



All Saints, Little Ca sterton



St Peter & St Paul, Great Ca sterton

# Four Churches



# Together

All Saints, Pickworth



St Peter's Tickencote



MARCH  
2026

**Calendar of Events for March 2026**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Place</b>
1	10.30am	Holy Communion Rev. Bob Mackrill	Gt Casterton
1	9.00am	Holy Communion Rev Jo Saunders	Lt Casterton
4	10.00am	Celtic Prayers	Church Hall
4	10.30am	Community Coffee & visit from Claire Crowley <a href="http://www.rootandbranchout.co.uk">www.rootandbranchout.co.uk</a>	Church Hall
5	9.00.m.	Parish Breakfast	Garden Centre
5	7.00pm	Home Group	Harvard
6	10.00am	Toddler Group	Church Hall
7	6.00pm.	Men's Cook Night All Welcome	Church Hall
8	10.15am	Café Church	Church Hall
11	10.00am	Celtic Prayers	Church Hall
11	10.30am	Community Coffee	Church Hall
13	10.00am	Toddler Group	Church Hall
15	10.30am	Holy Communion Rev Jo Saunders	Gt. Casterton
18	10.00am	Celtic Prayers	Church Hall
18	10.30am	Community Coffee	Church Hall
19	7.00	Home Group	Harvard
21	12.00	Saturday Live. McGoo Irish Folk Music featuring Rev Don McGarrigle	Gt. Casterton
21	11- 11.15am	Interment of Marjorie Needham's ashes Rev Jo Saunders. Private event	Gt. Casterton N. Churchyard
21	1.45pm	Marjorie Needham's Memorial Service. All welcome	Gt Casterton
22	10.30am	Morning Praise	Gt Casterton
23	2.00pm	Book Club	Sue Stretton's
25	10.00am	Celtic Prayers	Church Hall
25	10.30am	Community Coffee	Church Hall
26	7.30pm	Parish (Parson's) Pints All Welcome	The Crown
29	9.00am	Holy Communion Rev Keith Dennison	Pickworth
29	10.30a.m	Palm Sun Holy Communion Rev. Bob Mackrill	Gt Casterton

## FOUR CHURCHES NEWS MARCH 2026

As most of you know Rev Don and Helen, have now left the Parish and wider Benefice after serving our various communities with dedication, compassion, faith and sometimes a little chaos for eight years!! The change marks both an ending and a new beginning for us all.

Rev Don's last service was Benefice Holy Communion in St Peter and St Paul Gt. Casterton and was attended by at least 100 members of the congregations and wider community. It was a fitting tribute to a much-loved Priest in Charge. The Church keys were returned to the Churchwardens to hold for a new incumbent. Don and Helen were presented with a leaving card, a donation to their selected charities and Helen was presented with a bouquet of flowers, appropriately listed in the florists catalogue as "The Casterton." Light refreshments were served after the service followed by a social time in the Crown where the Bishop's Farewell was renamed Don's Farewell!!!!

The farewells continued at Great Casterton Primary School where Rev Don has taken collective worship on Tuesday each week, leaving teachers with the task of calming rather excited pupils. This week Rev Don brought his full drum kit and made an even better job of over-exciting the school. Cake has been provided for everyone so there was the sugar rush as well. Rev Don was presented with a picture of a tree with colourful leaves made with a fingerprint of each child and the Headteacher, Sally Gooding, read out a poem written for Rev. Don.

Although farewells bring sadness, Parish life continues. Services, groups, and activities will carry on as normal. We encourage everyone to continue taking part, supporting one another, and offering prayers for the future of the churches in the Benefice.

The process of appointing a new Priest in Charge will now begin which involves the Rural Dean and Archdeacon. We will keep you informed of progress.

If you have any questions or would like to arrange a Baptism, Wedding or Funeral please contact the Churchwardens:

Geoffrey Archer: mobile: 07803

423010 email: [geoff@imageinabottle.co.uk](mailto:geoff@imageinabottle.co.uk)

Peter Bryan: mobile 07507 299436 email: [jeanpeter02@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jeanpeter02@hotmail.co.uk).

Finally, we give thanks for Rev. Don's and Helen's ministry among us and wish them every blessing in the next stage of their lives together.

