

The Parish of St Mark and All Saints, Reading

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here. John 6:37

YOUR LIGHT HAS COME

As December envelops us in its cold, dark embrace, it serves as a poignant backdrop for our celebration of the light of Christ at Christmas. The long nights and frosty air are reminders of the challenges and shadows of our world and the struggles we face in our own lives. Yet, amidst this darkness, we gather to rejoice in the miraculous birth of Jesus, the true Light of the World. His coming into our lives brings warmth, hope, and illumination, guiding us through the bleakness with a promise of joy and renewal.

In his thought-provoking book, "For All God's Worth", theologian Tom Wright offers a compelling perspective on the significance of Christmas. He writes "Christmas is God lighting a candle, and you don't light a candle in a room that's already full of sunlight. You light a candle in a room that's so murky that the candle, when lit, reveals just how bad things really are. This metaphor invites us to consider the profound darkness that often envelops our world, suggesting



that the true essence of Christmas is revealed in the contrast between light and darkness.

The Gospel of John also affirms this truth: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

For that reason, Wright explains, Christmas isn't a dream or a momentary escape but reality. This truth extends beyond the Seasons of Advent and Christmas and invites us to reflect on the relevance of Jesus in our lives today

Wright goes on to say "Either Jesus is the Lord of the world and all reality makes sense in his life, or he is dangerously irrelevant to the problems and possibilities of today's world," "There is no middle ground. Either Jesus was, and is, the Word of God, or he, and the stories Christians tell about him, are lies."

For us, the light of Christ, not only illuminates our path but also calls us to reflect that light to the world around us.

This season invites us not only to celebrate the light that dispels darkness but also to share that light with others, embodying the love and grace of Jesus. In doing so, we find comfort and purpose, creating a luminous contrast to the cold December nights.

NATIVITY TRIVIA

We take for granted the presence of the Crib scene in our Christmas worship with Mary, Joseph, Ox and Donkey, Shepherds and sheep, Magi and of course Baby Jesus himself in the hay, but the custom of displaying a Nati-

ty scene in the chancel dates from the early 1600s. The tradition started in Germany.



It is thought, however, that the first live Nativity scene — in which live animals and people representing shepherds and wise men gathered at an outdoor manger — began with St. Francis of Assisi around the year 1220.

Our church relies entirely on the generous financial giving of our community to support our Mission and Ministry, and to help keep our beautiful buildings open. If you would like to know more about becoming a regular donor please speak to us about our **Parish Giving Scheme** or visit <https://www.parishgiving.org.uk/donate/>
Alternatively you can make a donation at <https://givealittle.co/campaigns/9a0a2324-3282-4e14-b1f8-dd36c01c9ea2>



Thank you!



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www.achurchnearyou.com/
reading-all-saints
www.achurchnearyou.com/
reading-st-mark



www.facebook.com/
StMarkandAllSaintsReading/

CHRISTMAS IS COMING ...



*The angel said to them,
'Do not be afraid; for see -
I am bringing you good news
of great joy for all people ...'
Luke 2.10-11*

The Church of England's Advent and Christmas theme for 2025 revolves round a single word: Joy! The great joy of Christmas, of course, is the good news the angel declared to the shepherds - the news of Jesus' birth as Emmanuel (God With Us).

The Children's Society

During our Christingle service on Christmas Eve at 5pm there will be a special collection for the Children's Society.



The Children's Society fights for the hope and happiness of young people when it is threatened by abuse, exploitation and neglect.

You can donate on the night or you can visit their online store to purchase a gift to provide a lifeline to a vulnerable child or young person.

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>

<https://givehope.uk>

**GIVE
HOPE**

CHRISTMAS SERVICES HELP

Are you attending one of our Christmas Services?

Can you help welcome our visitors and hand out service sheets?

Please contact the parish office or speak to Rev'd Jo if you are able to help steward at our any of our festive services.

pageborders.org



Christmas Services 2025

Sunday 21st December

Carols by Candlelight

6.30pm All Saints Church
(followed by refreshments)

Christmas Eve 24th Dec

Crib Service with Christingles

5pm All Saints Church

First Mass of Christmas

9.30pm St Mark's Church

Midnight Mass

11.30pm All Saints Church

Christmas Day 25th Dec

Christmas Morning Eucharist

10.am All Saints Church

 **THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND**

ROUND UP IN THE PARISH



On **Saturday 11th October** we had our Scottish Dance at St Mark's Hall to start our harvest celebrations. We had a fabulous time, dancing to the choreographed dances. Our thanks to Duncan (our MC). It is a fabulous event and something you must try next year! We had people join us from the Greek Orthodox Church Community who had seen the poster. We raised about £90 on the night.

Then following this on **18th October** we had our Jumble Sale at All Saints Hall. People queue around the square for our bargains! It's a wonderful event to put on for the community and our much needed fundraising. On the day we managed to raise £800, but we had some additional sales of £200 beforehand. In addition to this we were given some furniture and household bits to sell from a family of a recently departed couple in the parish. It was very kind of them and we were able to raise a further £500 selling items on gumtree and at the back of church. So in total our fundraising for this event was about £1,500.



