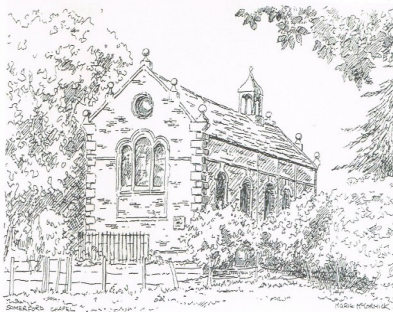
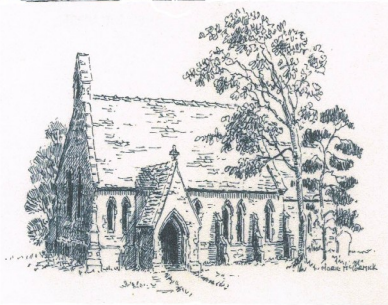
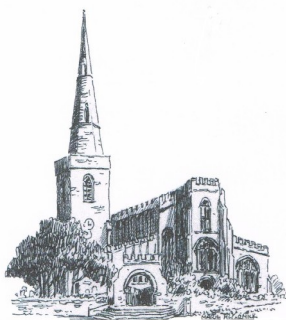


Astbury & Smallwood Parish News

February 2026

Price £1



Rector – Rev Heather Carter

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Assistant Priest – Rev Steph Morris

Telephone 07703 587003 email revstephmorris@gmail.com

Reader – Andrew Bevington

Telephone 07957 961140 email a_bevington@sky.com

Reader – Andrew Bailey

Telephone 01260 640616 email aghsbailey@sky.com

Reader – Prof Denise Morrey-Carter

Telephone 01260 702512 email revdheather@astburychurch.org.uk

From the Rector Following Jesus on the Journey

As I write this we have had our first two services at St John's Smallwood, where we have been very warmly welcomed and folks from both churches have commented on how much they are enjoying this brief sojourn away from St Mary's. It's a difficult thing to have change, to move buildings and mix with another set of people, to not have our 'own' pew and space, different ways of being and doing worship. Yet we gather to worship God. Wherever that may take us.

The story of faith has always been a story of movement. From the very beginning, God meets people not only in holy places, but on the road – while they are travelling, searching, leaving, returning, and beginning again. For church families today, this reminds us that faith is not something we 'arrive at', but something we live as a journey together.

Our lectionary readings that we have Sunday by Sunday, recently have had much to say about journeys.

We began the Sunday after Christmas with the readings about Jesus' journey to Egypt: a journey shaped by both danger and trust. As a small child, He is carried by Mary and Joseph into Egypt, fleeing violence and uncertainty. This was not a planned adventure, but a forced displacement. Yet even here, God is at work. The Holy Family's

journey tells us that God walks with families in seasons of fear, upheaval, and change. When life takes unexpected turns, God does not abandon us – He goes with us.

The following Sunday was Epiphany, another journey unfolding under the night sky. The wise men travelled far from their homes, guided by a star and stirred by hope. They did not know exactly where they would end up, only that they were drawn toward truth and light. Their journey reminded us that faith often begins with curiosity and courage—asking questions, paying attention to God’s signs, and being willing to take a different road home once we have encountered Christ.

Last Sunday Jesus’ journey continued. At the Jordan River, He stepped into the water to be baptized. This moment marked a beginning: a public declaration of love, identity, and calling. Immediately after, Jesus is led into the wilderness – a place of testing, silence, and preparation. Every faith journey includes wilderness moments, times when things feel stripped back or unclear. Yet it is often in these spaces that we learn who we truly are and who we trust.

This week will come another turning point: Jesus calls His disciples. Fishermen, tax collectors, ordinary people are invited to leave what is familiar and begin a new journey of ministry. They do not have all the answers. They make mistakes. They grow as they walk alongside Jesus. Their story reminds church families that faith is learned together – through shared meals, questions, service, and following Jesus one step at a time.

Our church family is on a journey too. We travel through seasons of joy and challenge, beginnings and endings, certainty and doubt. Like the Holy Family, the wise men, Jesus, and the disciples, we are invited to trust that God is present on the road. Wherever we are on the journey – just starting out, in the wilderness, or learning how to serve – Christ walks with us, leading us forward in love.

