



**St. Alban's Earsdon**

# **CHURCH VIEWS**

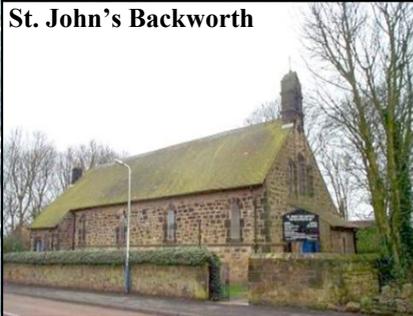
## **February**

### **2026**

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**Immaculate Heart of Mary,  
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# THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

## FEBRUARY 2026

I've just switched on the light. Not bragging about being able to afford it, not just indulging in another displacement activity to put off writing this, but because it is too dim to see the keyboard comfortably. It's 9.30 am; it's damp; it isn't truly daylight. February must be almost upon us. And that's February's trouble - it's too easy only to see it as miserable when it's really more two-faced than January. January looks back to last year and forward to the coming year. February has a different perspective – up and down.

*Februa* was the last month of the original Roman year when houses got rid of the rubbish accumulated during the previous months. Literally a rubbish month? Our rarely cheery Saxon ancestors just called it *Solmonath*, Mud Month. Over centuries then, from the sunny Mediterranean to the chilly North, February gets a bad Press. Even now Ash Wednesday, heralding Lent, falls more often in February than March. Even the calendar conspires against it.

Of course anybody can be miserable, it isn't a rare gift, but February has some neglected 'ups' too. Before Ash Wednesday there's St Valentine's Day even if the poor old Saint has been dispossessed. It's still a decent excuse for bright cards and celebrations. Before Ash Wednesday there is Shrove Tuesday, although our enthusiasm for pancakes has overtaken our enthusiasm for being shriven.

Pancakes will fly upwards, and with luck be cleared for landing at the take-off site, and be raced through cheering streets in several towns. The happy anarchy of the Sedgefield Ball Game will continue to bring joy, bruises and bandages to the participants, and excitement to the spectators. There's even a Bristol Police Ball Game, which sounds infinitely more respectable but is probably even more happily lawless.

So what else is 'up' in February? The days get longer and a little brighter if not warmer, and there's time to prepare for better days. Gardeners check their over-wintered tubers for Easter planting, the summer flowers are ordered from the catalogues. It's the best time for pruning too - trees and roses only look dead and cold, they're really raring to burst into bloom. This month the bright crocuses, anemones and dwarf irises will soon outshine the snowdrops.

So that's February; as good a month as any for finding the 'ups', and not seeing only the 'downs'.

*Gerry Latimer*  
*Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea*



## Ali's Memorial

With great sadness for his family, and for our church family, but with great gratitude for everything we received from him, we remembered the life of Ali Griffiths. Ali's special Memorial Service took place on Wednesday January 14<sup>th</sup>. Fellow churchwarden Rob Gowdy carried Ali's ashes to the front of church with great dignity. He then carried them with equal dignity to the Eccles Hall for Ali's reception.

A feature of Ali's service was the sheer number of messages in tribute that we received. Vicar Tim Mayfield decided to read them all. Here's a sample...

*It just struck me today how I miss Ali's warm welcome outside church on a Sunday morning often in his shirt sleeves in quite cold weather when I'm wrapped up and complaining about the weather!  
What a lovely man.*

*Ali: a perfect gentleman, who always had compassion and time to help anyone in need, including myself when I was I need of advice, who came happily to my home and sorted the problem out for me. A joy to all who met him and a true Christian.*

*He would do anything for anyone, nothing was ever too much trouble. Like all of us at St Alban's and St John's, I miss him so much.*

*My memory of my dear friend is short and sweet: Ali was the most beautiful Christian man I know. Sadly missed but such happy memories.*

*Continued on next page...*

Ali's widow Heather later sent a lovely thank you note...

Ali's family would like to thank everyone involved in Ali's memorial...

- Tim, for a beautiful service. It was lovely and personal to Ali
- Rob Gowdy, for respectfully delivering Ali's ashes to the front and to the hall.
- Rob, for the music, alongside Jean for the livestreaming.
- Joan and the events committee – the hall was beautiful.
- The Wednesday Walkers, for their contribution towards drinks
- The choir, for making the service special.
- And to all our friends and family who could make it, and those who watched it by livestreaming.



