

INSPIRE



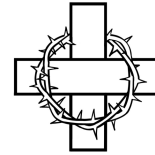
THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE
FOR THE PARISH OF
ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, FROME

APRIL 2025

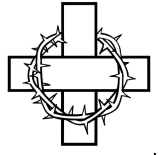
The parish of Frome Selwood
in the Frome Local Ministry Group

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Sacristy Team	Margaret Veakins
Tower Captain	Matthew Higby
Flowers	Elaine Gilbert

April 2025



**Holy Week and Easter
at St John's**



Palm Sunday 13 April

8.45am Zoom service

10am Holy Communion

5pm Benediction and evening prayer

Monday 14 April

8.45am Morning prayer

7pm Zoom Service

Tuesday 15 April

7pm Stations of the Cross

Wednesday 16 April

7pm Tenebrae service

Maundy Thursday 17 April

7pm Holy Communion service at the Bennett Centre
followed by the stripping of the altars in church

Good Friday 18 April

9am Preparation service at Via Crucis

12 noon-3pm The Three Hours

7pm *Film Jesus Christ Superstar*

EASTER DAY Sunday 20 April

8.45am Zoom service

10am Holy Communion

5pm Evening Prayer

For more details see article on page 4

The Vicar's view

I was recently sitting on a pew speaking to Warden Terry, when I glanced forward and noticed that someone had used a stone to draw a game of noughts and crosses on one of the pillars! My mind swiftly went into overdrive trying to decide which subsection of Frome society I was to hunt down and eviscerate for this vandalism. However, as my mind raced through its sub-sectional profiling, my eyes turned upwards to see the body of our crucified Lord on our rood screen, and I realised that, in some ways, far from discovering a crime to be prosecuted, I was observing yet another step in St John's witnessing to the Lenten journey, to its own conforming to the full, wounded, body of Jesus.

Each Lent we set up stations of the cross in our Church, to allow us to journey, with Jesus, in his Passion. What I am realising, however, is that in many ways, our Church itself is a station of the cross; moreover, it is a complete set of stations to the full life of Jesus. The epistles directly identify the Church (people) as the literal body of Christ, to the point that Jesus, in Acts, speaks directly of the suffering a Christian undergoes, being his own 'persecution' (Acts 9:4). If this is true of the Church (people), is it not also true of the Church (building) where these people have made their home, which has carried them, font to grave, through their life of Christian witness?

Throughout the years St John's has experienced every station in the life of Jesus. It has had Palm Sundays where it was decked with finery and lauded as a marvel; it has had abandonments in the garden, when numbers were few and its followers felt hopeless; it has had crucifixions where people have gouged its art, smashed its altars and broken its windows; it has had resurrections where people have remade and transformed it out of the broken debris of past. And in all this, St John's witnesses, in stone and glass, in scars and finery, to the one God, the single Christ, who, week on week, descends from heaven to reign from its altar and to enter our lives, our bodies, and form us more perfectly into his fullness; passion and death, resurrection and ascension.

If St John's (Building) has some share as the body of Christ, this means that we shouldn't be surprised when people wound, scar, even

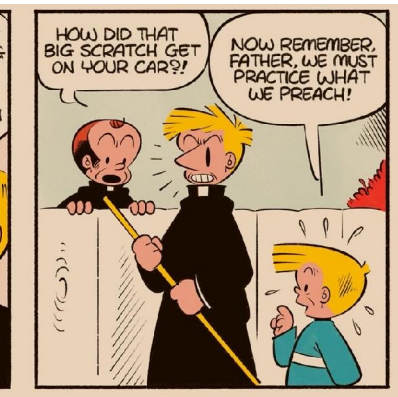
desecrate it, for Christ gave his body to violent men. Indeed, in the moments of desecration and dereliction, we can hope the most Easter teaches us is that the moments when hurt and violence are rawest are the same moments that resurrection is closest.

In moments of damage and danger, the challenge for us – far from retreating like disciples in an upper room with windows and doors locked – is how will we support St John's in its full witness to Jesus? How do we, who are being carried in the bows of the ark that is St John's, play our full part in drawing people into its safety, asking them to share our journey? If St John's is journeying towards the cross, will we respond, like St Veronica, and clean its wounded face? If it is at the last supper, will we respond as servers and chalice bearers so many may feed from our table? If it is at the resurrection, will we enhance its art and beauty, so others may marvel at, and be drawn to, the power and life exuded from it? Will we assist St John's

on its pilgrimage, so that, when Christ comes again in his full majesty, he will look upon St John's and see reflected back his own face – see in Selwood, a small corner of his own Kingdom living his reign?

Yours in Christ, Rev. Seamus Hargrave

Eds: With thanks to an American contact of Rev. Seamus who has given permission for us to use these jolly little cartoons. Look out for more next month!





Holy Week

Arrangements are in hand for Holy Week: many services are familiar, but you will not be surprised to learn that there are some changes!

On Palm Sunday we have plans to begin the service outside, with a walk from the church, at least to the Via Crucis and possibly along Cheap Street too. We hope that many of the congregation will join, even if you only get as far as the Forecourt. The service will continue inside church, with the reading of the Passion Narrative.

Our tradition of a service at 7.00pm on the first four evenings of Holy Week will continue with the now familiar pattern of a Zoom service, Stations of the Cross, Tenebrae with

Taizé and Holy Communion with foot washing.

The Zoom service on Monday will provide an opportunity for those unable to join the various services in church to reflect on the gradual unfolding of events of Holy Week.

During the Stations of the Cross on Tuesday, we will journey round the church pausing at each of the Stations, which depict events of the final hours from the appearance before Pilate to the eventual laying of Jesus's body in the tomb.

The service of Tenebrae on Wednesday is characterized by the gradual extinguishing of candles. As the shadows lengthen, we reflect on the suffering and death of Jesus.

On Maundy Thursday, the service which commemorates the Last Supper will be held in the Bennett Centre. At the end of that service we shall process into church for the stripping of the altars, and a period of silent watch in the church until ten o'clock when the vigil will end with a service of Compline.