**The Church of England Parish of Great Casterton  
and Tickencote**

**Church of St Peter and St Paul, Great Casterton**

Following the retirement of the Rev. Don McGarrigle our parish is now in a period of 'vacancy' (also known as an interregnum). During this time, all the life and worship of the Church continues under the oversight of our Churchwardens and the Rural Dean.

**Churchwardens:**

**Peter Bryan: 07507 299436**

**Geoffrey Archer: 07803 423010**

**Rural Dean:**

**Rev. Canon Jane Baxter: 07487 509807**

They are working closely with the Diocese to begin the process of finding our new priest.

Please direct any enquiries about the Church or services: Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals etc., directly to the Churchwardens.

Thank you.

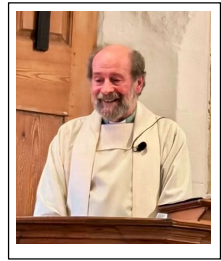
Contact details for all enquiries regarding  
**All Saints Little Casterton and All Saints Pickworth**  
during the vacancy can be found on page 13  
or by contacting the Rural Dean,  
Rev. Canon Jane Baxter 07487 509807

The Choir of All Saints Church Stamford will sing full choral  
Evensong  
in Great Casterton Church  
on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 17.30

## Honouring a Remarkable Life:

### Vicar, Musician, Friend, Family Man, and Legend

The 7th of February saw a truly special occasion: a joint 75th birthday and retirement party for Don. The event was a vibrant celebration of a man whose impact has been felt across so many spheres – as vicar, musician, friend, family man, and all-round legend. The atmosphere was filled with laughter, music, dancing, and a sense of joy that radiated from a room packed with people whose lives Don has touched.



The theme set the tone straight away: a fancy-dress London underground party, with outfits that showed real imagination and effort. From subtle nods (Tooting) to full-on creative masterpieces (Canning Town). The result was a vibrant, joyful crowd perfectly reflecting the connections Don had forged over the years and setting the tone for a night of genuine celebration.

Music, of course, was at the heart of the night. Don's band, the McGoos, delivered infectious energy. The floor stayed busy, and voices were raised throughout the evening. Both Anna and Rachel delivered heartfelt performances that brought warmth and emotion to the festivities.

The turnout said it all. Friends and connections from every chapter of Don's life came together: walking groups, church, bells, family, pickleball, bowls, rugby and more. It was a living timeline of relationships built over decades, united in celebrating a man who has clearly made a lasting impact wherever he has gone. What really stood out was the energy from the entire McGarrigle Clan, from the youngest to the oldest. Their enthusiasm was contagious and perfectly reflected the spirit of the night – intergenerational, inclusive, and full of life, with both Helen and Don at the heart of it.

A highlight of the evening was the ice-cream station with an array of toppings – the perfect tribute to Don's legendary sweet tooth. It was impossible not to go back for seconds (or more!).

In every sense, the party served as a wonderful send-off. Don will be missed enormously, but as he embarks on his next chapter, there is no doubt that his journey will continue to be filled with more adventures, more music, and more stories to tell. So, here's to Don: for his years of dedicated service to the church and wider community, for his friendship, his humour, and his generous heart. Three cheers for Don!



## LENT 2026 – ‘DRAW NEAR’

Lent is traditionally a time when Christians take time to reflect what it means to be a follower of Jesus and to prepare for the celebrations of Easter. This year, the Church of England has produced some materials under the heading, ‘Draw Near’, to help us develop some life-giving habits that will help us in our daily lives to draw nearer to Jesus.



Throughout the bible we read of people who encountered Jesus in amazing ways and whose lives are transformed. Often the story ends there, but of course, that is just the start of the journey. As followers of Jesus, we know that the journey continues as we build on our relationship with and understanding of God. Central to the journey lie certain habits that can help us: worshipping together, praying, reading and exploring the bible, sharing communion, offering service to those around us, and sharing the good news we have come to discover.

