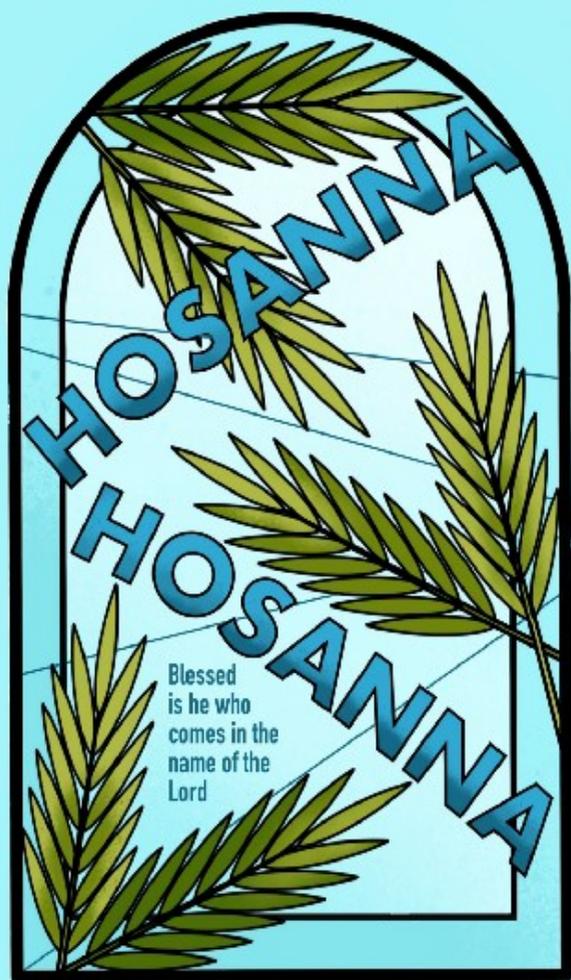


OCTAVO



The Voice of
The Stour Vale Benefice
£1 March 2026 Vol. 24 Issue 6

Stour Vale Benefice

Additional Services during March



Every Tuesday during Lent

Morning Prayer—9:30am West Stour Church

Compline online for Lent

3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st March—Full details page 11

For Lent Lunches see page 13

Mothering Sunday 15th March

West Stour 10:30am—Communion Service for
Mothering Sunday



If you do not wish to attend the Mothering Sunday service, the other services on the 15th will be focused on the 4th Sunday of Lent.

For details of services in Holy Week see page 17

Stour Vale Benefice

Regular Mid-Week Services / Benefice events February

Every Wednesday

Holy Communion 10:30am East Stour Church

Monday 16th March

Knit and Natter Group—2:30pm East Stour Village Hall

Tuesday 24th March

Benefice Lunch 12:30pm Udder Farm
Please remember to pre-book your food

Friday 27th March

Stour Vale Prayer Group 2pm East Stour Church

From the Vicar

Dear Friends

In our Ash Wednesday service this year, I spoke about the call to “declutter” our lives — not simply our cupboards and lofts, but our hearts, to make more space for God. As we journey further into Lent, it seems worth continuing that theme as it always seems challenging for all of us.



On a recent day off, we had lunch with a long-standing friend who is preparing to downsize and move house with her husband and elderly mother. Moving house is often described as one of life’s most stressful experiences, and she is certainly feeling the strain — particularly as she confronts just how much they have accumulated over the years.

She had organised Auctioneers to come to value inherited tea sets and silver. Apparently, there are boxes unopened since the last move. Her grown-up children still have belongings stored at home, “full of memories,” but not yet reclaimed. Then, from her handbag, she produced a small pouch she had discovered while sorting. Inside were gold-rimmed spectacles, gold false teeth, and a gold dental plate — heirlooms of a rather unexpected kind and my friend had no idea as to which of her ancestors they had belonged! Our reaction was instinctive horror, though thankfully lunch had not yet arrived, so we were not too put off!

The story is amusing, but it makes a serious point. We human beings are very good at collecting things. We fill cupboards, attics, garages and sheds with possessions — some useful, many not. Yet the greater danger is not household clutter but spiritual clutter.

