

WYKEHAM BENEFICE NEWS

FEBRUARY, MARCH 2026

Celebrating 30 Years as an enlarged Benefice

1996 – 2026



This edition covers both Lent events and Easter services

Photo of the sacraments bathed in sunlight at St Anne's Church, Epwell

from our Rector

It has been a busy time in the Church lately. Over the past two months we have had Christmas and Epiphany. These seasons in the Church calendar have been a time for celebrating with family and friends and journeying together.

With Candlemas (1st February 2026) marking the end of the Epiphany season, we will enter a little over two weeks of 'Ordinary Time' before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday (18th February 2026). This period of Ordinary Time can seem like a moment to breathe after the busyness of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. Although, as the Church of England states, despite its name, Ordinary Time 'is hardly boring'. We have a number of powerful readings coming up during these two weeks, including Matthew's version of the Transfiguration (Matt.17.1-9). This passage can help give us more insight into Jesus' life and identity as God's son, presenting us with the opportunity to continue to deepen our relationship with Jesus.

As that brief period of Ordinary Time concludes we reach Ash Wednesday. At our services that day we are invited to have a cross drawn on our foreheads in ash as a symbol of humility and a reminder of human mortality. Ash Wednesday begins the 40 days of Lent (excluding Sundays). Lent is an opportunity to slow down and look inward in order to prepare ourselves for the momentous events of Easter. It is a time for penitence, self-denial, self-examination and study. Sometimes these words and ideas can leave us feeling like Lent is a heavy time of year that is to be endured. Instead, I would like to encourage us to look to Lent as an opportunity to try and see ourselves from God's viewpoint. It is about allowing space for God's grace within us and to realign ourselves with God.

But Lent is not just a personal journey. It is a communal one too. All across the world Christians will be observing Lent. By sharing this experience with one another we are reminded that we are part of the great body of Christ, the Church, and that we walk this path together.

We will be running our Lent course this year and will use the 'Come and See' resource from the Oxford Diocese. Bishop Stephen Croft says this about this year's Lent Course:

Come and See this year focuses on meeting Jesus in the Eucharist. In Holy Communion, we meet Jesus the servant, who welcomes us, and Jesus the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

We meet Jesus the Bread of Life, who feeds us for the journey, and Jesus the Vine, who offers us rest and life. We encounter Jesus the Son of God, who draws us into the life of the Holy Trinity; we meet Jesus the Apostle, who sends us to share in God's mission to the world.

There are life-changing truths embedded in the meal which is at the centre of our faith. Holy Communion is, in John Wesley's words, a 'converting ordinance'. We are drawn more deeply into the love of God whether we are enquirers ourselves or have been Christians for many years.

Please keep an eye on the Pew Sheet for information about how to attend the Lent course this year.

I pray that in the few weeks after Epiphany and Ash Wednesday you will have a good time of rest before we begin the rich and insightful journey of Lent together this year.

Every blessing, Emily



COME AND SEE

Discovering Jesus through the Eucharist

Explore the profound meal at the heart of Christian life – whether you're new to Christianity or have been coming to church for years.

The journey starts in Lent 2026. Come and See what faith has to offer.

Lent Lunches in the Benefice for 2026

12.30p.m. – 2p.m.

Week 1. Monday 23rd February - TBC

Week 2. Monday 2nd March - Epwell

Week 3. Tuesday 10th March - Tadmarton,

Week 4. Tuesday 17th March - Sibford

Week 5. Monday 23rd March - TBC

Week 6. Monday 30th March – Shutford



Parish News

SHUTFORD

The final amount collected in Shutford for the Poppy Appeal was £847.

We shared **The Joy of Christmas** with lights in the village and the church tower illuminated.

Our Carol and Christmas Day services were **joyous** with large congregations, and the church was decorated with flowers and greenery: see pictures.

Seasonal refreshments were served in church after the carols. £305 from the collection and illumination donations have been given to The Children`s Society.

The new year has started with our All-Age Family Service in the afternoon, on the second Sunday of the month, using a new informal format.

Refreshments were available during the Café-Style service, but few accepted an invitation to join us in church. The next one, on 8th February, will be lay led.

