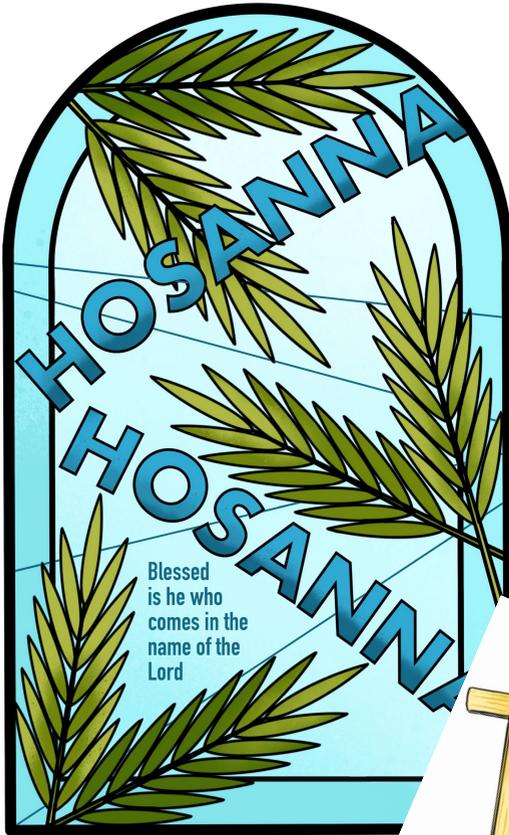


IN TOUCH

Magazine of
the Hanley
Team
Ministry



MARCH 2026

MARCH DIARY

Events in bold take place each week but check with organisers

Mondays	Cobridge Kiddies	Christ Church	10.00
Tuesdays	Lunch Club	Christ Church	12.00
Wednesdays	Places of Welcome	St. Luke's	08.30
	Open Door	St. Mark's	09.30-13.30
	'Drop-In'	Christ Church	10.00
	Baby & Toddler Group	St. Luke's	13.00
	Over 55s	St. Matthew's	13.30
Thursdays	Place of Welcome	St. Mark's	08.30
	Alpha Course	St. Mark's	12.00
Fridays	Open Door	St. Mark's	09.30-12
Second Sat	Bingo Afternoon	St. Luke's	15.00
Last Sunday	Bubble Church	St. Luke's	15.00
Saturday 21	Christian Aid Walk	Tittesworth Reservoir	09.15
	Coffee Morning	St. Matthew's	10.00
	Lunch + Bingo	St. Matthew's	12.00
Sunday 22	Evensong	Holy Trinity	16.00
Saturday 28	Quiz	N/wood Parish Hall	19.30

SUNDAY READINGS IN MARCH

1st. **The Second Sunday of Lent**

Gen. 12: 1-4a Rom. 4: 1-5, 13-17 John 3: 1-17

8th. **The Third Sunday of Lent**

Exod. 17: 1-7 Rom. 5: 1-11 John 4: 5-42

15th. **The Fourth Sunday of Lent**

1 Sam. 16: 1-13 Eph. 5: 8-14 John 9

For Mothering Sunday

Exod. 2: 1-10 2 Cor. 1: 3-7 Luke 2: 33-35
Or 1 Sam. 1: 20-28 Col. 3: 12-17 John 19: 25b-27