On Good Friday, the first service of the day will be at the gate of the Via Crucis, as those who will be leading and attending many different services in the churches in our town, gather together to prepare for the day. During the Three Hours, from 12 noon to 3.00 pm, the first hour will be a time of private prayer and reflection in church with appropriate music playing. At 1.00pm pm we shall walk the Via Crucis, pausing at each station to reflect and pray. At 2.00 pm the Liturgy of Good Friday will begin. As usual people will make their own decisions about which parts of the Three Hours they choose to attend. And to conclude our marking of the most solemn day in the church's year, at 7.00pm there will be a showing of the film *Jesus Christ Superstar* in church.

On Easter Eve the usual busy activity of restoring the banners, putting out all the candles, filling the church with flowers, decorating the Lent Cross and the Easter Garden will take place and the church will then rest in quietness until Easter Day.

Meanwhile, plans are being made to join St John's server team at Sherborne Abbey for the Easter Eve Liturgy at 8:00 pm. Look out for details of transport on that evening.

As you can see, Holy Week at St John's will give us all the opportunity to walk in the steps of Jesus towards the joyfulness of Easter Day. We hope that you will accept this invitation to attend some of the most moving, thought-provoking services of the year.

Janet Caudwell

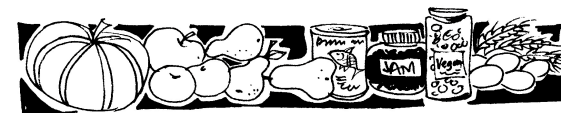
St John's Café and Mini Market

11.15am to 2pm

First Sunday of the month:

Sunday 6th April, Sunday 4th May,

Sunday 1st June





Rev. Seamus: The story so far....

Daily prayer instituted, pews removed, church rid of its encumbrances, visiting preachers of eminence...The parishioners did not in any way resist these improvements.

It's been quite a rollercoaster of a ride since Rev. Seamus arrived in Frome, but the comments above refer to the arrival of a different priest to St. John's: that fondly remembered and oft-quoted William

Bennett, vicar of Frome 1852–1886. Maybe 150 years from now a future congregation might reflect similarly on the impact of Vicar Hargrave.

So what have been the highlights so far? The bells ringing out, more services, candles and sanctuary lamps burning, the Via Crucis accessible, inspiring sermons, larger congregations and a general sense of purpose and joy around the church – to say nothing of the cake! Yes, there have been changes – we now get an extra 15 minutes in bed on a Sunday morning, the choir have been busy learning even more psalms, we have a newly refurbished cosy corner, and lots of new people are getting involved in our worship.

Behind the scenes there has been greater involvement with St John's School: the children have been learning to ring hand bells and some of them have even been able to chime the bells in church. We are hoping that they might demonstrate some of these new skills at the Mothering Sunday service on 30th March. Discussions are ongoing about new service booklets, and the 'clutter busting' team have been busy identifying areas of the church that can be tidied up and made more user-friendly for those people who visit the church in order to find a space for quiet prayer and reflection. As I write this, the new season of Lent talks has begun. I am told that the first session was very well attended – standing-room only – and that everyone enjoyed a stimulating discussion and cake!

Gone are the days of one service on a Sunday with the church

standing open but largely empty for the rest of the week, apart from the Julian Prayer and United Prayer meetings on the last Tuesday and first Saturday of each month respectively. Now there are at least four regular weekly services, and they are all beginning to attract their own dedicated congregations, Together with the daily ringing of the bells, there is a marked increase of constructive activity within the building which does seem to have the additional benefit of deterring those less welcome visitors who used to enjoy hanging out aimlessly in a dark, unattended corner.

A few words about Sunday afternoon services: If you haven't yet been able to attend one of these, I strongly recommend them:

1st Sunday: Said Evening Prayer: A quiet, reflective way to close a busy day after the mini-market.

2nd Sunday: Evening Prayer with Benediction: a candle-lit Ken Chapel for a devotional service, including hymns, canticles and the blessing of the sacrament.

3rd Sunday: Choral Evensong with the 'pop up choir': this is proving a particularly popular service and is in danger of outgrowing the Lady Chapel. It has been lovely to welcome some new singers to swell the ranks of existing choir members. We meet at 4pm to prepare the music for the service, which follows at 5pm after a short tea and cake interval! *NB in April this service will be on the 4th Sunday: 27th April, to allow us all to enjoy more family time on Easter Day.*

4th Sunday: Lay-led 'Holy Hour' – an opportunity for exploring different types of worship, and an opportunity for more people to take part in planning and leading. Janet and Rosemary would welcome any offers from people keen to become involved in these services.

5th Sunday: (when appropriate) An invitation to other churches in Frome and surrounding villages to join in an act of ecumenical worship.

So whether you are new to the Parish or have been quietly coming into the church for several years, we hope that you will find something here that calls you to find out more about us. There is always an

invitation to join in the tea/coffee & cake informal fellowship, so watch this space for news of even more ways of becoming part of the St John's family.
Rosemary McCormick

Kindness Festival 'Songs and Scones'

The Boyle Cross has been decorated with the Kindness Hat, children have been running around in their 'superhero' costumes, and there is a general air of well-being and generosity in the town – it is the Kindness Festival again, the theme this year being 'The 'F' Word – Forgiveness'.



The week was packed with events: from the Superhero Fun Run to the Grief Disco to the Kind Comedy Club, there really was something for everyone, and on Sunday afternoon St John's hosted the Songs and Scones event – four choirs and their supporters packed the church for a joyful afternoon. The singing was led by Frome Youth Choir, a Ukrainian choir, Songbirds and Utterance – four very different choirs, each with their unique repertoire and style, and the audience, sustained by tea and scones (other cakes were available), were enthusiastic in their appreciation of the performers.

When we are daily bombarded with reports of war, conflict and corruption, it is wonderful to be able to step back and celebrate acts of kindness. Masterminded by Alison Murdoch and her team at the Good Heart, this year's event has been the 4th Festival, which is beginning to be one of the main highlights of Frome's calendar. Several of the sessions have sparked conversations about difficult subjects such as grief and abuse and have given people chance to reflect on how we can spread the Kindness message more widely – Kindness is for life, not just for a week in March!

