

# Cherwell Valley Catch-up AUGUST 2026

St Mary - **Ardley with Fewcott**

St Olave - **Fritwell**

The Chapel - **Heyford Park**

St Mary - **Lower Heyford & Caulcott**

St James - **Somerton**

The Annunciation - **Souldern**

St Mary - **Upper Heyford**



There have been a lot of changes in the Cherwell Valley to take notice off in these last few weeks, with more to come. We have, very sadly, said Goodbye to some key members of our churches or of village communities who have died; while the wheat harvest has come in early, and with reduced yield. But then the next farming jobs need to be got on with: ongoing care of livestock and preparing ground for the next growing season. Other new starts are represented by the weddings taking place over the Summer, and new initiatives including Heyford Ark, alongside ongoing support for leadership across the Benefice from within the villages. The strength of this network of communities is grounded in the teams and individuals working hard to sustain and develop church buildings and parish ministry in the places where they are based – I feel very fortunate to be able to work with such kind and committed people.

There is another big change and new beginning coming, as Kath Cooke leaves us for her new post. Kath is an amazing and gifted colleague and it has been for me such a benefit that I have begun my time as Rector in collaboration with her and had the chance to work here with her and with Phil. Kath already wrote in June about it as a month of beginnings and endings, and I want to echo that by recognising that for all of us August will be a month of ongoing change.

The Gospel readings we will have through August help us in responding to change, or anything we encounter and need to respond to. Jesus will feed substantially more than five thousand people, responding to their needs with imagination and generosity. Jesus will reassure his terrified disciples, caught in a storm – emphasising that it's he himself who is with them. On the third Sunday in August we will mark the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary – reminding ourselves how she responded with acceptance and grace, understanding what she needed to do. On the fourth Sunday, Peter will recognise what he has encountered in Jesus, who will recognise in Peter someone who can provide leadership when he is gone. And on 30<sup>th</sup> August Jesus will look to the future, and so will we at our Benefice service at Souldern.

Responding with imagination and generosity; being present in the situations we find ourselves in and offering what we can; accepting with grace what is asked of us or needed from us; recognising what others can bring; looking to the future confident of God's presence with us. Not bad examples for anyone in this ongoing time of change.

With love and best wishes,

Rob

## AROUND THE BENEFICE

### 'Fritwell – In Flowers'

Over the weekend of 11/12 July, St Olave's hosted a floral event showcasing the organisations in the village. The range of creativity was impressive – from traditional arrangements, to tissue paper flowers, thematic displays and simple vases of flowers, Visitors were particularly charmed by the contribution from the Rainbows and Brownies displayed in the south porch.

The PCC of St Olave's would like to thank all those who decorated, or contributed in any way to this successful event – not least those who came for 'tea and cake'!

### Somerton



### Queen Prim, on her throne in St James Church at Queen Elizabeth's 2012 Diamond Jubilee Celebrations.

Primrose Wise was born near Nethercote, Blacklocks Hill, Banbury in 1938. Growing up she was very active with the local dramatic group helping to make the costumes etc. In 1969 she married a farmer, Ray Clare and came to live in Somerton as his wife and stepmother to his two children, Stephen and Robina. She subsequently had two boys of her own, Neil and Brian and soon became an integral part of village life. She was always busy, looking after the family and the cows, gardening – never

happier than when she got packets of last year's seeds, reduced of course, which then produced lovely tomatoes, courgettes (like marrows) and beautiful beans. Prim was known for cooking vast meals, (could those Clare boys eat). but always had time to make a cake or quiche for the Bazaar or any other fund raising event when needed. Bonfire nights held in the field with soup and jacket spuds, the Youth Club camping site, supplying milk to the canal boat users who couldn't find the shop that had closed several years previously. Prim was a generous friend, always cheerful and willing to help, seldom complaining even in the pain of her later years. She will be greatly missed in the village.

