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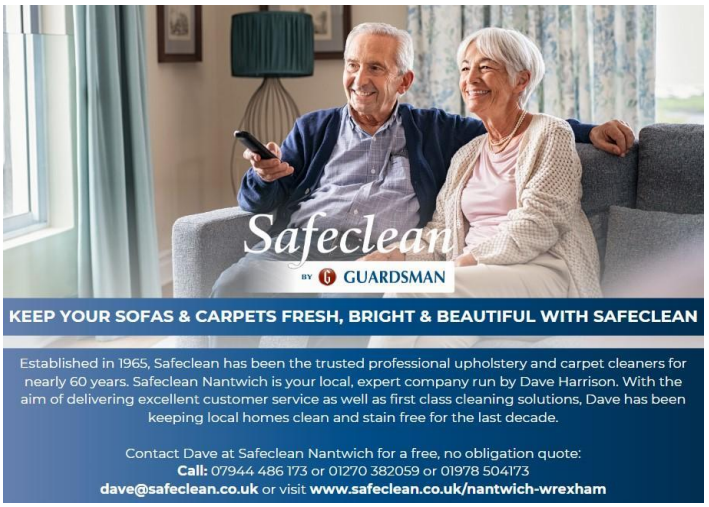
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Front cover: *Members of the Mothers' Union on Saturday, 14th March, preparing posies for Mothering Sunday. The Mothers' Union celebrates its 150th anniversary this year (more on this in future issues). See also pp. 13 and 26. Clockwise from left: Jan Virr, Sheila Crowley, Clare White, Penny Beeston, Lynne Marsh, Philipa Gomersall, Angie Bartlett.*



From the Rector

Here in Nantwich I miss having a churchyard which is open to new burials. "Are you nuts?" many clergy would say, knowing the work that would create. I don't think so. There's something healthy and meaningful about walking among the graves of departed parishioners on the way to church.

Our churchyard is still a graveyard even though none of those buried around the church was known to us personally. We should recognise that we can't go to church without first passing through a place of death. Whichever direction you come from, you will walk among graves.

And then we arrive at the church, the largest of crosses, an enormous symbol of death, yet by its magnificent octagonal tower rising from the centre, a symbol of resurrection, hope and life. All of which are equally symbolised throughout the decoration of the interior.

Here we are following in the footsteps of Mary Magdalene. She comes to the garden, expecting to find only tombs. It is where you go to pay respect to the dead, where mortal remains are laid to rest. And there she encounters her Lord, alive, calling her by name, honouring her as a child of God, and sending her forth as a witness.

Nothing less happens when we come to worship. Having passed through the graves we gather at the table of the risen Lord, in communion with all the saints, living and departed; we are fed with his life, and we are sent to live and work for his glory.

In my previous parishes I could walk among the graves and remember many dearly loved parishioners whom I had known and buried. Often someone attending church would briefly call at the grave of a loved one before entering to worship.

I can't do that here but I can look out on the congregations and remember who has departed. It is quite helpful that people tend to sit in the same place each Sunday. Many of you will have noticed that a number of regular and long-serving members of St. Mary's have died in the last three months. We miss them, but we gather with hope, keeping the faith for future generations. It is most encouraging for me to look around and see so many regular worshippers who were not attending when I first came, filling the gaps.

Every blessing for Easter *Mark Hart (Rector)*

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Rev. Dot writes …



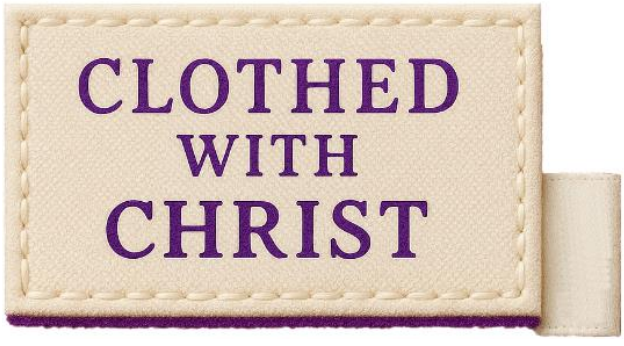
As children growing up in the '60s and '70s, my sister and I used to look forward to Easter. We knew we would always be able to choose a new dress, cardigan and sandals to go to church in on Easter Sunday to hear the story of Jesus once again. Easter meant lighter evenings to play out in, warmer weather and all the daffodils would be out in the garden. It was as if my small world, as I knew it, was getting dressed in something new and brighter too.

If only we could stay in those childhood bubbles and special times of year that only exist in our memories. My 7-year-old self was quite content there. I wonder if you have something like those memories of halcyon days gone by? I hope so.

Whether or not you do though today, as adults we know that as Easter time approaches, in 2026 many are facing much more difficult decisions globally than which clothes to wear or sandals to choose.

As Christians we are very much aware that for some in places where war has been raging for months or years, what they will wear or what they will eat will be the last thing on their minds – safety for their families, their friends, and their Church fellowships will be their main concern.

As those of Anglican Christian, Christian Orthodox and Catholic Traditions gather to celebrate the Easter miracle of Christ risen from the dead this year the heartfelt prayer of Peace for all Nations will be very much on everyone's minds.



I may have thought that pretty dresses and sandals meant "Easter" when I was a child, but obviously now I realise that the best way to approach this Holy Season is to "put away childish things" and to clothe myself from head to toe with Christ *(Galatians 3:27)*. That way we'll be ready to pray for Peace to the Prince of Peace, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

May I wish you a Blessed Easter.

Rev. Dot

Church News

Annual Meetings

The Annual Meeting of Parishioners and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting will be held in church on **Wednesday, 22nd April** at 7.30pm.

Nomination forms are at the back of church for the election of Churchwardens (2 vacancies, for 1 year terms), Deanery Synod members (6 vacancies, for 3 year terms) and Parochial Church Council members (5 vacancies, for 3 year terms). Note that Deanery Synod members are also members of the PCC, ex officio.

Please note that it is difficult practically to be a PCC member if you do not use e-mail. All PCC members are required to undergo Disclosure and Barring Service checks, and to undertake safeguarding training.

At the APCM reports will also be given on the activities of the past year, including the accounts for 2025. All are welcome to attend.

Electoral Roll

Are you a member of St. Mary's Roll? If so, you don't need to do anything this year - the roll is being revised, not renewed. If you attend St Mary's and you're not on the roll, please take and complete a form **by 7th April**. The roll provides a very useful record of St. Mary's church members, as well as being the body of people who may take part in the Annual Parochial Church Meeting. Please note that a list of the names of current members of the Electoral Roll is posted on the notice board at the back of church.

Quiz Night

Last month we reported on the Quiz Night held at the end of January but omitted the results. The winners were Wombats Play Ludo led by Brendon Pitts, scoring 67 points out of 110. Jaffa Cakes and Knights Revelos were joint second on 63 points.

