

The Village Herald

Your Church & Community Magazine

APRIL 2026

Thursday 2nd April	Maundy Thursday Holy Communion, Foot Washing, Stripping Altar and Vigil
Friday 3rd April	Good Friday 7pm A Shared Service of Quiet Reflection at Handsacre Methodist Church
Saturday 4th April	Easter Eve 8pm A Shared Service of Light with fire and Easter Vigil at St John the Baptist Church
Sunday 5th April	Easter Sunday 10.30am Holy Communion
Wednesday 8th April	5pm Prayer and Praise
Sunday 12th April	First Sunday after Easter 10.30am Morning Worship
Sunday 19th April	Second Sunday after Easter 10.30am Holy Communion
Sunday 26th April	Third Sunday after Easter 10.30am Morning Worship



**Church building open
daily from 9am until 6pm.
Thank you for your
support.**

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Our Rector writes

As I write my introduction for April's issue, a new war involving us all in some way is deeply troubling. Whenever nations choose violence, it is ordinary families both here and abroad who feel fear, grief and uncertainty.

As Christians, we do not place our hope in military strength or political leaders. Our hope is in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. He reminds us, "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*" Even when the world seems unstable, God remains faithful.

And this month we remember something even deeper than the headlines. At Easter, we celebrate that suffering and death did not have the final word. The cross seemed like defeat; the empty tomb revealed victory. The risen Christ steps into fearful rooms and says, "*Peace be with you.*" That Easter greeting still speaks into anxious hearts today.

How can we stay positive? Not by ignoring suffering, but by responding with prayer, compassion and steady faith. We pray for civilians caught in danger, for wisdom and restraint among leaders, and for a swift end to violence. We support relief efforts where we can. We speak graciously, refusing hatred or despair.

Easter hope is not wishful thinking. It is the quiet, stubborn confidence that light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. Because Christ is risen, love is stronger than hatred, peace stronger than war, and life stronger than death.

History shows that wars come and go, but Christ's love endures forever. In anxious times, the Church can be a calm and hopeful presence, trusting that God holds this troubled world in His hands and calls us to reflect His peace in our homes and community - no matter what the world throws our way.

Every Blessing to you all this Easter

Cath.

Rev'd Cath Leighton

Team Rector.

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Village website: www.armitagewithhandsacre.co.uk

The Church Room

St John the Baptist church building is open daily but if you require access to the church room please let Chris Rogers know on 07552 215087.

St John the Baptist's Spring Rhubarb Crumble

April at St John the Baptist brings that gentle promise of spring. The churchyard brightens, the daffodils stand faithfully on duty, and in gardens across Armitage and Handsacre the rhubarb is rising again - bold, pink and determined. So here is a pudding just right for April: simple, comforting and guaranteed to disappear faster than the biscuits after coffee in the church room.

Ingredients

For the fruit

500g fresh rhubarb, chopped

100g caster sugar

One tbs water.

For the crumble topping

200g plain flour

100g butter

85g soft brown sugar

A handful of oats (optional, but full of character - like our congregation)

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan). While you're at it, put the kettle on. It feels proper.
2. Gently warm the rhubarb, sugar and water in a saucepan for five to ten minutes until just softened.
3. Spoon into an ovenproof dish.
4. Rub the butter into the flour until it resembles breadcrumbs. This is wonderfully therapeutic.
5. Stir in the sugar and oats, then sprinkle generously over the fruit.
6. Bake for 35 - 40 minutes until golden and bubbling like conversation in the church room.

To Serve.

Best warmed with custard, cream, or both (we are, after all, people of generosity).

A Small Blessing

May your crumble be golden,
Your custard warm,
Your kettle full,
And now thank the Lord.
Amen.

Tessa Riley

Recent Baptisms, Weddings & Funerals at St John the Baptist

6th March	Interment of Ashes of Cyril Aubrey Parker of Uttoxeter Road Interment of Ashes of Alan James Brindley of Yew Tree Close, Norton Canes
12th March	Funeral of Sandra Critchley of Fair View
13th March	Funeral of Graeme Adams of Pinfold Drive
20th March	Funeral of Maureen Cycles of Moat Way Funeral of Stefan Mark Preston of Proctors Road



Handsacre Methodist Church

APRIL 2026

We meet for worship each Sunday morning from 9.30 to 10.30.

Upcoming services:

Good Friday 3rd April 7pm

A quiet service of reflection, shared with St. John the Baptist, Armitage

Easter Sunday 5th April 9.30am

A lively act of worship to celebrate Jesus's resurrection. Breakfast to include hot drinks, eggs, pancakes, croissants and pastries. Easter crafts and egg hunt.

