

The Quarterly

St Mary's Church, Ware Community News & Views

The Gift of Friendship

Friends come in more than one quality, as history and our own experiences show us, and in 21st century life you can even be friends with someone you'll never meet, by "friending" someone or something online.

This is a salutary observation; my father (born and died in the 20th century but brought up by rather Victorian parents) always averred that throughout your life you would probably have only two or three true friends. Everybody else was an acquaintance.

The Quakers would have to disagree! Originally known as the Society of the Friends of Jesus, it was an important principle that Quakers were Friends to each other, taking their example from Jesus's friends we usually refer to as the Disciples, even when, as sometimes happened, somebody's conduct resulted in a public warning or suspension from the worshipping community. For them, the meaning of Friend included the sense of belonging to the faith community, unlike our secular friendships.

So, how can we discern which of *our* friends is "true"? Is it how long we've known them? How closely we keep in touch? How far we'll go to help them in a time of need? All of these, or is it something different? Are the BFFs of the young really going to endure as friends "forever"?

My friend Christine met me first when I was 12 years old. She didn't choose me, she was asked to look after me when I joined the school during the academic year. And she was efficient at that, as I settled in fairly quickly. But after leaving school, we didn't even keep in touch. Then, 20 years later (and I don't know why) we began to exchange Christmas cards with letters, and promises of getting together in the New Year. Which happened. In 2020.



A few days before lockdown. Despite a gap of nearly **50 years** we instantly recognized each other, we began to natter, and were still chatting when the sky grew grey and it was time to go home. What with Covid, family issues and health problems, we haven't yet caught up again – but we are going to! In a week or two we'll be in St Albans and chatting till our voices are hoarse. I think she's a true friend, even though we're only spasmodically in touch; our hearts reach out and find each other.



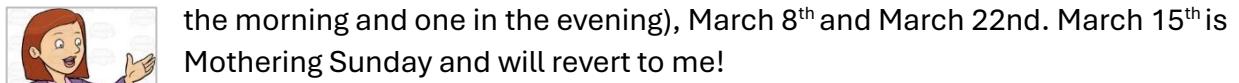
You may remember the old chorus "What a Friend we have in Jesus" – even if we have been far away, Jesus is still the Friend who will take our hand when we reach out towards Him.

Ysmena's letter

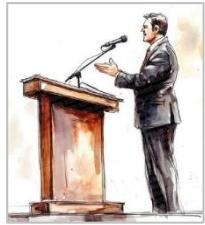


Before Christmas I put a note in the pewsheets to see if anyone fancied trying their hand at preaching. Just as a one off. I'm glad to say that 5 people have taken the plunge and are preparing sermons for Sundays in Lent. Lent is a time to refocus a bit, think a bit differently, find a bit of a challenge. Our Lent sermons will help us do all that. For those preaching, the challenge might be uppermost! For all of us it will give the chance to think a bit differently, as different voices with different ideas help us reflect on scripture.

The Lent 'guest' sermons will be given on: Feb 22nd, March 1st (twice - one in



the morning and one in the evening), March 8th and March 22nd. March 15th is Mothering Sunday and will revert to me!



Thank you to those who answered the call this time round. And if others of you are inspired, we can find other opportunities for you to give it a go.

More opportunities for Lent are introduced elsewhere in this magazine; some are still being finalised at the time of printing. So do take note of pew notices and posters.

There are lots of ways to refocus during Lent: read a book, join Morning or Evening Prayer, spend a bit of time with the Sunday readings, take up a Lent Challenge, come to Evensong, even in time honoured fashion - give something up. We don't have one whole church focus this year. What we have this year is more like a very un-Lenten box of chocolates. Dip in and out, find an old favourite or even - try something you're not sure you like.

Choir Update

Stephen Crookes

After a strong start to the year marked by renewed and new friendships, the choir turned its focus to Advent and Christmas. The autumn term included a well-attended All Saints' Evensong on 2 November, with skilled accompaniment by visiting organist Neil Chippington, followed by the annual Sausage Sizzle. The choir was also honoured to sing for the Civic Service on Remembrance Sunday at the Priory, supporting the town's commemoration of those who have fallen in conflict.



Advent began with a Service of Music and Readings on Advent Sunday, an atmospheric reflection on the foretelling of Christ's birth and the beginning of Christmas preparations. The Christmas season itself was especially busy and musically rewarding. A particular highlight was John Tavener's setting of William Blake's *The Lamb* at our Carol Service, a deceptively simple yet technically demanding work which the choir

[please turn the page]

mastered impressively, delivering two fine performances. Christmas celebrations continued into January, culminating in an Evensong for Candlemas at 5pm on Sunday, 1 February.



