

INSPIRE

MAY 2026



The monthly magazine
for the Parish of
St John The Baptist, Frome

**The parish of Frome Selwood
in the Frome Local Ministry Group**

Vicar	Rev. Seamus Hargrave rev.seamushargrave@stjohnsfrome.com 01373 433933
Reader	Janet Caudwell 01373 461176
Reader	Rosemary McCormick 01373 451055
Group Clergy	Revd Liz Dudley (CC/SM) 01373 473249 Revd Ian Snares (HT) 01373 462586
Administrator	Karolyn Curle 01373 462325 Email: admin@stjohnsfrome.com
Safeguarding officer	Steve Smith 01373 454083 / 07548 250805 Email: smith.steve.71@icloud.com
Churchwardens	Neil McCormick 01373 451055 Sky Dale 07464 603571
Lay chair	Peter Connew 01373 474158
PCC Secretary	Angela Pater Email: pccsec@stjohnsfrome.com
PCC Treasurer	Christine Holland 01373 461604
Choir Leader	Rosemary McCormick 01373 451055
Sacristy Team	Margaret Veakins 01373 473031
Tower Captain	Matthew Higby 07971 441042
Flowers	Elaine Gilbert 01373 466072

May 2026

VIVALDI'S TRUMPETS

SENSATIONAL TRUMPETS
AND BAROQUE STRINGS



ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, FROME
8TH MAY 2026 7.30PM



www.breathe-music.co.uk



Tickets £20 standard; £25 upfront; £10 student
Available from <https://www.breathe-music.co.uk/concerts>
or from Mandy Crook, 07561 305888 amandacrook@blueyonder.co.uk

The Vicar's view

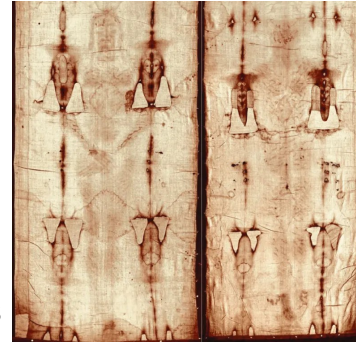
Good people of Frome, I am speaking to you from beyond the grave – well, not the grave exactly, but certainly I am speaking to you from beyond several country borders.

While I am on holiday, I will take the opportunity to visit the famous shroud of Turin, perhaps one of the most controversial relics of the western Church. My DK Guidebook clearly nails its colours to the mast as it calls the Holy Shroud “the most dubious Holy Relic of them all”. The Shroud itself is a long strip of linen with the very faint outline of a crucified man upon it. Indeed, the vagueness of this outline kept the Shroud in relative obscurity outside its immediate surroundings until the advent of photography when a curious amateur took a picture of the shroud and, while developing his plates, realised that the photo negatives of the shroud gave a nearly perfect impression of the body of the crucified Christ, whose face nearly perfectly matched what most western art has, for centuries, portrayed Christ as looking like.

This sparked a sudden global interest in the Shroud, to the point that an entire field of study – *sindonology* – has emerged. New religious devotions were developed and there was scientific interest from around the world. We are now at a stage where every decade there is ‘ground breaking’ research that claims to decisively prove or disprove the Shroud’s authenticity.

I don’t think it is a coincidence that the world’s need to disprove this shroud, or that splinter, coincides with its attempts to push God, in a much wider sense, out of the picture of everyday life: out of the arts, out of politics, out of Regent’s Park. Perhaps many are reading this with Black Adder-inspired incredulity towards the use of – and devotions to – relics. For me, just as winding sheets were once intended to keep God neatly sealed in the tomb, only for him to burst them and hallow every yard of Galilee with his risen presence, so too I think he bursts every time we try to push him out of the ordinary people, places and instruments of life. The obsession with ‘Yes, but is this the actual shroud that wrapped Jesus? Is this an actual splinter of the original cross?’ distracts from the much deeper truth, and beauty

which these relics participate in – of how perfectly, and fully, God fulfils his will and mission through human persons, through human means and instruments, how God transgressively enters into all those places we try to forbid him, and turns all those laws, sensibilities and etiquettes we use to push him away, into means for working his work and building his kingdom.



That our God, our Faith, is something firmly rooted in the events, materials and history of the world is a call to each of us to stop pushing God into the ether, to abstract and intellectualise, limiting him only to a cognitive hypothesis. To do so is to wrap God again in a winding sheet, safely contained in the marble white tomb of the human skull. God is more than sentiment and philosophy. The Romans, the Medievals, the cross and the feeding trough, these are all people, places and times uniquely touched by God, and we can look at these ordinary and mundane times, objects, made vessels of divine activity and saintly ministry, as covenants, as wonders for how ‘God with us’ is using us, and the ordinary things around us, to work extraordinary miracles and feats. When I look on the Holy Shroud, I hope I will be less preoccupied with trying to find proof or deceit, and more amazed that 2000 years ago something as ordinary as a piece of cloth actually touched God on earth and became a proof of his transforming the world! I hope that I will be encouraged that throughout the world, there is bone, wood, metal and cloth that was used to work God’s work, to sustain Christ’s life, to carry on the Gospel, and that equally ordinary things can still, today, be given that immense privilege and blessing, because God is a fact, a mover, a real presence in the world today, making the ordinary extraordinary, the base and secular, holy. Just as a 2000 year old burial shroud contained the living God, so too, today, there are ordinary, empty places, objects and people who can contain our God’s presence, can perform our God’s work, and through this our world can be transformed.

Rev Seamus Hargrave

Lent, Holy Week and Easter

‘Thank you to everyone who contributed to our services during a busy eight days. Thank you to our various teams – sacristy, servers, musicians, lesson readers, flower arrangers, worship leaders –all of whom dedicated many hours to ensuring that this was a really memorable commemoration.’



Palm Sunday procession

This is the notice I wrote for the pew sheet for the week following Easter Day. I hope that everyone felt properly thanked in these few words, but I think that a little more detail is needed for this piece.

‘Everyone’ really includes our loyal congregation who attended so many extra services in Holy Week, and in the following Easter week. Rosemary and I had dubbed it ‘Bring your bed to St John’s week’, but the loyalty and stamina of so many people is worth celebrating.

