENEFICE NEWS

Editor: Sue Davison - 01440 705829 - [suzannedavison747@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:suzannedavison747@yahoo.co.uk)

**February & March 2026**



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury  
and Ipswich**



BARNARDISTON - GREAT BRADLEY - LITTLE BRADLEY - KEDINGTON  
GREAT THURLOW - LITTLE THURLOW - GREAT WRATTING - LITTLE WRATTING

**Rector : Fr Christopher Giles**

**Benefice email - [stourheadbenefice@gmail.com](mailto:stourheadbenefice@gmail.com) - 01440 762901**

**Or use the QR code for more information on our Benefice**

Stourhead Benefice



Following in the  
footsteps of Jesus

## Ministry Team

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Jill Davis	01440 713137
Ruth Hopper	01440 783125
Peter Smith	01440 783278
Mary Upton	01440 706237
Benefice Safeguarding Officers	Ruth Hopper and Naomi Shelmerdine 07405 624132

**Benefice email: [stourheadbenefice@gmail.com](mailto:stourheadbenefice@gmail.com)**

**Father Chris's day off is Friday – in an emergency please contact a member of the Ministry Team.**

## Church Wardens

### Barnardiston:

Les Jobson 01440 786568

### Great Thurlow:

George Vestey 01440 783240

### Little Bradley:

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Colin Clifton-Brown 01440 783261

### Little Thurlow:

Robin Vestey 01440 783217  
Edward Perrott 07775 731805

### Great Bradley:

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Keith Willington 01440 783607

### Great Wratting:

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Editor: Sue Davison - 01440 705829 - [suzannedavison747@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:suzannedavison747@yahoo.co.uk)

**Deadline for next issue (April/May) 15th March**

The Stourhead Benefice is grateful to Barnardiston School for printing the Benefice News.

## Father Chris writes

**D**ear Friends

As I write February is approaching, we still have the cold and damp days where we can lack motivation to leave the house for walks and exercise. I read recently that February is also known as 'Heart month', strange, but in many ways appropriate. I come from a family with a history of heart disease, so I know how important exercise needs to be. The Heart Foundation encourages everyone to get out and exercise that muscle in the chest which is needing to be used.

As we know, hearts can be fragile emotionally as well. With Valentine's Day upon us, it is certainly something to look forward to and celebrate, but for some, they are just painful reminders of wounds that run deep. In this season of celebrating love, there are many injured hearts that feel pain even more acutely. The loss of a loved one through death or divorce... separation or growing apart. A spouse, a child or a parent...those who have our hearts, are the very ones who can break them like none other.

Our wounds are not always visible. Wounds of the heart can be concealed from those around us. They hurt in ways that physical wounds cannot even come close to, in their sheer difference. In time, wounds will eventually become scars. When my children were young, I used to refer to their scars as 'war wounds' to make them look on their former injuries with some pride. When the plaster was removed, they would look with anticipation, and a bit of apprehension, to see the healing that had taken place underneath that protective cover. But the process of going from injury to scar takes time...some longer than others.

We are reminded, that God's Word assures us that God himself desires to bind up our broken hearts. And as we heal, He can be the covering over our pain as the healing slowly takes place beneath. Spending time with the Healer of our hearts, causes the pain to subside and the healing to begin. This is not always a quick fix, but if we patiently wait upon the Lord, and let Him take over the healing process, one day we will

realize that day by day, the wound is improving, and when the time comes to look within, we will find that healing has indeed, taken place. We are still left with a scar of course, that will always remain, but our view of it can be one of victory, as it will be a reminder of God's healing love.

He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds. *Psalm 147:3*

Every Blessing  
Fr Chris

Stourhead Benefice  
Lent Course 2026

## "In the Dust of Jesus"



St Peter and St Paul's Church,  
Kedington

3pm until 4pm

Sunday 22 February, 1 March and 8  
March

All are welcome to join this informal discussion group as we study the Bible together over tea or coffee. Each session stands alone ; come to one or all.