Lent will begin with a Choral Eucharist for Ash Wednesday at 8pm on Wednesday, 18 February. New this year is a service marking the start of Passiontide at 5pm on Palm Sunday, 29 March, followed by a full programme of sung services during Holy Week on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

We are pleased to have welcomed several new singers this term and are keen to recruit more adult singers in all voice parts. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact Stephen Crookes, Director of Music (music@stmarysware.co.uk). We are also looking to launch a new Chorister Scheme for children aged eight and above, offering weekday rehearsals and opportunities to sing at services, fostering musical development, confidence, discipline, and teamwork.

Regular sung services take place on Sundays at 10am, with Evensong on the first Sunday of the month at 5pm, and increasingly on the third Sunday as well. Further musical services are planned.

Chocolate in Lent?

Lots of people “give up” something for Lent (wine, gossip, chocolate for example) and some take up a new thing – extra study, Bible reading, a specific charity collection have all been noted.

What about adding chocolate to the “taking up” list!

The Meaningful Chocolate Company makes fair-trade Easter eggs and packages them with booklets telling the story of Easter, and Bonnie can get these at a slightly lower price by buying cases of 6 eggs.



This year the price of chocolate means it is difficult to be sure of supply, so an order for 18 eggs (3 cases) and a couple of dark chocolate eggs will go in before you get your Quarterly.

So contact Bonnie direct to ensure she knows you want one from this stock. It will be first come, first served!

Milk chocolate eggs are £5.50 this year; dark chocolate £6.90 (they have a higher proportion of chocolate!)

Thinking of flowers.....



As there will be no flowers in church during Lent, it's always a delight to see the beautiful arrangements which appear for our great festival of Easter.



At this season people often wish to celebrate the life of someone dear who has died, and if you would like to contribute towards the Easter flowers, please contact Margaret Meldrum or other members of the flower team.

Lent Books

The Monday study group, meeting at Mary Millett's house (15 Warner Road) at 7.30 on Mondays or Tuesdays during Lent) will be reading and discussing:

Lent with the Beloved Disciple

by Michael Marshall

Published 2024 by Bloomsbury

This book was written as a Lent study in 2024, and is based biblically on the relationship between John the “beloved disciple” and Jesus. No background knowledge necessary, it takes the reader from John’s first meeting with Jesus, following Christ’s baptism by John the Baptist, to the resurrection appearances and the birth of the Christian church.

John was with Jesus throughout His ministry, and in the Gospel of St John writes with a knowledge and insight which gives deeper perspective into what we think we know about Him.

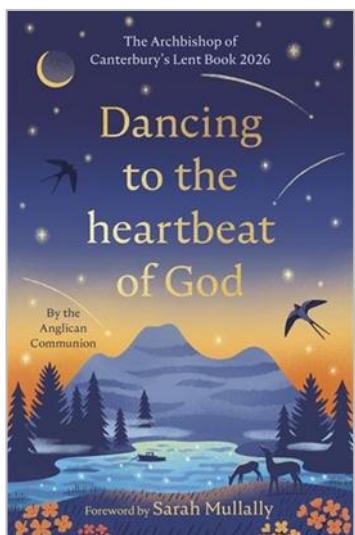
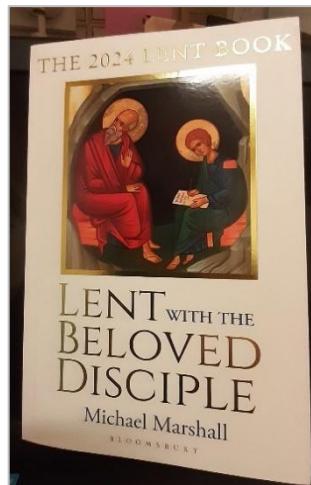


The six chapters of the book are based on six episodes in the passion and resurrection of Jesus – a Bible in your hand will be useful as you read through the chapters, and the introductory and “epilogue” chapters are full of helpful information to give background depth and interpretation.

Michael Marshall’s writing shows how we can more closely enter into an understanding of God’s love for us, and what this means for us, especially as we journey through our Christian pilgrimage.

Michael Marshall is a writer, preacher and spiritual director. He was the Vicar of All Saints Margaret Street in London, was Bishop of Woolwich at the age of 39, and has also worked for many years in America.

The book is £10.99. You can order from the Book Nook, or supplier of your choice.



Or, for those who are interested, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book for 2026 is:

Dancing to the Heartbeat of God: by the Anglican Communion
Published Redemptorist Press £11.99

Dancing to the Heartbeat of God explores many aspects of discipleship.

With a foreword and an afterword by the Archbishop of Canterbury designate, an introduction by the Archbishop of York, and chapters by around thirty authors drawn from across the globe, the volume creates a sense of excitement, dynamism and faithful witness in its gloriously diverse writers and readers alike.

