

across **ROYSTON**

February 2026



The magazine of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Royston Parish
Church, part of the worldwide Anglican Communion

DID YOU KNOW?

You can access an on-line version of the Across Royston Magazine on our website www.roystonparishchurch.org.uk

Like to test your general knowledge?



Then come to Royston Parish Church quiz.



WHEN: Saturday 14th February, 7 for 7:30 pm

WHERE: Royston Parish Church

WHO: Teams of up to 8, £8 per person

We need to know numbers in advance, so we have enough tables prepared. To register a team or interest in being put in a team, contact: Duncan Rodgers

email: duncanrodgers66@gmail.com

Licensed Bar

Bring your own nibbles. Opportunity to enter a raffle on the night.

All proceeds in aid of church funds.

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Lent Course: *Draw Near – Life-Giving Habits for Lent*

As we approach the season of Lent, we invite everyone in the parish to take part in our Lent course, which will guide us through these weeks of preparation and lead us into Holy Week and the celebration of Easter.

This year, our shared Lent journey will be shaped by the Church of England Lent resource, ***Draw Near: Life-Giving Habits for Lent***. The course is centred around a booklet (also available online) offering a short daily reflection for every day of Lent, helping us to deepen our relationship with God through simple, prayerful habits woven into everyday life.

Our Sunday preaching and home groups will be closely connected throughout the season, creating a shared rhythm of worship, reflection, and conversation across the whole church. Each week of Lent will focus on a particular theme, introduced in church on the preceding Sunday (or at the Ash Wednesday service) and then explored further in home groups in ways that suit each group's own rhythm and style.

To support your daily discipleship beyond these gatherings, you can also make use of the **Everyday Faith** app which is a free daily devotional from the Church of England offering carefully curated reflections, Bible readings and prayers that will complement the booklets throughout lent. You can download the app on **iOS and Android** (search for *Everyday Faith* in your app store or visit the official Church of England site for links [Everyday Faith | The Church of England](#)).

Home groups will meet weekly during Lent where possible, offering space for prayer, reflection, and mutual support as we walk this journey together.

If you are not currently part of a home group, Lent is a gentle and welcoming opportunity to experience one. Some groups are able to welcome one or two additional people for the Lent period only, with no expectation to continue afterwards. It is simply an invitation to share in conversation, prayer, and fellowship during this season. There will also be some other groups that will form just for the season of lent.

Lent is a time to slow down, draw nearer to God, and allow space for renewal. Whether through daily reflection, Sunday worship, or meeting with others during the week, we hope *Draw Near: Life-Giving Habits for Lent* will help us grow in faith, hope, and love as we journey together towards Easter.

Further details about booklets and home groups will be shared soon. If you would like to take part or find out more, please speak to a member of the Ministry Leadership Team whose contact details are available in this magazine.

Jaime Roberts

NEW SUNG SETTING

In our 10.30 services from the 8th February (with the choir singing it at the Candlemas service on the 1st February) we shall be singing a new setting of the communion setting (where we sing Lord, have mercy, Glory to God, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord and Lamb of God). The setting is written by David Thorne and is called the Mass of St Thomas. If you would like to get to know it before we start singing it then you can hear it at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVMJxiIXQMs>

EPIPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS

On the day of Epiphany (6th January), Revds Steven and Jaime walked around Royston on the ice blessing many people's homes. The initials of the names given to the Magi also correspond to the phrase 'Christ bless this house'. You may see these initials and the year chalked on houses as you travel around Royston; it looks like this: 20+C+M+B+26 How many can you find?



DEANERY CHORAL EVENSONG

On February 22nd at 5pm, our choir will be joined by choirs and singers from across the Deanery to sing Choral Evensong together. No other churches in the Deanery are having evening services as all the church leaders are taking part in the service, and we are also coming together with congregations across the Deanery to worship together in this service, which will be followed by wine and refreshments. If you would like to sing then please speak to Steven, otherwise, please do come along and worship together with our sisters and brothers from across the Deanery.

Minister's Musings

February marks a transition in the Church's focus: Candlemas comes at the beginning of the month and by the end we have moved past Ash Wednesday into Lent. A movement from the celebration of the birth of Jesus to preparation to reflect on his sacrifice on the cross.

This has caused me to reflect on the different ways in which people find their faith stimulated and encouraged. Candlemas is something I had not come across before coming to Royston, despite lifelong membership of the Church of England. For me, Christmas is over by twelfth night: decorations come down on the 6th of January and the tradition I learnt was that if they were not, they had to be burned! However, I have discovered that, for others, Christmas continues until Candlemas. I grew up thinking that the major festivals of the Christian Church were Christmas, Easter and Harvest. Pentecost, or Whit Sunday, was the day before the youth group Whit Monday hike and for me only took on a greater significance later in life. Other people have grown up in different traditions within the Christian Church and find great meaning in Saints' days and other lesser festivals which have little impact on me.

