

Together

Benefice Magazine

Cheddar, Draycott and Rodney Stoke



March 2026

£1

BENEFICE INFORMATION



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(St. Peter's & St. Leonard's information on inside back cover)

Pastoral Letter – Ruth Motion



Dear friends,

As March unfolds, we become aware of the quiet turning of the year. The days lengthen almost without us noticing, the first signs of life appear in fields and hedgerows, and there is a sense that something new is stirring. It is into this season that the Church invites us to walk the path of Lent.

With Easter being early this year Lent will already be underway by the time you read this, but there is always the opportunity to refocus if you need to. Lent is a season of returning—returning to God in prayer, reflection, and trust. It offers us space to pause and to consider our lives honestly before God, making room for repentance, renewal, and hope. These weeks are not about striving for perfection, but about walking faithfully with Christ, one step at a time, as we journey towards Easter.

As March draws on, Lent begins to lead us towards the start of Holy Week. In the events of Palm Sunday and the days that follow, we are drawn more deeply into the story of Jesus' final journey—his humility, his suffering, and his unwavering love. Holy Week invites us not simply to remember these events, but to walk alongside Christ, allowing his sacrifice and compassion to speak afresh into our own lives.

Life in our rural communities teaches us patience and attentiveness. We know that growth often happens quietly and that careful tending bears fruit in time. Lent and Holy Week call us to that same faithfulness—through prayer, acts of kindness, generosity, and making space for God in the ordinary moments of our days.

As we continue this shared Lenten journey, may we be strengthened by God's grace and drawn closer to one another. And as we approach Holy Week, may our hearts be prepared to receive anew the hope and joy of Easter.

Ruth

Bishop's Letter



Draw near this Lent

The Church of England's theme for Lent 2026 is 'Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent'. It's a very different way of thinking about the season. Often, we identify Lent as a time for prayer and fasting when we 'give things up'. More recently many have decided to adopt an opposite approach – of 'taking something up for Lent'.

'Draw near' has a much wider remit. Each week, it invites us to explore a different aspect of Christian discipleship – worshipping together, praying, exploring the Bible, sharing communion, offering service and sharing the good news with others.

The 'Draw Near' approach fits well with how Lent began. During the Church's earliest days, those wishing to become Christians were known as 'catechumens', people who were learning to live as disciples of Jesus. Preparation was intensive. It took place particularly in the 40 days before new Christians were baptised on the Saturday night before Easter Sunday. Our season of Lent comes from this ancient practice.

When the Church began, it didn't have the trappings we're used to seeing around us such as buildings, hymn books, pews, or paid ministers. Church wasn't an institution. It was known as 'the Way'. Christians met in each other's homes and sought to work out how to follow Jesus in their everyday lives. This wasn't so much about head knowledge, believing a particular set of doctrines.

It was about the habits and practices that Christians constantly cultivated to help them draw nearer to God who is with us, in us, around us and beside us every moment of every day. 'Draw Near' comes out of this heritage. It's an invitation to make Lent a journey that brings us closer to God.

I invite you to make use of 'Draw Near' this Lent. It includes materials for adults, for families and for children, resources for schools and encouragement for churches. More information can be found at www.cofeio/DrawNear. As we approach Lent, let's draw near and join each other on the journey to God that is the Way.

Bishop Michael

READINGS AND SERVICES

	Cheddar	Draycott	Rodney Stoke
1st March	10am	9.30am	11.15am
Lent 2	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	Holy Communion
8th March	9am	9.30am	11.15am
Lent 3	Breakfast Service, Cheddar Village Hall	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion
15th March	8am BCP Communion	9.30am	11.15am
Mothering Sunday	10am Together Mothering Sunday	Mothering Sunday Holy Communion	Mothering Sunday Holy Communion
22nd March	10am	9.30am	11.15am
Passion Sunday	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Matins
29th March	10am	9.30am	11.15am
Palm Sunday	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Holy Communion

	Psalm	First Reading	Second Reading
1st March	121	Genesis	John
Lent 2		12: 1-4a	3: 1-17
8th March	95	Exodus	John
Lent 3		17: 1-7	4: 1-30, 39
15th March	34:	Exodus	Luke
Mothering Sunday	11-20	2: 1-10	2: 33-35
22nd March	130	Ezekiel	John
Passion Sunday		37: 1-14	11: 1-45
29th March	118:	Isaiah	Matthew
Palm Sunday	1-2, 19-end	50: 4-9a	21: 1-11

FROM THE REGISTERS:

Baptism:

*We welcome into the Church family:
Leo Watts (St Peter's Church, 15th February)*



Funerals:

Our prayers are with those who mourn the death of Olive Lewis, Shane Churches, Donald Butt, Olive Edwards and Terry King.

MARCH

As nature awakens, so too should our spirits. March is a reminder that every ending is a prelude to a beautiful beginning. (Zubair Rabbani)

The above quotation seems to aptly summarise our attitude to the month of March which in the northern hemisphere marks the start of spring. The days are becoming noticeably longer and our gardens are now home to a variety of flowers - daffodils, hellebores, snowdrops, magnolias, camellias, primroses and daphne. March weather is famously unpredictable often featuring a mix of bright, sunny days and cold wintry showers. Anything is possible and mild balmy afternoons can even give way to late season snow.