22nd. **The Fifth Sunday of Lent (Passiontide begins)**

Ezek. 37: 1-14 Rom. 8: 6-11 John 11: 1-45

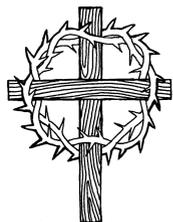
29th. **PALM SUNDAY**

Liturgy of the Palms

Matt. 21: 1-11

Liturgy of the Passion

Isa. 50: 4-9a Phil. 2: 5-11 Matt. 26:14 – 27:66
Or Matt. 27: 11-54



HANLEY TEAM MINISTRY

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

29 March – 5 April

Service	Time	Place
Palm Sunday 29 March Procession & Eucharist	09.30 11.00	Christ Church Holy Trinity
Monday 30 March Reflection & Communion	10.00	St. Mark's
Tuesday 31 March Reflection & Communion	10.00	St. Matthew's
Wednesday 1 April Reflection & Communion	11.00	St. Luke's
Maundy Thursday 2 April Chrism Mass	11.00	Lichfield Cathedral
Holy Communion	19.30	Holy Trinity
Good Friday 3 April Messy Church	11.00	St. Matthew's
Liturgy of Good Friday	14.00	Christ Church
EASTER DAY 5 April Service of Light & Eucharist	09.30 11.00	Christ Church Holy Trinity

Christ Church, Emery Street, Cobridge ST6 2JJ
St. Matthew's, Birches Head Road, Hanley ST1 6LH
Holy Trinity Church, Lower Mayer Street, Northwood ST1 2EA
St. Luke's Church, Wellington Terrace, Hanley ST1 3PX
St. Mark's Church, Broad Street, Hanley ST1 4LT

GRATITUDE, OPPORTUNITY AND HOPE

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

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

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.

If we have stored up our wealth, we don't rely on God meeting our daily needs.

In the desert, when the Israelites tried to store the manna they were given every day by God, it went off. In the wilderness, the Israelites learnt how to trust God for their daily bread – money helps us not to have to trust.

Counting my wealth leads me quickly into the sin of pride – I'm somehow better than you because I have more money in the bank. Pride leads to anxiety – worrying about what will happen if we lose our wealth and our status.

In a number of places in the Gospels Jesus talks about the anxiety that accompanies money and things. He knows that pride and anxiety are the enemy of hope - they lead us into ungenerous lives, holding on to the things we have instead of opening our hands, letting go, and living simply so that others may simply live. He said:

'No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.'

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?

NATURE NOTES

Lamb's Tails in the Spring Breeze

Harriet Carty, Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Adviser

Whilst most plants are pollinated by insects, plus other invertebrates and small mammals, quite a few rely on the wind to reproduce. A common way for trees to do this is to have catkins, hazel and silver birch both being good examples with easily visible long catkins often called lambs tails, but oak, beech, hornbeam, walnut, pine and other conifers do too. Catkins are actually long slim clusters of flowers which release large amounts of small, light pollen that can be blown a long way.

Most flowers contain both male and female parts within the one flower, but wind pollinated trees usually have separate male and female flowers. These may occur on the same tree as they do in hazel or oak or sometimes on different trees for example willow and poplar. The male flowers form in clusters making the catkin, whilst the female flowers stand upright individually.

Flowers of wind pollinated plants have small petals if they have any at all and catkins tend to be pale yellow, no need for bright colours, large petals or scent to attract insects when it is the wind that is doing the work! Both the male catkins and female flowers can be seen on the edges of the tree canopy where the wind will catch them, shaking the catkin, releasing the pollen and carrying it away. The female flowers then catch the pollen as it is blown past, they usually stand upright on top of twigs and often have a sticky tip or 'stigma' as it's known, to catch the passing pollen.

The female flowers are sometimes red, looking a little like a small sea anemone. Have a look on a hazel bush and see if you can see both the dangling catkins and also the small, red female flowers, sometimes on the same twig. Once pollinated the female flower will develop into the seed, be it an acorn, pine nut or a hazel nut. Wind pollination works well for trees that flower early, when few insect pollinators may be about, for trees that are found in cold and windy spots too.

