

CENTREPIECE

April—May 2026

Free but donations are helpful



Confirmation with the Bishop of Stafford

New Kneeler from Stafford Lions

Memories of an 81 year old

Gratitude, Opportunity and Hope
Rich or Generous?

Bishop Michael of Lichfield to retire

One World Update—last report on Hospice Care Kenya



The Collegiate
Church of

Saint ⊕ Mary
in Stafford

Stafford Churches

Saint Chad : Collegiate Church of Saint Mary : Saint Leonard

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philip21taylor@gmail.com

PARISH ADMINISTRATOR /PARISH OFFICE

Mrs. Samantha Sagar Tel: 07593 928837

Email: parishoffice@stmarysstafford.org.uk

For Baptisms and Weddings:
Please contact the Parish Administrator

Monday 11am—3pm
Tuesday 11am—3pm
Wednesday 11am—3pm
Thursday 11am—3pm
Friday 11am—4pm

SERVICES IN STAFFORD CHURCHES

Usual weekly services

The three Parishes Eucharist on Sundays

8.30am at Saint Chads

10.00am at Saint Mary's

Tuesdays at noon in St Mary's - suspended for the time being

Wednesdays at 11.00am in St Chad's

Fridays at noon in St Chad's

First Sunday of the month at 10.00: a service at Saint Leonard's, Marston

There is a weekly newsheet sent out by email. If you are not receiving this and would like to, please contact the Parish Office.



From the Editors

As we write this edition we are preparing for Easter. It is Holy Week. Palm Sunday, marking Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, has taken place. And personally we remember taking those steps into Jerusalem ourselves during a pilgrimage in 2013. What a moving occasion it was.

We have the sombre services of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday coming up and the Easter Vigil on Saturday followed by the joyful time of Easter Sunday. I wonder how many of you will be watching some of the old classics on television, biblical dramas telling the story of Jesus's passion and resurrection like *The Ten Commandments*, *Ben-Hur*, *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. I know we will!

*If you have something interesting to share with us —please do.
It's always nice to hear from different people.*

Steve and Dee Turner

steveanddeeturner@yahoo.co.uk

From The Musing Ministers

Having been through Lent, walked with Jesus as he entered Jerusalem in great triumph on Palm Sunday, endured with him the torments and torture of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and the pain of his crucifixion and death on the afternoon of Good Friday, and then joyously celebrated his resurrection On Easter Sunday – ‘Alleluia! Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!’, Christians can often forget that the Easter Season continues through six Sundays of Easter, Ascension Day, when we witness our Lord ascending into heaven to be with his Father and our Father, and indeed onto Pentecost, when we will receive the Holy Spirit into our lives.

Easter is of course a joyous season, reminding us again each year that Jesus is truly the Son of God by his resurrection and his appearances to his disciples over the next 40 days before going to his Father, and we should celebrate that joy throughout the Easter Season, not just on Sundays.

The Easter Season also reminds us, if we need reminding, that Jesus is all about God's Love for us all, that's why he was prepared to sacrifice himself for us on the Cross to show to all then and now that God's love is unconditional and freely given to everyone, no matter who we are, what we

are, no matter what class, creed, gender, colour, race or sexual orientation, we are all loved by God. Sometimes we may not feel like that, but it is true. We do well to remember the mediaeval Christian saying *Ubi amor ibi Deus*. Where love is, there is God.



And our world desperately needs God's love right now.

I am always touched by a poem by Malcolm Guite,
Priest Poet

Father John

*And where is Jesus, this strange Easter day?
Not lost in our locked churches, anymore
Than he was sealed in that dark sepulchre.
The locks are loosed; the stone is rolled away,
And he is up and risen, long before,
Alive, at large, and making his strong way
Into the world he gave his life to save,
No need to seek him in his empty grave.*

*He might have been a wafer in the hands
Of priests this day, or music from the lips
Of red-robed choristers, instead he slips
Away from church, shakes off our linen bands
To don his apron with a nurse: he grips
And lifts a stretcher, soothes with gentle hands
The frail flesh of the dying, gives them hope,
Breathes with the breathless, lends them strength to cope.*

*On Thursday we applauded, for he came
And served us in a thousand names and faces
Mopping our sickroom floors and catching traces
Of that corona which was death to him:
Good Friday happened in a thousand places
Where Jesus held the helpless, died with them
That they might share his Easter in their need,
Now they are risen with him, risen indeed.*

Alleluia! Christ is Risen. He is Risen Indeed Alleluia!