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## **Easter Vigil 2026 - on Easter Saturday 4th April at 8pm in Kedington Church**

When I hear the word 'vigil', I think of the solemn faces of people standing with their heads down. Rather like those who stood around the late Queen Elizabeth's coffin. Or crowds gathered in the dark, holding candles, waiting for something or someone. Until 2021, I had not experienced the Easter or 'Paschal' Vigil. (Derived from the Greek 'pascha' for Passover). In some respects, my thoughts about the word were correct, but the Easter Vigil service brings so much more as it takes place on Easter Saturday.

Katherine Swift, in her beautiful book, *The Morville Hours*, writes of one of her memories of Easter as a girl. *'I remember the anguish of Good Friday as a child, when my mother would fast all day, white-faced and fainting, meditating on the brutal facts of Christ's death and descent into the tomb; then the release of joy and ceremony the following night, when a lone candle would spark into life in the darkness ..... The candles kindled from one another until the whole church is filled with flickering light. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!'*

The Easter Vigil begins in silence with the church in darkness. There are introductory readings and prayers. The Minister then goes outside with the unlit Easter candle to where a fire has been started. The congregation follows and all have the opportunity to renew their baptismal vows before the Paschal Candle is lit from the fire. As the Minister enters the church with the lit candle, everyone else presents their candle to be lit from the Paschal Candle, so the light of Christ is spread around the whole congregation. Representatives from other parishes may bring their own Paschal Candle to be lit and blessed.

The congregation take their seats and after listening to the Easter Song of Praise, the service continues with a reminder of what Easter means to us. Following the Easter acclamation there is a fanfare before the Gloria is said and the church lights are switched on. The service continues with Easter readings. The congregation are then invited to gather at the font and reaffirm their faith. The Minister sprinkles everyone with the water from the font as a symbol of this reaffirming. After sharing the Peace with a smile or a handshake, a hymn may be sung and the service continues with the first Eucharist of Easter.

Although there are many elements to the Easter Vigil and there is a lot of moving around the church, the service is less than an hour long. With Easter Sunday often being a time for families to gather, the Vigil on Easter Saturday can be an opportunity to engage with the meaning of Easter in an unhurried and quite special way. Do think about joining us for this rich and refreshing service on the most significant and special of the Christian Festivals.

Jill Davis

## **A Poem for Easter**

'Twas the night before Easter, and all through the land  
There was mourning and grieving for Jesus, the man.

Forsaken by God, abandoned by friends,  
Jesus was punished for all of our sins.

"Crucify Him!" the angry crowds cheered.  
"Save Yourself!" the bitter ones jeered.

His followers' hopes were dashed in His death  
As they watched their Leader take His last breath.

They didn't remember or couldn't understand  
All Jesus said about God's ultimate plan.

What they thought in this silence seemed the end.  
They'd lost a Master, a Teacher, a Friend.

But Praise be to God – things aren't as they seem!  
A battle was raging behind death's last scene.

Sin could not win, death could not hold  
Messiah, Our Saviour, as prophets foretold.

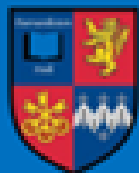
When on the third day, women were a-chatter,  
Disciples ran to the tomb to see what was the matter.

The tomb – it was empty, just like they said.  
Jesus had risen – He's no longer dead!

Sin, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?  
It was finished! Sin's curse destroyed by Jesus, The King!

Now we hear Jesus exclaim from His Word every day,  
"Come unto me, I'm the Life, Truth, and Way!"

'Twas the morning of Easter, and all through the land,  
We rejoice in Salvation, through Jesus, for man!



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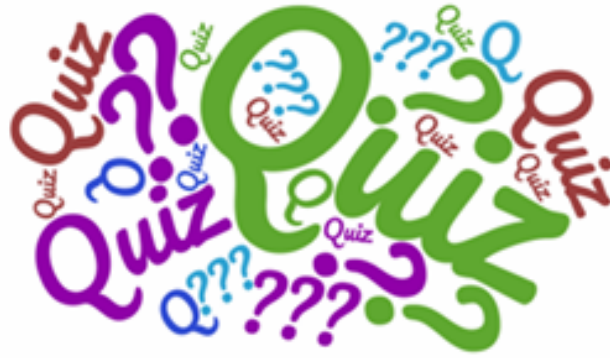
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**Saturday 21 February  
2026**

**Doors open 7pm  
Quiz starts 7.30pm**

**Kedington Community Centre**  
Arms Lane, Kedington, CB9 7QQ

**£5 per person - teams of up to six  
Please book in advance**

**There will be a bar so please do not bring your  
own drinks but feel free to bring your own  
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### **A Blessing**

God of love, carry us with You in these difficult times.  
Sustain us, and guide that we may love and protect others as  
you love and protect us.