12th April No service

19th April Alan Maguire

26th April Rev'd Liz Dunning, Holy Communion.

The Vine Café and Community Space

The Vine Café and Community Space at Handsacre Methodist Church is open from 9.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. We serve a wide range of coffees, teas, and hot chocolate, as well as homemade cakes, other sweet treats, toasted tea cakes, omelettes, beans on toast, jam on toast and toasties. There is no set charge, but donations can be made. Afternoon teas are bookable on request.

You are welcome to stay as long as you like - we have books, magazines, colouring, board games and jigsaws for you to enjoy.

We also have:

Chapel Lambs, a family play group, Mondays from 9.30am till 12pm.

The Hangout, a group for children in school years six to eight with food, chat, games and craft, Mondays 3.30pm to 5pm.

Games Night, usually first Monday evening of the month from 7.30pm. A great opportunity to try a wide range of board and card games and make new friends. 13th April from 7.30pm.

Craft & Chat, Thursdays. Drop in between 1.30pm and 4pm.

Saturday breakfast, full English, breakfast rolls, vegetarian and vegan options - 25th April from 9.30am to 12pm.

Please see our website: handsacremethodist.org.uk or our Facebook page at The Vine Cafe and Community Space. Do like and follow for all the latest information.



Armitage with Handsacre

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Do you need help to get to and from hospital or surgery appointments?

Our volunteer drivers can help.

Telephone: 01543 547507

or email

info@communitytransport.armitagewithhandsacre.org
for more information. Nominal charges apply.

We are grateful for three more volunteer drivers to get people to their medical appointments. Thank you Tammy, John and Stephen.

If you have need for transport to appointments phone 01543 547507



MEETING POINT is a community group of activities open to all residents of Armitage with Handsacre. Disabled people can be transported door to door. All welcome.

01543 491704 or 07890205575

email: gifford_foote@hotmail.co.uk

TUESDAYS 10am - 11.45am - Drop in to Handsacre Methodist room - the Vine Café. Meet friends over a cuppa and join in with activities and an interesting half hour.

7th April: Allan Tranter - How our District Council copes with homeless people.

14th April: Bring readings of interest

21st April: Craft with Diane

28th April: Music /activity

THURSDAYS 1pm - 3pm - Join the Knit and Natter group at St John the Baptist parish church room. They raise funds for a hospice etc.

FRIDAYS at the Vine - 10am - 12pm ART GROUP. Currently NO VACANCIES

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUPPORTED OUR BRING AND BUYS FOR MERCY SHIPS - £1121.36 WAS RAISED



OUR LITTLE PANTO -

Alice in Wonderland raised more laughter and fun.

Alice - Pauline

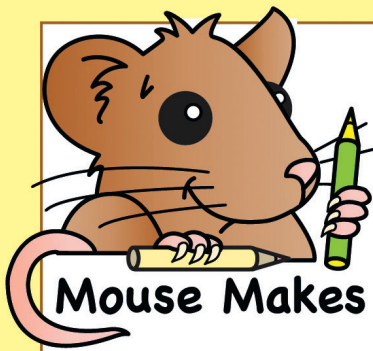
White Rabbit - Veronica

Mad Hatter - Jasmyn

Dormouse - Jill

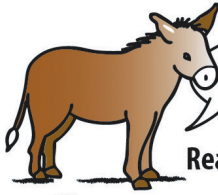
Cheshire Cat - Elen

Tweedledum & Tweedledee - Gifford



Mouse Makes

EASTER WITNESS - I WAS THERE



I carried Jesus into Jerusalem

Read Matthew 21:1-11



I handed Jesus over to be crucified

Read Matthew 27:11-26



I nailed Jesus to the cross

Read Mark 15:16-32



We watched Jesus die

Read Mark 15:33-41



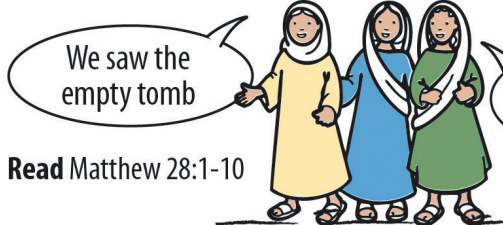
I laid his body in my tomb

Read Mark 15:42-47



I guarded the tomb

Read Matthew 27:62-66



We saw the empty tomb

Read Matthew 28:1-10

and spoke to the angel



Jesus is alive!
He ate a meal with me!

