

Issue 1:
February 2026



Jesus, Simeon and
Anna.
Rembrandt

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A candle in...

THE
*W*INDOW

News and Views from the Parish of Abingdon-on-Thames



St Helen's Wharf in snow: Picture: David Bevington

Inside:

Does Reading Literature help us to Encounter God?
Come and See!
Who is Kevin Beer?
What we say and how we say it: words in liturgy.
A "Variety" of Canons
"Habemus Mamam"
The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
The Parish Carbon Footprint 2025
Poems
Pictures
Events
And, of course, a quiz and a cartoon

Does Reading Literature help us to Encounter God?

Agnostics Anonymous as reported by Susan Reynolds

This was the question addressed by Dr. Kathryn Wills, an academic researcher who teaches theology and literature, in conversation with Dr. Jen Brown, Rector of St. Helen's, and Professor John Barton. Her interest is in how modern poetry uses theological ideas, with special reference to poetry in translation, and her answer to the question was wholeheartedly affirmative.

An author's deeply-felt religious faith may colour their writings, but an overt and earnest attempt to belabour the reader into belief may achieve precisely the opposite effect. Perhaps C. S. Lewis's approach of leading his audience 'past watchful dragons' to the heart of a narrative based on such beliefs can be more effective. What Dr. Wills' lecture made clear was that there are many different ways of perceiving God through literature, and of expressing a sense of his presence.

The speaker illustrated this with reference to poems by George Herbert ('Love bade me welcome') and John Donne ('Batter my heart...') Personal preferences inevitably play a part in the reader's response, and she admitted that she found the language of the latter too violent for her own taste. However, the talk focused not only on poetry but on drama and the novel as equally valid and vivid ways of conveying a personal sense of God and conveying it to a wider public.

Among Shakespeare's plays, *King Lear* was the one selected to depict this. The relationship between father and daughter movingly portrays the complex interplay of rejection and forgiveness; instead of the Prodigal Son returning to seek reconciliation with his father, it is Lear who is reunited with his daughter Cordelia and is granted the chance to make amends for the wrong which he has done her. Cordelia, for her part, generously accepts this to welcome her father in a truly redemptive way. Shakespeare suggests that although both Lear and Cordelia lose their lives, they attain a spiritual state which transcends an outcome which in earthly terms is purely tragic.

The father-daughter bond is also central to George Eliot's *Silas Marner*. Eliot herself had a complex relationship with organized religion, and written at a time when Christianity was in flux, her novels lay a greater emphasis on human love and its transformative potential rather than dogma and moral complacency. The embittered weaver Silas retreats into a lonely existence as a miser, isolated from the village community of Raveloe. An opportunity for a new start arrives with the arrival of a lost child at his home one winter night. (One might see the advent of a helpless waif in the bleakest season of the year as a parallel to the coming of the infant Christ and the hope of redemption which this offers.) Silas adopts the little girl, takes her to church to be baptized Hephzibah ('my delight is in her' in Hebrew), and brings her up, discovering a buried capacity for love and realising that the theft of his hoard is of small importance compared with the riches gained from his relationship with his foster-daughter. This reconnects him with his neighbours, and when her biological father, the local squire Godfrey Cass, offers to reclaim her, Eppie prefers to remain true to Silas and to marry Abel Winthrop, a neighbour's son, rather than be lured away by the temptation of wealth and privilege.

Earlier in the century, Jane Austen approached issues of religious belief from a different perspective. The daughter and sister of clergymen, she remained a devout Christian throughout her life, but retained few illusions about the human failings of churchmen. One thinks in particular of the pompous Mr. Collins, or the snobbish Mr. Elton in *Emma*. Charlotte Brontë, another clergyman's daughter, is similarly outspoken in her depiction of the odiously hypocritical Mr. Brocklehurst in *Jane Eyre*, very unlike the saintly St. John Rivers with his vision of a missionary life in India.

The novels of Charles Dickens have been disparaged by some critics as sentimental, but in certain cases he unsparingly examines the impact of false values on the development of a human soul. In *Great Expectations* Pip, an orphan living with his resentful (and much older) sister and her kind-hearted blacksmith husband Joe Gargery, first appears in miserable and unpromising circumstances. This changes when he is invited to Satis House to by the reclusive Miss Havisham. The latter treats both Pip and her ward Estella as mere pawns in a monstrous strategy to exact revenge on men, and

this is to have long-term effects on Pip. Offered the chance to become a 'gentleman', while wealth draws him out of the social environment in which he was born, it does little for his character. Dickens skilfully shows how the early lack of affection experienced by Pip and his manipulation by Miss Havisham render him vulnerable to exploitation. In spite of this, he recovers his moral compass and is able to comfort the dying convict Magwitch by praying with him in a heartfelt fashion which restores Pip as much as the condemned man through the realisation that the publican's prayer, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner', applies to both of them equally.

