

Saints ALIVE

*The magazine of:
All Saints, Leighton Buzzard
St. Nicholas, Hockliffe
St. Michael's, Eggington
St. Michael and All Angels,
Billington
The Good Shepherd, Sandhills*

April 2025

£1

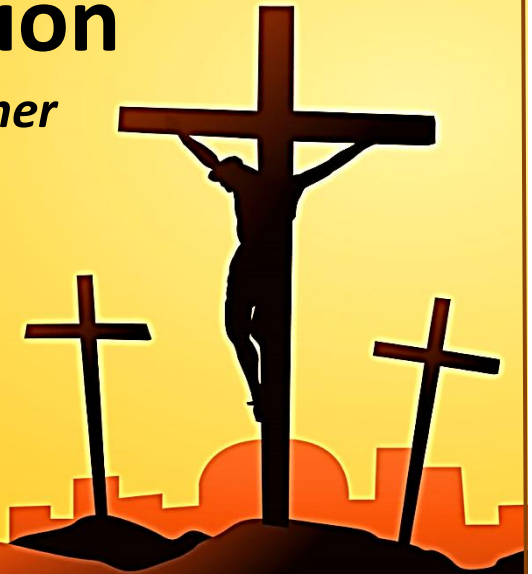
The Crucifixion

by John Stainer

A Meditation on the sacred Passion
of the Holy Redeemer

To be sung by
All Saints Choir together with
singers from other team churches &
Leighton Buzzard Festival Singers

Directed by Paul Dickens
Organ: Sam Kemp
Principal soloists:
David Emerson and Richard Ball



All Saints Church

Good Friday, 18th April at 7pm

Inside:

Reflections on Last Words – a prelude to Holy Week: Preb. David
A journey through Lent with Pulford School
Messy Mass: yet another activity for our Growing Church
And a note about why Stainer wrote The Crucifixion

plus

Living God's Love involves making new disciples: Frank Reedy describes some of the things that CGS does to encourage and support those who join them.

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Saints ALIVE: Items for publication to the Editors: Jo Waller & Julia Dickens, preferably by e-mail
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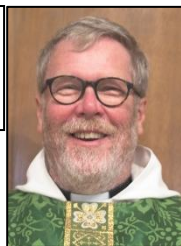
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Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

by Preb. David MacGeoch



Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Well, not quite. Easter this year is almost as late as it can be towards the end of April. So as I write this letter to you, we haven't yet gone through Holy Week.

This year at All Saints, I'm leading Holy Week focusing on the last seven words from Jesus on the cross. We often joke with family and friends about what their last words will be just before they die.

Sadly, I have been with quite a few people just before they die. For most the death is quiet and peaceful. Often people have gone into a coma or deep sleep before they die. However, for my mother, who died 17 years ago, that wasn't quite a case. She was diagnosed with a terminal cancer on the Friday and told she had several weeks to live but five days later she died. Just before she died, I asked her if she would like me to anoint her. To my surprise, she replied: "You are my son, but you are also my priest." It was a very emotional few minutes but a very special few minutes. She and I had had our ups and downs throughout my life, and she had given me the greatest accolade any mother could give their son. Those turned out to be her last words. For me very profound; they have lasted me all this time.

Jesus was nailed to a cross with thieves either side of him, dying for our sins and demonstrating God's love for all of us. Yet who was at the foot of the cross? It wasn't, as we might expect, his 12 friends. It was Mary his mother, Mary Magdalene, and John. The rest were strangers.

Yet his last words on the cross have resonated amongst Christians for over 2000 years:

- ◆ *Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.*
- ◆ *Today you'll be with me in paradise.*
- ◆ *To Mary: "Woman, behold your son,"; and to John: "behold your mother".*
- ◆ *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*
- ◆ *I thirst.*
- ◆ *It is finished.*
- ◆ *Father into your hands, I commend my spirit.*

To sum up, Jesus's words on the cross show love, forgiveness, and willingness to give his life.

As we celebrate Easter day, we know that through our personal journeys, our pilgrimage to the cross is now ended; and we are loved; we are forgiven; and we have with Him, new life.

May the joys of Easter bring each of you light, peace, hope and love.

Alleluia. Christ is Risen! Happy Easter

Yours in Christ, David.