Read Luke 24:13-35

G O O D N E W S
 O H O S A N N A
 D E A T H Q B V
 V N C O E E U I
 U A H N A A R O
 M I R E V S Y U
 A L I V E T D R
 R I S E N E O K
 Y O T H O R N S
 P A L M S Q K A
 R P I L A T E N
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 O C J E S U S L
 S T O M B V D Y
 S R Y E M P T Y

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 HOSANNA • PILATE • THORNS
 CRUCIFY • NAIL • CROSS
 QUAKE • DEATH • BURY
 TOMB • STONE • EMPTY
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**We thank the following
businesses and individuals
for their support in joining
our Angel initiative.**

Business Angels

AK Feeds, N.J & E.T Coles Butchers & Bakery.

Individual Angels

Barry Liddle, Frank Luton, Ann Hyden, Ann Samways. Sing For Joy (Lynne Tandy).

It's very early days and we look forward to more of the businesses and folks of Armitage with Handsacre joining the Angel club. Let's help our church and community magazine reach new heights.



CHURCH MICE

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH,
Church Lane, Armitage**

Wednesdays 10.30 – 11.30am
Church Room open from 10am

A free activity for 0-4yr olds (with their carers) during school term time.

Refreshments, stories, songs, play & crafts with a Christian theme.

Donations of £1 per family welcomed

Quiz Congratulations



We congratulate our quizzers who won the monthly quiz at Longdon Club (this is the sublime to the ridiculous as the group managed last position last time out) our team was Chris Rogers (Church Warden) and his daughter Heidi, Assistant Wardens Jeff Judge and Barry Liddle.

The unexpected cash prize being held up by Barry will be donated to St John The Baptist Church Armitage with Handsacre.

Important Churchyard Notice from the Rector...

Thank you so much for all who have cleared away Christmas and other items from the grass around your loved ones graves. Your help with this is much appreciated.

Unfortunately, there are still a growing number of extra items in the grass around and on headstones and memorial plaques, and for some over whole graves.

Just a reminder to the community, that it is only the headstone or memorial plaque that family members own, and only flowers are permissible on these.

The land itself, including all grass surrounding the headstones and memorial plaques, belong to the Chancellor of the Diocese, and it lies with me as Rector with the help of the Church Council, to ensure all areas of the churchyard remain clear, clean and tidy.

We need the whole community, all your help with this.

Please remove all items in the grass as a first step, as none of these are permissible and make maintenance of the grass impossible.

Some examples of the items that need removing...

Decorative stones, lights, lamps, vases, pots, ornaments, pictures, as well as old wreaths.

Please note... extra flowers for special occasions are of course permissible for a month, but only on the headstones and memorial plaques, not in or on the grass.

Thanks so much for your help with this.

Rev'd Cath.

PS For a copy of the latest churchyard rules from the Chancellor, please contact cmaleighton@icloud.com

Armitage Cricket Club 2026 Fixtures

We welcome everyone to our friendly club.

Our club house will be open, serving hot & cold refreshments.



1st XI

18th April	Beacon CC (A)
25th April	Hammerwich CC (H)
2nd May	West Bromwich Dartmouth CC (H)
9th May	Penn CC (A)
16th May	Brewood CC (H)
23rd May	Walsall CC (A)
30th May	Wightwick & Finchfield CC (H)
6th June	Swindon CC (A)
13th June	Elford CC (A)
20th June	Beacon CC (H)
27th June	Hammerwich CC (A)
4th July	Brewood CC (A)
11th July	Walsall CC (H)
18th July	West Bromwich Dartmouth (A)
25th July	Penn CC (H)
1st August	Wednesbury CC (H)
8th August	Whitmore Reans CC (A)
15th August	Wightwick & Finchfield CC (A)
22nd August	Swindon CC (H)
29th August	Elford CC (H)
5th September	Wednesbury CC (A)
12th September	Whitmore Reans CC (H)

2nd XI

Brewood CC (A)
Cannock CC (A)
Penkridge CC (H)
Whittington CC (A)
Hammerwich CC (H)
Penkridge CC (A)
Cannock CC (H)
Wednesbury CC (H)
Brewood CC (A)
Wednesbury CC (H)
Penkridge CC (H)
Cannock CC (A)
Whittington CC (H)
Hammerwich CC (A)
Wednesbury CC (A)
Codsall CC (H)
Hammerwich CC (H)
Whittington CC (A)
Codsall CC (A)
Brewood CC (H)
Codsall CC (A)

The Tunnels

Ask almost anyone who grew up in Armitage about Hawkesyard and the first thing they mention is not the house. It is the tunnels.

