



Benefice Bugle!



April 2021

Easter

Services

To ensure safety, we ask people wanting to go to a service in church on Easter Day to book in advance with a church warden of that church.

1 April Maundy Thursday

2000 Zoom service with seder supper element

2 April Good Friday

1000 Zoom service

2000 Zoom service

Churches will be open for meditation, with resources, 12 - 3pm

4 April Easter Day

0930 Bletchington Family Communion

0930 Middleton Stoney Family Communion

0930 Wendlebury Family Communion

1000 Zoom Family Communion

1100 Chesterton Family Communion and Easter egg hunt

1100 Kirtlington Family Communion

1100 Weston Family Communion

11 April Easter 2

1030 Weston Holy Communion

1800 Zoom Evening worship with Swedish link parish

18 April Easter 3

0930 Middleton Stoney Holy Communion

1000 Zoom Morning Prayer with 'Breakout!' for children

1800 Kirtlington Evening Prayer

25 April Easter 4

0930 Wendlebury Holy Communion

1000 Zoom Holy Communion with 'Breakout!' for children

1100 Bletchington Family service

Contact details

Do feel free to contact a member of the ministry team if you would like to chat over anything, or a churchwarden if you would like information

Ministry team

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If you are reading this on a notice board in a printed version, do also look on the website www.akemanbenefice.org.uk or email joannaclifford.akeman@gmail.com for the rest of the Benefice Bugle, which contains...

News from around the parishes
Points of view on zoomed services/services in church
Opinion pieces from two of the Second Sunday group
Family activity page
A poem invitation

Opening doors

With the arrival of spring weather, the majority of the adult population in this country having been vaccinated and the government's 'road map' leading towards the ending of lockdown, we may well be feeling a sense of doors opening in our lives. We can go back to worshipping in church for Easter, and may be able to spend more time with friends and loved ones.

Does this fill you with hope, or with mixed feelings, as expressed by our young people, on page 8? It would be interesting to hear about any doors that have opened for you during the 'lockdown' itself.



News from around the parishes

All our churches have been open for private prayer, and many people have made use of that opportunity.

Doors were opened into the hearts of the families of **KIRTLINGTON** by a special present of a posy provided for each child at Kirtlington School and pre-school, to give to their mother for Mothering Sunday, AND to the staff. The parents were very touched, and sent messages of thanks:

“Thank you for the lovely flowers for Mother’s Day!”

“I just wanted to say thank you to the church team for the very thoughtful flowers you gave us all. It was such a lovely idea and much appreciated.”

The flowers came from the Coop and they were extremely helpful. They also gave a couple of boxes of free hand sanitizer so one has been given to the School and one kept for the Church.



WESTON ON THE GREEN also offered posies for people to help themselves on Mothering Sunday. Half of them were taken, and any that were left over were distributed round recent graves.

Several funerals have taken place. Before the doors are open for services the church will be professionally cleaned, and a grant has been applied for. Eric has done research on a new sound system based on bluetooth technology, and initial results are promising. Pam Miller’s marmalade, for sale in the village shop, has been extremely popular and has raised money for the church.

BLETCHINGDON, too, have applied for a grant towards disinfecting the church before re-opening. How pure they will all be! Meanwhile their Wednesday prayer meetings have continued with regular attendees online.

Churchyard walls have been collapsing around the benefice, in **CHESTERTON**, **WENDLEBURY** and **KIRTLINGTON**. The church itself has been suffering in **MIDDLETON STONEY**, with water penetration through the roof. Access has been a problem because of the closed gates to the park, but this has now been resolved. More openings! **KIRTLINGTON** church’s heating problems have been sorted, and work has been going on in the bell tower. A warden’s work is never done, but it is good to know how cared-for our churches have been and continue to be.



WENDLEBURY has been branching out and have established a book swap shelf in church. Worth visiting for!

Nothing daunted by lockdown there has been plenty going on benefice-wide, including our very interesting Lent Wednesday discussions, and well-attended Friday midday prayer and Sunday evening prayer. One such event has been...

