

# 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*

**February 2026**

**£1**

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Focus on the Saints:  
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Getting to know our  
clergy in a  
different way –  
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members of the team

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journey ahead” –  
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“Walking the Lenten  
path together” –  
*discussed by  
Preb. David*

Renaissance music  
for Transfiguration  
Sunday

Looking forward to a  
Barn Dance in aid of  
All Saints Preservation  
Trust



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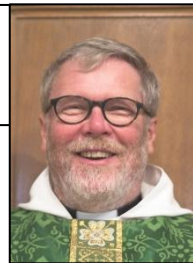
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# ***Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent***

## ***by Preb David MacGeoch***



Dear Friends,

On Ash Wednesday, we begin the sacred season of Lent. As we come forward to receive ashes on our forehead, we are marked with a powerful and humbling sign of our faith. The words spoken:

*“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”, or “Repent and believe in the gospel”* remind us of both the fragility of human life and the enduring mercy of God.

Lent is a forty-day journey of conversion, patterned after Christ’s own time of prayer and fasting in the desert. It is a season that invites us to pause, to examine our lives, and turn our hearts back to God with sincerity and trust.

Through the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and alms giving, we are drawn more deeply into a relationship with God and with one another. Jesus reminds us in the gospels, *“when you pray, go to your inner room... When you fast... When you give alms....”*

As members of the Ouzel Valley Team ministry, we are a community and therefore do not walk the Lenten path alone. We journey together, supporting one another through shared prayer, worship and acts of charity. We encourage you to take part in the liturgies, Stations of the Cross, and opportunities for reconciliation offered during this holy season. The sacrament of reconciliation, in particular allows us to experience the truth of God’s promise.

As we look towards Easter, let this season be a time of hope and renewal as Paul urges us: *“Be reconciled to God”*, reminding us that now is always the right time to begin again.

May this Ash Wednesday awaken with us a renewed desire to follow Christ more closely, to carry our crosses with faith, and a trust in the promise of new life. Let us support one another with prayer, kindness, and patience, confident that the Lord is near to the broken-hearted and that he walks with us every step of this Lenten journey.

***Wishing you a blessed and fruitful Lent. God bless.  
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)

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Messy Mass

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: All Age Service

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Holy Baptism

6.00pm Evening Prayer

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Choral Evensong Plus

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Sung with hymns  
(NO choir) followed by Benediction

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Said Evensong

#### **Weekdays:**

#### **Holy Communion**

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

*(Service of Healing on 4<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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:**

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: 'Chapel Time':

*Lead reflection and discussion*

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

4<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays: Holy Communion

11.00am Holy Communion

1<sup>st</sup> Sundays: Family Service

**Tuesdays:** 7.00pm Holy Communion

**Morning Prayer via Zoom:**

9.00am Monday – Saturday

[www.saintleonardschurch.com](http://www.saintleonardschurch.com)

### **St. Michael's, Eggington**

9.30am 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays: Holy Communion

4<sup>th</sup> Sundays: Café Church 3-4pm

### **St. Nicholas', Hockliffe**

9.30am 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays: Family Communion

4<sup>th</sup> 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.

£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.

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

**Choir Practice:** Friday evenings, 6.30pm Trebles; 7.30 – 8.30pm Full choir.

**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***

Have you renewed your Saints Alive subscription yet? If not, Stephen Jury would be pleased to hear from you.

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Please remember there is a scheme in place with regard to meeting the Religious Affiliation criteria in support of an application to Pulford School. For more information, or to obtain a card, please speak to a sidesperson or the Parish Office.



### ***Worth a smile***

A teacher told her young class of children to try and draw the portrait of someone they knew. While they worked, she walked about, keeping an eye on their progress. One little girl was working diligently, and the teacher asked who she was drawing. The child replied: "I'm drawing God."

The teacher protested that no one knows what God looks like. Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."



A little girl sitting on her grandfather's lap reached up to touch his wrinkled cheek. "Grandpa, did God make you?"

"Yes, sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," she paused. "Grandpa, did God make me too?" Her grandfather assured her that He had. Feeling his wrinkled cheek again, she observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't He?"