T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* also indicate that encounters with God are not always wondrous: he uses the experience of being stuck on a Tube train as a metaphor for the 'dark night of the soul' and a sense of estrangement from the divine, but equally demonstrates its presence in human fortitude. More recently, Maggie O'Farrell in *Hamnet* (2020), while not showing the established church in the best light, explores nature as a source of joy and oneness with God akin to eco-theology, with the hawk given to Agnes by her priest friend suggesting Gerard Manley Hopkins's 'wind-hover'.

The discussion afterwards raised questions about dystopian novels such as *1984*, *Lord of the Flies* and *Brave New World* and their portrayal of a world without God, C. S. Lewis's concept of 'reading literature against the grain', and the novels of Thomas Hardy and Kazuo Ishiguro. Closing with the final words of *Middlemarch*, Dr Wills reminded us that literature is itself: it is not necessary to read it expressly to encounter God, or to do so with that end in view, to discover its spiritual wealth.

Come and See: Discovering Jesus through the Eucharist

Alexandra Green

This Lent, Bishop Steven is inviting you to Come and See - an opportunity to explore the profound meal at the heart of Christian life. Whether you're new to faith, returning after a break, or have been part of church for years, this is a chance to pause, reflect and explore what the Eucharist might have to say to you. You can sign up to receive free daily Lent emails with short reflections, plus a weekly video from Bishop Steven. These short films take a different aspect of how we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, as the Servant, the Lamb of God, the Bread of Life, the Vine, the Son of God, and the Apostle.

There are postcards available on the welcome desk in St Helen's for anyone to take and send to a friend or neighbour who might welcome the opportunity to spend some time during Lent reflecting on what the Eucharist might say to them. There are intergenerational activities as well, so you can do it together as a family too.

[You can sign up now to receive the daily emails](#)

Why not take this opportunity to have a fresh look at the service which has been a central part of the life of Christians for many generations?



If ICE came to Abingdon,
Would I help my neighbours who were afraid to go out?
Would I do their shopping and take their kids to school?
Would I live the Gospel?

If ICE came to Abingdon,
Would I protest on the streets?
Would I react if a woman were dragged from her car by men in masks?
Would I be there?
Would I live the Gospel?

If ICE came to my church,
Would I tell them to leave?
Would I say 'I don't know what God you believe in
but here we preach the God of love'
Would I live the Gospel?

A meditation on recent events in Minneapolis by Rob Rutherford



The sinking February sun over the riverside meadow: Photo Rob Rutherford

Who is Kevin Beer?

I was born and raised in Old Windsor, where I was baptised, confirmed and married at the parish church of St Peter & St Andrew. As choir members there, we were allowed to wear red robes as it was once a royal church, having hosted synods during the reign of Edward the Confessor, before William the Conqueror decided to build a more substantial residence a bit further up the Thames. It was bellringing that brought me back to church after my teenage rebellion, and after reading the gospels and Acts, I became an enthusiastic believer! I was soon the youngest member of the PCC, eventually becoming church warden and chair of the United Churches Action Group (the local Churches Together movement) as well as being Tower Captain for 18 years. During this time, we raised £100k to re-shingle the tower over a steel sheet lining to prevent more holes from the local woodpeckers!



After being authorised to preach, I was fast-tracked to my first BAP (ordination selection panel) and they detected some of my own misgivings. I remember being asked how high up the candle I was and had no idea what they were talking about. However, Stephen Cottrell, who was then Bishop of Reading, upgraded my rejection to a “Not Yet” and suggested that I broadened my church experience, which resulted in our move to Abingdon in 2006 after our son was offered a place at Abingdon School. We tried all the churches, and I settled into St Nicolas as my main Sunday morning church. As well as having a welcoming congregation, the other reason for this was because as a bell-ringer, St Nic’s had the last service for which we would ring, the band having already rung at St Helen’s. We also attended Christ Church in the evenings as my daughter liked the youth setup there and I also joined one of their house groups and the men’s activities. However, my wife Lesley-Anne found her spiritual home at Peachcroft Christian Centre, so we had a foot in all the Anglican churches! At that time I also became the Lay Director for the Anglican Cursillo movement in the diocese, all of which certainly broadened my experience from just the one village church.

In 2009, I attended another Bishops Advisory Panel and this time it was, thankfully, a much more positive experience and so I began training on the Oxford Ministry Course at Cuddesdon. As well as the reading and study, this was a very practical course involving leading worship locally, mainly at my sending church of St Nic’s, but also with assessed preaching slots at Peachcroft and the Abingdon Baptist Church. So in the summer of 2012, I was ordained as deacon to become a curate in Beaconsfield where I would minister in a traditional town church of St Mary’s (with bells!), the evangelical plant of St Thomas’, Holtspur and the Anglo-Catholic St Michael’s. Indeed, after my priesting, the first time I presided at communion was at the Dom Gregory Dix memorial altar, which impressed my Anglo-Catholic friends!

