



April 2022 LENT and EASTER

Services

Sunday 3 April**Lent 5**

0800	Chesterton	Holy Communion
0930	Bletchington	Holy Communion
0930	Wendlebury	Breakfast Church
1100	Chesterton	Family Service
1100	Kirtlington	Holy Communion
1800	Weston	Evensong

Sunday 10 April**Palm Sunday**

1000	Wendlebury	Benefice Service and Procession (see publicity elsewhere for details)
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Thursday 14 April**Maundy Thursday**

2000	Weston	Holy Communion and Maundy Thursday Liturgy
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Friday 15 April**Good Friday**

1000	M Stoney	Family Service and Stations of the Cross
1200	Bletchington	One hour devotion
1400	Chesterton	One hour devotion
2000	Kirtlington	Compline

Sunday 17 April**EASTER DAY**

Holy Communion at all churches except Hampton Gay
0930 at Bletchington, Middleton Stoney, and Wendlebury
1100 at Chesterton, Kirtlington, and Weston

Sunday 24 April**Easter 2**

1100	Kirtlington	Confirmation and Holy Communion
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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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Forthcoming events in the benefice

The Future of Your Church During April both Middleton Stoney and Chesterton churches will be holding meetings to explore the future of their church buildings. Most parishioners hugely value their parish church and want it to remain a vital part of the community. But we face challenges - and opportunities! Come and listen to some exciting plans, and share your own thoughts and feelings. These are important chances for the whole community to reflect on what it wants from its church. Our hope is to make our churches more attractive and user-friendly, but we want to hear your views! So book the date now and come along. There will be coffee/tea and cakes, and a power point presentation.

Chesterton Sunday 24 April at 3.30pm
M Stoney Saturday 30 April at 10.30 am

The Bishop of Oxford will be visiting our deanery for the day on **Thursday 7 April**. He will be spending time with the clergy, visiting a farm and the eco town, and sharing supper with some lay leaders. At 7.30 pm there will be an open **Question and Answer** session with the bishop at Emmanuel Church, Bicester. All are most welcome.

Confirmation There will be a service of **Confirmation** with the Bishop of Dorchester in Kirtlington Church on **Sunday 24 April** at 11 am, when a number of people from our parishes will be confirmed.

Pilgrim Paths We are pioneering a series of circular walks around our deanery. We warmly invite everyone to come and walk the first walk together (Hethe-Hardwick-Cottisford-Hethe) on **Sunday 1 May**. Meet at Hethe Church at 2pm. The walk is about 4 miles over easy terrain. Return circa 4.30 for tea and short service. More details to follow.

On **Ascension Day, Thursday 26 May**, at 7pm there will be a Sung Eucharist at Kirtlington Church. All wardens and all church members (in fact everyone!) is encouraged to attend. After the service we will have our annual **churchwardens' supper**.

On Sunday 1 May there will be a **ramble and breakfast** at Wendlebury. The walk will start from the Village Hall at 9am and will last about an hour and a half. Breakfast will be served in the Village Hall from 10 am. Those who can't manage the walk are welcome to turn up for breakfast any time from 10. Those who would like to are very welcome to come to church at 8.30 for a brief (15 minute) service just to start the day on a good note!

Then the following week you can do it all over again...

THE BIG BREAKFAST IS BACK!!



Saturday 7th May, 9.30-11.30am

Chesterton Community Centre

Adults £8; Children £5, including full English breakfast, toast, coffee/tea, juice

Put the date in your diary!

YOUNG FAMILIES SERVICE

Our next service is on April 3rd @ 11am in Chesterton Church. This will be our EASTER SERVICE followed by an easter egg hunt in the church yard. Do join us.

Sue Ashdown

Informal service

30 minute informal service in St Mary's, Chesterton at 10.00 am each Tuesday.

Do come along if you can - the 30 minutes includes prayer, bible reading and discussion. It is open to all - non-denominational.

Do contact Lyn Clarke 01869 243993 for further information.

Also, the last in our Lent series...

WOMEN OF FAITH

The Akeman Lent Lectures 2022

A series of talks by some notable speakers on women of faith across the ages.