A little girl told her mother one day before lunch that her stomach was hurting. Her mother replied: "That's because it's empty, you have to put something into it!"

That evening the minister and his wife came for dinner. The minister looked a bit rough and explained that his head was hurting him. The little girl gave him a sweet smile and said encouragingly: "That's because it's empty, you have to put something into it!"



A man confided to his friend that he and his wife had had a serious argument the night before. "It finally ended," he said, "when she came crawling to me on her hands and knees."

"What did she say?" asked the friend, amazed.

The husband replied, "She said, 'Come out from under that bed, you coward!'"

# Parish Registers

There were no Weddings or Baptisms in December.

## R.I.P. December:

4: Sheila Clark at Bierton;  
9: David Grieff at Bierton,  
Jeanette Slow at St. Barnabas,  
Brian Vaughan at All Saints,  
Christine Cook at Crownhill

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

## Years Mind, February:

1: Christopher Blackbird Taylor, Trevor Lunnon;  
3: Frank Audas; 4: Ted Summerfield;  
6: Thomas Nash; 7: Annie Turney, Yiu To Lau, Lilian Baines, Wayne Johnson;  
9: George Waudby; 11: Stanley Boyce, Doreen Perry; 12: Frederick Bester;  
13: Mary Yirrell; 14: John Olds, Ida Kempson, Victoria Baillon;  
15: Nina Bolton, Winifred Turner, Gillian Marchant;  
18: Bessie Scraggs;  
19: Andrew Cooper; 20: Frank Bates;  
21: Pamela Gilbert, Ivy Wood, Margaret Marsh;  
23: Dorothy Collor, Lilian Cowley, Madge Vincent, Denver Child;  
26: Elsie Bates, Peggy King, Irene Scott;  
27: Tom Skevington, Ivy Francis



## LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

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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](http://www.pulfordschool.org)***

A church school for  
a whole community



The first week of December 2025 welcomed the much loved and anticipated Experience Christmas Trail. The fantastic team of volunteers, in the beautiful backdrop that is All Saints Church, were able to help showcase and recreate that first Christmas for nearly 700 children from many of our town's lower and middle schools. It was a feast for the senses!

From visiting Mary's house and travelling the road to Bethlehem, to experiencing the place where the wise men may have lived, it was an exciting journey. The children got to smell frankincense, make a stained-glass window, make their worries disappear in water, write some angel prayers for peace and even got to take some gold away with them!

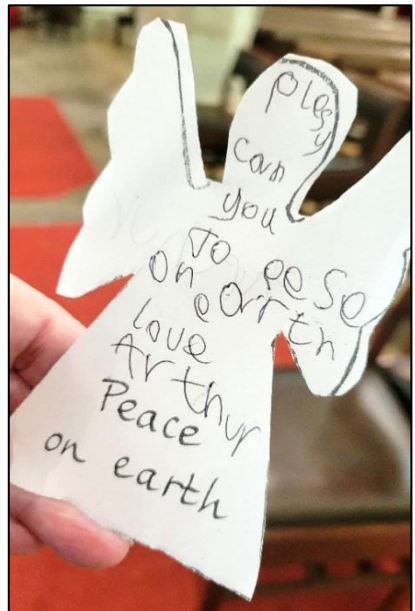
It is always such a pleasure and a privilege to see the awe and wonder in the children's faces as they experience the church in this beautiful way. Some even invited their parents back with them to look at the church the following week! One child was heard commenting to his teacher "I feel good in here". Another, "At Christmas we need to love others".

A big, big thank you to ALL those who helped during the week and setting up and taking down! It's a huge team effort!

Looking forward to Church's Year Experience in May! If you would like to help with future Experiences, please do get in touch.

***Luisa Borrelli,***

***Pulford Teacher and Experience Co-ordinator***







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*On a musical note.....*



## *A hymn for Transfiguration Sunday*

The choir is learning a new anthem which we hope to sing at the 9.30 service on February 15<sup>th</sup> 2026, Transfiguration Sunday. *Quicumque Christum quaeritis* is by **Lassus** (1532 -1594). The text is the twelfth and last poem in the Cathemerinon (a book of daily hymns) of **Prudentius**, originally written in honour of the Epiphany, and will be reproduced, with an English translation, in the news sheet for Transfiguration Sunday.