Easter Cross

A plain wooden cross has been erected in the Churchyard (see p. 27). As in previous years, you are invited to bring a few flowers and/or greenery on Easter Day (or a day or two earlier, to leave in buckets in the south porch) to decorate the cross. Let's make the bare wood come alive!

Holy Week and Easter 2026

Good Friday, 3rd April

8.30am Morning Prayer
10am All Age Devotional Worship
10.45am Churches Together in Nantwich: Open Air Service on the Square
12–3pm The Three Hours: Readings, Hymns, Silence, and Prayers by Eric Milner-White, and 15 Organ Reflections (Via Crucis by Philip Moore) played by Simon Russell. Come any time.

Holy Saturday, 4th April

8.30am Morning Prayer

Easter Day, Sunday 5th April

6am Dawn Communion, preceded by the Easter Bonfire at the West Doors, followed by Breakfast
8am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)
9.30am All Age Communion & Egg Hunt, with the Worship Band
10.45am Holy Communion with the Choir
6pm Jazz Mass: Will Todd's Jazz Missa Brevis sung by Concordia, conducted by Alison Phillips. Piano: John Gough. Bass: Alex Liebeck. Drums. Wine & Nibbles following.



Eastertide Memorial Service

The Eastertide Memorial Service will take place on **Sunday, 19th April** at 6pm. All are invited to attend, and to send names of loved ones to be read in the service to the office or add to the sheet at the back of church, and if you wish bring a lily or other white flower which will be added to the arrangement made during the service.



Growing in Grace

> There is no time like Spring, when life's alive in everything.
>
> *Christina Rossetti*

> Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen.
>
> *2 Peter 3: 18*

> Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
>
> *2 Corinthians 9: 7*

> Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.
>
> *John Macleod Campbell Crum*

A booklet has been addressed to every member of St. Mary's Electoral Roll to encourage our growth in faith, service, and giving. Have you received your envelope yet? If not, ask at the Parish Office, or collect a booklet from church.

Growing in faith is for everyone because none of us has arrived, and never will in this life.

Growing in service will take different forms for different people. Not everyone can take on new and active responsibility, but I remember a bishop, who was about to move to a clergy retirement home, telling me his work now was solely to pray. Again, that's something for any stage in life. However, if you're fairly new to St. Mary's, one of the best ways to feel you belong, and to get to know people, is to take on some responsibility or join one of the groups who serve the church. Each has a gift, a talent, to offer in service.

Growing in generosity is also something for everyone, even if we don't have the means to increase our financial contribution. We all have time to give, in one way or another. But the church does need to be supported by its members giving money. If you are already part of the planned giving scheme, now is a good time to review your giving. If you joined St. Mary's in the last few years, and you haven't done so already, please consider setting up regular, planned giving to the church, with Gift Aid if you are a UK taxpayer.

Please keep the response forms coming in. Eastertide is a very appropriate time for us to make our commitment.

Mark Hart

C S Lewis Study Day

On Saturday, 28th February a C S Lewis Study Day was held at St. Mary's. The upstairs Parish Hall was filled with Lewis enthusiasts both from within our own church and from further afield including Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stockport and Knutsford.

The day began with a lecture from Carole Tilt on "The Life of C S Lewis". This covered a chronological overview interspersed with amusing anecdotes and insights gained from her recent visit to The Kilns (Lewis's home). Rector Mark Hart spoke on "The Theology of C S Lewis: A Personal Perspective" and explained how reading Lewis's work from when he was a teenager until now had influenced his own faith.



Discussions about Lewis continued over lunch in the downstairs hall and there was opportunity to view displays about his life.

In the afternoon Ernie Charlton gave a lecture entitled, "The Literature of C S Lewis: Fantasy, Fable, Fact and Faith". His wide-ranging exploration of the literature made connections between the different works and gave many attendees inspiration for further reading.

Feedback received on the day was extremely positive and the following are from e-mails sent in afterwards:

> *"Thank you so much for organising yesterday - all three contributions represented hours of thought and study. It certainly helped me to see Lewis' life and thought more clearly."*

"Just a note to say thank you very much for organising such a splendid day yesterday - it was a real treat to hear three such different and complementary perspectives on C S Lewis, and to be reminded about how interesting a thinker and writer he was."

"I just wanted to thank you very much for yesterday's excellent C S Lewis event. The organisation and the displays all contributed to what was a very enjoyable and informative day."

"Thank you very much for organising such an interesting day at the weekend. It was informative and sociable at the same time."

Journeying?

Life as a journey is an old idea, but Robin Gamble in his book "Jesus 100" points out that thinking or reading about life's journey is quite different to actively following Jesus and striding out on the road. He invites the reader to decide which line in this piece below best applies to where they are on the journey:

- Get your feet on the path.
- Keep going.
- Meet other people on the way.
- Enjoy the occasional picnic.
- Live the adventure.

For me it is "Meet other people on the way". This is because I'm encouraged, each fortnight, by meeting briefly with others from our Church in a small group. Here I have chance to reflect on what's happening in my Christian life, in terms of Prayer, Study and Action. The others listen, giving me space to consider where God is in all the twists and turns of my life, but there is no comment or judgement from them and I can speak in confidence. I share the experience by taking my turn at listening. It encourages us to "Get our feet on the path, Keep going, Enjoy the occasional picnic and Live the adventure".

If you think this would be an encouragement to you too, you are very welcome to try it out in one of the six small Cursillo groups who meet from the congregations of St. Mary's, Nantwich and St. Mary's, Acton. You are also invited to explore your faith and where you are on the "journey" with Christ at a Cursillo Weekend. The next one, Number 67 in

the Chester Diocese, will be held at Foxhill Retreat House, Tarvin Road, Frodsham from 5pm on **Friday, 23rd October** to 5.30pm on **Sunday, 25th October**.

It is funded by "paying forward" in that you pay just a £20 deposit [non-refundable] but then are invited during the Weekend to pay, confidentially, the amount you can afford for someone to come after you on the next Weekend.

The Weekend centres around fifteen talks and meditations that provide stimulating discussion points. It's a warm, joyful and friendly occasion on which to take another step along the road, enjoy the picnic and live the adventure.

To know more contact Sue Hutt (*hutt.sue30@gmail.com*) who will be happy to explain any aspect and answer any questions. Take a look at the website *www.chestercursillo.org.uk* which includes a link to Lichfield Cursillo Diocese. *Sue Hutt*

Faith in the North

St. Mary's, Nantwich is in the Major Churches Network (MCN), which covers about 300 Churches in England. This MCN shares challenges and opportunities for ministry in our parishes.

I was fortunate to attend a gathering at Bishopthorpe Palace, York on 25th February at the Archbishop of York's invitation to those in the MCN from the Northern Province.

Archbishop Stephen was present and spoke of his hopes for Faith in the North, not as an initiative, but as a movement towards change, renewal and pilgrimage for all. He celebrated Holy Communion with us in his Chapel.