Ali at Children's Church illustrating the Bible's Book of Ruth. Boaz kindly allows Ruth to glean 'an ephah of barley' from his harvest.

Here's Ali showing the children that 'an ephah of barley' is a *lot* of barley (though actually it's popping corn).

An update compiled from Helen Jackman and Sandy Swindells regarding the “Walking With” open day on Friday 23rd January.

On a dreary Friday afternoon Sandy drove Sylvia and me to the Walking With Open Day in Wallsend. We met up with Joan Hoult who has previously spoken with us, both at church and at Mothers’ Union.

We were shown around all of the facilities offered to the Refugees seeking support and empathy. We read many messages they have written to express their gratitude for all that Walking With do for them. It is very humbling!

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the visit chatting to the staff and volunteer helpers.

After a cup of tea and a catch-up we deposited our goodies and were off home after a very nice afternoon.

Joan Hoult helping to prepare lunch for guests at their Open Day.



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## **Youth and Children's Work at St Alban's**

The Spring of 2026 is the second term of our three-year plan 'Seeds of Life'. A key project for us this term is re-launching Sunday children's activities at St Alban's.

Here's an extract from the 'Seeds of Life' booklet...

For too long now, St Alban's has not catered for the whole family. True, there is 'Children's Church' at St John's, but that doesn't really interact with the Sunday morning congregation.

Something rich happens when all ages are together. Jesus told adults to change and become like little children if we wished to enter the kingdom. Children, and the life they bring, are good for us. We very much hope to become an all-age congregation again, with children present at the beginning and end of the service, and going out during it to learn in their own way.

Although we know what we mean by the phrase 'Sunday School', it is perhaps language we should move away from. It sounds old-fashioned and, well, 'school-like'. Along the way, let's see if a more engaging name emerges.

Timetable for delivery:

- Tim to preach about this on November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2025
- Idea to be promoted to families at our Christmas services in 2025
- Team to be drawn together in the early weeks of 2026
- Good Friday Children's Workshop 3.4.2026
- First Sunday of the relaunched Children's Work 26.4.2026

If you would like to get involved, you are warmly invited to an initial meeting at 7.30pm on Monday February 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Welcome Area at St Alban's.

PS This year's home-grown Lent Course digs into themes covered in 'Seeds of Life'. Five Monday evenings from February 23<sup>rd</sup>; five Thursday afternoon from February 26<sup>th</sup>. Sign up at the back of St Alban's or St John's

Cathryn would like to thank everyone who contributed to the parish Christmas card, a magnificent £521.50 was raised in memory of Ali. Proceeds were sent to Newcastle University for colorectal research.

Dear Cathryn

Thank you to you and the Parishoners of St. Alban's Earsdon and St. John's Backworth for the generous donation in memory of Ali Griffiths.

Your donation will support our dedicated researchers who are striving to improve our understanding of this terrible disease, and provide the best care for those suffering with it.

All of the money donated will support our research in to bowel cancer and we hugely appreciate your generosity.

best wishes Anna Rogers. £521-50



(See also page 27 where another donation was sent to Newcastle University in memory of Ali.)

## **Weather Outlook for the month of February 2026.**

### **Direct from the Captain's Charts.**

#### **General overview for the North East of England.**

Cold air will settle in to the area, bringing a risk of wintry showers particularly over higher ground, while Atlantic weather systems will bring rain and strong winds at times. On average colder and drier conditions are likely to dominate in the northeast compared to the milder south later in the month.

#### **Early to mid-February.**

This period will start off in a similar trend to the current conditions. This means largely unsettled weather is expected, with showers or longer spells of rain for many places and occasionally rather windy. Some hill snow is also likely.

Temperatures will be close to average for most of the country, but perhaps rather cold in the far northeast. A subtle change is now looking likely during the second half of this period, as the winds could veer to a more easterly or northeasterly direction.

It is predicted to remain largely unsettled, especially towards the south, but it is likely to become colder with an increasing risk of snow, more particularly in the north and northeast.

A brisk wind will accentuate the chill factor too.