**Aurelius Prudentius Clemens** was a Roman Christian poet, born in the Roman province of Tarraconensis (now northern Spain) in AD 348. He probably died in the Iberian Peninsula some time after AD 405, possibly around AD 413.

He practised law with some success and was twice provincial governor. Sometime in his 40s, possibly around AD 392, he retired from public life to become an ascetic, fasting until evening and abstaining entirely from animal food. He spent his time writing poems, hymns and controversial works in defence of Christianity.



The poetry of Prudentius is influenced by early Christian authors, such as Tertullian and St. Ambrose, as well as the Bible and the acts of the martyrs. His hymn *Da, puer, plectrum*, including *Corde natus ex parentis* (*Of the Father's Heart Begotten*) and the hymn for Epiphany *O sola magnarum urbium* (*Earth Has Many A Noble City*), both from the Cathemerinon, are still in use today.



**Lassus**, who composed the music for this piece, must be counted, together with Palestrina, among the most important composers of the English Renaissance period. No composer was more often published than Lassus. More than 475 prints containing his work exist, with some pieces being printed more than twenty times.

His name has many variants in different languages. In English, we tend to just call him Lassus. He was a Franco-Flemish composer, so his name is sometimes rendered as Orlande de Lassus, or Roland de Lassus, or even in its Italian form as Orlando di Lasso.

The often-repeated story that as a boy he was kidnapped three times because of the beauty of his voice has no evidence whatsoever to support it.

**Paul Dickens**

# Calendar of Events

## 1<sup>st</sup> February

**Candlemas** Services as usual at All Saints including Messy Mass 11.30am; Festal Evensong for Candlemas 6pm.

## **Bereavement Support Café**

Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm



## 4<sup>th</sup> February

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



## 15<sup>th</sup> February

Services as usual at All Saints including All Age Communion 11.30am

## 18<sup>th</sup> February

**Ash Wednesday** All Saints Holy Communion 10am, Sung Eucharist 7.30pm



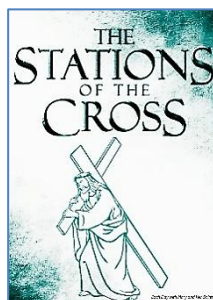
## 20<sup>th</sup> February

**Crafty Natter** All Saints 1.30pm - 3.30pm



## 22<sup>nd</sup> February

Morning services as usual at All Saints; Stations of the Cross 6pm



**All Saints Preservation Trust  
invite you to our fundraising**

# BARN DANCE

**Saturday March 7<sup>th</sup> at  
St Leonards Church Hall**

**Ticket price £15.00 to include Ploughmans  
Family tickets on request**

**Dancing to commence at 7.30pm  
Bring your own drinks and glasses**



**For tickets, please scan QR code  
to reserve tickets and make payment  
on the door or call 07535 973212**





## on ... *The Saints*



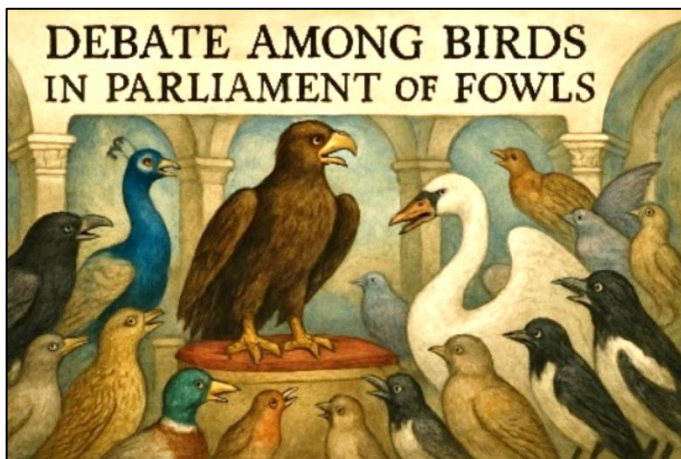
**The Legend:** St Valentine's day, 14<sup>th</sup> February, is a special day for lovers, but how did this connection come about? Its origins may well go back to a poem by Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Parliament of Fowles*. Dame Nature sees over a large flock of birds who are gathered to choose their mates. The birds have a parliamentary debate while three male eagles try to seduce a female bird. The debate is full of speeches and insults, but at the end, none of the three eagles wins the female eagle, and the dream ends welcoming the coming spring.

