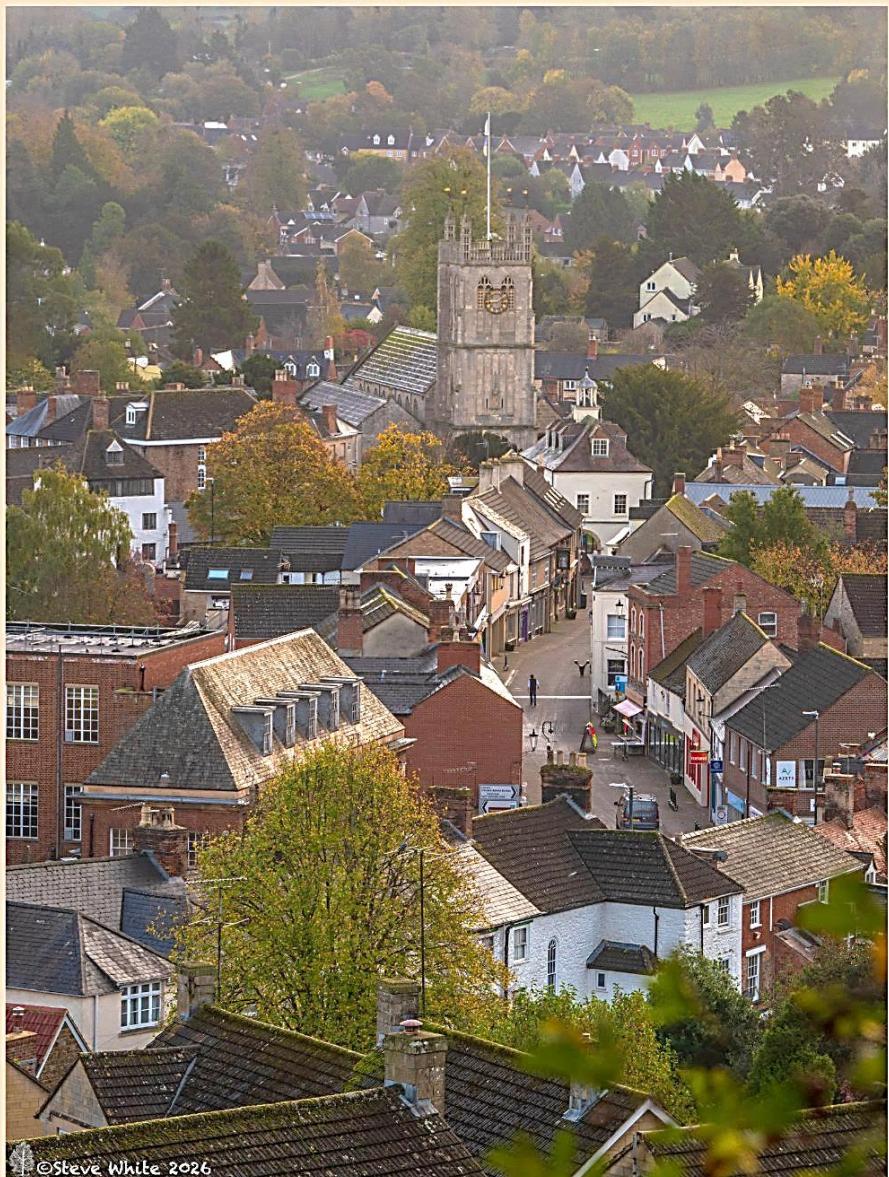


# The Messenger

## February 2026

### The Parish Of Dursley



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70p each or £7 annually

# **The Ewelme Benefice**

**The parish of Dursley  
and**

**the parish of Uley with Owlpen and Nympsfield**

**Web Site – [www.ewelmebenefice.co.uk](http://www.ewelmebenefice.co.uk)**

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## A Message from the Editors

Dear Readers

Welcome to our February edition, of the Messenger.

Spring is just around the corner, looking out for the daffodils and tulips to cheer us up and to throw off the January blues. Easter is not far away either.

We have a new advertiser, see page 27.

Please note views and opinions expressed within these pages are the writers own personal observations.

From Valerie and Judith (editors)

**Front Cover:** theme for 2026

'In and around Dursley Parish'

*Photo this month is an ariel view of St James and the town by*

©Steve White

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**DEADLINE FOR MARCH 2026 ISSUE  
IS SUNDAY 15th FEBRUARY 2026**



# FEBRUARY 2026

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## Revd David Vonberg writes...

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On my many walks around Cam and Dursley, during the changing seasons, I like to photograph what catches my eye. One tree has fascinated me for all sorts of reasons and at each season of the year I photograph its different moods. This was taken early last year in all its bareness and lack of colour.

For many, such a bare tree is not worth recording. Surely it would be far better to wait until the spring with its leaves and blossoms? Although it is spectacular, it is only part of the story. Without the deadness of the winter there would be no flourishing in the spring. Deciduous trees need the winter months to prepare for the bursting growth of spring and summer.



I want to suggest that the picture of the bare tree is one way to understand where we are on our faith journey. For me and perhaps also for you, there are times on the journey of faith, where the spark burns low and we wonder whether we are believing in a series of fairy tales which we hold on to keep us happy. God can seem a very long way away. That can be enormously painful. Through those times we may carry on coming to church, but with no enthusiasm or expectation that we will discover a new way of looking at things, as though the spark of the story of Christ has disappeared.

The temptation is to search ways of quickly resolving this by trying to kick start our enthusiasm. But perhaps, the questions and doubts which assail us are part of the necessary journey of exploring the depth and mystery of God's love in Christ as we let go of what is holding us back from discovering new insights into God.

Many years ago, I had a small book called "Guides to the Hidden Springs" by Mark Gibbard, one of the Cowley Fathers. It told the stories of some of the great saints of past generations whose writings had helped Father Mark to find new ways of watering his faith.

At times there is a need to rediscover the hidden springs of God's love in our lives. During this month of February we begin Lent, with added opportunities to explore with others the depths of our faith. There will be the ecumenical evening services on the theme of "A Cloud of Witnesses". There will also be different Lent courses organised by the different churches which will again be advertised, so do keep your eyes open.

By the way, I wonder if you can guess where the photograph was taken? No prizes – but do send your answers in to me!