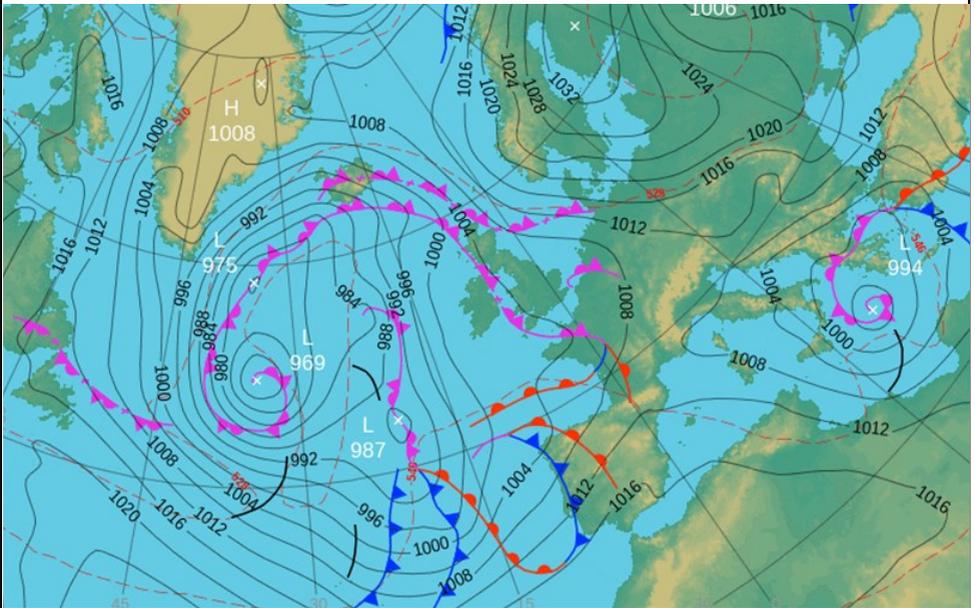
#### **Mid to late February.**

A similar theme from early February is likely to continue due to Atlantic frontal systems attempting to move across the country. With the jet stream positioned further south than normal, the wettest conditions are more likely in central and southern areas of the UK.

North and northwestern parts of the UK are most likely to be drier than normal.

Colder conditions in the north and northeast will bring an increased risk of wintry hazards, especially where any precipitation from the southwest interacts with the cold air.

North Atlantic Surface Pressure Chart Prediction for 12:00 hrs (UTC) on Sunday – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2026.



Whilst we remain in the grip of arctic influenced weather, I feel it is prudent to reiterate my previous warning of the potential for black ice especially when driving.

Black ice is a dangerous, virtually invisible thin coating of transparent ice that forms on roads, pavements and all exposed horizontal surfaces taking on a darker appearance of the road or pavement on which it forms and is most common during early morning and night-time hours when temperatures are at their lowest.

Black ice forms from rain, melted snow or even fog that freezes quickly and is found on untreated roads, bridges, overpasses, underpasses, tunnels and shaded areas caused by buildings & trees. It is worth noting that older terraced properties with gutter downpipes that discharge directly on to the pavements also becoming a serious slip hazard when they freeze.

**NB – Black ice can form in minutes.**

*David Gibson.  
29<sup>th</sup> January 2026.*

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# CHURCH VIEWS FOR FEBRUARY 2026 FROM THE PARISH OF OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA

We weren't dreaming of a white Epiphany ...



...but it meant nobody had to queue for a seat by the grotto.



The Walking Group still went for a postponed Christmas Lunch at the Beehive. The four roe-deer they spotted in the next field were too fast for a picture, as was a sparrow-hawk.