The Lent theme this year is Draw near: Life-giving habits for Lent: we will encourage our congregation to study a reflections booklet.

We have earmarked Monday, 30th March for a charitable lunch in Shutford Village Hall from 12.30pm.

Ken Jeffs



TADMARTON

I know that Christmas seems a long while ago now, but I would just like to mention the wonderful carol service that was well attended and as a result of the collection we were able to donate £177 to Katherine House. Thanks to the choir for their contribution and to those who provided the mulled wine and mince pies. It was a lovely time of fellowship.

We had our St Nicholas service on the 14th December led by Emily who explained to us why St Nicholas had become associated with Christmas and the giving of presents. A 4th

Century Greek bishop secretly provided dowries for three poor daughters by dropping Gold coins down their chimneys. Emily spoke about an idea she has for St. Nicholas

Sunday next year to be a toy service where we could bring good quality used or new toys to church, then to be given to charity for children who have nothing, so get collecting!

As Lent approaches we have planned our Lent Lunch for Tuesday 10th March at 12.30pm in the village hall. Please do join us if you can.

On Good Friday there will be a service of meditation in the church at 2pm led by John Tattersall. Our Easter Sunday service will be led by Emily.

BROUGHTON WITH NORTH NEWINGTON

Wishing you all a very Happy New Year.

As we start the new year, we reflect on the last month of 2025 and we are sorry to report the loss of two of our villagers John Taylor who passed away on Sunday 30th November and Miriam Parsley who died on Saturday 6th December. John was a well-known local farmer; a great character. Miriam was for many years a Sunday school leader here in Broughton and a member of the Church choir and was well known for her flower arranging. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families at this sad time.



On 13th December, we held our Church Fayre where we had a raffle, tombola, books, cakes, crafts and refreshments available to purchase. Thank you to everyone who came along to support us and all those who ran stalls. We are delighted to report that we raised a wonderful £509.71; thank you.

Our Christmas services were really well attended. The collection of nearly £300 from the Crib Service is being donated to the Church of England Children's Society. The collections from the Carol service and Christmas Day service, totalling almost £500 is being given to Alan's Africa for the wonderful charity work Alan Wolstencroft is doing in Sierra Leone, building schools and improving living conditions in very poor communities.

For many years Doreen Knight has been part of the flower arranging team for St Mary's church and has also managed the rota during that time. She has decided to step down from the team and we would like to extend our thanks to Doreen for her significant contribution.

Coming up in February and March and services over Easter:

As we look ahead to the coming months, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday which falls on 18th February and Lent lunches will be held across the benefice.

A special service for Mothering Sunday will take place on 15th March 2026; please do join us for this celebratory service.

Over the Easter weekend, we encourage you to join us on Good Friday on Friday 3rd April for our very moving benefice Devotional Service at 7pm and the special Easter Day service on Sunday 5th April.

EPWELL

Although it seems an age ago, the PCC would like to thank all those who came to one or all three of the Christmas services held in St Anne's in December. We offered something new this year with a Candlelit Carol service on 21st followed by mulled wine and mince pies, which was very popular. The Crib service on 24th was a chance to sing traditional carols whilst building the Nativity scene which was then the focus for the Christmas Day service.

N.B. Wednesday's Holy Communion Service 10a.m. Will now be held twice a month on the 1st and 3rd week. This is usually taken by Rev'd Emily for which we are grateful.

Lent Lunch

Our Lent Lunch will be held at the village hall on Monday, 2nd March. We will be giving a donation to a local charity and hope there will be a short talk about it. Watch this space... Please come and join us for a simple but delicious lunch and good company.

Mothering Sunday

This year the Mother's day service will be held on Sunday 15th March at 10am, everyone is most welcome and there will be refreshments following the service.

Holy Week, a Benefice Palm Sunday and Stations of the Cross

Holy Week begins with the Benefice Palm Sunday service on 29th March in Epwell. There will be the traditional procession around the village, hopefully following the donkey whilst singing and carrying Palm crosses before the service in the church, followed by refreshments. Please gather in the square at 10.15am or alternatively the church will be open if anyone feels unable to join the procession.

