



St. Alban's Earsdon

CHURCH VIEWS

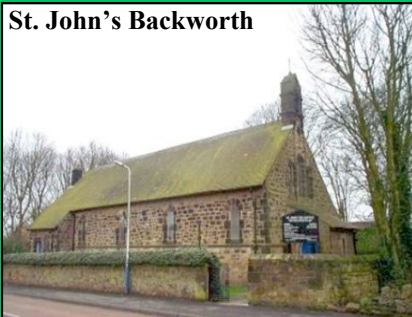
APRIL

2026

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St. John's Backworth



**Immaculate Heart of Mary,
Parish of Our Lady Star of the Sea**



THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

April 2026

These are troubling times. As I write, war is raging in Iran and across the Middle East. President Trump has issued an ultimatum to Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. This is the vital shipping lane through which a fifth of the world's oil and gas passes. It's unclear what will happen if the President's ultimatum is not met.

What we do know is that this war is escalating quickly, and impacting more and more countries across the Middle East. And because our attention spans are so distracted, what is happening in Iran is pushing other stories off the news agenda. What is happening, now, to the people of Gaza? Where do things stand in relation to the war in Ukraine? And what of the humanitarian disaster unfolding in Sudan?

With pressing issues such as these shouting loudly, it's easy to feel powerless. It's tempting to switch off the news and look away. Yet that really isn't an option for Christians. And, again, five short words have been echoing in my mind. Those five short words are 'what is mine to do?' I may not be able to bring peace to the Middle East. But what *is* mine to do? And shall I do it?

One answer to this question, especially in a time of war, is simply to reach out to my fellow human beings. We're in this together, and the vast majority of people simply want to rub along nicely with their neighbours. It doesn't take much to make contact with people around us – especially with people who look different to us.

I enjoy getting my hair cut at Alex Barbers. It's part of the parade of shops at Northumberland Park, and is staffed by Kurdish men. There are Kurds in Iraq, in Syria, in Turkey and elsewhere. They're Moslems, so it costs me absolutely nothing to walk into Alex Barbers and say 'Salaam Aleykum' – peace be with you. Once the ice has been broken, the relationships can develop in surprising ways. Ziko in particular has been teaching me Kurdish. I can ask for 'du' back and sides and 'char' on top (that's 'two' and 'four' respectively). Politely, I can also say 'beza hamat', which is Kurdish for 'please'. When Ziko holds up the mirror at the end I can look into it and say 'galak jana' – 'very nice'. And along the way we can compare notes about a Moslem's Ramadan and a Christian's Lent. I can celebrate Eid with them, and take them a box of mince pies at Christmas. It's all good! It enriches my life.

Playing squash enriches my life as well. For a couple of years now, I've been going to the same squash club in Jesmond. Recently, I was in the changing room with one other bloke. Just me and him. He seemed studiously to be ignoring me, wrapped up in what he was doing. So I caught myself thinking 'is this actually quite an unfriendly club?' Then I came to, and gave myself a good telling off. If there is ice to be broken, why shouldn't I take the lead in breaking it?

It was simple when it came to it. I just said, bending down to pick up a towel, 'blimey, that's a long way down'. That's all it took. The other guy wasn't unfriendly at all. He laughed at my cue, and soon a conversation developed. It was only about use of the gym at the squash club. But a human connection was made. It's not as if I wanted he and I to become blood brothers. But we were no longer getting changed in silence.

And only yesterday I was back in that same changing room. This time 'the other person' was not an Iraqi Kurd, but – clearly – a Jew. I could tell this from his skull cap and the long ringlets he tucked into it before playing. Now let me be honest. I wanted to say 'Shalom' (peace) in the same way as I say 'salaam aleykum' to my Kurdish barbers. But something held me back. I think it was all the (justified) sensitivity around anti-semitism. I didn't want to say the wrong thing. But if I said nothing at all the Jewish man in the dressing room would have had no idea whether I was thinking antisemitic thoughts. What to do?

In the end (call me unimaginative) I fell back on the same tactic. The 'I'm an old man bending down a long way to pick up a towel' tactic. And it worked again! Any ice that was there was broken. We had a 'normal, warm human encounter', and a bridge was built, however trivial.

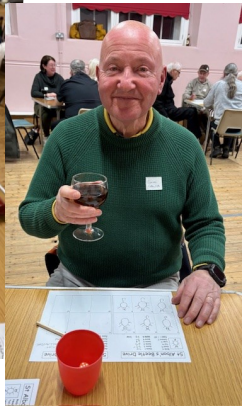
'What is mine to do?' The world is often a dangerous place. But, surely, the more we come out from our bunkers and reach out to others, the more we bring the temperature down, however little it might be.