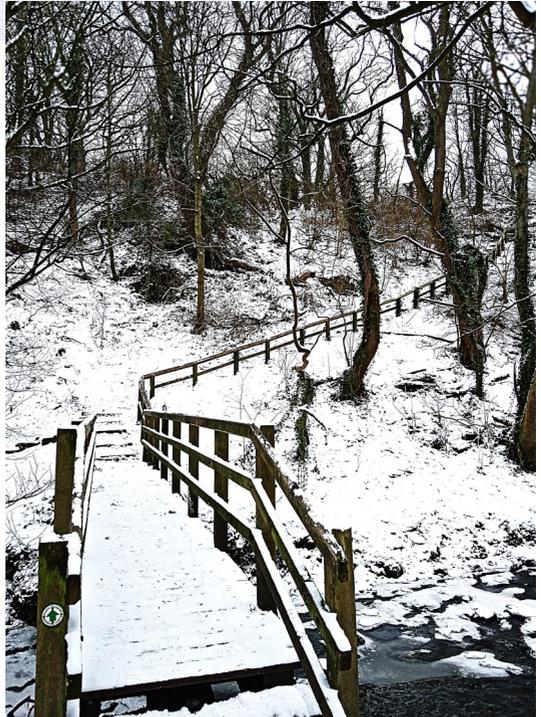


Because it was not all flat, every walker knows that even when it's as icy as this, what or who goes up, must come down.

Trigger warning:

After threats to the photographer, the pictures of the very undignified - but hilarious - descent of icy Hollywell Dene by these upstanding (but not on that occasion) parishioners have been omitted and only the scenic picture has been included.

*(Editor's note - I wish we could see the omitted pictures!)*





But this is England, and only a few days later the snow was gone and it was time for the tree surgeons to stake up and prune our parish apple trees for another bumper harvest.

***If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?***

***Shelley***

***Gerry Latimer, Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea***

**Parish Mass Times**

St Edward's: Sunday 9.30am, Tuesday & Friday 10.00am  
Immaculate Heart of Mary: Saturday Vigil 6.00pm, Wednesday 10.00am  
St Mary's: Sunday 11.00am, Thursday 10.00am, Saturday 10.00am

## 'Budget Sunday' – January 25<sup>th</sup>

On the fourth Sunday of the New Year, St Alban's and St John's take the opportunity to take stock of where we are financially.

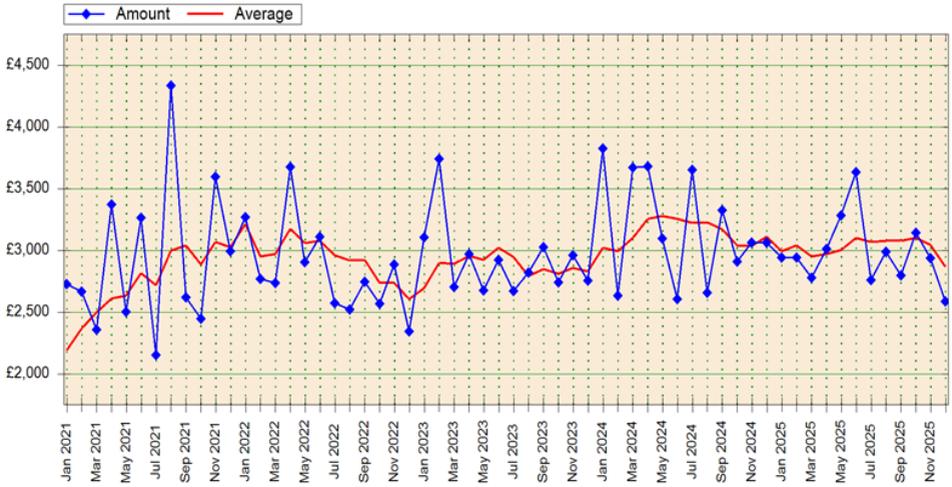
- ⇒ Our total income in 2025 was £59,202.96
- ⇒ Our total expenditure in 2025 was £56,079.04
- ⇒ This looks like a 'profit' of £3,123.92

However, there are some underlying issues. In 2025, for Netty Project cash-flow reasons, we withheld £8,640 of Parish Share. This is our contribution to the Diocese of Newcastle. Various other delayed outgoings, if paid, would have led to a total loss over the year of £7,299.84. Treasurer Rob Swindells says this equates to a monthly loss of over £600.

- We owe the diocese a further £7,000 of unpaid Parish Share from 2024
- This gives us total scheduled outgoings of £19,878.78
- Against this, we have scheduled incomings of £26,026.65
- These include nearly £9,000 from the Gladys Cross Trust to reimburse St Alban's for monies paid to St John's for the new heating system...
- ...and £8,000 from the Renewable Heat Initiative (a grant St Alban's receives to pay for the biomass boiler)
- When all these outgoings and incomings are complete, we would be left with £5-6,000...
- ...but if we run a loss of £600/month, that won't last us for long

A graph of the regular giving at St Alban's and St John's shows that it peaked in about May 2024, and has been declining since...

