



April 2026

In and around the parish of St Bartholomew

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Mary Magdalene

For me, this Easter, the secular highlight has to be the Cadbury's white chocolate crème egg. It is the sickliest sweet treat you can imagine; it is to really good chocolate what a 12 verse rendition of *The Wheels on the Bus* is to Mahler's Fifth; and it is exactly what I'm looking for in an Easter egg.

As you can see from the images I attach to this article, Mary Magdalene herself endorses the white chocolate crème egg, although there seems to be some brand confusion as she is also often depicted holding what seems to be a bright-red, Lindt Lindor egg. I must diverge from her on this point; a Lindor egg is a little too classy, somewhere in the range of the moonlight sonata, and I really want to stick to my nursery rhymes.

All joking aside though, why is Mary Magdalene depicted holding red and white eggs, and what has this to do with Easter?

The second point is perhaps the most straightforward to answer. Mary Magdalene is a central character of the Easter story. In all four gospels, she is named as either the one or one of a group who go to the tomb on easter morning and discover the resurrection. She is either the first person to know and say "Christ is risen!", or among the first. She is, by some definitions, the first

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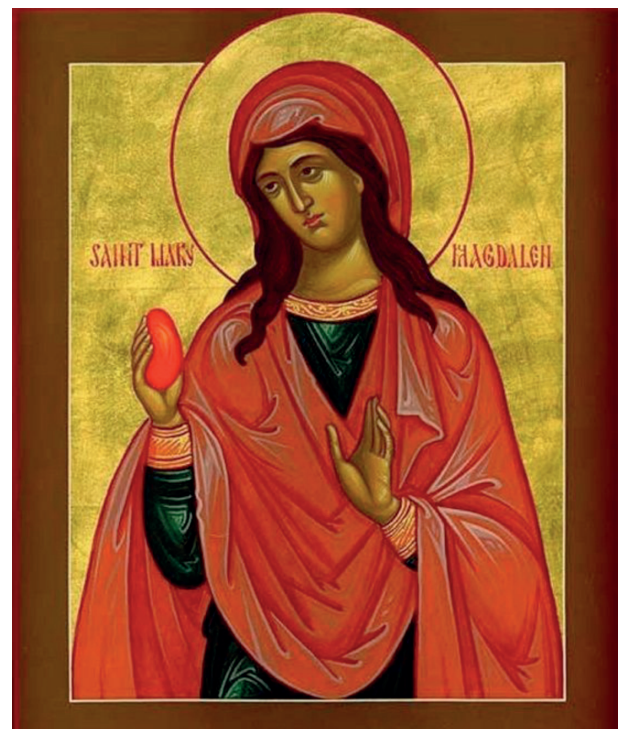
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by Mthr Bea

Christian. Mary Magdalene is central to Easter, and so it is unsurprising that her egg should come to be associated

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SCAN ME

From the Editor

On 20 March 2026, I was waiting at the bus stop near the Penge Food Store and the Tesco Express on Sydenham Road and heard a commotion.

It turned out that a lady who I recognised as a regular 202 bus passenger had witnessed a young person being accosted by a man who had just used the cash point and asked him for money and was in some distress by his over-the-top reaction. As heroes or heroines often do, she intervened and told him to stop his abusive behaviour. He then turned his abuse towards the heroine justifying his behaviour when he screamed that “she knew nothing about homelessness.” At this point a second heroic act took place as a gentleman strategically raised his elbow in a defensive way to stop the aggressor from getting closer to our heroine, who had just walked away. I asked the heroine who the person being abused was and peering back I witnessed a rather thin person whose clothes were fitting loosely about her. The heroine remarked that you just never know people’s circumstances. The worrying thing I considered was that the aggressor may have had some sort of weapon and the matter may have escalated, with dire consequences.

I think there should be a greater presence of outreach workers doing what is necessary to help individuals who are homeless or feel the need to beg on the streets. A few weeks ago, I was in New Cross Gate on a bitterly cold Saturday afternoon and I saw two ladies with rucksacks talking to an elderly gentleman with a duvet cover over his shoulders with very little on in terms of warm clothing. He was eating with both hands from a small Morley’s snack box that contained chicken and chips. As I walked past, I heard these ladies asking if he could get to Victoria where there was shelter and assistance.