Our present pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team

All Saints

Sundays:

8.00am Holy Communion

9.30am Parish Eucharist

11.30am (usual pattern but can vary occasionally)

1st Sunday: Messy Mass

3rd Sunday: All Age Service

2nd & 4th Sunday: Holy Baptism

6.00pm Evening Prayer

1st Sunday: Choral Evensong Plus

3rd Sunday: Sung with hymns
(NO choir) followed by Benediction

2nd & 4th Sunday: Said Evensong

Weekdays:

Holy Communion

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

(Service of Healing on 4th Saturday each month)

Morning Prayer:

9.00am Tuesday – Friday in the Chancel

St. Barnabas, Linslade

Sundays:

8.00am Said Eucharist

10.00am Parish Eucharist

6.00pm Evensong

www.stbarnabaslinslade.uk

St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington

11.15am Holy Communion

Good Shepherd, Astral Park Sports & Community Centre, Johnson Drive, Sandhills, LU7 4AY:

Sundays at 9.45am:

1st Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

2nd Sunday: 'Chapel Time':

Lead reflection and discussion

3rd Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

4th Sunday: 'Morning Break':

Informal service with sermon and discussion.

Free pop-up café every Sunday from 9.45am

*Community Cafe every Wednesday at Astral Park
10am - 12noon with a Music, Rhythm and Rhyme
session from 10am - 10:30am.*

St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach

Sundays:

8.00am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion

11.00am Holy Communion

1st Sundays: Family Service

Tuesdays: 7.00pm Holy Communion

Morning Prayer via Zoom:

9.00am Monday – Saturday

www.saintleonardschurch.com

St. Michael's, Eggington

9.30am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion

4th Sundays: Café Church 3-4pm

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

9.30am 2nd Sundays: Family Communion

4th Sundays: Holy Communion

Sunday Saints: for age 3+ year olds, meets during 9.30am Sunday service at All Saints.

All Saints Toddler Time: All Saints every Wednesday during term time, at 9.30am & at 1.30pm.
£1.50 per parent / carer & child; 50p extra per child; refreshments included.

Leighton Young Singers Club: for children in Years 2-6, meets on Fridays at 6.30 - 7.30pm.

Bereavement Café: a support group offering friendship and understanding.

1st Sunday of the month, 2.30-4pm The Spire Coffee Shop, All Saints

Choir Practice: Friday evenings, 6.45 trebles; 7.30 adults.

Bellringers: Practice on Monday, 7.30 - 9.30pm.

Spire Coffee Shop: Tuesday & Friday 10am - 2pm.

Saturday 10am - 12noon for drinks & cakes only.

Contact Details on Page 2.

News Roundup

All Saints Holiday Club 11th - 15th August – “Life in the Fast Lane”.

Application forms available after Easter.

*** **

Saturday Coffee Shop has re-opened 10am – 12noon for drinks and cakes.



Worth a smile

What can I eat for Easter?

Can't eat beef mad cow.

Can't eat chicken bird flu.

Can't eat eggs Salmonella.

Can't eat pork fears that bird flu will infect pigs.

Can't eat fish heavy metals in the waters.

Can't eat fruits and veggies insecticides and herbicides.

Can't eat potatoes, pasta, bread, rice nasty carbs.

Hmmmmmmmm! I believe that leaves chocolate.



A Sunday School teacher had been explaining why Easter should matter to us and wanted to make sure her group understood. So she asked, “Can anyone tell me what you must do before you can obtain forgiveness of sin?”

There was a short pause and then, from the back of the room, a small boy spoke up. “Sin?”



And finally: some Easter one-liners

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| What do you get if you pour boiling water down a rabbit hole? | <i>Hot cross bunnies.</i> |
| What do you need if your chocolate eggs mysteriously disappear? | <i>An eggsplanation.</i> |
| What kind of jewellery does the Easter Bunny wear? | <i>14-carrot gold.</i> |
| What is the Easter Bunny's favourite kind of music? | <i>Hip hop.</i> |
| What do you call an Easter Bunny wearing a kilt? | <i>Hopscotch.</i> |
| What do you call a bunny with fleas? | <i>Bugs Bunny.</i> |
| What do you call a line of rabbits jumping backwards? | <i>A receding hare-line.</i> |
| How can you tell which rabbits are oldest in a group? | <i>Just look for the grey hares.</i> |
| Why do people paint eggs for Easter? | <i>It's easier than trying to wallpaper them!</i> |
| What do rabbits say before they eat? | <i>“Lettuce pray.”</i> |
| Where does Christmas come before Easter? | <i>The dictionary.</i> |

Parish Registers

There were no weddings or baptisms in February.