Chaucer says that the birds will sing for St Valentine and choose their spouse:

*"For this was on  
Saint Valentine's Day,  
when every fowl  
comes to choose his mate.*

...

*Saint Valentine,  
that are full lofty on high  
Thus small fowls  
sing for thy sake.  
Now welcome, summer...*



Various other versions have been told about the origins of the St. Valentine tradition. The most touching is that of two young lovers, Sabinus and Serapia, whose relationship was hindered by their parents because they belonged to different religions (Christian and Pagan). They turned to Valentine, Bishop of Terni, for help and he married them. When Serapia fell ill with tuberculosis, Sabinus called St. Valentine to her death-bed. Sabinus implored the Saint to help him, telling him that he could not live without his companion.

### **Forgetting the many legends, what do we know about St Valentine himself?**

There appear to be at least three Saints Valentine with connections to February 14<sup>th</sup>: Valentine of Rome - a priest; Valentine of Terni - a bishop; and Valentine of Africa - about whom nothing is known except that he was martyred in the Roman Province of Africa on 14<sup>th</sup> February.

Two priests, two healing miracles; both executed or buried on the Via Flaminia - although the accounts give differing dates, there is a common nucleus of facts, giving rise to the idea that maybe they are in fact a single person.





*One of many definitions of a saint:  
"a holy person who knows he is a sinner  
and embraces heroic suffering and joy in Christ"*



## ***This month: Saint Valentine***



### **Valentine of Rome:**

The Emperor Claudius had banned marriages for young men, believing that single men made better soldiers. Valentine of Rome defied this edict by secretly performing marriage ceremonies which ultimately led to his arrest.

While under house arrest guarded by a judge, he cured the judge's blind foster daughter, and convinced the whole family to be baptised. He didn't have the same success with the emperor, who convicted him and sentenced him to death and martyrdom, around AD 270.

There is an unsubstantiated tale that before his death, this Valentine wrote to the judge's daughter and signed it off with "From your Valentine".

### **Valentine of Terni:**

The story regarding the Bishop of Terni takes place about seventy years later: Valentine was invited to Rome by the rhetorician and philosopher Crato, a teacher of Greek and Latin.

Crato had a son named Chaeremon who suffered from a physical deformity that forced him to keep his head between his knees. No doctor had managed to heal him. Crato promised Valentine half of his possessions if he healed his son. But during a long night-time conversation, Valentine explained that it would not be his useless wealth that would heal the boy, but his faith in the one true God. Valentine then prayed over the boy who regained his health. Moved by this miracle, Crato and his whole family were baptised by the bishop.



**St Valentine nearer to home:** There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Whitefriars Carmelite church in Dublin. On Saint Valentine's Day, many individuals make a pilgrimage to the shrine to pray for happiness and true love.

***Geoff Huskisson***

## ***Good Shepherd, Sandhills***

***Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh***

***Tel: 01525 838450***

***Churchwardens:***

***Stuart Blofeld; Katharine Reedy***



**CHURCH of the  
GOOD SHEPHERD**

### ***Celebrating Christmas in our community***

Christmas presents many opportunities and this year during Advent we tried out some new events as well as doing those that have now become annual traditions.

Things kicked off with Carol Singing at Greenfields Retirement Development on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November. This is now the 4<sup>th</sup> year running that we have led this event, and a good number of us from Church of the Good Shepherd took part, singing or playing. Everyone greatly enjoyed themselves and we also sang happy birthday to a gentleman who was celebrating his 80<sup>th</sup> that day. There was plenty of lively chat over refreshments too.

