

St Mary's Newsletter

22nd January 2026



The Vicar Writes...

This week has been a challenging one for anyone following the news, locally and globally. hope you found the pointers for prayer helpful, and please don't hesitate to chat to me if you would like prayer for yourself. Be assured that I pray every day for you, for our church, our nation and our world.

Another way to support one another is to come to church – in person or online. That way we remind ourselves that we are not alone but part of a community and a story that reaches back (and forward) through time and all around the world. So, if you are feeling under pressure just now do try to connect with others and with God.

Sunday Services

Sunday 25th January

10.30 Parish Communion with All Stars – ****GUEST PREACHER****

Sunday 1st February – Candlemas (the Presentation of Christ in the Temple)

8.30 Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

10.30 Café Church in the Church Hall

Prayer for our church community

This is a prayer that I pray every day, please do use it when you pray for our church. I encourage you also to pray for specific things that you feel we need.

God of Mission,
Who alone brings growth to your Church,
Send your Holy Spirit to give,
Vision to our planning,
Wisdom to our actions,
Joy to our worship
And power to our witness.
Help our church to grow in numbers,
In spiritual commitment to you,
And in service to our local community,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Discipleship

Lent is coming – if you are not already in a homegroup then why not sign up for the 6-week **Lent course** where we will be looking at Baptism using various Bible verses and conversation. Speak to Gail for details.

Confirmation – confirmation is a step of faith following baptism. It's usually for older teens and adults of all ages and is a way of publicly declaring our faith. If this sounds interesting, then speak to Gail – there is a service on 26th April, and she'll be running preparation sessions for those interested.

There are some interesting opportunities for study locally via the Diocese, including

St Gregory of Nazianzus – Trinity & Salvation

Pusey House, Oxford, Saturday 7 February, 10am-4pm

An introduction to the life and work of St Gregory of Nazianzus “The Theologian”, one of the three Cappadocian Fathers, and a key player in the fourth century trinitarian controversy.

The day will compare some ‘common sense’ views-from-some-Western-pews on the divinity of Christ with Gregory’s approach, as set out in his five *Theological Orations*, as well as surveying his understanding of the ‘shape’ of salvation.

[Find out more and book your place.](#)

ChurchWorks Summit

Central Hall, Westminster. Friday 27 February

Join The ChurchWorks Summit to explore how faith and policy can work together for the social good. The invitation is for anyone, whether you’re a senior church leader, an active member of your local congregation, or simply interested in the ways churches are working with government to make a difference.

[Find out more and buy your tickets.](#)

Revd Joanna at Evensong

The Revd Joanna Gallant, former Head of Discipleship and Social Justice for the Diocese of Oxford, will be speaking at Choral Evensong at The Queen’s College, Oxford at 6.15pm. The event is open to the public.

Local Community

Some of you may have known **Jane Sutton**. I have been asked to let you know that there is a Thanksgiving Service at St Nic’s for her, on Wednesday 28th January at 12.00pm. Jane died on Christmas Day at Falkland Grange Care Home, aged 92. Jane was a great supporter and pioneer of many Christian Organisations in Newbury, a passionate supporter of local churches working together, and a Licensed Lay Minister in the Newbury Deanery for many years. All welcome.

Faith in Action

While having a tidy up in the Baptistry this week I found a collection bin for the **West Berkshire Foodbank**. As some of you will know I am soon to volunteer at the Foodbank and so will be able to take along donations. Please do consider buying a donation as part of your regular weekly shop. Matthew 25:35 – for when I was hungry you gave me food...

On Thursday this week I went along to a morning with various organisations involved with **Newbury Nature Corridors**. It was a great way to meet people and to find out about all the good work being done to care for God's glorious creation in this little bit of it. If you feel the desire to live out your faith in this area then I can assure you of a warm welcome from any of the projects who are always short of volunteers. Speak to me, or get in touch with the Greener Greenham Group (<https://www.greenergreenhamgroup.org.uk/>), Newbury Friends of the Earth (<https://www.newburyfoe.co.uk/>) or Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (<https://www.bbowt.org.uk/>).

Family News and Events

Pat's funeral

This will be a private service at West Berks Crematorium on 20th February. I will take the service but it is for immediate family only. Later in the year there will be a memorial held in church and we will all have a chance to honour Pat and support Chris by planning and taking part. Please do continue to keep their family in your prayers and to pray for Chris's continued recovery.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) - 19th April after the 10.30 service.

This is the meeting where we celebrate our church and everything we've been up to. It's also the meeting when we elect the new members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) who oversee the work of St Mary's, including making sure we fulfil all our legal responsibilities.

This is an exciting time to be part of the PCC as we make plans for the next part of story.

Please pray about whether you feel God is calling you to **be part of the PCC**. We need representatives from every part of our church family – old and young, confident and quiet, new and of long-standing. All that is required is a desire to do God's work in this way and that you are aged 16 or over, take communion and have been on the Electoral Roll for at least 6 months prior to the APCM. You are usually elected for a term of 3 years. You will be required to complete Safeguarding Training but we can help you with that.

We have 5 vacancies – 3 to be part of the PCC and 2 to also sit on Deanery Synod (the next level up of governance – see me if you are really interested). Please chat to me, to Brian, or to anyone who is on PCC for more information.

We also have a vacancy for a **Churchwarden**. Before his illness, Chris had indicated to me that he did not intend to stand for election again and so I will honour that decision. Churchwardens are elected each year for a period of 1 year, so you are only committing yourself for that length of time. Please chat to Rob or to me if you feel God is calling you to this role, which is one of real legal, practical and spiritual significance.

We do not need 2 churchwardens in order to operate – it is better that we rely on God to call and equip the person who is right for this role so please pray for that calling and equipping.

We will also need a new **Parish Safeguarding Officer**. Liz Jones has carried out this work for the past few years and will happily talk to you about what is involved. A strong pastoral heart and sense of justice are vital for this work. Full support and training are available for this vital part of God's work in caring for the most vulnerable members of God's family.

Reading

Exodus 16:1-8 and 13-21

¹⁶The whole congregation of the Israelites set out from Elim; and Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. ²The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” ⁴Then the Lord said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. ⁵On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days.” ⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your complaining against the Lord. For what are we, that you complain against us?” ⁸And Moses said, “When the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the Lord has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the Lord.”

¹³In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Gather as much of it as each of you needs, an omer to a person according to the number of persons, all providing for those in their own tents.’” ¹⁷The Israelites did so, some gathering more, some less. ¹⁸But when they measured it with an omer, those who gathered much had nothing over, and those who gathered little had no shortage; they gathered as much as each of them needed. ¹⁹And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over until morning.” ²⁰But they did not listen to Moses; some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul. And Moses was angry with them. ²¹Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.