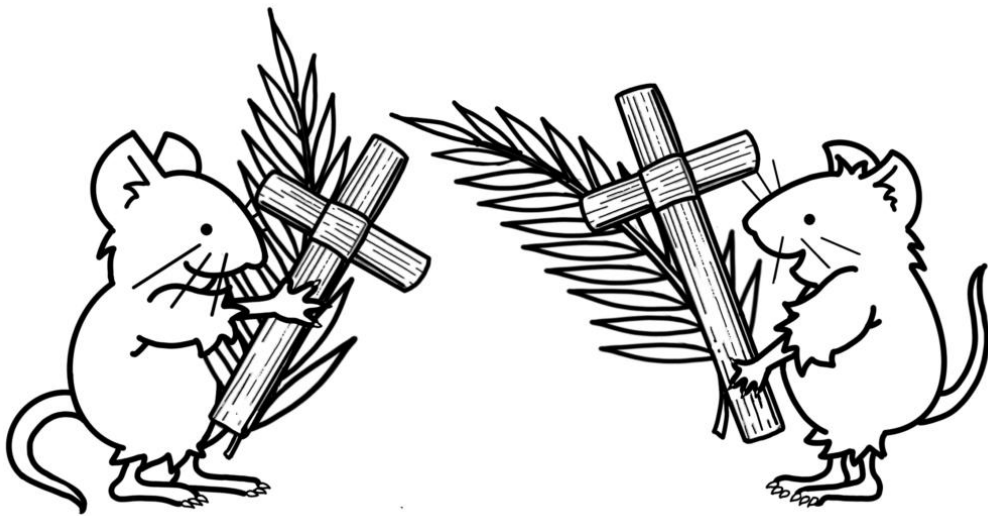


Keep in touch with St Alban's Church

Revd. Marie Flint

Parish Office: 0161 477 0456

(Mon & Fri 9.30-12.30)



March 2024

To Contact the Church.....

Parish Office: 0161 477 0456
Email: stalbanofferton@gmail.com

Priest: Revd. Marie Flint
0161 480 3773
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Treasurer	David Haslam	
Secretary	Janet Renshaw	
Reader	Brenda Baxendale	
Safeguarding	Jen Sadler	
	safeguard@stalbans@gmail.com	

You can find lots of information about the church and its activities on our Parish Website:

www.stalbanofferton.org.uk



St. Alban's Church Offerton

Also on Instagram, X and www.achurchnearyou.com

**Holy Week and Easter Services
at St. Alban's Church, Offerton**

Palm Sunday 24th March

10.30am - Holy Communion
4pm - Palm Sunday worship

Maundy Thursday 28th March

7.30pm - Holy Communion with footwashing

Good Friday 29th March

12pm - Stations of the Cross
1pm - Good Friday reflections
2pm - Good Friday service

Saturday 30th March

10am-12pm - Family Easter crafts and decorating
church

Easter Day 31st March

9am - Holy Communion
10.30am - Festival family service with Holy
Communion

**There will also be a 6.30am Sunrise Service on Easter Day
at Norbury Parish Church**

Marie Writes-



Have you noticed any glimpses of Spring yet?

As I write the sun is shining, there is blossom on the tree outside my window, the blue tits have visited and there are the first signs of crocuses and primroses



poking their way up through the ground. These signs of new life leave me feeling cheery as they point towards what is to come.

In our Lent bible study, which we are taking part, together with our sisters and brothers from Dialstone Lane Methodist Church and St. Philips and St. Peter's Churches, we are following a course called 'Glimpses of God – Hope for Today's World' by David Winter. We have been reflecting on the current global and local situation with regard to all that is happening in Ukraine and Palestine, the climate emergency and issues that are detrimentally affecting people living in our parish – the cost of living crisis and the challenges that face people who are seeking asylum. It can all seem a bit bleak and we have been asking the questions 'Where is God in all that?', 'What glimpses of God are there in such dreadful situations?', 'Where is the hope?' and 'What is my response?'. Sometimes, in the bleakness, glimpses of God are hard to see. But they are there because God is there.

Our own journey through Lent, through prayerful examination of our relationship with God helps us to learn where to look, and those glimpses point towards what is to come, the fullness of God's Kingdom.