I wonder, this Lent, what you might focus on to deepen your own discipleship and nurture your spiritual life. As we draw near to God, he draws near to us and we can know his presence with us more fully. As Richard of Chichester prayed: *‘may we know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly, day by day.’*



+ Debbie

The Rt Revd Debbie Sellin  
Bishop of Peterborough

*Information on Draw Near and related resources can be found here  
<https://tinyurl.com/2v49arbb> or by scanning the QR code.*

**Diocese of Peterborough - Magazine Resource – March 2026**

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[www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk](http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk)

*Please support the social team as they endeavour to provide a comprehensive range of social activities for your enjoyment - and to raise money. Your support in coming along is appreciated. Any help to organise or run the events will be warmly welcomed.*

### **Provisional Calendar of Social Events for 2026**

**March 7<sup>th</sup>** - Men's Cook Night - £10pp with bar available. 6 for 6.30

**March 8<sup>th</sup>** Evensong at 5.00pm - All Saints Church Choir

**March 21<sup>st</sup>** Saturday Lunchtime music - Mr McGoo band

**March 29<sup>th</sup> Palm Sunday Pilgrims visiting - p.m.**

**April 25<sup>th</sup>** - Barn Dance - £15pp with Sausage Supper and bar available.

**Thursday April 2<sup>nd</sup>** - Passover Supper £10pp

**September 27<sup>th</sup>** - Harvest Lunch - 12.00-2.30? - £10pp - BYO alcohol

**November 14<sup>th</sup>** - Quingo Quiz - light refreshments - Bar - £10pp

**December 12<sup>th</sup>** - Christmas Draw - coffee morning and prize giving

### **FIRST QUARTER PEAL**

On Thursday 12th February 2026 a quarter peal was rung for Sam Ryder.

Sam has been an active member of the Great Casterton band for about three years.

He has used Bellringing as his skill for both Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh awards, and now in his final year at Stamford School had continued with Bellringing for his Gold award.

He has improved his skill over the years and has become a welcome and enthusiastic participant in teaching new members the basics.

Jim Bence, the Peterborough Diocesan Guild Ringing Master, was invited to be the conductor of the quarter peal for Sam's first attempt. A total of 1260 changes were rung of Plain Bob Doubles in 43minutes.

The ringers were:

Treble - Sam Ryder    Second - Lois Webb    Third - Ann Archer

Fourth - Charlotte Peacock    Fifth - Jim Bence - conductor

Tenor - Sarah Bence

Sam was congratulated on achieving his first quarter peal with chocolates!! He will be 18 years old in a month's time.

## REPUTATIONS

**A reputation formed.** The Bible is not a linear history book. It is a series of records that God has selected and wants us to learn from. These incidents recorded below cover a period of about fifty or so years around the time of the exiles in 600 BC. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of the very powerful city of Babylon which had raided Jerusalem several times and captured the sacred jewels from the temple and took captives men with potential. Among these captives were Daniel and his three friends. They were sent at royal expense, to the top Babylonian University which had an international reputation to develop their knowledge and skills. That gave Daniel a problem as the University meat rations were from animals sacrificed to Bel and other local idols, so he resolved to go vegetarian. The authorities were sceptical but gave him a three month trial and surprisingly found that he seemed to look better than other students. Daniel now had a reputation. Meanwhile Daniel's three friends also gained a reputation when they did not bow down to a statue. As a punishment they were thrown into the local blast furnace. These furnaces were fed on tar and bitumen and were the source of much metal production, particularly iron and steel. When the three walked out without even the smell of burning tar on them, the king promoted them to senior government positions. Those three were called Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who I remembered as Shake-a-bed, Make-a-bed and A-bed-we-go some eighty years ago.

**A reputation justified.** The walls round Babylon city were so thick and wide that four chariots could drive side by side along the top. Huge gates. Absolute security. No worries, even when a small army under Darius the Persian came up and camped round the city. To demonstrate their confidence, Belshazzar who had succeeded Nebuchadnezzar as king got out the golden goblets that had been taken from the Jerusalem temple to show off at a big feast he was giving. (some politicians don't change much do they?) In the middle of the feast a hand appeared and wrote four words on the wall which no one could understand. "Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin". The king was so scared that, on the advice of his wife, he got his star student Daniel in to translate. The translation is simple "God has numbered your days and they don't add up. You have been weighed and you don't weigh much. Your kingdom has been divided". (Message) Disaster is forecast. Belshazzar the king was amazed and Daniel and co were further honoured and rewarded, but the warning was ignored.