On Ash Wednesday we have the opportunity of being “ashed” as a sign of penitence and of our own mortality, accompanied by the words:

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ”.

This is a reminder of the fragility of our lives and to help us re-focus on what is truly important.

In St Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus warns us: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”



From the Vicar—continued

He knows how easily our hearts become attached to the wrong things. The clutter in our lives — whether material goods, habits, ambitions, resentments, or distractions — can obstruct our relationship with God.

The prophet Joel issues a passionate call from God: “Return to me with all your heart.” Not a half-hearted gesture, but a wholehearted turning. Ash Wednesday confronts us with that same invitation. It is not about gloomy self-denial for its own sake; it is about coming back to the Lord who is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.”

St Paul, writing to the Corinthians, urges us: “Be reconciled to God... See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!” Lent is not merely a season on the Church calendar; it is a present opportunity. Now is the time.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus speaks about three traditional Lenten disciplines: almsgiving, prayer and fasting. Yet his emphasis is striking. He is less concerned with the outward act than with the inward intention. “Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them.” If our giving, praying or fasting is performed for admiration, that admiration is all the reward we will receive.

Instead, Jesus calls us into intimacy with the Father. Give in secret. Pray in secret. Fast without drawing attention to yourself. Lent is about the quiet reordering of the heart. It is about making space for God, not impressing other people.

Perhaps the “clutter” we are called to address this Lent is not chocolate, beer or wine — unless they truly have an unhealthy hold over us — but something deeper.

It may be a pattern of busyness that leaves no time for prayer. It may be an anxiety that consumes our thoughts. It may be a long-held grievance, an over-attachment to possessions, or an endless scrolling through meaningless social media, all distractions that dull our awareness of God.

Fasting, in that sense, becomes a way of clearing space. Giving possessions away and to charity loosens our grip on what we think we own. Prayer recentres us on our one true treasure.

God longs for us to return to him — not in public display, but in honesty and trust. Lent invites us to examine where our treasure truly lies, because “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

From the Vicar—continued

As we continue this Lenten journey, perhaps each of us might gently ask:
What is cluttering my heart?

What might I set aside, so that I may return more fully to God?

May I wish you a holy and blessed Lent, a time to deepen your relationship with
Jesus who loves each one of us more than we can ever imagine.

Clare

Prayer for March

Disturb us, Lord

Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas
Where storms will show your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.
We ask You to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push into the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

Attributed to Sir Francis Drake, 16th Century



Stour Vale Benefice Newsletter



Are you receiving our weekly newsletter by email?

It gives details of our church services, news of our events happening across the Stour Vale parishes, plus prayers, reflections, encouragement and much more!

If you would like to receive a copy by email each week, just send your email address to: octavoeditorsvb@googlemail.com with the subject title "Newsletter"

Don't miss out!

STOUR VALE BENEFICE FACEBOOK PAGE



Please search 'The Church of England in the Stour Vale' in Facebook or use/click on the link below to find us.

Or go via the Benefice Website—there's a link on the home page.

'Follow' us to keep up to date, and please do 'share' the good news!



The Church of England in the Stour Vale

www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089949903748

Stour Vale Prayer Group

We meet once a month for a short prayer meeting in which we bring our own concerns and the needs of the world in these troubled times.

Please join us on the Last Friday of the Month—
2pm at East Stour Church

All welcome!





THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**DRAW
NEAR**
LIFE-GIVING
HABITS FOR **LENT**

Online Compline in Lent

Every Tuesday

from 24th February to 31st March.

7.30pm

via the Google Meet link:

<https://meet.google.com/rbv-csqr-xqu>

The link will be published in the newsletter each week and found on the Benefice website.