On the afternoon of Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December, a small and intrepid group of CGS folk led an open-air event: Carol Singing on the Green at Astral Park. We had advertised that we'd be there, and a number of people from the surrounding houses came out, but the cold and windy weather made it difficult to stand outside for long. However, it was good to go outdoors and do something new, and it has given us something to build on for next year.

The following day, Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December, we spent a joyous hour at our Christingle for adults with learning disabilities at Astral Park Community Centre. Having run this event for the first time last year, everyone was keen to do it again. It was great to worship together as a community. Our worship included Makaton signing for carols and for 'We wish you a merry Christmas'.

On Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December we led another carol singing event, this time at Norton Court. It was very positively received by residents and by the new manager.

Our Family Carols event on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December was well attended and the combination of Christingles, crafts, carols and a Christmas story that children and adults could participate in, made for a vibrant and relaxed celebration. It was brilliant to see everyone enjoying themselves. The hall was decorated with wonderful Christmas lights, adding to the magical atmosphere. This is the second time we have run the event in this format, which has developed out of Beer & Carols to be more family-focused.

Finally, the Midnight Communion at St Michael and All Angels, Billington, brought together members of both the CGS and St Michael's communities for a special and peaceful welcome to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on Christmas morning.

Christmas comes and goes quickly, but it is good to reflect on these treasured times of community celebration together. We pray that the "light in the darkness" will sustain us all as we continue through the dark winter months.

***Katharine Reedy***

## ***St. Nicholas, Hockliffe***

***Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney***

***Tel: 01525 237633***

***There are no churchwardens at present.  
For all information, please contact the vicar.***



### ***Epiphany: Light for the Journey Ahead***

January often feels like a quiet in-between season. The decorations of Christmas have been packed away, and the new year stretches out before us. In the church calendar, this is no empty space. It is the Season of Epiphany—a time to notice God's light still shining, guiding us forward on our journey of faith.

During Advent, we journeyed in hope, joy and love. At St Nicholas, our milestones were the patronal supper, an evening of friendship, music and good food at the beginning of Advent, and the joyous *Carols By Candlelight* which prepared our hearts for Christ's coming. At Christmas, we celebrated the miracle of Emmanuel. Epiphany asks us to move forward, trusting in God.

The story of Epiphany centres on the Magi, who followed a star into the unknown. They, like us, did not have a detailed map, only a promise and a light to guide them. Their journey reminds us that faith often calls us to move forward with trust, even when our path is not clear. Like them, we are invited to keep walking, watching for signs of God's presence along the way.

January is a fitting time for reflection. The days are cold and the landscape may appear lifeless, but beneath the surface, change is already happening. Spring is quietly preparing to emerge. In the same way, God continues to work in us—even when growth is not immediately visible.

Epiphany encourages us to pay attention. To notice how Christ is revealed not only in grand moments, but in ordinary days. In conversations, acts of kindness, moments of prayer, God's light continues to shine. This season reminds us that Christmas was not the end of the story: it was the beginning of Christ's life and ministry that still transforms the world.

As we look ahead toward spring, Epiphany calls us to carry Christ's light forward. The journey of faith does not pause after Christmas; it deepens. We are invited to reflect on where God may be leading us in the coming months, both individually and as a church. What new life might God be growing? What steps of faith is He asking us to take?

In this season between celebration and renewal, may we walk with joy, hope, love and charity. And may we remember that the same God who met us in the manger continues to guide us—step by step—into the promise of new life.

***Roger Spalding***



## ***St. Michael & All Angels, Billington***

***Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh***

***Tel: 01525 838450***

***Churchwardens:***

***Julia Haviland 850380; Tina Thompson 378411***



With Christmas 2025 now a fading memory we look back on what, sadly, was stressful to some but for the many would have been a time of great joy and happiness. The congregation of St. Michael's and the people of Billington were able to enjoy three events bringing the community together and telling the Christmas story in the best of ways. We began on 5th December with a Christmas tree lights switch on at the Village Hall followed by Carols to the very welcome music of James McFarland and Carl Moulding with Rev'd Steve Marsh acting as MC. There followed 'festive nibbles' and mulled wine and although the weather tried its best to dampen the spirits the occasion was enjoyed by all.