March is a month that has been designated to highlight and publicise several important local, national and international causes and awareness events. We have **World Wildlife Day** on the 3rd, **World Book Day** on the 5th, **International Women's Day** on the 8th, **Global Recycling Day** on the 1st and **World Water Day** on the 22nd. A fortnight in the month is designated The Great British Spring Clean and the month in its entirety has been selected as both **Women's History Month** and **Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month**.

In March we are asked to remember and honour some of the women who have shaped the world. Women's contributions to science, culture, politics and society will be celebrated and feature in educational initiatives. However, the theme for 2026 goes even further as the aim is to highlight the women who are currently designing solutions for a better tomorrow. The month provides space and time to emphasise women's achievements across race, class, nationality and fields of work.



Ovarian cancer has not always received the publicity that it warrants and it is therefore fitting that this month should be designated Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. In the UK over 7000 women are diagnosed with this cancer every year. Many of these are diagnosed too late for treatment to be effective. Every day 11 women die. It is the 6th most common cancer but the early symptoms can be misinterpreted or ignored. Hopefully the campaigns and fund raising events that are planned for the month will help rectify this sad situation.

In order to end on a happier note here is another thoughtful quotation from Zubair Rabbani:

In March nature wakes up from its winter slumber, and so should we. It's a time for renewal, growth and blooming possibilities. March forward with purpose and watch the world awaken around you.

Susan Peel



All things not-so-bright

When I choose the hymns for Sunday morning services at St Peter's I always let those who will be leading the service know my choices well in advance, so that they can suggest alternatives. A couple of weeks ago we were to read the Genesis story of the creation of the world, and I put down *All Things Bright And Beautiful* to illustrate the passage.

I was surprised to see the number of people who disliked this hymn and its well-known tune, and I quickly dropped it in favour of *All Creatures Of Our God And King*. But it made me wonder whether there are other hymns that congregations find themselves singing through gritted teeth. Here are a few hymns which I could not recommend for use in church as they stand, but they're only my ideas, and I'm sorry if you feel differently about them.

Sometimes there are good hymns that are spoiled for me by the inclusion of one particular line that I find jarring, often because meanings of words have changed over the years. For instance, that fine hymn *Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne And Thy Kingly Crown* includes the very unfortunate line *But thy couch was the sod, O thou Son of God*. See what I mean?

That beautiful communion hymn *And Now, O Father, Mindful Of The Love* contains the line *And by this food, so aw(e)ful and so sweet*, which only puts me in mind of that favourite (?) nursery dessert "Angel Delight". I don't normally approve of altering other people's poetry, but these are instances where a little use of an editor's blue pencil could change embarrassments from centuries ago into useful hymns for today.

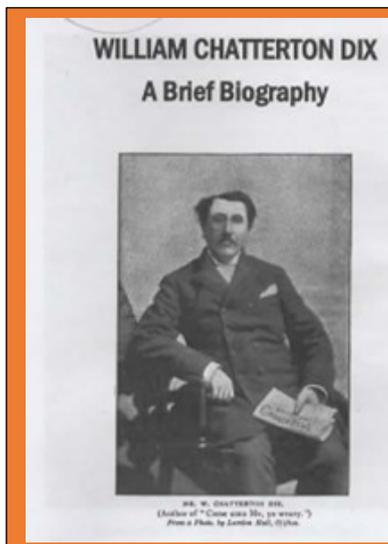
However, there are some examples in our A&M hymnbook which could not be made acceptable by any amount of blue pencil. *To God Be The Glory: Great Things He Has Done* contains the extraordinary assertion that *The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives*. I think I know what the author Fanny Crosby was getting at, that forgiveness is an unearned, unconditional gift from God, but that's not what she actually wrote.

I could not put down *Onward Christian Soldiers* on a music list because for many people the militaristic associations of such a hymn would be completely inappropriate in this 21st century. The old metaphors, of the church as an army and the Christian life as a conflict, come from an age when wars happened to other people in far-off lands. Now that war is alarmingly close, the metaphors feel very uncomfortable.

If readers have hymns which they find particularly off-putting, I'd love to hear from you. Get in touch with me through the Benefice Office email and I'll pass on your thoughts in a future Music Matters. I promise not to mention your name.

David Cheetham

-oOo-



Coming in April:

A brief biography of William Chatterton Dix, local hymn writer and poet.

Written by Ade Macrow and all profits to St. Andrew's church funds.

Available – on request – in all our benefice churches.

ST ANDREW'S

FRIENDS &

FAMILY

QUIZ NIGHT

SAVE THE DATE

SAT 09/05/26

Come and join the reordering group

for a fun evening with family and

friends - bring whoever you like to

work together in teams of 4 - 8

Further details in March / April Together magazine and Pew Notes nearer the time



CARYS' MARATHON JOURNEY

"Another big milestone for me – first-ever Half Marathon completed! An unreal experience in my Marathon journey! One final push before the big one.

I cannot believe we have hit over **£5,000** already. Thank you all for your ongoing support. It means the world to me.

Training continues, the miles are adding up and I'm hoping to raise even more as I keep pushing myself towards the start line in London next month. Thank you all for believing in me and being part of this journey."

Carys Walsh

**CARYS'
JUSTGIVING
PAGE CAN BE
FOUND AT:-**

[https://www.justgiving.com/
page/carys-walsh-1](https://www.justgiving.com/page/carys-walsh-1)

RUNNING FOR A REASON

LONDON MARATHON 2026

In memory of my dad, Rod - a hero gone, but never forgotten

I'm taking on 26.2 miles of sweat, strength and soul for a cause that hits home.

