



February 2022

Services

Clearly, the situation may change so keep an eye out for emails and changes on the website Sunday by Sunday

Sunday 6th February 4 before Lent / Accession

0800	Holy Communion*	Chesterton
0930	Holy Communion	Bletchington
0930	Morning Worship	Middleton Stoney
0930	Holy Communion	Wendlebury
1100	Family Service	Chesterton
1100	Holy Communion	Kirtlington
1600	Evensong*	Weston-on-the-Green

Sunday 13th February 3 before Lent

0930	Breakfast Church	Wendlebury
1000	Zoom service	
1100	Holy Communion	Chesterton
1100	Morning Worship	Kirtlington
1100	Morning Worship	Weston-on-the-Green
1600	Evensong*	Middleton Stoney

Sunday 20th February 2 before Lent

0930	Morning Worship	Bletchington
0930	Holy Communion	Middleton Stoney
1100	Café Church	Chesterton
1100	Holy Communion	Weston-on-the-Green
1600	Evensong*	Kirtlington
1600	Evensong*	Wendlebury

Sunday 27th February 1 before Lent

1100 Benefice Holy Communion Kirtlington
with Akeman Church Community Choir

*indicates that the service is
Book of Common Prayer

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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Events in the benefice



LIVING
IN LOVE
& FAITH

Consultation Day 1

18th January

"I've learned a lot just listening"

"Very, very good indeed!"

"It's a good opportunity for us to stretch our horizons: we don't often get the chance to discuss things"

"Better than I expected"

"Enlarges your view of God"

"I attended the "Living in Love and Faith" workshop in Kirtlington on Saturday. It was interesting and enjoyable. Some sat and listened while others put their pennyworth into the small group discussion sessions. It was certainly food for thought. There was coffee available and an opportunity to catch up with friends. I recommend it but do wear *warm clothes!"

Hilary Walbank

**(NB It was a very cold day and the church heating was on!)*

There is still a chance to listen, learn and share thoughts (if you wish)

**The 2nd Consultation Day is on
Saturday 5th February,
9.30 am - 4pm in Kirtlington Church**

Sign up for an interesting day. And lots of tea and coffee

cliffordpaula.akeman@gmail.com 350806 or paulclifford.akeman@gmail.com 351652



A colorful poster for 'Rise and Shine Café'. At the top, a banner with orange and blue triangles hangs across the page. In the center, a circular logo reads 'ALL WELCOME Rise + Shine CAFE'. Below this, the text 'RISE AND SHINE CAFÉ' is written in large, bold, orange letters, followed by 'RESTARTS WED 12TH JAN' in smaller orange letters. Underneath, in blue text, it says 'TERMTIME WEDNESDAYS 9.15-10.45', 'KIRTLINGTON CHURCH', and 'LFT AND FACEMASKS REQUESTED'. The central illustration features a collage of images: a teapot and cup, a slice of chocolate cake with a strawberry, a child reading a book, a red mug of coffee, a group of diverse people (including children and adults) gathered around a table, and a Fairtrade logo. At the bottom, a yellow banner contains the following text: '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!'

On this page

Two opportunities for us all, to meet, eat, share and Be Church in a lovely atmosphere:

In Rise and Shine the children get some story time and singing, too.

At Café Church we are given thought-provoking questions to discuss.

At both there are VERY good eats and drinks!



Café Church 20th February 11am

Chesterton Primary School, Alchester Road

A warm welcome for coffee, pastries, quiz, crafts for children and discussion in a relaxed atmosphere.

Bring the whole family

WOMEN OF FAITH


The Akeman Lent Lectures 2022

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

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- 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

Background Art:
© Micah Hayns



The Akeman Church Community Choir is
starting up again.

To find out more contact Gareth:
akemanbenefice@gmail.com

Pause for thought

Gareth asked this question at the February Benefice Service.

What is the mission of the Church?