Faith in the North has emerged from two years of conversations about how to celebrate the 1400-year anniversary in 2027 of the baptism in York by Bishop Paulinus of King Edwin, the first

King of Northumbria to profess the Christian faith. Faith in the North has three elements of renewal: prayer and discipleship, storytelling and church planting.

Faith in the North seeks to encourage this inspired by the Northern Saints. It will provide resources for churches, schools and individuals to foster deeper connections with the Christian faith and renew our missionary purpose.

So, we look for:

- more praying the Lord's Prayer and living lives shaped by its vision.
- children and young people knowing and engaging with the Lord's Prayer as a pathway to faith.
- a prayer network for church planting and revitalisation across the region.
- more people discovering a relationship with God through resources for prayer.
- people seeing themselves as part of the big story of Faith in the North through the centuries and encouraged and equipped to tell their story today.
- children in schools learning the story of Faith in the North in ways which engage them in the Christian faith.
- churches engaging with their story with fresh imagination and developing new creative approaches to mission.
- people of all ages encouraged to explore faith for themselves.
- churches and new worshipping communities started because of our work.
- a shared sense of identity and purpose across the Northern Province of the Church of England.
- the Northern Province as a learning community for church planting.

A Prayer for Faith in the North

Loving God, guide by your Spirit the churches of the North;
that following in the footsteps of the Saints who have gone before us,
we may walk in the way of Christ, share his love with others,
and build your Kingdom of peace in the communities we serve.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

At St. Mary's, we shall be discussing and acting on this as we plan for our future in Nantwich, as we share our faith in Jesus Christ in our and others future lives.

Paul Ramsey

Mothers' Union News



Several large bags full of donated toiletries, women's personal items, children's underware, nappies and children's clothing, have now been delivered to Cheshire Without Abuse. This is one of our community outreach initiatives. Mothers' Union in Nantwich are supporting vulnerable women and children in our community locally. A huge thank you once again for supporting this.

A group of volunteers met on Saturday, 14th March to assemble daffodil posies. These posies were given out at all the Mothering Sunday Services. Thanks to Mark for the lovely picture on the front cover of the ladies working hard in St. George's Chapel. The smiles say it all.

That afternoon members from across the Province of York gathered at Manchester Cathedral for a special service celebrating the 150th anniversary of Mothers' Union.

4 members of our branch represented Nantwich at the service. It was wonderful to see so many gathered together from across the Province for this special occasion.

For those members unable to attend, and anyone else who may be interested and perhaps thinking about joining our group, you can watch the service on the Manchester Cathedral YouTube channel.

"Join us and Join in".

Cathie Riddell



Little Fish has lovely new mats! Colourful, light, wipeable, and durable. Little Fish is for any age preschool with parents/carers and includes play, craft, story, prayer, song and refreshments. Thursday morning in term time, 10-11.30am.

Church Walk



An intrepid group from St. Mary's set off from Acton for a five mile church walk on Saturday, 7th March. Everyone arrived promptly and we were soon enjoying the fresh air and exercise as we walked along the Shropshire Union Canal towpath. There was plenty of opportunity to chat, admire the views and take photos.

At the canal junction we took the Llangollen Canal Branch and went past the many locks that cover the incline here before arriving at Hurleston Reservoir. A short detour around part of the reservoir rewarded us with great views of the local countryside and back to Nantwich.



Ernie and Geoffrey responded eagerly to my request for an action shot!

We enjoyed a picnic lunch beside the locks before continuing our walk. The towpath soon became quite muddy but a bit of teamwork ensured everyone navigated this part successfully. Fortunately the rain held off and the sun shone briefly on the large number of brightly painted narrow boats in Swanley Marina. At Swanley Locks we crossed over to a small island and had a short period of prayer and reflection on the theme of spring whilst surrounded by signs of the season in the fields and hedgerows.



A quiet country lane took us back to Acton where we walked through the interesting churchyard to complete our local circuit.

Everyone enjoyed the day and new friendships were made as we walked and talked together.

Carole Tilt

Bellringers mark International Women's Day

Women bellringers from St. Mary's marked International Women's Day 2026 by ringing a Quarter Peal of Plain Bob Doubles on Sunday, 8th March.



L to R:
Becky Williams,
Sam Martin,
Nicola Basford,
Fanny Weiss,
Diana Boyles,
Claire Jordan.

The ringing took place at 4.30pm and reflected this year's theme, "Give to Gain", which highlights the importance of investing in women to benefit society as a whole.

The all-female group of ringers featured five ringers who live locally.

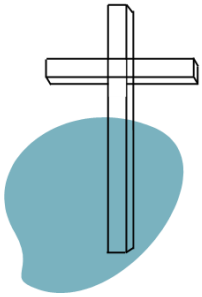
Fanny Weiss, a ringer since 2018, and originally from France, said International Women's Day remains vital while women's and girls' rights continue to be violated around the world, adding that it was special to honour them today through ringing.

Bellringer Claire, said, "I was excited and incredibly nervous for my first time ringing the treble and only my second quarter peal attempt. I knew immediately that the incredible teamwork of the ladies would get us through. Such an inspirational band of ladies and we all looked after each other. It was an honour."

Nantwich town councillor Anna Burton praised the "very talented group of women bellringers," describing St. Mary's as a community that supports and invests in women.

Anyone interested in learning to ring bells is warmly encouraged to get in touch, with practices held on Thursday evenings at 7pm.

Anna Burton



Churches Together in Nantwich

Annual General Meetings are not usually the most exciting evening out in the social calendar, but they do help groups and organisations take stock of the past year and enable them to look to the future. Churches Together in Nantwich (CTiN) did just that at its AGM on 9th March.

The meeting began with worship and a reminder that as Christians we are to "abide in Christ" who is the Vine. In doing so we will find ourselves bound up with one another as individual Christians and as churches.

The meeting received reports from organisations linked to but not necessarily run by Churches Together. Phil Boxhall gave us a clear insight into the challenges and opportunities facing the **Nantwich Foodbank** which many of our churches support through donations and volunteers. The **Christmas Day Lunch**, based at Nantwich Methodist Church welcomes thirty people not only for a meal but also for an afternoon of fellowship and entertainment. There were plenty of volunteers on the day but for next year two key organisers are urgently needed as the current ones are stepping down for personal reasons. This is a great opportunity for wider church participation in this worthwhile event and much of the preparatory work can be done by those who may not be able to attend in person on the day. Could that be you?

Churches Together has always supported the **Nantwich Show** and last year was no exception. Facilities for nappy changing, a ukulele band and a pop-up reflective garden featured in and around the CTiN tent. Bottles of water were distributed as were packets of seeds bearing Biblical messages and all churches were represented at the event. Less well known is the **Millennium Bursary Fund** which supports young people under the age of 30 years who seek to do voluntary service, both missionary and charitable, at home and abroad. Grants of up to £1,000 are available to suitable applicants who are asked to report back to CTiN through their churches in due course.

