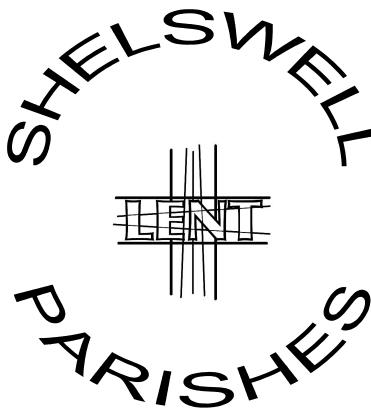


Shelwell News

The magazine of the Shelwell Group of Churches

Cottisford
Fringford
Hardwick
Mixbury
Stoke Lyne



Finmere
Godington
Hethe
Newton Purcell
Stratton Audley



February 2026

£1

*Talent can take you
where character does
not protect you
By Fr Alex p.3*

*Snowdrop Sunday at
Cottisford p.5*

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February p.6*

***"I do not give to you as
the world gives"***
*Studies show that early
belief in God and phone
fasting both improve
health p.38*

SHELSWELL BENEFICE MISSION STATEMENT

The Shelswell Family of Churches aims to bring people closer to God and to show the love of Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to everyone.

MINISTRY TEAM

RECTOR: Vacancy

BENEFICE ADMINISTRATOR: Mrs Becky Adams, c/o The Shelswell Benefice Office, 6 Chinalls Close, Finmere, Buckingham MK18 4BQ Tel: 07928 990569 Email admin@shelswellparishes.info Administrator's normal office hours: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 9.00 am – 1.00 pm

ASSOCIATE MINISTER: The Reverend Alex Mahlava, 10c St Michael's Close, Fringford, Bicester OX27 8DW Telephone: 07957 905969 Email: amahlava@gmail.com

ASSOCIATE MINISTER: The Reverend Liz Welters, 19 Scampton Close, Bicester OX26 4FF Telephone 01869 249481 Email lizwelters@yahoo.co.uk

LICENSED LAY MINISTER: Mrs Penny Wood, 8 Crosslands Fringford, Bicester, Oxon. OX27 8DF Telephone: 01869 277310 Email penelope.wood@btopenworld.com

BENEFICE TREASURER: Mr Philip Austin c/o The Shelswell Benefice Office, 6 Chinalls Close, Finmere, Buckingham MK18 4BQ or email philandpenni@live.com

THE PARISHES ARE PART OF THE DEANERY OF BICESTER AND ISLIP AND THE DORCHESTER EPISCOPAL AREA OF THE DIOCESE OF OXFORD

HOLY TRINITY ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, HETHE,

Mass: 4pm Saturday.

Weekday Mass: 9.30am Monday

Priest: Father Craig Davies , Henley House, 12 The Causeway, Bicester, OX26 6AW.

Telephone: 01869 253277

Website: <http://www.holytrinityhethe.co.uk/>

SHELSWELL NEWS

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ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES: Mrs Becky Adams, Benefice Administrator, The Shelswell Benefice Office, 6 Chinalls Close, Finmere, Buckingham MK18 4BQ Email admin@shelswellparishes.info

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES: Sylvia List, Tel: +49 8061 9391479 Email editor@shelswellparishes.info

SHELSWELL NEWS TREASURER: Phillip Rushforth, 7 Chinalls Close, Finmere, Buckingham, MK18 4BQ Tel: 01280 848534 Email prfinmere@btinternet.com

Deadlines for the March edition of Shelswell News

To Magazine Correspondents: **Midday on Friday 13th February**

Correspondents to Editor: **Midday on Sunday 15th February** at editor@shelswellparishes.info

All articles must be submitted in WORD or LIBRE OFFICE in a format that can be COPIED AND PASTED PLEASE - Many thanks for your cooperation.

www.shelswellparishes.info

SHELSWELL NEWS ARCHIVE. to look up previous issues of the Shelswell News. Please go to the Benefice website and look at the Archive. If the issue you want to refer to is not there please contact the Benefice office .

Minister's Letter

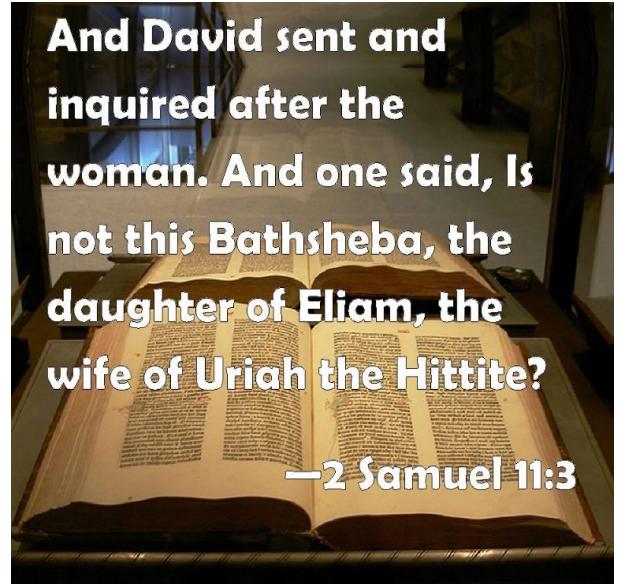
2 Samuel 11

TALENT CAN TAKE A PERSON TO WHERE CHARACTER WILL NOT PROTECT THEM

As the new year is beginning and a lot of opportunities coming by we reflect on the resolutions we are making for 2026. Some are planning to start new business this year, others are planning to get married or find a new partner. Some want to change their life style and kill old bad habits. I pray and commend all our resolutions in the hands of God. However sometimes our talents or gifts can take us where our character will not protect us. Let us reflect on the life and story of king David in 2 Samuel 11.

King David was chosen by God and anointed at the age of 15. He was a fine young person and very handsome. A good speaker, David knew the right pastures to take the sheep to when he was a head boy. He was a brave man, for he killed a lion with his own hands. As per Jewish law, David became a king at 30. It was when he became king that his talents took him where his character could not protect him.

Despite King David's talents, he had a weakness for women. As he was on the parapet of his palace, he saw a woman bathing. He did not end at seeing; he became lustful, committed adultery and even murder by having her husband Uriah killed. His talents had taken him to where his bad character could not protect him.



There are many leaders who assumed office as good people but are killing many innocent children and women.



As the new year is beginning, if a person can get a new job will his or her character going to keep them at the new job?

If you get a new relationship, will character keep you in the relationship or marriage?

Young and new drivers, is your character going to keep you safely on the road?

God loves us all and made us in his own image and gave us many talents. It is our duty to reflect and thank God for the talents and gifts he gave us. What are our strengths and gifts? We pray that our God-given talents will take us into opportunities where our character will protect us.

Have a blessed 2026 and may the Lord bless you abundantly.

Fr Alex Mahlava

BIBLE READINGS

Sunday 1 st February	The Presentation of Christ In the Temple	Malachi 3 v1-5 Hebrews 2 v14-end Luke 2 v22-40
Sunday 8 th February	2 nd Sunday before Lent	Genesis 1 v1 – 2 v3 Romans 8 v18-25 Matthew 6 v25-end
Sunday 15 th February	Sunday next before Lent	Exodus 24 v12-end 2 Peter 1 v16-end Matthew 17 v1-9
Wednesday 18 th February	Ash Wednesday	Joel 2 v1-2 and 12-17 <i>or</i> Isaiah 58 v1-12 2 Corinthians 5 v20b - 6 v10 Matthew 6 v1-6 and 16-21 <i>or</i> John 8 v1-11
Sunday 22 nd February	1 st Sunday of Lent	Genesis 2 v15-17 & 3 v1-7 Romans 5 v12-19 Matthew 4 v1-11

MIDWEEK HOLY COMMUNION AND SOUP LUNCH

The next service will be on Thursday 5th February

12 noon

Stoke Lyne Church



If you would like a lift then please contact Becky on 07928 990569

Email admin@shelswellparishes.info

SHELSWELL BENEFICE CHOIR



The choir looking is for new members: all voices, but men particularly needed. We meet on Tuesday evenings from 7.30pm to 8.30pm in Stoke Lyne. We practice to sing Evensong on the fourth Sunday of every month, and for special Benefice services as required. No audition required, just enthusiasm for singing. Interested? Contact Penny Wood on 01869-277310.

The Friends of Cottisford Church and
Cottisford and Juniper Hill Social Committee

Snowdrop Sunday

Sunday 8th February 2026

Cottisford Church

2 – 4 pm

**Come along to this picturesque, historic churchyard
to see carpets of snowdrops and aconites in full bloom.**

Visit the church where Flora Thompson ('Lark Rise to Candleford') worshipped and
the village where she went to school.

Lots to enjoy for the whole family!

Spring plants, including snowdrops, for sale.

Tea and delicious Homemade Cakes

Tombola

If you have any prizes for the Tombola, would like to help on the
day or would like to know more, please contact Jane Birnage
(07770 220605) or Eileen Torrance (07724 032554)





LENT 2026

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" James 4:8



Lent is an important part of the Christian calendar as it is a time when Christians can prepare for the celebrations of Easter by reflecting on their behaviour over the last year and finding ways to live a life based on the teaching of Jesus. People do this in different ways: some people fast, eat frugally, give up treats, or give to charity.

During Lent, many people also set aside time to study the Bible and meet with other Christians to reflect on Jesus's life and prepare for Holy Week and Easter.

17th February 2026 - SHROVE TUESDAY ('PANCAKE DAY')

Take this opportunity for a pancake mini-feast before the Lenten fast begins...

18th February 2026 - ASH WEDNESDAY

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. But why 'Ash' Wednesday? The reason has to do with getting things right between you and God, and the tradition goes back to the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites often sinned. When they finally came to their senses and repented, they covered their heads with ashes. For the Israelites, putting ashes on your head was an outward sign of their heartfelt repentance and acknowledgement of sin.

In the Church of England today, repentance and acknowledgement of sin is still at the centre of the Ash Wednesday service, but receiving the public mark of ashes on one's forehead is optional. Certainly, the mark of ashes on the forehead reminds people of their mortality: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return..." (Genesis 3:19) and helps to start the Lenten season of reflection.

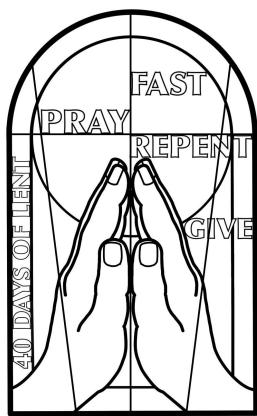
Services in the Benefice on Ash Wednesday:

11.00 am Holy Communion
St Peter's Church, Stoke Lyne

7.00 pm Holy Communion with the Shelswell Group Choir
St Mary the Virgin Church, Hardwick



GIVING SOMETHING UP FOR LENT



It is customary give up something during Lent to follow the example of Jesus who fasted in the wilderness before he began his public ministry. The Revd Roy Shaw, retired priest and spiritual director in the Diocese of York explains more.

"Remember the Winnie the Pooh stories? And Kanga's insistence on Baby Roo's taking his Strengthening Medicine? It's 'really quite a nice taste when you get used to it', she explained, although I'm not convinced Baby Roo always agreed. It can be helpful to think of Lent as a sort of medicine; an opportunity to strengthen us in the things that are good, rein in other facets of our personality, and reset the compass to the true North of following Jesus. A spring-clean of the soul, if you like.