Carys is running for the South Western Ambulance Service Trust Charity



The team that gives everything, day in, day out - just like my Dad did. This run is for him, and for every life they fight to save



**JOIN ME. SUPPORT ME.
REMEMBER WITH ME.**



Every step I take is powered by love, loss and hope of helping others.



Sunday 15th March

Mothers' Sunday

Benefice Services

9.30 AM St. Peter's, Draycott
10.00 AM St. Andrew's, Cheddar
11.15 AM St. Leonard's, Rodney Stoke

A Mothers' Sunday Prayer

Dear God, the compassionate care that we so appreciate in mothers reminds us of Your tender heart for us.

Please encourage mothers, grandmothers and the many other women who look after children.

Give them daily strength, patience, and reminders of Your deep love for us.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families
Diocese of Bath & Wells

FRIDAY 6TH MARCH
CHEDDAR VILLAGE HALL

Lent Lunch

Donations for Mother's
Union Diocesan Projects

SOUP, BREAD
AND CAKE



CHURCH ROTAS

MAR.

	Mar 1	Mar 8	Mar 15	Mar 22	Mar 29
CHEDDAR (St. Andrew's)	MP	Break. Ser.	HC <i>Mother's Sun.</i>	HC	HC <i>Palm Sunday</i>
Sidesperson (8.00)	n/a	n/a	Marie	n/a	
Sidesperson Team Leader	Fiona	Breakfast Ser.	Ken B.	Ade	David B.
Sidesperson 1	Rosemary	Breakfast Ser.	Marguerite	Frankie	Margaret G.
Sidesperson 2	Anne L.	Breakfast Ser.	Adrian	Anne L.	Jennie C.
Sidesperson 3	n/a	Breakfast Ser.	Jo	Anne H.	n/a
Sidesperson 4	n/a	Breakfast Ser.	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cleaning 1	Margaret B.	Davies fam.	Ade	Rosemary	Mo
Cleaning 2	Peter	Davies fam.	Frankie	Karen	David S.
St. Nectan Chapel Flowers	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent
Church Flowers - Altar	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent
Church Flowers - Table	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent
Brass Cleaning	n/a	Jean D.	n/a	Ade	n/a
Coffee/Tea 1	Roger B.	Breakfast Ser.	Mother's Un.	Rosemary	Ann B.
Coffee/Tea 2	Jane	Breakfast Ser.	Mother's Un.	Fiona	Frankie

	Mar 1	Mar 8	Mar 15	Mar 22	Mar 29
DRAYCOTT (St. Peter's)	HC	MP	HC	HC	HC
			Mother's Sun.		Palm Sunday
Organist/Music	David	Ian	Barry	David	tba
Reader 1	Roger	Tricia	Martyn	Gill	John
Reader 2	Sue	Jeff	Lynda	Iain	Gill
Sidesperson(s)	Roger + Sue	Tricia	Chris	Gill	Gill
Coffee/Tea	Roger + Sue	Tricia + Jeff	Chris + Gill	Chris + Gill	Chris + Gill
Cleaning	Karen + Chris	n/a	Heather	Tricia	n/a
Flowers	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent

	Mar 1	Mar 8	Mar 15	Mar 22	Mar 29
RODNEY STROKE (St. Leonard's)	HC	HC	HC	BCP	
			Mother's Sun.		Palm Sunday
Sidesperson	Alan	Megan	Sue	Ann	Sue
Reader 1	Alan	Megan	tba	Jo Symes	Sue
Reader 2	Joanne	Heather	tba	Ann	Angela
Organist	Joanne	Joanne	Joanne	Barry	Joanne
Cleaning	Lynda + Honor				
Flowers A	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent
Flowers P	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent	Lent

Loaves & Fishes Project - Lent 2026 Newsletter

As we begin our Lenten journey, we are often asked to 'give something up' as a way of preparing ourselves for the celebration of Easter. This period was first for those who were going to be baptised, and in later years was extended to all Christians. For us today, in the Western world, it doesn't always impact us. Some of us are even unaware of the season of Lent. So, I invite you to mark Lent in some way. Some Christian groups suggest giving up their time rather than chocolate, and with that in mind, I wonder if I could invite you to give something to the Loaves and Fishes Project?

Ideas for this might include:

- Praying for the Project
- Saving coins to donate
- Buying an item of food each week
- Contribute to the Easter Egg Appeal

There are so many ways you could offer up your Lenten journey to benefit the many who are in need.

Future of the Loaves and Fishes Project

The Sisters arrived 35 years ago - and the changes of the years have been huge. Over the recent years we have been working on future-proofing the ministry as the number of Sisters available to be at the house have reduced. The Sisters are still very much committed to continuing the ministry here in Bristol - which is great news.

However, this will mean we need another person to help take over the day to day running of the Project. With our wonderful Vanessa moving on shortly, we will be advertising for 2 new members of staff: Project Manager & Project Administrator. Do contact us directly if you are interested.

Easter Egg Appeal

Last year the response to our Easter Egg appeal was amazing - thank you all so much. Can we please ask for support again for this coming Easter? We have a separate printable poster available.