Amen



**Kedington 'Home-made and Home-grown' Show  
(Formerly Kedington Horticultural Show)  
Saturday 12 September 2026**

This year we are holding the home-made and home-grown show and church fete on different days. We look forward to seeing you and receiving lots of entries. The QR code gives details of the schedule. Please check carefully; there have been a few changes to the rules and the schedule. More information in another issue of the Benefice News.



## Our Camino Journey - continuing Claire and Amanda's journey

### Monday - Vilalba Hostel, 122km from Santiago de Compostela

Arriving at Vilalba Hostel, thank goodness for Morgan a young bubbly Belgian lady who filled us with enthusiasm for the adventures that lay ahead and showed us which app to download to easily set and keep track of the stages on our Camino journey and book ahead for accommodation. This was going to make our hiking experience much easier than depending on Google Maps and the Camino way markers.



In our cosy small kitchen we prepared a 'tasty' meal of onion, tomato and chick peas cooked in water (as we didn't want to carry the additional weight of oil!). Being shown our beds was a culture shock – a tightly packed mixed dormitory with ten pairs of bunk beds, backpacks spewing their contents over the floor, ripe walking boots having an airing and wet washing hung over bedposts to dry. The natural impulse was to greet our new room-mates in a jovial manner, but we quickly realised that in a dormitory with so many exhausted pilgrims sharing, there will always be someone trying to rest. So making very little noise, we made our beds with the disposable, plastic bedsheets and pillow cases and slipped into a sleep full of dreams and expectations for the days ahead.

### Tuesday - Vilalba to Baamonde 20km

On day one of our Camino hiking journey, we were determined to beat the other pilgrims to the municipal hostel at today's destination to ensure we got a bed for the night, so we woke with our alarm at 6am, as quietly as possible washed ourselves, dressed and squeezed our belongings into our backpacks using torchlight so as not to wake up our fellow roommates. It was still dark when we set off and, after a few wrong turnings, found our route. We were giddy with excitement once we were on the right track, and found ourselves singing 'I love to go a wandering along the mountain track...' making up hilarious verses and Whatsapping videos of these to our family back home, who also got the bug and replied with verse suggestions!

The countryside was glorious - lush fields, forests, fields of corn, sheep being herded down the road, birdsong and sunshine. What a great start to our Camino. We arrived at the Baamonde communal hostel in good time before opening time so were able to get to the front of the queue.

It cost only €10 for the night and was very basic, with a 60 bed dormitory and no kitchen, but we were happy sitting in the garden, eating salad and tinned food and getting to know other walkers. We did wonder how successful our sleep would be, sharing a room with so many, but with ear plugs and an eye mask you can survive the snorings of 60 other people no problem!

### **Wednesday - Baamonde to Miraz, 15km**

This was a short day, a good plan for day two of walking. Mid-morning always involved stopping at a cafe for coffee and snack time - always something to look forward to. The hostel at Miraz was really out in the sticks, with no shop, so we had bought sufficient provisions. However, there was a delightful restaurant/bar next to the hostel, offering a three-course meal with wine for €15 - an offer not to be missed! Over a delicious dinner we chatted with Chan, a 70-year old man from China, who was walking his fifth Camino (each year a different route); we were amazed that with all this experience he was using GoogleMaps to find his way, so he often found himself walking along roadsides. We showed him how he could use the Gronze Maps app, which Morgan had showed us, so that he could use established Camino paths. Also dining were a Spanish father, and his teenaged daughter and niece. The niece and daughter approached me to ask to have their photo taken with them as I reminded them of their grandmother (I pretended to be delighted!), and from then on Amanda and I called them our 'family'. We continued to bump into and spend time with Chan and 'our family' multiple times over the next week, one of the companionable aspects of doing the Camino.