Hazel, birch, willow and pines are trees that are early to arrive and grow on bare, rocky ground and are thought to have been amongst the trees that first colonised patches left bare by retreating glaciers after the last ice age. Wind pollination would have been an advantage in this. Another important group of plants that are pollinated by wind are the grasses. Grass flowers tend to be green, yellow or pale brown rather than brightly coloured. They are produced at the top of a grass stem that usually stands vertical, bringing the flowers above other foliage and into the wind. They tend to be clustered, often in a spike rather like a vertical catkin and they produce a large amount of pollen which can be carried over distance. Many grasses open up when ready to release their pollen, looking like a miniature Christmas tree, so that all of the flowers will be caught in passing breezes. Some grasses do have strong colours, but this is due to the colour of the pollen not the flowers. Grasses may be at their most beautiful when releasing coloured pollen. One example of this is meadow foxtail, so named because the red pollen colours the flowering spike like a fox's tail.

Harriet

Crufts



The nation's favourite dog show returns to the NEC this month, from 5th to 8th March. Organised by The Kennel Club, Crufts attracts more than 20,000 dogs from 49 different countries. They will be watched by 150,000 people, and over eight million TV viewers. **The Stand Up to Cancer Crufts Walkies Challenge** also returns, encouraging dog owners to walk 60 miles in April 2026, and raise funds for cancer research.

Dog Walkers Facing Unlimited Fines

As of the 18th of this month, The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Act 2025 will become law for



England and Wales. This means that police officers can seize dogs which pose a risk of repeated attacks on farm animals. It also means that dog walkers now face unlimited fines if their pets chase livestock. Up until now, the maximum fine for worrying sheep, cattle and poultry was £1,000. The fine is now unlimited, and also protects llamas and alpacas.

Parish Pump

A BUCKET OF TADPOLES: Springtime, Curiosity, and the Theology of Science

Dr Ruth M. Bancewicz, Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge.

When I was nearly three, I knocked a bucket of tadpoles all over the patio. Those unfortunate creatures must have been collected to educate my brother and I on where frogs came from, but a toddler can't just stand by and watch. Can I see up close? I might have been great at destroying things when I was a child (my family would probably say I still am), but I absolutely love watching living things up close. The more I learn, the more my sense of wonder grows. For a tadpole to become a frog, large sections of its gut, salivary glands and muscles must die, as well as the gills. The cells in those tissues are programmed to curl up and disintegrate, and are then swallowed up by a specialised kind of white blood cell. Legs grow from small sacs of cells on the tadpole's body, and one of my textbooks says that 'The nervous system is also remodelled' – which I suspect is a bit of an understatement.

This knowledge removes a little of the mystery of how a tadpole turns into a frog, but there is plenty more to discover. These few details also reveal the cleverness of the process. Metamorphosis is surprisingly common in the animal kingdom.

Scientists are essentially grown-ups who are still very much in touch with their inner two-year-old. They refuse to stop asking questions, even when finding an answer becomes decidedly more awkward than opening a textbook. Many scientists are people of faith, and this also drives their questioning. They believe that God created a world that was very good, that the purpose of all Creation is to praise Him, that we are made in God's image, and that we are tasked with looking after Creation. So Christians, of all people, should be enjoying and investigating our surroundings. These are the bones of a theology of science which serves some of us very well, and keeps us looking into things like buckets of frogs – that is, until a two-year-old comes and knocks them over.

MARCH QUIZ

Answers page 10

THE ANSWERS ARE ALL THINGS ASSOCIATED WITH SCOTLAND

1. Grab the conduits! (8)
2. Mr Kingsley visits the Caribbean island (3,5)
3. National Trust brushing around this special occasion (5,5)
4. Dog heather is a winter sport (7)
5. The Lib Dem leader in a rabbit hole, well with his frontal hair (9,6)
6. Between the third and fifth spanners (5,6)
7. Food mixture that has one horse inside it (6)
8. Up country pursuits (8,5)
9. A lovely twist of mahogany to start the year (8)
10. It was left inside his kit (4)
11. Sounds like it will stop you getting in (4)
12. Crest of ground behind the Post Office, right? (8)
13. Partly start another pattern (6)
14. This, initially, tiny little emblem, might scratch you (7)
15. You might ask "Why ski differently?" (6)