May you be blessed as you journey towards Easter.

Teresa Mary CSC

(For further, much more detailed, news of the Project and of the Sisters, please see the website link: (bristoladmin@sistersofthechurch.org)

82 Ashly Road Bristol BS6 5NT

0117 941 3268



Draycott and Rodney Stoke
Church of England First School
(drsfirstschool.co.uk)

Our school is proud of its inclusive ethos, underpinned by excellent teaching, care, guidance and support. We value each and every child, working closely with families and the wider community to help children aged 3 to 9 discover their strengths, develop their skills and nurture their dreams. Our core Christian values of **respect, trust, courage, thankfulness, kindness and community** are woven throughout our broad and inspiring curriculum.

In April 2020, we joined the Wessex Learning Trust, becoming part of a wider family of established local schools. As a Church of England school, we also enjoy close links with **St Leonard's Church in Rodney Stoke** and **St Peter's Church in Draycott**. Weekly collective worship is led in church by **Revd Stuart Burns, Revd Ruth Motion, Revd Thea Oliver and Mrs Gill Dury**, providing a welcoming, child-friendly setting that nurtures pupils' spiritual growth. Prayer and worship are centred around our shared Christian values.

This term, our focus Christian value has been **courage**. Through collective worship and class discussions, children explored what it means to be courageous and how they can live this value in their everyday lives.

Our learning has been underpinned by the Bible verse: "*Be strong and courageous.*" (Joshua 1:9). This powerful message reminds us that courage does not mean never feeling afraid, but trusting in God, standing up for what is right, and finding the strength to keep going when things feel challenging or unfamiliar.

We have encouraged children to be brave in their learning, thoughtful in their choices, kind in their actions, and confident when facing new experiences.

We have enjoyed seeing how this value of courage comes to life across our school this term.

Next term our Focus Christian value is "Thankfulness".

Mrs Sarah Netto (Headteacher)



St Andrew's PCC Meeting

Wednesday 28th January 2026

Our January PCC meeting gave focused and thoughtful attention to safeguarding, and we were pleased to welcome Jim Reeve, our Safeguarding Officer, who joined the PCC to guide and advise us in this important area of church life.

Safeguarding was a central theme of the meeting. The PCC formally approved the parish safeguarding action plan and reviewed current arrangements. We were reminded of the importance of safeguarding training for all PCC members, and of ensuring that safeguarding remains visible, well organised and appropriately shared.

Jim also outlined work underway to improve record-keeping and access to safeguarding information, so that responsibilities are clearly supported and not reliant on one individual alone. The PCC recorded its sincere thanks to Jim for his dedication and careful work.

Care for our church building was also discussed. Following the recent Quinquennial Inspection, a number of urgent and medium-term maintenance items have been identified. Priority will be given to essential safety-related work, alongside other necessary tasks to protect the fabric of the building.

The PCC also reflected on the recent reordering fundraising concert, which was very well supported and greatly enjoyed by those who attended. Considerable time, planning and commitment went into making the event such a success, and the PCC expressed its gratitude to all involved. As well as raising funds, the concert helped to raise awareness of the reordering project within the wider community, and plans for further fundraising events continue.

Encouragingly, it was noted that attendance at Christmas services was significantly higher than in previous years, possibly reflecting the impact of leaflet distribution and wider publicity. The Treasurer reported that, while finances remain tight, income and expenditure were broadly balanced over the past year, underlining once again the importance of regular giving and Gift Day contributions.

The next PCC meeting will be held on Thursday 19th March 2026 at 7 PM in the Den, when preparations for the APCM will begin.

Lorraine Grover Ng (PCC Secretary)

Introducing
The Somernotes
Male Voice Ensemble



A wide variety of popular, spiritual and show songs, old and new, to suit all tastes.

Saturday 28th March at 7.00pm

**St. Leonard's Church,
Rodney Stoke BS27 3UN**

For more information contact:

somernotes@gmail.com

Tel: 07931 840672

Joanne.turner2234@gmail.com

All donations will go towards church funds.Refreshments
and drinks will be available after the concert



Benefice Passover Supper

Maundy Thursday, April 2nd

6.00 PM in Cheddar Village Hall

followed by a short service of reflection in St. Andrew's Church



Taizé by Candlelight

**at St Peter's Church,
Draycott**

On Friday April 3rd at 6pm

Everyone is welcome to join us for an Ecumenical Taizé-style Service of contemplative worship to mark Good Friday



S.O.S.P. EASTER QUIZ

Entry £1.00 (enter as many as you like!)
To win: Easter Eggs!



Quiz sheets from & entries to be returned to

Thea Oliver 'Barn Close', Wet Lane

Tricia Lumley 'Holcombe', Wells Road.



Closing date (Good Friday) 3rd April 2026. Winner will be announced at Coffee & Cake on Easter Saturday!



Saturday 25th April

From 2.00 PM

Organised by SOSP,
raising funds for
St. Peter's Church.

Hosted by **The**
STRAWBERRY
SPECIAL pub,
Draycott.

Jumble Sale

**Donations very
welcome.**

(Sorry, we cannot accept
furniture or electrical items)

Please bring your jumble
to **The Strawberry Special**
Skittle Alley (from 10.00
AM on the day).

Thank you for your
support!

For All The Saints...