### **Thursday - Miraz to Sobreido de Monxes, 26km**

After a swift pod coffee, we were pleased with ourselves that we were on our way from Miraz by 6.10am, a perfect time as it was cool and just light enough for us to see the pathway. We knew today's stage was 26km with an ascent of 250m and no cafes were en route, so we were prepared with food (which we had carried since Baamonde) and water (3 litres each). Today was more rocky and misty with



an uphill straight away, but there was something refreshing and unexpected about a cool, damp walk, passing no-one for an hour. By mid-morning we were aware of a man walking a dog behind us and when we heard him talking in English into his phone we saw it as an opportunity to clarify a couple of things:



What were the oblong, tile-roofed huts made of stones or wood, raised up on bricks/stone in front of nearly all of the houses?

What were the very tall straight trees grown as a crop, with bark peeling off them and what were their use?

...We learnt that the huts are called *hórreos*, and are granaries, used to store and dry corn, elevated on pillars to keep rodents and water out.

The trees are eucalyptus gum trees that are grown as a crop and used for paper production.

Further on, we heard Gaelic music emanating from a house. We were intrigued, especially as a sign on the stone entrance said Credencial stamps were available - we required two stamps per day to qualify for our Compostela (certificate to prove we had walked the Camino) at the end, so the usual practice is to get your Credencial stamped on each day of walking, somewhere en route and then at the hostel you stay at. In a barn inside the garden an elderly gentleman made a ceremony of melting some drops of wax onto the Credencial page and pressing a signet into it, then writing the date. Many people living along the Camino offer services out of goodwill, the 'kindness of Camino strangers' being a hallmark of the experience. We were touched by the kindness of local residents giving up their time to explain the heritage of churches on the route, offering to share meals and particularly noticeable was how drivers stopped to allow pilgrims to cross the road.

Later that morning we were very pleased to come across an unexpected cafe, where we compared stories with a Chinese lady - a jewellery designer - and her Taiwanese companion - a pet carer - who were equally delighted with their wax Camino stamps.

Further along the route, we were joined by a very energetic Latvian lady, Dace, who walked with hiking poles and was great company. Her long-legged stride matched ours, and so we walked together, chatting about clothes and equipment for hiking, family, wildlife we'd seen, and hostels. When we arrived at the stunning historical Cistercian monastery which provided 100 pilgrim beds we were very excited to be staying there. On going through the grand imposing gates at midday and approaching the magnificent main door, we spotted the three French



pilgrims (now named French Trio) and the Spanish Pedro who we recognised. We placed our packs in the orderly backpack queue and chatted, whilst watching the dozen young summer camp volunteers who were clearing weeds and sweeping. Soon after one o'clock, a monk unlocked the door and asked in Spanish for six people at a time to enter the office, locking the door each time and going through a lengthy registration process. It was all very formal and officious. However, very soon, Lawrence, the monk, revealed his true colours and his delightful sense of humour and friendly welcome - I have since read reviews from hostellers touting this as the best hostel on the Camino and Lawrence also receives a lot of positive praise. When off duty he would stand in the cloisters, smoking a cigarette and chatting with pilgrims, with his cat weaving round his feet.

We explored the peaceful monastery gardens, taking the opportunity for my sister Amanda to teach me how to paint the fabulous geraniums and stone architecture using water colours. Two other highlights of this hostel were attending Vespers (although we didn't understand the language, the music was beautiful and the ambience sacred with the monks responding in unison), and the enormous, lively and sociable refectory and kitchen. Contrary to expectations, given that it cost just €10 for the night, the bunks were comfortable and cosy, each with its own plug, light and locker and the shower even had hot water.



We were at the halfway stage of our Camino!

Claire Shirm

The final part of Claire and Amanda's Camino will be in the next issue of the Benefice News.



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## Buddy's Blog - February 2026

Dear Readers,

I hope you are managing to keep warm this winter season. Somehow, as I get older, the colder weather seems to get to me more. My bones ache and I am not keen to go out. Not like Opie, who always leaps and bounds, whatever the weather. I go out when I need to but I am more keen to turn for home and get back in front of the fire and warm my paws.