There is no right or wrong in this. St Paul in Romans 14 v 5 notes that one man considers some days more sacred than others while another man considers all days to be of equal significance. In discussing this with my friend Juergen who, from a Lutheran background found his faith in an Anglo-Catholic context, whilst I felt some things that he found helpful were irrelevant to me, his comment was "if it helps". I found this useful in realising that things I felt were unnecessary for faith were for others part of what made their faith real for them.

We are each of us different, unique, and yet made in the image of the Creator God whom we seek to worship. God does not change. We often speak of Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever. By his death and resurrection, Jesus opened up a way for us each to be in a relationship with our Heavenly Father. But that relationship is different because each of us is uniquely different.

The psalmist in Psalm 139 v 13, 14 recognises that God was there as each of us was formed in the womb, we are, he says "fearfully and wonderfully made", each an individual known to God by name. (As an aside, I found when asking my Vietnamese friends their age, they would add a year on to what I would have said because their culture recognises that life begins in the womb and not from birth) Embrace whatever it is that helps to strengthen your faith, whether it be gestures during worship or acknowledgement of festivals or Saints you have previously ignored or books that take you in different directions of faith. Some of us need little extra but most of us can benefit from at least exploring what others find helpful. Lent is a good time to explore something different about how faith can be grown in us.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ends as February begins. Unity does not demand uniformity. There needs to be a variety of expressions of faith so that all may be drawn in to the Love of God.

Who knows? One year if I leave my Christmas decorations up until 1st February, it might just not be due to laziness!

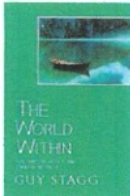

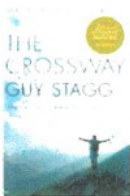
John Fidler

PS. Margaret and I had a couple of days in Norfolk after Christmas. We called on several friends from this Church who have settled in that area, including the following who send their best wishes to all at Royston Parish Church.

Christine and David Mellings, now living just South of Norwich.

Wendy Chappell, now in a village North East of Norwich.

And, for those whose memories stretch back as far as the 1980s, Rev Richard Sutton and Gina. Richard was not only curate here but instigated and was a founder member of the Royston and District Model Railway Society. They are in a village only a couple of miles from Wendy.



Join us for an evening with
GUY STAGG
Monday, February 9th, 7.30pm,
Royston Parish Church

Bow Books are delighted to welcome local author **Guy Stagg** to **Royston Parish Church**, where he will discuss his award-winning non-fiction books, **The Crossway** and **The World Within**, illustrated with slides.

In his powerful debut, **The Crossway**, **Guy** recounts his extraordinary 5,500-mile walk from Canterbury to Jerusalem. He shares how the rhythm of walking and the kindness of strangers provided unexpected solace and healing.

His latest book, **The World Within**, turns the focus inward, exploring the role of retreat in contemporary culture. Visiting famous places of retreat, he asks why so many artists, thinkers and writers have withdrawn from society in search of clarity and peace.

Guy's work explores how ancient rituals can bring connection and meaning in the modern world. Whether you are curious about history, religion or mental wellbeing, or seeking inspiration for their next journey, this event offers a unique chance to hear how moving across landscapes or withdrawing into the self can help with navigating life's most difficult challenges.

Tickets £5pp (includes first drink free) available from Bow Books
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LOOKING AFTER OUR WORLD....

As a church family we are concerned with looking after our world, and taking responsibility for reducing our individual impact upon it by considering carbon emissions and making less carbon-intensive choices where we can. As a recent attendee of the Carbon Literacy course, I've undertaken to collect and send out tried and tested favourite vegetarian recipes from members of our church family in this magazine over the course of a year.

It's a fact that cooking a vegetarian shepherd's pie, say, instead of a meat-based one gives a carbon footprint that may vary from as low as 1.6 kilograms of CO₂ for the vegetarian version to over 10 kilograms of CO₂ for one made with lamb. It's also true, according to a BBC article online and published in May 2022, that carbon emissions per week from a vegetarian diet can be calculated approximately as 16.9 kilograms of CO₂, compared to omnivore emissions of approximately 48.9 kilograms of CO₂. If just some of us make a shift towards a 'vegetarian day' each week, say, or a couple of vegetarian suppers per week, or whatever feels do-able to start with, the greenhouse gas impact across our church is reduced, and carbon saving across the church congregation could quickly become significant.

The first of the 12 recipes for the year follows - thanks to Jeni for writing it down (it was previously just in her head!) and sharing it:

VEGGIE SAUSAGE AND BEAN CASSEROLE Feeds 4 - 6 people, or 2 or 3 hungry people.