R.I.P. February:

4: Frederick Ottaway at All Saints;
10: Donald Salvage at St. Leonard's;
27: Kenneth Stratford at All Saints.

'Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die'

Years Mind, April:

1: Frederick Saunders, Robert Walters;
2: Betty Ransom; 5: Robin Boyce;
6: Ethel Higgs, Alison Austin, Owen Rock;
7: Peter Archer;
12: Marjorie Bester; 13: Hugh Frank Delafield; 14: Eileen Burtonshaw;
17: Jean Rumbelow, Stuart Vines;
18: Graham Sizeland, Margaret Field; 20: Burt Edgoose;
21: John Macfarlane;
22: Michael Gardner, Pamela Webb, Malcolm Jones, Josephine Sharplin;
23: Norman Warburton;
24: Penny Edwards;
28: Travers William (Bill) Ellison;
29: Derek Windle



LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

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Saturday 26th April 2025

at 7.30pm

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or in person from the Box Office, Tuesdays. Thursdays & Fridays 10am - 12pm or at the door.

Leighton Buzzard Music is a registered charity no: 1183681

Pulford VA Lower School

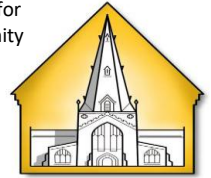
Head Teacher: Rev'd Dave Heather, MBE

Office Manager: Mrs Alison Quick

Tel: 01525 372188

Website: www.pulfordschool.org

A church school for
a whole community



As we journey through the season of Lent together, I thought that I would share a few pictures and thoughts of where it began back on Tuesday 4th March. We held our traditional pancake races, which were as exciting and competitive as always. Preb. David was there demonstrating his highly-tuned skill at this long-established activity.

We also learned some interesting facts about Shrove Tuesday. How many do you know?



- ◆ In which year did pancake races start? *1445*
- ◆ How many eggs are used in the UK on Pancake Day? *52 million*
- ◆ How many days before Easter Day is Shrove Tuesday? *47*
- ◆ What is the record number of flips of a pancake in one minute? *140*
- ◆ What size was the world's biggest pancake? *15m*

It all calmed down then on Ash Wednesday, with the children attending church in a reflective service engaging them in thinking about the things for which they need to say sorry to God.

Our learning continued though as we found out that the Ash Wednesday service began in the eleventh century and probably came about because of a verse in the book of Daniel which talks about fasting and ash.

I also have been on a journey over the last three years, having been engaged as the Curate to the parishes of Kensworth, Studham and Whipsnade. This training has now come to an end, and I look forward to rejoining the community at All Saints. I would like to take this opportunity to thank so many of you for your support during the past few years and hope that, with God's help, I will be of service to you as we journey into the future together.



Dave Heather, Headmaster



The Gentleman Gardener

Let your local RHS qualified gardener make your garden beautiful, from simple garden maintenance to redesigning your garden.

Please call Barry
01525 222451 or 07541 196384
to pop round to have a chat.



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On a musical note.....



Philip loves the music team at CGS



There may be no 'I' in team but both 'U' and 'I' are together in music!

I love arriving early at Astral Park where we meet as The Church of the Good Shepherd. The hall is empty and full of promise for the morning. The sun is (often) shining through the large windows and I can see the football parents eagerly supporting their youngsters out on the field. I drop my guitar, amp, bag and stand, and as the keyboard arrives, set up begins.

We don't have a fixed music group at CGS. 'Who's available' forms the ensemble for the day. We share music leadership and song choice for each service in cooperation with Steve (the vicar) or whoever is leading the service. Usually we are keyboard, guitar, singer and maybe violin and a second guitar with occasional drums. It keeps us simple and focussed and flexible. We are blessed with some brilliant musicians from professionally trained to enthusiastic self-taught. And we try to encourage and incorporate folk who are learning their craft or who just need experience of standing at the front or playing with others.

Anyway, with any luck the café will now be on its feet and a cup of coffee arrives as we start to tune up, check to see if there are any songs anyone is unsure of, ensure we are all in the same key and then have a short practice so that we at least know how the introduction should go and who's taking it. Then we'll gather together with the others involved in the service, leading, preaching, praying, serving coffee, teaching the children or youth. We pray together and for each other and the service and the people who will be with us worshipping today. We pray that God will lead us. We do it together and it's always a moment of calm where I feel part of a welcoming worshipping team that is setting clear intention for the morning.

