

United Parish@Home

Sunday Services



March 2026

**The United Parish of Chinnor, Sydenham,  
Aston Rowant and Crowell**

**The ministry team offer you these services, particularly if you find you are unable to attend church.**

**Our prayer is that these services will help you still feel connected to, and loved by, your church family.**

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March page 3**

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March page 10**

**Mothering Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March page 14**

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March page 18**

**Palm Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March page 24**

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2026**

**2nd Sunday of Lent**

**Opening Prayers**

May Christ, the true, the only light, banish all darkness from our hearts and minds.

Blessed are you, creator of all,  
to you be praise and glory for ever.  
As your dawn renews the face of the earth,  
bringing light and life to all creation,  
may we rejoice in this day you have made;  
as we wake refreshed from the depths of sleep,  
open our eyes to behold your presence  
and strengthen our hands to do your will,  
that the world may rejoice and give you praise.  
Blessed be God for ever.

O Lord, open our lips: And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

*Silent prayer/reflection on the coming day.*

Early in the morning my prayer comes before you.  
Lord, have mercy.  
You speak in my heart and say 'Seek my face'; your face, Lord, will I seek.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.  
Lord, have mercy.

**PSALM 121**

<sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills;  
from where is my help to come?  
<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord,  
the maker of heaven and earth.  
<sup>3</sup> He will not suffer your foot to stumble;  
he who watches over you will not sleep.  
<sup>4</sup> Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel  
shall neither slumber nor sleep.  
<sup>5</sup> The Lord himself watches over you;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,

<sup>6</sup> So that the sun shall not strike you by day,  
neither the moon by night.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord shall keep you from all evil;  
it is he who shall keep your soul.

<sup>8</sup> The Lord shall keep watch over your going out  
and your coming in,  
from this time forth for evermore.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.  
and shall be for ever. Amen.

### **A READING FROM THE GOSPELS** John 3 vs1–17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews.

He came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God. Jesus answered him, Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.

Nicodemus said to him, How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mothers womb and be born?

Jesus answered, Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, You must be born from above. The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus said to him, How can these things be? Jesus answered him, Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony.

If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

## **REFLECTION** (by Jacky)

This encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus is one of the more unusual conversations we witness in the Gospels. We most often hear Jesus' words addressed to outsiders, those seeking healing, his own followers, or those challenging him. Nicodemus fits none of these categories. He is not an outsider to religion but an insider at its heart: a Pharisee, a teacher, someone who has dedicated his life to knowing God. He is not careless, indifferent, or cynical. He represents faithful religious identity at its best: disciplined, thoughtful, morally serious, and committed to truth.

In our Lent course this year we are watching episodes of *The Chosen*, which tells the story of Christ through the eyes of several characters, including Nicodemus. In the series he is presented as deeply sincere, someone who genuinely longs for God. He recognises goodness when he encounters Jesus yet struggles to understand how this new reality fits within everything he has previously learned. The tension between faithful tradition and new revelation becomes central to his journey.

Conversion is often thought of as being only for those who begin far away from faith. But Nicodemus reminds us that conversion can also happen within religious life itself. That there can come a moment when previous knowledge, tradition, and structure are no longer enough. Not because they are wrong, but because, through experience, they become open to a transformation that deepens relationship and understanding of God. This is what Jesus' language of second birth is conveying, that faith is not a single moment of change, but the beginning of a lifelong work of renewal, in which God continues to reshape us more deeply into his life.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus with the language of theology: "Rabbi... we know..." He begins with his current understanding and knowledge. Jesus responds with transformation. The shift is subtle but decisive. Entry into the kingdom is not about refining what we already know; it is about being born anew.

For thoughtful religious people, this can be unsettling.

Faithfulness often becomes intertwined with identity. We know who we are through the roles we inhabit, the structures we uphold, the ways we interpret the world. Nicodemus carries authority, respect, and responsibility. To follow Jesus openly would risk not only personal change but social cost.