Its testimonies and stories aim to encourage people in the Church of England and across the Anglican Communion to share their faith with others.

Again, can be ordered from the Book Nook or other suppliers.



The unstoppable cycle of the Christian year gives us quite an early Easter this year (5 April is Easter Sunday), and worship, study and reflection are all being planned as the **Quarterly** goes to print.

Two Lent books have been highlighted, above, p3. You may choose to pursue personal reading and prayer, using one or other of those books, or take up Ysmena's suggestion and challenge yourself!

Options will include *Lectio Divina* which has been both popular and rewarding; this will be on Wednesday mornings at 9.45am, looking at the Passion narratives from the gospel of St Matthew), see dates in the What's On; and there is the prospect (not finalised yet) of a Parish Away Day in March, probably Saturday 7 March.

On **Mothering Sunday, 15th March**, there will be a soup plus bread and cheese lunch after the Eucharist – look out for details and a sign-up sheet.



Additional services during **Holy Week** include evening Eucharists and Compline, The Maundy Thursday eucharist and watch, Good Friday's walk of witness, as well as the Three Hours' Devotions, and first Eucharist of Easter, the vigil service on Easter eve.

Please keep your eyes open – **watch** for information in the pewsheets, **listen** to Ysmena's notices at the beginning of Sunday services, and do your best to enrich your faith and Christian life by joining with the universal church in Lenten activities as we progress towards the Passion, Crucifixion and glorious resurrection of Christ at Easter.

The 80th Easter Monday pilgrimage



The tradition of pilgrimage goes so far back that elements can be found in the Old Testament, and in the nativity story (were the Wise Men the first true Christian pilgrims??), but the Easter Monday pilgrimage to St Albans Abbey was revived in the 20th century, as a celebration primarily for young people who would come on foot to the cathedral, and celebrate the festival of Easter in joyously unrestrained ways. Nowadays people of all ages come, some by car as well (!), to join in an exuberant service of worship and praise. This year's service, the 80th, begins at 3.00pm in the Cathedral, on **Monday 6 April**.

And look out, too, for details of the **Alban Day**, when the Cathedral welcomes pilgrims from all over the world to celebrate the first Christian martyr in a day of celebration, with giant puppets re-enacting the martyrdom of Alban at the finale of a town-wide procession from St Peter's church to the Cathedral. This will be on Saturday 20 June and we hope to give details of preachers and services in May's Quarterly.

What We Remember Will Be Saved

The beginning of cold evenings, early darkness and hankering down at home in front of the television - those who opted for this vision of an evening's entertainment missed an absolute treat on October 28th when Stephanie Saldana, accompanied by her musician friend Ferhad Feyssal and refugee shared stories of heartbreak & hope and the things they carried with them.

After the traditional St Mary's opening of coffee, tea and biscuits and cakes, many based on Middle Eastern recipes, an almost capacity audience filed into the hall for the presentation.

Stephanie had a warm, enthusiastic speaking style which soon drew everyone into the world of the war-torn Middle East. From the horror of Christian communities being uprooted, to the social fabric and infrastructure of Aleppo being targeted by ISIS. A city where Christians, Muslims and Jews lived in harmony with many cross-faith friendships became a dangerous war zone. Inevitably many fled to surrounding countries to seek refuge.

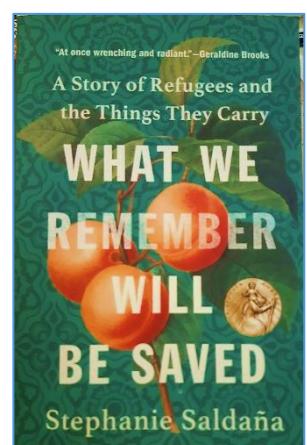
Stephanie, by focussing on some remarkable people, showed how hope can still triumph over despair. The things that became a focus of hope were quite humble: a dress, a packet of baby aubergine seeds, songs and a pharmacy created in a garage.

The dress had embroidered scenes of the town of Baghdeda whose inhabitants were predominantly Christian and whose native tongue is Aramaic, the language of Jesus. The dress belonged to Hana who had an idyllic childhood and when she left the devastation, she wanted to record the churches and community she had grown up in, so she embroidered all the memories on a traditional dress.

The songs and the musician Ferhad were an important and memorable part of the evening. Ferhad's story had the same quality as those linked to artefacts. Starting from conflict that broke up his pre-war world, he moved to a triumph over the negativity that could have overwhelmed someone less resilient and talented. The power point came into its own as we were able to read the lyrics in English as he sang. What lyrics! one of them about his boyhood evoked pictures of a kind of Aramaic *Just William* scrumping, playing marbles and just being a village boy.