For more info, or if you would like the link emailed to you each week, please contact

Fiona: fjhedges1@gmail.com



Stour Valę Benefice

Lent Lunches

For more details see the news from the villages—
please check if you need to let the hosts know you
are planning to attend:



Wednesday 4th March—Todber 12-2:00pm

Hosted at Copse House Moorside

Thursday 5th March—Kington Magna 12-2:00pm

Hosted in the village hall

Wednesday 11th March—West Stour 12:30pm

Hosted at The Walled Garden

Thursday 19th March—Buckhorn Weston 12:30pm

Hosted at New Barn House

Friday 27th March—Stour Provost 12:30pm

Hosted in the village hall

Saturday 28th March—East Stour 12-2pm

Hosted in the village hall

Stour Valę Benefice

Benefice Lunch

***Please note: we need to pre-order food, so let us know your
choice when you book your place—see their websites for menus.***

Tuesday 24th March—12:30pm

at **Udder Farm** —do join us for a relaxed chat over a meal in
pleasant surroundings. For bookings: please contact Revd Clare or
Jill by Tuesday 17th March.

The Udder Farm Shop Manor Farm, Front Street, East Stour
SP8 5LQ

<https://www.theudderfarmshop.co.uk/restaurant/restaurant-menus/>

The Way of the Cross

'Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me.' (Luke 9: 23)

These words of Jesus are spoken at a turning point in the gospel. Jesus challenged the disciples about His identity and their commitment to Him: *'who do the crowds say I am?'* (Luke 9:18). It is at this point that He *'resolutely set out for Jerusalem'* (9:51). On our journey through Lent, as we look to the events of Good Friday and Easter, what are our priorities as Jesus' disciples?

To deny ourselves: this means to saying *No* to ourselves and *Yes* to God, as we humbly submit our will to His. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane *'not My will but Yours be done.'* (Luke 22:42). It means putting Jesus first in everything: our work, family, ambitions, possessions, marriage, finance and future. We will not be guided by self-interest, but by allowing God to show us how to live in His way.

To take up our cross: this reminds us that the disciple is not immune from suffering, as we follow Jesus along the way of the cross. Just as He carried His cross to Golgotha, we cannot avoid experiencing suffering in a fallen world. Every day we are to live in a way that demonstrates to everyone that we have died to ourselves, our selfish ways and ambitions, and seek to live for God. It means breaking old selfish habits and ways of thinking, as we allow God to renew us by His Spirit.

Perhaps that is something we should learn—to wait for Jesus our Master, to be always obedient to Him, to serve Him with all our hearts, and to bear the mark of His grace in our lives.

In all of this we cannot lose, because like Jesus, it is only through death that we find God's new life. *'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose.'* (Jim Elliot).



Stour Vale Benefice
**BREAKFAST
CHURCH**

SUNDAY 15TH MARCH

Breakfast served from 8.45am

Worship 9.00am - 9.30am

Buckhorn Weston Village Hall (SP8 5HF)



Scan the QR code for more information,

Or contact Fiona Hedges: fjhedges1@gmail.com; 01747 838 942

Knit and Natter

Whether you'd just like some company and to knit some simple squares, or would like to learn how to make anything from beautiful baby clothes to creative jumpers, then come along to Knit and Natter on the 3rd Monday of the month.



The next meeting is on **Monday 16th March**
2:30-4:30pm in East Stour village hall.

Stour Vale Singers:

Stour Vale Singers choir meet weekly on Tuesday afternoons (2 o'clock for 2.30 until 4 o'clock), in West Stour Village Hall. Whilst some music reading skills are desirable this is by no means essential, enthusiasm and commitment (but not obligation) being far more important.

All are welcome. if you are interested, do contact me for more information: (dagrierson@hotmail.com)

David

Holy Week Services

Palm Sunday 29th March

10:30am—Stour Provost



Family Friendly Benefice Service with dramatized readings.
Followed by tea/coffee in the village hall—all welcome.

Monday 30th March – Taizé Service – 2:30pm West Stour Village Hall



This will be a meditative half hour of mainly Taize chants with scripture, prayer and silence.
The service will be followed by tea and hot cross buns.

Tuesday 31st March – online Compline for Lent – 7:30pm

This will be the final Compline for Lent online—details for joining are on page 11.