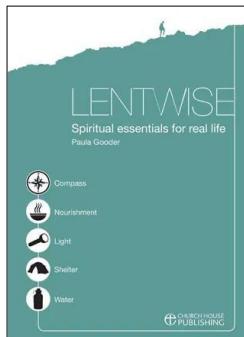
Think of what lies behind this 'giving up'. It's so that we may be strengthened, our character refined, our prejudices examined, our junk thrown overboard, and we may come to Passontide and Easter more fit to walk the way of the Cross, and rise in new life with Jesus at His Resurrection.

Nor is Lent just a case of giving up chocolate. One year I gave up Facebook for Lent, having spent far too much time scrolling through it each day. It freed me to do other, more constructive things.

Through Lent and Easter, we walk with Jesus on the way towards the Cross, mindful of the 'riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience' as St Paul says, and mindful too of Jesus' choice of the Cross as a way for us to enter those riches more fully.

And to face the immensity of that sacrifice, and the immensity of God's riches made available to us in Jesus, we need all the Strengthening Medicine we can get!"

SHELSWELL BENEFICE LENT GROUP



If you are interested in joining a Lent Group I am proposing to run one using a course prepared by Paula Gooder [Canon Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, London] Her book is called 'Lent wise, Spiritual Essentials for Real Life'. There are five sessions, and maybe we would run on a Thursday but that would depend on the participants. If you are interested let me know as soon as possible so I can get copies of the book for everyone, and we could work out when to run.

Penny Wood

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S LENT 2026 BOOKLET

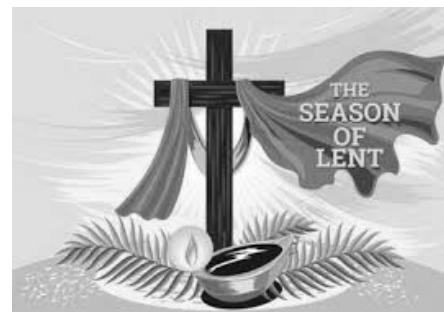


The booklet, Draw Near, invites readers to develop a rhythm of life that will help growth as a disciple of Christ. It offers 40 daily Bible readings, short reflections, prayers and practical responses. Each week explores an activity central to discipleship: worship, prayer, Scripture, communion, service to others and sharing the good news.

With an introduction by Archbishops Sarah Mullally and Stephen Cottrell.

Contents:

- The Affirmation of the Christian Way
- Ash Wednesday - Sharing in Worship, Matthew Salisbury
- Week 1 - Sharing in Prayer, Matthew Porter
- Week 2 - Sharing the Scriptures, Jitesh Patel
- Week 3 - Sharing Communion, Jessica Martin
- Week 4 - Sharing in Service, Michael Leyden
- Week 5 - Sharing the Good News, Eleanor Sanderson
- Holy Week - Sharing in Holy Week, Kate Bruce
- Easter Day - Sharing in Resurrection, Kate Bruce
- Going Further



Please pick up a free copy at one of the Ash Wednesday Services or at a Sunday Service

Liz Welters



Those who attended our first planning meeting for 2026 agreed that this year's holiday week should take place between Monday 27th and Friday 31st July in Finmere School. Unfortunately this may be a much reduced event due to a lack of volunteers.

We would be grateful if you could consider helping with the event—there are a variety of roles from craft making to refreshments and sport and drama activities. Please let us know what you could do to help and when you would be available. It doesn't have to be the whole week, it could be for just half a day.

Please email shelswell@lighthousecentral.org.uk



ARDLEY DUMPS DROP-IN VISITS

Since 14th January 2026 Oxfordshire residents need to book a time slot to visit the Household Waste Recycling Centre at Ardley. People can book 30 minutes before their visit (subject to availability) or up to two weeks in advance.

The slots are 15 minutes, or 30 minutes if you have a trailer. You can book one online at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/book-recycling-centre-visit> or by calling the council's Customer Service Centre on 01865 519800 during working hours.

BEE THERE FOR NON-DRIVERS

Having chatted to one of the Bicester Bee Bus service drivers recently I found out that the service will be out for tender again this year.

I'm sure everyone agrees that it is important to have a regular Bus service to our villages. Currently the number of passengers is not great. Let's all get behind the service. If every household used the bus once in 2026 it would really increase the passenger numbers and hopefully enable the service to continue in the future. None of us know when we will have to give up driving and need to rely on the bus service.

Alison Waters



FLORA THOMPSON 150th ANNIVERSARY

Did you know that 2026 marks the 150th anniversary of the author Flora Thompson's birth? As part of the celebration, local historian Martin Greenwood has written a new series of articles about Fringford in the 1890s. This one, the first of the series, looks at Flora herself and the publishing of *Lark Rise To Candleford*.



Flora Thompson (1876-1947)

Flora Timms was born on 5 December 1876 at the End House in Juniper Hill (*Lark Rise*). Her parents were Albert and Emma Timms. She went to school in Cottisford (*Fordlow*) and moved to the Forge in Fringford (*Candleford Green*) in 1891. She worked there in the Post Office for Kezia Whitton until 1897 when she left Oxfordshire for good. 'She was never to see any of these [landmarks] again, but she was to carry a mental picture of them, to be recalled at will, through the changing scenes of a lifetime.'

Lark Rise was published in 1939; *Over to Candleford* in 1941; *Candleford Green* in 1943. They were issued together as *Lark Rise to Candleford* in 1945. She married John Thompson in 1903. She died in May 1947.

Lark Rise to Candleford is a vivid picture of village life at the end of the 19th century and, uniquely, it was written by 'a child of poverty', who was able to avoid any sense of bitterness against the squire and his class. Not only was it published by the Oxford University Press but it received a magnificent testimonial from the publisher, Sir Humphrey Milord. He considered that the two most important books he had published in his twenty two years at the Press were Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History* and Flora Thompson's *Lark Rise to Candleford*.

The BBC television series ran from 2008-2010 to great acclaim, although it raised questions about how faithful was Flora's own portrait of village life during her childhood. In an unpublished letter of 28 January 1944, Flora replied to a Miss Eagle, who must have asked her how autobiographical the book was. Her reply sheds some light on her portrayal of *Lark Rise* and *Candleford Green*. She writes that 'Lark Rise is as far as I could make it a faithful portrait of the little Oxfordshire hamlet where I spent my childhood.' 'In Candleford and Candleford Green I wrote more freely, intending to give rather a picture of country life at that time and to portray some of the country characters I had known than to describe any particular town.' She also admitted in the letter that 'there is something both of Banbury and Bicester and more of Buckingham in my picture of Candleford. It was actually to Buckingham we went in the spring-cart and some of my relatives lived there.'

This in no way weakens her unique description of country life at the time. In many respects, village life had changed very little in the decades before 1876, when Flora was born. Deference to those above you was the norm and 'Every member of the community knew his or her place and few wished to change it.' Memories of some of the people who were part of her life in Fringford in the 1890s will appear in later months.

Martin Greenwood

DEBT - YOU ARE NOT ALONE

As the post-Christmas bills continue to pile up, many of us feel under financial pressure. It can be a lonely time, but you don't have to face it alone. Christians Against Poverty (CAP) have launched a new roadmap to get you from financial worry to a fresh start. In a nutshell:

- ❖ The First Step: Reach out to CAP for free, expert advice, tailored to your specific situation.
- ❖ Friendly Support: Their local team will provide face-to-face visits and a supportive hand to hold.
- ❖ An Expert Plan: CAP helps you build a realistic budget that prioritises your essentials, like food and housing.
- ❖ A Fresh Start: CAP can handle the process of creditor negotiations, so that you can focus on building long-term financial stability.

CAP assures people that: "We believe that no one should have to stay awake at night worrying about money. Our local debt coaches are ready to listen, help you organise the paperwork, and walk with you every step of the way. Discover how simple it is to start your journey toward peace of mind."

More info at: <https://capuk.org> or call 01274 760720 weekdays 9.30am - 5pm (3.30pm on Friday).



MIDWEEK COMMUNION AND LUNCH ON THURSDAY 4th DECEMBER

Reverend Liz Welters began the service with prayers of peace across the world, for our King and Government and people in hardship, unwell or grieving, or people known to us who are suffering.

The Gospel reading was read by Rena. The sermon by Liz was about Advent. For Christians Advent is about watching and waiting. Jesus told his followers to wait and be ready for his coming at Christmas, coming at the end of time, or at death. This is not what most want to consider at Advent. There are so many other things to think about, shopping, visitors, meals to plan, cards to write, services to prepare.

Christmas Day is the start of a new season, of better things to come, perhaps this is a good time to think about the newborn King and the new hope he brings for peace, healing and justice, and hope for the future. Here and around the world people are waiting today for forgiveness and a new start for peace and Justice, humanitarian aid, for health care and education. As we wait, we can remember the ways Jesus comes to us day by day.

Lord Jesus, you come to us in the need of another; in the quiet of the village and the bustle of the towns. However you come to us, help us to respond, be glad to welcome you and eager to serve. Amen

After communion we moved to the tables beautifully set for lunch. We had a change of lunch, instead of soup, it was decided to have macaroni cheese. This went down very well, there then was a choice of trifle or cheesecake or mince pies and tea or coffee.

Thank you to all who did the cooking or helped in any way; it is so nice to get together and hear what is going on in other villages. Thank you to Liz for carrying on with this service which is open to all, to bring people together. The next Midweek Communion will be on Thursday, 5th February at 12.00 at St Peter's Church Stoke Lyne.

Rena Andrews

SHELSWELL-BY-THE-SEA CHRISTMAS PARTY ON 10th DECEMBER

Invitations were sent out to senior citizens of the Shelswell Benefice of a certain age. The party was held at Newton Purcell Village Hall (this was the old village school put to good use). The hall was beautifully decorated and the tables lit up with candles and floral arrangements. At each place setting there was a puzzle to do while waiting for people to arrive, and it also gave time to talk to your neighbour.

When everyone had arrived, they started to bring out plates of buffet food of all description: sandwiches with various wonderful fillings, sausage rolls, and cheese and tomato on sticks. This is only a fraction of the savoury dishes, and another plate had hot sausages on sticks. The next lot of plates had an assortment of cakes, mince pies, stollen bites, Christmas cake. There was also plenty of wine or soft drinks. Then trifle was served to those who wanted it.



We then had three lots of “pass the parcel” going round. While the hosts were washing up, Liz handed out a Christmas quiz, that got the old brain cells working. Here are a few of the questions:

- ❖ Which Christmas cake or dessert is inspired by a pagan fireplace tradition? *Answer: Yule log*
- ❖ How many Christmas trees are placed in the Marble Hall at Buckingham Palace? *Answer: 3.*
- ❖ Which King was crowned in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day 1066? *Answer: William I ("the Conqueror")*

We finished up with some Christmas carols and more tea or coffee. I am sure all who attended had an enjoyable afternoon and didn't go home hungry. I would like to thank Penny Wood, Liz, June, Claire and Rebecca and all involved in organising the event, preparing, baking and cooking the food. Also to the two young daughters of Rebecca, Tess and Jemima who were handing out the plates of food and to those who decorated the hall so nicely, arranging lifts for those who needed it, and finally clearing up at the end. I am sorry if I missed anyone out.

Rena Andrews

FOOD FOR THOUGHT SERVICE ON 21ST DECEMBER 2025

On entering the Church we made our way to the tables, laid out with an assortment of breakfast items, cereals, toast and marmalade, croissants, teacakes and tea and coffee. When we had selected our choices, we made our way to the tables where the service would be held. The usual information leaflets and puzzles were there to take away. It was nice to see everyone, especially those we hadn't seen for a while because of other commitments.

