

PARISH CHURCH NEWS

**Ss. Peter & Paul, Clare
with St. Mary the Virgin, Poslingford**

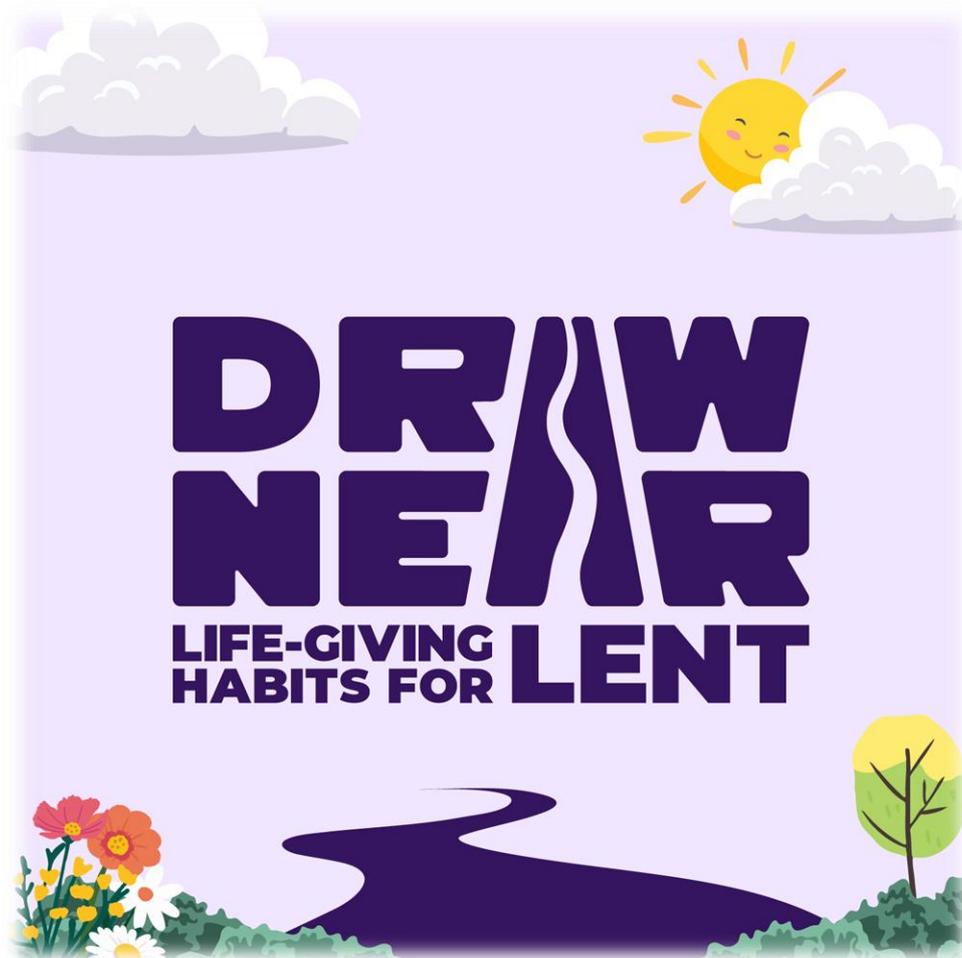
The Rev'd Mark Woodrow

Vicar and Rector of the Stour Valley Benefice
(Tel: 01787 277515 Email: rector@stourvalley.org.uk)
(Usual Rest Day: Monday)

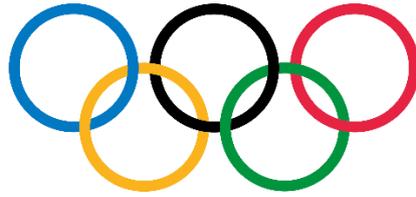
The Rev'd Dr. Karen Smith

Assistant Curate
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(Usual Rest Day: Saturday)

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March 2026



MILANO CORTINA 2026



Rector's Ramblings – March 2026 (A Season of Perseverance and Grace)

As the last traces of frost (hopefully!) begin to yield to the first green shoots of March, I find myself reflecting on the remarkable display of human spirit we witnessed during the Winter Olympics in Milan and Cortina last month.