Our **Stations of the Cross** service will be on Tuesday, 31st March at 6.20p.m.

Courtesy of A Church Near You, free stock images



SIBFORD

A new year and a new chapter begins at Holy Trinity.

SUNDAY 25th January, a Service of Blessing for the completion of the re-ordering of Holy Trinity and carbon net zero projects was held, The Venerable David Tyler, Archdeacon of Dorchester Deanery officiating.



Our grateful thanks to Revd. Ronald Hawkes who had the vision several years ago and to David Gill and others who carried this forward. We are also very grateful to Tom Elliot, our local architect/surveyor for his advice and assistance in producing the necessary plans and drawings needed by Oxford Diocese before the work was allowed and could be begin.

Grateful thanks also go to Opus Property Service Ltd, for their professionalism and for completing the reordering works on time thereby enabling us to reopen the Church before Christmas.

We were able to clean and reopen the church in time for our Christmas Tree Festival and Christingle Service that weekend and were able to host the Sibford Tots Christmas Party and Sibford Primary School Christmas Service with a display demonstrating children's artistic talents in the enlarged and welcoming space.



The Coffee Stop will begin again on Tuesday 13th January, open to parents and carers after they have delivered their children to school and anyone wanting a coffee and a chat between 9 – 10.30 am, please call in.

Mothering Sunday will be celebrated on 15th March 3pm with distribution of posies followed by tea and cakes. Our **Lent Lunch** will be on 17th March. Everyone welcome.

Sibford made a lovely cake for the Benefice service held in their church on 6th January. A Photo of the cake and Rev'd Emily preparing to cut the cake which was shared after the service can be seen alongside Ken Jeff's article on 'Celebrating 30 years of the enlarged benefice later in this edition.

SWALCLIFFE

Christmas Market

A big thank you to all those who supported Swalcliffe Christmas Market in December. The array of stalls was exceptional, the weather was kinder than last year, and the event was well attended. Above all, the community buzz was tremendous, with hundreds of villagers and visitors enjoying themselves.

Thanks to everyone's wholehearted engagement and generosity, the event raised a record sum of £5,200! For this particular year the Christmas Market Committee decided the full proceeds will be donated to Swalcliffe Church. The donation will specifically help fund building repair and restoration works.

Celebration of Christmas

On 22nd December villagers were welcomed into the church with festive refreshments to celebrate Christmas with readings, music, and a Christmas jumper competition. We finished off with a hearty rendition of The 12 Days of Christmas, enjoyed by all.



Easter

Looking forward to Easter, there will be the First Communion of Easter at 6am on Easter Day (5th April) starting outside the church doors with the lighting of the new fire, from which the Easter (Paschal) candle is lit. There will also be a Family Communion at 11am on Easter Day.

Thank you!

Thanks to all the kind volunteers who support the church by keeping the clock going, mowing the churchyard and arranging the flowers. New volunteers are always welcome!

Mother's Day ...

Grandmothers, Mothers, and Godmothers are essential people to our lives. Please remember them in your prayers on Mother's Day and if possible, go and see them! Share your day with them.

There are services available in all the parishes, come and join a service and bring them along with you. We would be happy to meet you all.

Celebrating the Benefice 30 years on

The Wykeham Benefice, by Ken Jeffs

Major Pastoral Reorganisation in the north of the Deddington Deanery, agreed in late 1995, led to the creation of The Ironstone, Shires Edge and Wykeham Benefices. These church groupings were initially informal until the necessary legalities were completed.

The Revd Timothy Wimbush assumed responsibility for Broughton with North Newington and Shutford parishes on 1st January 1996. An inaugural Benefice Service was held in Broughton on 4th February. Timothy had been vicar in Sibford since 1976. Broughton and Shutford had been part of the Wroxton group of churches since 1990.

The new Wykeham Benefice was made up of the parishes of Broughton with North Newington, Epwell, Shutford, Sibford, Swalcliffe and Tadmarton. We have been together for 30 years and during that time we have had three Rectors: Timothy Wimbush until September 2011, Ronald Hawkes – September 2012 until January 2020, Neil Bowler – January 2021 until July 2023 and Emily Rowbottom-Scott from August 2024. During the two vacancies church wardens became responsible for their parishes under the guidance of Revd John Tattersall and the Area Dean.