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## February Thoughts from The Benefice Office...

by Clare White

We've escaped January, finally. It always feels like the longest month of the year and then we dash into the shortest month and blink and the year has passed again.

Lent starts this month with the tasty Shrove Tuesday and the flipping of lemon soaked pancakes. Ash Wednesday brings us the imposition of ashes and then a time for reflection towards Easter.

This Lent Churches Together are holding services at 6pm on a Sunday evening. The reflection will talk about people of faith across the centuries, who can speak to us today.

On 22nd February the first service will be at St George's, Upper Cam where Revd Fiona and Phil Greenow will talk about William Tyndale, our own local person of faith.

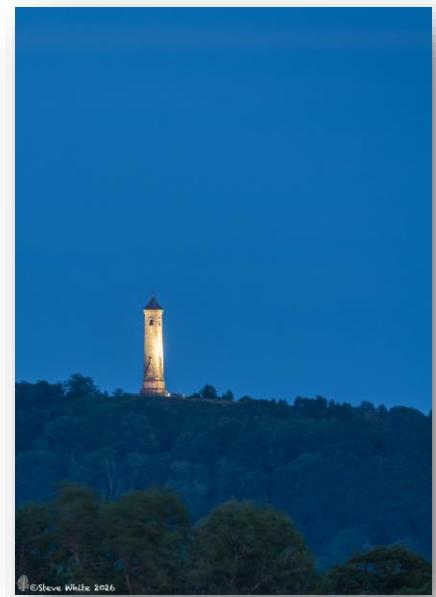
William was an English Bible scholar who became a leading figure in the Protestant Reformation in the years leading up to his execution. He translated much of the Bible into English and was influenced by the works of Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther.

Tyndale's translations were the first English Scriptures to draw directly from Hebrew and Greek texts, the first English translation to take advantage of the printing press, the first of the new English Bibles of the Reformation.

William translated the bible into colloquial language making it accessible to you and me!

We are reminded daily of him locally if we look towards North Knoll. My Father was born in North Nibley and it reminds me of him. On the 40th anniversary of my Dad's death we paid to have the monument lit in his memory. It is a lovely thing to do and it seems to be lit most evenings by families remembering birthdays and anniversaries of loved ones.

How interesting that Tyndale was killed on a charge of heresy in August 1536 and was condemned to death, having been publicly stripped of his priesthood. And yet we still read his translation of the bible today and translations of his translation, befitting our modern world. He is never forgotten,



particularly locally as we remember him by looking at our skyline and the remembrance of loved ones.

Translating the bible is something we still do as we share the good news in accessible language across the globe.

By children's stories or by the latest translation – hopeful that each person who reads the bible will find their good news within.

In Matthew 28: 19-20 we read "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*"



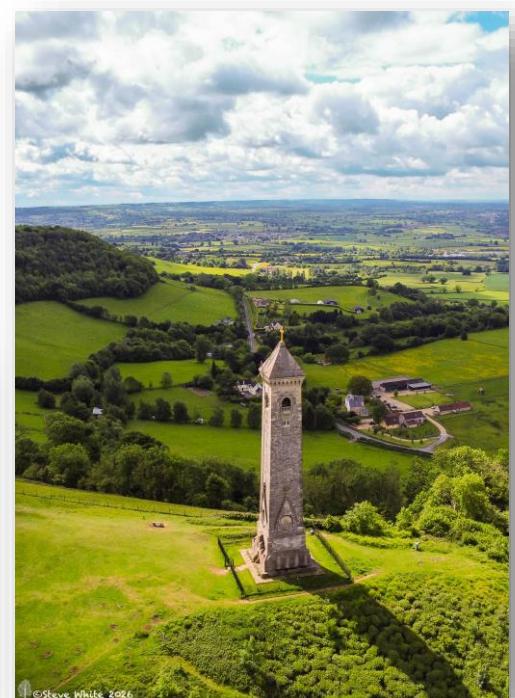
The Lord is with us always in old times and new, his words although translated differently will reach the ears of those who want to hear them.

If you want to light the Monument for an anniversary/birthday/remembrance you can use this link

<https://tyndalemonument.uk/booking/>

It costs £17 (further donations can be added)

*Photos by Steve White Photography*



# LENT 2026 A CLOUD OF WITNESSES



All the services take  
place at 6.00pm  
at different churches

A series of  
Ecumenical  
Evening Services  
reflecting on some  
of the great people  
of the faith in the  
past centuries, and  
what they can  
say to us today

**22nd February**

"William Tyndale"

**St George's Cam**  
**GL11 5PQ**

**1st March**

"George Whitefield"

**Dursley Tab**  
**GL11 4LW**

**8th March**

"Thomas Merton"

**The Quarry Chapel**  
**GL11 6JA**

**15th March**

"Mother Julian of  
Norwich"

**Dursley Methodist**  
**Church GL11 4BS**

**22nd March**

"St Benedict"

**St Dominic's**  
**GL11 4ES**

**Don't forget the**  
**Walk of Witness on**  
**Good Friday**  
**3rd April**

## Light Lent Lunches 2026

Starting on 23rd February, from 12 noon  
in St James Parish Centre, Dursley.

Soup, bread, cake and tea or coffee will be  
served each Monday during Lent.

All are welcome.

All donations will be donated  
to our nominated charities.





## Prayer for Grace

As the sun rises and casts its first light on a new day, it is a reminder of the incredible grace that God has bestowed upon us. Each morning provides a fresh opportunity to embrace this grace, allowing it to guide and strengthen us throughout our day.

Father God, I know that your grace is sufficient and that You are our ever-present help us in times of need, but sometimes our actions do not reflect these truths. It's much easier for us to either complain about our stressful and difficult circumstances or try to take matters into our own hands to try to fix or change what seems to be causing us to feel so overwhelmed. But we know that we need to come to you and ask for grace when we have reached our limits. You are faithful to provide all things that we need because you are a gracious Father who cares deeply for your children. We come to you as your child today, boldly and humbly asking for your sustaining and powerful grace carry us through each challenging moment. You are faithful in every season, and we thank you for reminding us to come to you first and foremost.

## Verse 1 of Amazing Grace.

*Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)  
that saved a wretch like me!*

*I once was lost, but now am found,  
was blind, but now I see.*

The writer of the hymn - John Newton, a slave ship captain, was caught in a violent storm at sea, he was saved and went on to become a priest, giving his life to God.