When I reflect on the suffering of people in the world, I am always drawn to the Cross. I remember the suffering of Jesus and am reminded that through the actions of Jesus on the Cross, God knows and understands our suffering because God too has suffered. The Cross takes us to the empty tomb and the resurrected Jesus – a glimpse of what is to come, gives us hope.

In the Lent course we have heard that the theologian Gustavo Gutierrez said that the most important thing about what Jesus said while he was on the Cross was not what he said, but the fact that he said anything at all. The tortured and broken Jesus cried out, teaching us to do the same. When we feel helpless because of the big issues like war and global warming we can cry out to God in prayer. In crying out, we pray that we will be drawn beyond our own thoughts into a deeper communion between our suffering humanity and a suffering God.



As I wish you a blessed Lent and a wonderful, hope-filled Easter, I leave you with some words from St. Augustine of Hippo:

“God does not sleep, he is never off duty, he never rests from his eternal task of guarding and guiding his people”.

Rev'd Marie



Ash Wednesday Service with our brothers and sisters from Dialstone Lane Methodist Church.



Thanks to Laura Roberts from Home Instead for running our 'tech talk' café on Monday 12th February.

St Alban's going for Bronze in 2024

We are still urging you to Get Outside in Lent – and spend more time in nature. Being out in nature will help you connect with God as Creator and celebrate his creation in different ways over the Lenten period. Lent continues until 30th March, a period of self-reflection, exploration, and discovery, when we try to grow nearer to the Heart of God and recapture a sense of wonder. Here's weeks 4-6 of our ideas to help you enjoy being outside and take time to connect with nature, either by yourself or with family & friends.

WEEK 4 – WATER - 6th-13th March



Go for a walk where there is running water. Close your eyes and listen. How does it make you feel? Listen to the sound of rain. Take notice of the different sounds it makes as it lands on different surfaces. Go for a walk and notice all the things that are growing around you, both wild and in people's gardens Water is essential for all life on earth.

You could make a washing up bowl pond for your garden.

To make you will need:

- 1 X normal sized washing up bowl.
- Enough washed gravel to cover the bottom of the bowl to 2 – 3 inches deep.
- 2 or 3 suitable aquatic plants.
- Enough rainwater to fill the bowl.
- Old bricks or logs to surround the bowl.

Make sure the site is flat and even. You only need a few plants per basin pond. Plants that grow to height out of the basin pond, are best since they can provide a habitat for the larvae of moths and butterflies.



To make - Gently place one plant in the washing up bowl and cover the roots with washed gravel so the plant can stand up freely on its own. Do this with your remaining plants and top up the gravel to an even surface 2 to 3 inches deep. Place the plants around the sides of the bowl to leave some free-standing water in the middle. Fill the bowl with rainwater. Line the outside edges of the bowl with recycled bricks, rocks or woodpile logs ensuring that nothing is loose or unstable. Leaving gaps between bricks or logs provides a habitat for amphibians and bugs OR the gaps can be filled with soil and bulbs or flowers planted to make a more decorative feature. Placing a larger rounded stone in the middle of the pond that just breaks the surface of the water makes an excellent frog plinth.

Don't add fish into the pond.

Prayer for water - Creator God, thank you for water, especially for clean, safe water to drink. Silence We are sorry for those times when we have wasted water, we remember those places where there is not enough water to keep crops alive, and those people who suffer because they do not have clean water. Silence Help us to value water as part of your creation; to realise our dependence on it, and our responsibility to look after it.

WEEK 5 - INSECTS & ANIMALS – 14th-21st March

Go for a slow walk and see how many "small crawling things" you can find, watch them for a while to see what they do. Go outside at night and see if you can hear or even see any of the nighttime creatures. If you have a pet, give it a hug (if it is that sort of animal) and think about what your pet adds to your life.



- Go for a walk and see how many animals you can spot.
- Hang on a banana skin on a bush and watch in the early evening – it may attract moths.



Prayer for Insects & Animals - Creator God, thank you for the variety of your creatures. Thank you for the enjoyment that they give us, and for the part that they play in keeping your world healthy. We are sorry for those times when we have been thoughtless in the way we have treated animals and insects. Help us to value every living creature as part of your creation; to realise that everything has a part to play in this beautiful world, and that

we are responsible for caring for them and treating them with respect.