I know that they are already beginning to make plans for the 2026 festival, and would welcome any offers of help, so if it is something you would like to get involved please get in touch with Alison at the Good Heart.
Rosemary McCormick

BRISTOL ENSEMBLE
The Lark Ascending
A CONCERT BY CANDLELIGHT

09 May 2025
19:30

St John the Baptist,
Bath Street,
Frome. BA11 1PL

Come and join us in the beautiful St John the Baptist church in Frome, to enjoy a wonderful candle lit evening of English pastoralism and American lyricism. Principals from The Bristol Ensemble, plus special guest William Drakett (member of the Vicar Choral in the choir of Wells Cathedral), will delight you with this glorious programme.

St John's PCC Breathe Music BRISTOL ENSEMBLE

www.breathe-music.co.uk

Come and join us to enjoy a candle-lit evening of English pastoralism and American Lyricism, including works by Vaughan Williams (Lark Ascending), Schubert, Haydn, Barber and Warlock and other traditional pieces

Tickets £10 (student), £20 and £30 (upfront) available from
<https://www.breathe-music.co.uk/concerts>
or from Mandy Crook, 01373 467828 / 07561 305888 /
amandacrook@blueyonder.co.uk



Frome Festival 2025
Events at St John's
 Friday 4 July to Sunday 13 July 2025



Floral displays:
Telling the story in fabric, glass and stone
 daily 11am–4pm (11.30am–4pm on Sundays)

Floral and visual displays by St John's Church,
 Frome Floral Art Society and local schools.

Frome Art for Wellbeing:
 daily 11am–4pm (11.30am–4pm Sundays)

Special events

An introduction to bell-ringing
 Saturday 5 July 11am–12.30pm

Andrew Hardy: Dear Elizabeth
 (The Life of Elizabeth Rowe)
 Saturday 5 July 7.30pm–10pm

Andrew Ziminski A life in ruins
 – a look at a lifetime repairing churches
 Monday 7 July 7pm–8.30pm

KANEKT concert
 an acoustic blend of sitar, guitar, clarinet and violin
 Wednesday 9 July 7.30pm–9.30pm

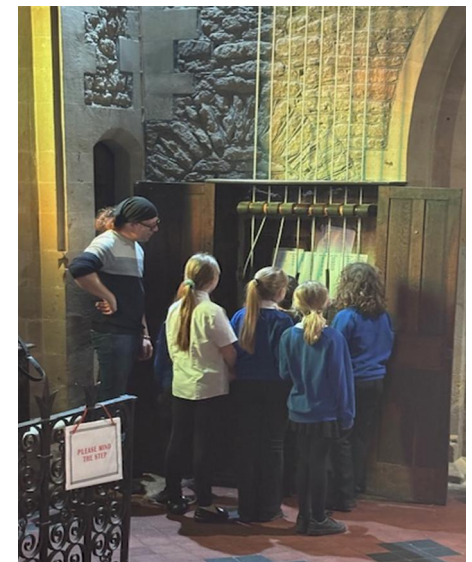
Festival Choral Evensong
 Thursday 10 July 6pm–7pm

St John's by candlelight
 Friday 11 July 8pm–9pm

Please support these exhibitions & events!



Thank you to Pete and Tony for power washing the Via Crucis steps to remove the moss and make them safe and to Pete, Tony and friend for fencing off the drop to Church Street so we can allow access to it again.



During visits to the church at the end of February, Selwood children were delighted to have a go at ringing our bells. A big 'thank you' to Tony for making this possible!



Lenore Humphreys

You will have noticed Lenore's name on our parish prayer list earlier this year; and then, all too soon, listed among those who have died. Lenore, together with her sister, Mandy Crook, was the devoted carer of their mother Eileen Wilkie, who is a regular member of our Zoom congregation. Many will remember Lenore as a faithful supporter of our fund-raising events. In earlier years, she and her mother enjoyed helping on the book stall. Lenore was most recently a member of St John's Book Club, Inspired to Read, and was able to attend our February meeting when we discussed *The Salt Path*, set in her beloved Cornwall.

We extend our sympathy and love to Eileen and Mandy and all Lenore's family.

Janet Caudwell

What might your role(s) be in the life of St John's?

We all have an important role in church life just by being a member of St John's, but during the intercessions at the Sunday Holy Communion service on 23rd March we prayed particularly:

God, please show each one of us the part that you want us to play in our church life.

To help with that prayer, here are some of the range of roles/tasks that are important to life at St John's.

Services: Rev. Seamus has started the ball rolling by his plea for servers and chalice assistants (see opposite), and for people to join the sacristy team, but we are also in particular need of flower arrangers (see opposite), coffee makers, welcomers and people to do the sound (it's much easier than it might look!)

Cleaning and tidying —both inside and outside: Our cleaner can only do so much in two hours, and the council does little more than trim the grass in the churchyard.

Fundraising: For example, we are always looking for helpers with the monthly mini-markets. Do you sell items on Ebay? We could do with help selling more valuable items that way. The advertising in the magazine raises some funds—but could raise more – see opposite.

Publicity: Karolyn does Facebook for us, but we don't yet do Instagram, for example. Or maybe you're a whizz with websites?

Archives: This is an area you possibly won't have thought of. The museum are doing an amazing job helping us, but we are woefully behind with sorting documents from the last ten years or so. We'd be delighted to have help with this.

Committee work: Our annual meeting comes up in May. Might you consider serving on the PCC? Or one of our other committees?

This list won't be comprehensive – I haven't even mentioned the choir (sorry Rosemary!) – but over the next few editions we hope to cover more of the roles in more detail – opposite are three to get us started. Don't wait to see the role in the magazine before you volunteer, though – you are needed now!

Mandy Crook

Joining the flower team

Would you like to help produce the beautiful flower arrangements that you see in church every week of the year (except Lent) and especially during Frome Festival? One of the current team is about to move out of the area, so they would love to hear from you.

Or maybe you have a friend who loves flower arranging and would like to join (it's not a requirement that you are a church goer)?