Cheer for Mums!



Almost all the parishes were represented at an online **Cheer for Mums!** activity afternoon at which children were shown how to make hearts out of dogwood cuttings and flowers out of coloured tissue paper, to give to their mothers the next day, Mothering Sunday.

We cheered for our mothers and all they have done for us: that day already mums present had made bacon rolls, and (different family) fish fingers for their children, taken them for a walk, and to the quarry, and been kind and loving. And lots more, no doubt! Plenty of detailed thanks went into the beautifully decorated 'thank you' cards. Well done everyone



It was good to have input from some experts: many thanks to Amanda Kelly, creative guru from Kirtlington who showed us how to make the very satisfying dogwood hearts. And to Erika Biscoe from Emmanuel Church Bicester who runs the Cherish programme encouraging women to value and care for themselves. She showed the children how to massage their mother's hands with the special cream provided. It was a delight to see the mothers who have worked so hard being looked after by the children!



The valiant online congregation at the Mothering Sunday service joined in the game from "Cheer for Mums!" which acted out some of that hard work that carers put in. We honoured all sorts of carers, and not only our loving mothers.

CHANGE OF DATE for the fund-raising event in the churchyard of St Mary's Chesterton, with special home-made Rosette Cookies and Plantain Fries. It will now be on 24th APRIL at 11am.



In aid of a Covid charity.



Doors opening into churches

We are much looking forward to being able to worship together again in church. For some, though, zoom services have provided not just the only way of meeting together during lockdown, but has some positive benefits. Here members of our congregations share their differing views of the different ways of meeting to worship:

George and Sally Moncrieff, Middleton Stoney write:

"Before the first lockdown a year ago we were attending a church in a neighbouring benefice where the numbers in the congregation were sadly dwindling. We decided to join the Akeman zoom services and felt uplifted by the experience. We were surprised by the large number of people in the virtual congregation and although we can't sing together, we have loved the choice of music, songs and hymns. We have enjoyed singing various harmonies in the privacy of our own home. Only the dog has complained!"



We are blessed here to have a fantastic team organising the services and delivering an interesting message each week for us to 'take home' and ponder.

Zoom services have enabled us to keep safe at home whilst meeting new people and old friends from across the benefice. We have felt part of the local church community.

A zoom service takes up just the time of the service: no travelling, no dressing up! It's great to be reminded of people's names on their screens! We love the short chat following the service.

Having sung the praises of zoom we are looking forward to the time when we can safely meet together to worship and sing in church. Zoom services have kept us in touch meanwhile.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for fulfilling our spiritual need during this difficult time."



And for a different take on it, here's Malcolm McBride from Chesterton:

'Why am I really looking forward to attending a service in one of the beautiful churches in our benefice as soon as this interminable lockdown passes into history?' This is the question posed by Joanna, the Editor of this on-line magazine. Do you know, I had to think really hard to come up with a sensible reply though, even after much thought, augmented by some anxiety, I'm still not sure

that I have anything definitive to offer as an explanation - though I am really looking forward to getting back into our church as soon as possible. Though a promise to write something is, after all, a promise, so I'll have a go.

I must say very firmly that I'm not against information technology, I wouldn't have lasted long in my professional life had I have been; actually, in truth, I'm a bit of a technophile. I should also say that I think that our ministry team, with no small amount of technological assistance from Andrew, our church warden here in Chesterton, have, quite frankly, pulled-off a minor miracle in bringing a 'live' service into our homes each week through this difficult time. A heartfelt thank you, and a round of applause needed at some future time; perhaps when we can again be together in one place.

As a Christian, I feel like a lucky man, some might say blessed. I can feel the presence of God almost everywhere: it's not an overwhelming or uncomfortable feeling, and mostly it goes unnoticed during the everyday business of life. Every now and then though, perhaps as sunlight breaks through a cloud, or wind whistles through trees, I get that special tingle pass through me as I, probably accidentally, tune-in to the voice ... that's always really there.



