



THE HERALD

The monthly newsletter from the churches of
St Nicholas Stevenage + St Mary's Graveley



www.saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

www.stmarysgraveley.org.uk

Dear friends,

March 2023

Our Ash Wednesday service at St Nicholas on the 22nd February marked the start of Lent, where for the 40 day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter we use it as a preparation time for that glorious Easter day when we celebrate our risen, Christ Jesus.

Some of us have moved from those New Year resolutions, which can be seen as focusing on self-motivating goals, rather than those goals which are established by God and his word, and may even be against his purposes. Lent is an excellent God given time to give up on our own resolutions and listen for God's leading and guidance, as it says in Isaiah 64:8, "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

Those who came along to the Ash Wednesday service, were called to observe lent by self-examination, repentance, by prayer and fasting and self-denial, and by reading and meditating on God's holy word.

Fasting is an intrinsic part of Lent inspired by Jesus spending the 40 days in the wilderness, which can be found in Matthew 4:1-4, well worth a read.

Prayer accompanies fasting as a tradition of Lent. We pray to improve our communion with God and strengthen our relationship with him during the preparation of Easter Sunday. As

Philippians 4:6 says: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and*

supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

Lent is a time of inner reflection, self-sacrifice, denial, and repentance. If something in your life has a grip on you, it may or may not be an idol, but Lent is a good time to give it to God.

The Lent season is an opportunity to grow closer to God, to remember Jesus' life and death, and to focus more on him and less on ourselves and our busy schedules. Fasting, or abstaining, from certain activities and items in our lives can help us focus on the life and sacrifice of Jesus.

Is there a blessing from Lent? Intimacy with God is the reward of sacrifice. His love and one's salvation are not reliant on denying ourselves chocolate or beer, but idolatry can stop us from worshiping the one true God. These 40 days are set aside to praise and worship the Lord; to read the Bible more, and to pray more often. We look for deeper intimacy with our Lord, which *is* the blessing.

We very much value and appreciate your prayers and as Church Wardens we would ask if you would join us in prayer and fasting specifically on the 8th March, which is the shortlisting day for the applicants who have submitted an application to be Rector of our benefice. Please pray for Bishop Alan, Archdeacon Janet and Rural Dean Andy Thomas along with Karen, Eunice, Andrea and Mike, pray that we will be led by the Holy Spirit who leads into all truth. Those we shortlist, we will be asking them to interviews on the 20th March and our prayer is that we have a spirit of unity to be able to appoint a Rector.

We are sure that you will have all seen reports in the media with regard to the General Synod's response to Living in Love and Faith, and their decision to offer prayers of blessing to same sex couples whilst asserting that there is no change to the Church of England's doctrine of Holy Matrimony.

We ask that following this decision, that we take time to pause and reflect and urge everyone to pray that God will guide us. As part of that reflecting process we have asked Tony Cannon of the Church Society to give us an overview of where we are now.

Therefore, we have arranged a meeting for all Church members and it will be held at St Nicholas Church on Sunday 5th March at 3.00pm, where Tony will give us an overview of the issues and how other Churches are reacting to the decision made in General Synod.

Love and Blessings

Mike Wilton, Church Warden, St Nicholas

EVENTS THIS MARCH

CHURCH SOCIETY – Sunday 5th March at 3pm – Visit by Tony Cannon.

WOMEN'S BREAKFAST - Saturday 11th March at 8.30am at The Standing Order - sign-up sheet in church at St Nicholas, or just come along.

MOTHERING SUNDAY - 19th March – Philip Walker will be preaching.

'SHOP AND SHARE' - Thank you to all those who have dropped in items to our shop and share initiative. If there are any specific items that are wanted, please do let Sue Bailey know or leave a note in the creche at St Nicholas.

FLOWER ARRANGING / CRAFT TEAM: If you'd like to join the Flower Arranging / Craft Team at St Nicholas, please see Chris Chambers – full training is given. Sessions are on Thursdays 10am-12pm, and 6.30pm-9pm at St Nicholas. Everyone welcome. During Lent, they'll be doing craft sessions, rather than flowers. More info and a list of meeting dates are on the notice board in the parish room at St Nicholas.

FUNDRAISING FOR CHURCH FLOWERS – Children's Jar Tombola – please could we ask for members of the congregation to put together and donate a filled jar for the children's tombola which will be at the Easter Saturday Fun Day on 8th April? If you can fill the jars with sweets, chocolate bars or little toys, this would be much appreciated. We have placed some examples on the welcome table at St Nicholas. Also, if anyone has any unwanted gifts or items we could use for the adult tombola these would be gratefully received.

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH WALKING GROUP – The next walk is on **Thursday 30th March**. More details to come in the weekly email.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! for the **Easter Saturday Family Fun Day** on **8th April from 1-4pm** at St Nicholas Church. Could you help with cake-baking or setting up beforehand, the Easter egg hunt, teddy bear zip wire, Easter bonnet competition, running the kitchen for an hour or two for tea and cakes in the Parish Room? Christine Chambers will also be running a flower group stall. If you can help for an hour or so, please speak to Mike or Karen.

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

St Nicholas Annual Parochial Church Meeting – Sunday 14th May at 11am after the morning service - Anyone who is on the Church Electoral Roll may vote at the meeting, but even if you are not on the electoral roll you are warmly encouraged to stay and listen.