To find out more, please email Elaine Gilbert on elainegilbert@live.co.uk. No previous experience necessary!



Becoming a chalice assistant

Rev. Seamus has been asking for volunteers for this role at the end of the last couple of services. Apart from the main servers, Pete and Sky, there are only three of us from the congregation in this role at the moment and we'd love others to join us.

Do ask any of us –Judith, Christine and Mandy – about it.

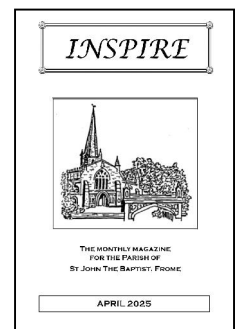


Finding adverts for the magazine

At the moment I am the person who keeps in touch with the current advertisers and looks for new advertisers, but I just do it when I have a moment so it's haphazard, and it would be wonderful if someone would step forward and offer to take this on and do the job properly!

It's not a huge task but it is a source of extra funds for the church as well as advertising useful local businesses to us. If you are interested, please let me know.

Mandy Crook (amandacrook@blueyonder.co.uk)



News from other churches

St Katharine's, East Woodlands

Services at St Katharine's

On Good Friday we will have hymns and readings at 4pm. Our Easter Day communion service will be at 11.15am as usual.

Thursday 8th May marks the 80th Anniversary of VE Day, so on Sunday 4th May our church service will acknowledge the occasion, by inviting anyone attending who has service medals to wear them. Appropriate hymns and the National Anthem will also be sung.

The Memorial Service on 14th March was a wonderful tribute to Steve Bainbridge. He would have loved the music. Here's a photo of him with choir member Misty!



East Woodlands Village Hall

Pop up Pub - 7.00 pm onwards Friday 4th April and Friday 2nd May.

Line Dancing Evening - Saturday 26th April 7.30pm onwards, £12.00 to include supper. Licensed cash bar. Tickets from Sharon Rose:

email sr210662@gmail.com or 07966 755509.

The blossom is looking good, but Spring, and the daffodils on the lane to the church and village, are both a little late this year. They'll be at their best in the first two weeks of April.

Pam Chapman



Bereavement course at St Mary's

Seven sessions starting Tuesday 6th May, 6pm-8.30pm
in St Mary's Hall

Cost £25 (supper included)

Visit: thebereavementjourney.org to find out more.

From the diocese

Our diocese offers a programme of events throughout the year. Here are two coming up in May that you might be interested in that are open to all. Please book using the [online registration form](#). Both events are at Flourish House (the diocese's headquarters) at Wells.

Ministry beyond walls

Thursday 8 May 10am-4pm

Our churches play a significant role within the life of our communities. The day will consider how we partner with local organisations as we seek to transform our communities. What has been difficult and where we have seen green shoots.

The challenge of carbon net zero

Thursday 22 May 10am - 4pm

As Christians, we are called to be good stewards of the earth which God has entrusted to us. We are also called to love our neighbours; this includes our global neighbours who are feeling the effects of climate change first and worst; and our future neighbours, who will inherit this world from us. As churches – often pressed for both time and money – it can be overwhelming to think about the climate challenge and where to start in caring for creation. This day will explore the five areas of Eco Church:

- Worship and teaching
- Management of church buildings
- Management of church land
- Community and global engagement
- Lifestyle.



Links in a Golden Chain 9

John Robinson

You will have noticed that I have been including in this series men and women from different periods in history. This link, a former Bishop of Woolwich, died in 1983, but he is remembered from a book which was published in 1963. In terms of church history, he is a modern figure, but how many of

you remember the sensation that was caused by

Honest to God? Half a century has gone by since the book stimulated the headline in a tabloid newspaper 'Our Image of God Must Go!' Bishop Robinson was a theological lecturer at Wells Theological College and Clare College, Cambridge. The publicity, by journalists with little religious knowledge, stimulated greatly increased sales of the book, and positive discussion in many parishes, especially amongst those who actually read the book. It presented in accessible form ideas that had been commonplace amongst clergy and scholars for many years. It pointed out that to describe God in terms of an elderly, bearded and remote judgemental figure, seated on a cloud, did not make much sense to people living in England in the 20th century. His key thought was that we might better reflect on God as the ground of our being, the origin and source of the whole created order, who revealed himself through Jesus Christ, and offering the possibility of close and real relationship with all people.

He wrote later 'My book seems to have touched people at a point where truth really matters to them. And of that I am glad – even if it has meant some pain. For God is to be found at the point where things really matter to us. What drove me to write my book was that this is simply not true for most people. What matters to them most in life seems to have nothing to do with 'God'; and God has no connection with what really concerns them day by day. At best he seems to come on only at the edges of life. He is out there as a sort of long-stop – at death, or to turn to in tragedy (either to pray or to blame). What I want to do is not to deny God in any sense but to put him back into the middle of life – where Jesus shows us he belongs.

For the Christian God is not remote. He is involved; he is implicated. If Jesus Christ means anything, he means that God belongs to this world. I have tried simply to be honest about what God means to me – in the second half of the twentieth century. The hundreds of letters I have received, particularly from the younger generation, inside the Church and out of it, have convinced me that I may have rung a bell for others too. For that I can only be humbly thankful. For I want God to be as real for our modern secular, scientific world as he ever was for the 'ages of faith'.'

It is significant that *Honest to God* is still in print, remarkable for a small paperback of 141 pages, published over sixty years ago. I still have my copy.

Kevin Tingay



Invitation to a retreat

Over two nights, Tuesday 13th and Wednesday 14th May 2025, a retreat is offered in the startling beautiful landscape of Llangorse Lake, in the Brecon Beacons of South Wales. The programme comprises prayer time, a eucharist service, and led-conversational sessions on four great Christian personalities of recent decades (A Schweitzer, A Bojaxhiu, D Tutu and C Saunders). There will also be time for the garden area, walking or a drive further afield. The centre provides good, simple hospitality.

Shared transport to Llangasty retreat house (LD3 7PX) is arranged by combining car spaces with individuals. Full board is £220. Please make your interest known to 01985 300025 or by email weymontmartin@gmail.com

This is a great chance for spiritual resources for the year ahead.