For me, actually being in church helps me to 'tune in' to this spiritual channel, I've been really missing this - and that's why I'm looking forward to getting back to going to a real church to pray, rather than sitting down in front of a screen in my home-office. Then, of course, there's the singing - but that's for another brief note - oops, forgive the unintentional pun!

Doors opening into schools - a mixed blessing!

Two of our young people write:

The cancellation of school is something all students have secretly dreamt about at some point. However, when pupils were sent to work from home in 2020 everyone was left in a state of shock. Being away from school meant I was separated from my friends and everything I had been used to. I feel very lucky to have easy access to the technology that helped with online school. Unfortunately, seeing people virtually was not the same as being in person. There was definitely a feeling of dread going back to school as I was not used to having to interact with people outside my household but it was also comforting to go back to a state of normality. As protective as they may be, masks make communication very difficult. All conversations are muffled by the fabric leaving everyone in confusion. With faces covered everyone I pass in the corridors looks the same. Despite this, this new state of normal still significantly beats the isolation of online school.

The worst thing about returning to school was having to get up early to catch the bus as well as the longer days- not getting home until after 5pm. I had quite enjoyed the relaxed approach with online education- being able to register whilst still in my pyjamas, or even still in bed!

At school I'm not able to grab a snack from the cupboard whenever I'm hungry. I have to wait in a queue for my lunch - that didn't happen during Lockdown! I could nap in the afternoon between lessons if I felt like it when I was at home, or watch films during free periods, so being at home was great. However, I did miss taking part in actual sport rather than virtual workouts, which was really just another opportunity for me to nap, if I'm being honest!!



Virtual Door

Watch out for our lovely new website, launching any day now! It will be the same link:

www.akemanbenefice.org.uk

Do enjoy exploring it. And recommend it to others.

Family activities from



Good Friday

Cross

You will need: card, scissors, foil, a blunt pencil

Read the Good Friday story (Luke 23:44-56). On Good Friday we remember when Jesus died on the cross. Cut out a piece of card into a cross shape, then wrap it in foil. Use a blunt pencil to make marks and patterns into it. Make the cross look beautiful. The best thing about Easter is that we can be friends with God because the cross means our sin is forgiven! Talk about how we all get things wrong and life is messy, but we can say sorry to God when we do and he forgives us.



Easter Sunday

Scavenger hunt

All the items in the Scavenger Hunt are linked with the Easter story.
How many can you find?

- ☐ People waved palm leaves as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.
Find a large leaf
- ☐ Jesus took some bread and said, "This is my body broken for you".
Find something to eat
- ☐ Jesus took some wine and said, "This is my blood shed for you".
Find something to drink.
- ☐ Jesus went into the garden to pray to God.
Find something from the garden or another outside space.
- ☐ Pilate washed his hands and gave Jesus to be crucified.
Find something that cleans you.
- ☐ Jesus was put on a wooden cross.
Find something wooden.
- ☐ Jesus died and was placed in a tomb with a stone rolled over the entrance.
Find a stone.
- ☐ Women came to put spices on Jesus' body.
Find something that smells nice.
- ☐ Jesus is alive! He is risen!
Find something that makes you happy

Additional Activity: identify the lucky person given a cake made by Mandy Jones, for Mothering Sunday. Clue, it's not Boris Johnson! And it was DELicious!



And finally...

Our theme has been doors opening. In this moving poem the door is being opened by God, as he invites the poet/us into his presence. George Herbert deserves the last word.

Love 111

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
 Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
 My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
 So I did sit and eat.

George Herbert

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PS The Benefice Bugle is yours, and welcomes contributions from around the parishes. Opinion pieces, publicity, reports, photos, good jokes, letters to the ed, suggestions... please send any contributions to joannaclifford.akeman@gmail.com by 23rd April for inclusion in the next Bugle, and if you can provide advance notice of something coming, even better!