First, the veils over the statues. Now I know there were questions about their appearance, but we should record our thanks to the noble members of the Craft and Conversation group who stitched the veils and put them over the statues in the Lady Chapel. I didn’t witness whoever put them over the Rood Screen figures—I’m always a little queasy at the best of times whenever I see anyone up there. But thank you all.

The Sacristy team always work overtime in this season—so many changes of altar frontals, vestments, banners and candles take place over a few days so that we can all appreciate the wondrous burst of colour and light on Easter Day. It is meticulous, painstaking work. Thank you all.

For the servers, Holy Week and Easter is particularly exhausting and, occasionally, dangerous– the combination of the Easter Fire and Storm Dave on Holy Saturday in the forecourt was particularly challenging. It was so encouraging to observe everything being conducted with quiet efficiency. Thank you all.

The musicians as always, had so many things to do, including providing many of the speaking parts in the dramatised passion on Palm Sunday. The Tenebrae service in the chancel with its slowly extinguished candles was accompanied by beautiful music. The simple service of Compline at the end of the Watch on Maundy Thursday was incredibly moving. And it was wonderful to hear the Alleluias ringing round the church at the beginning of the Easter Day service. Thank you all.

In Holy Week everyone becomes a lesson reader! There are so many services when extra readings are needed. Special, grateful thanks to those who may have suddenly found themselves presented with a reading. But thank you, too, to those who signed up and committed to reading as they do, often just once a year. It was pleasing at the Stations of the Cross service to welcome some readers from the Zoom service, others whose voices we rarely hear, together with the usual reliable lesson readers – all fourteen of them! There were similar



The Easter fire
Photo Tony Hodges

quite long, sometimes unfamiliar readings at the Tenebrae, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday service. Thank you all.

Easter is God's gift to flower arrangers—all those daffodils and tulips this year were amazing. I am always intrigued by the extra decorations: the two wooden crosses are given a wondrous splash of colour. The addition of candles among the nave displays also brought everything alive. Those who glance idly at those arrangements and think the church looks nice should perhaps reflect on the long hours spent on Holy Saturday perfecting everything. Something extra this year was the decoration of the Ken Chapel altar over which the gardening group laboured for a long time. It served as the Garden of Gethsemane during the Watch and then became the Garden of Repose before featuring the resurrection figures on Easter Day. Thank you all.

My brief pew sheet notice did mention the dedication of 'many hours' during this busy few days. That was certainly true of what I called 'worship leaders'—aka Seamus, Rosemary and me. I lost track of the emergency meetings Rosemary and I had in La Strada in an effort to keep track of the services for which we were responsible. But Seamus of course had so many more, not only during Holy Week but in the week following. The enthusiastic response of so many who came through our open doors, or watched fearfully in the forecourt, made this really memorable commemoration all worthwhile.

So, thank you all.

Janet Caudwell

As has become our custom, those of us who had been closely involved in planning our services held a review meeting (unkindly called an autopsy in the email messages) in the days following Easter. While we have received some very positive feedback from people who appreciated the way our services marked the key events of Holy Week, we are also aware that there are others who struggled with the length and timings of some of the services, and we will be looking carefully at this for next year.



Weekday services at St John's

If you look at our brilliantly re-vamped parish website www.stjohnsfrome.com (thank you, Jen – I have forgiven you for luring me into La Strada and plying me with coffee in order to photograph me), you will find a section on regular services which perhaps needs a little amplification.

Now I realise that not everyone has the time or opportunity to come to weekday services, but at each service there does seem to be a significant number of worshippers who gather for quiet, simple services.

The week begins with Morning Prayer at 8.45am in the Ken Chapel. We say prayers together and read the psalms. We also read aloud the prayers that have been written in the book placed in the Francis Chapel.

During the week, if there is a Saint's day, there will be a service of Holy Communion, usually around midday. This was particularly welcomed in the week following Christmas Day, when each day is a holy day.

The Friday Eucharist at 12.30pm is clearly a special time for a number of loyal members of the congregation some of whom read the lesson and lead the responsorial psalm.

The Saturday Vigil Eucharist is a service which some may not have noticed, but it is held at 5.00pm and includes all the readings and the sermon that will be heard at the same service on Sunday morning. People who go to this service may not be able to attend Communion on the following day (I go to this service if I am taking a non-Eucharistic service on the following morning) or may choose to attend a simpler, shorter service than the Choral Eucharist.

Rather appropriately, we quote from George Herbert's great hymn on the back of our service books:

'Seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee.'

Janet Caudwell

Whatever your task, work heartily Col 3: 23



Traditionally during Holy Week, a Chrism Eucharist is celebrated at cathedrals across the country. During this service the holy oils that are used for baptisms, and anointing the sick, are blessed and distributed to the clergy, and all ordained and licensed ministers are invited to reaffirm their vows.

I went to this service for the first time this year, and I found it to be an inspiring gathering of both clergy and laity from across the diocese. One particularly moving part of the service was when the Bishop recognised and prayed for all the many and diverse groups of people who serve the church, from bishops to churchwardens, and he invited them all in turn to stand for a blessing. By including vergers, lesson readers, bell ringers, flower arrangers, church administrators and 'everyone who has a role within their own church – the unsung heroes', the entire congregation stood together, as Bishop Michael prayed.

We have many unsung heroes at St John's, but we are always keen to invite more people to join their ranks, and as we approach our annual APCM it is perhaps time to take another look at the sort of things that happen, often behind the scenes, but which are crucial to the smooth running of the church. If you regularly attend Sunday morning worship, you will see some of them in action: the sidespeople/welcomers, the servers and chalice assistants, the sound-desk operators, the musicians and flower arrangers, and the all-important coffee-makers, but there are others whose work is less visible – the sacristy team, the worship and pastoral teams, the administrator and the fundraisers.

On 10th May, after the morning service, there will be an opportunity to look behind the scenes; to meet some of the people who take on these tasks and find out what they involve – how much time is involved, whether any special training is needed – and there are likely to be further magazine articles as we widen our view to many of the other things that happen in church – the different social groups that meet, the areas of the church that have been designated for particular use, such as the hospitality area, the prayer corner and the cosy corner, all of which have to be regularly maintained and monitored. After the 10am service on Sunday 17th May we will have our Annual Parochial Church Meeting and Annual Meeting of Parishioners (APCM) – a statutory meeting to elect PCC members and churchwardens, as well as being an opportunity for the ‘voice from the pews’ to be heard.