St. Patrick (17th March)

Patrick was born in England. His father was Calpurnius, a senator and tax collector. At the age of 16 he was captured by pirates and taken to Ireland. He was enslaved and made to herd sheep. After 6 years he managed to escape and returned to his family, On his return he began to study Christianity before leaving to study in Auxerre, where he was ordained as a priest, later being consecrated as a bishop by Maximus of Turin.

He returned to Ireland, landing at Wicklow, before travelling to Saul and establishing a sanctuary, where he ordained priests to lead the new Christian communities and attracted many converts. He was not fully accepted in Ireland, and being seen as a foreigner, he was legally without protection and in his words *"he was beaten, robbed of all he had and put in chains waiting for possible execution"*. The Druids were particularly hostile, prophesying that *"across the sea will come Adze-head, crazed in the head, his cloak with a hole for his head, his stick bent in the head. He will chant impieties from a table in front of his house; all his people will answer: 'so be it, so be it'"*.

Writers in the year 657 portray Patrick as a martial figure who *"contests with druids, overthrows pagan idols and curses kings and kingdoms"*. He is also shown as *"working with the unfree and poor, encouraging them to vows of monastic chastity"*, as many of the early churches were combined with nunneries founded by converted noblewomen. Legend has it that he preached the doctrine of the Holy Trinity using the shamrock as an example.

The legend of him ridding Ireland of snakes is, however, untrue; the naturalists at the Natural History Museum of Ireland in Dublin point out that there never have been snakes in Ireland. In another legend he visits the landlady of an inn who is known for her short measures and he tells her that she has a demon in her cellar fattening on her dishonesty and she must mend her ways to get rid of him. When he returns he finds her filling the cups of whiskey to the brim. He takes her to the cellar and shows the demon withering away. It then flees in a flash of flame and Patrick decrees that a glass of whiskey should be drunk on his feast day, this is known now on St. Patrick's Day as 'drowning the shamrock'

It is claimed by some that he returned to England, and, having found a community of holy men living at Glastonbury, he founded the abbey there and became its' first abbot. He was supposedly buried there beside the altar. St. Patrick's Chapel lies within the grounds of the abbey and is a place of pilgrimage.

Pat Groves



An Irish Blessing

*May your troubles be less
And your blessings be more
And nothing but happiness
Come through your door.*

RENT DUE (& DINNER GIVEN) — RODNEY STOKE, 1869

Rectory of Rodney Stoke.

To Mr. *S. G. Masters*

I hereby give you Notice, that I purpose to attend at the RECTORY, RODNEY STOKE, on WEDNESDAY, the 27th day of OCTOBER, at 11 o'clock in the Forenoon to receive the Rent Charge in lieu of Tithes, due to me on the 1st October, and beg that you will either pay or send the amount due from you on that day.

Yours faithfully,

G. H. FAGAN, RECTOR.

Rodney Stoke, October 20th, 1869.

One ~~year's~~ year's rent charge,
due 1st October, 1869, accord-
ing to the averages.

£ s. d.

2 1

S. H. F.

DINNER AT 2 P.M.

S. H.

P.S.—If any error in the above account requires correction, I shall

BARA BRITH

(makes 2 cakes)

1 lb. self-raising flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Stork margarine (hard)

$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. brown sugar

12 oz. sultanas

3 eggs

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vinegar



First, boil the sultanas for approximately 5 minutes and leave to cool. Rub fat in flour and mix all dry ingredients. Add the eggs, sultanas and vinegar.

Mix well and spoon out into two 2-lb loaf tins lined with non-stick cake tin liners.

Cook for 75 minutes at 180 degrees centigrade.

(NB: I test the cakes after an hour with a skewer. If the skewer comes out cleanly, the cakes are ready).

This is an old family recipe. 'Bara Brith' means 'speckled bread' and is common to all the Celtic countries.

It is delicious sliced and buttered.

Margaret Bassett



BEETLE DRIVE



**6pm on Saturday 14th March
in Cheddar Village Hall**



*Soft drinks &
pudding
provided at the
interval*

*All ages
welcome
for 1.5 hours of fun!*

**Messy Church families & everyone from
the Benefice of Cheddar, Draycott
and Rodney Stoke
are invited to a family fun evening!**



Please email Samm on beneficecdrs@gmail.com
to guarantee a place
NO entry fee, donations for the evening welcome.

A Verger's Reflections

(from the parish of St. Faithful, Habnot)

Right. Vergers. We are the people who arrive before everyone else, leave after everyone else, and somehow get blamed for the weather in between. Officially, we “*prepare the church for worship*” and “*support the ministry of welcome*”. Unofficially, we spend our lives preventing the House of God from becoming a community centre with candles. So, in the spirit of Christian confession (and because I can feel my blood pressure increasing like the organ swell on a dramatic hymn), here are a few things that get under this verger's collar.

Firstly: the sacred art of moving things and not putting them back. Some people enter a church and immediately think, “*This chair is not living its truth. I will move it.*” Friends: the chairs are not having a personal journey. They are where they are because last Sunday you asked for “*more space*”, and the Sunday before that you asked for “*more intimacy*”, and the Sunday before that you asked for “*something between a concert hall and a monastery.*” If you have rearranged half the nave for reasons, please return it to its original position afterwards. Do not leave it “*for the verger to sort*”. I am not the Holy Spirit of Furniture.