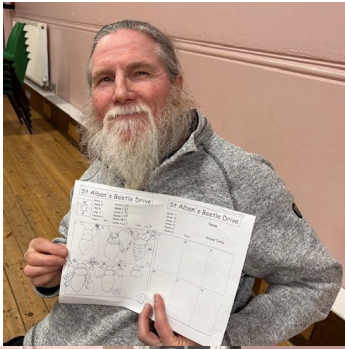
Who do you know to whom you could reach out in 'normal, warm human encounter'?

Yours with love,

Tim Mayfield.

A great night at the beetle drive, full of frantic dice throwing and more frantic beetle drawing! Great sandwiches and home baked yummy desserts. (Thanks to Jill for these pictures.)





Alison Hudspith

Alison was a much-loved member of St John's. She died, peacefully, in North Tyneside General Hospital on Thursday February 26th. Her funeral was at the graveside in Earsdon Cemetery on Monday March 23rd. Here is an extract from her funeral service...

God of mercy, Lord of life, you have made us in your image to reflect your truth and light: we give you thanks for Alison, for the grace and mercy she received from you, for all that was good in her life, for the memories we treasure today. Thank you that Alison and Brian met, and for many years of happy marriage. Thank you for the gift of children to Alison and Brian. Thank you Alison's 'selfless life' – for her care for her family, and for her life in nursing, and in teaching. Thank you that her life was all about caring for others, and that her door was always open. Thank you for her commitment to the life of St John's – for the Monday Club, for knitted angels at Christmas, and for knitted chicks at Easter.



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Smile-lines

From a church notice-sheet:

This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs Brown, our church warden, to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.

The nice thing about becoming forgetful is that you can hide your own Easter eggs.

A schoolteacher asked her students to each bring in an object that represented their religion.

The first student got up and said, "My name is Benjamin and I am Jewish and this is a Star of David." The second student got up and said, "My name is Mary. I'm a Catholic and this is a Rosary." The third student got up and said, "My name is Tommy. I am a Baptist, and this is a casserole."

"The trouble with quotes on the Internet is that you can never be sure they are genuine." - Winston Churchill.

"Most cars on our roads have only one occupant, usually the driver." (Carol Malia, BBC Anchorwoman)

The Sunday School teacher asked her class: "When you die and go to Heaven...which part of you goes?"

Young Suzy ventured: "I think our hands go, whatever else." The teacher asked why. Suzy replied, "Because when you pray, you hold your hands together in front of you and so when God comes to get you, He'll just naturally grab those first."

More from St Alban's & St John's.

Headlines from your Church Council

The Church Council (PCC), met on Tuesday March 10th. Here are some headlines...

- Rob Swindells is continuing to work hard to try and access about £10,000 owing to us from the Renewable Heat Initiative. This is a government scheme linked to the biomass boiler.
- Meanwhile Rob, along with Tracey Gray, is working hard to reopen the Gladys Cross Trust. When this has been achieved, we will be able to access more funding.
- Now that spring is springing, we're reviving plans to paint the doors at St Alban's. A kind donor has paid for this work to be undertaken.
- Sadly, the National Lottery have rejected our bid for funding for the Eccles Hall. We quite urgently need to lay a new wooden floor. A second quotation is being sought for this work – the first one came in at £24,000.
- The Council voted unanimously to allow the blessing of same-sex couples at both St Alban's and St John's.
- The Council voted to allow St Alban's to be used as a fire evacuation centre for Wellfield Middle School.
- Treasurer Rob Swindells highlighted the difficult position we are currently in financially. We owe the diocese a large amount of Parish Share.

Easter for our children and young people

- ◆ The Children's Church Easter Special was on Palm Sunday, March 29th
- ◆ Tim is leading an Easter assembly at South Wellfield First School on Monday March 30th
- ◆ Tim is leading an Easter assembly in Backworth Park Primary School on Tuesday March 31st
- ◆ Tim is leading an Easter assembly for the whole school at Wellfield Middle School on Wednesday April 1st
- ◆ St Alban's is hosting a children's event called 'Celebrate Easter' on the morning of Good Friday

Weather Outlook for the month of April 2026.

Direct from the Captain's Charts.