Then on **Saturday 1st November** we held a table top sale at St Mark's Church. We charged sellers £8 a table and managed to raise about £100. An event we would definitely try again.

Thank you to all of our wonderful organisers, helpers, buyers and all the donations for our events.



HARVEST

Creationtide saw a host of harvest celebrations in our two churches and our local schools.

St Edwards kicked off the festival season when Revd Jo also lead collective worship for harvest in school. where we looked at the Story book "If the world were 100 people" and considered how blessed we are.

All Saints Infant School led a wonderful service which celebrated the food chain, looking at and giving thanks for all the people involved in bringing our food to us from farmers and pickers to packers and truckers, supermarket stackers and checkout staff, shoppers and cooks! The Junior School and their parents also joined our celebration in church.



Battle school and their families filled St Mark twice over for their joyful exploration of the season with poems and songs (who could resist cauliflowers fluffy?!)

Then our own Church harvest celebrations which again considered all that we have been blessed with and considered a faithful response to the inequalities in our world.

St Mary and All Saints rounded off the Harvest season and also brought the whole school to All Saints to give thanks for the Harvest.

At every service and assembly help donations were offered for READIFOOD and other local charities. We sent 25 crates full of food from St Mark and All Saints (and more was collected in schools). In fact we had so many donations this year that Readifood

had to come and collect it! Thank you to all of you who gave so generously this year. Every tin and packet makes a huge difference to families in need.



CHRISTMAS FAIR THANK YOU...

A huge thank you to everybody that helped out or came and supported our Parish Christmas Fair on Saturday 22nd November at All Saints Hall. It was awful weather but people came and enjoyed the festive spirit of the event. We had games, cakes and refreshments, gifts to buy, bottles to win and of course Father Christmas.



In total we managed to raise £1,335.63 which is a fabulous amount.

We had some fabulous gifts this year donated for our raffle (split between this event and the Christmas Tree Festival on 6th December at St Mark's Church). It makes such a difference to us to have companies support us in this way. See below for information about each company and do support them if you can.

Bric-a-Brac	Christmas stall	Games
£260.33	£55.80	£64
Gifts	Santa	Bottles
£171.90	£46.50	£40
Cakes	Toys	Raffle
£158	£45.70	£118
Tombola	Knitting	Door
£105	£53.30	£69.50
Refreshments	Lucky mugs	Donations
£79.60	£41.50	£26.50

THANK YOU FOR OUR RAFFLE PRIZES

Tesco Extra (Napier Road) always support us and give us items for the raffle, tombola or gift stall. A big thank you to Elaine, the Community Champion and to Tesco Extra store	
Oxygen Activeplay in Reading is Berkshire's highest flying indoor trampoline and activity park. Great for birthday parties or just burning off some steam https://oxygenactiveplay.co.uk/activity-parks/reading/	
Reading Biscuit Tin - Reading town centres independent 3-screen cinema, event space, bar, eatery and community hub https://www.readingbiscuitfactory.co.uk/	
Bowl Central in Reading (Caversham Road in between Pure Gym and the Fire Station) - Discover the best bowling alleys in Reading for family fun, group nights out, and competitive games https://bowlcentral.co.uk/reading-bowl-central/	
Stanlake Park - Stanlake Park is one of the oldest wine producers in England. Every year our 40-year-old vines give us quality, well-ripened grapes. https://stanlakepark.com/	
Bills Restaurant - Swing by and tuck into one of our signature dishes, with our menu spanning breakfast and brunch to lunch and dinner. In front of our beautiful restaurant, you'll find the sunshine terrace, perfect for sipping on refreshing cocktails. We've also got a stunning private dining room suited for large parties from 15 to 40 seated or up to 70 standing! https://bills-website.co.uk/restaurants/reading/	
Urban Fun - (Broad Street Mall) Non-stop excitement at Urban Fun! From arcade games and VR, Karaoke, bowling & parties – it's your go-to spot for fun in Reading https://urban-fun.co.uk/	

CHRIST THE KING SERMON—FROM 22ND NOVEMBER

Dr Diana Matthews

So this morning we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, the last day of the Church Year, and by next Sunday we shall moved into a new year with Advent Sunday. Like all endings and beginnings such a moment gives us a moment for thought: how has this church year been for us? How has it been for us as individual Christians, as a parish, as a Christian community? Have we moved forward along our own spiritual path this year? Have we grown in our Christian lives? And of course, we not only look to the past, but to the future. How will things go for us as individuals, as a parish, as a community over this next Church year? Where shall we be by the Feast of Christ the King next year?