The AGM also heard of a number of projects run directly by Churches Together. **Pilgrims** is the name given to a group of people from member churches who visit one another's churches for Sunday worship from time to time. The Pilgrims visited all our churches in 2025 and a programme of visits is planned for 2026 beginning with the Vigil Mass at St. Anne's RC Church on Saturday, 7th March. Anyone is welcome to join the Pilgrims, simply by coming along. Details of visits can be found in the weekly news

sheet. In addition, Churches Together marked The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and All Saints-tide with **United Services** in Market St. Church, St. Mary's Acton and most recently at Nantwich Methodist Church.

In 2025 Churches Together revived the **Christian Aid Week collection** with envelopes in church and a collection in the Square. £1,963 was raised and CTiN are planning to repeat this exercise during Christian Aid Week (10th-16th May) this year.

Looking forward, CTiN are exploring ways of engaging with children and their families with a possible event during this coming summer. Activities such as this raise issues of safeguarding and CTiN are exploring with member churches the best way to set up interdenominational events such as this.

Finally there was the usual business of any AGM. Jackie Holland presented the accounts and informed member churches of the levy asked of each church to support CTiN. The Chairman gave his farewell annual report saying that "it had been a privilege to get to know so many good people from our different churches and to work alongside them in so many different ways". The new Chairman of CTiN is Rev. John Penny, deacon at St. Anne's Church. John thanked Canon David Taylor for his chairmanship of CTiN over the past two years and presented him with a book token and flowers before closing with prayer.

Forthcoming Events



Good Friday Open Air Service - Friday, 3rd April (10.45am at St. Mary's; 11.00am on the Square). Join the crowds for a public act of worship and witness on this most significant day in the Christian calendar.

Christian Aid Week - 10th-16th May



Donation envelopes will be available in church and can be returned to church via the collection boxes and plate up to 17th May when Christian Aid Week ends. Volunteers will be needed on Saturday, 16th May for a collection on the Square. Could you spare an hour to help raise funds? Please make a note of the date now and watch out for further details.

Sanctuary and Launchpad



The speaker for the March breakfast was Tim Emerton, head of fundraising at The Boaz Trust. The Boaz Trust is a Manchester-based Christian charity providing housing and specialist support for people who have become homeless and destitute after seeking asylum.

It has 15 properties with 52 bedspaces and provides outreach support as well. People come to Boaz on a referral basis from 60 different organisations including the NHS, homeless services, Councils, Churches and the Red Cross. St. Mary's provides mission support to Boaz.

Boaz has 20 staff and was started in 2004. It is part of NACCOM (no accommodation network) which links organisations providing similar support across the country. It is named Boaz after the Biblical character in the Book of Ruth. There, Boaz is a prominent, respectable Bethlehem landowner, known for his kindness.

Boaz operates under the strapline of "sanctuary and launchpad" because Christian hospitality is not just about sheltering from the immediate storm, but also about the future.

Tim got us to think about the conflicts and instability in the world, about how life is difficult for millions of people who are uprooted and must leave the place they called home through no choice of their own. They have to make a journey they never wanted to make because of violence, war and persecution.

At one stage Tim got us to talk to those next to us about what we would take with us if we had only a few minutes to leave our homes. "Dogs, cats, photographs, passports, water and medicines" were all mentioned.

Tim reminded us that movement of people is not an alien concept mentioning Abraham, Israel, Egypt. Indeed, hospitality to strangers is close to our faith in the Bible and Jesus was a stranger in a foreign land. Tim encouraged us to hold what we read in the Bible, rather than hostile rhetoric we might hear in terms of "invasions", "immigration", "numbers", "symbols" and "categories".

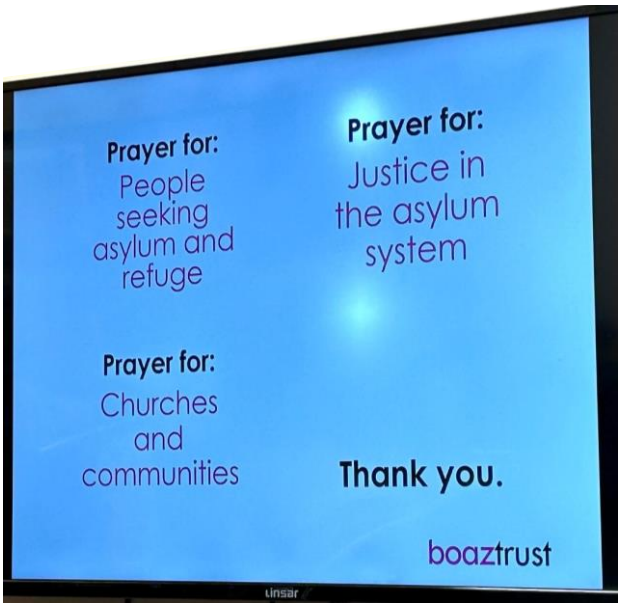
Boaz welcomes strangers in the way that God does in the Bible. This involves in the first place giving them respect. Then considering the person, the individual's practical, emotional and spiritual needs. In providing accommodation, Boaz can make a real difference to people who have lived through years of uncertainty. Tim mentioned one asylum seeker, who after ten years gained refugee status, explaining how a clean room, a bed, a key for the door gave her power and energy and renewed her self-belief. She is now working and volunteers with people in the asylum system.

Boaz also helps people navigate the complicated asylum system and gives outreach support helping people access legal advice, medical care, mental health support, wellbeing initiatives and voluntary and employment opportunities. It also engages in local, regional and national advocacy campaigning for positive reform of the asylum system.

Towards the end Tim asked us to pray in the days and weeks to come for:

- People seeking asylum – for strength and perseverance in times of uncertainty
- Justice in the asylum system – for compassion and good judgement in those in authority
- Churches and communities – for people to have tender hearts without suspicion.

www.boaztrust.org.uk/



April Breakfast

The speaker will be choir member, Nigel Phipps. The breakfast will take place at The Tea Lounge at Nantwich Football Stadium at 8.30am on **Saturday, 18th April**. As usual, sign up on the sheet at the back of church or phone the office. If you book, we need to pay, so have to ask you to pay if you fail to turn up.

Rest in Peace



St. Mary's owes a considerable debt of thanks to God for the arrival of **Tony Metcalfe** in Nantwich in 1986 (to take up the position of District Education Officer in Crewe) and for the decades of service to the music of the church which followed, including 23 years as Director of Music, and 25 years as Director of the Nantwich Singers (formerly the Tudor Consort).

Tony embraced the role of Director of Music with gusto, and organised a successful recruiting drive in local schools, always encouraging youngsters to try out their voices. He loved to draw in singers from the wider area for special occasions to perform ambitious works such as Choral Requiems on Good Friday. He started the Primary Carol Services in the early 2000s, attracting all the local primary schools to participate.