John said he prayed for mercy and was saved. He looked at this incident in his life as a conversation he had with God, it was his road to Damascus.

The Lord saved the wretch that was John from death. He looked at it as grace from God, he was lost but was found then being able to see clearly, full of God's grace and mercy.

This sentiment is applied to our own modern lives, I was lost for years from my faith and God saved me through the grace of good Christian people, these people in our community showed me that with their grace they can be an example to others. This shows that the grace of God can save any wretch or feelings of wretchedness.

Your own faith journey is personal to you and should fit your life with God, reflecting in his given grace.

We can all be blind – taking time to stop, think and let God's grace in will give us the sight we need – the required spectacles of truth and light.

When God called me again it wasn't on the road to Damascus, it was in the Parish Centre. The grace of God will find us anywhere we are, maybe not with blinding lights and cymbal crashes, or drowning on the high seas, but in a moment where we feel in need, or just open to letting God.

## **Verse 2**

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.*

## **Reflection**

Let us, in our minds eye turn round, and cast our eyes back on the pathway of our lives thus far.

I imagine that each one of us will see, along the path, that we have left the litter of many episodes of varying challenge.. Traumatic times physical dangers.. physical illness.. mental torment.. emotional exhaustion.. temptations and more. All individually recalled by us but collectively known to God.

As we reflect, we might dare to see where and how God's amazing grace has been present. Perhaps through the gift of family.. The gift of friends.. the gift of strangers.. The gift of professional intervention In so many other different ways.

For some of us there may be times of complete bleakness, one set of footprints. As in the footsteps poem, can you see now that God was carrying you? Holding you? while, perhaps like Jacob, you wrestled with him - but all the while he loved you until you got to a place of letting him in. Perhaps those gifts which he longs for us to benefit from remain wrapped in the boxes until we accept them and take them out?

More recently as I have had to learn to wrap myself in Gods grace, may I suggest we have never been promised the absence of battle.. life is not like that.

God is not like that, he continually refines us.. Shapes us.. Moulds us.. Comforts us...

But we are absolutely promised His grace which is the quiet assurance that, no matter the challenge or depth of struggle, God's love, acceptance, and power is always there to carry us through now and into the future whatever that brings.



## MUSIC NEWS FOR February...

*by Director of Music Nigel Davies*

---

As I write this in mid January, the carol books have been put away until next Christmas. Phew! On the plus side, there has been much to enjoy even if the "Faithful" begin to flag after six repetitions. I didn't once have to play the tedious "usual" tune to "While Shepherds Watched their Flocks", and, having forgotten the music, at the Christingle service I was able to vamp "Little Donkey" - arguably one of the most cringeable Christmas songs of all time, but there are plenty to choose from..... I was pleased to be asked back to my former school to accompany the congregational carols and was heartened to witness real standards of excellence from the choirs , but, on the home front, whilst I thoroughly enjoyed the lusty congregational singing at the Christmas Carol Service and Midnight Mass, I was hugely disappointed in the level of sound generated by the capacity congregation for the Christingle Service on Christmas Eve. Thank goodness the Rector gave a strong lead, otherwise I would not have known which verse I was meant to be playing!

I was amazed to see a copy of our local primary school's Christmas Service held at St James as there was not one "traditional" carol in evidence; not even "Away in a Manger" or "Silent Night" and that from a Church School. It made me think that we are going to lose many of our traditional carols before very long. They will become museum pieces and enshrined at Kings College Cambridge as the "I Sing Pop", and tediously repetitive worship songs become the musical diet of our young people. Incidentally, can someone explain why worship songs seem to encourage people to put their hands in the air? My theory is that the music is so awful, they are asking to leave the room.

Listening to the traditional Dorset carols at "Twelfth Night with Thomas Hardy" made me further wonder about the demise of our carol singing traditions. When did a group of singers last knock on your door to sing a couple of carols? We are going to need the present-day equivalent of Vaughan Williams and Cecil Sharp to preserve our wonderful, but fast disappearing heritage. Let's hope it happens soon, otherwise it will be too late.

## Music for February

1st	am	Nunc Dimittis in A minor – Noble	Willan in D
8th	am	Be Thou my Vision – Chilcott	Woodard Service –
	pm	Shephard	
	pm	Open Thy Gates – Harrison	Rose Responses
		And I saw a new Heaven – Bainton	Murrill in E
15th	am	Informal Worship	
18th	pm	Thou knowest Lord – Purcell	Miss Brevis –
		Lotti	
(Ash Wednesday			
22nd	am	Benefice Service at Uley	



### January Acrostic Poem....*by Sally Hayward*

---

**J**anuary  
**A**nother  
**N**ew Year 2026' begins;  
**U**sual resolutions  
**A**re made  
**R**emembering the  
**Y**ears that have past

Sorry this is late, but better late than never. Sally says it's 6 years since she did the first acrostic. Thank you and keep up the good work.

*Judith*

### February Acrostic Poem

**F**ire is lit and the  
**E**mber's glow  
**B**rings us close together, the real  
**R**eason why it's best for  
**U**s to stay in; we  
**A**lways looking forward to the spring  
**R**eminiscing the  
**Y**ears that have past



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our next  
events



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---

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This month I have been thinking forward towards Lent.



Climate Stewards is part of the A Rocha family of organisations. They work globally, to help people, churches and charities assess, off-set and reduce their carbon footprint.

They offer suggestions and strategies to help manage them.

Their aim is also to help people around the world to adapt to climate change.

One of the Church of England Five Marks of Mission is "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth". Climate Stewards suggest that during Lent, when Christians are traditionally 'giving up something' to help us focus on God, we might consider a 'Carbon Fast'. This may involve making a simple change such as remembering to take reusable bags to the shops, reduce our dairy and meat consumption or even lift sharing. Larger changes might involve changing to a renewable energy provider or changing to an electric car or even taking fewer flights. It is surprising how making even small changes can add up and help with an overall greater change. On their website

[www.climatestewards.org/resources/lower-carbon-living](http://www.climatestewards.org/resources/lower-carbon-living),

Climate Stewards have free resources with tips to help you lower or even off-set your carbon footprint. There is also a guide how to calculate your carbon footprint which can be interesting when working out if the changes one makes is helping.