From Rev. Jeff Short of the Torbay Methodist Circuit

MARCH PAST

- 100 years – 30th. Birth of Ingvar Kamprad, founder of IKEA
- 90 years – 4th. First flight of the German airship Hindenburg
- 80 Years – 25th. Opening of London Airport renamed Heathrow in 1966
- 75 years – 15th. First appearance of Dennis the Menace in The Beano
- 30 years – 13th. Dunblane Massacre
- 20 years – 21st. founding of Twitter
- 10 years – 31st. death of Ronnie Corbett



CONFIRMATION

Bishop Matthew is coming to a Team service at St Marks on Sunday 21st June at 10am to confirm members of St Marks congregation. This would be an ideal time for anyone you know within the Team churches who also wishes to be

confirmed. If so, please contact Revd. Mike Bridgewater for more information. You will find his contact details on the back page of the magazine.

March Quiz Answers: 1. Bagpipes, 2. Ben Nevis, 3. Burns Night
4. Curling, 5. Edinburgh Fringe, 6. Forth Bridge, 7. Haggis,
8. Highland games, 9. Hogmanay, 10. Kilt, 11.
Loch, 12. Porridge, 13. Tartan, 14. Thistle,
15. Whisky

***‘One of my churchwardens
is a stickler for health and safety’***

How many words does it take?

Lord’s Prayer – 66

Ten Commandments – 179

‘To be or not to be’ soliloquy – 260

EU regulations on the sale of cabbages – 29,911

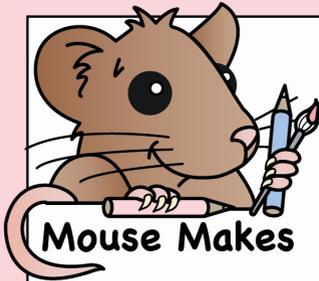


Denise Kent : Many thanks to all who made donations to Holy Trinity Church in memory of Denise. Donations amounted to £772.20
Additionally, Denise made a bequest of £200 to Holy Trinity in her will.



Jars of Change for Water Aid

With many things paid by direct debit or bank card, the amount of loose change in your pocket might not seem to amount to much. You can put it to good use, though, if you wash out an empty jar and store in it any change that comes your way over Lent. Then pass your jar to Derek Durber at Holy Trinity and he will add your change to a donation to be made to Water Aid.



The Bible has many stories of mothers who had great faith in God. With their love, care, encouragement and prayers their children grew up to be great people of God.



Who saved her baby by putting him in a basket in the river?

Exodus 2:1-3 and 6:20

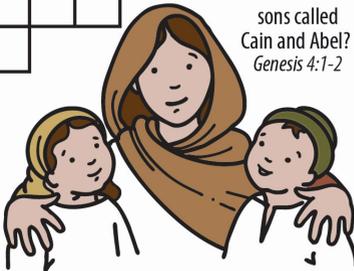
Who was 90 years old when she had her son Isaac?
Genesis 17:19

Across

- 3. **Obed's** mother
Matthew 1:5
- 4. **John's** mother
Luke 1:57-60
- 7. **Reuben's** mother
Genesis 29:32
- 8. **Joseph's** mother
Genesis 30:22-24
- 9. **Jesus' mother**
Acts 1:14

Down

- 1. **Boaz's** mother
Matthew 1:5
- 2. **Solomon's** mother
1 Kings 1:11
- 4. **Timothy's** mother
2 Timothy 1:5
- 5. **Ishmael's** mother
Genesis 16:15
- 6. **Jacob and Esau's** mother
Genesis 25:21-26



Whose prayers for a child were answered by God?
1 Samuel 1:20

Who had two sons called Cain and Abel?
Genesis 4:1-2

Answer the questions then put them into the crossword

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MOTHERING SUNDAY 15 MARCH

Rev. Roy Shaw

The fourth Sunday of Lent offers families an opportunity to honour the women who have nurtured them. Lots of different streams and traditions have come together to make today's Mothering Sunday the special day that it is. In the Middle Ages it was an occasion for everyone to visit their 'mother' church – the place where they had been baptised. Later, an opportunity for those who worked away from home to visit their mothers became added to the mix of reasons to make it a special day.