Tony made use of the church's link with the Royal School of Church Music and would lead workshops in St. Mary's for the diocese, later becoming an examiner and encouraging the children in the choir to participate. He took the choir to sing in services elsewhere, including Liverpool, Blackburn, Lichfield and Chester, and on residential weekends in Hereford and Ripon.

Alongside the church choir, Tony was keen to utilise the wonderful building and its acoustics, and to provide a platform for local musical talent. He started the Summer Lunchtime Concerts in the early 90s, and quickly realised that the voluntary donations could be the beginning of a fund to buy a grand piano.

After the funds had been raised it was then a source of great frustration to Tony that the requirement of church faculties delayed the purchase for years! It was a source of huge joy when the piano finally arrived in church in 2016.

Tony always considered the church choir an important social group and organised many



The banner in St. Mary's dedicated to Tony, including the first line of the hymn tune written by Tony which was sung at his funeral.

big picnics and walks and fun workshop days. He was always willing to participate in any big money making drives undertaken by the church - as long as it involved music. In 1998 and 2002 he organised a "Musicthon" which involved 12 hours of continuous music in and around the church.

Two prominent events during Tony's tenure were the "Out of the Ashes" drama telling the story of Nantwich's 2000 years of history performed in October 2000 with Tony as musical director. Following its success, the parish put on a performance of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat", again with Tony as DM.

In these latter years, though struggling mentally and physically, Tony loved attending services, and would try hard to stand tall for the hymns and the creed. It was a poignant thrill to his dear wife Anne when she heard the occasional line of bass or tenor sung next to her.

Thank you, Tony. May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.



*We give thanks for the life of **Pat Stalker**, who died on 19th March aged 92. May she rest in peace. Pat was a Churchwarden of St. Mary's for six years, and an extraordinarily friendly presence at church and throughout the town, known to so many people. We will pay tribute to Pat in the next issue.*



*We give thanks for the life of **Jack Corbett**, who died on 10th March, 4 days after his 100th birthday. May he rest in peace. Jack, who served with the Intelligence Corps in Burma, is shown here on the 80th anniversary of VJ day. We will pay tribute to Jack's long and interesting life, and his contribution to St. Mary's over many years, in the next issue.*

Come and See

This year's Lent course ran over five weeks, on Tuesday afternoons and Wednesday evenings. Over 70 people attended at least one session. Some came back for more, and over 50 were present each week, across the two sessions, which made for good interaction, as we met in the choir stalls.

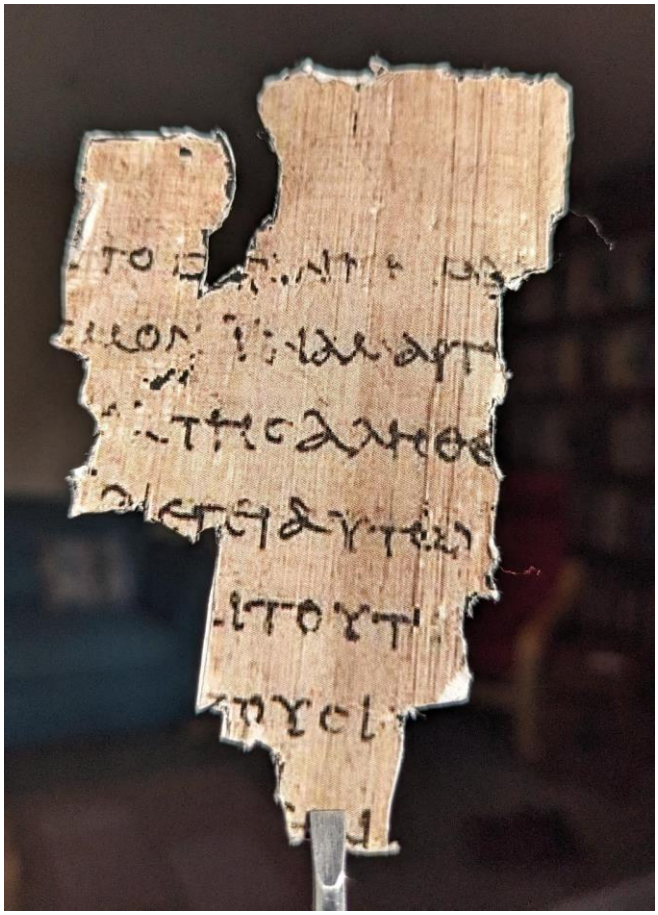
The heart of the course was simply the reading of the whole of the Gospel according to St. John together, with many different people reading a chapter each. It's rare for us to be able, together, to gain an overview of a whole book of the Bible in this way.

The first words of Jesus in the Gospel are "What are you looking for?", and the title of the course, "Come and see" is his second saying. We saw how throughout the Gospel the text is very carefully constructed and has meanings at different levels, and so many of the questions can be asked of or by us.

What does John want us to see? The glory of Jesus! The climax of the Gospel is where Thomas exclaims "My Lord and my God". And at this point Jesus gives a special blessing for us if we believe, but without seeing as Thomas did.

The notes of the course are available, if you couldn't attend. Thank you to all who attended. I learnt a lot by preparing and attending. If I were allowed only one book of the Bible on a desert island it would be John. Listen out as we hear it again on many Sundays in Eastertide.

Mark Hart



A replica, made for the course, of the P52 fragment from the John Rylands Library, the oldest known copy of text from the New Testament, words from John's Gospel.

News in Pictures

On Monday, 2nd March a piece of stone fell from the arch above the west window of St. Mary's. Fortunately the only casualty was a stone cherub lower down. As a precaution the west doors were closed until a thorough inspection could be carried out.





On Thursday, 19th March, Western Platforms of Colwyn Bay delivered and operated an access platform to allow our church architect, Tony Barton (of Donald Insall Associates), to carry out the inspection.

He identified the cause of the fall - a particular place where water had gained access to the iron cramp, causing it to rust, expand, and crack the stone.

The remainder of the arch was inspected and no reason was found to keep the west door closed. Repair work will be planned in due course.



A wave from Paul O'Brien who made use of the access lift to replace some of the roof lights above the front of the nave.

Spring Fair 2026

Thank you to all who donated, made, or prepared items for the Spring Fair, held on Saturday, 21st March. And thank you to all who manned the stalls, and to those who spent money.













It was a lovely day, very welcome after the disappointing weather for all the 2025 fairs. It made a difference; town was busy, and we raised £1,703.



Over 80 people gathered at midday on Saturday, 21st March to hear Songs for Lent performed by Concordia, conducted by Alison Phillips, and accompanied by John Gough (here receiving applause). The varied and interesting programme covered music from the 16th to the 21st centuries, including works by Felice Anerio, T L de Victoria, Claudio Monteverdi, Herbert Howells, Carlo Gesualdo, Anton Bruckner, J S Bach, Will Todd, Eleanor Daley and Bob Chilcott.