On reflection, this last year has been a good year for us. Our ministry in the schools and care homes of our parish has

continued to flourish, and we are very fortunate having children here who enjoy both church services and the special activities provided for them like Messy Church and MAD, the Make a Difference, club. We have had some nurture activities, like the Prayer group, and Bible Study, which give everyone the opportunity to study the Bible in greater depth and learn more about their faith. There are the members of the PCC who give of their time to think about the parish, its funds and its needs, and try to make good decisions for

the future. We have activities for those outside the parish too, like the Monday morning coffee time, the Saturday morning sessions for a variety of charities, the Christmas tree festival, the summer and winter fairs, Badminton in the hall, the Open Group. And we have given to our community through your generous donations to Readifood through the year. There have been the fund raising activities, especially the Jumble Sales, which not only bring in much needed cash but also provide opportunities for so many in the church community, and those on the fringe, to get stuck in and help, a real community building exercise. Numbers in the pews on an average Sunday morning have risen too, and when you add to these the school congregations and the Care homes, it means that over 150 people receive ministry or support here every week. And we should never forget the people behind the scenes: those who see the light bulbs

are changed, the flowers arranged and watered, the loos unblocked, soap and loo paper there week by week, locking and unlocking for those who need access, so many little time consuming jobs that mean this community can move on from week to week. We have so many people to thank, so many tasks, large and small, which make this all work to the glory of God.

But there are always gaps to be filled. We need more people on the PCC, we could do with an extra person on the Care homes team, and on Deanery Synod, governors for our church schools. We need to build numbers in our congregations, more on our electoral roll, bring in younger people to take all this activity forward, and so ensure a future here for both our churches.



But now, what does this new Church Year hold for us all? Around the New Year in January, many people who are afraid of the future, try to find hope by buying popular publications like Old Moore's Almanack, or they read their horoscopes avidly, all in the hope of finding out what will happen to them in the year ahead. But of course this is a vain hope. But, as Christians we *can* look to something that will give us hope for the future, something much better than an Almanack, for we have Holy Scripture. As the Collect for the second Sunday in Advent puts it, that by patience and comfort of God's Holy Word, we may embrace and hold fast blessed hope.

So, let's look in hope at our Bible readings for today, starting with the Gospel. It seems it could not have been taken from a more sombre moment in our Christian story. That beloved Son, sent by God, has

been arrested, tortured, and condemned, and now hangs on a cross, dying between 2 criminals. And they call him 'King' in mockery: If you are the King of the Jews, come down from that cross, and they hang a label on his cross, saying in scorn, the King of the Jews. We could easily think what hope *is there* for us here? And yet it *is* a moment full of hope for all of us because, the one thief, almost in the moment of death, repents, turns and acknowledges Jesus indeed to be Christ the King: Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus the true King, turns and replies, surely today, you will be with me and Paradise. And that same welcome Christ the King gives to all of us who truly repent and truly believe.

And then, we come to Jeremiah: with the best will in the world, we could not call him the cheeriest of prophets. He lived during a bitter period when the Israelite monarchy had fallen, and God's Chosen Nation were in exile. Nevertheless, here, Jeremiah is really upbeat. Despite the dark moment in which they are living there is hope for God's people because, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right. And as we celebrate today, Christ the King did indeed come to rule wisely and do what is just.

So where does all this leave us? As we face our new Church year, as humans we can so often be afraid of the unknown future. It all seems dark, and unknown, and we fear the dark and the unknown. And yet, as Christians, we should have no fear of the future: for we have the Scriptures to guide us and to keep us hopeful. In the words of Minnie Haskins, we have only to - Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God, and that shall be better to you than a light and safer than a known way. So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, I trod gladly into the night.

Amen!

(Thank you Diana for giving permission for us to print your thought provoking sermon)

PCC VACANCIES

SAFEGUARDING OFFICER



After 3 years helping us stay safer as a church Levine has stepped down from this role. We wish her well in her new endeavours at work and we are thankful for all she has brought to the job. So, we are searching for a new Parish safeguarding officer. This is a crucial role in ensuring that our community places safeguarding at the heart of all we do. Full training is provided. The main responsibilities would be to meet with the vicar regarding any reports and keep our parish dashboard up-to-date.

If you think you could help, please speak with Rev'd Jo or Jackie.

ECO GROUP

Thanks to those of you who have enquired about the Eco group to help us work towards becoming more environmentally friendly in the parish, and consider how to best work towards an Eco Church award. We will be arranging a meeting soon but we still need passionate people to help us with our plan. Speak to Rev'd Jo or Jackie if you are interested.

FLOWER ARRANGING HELP

We need a few extra volunteers to help the flower arranging team at All Saints Church?

Do you have a bit of spare time in the week to help?

Please speak to Sylvia or Jackie if you can help.

Thank you

PARISH EXPLORERS



As per previous years we will be making a special trip to Henry Street garden centre on

Friday 12th December

Henry Street has a beautiful Christmas market for purchasing gifts. We'll then have a catch up over coffee and cake in the restaurant (optional)

10.15am meet at All Saints Church

If you would like to join us please get in touch so we can organise drivers. Please contact Jackie or Rev'd Jane



Christmas Light Walk

NEW COMMUNITY VENTURE

ALL SAINTS FAMILY

As a Church, both nationally and locally we have committed ourselves to striving to do more to encourage children and young people to grow in faith. Every church is being encouraged to try something new for children and families alongside their usual provision.

PCC would love to try a new venture for school families, to create community space and encourage relationships to grow and flourish between the church and the school.

We would like to invite families to pop in to church for a drink and a snack and chance to chat on the way home from school, initially once every short term.

To do this we need your help!