### The Chapel, Heyford Park

**"Responding to age-related hearing loss in ministry and pastoral care**

**Karen Smith - Teacher of the Deaf and educator in Deaf Awareness**

**Wednesday 12th August at 10:30am at Heyford Park Chapel**

# Kindness - the hidden superpower

During Sir Keir Starmer's final Prime Minister's Questions he had an unexpectedly moving exchange with Kemi Badenoch the leader of the Conservative party. After she wished him and his family well, he then thanked her for the times she had reached out to him privately, particularly at times of great personal need such as when his brother died and the significant difference this had made to him and his family. Keir Starmer acknowledged that; *"The kindnesses that sit behind the robust disagreements are just as powerful if not more powerful."* Although in no way likening our departure to that of the Prime Minister(!) I also wish to highlight the hidden superpower of kindness in this my final Catch-up article.



The kindness shown to us during our time in Cherwell Valley has indeed been very powerful and has contributed to God's transformation and healing. I arrived here in many ways wounded, weary and grieving - it's frequently been the unseen, quiet, practical kindnesses which have made such a powerful difference to me and to Phil. There are too many to name them all but here are just some examples: flowers & food from the community fridge left on the doorstep; words of thanks & encouragement; homemade sausage rolls on the organ seat; gift through the door of a Charlie Mackesey book; eggs & daffodils left anonymously; unexpected delivery of champagne into the chaos of December; smiles & welcome on Sunday mornings – even when I'm late! It's said that 'kindness is love in action' so Phil & I we really want to thank everyone in CVB for demonstrating such love in action during our time here.

Kindness, with its link to the word 'kin' and 'kinship', is about reminding us that we human beings are deeply connected and all made in the image of God. Kindness runs like an invisible thread throughout Scripture. The stories of Abraham, David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi are filled with acts of kindness. Proverbs 14:31 tells us that 'those who are kind to the needy honour God' and towards the end of the OT comes this lovely reminder that all the time God has been holding Israel with an invisible thread of kindness:

*"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.... I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek. I bent down to feed them."* (Hosea 11:3,4)

In the life of Jesus we see many demonstrations of kindness such as turning water to wine at a wedding, healing the lepers and welcoming little children. The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates the profound impact of showing kindness to others, regardless of social or ethnic difference. Kindness is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. My experiences in Cherwell Valley have reminded me that kindness is powerful, kindness is transformational, kindness is mission, kindness is love. I'm very thankful that our final service on 30<sup>th</sup> August in Souldern is a Benefice service so we can join together in thankfulness and also celebrate with a BBQ in Fritwell afterwards. The licensing service in Holy Trinity, Formby is on 24<sup>th</sup> September. You will always hold a special place in our hearts, particularly for your kindness – please continue to be kind, with love and prayers, Kath.

## Lay Ministry in Cherwell Valley Benefice

We'd like to get together as many people as possible who are involved in lay ministry, to build on previous gatherings and for sharing what we're doing, supporting one another and planning together.

The meeting is planned for

**Saturday 15th August,  
from 10am-12noon,**

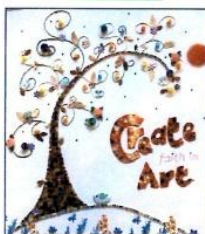
with refreshments provided, at the Chapel on Heyford Park. If you'd like to know more then please speak to one of us.

Rev'd Andrew, Rev'd Kath, &  
Rev'd Rob



*Heyford Park Chapel*  
572 Brice Road, OX25 5TE

The Chapel on Heyford Park is the Church of England parish church for this community. Our aim is to serve and support everyone living here.



Art, craft and conversation, refreshments.  
Mondays 1pm-3pm.  
All Welcome.



Heyford Ark all-age church: songs, story, activities and refreshments. **Everyone welcome.**  
Sundays  
4pm-5pm.  
16 Aug &  
20 Sept



**To find out more or get involved, be in touch!**



Alternate Wednesday mornings  
10am Holy Communion, 10.40am Bible study, with refreshments.  
8<sup>th</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> July, 5<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> Aug,  
2<sup>nd</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> Sept. **Come and see!**

[www.cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk](http://www.cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk)