Ali welcomed all to the service, with prayers for King Charles and the Government and peace across the world. Prayers were also said for our village of Stoke Lyne, and people who have been bereaved or sick and others known to us and across the Benefice.

Ali had put the service on the overhead screen, as we didn't have Flora to play the organ, it was lovely singing the hymns with the accompaniment of a wonderful choir. The talk was on the screen, easy to follow, after which there was a good discussion about what it signified to us.

Thank you to those who had supplied the food, prepared the tables, and everyone else who had helped in any way to clear up etc. Thank you also to Ali for preparing the service.

The next Food for Thought service will be on Sunday 15th February at 10.00 am at St Peter's Church in Stoke Lyne.

Rena Andrews

REGISTRY

Funeral

Jean Bateman

17 September 1935 – 26 October 2025

St Mary the Virgin, Cottisford

It is with a sad heart I am writing this tribute about my Mum, Jean Bateman, who some of you may recall resided at 2 Lake View in Cottisford between 1982 and 2002. Jean was an avid reader and supporter of the parish newsletter therefore it seems only fitting to write a little piece about her life.

Jean was born on 17 September 1935 in Bromley and lived with her parents on a smallholding in Nutley in Sussex. She had an affinity with animals from a very early age and helped to look after the various farm animals however her favourite was always dogs, her first being a Border Collie named Bob.

After leaving school, Jean moved to London to find employment and found a position with Negretti & Zambra. This employment resulted in, at the age of 16, meeting Alan, her future beloved husband.

They courted for 3 years before they were married in 1954 at West Greenwich Methodist Church. They started married life living at the family home in Gloucester Circus in Greenwich before moving to Ashley near Croydon.



Jean and Alan enjoyed a child free existence for 17 years and spent a lot of time touring the UK and Europe in open top sports cars. It was during one of these trips they fell in love with North Cornwall, particularly Port Quin, which would become the annual family holiday destination for decades to come.

In 1971 Jean gave birth to me (Emma) and was followed by Stuart in 1973. During this time Jean and Alan moved to Coulsdon in Surrey which was the first step they made to move away from the city and closer to the countryside.

In 1978, following Alan's promotion to Managing Director of Negretti Aviation in Aylesbury, the family relocated to Bicester. Moses, the donkey was moved to a local farm in Bicester owned by Mr Kelly with whom Jean and Alan became friends.

Over the next few years, the family spent a lot of time exploring the local area and stumbled across a village called Cottisford. Jean and Alan instantly fell in love with the hamlet and in 1982 moved to Lake View. Jean was able to look out of the windows and see beautiful countryside, go on long walks, have a Rayburn installed, enjoy open fires and have multiple dogs, chickens and ducks. She was also able to acquire an allotment in Juniper which enabled her to stable Moses and have sheep. She truly was in her element and couldn't be happier.

Jean and Alan enjoyed a wonderful life together in Cottisford however this was cut short when her beloved husband died, unexpectedly, in 2002. Having spent all of her adult life with Alan she wasn't able to come to terms with his passing and completely withdrew from normal life and her family.

She decided the only way she would be able to have a future was to have a property which would allow her to have lots of animals which depended on her and would therefore give her a reason to live. She found such a property just outside of Wick in Scotland. Unfortunately, the move didn't provide her with the peace and acceptance she'd hoped for and she spent the next 23 years filled with regret that she had left her beloved Cottisford and her connection to her life with Alan.

Her first great love was always Alan with her second great love being the countryside, particularly Cottisford, surrounded by nature. Her final wish was for her and Alan to be returned to Cottisford and laid to rest in the beautiful grounds of St Mary the Virgin. The funeral service was beautifully conducted by Liz and I'm sure Jean and Alan are finally at peace and happy to be together forever in their special place, Cottisford.

Emma Bateman

Club News



SHELSWELL WI

Unfortunately due to the adverse weather conditions our January meeting was cancelled. We are now looking forward to February 5 when hopefully the weather will be kind to us. We have a change of speaker. Chris Bazeley will be talking to us about A Year in the Life of a Northamptonshire Woodland. Our 3B's radio talk has been rescheduled for a later date.

In March we will be holding our AGM, followed in April by "Tax, care and the new partner." Shelswell WI always welcome new members, if you would like more information contact Sandra at sandrambickmore@gmail.com. We meet on the first Thursday of the month 7.30pm in Fringford village hall.



SHELSWELL READING GROUP

The Shelswell Reading group is a great opportunity to read a variety of books, from best sellers to classics and everything in between. If you are not sure about joining, why not come along for a meeting to meet the group and see what we are about. No need to have read the book for that month - just come along and meet all of us and listen in. If you are interested, please let Jane Birnage know - janebirnage@icloud.com 07770 220605

Our next book club meetings are:

- Wednesday 11th February, 7.30 pm. 3 Kennel Cottages, Cottisford
- Monday 9 March, 7.30 pm, Venue TBC
- Wednesday 15th April, 7.30 pm, Venue TBC

Our next book is '**Wuthering Heights**' by **Emily Bronte**. And the book after that will be "Atmosphere" by Taylor Jenkins Reid

The Correspondent by Virginia Evans was enjoyed by all, although some of us found Sybil rather irritating and unsympathetic. The epistolary nature of the novel worked for all of us, and we enjoyed the different format (long letters, emails, notes). It was described as a puzzle or a book that revealed layer after layer of Sybil's personality and past life. We were moved to tears at various points in the book and we enjoyed the fact that Sybil was not a "goody – goody" – she had her faults and secrets, and it was only towards the end of her life that she was able to open up and embrace life.

The story explores themes of family, forgiveness, grief, memory, aging, guilt, and the power of communication, especially as Sybil struggles with encroaching blindness. As readers, we enjoyed her comments on many of the books we had read – and we felt the author had been extremely clever in pulling the story together through the correspondence. Her relationship with her daughter (and son) prompted a great deal of discussion and whilst we understood that her grief and unresolved guilt affected Sybil's approach to life, many of us felt she was not a good parent – or wife!

Overall, it was a clever book, with some parallels with Olive Kitteridge (Sybil and Olive shared a similar personality!). It made us cry, smile and think – what more can you ask of a book!

Other books discussed were:

- Frozen River – Arile Lawhon (possible book club read)
- The Names - Florence Knapp
- Norwegian Wood – Haruki Murakami
- The City and its uncertain walls – Haruki Murakami
- You are Here – David Nichols
- Starter for Ten – David Nichols
- Night People - Mark Ronson Memoir
- The Unwilling – Marina Kemp
- I Swear – John Davidson
- Maggie O'Farrell – I am, I am, I am
- Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo – Taylor Jenkins Reid



Films discussed..

Wuthering Heights – with Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon

Wuthering Heights – NEW FILM – Book club trip?

Ballad of Wallace Island

SHELSWELL POETRY APPRECIATION GROUP

Our theme for January was Memory.

The first poem we read was ***Tinkerness by Miriam Gamble (extant)***. The ‘tinker’ of the title was George Best, the Northern Irish footballer whose sporting brilliance was overcome by his drink and drugs lifestyle once he became famous. The poet weaves memories of his brilliance on the pitch with his failings in what is an insightful yet affectionate tribute to a flawed celebrity.

An Australian poet, famous for the song Waltzing Matilda, ***Banjo Patterson (1864-1941)*** also wrote the tender, nostalgic poem ***A Bunch of Roses***, about a lost love. Similar in the response they evoke are ***When You Come by Maya Angelou (1928-2014)***, whose memories of a happier time move her to tears, and ***Memory by Sarah Jane Coleridge (1861-1907)***. The poems ***Let Thine Eyes Whisper by Ameen Rihani (1876-1940)*** and ***Time Does Not Bring Relief by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)*** both focus on a departed loved one and speak directly to them.

When You Come by Maya Angelou

When you come to me, unbidden,
Beckoning me
To long-ago rooms,
Where memories lie.

Offering me, as to a child, an attic,
Gatherings of days too few.
Baubles of stolen kisses.
Trinkets of borrowed loves.
Trunks of secret words,

I CRY.

Looking at the idea of memory from a different angle, in the poem ***Music When Soft Voices Die, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)*** presents good experiences as providing future happiness. ***George Eliot, (1819-1880)***, better known for her novels than her poetry, is similarly positive in ***Our Finest Hope***. In ***Those Memories***, a prose poem by American ***Fannie Flagg (extant)*** memories are likened to moonbeams.

Thomas Hood (1799-1845) wrote a despondent ***I Remember, I Remember*** about adult world-weariness, comparing it to his happy memories of childhood. In a similar mood of regret for failing powers, ***Billy Collins (extant)*** wrote ***Forgetfulness***. He also wrote the humorous ***Nostalgia***, which has a lot to say about history, in a light-hearted way. Also light-hearted, but with a real understanding of how to tug on the heart strings is ***Tamar Yoseloff (extant)*** in ***The Last Woolworths in America***.

In the poem ***Roots and Rain, Leigh Dean (extant)*** describes her childhood in Oklahoma. One of the Native American Seminole people, she still has ‘the rhythm of earth beneath my feet’ in spite of her rural home becoming part of a city where ‘the lights now dull the stars’. Similarly, the part-Chinese ***Hannah Lowe (extant)*** has warm memories of her father as she and her son eat in a Chinese restaurant, in the poem ***The Golden Phoenix***. In ***Banking Potatoes, Yusef Komunyakaa (extant)*** describes his Louisiana childhood, and in ***The Roller in the Woods Kit Wright (extant)*** regrets the falling into disuse of the cricket pitch where he so often played.

Finally, ***Spice Jars*** by ***D A Prince (extant)*** sums up, in a modern sonnet, how the faint smell of old spices in a pantry acts as a powerful link with the past.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 3rd February at 10.30 and the theme will be Faraway Places. If you would like to join us, please contact me on 01869 811994 or at judith.harvey@live.co.uk

Judith Harvey

REPORTS FROM THE PARISHES

Cottisford and Juniper Hill St Mary the Virgin

CHURCHWARDEN: Charles Jackson, Cottisford House, Cottisford

Tel 01280 848247

TREASURER: David Barnes, Honeysuckle Cottage, 11 Hardwick

Tel 01869 277690

PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER: Flora Skinner

Tel: 01869 277366

MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT: Sandra Bickmore, Thatch End, Juniper Hill

sandrambickmore@gmail.com

SERVICES

Sunday 15th February 10.45 am Holy Communion (BCP)

COTTISFORD AND JUNIPER HILL SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Happy New Year to you all, we hope that you enjoyed the celebrations and are looking forward to 2026.

On Sunday 8 February the Social Committee along with the Friends of Cottisford Church will be welcoming everyone to Snowdrop Sunday. This will be held in the church from 2-4pm. Refreshments will be available along with a tombola and plant sale. We look forward to seeing the snowdrops which herald the start of the new year and also everyone for a chat.

Later on in June we will also be organising Open Gardens so if you would like to open your garden or are able to help in anyway please let us know.

If you like to host a coffee morning or pop up pub contact one of the Social team.

Finmere St Michael and All Angels

CHURCHWARDEN: Barbara Cunningham, 'Woodlea' Finmere

Tel: 01280 847992

TREASURER: Peter Goss, 6 Stable Close Finmere

Tel: 07941 322 840

PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER: Katherine Grimston, The Old Rectory, Finmere

Tel: 01280 848364

MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT: Paul Nash Email: paan63@yahoo.co.uk

Tel 01280 848268

CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 15th February 9.15 am Holy Communion (CW)

Sunday 22nd February 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)

Found - A pair of Blue Glasses found in the front pew of Finmere church.