Both St Mary's and St John's have significant building maintenance to do this year. Listed buildings are always very expensive to maintain and repair. We are rightly very proud of both churches and want to do our very best to keep them open. Yet we also see the decline in numbers and are aware of many people's struggles with rising costs in their own lives. This journeying time gives us time to stop and reflect on how important these buildings are and what lies in our future in keeping them fit for purpose and financially viable.

So whether you are able to worship with us at St John's or are waiting until we all return, please continue to pray for our churches and for our ministry team and PCC's as we look ahead to find ways to keeping these buildings alive.

Thank you so much for your support and prayers during this time of uncertainty.

Heather

Editor – Mr W. Ball

The Old Vicarage, Reades Lane, Congleton, CW12 3LL.
Telephone 01260 279276 Mobile 07710 234943

How is it possible that we need almost £12,000 a month? A brief look at St Mary's day to day running costs:

NB: I have not used all the figures so the totals are not quite the same as our accounts, it's a snap shot into the biggest expenditure – if you would like to see a copy of the full accounts please do ask me for them. I have also excluded the gift of £200,000 which is given for the building project and cannot be used for running costs.

I have included a diagram from the accounts at the end here with the full figures.

We are so very grateful to Rachel Hulse who spends hours of time keeping our books, we are still looking for someone to stand with her and take on the roll of Church Treasurer.

Income:

Voluntary income £60,704

Fund raising £9,973

Income from Investments £3,576

Church activities £17,669. (Fees from Weddings/funerals.....)

Other incoming resources £75

Total £91,997

Expenditure:

Parish Share £65,040

Church activities-running costs £39,480.

(£12,150 insurance, £2605 utilities, £6086 rectory, £7837 churchyard maintenance, £313 clergy expenses, £601 music licence, &c)

Audit fee £1,250

Church repairs and maintenance £20,530 *from restricted Fabric fund

Total £126,300

-£34.303

ST MARY'S CHURCH, ASTBURY

2025 Total Income

£329,265



Extraordinary, one-off, restricted donations of **£207,579** are excluded from this pie chart but are included in the above total.

Regular giving is Standing Orders direct to the bank.

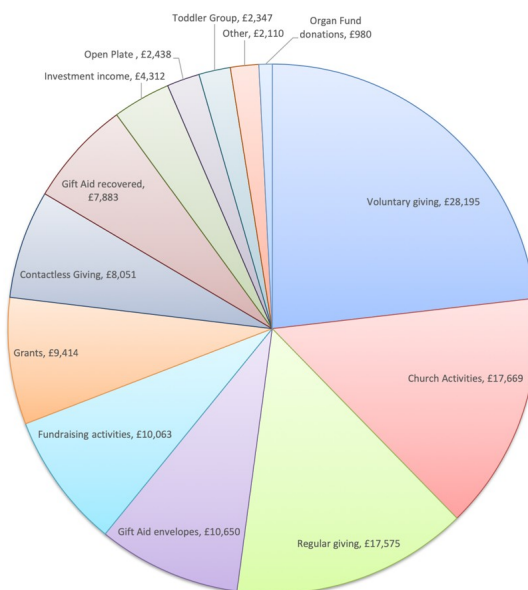
Gift Aided donations are via identified donor envelopes.

Gift Aid recovered is from 2024 donations.

Voluntary giving is all other individual donations.

Open Plate and Contactless is giving at Sunday services.

Church Activities are weddings, funerals, memorials.



Services at Smallwood: Heather is pleased to announce that there will be a service of Holy Communion using the Book of Common Prayer at 8.00 am at Smallwood on Sunday 8th February, and likewise a service of Evensong at 6.30 pm on Sunday 22nd February, in addition to the normal service at 10.00 am.

I'm sure, like me, you are sad that the church has been obliged to close for a few months. I know everyone will be keen to celebrate the re-opening at Easter time. With Heather's approval I am arranging a celebratory concert on Saturday 18th April at 7.00 pm. This would not be possible without the generous support of The Little Moreton Singers who have agreed to perform in the church. If you heard The Little Moreton Singers at Christmas in Biddulph Old Hall you will know what a beautiful sound they make.

I shall be selling tickets from my house from the end of February. They will be priced at £15 each and will include wine, soft drinks and nibbles, served during the interval. With your help I hope to raise a goodly sum to support St. Mary's. Please tell your friends and hopefully some of you can help on the evening, selling programmes or serving refreshments. Happy New Year. Jane Sharman

Astbury & Smallwood Parish News: Thank you to all those who, unprompted, have renewed their subscription to *ASPN* for 2026: this means that I shall carry on (DV!) until the December issue, which will complete my 40 years as printer and publisher. After that, it will be up to someone else. Who? Let me know if you think it could be you. Read last month's edition for an idea of what is involved. Please do get in touch with me if you are interested (my details are on page 20).