WEEK 6+ - BIRDS & AIR – 22nd-30th March

- Choose a windy day and go out and fly a kite.
- Go for a walk, see how many ways you can tell that air is there even though you can't see it.
- Watch a bird flying. See how different birds move in different ways. How does watching them make you feel? Wherever you are today, keep looking around to see if you can see a bird, they are everywhere.
- Find somewhere where you can be quiet for a few minutes and listen to the birds singing.
- Put some food out for the birds and watch for a while to see what comes.



Prayer for Birds & Air - Creator God, thank you for the air that we breathe and the beauty of flying creatures like birds. We are sorry for those times when we have taken the simple pleasures and necessities for granted. Help us to value clean air, and to do our bit to keep it clean. And help us always to appreciate the beauty of your creation.

Stand for a moment and let thoughts of clean air and birds point you towards God.

March - Days for your Diary – as you can see March is a very busy month

7th March – www.worldbookday.com

10th March – MOTHERING SUNDAY – Mothers Day

15th March – www.comicrelief.com/rednoseday

17th March – St Patricks Day



18th March – www.globalrecyclingday.com



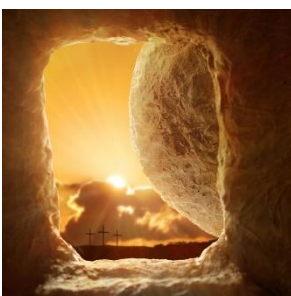
20th March – World Frog Day

21st March International Day of Forests
www.un.org/en/observations/forest-and-tree-day

22nd March – World Water Day

23rd March – EARTH HOUR – turn off all non-essential lighting for one hour 8.30pm – 9.30pm

29th March – GOOD FRIDAY – Crucifixion of Christ



31st March – EASTER DAY – Resurrection of Christ



A Drying Day

The branches are swaying
Replete with their fresh-growing leaves
The wind-music playing –
The breeze singing soft in the breeze.

The sun on our faces
The first sunny warmth of the year;
The frost it displaces,
The first signs of spring now appear.

We won't need our drier
This day will be breezy but fine;
No rack by the fire –
We'll hang out our clothes on the line!

This day is a treasure,
We watch as our shirts dance and play;
There's no better pleasure
Than the breeze on a spring drying day!

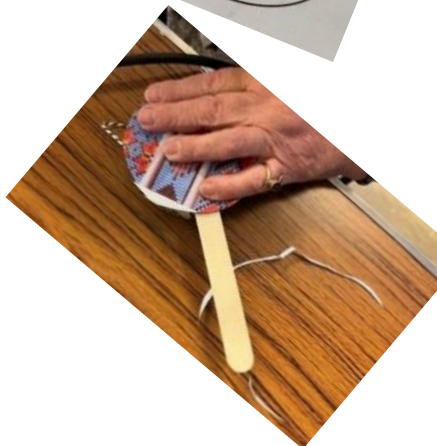
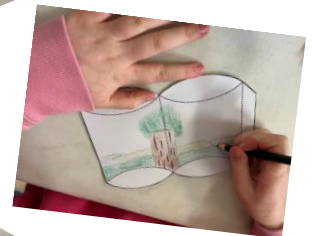
By Nigel Beeton

MESSY CHURCH

In February we celebrated 'being different but all created by God'. Activities included a Chinese lantern, butterfly valentine card, vines and branches, all in one Christ collage, we are all one gingerbread, making a drum, created in his image, fearfully and wonderfully made and national dress.



collage, we are all one gingerbread, making a drum, created in his image, fearfully and wonderfully made and national dress.





24th – 31st March – Palm Sunday and Holy Week



The events of Easter took place over a week, traditionally called Passion Week.

It began on Palm Sunday. After all His teaching and healing, Jesus had built a following.

On the Sunday before He was to die, Jesus and His followers arrived at Jerusalem. The city was crowded. Jewish people were arriving from to celebrate Passover. This commemorates how they had escaped from slavery in Egypt nearly 1,500 year earlier.