The Feast of the Annunciation was celebrated on 25th March with some rare Wednesday bell-ringing, followed by a Lady Day service of Holy Communion at 11am supported by a good congregation including many from the Mothers' Union. Here the Rector welcomes three new members of the MU: Beth Roberts, Angie Bartlett, and Jan Anderson. The MU kindly provided refreshments after the service.



Mums and Toddlers finished the term on an Easter theme. Our "creative lady" Sally helped to make bunny ears and we finished off with singing and handing out Easter eggs. All the children had a great time. Next term starts on 14th April.

The Rector with Alan Joslyn, after Alan had found and dug the hole for the cross on the churchyard. Please bring flowers to decorate this cross on Easter Day, and through Easter week.

Lift high the cross! Phil Boxhall, Nick Leftley, Paul Oliver, and Ernie Charlton, erect the (very heavy) cross in church.





Easter Experience

In the last week of the school term 200 children from St. Anne's, Highfields, Millfields, and Nantwich Primary schools attended Easter Experience in church to be led through the story of Holy Week and Easter.

Graham Christopher prepared stations around the church, including a large gazebo to represent the empty tomb.

It was a lively and engaging time for everyone!

Thank you to all from St. Mary's who helped to lead the experience.



David Taylor talks with the children about the Garden of Gethsemane.



For some of the time children were working with "goody bag" quiz materials.



Andrea Howell-Jones here takes the story from the cross to the empty tomb.



Daisy's determination decides the Palm Sunday procession route

No amount of bribery with treats, or gentle persuasion by Liz and Michael-John Parkin or even a friendly labradoodle nuzzling behind would persuade Daisy to participate in the usual walk around the town centre with the 9.30am congregation to re-enact the Palm Sunday procession. Never mind, she was persuaded to move from the south door to the grass outside at the eastern end of Church.



Flexibility was the name of the day and the prayers and songs led by youth and children's worker Graham Christopher and Rev. Dot Woods, with technical support from Paul O'Brien, took a different route from usual, starting and finishing where Daisy deigned to stay.



Even though she didn't want to process, she was very relaxed and friendly with all the fussing and stroking she got from the young people and adults alike.







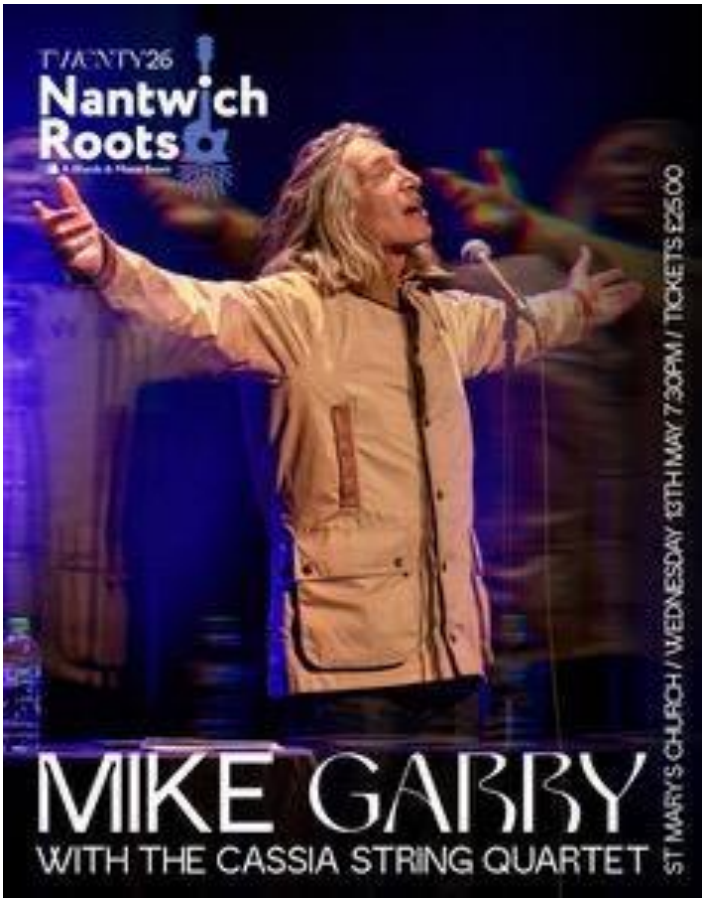
There was a good crowd of people, some waving palm branches and most carrying their palm crosses.

Annie Coombs



Forthcoming Events





ST MARYS
NANTWICH

STORIES WORTH TELLING



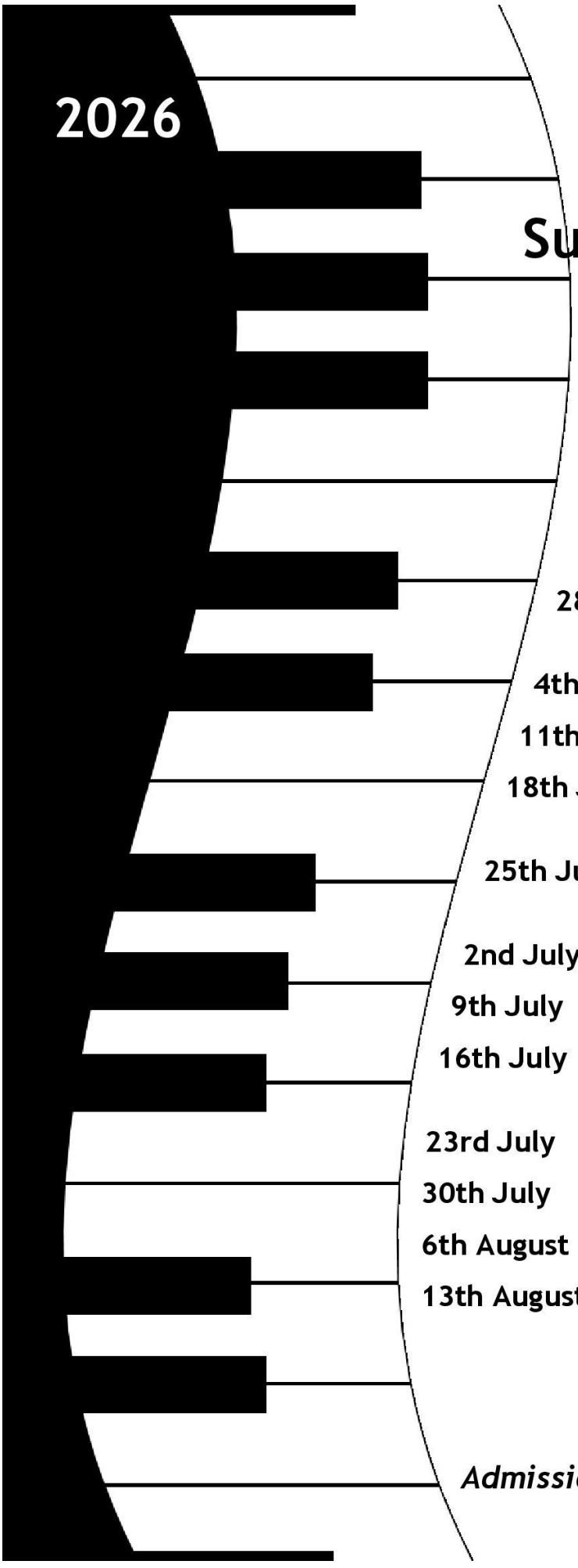
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All this and more. Something for everyone.