Alternatively, you may wish to play the 'Carbon Footprint' card game found at the Eco Church area of St James notice board. It's a simple game which only lasts a minute or so. It tests your understanding of the carbon footprint values different activities have as well as provides helpful hints and tips on how to lower the values.



Limestone Woundwort (Stachys Alpina)

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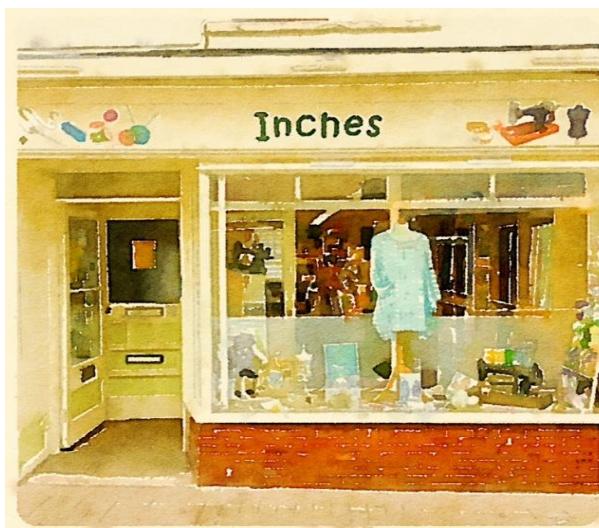
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*Contd from page 12.....*

The Eco Church Group have been able to plant in St James Churchyard three seedlings of this rare and endangered British wildflower. They are planted up against the church wall, in the triangle that is usually left to 'go to meadow' in the spring. According to the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, there are only three known places in the UK where it exists, Gloucestershire, Conwy County Borough and Denbighshire.

It is endangered because the national population is low, and therefore at risk from further loss such as an adverse weather episode. It also thrives when our winters are cold and summers are warm. This traditional weather pattern appears to be altering with Climate Change.

The plant, when mature, has pinky-red flowers with a distinctive yellow eye, which are arranged on a flower-spike, 40-80cm tall. It would be wonderful if these plants settle in and thrive in the churchyard too.

Local environmental enthusiast, Julian Jones (Lionel and Hazel's son) has kindly donated the seedlings he has nurtured from a stock of the plant, which is growing in St Georges church, Cam.

Best Wishes from Gill

Are you interested in finding out more about St James Eco Church?

Do you have ideas or suggestions which promote sustainability that you would like to share?

Why not come along to one of the St James Eco Church meetings?  
Please check the pew sheet for further details or email Gill at

[Gill.mather@btinternet.com](mailto:Gill.mather@btinternet.com)



## References

[www.climatestewards.org](http://www.climatestewards.org)

[www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm)

[https://www.gloswildlifetrust.org/nature-reserves/old-london-road](http://www.gloswildlifetrust.org/nature-reserves/old-london-road)

~~On Thursday 30 January we held our AGM in the ringing room (suitably heated), Rev. Juliet in the Chair. She mentioned in her welcome that this was the first time in her ministry that she was in a~~

church which had bells. The meeting followed the usual format, with a slight change in the committee. The new committee is:

Ringing Master Isaac O'Shea

Deputy Ringing Master Philip Pope

Secretary Elizabeth Byrne

Treasurer Anne Pope

Steeple Keeper Andrew Ward.

---

### **Bernard Bowden (April 1943 – January 2025)**

Bernard and Jean Bowden moved from Longparish, Hampshire to Dursley in the early 2000s. While living in Longparish Bernard had responded to the call for Millennium learners and learned to handle a bell. Their move to Dursley was to pursue his business interest, he was an electronics engineer and had run his own company. Soon after moving, Bernard started to lose his sight and hearing and consequently, he retired.

It was during conversations with Philip Pope and Liz Byrne that Jean mentioned Bernard had learned to ring but hadn't pursued it due to his deteriorating sight. Philip invited him up to a Friday simulator beginners practice to try out Dursley bells. For five years Bernard enjoyed ringing, especially the social side après practice in The Old Spot. He also liked the practices at Berkeley for their easy going front six, the company and where post ringing social activity was in the Salutation. Eventually, Bernard's deteriorating sight and hearing caused him to lose confidence and he stopped ringing.

During Bernard's short ringing career, he rang his first quarter peal on the simulator at Dursley (see below). His last was at Dursley 16 May 2011. Dursley (sim),

At St. James the Great

Tenor: 11 cwt

On Friday, 31 August 2007

**1260 Doubles (2)**

1 Ian Unsworth (C) 4 Philip Pope

2 Jackie Spratt 5 Frank Byrne

3 Anne Pope 6 Bernard Bowden

First attempt 6

~~Dursley (sim),~~

~~At St. James the Great~~

~~Tenor: 11 cwt~~

~~On Friday, 31 August 2007~~

~~**1260 Doubles (2)**~~

~~1 Ian Unsworth (C) 4 Philip Pope~~

~~2 Jackie Spratt 5 Frank Byrne~~

~~3 Anne Pope 6 Bernard Bowden~~

~~First attempt 6~~

~~This quarter is a significant achievement for Bernard who, since learning to ring as an adult for the millennium, he has lost most his sight and hearing.~~

~~In all, Bernard rang 16 quarter peals, all on the tenor behind. Eleven of these were at Dursley, one each at Stinchcombe, Leonard Stanley, North Nibley, Coaley and one at Longparish (see below) for which we made a special journey so that Bernard could ring a quarter peal on the bells on which he had learned to ring.~~

~~**Longparish, Hampshire, St Nicholas**~~

~~Tuesday, 2 August 2011~~

~~**1260 Doubles (1p, 3m, 1v)**~~

~~300 Stedman and 240 each of Grandsire, April Day, St Simon's, and Plain Bob~~

~~1 Elizabeth Byrne 4 Andrew Binstead~~

~~2 Ian Unsworth 5 Frank Byrne (C)~~

~~3 John Taylor 6 Bernard Bowden~~

~~Bernard was a 'Millenium Ringer' at Longparish but didn't ring a quarter peal there before work took him away from the village.~~