Dark, cool and slightly forbidding, their stone entrances half-hidden by ivy and bramble, they have long stirred the imagination. Stories have travelled with them for generations. One tunnel, it is said, runs all the way to Lichfield. Another leads to a hidden nunnery. Some say priests once used secret passages in troubled times. Others insist there were miles of underground routes beneath the hill.

As children, few of us needed much encouragement to believe it. The air inside is damp and still. Light fades quickly behind you. Voices echo strangely. Even in summer, the temperature drops as you step inside. It is easy to see how legend took root.

But step back nearly two hundred years, and those same tunnels tell a different story.

Not Secret - Designed

In Victorian times, the tunnels were not mysterious at all. They were deliberate features of a carefully planned show garden built by unemployed miners under the direction of Josiah Spode in the late 1840s.

Rather than secret escapes, they formed cool transitions between heated glasshouses and shaded fernery. They allowed visitors to move from warmth into shadow, from tropical brilliance into green calm. What feels slightly eerie today would once have felt theatrical - a contrast in temperature and light, carefully orchestrated.

And when visitors emerged from the tunnel's cool darkness, they would have seen something extraordinary.

The Glasshouse on the Rock

Above them stood a glasshouse perched on a rocky mount, its panes catching the light like a small Crystal Palace, echoing the great Victorian fascination with glass and iron. From below it must have seemed almost magical - a greenhouse raised above the slope, glowing in the sun.

Climbing towards it, Victorian visitors from Armitage and nearby villages would have felt the air grow warmer. Inside were plants from distant continents: brilliant ixoras blazing red and orange, orchids clinging in curious shapes, palms arching high under the roof.

In a great tank floated the immense leaves of the Victoria Regia, the giant water lily whose vast leaves could carry a child and caused excitement when it flowered here in the 1850s.

For parish families accustomed to fields, hedgerows and canal banks, this was a journey far beyond Staffordshire - without ever leaving the hill.

How Legends Grow

The tropical plants are long gone - sold in 1894 after the death of Josiah Spode IV. The great boiler chimney that once powered the heat was taken down in 1964. Most of the glasshouses have gone with just 'the summer house' remaining.

But the tunnels remain.

Perhaps it is no surprise that, once their original purpose faded from memory, stories filled the space. A passage to Lichfield sounds far more romantic than a Victorian garden walkway. A hidden nunnery makes a better tale than a fernery.

Yet in their own way, the truth is just as remarkable. These were not medieval escape routes but part of one of the region's most ambitious show gardens - a place where heat, glass and imagination combined.

And perhaps that is why the legends persist. The tunnels were always meant to lead somewhere different.

Richard Ewing

www.armitageops.com

JOIN THE ANGEL PROGRAMME

Help Our Church and Community Magazine Soar!

We are delighted to announce the launch of **The Angel Programme** - a new and heartfelt initiative to support the ongoing work of our church and community magazine. This programme aims to ensure that our publication continues to reach every household, sharing stories of faith, hope, and community spirit.



Our magazine has always been a labour of love, offering inspiration, information, and connection across our parish and beyond. However, with rising costs in printing, distribution, and plans to expand our reach to even more homes, we need your help to keep this important ministry thriving.



St. John the Baptist Church, Armitage with Handsacre



HOW YOU CAN BECOME AN ANGEL

By joining The Angel Programme, you'll help cover the essential costs of producing and sharing our magazine. In gratitude for your support, we'd like to offer a small token of appreciation:

INDIVIDUALS: A contribution of **£4 a month** makes you one of our cherished Angels. As a sign of our thanks, you will receive a beautiful **Golden Angel badge** — a reminder of your kindness and commitment to our shared mission.

BUSINESSES: A contribution of **£20 a month** welcomes you as a Business Angel. In recognition, you'll receive your **Golden Angel badge** and a **quarter-page advertisement** in the magazine — available **anytime and for as many adds you require as long as your payments are up to date**. It's a wonderful way to show your community spirit while supporting local outreach.

WHY YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

Your monthly gift will go directly toward:

1. Printing and distributing the magazine to our congregation and local community
2. Supporting the expansion of our reach and facilities
3. Sustaining a vital platform for sharing local news, events, faith reflections, and encouragement
4. All Angels will be recognised in the magazine every month.

EVERY ANGEL MAKES A DIFFERENCE. TOGETHER, WE CAN ENSURE OUR MAGAZINE CONTINUES TO INSPIRE AND CONNECT PEOPLE FOR YEARS TO COME.

If you would like to become an Angel or would like more information, please contact liddedarlo@gmail.com or telephone 07922529801

Thank you for helping our light shine brighter — with your support, our community truly has wings!

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." – Hebrews 13:2