WHAT WOULD YOUR ANSWER BE?

Do write with your suggestions to the

Bulletin - it would be interesting to have your views!

joannaclifford.akeman@gmail.com

The whole sermon can be found on the website. This link will get you to the page [Church News and Information and Useful Information - The Akeman Benefice](#) or go via www.akemanbenefice.org.uk. An extract from the sermon, with some of Gareth's thoughts on the question, are at the end of this Bulletin, to give you time to think first...

..... February focus

The following articles may suggest some thoughts about the church's mission...

A Desert Challenge

By Mandy Jones from Weston-on-the-Green



The morning after the night before – when realization dawns that you might have agreed to something that seemed like a good idea after a few glasses of wine. This was how a very good friend of mine managed to get me to sign up to the 100km Sahara Challenge. It was to have taken place in November 2020 in Morocco, following the route of the Marathon de Sable that both our husbands had completed 3 years previously. They are always undertaking mad challenging experiences so now surely it was our turn? The added incentive was that this was going to be raising funds and awareness for Maggie's Support Centres, a charity providing free cancer support and information in

locations across the UK and online. These centres are warm, welcoming environments designed to create a home-from-home that is nothing like a clinical hospital environment. They help with specialist, psychological and financial support for people with cancer and their families and friends. As a nurse, I have seen the devastation that a diagnosis of cancer can mean for individuals and their families. I have friends who have benefitted directly

themselves from Maggie's Centres and so I embarked on this adventure challenge aiming to raise £1000 for Maggie's.

Like so many things over the last 2 years, the global pandemic resulted in postponement of the trip twice and then ultimately caused our expedition organizers, Tribal Tracks, to resort to a plan B destination: the Wadi Rum, Jordan.

And so it was, in November 2021, I found myself with 10 other trekkers from all over the UK whom I had only briefly met previously via Zoom, in Madaba at 6am heading out on a 4 hour bus journey taking us to



the Seven Pillars of Wisdom. Here we would start our long-awaited adventure. With storm warnings ringing in our ears, we began our trek, carrying only what we needed for the day, walking around the 6.4 billion year-old iconic rock formation before leaving the tourist jeeps far behind and on into the Jabel mountain area. Walking through spectacular scenery of narrow canyons and wide sweeping plains, the remains of an ancient sea with shells and coral being seen amongst the scrubby vegetation. This was to be a gentle day – just 15km before the welcome site of our first wild camp came into view. The temperature drops quickly when the sun goes down (about 4pm) and so it was important to get your bedding sorted, have a quick baby wipe wash, get thermals on and sort your kit ready for the next day, all before a delicious hot meal in the mess tent and then tired, happy chat around the camp fire, settling for the night around 8pm.

6am and the call to get ready for day 2, our first 25km day. Each morning was a fight to the death to get your sleeping bag into its compression sack and repack your kitbag so that you knew where everything was at the end of the day. Breakfast was 6.30 and by 7am we were trekking. The mornings were chilly and many layers of clothing were needed but quickly discarded as we headed in to full sun and temperatures rising to a maximum of 28 degrees centigrade. The stunning views of the rocky mountains and plains where the 'The Martian' had been filmed, a brief stop at 'Lawrence of Arabia's House' and



a climb up to the highest natural rock arch formation of the Burdah Bridge was a welcome distraction from our sore feet and aching legs. We had to dig deep and engage mind over

matter in order to complete an exhausting dune climb to spectacular views over 'other worldly' terrain, where our second wild camp was nestled.