Young Merry, Millie's baby boy, has had his jibber-jabs now so he is allowed to go out for walks. But his legs are so little he either goes out with his Mum or on his own. When he is in the long grass, I'm surprised he can see where he is going. It must be like a forest to him.

Even though I don't go on every walk with him, I do look after him when we are at home. I teach him how to wait for his dinner to be put in a bowl and on the floor rather than jumping up and trying to get in the bowl with his dinner. I also show him how to get close to the fire without getting burnt. I think he looks up to me as an older dog, the oldest in our pack. And his Mum is pleased that it is not always left to her to teach him doggy ways. I like caring for him.

In the little bit of snow we had after Christmas, Merry was scared. It must have been frightening, trying to make his way when the snow was up to his ears. I went to play with him but he wanted to run inside. After a few times of running inside and then out again, he followed me and rolled in the snow with gentle little grunts.

Looking after Merry can be tiring for an old dog like me. But when he climbs in my bed and snuggles next to me, I love to feel his little warm body. When he steals my treats because he is quicker than me .....

I am not so thrilled!

*Hebrews 13:16 - 'Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.'*

Your friend  
Buddy





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# Quiz Night

In aid of Little Bradley Church



## Fish & Chip Supper

at

The Garden Barn,

Little Bradley

on

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Arr. at 6.30 for 7.00pm



All tickets to be  
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Teams of 6

Please bring your own drinks & glasses.  
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### What am I?

I'm a 5 letter word

Some people can't tolerate me

Remove my first letter, I'm a form of energy

Remove my first two letters, I'm something you need to do

Scramble those last three letters and I'm something you drink.

— — —

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## **Mission Statement and Vision for the Stourhead Benefice**

Our front cover for this issue has the new logo for our Stourhead Benefice.

**Mission Statement:** Stourhead Benefice, striving to be a welcoming community for you, whoever, wherever you are, journeying in the footsteps of Jesus.

### **Our Vision: a fuller version of the mission statement**

Stourhead Benefice:

Striving to be a welcoming community

- a living, listening, loving and growing church
- a warm, comfortable and safe environment

For you, whoever, wherever you are

- for everyone
- for people of all ages

Journeying in the footsteps of Jesus.

Come and See!

The Ministry Team.

### **Access to our churches in the Stourhead Benefice**

- Great Bradley, Great Thurlow, Kedington, Little Wrating and Little Thurlow each have a ramp that is put in place when needed.
- Great Wrating does not have a ramp but the step into the church is quite shallow, however the slope to the church gate is steep. Arrangements could be made for wheelchair users to park in the Rectory and access the churchyard through the side gate but this is across grass.
- Little Bradley does not have a ramp. The step into the church is 4 inches deep.
- Barnardiston does not have a ramp and the entry into the church requires stepping over a raised threshold.

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## Events Diary

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Event</u>
Saturday 21st February	7 pm for 7.30 pm	Quiz at Kedington Community Centre. £5 per person teams of six- proceeds divided between KCA and Kedington Church. Please see poster in this Benefice News for more details
Friday 6th March	6.30 pm for 7 pm	Quiz in aid of Little Bradley Church at the Garden Barn with Fish & Chip Supper. Adult £17.50 including meal. Teams of 6. Please see poster in this Benefice news for more information.
Saturday 14th March	9 am - 12 noon	Gardening Kedington Churchyard. All welcome.
Friday 20th March	12 noon	Lent Lunch Kedington Church. All welcome.
Tuesdays	10 am -12 noon	'Dolce Gusto' Coffee morning at St Peter & St Paul's Kedington.
Thursdays	2 - 4 pm	Centre café at Kedington Community Centre.

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## **Gospel Readings during February**

1	Candlemas	Mark	5: 1 - 20
8	2nd Sunday before Lent	Matthew	6: 25 - 34
15	Sunday next before Lent	Matthew	17: 1 - 9
22	1st Sunday of Lent	Matthew	4: 1 - 11

## **Gospel Readings during March**

1	2nd Sunday of Lent	John	3: 1 - 17
8	3rd Sunday of Lent	John	4: 5 - 42
15	Mothering Sunday	Luke	2: 33 - 35
22	5th Sunday of Lent	John	11: 1 - 45
29	Palm Sunday	Matthew	26: 14 - 27: 66 or Matthew 27: 11 - 54

## **Gospel Readings during April**

5	Easter Day	John	20: 1 - 18
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### **Evening Prayer on Mondays**

Monday Evening Prayer is at Kedington Church at 5pm.