This evening finished with questions and a book signing. All the copies of the book (*pictured right*) were sold on the night, but you can order your copy from Julia at The Book Nook or your usual supplier. It is an uplifting and inspiring read and I thoroughly recommend it.

Ian Little



Lunchtime Concerts



The December Lunchtime Concert – but more than that!

As on the first Monday of every month at about 10.30, Derek and his team start preparing the tea, coffee and cake for the pre-Lunchtime Concert café so popular with our audience. Chairs and tables are grouped around St. Mary's Hall in anticipation of the arrival of our concertgoers. Soon they begin to trickle in, in groups mainly, and we begin to hear their cheery greetings:

Hello! How lovely to see you! How are you? Tea or coffee? Which cake will you have?

The conversations grow and mingle as the numbers swell, and Derek continues to coin in the money from the eager customers.

But what is it that gives rise to this monthly warmth and cheerfulness, friendliness and generosity? Well, in December 2025, it was the surety of the musical feast to follow.

At 12.30, as always in the past, the warmed and satisfied listeners make their way from the hall into the church, because they know that waiting in the choir vestry is a pianist whose music has delighted their ears at concerts for many years. When I introduce our performer, there is no need for me to use my usual encouraging phrase *--- and please give a very warm welcome to ---* because I know it is not necessary for **David Silkoff**.

His undoubted enthusiasm for the works he is about to perform shines out as he gives us all some background to the Beethoven or Chopin he is about to perform. Then we settle down and sit back, (as much as this is possible in our pews!) to soak up the flurry of notes that pour out from his fingers and our fine Bluthner piano. The first movement of the Beethoven ends, and the well-trained audience sit in silence waiting for the slow movement. Likewise before the cascade of notes in the finale.

And more - and more - and it is finished.

I thank David, I thank the audience, I mention the future concerts. What did I forget?

Oh damn!! £ - £ - £ I forgot the money. But not to worry, the Gift Aid envelopes are duly being completed by the elated listeners giving willing thanks with their customary generosity.

Thank you, David. Thank you, everyone, for a very successful 2025 concert series.

We look forward to more in 2026. Best wishes, Mark.

Concerts in 2026

- Monday 2 February: The “**Anything Goes**” String Quartet will be performing Brahms Clarinet Quintet in B minor Op 115 with *Colin Eldred* on clarinet.
- Thursday 19 February: **Catherine Wild** will be bringing her recorder consort to perform for us. Come and see the different recorders, from the tiny *sopranino* to the gigantic *bass*.



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- Monday 2 March: We are looking forward to the return of **Jonathan Prag**, who will entertain us with a programme of classical guitar favourites.
- Thursday 19 March: we will be welcoming **Herman Carisha** to perform a recital of classical piano music.
- Monday 6 April – Easter Monday – no concert in church on this day!

Look out for details in the pew leaflets, on the posters in and around church, and throughout the town. If you would like to receive regular monthly updates about the concert series, please speak to Mark.

You will soon be able to find all concert details on the St Mary's website, via "A Church near you"

Round-up of other performances

At the beginning of November, we were delighted to welcome two very talented **students from Haileybury** who were preparing for their grade 8 exams, Bérenger on piano alternating with Rohit on saxophone. They both played a wide variety of music.

Bérenger, a former St Catherine's pupil, started with a beautifully dextrous, melodious piece by Schubert, followed by Mozart's well-known *Rondo a la Turka*. His next piece, *Malgre Tout*, was written for left hand only by Manuel Ponce and demonstrated great skill, moving seamlessly from one section of the keyboard to another. Bérenger's final piece delighted the young children present with music from *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

Rohit's first piece was *Gershwin Celebration* which included many favourite tunes from this popular composer. Next he played a more modern, very lively *Sonata* by Phil Woods. His final piece was beautifully lyrical *Perfect* by Ed Sheeran. It was lovely to hear the saxophone being so beautifully demonstrated as a melodious solo instrument.

Celia

Comments from Yr5 children from St Catherine's School:

"I liked how the piano could play music that makes you feel both tired and energetic." (Talia)

"They were so focussed!" (Elsie)

"I liked how they both played a mixture of modern and classical music." (Ariella)

"How does he fit in a breath without anyone noticing?" (Callie)

"I really appreciated how hard they worked to put the show on for us." (Nancy)

"I liked the one where the pianist had to play with only his left hand." (Alissa)

"I noticed how he [the saxophonist] had to press lots of different buttons to make the different sounds." (Mya-Rose)

"They played two songs that I already knew. One that I enjoyed was 'Pirates of the Caribbean' which is my favourite movie." (DeNiro)

"I liked watching a saxophone play for the very first time!" (Harry)

"It looked really hard, playing all those notes!" (Noah)