The Spring Equinox marks the start of astronomical spring that occurred on the 20th March at 14:46 hrs (GMT).

Early April - High pressure is anticipated to have a greater influence, bringing quieter, brighter, and potentially drier weather, although nights will remain cool with overnight frosts where and whenever the skies are clear and the winds are light in strength.

Daytime temperatures will be close to average overall.

Throughout the majority of April high pressure will continue its dominance, causing plenty of dry weather.

Later in the month high pressure will be less dominant allowing a marked difference in cloud amount and varying temperatures with strong winds and rain from time to time. Overall, temperatures will likely be near to average.

David Gibson.
25th March 2026.

Please note - all material for next month's magazine (May 2026) will need to be in before Tuesday 28th April. Thank you, *Jean.*

It's National Pet Month

April is National Pet Month (NPM), an annual initiative dedicated to promoting responsible pet ownership, and supporting UK pet charities.

National Pet Month celebrates the companionship of our pets, educates owners on responsible care, and raises funds for pet charities.

Pet owners are encouraged to share their pet stories/photos, host fundraisers, and to visit the website: National Pet Month 2026 for resources.

*Guess who this is,
enjoying the beach...*



* **National Gardening Week - 28th April to 4th May** *
* *
* Led by the Royal Horticultural Society, this annual premier UK *
* celebration encourages everyone to experience the joy of gar- *
* dening. *
* *
* Aimed especially at beginners, events and activities are run up *
* and down the country, offering tips, events, and *
* resources to promote the health, wellbeing, and *
* environmental benefits of cultivating plants. The RHS *
* provides expert tips, how-to guides, and fun, easy *
* gardening challenges to build confidence in new gardeners *
* *
* More at: <https://www.nationalgardeningweek.org.uk> *
* *

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

Triduum* 2026



All Triduum parish services will be celebrated in St Edward's Church in Coquet Avenue this year. Of the three churches in Our Lady Star of the Sea parish, St Edward's has the largest capacity, allowing us all to gather in a united

celebration of Easter. Although each of our three churches holds cherished memories of these services, gathering in one place helps to strengthen the bond and spirit of unity which has grown in the last year.

That unity will help to consolidate our Parish Discernment requested by the Diocese, and Bishop Wright's direction to look at our current situations, especially those parochial strengths and weaknesses which can greatly vary. The first meeting to consider this in our parish has already taken place at Immaculate Heart of Mary church, where forty or so OLSS parishioners from all three churches gave up their Saturday morning to attend.

This is more than an exercise in administration, and these meetings - the next is at 11.00am on Saturday 18 April - are our first steps in moving to a parish which has a new view of itself. A little daunting - inertia is always very comfortable. But as Bishop Trevor Huddleston said, "We must never underestimate the power of prayer in bringing about change."

**Triduum* in Latin means 'three days', and applies to Holy Week: the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the Passion on Good Friday, and the Vigil of the Resurrection on Holy Saturday.

A more personal note: In my schooldays Spy Wednesday was every bit as important as those three solemn days. It might not have been very prominent in the Liturgical Calendar, but in the Schoolboy Calendar it meant the start of two weeks holiday and cricket instead of football when we went back. 'Important' is always a matter of perspective.

Continuing Excellence



No surprise but always welcome, the Luncheon Club has been awarded yet another very top Food Standards Agency rating after an unannounced Local Authority inspection during last month's regular meeting. The inspection was carried out

using the same criteria as the Agency applies to commercial premises, so those cooking and serving, the kitchen, food preparation, allergy awareness, and serving areas had to meet the same requirements as all commercial restaurants. Happily, but as we expected, our Luncheon Club was awarded the rating most of us look for in restaurant windows.

Candles for Ukraine



This is the response to an appeal for candles for Ukraine which recently appeared in the Northern Cross. The appeal asked for even stubs of candles which can be recomposed for trench candles, while others will provide families with light, heat - and sadly - even a means of cooking as attacks on the civilian infrastructure continue. The parish response was immediate and generous, and here is some of it at its

colourful best. If you ever wondered what happened to old Advent candles.....

Bishop Stephen welcomes new Bishop of Durham

What a pleasure to see how far relations between Churches and Faiths have progressed and improved. Bishop Stephen recently posted:

“On behalf of our Diocesan Family I welcome the news of the appointment of Venerable Rick Simpson as the new Bishop of Durham. I assure him of my prayers at this time of change and I look forward to working with Venerable Rick Simpson and all Christian Leaders together with all Faith Leaders in the North-East. We pray we will respond to the Lord’s call to be one and to serve the poor”.