Secondly: candles. I love candles. I love the way they speak of prayer. I love the way they turn a gloomy Tuesday into something tender and human. But if you light a candle and then push the match into the wax like you're sealing a medieval treaty, do not be surprised when I sigh deeply enough to power the church boiler.

Also: if you are going to pray for “*Auntie Jean's hip*” (valid), please do not place the candle directly under the notice that says 'DO NOT PLACE CANDLES DIRECTLY UNDER THIS NOTICE.' That is not faith. That is testing the Lord.

Thirdly: the holy war of doors. In winter: everyone shuts every door “*to keep the heat in*”, including doors that should not be shut, like the one that stops the fire exit being a fire exit. In summer: every door is flung open “*for a breeze*”, including the one that invites pigeons to experience a profound sense of belonging in the sanctuary. I have, at various points, conducted a one-man ministry to both draught exclusion and wildlife management. I do not feel called to either. Yet here we are.

Fourthly: microphones and “helpful” adjustments. If you find a microphone and think, “*I'll just turn this up a bit,*” please don't. Sound systems are like parish politics: one small tweak can unleash a howl that raises the dead and frightens the living. The number of times I've been told “*the mic's not working*” when it IS working: it's just not pointed at the mouth... honestly.

And, readers and intercessors please note: microphones are unable to pick up a mumble and instantly transform it into an oration from the steps of the Roman Senate. They are just not built for that. So kindly speak up (with the thing actually pointing into your gob). Then we'll all be able to benefit from your erudition and praying power.

Fifthly: weddings. Ah, weddings. The day when people who have never been inside a church discover the aisle is, apparently, a catwalk. A gentle reminder: the service is not improved by a photographer doing press-ups in the chancel for “*the angle*”. And if someone says, “*Can we just have the candles moved to that side for symmetry?*”—yes, of course we can. We can also re-enact the Reformation while we’re at it. Shall I pop the kettle on?

Sixthly: (and I say this with love): treating the church like a museum—OR like your front room. Some folk behave as though God is terribly easily offended and must be approached on tiptoe, preferably in Latin. Others behave as though the nave is an overflow café and the credence table is a convenient shelf for a half-eaten biscuit. May I suggest a third way? The church is holy because people are HERE: grieving, rejoicing, doubting, bringing toddlers, bringing walking sticks, bringing questions, bringing themselves. Which means: yes, it is a place of reverence. And yes, it is a place of welcome. The tension between those two is not a problem to solve; it’s the Christian life in miniature.

Because here’s the thing. The longer I do this job, the more I realise my “pet peeves” are often just my fear in a hi-vis jacket. Fear that something will go wrong. Fear that someone will be hurt. Fear that the sacred will be trampled by the casual. And the Gospel keeps nagging me “*Perfect love casts out fear.*” Not perfect tidiness. Not perfect choreography. Love.

So yes: please stop hiding old service sheets behind the radiator. Please don’t wedge a fire door open with a hassock. Please don’t feed the pigeons “because they look lonely”. But also: if you are new, unsure, scruffy, noisy, anxious, late, or burdened—come in anyway. Sit down. Breathe. God is not peering over the top of the pulpit waiting to tell you off. That’s my job. (Joke. Mostly.)

Right. I feel better. I’m off to find out why the processional cross has migrated again. It does that.

Alan Dobbs – Verger

and

Disclaimer: It is entirely possible that St Faithful's, Havnot may be a fictional parish, and not in any way connected to the real parish of St Faith's Havant.

(With thanks to Cindy Kent)

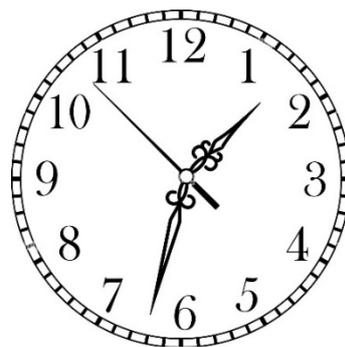




CHIMING AGAIN!

Late in January, horologist Paul, a skilled worker from Smith of Derby, refitted the ancient and newly-refurbished 'going side' mechanism into the mid-19th century tower clock in St. Andrew's.

For the first time in five years, the chimes can again be heard.



SHOCK NEWS

Diocesan cuts force extra duties upon incumbents!

The new

You must muck in with everything

Act comes into effect immediately.

Jim Reeve





SAVE THE DATE



07 | MARCH
2026

Theme: Mothering Sunday

MORE INFORMATION:

🕒 3pm - 4.30pm

📍 Cheddar Village Hall

🌐 www.beneficecdrs.org



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St Peter's Church

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Good company



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ward hearts

Variety of
delicious soups
to choose from

A 'HOW NOT TO DO' GUIDE

The best-laid plans o' mice and men gang aft a'gley, as Rabbin Burns observed. Imagine how *agley* a hastily-constructed-the-night-before plan could turn out. And aye, it did.

The 2nd Alexandra Park Guides affiliated to the church traditionally staged a revue show for parishioners, parents and every other interested parties in January or February each year. Admission to this – staged in the Church Hall – was free, with donations toward church funds.

The particular show in question was on a Thursday evening. The auguries weren't propitious, as I received a phone call on Wednesday afternoon, asking if I could attend the dress rehearsal that evening, as the stage lighting, placements and sundry other matters hadn't been decided upon. A long and somewhat fraught few hours later, all was set fair(ish) for a reasonably polished performance the following night. Or so we thought.