Saturday 23rd May 10am – 4pm

Venue: St Marys Nantwich. Free entry, drop in anytime. All welcome.

See also **"Special Services & Events Calendar"** on p. 40.



ST MARYS
NANTWICH

Summer Lunchtime Concerts 2026

Thursdays 12.30-1.15pm

28th May	Leora Cohen (Violin) Ariel Lanyi (Piano)
4th June	Alexia Eleftheriadou (Piano)
11th June	Nantwich Chamber Ensemble
18th June	Students from Chetham's School of Music
25th June	Benedict Holland (Viola) John Gough (Piano)
2nd July	Nantwich Singers
9th July	Tim Sagar (Organ)
16th July	Alison Loram (Violin) Christopher Symons (Piano)
23rd July	Northerly Winds
30th July	Stage Serenade
6th August	Richard Haslam (Classical Guitar)
13th August	Simon Russell (Organ)

Admission Free ***Retiring Collection***

Prayer of the Month

Be present, O merciful God,
and protect us through the silent hours of this night,
so that we, who are wearied by the changes and chances
of this fleeting world,
may rest upon your eternal changelessness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
[from Night Prayer (Compline) at the end of the day]

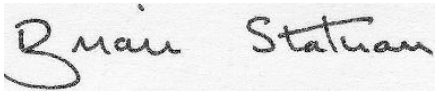
This is just **one** of my favourite prayers! (I have many!) It is a prayer that allows us to be honest with God. It opens the door to the possibility that all is not perfect in our world. It gives us permission to acknowledge that we have come to the end of another day with things left incomplete, in dissatisfaction. Yet, by the same token it draws us on – to let those things go, and allow God to take his place.

The two strands that stand out in this short but deep prayer are about God's presence, and about hope. This is not a prayer asking for miracles, or asking God to put things right. It is a prayer asking for comfort – surely there is nothing greater that we can request than the presence of our loving God.

A powerful phrase in this prayer is *"that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world, may rest upon your eternal changelessness"*. The contrast between the changes and chances of our world and the changelessness of God offers such hope. It says to us that God is our constant – our past, present and future. We may feel as if we are on shifting sands, but God will hold us fast.

What makes this prayer special for me is that it ends in hope. It takes us from the spoiled day to the peace and presence of God. As the 14th century mystic so eloquently puts it:

"All shall be well … all manner of things shall be well."



Forgiveness

There have been various programmes and stories on Radio 4 and on TV recently about the effect of forgiving. When someone upsets or attacks us we react almost automatically. We have been told by Jesus to forgive not seven times but seventy times seven. In fact he is advising us not to hold grudges or to take revenge against others. This is forgiveness, to show care for the sinners and for those sinned against.

Revengeful feelings destroy personalities. People can be obsessed with suspected blame and may target and damage those whom they blame for some action or other.

Christians believe that Christ died and rose again at Easter to take the sins of the world upon himself and to save us from the burden of sin. As he suffered at his crucifixion he said of the Roman soldiers, *"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."*

Forgiveness is healing. I recently watched an account of the actions of the Norman soldiers in southern Europe in the 11th century and of those in the northern area in the first crusade. In Sicily, having invaded the island, the leader, Roger, a relative of William the Conqueror became the political head. He believed that everyone of any religion should live together in peace. In Sicily at the time this meant the Greeks, the Muslims and the Normans. The result was that the island flourished and some of the most beautiful works of art and architecture that were built at the time are still there to be seen such as the amazing church in the palace at Palermo which is full of gold mosaics and amazing statues.

The aggressive Norman soldiers in the north led by Robert, another relative of William the Conqueror, joined the first Crusade and went to kill as many Muslims as possible because they had occupied the Holy Land. Extremists today still feel the hate that was around then. Why? They cannot forgive and too many problems of today are based on hatred of someone, something or some historic event or group. Many wars and aggressive actions are based on revenge. Someone wants more land or power and is willing to kill to get it.

Why can't people learn from the good news of forgiveness? What are our motives? Why do many people believe that they know what is right and others who do not think the same things should be eliminated? Why are so many words spoken and repeated in the media made against different individuals or groups? The world would be a much happier planet if people would value each other's views, share the available resources, respect each other and learn to forgive. Easter is a very good time to practise forgiveness and to focus on our own attitudes to others. Pray for peace and cooperation in the world especially at this time, this year. *Dot Roxby*

From the Registers: February 2026

Holy Baptism

We welcome you into the Lord's family

15th	Winifred Warner

Funerals

May they rest in peace and rise in glory

6th	Arthur Evanson (95)
9th	Edward Taylor (80)
16th	Doreen Cooper (88)
16th	Margaret Smith (98)
17th	Keith Billing (90)
17th	Ian Smith (84)
23rd	Anthony Farrall (61)
24th	Eric Cartlidge (97)
25th	Peter Wollaston (74)
27th	Dorothy Relton (90)

Readings for April 2026

2nd April *(Maundy Thursday)*	1 Corinthians 11: 23-26 John 13: 1-17, 31b-35
5th April *(Easter Day)*	Colossians 3: 1-4 John 20: 1-18
12th April *(2nd Sunday of Easter)*	Acts 2: 14a, 22-32 John 20: 19-31
19th April *(3rd Sunday of Easter)*	Acts 2: 14a, 36-41 Luke 24: 13-35
26th April *(4th Sunday of Easter)*	Acts 2: 42-47 John 10: 1-10

Regular Services & Groups

The church is open for all our usual regular services, and open to visitors Monday-Saturday, 9.30am-4pm. The 9.30am and 10.45am Sunday services continue to be live-streamed on YouTube most weeks. Services and events below are held weekly unless stated otherwise, and this is the normal pattern, which may occasionally change (check the weekly notice sheet).