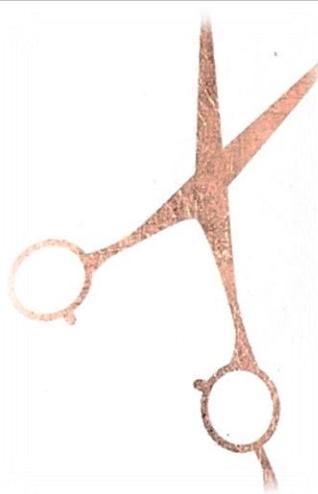
~~A first birthday compliment to Emilia Victoria Taylor today.~~

~~Bernard was excellent company. Running his own company meant he had to travel frequently. A 'rumour' about one of these travels recounted his experience when travelling on Concorde. The captain invited any interested passengers to visit the cockpit (possible at this time). Upon learning that Bernard was a glider pilot, the captain offered Bernard the pilot's seat if Bernard would take him up for his first ride in a glider. The result was that Bernard sat in the pilot's seat (did he fly the plane?) and the captain had his glider trip. After this~~



experience, he reported that he had never been so terrified in all his life travelling in an aircraft without an engine!

Bernard eventually acquired a guide dog, Chester. This dog was highly intelligent but had a mind of his own which wasn't always in accord with Bernard's wishes. On one occasion Bernard ended up in the Broadwell stream at the rear of St James' when Chester's attention was attracted elsewhere. Several other occasions found Bernard walking in the middle of the road rather than on the pavement. Other drivers would stop and rescue them both. Chester did like the Old Spot and could be relied upon to get his master there. Otherwise, Bernard was never sure where he might end up. Because of this, on several occasions, the Guide Dog people came to assess Chester for his continuing suitability and to see if more training was necessary. On each of these occasions, Chester behaved impeccably. Eventually Chester had to be retired but stayed with Bernard and Jean as a pet. Bernard and Jean moved into a home about a year ago in Surrey to be closer to their son and where Bernard died at the end of January 2025.



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**DIGNITY**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

# **February 2026**

(Joining Zoom details on Ewelme Benefice website)

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## **Sunday 1st February – Presentation of Christ**

10am Parish Holy Communion at St James

## **Wednesday 4th February**

6pm Evening Prayer via Zoom

## **Thursday 5th February**

9am Morning Prayer in St James

10am Holy Communion at St James

## **Sunday 8th February – 2nd Sunday before Lent**

10am Parish Holy Communion

6.30pm Choral Evensong

## **Tuesday 10th February**

2pm Communion at Holly Oak Care Home

## **Wednesday 11th February**

6pm Evening Prayer via Zoom

## **Thursday 12th February**

9am Morning Prayer in St James

10am Holy Communion at St James

11.15am Communion at Henlow Court

## **Sunday 15th February**

8am Said Holy Communion

10am reflective Worship

10am Shine! Family Service at Dursley Academy School

## **Tuesday 17th February**

12noon Pancake Race – Dursley Town Centre

6pm Staff meeting

## **Wednesday 18th February – Ash Wednesday**

6pm Evening Prayer via Zoom

7.30pm Ash Wednesday Communion

## **Thursday 19th February**

9am Morning Prayer in St James

10am Holy Communion at St James

## **Saturday 21st February**

9.45am Wedding Preparation Day at St George's, Upper Cam

## **Sunday 22nd February – Lent 1**

10am Benefice Holy Communion at St Giles, Uley

6pm Churches Together service for Lent at St George's, Upper Cam – "William Tyndale"

## **Monday 23rd February**

12noon Light Lent Lunches – Parish Centre

## **Tuesday 24th February**

2pm Communion at The Hollies Care Home

## **Wednesday 25th February**

6pm Evening Prayer via Zoom

## **Thursday 26th February**

9am Morning Prayer in St James

10am Holy Communion at St James

## **Erosion**

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Dry rock splitted,  
crashed and smashed  
like a wild bear unleashed.  
Muscles honed to the limit  
were not enough resistance.  
He was like a force unknown.  
His fossilised destiny was  
unspeakable, but repeatable.  
Visitors inspect remains  
amongst the litter.



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## **Memories....by Canon Richard Morgan**

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Jennifer Kendrick has given us interesting memories of her family in recent editions of the Messenger. I'd like to do the same this month. Mothering Sunday is in March as usual this year. It can just be at the very start of April if Easter is very late. But my mother's birthday is 1st February, so I remember her especially at the start of February. Many of the St. James' and St. Mark's congregation will remember her well, as she was a regular at St. James', and, when I was a child, we always attended the Christmas [and, I think, Easter] morning services at St. Mark's. Some, especially at St. Mark's, will remember her father, Stuart Read, who was also a regular at St. Mark's and sat in the pew at the back by the side of the porch which juts into the church. Few will recall her mother, Doris Read, nee Lovelock, who died in 1956, but I know Gerald Holford will remember her.

When I was a boy, St. Mark's had chairs instead of pews, and we sat on those. At St. James', before the kitchen etc. were put in, there were pews behind the crossing walk. Now there are a few chairs, where I sit to be able to stretch my legs out since my knee operations, and so I sit almost exactly where my parents sat for services!

My mother was also secretary of the Young Wives and then enrolling member of the Mother's Union in Dursley for many years and did pastoral visits to her members. She and my father would do what they could to help their elderly relations.

My mother taught us to pray, sent us to Sunday School and took us to church services. I wanted to be confirmed at twelve years old, but mother said I grumbled about going to church, so I wasn't ready! So I had to set my faith in order and it made my Confirmation what it is meant to be – taking on faith and discipleship for oneself. [I had my failures to resist temptations after it. Confessions at our services remind us that we continue to struggle and need God's forgiveness, and that God wants to give it.]

My mother was deeply attached to her own mother. She told my wife that never a day passed when she did not think of her mother. I was only five when Grandma Read died, but I have a Prayer Book she gave me when I was about one year old, and a book of poems by John Keble, *The Christian Year*, which my grandmother was given at her Confirmation in 1910. I can be grateful to generations of mothers!

Parents are so important in our lives. We are blessed if we can give thanks for good parents, and they show us something of God, who is our ultimate and perfect parent, source not just of mortal life but of

eternal life too. And nearly all of us have things for which to be thankful in our parents.