The PCC (Parochial Church Council) is the official body that oversees the management of the church and its charitable interests. As such there are certain rules that have to be observed governing the number of members and their roles within the church community.

Some facts about PCC membership:

- PCC members should be:
 - at least sixteen years of age
 - actual communicants;
 - on the Electoral Roll of this Parish for at least six months
- A PCC member would expect to serve for 3 years, but they can then be re-elected.
- Every PCC member is also a charity trustee with responsibility for the financial control, care, and maintenance of church buildings and property.
- Full PCC meetings are currently held every 2 months.
- Clergy, Readers and churchwardens are automatically part of the PCC, with other members being elected from the church membership.
- Some PCC members (but not all) have specific roles such as:
Lay Chair; Treasurer; PCC secretary; Safeguarding officer;
Deanery Representative; Health and Safety Officer

On Sunday 17th May there will be opportunities for new PCC members to be elected. If you think you might be interested, do talk to one of the existing members: Angela, Seamus, Sky or Neil.

Even if you don't feel called to join the PCC, do come to the meeting and join the conversation.

Next month I will take another in-depth look at "unsung heroes" of our community – Could you become one of them?

Rosemary McCormick

The Coat of Hopes

I want to make you a coat.

A coat to warm you. To warm you; with a sense of what to do, and of being a part of the story, with the knowledge that you are not alone, alone; a coat that will not be still, a coat to carry your voice and to comfort your uncertainty. A comforter, a carrier of sorrows, remembrances and a carrier of hopes. Stitched from the ragged past into a gentle armour against a sharp future. So you can wear the promise that we all belong together.

I had never heard of the Coat of Hopes until, in a chance encounter with Liz Dudley, I discovered it was on its way to Frome as part of a pilgrimage which has already seen it travel the length and breadth of Britain.

So what is the Coat of Hopes? Back in 2021, when we were all still very much under the shadow of Covid, world leaders met in Glasgow for the COP 26 conference – the United Nations 26th Climate Change Conference. The gathering became an opportunity for many groups to gather and protest their concerns about the environment and climate change, and very visible amongst the crowd was the Coat of Hopes. The Coat began as a community project in Lewes, Sussex, and was devised by artist Barbara Keal, whose response to the global threat of climate change was to create a visible and wearable 'coat', based on a blanket, because a blanket can be a comforter in times of trouble. The community were invited to sew blanket patches to express their personal responses to the issues surrounding climate change, and so the Coat has evolved and grown. In the first year the Coat was worn

by hundreds of people as it made its first pilgrimage from Newhaven to Glasgow – a distance of 900 km – and since then it has continued to travel around the country, always being worn by volunteers. When it



arrived at Christ Church I was given the chance to put it on briefly, which was a moving experience. Not only is the Coat itself quite heavy but one also feels the burden of all the hopes and prayers that are woven into it.

For more information about the Coat I would encourage you to visit the dedicated website <https://www.coatofhopes.uk/story>, and if you want to see it during its stay in Frome, it can be viewed at Christ Church on Wednesdays and Saturdays, when the church is open and stewarded. It will be there until 4th May when it will continue its journey towards Land's End - next stop Edington.

Rosemary McCormick



**Christian Aid week
10 to 16 May**

Please support generously!

There will be donation envelopes in church on 11 and 17 May; the 'lolly trolley' will be in place too, and donations made be made online at <https://caw.christianaid.org.uk>

- St John's will be responsible for collecting in the precinct on Saturday 16 May.
- Trio Con Brio (Paul Feldwick, piano, Carmen Tunney violin and Cully Wilcoxon, cello) will perform a concert of Haydn and Schumann piano trios in aid of Christian Aid on Saturday 16 May at 3pm at Christ Church, with tea and cakes in the interval.

What a wonderful world ...

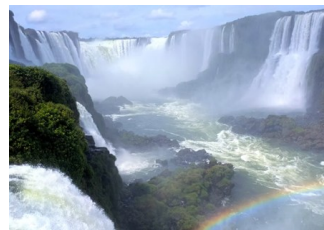
This year, our Frome Festival flower displays will be looking at the 'Wonders of Creation', based on the six days of Creation in Genesis – a look beyond the shocking events of this year and on to the natural wonders around us – places and things that are awe-inspiring, that stop us in our tracks, that make us gasp in wonder at the sight or sound of them ...

There will be nine stations:

1. Light and the beginning of time
2. Sky and atmosphere (eg Aurora borealis/ australis; rainbows)
3. Land – underground and overground (eg limestone and volcanic caverns; troglodyte villages; Himalayas)
4. Water – fresh and salt water (eg waterfalls; coral reefs)
5. Vegetation (eg Amazon rainforest; desert and alpine flora)
6. Solar System (eg total solar eclipse; the Milky Way)
7. Animals of the sea and sky (eg loggerhead turtles, Arctic terns)
8. Land animals (eg duckbill platypus, migrating wildebeest)
9. Humans (eg St Francis of Assisi; ancient and modern man-made wonders)



Aven Armand, France



Iguazu Falls, Argentina/Brazil



Meteora Monasteries, Greece

I'd like to put by each station a sheet of images of our congregation's 'wonders'. Some examples are given in the list above, but I'd like lots more – and not necessarily the obvious ones such as Niagara.

So, help please! Can you send me your nominations (and pictures if you have them) for 'wonders' that capture the staggering beauty, immensity and diversity of our 'strange and exotic planet'.

Many thanks, Elaine Gilbert elainegilburt@live.co.uk

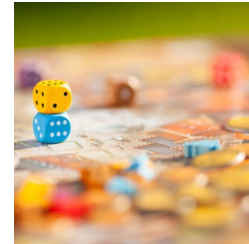
'Isaiah then and now' study group
Thursday 30 Apr and all Thursdays in May
7pm in church

The course is led by Mark Golder, and each of the weekly sessions lasts about an hour. Everyone is very welcome.