Could you spare an hour (from 3pm) every once in a while to welcome people to church, make drinks and chat to people? If you would like to help, please speak with Revd Jo.

Proposed DATES

Wednesday 21st January 3-4

(Tuesday 24th February Pancake party 5-6pm)

Tuesday 17th March 3-4

Friday 24th April 3-4

Wednesday 20th May 3-4

Thursday 18th June 3-4



Symbols of the season

Many traditional decorations convey the meaning of Christmas.

Directions: Use the picture clues to the right to complete the words. Then write the boxed letters in order to complete 2 Corinthians 9:15, NIV.



shepherd's staff _ □ □ _ _ _ □

tree that keeps its leaves _ _ _ □ _ _ _

shines to lead the way _ _ _ □

green for eternal life, □ _ _ _ &
red for Jesus' blood _ _ _ □ □ _ _

sounds to announce □ _ _ _
good news

has no beginning or end _ _ _ _ □ _

Th □ □ ks b □ to □ od fo □ □ is
indesc □ □ ba □ le gif □ !

2 CORINTHIANS 9:15, NIV

ALL SAINTS FAMILY

PANCAKE PARTY

Raising money for
PACT
Parents And Children Together

PACT is a local charity who help build and empower adoptive families and support women and children to rebuild after trauma and domestic violence.

Tuesday 24th March

5 – 6.30pm

All Saints Hall

Downshire Square

All ages welcome,
come join the fun!

suggested donation £3 per person

MONDAY 30TH MARCH 2026...

And We Beheld His Glory:

The Parish of St Mark & All Saints presents a faithful modern-day retelling of St John's Gospel, read by members of the parish. And We Beheld His Glory brings John's intimate gospel to life in around two hours with an interval, and promises to be an inspiring, entertaining and memorable evening, as part of our Easter programme. We will be inviting other churches in Reading, and publicising the event in local media. There will be a charge for admission, with proceeds going to our parish funds.

And We Beheld His Glory is written by parish member Charlie Smith, adapted from St John Live, Charlie's dramatisation of the fourth Gospel, which was previously performed in churches around London. The drama brings out the supporting characters and shows how knowing Jesus changes their lives forever, and will do the same for us today.

Co-producers Charlie and Kwaw have led Zoom readthroughs of the drama this autumn, and will hold an audition for reserve readers in the new year.

ST MARK AND ALL SAINTS, INVITE YOU TO JOIN US AT:



ALL SAINTS CHURCH, DOWNSHIRE SQUARE

SUNDAY 1ST FEBRUARY
2.30 - 4.30PM

For more information call Revd Jo 07977 142450
or email stmarkandallsaints@gmail.com

Messy Church is a family activity and children must be accompanied by an adult.

MESSY ADVENT

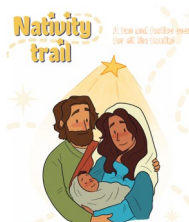
37 Children and adults joined us for Messy Church on 23rd November, for a faith filled afternoon of craft and activities.



WE ARE WAITING

We made our own Advent window displays, night light holders and Calendars to guide Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem in preparation for Jesus' birth, and explored the Christmas story with crib sets and playdough

and an interactive Nativity Trail in which we scanned the QR codes to hear sections of the story and cracked the code to win a prize!



Some of us had a go at the challenging Flextangles - a flexing fidget toy of the Christmas story, proving that Messy Church is as much fun and challenge for grown ups as for kids!

We finished with a discussion about the meaning of Advent and how waiting helps us prepare for the coming of the light that shines in the darkness and cannot be put out!

Messy Church is a great way for all ages to have fun and engage in faith together—why not join us for our next Messy in February!

DESERT ISLAND HYMNS



Imagine a small, sandy island surrounded by crystal-clear turquoise waters. In the foreground, there's a gentle shoreline with soft waves lapping at the sand. Scattered around the beach are tropical palm trees, their fronds swaying gently in the breeze. In the background, a vibrant sunset paints the sky

with hues of orange and purple, casting a warm glow over the scene. On the beach, are a group of people gathered in a circle, praising God and singing hymns, their faces illuminated by the fading sunlight. Nearby, other instruments rest against a palm tree, inviting others to join in the music...

OK maybe not! But have you ever considered what hymns you would take with you to a desert island? This year, to help us get to know each other a little better, we will be inviting different people to share 3 of their Desert Island Hymn choices with us. Diana Matthews discusses her choices...

Hymn One

O Lord, all the world belongs to You

*O Lord, all the world belongs to You
and You are always making all things new.
What is wrong, You forgive,
and the new life You give
is what's turning the world upside down.*

*The world's only loving to its friends,
but Your way of loving never ends,
loving enemies too;
and this loving with You
is what's turning the world upside down.*

*The world lives divided and apart,
You draw men together, and we start
in our friendship to see
that in harmony we
can be turning the world upside down.*

*The world wants the wealth to live in state,
but You show a new way to be great:
like a servant You came,
and if we do the same,
we'll be turning the world upside down.*

*O Lord, all the world belongs to You
and You are always making all things new.
What is wrong, You forgive,
and the new life You give
is what's turning the world upside down.*

©1965 Josef Weinberger

I chose this hymn because I think it speaks so clearly to the modern world: we are divided, we are greedy, but Christ offers us another way of life, a life of love, and peace, of plenty for all through love for God and neighbour. We just need to keep hearing those words – that with his grace we can live differently in love and peace.