*The Chosen* portrays this powerfully, showing a man whose heart is moved yet whose world feels fragile and at risk.

Many clergy, long-time church members, or spiritually serious people recognise this experience. It is not a question of whether God exists, but whether we are willing to allow God to reshape the foundations of who we think we are. Jesus' invitation to new birth is clearly a challenge to Nicodemus, as it can be to us, because the transformation may also come with loss of our old ways of life and thinking.

Nicodemus comes at night because night allows honesty. In the dark, he can ask questions without needing to defend his reputation. He can listen as a student, ready to learn and be transformed. The Gospel shows Jesus meeting him patiently, speaking truth without pressure, inviting rather than forcing. And we may need to ask our deepest questions "at night" in a space where we can speak honestly and openly, without fear of judgement.

Lent can create such spaces within ourselves. It is a season where we are invited to focus more on inward examination rather than outward religious activity. We try to find the time and space to step away from noise and distraction. In turn, this can create time and space for spiritual growth and like Nicodemus, we may discover that it is the questions we have that lead to spiritual growth, rather than the answers we thought we knew.

The Chosen's portrayal deepens this experience by allowing us to see Nicodemus' emotional reality. We witness his compassion, his intellectual honesty, *and* his quiet fear. It is an imaginative layer that can help modern viewers recognise themselves in him. He is not weak because he hesitates; he is human. Transformation rarely happens in a single moment. More often it unfolds slowly, through encounters that unsettle us and draw us forward.

And John's Gospel confirms this gradual movement. Nicodemus does not immediately become a disciple. Instead, he reappears later, cautiously defending Jesus, and finally standing near the cross, participating in the burial. The man who began in the night slowly moves toward the light.

Our witnessing of Nicodemus' slow journey can be reassuring for us. Faith does not require instant clarity. It does not demand that we abandon our questions or our history. Instead, it invites us to trust that God works patiently within us.

Therefore Nicodemus becomes a companion for anyone who has ever felt both drawn to Christ and uncertain about what following fully might cost. He shows us that curiosity can be holy, that hesitation can co-exist with genuine faith, and that transformation often begins quietly.

The heart of Jesus' message to Nicodemus remains the same for us: God does not approach us with condemnation, but with love. The invitation is not to become perfect but to become new.

And perhaps this is why Nicodemus continues to speak to us so strongly today. He reminds us that even those who know much about God must still allow themselves to be surprised by God.

## **THE BENEDICTUS**

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel :

for he has come to his people and set them free.

The Lord has raised up for us a mighty Saviour :

born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets God promised of old to save us from our enemies :  
from the hands of all who hate us.

To show mercy to our forebears :

and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham :

to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

Free to worship him without fear :

holy and righteous before him all the days of our life.

And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High :

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

To give his people knowledge of salvation :

by the forgiveness of their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God :

the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death :

and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be for ever. Amen.

## **AN AFFIRMATION OF THE FAITH**

I believe and trust in God the Father,

source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist.

I believe and trust in God the Son,

who took our human nature, died for us and rose again.

I believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,

who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world.

This is the faith of the Church.  
This is our faith.  
We believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

**PRAYERS** *may be offered for the day and its tasks, for the world and its needs and for the Church and its life or this short litany may be used:*

Be exalted, Lord, above the heavens: may your glory cover the earth.  
Renew your Church in holiness: and give your people the blessing of peace.  
Keep our nation under your care: and guide us in justice and truth.  
Let your way be known on earth: your saving power among all nations.  
Do not let the needy, O God, be forgotten: nor the hope of the poor be taken away. Lord, hear our prayer: for we put our trust in you. Amen.

*The prayers may conclude with the Lord's Prayer and morning Collect*

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

O Lord and heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God,  
we thank you for bringing us safely to the beginning of this new day:  
defend us by your mighty power  
that we may be kept free from all sin and safe from every danger;  
and enable us in everything to do only what is right in your eyes;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **THE CONCLUSION**

To the holy and glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be blessing and honour, thanksgiving and praise,  
now and for ever. **Amen.**  
Let us bless the Lord.