Board Game and Pizza Party
Wednesday 13th May, 7pm
in the Bennett Centre

For those new to St John's and looking to make contacts and socialise, please join us for a night of free pizza and board games in the Bennett Centre Cloisters. Please be aware that the vicar is always the Monopoly dog!



Electoral Roll

Everyone who is baptised and either lives in the parish or is a member of our congregation can apply to be on the Electoral Roll, which is our electorate for elections for members of the Parochial Church Council. If you are a regular at St John's you are encouraged to be on the Electoral Roll. See Neil McCormick if you are interested.

Annual meetings

The Annual Meeting of Parishioners (to elect the two Churchwardens) and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) will be held in Church on **Sunday 17 May at 11.30am.**

The APCM is a chance to discuss the accounts and annual report for 2025. There will also be elections to two Deanery Synod places and to several vacancies on the PCC. Please see Seamus, Angela Pater (secretary), or a churchwarden for an informal chat if you are interested.



Hilary Daniel

Hilary Daniel, that great embodiment of Frome spirit, has died. I expect at his funeral we shall hear of the many different aspects of Frome in which he has had great influence, but I knew him best when he was wearing his blue scarf as a Reader. He was always very supportive of me as I became a Reader, and was a loyal supporter of Reader events: the annual Reader day in the Cathedral

and local gatherings of Readers.

I remember him driving me to a Reader event at Taunton racecourse (yes really!). It was a hilarious journey (literally) as he regaled me with many of his stories as we rattled around a bewildering system of country roads which Hilary, of course, knew well.

I can also remember a fundraising event in the Bennet Centre many years ago, when Hilary's great talent as raconteur and actor ensured that he was top of the bill!

Until the pandemic he was in great demand, taking services not only in the Frome Deanery, where there is always a need for someone to take Morning Service or funerals, but across the whole Diocese – I have a friend who lives on the other side of Wells who relied on Hilary taking his BCP Mattins services ...

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Janet Caudwell

Well dressing 2026

The Blessing of St Aldhelm's Spring

(at the bottom of the Via Crucis steps)

will take place on

Saturday 23rd May

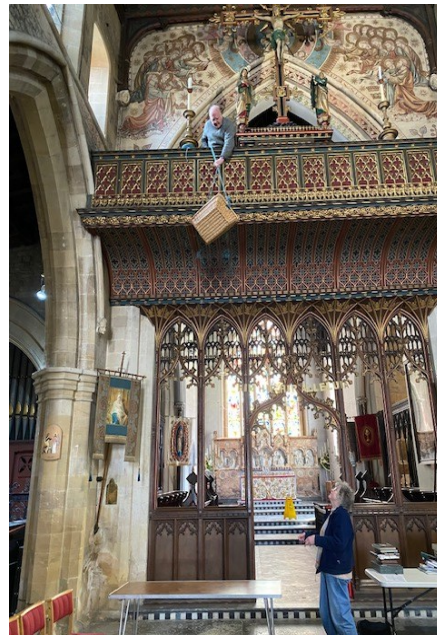
at 9.30am

Do join us!



Some of those 'unsung heroes' at work (see pp 8-10)

One Saturday morning in April the McCormicks were hard at work removing boxes of archives from the Rood Screen using an ingenious system of ropes and a laundry basket.



Meanwhile Pete, Matt, Alasdair and Tony were also hard at work in the forecourt installing railings under the Wyattville Screen ... when they had this visitor – any suggestions on a suitable caption?



God so loved the world

On Easter morning I opened my email to find a beautiful Jacquie Lawson card of Easter greetings, accompanied by the John Stainer anthem *God so loved the world* sung by the choir of Salisbury Cathedral (thank you Val!).

For me, Holy Week and Easter were book-ended by this beautiful anthem from Stainer's oratorio *The Crucifixion*: Rosemary included it among the words and music for our Palm Sunday evening service of reflection in St John's, where we were joined by Diane, Penny and Josie, stalwart supporters of the Frome Area Christians Together Hospital service.

Later, during Holy Week, as the candles were snuffed and the shadows lengthened during the moving service of Tenebrae, St John's choir sang *God so loved the world*.

By a process that I still find bewildering, whereby I went with St Katharine's church when they became part of the Beckington benefice, I get two Good Fridays (and two Easter Days), and as I walked up the path to St Katharine's late in the afternoon following all our St John's services I could hear the choir rehearsing, yes, of course, *God so loved the world*. And what a choir! Diana often recruits extras to join us for this important service, and it was lovely to greet friends from different churches and what wonderful singing!

An extra bonus for me this year was that Judith, our newly licensed Reader, joined us to lead the prayers to conclude this thoughtful service.

*God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
That whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish,
But have everlasting life.*

Thank you to everyone who enhanced our worship with words and music.

Janet Caudwell

News from other churches

St Katharine's, East Woodlands

Our services on Good Friday and Easter Sunday were very well attended. It was so lovely to see three generations of some families filling our pews on the Sunday. Many thanks to Paul Eyre for playing the organ on Good Friday and to those from other choirs who enabled us to sing four part harmony anthems over the weekend. The church bells have finally been taken for repair – fingers crossed we will have them back with new ropes in the autumn.



Village Hall, East Woodlands

Fri 1st May and Fri 5th June, 7pm: Pop-up Pub.

Sat 6th June at 7pm: Line Dancing Evening with a light supper.

Tickets and further information: Sharon Rose sr210662@gmail.com.

Pam Chapman

JUSTINE HUXLEY: KINSHIP WITH NATURE

HOW CAN WE RECLAIM EARTH-FOCUSSED SPIRITUAL
PRACTICE AND COME BACK INTO RELATIONSHIP WITH A
LIVING INTELLIGENT EARTH?

23 MAY 12-5



Suggested donation £10 - includes a soup lunch

Mary's House is a new community for the spiritually curious, exploring what Christian wisdom might teach us about how to live more fully in an uncertain world.