On 21st December we had our traditional Carols by Candlelight Service in St Michael's with the whole interior glowing with the light and warmth of hundreds of candles. Apart from the beauty of the Nativity itself and the welcome additional visitors to swell our congregation there is something magical about the atmosphere in this ancient church at this time. We are fortunate in having all round oak panelling which lends itself to safe support of real candles without which it just could not be done. For the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, we were again able to welcome a number of visitors we would not expect to see on a regular basis. Perhaps we should have candles all year round!

As we now move to January, heralded in by extreme cold, ice and snow, we wish all our readers a Happy and Peaceful New Year and we thank all our clergy, our PCC, Church Wardens and volunteers for everything they do. A special mention of thanks to Molly Bowerman who has now 'retired' from leading services, we will miss her thoughtful preaching but look forward to her continuing presence as a much-loved member of the congregation.

*Lighting the candles for Midnight Mass*

***Geoff Haviland***



## ***St. Michael's, Eggington***

***Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney***

***Tel: 01525 237633***

***Church Officers:***

***Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861***



As we step into February, with Candlemas already upon us, I suspect many of us are still finding stray pine needles determined to outlive the season. Christmas always seems to leave its mark — and this year was no exception.

Our Carol Service was wonderfully received, full of familiar music and the gentle bustle that reminds us why community matters. The Crib/Christingle Service glowed with energy; while Carol worked away like a quiet miracle in human form behind the scenes, I was secretly amazed at how many people we managed to squeeze into St Michael's.

Christmas Eve brought us a warm and reflective lay-led Midnight Service, blessed with a truly encouraging attendance. There is something about gathering in the hush of that night that brings faith right up close, as though the whole village stands still for a moment to listen.

The season was rounded off with the village Christmas celebration at The Dukes — as always, a thoroughly enjoyable evening — and our thanks go to Steve Sheppard for once again organising it so smoothly.

And now Candlemas calls us onward — that tender turning point where we look back at the Child in the manger and forward to the light that will carry us through Lent and beyond. It reminds us that faith is not confined to a season; it flickers, grows, and travels with us.

Wishing you all brightness for the weeks ahead, and the courage to carry your own small light wherever it is needed.



### **Upcoming Events in Eggington:**

Elevenes on the first Wednesday of each month.

**March 7th** Quiz Evening, 7.00 pm, Village Hall.

Booking via Martine on 07826 905009.

**March 15th** Mothering Sunday Service, 9.30 am.

***Linda Morris***

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# ***Snowdrop Garden Open Days***

— *possibly for the Last Time* —  
*in support of the Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust*

We are pleased to share that the Bishop of St Albans' Garden will open to visitors this February, offering a much-loved chance to enjoy God's creation in its early spring beauty. This year's openings may be the last time the garden is made accessible to the public, making the occasion especially meaningful.

Thousands of snowdrops and other early bulbs will be in bloom, creating a peaceful, uplifting place to wander and reflect. All proceeds will go directly to the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust, which helps fund essential repairs to historic churches across Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

Bishop Richard, Acting Bishop of St Albans, writes:

"This is a lovely way to enjoy the first signs of spring while supporting an important cause. We're proud to contribute to preserving the unique heritage of our local churches."

## ***Open Garden Dates***

Abbey Gate House, Abbey Mill Lane,  
St Albans AL3 4HD

- Saturday 14 February
- Sunday 15 February
- Saturday 21 February
- Sunday 22 February

**Time:** 2pm–4pm

**Entry:** £5 per adult  
(all proceeds to the Trust)

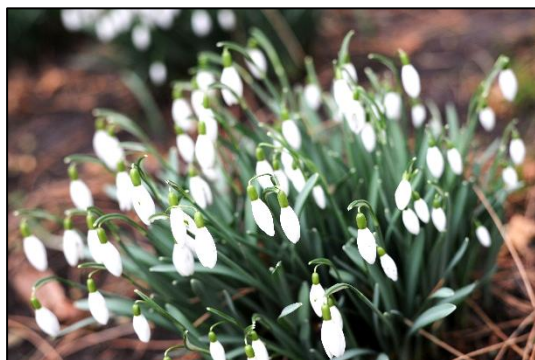
All are warmly invited to visit the garden—perhaps for the final time as we are not sure if the new Bishop will continue to allow the garden to be opened to the public—enjoy its seasonal beauty and support the preservation of our cherished church buildings.