## HYMN

O praise ye the Lord! Praise him in the height;  
rejoice in his word, ye angels of light;  
ye heavens adore him by whom ye were made,  
and worship before him, in brightness arrayed.

O praise ye the Lord! Praise him upon earth,  
in tuneful accord, ye sons of new birth;  
praise him who hath brought you his grace from above,  
praise him who hath taught you to sing of his love.

O praise ye the Lord, all things that give sound;  
each jubilant chord re-echo around;  
loud organs, his glory forth tell in deep tone,  
and, sweet harp, the story of what he hath done.

O praise ye the Lord! Thanksgiving and song  
to him be outpoured all ages along:  
for love in creation, for heaven restored,  
for grace of salvation, O praise ye the

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**Third Sunday of Lent**

People wonder who Jesus is. In this week's Gospel, a Samaritan woman wonders the same, and, as she discovers more about who Jesus is, she also discovers more about herself.

### **An Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus thank you that, as we come to you,  
you are always waiting to welcome us and  
draw us closer to you and deeper into your love. Amen.

### **Psalm 95 v1-7**

O come, let us sing unto the Lord;  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!  
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;  
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!  
For the Lord is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.  
In his hand are the depths of the earth,  
the heights of the hills are his also.  
The sea is his, for he made it,  
and the dry land which his hands have formed.  
O come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!  
For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand.

### **The Gospel Reading**

This scene takes place in the blazing heat of mid-day in Samaria, where a woman is collecting water – possibly she collects it when no-one else will be there because she is an outcast. The disciples return from going into the city to buy food and are possibly shocked to find Jesus talking with her, not only because of her lifestyle but as a Samaritan she would be seen as being of mixed race.

The woman does not understand the gift Jesus offers because she does not yet know the giver, but she confesses her faith in the coming Messiah and so Jesus reveals himself to her, as such.

### **St. John 4 vs 5-30 and vs 39-41**

A Samaritan woman came to draw water and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone into the city to buy food). The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans). Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you "Give me a drink" you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep, where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or keep having to come here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right, for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, is now here, when the true worshipper will worship the Father in spirit and in truth for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he the one who is speaking to you."

Just then his disciples came.

They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no-one said. What do you want? or Why are you speaking with her?

Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and went on their way. Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony. "He told me everything I have ever done." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them and he stayed two days, And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world."

### **A Reflection – (by Joan)**

We all get caught in the same trap of thinking there is a right way to behave e.g. a man should give up his seat for a lady/walk on the outer side of a path by the road; or a right way of doing things e.g. loading up the dishwasher! When Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink, he was shattering convention and creating a storm in a teacup. Jews and Samaritans did not mix, and Jewish men never talked to a woman in public, especially not with a woman with this lady's reputation.

Jesus was never inhibited by convention, rules or traditions. Here, he saw beyond the obvious and recognised a life which was broken and to reach out to her, he broke the rules. The woman tried to divert Jesus attention by changing the subject, she did not want to face herself as she really was. Jesus knew life was to be lived not by rules and regulations but in relationships. He wanted to free her from impossible expectations to find forgiveness and restoration, to discover she need only learn to be still and rest within God's love and mercy.

### **Take time to pray**

Pilgrim God - refresh and quench our thirst

Revealing God - refresh and teach us truth

We are God's people - loved and cherished

We are God's people – called and challenged

We are God's people – refreshed and forgiven.

Take us on our journey

from where we are to where you want us to be

so that we become a community

where all are welcomed and no-one is excluded

where all are valued and no-one is made to feel inadequate

where all are forgiven and no-one is ashamed to belong  
where all are encouraged and no one is too hurt to come among us.  
Teach us how to journey on in the peace and power of the Spirit.  
Amen

**A hymn to sing or say as a prayer**

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds  
in a believer's ear!  
It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds,  
and drives away our fear,

It makes the wounded spirit whole,  
and calms the troubled breast;  
'tis manna to the hungry soul,  
and to the weary, rest.