**mary's house
community**



SERVICES at ST JOHN's – MAY 2026

Regular weekly services

Sundays

8.45am Online service via Zoom – contact admin for link & code

10.00am Choral Eucharist*
Sun 24 May—Pentecost

5.00pm Evening worship in the Lady Chapel:
(4.00pm on the 4th Sunday)
Week 1: Evening Prayer
Week 2: Benediction and Evening Prayer
Week 3: Come and Sing Evensong
Week 4: 4th @ 4.00
Week 5: Flexible Fifth

Mondays

8.45am Morning Prayer in the Ken Chapel *
*Mon 25th St Aldhelm

Fridays

12.30pm Lunchtime Eucharist in the Lady Chapel*
*Fri 8th Julian of Norwich

Saturdays

5.00pm Evening Eucharist in the Lady Chapel

Additional services in May

Tue 12: 12/30pm Eucharist:
St Pancras

Thu 21: 12.30pm Eucharist:
St Helena

Thu 14: 8.45am Mattins:
Ascension Day

Sat 23: 9.30am Well Blessing

Thu 14: 7pm Eucharist:
Ascension Day

Mon 25: 12.30pm Eucharist:
St Aldhelm

Fri 15 to-Fri 22: 5pm Novena to the
Holy Ghost

Wed 27: 12.30pm Eucharist:
St Augustine

DIARY DATES – MAY 2026

May

Sat	2	9am	United Prayer at St John's
Sun	3	11.15am-2pm	Café & Mini-Market
Wed	6	6.30pm	<i>Inspired to Read</i> Book Club
Thu	7	7pm	Isaiah study group
Fri	8	7.30pm	'Vivaldi's Trumpets', Bristol Ensemble at St John's
Sun	10	11.30am	Find out about volunteer roles at SJ see p9
Sun 10 to Sat 16			Christian Aid Week
Wed	13	7pm	Boardgame / Pizza Party, Bennett Centre—see p13
Thu	14	2pm	Craft and Conversation
		7pm	Isaiah study group
Sat	16		SJ collecting for Christian Aid in Westway
		3pm	Trio Con Brio (CC) see p 11
Sun	17	11.30am	Annual meetings (see p 9 and p13)
Tues	19	10am	Worship Committee meeting
Thu	21	7pm	Isaiah study group
Sat	23	9.30am	Well Blessing Service
		12 noon-5pm	Kinship with Nature (Mary's House) see p 17
Tues	26	11am	Julian Meeting
Thu	28	2pm	Craft and Conversation
		7pm	Isaiah study group
Fri	29	2pm	Hospital Service

June

Mon	1		Cinema outing (SJ women's group)
Wed	3	6.30pm	<i>Inspired to Read</i> Book Club?
Sat	6	9am	United Prayer at St John's
Sun	7	11.15am-2pm	Café & Mini Market

Churches rescued from floods, sand or developers

This month we are looking at four churches that have been rescued or moved so their architecture can still be enjoyed today. Changes in their surroundings meant that by modern days they were in the wrong place for worship and in danger of being demolished; in each case, sufficient local people were unhappy about their fate, raised enough money and created enough publicity to ensure a way was devised to keep them alive, although in a very different environment.

St Matthews Church, Normanton, was built for the Earl of Ancaster on the foundations of a building dating back to the 14th century. It was later rebuilt in a classical style in the 18th century. In 1920 the family relocated, and the church was abandoned until Rutland Water reservoir was created in the 1970s.



Locals protested against the church being demolished, and it was decided that it would be only partially submerged underwater. The lower level of the deconsecrated church was filled with rubble and concrete and a new floor was created. A causeway and an embankment were created to make the building accessible from the shore of Rutland Water. The outcome was one of the most iconic churches in the UK, seemingly floating above the waterline. The church now serves as a beautiful and unique wedding venue in Rutland. The dramatic classical features of the building in combination with the stunning views of Rutland Water make for a memorable wedding setting. It is also open for tourists.

St Enodoc's church, Trebetherick, was rescued from the sand dunes of the Estuary of the River Camel in Cornwall. Over many years, wind-driven sand had formed sand dunes that were almost level with the roof on two sides. From the sixteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century, the church was virtually buried by these dunes.



To maintain the tithes required by the church, it needed to host one service a year, so the vicar and parishioners are reputed to have clambered over the dunes, made a hole in the roof and let themselves down into the church for a service. Technical developments in Victorian times meant the sand dunes were stabilised, and by 1864 the sand had been removed and the church was open for services again. It is now surrounded by the St Enodoc Golf Club. It was the favourite church of John Betjeman, who wrote about his childhood memories:

*Blessed be St Enodoc, blessed be the wave,
Blessed be the springy turf, we pray, we pray to thee,
Ask for our children all the happy days you gave,
To Ralph, Vasey, Alistair, Biddy, John and me”*

The poet had a holiday home in nearby Trebetherick and was buried in the churchyard in 1984.

St Teilo's church, Glamorgan, has been taken down from its original setting and re-erected in the Museum of Welsh Life in St Fagans, near Cardiff, a village where my grandfather was brought up. As the church had existed for many hundreds of years, the internal decoration of the walls had undergone many changes. For its



reconstruction, it has been refurbished as it may have appeared about the year 1530, with all the elements associated with a late medieval Catholic church, including a rood screen and loft, altars, carvings and brightly coloured paintings on all the walls.

The church, originally built during the 12th century on the site of an earlier pre-Norman church, originally stood close to the banks of the river Llwchwr outside Pontarddulais, near Swansea. As it became isolated from its congregation with access only by taking a boat up the river, the church was abandoned in 1970. It was then moved stone by stone to the Museum, where it can be visited daily. The oldest parts of the present structure are the nave and chancel. During

the 14th and 15th centuries, chapels and an extension were built onto the chancel. The roof timbers are of typical early 15th century design of arch-braced collar-beams. In 1810 the interior was furnished with box pews and a three-decker pulpit. Most of the stone mullioned windows appear to have been blocked up at this time, and were replaced by new 'Georgian gothic' lancet shaped windows. One original two light stone mullioned window survived in the south aisle. The oldest surviving feature of the church is the stone font which is believed to date from the 13th century or earlier.