All are welcome to join this short intimate service as we pray for the world, the Church, our communities and ourselves.

# **Easter Experience**



**Easter Saturday 4 April 2026  
from 10.30am**

**Stations of the Cross with Fr Chris Giles  
Activities for children followed by  
Easter Egg Hunt**

**St Peter and St Paul's Church,  
Kedington**



**All welcome + Bring your friends**

**Churches in the Benefice open for Private Prayer:**

**St Mary the Virgin, Great Bradley is always open for private prayer.**

**St Peter's Little Thurlow is open daily usually at 9am and closes about 5 or 6pm.**

**St Peter and St Paul's, Kedington will be open daily between 9am and 4pm.**

## Home Communion – Pastoral Care

The Blessed Sacrament is perpetually reserved for the Communion of the housebound, the sick and dying. Please inform Fr Chris, or a member of the Ministry Team, of parishioners who are sick or in hospital, and of those who are in need of pastoral care.

**Baptism:** We welcome into God's family Claire Castellano who was baptised at St Peter and St Paul's Church Kedington on 7th December, Archie Rohse who was baptised at the Church of St Peter Little Thurlow on 3rd January and Ralphie Linton-Russell who was baptised at St Peter and St Paul's Church Kedington on 25th January.

**Funeral:** The funeral of the late Laurence Beasley was held at St Felix Church Haverhill followed by committal at St Peter and St Paul's Church Kedington on 27th January.

**'May they rest in peace and rise in glory'**

Thinking of a christening or a wedding in church? Please take a look at our Benefice website where there is useful information about both baptisms and weddings.

## Holy Communion

Sharing of the common cup is now permitted. However, if you do not want to receive from the Chalice, please say 'intinct' as the Priest approaches you and they will intinct the wafer in Consecrated wine from a separate Chalice. Good hygiene practises are maintained at Holy Communion.

Gluten-free Communion wafers are available - please ask when you come up to the altar rail.

**Answers to What am I:** Wheat, Heat, Eat, Tea.

## SERVICE ROTA

### February 2026

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Sun	1	10:00	Little Bradley	Sung Eucharist - Candlemas
		10:00	Kedington	Family Service - Candlemas
Sun	8	8:00	Kedington	Said Eucharist
		10:00	Little Thurlow	Sung Eucharist - 2nd Sunday before Lent
		16:00	Great Thurlow	Evensong
Sun	15	10:00	Great Wratting	Sung Eucharist - Sunday before Lent
Wed	18	18.30	Little Thurlow	Sung Eucharist - Ash Wednesday BCP
Sun	22	10:00	Great Bradley	Sung Eucharist - First Sunday of Lent
		16:00	Kedington	Evensong

### March 2026

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Sun	1	10:00	Kedington	Sung Eucharist - 2nd Sunday of Lent
Sun	8	8:00	Kedington	Said Eucharist
		10:00	Great Thurlow	Sung Eucharist - 3rd Sunday of Lent
Sun	15	10:00	Little Thurlow	Sung Eucharist - Mothering Sunday
		10:00	Great Wratting	Family Service - Mothering Sunday
Sun	22	10:00	Great Bradley	Sung Eucharist - 5th Sunday of Lent
		18:00	Kedington	Evensong
Sun	29	10:00	Little Wratting	Sung Eucharist - Palm Sunday
		16:00	Barnardiston	Songs of Praise or Evening Prayer

### April 2026

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Thurs	2	19:00	Great Wratting	Sung Eucharist - Maundy Thursday
Fri	3	14:00	Barnardiston	Good Friday Vigil
Sat	4	20:00	Kedington	Easter Eve
Sun	5	10:00	Little Bradley	Sung Eucharist - Easter Day

Mid-week Said Eucharist at Kedington on Wednesdays at 10am