I was anxious that day 3, another 25km, was going to be difficult, with blisters and aches and pains from the previous day needing to be managed effectively in order to get through not just this day but the remainder of the trek. As 'flat' as the terrain was, it was difficult to work out how far we had come and how far yet to go. Chatting to fellow travellers, getting



to know them and their stories that led them to this adventure was inspirational and motivating and helped to focus the mind on our goal. Some of our team were relatively senior in years, the eldest being 72, and had experienced cancer themselves or cared for loved ones through treatment and, sadly, death. The support they received from Maggie's centres during this time led them to this challenge in a desire to raise funds and awareness for the charity, and many of them continue to volunteer at various centres. We arrived in camp footsore and weary but the team had made this one special- after climbing a large rock to watch the landscape change colour in the sunset, the camp took on a magical appearance as

candlelights dotted the darkness around the tents and on the surrounding rocks.

Day 4: the last of the 25km days. It was a mixed bag of deeper sand and rockier harder plains, but as always, the views of the Red Mountains were stunning, especially when re entering the canyons towards our final wild camp. That night we were treated to a special Bedouin meal, 'mansaf' and learned a new way of eating!

Day 5 and the final leg of the trek – 10km. After passing the Barra and Lawrence Canyons we walked mostly across open plains. The heat was unforgiving and the trek seemed never ending. Gradually little touches of civilization appeared in the form of permanent tourist desert camps, jeeps and electricity pylons – all at odds with the peace and tranquillity of the previous few days. We were joined by a beautiful dog, owned locally but who decided it was her job to defend and guide us for at least 3 miles to our final stop and a celebratory lunch provided by the desert team. We watched in amazement as a traditional Jordanian Yarb, a meal of meat and vegetables buried in the ground in a cast iron pot and left to cook for 4 hours, was lifted out of the sand. We were finally able to relax, reflect on our achievement and look forward to a shower and comfy bed in Wadi Musa. At times the challenge was almost overwhelming, but I feel privileged to have been able to not only complete it but to have made some lasting friendships with a great bunch of people through a shared experience.

Tribal Track's Jordanian team looked after us incredibly well throughout the expedition, setting up the camps every night, which comprised canvas tents, a very basic portaloos and a mess tent for meals. All of this and our personal kit was transported via jeep each day and even after stopping to provide us with a delicious cooked lunch, usually a stew, rice, beans, and flat bread, they were always ready to greet us with a cheer, cups of hot mint tea and

another very welcome hot meal as we staggered into camp at the end of every day. Desert life strips everything back to physiological needs: water, food, sleep. Taking everything else away is liberating and helps to focus thoughts on what is important in life.



*CONGRATULATIONS MANDY!
An amazing feat! And readers will be
very envious of your energy and
adventure!*

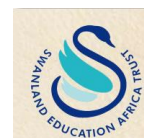
Thanks to the generosity of so many people, I have surpassed my target amount raised for Maggie's. However, my Just Giving page is still open via the link below if you feel able to donate even a small amount. Thank you.

<https://tinyurl.com/449fnj9t>



Sylvia Oldcorn writes:

Swanland School



Kirtlington Church has been supporting the Swanland School in the slums of Nairobi since 2004, initially with the children in church. We were introduced to the school by Alan Garrow who was our house-for-duty priest at the time. We had a small Sunday school and the children would write letters, send photographs and hold small fundraising events. Our contacts were Shirley and John Waters who live in East Yorkshire and had 'discovered' the school when their daughter volunteered there; John and Shirley were so moved by the stories she came back with that they started a fundraising campaign in their home village of Swanland. The children in their village school got very involved and so the African school took the name of Swanland. The school donated uniforms that the children had grown out of to Swanland School in Nairobi.



Swanland School
uniforms

John and Shirley had also become involved with Esther Wanhoji who worked with a group of women in the slum district of Ngongo. All the women were HIV positive and with Esther's encouragement and support the women set up a workshop making jewellery from indigenous materials. There was no education available to the families of these women and this prompted Esther to try and set up a school for pre-school children and their siblings. This was achieved, in the beginning in a very small way, with help from John and Shirley.