### All Regular Giving



With all of this in mind, the congregation was asked to review their giving. That doesn't necessarily mean 'giving more'. It might be that our giving needs to stay the same or reduce. And while we are very grateful for everything that people give, for our hard-working finance team the most efficient way we can give is through the Parish Giving Scheme. If you're not yet a member of this Scheme, and would like to find out more, please have a word with treasurer Rob Swindells.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Might you serve on the Church Council?**  
 The Church Council [PCC] is the decision-making body of the local church. There are four vacancies available at our Annual Meeting on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Please have a word with Tim if you'd like to explore this further.

# Burns Night Celebrations, 24th January in the Eccles Hall.





*See also page 31*

# St. Alban's and St. John's

## Diary Page for February 2026

Sunday	1st		<b><u>Candlemas</u></b>	
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
Thursday	5th	9.30am	Holy Communion	St John's
Sunday	8th		<b><u>The Second Sunday before Lent</u></b>	
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
Sunday	15th		<b><u>The Sunday next before Lent</u></b>	
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's
Thursday	19th	9.30am	Holy Communion	St John's
Sunday	22nd		<b><u>The First Sunday of Lent</u></b>	
		9.00am	Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Holy Communion	St Alban's

### Ash Wednesday – February 18<sup>th</sup>

Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, falls on February 18<sup>th</sup>. There will be acts of worship at both St Alban's Earsdon (9.30am) and St John's Backworth (7.30pm). Both will feature the offer of receiving the sign of the cross in ash for those who would value it. 'The imposition of ashes' is a picture in the Bible of sorrow for sin. People kneel at the communion rail, and the cross is traced on their forehead with ash. As we do so, we use these ancient words: 'Remember that you are dust, and that to dust you shall return. Turn away from sin, and be faithful to Christ'.

On behalf of everyone at St Alban's and St John's we wish you a deep, rich journey through Lent.

# St. Alban's and St. John's

## Sunday Gospel Readings for February 2026 :

1st	8th	15th
Luke 2.22-40	Matthew 6.25-34	Matthew 17.1-9

## 22nd

Matthew 18.1-6

### Sneak Previews...

**Children's Church** is marking Candlemas at 4pm at St John's on Sunday February 1<sup>st</sup>. The Lent Special is at 4pm in St John's on Sunday *March* 1<sup>st</sup>.

There is a service of prayer for the **Week of Christian Unity** on Sunday February 8<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Whitley Bay Baptist Church are our hosts.

Celebrate **Valentine's Day** with pancakes and a quiz. The Eccles Hall, Saturday evening February 14<sup>th</sup>.

We mark **Mothering Sunday** with a special 10.30 service for all the family – Sunday March 15<sup>th</sup>.

Our next **Quiet Day** is on Saturday May 9<sup>th</sup>



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Please note - all material for next month's magazine  
(March 2026) will need to be in before  
Tuesday 24th February. Thank you, *Jean*.

As mentioned in last month's Church Views (page 15), the Wednesday Walkers donated £300 to Newcastle University, in memory of our dear Ali. Sylvia wants to share this Thank You card with everyone...