Our Rectors had / have different styles of ministry and interpretation of the scriptures in a rapidly changing world. Some have liberal ideas, others have more traditional views, but all come together to exemplify the churches "Living in Faith and Love" doctrine. They have been ably assisted by many other priests, not least Keith Walklate and John Tattersall, Associate Ministers, and village lay people.

Our six communities are all different – we have shared happiness and sadness over the years and have come together for all the important occasions. Our congregation numbers remain stable, but we need younger members of our villages to lend a hand to keep our churches open and part of village life. Our churches are for people of all faiths or none and everyone is welcome in them. Whatever happens, we will continue to care for our neighbours and will always have a cup of tea available and some cake to share.

We remembered our 30th Anniversary at the Epiphany Service on 4th January in Sibford with a birthday cake. There will be more celebrations and recollections during this year

A beautiful cake which was made for the Benefice Service to celebrate the 30th anniversary.

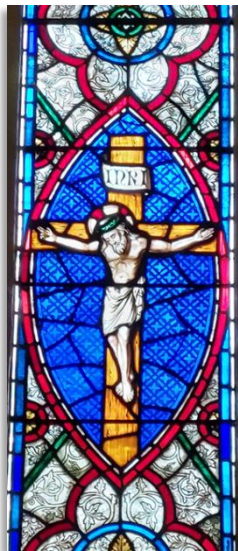


Services and Readings

February Services

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Sunday 1st Candlemas White or Gold | Swalcliffe | 10.30am | Benefice Eucharist (ES) | |
| Sunday 8th Second before Lent Green (ES away) | Sibford Swalcliffe Sibford Epwell Broughton Tadmarton Shutford | 8.00am 9.30am 10.00am 10.00am 11.00am 11.00am 4.00pm | BCP Holy Communion (JT) Holy Communion (JT) Family service (lay led) Family service (lay led, D Long) Holy Communion (JT) Holy Communion (GE) All Age family service (lay led) | |
| Sunday 15th Next before Lent Green | Sibford Shutford Epwell Broughton Tadmarton Swalcliffe | 9.30am 9.30am 9.45am 11.00am 11.00am 6.00pm | Holy Communion (BF) BCP Holy Communion (JT) Holy Communion (ES) Holy Communion (ES) Holy Communion (JT) BCP Evensong (ES) | |
| Wednesday 18th Ash Wednesday Purple | Epwell Sibford | 10.00am 7.00pm | Holy Communion & Imposition of Ashes (ES) Holy Communion & Imposition of Ashes (ES) | |
| Sunday 22nd Lent 1 Purple | Shutford Sibford Swalcliffe Epwell Broughton Tadmarton | 9.30am 9.30am 9.30am 9.45am 1.00am 11.00am | Holy Communion (GE) Holy Communion (JT) Holy Communion (GA) Holy Communion (ES) All Age Family service (JT) All Age Family service (ES) | |

February Readings



| February | Old Testament | New Testament | Gospel | Liturgical Colours |
|---|---|---|------------------------|--------------------|
| Sunday, 1 st (Candlemas) The Presentation of Christ in the Temple | Malichi 3 v 1 - 5 | Hebrews 2 V 14 - 18 | Luke 2 V 22 - 40 | |
| Sunday 8 th The Second Sunday before Lent | Genesis 1 V 1 - 2 – Ch.2 V 3 | Romans 8 V 18 - 25 | Matthew 6 V 25 – 34 | |
| Sunday 15 th The Sunday before Lent | Exodus 24 V 12 - 18 | 2 Peter 1 V 16 - 21 | Matthew 17 1 – 9 | |
| Wednesday 18 th ASH WEDNESDAY | Isaiah 58 V 1 - 12 | 2. Corinthians Ch. 5 V20b – Ch.6 - V 10 | John 8 V 1 - 11 | |
| Sunday 22 nd First Sunday of Lent | Genesis 1 V 15 – 17, Ch. 3. V 1 – 7 | Romans 5 V 12 - 19 | Matthew 4 V 1- 11 | |