## PRAYER

We praise you, God, that you are our perfect parent, whose love is the source and pattern for human mothers' and fathers' love.

Thank you, God, for our parents, for all the love and care we have received from them.

We commit them to your love.

Bless all parents and help them care wisely for their children.

Bless all children;

may they receive helpful love and care from their parents and respond in love.

We ask for Jesus' sake.

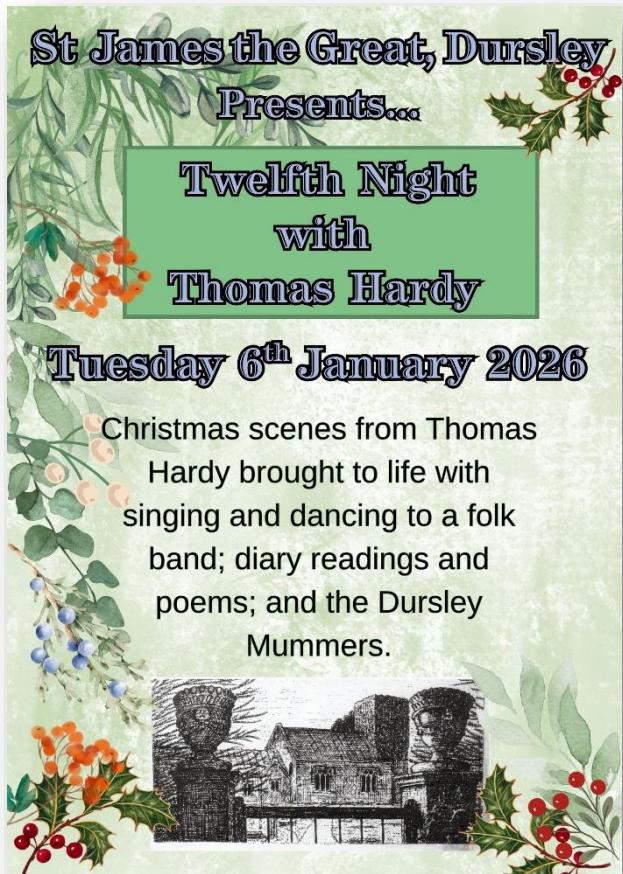
Amen.

## FREE BOOKS ON SATURDAYS IN ST JAMES.

Just a reminder that we have rather a lot of books in stock. Coffee and cake is usually on hand and sometimes there is music too.

It has also been rumoured that there will be an Open Garden @ No 52 again this year, with cream teas and one of Philip's tantalising quizzes. Sunday 31st May is the preferred date at the moment.

It's never too early to pray for a lovely warm sunny day!!      *Judith and Philip*



(above right)  
John Ewer and Rachel Tyler  
as Mr and Mrs Thomas Hardy

All photos © Steve White Photography





Carol Singers and musicians





Warterly Bottom Mummers



The genie is out of the bottle and it seems as if the world is bent on going to hell in a hand cart. What can I do? I am one little old lady, living quietly in rural England!

At first, about two years ago, I was in despair. All of a sudden my contemporary family members and friends died or foundered beyond reach (there is a difference!) and left me feeling very vulnerable, but also sure my time on Earth was not yet done! I set about discovering myself, imagining ploughing new fields with positive thinking!

My home is already carefully equipped for warmth and safety, and full of bric a brac that is priceless to me but rubbish to others. I have a gentle routine which can be altered, at will, but gives me purpose. I read, write, walk daily, do my own shopping and enjoy cooking from scratch, though no two meals are easily repeated. I knit sometimes, but it is all very slow! I am learning how to ask for help when necessary!

I spend time in prayer, constantly giving thanks and taking frequent rests to listen to the sounds of silence that give me peace. It's hard work being busy without tangible lasting evidence of effort but my everlasting faith gets stronger by the day, my door is always open, and I am truly blessed with caring neighbours.

Friends are often shocked when I say "I don't care anymore", assuming I have given up on the future. The truth is I am looking back to move forward! It is not the end, but a new beginning! I am not afraid to stand alone and thoughtfully say my piece.

I have done my best to tie up loose ends so my family are well aware of all my wishes, hopes and desires, whilst understanding there has to be a degree of flexibility. I have offered my body to science, and my favoured undertaker has given an assurance that all my immediate needs will be attended to wherever I am when the inevitable occurs.

That is a huge comfort. I have had my cosy coffin in my bedroom for years, and should it be surplus to my needs, one of my daughters has laid claim to it!. It is upholstered in fluffy sheep's wool direct from animals grazing the rolling slopes of the Yorkshire Moors, and currently in use as a blanket box! It makes me smile.

I may live alone quietly, but I am never lonely. My offspring are scattered round the world like seeds and I use just enough technology to keep in close contact with them. Their honest achievements through

hard work and endeavours to help those less fortunate than themselves are inspirational and make me proud. My horizons may be closing in, but I am content to "do my duty to God and the King, and try to do a good deed every day", a promise I solemnly made first as a 7-year-old Brownie 82 years ago and has remained constant since.

That is still my choice. Meanwhile, my friend is kindly going to take me shopping. I fancy buying an old-fashioned rocking horse to ride for fun.