And then we're off. And the beauty of the words of the service drives us forward toward the first song, be it hymn or chorus, new or old. We try to blend all these elements together so that our sung worship is part of the theme or readings for the day. We are here to bless the congregation and help them lift their voices in sung worship.

And as I sing, I too feel blessed to be a part of this ensemble of talented musicians. And I know that they appreciate the way in which I don't always manage to have noted down the correct key, time signature, etc.

Ah, it's good to be part of the music team.

Philip Nicols

Calendar of Events

2nd April

Lunch Club in the North Transept, All Saints 1pm.
Tickets £6.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



6th April

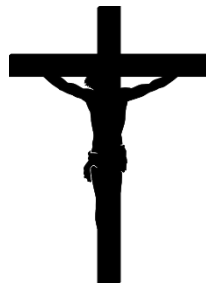
Bereavement Support Café Coffee Shop,
All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm



18th April Good Friday

The Crucifixion by John Stainer All Saints 7pm

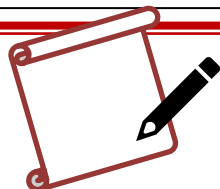
A meditation on the Sacred Passion of the Holy Redeemer
to be sung by All Saints Choir, Leighton Buzzard Festival Singers,
and singers from other team churches.



2nd April, 4th April, and 30th April

Passiontide and Easter services for Leighton Middle and Pulford Schools.

For other Holy Week and Easter Services: see opposite



All Saints Church Electoral Roll Renewal 2025

Every six years all Church of England parishes are required to renew the Electoral Roll.

You are invited to complete an application form by 2nd May 2025,
prior to the Parish's APCM on 17th May 2025.

The Roll is essentially a list of names and addresses of every person who can attend,
and vote, at the Parish's Annual Meeting.

Importantly, it also affirms your commitment to the ministry of All Saints Church,
sharing in its life, both spiritually (through prayer and participation in worship
services in person or online), and practically (through involvement in the week-to-
week activities, perhaps volunteering your time and talents).

The forms are in church on the Sidespersons' table, and at the entrance to the Spire
Café. If you are unable to collect a form for yourself, please contact the Parish
Office.

If you have a query, the Clergy, Churchwardens, or I will be pleased to help.

Liz Corbett 01525 372822

ALL SAINTS PARISH CHURCH

Holy Week And Easter

PALM SUNDAY 13th APRIL

8.00am Holy Communion
10.00am Procession from the Market Cross
followed by Sung Eucharist*
6.00pm Stations of the Cross with Readings

MONDAY, TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY HOLY COMMUNION

7.30pm with addresses on
The Seven Last Words of Christ
from the cross

MAUNDY THURSDAY 17th APRIL

10.00am Holy Communion
7.30pm Sung Eucharist and ceremony of
foot-washing followed by Watch of Prayer
until midnight*

GOOD FRIDAY 18th APRIL

12.00 noon, A time for reflection*
12.45pm - 1.50pm Preaching the Passion*
2.00pm - 3.00pm The Good Friday Liturgy*

HOLY SATURDAY 19th APRIL

9.00am A quiet service of reflection
9.00pm Easter Eve Vigil and
First Eucharist of Easter*

EASTER DAY 20th APRIL

8.00am Holy Communion
9.30am Festal Eucharist for Easter Day*
11.30am Messy Mass for Easter Day
6.00pm Festal Evensong*

*Services will also be live-streamed on the
You Tube Channel, All Saints Church Leighton Buzzard



on ...

The Growing Church

Held on the 1st Sunday each month at 11.30am, Messy Mass is a family service designed to introduce children to church, and perhaps provide a stepping stone to joining us as part of the All Saints family at Sunday school at 9.30am services. We hope Messy Mass will be fun, helping children and their families to engage with the Christian journey.



Planned by Jaine Holford, with 2 youth helpers and a few other church members, the theme and bible story are introduced through a video story, and a crafting activity. Parents and the youth helpers are essential to making the craft activities run smoothly, and the young people take responsibility for setting up and tidying everything away. We aim to make an item to take away that represents the day's lesson.

Eucharist is offered at the service for those who wish to share it, and many step forward for a blessing.

Music at the service is accompanied by a small band, playing hymns and songs throughout the service. The band also welcomes young players, and music can always be arranged to suit the capability of the player.