Towards the end of my curacy, I went on Bishop John’s “Pilgrimage of Peace” to the Holy Land. As well as visiting all the usual sites, equivalent to reading a “5th gospel”, it was a real eye-opener to the tensions there, as we met with Jews and Muslims as well as the Christian minority – the “living stones” who still worship and witness there. I am proud to wear my Diocese of Jerusalem red stole on Pentecost in union with them. The other major excursion during my curacy was a week spent in our link diocese of Växjö in Sweden, visiting the cathedral and learning from the many diverse expressions of being the Lutheran state church there.

I joined the Wallingford Benefice as their Team Vicar in 2016, with responsibility for the two villages: Crowmarsh Gifford and Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, each coming with their church primary schools and village charities. I also served as Chaplain to the local Air Cadet Squadron, the Mayor’s Chaplain, chair of Churches Together and enjoyed being a Street Pastor with Lesley-Anne and our ecumenical friends. We stayed for nine years, but those three journeys around the lectionary felt rather different each time as they roughly equated to three phases: firstly the pre-COVID “old normal”; secondly the pandemic (where my technical skills as a former IT Consultant came to the fore as church became virtual and online, but hopefully never “remote”); and then thirdly the recovery phase, which included a year of interregnum of the Wallingford Team Rector and final year to allow

my new colleague to properly settle in. Friends here recognised me when I appeared on the national TV news to represent the community after the tragic death of PC Andrew Harper, as well as in a half-page picture in the Telegraph with a former PM who had become a parishioner. I was also on Radio Oxford during lockdown to promote our Wallingford Churches' "Drive-in Christmas Carols", with videos projected onto a big screen in the Lidl carpark. The risk assessment for that still gives me cold shivers as the guidance changed so frequently.

We returned to Abingdon last spring after my retirement from fulltime ministry, and I have recently been given my PTO, i.e. Permission To Officiate to continue my ministry as a priest.

A Team Vicar for Abingdon-on-Thames

We have now entered the process for discerning who God has called to be our next Team Vicar. We had a very useful meeting in January when members of all three congregations discussed what we might be looking for in a new Vicar. The thoughts and comments will be considered by the PCC when drawing up a Person Profile for the post. The Parish Profile, compiled for the appointment of the Team Rector, will be revised. After further thought, prayer and discussion the final documents will (we hope) be approved by the PCC, and the Diocese in late February.

We are planning to advertise the post formally after Easter, and hope to have candidates to interview in June. The interview panel, as with the Team Rector post, will involve representatives from all three churches, plus the Team Rector, Bishop, Archdeacon and representatives of the Deanery (a daunting panel).

Please keep the process and all involved in it, and any considering applying, in your prayers over the coming months

Eluned Hallas, PCC Secretary



The iron bridge in snow

Photo: David Bevington

'What we say and how we say it: the words we use in liturgy.'

A summary of Faith Forum by Rosalind Rutherford

This was the topic of the first Faith Forum for 2026, when the Rev Jen Brown spoke to about thirty members of all three churches about the words we use in liturgy. (And Anglicans have a lot of words and a whole library of prayer books!!).

She began by talking briefly about what we might mean by “liturgy” and, as well as a dictionary definition, pointed out that although most liturgy frames public worship, it can also be part of private prayer, such as when individuals say Morning Prayer on their own, but using the words shared by hundreds of others that day.

Liturgy, the familiar words and shape of our worship, has several functions. It is how we worship together, creating a living tradition; it gives shape and direction to what we do when we meet to worship; it is how we connect most deeply to each other and the universal church; it creates a safe space to encounter the holy as individuals and collectively.

Some Christians feel that set words, or too many words, get in the way of their worship, but as Jen pointed out, liturgy and the structures of worship have always mattered. Exodus and Numbers include detailed instructions for how worship should be structured; Jesus went to the synagogue regularly and to the Temple at feasts. He also taught his disciples the Lord’s Prayer – words shared by Christians in all churches from the beginnings of Christianity.

How we worship, and the words we use, express what we believe – this is particularly true of Anglican worship, where our theology is expressed in the authorised words of our prayers. More recent psychological research demonstrates that the words and rituals of our liturgy help to focus and regulate our attention. It is also common for people to discover that the familiarity of the words we use in worship can “carry” us at times of sorrow or stress, allowing us the space we need, and offering us words to pray with when we cannot find them ourselves.