Martin Weymont

SERVICES at ST JOHN'S – APRIL 2025

Regular weekly services in April

Sundays

8.45am Online service via Zoom – see weekly sheet for link

10.00am Choral Eucharist

5.00pm Evening worship in the Lady Chapel:
 6th: Evening Prayer
 13th: Benediction and Evening Prayer
 20th: Evening prayer
 27th: Come and Sing Evensong
(on 4th Sunday in April because the 3rd Sun is Easter Day)

Mondays

8.45am Morning Prayer

Fridays

12.30pm Lunchtime Eucharist

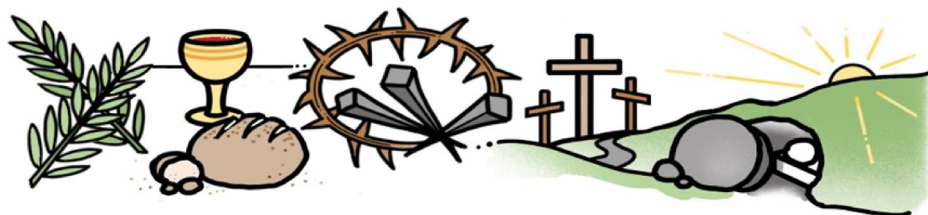
Additional services in April

The Holy Week services are set out on page 1. In addition, there are the following special services in April:

Friday 4 April 5pm Lenten Evening Prayer

Thursday 8 April 4pm Lenten Reconciliation Service

Holy Week services: see page 1



DIARY DATES – APRIL 2025

April

Wed	2	1.30pm	Lent course at Vicarage
		6.30pm	<i>Inspired to Read</i> Book Club (BC)
Thurs	3	2-4pm	Craft & Cake (BC)
Sat	5	9am	United Prayer
Sun	6	11.15am-2pm	Café & Mini Market
Wed	9	1.30pm	Lent course at Vicarage
Thu	10	7pm	PCC meeting
Sat	12	9.30am-11am	Working Party - meet in church
		10.30-12 noon	Open Doors
		10.30	Intercessions team meets
Wed	16	1.30pm	Lent course at Vicarage (final session)
Thurs	17	2-4pm	Craft & Cake (BC)
Fri	25	2pm	Hospital service
Mon	28	7pm	Women in Fellowship group
May			
Sat	3	10am	Worship Committee meeting
Sun	4	11.15am-2pm	Café & Mini Market
Fri	9	7pm	Concert - Breathe Music

Second Saturday regular activities in St John's

Next one: Saturday 12th April

De-cluttering and cleaning working party: 9.30am-11am

What it says! Do come and help—just turn up!

Open Doors 10.30am to 12 noon

An opportunity for people to deal with baptism/wedding arrangements.

Volunteer team meetings: 10.30am –11.30am

Vestry team:	January & July
Sidesmen & Welcome:	March & September
Intercessions team:	April & October
Lesson readers team:	June & December

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Non-Christian religious buildings

The Mosque

Just as Christian churches range from St Peter's, Rome, to the roadside chapels scattered through Somerset, so mosques can be one-roomed buildings in small Moroccan villages or great complexes, such as this Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, covering 30 acres. I have travelled in Muslim countries and entered both types of building. The 'numinous' sense of religious or spiritual emotion aroused in them can be as great as in any Christian church.



A mosque can take many forms, with very few obligations on the architect. There needs to be a *mihrab* or niche, which indicates the *qibla* or the direction of Mecca, a space so that Muslims can face the *qibla* wall when praying, a *minbar*, or pulpit for the sermon at Friday prayers, and facilities for ritual washing. Most mosques aim to create an Islamic image of a vaulted roof which leads to a central dome. The call to prayer leads to the need for one or more minarets from which the call is made, usually by loudspeaker. Travellers in Muslim countries from Arabia to Zanzibar get used to hearing this call, which comes five times a day. Most mosques have separate prayer spaces for men and women. Because the number of Muslims is increasing, more and more mosques are being built.

Christian churches contain pictures of Christ, Mary, other saints and Biblical stories. Most Islamic traditions forbid figurative work, which leads to geometric patterns being the commonest form of mosque decoration. These designs are often built on combinations of repeated



squares, circles or arabesques, which may be overlapped and interlaced to form intricate and complex patterns, including tessellations. These may be the entire decoration or a framework for floral or calligraphic embellishments, which appeal to mathematicians such as myself. Here is a 15th century archway from a Turkish mosque.

The mosque is a place to gather for prayers, to study and to celebrate festivals such as the month of Ramadan. It can also house schools and community centres. There is an obligation to pray five times a day, hence the call to prayer. My lectures in Dubai were punctuated by these calls when all my students would get up and move to a separate prayer room for half an hour. But Friday is a special day, when work places tend to close and attendance at mosque Friday prayers is widespread. There is instruction from the *minbar*, either on general faith issues or on wider social behaviour expected of Muslims. Many Muslims pray at mosques on other days, where they can share their faith with others. But any quiet place, even a corner of an office or home, can be used for prayer. The only stipulation is that the prayers must be said while facing Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad. The direction is always shown by a fixed arrow in places such as restaurants and hotel rooms.

Giving to charity is an obligation to a Muslim. In Arab countries many give small sums in public daily to the less well-off. Many mosques also actively participate in charitable activities, collecting and distributing both obligatory almsgiving and voluntary charity to support those in need.

There is no central governance for Muslims. Some countries, eg Iran, Afghanistan, have a religious government, with strict enforcement of Islamic Law, as interpreted by their leaders. Other countries have a more relaxed attitude to religion. Modern mosques reflect the wealth of their countries. For example, in states with great oil wealth, mosques tend to be lavish complexes.

Despite its theocracy and rigid adherence to a very strict interpretation of Islam, Iran has some of the most beautiful mosques among its total of over 60,000 mosques, many of ancient construction and richly designed with arabesques. The picture opposite is of the Friday Mosque in Esphahan, which was started in 771 AD and has been extended and added to ever since. Its perimeter is now thoroughly enmeshed with the surrounding structures of the mediaeval city and the bazaar, the Persian market place.