*A series looking at
youth work in our churches.
This month: Messy Mass*

The majority of those who come are pre-schoolers with parents, grandparents or carers, so the crafts are designed to be inclusive of that age group. With the help of parents or carers, the food-based activities are always a winner.

For harvest we made chocolate dipped apples covered in sprinkles; at Candlemas, iced fairy cakes with edible candles and marshmallow flames.

At the last service of the school year, in July, we hold a BBQ in the church grounds with freshly cooked hot dogs. There are usually around 25 families at the service, so it is a good place to meet and mix with like-minded people at a similar point in family life. Refreshments are served after the service, giving the opportunity to chat to any new people you have met. It is very relaxed - some just take the opportunity to fit in a nap.



If you are hoping to apply for Pulford school, it is a place to get your card stamped and start to get used to the church services that you will attend if your child attends the school. Or you may just like to try the church to see if something is you and your family want to engage with. You will be very welcome.

Jaine & Effie Holford



Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Stuart Blofeld; Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

Preparing for Easter

In our church life at CGS we've been considering how we can use the opportunities of Lent to review and refresh our faith – prayerfully taking stock of our life and our habits to see how we might tune into God more closely.

The 3 temptations of Jesus in the wilderness in Luke 4: 1-13 can prompt us to build up our faith in God's provision ("Man shall not live on bread alone"); to renew our worship of God ("Worship the Lord your God and serve him only"); and to refine, renew and refresh our faith ("Do not put the Lord your God to the test").

For me personally, Lent is a chance to say no to a few things and yes to some others. For example, to fast from or cut down on activities that, while not wrong in themselves, can keep me busy when it might be better to rest, and to do some of the reading and praying I might normally not get round to. I've been particularly drawn to think about worship of God – which for me is often a case of going and doing something practical – and am making efforts to have more quiet time.

Our two home groups are studying a different Lent course each – the CofE "Living hope" course and the Tearfund "Together as one". The focus on hope and unity seems to sum up the heart of the Christian message.

In addition, our church this year will be leading the open-air worship on Good Friday morning, 18th April, at the Market Cross, and we want to use that opportunity to share the hope of the full Easter story in a way that speaks to those with no church connection.

Before then, we have the joyful celebration of four young people getting baptised, and an Easter flower basket arrangement evening.

At the same time, there are plenty of challenges in all our lives, and the reminder of wilderness experiences in the Bible is an encouragement as we navigate these testing times. We're not alone when we come under pressures in life. We have the reassurance that God is with us in everything, we know that our church community is there to support, and we stand in solidarity with fellow believers around the world.

All of these things are a part of our Lent journey, pointing towards the joyful culmination on Easter day. We know that the story ends well, even if the in-between times are tough. Like Mary Magdalene on the morning of that first Easter day, we can use these days and weeks of Lent to turn our gaze away from the tomb, to focus on the risen Jesus.

Katharine Reedy

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Brian Speller: 01525 210565



At the time of writing this article we have now entered the season of Lent, later this year with Easter Day falling almost as late as it can on 20th April 2025. By the time you read this article Mothering Sunday will be upon us, an opportunity to pause the strictness of our Lenten observances, as we enjoy a moment of refreshment to celebrate family life.

The Church of England's theme for Lent this year is Living Hope. We would all have made differing commitments about how we would each be observing Lent this year. I am following the CofE's booklet of 40 Daily Reflections which accompanies this year's Lent Book 'Wild Bright Hope'. At the beginning St. Paul reminds us that endurance produces character, and character produces hope. As we journey through Lent, we are called to invite the Holy Spirit to guide us. We are invited to explore hope.

As we look at the state of our world today, at home and abroad, searching for hope is an uncertain path and is challenging. For some, there will be times and places of 'wilderness'. Yet even through these 'wildernesses' we know that we have God with us, walking beside us, just as he supported his own beloved Son Jesus.



I have just returned from a morning's walk around College Lake Nature Reserve near Tring. It is a former chalk quarry transformed into a wildlife haven by Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust. We have not yet reached the first day of spring; yet we have been blessed with some very mild weather with temperatures in the mid-teens. Nature has its own way of giving us hope through its enduring timetable created by God. It was encouraging to see early signs of new life with trees full of buds, early blossom, bright yellow butterflies and newts.

Fr. Noel, supported by Readers Linda Morris and Geoff Marchant, is leading a Retreat for his Parishes to Buckden Towers from 2nd to 4th May 2025.

