

Rector's Ramblings – February 2026 (Love in the Lean Months)

By the time this magazine reaches your doormats, we will be navigating that curious, "in-between" stretch of the British year. February is often described by poets and artists as the month of "fill dyke," where the grey skies seem determined to soak the earth, and the initial excitement of the New Year has long since faded into the reality of damp mornings and early sunsets.

However, as we look at the calendar for February 2026, our eyes are naturally drawn to the 14th. High street windows are already awash with Hearts, Roses, and Teddy bears. While there is nothing wrong with celebrating romantic love, for many of us, Valentine's Day can feel a little narrow - or even isolating. This year, I want to invite us all to look beyond the roses and explore a more enduring kind of affection.

In the Christian tradition, we often speak of *Agape*—a Greek word for a love that is selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional. This isn't the flutter of a heartbeat; it is the steady pulse of a community that looks out for its neighbours.

As we move past the 14th, we find ourselves on the threshold of a very different season. This year, Ash Wednesday falls on 18th February, marking the beginning of Lent. It is a poignant timing. If Valentine's Day is about the "highs" of affection, Lent is about the "depths" of devotion. It is a forty-day journey that asks us to strip away the distractions and focus on what truly matters.

When people think of Lent, they often think of "giving things up"—chocolate, wine, or perhaps social media. While these small acts of self-discipline are valuable, I wonder if this February we might consider a "Lent of Action."

Instead of merely subtracting something from our lives, could we add something that reflects that *Agape* love?

- **Checking in** on a neighbour who rarely gets visitors.
- **Volunteering** an hour at the local food bank or community café.
- **Committing** to a daily moment of silence to reflect on our place in the world.

Lent is essentially "soul-gardening." Just as the snowdrops (those "fair maids of February") are currently pushing through the cold soil in our churchyards, Lent is the time for us to prepare the ground of our own hearts for the new life of Easter.

Life in our parish is rarely static. Beyond the quiet reflection of Lent, we have much to look forward to (check the Benefice website for details!)

As we walk through this month together—through the rain, the mud, and the occasional burst of pale winter sunshine - let us remember that we are never walking alone. Whether you are celebrating a long-term romance or finding this time of year particularly quiet, you are a valued thread in the fabric of this parish and community.

May the peace of the season be with you all.

Mark

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