**A reputation resented.** Meanwhile, Darius had not been idle and had dug a bypass for the river that flowed through the city. In the middle of the feast, he opened the sluices and the water stopped going through the city. All the water ran round the new bypass. The old riverbed became dry. Darius walked in with his army. The kingdom was certainly divided. The record is terse: "At that same night the Babylonian king Belshazzar was murdered and Darius the Mede succeeded him as king aged sixty two." The new king divided the

country up into admin areas and appointed governors for each. Daniel got one and did so well that the new king decided to appoint him supreme governor over all the others who were naturally jealous. They thought that the only way to get at Daniel was to pretend he was disloyal. They persuaded the king to issue a decree that all prayers for the next month must be made only to the king or be lion feed. These pet lions were kept on a diet of two sheep and a human prisoner every day according to Josephus.

**A reputation tested.** Daniel is undeterred and, as was his habit, made his daily prayers to God by the window. The other governors saw him and thought they had won and reported to the king who realised he had been tricked and objected but had to keep to the decree. In front of witnesses Daniel is sealed into the lion cage. The next morning Daniel is pulled out unharmed and the other scheming governors take his place to the delight of the lions who liked fresh meat. The king Darius issues a new decree that Daniel's "God is the living God, world without end. His kingdom never fails. He is a saviour". Daniel is treated well from then on and into the reign of Cyrus, who became king of all the Medes and Persians. Daniel does have another dream which forecasts accurately the great empires of the Persians, then the Greeks and finally the Romans. Perhaps for future articles.

**Questions.** Why are these incidents recorded for us now? What should we learn in 2026? Was Daniel's capture a disaster or was it a part of God's plan? Was Belshazzar wrong to use the sacred cups for a party? The promise of inevitable judgement is repeated from Genesis to Revelation. God is that judge, not us. The meaning of the inscription written on the wall at the feast is translated in our AV Bibles "You are weighed in the balances and found wanting". That observation was scary. It must have worried the king yet all he did was to give Daniel a promotion and go on with the feast. Jealousy and pride are very strong motivators of behaviour. Do we recognise them in international relations? Being a Christian is considered by some, a soft option. Works like feeding the poor, providing housing, making reparations, net zero, levelling up and other good works without faith may be as good as leaving Christ out of Christian behaviour. Is it like that now? Rules precedent over love? Jesus wept over Jerusalem saying that disaster would come on it "because you did not recognise the time of God's coming to you". He said nothing about good works. (Luke 21) But faith without works is dead we are told in the Epistles. Daniel must have had some faith when he prayed by the window and said, "My God is able". He lived up to his reputation.

*Quotes from AV and Message Bible  
Bob*

## **SIGNS OF SPRING: SNOWDROPS AND PRIMROSES**

As winter gently loosens its grip on our countryside, two familiar faces are among the first to herald the arrival of spring; snowdrops and primroses. Delicate blooms appearing often when frost still covers the ground, bringing a welcome splash of colour and hope to our gardens the churchyard and hedgerows.

Our snowdrops are gradually coming fully out in the churchyard, those on the south side are immediately obvious but if you have time take a look at the area on the north close to the church wall where there is a fine display of snowdrops. The primroses are a little behind but are gradually showing their yellow flowers.

Primroses meanwhile offer cheerful clusters of soft yellow pink or even purple flowers brightening shady corners and verges.



Both are native to Britain and have featured in local folklore for generations. Snowdrops are often associated with purity and new beginnings, while primroses are thought to bring luck and happiness.

You can see both in the graveyard their presence is a gentle encouragement to embrace the changing season and the renewal it brings to our parish community.



### **Quote of the Month**

*Answer from last month - Confucius said "Better a diamond with a flaw, than a pebble without".*

This month's quote: Who said this? " I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king."

### **March Around the World**

St David's Day (Dydd Gŵyl Dewi) is celebrated annually on 1 March. This is the national day of Wales when folk wear daffodils or leeks. St Patrick's Day is on March 17th, when Irish culture is celebrated globally, featuring parades, wearing green, and honouring the patron saint of Ireland . Vibrant spring celebrations are held in many cultures, including Holi (the Hindu Festival of colours) in India, and the Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival. Internationally it is World Wildlife Day on March 3rd, and Mothering Sunday on Sunday 15th March, and the spring equinox is on March 20th

### **Word Challenge**

How many words can you make of 3 letters or more from the letters in NOTTINGHAMSHIRE?