"I really liked the piano. He was playing so fast! He showed his talent by far!" (Rudi)



November 20: Organ recital by Neil Chippington

Congratulations to the audience for turning out and braving a cold church, and to Neil Chippington for managing some very florid passages with cold fingers! Perhaps the Advent/Christmas feel was further enhanced by the choice of Bach's famous advent Chorale Prelude *Wachet Auf* and John Ireland's evocative *The Holy Boy* which showed a fine variety of tasteful registration. Neil also gave some interesting background information on the various pieces. Following Ireland's *Holy Boy* Neil played a Howells' *Psalm Prelude* which, like the Ireland, demonstrated the organ's registration being well suited to English music but less so to continental music. However, for the *Vierne Berceuse* Neil found some suitable sounds before finishing with the well-known Dubois *Toccata*. Neil took this at a fair pace and so it was a jolly piece with which to end the recital.

Edward Dodge

January 15th 2026: Chauncy School musicians

There was only one concert in January, a wet Thursday when we had a fair-sized audience for six pupils from Chauncy school playing a variety of instruments, and singing to us. There was plenty of enthusiasm from them, and many of the year 6 children from St Catherine's School in the audience were familiar with some of the music, judging by their reactions to it. Esme and Bethany played piano and guitar to accompany themselves whilst they sang several songs, and encouraged audience participation in their final song *I'm a believer*. Noah demonstrated his prowess on trombone with a tricky variation on *The Ash Grove*. Will played his guitar and sang to us, Aidan and Kyran both show great promise as pianists with a variety of music including *Maple Leaf Rag* by Scott Joplin.

Celia

St Catherine's Year 6 pupils are budding music critics! They really enjoyed this concert – see comments below:

“I liked how talented all the performers were” (Gabriella)

“The pieces were well constructed and performed confidently” (Theo M)

“It was very heartfelt and emotive. Especially, the two girls singing and the trombone” (Olivia)

“I found it very inspiring - I enjoyed the music and fact that it was Chauncy students performing” (Millierose)

“I love that I could hear every sound from the pieces clearly” (Jesse)

“In one of the songs, we were able to join in and this made the performance interactive and more fun” (Theo BW)

“There were a lot of songs that we knew so we were able to sing along. This made the performance more engaging.” (Eloise)

“My favourite was 'I'm a believer' because I could sing along and it's a really upbeat track to finish on.” (Isaac)

“My favourite was the trombone as I haven't heard one played live before.” (Jack H)

St Mary's Plant Market and Summer Fayre

Saturday 16 May



As we start the month of February, there are some 15 weeks for growers to get their seedlings and cuttings underway for selling at our Plant Market on **Saturday 16 May**. And so, do get sowing, planting and potting on!

We are seeking greenhouse accommodation for young plants as they spring into life from the beginning of April.

If you have a spare shelf or two in your greenhouse for small pots for 6 weeks or so at that time, please contact Roger (07736 673899). He will be pleased to let you have some greenhouse guests at that time.



And everyone - this is a date for your diary. It is the sixth time that we have organised Ware's stand-out event of the summer. In addition to plants, there will be fancy goods and the opportunity to put down your plant goodies and have cake and coffee under the linden trees of Bates Walk. Not to be missed. Tell your friends to book the date too.

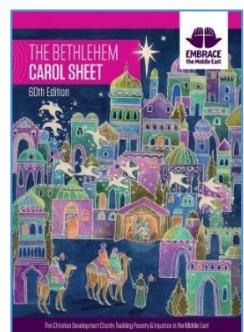
Roger

Carols for Everyone

Linn Parker

Anyone who was at the Carol Service in St Mary's on the Tuesday before Christmas will not have forgotten how splendid and wonderful it was, from the first soaring solo verse of *Once in Royal David's City* to the eager consumption of mulled wine and mince pies afterwards. The readings, the carols sung with so much enthusiasm, and the beautiful and moving anthems sung by the choir all made for a truly wonderful evening.

Earlier that Tuesday afternoon, and on the Monday before, I had been privileged to assist at two slightly smaller Carol Services, at Hillview and Ashcroft care homes, led by Ysmena. At each, all the residents who wished to were invited to gather around the piano or keyboard to hear some Christmas readings and join in with well-known and well-loved carols. Word sheets were provided, but were hardly needed as the ladies and gents sang the very familiar tunes. Bonnie West, Marion Little and I provided the readings and vocal support. Several of the staff and some visitors also joined in, helping to make both occasions happy and inclusive.



Ysmena had led the Carol Service at Snowdrop House the week before, with some St Mary's visitors and the "usual team" who also attend the weekly communion service, so there was a friendly family atmosphere and the carols were enjoyed by a good number of the residents, visitors and staff. The church Carol Service is of course a highlight for many, and a chance to pause and reflect on the season and what it means. Taking the essence of the service 'on the road' to some of those unable to get to the main event helps to include them as part of that community of joyful carol singers, celebrating in their own way, even without the mulled wine.