Many people do not read the bible regularly, but still engage with words from the bible through worship. Nearly every service will include one or more readings from the bible; we say (or sing) psalms and canticles (biblical songs) in Morning and Evening prayer (and sometimes sing metrical versions as a hymn). The eucharist includes the “Sanctus”, joining our worship to the worship of heaven, and many other phrases or images from different parts of the bible. Other prayers and words of our worship link us with the worship of Christians through the ages – the Apostles Creed is derived from a very early baptismal affirmation of faith. Jen also spoke of how the version of the Nicene Creed which is introduced with “We believe...” emphasises that we say this as part of the whole church, rather than an individual statement.

In the questions and comments afterwards some spoke of the comfort familiar words and prayers can give, particularly when visiting care homes (though by now we need to be careful which words we assume people will know – “modern language” prayers have been in regular use for at least fifty years now!!). A question was also raised about the use of gendered words and pronouns in our worship both referring to us, and also to God. How can we use language in liturgy to expand our awareness of God and others, and not limit our worship? Others remembered when they had been somewhere with no English language service but they had been able to follow a eucharist by recognising the familiar shape and patterns of the liturgy.

A “Variety” of Canons

David Duce

Once in a while one reads an article in a magazine that contains an unexpected twist. Such was my experience recently on reading an interview with Professor Penny Endersby, Chief Executive of the Met Office published in *Ingenia*, the magazine of the Royal Academy of Engineering. The twist was that one of the accompanying photographs was taken in Exeter Cathedral with the caption “... Penny Endersby became Canon Scientist at the cathedral...”. She was appointed a Lay Canon in September 2023 and what struck me as unusual though was her title, Canon Scientist. One is used to Canon Treasurer, Canon Librarian, Canon Missioner, Canon Theologian, but Canon Scientist?

I wondered how many other cathedrals have Canon Scientists. A web search for the term found a few examples. The Revd Canon Dr Mike Kirby, a radiotherapy physicist and honorary lecturer at the University of Liverpool, was appointed Canon Scientist of Liverpool Cathedral in 2020. Tom McLeish, Professor of Natural Philosophy in the Department of Physics at the University of York and a Licensed Lay Minister, was installed as Canon Scientist of St Albans Cathedral, in November 2021 (a fixed-term appointment), followed by Russell Cowburn, Professor of Experimental Physics at the University of Cambridge, in February 2025. At St Alban’s the role of Canon Scientist is described as encouraging “deeper dialogue and exploration of how scientific discovery can complement theological reflection” and he gave an inaugural lecture entitled “Invisible Wonders: Nanotechnology and the God of Creation”.

I then wondered if other disciplines apart from theology are represented in the titles of canons. A very quick, certainly non-exhaustive, search found a Canon Historian at Salisbury Cathedral, historian and broadcaster Tom Holland who was installed in June this year and is described on the cathedral’s web site as “the first Canon Historian to be appointed in an English cathedral.”

But are there no Canon Engineers? It seems not as such, but there are canons who are engineers. Here in Oxford, Canon Professor Lionel Tarassenko (now Lord and president of Reuben College Oxford), a prominent British engineer and academic, serves as a Lay Canon of Christ Church Cathedral, being appointed to this honorary position in May 2012, and among the first lay canons in the cathedral's history. The Revd Canon Dr Tim Bull, a residentiary canon at St Alban’s Cathedral and Director of Ordinands in that diocese, lectured in software engineering at the University of Durham prior to ordination. In October this year he gave a course at Salisbury Cathedral on “AI: Questions of Faith - Should we embrace this technology with open arms or approach it with caution?”

Monetisation

The advert said
 MONETISE YOUR FOLLOWERS
 so he thought
 he would respond

by painting them
 in the changing light,
 like waterlilies
 in a pond.

Brian Bilston

With thanks to Brian Bilston for
 posting this on Facebook!

“Habemus Mamam” (said by The Bishop of Dover 28 Jan 2026)
Rosalind Rutherford

For nearly fifty years I've been involved in campaigning for the Church of England to live out:

“In Christ... there is no longer male and female for all of you are one in Christ”

and so it felt important to be in St Paul's Cathedral last Wednesday (28th Jan) to witness the moment when Bishop Sarah became Archbishop of Canterbury. Her installation in Canterbury Cathedral on March 25th will include the powerful symbolism of seeing her seated on the Chair of St Augustine, but legally, the Church of England's senior bishop is now a woman.

The Church of England has an archaic and convoluted process for formally appointing diocesan bishops and confirming that the wider church accepts the nomination. However, those organising this ceremony recognised the significance of this moment to many people, and so framed the necessary legalities within a service, which enabled prayer and reflection on the task she is accepting, and affirmation of her as Archbishop of Canterbury.