Sunday	8.00am	Holy Communion
	9.30am	All Age Worship (Communion 1st Sunday)
	10.45am	Holy Communion
	2.30pm	Holy Baptism (1st and 3rd Sundays)
	3.00pm	Afternoon Prayer or Holy Communion (Richmond Village)
	3.30pm	Holy Baptism (1st and 3rd Sundays)
	6.00pm	Evensong
	7.15pm	Encounter (1st & 3rd Sundays)
Monday	7.00pm	Community Choir Singing (1st Monday)
	8.00pm	Welcome to Baptism (2nd Monday)
Tuesday	8.30am	Morning Prayer
	10.00am	Mums & Toddlers in the Parish Hall
	3.45pm	SING!@St.Mary's in the Parish Hall
Wednesday	8.30am	Morning Prayer
	11.00am	Holy Communion
Thursday	8.30am	Morning Prayer
	9.30am	Flower Arrangers in church
	10.00am	Little Fish Toddler Group in church
	7.00pm	Bellringing practice in the Tower
Friday	8.30am	Morning Prayer
	10am-1pm	Place of Welcome in the Parish Hall
	2.00pm	Mothers' Union (3rd Friday) in the Parish Hall
	7.00pm	Choir Practice in church
	7.30pm	FNL
Saturday	8.30am	Morning Prayer
	8.30am	St. Mary's Breakfast (3rd Saturday)
	10.00am	Concordia Practice in church

B's Café

B's Dementia Café at Belong Crewe



Hosted by an Admiral Nurse, B's Dementia Café monthly sessions in Belong Crewe, offers a warm and welcoming space where families, friends and carers of people living with dementia can come together over a cuppa and cake!

Dementia drop-in

Join us for our next monthly session:

Tuesday 21 April

2pm - 3pm

The Venue, Belong Crewe, Brookhouse Drive, Crewe CW2 6NA

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	The Rectory, Nantwich CW5 5RQ	
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Honorary Clergy:	Rev. Tony Long	561113
	Rev. David Marsh	610079
	Rev. Brian Statham	07724 133215
	Rev. Canon David Taylor	618936
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Youth and Children's Worker:		
	Graham Christopher	07795 696234
	graham@stmarysnantwich.org.uk	
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	Paul O'Brien	07973 743909
Verger:	Linda Lewis	07534 272901
Pastoral Worker:	Mary Harris	
	maryhma@icloud.com	628393 or 07753 840118

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Baptism Coordinator:	Jo McCauley	620745
Bellringers:	Mary Stanwell	628900
	marystanwell@icloud.com	
Christian Stewardship Recorder:	Margaret Winzer	623768
Director of Music & SING!	Alison Phillips	07891 620678
Parish Hall Manager:	Nick Leftley	07899 807831
	nicleftley@aol.com	
	(Bookings via mah4now@yahoo.com)	
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	safeguarding@stmarysnantwich.org.uk	
PCC Secretary:	Beth Roberts	
	pccsecretary@stmarysnantwich.org.uk	
PCC Treasurer:	Steve Lockett	628203

Parish Office:	Gail Johnson & Miriam Harvey	
(Open 9am-12noon Mon-Fri	Church Walk, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 5RG	
and until 3.30pm Wed)	office@stmarysnantwich.org.uk	625268

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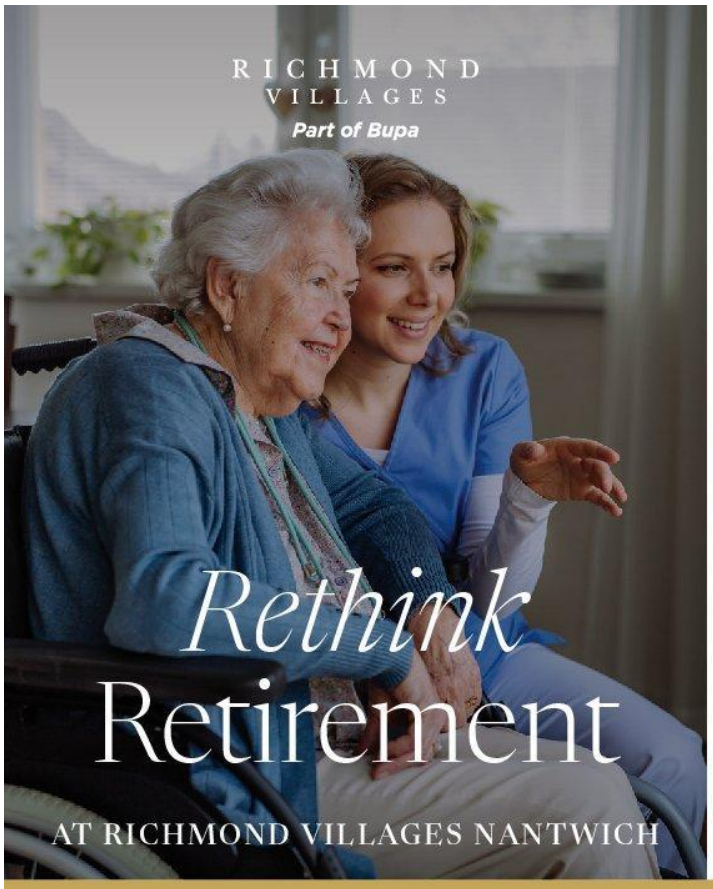
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Special Services & Events Calendar April-July 2026

April	2nd	Holy Communion and stripping of the altars, 7.30pm
	3rd	All Age Worship, 10am
		The Three Hours, 12-3pm
	5th	Dawn service, 6am
		Easter Day services, 8am, 9.30am, 10.45am
		Concordia Jazz Mass, 6pm
		Encounter in the Parish Hall, 7.15pm
	18th	St. Mary's Breakfast at Nantwich Football Club, 8.30am
		Illuminated Orchestra Concert in church, 4pm, 6.30pm, & 9pm
	19th	Eastertide Memorial Service in church, 6pm
	22nd	Annual Parochial Church Meeting in church, 7.30pm
	27th	Melanie C live performance in church, 7pm
	29th	Sound Bath in church, 7.15pm
May	3rd	Encounter Supper in the Parish Hall, 7.15pm
	13th	Mike Garry with the Cassia String Quartet in church, 7pm
	14th	Ascension Day Holy Communion, 8am & 7.30pm
	16th	St. Mary's Breakfast at Nantwich Football Club, 8.30am
		Cheshire Police Band in the Well, 11.30am
	17th	Social Committee Welcome Tea in Parish Hall, 3.30pm
	23rd	Encounter Explore Day in church, 10am-4pm
	28th	Summer Lunchtime Concerts begin, Thursdays, 12.30pm
June	6th	Celebration of Simon & Garfunkel in church, 7.30pm
	17th	Sound Bath in church, 7.15pm
	20th	St. Mary's Breakfast at Nantwich Football Club, 8.30am
		Social Committee Hog Roast, Parish Hall 4-8pm
	21st	Encounter Explore in church, 7-9pm
	27th	Nantwich Choral Society Concert in church, 7.30pm
	28th	Choral Evensong, 6pm
July	4th	Encounter Church Walk
		Youth Spanish Baroque Ensemble in church
	11th	Summer Fair in Parish Hall/Church grounds 10am-2pm
	12th	Hymns and Pimm's, 6pm
	15th	Everyday Faith Podcast Event in church, 7pm
	29th	Nantwich Show at Reaseheath