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

Triduum service times will appear on the relevant parish bulletins.

God in the Sciences - The Beauty of Good Friday

Dr Ruth Bancewicz, who is based at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Some of the most beautiful things in the world have an ugly side. What about the emperor penguin chick, nestling in a feathery pouch above its parent's feet? There's a lovely moment when mum and dad greet each other over the gaping beak of their fuzz-ball offspring. Heads bent together, making a heart shape in the air, we can't help seeing a reflection of our own ideals of love in the pair.

But the reality of what those birds are going through is even more gruelling than human parenthood. Father penguin has spent all winter sheltering the egg from freezing hurricane-force winds, while mother penguin was feeding at sea. When the chick hatched its parents started an exhausting game of tag, taking it in turns to walk across the ice and risk being eaten by leopard seals or killer whales, in order to catch fish for their new offspring.

The living world is truly wonderful in so many ways, but the darker side of the picture is never far away. Creation is groaning (Romans 8:22), and just waiting to be rescued. Enter Jesus, through whom all of Creation was made. The king of the universe came to live with us, bringing His great love and wisdom to the human population of first-century Israel. The Creator was relating to His creation in a very personal way, and this could have been a totally beautiful picture.

But there is a horrifically ugly side of Jesus' story that threatens to obscure the beauty of what He did on Good Friday. It was a brutal and terrifying day when human sinfulness resulted in the Son of God being executed by His enemies, but thankfully there was much more to it than that. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ set off a seismic wave of spiritual events whose effects are still rippling out across the world.

So that ugly day over 2,000 years ago is called ‘good’ because of what it achieved. Those who follow Jesus find their lives are changed for the better, even if their day-to-day existence may still be incredibly tough. When people come to understand what Creation is for and who it belongs to, they can begin to serve and preserve the earth as they should. These things are only whispers of what is to come, but they give me hope for the future redemption of all Creation. I can choose to dwell on the beauty of Jesus’ death because it was not the end of the story – the future beckons.

This article is extracted (with permission) from New Life: Reflections for Lent, edited by Amy Robinson and Wendy H Jones (£7.99).

On a lighter note ...

1 April - All Fools’ Day

In years gone by, the rules surrounding April Fool were this: between midnight and noon on 1st April, everyone is ‘fair game’ to be made a fool of. It is the morning of the practical joke. But the aim is not just to discomfort the victim: they must be tricked into taking action themselves, sent on a ‘fool’s errand’.

And so children would be sent to the dairy for a pint of dove’s milk, or to the bookseller for *The Life of Eve’s Mother*. Practical jokes on a bigger scale were played: in 1860 a vast number of people received an official looking invitation to the Tower of London that read: ‘Admit the Bearer and Friends to view the Annual Ceremony of Washing the White Lions.’ Precisely the same trick had been played in 1698.

Then, on the stroke of noon, tradition decrees, April Fools is finished. If anyone attempts devilry thereafter, even while the clock is still striking, it recoils on his own head. A child would then race through the sing-song formula: ‘April-Fool-Day’s-past-and-gone-you’re-the-fool-and-I-am-none!’

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St. Alban's and St. John's

Diary Page for April 2026

Sunday	29th March		<u>Palm Sunday</u>	
		9.00am	Palm Sunday Holy Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Palm Sunday Holy Communion	St Alban's
Monday	30th March	7.30pm	'The Stations of the Cross for Today', part 1.	St Alban's
Tuesday	31st March	7.30pm	'The Stations of the Cross for Today', part 2.	St Alban's
Wed.	1st April	7.30pm	'The Stations of the Cross for Today', part 3.	St Alban's
Thurs.	2nd		<u>Maundy Thursday</u>	
		9.30am	Communion	St John's
		7.30pm	Communion, followed by Gethsemane Vigil	St Alban's
Friday	3rd		<u>Good Friday</u>	
		10am to 12noon	'Celebrate Easter!' – an event for young families	St Alban's
		2.00pm	'At the Foot of the Cross'	
Sunday	5th		<u>Easter Day</u>	
		9.00am	Easter Day Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Easter Day Communion	St Alban's
Sunday	12th		<u>Second Sunday of Easter</u>	
		9.00am	Easter Day Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Easter Day Communion	St Alban's
Sunday	19th		<u>Third Sunday of Easter</u>	
		9.00am	Easter Day Communion	St John's
		10.30am	Easter Day Communion	St Alban's

St. Alban's and St. John's

Sunday 26th

Fourth Sunday of Easter

9.00am Easter Day Communion

St John's

10.30am Easter Day Communion

St Alban's

Sunday Gospel Readings for April 2026 :

29th March

5th

12th

Matthew 21.1-11

Matthew 28.1-10

John 20.19-end

19th

26th

Luke 24.13-35

Sneak Previews...