Today we honour all women who have in one way or another been special to us, and in church this is usually signalled by small bunches of flowers for every woman present. Treating mums and grans to Sunday lunch, chocolates and flowers is also part of the present mix. And will there be a simnel cake to be seen – a tradition from ages past – with its rich layers of marzipan, and eleven balls of marzipan on top, reminders of the 11 disciples who remained faithful to Jesus?

Not everyone has enjoyed a wonderful or enduring relationship with their mum, so lest we get carried away on a wave of love and sentimentality, there is usually space in the Mothering Sunday church service to reflect on and pray for those whose relationships with their mother were not all they might have been.

Also, there are the families blighted by the lack of, or death of a child; families remembering a mum who died tragically young; women who never had a child but would have dearly loved the opportunity; all these and more are a recognition of the imperfections of human love, human life.

These imperfections can be brought in prayer to the God who mothers us. In the Old Testament, Isaiah speaks of God comforting His people like a mother hen. In the New Testament, both Matthew and Luke bear witness to Jesus expressing His desire to gather His people as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Yes, God has strong maternal qualities which He invites us to discover and enjoy!

GRANNY RETIRED ?

You must be joking.

The idea that grandmothers retire into an unburdened world of gardening and tea-drinking, golf and knitting is no more than a pleasant fantasy these days.

Instead, nearly 63% of grandparents provide some sort of childcare to their under-16-year-old grandchildren. That amounts to around seven million older people, aged mostly between 55 – 74. As many as one in three is doing the school run. Nearly one in five is spending more than 10 hours a week giving other childcare.

America has a nickname name for them: the ‘granny nannies.’

But granny nannies not only care for their grandchildren, they may also be providing comfort for elderly relatives of their own – and hold down a part-time job at the same time.

Perhaps Super-Granny-Nannies is the correct name for them!

A grandmother was taking her young grandson for a walk in the park. The daffodils were in bloom, and it was a beautiful Spring day. Wanting to encourage her grandson’s spiritual understanding of the world, she said:

‘Doesn’t it look like an artist painted this scenery? Did you know God did all this?’

Her grandson replied: ‘Oh yes, and God did it left-handed, too.’

In astonishment, the grandmother asked what he meant.

‘Well, He must have done,’ said her grandson, ‘because we learned at church last week that Jesus sits on God’s right hand.’

Parish Pump

ST. JAMES THE LEAST OF ALL

Historically, the Church of England has had its share of eccentric clergy. Clergy such as the elderly, Anglo-Catholic Uncle Eustace, who is incumbent in the small parish of St James-the-Least-of All, somewhere in Very Rural England. Eustace despairs of his nephew, Darren, who has become an evangelical curate in a busy urban parish... and so he writes letters, to try and properly 'educate' Darren in how to run a parish. The Revd Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace'...

On how to run a church council meeting

The Rectory
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

Clearly, the sight of your vicar running out of the room halfway through your last church council meeting, saying he should have stayed as a traffic warden, where he was universally liked, has unnerved you.

It would have unnerved me too, since a universally popular traffic warden is an exceptional creature. But perhaps it is necessary to give you some advice for the day when you do have to chair your first church council meeting.

1. Consider every agenda issue carefully beforehand and decide what you would like to do. Then, at the meeting, consult widely, listen to every opinion, weigh all the arguments, and then do precisely what you had decided before the meeting ever took place.
2. Never, ever, let council members discuss hymns, which avoids getting blood on the carpets.