Ingredients:

- 1 tin of baked beans
- 1 tin of other beans (I like butter beans or mixed beans but whatever you fancy is absolutely fine)
- 1 tin chopped tomatoes
- 1/2 pint of a meat flavoured gravy
- 8-12 vegetarian sausages
- 1 large or 2 small onions
- 3-4 carrots
- 1-2 parsnips
- 1/2 swede or turnip
- 2-3 handfuls of frozen peas

You can mix and match the root veg and peas, and substitute for sweetcorn or green beans. As long as you have roughly the same volume it'll work just fine!

Method:

I use a slow cooker for this, but a very large saucepan on the hob or a casserole dish in the oven will work just as well.

1. Lightly fry the sausages in a little oil till just browned, then set aside to cool while you prep the rest. (They don't need to be cooked through; just 'crisped' enough to cut up).
2. Dice the vegetables, I do mine fairly small in 2cm-ish chunks, but if you like it chunkier, that's fine, just cook for a little longer.
3. Make up 1/2 pint of gravy, I use bisto (the beef flavour is vegetarian) but any meaty flavoured but vegetarian gravy works.



4. Pour it into the slow cooker, add the baked beans and chopped tomatoes, then drain and add the other tin of beans.
5. Add all the chopped vegetables and peas.
6. Chop the sausages into 3 or 4 pieces and add them to the slow cooker too.
7. Stir everything together, pop the lid on and leave to cook on low for 6-8 hours or high for 4-6 hours.

If cooking on the hob, use a low heat for a couple of hours stirring frequently to prevent it sticking.

If cooking in a casserole dish in the oven, cook with the lid on, low is roughly 100, high is roughly 140/gas mark 2 using similar times as above. You could also cook quicker, 180/gas mark 4 for 2-3 hours.

You can't really overcook this, so don't worry too much about leaving it, particularly in the slow cooker or in a low temperature oven while you're out at work or similar.

I serve mine with mashed potato or fresh crusty bread.

CHRISTIAN OF THE MONTH—GILBERT OF SEMPRINGHAM

Commemorated by the church of England on February 4th.

Gilbert of Sempringham (c.1083–1189) was an English religious reformer and the founder of the Gilbertine Order, the only monastic order to originate in England. He was born in Sempringham, Lincolnshire, around 1083, the son of a Norman knight and lord-of-the-manor. However, he did not take up his feudal and knightly duties, possibly because of a physical deformity. Instead was destined for a clerical life, receiving a strong education in both England and France, studying theology and the liberal arts. Despite his learning, he was reportedly shy and physically frail, traits that shaped his preference for teaching and pastoral care over public life. After returning to England, Gilbert served as household clerk to the Bishop of Lincoln. He was offered the Archdeaconry of Lincoln, a rich position, but he refused saying he knew of no surer way to perdition. Eventually he became the parish priest of Sempringham, his father's manor, and was appointed master of a local school for girls. Concerned with providing a disciplined religious life for his female students, he established a community of nuns around 1131, following a strict rule influenced by Cistercian ideals. To support them, Gilbert later organised communities of canons, lay brothers, and lay sisters, creating a unique "double order" in which men and women lived in separate quarters but under a single organisational structure. This complex arrangement became the hallmark of the Gilbertine Order, which spread rapidly across England, with over 20 houses established. The order was to thrive until all its houses were suppressed in the sixteenth century by King Henry VIII. Gilbert faced significant challenges, including being arrested and charged with helping Thomas Beckett in his struggle against King Henry II. Although cleared of wrongdoing, the episode tested his resilience. He lived to be over 100, passing his last years nearly blind, as a simple member of the order he had founded. Remembered for his humility, administrative skill, and commitment to religious life, Gilbert of Sempringham was canonised in 1202 and remains a distinctive figure in English medieval spirituality.



MISSION OF THE MONTH—FEBRUARY

tearfund

Tearfund is an international Christian relief and development organisation that works to end extreme poverty and injustice around the world. Founded in the United Kingdom in 1968, Tearfund partners with local churches and organisations in some of the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities. Its work is driven by a vision of restored relationships with God, with one another, and with creation.

Fighting Poverty Through Community-Led Development

At the heart of Tearfund's work is a belief that lasting change comes from within communities themselves. Rather than imposing solutions from the outside, Tearfund supports local people to identify their own needs and use their skills and resources to improve their lives. This approach, often called community-led development, helps communities become more resilient, confident, and self-sustaining.

Tearfund's programmes focus on key areas such as food security, clean water, sanitation, healthcare, education, and livelihoods. By helping families grow more food, access safe drinking water, and earn stable incomes, Tearfund works to break the cycle of poverty and dependence.