For more information, please contact:

**Jane Smith**, PA to the Bishop

Phone: 01727 229 073

Email: [janesmith@stalbandiocese.org](mailto:janesmith@stalbandiocese.org)







## ***Getting to know your clergy in a different way***

***This month:  
Preb. David MacGeoch***

### ***“Choir Boy Stops Wedding of the Year.”***

These were the words on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1975 that the local newspaper sellers were calling out all over the City Centre of Birmingham: *“Choir boy stops wedding of the year.”*

It was a day implanted in my memory. I woke up early that morning very excited because I was going to have a whole day off school and be paid for the luxury of not going in. You see, I was a chorister in Birmingham Cathedral Choir at the time and we had been asked if we would sing two hymns during the pretend wedding between Noel Gordon and Hugh Mortimer. This wedding had had a lot of hype over the proceeding months because it was through the Midlands soap, ‘Crossroads’ where the proprietor of Crossroads Motel was to be married. This soap at the time was as popular as Coronation Street, and EastEnders still was not on our TV screens. Crossroads was on twice a week and watched by millions of viewers from all over the country.

Choir arrived at the cathedral in good time and rehearsed with the actors and actresses for what seemed like ages. We had to sing these two hymns over and over and over again. Of course, what nobody told us was that to film you had to have extra lighting. Please bear in mind that I am only 11 years old and we were not the main people of the wedding. Some of these big lights were shining brightly on me for some hours and I ended up with the most horrendous headache. This headache turned into feeling very unwell. Being very young, I didn’t know how to stop them filming or tell anybody I was feeling so sick. Well, the consequences you can work out for yourselves but needless to say several choristers had to be removed as I had been physically ill! You’ll only see me singing in one hymn looking very pale and not seen at all in the second one.

To this day, I have no idea how my illness had got out into the wide world and of course, because of my age, I could not be named. But my migraine somehow hit not only the local paper that night but also the local news on TV. For quite a few days people wrote letters into the local paper saying things like, I had summoned up many people’s feelings in the city as the Cathedral should never have been used for a fake wedding. So you now know that if I disappear during the service, I have learnt to withdraw if I have a migraine rather than to remain and create mayhem within the service!

The second thing you may not know about me is that I was the warm-up act for Kylie Minogue when she was performing on the pyramid stage at the Glastonbury festival some years ago.

Many of you know that I was previously Vicar in Glastonbury and the question I'm often asked is, did I attend the festival? I have been very fortunate as Michael Eavis was a regular attendee at the church in Glastonbury as it was also the civic church. He would attend Remembrance and the Mayor's service every year. We got talking and he asked if I would wander around the festival talking to anybody who wished to talk to me over the duration of the festival. So I would happily wander around with a Glastonbury festival style hat and a suitable dog collar and shirt, obviously again Glastonbury style. The idea was that I walked around the site during the day, and in the evening, I could put my dog collar to one side and listen to any concert I wish to attend. Hardly a hardship as you can imagine. It used to take me a good three days to cover the whole site. Bear in mind, I would clock off around six in the evening each night. I have had some amazing experiences but to say that I was the warm-up for Kylie Minogue is something I'm very proud of.

A few days before the festival started Rev'd. Kate Botley, who hosts the radio 2 morning show on a Sunday came to Glastonbury with the BBC. I was interviewed by her in Glastonbury Abbey talking about the Holy Thorn. This is a tree that legend says Joseph of Arimathea planted when he came to Glastonbury. What makes this unique is that it flowers at Christmas every year but also at Easter. This makes it an extraordinary tree as Easter varies every year.

I don't know how, but we ended up talking about various acts that would be at the festival that year, and I was heard to be saying that I would be attending Stormzy who was a big noise at the time and performing on the Friday on the Pyramid stage. What I didn't know is when this would be broadcast.