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

House of Bread (HOB) have a new opportunity to share with the wider faith community via Love Stafford.

Opening at the end of this month, March, HoB will be partnering with TurningPoint (www.turning-point.co.uk) to help deliver a MPFT Service Level Agreement to provide and support an open access cafe.

"Connections Cafe" is the current working title. This will offer a seven day a week safe place for agencies and statutory authorities and relevant services to be able to use for occasions where A and E would not be the best option for the individual.

What HoB is looking for are volunteers to help be part of the "meet and greet" aspect of the arrival experience at the Cafe.

If you would like to have more details or indeed want to speak to us, can I ask you to email info@hobstafford.co.uk. We will then be able to share more of what the Connections Cafe is all about and the significance of this creative solution to the support of the vulnerable in Stafford.

If you want to check out our website to understand what we do and why, as well as check out credentials, please visit www.hobstafford.co.uk.

Thank you for your support past and present, and please include HoB in your prayers as always.

Blessings in His name.

Will

"The King will reply," Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. Matthew Ch 25 V 40

The Lion's Club Kneeler

We were pleased to welcome 11 members of Stafford Lions to the Eucharist on Sunday 1st March. They came to present a kneeler to be added to those which already grace our pews.

The first thing most visitors notice when they enter St Mary's is the display of over 200 kneelers. They demonstrate a great deal careful embroidery but they also celebrate the work of many groups and organisations who do so much good in the local community.

Stafford Lions has 31 members and has recently raised funds to support; Prostate Awareness Testing, The Roy Castle Cancer Charity, The Child Sight Project (which aims to provide eye tests for all school children in Stafford) as well as organising the Annual Food Bank Collection across the town.

The Lions are a national and international organisation whose motto is "Ordinary People doing amazing things." Without doubt this would make a worthy mission statement for the Christian community. It's encouraging to know that we have so much in common with other like minded people.

Members of Lions also act as stewards to help keep St Mary's open during the week. One member has worked to produce an E-guide to the church which can be accessed on smartphones from QR Codes placed around the building. This is also much appreciated.



Pail Milgate-Scarrott

**Once again
thank you to
the Lions and
with God's
blessing may
your work
prosper.**

Michael
Newman

Special Memories from an 81 year old!

Geoff McKenzie

Having read the Venerable Michael's contribution regarding Stafford Lions, I truly acknowledge gratefully his article in the magazine. As the current second longest member of Stafford Lions, I continue, with John Kemp, our oldest member, to open up our wonderful church from 10.00 am to 2.00 pm, together with other Lions, including Pauline Guy and her husband Roger. Pauline designed and produced our kneeler, during considerable physical discomfort.

Other members, Dave Lewis and Phil Grainger worked hard designing and producing the E-guide in support of visitors to our church.

As a longstanding member of Stafford Lions, I'm also personally proud of my history with St Mary's, which goes back to my teenage years in the 60s when the Rev Dudley Hodges was the Rector. Under him, was an amazing team of Curates, which also embraced St Bertelin's church. These included Tony Bird, Roger Tallont, David Tustin, John Dilnot, Christopher Nankovich and others. They were an amazing team!

Tony Bird was also a medic. He organised exciting things for us as youngsters, like making and using a raft on the River Sow from the pub where the current 'Essence of the Orient' prevails.

There was also a youth group called 'Companions of Christ' including youngsters from many local churches. We had an annual musical show in the Oddfellows Hall.

Mr Tucker and Mr Webb were the Church Wardens. There was a superb choir of boys and men under John Anson. I remember Rodney Heep from that choir. Gilbert Matthews was the organist, when the amazing Harrison organ was in operation, and filled the church with the most glorious rich and mellow sound. Dick Warrilow was in charge of the bellringers, which included a local shopkeeper Harold Garbett. The tenor bell was also the clock's 'hour' bell, and at over 19cwt took two ringers to raise every Sunday and Wednesday evening practice night. Some ringers retired to The Bird in Hand afterwards!