Responding to Emergencies and Disasters

Tearfund is also well known for its rapid response to humanitarian emergencies. When disasters such as earthquakes, floods, droughts, or conflicts occur, Tearfund provides immediate life-saving assistance. This includes food, clean water, shelter, medical care, and hygiene supplies.

Empowering Churches and Local Partners

A distinctive feature of Tearfund's work is its strong partnership with local churches in more than 50 countries. Tearfund believes that churches are uniquely placed to bring hope and practical support to their communities because they are trusted, deeply rooted, and present even in times of crisis.

Advocacy and Tackling Root Causes

Tearfund recognises that poverty is often caused by injustice, inequality, and poor governance. Alongside practical aid, the organisation engages in advocacy to challenge the systems and structures that keep people poor. This includes campaigning on issues such as climate change, unfair trade, corruption, and access to resources.

Faith, Hope, and Dignity

Christian faith shapes Tearfund's values and motivation, but the organisation works with people of all faiths and none. Its work is rooted in compassion, justice, and respect for human dignity. Tearfund believes that every person is created with worth and potential, and its programmes aim to restore hope as well as meet physical needs.

Tearfund is one of the missions which St. John the Baptist Church supports through prayer, publicity and regular financial donations.

Heath Watch with Holly (the little dog)

Welcome to the Forty fifth article in a series of dog walking diaries, documenting the flora and fauna on the beautiful heath as the seasons change.

December 2025

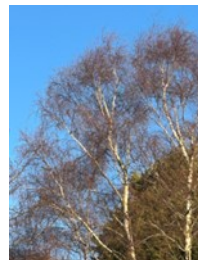


It was cold and wet at the start of December and at first sight you would have been forgiven for thinking that nature had gone to sleep; however on closer inspection you could see the leaf buds growing on the trees, bulbous plants poking above the ground and fungi making the most of the damp conditions.



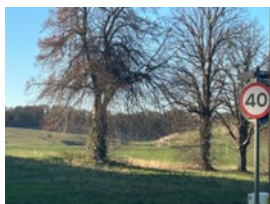
Nothing deters keen golfers of course and there were plenty to be seen on the heath. Joggers too still ventured out including some in fancy dress! The Christmas tree man was back again selling trees from the land adjacent to the car park and the full moon on the 4th (known as “the cold moon” not only appeared larger than usual but was also visible during the day, winter was here.

Although there was less birdlife than at other times of the year, when I saw birds they were very active and busy. At one time I saw a tree full of Long Tailed Tits, I didn't have time to count them because they flew off in one simultaneous movement as soon as I got near but it was certainly dozens. One fine day it felt like spring and I heard a Collard Dove; the larger Wood Pigeon's song is often described as “my toe bleeds Betty” whereas the Collard Dove only sings the first part so it sounds like it's saying “my toe bleeds” over and over again. It reminded me that during the summer months as a child growing up in Royston I often used to hear the purring sound of the smaller Turtle Dove (a summer visitor) but I haven't seen or heard one for many years now and had quite forgotten about them, if anyone has seen or heard one in recent years please let me know.



It is easy to overlook birds that we see all the time and I do want to mention the Robin, this delightful little bird, always associated with Christmas, is among the tamest of all birds and lives happily in gardens, takes little notice of passers by and has the most enchanting song.

By the middle of the month I was surprised by the amount of growth on the trees and in the ground, I watched a Buzzard chase off a Red Kite and on Christmas day, the first day I



noticed a frost, I saw a Buzzard, a Red Kite and a Kestrel within minutes of each other, the next day, Boxing day, I saw a fieldfare, a welcome visitor from Scandinavia. After the Christmas holiday, on the way to the heath I noticed snowdrops, Christmas roses, and could see daffodils well on their way to announce the spring. More next time.....

Sunday Services for February 2026

Services to be held in Royston Parish Church

Sunday 1st February

09:00 - 09:45	Communion Service that is quiet and reflective
10:30 - 11:40	Communion Service with music/choir, children's groups/toy area, followed by refreshments
17:00 - 18:00	Candlemas, a Communion Service celebrating the end of the Christmastide season, with choir and incense

Sunday 8th February

09:00 - 09:45	Communion Service that is quiet and reflective
10:30 - 11:40	Communion Service with music/choir, children's groups/toy area, followed by refreshments
15:30 - 17:00	Tea Time Praise

Sunday 15th February

09:00 - 09:45	Communion Service that is quiet and reflective
10:30 - 11:40	Communion Service with music/choir, children's groups/toy area, followed by refreshments

Sunday 22nd February

09:00 - 09:45	Communion Service in traditional language (BCP) that is quiet and reflective
10:30 - 11:40	Communion Service with music/choir, children's groups/toy area, followed by refreshments
17:00 - 18:00	Deanery Choral Evensong