If you know to whom they may belong, please contact Barbara, the church warden (contact details above)



Village Hall

The village hall is available for hire. Facilities include AV system with a new projector and larger screen, plus sound system. Fitted kitchen, Meeting room, Patio doors onto the children's play area and enlarged storage spaces for regular users. WiFi facilities are available. For all hall booking enquiries, please visit www.myfinmere.com/villagehall.

Allotments

Well January certainly came in with a bang. Many of us feel this is the sort of weather we should be having mid winter, and tend to think the soil needs a period of dormancy before the new growing season. At last the redwings have arrived, though still in smaller numbers than usual, I think. The birds in the garden are really appreciative of the food we are providing now that it's so cold.

And so we sit and wait, planning and dreaming of perfect crops for 2026. Why not come and join our lovely community? Details can be found here www.myfinmere.com/poorsplot and select the 'enquiry' link.

Jean (Allotment correspondent)



Please come along to support Finmere's
"Tuesday Teas"

If you are at home in the day, please pop into the Village Hall for a cuppa & a catch-up...

Tuesday 10th February from 2 - 4 pm
 Tea, coffee, cake & biscuits
 All locals welcome, no charge

If you need transport, please contact Jo (07974 740312) or Katherine (07770 804025)

If anyone would like to help with "Tuesday Teas",
 we need help serving refreshments, setting out tables, providing lifts and BAKING CAKES!
 Your baking costs can be reimbursed; No need to volunteer every month; just help when you can...

Some Finmere related links:

Finmere facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/finmereandlittletingewick/>

Shelswell Parishes website at – www.shelswellparishes.info/finmere

Finmere Parish Council website at – www.finmerepc.org

Village hall news at – www.myfinmere.com

Finmere Poor's Plot – www.myfinmere.com/poorsplot

Old Finmere history website – www.myfinmere.com/history

Finmere on Wikipedia - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finmereipedia>

Finmere Primary School - www.finmere.oxon.sch.uk

FINMERE



POP UP PUB

**FIRST FRIDAY OF
EVERY MONTH**

**Come catch up with friends and
neighbours. Families welcome!**

**Licensed bar
and food van on site!**

**FINMERE VILLAGE HALL
6-10PM**

Light lunch

Finmere Village Hall
4th Tuesday of the month
No charge but donations appreciated



**TO BOOK YOUR PLACE
PLEASE RING DEBBIE
07765 874090**

Fringford

St Michael and All Angels

CHURCHWARDEN: Max Todd 5, The Manor, Fringford

Tel 07936 760684

TREASURER: Christina McCullagh, 5 Crosslands, Fringford

Tel 07867 515207

PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER Penny Wood ,as below

MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT: Penny Wood, 8 Crosslands, Fringford

Tel 01869 277310

VILLAGE HALL CORRESPONDENT: Christine Underwood

Tel 01869 278949

WEBSITE www.fringford.info

ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, SERVICES & EVENTS

- Sunday 1 February – at 10.45am – Morning Service
- Sunday 1 February - at 4.00pm - Connect Informal Worship at Hall Farm, Fringford
- Sunday 15 February – at 10.45am – Holy Communion

There is a variety of services available in the Benefice, if there is not one in Fringford Church. You will always be welcome in our other churches. For details of those services please see the back cover of this *Shelwell News*. And see the cover also for the services on Ash Wednesday.

EVENTS

Looking Ahead

There will be another **History Talk** on Friday March 27th 2026. Details to follow next month.

The **2026 Fringford Beer Festival** in aid of Fringford Church Restoration Fund will be held on Saturday 13 June.

Greetings Cards

Packs of greeting cards (6 cards for £3) available for purchase. They feature 6 photographs of the church both in and outside. Ring Christina McCullagh on 07867 515207.

Fringford Church 100 Club

Numbers cost £3 a month (£36 annually) Payment by BACS, cheque or cash. Draw each month for 50% of the income divided amongst 3 winners: at the moment 1st prize £61, 2nd £37, 3rd £25. You can still sign up to the 100 Club. Contact Christina McCullagh to register - **07867 515207**. The draw takes place monthly at the Village Coffee Morning.

Little Lambs Babies & Toddler Group

Every Wednesday during term time in Stratton Audley Church. Times are: from 10.00am to 11.30am. [Not during holidays and half term.] Just come along. If you need information in the meantime, email admin@shelswellparishes.info . [Volunteers always needed to help at Little Lambs – could you help?]

FRINGFORD VILLAGE COFFEE MORNING

Village Coffee Mornings usually take place on the third Monday of each month. In February we will meet on Monday 16th. Drop by for a coffee/tea and a chat any time between 10.30 am and 12 noon, in the Chinnery Room at the Village Hall. Contact Penny on 277310 if you want more information.

Regular Activities held in Fringford Village Hall

To find out more or book a place, please contact the hirer direct.	
Weekly Activities	Monthly Activities
<p>FS Dance</p> <p>Wednesday (term time) After school classes</p> <p>BALLET • TAP • MODERN • STREET</p> <p>leah.fsd@gmail.com or 07885827592</p>	<p>Village Coffee Morning</p> <p>All ages welcome Third Monday in the month - Chinnery Room Drop in anytime between 10.30 am and noon Penny Wood 01869 277310</p>
<p>Parish Council Meeting</p> <p>All villagers welcome Third Monday in the month 7.45pm</p> <p>Contact 01844 237766 or fringford.parishclerk@gmail.com</p>	<p>Just Puppies</p> <p>Puppy Training Tuesday evening, Sunday afternoon – various classes</p> <p>Contact Kerri 07720 891489 www.justpuppies.training</p>
<p>Fringford Yoga</p> <p>Wednesday morning 9.30am – 11am</p> <p>Carolyn White 07763 817078</p>	<p>Shelswell WI</p> <p>First Thursday of the month 7.30pm (Not December or August)</p> <p>Contact Sandra Bickmore 07961 828571</p>

<p>Pilates</p> <p>Thursday at 10.00am natashaflowerspilates@gmail.com or 07545 525820</p>	<p>Fringford Sewcial Sew and Chat! All welcome Monthly Wednesday from 7pm Or Sunday from 3pm Contact Irene at ireneethomas@btinternet.com</p>
<p>Mindfulness Meditation</p> <p>Monthly Sunday 11am to 12.30pm janerainey17@gmail.com or 07971 008337</p>	<p>Village Hall Team Meeting</p> <p>Please contact for dates Open meetings – all welcome fringford.hall@gmail.com or 07936 879175</p>
<p>To book the hall for your own event, please go to www.fringford.info/village hall, how to book Here you will find all the information you will need to book on-line. For any other queries please phone or text 07936 879175 or email: fringford.hall@gmail.com</p>	

COME & JOIN US AT 'SEWCIAL'



We enjoy any type of craft and a natter
 getting together to relax and enjoy each other's company.
 Some of us knit, crochet, embroider, quilt, sew or create craft albums.
 Please come and join us for tea and chat too, crafts not essential.

We get together once a month,
 either on a Wednesday evening at 7 – 9pm
 or Sunday afternoon at 3 – 5pm
 We meet in the Chinnery Room at Fringford Village Hall.
 Our next sessions for 2026 are:

Sunday January 18 th	Wednesday February 18 th
Sunday March 22 nd	Wednesday April 15 th
Sunday May 17 th	Wednesday June 17 th
Sunday July 19 th	August no meeting
Wednesday September 16 th	Sunday October 18 th
Wednesday November 18 th	Sunday December 13 th
Sunday January 17 th 2027	

Everyone welcome
 No need to book – just come and join us!
 If you would like information, please email Irene ireneethomas@btinternet.com

Hardwick

St Mary the Virgin

CHURCHWARDEN: David Barnes, Honeysuckle Cottage, 11 Hardwick

Tel 01869 277690

TREASURER: David Barnes, Honeysuckle Cottage, 11 Hardwick

Tel 01869 277690

PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER Flora Skinner

Tel: 01869 277366

MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT: Veronica Barnes, Honeysuckle Cottage, 11 Hardwick

Tel 01869 277690

WEBSITE: <http://hardwickvillage.btck.co.uk>

CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 1st February 9.15 am Holy Communion

Wednesday 18th February (Ash Wednesday) 7.00 pm Holy Communion with the Shelswell Group Choir

Sunday 22nd February 4.00 pm Evensong with the Shelswell Group Choir

Hardwick Church will be open on Saturdays and Sundays from 10am to 4pm

Private prayer and quiet contemplation

View the architecture, memorials and stained-glass windows

Please make use of this special space

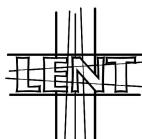
During the winter months Evensong at Hardwick on the last Sunday of the month will start at 4 pm.

Pilgrim Pathways

Why not walk the Hethe to Hardwick to Cottisford to Hethe "Pilgrim Pathway". This 4-mile circular route takes in the C of E churches of each of these villages as well as Holy Trinity, Hethe's RC church. You can start and end your walk at any point on the route, which takes in some glorious North Oxfordshire countryside. Pick up a free brochure outlining the route from any of the churches or contact David Barnes (01869 277690), who can send you one.

Hardwick Church guidebook

The guidebook for Hardwick church and the parish of Hardwick with Tusmore is available to collect from the church or contact David Barnes (01869 277690), who can send one to you. This 44-page booklet has over 20 colour photos and provides a fascinating insight into the features and history of Hardwick church, the village and the Tusmore Estate. We ask that you make a minimum donation of £5 to church funds.



Hethe St Edmund and St George

CHURCHWARDEN: Flora Skinner, Fox Hollow, 2 Hardwick Road, Hethe

Tel 01869 277366

TREASURER: Mike Green, Greenhill Cottage, Main Street, Hethe

Tel 01869 278166

PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER Flora Skinner as above

MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT: Mike Green as above

Tel 01869 278166

WEBSITE: www.hethe.org

If you have any news or a village event to publicise, please send the details to me, where possible with a photo, and if suitable I will add them to next month's news and include them on the village web site.

ST EDMUND & ST GEORGE CHURCH

Sunday 8th February 9.15 am Holy Communion

Sunday 22nd February 9.30 am Morning Service at the Village Hall



Church Services and Events

We are grateful to the Oxford Diocese, the Benefact Trust and some generous donors for the funds which enabled the works to be completed last year to repair plaster work and make our church more watertight. Our contractors were S&W Building Contractors, and our Church Architect was Camilla Finlay of Clews Architects. There is more to be done as you will see if you visit the church, but that work will wait until the Quinquennial Inspection is completed and the highest priority works identified. And a special thanks to our volunteers who were involved in organising this work and are now preparing the building to be reopened for visitors.

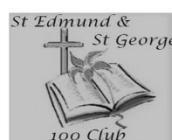
Volunteers are the life blood of the church, and we hope that those people who joined the rotas for cleaning and flowers in 2025 will be available again this year. Also, thanks to Flora and Helen for running the coffee mornings. Dates for spring cleaning and churchyard tidy-up will be publicised when agreed.

Thanks to Dean for producing and selling the Christmas Cards. He sold 190 cards for a total of £189. The cards will be available again for sale later this year.

Morning Prayers this month will be held in the warm and cosy village hall on Sunday 22nd starting at 9.30am, for about 30 minutes. This informal, modern service focuses on gratitude for the world around us and care for the environment. We use music, words and silence for praise and reflection. All are welcome and we encourage families to bring children – they can just be themselves!

