

March 2026

St Mary's Monthly Message



A Note From Lesley

Trusting God in the wilderness

Lent feels especially real to me this year.

Over recent months, life has shifted in ways I'm still trying to take in. I'm loving being part of St Mary's and gradually getting to know you all. Thank you so much for the warmth of your welcome. After 28 years leading a church with my husband, Jim, we have said goodbye to a much-loved community — and to the area where I grew up. We've downsized our home. I've begun a new role in a new town. My dad has moved into a care home, and selling his bungalow made it tangible, since Mum died eighteen months ago, that chapter of "home" has closed. In November, we also said goodbye to my mother-in-law.

It has been a season of change, loss and letting go. At times, if I'm honest, it has felt like being propelled into a wilderness. And yet, that is exactly where Lent begins.

After His baptism, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the desert. The wilderness is a place of testing, but also of revealing. The temptations are not really about bread, spectacle or power, but identity, trust and allegiance. "If you are the Son of God..." The question underneath is always: Did God really say...? Will you trust the Father and hold onto who you are when everything familiar is stripped away?

Jesus emerges from the desert strengthened — secure in His identity.

Recently, in the midst of so much change, I experienced a panic attack during which I felt shaken and untethered — disconnected from God, from Jim, even from myself. For a moment, I was afraid I wouldn't find my way back.

But as Jim prayed, I recognised the lies for what they were. I chose to speak truth instead: that Jesus, my Saviour, is the Prince of Peace. I asked for His peace to guard my heart and mind and anchor me again in His love.

Wilderness seasons remove the props we did not realise we were leaning on. And yet, in the quiet space that loss creates, God is doing something new. A part of that is shaping us more into the person he made us to be.

If this season feels like wilderness for you too, perhaps Lent is an invitation — not to fear the shaking, but to trust the One who holds us through it.



Rev'd Lesley Tate
Children's & Families
Minister

What's inside?

- ***Focus on Giving***
- ***Holy Week & Easter Services***

In Other News...

Dates for your Diary

Prayers for this month

Re-focusing our giving as a church and individuals

Giving is at the centre of our mission as a church to 'Share the love of Christ with all', which is why at St Mary's we'd like to share with you all, the very real impact your support has for the hundreds, even thousands, of people who rely on the charities we support and the projects we run.

Did you know, each year we aim to give at least 10% of our gross income to these charities, before we begin to consider our own needs? In 2026, the new charities we will support are [BRF Ministries](#), CMS (through whom we support Nicci Maxell in Sudan) and [Impact Giving](#) (supporting David James' work in London). We have also pledged to give one-off grants to the following organisations [A Rocha](#), [Every Life](#), [Hamlin Fistula](#) and [Project Possible](#).

We put our church mission into practice with the community projects we support, like Messy Church, Lunch Club, Play Café, Princes Risborough Lighthouse and the Princes Centre, to name just a few of the activities where our funds are directed and our volunteers are giving their time.

At the heart of our Christian stewardship is the belief that all we have comes from God himself and we should use these gracious gifts for His glory. In order for this work to continue, and the impact to grow, a new stewardship group has been created, made up of St Mary's worshippers who have skills in communications, giving and fundraising. The stewardship group will be shining a light on the generosity of our congregation and also sharing where your giving could make a real difference in the future.

We will be looking at ways to give to church, through [planned giving](#) (managed by Michael Hoey, as well introducing the [Parish Giving Scheme](#).

Key dates to come will be the Sunday services on 10 May and 15 November where our rector, Steve, will be preaching on the theme of Stewardship. One of our core values as a church is generosity and this will focus a sermon series in the autumn. The Annual Parochial Council Meeting will be held on 28 April at 7.15pm at St Mary's where there will be an opportunity to hear about the accounts for 2025 and how the Parochial Church Council is planning for the year ahead. We will also be showing you how your financial support makes a difference to the church, the diocese and the community we are a part of.

Thank you to each and every one of you who share your time, your resources and your gifts for the life of the church. Your generosity has a very real impact on the world around you. This is just the beginning of what we can do – together.

Beka Sharrock and the Stewardship Team



*see our [Charities page](#)
on the website*



*see our [Giving page](#)
on the website*



**Annual
Parochial
Church
Meeting**

In other news...

Digging deeper - The Letter to the Romans. Five evenings in Lent to listen to, wrestle with, go deeper into and discuss God's word in the letter to the church in Rome. Each evening begins with coffee & cake and there will be books to browse. No booking needed, just come with a bible. Tuesdays at St Mary's from February 24 to March 24. Refreshments from 7.15pm, sessions begins at 7.30pm through to 8.45pm.

Maker & Fixer meet on Sunday 8th March at 3pm and they will be looking ahead to International Women's Day with crafts including decorating a candle and a sewing activity. As usual, there will be refreshments and short time of reflection. This afternoon is suitable for all ages and you are warmly invited to come along and join in at The Old Dairy, Culverton Farm, Wycombe Road - parking available.

Mothering Sunday will be celebrated at all Sunday morning services on Sunday 15th March and posies of daffodils will be distributed. If you can help to create the posies on Saturday 14th March, please contact Jacquie Biddlecombe via the office.