There are many countries where the dominant religion has changed over the centuries and religious buildings have been converted from one religion to another. Countries around the Mediterranean such as Turkey, Spain and those in North Africa and SE Europe, once dominated by Christianity, were followed by Islam, and some, eg in Spain, have come back to Christianity.



Migration to Europe since the 1950s has also played a part, as has the way that Jews have been driven out of many European countries from time to time over the last 1000 years. Thus, we have the Grand Mosque in Cordova, Spain, which has a gothic Christian cathedral erected within its walls and columns, and Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, which started as a Christian Church, was converted to a mosque in 1453, made into a museum in 1935 and became a mosque again in 2020. Toledo, in Spain, has several ex-mosques and ex-synagogues which are now churches.

The UK population of Muslims is now around 4 million. The first mosques consisted of buildings taken over from other religions, for example, in 1976 London Muslims took over a building originally constructed in 1743 as a Huguenot chapel, which became a Methodist church in 1809 and a Jewish synagogue in 1891. More recently, new mosques have been built. Near where I used to live in south London, a mosque complex, which can accommodate 13,000 worshippers, was completed in 2003 at a cost of £15 million, entirely from donations of Ahmadi Muslims. The complex consists of separate prayer halls for men and women, offices, book store, library, exhibition space, multifunctional halls, TV and radio studios, guest rooms, kitchen and dining hall. People attend from all over London, as the mosque was carefully built next to an underground station.

I think we Christians could learn from trends in Islam and in modern mosque-building: especially in their creation of religious complexes with wider facilities, the understanding that people will travel distances to worship and the obligation to give to charity.

Chris Lewis

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St David's Day - March 1st



St David's Day was always a special day in the Wales of my childhood. Boys wore a leek to school and girls wore a daffodil, both Welsh national symbols. Some girls wore traditional Welsh dress to school, including a long woollen skirt, apron, white blouse, woollen shawl, and a black hat. There were no lessons, and school finished at lunchtime. The morning was taken up with an eisteddfod. This means 'sitting down' in Welsh and refers to the Welsh tradition of poets, musicians, choirs, dancers, etc getting together to perform in their local community.

Our school competition was both personal, in that each performer was placed in their class, and in teams, with points being counted towards your house. The houses were named after four 7th century Welsh Saints, Baruc, Cadoc, Illtyd, Dyfan. I was in Cadoc, and my piano playing, individual and choral singing contributed to the Cadoc score. We didn't usually win the eisteddfod, as the best musician of my time was Robert Tear who was in Baruc and achieved great fame as an oratorio and operatic tenor. Girls had their own school and their own eisteddfod, with more emphasis on poetry readings, essays, etc. I can recall making my sister repeat her poem over and over again, as they all had to be recited from memory. One year it was *Yes, I remember Adelstrop*. There was also French poetry to be remembered. *'Je viens te demander... du calme pour mon coeur...* and we ended with the school song. *...Be ye faithful, trustful, true...* and *Land of my fathers*.

How many schools today still hold eisteddfods I do not know, but the wider concept of the Eisteddfod still carries on with the National Eisteddfod of Wales and the Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod being held each summer. The high points of the National Eisteddfod are the presenting of the poetry prizes for Welsh poems written in the strict meters handed down from past times. These are called the Crowning of the Bard and the Chairing of the Bard, with the prize a crown or a chair. There is a similar prize for a piece of prose, not in strict meter.

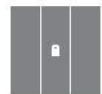
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One important aspect of these ceremonies is the setting aside of tribal enmities during the period of the eisteddfod. Before the poet is awarded their crown, a very large sword is produced and the question asked three times: *A oes Heddwych? – Is there Peace?* The audience cries back *Heddwych!*



signifying that the sword can be put away and that finding the best poet is more important than ongoing fights between local rivals.

I found out later that although the concept of eisteddfods is as old as Wales itself, the detail was all invented by a bit of a trickster who grew up on a farm a couple of miles from the farm on which my mother was later born. Iolo Morgannwg, as he called himself, felt that detail of the old traditions had been lost, so in the 1780s he wrote down what he thought they would have been, both the ceremonies and those taking part, setting up the idea of the *Gorsedd*, a society of Welsh language poets, writers, musicians, druids and bards that continues to this day, particularly at the annual national eisteddfod. Iolo's traditions, many invented by him as has now been shown, have continued to this very day and have become hallowed in themselves.

Since my childhood, there has been an upsurge in maintaining a Welsh identity: Although my grandmothers and my mother grew up with Welsh as their main language, few men spoke Welsh in my childhood. Since 1960, many more people speak Welsh, there is a TV channel broadcasting in Welsh, Wales now has a parliament of its own, the Senedd Cymru, and is responsible for many of its own domestic policies: eg NHS prescriptions are free in Wales.

St David's day is celebrated on 1 March as this is the anniversary of St David's death around AD 600, although the day has only been celebrated since his canonisation in 1120. He later became patron saint of Wales but his life is shrouded in mystery: it seems certain that he was born in Pembrokeshire, that he was probably from a professional family and grew up to become a priest and religious

teacher, both in Wales and Brittany. He founded many religious settlements and churches, including what is now St David's Cathedral, almost as far west as one can get in Wales. He is also supposed to have founded Glastonbury Abbey, although this is disputed.

This was the age when the Pelagianism heresy was still strong, a variant of Christianity that humans generally have the free will to achieve perfection without divine grace. At a synod around 550 David spoke extremely eloquently against this heresy: so much so that he was elected Archbishop of Wales by popular acclaim.

David's religious houses were asked to follow an extreme rule. Only water, bread, salt and herbs were allowed. There were no personal possessions, no gaming – only prayer, reading and writing. David practised this himself, but it did not stop him living over 80 years. He died after preaching in the cathedral where his last sermon included the words 'Keep your faith and your creed and do the little things in life that you have seen me do and heard about.'

'Do the little things in life' is a well-known phrase in Wales even today and one I have used before. I think the main lesson we can learn from David's life is to concentrate on 'the little things': listening to others; making sure we harm nobody; encouraging the young; passing on our experiences; avoiding excess; believing we can make a difference. As a more modern hymn writer, John Keble, says, 'The trivial round, the common task, will furnish all we need to ask'.