There will be no increase in the price of *ASPN* for 2026. An individual copy will still be £1 (please put the £1 in either of the boxes for general church funds). A normal subscription for the year remains at £10 (please collect your copy from the pile at the back of church each month) and saves you £2 over the year. If I post your copy the cost is £20, and if you have an email copy the cost is £5, both for the year. Please pass on the money to Rachel direct, cash or cheque

payable to **Astbury PCC**. Or post your cheque to me and I shall pass it on to Rachel.

If you have something which you would like to contribute, an article or photo, do please send it in (preferably by email to me at wbbtov@gmail.com so that I can simply copy and paste it). Articles printed represent the view of the contributors only and are unedited, apart from the correction of typos &c.

Astbury Ladies' Fellowship: The Fellowship's January meeting is always the winter luncheon at the Legs of Man. Members arrived looking very smart and they were soon seated at the long table all together. Carole welcomed everyone: it was good to have friends from the WI with us. After the Grace expressing thanks for family, friendship and fellowship, the food began to arrive: I had prawn cocktail, then roast turkey – both delicious and plentiful – then a choice from the sweet trolley, which groaned under some twelve choices of delight.

We chattered away exchanging news – Astbury Church now closed until Palm Sunday for roof repairs, and fundraising now taking place. If you would like to make a donation online, go to astburychurch.org.uk, scroll down to the Astbury daffodil logo and follow the instructions for how to donate by credit card.

There is a very warm welcome from Smallwood Church for us to attend their Sunday service at 10.00 am, and last Sunday about forty members from Astbury did so. We have been sorry to hear that our former member Ina Lomas has died, and her funeral will be in Astbury Church at 12.00 noon on 12th February. Looking forward to spring and for those of you who bowl, the hut is being decorated and the green revamped, which will be great. (And, by the way, subscriptions are due by the end of February – £36.)

After the lunch it was time to thank Pamela Price for arranging the lovely meal and to present her with a gift (which she says needn't happen) with our appreciation and thanks.



At the end of a very happy afternoon some notices were given out. At the next Fellowship meeting on 18th February, we have invited the church congregation to join us in the Village Hall (1.30 to 3.30 pm) as a way of being together. Further in the future, there will be a celebration concert in Astbury Church on Saturday 18th April at 7.00 pm. The Little Moreton Singers will entertain us: if any of you have heard them at Biddulph Old Hall then you will know that it will be a treat indeed. Tickets will be £15 And will include wine or soft drinks

and nibbles. Jane Sharman will have tickets available after the end of February, or let me know – 07484 525829. It was good to be together at the Luncheon and we look forward to seeing you in February.

Carole

Astbury Women's Institute: Due to snowy weather we had to cancel our January meeting. As the snow continued to fall, and was followed by a cold spell and thus ice, we decided to keep warm indoors. But behind the scenes our WI members were busy planning the next year's events. Despite the challenging weather we do what we do best in a crisis and soldiered on. We met up on Zoom, and small groups of members living nearby met up in person. We all shared and rallied round and looked out for each other.

Our next meeting is on 4th February and our Speaker will be Suzan Holder – Noddy Holder's wife – who is a writer and writes romantic adventures with a musical twist as Noddy was in that famous pop group called Slade in the 70s – remember that iconic Christmas song! We are looking forward to hearing about her life and what she spends her time doing. Do come along as everyone is welcome. We start at 7.30 pm.

Joan our Vice President met two other Committee Members to organize new events and the meeting in March has been booked in – this will be a 'would- be' contestant for the famous show the Great British Bake off or GBBO for short! Deborah Cox has applied for several years to try and get on the GBBO to no avail so she sets herself the same tasks and does them in the same time frame as the TV programme. We hope to be inspired by Deborah as she will be bringing her ideas and baking tips to make fabulous cakes, and we will also be tasting them too.

Our President Kate Naylor attended a Zoom meeting with over 100 other WI members within the Cheshire Area to discuss the Resolutions put forward to which all WI members will be voting for. The categories are as follows: Action on Women's Homelessness, Nearer to Nature, Accessible Public Toilet Facilities for All, Every Child Needs a friend and Defence on Vulval Cancer. The WI will be

voting for one of the above which then goes forward and the NFWI will campaign to the Government.