Special memories from an 81 year old!





A Report from St. Mary's One World Group

After two and a half years of supporting Hospice Care Kenya, we're proposing to move on to a new project in the summer of 2026. Donations towards the work of HCK will continue to be gratefully received until June. Thank you to everyone who's supported the charity; with your support we've helped make a difference to the lives of many patients in Kenya suffering the effects of life-limiting illnesses.

In this last report on the work of HCK, we're looking at the help that has been given to fathers in Kenya who traditionally are unwilling or unable to know how to support children facing illness. The following report is taken from the HCK website.

Helping fathers, supporting families

"Caring for a child with a life-limiting illness can be overwhelming. Many families face stigma, isolation and a lack of understanding from the community. In Kwale County, Kenya, fathers often feel unsure of how to help, or are hesitant to get involved due to cultural expectations. This can leave mothers carrying most of the caregiving responsibilities alone.

Hospice Care Kenya is working to change this. Our community-based project is supporting fathers to take an active role in caring for their children while building stronger, more supportive communities.

Why this project matters

Children living with conditions like cerebral palsy, cancer and sickle cell disease deserve care, comfort and a chance to thrive. Families need guidance, support and understanding to navigate these challenges.

This project focuses on:

- *Encouraging fathers to embrace their caregiving role*
- *Reducing stigma and challenging harmful myths about childhood illness*
- *Connecting families to local health services*
- *Improving quality of life for children and their loved ones*
- *By working through community health volunteers and community leaders, the project ensures support reaches the families who need it most.*
- *Day care for children with cerebral palsy*
- *Fathers' peer support group*
- *Community engagement to foster acceptance and understanding*

What we've achieved so far

Thanks to the support of our donors and partners, the project has already made a real difference:

Training and community engagement

- *190 people have been trained in awareness of childhood illness and home-based care, including fathers, community health volunteers and community leaders*
- *80 community health volunteers are now helping families access care, reducing stigma and providing ongoing support*
- *Regular community dialogues with local leaders are promoting acceptance and understanding*

Support for children and families

- *58 children with palliative care needs are now receiving care & support*
- *Monthly peer-led support groups are helping fathers share experiences and learn together*
- *Day-care sessions are providing safe spaces for children and parents*

Changing lives

- *Fathers who were once unsure of how to support their children are now actively involved.*
- *Families are seeking help earlier, reducing pain and improving quality of life.*
- *One father of a child with cerebral palsy shared: ‘I did not want to be associated with disability because my family said my child was bewitched. Now I understand that cerebral palsy is a health condition and not a curse.’*
- *Another father said: ‘I thought I was the only one with a differently abled child till I attended the peer support group. I hated to discuss my child with anyone because I thought they were just laughing at me. I’m glad that we can share and learn openly during the support group meetings.’*

Projects like this are only possible because of supporters like you. By helping us train more fathers, provide home visits and run peer support groups, you can ensure that more children and families in Kwale County live with dignity, comfort and hope.”



A group of fathers attending a peer support

For further details of the work of HCK, see the website: [Hospice Care Kenya Charity](#)

Gratitude, Opportunity and Hope

What is it to be rich and what is it to be generous?

Ten million pound coins on a desert island would be as useless as a tissue paper canoe. Less useful, because burning the canoe would at least keep you warm. Physical money on its own has no value – you can't eat it, you can't build a shelter out of it, you can't easily use it to keep warm or dry, yet it has a peculiar hold over us.

Why? Probably because of what it represents. Bankers say that money serves three basic functions: it is a medium of exchange, a unit of account and a store of value. It makes buying and selling things easy, we can use it as a way of keeping count of our wealth and it is a way of holding onto wealth.

For example, if I tie up my wealth in cabbages, it wouldn't last very long. Two or three weeks after cutting the cabbages, they'd have no value because they'd be mushy and revolting. But if I sell them when they are fresh and green, I can get £100 to put in the bank to use whenever and wherever I want.

These very useful things about money are also at the core of some of our worst temptations. If I use money to buy and sell, I am distancing myself from the thing that I am buying and it makes it easier to do things that I wouldn't do if I was close up.