Everyday Faith is the daily devotional app from the Church of England designed to inspire, equip and encourage you in your faith every day of the week. The app is free to download and is available for Apple and Android. You can download from the home page of the Church of England: <https://www.churchofengland.org/>

COME AND SEE: The Oxford Diocese have prepared a daily lent journey available as emails or as a podcast on Apple and Spotify - search *Come and See*. Each day in Lent you'll receive a short Bible reading and reflection to help you explore the Eucharist in a way that connects with everyday life. Whenever and however you read or listen, it is hoped that these reflections become a small, steady space for prayer and encouragement through Lent and beyond. Sign up at <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see>

Holy Week Services: There will be a service of Evening Prayer and Reflection in St Mary's church at 7.30pm on Monday 30, Tuesday 31 March and Wednesday 1 April. On Maundy Thursday, 2 April, there will be an evening service of Holy Communion at 7.30pm. All are warmly invited to attend. At 9.30am on **Good Friday** morning there will be a Church Families Service, children and families welcome. This is then followed at 11am by an open air ecumenical Act of Witness at the Market Cross with Churches Together in Risborough (CTR). In the afternoon there will be 'An hour at the Cross' service at 2pm. **Easter Sunday** begins with a sunrise service at 6am on Whiteleaf Hill with CTR. Easter Sunday is celebrated at all three morning services at St Mary's and at St Peter's there will be Evensong with shortened HC at 6pm.

Sustainable Church Flowers is one voice amongst a growing number calling for a sustainable approach to the floral economy. It gently encourages a positive change towards a more equitable, planet-friendly and life-giving future, rooted in our belief in the everlasting love of the Creator God. At St Mary's the flower team use flowers grown locally - often from members' gardens - and use only water and natural structures, not floral foam, for their arrangements. If you would like to learn more about this initiative, which has the backing of General Synod, please speak to Jacquie Biddlecombe.



*Don't forget
You can make regular
or one-off donations
to St Mary's at the
Payaz Terminal*

GIVING ...

... keeps St Mary's going.
From services and AV
to lighting and courses,
we rely on

Regular Planned Giving.

Please support the Church.
To get started, please contact
the Giving Secretary:
Michael Hoey
01844 275192
mhoey@btinternet.com

*Sign up for our weekly
e-news by going to the
homepage on our
website. Receive all the
news from St Mary's
direct to your phone!*

Dates for your Diary

Lunch Club: Wednesday 4 March 10am-3.30pm in St Mary's Church
World Day of Prayer Service: Friday March 6 at 11am, St John's Lacey Green
Ladies Breakfast: Saturday 7 March, 9am in the Church Hall with Steve Benoy speaking
Maker & Fixer: Sun 8 Mar, 3pm in the Old Dairy, Culverton Farm
Unplugged: Sun 8 March, 6.30pm, contemporary worship service in church
Bereavement Drop-in Group: in the Chapter House, 3pm on Monday 9 March
Mothering Sunday: Sun 15th March with daffodil posies
Lent course: Digging Deeper - The Letter to the Romans: Tues March 3, 10, 17 & 24 in church, refreshments from 7.15pm session begins at 7.30pm-8.45pm.
Morning Prayers at The Yurt: Mon & Fri mornings, 7.30am to 8am, Church Farm, Saunderton, HP27 9NJ
Yurt Gathering: Wednesday evenings, 7.30pm - see Carole Edwards for more info
Tea for All in the Chapter House at 2.30pm on Sunday 22 March
Play Cafe: Tuesdays from 9.30am to 11am in Church
Youth Group: Sundays during term time from 6.30pm to 7.45pm in the Chapter House

Services at St Mary's and St Peter's

Holy Communion at 8am (*said*)

Parish Communion at 9.30 on Sundays in church and live streamed to your home. See the St Mary's website for the link to our YouTube channel.

Live@St Mary's all age service at 11.15 in church. Kid's Church welcomes children to join them for activities in the Parish Hall during this service - contact the Parish Office for further info on sessions.

Mid week Holy Communion is on Wednesdays at 10.30 followed by coffee.

St Peter's Evensong with shortened Holy Communion on Sun 15th March, 3pm

For your Prayers this month

A prayer for Creation

God of awe and wonder,
creator of both night and day,
you count the number of the stars and call them all by their names.
Help us to cherish your abundant creation,
grateful for the gift that it is to us,
living in harmony with our common home,
through him who is the firstborn of all creation,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

We uphold in prayer: All those bereaved, including the families of Leonard Loveridge. All those known to us suffering ill health or facing operations.

We give thanks for: Nicci Maxwell, our CMS sponsored missionary, who enjoyed revisiting her former hospital in Uganda for a few days. Catch up with her blog at: <https://niccimaxwell.wordpress.com/author/niccimaxwell/>

Please pray for:

- Ukrainian refugees and their sponsors & supporters in our community.
- Cassa Messervy, former Rector of the Wychert Benefice, as she becomes Archdeacon of Buckingham at 6pm on Sunday 1 March in St Mary's Aylesbury. (You can watch the service online at <https://oxford.anglican.org/livestream>.)

Copies of this newsletter are available in Church for you to collect and pass on to friends and neighbours. They are also on the website.



Join our weekly prayer meeting on Zoom every Wednesday at 9am - Zoom invite available from the Parish Office .

We encourage everyone to pray for one another. Ask the Parish Office if you would like to receive details of prayer requests.

Contact the Parish Office
parishoffice@stmarysrisborough.org.uk

Tel: 01844 273300