Dear Name! the Rock on which we build,  
my shield and hiding-place,  
my never-failing treas'ry, filled  
with boundless stores of grace,

Jesus! my shepherd, brother, friend,  
my prophet, priest, and king,  
my Lord, my life, my way, my end,  
accept the praise I bring.

Weak is the effort of my heart,  
and cold my warmest thought;  
but when I see thee as thou art,  
I'll praise thee as I ought.

Till then I would thy love proclaim  
with every fleeting breath;  
and may the music of thy name  
refresh my soul in death.

**A Blessing**

The Lord bless us and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life. Amen.

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, Mothering Sunday.**

**Introduction**

Today is Mothering Sunday which is traditionally celebrated on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent. The theme of Mothering Sunday opens up numerous affiliated readings which celebrate motherhood and family. The one which often comes first in lists is Proverbs 31 vs 10 which highlights a mother's strength and dignity – the famous 'Noble woman'.

**Opening Prayer** [a Celtic opening prayer]

In the beginning, O God you shaped my soul and set its weave. You formed my body and gave it breath. Renew me this day in the image of your love.

O Great God grant me your light.

O Great God grant me your grace.

O Great God grant me your joy this day and in this service,  
and let me be made pure in the well of your health.

**Collect for Mothering Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Lent**

God of compassion, whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary, shared the life of a home in Nazareth, and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself: strengthen us in our daily living that in joy and in sorrow we may know the power of your presence to bind together and to heal; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Psalm 23**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

<sup>3</sup>He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

## **Reading 1 Proverbs 31 vs 10 to 25**

- 10 A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth more than rubies.  
11 Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. 12 She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.  
13 She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.  
14 She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.  
15 She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants.  
16 She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.  
17 She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.  
18 She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.  
19 In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.  
20 She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy.  
21 When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.  
22 She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.  
23 Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.  
24 She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.  
25 She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.

## **Reading 2 Luke 13 vs 34**

<sup>34</sup> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

## **Reflection (by Brian)**

Proverbs 31 is the final chapter of the book of Proverbs. It provides a description of a virtuous woman. This woman is often referred to as “A wife of Noble Character”. It describes the attributes of a godly woman. The passage encapsulates the themes of wisdom, godly leadership, and the beauty of a life lived in righteousness. It stands as a powerful conclusion to a book that consistently emphasises the contrast between wisdom and folly, righteousness and wickedness.

The noble woman is industrious, wise, charitable, and deeply devoted to her family. The passage does not only apply to wives but serves as a model of godly character for all believers, demonstrating diligence, generosity, and the fear of the Lord as key virtues. Proverbs 31 ultimately points to the fruit of a life lived in submission to God's wisdom. It shows that true strength and honour are found not in external beauty or worldly success (as seems to be the case for our present society) but in a heart that fears the Lord which is why this Proverbs passage is used on Mother's Day.

The image of a noble and Godly woman is but a short step from that of a loving God which is why God is likened to mother hen, particularly in Luke 13:34 where Jesus expresses a desire to gather His people as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. This imagery emphasises God's protective and nurturing comfort to those who seek refuge in God in the same way the noble mother looks after her family

### **Personal prayer**

Loving God, you have given us the right to be called children of God. Help us to show your love in our homes that they may be places of love, security and truth.

Loving God, Jesus, your Son, was born into the family of Mary and Joseph; bless all parents and all who care for children; strengthen those families living under stress and may your love be known where no human love is found.

Loving God, we thank you for the family of the Church. We pray that all may find in her their true home; that the lonely, the marginalized, the rejected may be welcomed and loved in the name of Jesus.

Loving God, as we see the brokenness of our world we pray for healing among the nations; for food where there is hunger; for freedom where there is oppression; for joy where there is pain; that your love may bring peace to all your children.