- 8 March** Old Testament women
The Rev'd Clare Hayns, Chaplain of Christ Church, Oxford
- 15 March** Medieval women
The Rev'd Dr Paula Clifford, retired academic and assistant priest, Akeman Benefice
- 22 March** New Testament women
Dr Rebecca Dean, Lecturer in New Testament, Ripon College, Cuddesdon
- 29 March** Victorian women
The Rev'd Mia Smith, Chaplain of Hertford College, Oxford
- 5 April** Twentieth Century women
The Rev'd Dr Laura Biron-Scott, Vicar of Headington Quarry

Tuesdays in Lent
Kirtlington Church at 1930

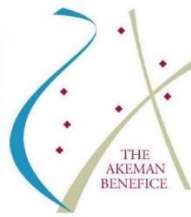
Live stream details from akemanbenefice@gmail.com

Background Art:
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RISE AND SHINE CAFÉ

TERMTIME WEDNESDAYS 9.15-10.45
KIRTLINGTON CHURCH
LFT AND FACEMASKS REQUESTED

WELCOME FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, AND ALL AGES. HAVE A NATTER AND ENCOURAGE SOMEONE OLDER, OR YOUNGER! DELIGHT IN TEA, COFFEE AND HOMEMADE GOODIES. SHARE RHYMES, SONGS AND A BIBLE STORY FROM 10.40. EMAIL GEMMAMAYBANK.AKEMAN@GMAIL.COM WITH QUESTIONS, OR SIMPLY COME ALONG AND ENJOY!



Palm Sunday

Procession & Service

Sunday 10th April

10:00am

followed by Refreshments



Join us in procession through Wendlebury
starting at **Elm Tree Farm Lane**
ending at **St Giles' Church, Church Lane**
parking available at The Lion

If you have difficulty walking please feel free to sit in the church and wait!



Rector's Letter

Dear friends

As I write the war in Ukraine is proceeding unabated. Who knows what will have happened by the time you read this? Europe and perhaps the world are in a more perilous position than they have been since 1945. While the world is on the brink of extinction because of climate change, massive amounts of money are being poured into a pointless military campaign.

It is a sad fact of human history that many of its wars have been started by individual men with personality disorders. It is a tragedy beyond words that a world that has in so many ways become hugely sophisticated has not yet succeeded in finding a way of intercepting men like this at an early stage, nor of settling territorial disputes in a more mature and intelligent way. It is depressing beyond words that humanity, for all its sophistication, remains remarkably unintelligent. We see this in our inability to settle relationship problems and family bust-ups, which are but microcosms of the battles that so easily develop between ethnic and social groupings, not to mention nation states.

The League of Nations, and later the United Nations, were bold and imaginative attempts to try to monitor and regulate the disputatious affairs of humankind, and the latter has been remarkably successful in many ways. But it stands in need of radical reform, and it saddens me that what we call the major powers, who sit on the Security Council, can veto and stymie efforts to develop a dispensation more appropriate for the realities of the 21st century.

What of the Christian voice in all this? The churches in Germany in WW2 were faced with huge moral dilemmas. Some compromised with the Nazis. It was only after great heart-searching that Dietrich Bonhoeffer allied himself with the plan to assassinate Hitler. I am not advocating that for Putin, but he clearly needs to be stopped, and stopped soon. Russia is a great and wonderful country. I have studied its language and its literature. Yes, it has had a tortured history. Yes, some of its neuroses are understandable. Yes, the West could have engaged more positively with it after 1991. But it deserves so much better than this.

It is said that Putin is a religious man. In my understanding, true religion is not buttering up the ecclesiastical elite and building blingy new churches. True religion is humility, it is serving the weak and the poor, it is defending the orphan and the widow, it is loving mercy and justice. It is pursuing righteousness, it is being a peacemaker, a reconciler. It is being honest and upright and truthful.

The prophet Isaiah had a vision of swords being beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks - "neither shall they learn war any more." It is only when we place our trust, not in our own might, nor in the might of any human hand or weapon, but in the power of God, that the possibility of transfiguration occurs. May the people of Russia and Ukraine soon learn the value of true brotherhood (and sisterhood too!).

Gareth

News from around the benefice

Bletchington's wi-fi is now installed and working satisfactorily. The PCC has received a diocesan grant of £800 towards the costs for the first 2 years, and has applied for an electronic paypoint for donations. A recent teenage suicide in the village has rocked the community which is rallying round the bereaved family.

Chesterton has had some major services: a double baptism and 300 in the congregation for the funeral of Tony Hayward, the grave-digger. As many moles seem to be teeming underground, causing problems which are being dealt with. The church reordering committee has been re-formed and is working away.

There was no report from **Hampton Gay**.