Comfort and Joy – Christmas Together 2025

We had a wonderful Christmas Day again this year at Riverside Hall. This event has been bringing comfort and joy to so many people in Ware and surrounding areas for so many years.

Started by Churches Together, people from the Ware churches are part of our core team, as well as many others beyond church who join in these most redemptive of days.

We celebrate Christmas remembering that God is with us, come as one of us, and this community event holds just a little bit of that – one guest told us it was their ‘best Christmas ever’. This year a number of us from St Mary’s were there sharing the good news of God with us.



John Crouch shares his reflections with us... and a lovely picture (*left*) of the table where Steve & Jan were hosts.

After losing my wife in the summer, the thought of spending Christmas Day on my own didn’t worry me; different for sure, but lots of lovely music, my choice of food and telly, and a good weather forecast – bring it on. But then I thought

Christmas is the one day of the year that gives us all something to celebrate together, so having seen the Christmas Together publicity earlier I thought it would be perverse of me to spurn the opportunity to share some fun with others for part of the day, and to get some extra feel-good from helping the arrangements where I could.

I was allocated two duties – to collect and return a gentleman in Watton at Stone, and to deliver Christmas lunch to an elderly lady in Stanstead Abbotts. I was surprised by how young the gentleman was, but thought good on you, taking the invitation to anybody on their own at its word, and we enjoyed chatting on the ride to Ware in bright sunshine along an empty road.

Arrival at the venue found a hall just starting to receive its guests, and buzzing with activity, especially in the kitchen. A growing collection of drivers was eventually rewarded with parcels of food and goodies, and sent on their way.

Having found the Stanstead Abbotts address I had to let myself in - to find the lady bedbound, and not able to feed herself or communicate normally. We eventually established that her carers would be coming soon, and it would be best if I left the lunch for them to serve, and I would return later to check this had happened.

Back at the hall, the party was in full swing. I found a table with a spare seat, and the main course about to be delivered – perfect timing, and perfectly cooked.

Conversation was entertaining, and enlivened by the presence on our table of a loud American gentleman from Enfield Lock – yes, the word had obviously spread far and wide. Seconds of vegetables were welcomed and devoured – and then came desserts, and some of the best Christmas pudding I have ever enjoyed.

Please turn the page

With coffee starting to come round, I thought it time to check on my lady, and another chance to enjoy the empty roads on Christmas Day afternoon. I wasn't able to get back in, but the big grin and double thumbs up she gave me through her bedroom window conveyed all was well.

Back at the hall (again), the musical entertainment was enjoying enthusiastic audience participation, even if some of the words were not remembered perfectly. Then a raffle draw, out of which I somehow came away with a bottle of Pinot Grigio. 'Santa' was coming round with the tickets and his helpers were running off to get the 'present' – prizes for everyone! It was all very improvised, but the feeling of good-will was palpable. So, after a few thank-yous to the organisers and the brilliant kitchen team, it was time for goodbyes, and for me to take my charge back to Watton at Stone – and to reflect, next Christmas? - I wouldn't miss it for the world!

St Mary's Pledged Giving – The Parish Giving Scheme

Planned and pledged giving by those who are part of our St Mary's community underpins our ability to plan our expenditure and provides a foundation for the sound financial management of our resources. Currently there are over **60 donors** who, month by month, demonstrate their ongoing financial commitment and support using the Parish Giving Scheme. Thank you very much to them, and to everyone who contributes to the financial well-being of St Mary's.



If you are not a member of PGS, please consider becoming one. It is a national church charity which organises a donation scheme for parish communities. It enables individuals to make planned donations to their PCC account, usually monthly, via a direct debit. It operates without charges, and collects on behalf of the parish any Gift Aid associated with each donation, thereby saving the parish huge amounts of effort and time in Gift Aid administration. The donations plus the Gift Aid are paid to the PCC very promptly each month.

If you would like to know more about supporting St Mary's through PGS, please take an information (blue) leaflet from the table near the main door to the church or contact our parish giving officer David Horner (07768 105387), or go to the PGS website www.parishgiving.org . All personal information is treated in strictest confidence.

Roger Hawkins: Chair, PCC Giving Committee

Montgomery Heights

This Christian children's home and orphanage in Zimbabwe has been close to our hearts and in our fundraising campaigns for several years now. Fiona, one of the leaders there, has sent a newsletter which you should be able to see on the church noticeboards. It's a very uplifting and positive message.

World Day of Prayer 2026: I will give you rest, come!