All Hallows, Lombard St, in the City of London, dates back as far as

1054, was rebuilt in the 16th century and badly damaged by the Great Fire of London in 1666. It was rebuilt in 1694 by Sir Christopher Wren. In the 1830s George Godwin noted that the church was so hemmed in by other buildings that it was difficult to find, even when looked for, and locals called it 'the invisible church'. By the



20th century there were far too many churches in the City and there was pressure from developers to demolish it. However, a group of parishioners raised enough money to be able to move much of the building and fittings to the London suburbs, where it was rebuilt as close to the original design as possible and now stands as All Hallows Church, Twickenham.

The Wren church was 84 feet long and 52 feet wide. The interior was a simple undivided space, without aisles; a gallery at the west end was supported on a single column. There were five windows on the north side, and four on the south, but the only illumination at the east end was through two small windows in the side walls of the recess housing the oak reredos, ornamented with a carved pelican and seven candlesticks. In 1880 additional lighting was provided by inserting a rectangular skylight in the ceiling. The walls were panelled with oak to the height of 9 feet.

Chris Lewis

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'Alexamenos worships his god'

This article is being written in April, the month in which we are praying for the Christians of North Korea who are persecuted for their faith. Aid to the Church in Need puts North Korea in the top rank of persecutors because up to three generations may be punished for a member reading a Bible or attending a prayer meeting. Christians are sent to political prison camps or executed, being seen as rebels against the state ideology which demands total loyalty to the Kim family.

In this country, I'm not sure we truly appreciate how fortunate we are. We might face a lack of interest in what we do, with the occasional sneer of contempt, but – for us – public expression of belief is not a matter of life or death. This made me think about one of Seamus's Friday eucharist sermons given during Lent. It concerned the earliest image of Christ Crucified. So I've decided – although Good Friday is now behind us – to consider that image and to dedicate this article to the persecuted Christians of North Korea.

The earliest Christians did not choose to create images of Christ Crucified. The representations in the Roman catacombs stress rather Christ as the Good Shepherd. The first Christians did not 'celebrate' an image which reminded them that Jesus was executed by the forces of Rome and that Jesus died the excruciatingly painful death reserved for runaway slaves, dangerous criminals and rebellious provincials. We have to wait until about AD 430 for the first Christian crucifixion images.

Jump forward to AD 1857 and excavations of the ruins of the so-called Domus Gelotiana on the Palatine Hill in Rome. This building – part of the imperial palace complex – turned out to be a paedagogium: a training school for page boys. Such boys were not aristocrats – like the ones carrying royal trains on special occasions in this country – but slave boys belonging to the familia – the household – of Caesar. The archaeologists discovered a graffito, only 33.5 by 38 cm, scratched into the plaster.

It was designed certainly to insult and possibly to get someone into deep trouble because it dates from the period AD 200-300, when Jews

and Christians (the Romans did not yet differentiate between them) were held in abhorrence as bad citizens, practising 'un-Roman' superstitions and so worthy of being shunned or even executed. For example, in AD 250 the emperor Decius launched a systematic and empire-wide persecution of Christians because they refused to accept him as their 'Lord' and would not burn incense to him as their God. The words are in Greek, a common language of the Roman Empire and used in the palace as a sign of refinement.



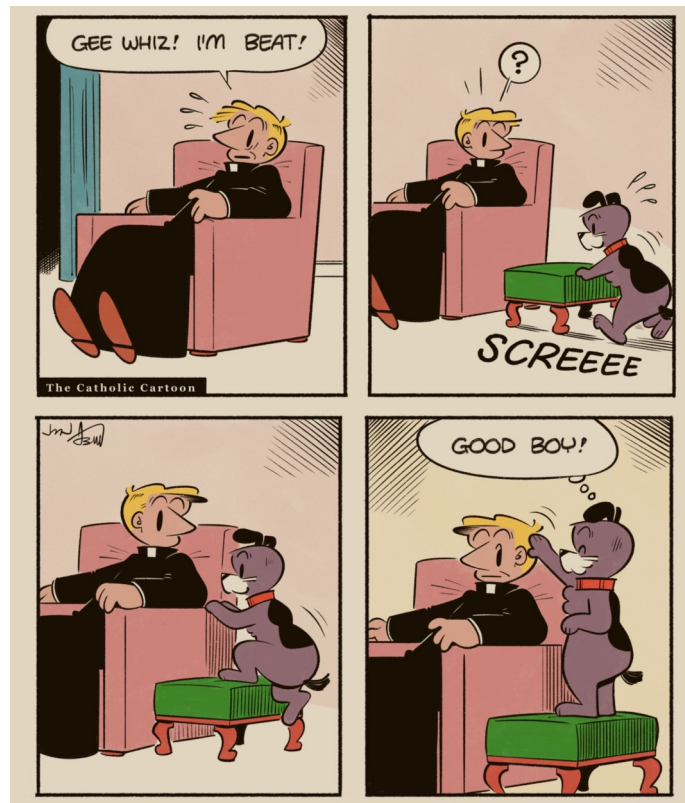
A boy is practising his Greek and taking the chance to mock a fellow page. He scratches 'Alexamenos sebete theon': 'Alexamenos worshipping [his] god'. Then Alexamenos is drawn on the left, with one hand raised in adoration. 'Alexamenos' might sound very posh – being a Greek name – but it simply means 'Helper' ... so not so much a name as a title showing his humble status as a slave. Slaves had very few rights and lived in constant fear of savage maltreatment. Alexamenos is worshipping the figure of a crucified man-ass: the body is human but the head is that of an ass. This is a bit of anti-Semitic / anti-Christian stereotyping. To show a crucified Christ is bad enough, but the addition of the head rests on centuries of xenophobia aimed at the Jews, and then by extension to the Christians who had originated in Judaea.

In the 1st century AD the Greek writer Apion had accused the Jews of worshipping an ass's head in the Jerusalem Temple. In the same century the Roman writer Tacitus repeated the rumour, saying that it was connected to a story of a herd of wild asses leading the Jews to

water in the wilderness. By AD 200 there might even be a knowledge of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on an ass on Palm Sunday. But why was the ass imagery so offensive? Simply put: the ass was the exact opposite of the horse. The horse was a symbol of strength, virility and military prowess; but the ass was considered a beast of burden, a country bumpkin animal ... and a bit dumb. So the ass became a symbol of stupidity and backwardness.