Our WI at Astbury is unique as are all the WI groups and we are happy to discuss our full Calendar of events with prospective members – you can try out a range of activities and discover new interests, both physical and virtual events at local federation and National level. You will have the opportunity to meet like-minded women from all different backgrounds. There is also a WI learning hub (Online Courses) a range of Lifelong learning and self-Development courses across a broad range of topics. Do come along and get involved with local events and the community – one highlight of our Calendar is the Astbury May Day where we run the Refreshment tent and a great day and camaraderie will be had plus plenty of fun and laughter! we welcome you to our meetings so please come along on the first Wednesday of the month

Call Kate Naylor President of Astbury WI – 07875 691170 for more information or to register to join us at our next meeting.

Kate Naylor

Sartor's Quiz (Answers on page 18)

1. Who composed the cantata *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*?
a. Bach; b. Handel; c. Haydn; d. Elgar.
2. Who created the marble sculpture of David? a. Raphael;
b. Leonardo da Vinci; c. Michaelangelo; d. Donatello.
3. What is an icon? a. Bishop's Hat; b. Idol; c. Image of Jesus or a Saint; d. Ceremonial Candle.
4. Who was the first King of Israel? a. Herod; b. Moses; c. David; d. Saul.
5. Who was the second King of Israel? a. Saul; b. David; c. Solomon; d. Rehoboam.

6. What was the name of the High Priest's servant whose right ear was cut off by Simon Peter? a. Mahlon; b. Malchus; c. Madai; d. Malachi.
7. Who or what were Gestas and Dysmas? a. Roman officials; b. Jewish Festivals; c. Greek Gods; d. Crucified malefactors.
8. Who said, 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast'? a. Alexander Pope; b. Thomas Gray; c. Bob Hope; d. Rudyard Kipling.
9. Who said, 'Hell is other people'? a. Dorothy Parker; b. Jean-Paul Sartre; c. Louis XIV; d. Howard Hughes.
10. Which of these words means having one wife? a. Monogyny; b. Monocracy; c. Monopoly; d. Monotony.

WORDS OF WIT & WISDOM

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3, 22-3

Great is thy faithfulness, O God, my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided;
great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Thomas Obadiah Chisholm, 1866-1960

God Almighty first planted a garden; and, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures.

Francis Bacon, 1561-1626

Anyone who has a library and a garden wants for nothing. Cicero

In successive censuses, gardeners are continuously found at the head of the tables of longevity. William Beach Thomas

If you want to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first make the universe. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*, 1980, chapter 9

Church ladies in church magazines:

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

Next Thursday there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.

Irving Brown and Jessie Carter were married on 24th October in church. So ends a friendship that began in their schooldays

Supplied by Susan Bayley of Montreal

Always forgive with grace, for who among us doesn't need to be forgiven. UCB *Word for Today*, Friday 20th January 2017

FASCINATING FACTS

The beginning of the eulogy for Dame Rebecca West (1892-1983), writer, by Bernard Levin, writer, at the Memorial Service at St Martin-in-the-Fields Church, London, on 21st April 1983

The long and fruitful life of Rebecca West, which came to an end on 15th March, makes it most appropriate for us to be marking it here today, under the rubric of a service of thanksgiving. In truth, she gave her friends, and the world, much to thank her for. It is worth reminding ourselves of just how different is the world we live in from the world she was born into. The Boer War and two World Wars were in the future; Queen Victoria had nearly a decade still to reign; six men who

were to be Presidents of the United States had not been born; Einstein had not yet propounded the Theory of Relativity; Nansen had not yet set out for the North Pole; among those still living were Tolstoy, Brahms, Robert Louis Stevenson, Maupassant, Gladstone, Oscar Wilde, Bisnarck, Samuel Butler, Lord Acton and Louis Pasteur; the Paris Métro did not exist; the Klondike Gold Rush had not started; Sir Arthur Evans was yet to embark upon his excavations in Crete; Dreyfus had not been arrested; and among the familiar objects and substances of today that were still unknown then were wireless, aeroplanes, safety-matches, razor-blades, the Rolls-Royce, radium, aspirin and the zip fastener.

It was a world that stood on the threshold of changes greater and more far-reaching than any in the history of mankind; and the woman who was born when the motor-car had just been invented lived to see men standing on the moon.