Remember that you will always be welcome at services in any of the other churches in the benefice, or if you are away from the village, you can find a nearby service through the web site <https://www.achurchnearyou.com>.

100 Club. If you would like to join the 100 Club, Helen Pritchard is the contact.



St Edmund & St George 100 Club

Results of the 85th draw held
on 21st December 2025

- 1st Prize No 6 Max Pritchard
- 2nd Prize No 47 Ben & Ali Jones
- 3rd Prize No 4 Helen Pritchard

Many thanks to our members
Hethe PCC



Our QR Code if you wish to contribute to the costs of running and maintaining the church.

HETHE COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Hethe Community Coffee Morning in St Philip's Hall

Monday 9th February from 10.00am to 12.00pm

***Friends, neighbours, dog walkers, pram pushers:
an opportunity to meet during the daytime – there's great
cake too!***



Hethe and District Darby & Joan Club

Meeting at Hethe Village Hall on the third Tuesday of the month, 2-4pm
and

holding a Bingo Night at Hethe Village Hall every third Saturday of the month, 7.30pm

Membership £15 p.a.
New members welcome.

Contact: Sheila Heydon 07455 185201

Recycling. With effect from January, glass jars and bottles are being collected in the blue recycle bins.

Pop-up Pub. Friday 6th February in the Village Hall, from 7.00 to 10.00pm. Everyone welcome. Bring your own drinks of choice, snacks and games!

Local Bus Service



Monday to Saturday - pick up at Hethe War Memorial at 07.39, 10.54, 1342 and 15.42. Last bus departs Bicester at 17.50 to arrive in Hethe at 18.12. Note that this service does not operate on Bank Holidays.

For **Village Hall bookings**, please contact Flora, the Village Hall Booking Secretary, on 01869 277366 fjskinner@hotmail.co.uk.

The Hardwick Road Allotments. The contact for the allotments is Yvonne Thomas, 3 Wilson Way, Caversfield, OX27 8FB, tel 243536 or 07773065890. The agents are Carter Jonas for the Oxford Diocese.

Hethe, continued

Keep up to date with what is happening in the village through:

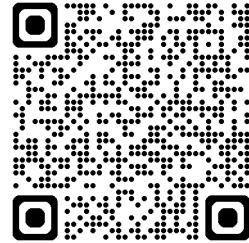
Our village web site (courtesy of the Parish Council): <https://www.hethe.org/>

Facebook Pages:

Community Spirit of the Hethens

Hethe Community

Hethe Allotments



The Next Door App - <https://nextdoor.co.uk/>

Mixbury All Saints

CHURCHWARDENS: Martin Ayres, Northwell Farm, Finmere

Tel 07899 792552

Alec Howard, Middlestead, Mixbury

Tel 01280 848295

TREASURER: David Mitchell. 2 Town Farm, Mixbury

Tel 01280 847769

PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER Anna Howard

Tel 01280 848295

MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT: Sue Goodman

Tel 01280 848002

pasgoodman551@gmail.com

If you have any news articles for the Parish Magazine please do not forget to let your Magazine Correspondent know in good time – deadline dates are normally found on the inside cover of the Shelswell News. Sue Goodman; email: pasgoodman551@gmail.com or telephone: 01280 848002.

CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 8th February 9.15 am Mixbury Half Hour

MIXBURY CHURCH FLOWER ROTA

Thank you to everyone for doing church flowers. It's much appreciated. If anyone wishes to be added or removed from the list, please get in touch with Eryl on 07840 464541.

February	Melanie Soar
March	Emma Bray
April	Easter – Everyone
May	Jane Marshall
June	Kate Darby
July	Sue Goodman
August	Helen Backon
September	Philippa Brown
	Harvest festival – everyone
October	Morag Westworth
November	Fi Bairstow
December	Carol service and Christmas - everyone
Reserve:	Sam Lockwood



MIXBURY CHURCH CLEANING ROTA 2026

As ever, a big thank you to the team of cleaning volunteers who keep the church clean and tidy.

Having done this role for the greater part of 30 years, I have decided to resign from my position as church cleaning rota organiser and voluntary cleaner. This decision is based on both age and health grounds. During these years I have brought up a family and held down a job.

I am appealing for someone new to step up and take on this necessary and important role. This message goes out to the wider Mixbury community and not just those who currently give of their time.

It would be particularly appropriate if someone new to the village and / or from the younger generation were to volunteer. Anyone prepared to take on this role, please let me know by email or phone. See details below.

Best wishes, Julie

If anyone else would like to help with cleaning, we would be very grateful for extra volunteers. This would help to lighten the load on otherwise busy people. The job only requires a couple of hours simple cleaning in your allotted month, and if you can find a partner or join a group of two to make groups of three, it can be a pleasant way to involve yourself in the village and familiarise yourself with our beautiful church. For more information please contact - Julie Mitchell on 01280 – 847769

FEBRUARY	Rebecca Ayres and Eryl Tobin
MARCH	Giovanna Holdcroft and Tanya Howroyd
APRIL	Emma Bray and Viv Williams
MAY	Alison Bailey, Pam Burrill and Jules Channon
JUNE	Nicola Adams and Anna Howard & Sue Bosher
JULY	Julie Mitchell and Helen Backon
AUGUST	Rebecca Ayres and Eryl Tobin
SEPTEMBER	Giovanna Holdcroft and Tanya Howroyd
OCTOBER	Emma Bray and Viv Williams
NOVEMBER	Alison Bailey, Pam Burrill and Jules Channon
DECEMBER	Gail Bellingham, Mel Soar & Sue Bosher

MIXBURY NATIVITY AND CAROLS

Over the years, Mixbury's annual carol service and Nativity has become something of an institution, and 2025 was no different.

On the Sunday before Christmas, as the daylight faded and the shadows lengthened, a congregation made their way to church - villagers, families and friends, of all faiths and none, they came from near and far.

As in years gone by, there were shepherds watching their sheep in the churchyard, keeping warm around a brazier, and a small pony called Rosie stood (almost) patiently for her role as the donkey. A huge thank you to the shepherds, Henry, George and Gus for their time, support and, as always, their humour.

The church was packed and looked beautiful with its traditional greenery and red candles (thank you Fi). With standing room only, the service began with 'Once in Royal' and a wonderful and beautiful solo from Amelia, followed then by readings and familiar carols. Thank you to all the readers, especially Eliza and Amelia, and to Corrine for her wonderful organ playing.

In the latter part of the service, yet again, the wonderful Mixbury children stepped up and acted out the Nativity story moving from the church to the stable (bus shelter). Without any real rehearsal, this is always a little improvised, but it all adds to the charm. This year, Mary and Joseph were played by Holly and George, the Kings by Charlotte, James and Frank, the young shepherds by Wills and Sebby, and the host of angels were Ferne, Evie, Issy and Jessica. Sadly, Sahib and Fleur couldn't make the big day, but I do so appreciate their willingness to be a part of this. Thank you too, to the other children in the congregation who enthusiastically donned a costume at the last minute and joined in. Every year, we try to include a village baby for the most important role, and this year, baby Issy played her part beautifully. Issy's daddy, Charlie, grew up in Mixbury and as a little boy he too had played various roles in the annual carol service.

This year the threat of rain was ever present, but we were really lucky, and it wasn't until we were singing the last hymn outside by the stable that the first drops fell. Another thank you to Tanya and Caroline who, as I.C. mulled wine and mince pies, ably relocated everything back into the church.

The Mixbury carol service is the most fantastic community event and to the over 150 adults and children who came, read, sang and acted, an enormous thank you. It makes a lot of people very happy.

Anna Howard

MIXBURY POP UP PUB NIGHTS

The Mixbury Pop Up Pub has been a tradition in the village for many years now and is a lovely way to socialise and make friends. The hosts provide the venue, glasses and a few nibbles and the guests arrive with their own drinks. If you are interested in hosting a pub night please contact Tanya – markandtanya@yahoo.co.uk.

BOOK EXCHANGE

Looking for something to read during the winter – there is a large collection of second hand books in the church for villagers to borrow and replace with any book they may have read.

KNIT AND NATTER

Courtesy of Anna at Swallows Nursery Mixbury Knit and Natter now meets fortnightly in the coffee shop at the Nursery. 2-4pm. 27th January 2026, 10th and 24th February 2026.

All welcome – and you don't have to knit or crochet, just come along and chat! Swallows not only sell lovely plants but coffee and cake too.....!

ARDLEY FIELDS HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE

(Brackley Road, Ardley, OX27 7PH)

From 14 January 2026, you must book in advance before visiting a household waste recycling centre. See "Ardley Dumps Drop-In Visits" on page 8 for more details. The same applies to Farthinghoe recycling centre.

PAYABLE GARDEN WASTE SUBSCRIPTION

The subscription for the above from Cherwell is due for renewal or application if you use this service, please follow this link for more information.

<https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/10/rubbish-and-recycling/872/payable-garden-waste-collection>

SWALLOWS NURSERY

We have renovated the old barn and made it a much nicer and more useful space with room for new quality items.

Also, check out our new potting shed under the canopy - we have put up windows so you see us at work producing the tens of thousands of plants we grow every year. Our polytunnels are still open with lots of great plants for sale - always fun to browse and see what's going on.

Now, all of the work on site has been quite disruptive for us in the last 3 months. There was a huge amount of work to do. And consequently, we are now delayed in opening our brunch and lunch venue, The Nordic Kitchen. However, the coffee and cakes, which now also includes some delicious Nordic cakes, are served from Wednesday to, and including, Sundays. We are introducing soups, tarts and simple dishes over the next few weeks with the full menu offering in late March. Thank you so much for your patience - we are slowly but surely getting there. Do come and sit by our log burner and enjoy a really great cup of coffee.

Please note that we are currently closed on Mondays to allow us time to get more production done.

I would like to thank everyone in Mixbury, including my wonderful staff, for the support we have received. Now more than ever, we hope you will come and support again us during these quiet months.

With best regards

A. V. Allen

Owner

Swallows Nursery & Plant Centre Ltd

www.swallowsnursery.co.uk

Look out for Churchyard Tidy Up date – to be announced; all welcome



Newton Purcell St Michael and All Angels

CHURCHWARDEN: Ann von Maltzahn, Home Farm Shelswell Park	Tel 01280 848680
CHURCHWARDEN: Stuart Hinton	Tel: 07593 784143
TREASURER: Fai Li	Tel: 07725 009838
PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER Flora Skinner	Tel: 01869 277366
MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT: Ann von Maltzahn	Tel 01280 848680

Services:-

Sunday 1st February - 9.15 a.m. Holy Communion

Flower & Church Cleaning Rota:-

We appeal to anyone who might have a few spare moments to help with simple flowers on the alter and church cleaning. Please contact Ann von Maltzahn - ann_maltzahn@yahoo.com - with your offers of help.

Old School to Let:-

Are you looking for a venue for meetings or an event? Look no further! Our newly refurbished Old School is available to hire at very competitive rates. For details and to make your booking contact Jackie Le Fevre on - jackielefevre@btinternet.com.

Bonus Ball Lotto:-

Our recent lucky winner was Ryan Parouty.

It's still not too late to join in on this fun way of supporting our church and the chance of a weekly cash prize. Just contact either of the Churchwardens above for details.