Part of the alter window
at Holy Trinity Church,
Sibford

March Service

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Sunday 1st Lent 2 Purple (JT away) | Tadmarton | 10.30am | Benefice Eucharist (ES) | |
| Sunday 8th Lent 3 Purple | Sibford Shutford Swalcliffe Sibford Epwell Broughton Tadmarton | 8.00am 9.30am 9.30am 10.00am 10.00am 11.00am 11.00am | BCP Holy Communion (ES) BCP Holy Communion (ES) Holy Communion (JT) Family service (lay led) Family service (lay led) Holy Communion (ES) Holy Communion (JT) | |
| Sunday 15th Mothering Sunday Purple | Swalcliffe Epwell Broughton Tadmarton Sibford Shutford | 9.30am 10.30am 11.00am 11.00am 3.00pm 4.30pm | Mothers' Day service (ES) Mothers' Day service (JT) Mothers' Day service (ES) Mothers' Day service (lay led) Mothers' Day service and tea (ES) Mothers' Day tea (JT) | |
| Sunday 22nd Passion Sunday Purple | Shutford Sibford Swalcliffe Epwell Broughton Tadmarton | 9.30am 9.30am 9.30am 9.45am 11.00am 11.00am | Holy Communion (BF) Holy Communion (JT) Holy Communion (GE) Holy Communion (ES) Holy Communion (JT) Holy Communion (ES) | |
| Sunday 29th Palm Sunday Red | Epwell | 10.15am | Procession of Palms followed by Benefice Eucharist (ES) | |

March Readings

| March | Old Testament | New Testament | Gospel | Liturgical Colours |
|---|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Sunday 1 st The Second Sunday of Lent | Genesis 12 V 1 – 4a | Romans 4 V 1 – 5 | John 3 V 1 - 17 | |
| Sunday 8th The Third Sunday of Lent | Exodus 17 V 1 – 7 | Romans 5 V 1 – 11 | John 4 V 5 - 42 | |
| Sunday 15 th Mothering Sunday The Forth Sunday of Lent | Exodus 2 V 1 – 10 | 2 Corinthians 1 V 3 – 7 | John 19 V 25b - 27 | |
| Sunday 22 nd Passion Sunday | Ezekiel 37 V 1 - 14 | Romans 8 V 6 - 11 | John 11 V 1 - 45 | |
| Sunday 29 th Palm Sunday | Liturgy of the Palms: Matthew 21 V 1 – 11 Liturgy of the Passion: Isaiah 50 V 4 – 9a | Philippians 2 V 5 - 11 | Matthew 26 V 14 – end of 27 | |



The alter laid for Holy Communion at St. Anne's Church, Epwell

Easter Service in April

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Maundy Thursday 2nd White | Sibford | 7.00pm | Benefice Eucharist for Maundy Thursday (ES) | |
| Good Friday 3rd Red (but no hangings) | Tadmarton Broughton | 2.00pm 7.00pm | Good Friday Meditation (JT) Devotional service (ES) | |
| Sunday 5th Easter Day White or Gold | Swalcliffe Sibford Shutford Epwell Broughton Swalcliffe Tadmarton | 6.00am 9.30am 9.30am 9.45am 11.00am 11.00am 11.00am | First Communion of Easter (ES) Holy Communion (JT) Holy Communion (ES) Holy Communion (GE) Holy Communion (JT) Holy Communion (BF) Holy Communion (ES) | |

Easter Readings in April

| April | Old Testament | New Testament | Gospel | Liturgical Colour |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Thursday 2nd Maundy Thursday | Exodus 12 V 1- 4, 11 - 14 | 1 Corinthians 11 V 23 - 26 | John 13 V 1 – 17, 31b – 35 | White |
| Friday 3 rd Good Friday | TBC | TBC | TBC | No hangings |
| Sunday 5th Easter Day | Jeremiah 31 V 1 - 6 | Acts 10 V 34 - 43 | John 20 V 1 - 18 | White |

Verses for Lent

Daniel 9, v 3 Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

John 16, v 33 John In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

Please send articles for the April and May 2026 edition of the Wykeham Benefice News by 12th March 2026 to carolyn.kdeg@zen.co.uk