Like all revues, some acts took place in front of the closed stage curtains, whilst frantic scene-changing went on behind. One such act was my younger sister playing an upright piano and a piece called *Gypsy Caravan*. (Don't look it up; there are hundreds of pieces with the same title and Linda remains too traumatised, even all these years hence, to recall which it was).

It simply required the upright piano to be rolled into place centre-stage, Linda to sit down and begin performing the three minute piece. Unbeknownst to most of us, the person responsible for bringing the stool onto the stage hadn't done so. Thus, Linda was standing up, back necessarily towards the audience, looking rather like a honky-tonk player in a Western saloon bar.

Added to which, a vital prop was misplaced, resulting in repeated hissed "play it again" instructions from the other side of the curtain. A brief, jolly interlude became a 12 minute exercise in fortitude for the audience.

Somebody had also decided that a skit about Helen Keller, the blind American author was just the thing. A rum choice but what followed must have seemed utterly bizarre to the watching audience.

The Guide playing Keller not only missed her cue to enter but disappeared for the entire first half of the sketch. The other participants carried on, speaking to a 'Keller' that was not only blind but also invisible. She'd also acquired a deep masculine voice, as having only the previous evening's dress rehearsal to go on, I (unseen on one side of the stage) hastily and inexpertly improvised her lines.

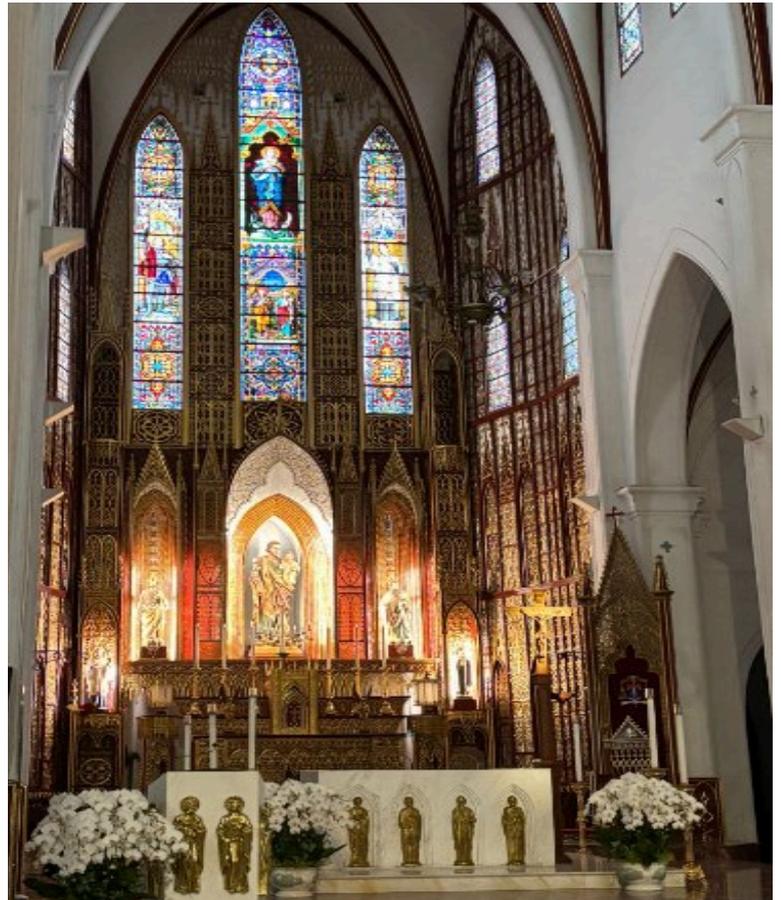
The 'real' Helen Keller then strolled on, approximately five minutes into the piece, as if her cloak of invisibility had just malfunctioned and her voice reset, several octaves higher. That evening was surreal but never dull.

Ade Macrow

THE FURTHER TRAVELS OF A TAIZE PILGRIM

Many of you will recall that Jack Warwick was one of the Taize pilgrims from the benefice last year. Before beginning university, Jack decided to spend a few months travelling in Asia, thence to Australia, with his friend Elliott.

The first picture shows Jack at an unidentified location; the second, the stained-glass windows in a Roman Catholic cathedral in Hanoi, Vietnam.



EASTER LILIES

Anybody wishing to donate towards Easter lilies in memory of a loved one, please contact DAWN at St. Andrew's.

A BIBLE STUDY PRAYER

Merciful Lord – The message that Your son brought us over two thousand years ago has reached far and wide across this planet, and yet we struggle to understand the meaning of Your message “to love one another”.

We pray that you will take away the desire of nations wanting to dominate each other, causing fear and dread to so many.

We pray that they will see the light of Your love and turn to You for wisdom and understanding.

We ask this in the name of Your son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

(Unattributed, at author's request)

EACH TIME

**Each time I see a Church
I always pay a visit
For when at last
I come to rest
God won't say
“Who is it?”**

A Bible Recipe

An easy way to recall how many books are in both Old and New Testaments is as follows:-

Count the letters in the word ‘Old’ (3). Do the same for ‘Testament’ (9). There are 39 books in the Old Testament.

Multiply 3 x 9 (27). There are 27 books in the New Testament.