Once, if I wanted to swap my cabbages for your wheat, I'd have to meet you to do that. Today if I want to buy some cheap clothes, I don't have to take my vegetables all the way to a sweat shop in the far east and see the conditions of the children there. I can use my £100 in the bank to pay for clothes in a shop without worrying where they came from. Or if I send my struggling widowed sister £100 every month to help with living costs but never visit her, I never see that she needs company as much as she needs food.

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As you think about your life, do you control your money or does your money control you? Do we hold onto more than we could ever spend in our lifetime when others in the world have so little? Can we be more generous with our money and our time? How can we use our money to bring hope to the hopeless and renew our own faith in the God who is always faithful?

Sam Rushton,
Chief Executive Officer and Diocesan
Secretary of Lichfield Diocese



Dates for next
QUIET MONDAYS
at Shallowford House
13 April, 18 May, 8 June, 13 July
10.00 am to 3.30 pm

a gentle day of devotion, quiet time and worship

£28 including lunch
To book call 01785 760233

Further information about these Quiet Days from Sheila Young

Bishop Michael to retire in September

After ten years as Bishop of Lichfield, the Rt Revd Dr Michael Igrave has chosen St Chad's Day, 2 March, to announce his intention to retire. HM the King has graciously given his permission for him to resign the See of Lichfield at the end of September 2026 when he will have been ordained for 44 years. Bishop Michael shared the news with clergy and lay ministers gathered to celebrate St Chad's Day in Lichfield Cathedral late on Monday afternoon, 2 March. It was ten years exactly since his nomination as 99th Bishop of Lichfield.



Bishop Michael speaking at the festal evensong for St Chad's Day with the entire College of Canons present.

Announcing his retirement plans, Bishop Michael referred to the constant inspiration of St Chad over his ten years, describing himself as “humbled to be amongst one of the successors of St Chad, our first and greatest bishop.” He continued, commending Chad's example: “Chad was the first to bring to Mercia the life-giving, peace-making, soul-restoring gospel of Jesus Christ. As we face the challenge of re-evangelising our contemporary Mercia, I am convinced that we can only do that by walking in his steps of kindness, friendliness and humility in the service of others.”

In these last months of his ministry, Bishop Michael will be as occupied with this work just as he has been for the last ten years. It will be both business as usual and continuing to lay the foundations of the diocesan strategy for the coming few years. It will also include many opportunities for people across Lichfield Diocese to meet Bishop Michael before he leaves.

Speaking about his time in Lichfield Diocese and thanking those who share the task of ministry across the 1800 square miles of the diocese in 423 parishes and over 500 churches, in every community of Staffordshire, North Shropshire and the Black Country, Bishop Michael observes: “I know that I have been blessed over the last ten years to work in one of the friendliest, most down to earth and least pretentious parts of the Church of England; thank you from my heart.”

Responding to the announcement, the Rt Revd Jan McFarlane, Dean of Lichfield, said: “The time for farewells is, thankfully, some months’ away but as Bishop Michael prepares to retire we know already just how very much he will be missed. In the leading of our Diocese our Bishop has modelled true servant leadership, as a prayerful, wise and learned teacher and pastor. We will always remember his openness and honesty following the death of his son, Frank, when even in the very depths of his bereavement he courageously shared with us what he’d learned of God. A prayerful Bishop who loves God and loves his flock is a true gift. We will be holding Bishop Michael and Julia in our prayers as they prepare to say their farewells to a diocese they’ve served with distinction.”



Bishop Michael on the day his appointment was announced in 2016

About the Bishop of Lichfield

The Bishop of Lichfield’s Role: he is the Diocesan Bishop of Lichfield Diocese and the chief pastor or shepherd of Christ’s flock in Staffordshire, North Shropshire and the Black Country. He is guardian of the faith, proclaimer of the gospel of God’s kingdom and leader of mission in the diocese. His responsibilities are shared with three area bishops: of Shrewsbury, Stafford and Wolverhampton, and with the Suffragan Bishop of Oswestry, and with the four archdeacons: of Salop, Stoke-Up-on-Trent, Lichfield and Walsall, with the Dean of the Cathedral who is the senior parish priest of the diocese and with over 300 clergy and 150 licensed lay ministers in the 423 parishes of the diocese, supported by active retired clergy and lay ministers too. Bishop Michael is one of 26 Bishops in the House of Lords, introduced there by length of service in 2023. He is by virtue of office a member of the General Synod, the Governing Body of the Church of England. He chairs the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England, and is also a member of its Faith and Order Commission. He has a long-held interest and expertise in ecumenical and inter-faith matters, work for which he was awarded the OBE in 2012.