Jesus rode into the city on a young donkey. He was greeted like a conquering hero. Cheering crowds waved palm branches in tribute. He was hailed as the Messiah who had come to re-establish a Jewish kingdom.

The next day they returned to Jerusalem. Jesus went to the temple, the epicentre of the Jewish faith, and confronted the money-changers and merchants who were ripping off the people. He overturned their tables and accused them of being thieves. The religious authorities were alarmed and feared how He was stirring up the crowds.

On the Tuesday, they challenged Jesus, questioning His authority. He answered by challenging and condemning their hypocrisy. Later that day he answered by challenging and condemning their

hypocrisy. Jesus spoke to His disciples about future times. He warned them about fake religious leaders; the coming destruction of Jerusalem; wars, earthquakes, and famines; and how His followers would face persecution.

By midweek the Jewish religious leaders and elders were so angry with Jesus that they began plotting to arrest and kill Him. One of Jesus' disciples, Judas, went to the chief priests and agreed to betray Him to them.

Jesus and the 12 disciples gathered on the Thursday evening to celebrate the Passover meal. This is known as the Last Supper. During the evening, Jesus initiated a ritual still marked by Christians – Holy Communion – which commemorates His death. Jesus broke bread and shared it and a cup of wine with His disciples.

Judas then left to meet the other plotters. Jesus continued to teach the others and then went outside into an olive grove to pray. He even prayed for all future believers. He agonised over what was to come but chose the way of obedience. The Bible book, Luke, records Him praying, *'Father if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done'*. Minutes later Judas arrived with soldiers and the chief priests and Jesus was arrested.

Hereafter

The minister came to see me the other day. He said that at my age I should be thinking of the hereafter. I told him, "Oh, I do it all the time. No matter where I am – in the bedroom, upstairs, in the kitchen, or down in the basement – I ask myself, 'Now, what am I here after?'



10th March- Mothering Sunday and Mother Church



The Fourth Sunday in Lent was called 'Mid-Lent' or 'Refreshment Sunday', when the rigors of Lent were relaxed more than was normal for a feast day. It is called Mothering Sunday as a reference to the Epistle reading for the Day (Galatians 4:21-31). The Lenten Epistles follow from each other with teaching about our life as Christians and how we are to follow Christ.

On Mid-Lent Sunday the Epistle talks of bondage and freedom; the bondage of the Law and the Old Covenant as compared to the freedom in Christ, "the promised one", and the New Covenant. Verse 26 reads "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." We gain our freedom from Christ and, as it was seen before the Reformation, the Church.

Thus, Mothering Sunday is about the freedom that we gain through the promise of Jesus Christ delivered through our Mother the Church. People were encouraged to go to their 'Mother Church' (their home church or their home Cathedral) to worship and give thanks. Hence apprentices, and others, went home for the weekend and often brought gifts (or accumulated pay) home to their family.

On the other hand, Mother's Day is a secular festival invented in 1904 and is celebrated on the 2nd Sunday in May in most countries in the world. The UK seems to be the exception. In recent years Mothering Sunday has been hijacked to take the place of a special, secular day to give thanks for our mothers.

Why we should be like donkeys



Are you a pet-lover?

Many people own a dog, a cat or a budgie, but most of us don't own a donkey! Yet in Bible times, donkeys were essential to daily life. They did everything from helping to grind corn, to ploughing, to carrying people, to transporting their belongings. Despite their small frame, donkeys are surprisingly tough. They can survive on poor fodder, can travel an average of 20 miles a day.

There are two occasions in the Christian calendar where donkeys walk into the picture. At Christmas, Mary travelled the 100 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem on a donkey. And although a donkey doesn't get a specific mention in the manger story, that same one that transported her was probably there; where else would it have been?

On Palm Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Jesus deliberately chose this animal rather than a horse. Why? In Bible times, the horse was associated with war, conquest and worldly might. But the donkey was a symbol of peace and humility. So, Jesus used this animal to show that He had come with the dignity of the king of peace. His entry into the Holy City also fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy concerning the Messiah. Donkeys are hardworking and undemanding. They wait for their master to put them to the work He has chosen for them. And, remarkably, each one bears the mark of the Cross on their backs!