Stoke Lyne St Peter's

CHURCHWARDEN: Christopher Poole	Tel 01869 346020 CTP@oxford-educational.co.uk kholdenwhite@aol.com
CHURCHWARDEN: James Holden-White	Tel 07810 120457 janey@oxford-educational.co.uk emmbrown911@gmail.com
TREASURER: Janey Poole	Tel 01869 346653 renaandrews820@gmail.com
PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER Emma Brown	Tel 01869 345211 kholdenwhite@aol.com
MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT: Rena Andrews	
PARISH ROOM BOOKINGS : Kelly and James Holden-White	

St Peter's Church Stoke Lyne Services

Thursday 5th February 12.00 noon Midweek Holy Communion
 Sunday 15th February 10.00 am Food for Thought
 Wednesday 18th February (Ash Wednesday) 11.00 am Holy Communion
 Sunday 22nd February 10.45 am Holy Communion

Flower Duty for February

Sarah-Jane Buckle

Stoke Lyne 100 Club – January Results

1 st Prize	Membership No 12	Hugo Brown
2 nd Prize	Membership No 15	Ali Miller
3 rd Prize	Membership No 20	Jeanette Smith

Thank you all who subscribe to the Stoke Lyne 100 Club. Please contact me if anyone would like to join. It's only £3.00 per membership per month.

Janey Poole
Treasurer
St Peter's Church PCC

Christmas Quiz Night – 13th December 2025 at St Peter's Church

The evening was hosted by Ali Miller along with Linda Thompson and Ellen Whitney who all supplied the refreshments. The tables were nicely decorated with flowers and various nibbles, and there was also a bar where you could buy alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks before the quiz started, as well as raffle tickets.

Considering the awful night there was a good turnout of about 30 people attending, including some new faces. Ali commenced the quiz and explained the rules. All the questions were on the overhead screen, very easy to follow. There were 10 categories on a variety of different subjects. When we had completed the 10 categories, we stopped for refreshments and Linda and Ellen brought out plates of mince pies and sausages, with mulled wine prosecco and soft drinks. The raffle with some lovely prizes was then drawn.

Ali continued with the second half of the quiz. I should say that there was lots of laughter and heckling when the results were being given out after each round. Congratulations to the winning team, their first time at one of our quizzes, and we hope they will come again. Ali was given a hearty vote of thanks for hosting the quiz and presented with a bouquet of flowers.

Thank you to Linda, Ellen and Ali for providing the refreshments. Thank you also to everyone who helped to set up and clear away.

The Quiz Night raised £250 which will go to the repair fund for the Church.

Rena Andrews

St Peter's, Stoke Lyne Carol Service - A huge success!

Our Carol Service, held on the 20th of December, was a great success and a record congregation enjoyed traditional Carols sung with great gusto and seasonal bible readings. Rev. Dr Liz Welters presided, and Pam Morgan very kindly rearranged her busy schedule to play organ. This greatly contributed to a fantastic atmosphere in church, and we are very grateful to Pam. The readings were beautifully performed by members of our community and all this together created a wonderful atmosphere in which to celebrate Christmas.

Our generous congregation gave a sizeable collection from which we were able to donate to Crisis at Christmas. We had by far the best attendance in many years.

Following the service, Prosecco and delicious nibbles prepared and provided by Janey Poole and her sister Pauline were enjoyed by all in a convivial gathering that continued well into the evening!

Thank you to all involved in making the occasion so special; Rev. Liz and Janey for a lovely service; Pam for the music and Kelly for her invaluable IT support.

A truly magical evening was enjoyed by all!

Chris Poole

A Look at the Peyton Memorials within the church – Part 8

Algernon Thomas Peyton, 7th Baronet (1889-1962)



Although he was born in London Algernon was baptised on 15th February 1889 at St Peter's Church by his uncle the Rev. T. T. Peyton, Rector of St Mary's Church in March, Cambs. He was the first of three children, the other two being Henry and Dorothy. On the 1891 census the family were at home at Swift's House and on the next one in 1901 Algernon, aged 12, and Henry, aged 9, were pupils at St Neots School, a boys' preparatory school at Eversley in Hampshire.

From there he went on to Eton and afterwards he attended the Royal Military College. The London Gazette in February 1909 announced under the 11th (Prince Albert's Own) Hussars that:

Gentleman Cadet Algernon Thomas Peyton, from the Royal Military College, to be Second Lieutenant, in succession to Lieutenant H. S. Cayzer, promoted. Dated 17th February, 1909.

The Bicester Herald of 7 January 1910 reported in great detail on his coming of age celebrations at Swift's House, a few extracts of which appear below:

STOKE LYNE.

COMING OF AGE OF MR. ALGERNON PEYTON.

GRAND FESTIVITIES

On Tuesday last Mr. Algernon Thomas Peyton, elder son of Sir Algernon Peyton, Bart., and Lady Peyton, of Swift's House, attained his majority, and received the congratulations of hosts of friends. In honour of the occasion Sir Algernon and Lady Peyton entertained the whole of the tenantry, wives, and children on Wednesday afternoon, when a company of about three hundred had a very pleasant time.

A large marquee had been erected near the House, and at 1.30 the whole company sat down to an excellent repast. Grace was said by Sir Algernon, and soon the knives and forks were busy ...

... Mr. T. May had much pleasure in proposing Mr. Algernon Peyton's very good health, and to wish him every health and happiness. Might he live long and be prosperous, and as useful as his forefathers were. He had commenced his military career, and they sincerely hoped that he would win his laurels, and then come back and reside amongst them. (Applause.) -The toast was enthusiastically received and accorded musical honours.

Mr. Peyton, who was received with loud cheers, said he felt very grateful to Mr. May for his kind words and also to the company for the way in which they had received them. He must thank them all very much for the beautiful presents they had given to him, which he should always prize very much. He hoped in the dim future that they might be present when his son was attaining his twenty-first birthday. (Laughter.)

On the 1911 census he is listed at Shorncliffe Camp in Cheriton, Kent, age 22, Lieutenant in the 11th Hussars. He was wounded during WW1. The Bicester Herald of 6th November 1914 reported:

LIEUT. A. T. PEYTON WOUNDED

Lieut. A. T. Peyton (eldest son of Sir Algernon Peyton, of Swift's House, Stoke Lyne) 11th Hussars, has returned from the Front, wounded. He is now lying in Guy's Hospital, London. It will be remembered that he was ill at the commencement of the war, but rejoined his regiment shortly after recovery."

He was eventually promoted to Captain and his entry in the publication "List of Etonians who fought in the Great War 1914-1919" indicates that he was "mentioned in dispatches" but I have no further information on the latter.

He married Joan Stratford Dugdale (more about her in another "Look at") on 3rd April 1916 at St Peter's Pimlico in Eaton Square. According to the press reports "Owing to the bridegroom's short leave of absence, the ceremony was rather hurriedly arranged, and there were neither bridesmaids nor pages." A photograph of the bride and groom (who was wearing his uniform) appeared in the Lady's Pictorial and also the Daily Sketch.

Algernon became the 7th Baronet upon the death of his father a couple of weeks later on 11th April. According to the London Gazette he resigned his commission in the 11th Hussars wef 24th May 1919 upon which date he became a Captain in the General Reserve of Officers with his seniority as a Captain backdated to 14th June 1916.

After WW1 his name crops up over the years in Banbury newspapers (the Bicester and Oxford ones are not yet online for the period in question) as serving on various committees: he was President of the Oxfordshire Agricultural Society (1924) and a Trustee of it in 1934; he was a member of Oxfordshire County Council and in 1924 was on its Roads and Bridges Committee; was involved with the Bicester Board of Guardians (1925) and appointed High Sheriff for Oxfordshire in 1928. In 1924, 1925 and 1927 he was re-elected chairman of the Rural District Council and was still listed as serving on it in the 1954-55 Ploughley Rural District Council Guide, where he was listed as vice Chairman. According to a newspaper cutting on the Oxfordshire Heritage Search website he served as a magistrate in Bicester for 38 years, the last 12 of which he was chairman of the Bicester bench, declining to accept his nomination as chairman for 1960 "owing to infirmity". His photograph crops up several times in The Tatler among guests at the Bicester Hunt Ball as well as at various London events and race meetings such as the Oxford University Point to Point Steeplechase at Stratton Audley.

In the 1923 "Poor Rate" book for the parish of Stoke Lyne all the land and property in the parish is listed with the names of who is the occupier and who is the landowner. Sir Algernon is the principal landowner. The farms "occupied" by Harry Curtis, Thomas May, Rupert Adams and John Simons were all under his ownership as well as the Peyton Arms and the village blacksmith and nearly 40 properties described as "cottage and garden" (more if you include Fewcott).

He was churchwarden at St Peter's Church and was involved with the restoration of the church bells in the 1925 The tenor bell had to be replaced as it was badly cracked. The new bell bears the inscription:

"THE SOUND THAT REACHETH GOD ABOVE IS NOT CLANG, BUT VOICE OF LOVE SIR A PEYTON, BART., R.
ADAMS, CHURCHWARDENS"

He helped raise funds for this by holding a garden fete in the grounds of Swift's house as reported in the Banbury Guardian of 2nd July 1925:

"A long pull and a strong pull and a pull together. This key to success was obviously a prominent feature of the fete held on Thursday in aid of the church restoration (chiefly the bells) in the grounds of Swift House, by kind permission of Sir Algernon and Lady Peyton. Two large marquees were provided in the event of bad weather, but the latter proved ideal and there was a large attendance and not a dull moment during the day. A concert party from Bicester arranged by Miss Mountain gave an excellent programme which was very much appreciated, several items being encored. The British Legion Orchestra, conducted by Mr. G. Barrett, from Banbury, rendered an excellent programme of music during the afternoon, to the delight of the company, and played for dancing until after 10 p.m., making a great hit with their latest song dance music. The stalls and games were well patronised and much credit is due to the following ladies and gentlemen for the great help towards the success of the fete ..."

When the Committee of Management for Stoke Lyne's new Memorial Hall was set up in 1919, he was "Permanent Chairman" and he invested capital to produce £10 yearly for the benefit of the club. This was administered by the Committee and called the "Chairman's Fund".

Algernon and Joan produced three children: Delia (1916), Elizabeth (1919) and John (1923). Sadly John was killed in WW2 so when Algernon died aged 73 in 1962 there was no male heir and the baronetcy lapsed.

Brenda Hazel

Stoke Lyne on the internet:

Stoke Lyne Village Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/StokeLyneVillage>
 Stoke Lyne Parish Council: <https://stokelyne.org/>
 Stoke Lyne Stories: <https://stokelynestories.webador.co.uk/>
 Victoria County History: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol6/pp312-323>



Stratton Audley and Godington St Mary and St Edburga; Holy Trinity

CHURCHWARDEN: Sarah Noujaim, 15 Cavendish Place, Stratton Audley

Tel 07941 273145

CHURCHWARDEN: Penny Oakey, Grange Farm, Godington

Tel 01869 278778

TREASURER: Fai Li

Tel 07725 009838

PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER: Maxine Ling

MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT: Vacant (Stratton Audley)

MAGAZINE CORRESPONDENT: Sylvia List (Godington)

editor@shelswellparishes.info

CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 1st February 6.00 pm Compline at Godington

Sunday 8th February 10.45 am Morning Service at Stratton Audley

Sunday 22nd February 9.15 am Holy Communion at Stratton Audley

GODINGTON CAROL SERVICE

On Monday 22nd December, a festive carol service was held at Holy Trinity church in Godington. Old and young, the congregation was a great cross-section of the small community of Godington, and the church was almost full.

Despite some last minute technical challenges with the music, which were swiftly corrected thanks to the help of Flora Skinner from Hethe, the service was a triumph! Many thanks to all those who read lessons telling the Christmas story. We were also treated to Vicky singing a lovely solo of 'O Holy Night.' And the highlight of the service was a joyful rendition of Jingle Bells, led by the lovely Elodi and Alana, plus accompanying bells.