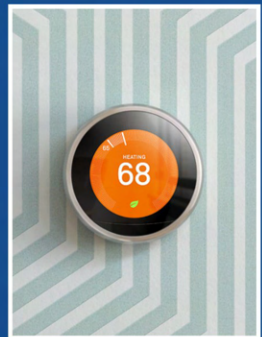
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Saturday Morning Coffee Concerts at St Mary's



April 11th	Tim Sagar (organ)
April 25th	Quartz (brass and voice)
May 9th	Beautiful Baroque!
May 23rd	Rachel Fillheart (clarinet) and John Gough (piano)

All concerts begin at 11:00am

Doors open 10:30am when tea and coffee will be available.
All are welcome. Admission free but donations very welcome!



Tuesday 21 April 2026

The Nature of the Beast! Understanding Fabulous Animals in Medieval Art

Lecturer Jonathan Foyle

Medieval bestiaries are wondrously colourful worlds, blending fact with fiction, morality with mythology. They represent an understanding of the physical world.

Tuesday 19 May 2026

Icons and the Art of Byzantium

Lecturer Christopher Newlands

The religious art of the Eastern Church has become beloved as objects of veneration by people of faith, as well as being admired as fine works of art.

Venue is Stafford Gatehouse Theatre at 1.45pm.

Membership for the year starting on April 1st costs just £60 for 10 lectures.

Guest attendance fee is £10

For more information please see our website: www.theartssocietystafford.org.uk

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Confirmation Service Sunday 8th March

Father John

Sunday 8th March was a very special day for members of the congregations of both St Mary's Church and St Chad's Church, as they gathered together,



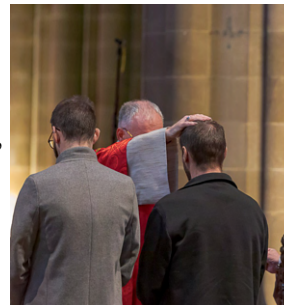
with friends from St Leonard's Church, to witness friends from both congregations being confirmed by the Bishop of Stafford.

We send our very best wishes and our love to David, Anthony, Dylan, Michael, Samantha, Leighton, Melanie and Alexander from St Mary's and to Edward, Anniken and James from St Chad's, as they continue their journeys in the faith of Christ.



(They are featured on the front cover).

Photos by Paul Milgate-Scarrott



R N Clarke

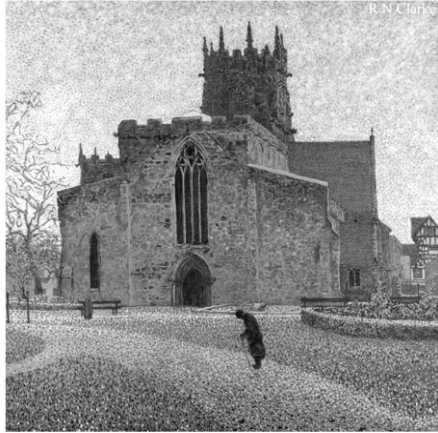
Paintings, drawings and
watercolours of
R N Clarke

Gallery address

R N Clarke Fine Art
Suite No1, St Mary's Mews,
St Mary's Place,
Stafford ST16 2AP

The Gallery is **Open by Appointment**
please telephone 07874 708372
or email
richard.n.clarke@outlook.com

The Gallery also holds occasional
Open Days



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CHORAL EVENSONG celebrates the 100th birthday of Saint St Mary in England

Sunday 19th April
6.30pm at St Mary's




The Choir of the Collegiate Church
Director of Music: Margaret Outen
Organist: Tim Sagar

Stafford Churches
The Stafford Churches' Association

Book Sale Plus

Saturday 2nd May
10.30-2.30 at St Chad's



For books and more!