Hymn Two

Be Still and Know

*Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.*

*I am the Lord who healeth thee.
I am the Lord who healeth thee.
I am the Lord who healeth thee.*

*In thee, Lord God, I put my trust.
In thee, Lord God, I put my trust.
In thee, Lord God, I put my trust.*

*Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.*

We often sing this as the Gradual in our Care homes. I love this little hymn because it gives us a simple message, but a message we find so hard to hear and act upon. Be still and know that I am God – how often do we ignore those words in our own lives? We fret and worry – but if we could just hear them: be still, and know that I am God – how much more peaceful our own lives and those around us could be.

Hymn Three

How Great Thou Art

Oh Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed

**Chorus: Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art**

When through the woods, and forest glades I
wander

And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze

Chorus: Then sings my soul...

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on a cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin

Chorus: Then sings my soul...

And when Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim
My God, how great Thou art

Chorus: Then sings my soul...

It is always good to have a good sing! And this hymn really gives us that. But also with a wonderful message: it doesn't matter where we are, at home, on a country walk, even walking along Broad Street, we can be aware of God's presence and power with us, in our lives, in the lives of those around us, in our communities, through people of good will. And then, as Christians, we can try to act and to pray that we may make a difference in those communities and so create a better world for all.

Thank you Diana for sharing your favourites with us!

If you would like to tell us your top 3 Desert Island Hymns, speak to Revd Jo

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

• Lonely? • Looking for Company? • Want to make new friends? • Building Community? • New to the area? • Bored at home? • Bereaved? • Fancy a chat? • New Baby?

Coffee on Mondays

Join us for coffee and a chat.

Every Monday
10:30–12.00



Church also open for prayer and reflection.

Fancy a cuppa?

Join us at our regular Monday coffee mornings at All Saints Church or at our monthly charity coffee mornings in the Downshire room All Saints Hall.
(For full details see below).

Coffee, chat and companionship

Everyone is welcome

Coffee is also served on Friday mornings at 8.40 (term time only) before our weekly Infant School service.

CHARITY COFFEE MORNING

10.30am—11.30am

Downshire Room, All Saints Hall
Includes raffle, tombola and bring 'n' buy

2nd Saturday in the month (except Nov)




SHINFIELD CLUB

Love words? Enjoy a challenge? Whether you're a seasoned player or a newbie, come along and join the fun!

Starting Monday 12th January 2026.
6pm–8pm
School Green Centre
Shinfield, RG2 9EH

Small donations are welcome to offset the venue hire, refreshments and quarterly prizes.

shinfieldscrabbleclub@gmail.com



@SHINFIELDSCRABBLE

BADMINTON CLUB



Monday 7.30–9.30pm
Tuesday 7.30–8.30pm

All Saints Hall £4
Bring a racket, Tuition available.

We're hosting a coffee morning

Join us for a coffee and a friendly chat every Tuesday morning. Make new friends and enjoy a slice of home made cake!

Everyone's welcome.

Every Tuesday
11am to 12 pm

Parkside Care Home

Parkside Road,
Reading
RG30 2DP



Free event

Call us to reserve your spot or find out more
0118 952 8910 ext 1200

We may record or monitor our calls.



BADMINTON DATES

DEC / JAN

There is **NO** badminton on the following dates:

Monday 1st December
Tuesday 2nd December
Monday 8th December
Tuesday 9th December
Monday 22nd December
Tuesday 23rd December
Monday 29th December
Tuesday 30th December
Monday 5th January
Tuesday 6th January

Badminton will resume again on 12th Jan 2026. Happy Christmas.

13th December—Cardiac Risk in the Young

10th January—SENSE (DeafBlind Childrens charity) and Cardiac Risk in the Young

14th February—British Heart Foundation and Versus Arthritis

14th March—Alexander Devine Hospice and Young Lives vs Cancer

11th April—Thames Valley Animal Welfare and International Fund for Animal welfare

23rd May—Duchess of Kent Hospice and Institute of Cancer Research

13th June—Operation Smile and Smile Train

11th July—Alzheimer's Society and Age UK

8th August—M.N.D Association and the Stroke Association

12th September—Macmillan cancer support and Mercy Ships UK Ltd

10th October—Breast Cancer Now and Prostate Cancer

21st November—BLESMA (The limbless veterans charity) and the Royal Airforce Benevolent Fund

12th December—Thames Valley and Children's Air Ambulance

25% of the fundraising from each coffee morning will be donated to Parish Funds, the remaining donations go directly to the charities listed.

PRAYERS...

Do you have something or someone you would like us to pray for?

We are happy to receive weekly prayer requests using the prayer boxes in church or by speaking to the wardens or clergy on a Sunday morning. If your request is not for yourself, please check that the person for whom you are requesting prayer is happy for you to share information with us. In public prayer only first names or initials will be used. God, who knows all things, hears beyond the words we speak aloud to the intentions of our hearts and will not fail to listen. If you would like someone to pray with you, please speak to one of the clergy or ministry team.