Kirtlington has been having reasonable attendances. The Lent Lectures have been going well, with about 40 attending each one so far, either online or in person. We have heard about some amazing women, in the Old Testament, in the New Testament and in Medieval Italy.



In **Middleton Stoney** Catherine Fulljames has been working with the parish council on Jubilee celebrations. A paypoint contract has been applied for. Moles underground and rotted oak beams aloft are needing treatment.

Wendlebury Community Choir rehearsals are back in full swing in preparation for their Summer Concerts - look out for details!

Weston-on-the-Green are working on getting a VAT refund, and on planning Jubilee events. Building works may be needed after the overdue quinquennial review. Numbers have been low at services.

CHESTERTON YOUNG FAMILIES SERVICE

The sun shone brightly on the first Sunday in March and I was delighted, for we had a very special day planned.

Phoebe Holliday and Eliza Wilson of Chesterton, and of the Young Families Service, were getting ready to be baptised.

Baptisms are carried out within a normal service, which is lovely because all our regulars can then come and join in with the ceremony and celebrations.

We started our service by welcoming Rev. Paula Clifford and of course, all the members of each girl's family. Don Barden started us off with that lovely hymn, 'All things bright and beautiful'. We had the birthday box and sang HBTY to Phoebe (yes, the very same) and Ella, a visitor within the guests. Happy Birthday to both of you girls!

I did a noisy rendition of the story of John the Baptist followed by a soothing hymn - Be Still for the Presence of the Lord. This hymn is one of my personal favourites and it calmed everyone down before the Rev. Paula started the official baptism ceremony.

Welcome Eliza and Phoebe to the family of the Church, and to the Young Families Service here in Chesterton.

A treat for all followed when Bella, Phoebe's sister, played a piece on the organ for us. Bella is only 7 years old and we all listened in awe as she delivered her piece faultlessly. Well done Bella.

Following hot on the heels was another treat - a reading by Maisie, Eliza's sister. It is no mean feat to stand up in front of a church full of people and find your voice, but find it she did! Beautifully read, Eliza. Well done.

'Come on and Celebrate' seemed very appropriate for our next hymn and some of us even managed to get the clapping in the right place!

We finished our service with the giving out of the baptism candles for Eliza and Phoebe and of course our prayers.

Our usual Lord's prayer was followed by our Young Families Prayer and we added a very heartfelt prayer for the people of Ukraine.

Phoebe and Eliza - You have received the light of Christ; walk in this light all the days of your lives.

Sue Ashdown

Interview with

Catherine Fulljames, one of the churchwardens of Middleton Stoney

Having been shown round Catherine and Andrew Fulljames' lovely and historic home in Middleton Stoney, and their garden full of snowdrops, and having sat down with a good cup of tea, the BB interviewer had an easy time of it with Catherine. There is much to hear about.



Ed: This is such a fascinating house.

Catherine: Yes, we moved here in the Silver Jubilee year, 44 years ago! The Reverend David Bond Thomas popped his head into an open window with a welcome, and in a short time I was on the PCC. Our 4 children went to Chesterton School and Andrew was a governor (I've been married to Andrew for 57 years!). You asked me to tell you about my interests. Gardening is one...

Ed: Yes, I can see that

Catherine: ...and I am very good at sewing, crochet, knitting, needlepoint, things like that. I have my mother to thank for that. She died just before she was 102, two years ago. I had a business as a curtain-maker, for 24 years, working for interior designers.

Ed: Ah, that explains all these gorgeous curtains and the hangings...

Catherine: I specialised in 4-poster beds. So I got inside lots of lovely houses, and I did the curtains in Middleton Stoney Church. Someone told me, "You have made it look like a cathedral". I did the curtains for Helen House, too, choosing the material with Sister Frances, and then hanging them all up at the 11th hour before the opening, with the Duchess of Kent due to arrive any minute!

Ed: The rest of life was quite busy too, I think?