PALM SUNDAY

**“BLESSED IS HE THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;
HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST”.**

MATTHEW 21:9

SUNDAY 29TH MARCH

9.30 AM at St. Peter's, Draycott

**10.00 AM at St. Andrew's,
Cheddar**

**11.15 AM at St. Leonard's,
Rodney Stoke***

*** with a live processional donkey**

The Sound Of Satisfaction

The quiet of St Andrew's Church was rocked recently by the enduring melodies and harmonies of Simon and Garfunkel as performed by Paul Collins and Si Barron – Paul and Simon.



Playing to a packed Church, the audience were treated to classic songs opening with the lively and foot-tapping *Mrs Robinson*. Paul and Simon took us on a journey of both well-known and less familiar songs. The sometimes spiritual lyrics were well suited to the environment of St Andrew's, the vocal harmonies and wonderful guitar melodies soaring to the roof and embracing all of us.

It was fantastic to see so many people supporting this wonderful event, as evidenced by the quiet humming of the audience to *Scarborough Fair*, a seemingly word perfect accompaniment of *Homeward Bound* and a rousing rendition of the chorus to *The Boxer*.

A big thank you must be made to all those who contributed to making this a memorable evening – Paul and Simon themselves, the organisers, the volunteer family members running the bar in the village hall and everyone from the local community who came out on a wet and windy evening. We think it was worth it!

All proceeds will be for the St Andrew's Reordering project and a grand total of over £1600 was raised. As we all made our way home into the dark night, how many of us were still enjoying the echo of *Sound of Silence* – silent we were not!

Mike White



CHURCH CURIOSITIES



The first-time visitor to the church of **St. Martin of Tours**, Cwmyoy in Monmouthshire could be forgiven for immediately booking an eye-test. But their ocular organs do not deceive them: the tower, roof and walls of the church all lean in several opposing directions.

The reason is that the church was constructed on the site of an ancient landslide. (No, me neither). The soil is still shifting and the justification for pressing ahead on a site that must have immediately shown signs of several subsidence remains utterly baffling.

The medieval structure was unsurprisingly repaired on many occasions; a substantial programme was overseen in Victorian times also. This was not to try and straighten the church but to prevent further instability. Only time will judge how successful these will be.

Safely (a relative term) installed in the nave is the Cwmyoy Cross. This has a rare Christ carving. Although stolen in the 1960s, it was later recovered from an antique shop in London. The set of six 17th and 18th century bells in the tower cannot be rung, as the tower is unable to support the activity. It leans further 'out of true' than the tower in Pisa.

For all the nightmarish structural problems, St. Martin's remains in regular use.

St. Leonard's, Rodney Stoke

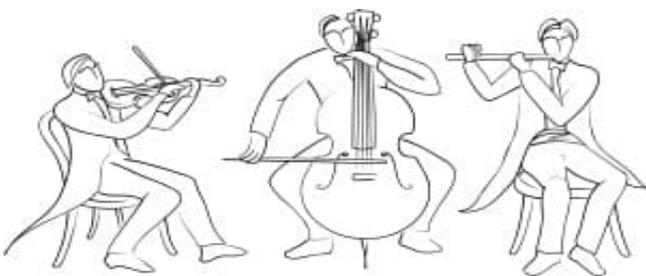
Future dates for your diary.
(More details later)



COFFEE MORNING
18th April

St Leonard's Church Hall 10.30 AM - noon

FRIDAY 20TH JULY



CLASSICAL TRIO

Lunchtime Concert
1 PM – 2 PM

Further details to follow.
Tea and cake available afterwards.



TREASURE TRAIL

Join the Treasure Trail around St. Leonard's Church and Stoke Street.

SATURDAY 20TH JUNE

1.45 PM – 4.30 PM

All correct answers will be entered into the draw for a luxury hamper. (Draw to take place approx. 4.15 PM).

Raffle and lovely refreshments available throughout the afternoon.



(See 1 Kings 11:1-9)

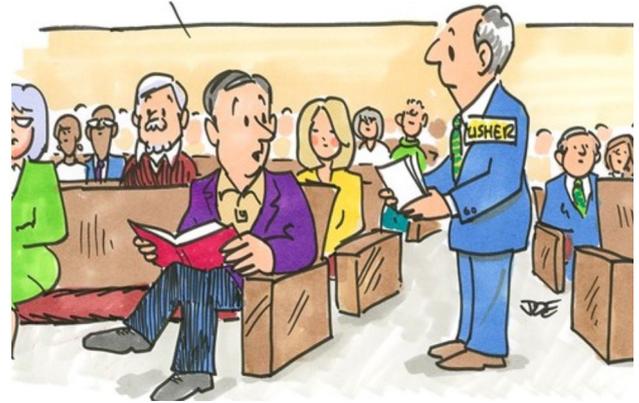
03-11-2011

YOU HAVE LIKE A THOUSAND WIVES AND CONCUBINES ... PERHAPS IT'S TIME TO SLOW DOWN WITH THOSE ROMANTIC SONGS OF YOURS

"NO, MY WIFE IS NOT WITH ME NOW - SHE'S IN A BETTER PLACE."

"YOUR WIFE DIED?"

"NO, SHE'S JUST GOING TO A BETTER CHURCH."



"HE WHO IS WITHOUT SIN CASTS THE FIRST STONE". RIGHT? WELL I STILL HAVE THE FIRST STONE ... I THREW THE SECOND STONE AT HIM

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