There but for the Grace of God go I. I would not want to be in similar position and hope that rough sleepers and people in need can obtain all they assistance they need to get back on their feet.

Geoffrey Cave, Sydenham Life Editor

March – Solution

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with the proclamation and celebration of this good news.

The egg, however, is a little more elusive. Some sources (none of them biblical, I should be clear) say that the tradition of presenting brightly coloured eggs at Easter began with Mary Magdalene. It is said that she took a white egg with her as a visual aid to tell people about Christ’s resurrection. On one occasion, she presented a white egg to the emperor Tiberius and proclaimed, “Christ is risen!”. He scoffed, and said that a human being raised from the dead was as likely as a white egg turning red. Immediately, the egg changed colour in her hand as a sign from God to affirm her story.

Why would you take an egg as a visual aid though? This part is somewhat confusing. Another tradition (also not biblical!) says that Mary had with her a basket of boiled eggs on the morning of the resurrection. We should remember that she was going there to tend to Jesus’ corpse, to treat it with spices and to re-wrap it after the hasty burial on the eve of the Sabbath which had just passed. This was a full day’s work, and thus the tradition that she brought with her a packed lunch of eggs, and that these were the items she had with her when she had returned to the other disciples to tell them the good news. How she used it as a visual aid, and how it came to be her common practice, is left to our imagination. I like to imagine her so overwhelmed with excitement and exertion from running back to the other disciples that she cannot speak properly, and needed the egg with its symbol of new life emerging from a now empty case as a way to get her message across, and that this habit stuck and wherever she went she took an egg to tell this story. Or perhaps she simply had it in her hand when she first told someone, and to physically hold an egg reminded her of the concrete reality of what had happened as she retold the story down the years.

Whatever the reason, I hope that you will join me this year when you hold or decorate or eat an easter egg – whether it be a white chocolate crème egg, Lindor, or something entirely different – in remembering Mary Magdalene, the first Christian, with her most beautiful message: “Christ is risen!”

Mthr Bethany

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Hidden vocal talent in Forest Hill



Louis George Drysdale

I often discover people who I have never heard of but during their lifetime they were well known and appreciated. In this instance it is a man born in Jamaica who came to London in 1906 as a member of a choir, stayed and eventually became the vocal coach to popular African American performers in the late 1920s.

Louis George Drysdale lived at 11 Westbourne Road, now renamed as Westbourne Drive, Forest Hill. Records show that he lived there from 1918 until his death in 1933. He described himself a *Specialist in Breath Control, Diction and Style*. Many of his clients came by recommendation. Amongst his clients was Florence Mills, an African American singer and dancer, who came to London in 1926 and performed with a dance troupe at the then London Pavilion, Piccadilly Circus, now the Trocadero. She was much impressed with his style of vocal training that she recommended fellow African American singers and actors to him. In 1927, she along with fellow singers set up two scholarships for African- American female singers – a soprano and contralto to study with him. Amongst the luminaries of the day who also received his coaching was Paul Robeson who came to London to perform in the musical *Showboat* (1928). Robeson also took coaching later in 1930 from Amanda Ira Aldridge (the daughter of the *Tragedian* Ira Aldridge of Hamlet Road Anerley).

But before becoming a vocal coach Drysdale travelled to Britain in 1906 with the Kingston Choral Union which was advertised as the *Jamaica Choir*. Sir Alfred Jones “The Banana King” sponsored their trip to the UK and arranged for them to perform as part of his Colonial

Products Exhibition in Liverpool. They also performed at the relocated Crystal Palace. Even though Jamaica was part of the Empire, British people were surprised how well they spoke and sung in English!