Wednesday 1st April – Holy Communion – 10:30am at East Stour

Thursday 2nd April – Maundy Thursday – Agape Meal

6:30pm at East Stour—full details in April's edition of Octavo and the weekly Newsletter

Good Friday

Hot Cross Bun service –10:30am at Todber

(Please note this is subject to the roof repairs being completed so please check the April Edition of Octavo/Newsletter)

Reflections at the Cross – 2pm Stour Provost

A gentle time of reflection on the events of Holy Week

Easter Day

Sunrise Service – Fifehead Magdalen – 6:30am

Gather in the churchyard by 6:30am for the 6:36am sunrise—dogs welcome—tea/coffee and Hot Cross buns after the service.

Family Easter Service – Buckhorn Weston 9:30am

A Family friendly lay led service with an Egg Hunt for the children after the service.

Benefice Easter service – 11:00am Kington Magna

Family friendly service including Communion

Services for the
Stour Vale Benefice
March 2026



Sunday	1 st March 2 nd Sunday of Lent	8 th March 3 rd Sunday of Lent	15 th March 4 th of Lent/ Mothering Sunday	22 nd March 5 th Sunday of Lent
Buckhorn Weston		9:30am Parish Communion	8:45am Breakfast Church In the Village Hall	10:30am Morning Worship—CW
East Stour	11:00am Parish Communion		10:30am Morning Worship	
Fifehead Magdalen		6:30pm Parish Communion BCP		6:30pm Evensong BCP
Kington Magna		11:00am Morning Worship—CW		11:00am Parish Communion
Stour Provost		10:30am Morning Worship—CW		9:15am Parish Communion
Todber	9:15am* Parish Communion		10:00am* Morning Prayer BCP	
West Stour	10:00am Morning Worship—CW		10:30am Mothering Sunday Communion	

CW – Common Worship

BCP = Book of Common Prayer

***Please note:**

at the time of publication **Todber church** was still closed which means the services listed here are subject to progress on the roof restoration work – please see the Newsletter to confirm if they have restarted or not.

Breakfast Church is open to the whole Benefice – more details from Fiona.

Readings for March 2026

1st March

Genesis 12.1–4a
Romans 4.1–5, 13–17

2nd Sunday of Lent (Purple or Lent array)

Psalm 121
John 3.1–17

8th March

Exodus 17.1–7
Romans 5.1–11

3rd Sunday of Lent (Purple or Lent array)

Psalm 95
John 4.5–42

15th March

1 Samuel 16.1–13
Ephesians 5.8–14

4th Sunday of Lent (Purple or Lent array)

Psalm 23
John 9

15th March

Exodus 2.1–10
2 Corinthians 1.3–7

Mothering Sunday (Purple or Lent array)

Psalm 34.11–20
John 19.25b–27

22nd March

Ezekiel 37.1–14
Romans 8.6–11

5th Sunday of Lent (Purple or Lent array)

Psalm 130
John 11.1–45

29th March

Liturgy of the Palms:

Matthew 21.1–11

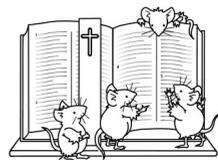
Palm Sunday (Red)

Psalm 118.1–2, 19–end

Liturgy of the Passion:

Isaiah 50.4–9a
Philippians 2.5–11

Psalm 31.9–16
Matthew 26.14—end of 27



Additional Services in March

Additional Services for Holy Week:

Sunday 29th March – Benefice Fifth Sunday Service – Palm Sunday

10:30am at Stour Provost – followed by Tea & Coffee in the village hall

Monday 30th March – Taizé Service – 2:30pm in West Stour Village Hall

Tuesday 31st March – online Compline for Lent – 7:30pm

Wednesday 1st April – Holy Communion – 10:30am at East Stour

Thursday 2nd April – Maundy Thursday – Agape Meal– 6:30pm at East Stour

Good Friday – Hot Cross Bun service –10:30am at Todber

Reflections at the Cross – 2pm Stour Provost