Chris Lewis

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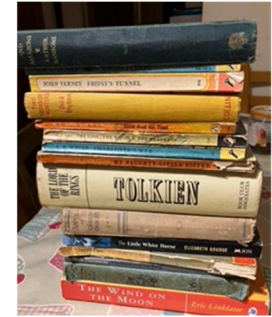
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Inspired to Read Children's literature



Chris very kindly hosted our meeting this month, and, fuelled by 'lashings' of Dandelion and Burdock, we set off down the memory lane of our own childhood reading – the books we enjoyed, and how they influenced our later reading habits. I imagine that if I set you the challenge of guessing which authors we remembered, you would probably come up with most of our favourites: Enid Blyton, Arthur Ransome, Edith Nesbit, R.L. Stevenson, A.A. Mine, C.S. Lewis, Louisa May Alcott. Most of us being of the post-war generation, we remembered books where children were free to have adventures unsupervised by adults: often the father figure of the family had 'gone away' – *The Railway Children*, *Ballet Shoes* – or sometimes the children had been left entirely to fend for themselves – who else remembers *The Children who lived in a Barn*? Mystery stories, school stories – Enid Blyton (of course!), Anthony Buckeridge and, of course, the infamous William! Animal stories – we all remember crying over *Watership Down*, and then for the girls among us there were the endless pony books – more tears for *Black Beauty*. They were all books we could relate to, then and now – but with the children as the courageous, dare-devil protagonists. Somehow the sun always shone, injustices were rectified and families reunited. I still have many of my own favourites – mainly because I wanted to share them with my own children, and I am happy to report that both my girls are as big fans of *Anne of Green Gables* as I was (and my mother before me – I have all her copies, 1940s hardbacks – some

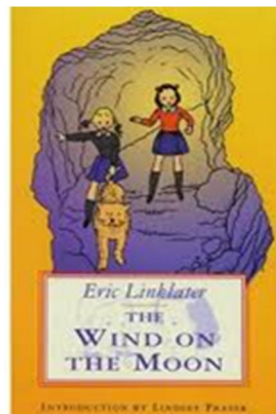


still with their dust jackets!). Inevitably our discussions strayed away from books to more general reminiscences about what it had been

like to grow up in a time before the internet or mobile phones; a time when it was normal to play out with one's friends from dawn to dusk, oblivious to any dangers.

I am going to briefly shine a spotlight on two of my favourites – possibly ones that are less familiar, but which are considered classics and are still in print!

My favourite book was ***The Wind on the Moon*** by Erik Linklater. Written in the 1940s, it is the story of two girls, Dinah and Dorinda, whose father has to go away 'on business'. On the night he departs he warns the girls that there is



wind on the moon ... I don't like the look of it at all. When there is wind on the moon you must be very careful how you behave. Because if it is an ill wind and, you behave badly, it will blow straight into your heart, and then you will behave badly for a long time to come.

Needless to say, the girls behave badly even though they have good intentions. They totally disregard their mother and their governess, Miss Serendip, as they manage to turn themselves into kangaroos, inadvertently succeed in having all their respectable neighbours locked up in jail, and eventually run away to Bombardy, where their father has



been locked in a dungeon by the tyrant Count Hulagu Bloot. I won't include any 'spoilers' here, apart from to say that most of the characters live happily ever after, justice is meted out appropriately and the girls are forgiven for their misdemeanours.

While I was immersed in the adventures of Dinah and Dorinda, my sister was equally captivated by the story of the Merryweather family, as told by Elizabeth Goudge in ***The Little White Horse***. This is a fairy story with a strong moral message. Inevitably the heroine, Maria

Merryweather, is an orphan, and she is sent to live with a distant cousin. She finds herself at Moonacre, a beautiful, hidden-away valley where the people live in fear of Monsieur Coque de Noir and his bandits. Maria learns that only she has the power to resolve the old conflict and bring peace back to the valley, but it is a task which will demand bravery, humility, self-sacrifice and perseverance:

The brave soul and the pure spirit shall, with a merry and a loving heart, inherit the kingdom together ... Once in every generation the Moon Princess comes back to the manor; and for a short while there is great joy ... but then, as if in punishment for the original sin, there is a quarrel and the Moon Princess once more goes away.

What was your favourite childhood book? Do you still have any treasured paperbacks on your shelves? Or maybe there are books you loved that you now enjoy sharing with your children or grandchildren. Maybe this is a conversation to continue over coffee one Sunday morning after service.

The Inspired to Read Book Group will meet again on **Wed 2 April**, 6.30pm in the Bennett Centre, when we will be discussing *A Month in the Country* by J.L. Carr. The following month will be a poetry evening. If you would like to know more about the group please contact Rosemary: rosemarymccormick@hotmail.com



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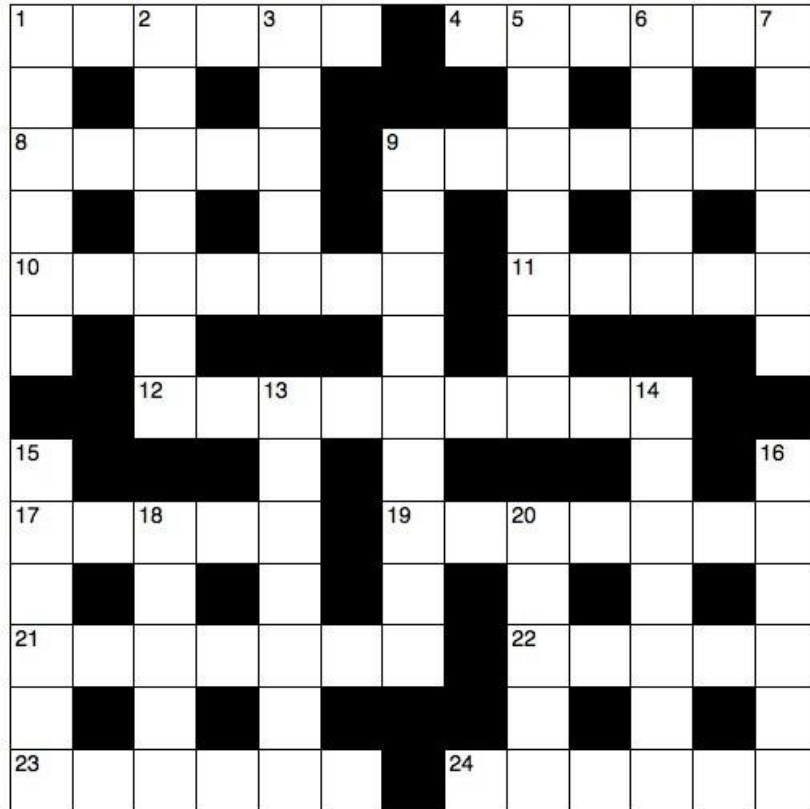
References Available