In particular we invite you to pray :

- For God's guidance and Blessing on our community .
- For our government and council.
- For peace in the world
- For the People of Gaza and Ukraine and all those affected by war, terror or violence of any kind.
- That we might seek to safeguard the integrity of creation.
- For our Archbishop Designate, and Local Bishops Stephen and Mary
- that local churches will be a place of welcome and kindness for those seeking refuge.
- For wisdom and understanding in the heated discourse around immigration in the UK,
- For the work of the Children's Society
- That our Christmas celebrations might be a time of meaningful engagement with our wider community.
- For those who are lonely or in need.
- For all who are sick including Elizabeth and David, Ben Kwaw and A
- For Pam, Theo, and all those who have died, or whose year's mind falls at this time.

JOIN US FOR PRAYER ...



Compline (Night prayer) is online each Wednesday and Sunday night at 9pm .

Parish prayers meet fortnightly online on alternate Monday evenings at 7pm, to pray for the Parish and our community.

Everyone is welcome to join us at these times.

"Rejoice at all times, pray without ceasing give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Christmas Card treasures



Turn old Christmas cards into beautiful keepsake ornaments! It's a fun, simple way to give new life to cards you've received and add a handmade touch to your tree.

What you need:

- Christmas cards
- Scissors
- Glue
- Circle pattern (cut from cardboard or trace around object)
- Hole punch
- Yarn or ribbon
- Glitter (optional)



What you do:

1. Trace a circle onto two Christmas cards.
2. Cut out the circles and glue the backs together.
3. Decorate the edges with glitter or ribbon for extra sparkle.
4. Punch a hole at the top and thread yarn or ribbon through to hang.



*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.
— James 1:17 (NIV)*

A POEM written by Paul Farmer

It was common wood that formed the unpretentious crib
used upon that first Christmas morn,
To keep a baby free from harm and to keep him warm.

But that was no common babe,
for on that day in that stable cave
Jesus (God's son) was born.

It was common wood that was used
to build a boat that was to sail the sea of Galilee
used by common fishermen
when Jesus calmed the sea.

It was common wood that formed the cross
upon which our shepherd King was slain.
And yet His death was not the end,
for on the third day He rose again.

It was written on common wood
the words Pilate ordered to proclaim
the reason for Jesus' condemnation
(placed upon the cross)
'Jesus, the Nazarene, King of the Jews'
Written to humiliate, not just Jesus but
the entire Jewish nation.

It is from common wood that our coffins are made,
yet they are merely temporary vessels for our souls.
Which within our bodies no longer stay,
for our saviour King (by his sinless sacrifice)
our sinful souls have saved.

Whilst curbing the
power of satan,
and the finality
of our graves,
He turned the common
wood of his cross
into the door
to our eternal lives.



A PRAYER FOR OUR TIME

Loving God ,
You have brought us to
Christmastime once more.
Help us not to get lost
in the glitter and the glow,
but to see the true glory of the birth
of Your only begotten Son.

Keep our hearts from clinging too tightly
to parties, presents and decorations,
and turn our eyes instead to Christ
who bears Your image and brings us
Your message of love and hope.

Amen

CHRISTMAS CRACKUPS

Enjoy these kid friendly jokes!

What did Adam say the day before Christmas?

It's Christmas, Eve!



What does the gingerbread man put on his bed? *Cookie sheets!*

What goes "Oh, Oh, Oh"?
Santa walking backwards.

Why are Christmas trees so bad at knitting?

They keep dropping their needles.



2026 DATES

OPEN GROUP

We meet at 2.30pm in the Downshire Room, All Saints Hall (unless otherwise stated) Payment is £10 per year (excluding July/ Aug and Dec) or £2 per meeting.

Wednesday 10th Dec 3pm—4.30pm

Christmas Cream Tea (£4) - speak to Philip Cook for further details

Wednesday 28th January—'Inter-

Galactic highway - how we communicate with spacecraft'. Talk by Dr Alison Johnston

Wednesday 25th February - 'Buses—my hobby' Robert Williams (CEO Reading Buses)

Wednesday 25th March - 'The Necropolis Railway' - a railway line opened in 1854 to carry corpses and mourners between London and the newly opened Brookwood Cemetery. Illustrated talk by David Morton (Chair Reading U3A)

Wednesday 22nd April—'My childhood and working life' - talk by Jenny Henshall

Wednesday 27th May—Ayres and Greeces (poems, odes and acoustic R'n'R) - **NEW**

Wednesday 17th June—'My cruise to Antarctica and Falklands' (exploration!) - Dr Jane Sellwood

Wednesday 15th July—(midday for 12.30pm start) annual **Toby Carvery meal out**

Wednesday 26th August—Bring and Share **Garden Party at Kaikoura**

Wednesday 23rd September—My travels in 2025—illustrated talk by Peter Scott

Wednesday 28th October—'The Samaritans—still listening after all these years'—Seamus Jennings

Wednesday 25th November—'Black Gold Black Lungs'—a talk on coal mining—Lionel Williams