### **Have You Ever Visited?**

Magna. Set within an iconic former steelworks in Sheffield City region, only minutes away from the M1 Meadow Hall turning, and with free parking this is a great day out for a family. There are huge spaces to explore, with many science adventure activities, and places to eat all within a huge steelworks setting. Wear outdoor clothes as some of the areas can feel very outdoorsy. There's also a huge outdoors play area, and a splash park for summer visits, and a cafe selling drinks, snacks or hearty fresh and flavourful main dishes. To explore the wonders of Air, Earth, Fire and Water with an amazing smelt furnace you can hear, feel and smell ! tickets online cost from £20.95 for an adult and £18.95 for children up to 15 years (£9.50 for 2 - 3-year-olds). Prices are slightly more expensive on the day. Open from 10.00 am daily and closing at 4pm during school holidays but 2.30pm during term time. Please check precise opening times before visiting.



**DON AND HELEN'S PARTY**

### **PRAYER BOARD IN CHURCH**

Did you know that every week the names that have been placed on our prayer board in church are prayed out loud on Wednesday mornings? Please date each prayer that is placed on the board, to help the team keep up with how recently they were placed there.

Thank you

### **USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

<b>Priest in Charge</b>	Vacant	
<b>Great Casterton Hall Bookings</b>	Steve Cunningham	07810 404748
<b>Benefice Safeguarding Officer</b>	Carol Maynard	01780 755687.
<b>Newsletter Distribution</b>	Mary Sproson	01780 762933
<b>Churchwardens:</b>		
Great Casterton	Geoffrey Archer	07803 423010
	Peter Bryan	07507 299436
Little Casterton	Tony Dolby	01780 766897
Pickworth	Charles Gilman	01780 411017
	Goldie Bardwell	01780 410272

### **FOR HIRE**

Great Casterton Church Hall is available for hire for children's parties and/or other events. For more details contact Steve Cunningham

Email: [stephenmichaelcunningham@gmail.com](mailto:stephenmichaelcunningham@gmail.com)

Phone: 07810 404748

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### **Church Projects**

Moving on from our heating project we are now fund-raising to renew the kitchen in the Church Hall, which is in dire need of being updated to meet current standards. You can help by coming along to and supporting our social events, where all monies raised will go towards church projects, or you can make a one off or regular donation by using our QR code. We are very grateful for any support you can give us.



## **REV DON'S LAST SERVICES**

Rev Don spent his last three services as Priest in Charge of our benefice with a service of Holy Communion at each of our churches. Little Casterton on the 18th January, Pickworth on 25th January, and Great Casterton on the 1st February. Each service was a service to remember, totally unique and full of joy and thanksgiving for Don's service and commitment to all our churches tinged with sadness at Don's retirement.

After the service at Little Casterton we were treated to tea, coffee and cakes (see pic of cake which suffered damage in transportation). Although it was a very cold day, Pickworth gave us a very warm welcome as well as a warm church. Afterwards we were treated to wine and nibbles and plenty of wine and sharing of memories.

On 1st February we gathered, as a Benefice, for Don's last service and to celebrate Candlemas in Great Casterton ... and gather, we did. There were over one hundred in church. People from our three churches, from the school, the village and the pub and many more whose lives had been touched by Don's ministry in the past eight years. Once again it was a service to remember and afterwards we carried on with bubbles and nibbles and plenty of 'the craic' as Don would say.

Not an ending but a true beginning for all of us and especially Don and Helen. We will keep them in our thoughts and prayers for whatever the Lord has in store for them, and us.

MS

## **REV DON'S LAST SERVICE AT LITTLE CASTERTON**



**REV DON'S LAST SERVICE AT GT CASTERTON**



*More from the Gt Casterton service*





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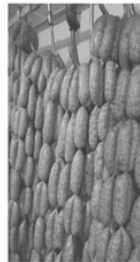
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- To promote healthy ageing and attitudes towards older people, seeking relevant ways to honour old age and if needed, to serve through advocacy, friendship and practical support.