Despite many setbacks, over many years, John and Shirley and their supporters in Swanland persisted and finally set up a charity - SEAT - Swanland Education Africa Trust. Through local support (including some fundraising from Kirtlington) they have saved and transformed hundreds of lives of the poorest and most in Nairobi Slums. They fully fund two schools with 700 children and 50 staff - Swanland School, Nairobi and Esther's School in Ngong. They guarantee that every child will get two meals a day as well as the education. It is also guaranteed that 99.5% of the money given goes to the schools.

The following is a letter received from one of the children:

'My name is Sofia Nelima. I am in class eight in Swanland School, Nairobi. Before I came to Swanland my life was miserable. My father had no work and my mother was just taking care of us as a housewife. My father would go and search for a job to feed us for that day. My mother would shed tears before the Lord. There was no sunshine in our house. I was taken to one of the schools within the area. I tried my best to read but I had no skills to read. I had to drop out of school when I was in class six. I stayed home helplessly while others were going to school. It reached a day when my father and mother started fighting because of the issues here and there. The next day my mother developed an illness. My father went and begged help together with my big brother. My brother had met a woman the day before and he begged for her help to take my mother to hospital. She found a place in her heart and felt mercy. She took my mother to hospital in Kenyatta and we prayed to the Almighty Father to heal my mother. While my mother was in hospital undergoing treatment the woman helped feed her and treated her as her own mother. She was so kind.

She also managed to get my brother a job as a chef. My brother got some money and paid for the hospital bills. He fed us and gave us clothing while my father was searching for the house rent. My father got a tuition job and was paid 100 shillings per day (75p/day). He suffered so much so that my mother could get food to eat and after a few weeks my mother got well and went to find a school which she had heard about. She found the gate written Swanland School. She had faith in herself to talk to the Head Teacher and convince him to allow me in school, I asked God to answer my prayers of wishing to go to school again. The Head Teacher was convinced and he agreed to admit me to school.

*I learned hard for the two years I had not been in school and read any book I could and so long as I have entered to life in Swanland School everything went smoothly. The hard times that I had been passing through finally came to an end. **Swanland has really given my family a better time.***

Since I joined Swanland Village School, until now, when I am in class eight, the problems which were going on in our family ended. We live happily. My father works hard and if there are some petty issues he can solve easily. I will strive and excel in my education so that I can overcome the challenges my family went through. I would like to fulfil my wishes and I would like to thank the SEAT charity of UK for making me and all members of the school have the basic need in school. Even if I am facing more and more challenges in my education I will work extra hard to achieve my goal.'

Up until Covid Kirtlington Church supported SEAT by giving a portion of the money raised at the Christmas Eve Crib Service, proceeds from the Harvest Lunch and collections at the Thursday Communion services. Covid has meant that those things haven't happened; there was a collection at the Harvest Festival Service but otherwise church-wide financial support has halted. But the needs continue.



Jewellery on display

Comment and question:

The above are good examples of how we can as a church show our Christian care for vulnerable people and places, and look beyond the preoccupations of keeping our church buildings and activities going. Might other churches in the benefice like to consider joining in the relationship with Swanland School, or want to form their own? It is not a case of taking time and money away from our churches but of enlarging our view and fulfilling our calling.

Thankfully, mission is not one-way, and the lively and growing churches of other countries are sending help to the declining churches of the west. Welcome to Albert, studying in Cuddesdon, who is with us until March.

Introducing.... Albert Danquah




I am training to become a priest in Ripon College, Cuddesdon, at present. I live in Upper Heyford with my spouse and two children aged 13 and 11. We used to live in North London prior to my training. My desire to serve God and His people was kindled at an early age. I fondly recall following my Methodist parents to Sunday School where I enjoyed stories from the Bible. Growing up, I had the privilege of spending seven years in Adisadel College, the first Anglican secondary school in Ghana, established in 1910. Here, my sense of calling was ignited and shaped as I was exposed to Anglicanism and the Scripture Union.