Perhaps that is something we should learn—to wait for Jesus our Master, to be always obedient to Him, to serve Him with all our hearts, and to bear the mark of His grace in our lives.

Missing socks in your life

What does it mean when all the socks in your laundry match, with none left over?

You're now losing them in pairs!

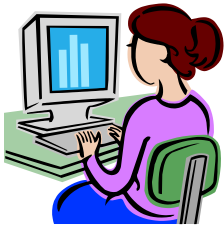


Pewsheet notice that went wrong....

This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.

Musings on Life

I hate it when I see an old person, and then realize we went to school together.



My boss calls me 'The Computer'. Nothing to do with intelligence; I go to sleep if left unattended for 15 minutes.

Reflecting Faith: Lychgates



On the moors near to where I used to live in West Yorkshire, there were a couple of large stones with crosses marked on them. Many people thought that they were boundary or marker stones, and in so far as they marked the way towards the oldest church in that area they were. To be more exact, they were on the route towards the oldest churchyard.

In ages past bodies were carried by hand, sometimes over long distances, and there were restrictions placed on where they could be laid to allow the bearers to rest. These two stones were 'resting' stones.

When a body arrived at the church for burial, it would again be put down while the administrative formalities were carried out, and again the bearers could rest. So, a resting stone was placed at the edge or start of the consecrated land around the church.

The priest conducting the funeral would meet the cortege here, not originally out of respect, but rather to receive the required legal certificate for burial before he allowed them to enter the church grounds.

Because of typical English weather – rain and wind – it was usually sheltered, and benches were built for the bearers. There would also be a cross within the construction to signify the start of holy land. This is what today we call the 'lych-gate'; lych coming from the anglo-saxon word *lich* or *lic*, related to the modern German word *leiche*, all meaning corpse.

Few old lychgates remain today, as many were destroyed or damaged after the Reformation, and most of those that survived were constructed of timber and have since decayed. In the eighteenth century, when the use for the resting stones and thus lychgates declined, many were removed

and replaced with gates, often retaining the shelter as it continues to be a meeting place for the priest to receive funeral parties.

By the Revd Dr Jo White

This month

Try and visit a lychgate this month and actually spend a few moments under its shelter. Have a think about what burdens you want to lay down. What do you need to be sheltered from?

28th March – What is Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday is the 5th day of Holy Week. 'Maundy' comes from the Latin word for command, 'mandare'. On this day the Church looks back to Jesus' command to His disciples that they should: "Love one another as I have loved you."



On the evening of Maundy Thursday Jesus shared the Last Supper with His disciples, before going on to the Garden of Gethsemane and being arrested. It was the last evening He had with them before His crucifixion.

21st March – Thomas Cranmer Archbishop of Canterbury & Reformation Martyr



If you have ever been caught up in a great event at work, which has gone on to change your own life, then Thomas Cranmer is the saint for you. He was the first ever Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, following King Henry VIII's decision to pull away from Rome, and set up the Church of England.

Born in Nottingham in 1489, Thomas Cranmer became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533. He was adviser to both Henry VIII and Edward VI. He helped Henry with the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and along with Thomas Cromwell, supported the principle of Royal Supremacy (where the king is sovereign over the Church in his realm).

Under Edward VI, Thomas Cranmer made major reforms to the Church of England. He put the English Bible into parish churches, compiled the first two versions of the Book of Common Prayer, and worked with continental reformers to change doctrine on everything from the Eucharist and veneration of saints.

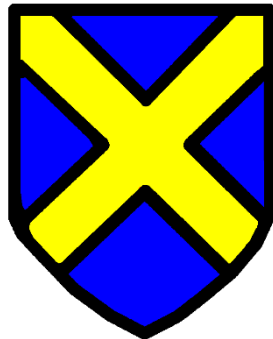
But kings and queens, like American presidents, change, and the Catholic Queen Mary I was determined to wipe out Protestantism. Thomas Cranmer was imprisoned for two years, found guilty of heresy, and burned at the stake on 21st March 1556.

Welcome



We welcome into our church family -

Georgie Johnson who was baptised on 11th February 2024



Chester Diocese News

If you have access to a computer you may want to catch up on the latest news by logging on to –

www.chesteranglican.org