Why not finish with the Lord's Prayer

**Hymn. 'Abide with me'** [*Author: Henry F. Lyte. Composed in 1847, this hymn's plea for God's presence and comfort mirrors the comforting role of a mother. It's a moving choice for Mother's Day services.*]

Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;  
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide:  
when other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;  
change and decay in all around I see:  
O thou who changest not, abide with me.

I need thy presence every passing hour;  
what but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?  
Who, like thyself, my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless;  
ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.  
Where is death's dark sting? where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still, if thou abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;  
shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;  
heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;  
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

### **Closing Prayer & Blessing**

The Lord bless us and keep us; <sup>the</sup> Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us; the Lord turn his face towards us and give us peace. Amen.

### **The Grace**

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2026**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent**

**Opening Prayers**

O Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Gracious Father, you gave up your Son out of love for the world:  
lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion, that we may know eternal  
peace through the shedding of our Saviour's blood, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;  
let us pray with one heart and mind.

*Silence is kept.*

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,  
so may the light of your presence, O God,  
set our hearts on fire with love for you;  
now and for ever. Amen.

**Psalm 130**

Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice;  
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.

<sup>2</sup> If you, Lord, were to mark what is done amiss, Lord, who could stand?

<sup>3</sup> But there is forgiveness with you, so that you shall be feared.

<sup>4</sup> I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him; in his word is my hope.

<sup>5</sup> My soul waits for the Lord, more than the night watch for the morning,  
more than the night watch for the morning.

<sup>6</sup> O Israel, wait for the Lord,  
for with the Lord there is mercy;

<sup>7</sup> With him is plenteous redemption and he shall redeem Israel from all their  
sins.

**Gospel Reading** John 11.1–45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her  
sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and  
wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill.

So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, Lord, he whom you love is ill.

But when Jesus heard it, he said, This illness does not lead to death; rather it  
is for Gods glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.

Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, Let us go to Judea again.

The disciples said to him, Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them. After saying this, he told them, Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.

The disciples said to him, Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.

Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.

Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.

Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him. Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again.

Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?

She said to him, Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, The Teacher is here and is calling for you.

And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.

Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.

He said, Where have you laid him? They said to him, Lord, come and see.

Jesus began to weep.

So the Jews said, See how he loved him!

But some of them said, Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days. Jesus said to her, Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out! The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, Unbind him, and let him go. Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

### **Reflection** (by *Jacky*)

John 11.1–45 invites us into one of the most emotionally complex moments in the Gospels. At its centre is a troubling question: why does Jesus delay? When Mary and Martha send word that their beloved brother Lazarus is ill, Jesus does not hurry. He waits. From our perspective, and surely from theirs, this delay feels bewildering and even cruel.

We are accustomed to thinking of Jesus as one who responds immediately to suffering. Yet here, the story deliberately unsettles us. The sisters believe that if Jesus had come sooner, Lazarus would not have died.

Their words carry grief, faith, and perhaps an unspoken accusation. “Lord, if you had been here...” It is the cry of many hearts when prayer seems unanswered or God seems slow. The Gospel does not avoid this tension. Instead, it brings it into the open, acknowledging that faith often lives alongside confusion.

Jesus’ delay forces us to confront the difference between our understanding of urgency and God’s larger purposes. The narrative tells us that Jesus loves Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Yet precisely because he loves them, he does not act according to their expectations. This challenges our assumptions about divine love. Love does not always look like immediate rescue. Sometimes love moves within a horizon we cannot yet see.

When Jesus says, “This illness does not lead to death,” his words sound paradoxical, even misleading. Lazarus does die. But Jesus speaks beyond physical death to a deeper reality. The illness will not end in ultimate separation from God. It will not result in spiritual death, the loss of life in communion with the Father. Instead, the illness becomes the setting in which God’s glory and life-giving power are revealed. Jesus is reframing the story, not denying the pain within it.

Jesus does not minimise grief or pretend that physical death is insignificant. He meets Martha and Mary in their sorrow, not with abstract explanations but with presence. And it is here that we encounter one of the most profound revelations of Jesus’ humanity.