There is something profoundly moving about watching athletes navigate the literal and metaphorical "slippery slopes" of life. Whether it was the precision of the skaters or the sheer courage of those hurtling down the Alpine runs, we were reminded that greatness is rarely achieved in a straight line. It is forged through discipline, often in the cold and the dark, and through the resilience to pick oneself up after a fall.

In many ways, the Olympic journey mirrors our own walk through Lent. We are currently in that "middle distance" of the season - a time that can feel a bit like a long-distance cross-country ski trek. The initial enthusiasm of Ash Wednesday may have cooled, and the celebration of Easter still feels a long way off. Yet it is precisely in this quiet, steady perseverance that our faith finds its depth.

This month, our Lenten journey brings us to a joyful "halfway house": Mothering Sunday on 15th March.

Historically, this was the day when domestic servants were given leave to return to their "mother church" and visit their families. Today, it remains a vital moment to pause and say thank you. We celebrate not just our own mothers, but all those who have "mothered" us - the grandmothers, aunts, teachers, and neighbours who have offered us a sanctuary of care.

In a world that often feels as competitive as an Olympic arena, the unconditional love of a mother-figure provides the ultimate "safe harbour."

Looking further ahead, the month draws to a close with the dramatic shift of Palm Sunday on 29th March. *(And if any readers have a donkey or two available for a procession around the church – please do get in touch!)*

We move from the warmth of family appreciation to the stirring scenes of the Triumphant Entry. As we hold our palm crosses, we recall the crowds in Jerusalem who cheered for Jesus, only to fall silent or turn away just days later. It is a sobering reminder of how quickly "gold medal" acclaim can vanish.

Palm Sunday marks the start of **Holy Week**, the most sacred time in our calendar. I invite you all to walk this path with us. From the shadows of the cross to the light of the empty tomb, it is a journey that promises something far more enduring than any earthly podium: the gift of new life.

May this March be for you a month of steady hope and renewed strength.

With every blessing,

Mark

The Revd Mark Woodrow
(Rector)



Friday 6th March. Service at 10.30am at the United Reformed Church. This year the service has been written by the women of Nigeria. Last year more than 7,000 Christians were killed in Nigeria and hundreds more kidnapped or tortured. In the last month there have been 3 attacks with more than 170 killed and a further 170+ abducted. The Christians in Nigeria need all the prayers and support they can get. Do come along and pray together with Christians from all 4 churches in Clare.