Wednesday 9th December 3-4pm Downshire Room for the **Christmas Cream Tea (£4)**



Previous Open Group—Reading Accor-dion Group October 2025

LINK GROUP

Link Group usually meet on Wednesdays at 11am until 12 noon (in the Downshire Room, All Saints Hall, Downshire Square) for coffee, chat, prayer and study of a bible passage

Thursday 11th December—change of date

Wednesday 14th January

Wednesday 11th February

Wednesday 4th March

Wednesday 8th April

Wednesday 13th May

Thursday 11th June

Wednesday 8th July

Wednesday 5th August

Thursday 10th September

Wednesday 7th October

Wednesday 11th November

Wednesday 2nd December



M.A.D.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A Social gathering for children (aged 5+) of the church community

TUESDAY 9th DEC
TUESDAY 13th
4.30-6pm
All Saints Church Hall

MAD Club meets one **Tuesday** a month, for fun, games, crafts and time together to grow in our faith and make an even bigger difference in our world. We will finish as always with a simple meal (Pasta, Pizza Hotdogs etc).

Why not invite a friend?
For more information talk to
Rev'd Jo or Iva Butler.

WALSINGHAM MASS



NEW MEETING TIME 7.30PM

The cell of our Lady of Walsingham meet to celebrate Mass at 7.30pm at All Saints Church (on the first Monday of the month (excluding bank holidays):

Monday 1st Dec

Monday 5th January

Monday 2nd February

Monday 2nd March

Monday 13th April

Monday 11th May

Monday 1st June

Monday 6th July

Monday 3rd August

10th—14th August—Pilgrimage to Walsingham

Monday 7th September

Monday 5th October

Monday 2nd November

Monday 7th December

Dates in red (in the colder months) will be meeting at Tazewell Court

M.A.D Club 2026

Tuesday 13th January

Tuesday 10th February

Tuesday 10th March

Tuesday 14th April

Tuesday 12th May

Tuesday 9th June

Tuesday 14th July

Break for August

Tuesday 8th September

Tuesday 13th October

Tuesday 10th November

Tuesday 8th December

GENEROUS GIVING

CHRISTMAS IS COMING

If you are shopping online then please consider first registering with easyfundraising.



Raise **free funds**
every time you
shop online

www.easyfundraising.org.uk—perhaps the easiest way to support our church financially if you shop on-line. Many companies ‘donate’ a small percentage of the total cost of your goods to your nominated charity and it costs you nothing.!

Just hover over the QR code with your camera on your smart device and it will take you to St Mark and All Saints Reading easyfundraising’s cause page.

easyfundraising

You spend, retailers donate

Sign up to easyfundraising
and see your favourite
retailers donate to

St Mark and All Saints Reading

whenever you shop with them

Sign up and get started

Thank you for everything you currently do. It makes a huge difference.

Don’t forget our Parish is also a charity and there are many ways you can support us.

- You can remember loved ones by **sponsoring our weekly service sheets**. We recommend a donation of £20 and we can print a short tribute (up to 50 words) on the front of the service sheet on your chosen date.
- If you’re a fan of online banking why not give **direct by BACS** to St Mark and All Saints Church PCC.

Sort Code **30-91-31**,
Account number
02374937.

- Become a **regular giver** by setting up a regular amount via the Parish Giving Scheme—<https://www.parishgiving.org.uk/donate/>
- **Scan the QR code in the service sheet** (and the front of this newsletter) and make a donation on your smart phone with your card.

HALLS FOR HIRE

Our two beautiful Church halls are available for regular hire for groups and organisations or one off hire for parties and events.

Rental income from our halls plays a huge role in balancing the parish finances so please consider us if you are looking for a space and recommend us to your friends.

The Downshire Room at All Saints is also available separately for smaller groups.



**All Saints Hall,
Downshire Sq,
RG1 6NH**

Email the Parish
Office:
allsaintsreading@gmail.com

or stmarkandallsaints@gmail.com
or call 0118 9502620

**St Mark’s Hall,
Cranbury Rd,
RG30 2TA**

Email Sharon:
st.mark.church.hall@gmail.com
or telephone 0770 752 3617



BLESSED HUGH FARINGDON

If you are applying for a place at Blessed Hugh Faringdon School (for September 2026) and need a letter to accompany your supplementary information form (SIF), please email your request to Rev’d Jo by the end of November. Email: revdjowilliams@gmail.com

Details about the application process and supplementary form can be found at the below link.

[HTTPS://WWW.HUGHFARINGDON.ORG/HOME/JOIN-US/ADMISSIONS-INFORMATION/](https://www.hughfaringdon.org/home/join-us/admissions-information/)

THE MONTH AHEAD...