The Jamaica choir toured the UK between 1906-1908. “Dri” to his friends decided to remain in Britain. He wanted to make use of the opportunities to improve his musical skills. Sir Alfred Jones who was impressed with the quality of Drysdale’s tenor voice. With his backing, Drysdale was able to study at the Royal College of Music with outstanding operatic performers of the day including Gustave Garcia. Garcia was one of the influential family of singers who had shaped 19th century Italian bel canto, and whose members included some of the finest singers of their generations, who had variously performed in premieres of operas by such as Rossini, Verdi, Donizetti and Bellini.

Drysdale decided that he preferred to teach rather than perform. The skills he learned allowed him the opportunity to teach others to sing in the Italian method. He became a specialist in breath control, diction, phrasing and style in London. It is believed he started his first studio at Westbourne Road.

His success was reported in the Jamaican newspaper *Daily Gleaner*, October 31, 1924:

“Mr Drysdale has had exceptional experience in training voices, his pupils being most successful. He trains pupils for opera, oratorio and the concert platform.”

As his fame grew, he set up further studios in central London and Margate. Not much is known about his wife Hilda, but their home became a haven for visiting black singers and musicians including Marian Anderson, who would later become the first American-African to perform at the New York Metropolitan Opera.

Known affectionately as the ‘Professor, Drysdale was also a highly regarded vocal tutor in Europe. A view shared by his close friend, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor -a Croydon resident. At what could be considered the peak of his success with many famous singers lauding his teaching abilities, after a short illness, Drysdale died suddenly in 1933. Aged only 49. He was buried in Ladywell cemetery.

Angela Morgan MITG

Instagram: [angelamorgan365](https://www.instagram.com/angelamorgan365)



11 Westbourne Drive (formerly Westbourne Road)

Retirement can be an oxymoron

Life oftentimes seems to be composed of diametric thoughts. When we were children we couldn't wait to grow up and be older. One day we get there, and looking back, think why were we in such a hurry to be older. When a woman first gets pregnant she thinks I don't know if I can go through labour and delivery; then by the ninth month her thoughts change and she thinks I don't care what it takes, I just want this baby out. When a woman first embraces motherhood her thoughts are 'I could hold this child forever.' Then at 3 years of age, she is aghast to learn that her child cannot start reception until they are age 4. When children become teenagers you find yourself thinking some days are so long, it will be good when they go off to school. As they are soon to complete their studies and go off to university, your thoughts turn to my baby is leaving home. They go off to university, and after a couple of months they come home for the weekend. During the time they were gone you have gotten used to quiet and tidiness, so when they return for the weekend you find yourself thinking Sunday mid afternoon, isn't it time yet for them to return to campus.

And so on life goes... and one day you find yourself counting the time until you can retire and will be able to slow down and take life easy. As that deadline approaches, we have all known many people to get cold feet and postpone retirement because they didn't know what to do with themselves if they were not working.

When you retire life just keeps coming at you. You get asked to volunteer for every project, charitable cause and community event that comes along. The list is endless.

The number of groups one can join can be staggering if one does not learn how to say 'no.'

You also spend a copious amount of time socializing. I had no idea I knew that many people! Socializing usually translates into meeting up with friends for a drink or going out to eat. Which is all fine and good but if you do not have a bathroom scale, I recommend you purchase one as one can readily find their waistline increasing with all the socializing. In which case one might want to consider joining a gym or physical fitness group. (Joining yet another activity.)

Sports are another avenue of pursuit. The downfall here is that one must be aware of the potential for the inevitable injury which renders one in a temporary state of disability for a period of time. That leads to television watching as one's prime pastime. Another weight-gaining environment.

Someone once asked my husband what do you do when you retire? To which his answer was, "You go around collecting doctors." As one ages the list of maladies or follow-up appointments accumulates.

Let me exemplify this all for you.

Upon completion of caregiving my daughter's postop knee replacement surgery, we flew back to America to fulfill our commitments there. We arrived back in Arizona



Unsplash / Anukrati Omar

at 9pm on 20 January. At 9:30 am on 21 January my best friend from high school and her husband arrived to spend a week with us – an annual January event as this couple lives in Minnesota, so we are their escape valve for a week from the winter freeze. After various activities they left at noon on Monday and by 3pm that day I began a week of medical appointments. A bone scan that afternoon, followed by a spinal ultrasound Tuesday, then a preoperative physical and meeting with the foot surgeon the following day. Thursday my husband had an appointment with the GI doctor, and we rounded the week out with my having an appointment with the orthopedic surgeon on Friday.