Jayne Drinkwater



PCC NEWS

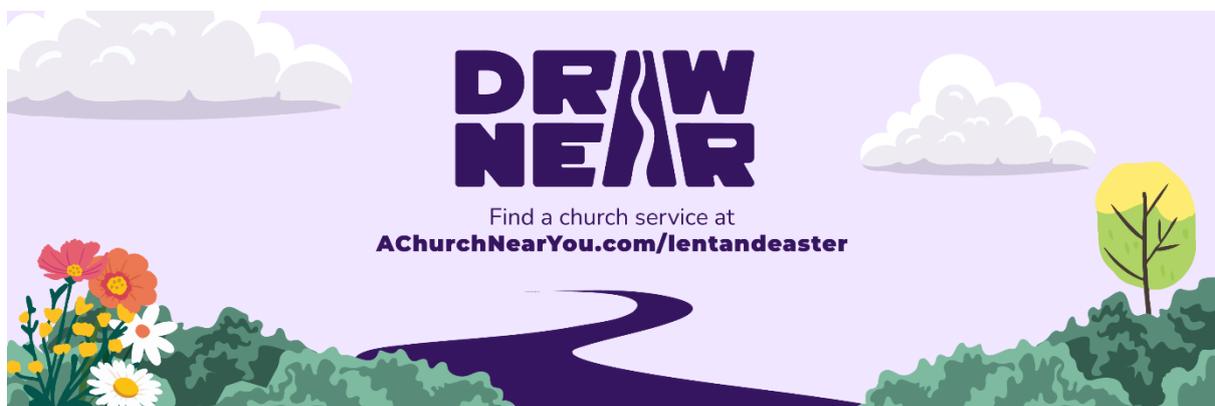
NEW LIGHTING

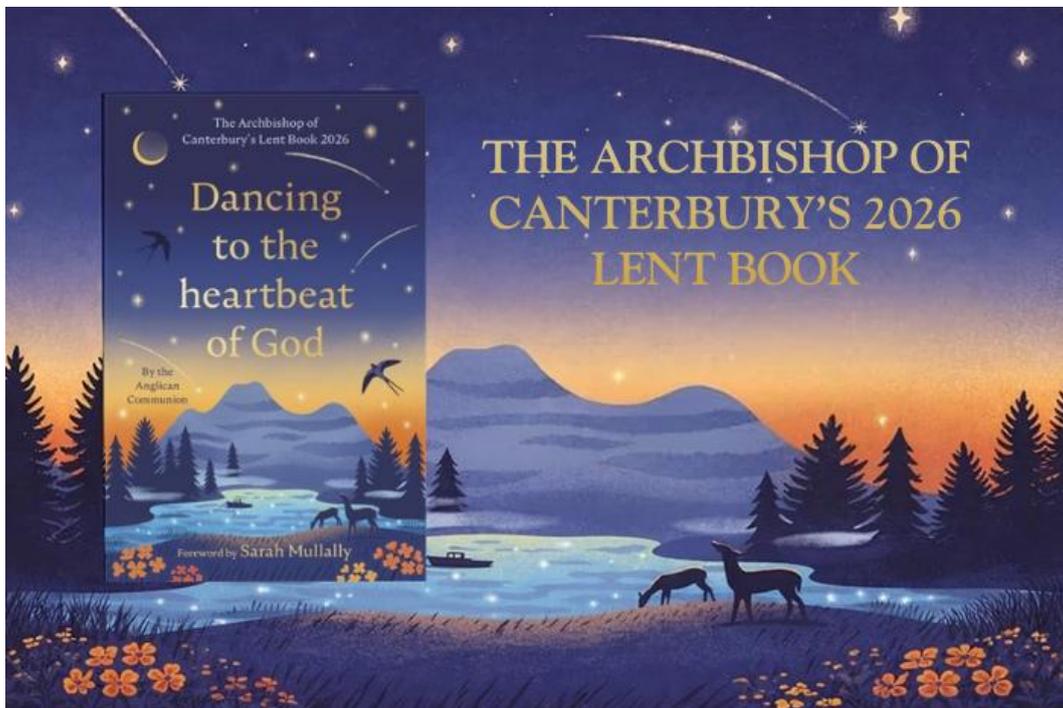
By the time you read this newsletter the installation of the church's new interior lighting system will be virtually complete, having been concluded ahead of schedule. There is still a little additional tweaking of the settings that needs to be done, and more will be written about the completed project in due course. The new system will deliver better lighting but also reduce our electricity bills and go towards reducing our carbon footprint, so wins all round!

Other projects that we are looking into are improvements to the external floodlights, improving the internal heating system, and also whether it might be possible to install solar panels and batteries to reduce our electricity consumption even more!



**Everyone is invited to join us for a special
Fifth Sunday Benefice Service for Palm Sunday
29th March 2026 at 11 a.m. in St. Peter & St. Paul's Church, Clare**





The Rector's review

As we journey through the wilderness of Lent, we are often searching for a rhythm that sustains us - not the frantic pace of the world, but the steady, life-giving pulse of the Divine. It is a remarkable feat of spiritual synthesis. In ***Dancing to the Heartbeat of God***, Archbishop Sarah Mullally doesn't just curate a collection of disparate voices; she weaves a "global tapestry" that reflects the messy, vibrant, and sometimes strained reality of the **Anglican Communion**.

Reflecting on how these views are drawn together, three distinct threads emerge:

Unity in the Liturgical "Pulse" - Despite the vast cultural distances between a cathedral in Canterbury and a parish in Kenya, Mullally identifies the heartbeat as our shared liturgical life. She draws together these views by showing that while the "dance" looks different in every province, the music - the Eucharist, the Daily Office, and the Gospel - remains the constant rhythm that prevents the Communion from spinning apart.