DEC

Mon 1st	10.30	Coffee on Mondays AS
	7.30	Walsingham Mass Tazewell Ct
Tue 2nd	7.00	Bible Study (AS Hall)
Wed 3rd	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Thurs 4th		NO EVENTS
Fri 5th	8.45	School Family Worship AS preceded by coffee
Sat 6th	1.00	Christmas Tree Festival SM
Sun 7th	9.00	St Mark's Eucharist
	11.00	All Saints Eucharist
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Mon 8th	10.30	Coffee on Mondays AS
	7.00	Parish Prayers
Tue 9th	4.30	MAD Club (AS hall)
	7.00	Bible Study (AS Hall)
Wed 10th	3.00	Open Group AS Hall
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Thurs 11th	11.00	Link Group AS hall
Fri 12th	8.45	School Family Worship AS preceded by coffee
	10.15	Parish Explorers to Henry Street
Sat 13th	10.30	Charity coffee (AS Hall)
Sun 14th	9.00	St Mark's Eucharist
	11.00	All Saints Eucharist
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Mon 15th	10.30	Coffee on Mondays AS
Tues 16th		NO EVENTS
Wed 17th	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Thurs 18th		NO EVENTS
Fri 19th	8.45	School Family Worship AS preceded by coffee
Sat 20th		NO EVENTS
Sun 21st	9.00	St Mark's Eucharist
	11.00	All Saints Eucharist with All Comers Nativity
	6.30	Carols by Candlelight (AS)
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Mon 22nd	10.30	Coffee on Mondays AS
	7.00	Parish Prayers
Tue 23rd		NO EVENTS
Wed 24th	5.00	Crib service with Christingle AS
	9.30	First Mass of Christmas SM
	11.30	Midnight Mass AS
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Thurs 25th	10.00	Joint Festal Eucharist AS
		(no service at St Mark's Church)
Fri 26th		NO EVENTS
Sat 27th		NO EVENTS
Sun 28th	9.00	St Marks Eucharist
		(no service at All Saints)
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Mon 29th	10.30	Coffee on Mondays AS
	7.00	Parish Prayers
Tues 30th		NO EVENTS
Wed 31st		NO EVENTS

JAN

Thurs 1st		NO EVENTS
Friday 2nd		NO EVENTS
Sat 3rd		NO EVENTS
Sun 4th	9.00	St Mark's Eucharist
	11.00	All Saints Eucharist
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Mon 5th	10.30	Coffee on Mondays AS
	7.30	Walsingham Mass Tazewell Ct
Tue 6th		NO EVENTS
Wed 7th	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Thurs 8th		NO EVENTS
Fri 9th	8.45	School Family Worship AS preceded by coffee
Sat 10th	10.30	Charity coffee (AS Hall)
Sun 11th	9.00	St Mark's Eucharist
	11.00	All Saints Eucharist
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Mon 12th	10.30	Coffee on Mondays AS
	7.00	Parish Prayers
Tue 13th	4.30	MAD Club (AS Hall)
Wed 14th	11.00	Link Group (AS hall)
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Thurs 15th		NO EVENTS
Fri 16th	8.45	School Family Worship AS preceded by coffee
Sat 17th		NO EVENTS
Sun 18th	9.00	St Mark's Eucharist
	11.00	All Saints Eucharist
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Mon 19th	10.30	Coffee on Mondays AS
Tue 20th		NO EVENTS
Wed 21st	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Thurs 22nd		NO EVENTS
Fri 23rd	8.45	School Family Worship AS preceded by coffee
Sat 24th		NO EVENTS
Sun 25th	9.00	St Mark's Eucharist
	11.00	All Saints Eucharist
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Mon 26th	10.30	Coffee on Mondays AS
	7.00	Parish Prayers
Tue 27th		NO EVENTS
Wed 28th	2.30	Open Group AS Hall
	9.00	Compline (zoom or telephone)
Thurs 29th		NO EVENTS
Fri 30th	8.45	School Family Worship AS preceded by coffee
Sat 31st		NO EVENTS

FUTURE DATES 2026

February

Wed 18th Ash Wednesday

March

Sat 22nd Reading Half Marathon

Mon 30th And We Beheld His Glory - AS

April

Sun 5th Easter Sunday

May

Sun 17th APCM—joint service @ 10am

June

Sat 6th Proposed Summer Fair

Do email the parish office for any social or fundraising event suggestions. Further events will be added to the list throughout 2026

SUNDAY ZOOM



We recognise that it can be difficult for some members to get to church each week, particularly in the colder months of the year.

We aim to live stream one service each week over Zoom.

If you are unable to join us in person, please do consider joining our worship online.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85678162379?pwd=ZytBWfpleGdlUXovdGcyeEZOelZBdz09>

Meeting ID: 856 7816 2379 and Passcode: worship (or 7805385 if dialling by phone)
You can also join by telephone by dialling: 0208 080 6592 or 0203 481 5237

PONDERINGS AT THE END OF A DAY - OR YEAR...

Dutch Catholic priest and theologian Henri Nouwen found it useful to reflect on several questions at the end of the day: "Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing?"

Pondering such questions may prove valuable at the end of a year as well: "How did I contribute to peace in the world

this past year? Did I bring smiles to others' faces? Did I offer words of healing?"

Nouwen continued, and we can too: "Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love?"

Many of us set New Year's resolutions for self-improvement, asking, "What are my goals? How can I better myself, my weight, my work-life balance, my habits?"

But Nouwen said of his self-inquiry: "These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and [in] the life to come." His resolution was to share God's love with others. With God's help, it can be ours as well, for each new day and each new year.