So there I am amongst thousands of people around the pyramid stage waiting for Kylie to come on when I suddenly get lots of text messages from friends from all over the country saying, "Dave you're on TV with Kate and it's just before Kylie is about to come onto the telly." So you see Kylie and I have a following as millions were watching this before she came on stage. Thank you to the BBC and of course to Kylie herself!

(We thought that you might find it interesting to hear a little about your clergy over the coming months in a way that might surprise you. Little things that you might not have known about.)

***God Bless, Preb. David***

150 years ago, Mary Sumner, a vicar's wife, had a vision of women supporting and encouraging each other in their faith and nurturing their families. In 2026 Mothers' Union has 4 million members in 84 countries, changing families and communities.

One woman in one parish began it all. She saw the struggles of women in families in her time and chose to act, offering practical help, spiritual support and fellowship. She followed the example of Christ, becoming a pioneer for social and spiritual change. That legacy is still changing lives and communities around the world.

For 150 years, Mothers' Union members have put faith into action to support women and families facing poverty, violence, and injustice. But many communities will still be hurting — and the world will need MU more than ever. In 2026, we'll rise to meet that need. Will you?

We are inviting every diocese to welcome 150 brand new members in 2026.

That is 150 new voices, new hearts, and new hands, joining the movement in every part of Britain and Ireland. As Members (or Friends), they will be joining our wonderful movement for the first time.

It is time to reach out to new people and invite them to Join Us and Join In. Welcome them to meetings, events or to volunteer in MU projects and programmes. When they know what we do, they will join!

For more information: contact Alison Dobbie via the office  
or [www.mothersunion.org.uk](http://www.mothersunion.org.uk)



***Mary Sumner's personal prayer:***

*All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee;  
and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken,  
whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live.*





## REPAIR CAFE LB

**2026**  
Dates will follow  
next month

25

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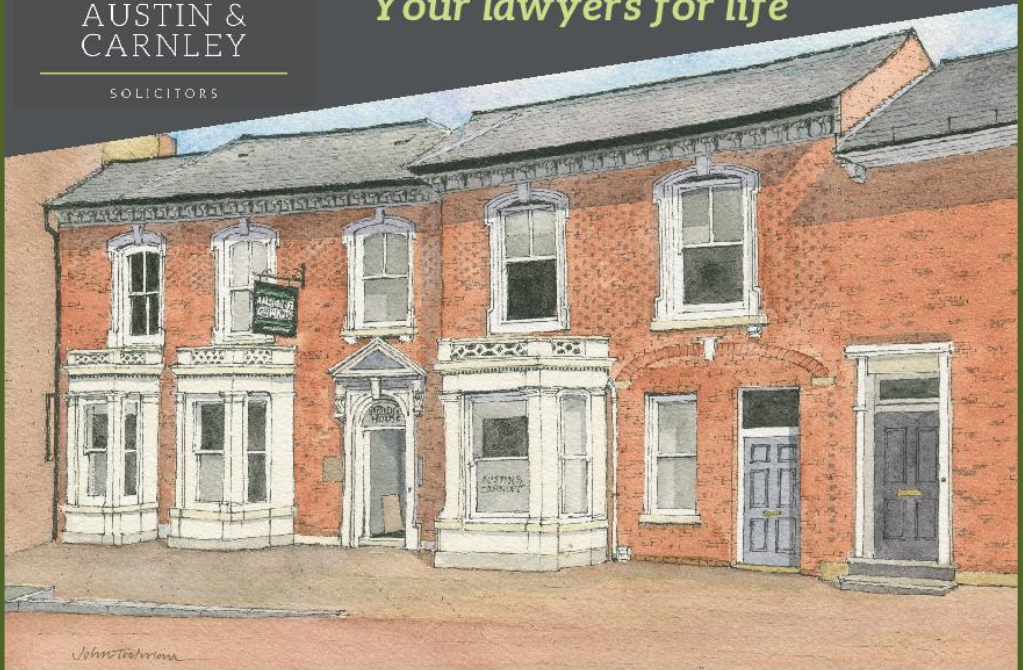
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