ST LEONARDS CHURCH

Spring Beetle Drive



Saturday 18th April 2026
7.30PM

AT NORTHEM COMMUNITY CENTRE, HOLMCROFT ROAD, STAFFORD, ST16 1JG

Evening includes Beetle Drive Game and light refreshments

Tickets: Adults £6 Children £4
Tickets available on the door

Enquiries: stleonardmarston@outlook.com

Raffle tickets will be on sale during the evening with the raffle being held on the night. Fantastic prizes to be won!

A Feast of A Capella
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New Gifts for St Mary's

Gold Chasuble

Having already provided some beautiful new Clerical Chasubles, which have been admired by everyone, the Friends of St Mary's have now agreed to purchase a similar Gold one for very special occasions.

Paschal Candle Stand

We are pleased to let you know that Stafford Burgesses will be making a new wooden candle stand for St Mary's, as a gift. It will be hand crafted by two of the Burgesses. They have now found a supplier for the size of wood they need and hope to start work on it in April.

Fridge Magnets on Sale

One of the ways in which we raise money for St Mary's is by producing and selling our own fridge magnets of Stafford. They make great little gifts or souvenirs of Stafford for visitors and former residents. They feature St Mary's, Church Lane, the High House, Market Square, Victoria Park and the Castle. They are on sale at the back of the church along with the greetings cards. And don't forget—if the church is closed they are also on sale at Snapdragon Cards and Gifts in the square opposite.



We join together every week day morning at 9 am online to say Morning Prayer and we would love you to join us!

Just one day or five, and join just to listen or to take part.

It is a wonderful way to start the day!

Interested?

Contact Rev. Pam Merriott (pamamerriott@gmail.com)

or Ruth Duffy. (r.m.duffy@me.com)

The Soup Kitchen



This beautiful 16th Century eating house offers the ideal place to meet your friends and is described in The Times as "Stafford's hidden gem". Visitors from all over the world regularly return and comment 'there is nowhere else that compares in atmosphere, traditional old-fashioned service and genuine warm welcome which is unique to Stafford's Soup Kitchen.

Church Lane Antiques



A wide selection of antiques for sale, including furniture, pictures, pottery, glass, silver and jewellery.

We are always interested in buying; from single items to house clearance.

32 Mill Street
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Tel: 07770 870140 or 07795 023857

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Open Friday & Saturday
10am-4pm

CHURCH CONTACTS

St. Mary's

Churchwardens.....Sue Savage
Paul Milgate-Scarrott
Bellringers Selwyn Jones..... 242116

One World Group.....Pauline Roycroft .. 244556

Julian Meeting.....Sheila Young..... 252023

Director of Music.....Margaret Outen....253182
Email: margaretouten@hotmail.co.uk
Planned Giving Secretary....Chris Bown..... 229192
..... Email: chrisbown@btinternet.com

St. Chad's

Churchwardens.....Ian Carr.....07714913079

St. Leonard's

ChurchwardenGail Wray01889 271176

WEBSITES:



Website for StaffordChurches: www.staffordchurches.uk
St Mary's Website: www.stmarysstafford.org.uk
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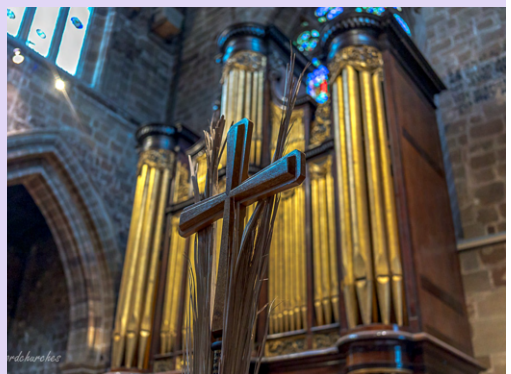




Palm Sunday

Our Palm Sunday began with the blessing of palms at St Chad's Church, followed by a procession through the town centre to St Mary's Church for the Eucharist and proclamation of the passion.

Photos from Paul Milgate-Scarrott



Contributions to Centrepiece:

If you would like to advertise an event, comment on one you have attended or just share something interesting with us— then please do so.

Email us at: steveanddeeturner@yahoo.co.uk

Deadline is about 10 days before the first Sunday of the month.