Well-Remembered Friends, Eulogies on Celebrated Lives,
Collected by Angela Huth, pp83-84

How to live wisely and well

An elderly lady gives us the benefit of her experience. She says: ‘Time is precious; don’t waste it arguing about things that won’t matter when your loved one is gone. Do everything you can to live in harmony and show your love, because no matter how long you have together, it is never enough. You’re making memories; make them good ones. The day my husband died we kissed (as we always did when we parted), at noon. By five-thirty that evening, he was dead. I’ve always been glad about that final kiss. So create memories, not regrets. It’s not what happens, it’s how you respond that counts. Every day holds new challenges that will test your love and resolve. Life is full of seemingly unpleasant events. Try to handle them in such a way that when you’re old, you will be able to look back and thank God for that experience, which helped you to grow, and that’s how to live wisely and well.’

UCB *Word for Today*, Monday 17th October 2022

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Astbury & Smallwood Parish News

Publication & Copy Dates 2026

Publication is on the last Sunday of the preceding month –

The March issue will be published on 1st March
Last Date for material 20th February
The April issue will be published on 29th March
Last Date for material 20th March
The May issue will be published on 26th April
Last Date for material 17th April
The June issue will be published on 31st May
Last Date for material 22nd May
The July issue will be published on 28th June
Last Date for material 19th June
The August issue will be published on 26th July
Last Date for material 17th July
The September issue will be published on 30th August
Last Date for material 21st August
The October issue will be published on 27th September
Last Date for material 18th September
The November issue will be published on 25th October
Last Date for material 16th October
The December issue will be published on 29th November
Last Date for material 20th November

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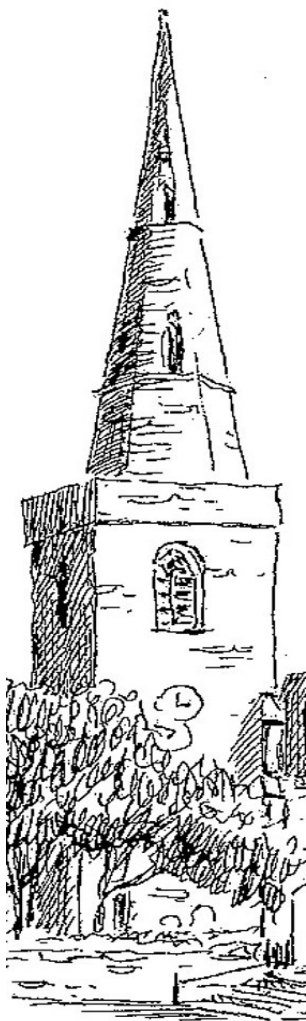
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**Gomme, Notes on St Mary's Church
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Registered Charity No. 1178664

RECTOR	Rev Heather Carter	01260 702512
ASSISTANT PRIEST	Rev Steph Morris	07703 587003
READERS	Andrew Bevington	07957 961140
	Andrew Bailey	01260 640616
	Prof Denise Morrey-Carter	01260 702512
CHURCHWARDEN	Dr Sally Drage	01260 270217

SERVICES	8.00 am	1st & 3rd Sundays	Holy Communion	BCP
Currently	8.00 am	2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays	Morning Prayer	BCP
suspended –	11.00 am	1st & 3rd Sundays	Morning Praise	CW
see pp 19-20	11.00 am	2nd & 4th Sundays	Holy Communion	CW
	11.00 am	5th Sunday	Benefice Service	
	6.30 pm	1st & 3rd Sundays	Compline	
	6.30 pm	2nd & 4th Sundays	Evensong	BCP
Wednesday	11.30 am	every Wednesday	Holy Communion	CW
	2.45 pm	every Wednesday	Community Worship	

Funerals and Services of Holy Baptism & Holy Matrimony by arrangement with the Wardens

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Hon. Vice Chairman	Mr A. Bevington	07957 961140
Hon. Secretary	Mrs M. Chapman	
Hon. Asst. Secretary	Mr A. Bailey	01260 640616
Hon. Treasurer		
DEANERY SYNOD	Mrs C. Goodwin, Mr A. Bailey, Mr A. Bevington	
ELECTED PCC MEMBERS	Mrs M. Armstrong, Mrs D. Barnett, Mr T. Buiscool, Mrs M. Chapman, Mrs B. Cook, Mrs L. Gleaves, Mrs J. Goodier, Mr J. Hulse, Mr Trevor Massey, Dr J. Moore, Prof Denise Morrey-Carter	
CO-OPTED PCC MEMBERS	Miss P. Blythe	