3. Arrange the seating in rows, all facing the front, so that everyone must respond directly to you. The last thing you want is for council members to be able to discuss matters freely with one another.
4. Start smoking a pipe. At those times when you are faced with an issue when you really are unsure of how to respond, taking out your pipe, dismantling it, searching for a pipe cleaner, squinting down the stem to see if it is clean, mopping out the goo in the bowl, searching for your tobacco pouch, filling the pipe, tamping it down, asking if you can borrow matches and attempting to light it several times over, will give you more than sufficient time to formulate a reply. Once you have perfected the routine, the silence will have been so protracted, that most of the committee will have long forgotten what the question was anyway.
5. If someone is talking too long, consult your diary, noisily and obsessively, about next month's appointments, or write a note to a committee member who is at the back of the room and get it passed to him. The speaker should soon get the message.

These are the simpler techniques of committee management. The advanced procedures must wait until you are strong enough to bear them.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

How many church members does it take to change a light bulb?

What do you mean CHANGE??? That light bulb was given in memory of my grandmother! My father installed it with his bare hands! He donated his time AND the use of his ladder to do it, too! My family's been members of this church for four generations! And if you think you're going to come in here and make a bunch of changes all of a sudden, vicar, you've got another think coming!

SYNOD STANDS FIRM ON THE COST OF DYING but gets hot under the collar about flower arranging

Some interesting highlights were reported in the **Church Times** from February's meeting of the General Synod of the Church of England, where a warm welcome was given to our new Archbishop of Canterbury.

Burial fees

Synod overwhelmingly voted against a proposed increase of £1,000 in burial fees. The Church Times reported that many speakers regarded the proposed increase as a *'pastoral nightmare', 'embarrassing and indefensible'*. *'Clergy spoke of growth coming from funerals ministry and of the likely impact on the community.'* An 85 year old member from Leeds admitted to taking a keen interest in the debate.

Sustainable flowers

The Church Times reported upon a motion that called on the Synod to embrace the principles of the Sustainable Flowers movement. These are *'to promote the use of local, seasonal, biodegradable or compostable flowers and foliage... to eliminate the use of floral foam (oasis) and non-reusable products and techniques, while re-discovering traditional and environmentally friendly methods of presentation and display.'* Following the debate, the Synod voted in favour of the motion. This proves that a 'grass roots' (sorry) initiative can make its way from the local level to the General Synod; it originated from the tiny parish of St. Bartholomew's, Harpley, in Worcestershire.

Funding to poor parishes

The debate concerned Lowest Income Communities (LInC) funding. The fund was established in 2017 to support dioceses in sustaining ministry in socio-economically deprived areas. It is currently allocated to 28 dioceses using a formula based on average income of diocesan residents, income deprivation and population. A review was proposed having regard to a high percentage of our poorest parishes receiving no such funding. Synod endorsed a review of the formula and of the processes used to distribute LInC funding.

A Prayer for a new Rector

God our Father,
you are all knowing.
God of all creation and life,
you know the needs of your Church in the Hanley Team.
In this time of seeking and praying for a new Rector, we pray for you to
place this calling within the heart of the servant you have chosen.
You alone know the plans you have for your Church in Hanley.
We ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us discernment to know the
person you have chosen.
We ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Glenys Paterson, Holy Trinity Church, Hanley Team Ministry 2026]

A World of Noise

One of the challenges of Lent is finding space to meditate and to pray.
Last year, the Canterbury Press published a book by Joshua Rey upon
how to find stillness in a noisy, fast-paced world. Here are two short
extracts from the book:

*'For the whole of human history except our present bit, the only sounds
were voices, bells, flutes, animal cries, weather and so on. The loudest
thing anyone had heard was a thunderclap. If you wanted music you
went to church, or hired a band or sang. No voice had ever been heard
more than a few hundred yards from the owner of the voice. No sound
had ever been heard other than when it was first made.'*

*'Lord of all life,
thank you
for the energy and variety
of the world you give me to live in:
amid the noise and movement
help me remember
to seek moments of silent rest
with you.'*

*[From 'A Season of Silence – Deep Listening in a Noisy World'
Joshua Rey, Vicar, London & former Chaplain to Bishop of Southwark]*