“Jesus wept.” The shortest verse in Scripture carries immense theological weight. The one who knows what he is about to do, the one who has already declared himself the resurrection and the life, still stands before the tomb and cries.

These tears show us that divine power does not cancel human feeling. Jesus does not remain distant or emotionally detached. He enters into the raw reality of loss. His tears are not weakness. They are the expression of love. They affirm that grief itself is not a failure of faith. Even in the presence of hope, sorrow is real and honoured.

The raising of Lazarus does not erase the confusion that precedes it. Instead, it reframes it. The delay, which initially seemed like absence or indifference, becomes part of a larger revelation. Yet the story does not suggest that understanding will always come easily or quickly. Mary and Martha had to live through the waiting, the death, and the mourning before they saw what Jesus was doing.

For us, this passage invites a gentle honesty about our own experience of God.

There are times when Christ seems late, when prayers appear unanswered, when suffering unfolds despite faith. John 11 does not dismiss these experiences. It acknowledges that discipleship includes moments of uncertainty. But it also points us toward a deeper trust: that even when Jesus delays, he does not abandon; even when death appears final, it is not the ultimate word; and even when hope feels hidden, Christ stands near, sharing our tears and calling us toward life.

### **The Benedictus** (*The Song of Zechariah*)

- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel,  
who has come to his people and set them free.
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,  
born of the house of his servant David.
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old  
to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors,  
and to remember his holy covenant.
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
- 6 Free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight  
all the days of our life.
- 7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- 8 To give his people knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- 9 In the tender compassion of our God  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
- 10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

*Luke 1.68-79*

**Prayers** *Take some time to offer to God your own prayers.*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Awaiting his coming in glory, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

### **The Conclusion**

May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting.  
Let us bless the Lord, thanks be to God. Amen.

### **Hymn**

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unchanging, and silent as light,  
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;  
thy justice like mountains high soaring above  
thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;  
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;  
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
and wither and perish but naught changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;  
all praise we would render, O help us to see  
'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee.

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**Palm Sunday**

***“HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID”***

***‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’***

*Palm Sunday is celebrated one week before Easter Day. It marks the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, an event that is recorded in all four Gospels. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, while the crowds waved palm branches and shouted "Hosanna!" (an exclamation of praise)*

*‘Church of England Website’*

### **The Greeting**

Dear friends in Christ, during Lent we have been preparing by works of love and self-sacrifice for the celebration of our Lord's death and resurrection. Today we come together to begin this solemn celebration in union with the Church throughout the world. Christ enters his own city to complete his work as our saviour, to suffer, to die, and to rise again. Let us go with him in faith and love, united with him in his sufferings, we may share his risen life.

### **Collect**

True and humble king,  
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:  
grant us the faith to know you and love you,  
that we may be found beside you  
on the way of the cross,  
which is the path of glory.

**Amen**

### **A Psalm set for Palm Sunday Psalm 118**

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his mercy endures for ever.

Let Israel now proclaim, ‘His mercy endures for ever.’

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Come, O Lord, and save us we pray. Come, Lord, send us now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; we bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God; he has given us light; link the pilgrims with cords right to the horns of the altar. You are my God and I will thank you; you are my God and I will exalt you.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his mercy endures for ever.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.**

### **Confession**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we confess we have failed you as did your first disciples.

We ask for your mercy and your help.

When we take our ease  
rather than watch with you:

Lord, forgive us.

**Christ have mercy.**

When we bestow a kiss of peace  
yet nurse enmity in our hearts:

Lord, forgive us.

**Christ have mercy.**

When we strike at those who hurt us  
rather than stretch out our hands to bless:

Lord, forgive us.

**Christ have mercy.**

When we deny that we know you  
for fear of the world and its scorn:

Lord, forgive us.