Palm Sunday (2nd April) – Jon Woodrow will be preaching.

Nightly evening prayer services - Sun 2nd – Wed 5th April – 7 – 7.30pm – at St Nicholas Church - following the Lectionary readings.

Maundy Thursday: meal at 6pm, followed by a service at 7.30pm, at St Nicholas Church. Revd Andy Thomas will be taking the service.

Good Friday – Meditations at St Mary's at 3pm – Graham Squires will be preaching.

Easter Saturday Family Fun Day – 1 - 4pm. Easter egg hunt, teddy bear zip wire, Easter bonnet competition, Flower Group stalls, tea and cakes in the Parish Room.

Easter Sunday Family Communion – Revd Ray Porter will be taking the service.

PATTERN OF SUNDAY WORSHIP: Unless otherwise stated, both churches will have services of Holy Communion on the 2nd and 4th Sundays, and Services of the Word on 1st and 3rd Sundays. 5th Sundays will be joint Services of the Word - starting at 10:30am, with the venue moving between the 2 churches.

Advance notice! Just for MAY, this pattern will be reversed – Holy Communion on the 1st and 3rd Sundays and Service of the Word on the 2nd and 4th Sundays.



Come and pray together

Every Wednesday, there will be an Act of Prayer at St Nicholas Church – either a Benefice Prayer Meeting at 7.30pm, or a service of Evening Prayer at 7pm – check the church calendar for details: [Calendar – St Nicholas Church \(saintnicholaschurch.org.uk\)](http://saintnicholaschurch.org.uk).

Every other Wednesday, on the same week as Home Groups, there will be an Early Morning Prayer meeting on Zoom.

St Nicholas will also be open for visitors and private prayer on Tuesdays from 2-4pm, Wednesdays from 12noon-2pm and Thursdays from 10am-12 noon



Sunday Bible Readings

5th Mar Luke 5: 1-11 12th Mar Luke 5: 12-26
19th Mar Luke 5: 27-39 26th Mar Luke 6: 1-11

Preachers for March:

5th Mar: Graham Squires (MW)

12th Mar: Revd Ray Porter (HC)

19th Mar: Philip Walker (MW)

26th Mar: Revd Ray Porter (HC)

KEY CONTACT DETAILS

St Nicholas Church, Rectory Lane, Stevenage, SG1 4DA
St Mary's Church, Church Lane, Graveley, SG4 7LY

CHURCH WARDENS:

St Nicks Mike Wilton – 07946 140909

St Nicks Karen Walker – 07427 576870

churchwardens@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

St Mary's Eunice Sirkett – 07709 248625

Enquiries for weddings, funerals and baptisms –

07733 995779 or admin@saintnicholaschurch.org.uk

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

A free interactive church based event for children in year 6

Week One: Monday 6th March - Friday 10th March 2023

- All Saints, The Oval, Stevenage
- St Martin's, Knebworth

Week Two: Monday 13th March - Friday 17th March 2023

- St Andrew and St George, Stevenage

Week Three: Monday 20th March - Friday 24th March 2023

- St Hugh and St John, Chells
- Longmeadow Evangelical Church, Oaks Cross

Please sign up to be a part of this amazing project, helping children to learn and understand the importance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To sign up as a volunteer please contact one of the church co-ordinators or contact the Bridge Builder's office on 01438 314314.

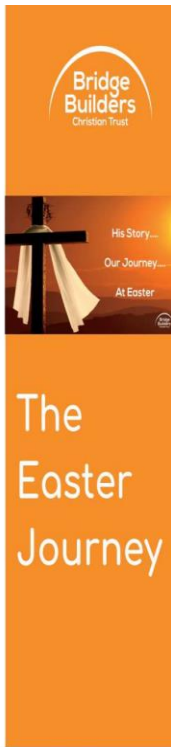
All Saints
Helen Gale
07790 381740
hcg88@outlook.com

St. Hugh & St. John
Sunil Jayewardene
07314 417046
sunil_jayewardene@yahoo.co.uk

St. Martin's
Penny Paton
01438 313241
knebworthparishchurch@gmail.com

St Andrew & St George
Karen Mitchell
07596 374372
revd.karenmitchell@btinternet.com

Longmeadow Evangelical Church
Russell Knell
0771164673
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Many Thanks



Generous Support

Allchurches Trust, Broadwater Fair Trading, Bunyan Baptist Church, Churches Together In Stevenage, Hertfordshire County Council, Holy Trinity, Great Ashby Community Church, Longmeadow Evangelical Church, North Hertfordshire Methodist Circuit, Ravenstone PCC, St. Andrews Church Hertford, St. Hugh & St. John, St Martin's Knebworth, St. Mary's Graveley, St. Mary's Shephall, St. Nicholas, St. Peter's, Sirius Digital Solutions, Stevenage Borough Council, United Reformed Church, Trinity Church Knebworth, and individual donors.

Prayer: the most important form of support is to pray

– For doors to open in schools

- to reach more children through assemblies, lessons and journeys

– For hearts to be opened

- as both children and teachers hear about Jesus

Partnership funding: to continue the work of Bridge Builders

£20 a month: essential storage for costumes, props and craft materials

£10 a month: sponsors a class to attend Christmas or Easter Journey

£5 a month: an assembly for use in schools across Stevenage

Regular giving enables Bridge Builders to plan ahead

Gift-aid increases the amount given by 20%