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APRIL CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Relating to the whole universe (6)
 4 The disciple who made the remark in 8 Across (John 20:24) (6)
 8 'Unless I see the nail marks — — hands, I will not believe it' (John 20:25) (2,3)
 9 He urged King Jehoiakim not to burn the scroll containing Jeremiah's message (Jeremiah 36:25) (7)
 10 Baptist minister and controversial founder of America's Moral Majority, Jerry — (7)
 11 'Look, here is — . Why shouldn't I be baptized?' (Acts 8:36) (5)
 12 Repossessed (Genesis 14:16) (9)

- 17 Port from which Paul sailed on his last journey to Rome (Acts 27:3–4) (5)
 19 'Moses was not aware that his face was — because he had spoken with the Lord' (Exodus 34:29) (7)
 21 Roonwit, C.S. Lewis's half-man, half-horse (7)
 22 Grill (Luke 24:42) (5)
 23 'The lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the — apostles' (Acts 1:26) (6)
 24 'I was sick and you looked after me, I was in — and you came to visit me' (Matthew 25:36) (6)

Down

- 1 Coastal rockfaces (Psalm 141:6) (6)
 2 Academic (1 Corinthians 1:20) (7)
 3 Publish (Daniel 6:26) (5)
 5 For example, the Crusades (4,3)
 6 11 Across is certainly this (5)
 7 He reps (anag.) (6)
 9 Liberator (Psalm 18:2) (9)
 13 Man who asked the question in 11 Across was in charge of all her treasury (Acts 8:27) (7)
 14 They must be 'worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine' (1 Timothy 3:8) (7)
 15 The human mind or soul (6)
 16 'O Lord, while precious children starve, the tools of war increase; their bread is — ' (Graham Kendrick) (6)
 18 'We played the flute for you, and you did not — ' (Matthew 11:17) (5)
 20 Bared (anag.) (5)

Answers to the crossword in the March magazine

ACROSS: 1, Corinthians. 9, Abandon. 10, Eglon. 11, Spa. 13, Deem. 16, Hi-fi. 17, Abijah. 18, Ohad. 20, Myth. 21, Now see. 22, Knit. 23, Tide. 25, Arm. 28, Nahor. 29, All done. 30, Kind-hearted. **DOWN:** 2, Of age. 3, ISDN. 4, Tens. 5, Idea. 6, Nullify. 7, Hardworking. 8, Enlightened. 12, Praise. 14, Mad. 15, Vigour. 19, Abishai. 20, Met. 24, Is one. 25, Arid. 26, Male. 27, Slur.

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APRIL WORD SEARCH

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! April brings us to Easter – the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - the triumphant highlight of the Christian year. As St Paul pointed out,

unless Jesus really did rise again, our faith is useless, and we may as well forget any hope of heaven or eternal life. But because He does live, we have a sure and certain hope for our future.

Passover
bread
wine
body
blood
betrayal
Jerusalem
Pilate
judas
gethsemane
trial
crucifixion
soldiers
cross
nails
vinegar
temple
curtain
tomb
angel
stone
risen
gardener
Mary

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



APRIL SUDOKU

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SERVICES ROTA FOR APRIL 2025

Date/Week	Services	Readings	Duties for the 10am service			
			Readers	Prayers	Sidespersons	Chalice
Sunday 6 April <u>Fifth Sunday of Lent</u>	8.45am Zoom Service <u>10.00am Holy Communion</u>	Isaiah 43:16-21 Psalm 126 Philippians 3:4b-14 John 12:1-8	N McCormick S Caden	J Bruges	G Fone R Gosling	J Davies
Sunday 13 April <u>Palm Sunday</u>	8.45am Zoom Service <u>10.00am Holy Communion</u>	Luke 19:28-40 Isaiah 50:4-7 Psalm 21 Philippians 2:6-11 Luke 22:14-23:56	The Hudson Family C Holland	J Caudwell	D Bargett B Essex	C Holland
Sunday 20 April <u>Easter Sunday</u>	8.45am Zoom Service <u>10.00am Holy Communion</u>	Acts 10:34, 37-43 Psalm 117 Colossians 3:1-4 John 20:1-9	R McCormick S Smith	A Hender- son	M Veakins J Bruges + 3rd per- son?	A Crook
Sunday 27 April <u>Second Sunday of Easter</u>	8.45am Zoom Service <u>10.00am Holy Communion</u>	Acts 5:27-32 Psalm 118:14-end or Psalm 150 Revelation 1:4-8 John 20:19-end	E Gilbert J Arnall- Culliford	L Busheil	C Holland A Crook	J Davies
Sunday 4 May <u>Third Sunday of Easter</u>	8.45am Zoom Service <u>10.00am Holy Communion</u>	Acts 9:1-6(7-20) Psalm 30 Revelation 5:11-end John 21:1-19	B Essex S Caden	R McCor- mick	B Essex D Bargett M Smither- man	C Holland
Vicar: Revd Seamus Hargrave Reader: Janet Caudwell		Sundays at 5pm Evening Worship (April 27th - Evensong) Mondays at 8.45am Morning Prayer Fridays at 12.30pm Lunchtime Eucharist Tuesday 29 April at 11am Julian meeting				

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