Service on Thursday 5 March 2.00pm

Despite the change of name several years ago, the service for World Day of Prayer is still described as “a Women-led Global Ecumenical Movement”, devised by the Christian women of a different country each year. This year the country tasked with this is Nigeria (*artwork, right, by Gift Amarachi Ottah*). In recent years some of the countries producing the service have been small and little known to most of us.

However, this year we do know something about Nigeria and its people, sadly for the wrong reasons as that country quite often features in our news media.



Nigeria is the largest and most populous country in Africa, with a population of over 200 million, woven from 250 ethnic groups, and is also the seventh most populous country in the world. Apart from the diversity of its people, north and south of Nigeria are like two different countries. This is because, in colonial historical times, Nigeria's many regions were ruled by various European powers and more recently by descendants of the slaves transported to America and the Caribbean. The British Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated into one country, which gained independence in 1960. The sheer size of the country gives it a varied climate, equatorial in the south, tropical central regions and an arid north. Two major seasons, dry and rainy, contribute to its rich agricultural potential. The country is rich in natural resources, oil, gas and minerals. Since independence, Nigeria has had periods of political instability, including periods of military rule and the Biafran War from 1967 to 1970.

The World Day of Prayer movement was introduced by Lady Eudora Olayinka Akamu-Ibiam of the Presbyterian church. In 1962 Interdenominational Christian Women's Organisation (later Association) was formed in Lagos, and this played a crucial role in the early development and spread of the World Day of Prayer movement in Nigeria. For 2026, the women of Nigeria have created a service that speaks to our need for peace and solace, drawing on their faith and experiences in a world filled with struggles and anxieties. They have faced numerous challenges that stem from deeply rooted gender discrimination and inequality which affect education, employment and political representation.

World Day of Prayer this year is Friday 6th March. But the host church in Ware is not available on that day, so the service in Ware will take place at the **Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Joseph**, on the corner of New Road and King Edward Road:

Thursday 5th March at 2.00pm.

All are welcome!

Fundraising to fix the Hall - launch and update

Sunday 11 January saw the first of what will be many fund-raising events. Just when you thought you had eaten all the festive food you could manage....Roger and his very hard-working team produced a splendid lunch for 50 very willing diners (*left*), with a fizzy celebratory drink to put everyone in the mood! Three generous courses, followed by after-dinner mints, coffee and quiz,



were beautifully enhanced by Malcolm Elliott's drily entertaining talk about "Englishness" and all the idiosyncratic ways this can be seen. This was a most enjoyable way to begin the campaign for raising the money we'll need to make essential repairs in the Hall and porch. It's reported that nearly £1600 was raised – well done to all who took part! And many thanks to the cheerful team who brought it all together.

Roger now updates us: In addition, we have been blessed with two very generous gifts. Margaret and Graham Meldrum have kindly offered to pay for the ten replacement windows in the Hall building. We thank them very much for their tremendous act of generosity. And secondly, we have received a grant of £3,000 for which our thanks go to Ware Town Council for supporting St Mary's in this way.

And so what's next? The fundraising group has had an initial meeting, and is exploring fundraising opportunities before meeting again early in February, when they anticipate formulating an outline plan for the next 12 months. Many ideas are under consideration and are being explored before the next meeting.

The works to make the Hall waterproof are less expensive than initially envisaged, and that work will have begun by the date on which the Quarterly is published. We are still uncertain as to exactly how much we need to raise, as some cost estimates are still to be obtained and other sources of funding explored. But we do know we need to secure 'lots' to make a real difference to the quality of the Hall. The more we raise, the better it will be.

If you feel that you would like to make a direct and specific donation to the fund, please be in touch with Roger.

As the fundraising activities get into top gear we shall need people to help with those. Please let Roger (07736673899) know if you are willing to be called upon 'as required'.

Roger Hawkins, Chair of the Hall and South Porch Fundraising Group

Electoral Roll

Every year we revise the existing Electoral Roll to ensure it is accurate and for that, we need to enable people to join. Notices will be posted in the porch and link way to remind you.

If you are a regular worshipper at St Mary's, whether or not you live in the parish, you can be a member of the roll – please ask Bonnie for a form. Your personal details are held securely and will not be disclosed to a third party.

Once you are on the roll, you are entitled to come to the Annual Parish Meeting, which this year will be on Sunday 26 April, after the Eucharist.

At this meeting we are able to discuss the year just passed, and any developments which might be happening, as well as vote for PCC members and churchwardens.

What's on

(not an exhaustive list – do keep looking out for any additional events).