Afterwards, many of us enjoyed a festive drink or two back at Grange Farm, with thanks to the Oakeys.

Rupert Broome

FOODBANK

Please don't forget the foodbank donation point in the church porch in Stratton Audley, supporting Bicester Foodbank! Thank you to everyone who donates.

Particularly appreciated are tinned fruit, veg, soup and fish also coffee and hot chocolate. If you are in need or would like more information, please contact Becky on 07928 990569 (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 9.00 am – 1.00 pm) or by email admin@shelswellparishes.info



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GODINGTON**

**The Church is open for private
prayer and contemplation
every day 10am – 6pm summer
10 am – 4pm winter**

The Last Word

"Every action of our lives touches on some chord that will vibrate in eternity." – E H Chapin

1st FEBRUARY - SAINT BRIGID OF IRELAND



Historical facts about St Brigid, who was born around the year 451 and died in 525, are scarce, but her 'Lives', written from the 7th century, tell many anecdotes about miracles which over the centuries have become deeply rooted in Irish folklore.

Brigid came from a village near Kildare, of parents of humble origin, and is said to have been baptised by St Patrick and became a nun at an early age. She is credited with founding the monastery of Kildare whose Abbess she later became, a powerful influence for Christianity in Ireland.

The miracles attributed to Brigid show her to have been a woman of great compassion and generosity. There are stories of how she could multiply food, especially butter, for the poor. Other stories tell of her changing her bathwater to beer, in order to satisfy the thirst of unexpected visitors. Even her cows gave milk three times the same day, to enable visiting bishops to have enough to drink.

Brigid's cult grew rapidly in Ireland, where it became second only to that of Patrick. In England, there were at least 19 ancient church dedications in her honour (the most famous is St Bride's Fleet Street). There is also St Bride's Bay, Dyfed, which underlines the strong connection between Irish and Welsh Christianity. St Brigid is patron of poets, blacksmiths, and healers. She is usually depicted with a shepherd's crook and sometimes with a cow lying at her feet, which recalls her phase as a nun-cowgirl.

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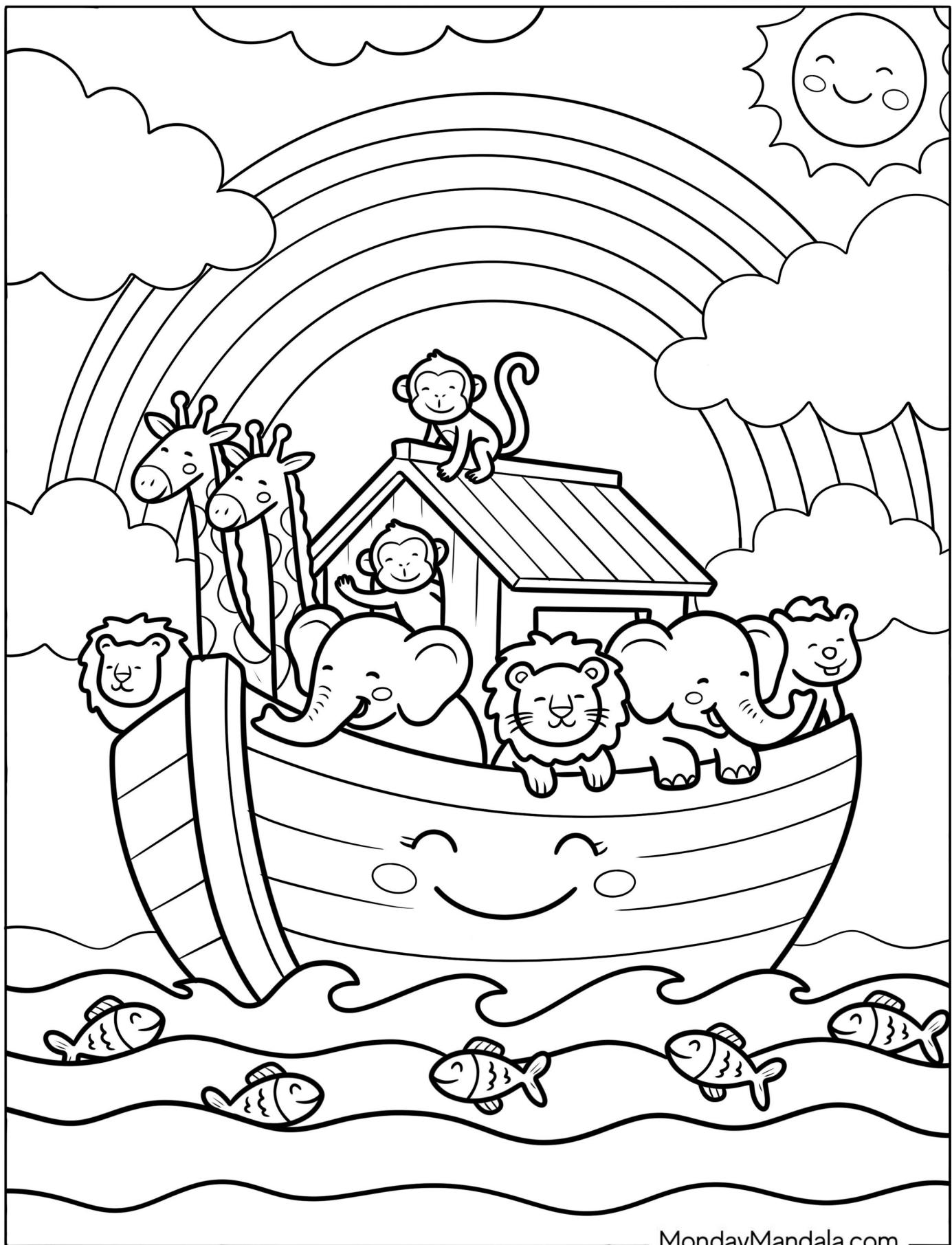
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All profits donated to Dementia Active and Dementia Oxfordshire

Date	Performance Times		Adult (18+)	Child (1-17)	
Weds 18 th Feb		7:30pm	£12	£7	
Thurs 19 th Feb	10:30am*	2:30pm	£12	£7	
Fri 20 th Feb		2:30pm	7:30pm	£14	£8
Sat 21 st Feb		2:30pm	7:30pm	£14	£8

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JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONE STORY WAS ABOUT A RICH MAN WHO DECIDED TO HAVE A PARTY

HE SENT OUT LOTS OF INVITATIONS

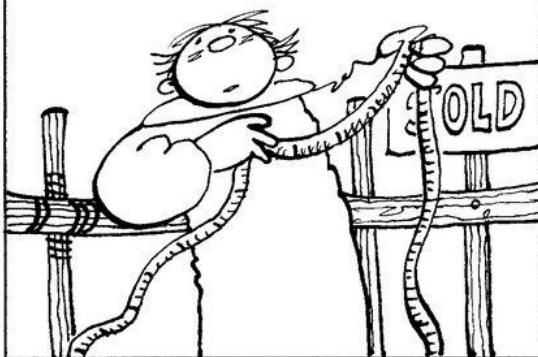


OH! NO!!

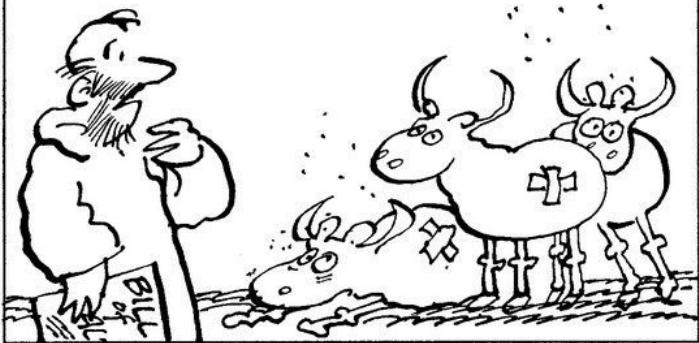


BUT PEOPLE STARTED MAKING EXCUSES

ONE MAN SAID HE HAD BOUGHT A FIELD, BUT NEEDED TO MEASURE IT



ANOTHER MAN SAID HE NEEDED TO TEST DRIVE THE OXEN HE HAS JUST PAID FOR

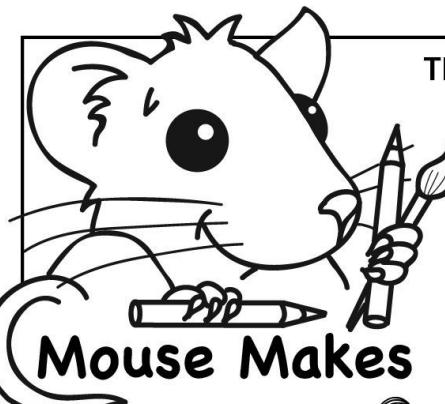


ANOTHER MAN SAID HE HAD JUST GOT MARRIED - AND HIS WIFE WOULDN'T LET HIM OUT!

SO THE RICH MAN INVITED ALL THE POOR AND NEEDY INSTEAD.



THE PARABLE MEANS WE SHOULDN'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.



Mouse Makes

Read the story in Luke 4:1-13

SECOND TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:
"I will give you power and wealth if you worship me."

JESUS REPLIED:
"Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him."

Read Deuteronomy 6:13

WE LEARN:
Put God **first**
Worship **only** Him.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

After Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan where did the Holy Spirit lead him to? v1

How many days was Jesus being tempted by the devil? v2

What did Jesus eat? v2

What did the devil tempt Jesus to turn a stone into? What did Jesus say? v3-4

What did the devil offer Jesus if He worshipped him? What did Jesus say? v7-8

What did the devil ask Jesus to do? What did Jesus say? v9

FORTY DAYS SON

WORD TEST WILDERNESS

WORSHIP JORDAN RIVER

DESERT JERUSALEM

LED FORTY LENT

LIFT HIGH TEST

LIFT LENT TEST

LIFT TEST LENT

FIRST TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:
"If you are God's Son order this stone to turn into bread."

JESUS REPLIED:
"Man shall not live on bread alone."

Read Deuteronomy 8:3

WE LEARN:
Read the Bible
Learn God's word.

THIRD TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:
"If you are God's Son throw yourself down, the scriptures say God will take care of you."

JESUS REPLIED:
"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Read Deuteronomy 6:16

WE LEARN:
God cares, **trust**
Him do not test Him.

GOD AND YOUR BOD

Elderly people in Europe who had a religious upbringing as children have been found to be physically healthier, according to a recent study. The data found that such people are reporting fewer difficulties with daily activities such as dressing or washing.

Scientists believe that one reason may be that they did not use drugs, cigarettes or alcohol when they were young. Christians might hazard a guess that it has something to do with the following:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."
(John 14:27)

The study looked at older people across Europe, and the results were published in the journal Social Science and Medicine.

POINTS TO PONDER...

It's funny how we say, "a bug hit my windshield" when we are the ones going 70 mph. I'll bet the bug's family describes it differently.

well well well



BETTER CONCENTRATION AND MENTAL HEALTH AFTER 14 DAY MOBILE INTERNET FAST

A randomised, controlled study in the United States has found that simply removing mobile internet access—while still enabling calls and texts—can produce measurable improvements in mental health in just two weeks.

When smartphones were turned into "dumb phones" the participants' attention span improved and they felt happier. The trial lasted for a month and 467 people took part.

About 91% of participants improved in at least one of the outcomes measured which included life satisfaction, depression, anxiety, anger, social anxiety and sustained attention span.