Marking the legal nature of the ceremony, there was no altar but tables set under the dome, where the archbishop of York, and various other bishops and legal officers sat, with the new archbishop facing them. Papers, certificates, mandates were presented and described, all confirming that the various legal processes had been followed. Despite a protest (he is a known protestor at consecrations of women), the moment came when all the legalities had been successfully completed and the newly elected Archbishop stood to be welcomed. Applause rang out in the cathedral - not just polite applause, but heartfelt acknowledgment of the significance of this moment, both for Archbishop Sarah, but also for the Church. For those there who had written letters, demonstrated, held prayer vigils, campaigned, it was a moment that most of us thought we would not see but, despite continuing legal discrimination, a moment we welcomed with deep joy. When I walked into the cathedral, I had seen a long-standing friend and campaigner, who lives in London. “I can remember standing in exactly that place holding a banner”, she said, pointing to the tables where the lawyers and bishops sat. Throughout the service we were both remembering those we had worked alongside, wept and hoped for a moment such as this.

The service affirmed our new archbishop's calling, and included a variety of people from parishes, the wider Communion and of all ages. I found the words of the anthem poignant - linking her first calling as a nurse to her calling as Archbishop, to bring healing to church and community:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
 because he hath anointed me to preach
 the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to
 heal the broken-hearted,”

(from Isaiah 61)

Finally, Archbishop Sarah gave us all her blessing and the assembled lawyers, clergy, canons, bishops and our new Archbishop processed out to the hymn “Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord”.



Photo: Graham Westley Lacdao
 (Archbishop of York Facebook Post)

Sometimes it is not until something actually happens that we realise how much it matters.

The week of prayer for Christian Unity, WoPCU.

Sue Holligan

The week of prayer for Christian unity was first begun, and celebrated, in the chapel of a Franciscan convent in New York State in 1908. The eight days they set aside to pray for Christian unity inspired many outside the convent and grew into the worldwide observance that we find today. It encourages all Christians to do their best to seek the fulfilment of Christ's prayer "so that they may be one". WoPCU is now sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the Vatican Council for promoting Christian Unity. The biblical themes for each year are proposed by ecumenical groups around the world.

St Nicolas' DCC thought that their church, positioned in the centre of the town, would be an ideal location to set out all the resources for this year's WoPCU, so that members of the churches in the town who were able could come into the church and add their prayers to the other prayers being offered worldwide. It was also hoped that visitors to the town from other parishes might see the advert outside the church and drop in and use the resources too. St Nic's was open from 10 to 12 each day and two stewards were present to welcome people, hand out the daily resources and provide tea and coffee if required.

This year the biblical theme was proposed by the churches in Armenia, a Christian country that has suffered from wars, ethnic cleansing and human rights abuses for generations. The introductory welcome leaflet for the week states 'in major international ecumenical gatherings of recent years, the Armenian Church has brought a heartfelt appeal for a stronger collective voice of the church as an advocate for just peace in the world, not only for Armenians, but for all those suffering as a result of violence, displacement and persecution.'

The biblical theme was taken from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 4.4, 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling.' The resources provided each day included the key verse from Ephesians 4, three additional scriptural passages, a commentary, reflection and prayer. There were also questions offered to think about as well as possible actions to be taken. Over the week about 30 people came and used the materials, including some visitors to the town. We had no prior awareness of how many people would drop in, but those who came were very enthusiastic and when 2 or 3 were quietly praying the sense of spiritual awareness was profound.

The third day of the week was the day Donald Trump went to Davos, and the theme was 'The bond of peace'. The verse for the day was Ephesians 4.3, 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace,' The following was the prayer offered all over the world on that day:

Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Prince of Peace. Strengthen the bond of peace among us and in our troubled world. Disturb the hearts of all who would make war; touch the wounds of all who are afflicted by war. We pray especially for the people of Armenia and Artsakh, and their kindred throughout the world. Let the light of Your love shine in all the dark places of our world, and hasten the day when all peoples may dwell in peace with justice. Amen.

The Parish Carbon Footprint 2025

Rob Rutherford

Revision!.... I'm sure that you know this:

Despite what the Conservatives and Reform say, our Nation is committed to being Net-Zero by 2050. The Anglican Church has challenged us to be carbon neutral by 2030 or at the very latest 2035.

The Candle in the Window has published the carbon footprint of our churches every year since the October 2020 edition published the 2019 figures. Here is the data for 2025. It only includes the gas and electricity used by the church buildings so it does not include the hidden carbon dioxide generated as a consequence of the things we buy. Nor does it include petrol used in getting to church etc.