SIDSEPEOPLE	see ASTBURY ROTAS	
BELL RINGERS TOWER CAPTAIN		
CHILDREN'S SOCIETY	Mrs B. Cook	
CHURCH RECORDS	Mr W. Ball	01260 279276
ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER	Mr J. Hulse	
FLOWERS	Mrs B. Cook.	
JUNIOR CHURCH	Mrs L. Shipton, Dr J. Moore	
PARISH NEWS EDITOR	Mr W. Ball	01260 279276
ORGANIST	Dr S. Drage	01260 270217
SAFEGUARDING CO-ORDINATOR	Mrs J. Renshaw-Priest	07825 549788
VILLAGE HALL BOOKING	Mrs S. Brightwell	07857 234686

ASTBURY ST MARY'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL, School Lane, CW12 4RG.

Head Teacher	Miss P. Blythe	01260 272528
Chairman of Governors	Mrs K. Moore	01260 290135

WEBSITES www.astburychurch.org.uk

CHURCH KEYS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE CHURCHWARDENS

Astbury & Smallwood Parish News – February 2026

Astbury Church choir meets to practise every Friday evening
between 7.00 and 8.00 pm.

Astbury Church bellringers meet to practise every Wednesday evening
between 7.30 and 9.30 pm.

ASTBURY ROTAS for CLEANING & BRASS – *currently suspended*

ASTBURY ROTAS

8.00 am

11.00 am

6.30 pm

Answers to Sartor's Quiz this month (page 10)

1 – a; 2 – c; 3 – c; 4 – d; 5 – b; 6 – b; 7 – d; 8 – a; 9 – b; 10 – a.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Holy Matrimony

Burial of the Dead

JOINT PARISHES CALENDAR FOR THE COMING WEEKS

JANUARY

Sun 25th EPIPHANY III

10.00 am Smallwood

February *Parish News* published
Morning Praise

FEBRUARY

Sun 1st SEPTUAGESIMA

10.00 am Smallwood

Holy Communion (CW)

Wed 4th 7.30 pm Astbury

Women's Institute

Sun 8th SEXAGESIMA

8.00 am Smallwood

Holy Communion (BCP)

10.00 am Smallwood

Morning Praise

Sun 15th QUINQUAGESIMA

10.00 am Smallwood

Holy Communion (CW)

Wed 18th ASH WEDNESDAY

1.30 pm Astbury VH

Ladies' Fellowship

7.30 pm Smallwood

Holy Communion (CW)

Fri 20th 6.00 pm

Copy date for *Parish News*

Sun 22nd LENT I

10.00 am Smallwood

Morning Praise

6.30 pm Smallwood

Evensong (BCP)

MARCH

Sun 1st LENT II

10.00 am Smallwood

March *Parish News* published

Wed 4th 7.30 pm Astbury

Holy Communion (CW)

Women's Institute

Sun 8th LENT III

10.00 am Smallwood

Morning Praise

Sun 15th LENT IV – Mothering Sunday

10.00 am Smallwood

Holy Communion (CW)

Wed 18th 1.30 pm Astbury VH

Ladies' Fellowship

Fri 20th 6.00 pm

Copy date for *Parish News*

Sun 22nd LENT V

10.00 am Smallwood

Morning Praise

Sun 29th PALM SUNDAY

8.00 am Astbury

April *Parish News* published

11.00 am TBA

Morning Prayer (BCP)

Benefice Service

Joint Parishes Calendar, continued

APRIL

Sun 5th EASTER DAY

8.00 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (BCP)
9.30 am	Smallwood	Holy Communion (CW)
11.00 am	Astbury	Holy Communion (CW)
6.30 pm	Astbury	Compline

Wed	8th	7.30 pm	Astbury	Women's Institute
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ASTBURY & SMALLWOOD PARISH NEWS

is also available in large-print format.

Please let Mr Ball know if you require such a copy.

Editor – Mr W. Ball

Telephone 01260 279276 email wbbtov@gmail.com

Cover Drawings of St Mary's Church, Astbury,

St John's Church, Smallwood and All Saints' Chapel of Ease,

Somerford by Marie McCormick

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