## August Sunday Services

| Sunday Worship             | 2 <sup>nd</sup> August                                                                                                                          | 9 <sup>th</sup> August     | 16 <sup>th</sup> August                               | 23 <sup>rd</sup> August                 | 30 <sup>th</sup> August                                                |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ardley w Fewcott           | 9.30am<br>BCP Holy Communion (1662)                                                                                                             | 9:30am<br>Family Communion | 9.30am<br>Morning Prayer                              | 9.30am<br>Family Service                | 11am<br>BENEFICE SERVICE AT SOULDERN<br><br>Kath & Phil's last service |
| Fritwell                   |                                                                                                                                                 | 8:30am<br>1662 HC          | 9.30am<br>Family Communion<br>10:30am<br>Wild Worship | 6pm<br>Evensong                         |                                                                        |
| Lower Heyford and Caulcott | 11am<br>BCP Holy Communion (1662)                                                                                                               | 11am<br>MP                 | 11am<br>Family Worship                                | 11am<br>Family Communion                |                                                                        |
| Somerton                   | 6pm<br>Evensong                                                                                                                                 | 9:30am<br>Sunday Club      | 11am<br>Matins with BCP Holy Communion (1662)         | 9.30am<br>Family Service with Communion |                                                                        |
| Souldern                   | 10.30am<br>Wild Worship                                                                                                                         | 11am<br>Sung Communion     |                                                       | 10.30am<br>Family Church                |                                                                        |
| Upper Heyford              | 9.30am<br>Family Communion                                                                                                                      |                            |                                                       | 9.30am<br>BCP Holy Communion (1662)     |                                                                        |
| Heyford Park Chapel        | HEYFORD ARK Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> August 4pm??<br>Mid-Week Holy Communion Services<br>Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup> & 22 <sup>nd</sup> July @ HPC |                            |                                                       |                                         |                                                                        |

Bicester and Islip Deanery

# Pilgrim Paths

Newton Purcell Circular Walk



*Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September*

Distance: 5 miles

You are warmly invited to join Bicester and Islip Deanery's tenth Pilgrim Paths walk.

Starting at The Church of St. Michael and All Angels, Newton Purcell at **2.00pm**. There will be refreshments and a short service at Newton Purcell at the end of the walk.

Further information from the Pilgrim Paths Team:

[bicislip.pilgrimpaths@gmail.com](mailto:bicislip.pilgrimpaths@gmail.com)

Follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1310223859871650>

## MORNING PRAYER in our Churches

Mon 10<sup>th</sup> & Thurs 13<sup>th</sup> August  
9am at St Mary's Upper Heyford

## Mid Week COMMUNION SERVICES

10:00am at Heyford Park Chapel

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> August**

## Friday Recorded MORNING PRAYER

*to receive the link email*

[barbara.mcgarra@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk](mailto:barbara.mcgarra@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk)

## Children's Church Around the Benefice



**Fritwell Wild Worship**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month at 10:30am  
Outside (weather permitting)  
Crafts for the children  
*Coffee and a chat  
for the adults*

### Souldern

**Wild Worship (Outside) – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday**  
**Family Church – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday**  
**both at 10:30am**  
Crafts for the children  
*Coffee and a chat  
for the adults*



**Somerton Sunday Club**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month at 9:30am  
Short Family Friendly Service  
Followed by  
Crafts for the children  
*Coffee and a chat  
for the adults*

## The Cherwell Valley Benefice in the Diocese of Oxford

|                  |               |                                                                                                              |
|------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rev Rob Gilbert  | 01869 222625  | <a href="mailto:rob.gilbert@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk">rob.gilbert@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk</a>         |
| Rev Kath Cooke   | 01869 872242  | <a href="mailto:kath.cooke@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk">kath.cooke@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk</a>           |
| Rev Andrew Foran | 07753 677 470 | <a href="mailto:andrew.foran@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk">andrew.foran@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk</a>       |
| Administrator    | 01869 233687  | <a href="mailto:barbara.mcgarra@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk">barbara.mcgarra@cherwellvalleychurch.org.uk</a> |

## Parish Churchwardens & Contacts

|                             |                               |                                |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ardley                      | Rebecca Bazeley               | 07931 698 046                  |
| Fritwell                    | Jane White                    | 01869 345396                   |
| Heyford Park                | Cath Mullineux                | 01869 225764                   |
| Lower Heyford<br>& Caulcott | Philip Boxall<br>Diana Boxall | 07721 556 199<br>07792 390 755 |
| Somerton                    |                               |                                |
| Souldern                    | Clive Smith                   | 07783 367 258                  |
| Upper Heyford               | Sally Anne Mildenhall         | 07778 431 165                  |