Friday evening began our round of social events with dinner at a friend's house. Sunday we went to a play with friends then out to dinner. A Monday morning political group breakfast meeting, Tuesday we entertained friends for dinner, Wednesday had the neighbours in for a happy hour, and Thursday another play followed by dinner with other friends. Friday we prepped to leave on Saturday for a four-day trip to San Francisco to see our son and his partner. We returned Wednesday evening. Thursday morning my husband had a telemedicine appointment, then we went to an afternoon play and had dinner with a friend. Friday morning I had foot surgery and am now recovering from it so as to return to the UK The Ides of March. And so on the schedule goes...

The bottom line, there is always something going on.

by Geri Falconer-Ferneau

Send in your Sydenham Life contributions by the first day of each month

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in Sydenham Life are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of St. Bartholomew's Church or the Church of England. The information contained is not advice, or any form of recommendation and should not be treated as such.

Calling for fair water footprints



What's on your shopping list? Tomatoes, blueberries, avocados? Perhaps some chocolate or a carton of orange juice? Apart from food, are you thinking about going clothes shopping?

All these items need water for production. A pair of jeans takes 8,000 litres; a glass of orange juice 200 litres. This is their 'water footprint'. But when we walk round the shops, most of us have no idea that nearly three-quarters of the water needed to produce the goods we want to buy comes from outside the UK.

Take tomatoes. The UK imports about a quarter of its tomatoes from Morocco. Morocco has been experiencing drought for seven years, yet 98 per cent of its water footprint is embedded in agricultural exports. Its scarce water is essential for supporting its economy but at the cost

of extreme water stress in large parts of the country.

Alongside this are human rights concerns. Businesses producing vegetables, fruit, fashion items and cocoa all need water, very often taking it away from local communities and workers. In Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa, for example, research by an organisation called Water Witness International (WWI), found dire conditions in the cocoa sector: workers have little access to water for sanitation and hygiene, leading them to have nowhere private and safe to go to the toilet and only able to drink poor quality water.

In many places, women and girls are more affected than men – one of the reasons World Water Day in March drew attention to this inequality.

This is why WWI and other organisations and governments, are calling for water footprints to be 'fair'. Calling for businesses to take more action to make sure their supply chains use water fairly – that they take water stewardship seriously to protect and sustain water supplies.

The UK government published a report in January this year setting out the longer-term impact to the UK of global biodiversity loss and the collapse of critical ecosystems; how disrupted water supply (among other things), could affect our resilience, security and prosperity in the future.

We need to challenge our supermarkets, businesses and fashion brands to be better water stewards. As Water Witness International says, "We're being sold inequality by the gallon". Go to waterwitness.org to see what action you can take.

www.waterwitness.org

Rosalind Goodrich

Have you heard about Credit Unions?

Credit unions are community-based financial cooperatives serving residents and workers in their own communities. Unlike traditional banks, a credit union is owned by its members and exists to benefit the community rather than generate profit for shareholders. This means every decision made is guided by fairness, responsibility, and a commitment to improving financial well-being locally.

At its heart, a credit union is about people helping people. Members save together, and those savings are then used to provide affordable loans to others. Some members want to save larger amounts to help support lending across the community, while others build smaller savings over time to create a safety net for emergencies or reduce the need to borrow in the future. All savings are fully protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS), giving members peace of mind.