February

Sun 1	Candlemas 8.00am Eucharist 10.00am Eucharist with Children's church 5.00pm Choral Evensong
Mon 2	11.30am churchyard café 12.30pm Lunchtime concert: Anything Goes quartet 2.00pm Board Games café
Wed 4	11.00am Eucharist
Thu 5	8.00pm "Space"
Sun 8	8.00am Eucharist 10.00 Eucharist
Mon 9	3.45pm Rota planning meeting 7.30pm Study group, 15 Warner Rd
Wed 11	11.00am Eucharist
Thu 12	8.00pm "Space"
Sun 15	8.00 Eucharist 10.00am Eucharist with baptism and children's church 5.00pm EHCCA evensong at Waltham Cross (Fr Jake's church)
Mon 16	Half Term week
Tue 17	Shrove Tuesday: 10.00am Pancake Coffee Morning, with children's activities
Wed 18	Ash Wednesday – Lent begins 11.00am and 8.00pm Eucharist with imposition of ashes
Thu 19	11.30am churchyard café 12.30pm Lunchtime concert: Catherine Wild with her Recorder Consort
Sun 22	8.00 and 10.00am Eucharist
Mon 23	7.30 Lent course, 15 Warner Rd
Wed 25	11.00am Eucharist
Thu 26	8.00pm "Space"

March

Sun 1	8.00 Eucharist 10.00am Eucharist with children's church 5.00pm Choral Evensong
Mon 2	11.30 churchyard café 12.30pm Lunchtime concert: Jonathan Prag, classical guitar 2.00pm Board Games café 7.30pm PCC
Tue 3	7.30pm Lent course, 15 Warner Rd (note! Tuesday not Monday)
Wed 4	9.45 am Lectio Divina 11.00am Eucharist
Thu 5	2.00pm World Day of Prayer, Sacred Heart church, see p12 8.00pm "Space"
Sat 7	Lent study/pilgrimage, details to come
Sun 8	8.00am Eucharist 10.00am Eucharist with baptism
Mon 9	3.45pm Rota planning meeting 7.30pm Lent course, 15 Warner Rd
Wed 11	11.00am Eucharist
Thu 12	8.00pm "Space"
Sun 15	Mothering Sunday 8.00 Eucharist; 10.00am Eucharist with children's church Mothering Sunday lunch in Hall
Mon 16	7.30pm Lent course, 15 Warner Rd
Wed 18	9.45 am Lectio Divina 11.00am Eucharist
Thu 19	11.30am churchyard café 12.30pm Lunchtime concert: Herman Carisha, piano
Sun 22	8.00 & 10.00am Eucharist
Mon 23	St Catherine's school end of term service
Tue 24	St Mary's School end of term service
Wed 25	7.30pm Lent course, 15 Warner Rd (note! Tuesday not Monday) The Annunciation 9.45 am Lectio Divina 11.00am Eucharist



Sun 29	Summer Time begins – clocks go forward Palm Sunday: Holy Week begins 8.00am Eucharist 10.00am Eucharist 5.00pm Choral Evensong
Mon 30	8.00pm Eucharist
Tue 31	8.00pm Eucharist
 April	
Wed 1	9.45 am Lectio Divina 11.00am Eucharist 8.00pm Compline
Thu 2	Maundy Thursday 8.00pm Eucharist, with watch until midnight
Fri 3	Good Friday 9.30am Walk of Witness, with worship in Tudor Square 12-3.00pm Three Hours' Devotion
Sat 4	Vigil and first eucharist of Easter, tbc
Sun 5	Easter Day 8.00am Eucharist 10.00am Eucharist
Mon 6	Easter Monday: Pilgrimage to the Cathedral
Wed 8	11.00am Eucharist
Thu 9	8.00pm "Space"
Sun 12	8.00am and 10.00am Eucharist
Mon 13	7.30pm Study group 15 Warner Road
Wed 15	11.00am Eucharist
Thu 16	11.30am churchyard café 12.30pm Lunchtime concert: not yet announced 8.00pm "Space"
Sun 19	8.00 am Eucharist; 10.00am Eucharist with baptism Children's church
Wed 22	11.00am Eucharist <i>*Deadline for May's Quarterly*</i>
Thu 22	8.00pm "Space"
Sun 26	8.00 & 10.00am Eucharist followed by APCM

Wed 29	11.00am Eucharist
Thu 30	8.00pm "Space"

Get in touch...

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Friends of St Marys: Mike West
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Usual services at St Mary's

Sunday: 8.00am Eucharist (live on facebook)
10.00am Eucharist, also on Zoom, with
children's church offered on 1st and 3rd Sundays

5.00pm Choral evensong once a month

Wednesday: 11.00am Eucharist

Monday – Thursday:

9.15am Morning Prayer (also on facebook)
5.00pm Evening Prayer

Regular services in care homes:

Hillview 2.30pm, first Monday in the month

Ashwood 3.00pm, last Monday in the month

Snowdrop 11.00am every Thursday (all are welcome to this eucharist)