The Theology of "The Body" - Coming from her background in nursing, Mullally uses the metaphor of the biological body to reconcile differing viewpoints. She treats the Anglican Communion not as a political organization, but as a living organism.

- **The Lesson:** Just as a body requires different organs to function, the Communion requires different cultural perspectives to be "whole."

- **The Result:** Contradictory views are held in a "creative tension" rather than a conflict, suggesting that we need the "other" to fully understand the heartbeat of God.

Shared Vulnerability

Perhaps the most moving aspect of how these views are integrated is the focus on suffering and service. By highlighting voices from parts of the Communion that are facing persecution, poverty, or the climate crisis, she anchors our theological debates in the reality of human need. This shifts the focus from "who is right" to "how do we serve together."

"The drawing together of these voices reminds us that the Anglican 'via media' (middle way) isn't a compromise of convenience, but a rigorous commitment to staying in the room with one another."

The contributions remind us that the "heartbeat" is loudest when we are close enough to hear one another, even when we are out of step.

"Dancing to the heartbeat of God" (ISBN 978-0-281-09231-4) is published by SPCK and is available from Bookshops and online retailers. £11.99.

MARCH

Slayer of the winter, art thou here again?
 O welcome, thou that bring'st the summer night!
 The bitter wind makes not thy victory vain,
 Nor will we mock thee for thy faint blue sky.
 Welcome, O March! whose kindly days and dry
 Make April ready for the throstle's song,
 Thou first redresser of the winter's wrong!

Yea, welcome March! and though I die ere June,
 Yet for the hope of life I give thee praise,
 Striving to swell the burden of the tune
 That even now I hear thy brown birds raise,
 Unmindful of the past or coming days;
 Who sing: 'Oh joy! a new year is begun
 What happiness to look upon the sun!'

William Morris (1834-1896)

The Stour Valley Benefice

The Parishes of Cavendish, Clare, Hundon, Poslingford,
Stoke-by-Clare & Wixoe

HOLY WEEK

PALM SUNDAY 29TH MARCH

9 AM - Eucharist - Stoke by Clare

11 AM - Benefice 5th Sunday Service - Clare

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2ND APRIL

7 PM - Eucharist with Foot Washing - Clare

GOOD FRIDAY 3RD APRIL

9 AM - Morning Prayer & Litany - Stoke-by-Clare

10.30 AM - Walk of Witness - Start at Clare Priory

7 PM - Compline - Poslingford

EASTER VIGIL 4TH APRIL

7 PM - First Eucharist of Easter - Hundon

EASTER DAY 5TH APRIL

9 AM - Eucharist - Stoke-by-Clare

9 AM - Eucharist - Wixoe

10.30 AM - Eucharist - Cavendish

11 AM - Eucharist - Clare

4 PM - Evening Prayer - Poslingford

Stour Valley Benefice - Services for March 2026

Sunday, 1st March

Second Sunday of Lent

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Clare:	11:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>

Sunday, 8th March

Third Sunday of Lent

Hundon	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Clare:	16:00	Evensong	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>

Sunday, 15th March

Fourth Sunday of Lent (Mothering Sunday)

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Clare:	11:00	Holy Communion & Baptism	<i>Led by The Revd Liz Paxton</i>
Poslingford:	16:00	Evening Prayer	<i>Led by Mrs Sarah Smith</i>

Sunday, 22nd March

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Wixoe:	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Cavendish:	10:30	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Clare:	11:00	Morning Prayer	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Hundon:	16:00	Evening Prayer	<i>Led by Mrs Barbara Hill</i>

Sunday, 29th March

Palm Sunday

Stoke by Clare:	09:00	Holy Communion	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>
Clare:	11:00	Benefice 5th Sunday	<i>Led by The Revd Dr Karen Smith</i>
Clare:	14:00	Baptism	<i>Led by The Revd Mark Woodrow</i>

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Closing date for copy: 25th of each month for inclusion in following month's edition