Catherine: Andrew belonged to the Round Table, and I was part of the Ladies Circle, for wives of Round Table members. We did lots of fund-raising, such as old-time music hall, and getting dressed up as Andy Pandy to collect for Children in Need with a bucket outside Woollies. Then in 1989 I was elected as County Councillor for the Ploughley Division. Well, first I canvassed, and I love canvassing, going into odd corners of this beautiful countryside. Though I was bitten by a dog once! We put the owner down as a no vote. Then I stood as a candidate. I represented 22 villages, for 28 years. At the same time, for 20 years, I was also a Cherwell District Councillor, so had 2 hats on at lots of meetings, so they got good value out of me! Every Monday to Thursday there was a parish council meeting, sometimes 3 in one night! I sat in lots of cold halls. I was very lucky to be chairman of Oxfordshire County Council for a year, and for 2 years chairman of Cherwell

District Council, so was invited to the Royal Garden Party. On VE day there was a huge tea party at Christchurch for all living service people; we met a man who had fought in 2 world wars in the Royal Navy, who was over 100. He had been a stoker and had his leather apron. And then at Dorchester Abbey there was a service and tea party for the Land Army girls when they were at last recognised. Ladies who had been Lumberjills were there too, and they had amazing stories of how they used to use two-handled saws. Once they were doing that in a wood when some men came towards them waving white handkerchiefs. Germans! The Lumberjills had to escort them out of the wood to be arrested. The most humbling thing was a county council tea party each year for people who adopted children (and a separate event for fosterers). There was one couple at a fostering party who had fostered 115 children. She was in a wheelchair and he was having to feed her; it broke my heart. She'd done so much for so many, it was awful to see her now in need! It wasn't right!

Ed: Can you tell me about your faith or church background?

Catherine: I went to church as a little girl, taken by my father. When we moved to Wembley I was in the church choir - I like rousing hymns! My mother and I were confirmed together at Wembley. Then when Andrew and I lived in Ruislip we would take the boys to Sunday School. There was no Sunday School in Middleton Stoney when we came here but we would take all four boys to communion services - they always behaved themselves! I was on the PCC for 31 years and then went back on again to support Marc as church warden. I wish we could get more people involved. I hated it when churches were closed for Covid. We had to get keys made especially, as we hadn't had them before. Now we have lost regulars: how do you get those back and bring in new people? We need more people: many hands make light work! But we are lucky to have 3 young men on the PCC doing a lot. Some of us need to retire!

Ed: You've had some really difficult times recently, I know.

Catherine: Yes, we had a traumatic time the last few years with our oldest son dying of cancer. Then our house was flooded and we had to live in a cottage in the village for eight months. The people in those houses became very close, it brought us together. There was one foot of water over the whole house. Our Christmas presents, marriage certificates, wedding albums, all gone, the car written off. Our son's house had burnt down the previous August. And now with my recent diagnosis we are very thankful that we have the wonderful Churchill Hospital nearby. Funnily enough, I was chair of planning when there was a fight over the footpath that had a right of way where they wanted to build it, so I am benefitting now from having got the path moved and the Churchill built!

Ed: Catherine, thank you so much and all the very best wishes for your forthcoming operation.

And finally...

“What do you actually do, between Mondays and Saturdays?” is a question often asked of hapless clergy. Here is an (exhausting) answer from our very own benefice:

A day in the life of the Rector.



I normally rise sometime between 3.30 and 4.30. I go downstairs and make a cup of tea and sit in my green chair. I usually read for an hour or so, but sometimes I catch up with radio programmes I have missed. I have *BBC Sounds* on my phone, which is such a joy - it comes with me almost everywhere!



At 5.30 I make a coffee and listen to the headlines and go to my desk. I



tend to work there until about 7.15, when I do my domestic chores. At 7.45 I try to have a brisk walk, and then have a shower and listen to the 8.10 interview before having breakfast and saying my prayers. Again, I am very fortunate in that Morning and Evening Prayer are both on an app on my phone. It's moving to be able to pray the psalms and read the readings that other clergy and many Christians around the world are sharing. It's rare that a particular verse of scripture doesn't stand out as being particularly apposite for that day! I also try to think of all the people I met or spoke to the day before, and lay before God all the meetings in the day ahead.

Most days are a fairly continuous round of meetings and encounters of one sort or another. The fantastic thing about this job is that no two days are the same! One minute I might be at somebody's side in a hospital ward (perhaps even at a deathbed) - the next moment I'll be on a church roof with an architect! I have school assemblies to prepare and deliver and I also attend governors' meetings - usually about twelve of these per year, plus some sub-committees. Of course, I also have PCCs and annual church meetings. There are usually about 35 of these in a year, and they are usually profitable and forward-looking. There are quite a lot of meetings about buildings - with architects, conservationists, builders, organ-restorers, and others! We have seven ancient and wonderful churches, but they need a lot of time and money, and it can be dispiriting when you have just dealt with one leak and another one appears. I went to one of our churches on Christmas morning and found half the roof on the floor (slight exaggeration!).