**Christ have mercy.**

**Amen.**

***“Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ.”***

**Absolution:**

ALMIGHTY God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness, and live; and hath given power, and commandment, to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins: He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel. Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true repentance, and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him, which we do at this present; and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure, and holy; so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.. **Amen.**

**Gospel Reading Matthew 21 vs 1-11**

**Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

21When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you, just say this, “The Lord needs them.” And he will send them immediately.’ <sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

<sup>5</sup> ‘Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’

<sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; <sup>7</sup>they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup>A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,  
‘Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

<sup>10</sup>When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, ‘Who is this?’ <sup>11</sup>The crowds were saying, ‘This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.’

## Reflection (By Tony)

Have you remembered to put the clocks forward an hour this morning with the official start of British Summer Time?

I've tried to imagine what it must have been like in Jesus' time without wristwatches and church clock chimes to tell the time, never mind thinking about all the technology available to us today which automatically adjusts the time to BST.

Jewish people looked to sunrise and sunset as important elements to their sense of time, while the Romans ordered their days from midnight to midnight, divided up by 'watches'. There were sundials and water clocks, but on a day-to-day basis 'time' may have played a much less important driver in their lives, although the seasons and festivals of the year were important.

Jesus though knew it was 'time' to enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

In his ministry there were times when Jesus knew it wasn't time for him to do something. John records in Chapter 7 Jesus' brothers encouraging Jesus to leave Galilee and go to Judea to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles and show everyone just who he was. Jesus replies *"I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come."* Jesus knew that he had more teaching, miracles and preparing to do, before stirring the authorities to respond with his arrest and death. His disciples were not ready yet to take on the great commission he would give them, and vital elements of his teaching had not been shared.

Luke though shares in chapter 9 of his gospel the moment Jesus knew it was time: *"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem."*

When Jesus enters Jerusalem, Matthew tells us it is in turmoil. Into the turmoil then God brings order and resurrection out of chaos. God had decided it was time to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

What time is it now for you and me? – our world is in turmoil. What does God want to do through us?

## **Intercessions**

O God, we thank you for the joy, deeper than any sorrow,  
which you bring to us and with which you bless us.  
Help us to find this joy and to live it as a blessing for the world.  
May there be times for all of us when we can let go  
of the things that bind us to sorrow and fear,  
so that we can praise you and let our hearts dance.  
Let us be bearers of true joy to the world.

We pray for those who are sad or suffering.  
We pray for those for whom depression or anxiety brings a denial of joy,  
that they may find healing and release.

We pray for those made sad by loss and death,  
that they may grieve honestly and freely  
and find even in grief true comfort and hope.

We pray for those saddened by disappointment,  
by betrayal, or by the failure of something important to them.  
May they find healing and hope again.

We pray for all who are ill, and who for those who love them,  
for those who have heard fearful news from the doctor  
or who worry about their own state of mind.  
Bring them peace and the certain comfort of love.

We pray for places scourged by violence and war,  
for lands where there is poverty and hunger for the powerless,  
and for nations where hubris and wealth bring blindness to the needs of others.

O Christ, who entered the city in peace and was greeted with joy,  
bring your peace and your joy to our world and to your Church,  
this day and every day.

### *Silence*

O God, hear our prayers, spoken and offered in silence.  
Show us where we may begin to answer them ourselves or persuade others to  
answer them. And where we can do little, help us to trust in your unfailing love.  
In Christ's name, Amen.

## **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## **Hymn:**

Hosanna, Hosanna,  
Hosanna in the highest,  
Lord, we lift up your name,  
with our hearts full of praise,  
Be exalted, O Lord, my God,  
Hosanna in the highest!

Glory, glory,  
glory to the King of kings!  
Lord, we lift up your name,  
with our hearts full of praise,  
Be exalted, O Lord our God,  
Glory to the King of kings!

## **Closing Prayer and Blessing**

Lord Jesus Christ, you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant, and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation: give us the mind to follow you and to proclaim you as Lord and King, to the glory of God the Father. Amen

May the Christ who came to the city and who provoked a carnival of hosannas come to your heart, your life, our United Parish, our nation and our world, to bring joy and hope.

And the blessing of God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us this Palm Sunday and always. Amen