Comparing these with the results of other trials, researchers say that mobile internet fasting produced better results than antidepressants and comparable results to cognitive therapy. The improvements in ability to concentrate were compared to improving age-related attentional decline by 10 years.

Researchers suggest that the measurable improvements in mental health came about because people returned to real world activity and also slept more. The study backs up anecdotal evidence that we reported last year from a church whose congregation gave up the mobile internet for Lent
(<https://www.christiantoday.com/news/what-happened-when-a-whole-church-ditched-the-digital>)

The researchers installed the Freedom app on participants' phones to block the internet - more information about this app is available at freedom.to.

The study is published at
<https://academic.oup.com/pnasnexus/article/4/2/pgaf017/8016017>.

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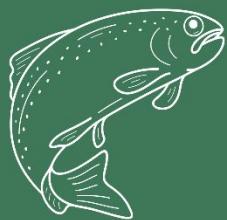
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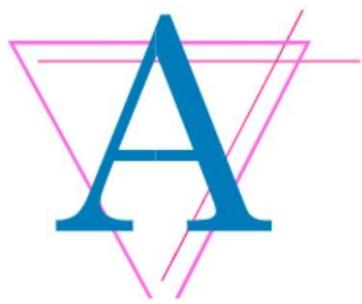
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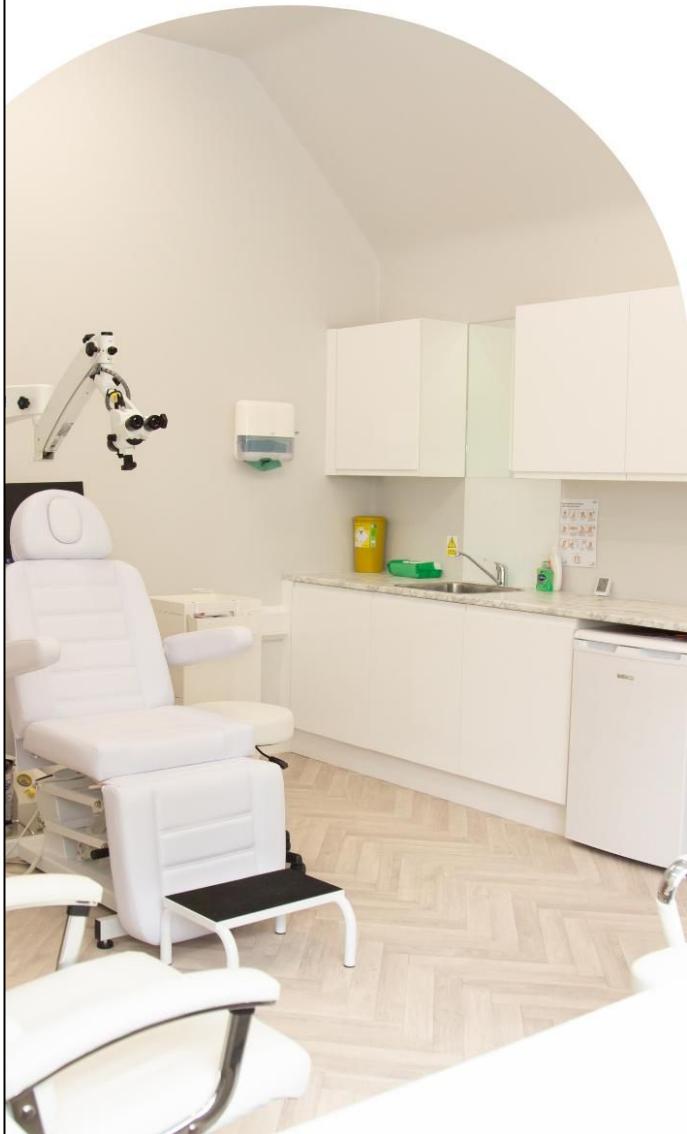


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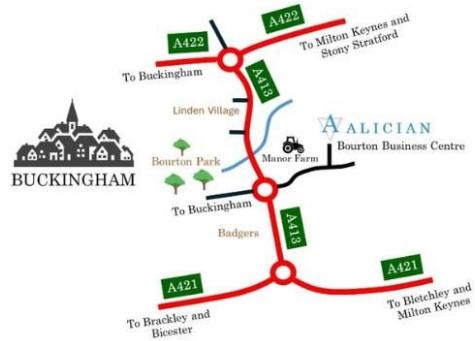
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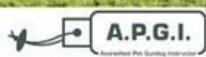
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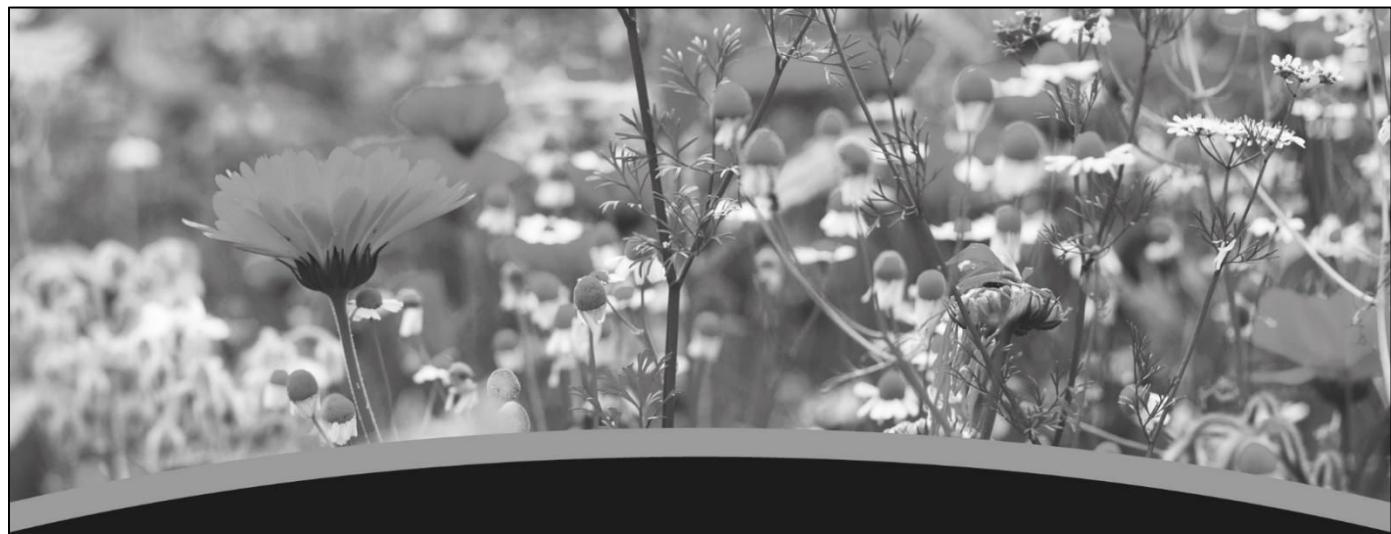
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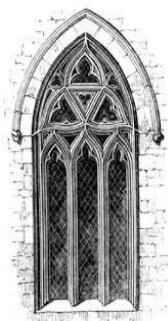
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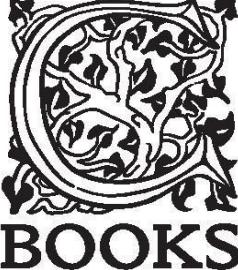
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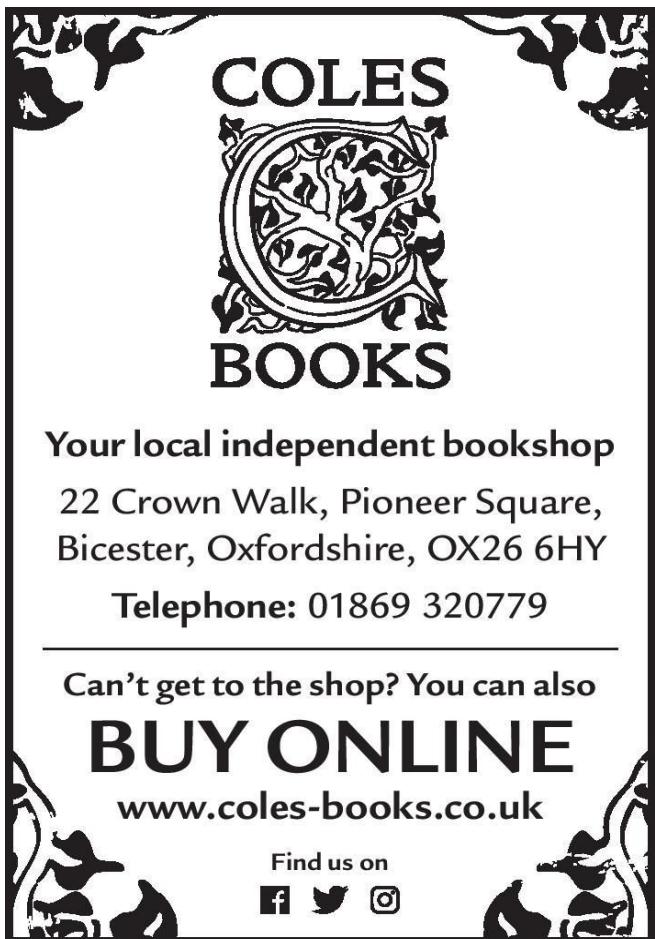
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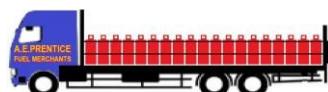
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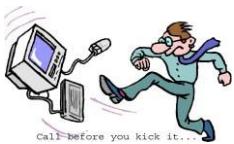
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SHELSWELL GROUP SERVICES: FEBRUARY 2025
 CW: 'Common Worship' modern language service
 BCP: 'Book of Common Prayer' traditional language service

DATE	1st February in the Temple	8th February before Lent	15th February Sunday next before Lent	18th February Ash Wednesday	22nd February 1st Sunday of Lent
ALTAR	White	Green	Green	Purple	Purple
8.00 am					Holy Communion (BCP) FINMERE AM
9.15 am	Holy Communion with hymns (CW) HARDWICK LW	Holy Communion with hymns (CW) HETHE AM	Holy Communion with hymns (CW) FINMERE AM	Holy Communion with hymns (CW) STRATTON AUDLEY LW//John Alderdice	
	Thursday 5th February (12 noon) Midweek Holy Communion and Soup Lunch STOKE LYNE				
10.45 am	Morning Service FRINGFORD	10.45am Morning Service STRATTON AUDLEY	10am 'Food for Thought' STOKE LYNE	11am Holy Communion (CW) STOKE LYNE	9.30am Morning Service HETHE
	Lay-led	Lay-led	Lay-led		Lay-led
4pm	'Connect' Informal Worship HALL FARM, FRINGFORD AM	10.45am Holy Communion with hymns (BCP) COTTISFORD AM	10.45am Holy Communion with hymns (CW) FRINGFORD VM	10.45am Holy Communion with hymns (CW) STOKE LYNE	10.45am Holy Communion with hymns (CW) STOKE LYNE
6.00 pm	6pm Compline GODINGTON PW	7pm Holy Communion (CW) HARDWICK with the Shelswell Group Choir	4pm Evening Communion STOKE LYNE AM	4pm Evensong with the Shelswell Group Choir HARDWICK PW	
	AM: Revd Alex Mahlava	VW: Revd Vicki Mellor	LW: Revd Liz Welters	PW: Mrs Penny Wood (LLM)	