The 2025 calculation is based on this data:

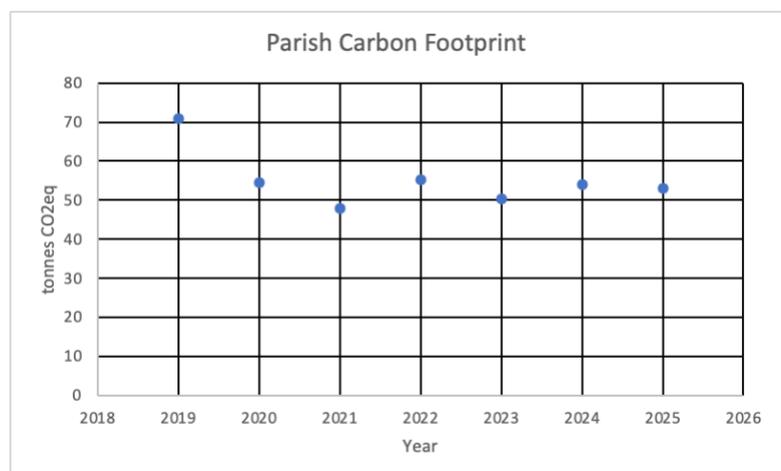
184g of Carbon Dioxide are released for each kWh of gas energy used.

177g of Carbon Dioxide are released for each kWh of electrical energy used.

This latter figure is that recommended by the government for businesses to use in their reporting. It represents the average for the grid rather than an area specific figure. It does not take into account any 'green supplier' we may happen to use. It was calculated mid-year.

Building	kWh gas	kWh elec	kg CO2	tonnes CO2
St Helen's Church	135900	12700	27254	27.3
Parish Centre	13230	4210	3179	3.2
St Michael's Church	82270	4816	15990	16.0
St Nicolas' Church	31344	3910	6459	6.5
total	262744	25636	52882	52.9

Year	tonnes CO2
2019	70.8
2020	54.6
2021	48
2022	55.2
2023	50.3
2024	54
2025	52.9



The churches are making an effort to improve the efficiency of their lighting and this is beginning to show in the data but most of the energy we use is for heating and that is largely from burning gas - so overall the carbon footprint has not changed very much.

The government hopes to decarbonise the grid by 2030. Some regard this as optimistic but the carbon intensity of the electricity grid is reducing and the argument for electrical heating grows. What we don't want is to go over to electricity too early when the consequence will be that Didcot power station burns more gas – not exactly the aim!

BUT we still need to prepare – if the gas boilers need replacing, what will we do?

If this seems similar to last year's article, that is because it is.

Events February and March

Compiled by Louise Heffernan

Classics for Wind Quintet (and one or two treats) with Pavlova Winds

February 8 @ 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm
St Nicolas' Church

Tickets: £12

abbeychamberconcerts.org



Church Twinning Barn Dance

Fancy a knees-up, a ploughman's dinner and fun company? Abingdon Church Twinning is organising a Barn Dance fundraiser on **Saturday the 28th of February in Trinity Church Conduit Centre**. Alan Fisher from Abingdon Baptist will be the caller, and all proceeds will support church twinning. Limited spaces! Put on your dancing shoes, and get your tickets from your Church Twinning reps: anne.dodd28@gmail.com, Elizabeth Simpson; simpsonem123@gmail.com, John Clare johnclare.blunsdon@gmail.com Hildegard -Hyde hnelghyde@gmail.com

Tickets: £15 to include a welcome drink and ploughman's supper.

Faith Forum

In this series, we will be looking at different aspects of liturgy. This session will be led by the Revd Dr Phil Cooke who will consider how music works in liturgy.

Sunday 22nd February at the Parish Centre
12.45pm preceded by a light lunch at 12.20pm

Abingdon & District Musical Society

Saturday 7th March 7.30pm

Wagner – Lohengrin: Prelude to Act I
Suk – Prague, Symphonic Poem
Saint-Saëns – Symphony no 3 “Organ”

Alexander Walker - Conductor
Kate Bailey – Leader
Malcolm Pearce – Organist

St Helen's Church
Abingdon
OX14 5BS

Tickets £14 in advance / £15 on the door / £12 Under 16's – available through www.waggettickets.com/ADMS
www.adms.org.uk

Abingdon & District Musical Society

Saturday 21st March 7.30pm

Handel – Coronation Anthems
Bach – Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring
Parcell – I Was Glad
Plus: solo organ interludes

Robert Legg - Conductor
James Brown - Organist

St Helen's Church
Abingdon
OX14 5BS

Tickets £14 in advance / £15 on the door / £12 Under 16's – available through www.waggettickets.com/ADMS
www.adms.org.uk