Thus a nasty piece of graffiti from 1800 years ago finds echoes in the treatment of Christian people living in North Korea today. I would like to end this month's study of 'Christian' art with a short prayer:
God of compassion, protect your people in North Korea. Give them courage, comfort and freedom. Let your justice break through. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Mark Golder



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Links in a Golden Chain 20

Mary Astell 1666–1731

In examining the list of those who have contributed to the life of the Church of England it is noticeable that the number of women is very small. It is not until the 20th century that some female figures emerge, some of whom I have noted in past issues. While the contributions of clergy, and some laymen, to religious discourse often appeared in print and thus to the record, women, excluded from ordained ministry, generally had their witness to God recorded only by Him.



One exception from the 17th century is Mary Astell. She was born in Newcastle and died in London. She has been called a 'proto-feminist' and was an author and advocate for the rights of women. Perhaps her most famous book was *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* which was published in 1694. She proposed the establishment of communities of women in retirement according to the principles of the Church of England. Her scheme was not for monastic life but was focused on academic study and intellectual activity. It never eventuated, being opposed fiercely by bishops and other clergy.

Later, writing anonymously, she published *The Christian Religion as Profess'd by a Daughter of the Church of England*. She supported the Nonjurors, and was supported in turn by Archbishop Sancroft, a friend of our Thomas Ken, and she belonged to a circle of literary and influential women. She never married and devoted her life to the education of children, especially girls, and the intellectual development of women.

On the subject of the Christian woman she wrote:

If God had not intended that women should use their reason, He would not have given them any, for he does nothing in vain. If they are to use their reason, certainly it ought to be employed about the noblest

objects, and in business of the greatest consequence, therefore, in religion. That our Godfathers and Godmothers answer'd for us at the font, was an act of charity in them, and will be a great benefit to us if we make a right use of it; but it will be our own condemnation if we are Christians merely upon this account, for that only can be imputed to a free agent which is done with understanding and choice. A Christian woman therefore must not be a child in understanding; she must serve God with understanding as well as with affection; must love Him with all her mind and soul, as well as with her heart and strength; in a word, must perform a reasonable service if she means to be acceptable to her maker.

She owned a significant collection of books, some of which survive with her annotations, and are in the library at Magdalene College Cambridge and in the British Library. There is a school named after her in Newcastle upon Tyne. She is also remembered in a street name in Bremen in Germany, Mary-Astell-Strasse.

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A man of Frome

Graham died over Easter 2026. He was born in Frome in 1947, starting off in a two-up two-down in Milk Street, lived here nearly all his life and died in his maisonette on the Stonebridge Estate. He was the one boy between an older and a younger sister. Both sisters married and moved away, but he stayed in Frome. His father worked at the Frome Iron works Singers, actually dying at work. His mother ran one of the many corner shops in the Trinity area of Frome, called Chinatown by the US soldiers billeted around Frome during WWII.

He died peacefully in his own bed, surrounded by his family and friends. refusing to be moved to a hospice. He was a good example of someone Frome no longer sees, gaining most of his employment from the factories, workshops and households of Frome, full of memories of days before the North and South housing developments: recalling a Frome with only 20,000 people but with 54 pubs and no supermarkets; where chapels and corner shops flourished; where if you were an incomer, that meant you were born in Trowbridge. He did not go away to college but served an apprenticeship here in Frome. He was one of the last people to recall a self-sufficient Frome. We shall remember him fondly.

He was not a religious man, although, like many people of his age, it was normal for his parents to take him to chapel two or three times every Sunday. He often mused, in later years, that most of the chapels have now been converted to other uses – his own becoming a bakery/ restaurant. He did not mind complete changes of use, but he was bitter about the way that Trinity Church had modernised itself recently: he felt that, although it might be warmer and more efficient as a building, the presence of God had been lost.

However, this total immersion in religion from birth to 12 years old achieved exactly the opposite effect during his teenage years. He was definitely one of the Frome lads from 1960 onwards, chasing the girls and moving from job to job, but never doing anything seriously wrong. By his early twenties he was doing an apprenticeship as a carpenter and French polisher, married with two children and living within a

quarter of a mile from where he was born. Once qualified, he worked as a French polisher, and for some time set up as an antique dealer, buying furniture from Ireland or France, and selling it in Frome. At other times he helped to renovate Longleat and Trinity Church. Most of his early friends had the same moderate success in work, but one had the luck to go into property and is now a millionaire.

Graham was a musician. His uncle was 'Acker' Bilk, the Somerset clarinettist whose 'Stranger on the Shore' became the UK's biggest selling single of 1962, spending 55 weeks in the charts and also reaching Number 1 in the USA. Graham was encouraged to play an instrument but could only afford a mouth organ, which he played with enthusiasm and success in groups that performed in towns around Frome. In particular when Michael Eavis started the first Glastonbury Festival in 1970, along with stars such as Marc Bolan and Quintessence, he invited local artists. So Graham found himself playing in the 1970 first Glastonbury Festival (£1 entry, including free milk from Eavis's Worthy Farm.) He continued to play in local pubs – his favourite was the Lamb and Fountain, close to his birthplace in Milk Street.

In his young days he was a caver, mainly in the local Mendips, discovering a number of new underground routes, and in order to share his experiences, he wrote a book about caving in the Mendips during the 1970s.

His main leisure activity was karate. He joined a local club 'for a bit of fun' in his early 20s and found he was very good at it. He found himself a natural, progressed far quicker than most and rapidly overtook his teachers. He was soon running courses himself throughout Somerset and adjacent counties. Many current inhabitants of Frome attended these classes and recall fondly his stress on discipline which benefitted them



throughout their lives and not just in the karate sphere. A former pupil (see right) says that he taught more relaxed movements, condensing the techniques to take out any non-essential movement, including over-exhalation and tension.

Even when his age forced him to cut back on personal karate activity, he continued to classify the progress of others even as late as 2025. To keep up his ability he continued to climb the karate tree and eventually attained the high international status of 6th Dan with the title of Master or *Sensei*. He was able to benefit from this when injuries forced him to retire from his main work as carpenter/French polisher/antique dealer in his late 50s.