On Saturday morning April 25th, St Alban's and St John's will hold the summer term before God in prayer at a special **online prayer morning** (10.15am to 11.30am on Zoom)

Our next **Quiet Day** is on Saturday May 9th. The theme will be 'Remain in the Vine'. Venue tba

Earsdon and Backworth's **Annual Meeting** will follow the 10.30 service on Sunday May 10th in St Alban's

In obedience to the command of Jesus, we will spend time **waiting on God** for the gift of the Holy Spirit on the evening of Wednesday May 20th.



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All in the month of April

It was ...

125 years ago, on 3rd April 1901 that Richard D'Oyly Carte, theatrical impresario, died. He built the Savoy Theatre and the Palace Theatre in London, managed some of the most important theatrical stars of the era, and founded a touring opera company.

100 years ago, on 21st April 1926 that Queen Elizabeth II was born.

80 years ago, on 2nd April 1946 that Sue Townsend, writer and humourist, was born. Best known for her *Adrian Mole* series of novels.

75 years ago, on 2nd April 1951 that General Dwight D Eisenhower (later US President) became NATO's first Supreme Allied Commander. He assumed command of all Allied forces in the Western Mediterranean and Europe.

Also 75 years ago, on 17th April 1951 that the Peak District National Park was established. It was Britain's first National Park.

70 years ago, on 18th April 1956 that American film actress Grace Kelly married Prince Rainier III of Monaco and became Princess Grace of Monaco.

65 years ago, on 12th April 1961 that Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first person in space and the first person to orbit the Earth.

50 years ago, on 7th April 1976 that politician John Stonehouse, who infamously had tried to fake his own death in 1974, resigned from the Labour Party, leaving the government in a minority. After his death in 1988 it was revealed that he had been a Czech spy since 1962.

Also 40 years ago, on 26th April 1986 that the Chernobyl disaster took place in Ukraine, then within the Soviet Union. It was the world's worst nuclear power plant accident, killing 31 people outright, and leaking radiation across the western Soviet Union and Europe.

15 years ago, on 29th April 2011 that Prince William and Catherine (Kate) Middleton were married at Westminster Abbey in London. They were given the titles Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

10 years ago, on 22nd April 2016 that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was signed. It came into effect on 4th November 2016.

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.

					5	3	2	
					3	8	7	5
			8	7	1		6	
4			1		2	9		7
	6		9		8		5	
3		9	7		4			8
	1		5	8	6			
5	4	7	3					
	8	2	4					

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WORDSEARCH

April 2026

Even as Jesus ate that last Passover meal with his disciples, he warned them he was about to be betrayed. He took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them; he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them to drink. The Old Covenant, based on Law, was ticking away its final hours; the New Covenant, based on Christ's body and his blood, was about to be ushered in. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane that this fearful cup might be removed from him, but even more, that God's will might be done. And it was. From Easter onwards we can only approach God through his Son, Jesus Christ, not on our own merit.

Jesus
Ate
Last
Passover
Meal
Disciples
Warned
Betrayed
Bread
Blessed
Wine
Thanks
Drink
Covenant
Law
Old
New
Body
Blood
Gethsemane
Cup
Removed
Will
Easter
Approach
God

B	S	E	S	O	G	W	Y	E	G	S	H
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P	D	R	D	N	T	H	A	N	K	S	M
B	R	E	A	I	H	S	A	O	L	E	B
O	H	T	V	W	S	N	A	A	A	J	W
D	C	S	T	O	E	C	E	L	D	C	A
Y	A	A	V	V	M	V	I	E	U	K	R
B	O	E	O	A	A	E	S	P	N	U	N
I	R	C	R	V	N	S	R	I	L	B	E
A	P	G	D	B	E	T	R	A	Y	E	D
D	P	W	I	L	L	D	W	T	O	O	S
M	A	B	B	L	O	O	D	E	G	S	A

Church Contacts

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Church warden

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NE25 0SR

Tel: 07841 986 019

PCC Secretary

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Vicar

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Parish Priest

Mgr. Andrew Faley

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