<p>Mothers' Union Tuesday March 3rd "Reducing the Risk" - Cllr Gwyneth Lewis</p> <p>Reducing the Risk is a locally based charity, working locally, regionally and nationally, to support adults and children at risk of domestic abuse and empower the professionals and volunteers who support them. https://reducingtherisk.org.uk/</p> <p>Cllr Gwyneth Lewis is a Town Councillor, former Mayor and member of St Nicolas'</p> <p>All welcome. Meetings are held in the Parish Centre 10:15 for 10:30am</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">World Day of Prayer Friday 6 March 2026 at St Edmund's Church at 2.30 pm.</p> <p>The service has been prepared by the Christian women of Nigeria and the theme is 'I will give you rest, come' from Matthew 11:28 – 30. The service shares the stories of four Nigerian women who inspire us to work towards a world without injustice, insecurity, marginalisation, religious persecution, poverty and despair. We will join a great wave of prayer that encircles the globe, all praying with and for the country and people of Nigeria. All welcome, Refreshments will follow the service.</p> 	<div style="text-align: center;">  <h2 style="margin: 0;">St HELEN'S CHURCH</h2> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold; margin: 5px 0;">AGNOSTICS ANONYMOUS</p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em; margin: 5px 0;">'Are you saved? Ideas of salvation in the Bible and today.'</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">Led by John Barton, with Jennifer Brown.</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">Tuesday 24th March 2026 6pm to 7.30pm</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">In Parish Centre (opposite main door of St Helen's)</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">FREE Everyone Welcome</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0; font-size: 0.9em;">Contact for more Information: Jill Gant 01235 528929</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0; font-size: 0.9em;">https://abingdonparish.org.uk/P_events.html</p> </div>

Quiz: Dates in February

Family Hallas

Can you identify these February dates and then find them in the word square?
 The given initials should help, but only the one with the length in brackets is hidden the square. Hints on page 15, answers on page 16.

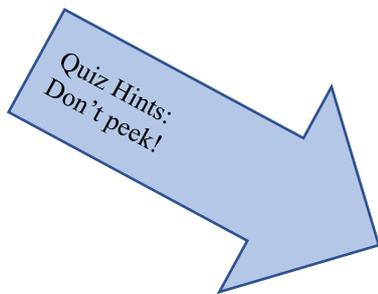
- Feb L(5) H M
- Feb 2 G(9) D
- Feb 2 C(9)
- Feb 6 W O(8)
- Feb 8 T(5)
- Feb 14 S V(9) D
- Feb 15 C E(8)
- Feb 17 S(6) T & P(8)
- Feb 17 R(7)
- Feb 17 C(7) N Y
- Feb 18 A(3) W
- Feb 18 – April 4 L(4)
- Feb 22 F(5) F(5)
- Feb 22 H(8) & W
- Feb 23 S P(8)
- Mar 1 S D(5) D (Couldn't leave this one out)

E E S E K A C N A P H
G V Z C F H L A E P B
T O E A I A I N U R C
A R H N D P I N R A H
I H E D S T M T A C E
Z S S L N O N Y H Y A
E + P E M U N E L L L
M R L M R B O G L O I
M A D A M A R R V P N
V C A S H + T B G L G
D I V A D F O R U M V



Thrupp Lake with swans and ice

Photo: David Bevington



Hints	Feb	LGBT+ History Month
	Feb 2	Groundhog Day
	Feb 2	Candlemas
	Feb 6	Winter Olympics
	Feb 8	Taizé
	Feb 14	St Valentine(s) Day
	Feb 15	Choral Evensong
	Feb 17	Shrove Tuesday, Pancakes
	Feb 17	Ramadan starts
	Feb 17	Chinese New Year
	Feb 18	Ash Wednesday
	Feb 18 – April 4	Lent
	Feb 22	Faith Forum
	Feb 22	Healing & Wholeness
	Feb 23	St Polycarp
	Mar 1	St David(s) Day

Not Another Amaryllis

Eileen Duckett

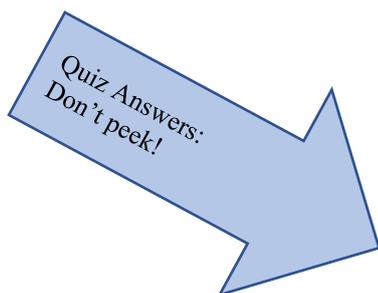
Not another amaryllis
 I seem to be given one every year
 And although they are lovely when out in bloom
 I don't want another in here.

I do like a poinsettia
 With leaves of a very deep red
 Which even when they have all fallen off
 Makes a lovely green plant instead.

Cyclamen are also so pretty
 And when they are over and done
 I can plant them out in the garden
 So they can bloom next year in the sun.

And I love a bowl of hyacinths
 Their smell is quite divine
 They sit upon the windowsill
 Cheering up this house of mine.

But those wretched amaryllises
 Are only in bloom for a limited time
 So I banish them out to the greenhouse
 Where they're my husband's problem not mine.