May God bless us at St. Nicholas in our Lenten journeys of hope as we prepare to celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord and Saviour this Easter.

Dates for your diaries:

Cream Teas at St Nicholas Church, Saturday 10th May, Sunday 22nd June and Sunday 7th September 2025, all 2pm - 4pm.

Café Church is on Sunday 27th April 2025 at 3pm - 4pm in Eggington Village Hall.

APCM is on Sunday 11th May 2025 at 3pm in St. Nicholas Church.

Geoff Marchant

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Julia Haviland 850380; Tina Thompson 378411



In February's issue of 'Saints Alive' David Thompson refers to a tendency for some to avoid the expression that someone has 'died', preferring instead 'passed away'. Well here is another oddity: Why is it that so many people when asked 'how are you' say 'I am good thank you'. Aren't we all sinners? Do we not confess our sins when praying in church and are we not unfit to eat the crumbs from under His table? Hardly being 'good' is it, something very few of us can ever truly be (Note in diary to remember to stop saying this myself!)

Talking of goodness I can recommend one shining example. A little off track perhaps but interesting none the less. A new documentary film on a forgotten wartime atrocity is to be on general release in cinemas from 27th March. It concerns the tragic sinking of a Japanese prisoner of war ship by an American submarine. Over 1000 British military personnel died in the incident but some 800 were saved by the actions of Chinese fishermen who braved machine gun fire to rescue



men floundering in the shark-infested waters. It is an account of the greatest loss of British life through friendly fire but also a wonderful story of the very worst and the very best of mankind. Look out for 'The sinking of the Lisbon Maru' and do go to see it if you can. It isn't just another war film!

Returning to normal reporting we in Billington have just enjoyed our first fund raiser of the year, the annual Spring Walk held on Saturday 8th March. 32 people assembled at the village hall on a beautiful morning ready to set out on a gentle walk over the hill and down into Little Billington before cutting across the fields to the quarry where the footpath led back to St Michael's Place and to Gaddesden Turn via Hillview Lane. 50 minutes of pleasant exercise enhanced by good company, good weather and enjoyment of the onset of spring! The non walkers gathered at March House in time to share the sumptuous breakfast prepared and served by the Thompson family. Very many thanks to Tina and David and all their helpers and many thanks also to all those who donated so generously. Let us hope this sets the pattern for the year. It is interesting to note that the total of 40 people at breakfast has only been bettered once in the last 20 years, so an excellent day all round!

Dates to remember for Village Hall events:

May 10th: St George's Day lunch;

June 14th: Italia Day lunch.

Geoff Haviland

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861



Having recently had a new lease on life granted by the skill and care of the NHS and MK Cancer Centre, the experience has given me the metaphorical kick up the derriere and the realization that it is always later than you think.

That sentiment is summed up in the poem by the Yorkshire poet Rose Milligan (with illustrations by Hayley Wells):

*Dust if you must but wouldn't it be better
to paint a picture or write a letter,
bake a cake or plant a seed.
Ponder the difference between want and need.*

*Dust if you must, but there is not much time,
with rivers to swim and mountains to climb.
Music to hear and books to read,
friends to cherish and life to lead.*

*Dust if you must but the world's out there,
with the sun in your eyes and the wind in your hair.
A flutter of snow, a shower of rain
this day will not come round again.*

*Dust if you must, but bear in mind
old age will come, and it's not kind.
And when you go (and go you must)
you yourself will make more dust.*



Dust if you must ...
but wouldn't it be better to ...



A good friend has a quote on the bottom of his business card.: *"We do not stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing."*

Spring is here, let us go forward with a playful spirit, enjoying life the best we can and helping others along the way. What a change there could be if the world could take heed of the second commandment of Jesus: " Love your neighbour as yourself." In these present troubled times, the message seems to be given little heed. Maybe we should shout it louder. Make it happen.

Harry Sear

Some important diary dates to note:

April 2nd: Coffee morning in the church

April 20th: Easter Day Service at 9.30 with Rev Steve Davies

April 27th: Café Church in Eggington Village Hall at 3.00pm for the young

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Christian Aid Week 11th – 17th May 2025

Christian Aid's objective is to provide humanitarian relief and long-term development support for poor communities worldwide while highlighting suffering, tackling injustice, and championing people's rights.

HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN AID: During WW2, millions of people became homeless. The British and Irish Churches established an organisation called Christian Reconstruction in Europe (CRE) to raise funds to help resettle them. In 1948 CRE was renamed the Inter-Church Aid & Refugee Service. The organisation then began to move into worldwide development work. Since 1957 they have held an annual fundraising drive in the UK and in 1964 ICARS changed its name to Christian Aid. It is Britain's longest running fundraising week involving thousands of volunteers who work hard to raise public awareness of the poverty and suffering throughout the world.

AURELIA'S STORY: In Guatemala gruelling heatwaves, savage storms and extreme weather conditions are destroying farms and crops.

"CLIMATE CHANGE has been killing our crops, and this is our food. It's killing our plantations and it's killing us" says Aurelia who belongs to the indigenous Q'eqchi' community in the Alta Verapaz region in Guatemala. She tries to grow a range of crops to provide her family with a balanced diet, trying to protect them from malnutrition and ill health, but the extended dry seasons, the degradation of the soil and contaminated water make this a very difficult, sometimes impossible, task. To make matters worse Aurelia and the women and girls from her community have a twice-daily challenge of collecting water from a natural sink hole near her village.

Recently Aurelia discovered the work of Congcoop and applied for the specialist agricultural training that was on offer. With funding from Christian Aid, Congcoop supports communities to return to Indigenous farming practices and thanks to Aurelia's increasing knowledge she is now growing cacao, sugarcane, corn and pineapples. She has become a role model for her community, inspiring and teaching the women to follow her example, and they are now able to sell their cocoa and other products and become self-sufficient.

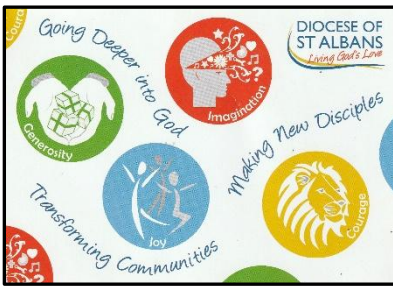


Aurelia holding hope in her hands

Your support is urgently needed to ensure we can be there for indigenous families who are bearing the full force of the climate crisis. Envelopes will be available throughout the week near the north door in the Church. Please return filled envelopes to the Parish office with the gift aid declaration filled in if appropriate.

Please contact me if you would like more information about Christian Aid week

Pauline Lyon 07968746618



Living God's Love

A series exploring
the St. Alban's Diocese Vision Statement
This month:

Creating new disciples By Frank Reedy

This year, the longer article for Ouzel Team magazines is based around the Diocesan Vision Statement and its accompanying *Living God's Love* prayer. This is the Diocesan Vision Statement: *The Diocese of St Albans is Living God's Love by going deeper into God, making new disciples and transforming communities.* Over the last couple of months, we've looked at 'Going deeper into God' and 'Transforming Communities.' This month I'll be writing about 'Making New Disciples.'

The term disciple means 'someone who follows', and we follow Jesus. How we are disciples ourselves and how we encourage others to become disciples very much depends on what we believe about the nature of God and Jesus. I believe that God loves us and wants everyone to follow Him. He doesn't put barriers in people's way. He doesn't say – 'You can only start this journey of discipleship if you do this, or join this type of church.' Based on that starting point, the framework I'll use to describe this journey is 'Belong', 'Believe', 'Become'.

God has already accepted us, so we already 'Belong', so that's first in order. Once we belong, we want to know something about what brought us to belong and what the community we are now part of believes. Finally, as we belong and believe, we learn that there are ways to reflect the Father, and the community to whom we belong, in how we behave. Our belief will change who we are and how we live.

At Church of the Good Shepherd, we describe these three stages as Engagement, Exploration and Discipleship and have developed a model as to how people move from one stage to another.

To those who have no church connections, we need to engage them first, to bring them into the community of the church so that they feel they belong. We create open social spaces where everyone is welcome. On Sunday morning, there are football matches going on next to where we meet, so we have a café to serve those attending the matches and which provides opportunities for conversation.

On Wednesday mornings, we have a drop-in café for all ages and specific activities for pre-schoolers. All of these create space in which we can get to know people, share hospitality and have conversations. At our first pre-school drop-in, someone said to me 'I know this is a church-run group. I'm not really a religious person but ...' starting a fruitful conversation about faith which has continued over the following weeks and months.



Many people are open to faith but don't feel comfortable in a traditional church environment, so we need to make suitable opportunities for people to connect with us and our faith.