Hoping to make a living at teaching karate, he travelled throughout East Asia, spending a good deal of time in Japan and Thailand. His high status gained him a number of high attaining students, one of whom fought for the world championship: but he was already too old to gain the success that an earlier trip to Asia might have given him.

However, his time in Thailand did gain him one great benefit, when he met and married Benchamat,

known to the English as Ben, in 2005. She is now an accepted member of the growing number of Asian ladies, on whom the care and catering industries of Frome rely. She was with him at the end, comforting his last days with a Buddhist simplicity and care, and ensuring that all his friends were able to say their farewells with an acceptance of his passing that seems less easy to attain in these days of hospices and palliative care.

Chris Lewis

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Inspired to Read
The Devil you Know

by Dr. Gwen Adshead & Eileen Horne

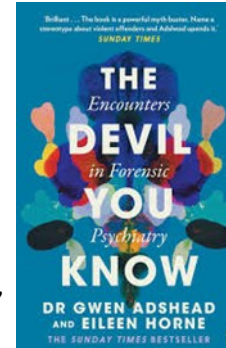
When, as a book group, we plan our reading programme for the year we try to include as wide a range of books as possible, and at least one non-fiction book. When we met at the beginning of April, we had been reading *The Devil you Know (Encounters in Forensic Psychology)*, which for many of us was a literary voyage of discovery, and those of us who made it to the end of the book agreed that it was a fascinating and thought-provoking read.

About the Author

As a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Dr Gwen Adshead has devoted her career to helping some of Britain's most troubled mental health patients, many of them confined within secure institutions such as Broadmoor. As a writer she has collaborated on several projects with American novelist and dramatist Eileen Horne, and in this book they present a selection of case studies that are accessible for the lay person while also delivering insights into the many challenges faced by both doctors and patients in this field. Dr Adshead has also been the subject of Radio interview programmes such as *Desert Island Discs* (R4) and *Private Passions* (R3) as well as delivering the Reith lectures in 2024, all of which are available (and worth listening to) on BBC Sounds.

From the back cover

Dr Gwen Adshead is one of Britain's leading forensic psychiatrists. She treats serial killers, arsonists, stalkers and other individuals who are usually labelled 'monsters'. Whatever their crimes, she listens to their stories and helps them to better understand their terrible acts of violence ... Adshead invites the reader to step with her into the treatment room to meet twelve patients, and presents a powerful case for rehabilitation over revenge, compassion over condemnation and empathy over fear.



A short extract

Helping someone work through shame and trauma, exploring the causes and consequences of their violence, can be a difficult and lengthy process. Sessions can be halting and disjointed at times. ... some people have no words to talk about their feelings or cannot grasp what is real ...

An important theme that runs throughout this book is the idea of common risk factors for violence. The act of violence has been likened to the release of a bicycle combination lock. The first two 'numbers' that align are likely to be socio-political, related to masculinity, vulnerability and poverty ... the next two factors may be specific to the perpetrator, such as substance abuse or varying kinds of childhood adversity ... the final 'number' that causes the lock to spring open and release an act of harmful cruelty, is the most intriguing.

This book could, in the hands of a less sympathetic and professional writer, have been a series of sensational stories about violent criminals, of the type that one sometimes finds in the tabloid press, but Dr Adshead treats every case sensitively and reveals almost as much about herself as she does about the patients she has treated. The reader is drawn into Adshead's world – a world that most of us are never likely to experience – where boundaries are set by high walls and locked doors: dreadful confinement inhabited by some of society's most dangerous criminals. But one doesn't have to read many pages to realise that not all inmates of high security institutions are Hannibal Lecter. Many are unfortunate members of society who have triggered the 'bicycle lock' mechanism and committed crimes for which they have been identified as dangers not only to society but also to themselves.

When choosing the book that we would be reading over Easter, we did not consciously choose one which could lead us into discussions about sin, forgiveness and redemption, and in fact we skirted round the subject of evil in favour of a discussion about the prison system and the increasing prevalence of mental illness within our society. Despite increased media coverage, mental health remains one of the most misunderstood and under-resourced areas of health care in this

country. Symptoms are often misinterpreted or never identified, while treatment is often lengthy with unpredictable outcomes. Many people are able to manage their mental health difficulties with the help of therapists and/or medication; it is still exceptional for that bicycle combination lock to trigger a violent act. Which I am sure is welcome news to anyone who has to deal with the various church combination locks on a daily basis!

The Devil you Know is not an easy read, but it is a very rewarding one, although I can't help feeling that it should perhaps be accompanied by the sort of announcement one often gets after a troubling TV programme – *If you, or anyone you know has been affected by any of the issues in this book ...*

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		Readers	Prayers	Sidespersons	Chalice
Sunday 3 May Fifth Sunday of Easter	Acts 7.55-end Psalm 31 1 Peter 2.2-10 John 14.1-14	C Harrison E Gilbert	Rev Seamus	A Barr-Sim B Essex K Gurr	A Crook
Sunday 10 May Sixth Sunday of Easter	Acts 17.22-31 Psalm 66 1 Peter 3.13-end John 14.15-21	B Essex S Smith	J Caudwell	M Smitherman J Davies	C Holland
Sunday 17 May Seventh Sunday of Easter	Acts 1.6-14 Psalm 68 1 Peter 4.12-14, 5.6-11 John 17.1-11	S Caden R McCormick	J Bruges	K Gurr M Veakins	J Davies
Sunday 24 May Pentecost	Acts 2.1-21 Psalm 104 1 Corinthians 12.3b-13 John 20.19-23	A Barr-Sim J Arnall-Culliford	R McCormick	J Bruges C Holland	A Crook
Sunday 31 May Trinity Sunday	Isaiah 40.12-17, 27-end Psalm 8 2 Corinthians 13.11-end Matthew 28.16-end	N McCormick C Holland	L Bushell	A Crook A Barr-Sim	C Holland
Sunday 7 June First Sunday of Trinity	Hosea 5.15-6.6 Psalm 50 Romans 4.13-end Matthew 9.9-13, 18-26	S Smith C Harrison	Rev Seamus	B Essex M Smitherman	A Crook
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Editors Mandy Crook 01373 467828
 Karolyn Curle 01373 462325
 Email: amandacrook@blueyonder.co.uk
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