The boroughs of Bromley and Lewisham have their very own credit union - Lewisham Plus Bromley Credit Union. In addition to encouraging savings for adults and



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Mark Plummer

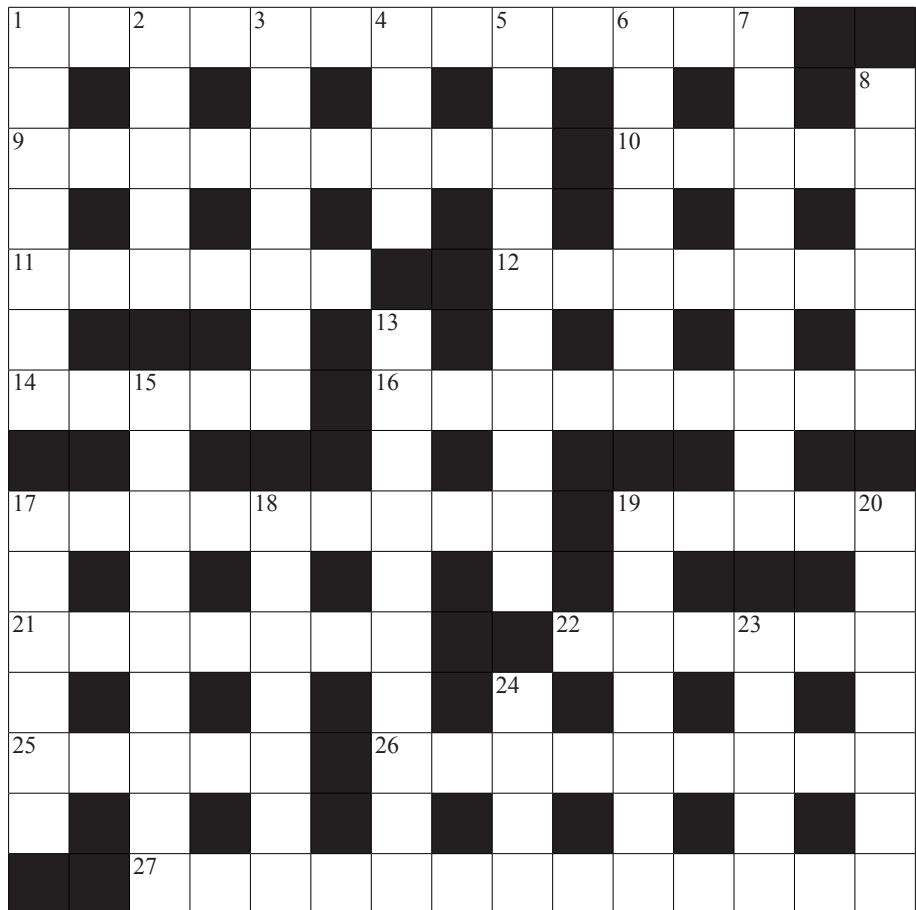
Easter — Mthr Bea

Across

1. “Easter Greetings!” or alternatively, “Nice shirts, Sir!” (6,2,5)
9. Call 999 for one Cuban male in trouble (9)
10. Former monarch following favourite saint (5)
11. Yes, one northern flower died (6)
12. You finally shake up Iran and, um, find nuclear fuel (7)
14. Cathy developed a certain craft. (5)
16. Study has chosen to assume again (9)
17. Small, orange ball of fury in a barb (9)
19. A big spoon left out? Not carrying much (5)
21. Marsupials say: “at first, all non indigenous mammals are legitimately scary.” (7)
22. Refuge from bedlam (6)
25. A famous dog was once one of nine (5)
26. Throwing out last of fruit due, essentially, to brown primate (9)
27. Crazy madman eagerly proclaimed Easter tidings first. (4,9)

Down

1. Explain why fir alcohol chokes on the return (7)
2. Overzealous Jewish teacher throws black penny (5)
3. Debt-free alcohol? (7)
4. Places to drink among poles (4)



5. Old gold coin from east found in grass taught something afresh (10)
6. Thus, an inspiring expert becomes a singer (7)
7. Foolish Edward is beneath moron humour (9)
8. King in well known set up (6)
13. Martin Bros lay about and have ideas together (10)
15. Prisoner (backward one) takes up Greek character’s flow (9)
17. Walks like vagrants (6)
18. In French, a second city is: “beguile” (7)
19. Pasta is not available after the Italian decline (8)
20. Candidate for election held in guano mine elevator (7)
24. Report a loud noise (4)



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