Having made a connection with people so that they feel they belong, how do we move on to developing what they believe? For some, it will come naturally through conversations. Some may wish to come to one of our regular church services. For others, the best way may be to invite them to a specific group for seekers, that puts forward what Christians believe and allows time for discussion and developing their thinking. The best known of these is Alpha and that may be suitable for some. However, in my experience Alpha can move very quickly to quite deep areas such as 'Why did Jesus die?' and expect a commitment to a specific set of beliefs quite early. There are alternative courses, such as the Emmaus course. Another route might be to have small groups for people wanting to learn more, where they can tackle the basics of the Christian faith at their own pace.

It's important to recognise that what we believe isn't just an assent to a set of abstract doctrines. It also includes how we behave. If we believe in a God of love, then that will be reflected in how we treat others. A frequent picture in the Bible is that *'the fruit reflects the root.'* In the same way that you can tell the nature of the tree by the fruit it produces, you can tell the nature of a person by their actions. This leads me on to the Belong or Discipleship stage.

One of the main points of Jesus calling his disciples was to form in them something of his own image; they can then carry on his work in the world. *'Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.'* (John 14:12).

Jesus promises that those who follow him will receive the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, if allowed to work in each disciple and the church as a whole, will develop that character so that we become the hands and feet of Christ on earth, bearing the fruit that comes from having his nature within us.

This is therefore how we make new disciples. First, we engage with those around us so that they feel they belong to a new and alternative community. Second, we give them the space and time to explore the faith of our community and so come to believe. Finally, believing will lead to becoming a different person, someone who lives as Jesus' disciple in their everyday, at home, at work, in the community and in the church.

Frank Reedy

Stainer's Crucifixion: An Act of Devotion ***7pm on Good Friday***

125 years ago, in February 1887, as part of a series of Lenten services, the choir of Marylebone Parish Church in London gave the first performance of a Passiontide cantata that was to become an established favourite in churches throughout the country, and still lives on today. The work was dedicated to William Hodge, Stainer's pupil, friend and colleague at St Paul's Cathedral, organist and choirmaster at Marylebone Parish Church.

When organist at St Paul's, Stainer raised performance standards and greatly expanded the repertoire, introducing Bach's *St Matthew Passion* into the music for Holy Week a decade earlier, but there was at that time no extended Passiontide meditation on a scale and in a musical language that ordinary choirs could perform, and to which congregations could immediately relate.

Stainer's aim was to provide such a piece, and in this he undoubtedly succeeded. So much so that, although he made an immense contribution as organist, conductor, composer, teacher and author, today Stainer is remembered simply for *The Crucifixion* and a few rather fine anthems and hymn-tunes! This wasn't the view at the time: apparently Sir Arthur Sullivan said bluntly and memorably: "He is a genius".

Though intentionally more modest in scale than the Bach *Passions*, *The Crucifixion* is clearly modelled on the same scheme of choruses, chorales, recitatives and arias, its five hymns for congregational participation being a direct parallel to the *Passion* chorales. Of these hymns, "Cross of Jesus" must surely be counted amongst the finest of all hymn tunes.

The Rev William Sparrow-Simpson, another colleague of Stainer at St Paul's, compiled the libretto, drawing on the Gospel accounts for the narrative elements of the story and writing the texts of the choruses, arias and hymns himself.

Some of the music is arguably sentimental, but its simple melodiousness and the powerful message of Christ's Passion still elicits a response from the listener. *The Crucifixion* also has moments of true beauty and significant choral writing skill, "God so loved the world" being a popular anthem in its own right, and there are sections of dramatic interest, in particular a highly effective setting for men's voices of the seven last words from the cross.

Barry Rose, a lifelong advocate of the piece, wrote; "To [Sparrow-Simpson's] words Stainer added his music, writing some of the most memorable hymn-tunes we shall ever hear, and showing a rare sense of understanding in painting the text with music that is both thoughtful and dramatic, whilst also giving us the sublime and unsurpassed setting of 'God so loved the world'".

The choir of All Saints together with Leighton Buzzard Festival Singers and others from across the Ouzel Valley will sing this on Good Friday evening at 7pm, not as a "performance" but as an Act of Devotion. All are welcome, but please arrive and leave in silence, to respect the solemnity of the day.



REPAIR CAFE LB 2025 DATES



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JUN 28	JUL 26	SEP 27	OCT 25	NOV 22

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