WORDSEARCH : Love and serve one another

On Maundy Thursday we recall the final command that Jesus gave to his disciples before his death. After the Last Supper, He rose and washed his disciples' feet. This was astonishing for a 'teacher' to do, but He had a firm purpose in mind: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." His disciples were to love through service, not domination, of one another. In Latin, the opening phrase of this sentence is 'mandatum novum do vobis'. The word 'mundy' is thus a corruption of the Latin 'mandatum' (or command). The 'washing of the feet' ceremony was an important part of the medieval church's liturgy, symbolising the humility of the clergy, in obedience to the example of Christ.

Maundy	Disciples	Feet	Loved	Service
Thursday	Death	Astonishing	You	Domination
Final	Last	Purpose	Must	Latin
Command	Supper	Teacher	One	Ceremony
Jesus	Washed	Medieval	Another	As
Humility	Obedience			

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

BACK PEW

From time to time, I have asked people to describe their experiences of the first 100 days since changes occurred in their lives and circumstances. Bishop Matthew led the way with his first 100 days as Bishop of Stafford. Our former Rector, Phillip Jones, recently added an account of the time immediately following his retirement.

By the end of this month, it will have been over 300 days since Phillip's retirement. Naturally enough, people are asking how long it will be before we have a new Rector.

How long is a piece of string? I can say that the parochial church council (PCC) and other lay leaders around the parish have not been idle. In addition to what might be termed 'normal business', services and funerals, general enquiries, and matters requiring immediate attention (e.g. heating problems), the PCC has carried out an audit of the current position regarding their policies, buildings and administrative arrangements. There have been five meetings of the PCC since last Summer.

The appointment process for a new Rector also requires the PCC to devise a 'parish profile' of the area, its churches, and the sort of person we would like. Along the way, advice and guidance has been received from The Ven. Dr. Megan Smith, our Archdeacon. We are up to version six of the parish profile. Like God, the Church of England moves in mysterious ways and it all takes time. We are not alone; stories abound of the length of time other churches have been 'in vacancy'.

Long gone are the days when the Team Ministry was staffed by a rector in addition to a vicar in each of its five churches. For everything there is a time and season. Ironically, this year will see the Team's 50th. anniversary. So we plod on, grateful for all the support we receive from clergy and lay volunteers alike. Whilst that sometimes may feel like we are living in the parish of Dibley within the diocese of Barchester, it also serves as a reminder of the need to submit to a discipline of patience and to remind ourselves of the gifts of the Spirit.

CONTACTS



Rector – Vacancy

Assistant Minister

for St. Mark's Church

and **Strategic Missioner**

for St. Matthew's Church and St. Luke's Church

Rev. Mike Bridgewater



07488233118

revmikebridgewater@gmail.com



Assistant Minister Rev. Gill Shilkoff 07525668262

gillshilkoff@btinternet.com

SERVICES

Holy Communion Sundays:	09.30	Christ Church, Cobridge
	11.00	Holy Trinity Church, Northwood
	10.00	St. Mark's Church, Shelton (First & Fifth Sundays, other Sundays Morning Worship)
Evensong	16.00	Holy Trinity (monthly)
Bubble Church	15.00	St. Luke's Church (Last Sunday of the month)
Tuesdays	10.00	St. Matthew's, Birches Head
Wednesdays	11.00	St. Luke's, Wellington
Thursdays:		
Service of The Word	10.00	Christ Church, Cobridge

Whilst the Rectorship is 'in vacancy', services will be co-ordinated by members of the laity in conjunction with available clergy.

For general enquiries, banns, baptisms and weddings, the contact is

Winnie Wilshaw 07731829785

winnie_184@msn.com

For funerals, contact a funeral director in the first instance, then

Kathleen Durber

01782 219147

Dekadurber@yahoo.com

'In Touch' editor Graham Foxley 07707011628

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The deadline for April's issue is Mothering Sunday