D I V A D F O R U M V
 V C A S H + T B G L G
 M A D A M A R R V P N
 m r l M r b O G L O I
 E + p E m U N E L L L
 Z S L N O N Y H Y A
 I H E D S T M T a C E
 A R H N d P I n r A H
 T O E A I A ! N u R c
 G V z C F H l a E P b
 E E S E K A C N A P h

Useful Weblinks:

Services: for the latest news see the Parish Website:

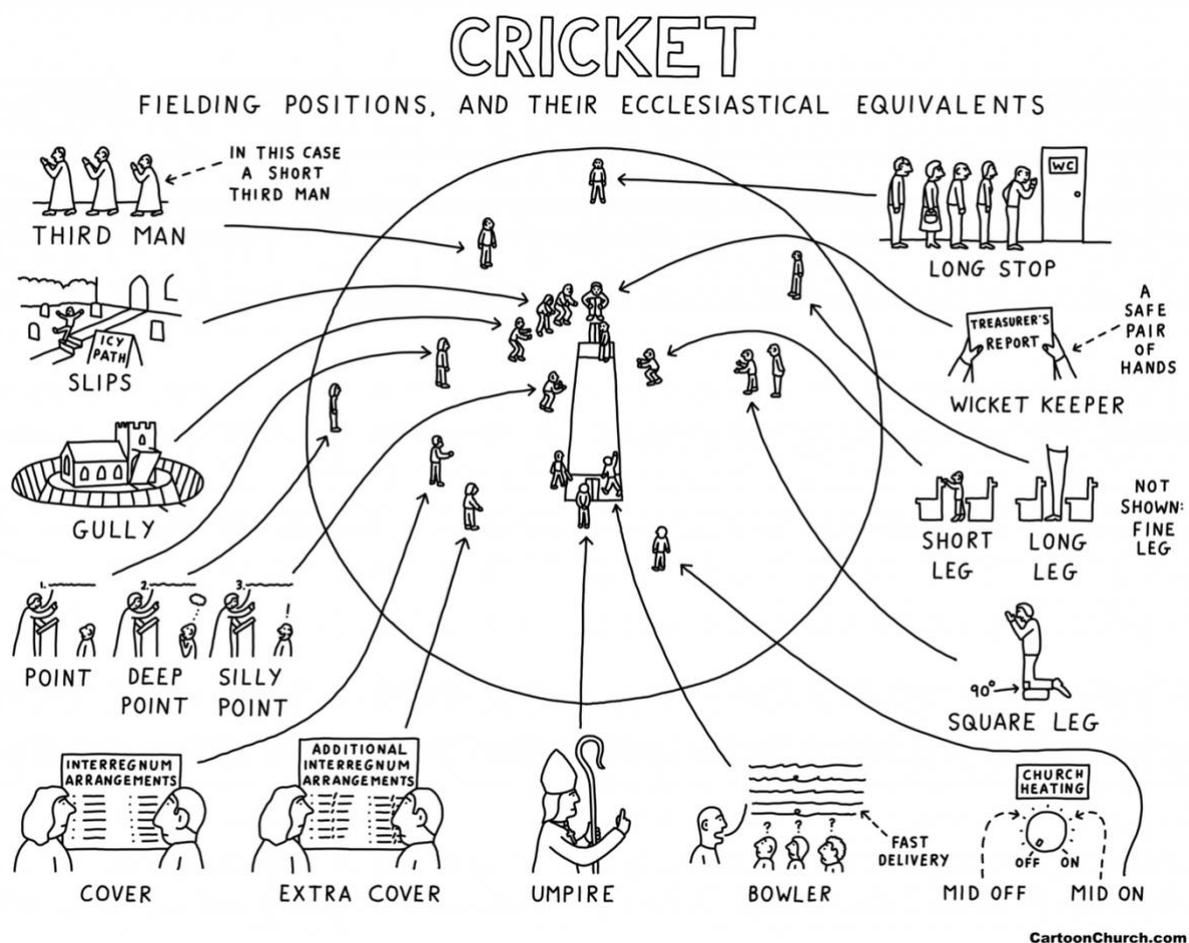
<https://abingdonparish.org.uk>

for Church of England links: services, daily readings etc

<https://www.churchofengland.org/>

FOOD BANK. The Abingdon Foodbank is still very busy and anxious to keep up the support. Northcourt Road (Christ Church) is open to receive donations on Tuesday and Friday mornings between 9.30 am and 1.00 pm. The foodbank also operates from Preston Road Community Centre. Donations are welcome there too between 12.00 and 2.30pm on Wednesdays. You can also donate money by sending a cheque made out to *North Abingdon PCC Christ Church*, clearly marked 'for Food Bank' or via the Foodbank website <https://abingdon.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money/> or the Parish office has details if you want to donate via online banking.

Finally, from Dave Walker, with apologies to those who hate cricket or don't know what it is. We know it's only February but we live in hope.



Thanks and all good wishes to all contributors and to you, the readers.

The next issue will be published on March 8th. Please help us by sending feedback, ideas and contributions to Candle@abingdonparish.org.uk