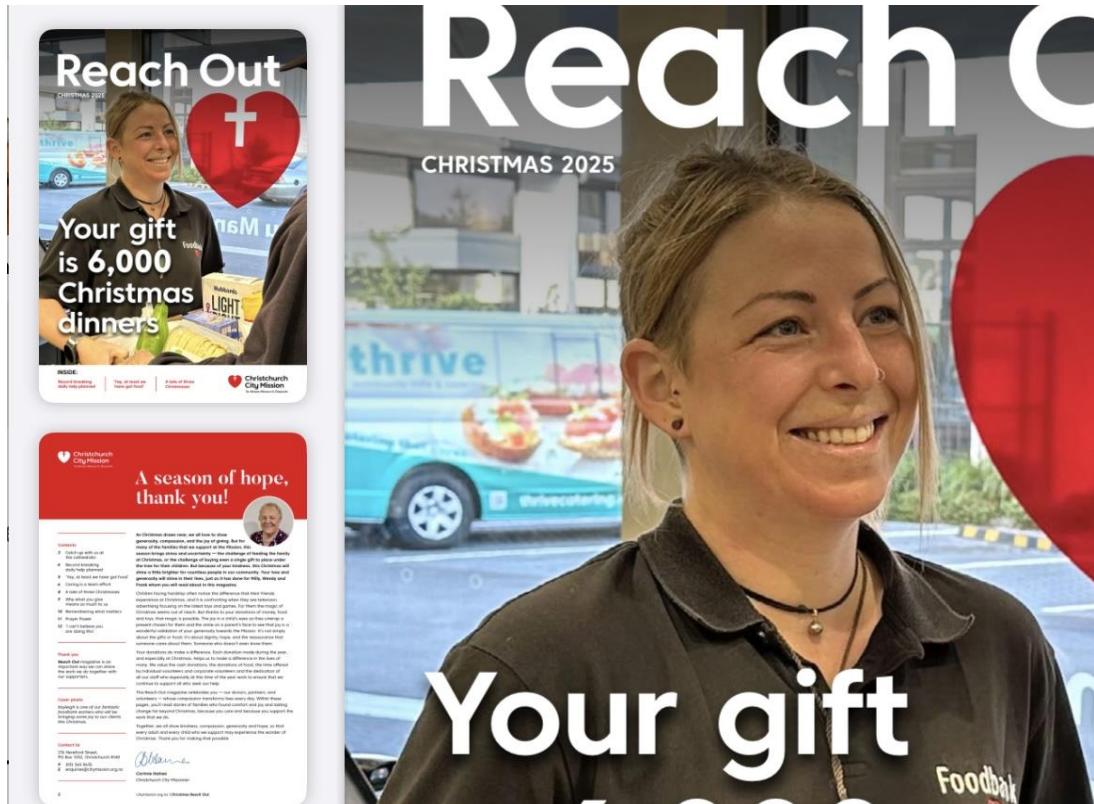
### **GENUINE OUTREACH.**

I hope I may be forgiven for sharing recent news that has made me very proud.

My precious grand daughter, my diamond on two legs, has not had an easy childhood. From the start her parents divorced and her father, my son, took on a single parenting role, whilst her mother had her to stay when it was convenient! Thankfully, Social Services were understanding about my concerns and there were long periods when she stayed with me, although I had no legal rights! She never had a truly permanent home, but at about 10 years old informed me she had to keep moving, because everybody needed her!

At 16 years old, the authorities deemed her equipped to be independent and despite all my objections she chose to move in to a homeless hostel in a grim part of Plymouth. Her boyfriend was allowed to stay too! Amazingly, within weeks they both had jobs, had saved up and moved into a tiny flat that needed a lot of loving care and very soon became a cosy functional base. Within five years they had moved and improved a number of places and were ready, and very able, to set off working their way round the world! Another five years flew by before they parted company, each to pursue very different aims. : He soon had a child by a casual relationship that has been remarkably stable, whilst she has continued to be challenged by change and adventure, learning and living a full life without dependents.. She is an expert forager, constantly increasing her knowledge about fermenting foods and inventing recipes from plants she grows in her tiny garden or in pots, to freely share with anybody! She has settled in New Zealand and currently works at The Christian Mission Foodbank as a gopher, packing parcels, driving lorries and pick-up trucks, answering calls for help wherever needed, the list is endless and she was humbled this year, 2025, to see her image plastered on hoardings and bollards, busses and public places all over

the city of Christchurch where she currently lives. She is happy to be spreading good will, and I am so blessed to have known this mighty little atom all her life, thanking God that we continue to travel this wonderful journey together, despite the geographical distance, and without fear for the future.



### WORD OF THE MONTH COMPETITION

Each Month there will be a new word which we need you to fit into a sentence. The sentence, or even a poem which best conveys the meaning of the word and will be judged by the editors and Benefice Administrator, will be the winner. There will be a small prize.

The word for February is **Ennui**

From .

Send entries to the Office, Valerie or Judith by 20th



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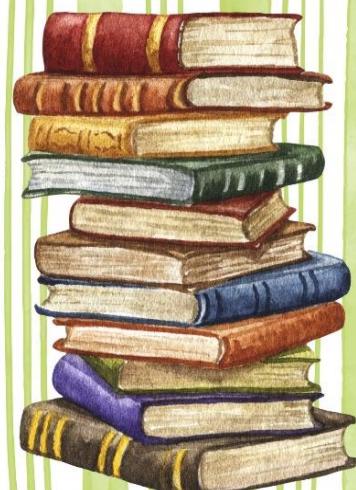
**St James the Great, Dursley**

## **Free Books**

**Here Every Saturday from 9am**

**ALL BOOKS ARE FREE**

**Everyone is welcome to come in**



**Please leave book donations at the  
back of church**

## **Here is the winner of January's competition Axiom.**

Word of the Month is a lot of fun.  
But which is idiom?, axiom or pun  
The Canon pens a clever rhyme.  
His witty verse keeps us on our toes.  
Yes, I'll have a try, so here goes.  
Alas, my brain is tired now, so I'll have to let it stay.  
Ah, well, as the old axiom goes.  
'Tomorrow is another day', Jean Gardner.

### **Some other attempts**

I do not think it would be fun  
To define an axiom,  
But maybe if we analyse -  
- Divide it up - we might devise  
A way of understanding it,  
Or some examples that would fit.  
So forget spelling them,  
Just hear how it would sound yelling them:  
An 'Ax' is better kept sharp.  
If food is 'iom, iom' people will want to eat it.  
If I say, 'om,' I'm not sure about it.

When I was a boy, my father showed me the 'Dursley Donkey train'.  
The railway lines are parallel.  
So they would never cross.  
God is forever.  
These are axioms.

From a new contributor...  
'It is what it is', a common axiom in use today.

Many people live their lives by the popular axiom,  
that is 'honesty is the best policy'.

An axiom is a statement that is accepted to be true.,  
without further proof.

Thank you everyone, we do enjoy reading your answers and it is very hard to choose. *Judith, Valerie and Clare.*

## Your guide to sharing faith this Lent

For many Christians, our faith and our relationship with God are a key part of who we are, something we feel deep in our souls. But sharing that personal sense of faith with others can sometimes be daunting.

The Revd Sonya Newton realises the challenge this poses to many of us and so has pulled together a selection of resources to equip us to share our stories during Lent and beyond.