While undertaking mechanical engineering training in University, I was very much involved in the University Christian fellowship and served as a member of the Students' Chaplaincy Council - whose mandate was to maintain a Christian witness on campus. Serving with others from various Christian traditions crystallized my sense of calling to serve within the church.

I went on to spend quite some time in Evangelical-Pentecostal circles until I was drawn back to Anglicanism in 2014 during theological studies in London. I undertook vocational discernment in the Diocese of London which led to formation and ministerial training in September 2020. Mine has been an interesting journey with a fair mix of diverse experiences which I am hoping may be of good use in my future ministry within the Church of England. I am on placement within the Akeman Benefice until the end of March 2022.

Extracts from Gareth's sermon at the February Benefice Service:

He has sent me to proclaim good news for the poor. (Luke 4.18)



What is the mission of the church?

What is the mission of the Church? Jesus' mission, he says, is to bring good news to the poor. But who are the poor and why are they poor? We could spend very long on that and probably not agree.

Jesus takes a very different line from much of the Old Testament. There are swathes of the Old Testament that see poverty as a punishment for sin. According to Deuteronomy it is the godless who end up in the gutter. And don't you often hear that point of view? 'They're feckless. They've brought it on themselves. That sort will never pull themselves up.'

That is not how Jesus sees the poor. Nor does he advocate a spiritualised version of poverty. No, the scriptural tradition in which Jesus stands is that of the psalmist and the prophets. For them the poor are the materially destitute and the socially oppressed.

Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. (Psalm 82)

So, does God care for the poor more than the rich? Well, yes, it seems so, though we find it hard to say so, so we wrap it up in opaque phraseology like 'the preferential option for the poor'! I guess it might be fairer to say that God does not LOVE the poor more than the rich (after all, Jesus looked on the rich young ruler with love), but that his heart is burdened for them, and breaks when he sees their oppression.

We live in a fairly affluent area, and in a fairly affluent country. But there are in our communities pockets of real poverty. I see that in my work and in my contacts with parishioners. The rising cost of living is hitting us all hard, but especially those who can least afford it. The increase in house prices is forcing many local people, especially young ones, out of our villages.

It's easy to turn a blind eye to what is going on in our midst. In our epistle, 1 Corinthians 12, Paul reminds us that we are members one of another. If one suffers, we all suffer. And that is true, not just of the church family, but of our communities too.

Jesus didn't come up with a radical programme for poverty relief. Instead, he went about doing good, proclaiming the good news, healing the sick. Some of you, perhaps many, are involved in foodbanks, in charities, in visiting prisoners. Perhaps some of you support people financially. Perhaps you belong to organisations that lobby on behalf of the poor.

It's very easy for churches, and synagogues, and all religious organisations, to become a comfortable part of the establishment. It's all too easy only to associate with people who talk like us, look like us, think like us, behave like us.

Jesus' love was indiscriminate. He mixed with all the reprobates, with prostitutes, with tax collectors, with lepers, and yes, with the rich too. And he challenged them all, as he challenges us all. I like the church in the USA that changed its name from All Saints to All Saints and Sinners!

So, if you believe that God can love you with all your faults and idiosyncrasies (as I hope you do), it follows that he loves your brother and your sister too. And just as in a human family we cannot choose our siblings, nor can we in God's family.

God call us as a church, as a nation, and as a human family, into a messy coalition, a coalition in which we perhaps share only one thing in common - our fragility and sinfulness, and God's graciousness and love. May you know that graciousness and love as you try to live out your Christian life in sincerity and truth.

Do write!

Contributions for the March Bulletin are due in by Monday 21st February please.

Send to joannaclifford.akeman@gmail.com

And finally, here are some questions and quotations from the first Living in Love and Faith Consultation Day:

“How do you understand being made in the image of God?”

“Do you need to be married?”

“The Bible is not an instruction manual”

“Should clergy and laity be treated equally?”

“The church has misused the idea of marriage for its own ends”.

What do YOU think?