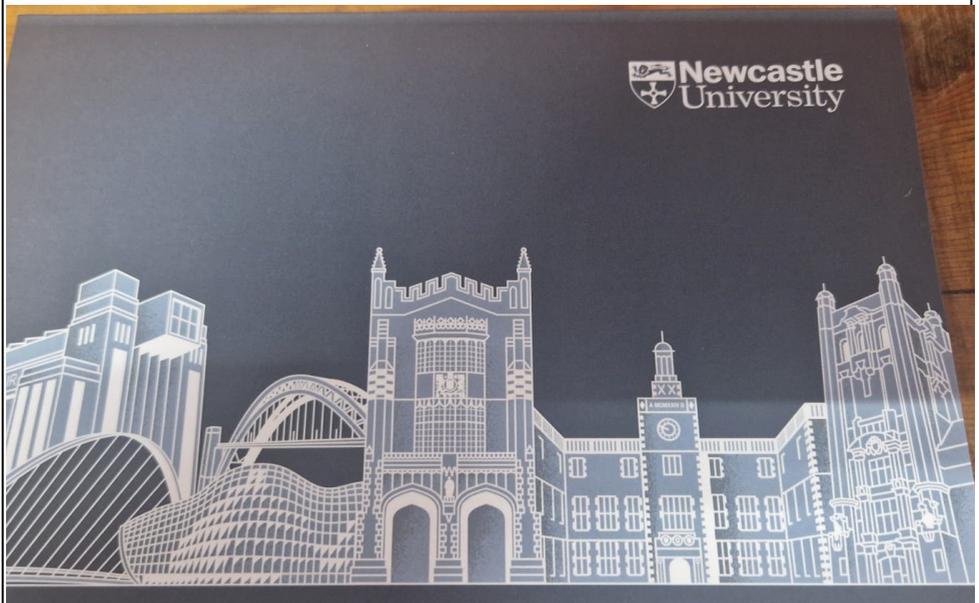
Dear Sylvia

Thank you to you and the Wednesday Walkers for your kind donation in memory of Ali Griffiths.

This will support Newcastle University's continued research in to bowel cancer, it's causes and treatment.

Kind regards

Arena Rogers.



*(See also page 11 where another donation was sent to Newcastle University in memory of Ali. )*

# SUDOKU

Complete the 9x9 grid with digits so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3x3 blocks contains all of the digits from 1 to 9.

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9				1				
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8	4							

\*\*\*\*\*  
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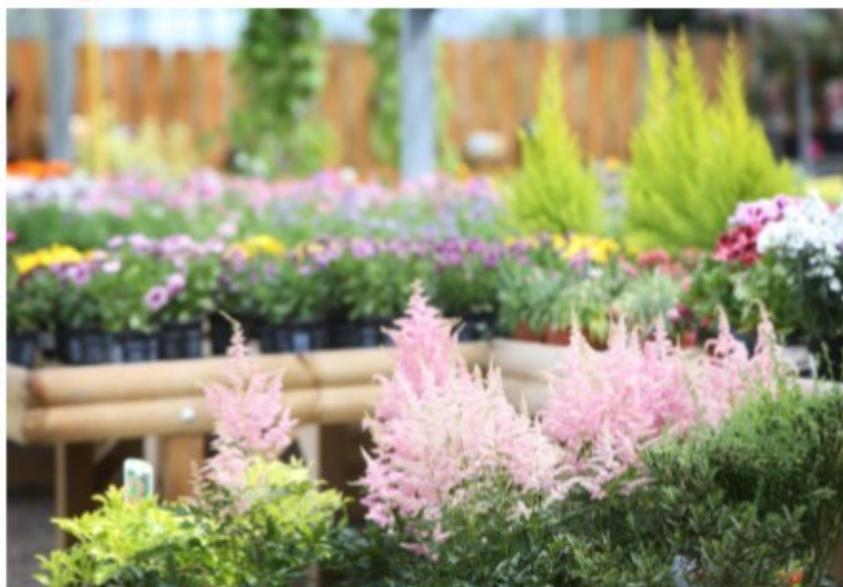
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*See also pages 22 & 23*

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Tel: 07414 601 351

#### *Church warden*

Rob Gowdy, 82 Chipchase Court, New Hartley, Northumberland  
NE25 0SR

Tel: 07841 986 019

#### *PCC Secretary*

Rob Gowdy, 82 Chipchase Court, New Hartley, Northumberland  
NE25 0SR

Tel: 07841 986 019

#### *PCC Treasurer*

Rob Swindells, 81 St Mary's Avenue, Whitley Bay NE26 3TS.

Tel 252 3919

#### *Safeguarding Officer*

Tracey Gray. Tel: 07767 382 744

### St. John's Backworth:

#### *Vicar*

Rev'd. Tim Mayfield, 5 Front Street, Earsdon, Whitley Bay NE25 9JU

Tel: 07414 601 351

#### *Treasurer & Assistant Church Warden*

Mary Oliver 10 Melrose Avenue, Backworth, Newcastle NE27 0JD

Tel: 268 4334

### Our Lady, Star of the Sea :

#### *Parish Priest*

Mgr. Andrew Faley

Church of St Edward, Coquet Avenue, Whitley Bay, NE26 1EE.

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