She said, "We worry about what we're going to say, we worry we are going to mess with their journey somehow if we say the wrong thing and we worry about how we are going to answer any questions that people might ask us.

"The thing is, there's not a one-size-fits-all way of sharing our faith. The most important thing is to be open and to be sharing the stories of Jesus at work in our lives with the people around us. How we do that, is to find ways of becoming more confident and frankly, have a practice."

The diocesan website has a series of Easter to Pentecost Lectionary reflections that people can use to focus on sharing faith through the readings. There is a guide to telling your story, for use in small groups, home groups, coffee mornings etc or as part of an away day. The resource is useful to work through with others so you can practice sharing your story with your friends.

There are also links to resources for small groups, including podcasts, DVDs and books.

<https://gloucester.anglican.org/living-faith/your-prayer/sharing-faith/>



## **Holding the key: Podcast 12**

Bishop Rachel speaks to Sarah Burrows, founder of the charity Children Heard and Seen.

In her thought-provoking podcast series, 'Holding the key', Bishop Rachel is joined by influencers and change-makers to consider what prison is really for and more importantly what the alternatives could be.

Parental imprisonment is often discussed from the perspective of the parent, but what about the children left behind? In episode 12 Sarah delves into this issue with Bishop Rachel. They explore the often-overlooked impact of parental imprisonment on children, particularly those living in the community who may have little or no relationship with the parent in prison.

You can visit <https://gloucester.anglican.org/2026/sarah-burrows-justice-podcast/> to listen to the podcast or subscribe.

## **Draw near with 40acts**

The Church of England is inviting people to take part in a 40-day generosity challenge, building habits, deepening faith and reflecting the heart of Jesus through everyday acts.

Each day offers a simple invitation to give, bless, and grow in generosity, one act at a time.

Every day there will be a new challenge, from writing a note of encouragement to someone, to buying a gift for a friend.

To take part, sign up at <https://www.stewardship.org.uk/40acts> and respond to the daily prompts.

## **Ash Wednesday services**

On Ash Wednesday, churches often have an evening service to mark the start of Lent. People are invited to go to the front of the church to have the sign of the cross marked in ash on their foreheads. This is a sign of penitence and an expression of trust in God.

If you are interested in learning more about God and faith during Lent, you can find details of services near you at [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com)

If you'd rather see what happens first, the Church of England broadcasts weekly services on its YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/thechurchofengland> or get in touch with your local church.

## **Events and training**

More details for all these events at [gloucester.anglican.org/events](https://gloucester.anglican.org/events)

## **Fairtrade Friday coffee afternoon**

**Every Friday, 12 noon to 4pm at St Stephen's, Cinderford, GL14 2AA** - Fairtrade hot drinks and refreshments, a time to chat and lots of fairly traded goods from around the world to browse. [www.cinderford-churches.org.uk/calendar](http://www.cinderford-churches.org.uk/calendar)

### **Just Sust – Sustainable fashion festival**

#### **28 February, 11am to 5pm at Brimscombe Mill, GL5 2SB**

A joyful day of workshops, making, mending, inspiration and community creativity centred on the possibilities of circular clothing.

[www.brimscombe-mill.org.uk/whats-on/justsustfest](https://www.brimscombe-mill.org.uk/whats-on/justsustfest)

### **Faithful Generations**

#### **28 February, 12 noon to 4pm at St John Baptist, Cirencester**

A shout-out to everyone of grandparent generation and the children they love and care for in their families, churches and communities. An afternoon of prayer spaces, story, activities, dance, interactive worship etc.

<https://gloucester.anglican.org/event/faithful-generations-event-2026/>

### **Growing Hope: accessibility training**

#### **6 March, 5pm to 7.30pm at St Matthew's Church Hall, Stroud**

**GL5 4JE** - This practical workshop will look at how to support children, young people and adults with a range of needs, focusing on sensory processing. <https://gloucester.anglican.org/event/growing-hope-accessibility->

### **Have your say**

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**Bishop Rachel says:** Prayer is integral to our relationship with God and our growing in faith as followers of Christ.

"If we want a relationship with someone to deepen and grow, we need to spend time with that person. It can be no surprise that the same is true between us and God."

"Commitment to daily prayer is about our relationship with the God who is love. St Paul, in his great passage about love, speaks of now seeing 'in a mirror, dimly' but one day seeing face to face: 'Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known' (1 Corinthians 13.12).

## FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS.



**FUNERALS & INTERMENT SERVICES:**  
**We share our thoughts and prayers  
with the families of those who mourn  
the loss of those they love.**

### 23rd December

Funeral of Mary Fisher at Gloucester Crematorium

### YEAR'S MIND FEBRUARY

- 1st Colin Straight
- 3rd Ruth Pulsford 2003, Ronald Sandalls 2006
- 4th Ruth Brain 2009
- 5th Alma Exell 1987, Edward Rowles 2004, Jean Harney 2001
- 6th Richard Mann, Donald Sugar 2003
- 8th Margaret Siveyer 2018
- 9th Jean Gough 2015, "Jack" Johnson 2016, Ian Unsworth 2022
- 11th Doris Read
- 14th Paul Ewer 2015, David Ind 2024
- 15th Kath Snow 1999, Douglas Bennett, Barbara Fouweather 2012
- 20th Margaret Simpson, Valerie Ford 2025
- 22nd Hilda Waterson 2019
- 23rd Phyllis Trapp 2007, Beatrice Bailey 2017
- 24th Dick Wright 2001, Mike Easey 2020, Carol Thomas 2025
- 25th Betty Jenkins 2009
- 26th Wilfred Harding, Peter Dunstan Horsfall Packer 2007,  
Greta Chappell 2015, Winifred Farr 2018
- 27th David Benjamin 2017, Ursula Bray 2024

### FLOWER ROTA

Feb 1st

**High Altar** Clare White

**Tanner Chapel** Sandra Longstreth

**Lady Chapel** Margaret Lloyd

Feb 8th & 15th

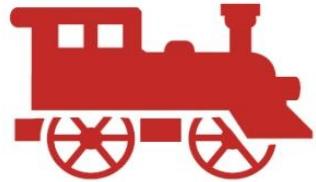
**High Altar** Cynthia Martin

**Tanner Chapel** Sarah Hodge

**Lady Chapel** Valerie Meares



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