There is a lot of admin involved in being a rector. I try to delegate as much as possible, and I am very blessed in having a marvellous Ministry Team, but ultimately the buck stops with me. There is a constant flow of emails, some from the diocese, some from the deanery, some from the benefice, others from outside. I receive a lot of enquiries about baptisms, weddings and, of course, funerals. It is always a privilege to take part in these ceremonies, and I do my best to give time to preparation and getting to know the people as well as possible. I also have to prepare material for our various magazines, make sure rotas are organised, liaise with churchwardens, treasurers, vergers, musicians, funeral directors, stonemasons, lawyers, safeguarding officers, and many others. It's surprising how much time is consumed by issues relating to graves and churchyards - these matters can be very sensitive and have to be handled with care.

If I am at home I tend to have a light lunch at about 1pm. Afterwards I sit down with the news on, and sometimes shut my eyes for ten minutes. At 1.30 I have a coffee and read for a while, and at 1.45 or thereabouts I try and take a short walk before the afternoon's work.



I do my best to show a face at the various coffee mornings and other social events that take place across the benefice, though of course it is not possible to go to all of them. I also try to look in at our local pubs, though not as much as I would like. I was amused the other day when one of my sons told me he had met someone from one of the villages. "Oh, I know your Dad," she said. "We often see him in the pub." I hope I don't give the wrong impression!



Alongside all these things, time has to be set aside for service and sermon preparation. Like study and theological reflection, it can easily get nudged out. I am fortunate to know quite a few religious houses (monasteries) where I can go and spend a few days twice a year. This is hugely important and always uplifting.

In addition to my duties in this benefice, I am also Area Dean of Bicester and Islip. This means I have a pastoral concern for the clergy and people in the 38 churches of the deanery, organising Deanery Chapter and Synod, Standing Committee, and inspections of all the churches every three years. I have responsibility for overseeing vacancies, and also for dealing with knotty pastoral problems should they arise (fortunately quite rarely).

So you can see that it's quite a busy and varied life. In between all these regular and fairly predictable things are all the unexpected ones - the knock on the door, the phone calls. I get quite a lot of amusing ones (eg "Is that St Mary?" or "Can I speak to St Giles?"!) Very occasionally someone rings up with a long complaint, often about something of which I am entirely ignorant. The gift of patience is not one I possess in abundance, but it's a good one to practise!

One of the things that is hardest for a parish priest in the modern world is how to stay connected to the large body of people who have no church background. There are scores of people who value the Church and want to celebrate their important occasions there, but few of them become regular members. It's not unique to here - it is a conundrum faced by clergy and congregations up and down the country, and there are no easy solutions.



If possible, I try to have a break between 6 and 7 pm. I usually go into the kitchen just before 6, switch on the radio and prepare my supper. While supper is cooking I do what needs to be done around the house (putting the bins out, hanging up washing, ironing, etc). I usually eat at the kitchen table with the 6.30 comedy on in the background. It's a good antidote to routine stuff!

Most evenings I have a meeting at 7.30 or thereabouts. I often manage to squeeze in a baptism or wedding interview at 7pm before heading off to the meeting. Of course, this has been a bit easier over the past two years, as many of the meetings have been on Zoom. I won't have a word said against Zoom - it is very convenient and can save both time and money, but of course it's not the same as meeting in person.

I try to switch off by 10 at the latest, and generally watch the news and/or *Newsnight*. I sometimes watch a quiz, or a drama, and have recently become a devotee of *Vera*! I tend to retire between 11 and 11.30 and usually go to sleep with my ever-present radio on!



Whatever happens in the daily round, I find strength and renewal in the love and example of Jesus Christ. When things seem too busy, or ministry seems unrewarding, I turn constantly to him as friend and helper. I am challenged daily by the words of scripture, but also encouraged to go on seeking, to go on preaching, and to do my little bit to share the reality of God with others.

The other thing that keeps me going is that I have a wonderful family (five children and two grandchildren), and a fantastic band of friends. I usually spend my day off with one of my friends or family, and I very much enjoy exploring our wonderful county and further afield, and to travel abroad when restrictions allow! I have my bucket list, and have a bit of catching up to do!

And finally finally...

This is the last edition of the Benefice Bulletin, which was started up to keep us in touch during isolation and lockdowns. But let's keep on 'thinking Benefice': enjoying one another's events, services and people. We are Better Together.

Joanna Clifford
