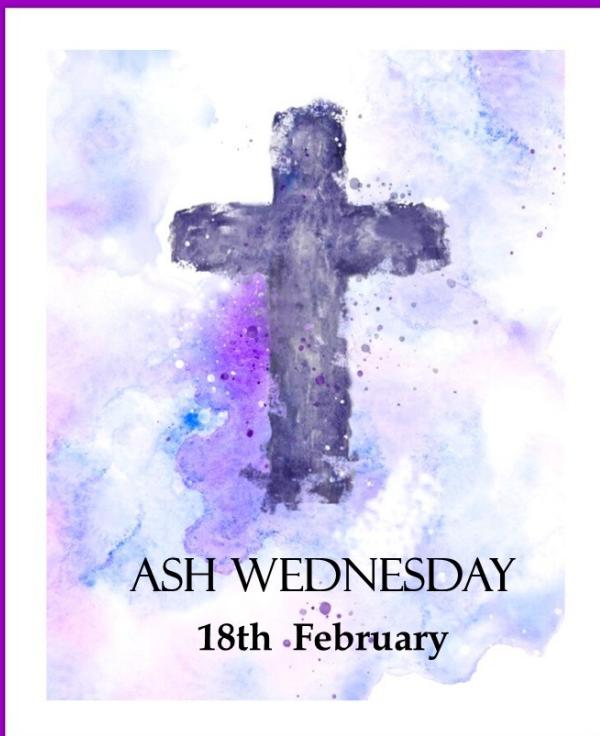


February 2026

PARISH MAGAZINE



ASH WEDNESDAY

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**Vicar of Oswestry & Rector of Rhydycroesau
*Interregnum***

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Mr Bill Bowen, BEM

Commissioned Lay Workers

Mrs Jenifer Chippett Williams

Mrs Lindsay Clarke

Miss Sally Wright

Churchwardens

S Oswald's: Miss June Williams

Tel: 652544

Mrs Muriel Jones

Tel: 653598

Mr John Abram MBE TD

Tel: 653316

Christchurch: Mrs Elizabeth Stanley

Tel: 676450

Rosemary Davies

Tel: 07813757498

Parochial Church Councils

S Oswald's: Hon Secretary: Ms Carron Boulton

Tel: 652861

Hon Treasurer: Mr Paul Evison

Tel: 653315

Christchurch: Hon Secretary:

Hon Treasurer:

Director of Music

S Oswald's: Mrs Samantha Lewis-Widnall

Email: samanthalewiswidnall@gmail.com

Organist:

St Oswald's: Josephine Sands email: joasands@hotmail.co.uk.

Christchurch:

Parish Office

S Oswald's: Church Street, Oswestry SY11 2SY.

Tel: 652861

Parish Administrator: Ms Carron Boulton

email: stoswald.office@gmail.com

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GOD OF SURPRISES

You may recall that when I preached on the occasion of the Baptism of Jesus last month, I remarked on how God presents us with situations we weren't expecting and I suppose the departure of our Vicar could fit into that category. While we wish Harvey and Liz every joy and happiness in their new ministry it does present us with a few surprises as a parish but also with some opportunities as individuals.

For a start I am surprised that I am writing this letter, the third interregnum at which I have done so, but it does give me the opportunity to say that I am pleased to welcome Revend Adrian and Father Phil as colleagues at this time and also our Worship Leaders Jenifer, Sal and Lindsay. We will endeavour, with the help of readers and intercessors from the congregation, to maintain and develop our worship. In this I know that we will be supported by our colleagues Reverend John and Reverend Brian by prayer and in practical ways. There is the added dimension this time in that we have a new Director of Music, Sam and we look forward to fresh expressions in our worship as she builds on the excellent standard she has inherited from Mike.

At the time of writing the Worship Team has not had the opportunity to meet but hopefully by the time you read this we will have established a protocol and will meet regularly to ensure good lines of communication. Despite this it is planned to have a rota for February in place before the start of the month. This will include details of the special services and study groups for Lent which starts on Wednesday 18th February.

From the outset Father Phil will continue to be the contact for funerals, I will continue managing the ministry of home communions and, although he will continue to support the surrounding parishes who are in vacancy, Reverend Adrian will also contribute to the worship at St Oswald's.

There are of course many other activities which involve the parish priest and, in our case, these include civic duties, ministry to the schools, especially our church school at Morda, our Stay and Play Group, the Place of Welcome and general visiting to the sick and elderly who are unable to attend church. These are not all priestly duties and many afford opportunities for lay people to broaden their ministries.

As time goes by there will be opportunities for many of you to be surprised by God and I hope and pray that you will be receptive to these calls to action so that when our new incumbent arrives, she or he will

find a vibrant welcoming church full of joy and basking in the peace which passes all understanding.

May God bless us all

Keith

LENT STUDY GROUPS



The Mission and Ministry Team will again be running Study Groups during Lent. We are hoping to offer both daytime and evening groups.

Sign-up sheets with details of times, venues and the course being studied will be in church shortly with further information on the weekly pew sheet as soon as arrangements have been finalised.

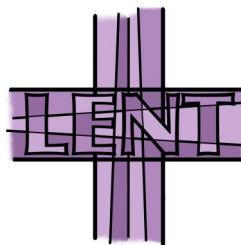
Lindsay Clarke



PRAYING FOR OUR WORLD

The Mission and Ministry Team ask you to join them in prayer in the Church Reading Area at 7 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month, the next meeting is **February 4**. You won't need to speak if you don't want to, but your silent prayer and thoughts directed to God will add so much to each meeting. So please join us and let's make this a "holy habit".

For people who wish to come in and pray during the day, prayer resources can be found in St. George's Chapel.





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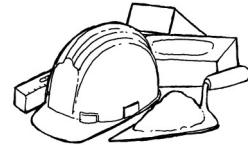
A photograph showing a group of students in school uniforms (grey blazers and white shirts) sitting on the grass in a park-like setting. They appear to be having a picnic or a break. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

www.marchesschool.co.uk

Come and see where we belong

BUILDING & MAINTENANCE

As many of you may be aware we have a small team at St Oswald's that deals with these matters. That team is not getting any younger!



Is there anyone out there with any of the following skills and is willing to give a bit of time/talents to help? These are: -

- Knowledge/experience of any of the following - building, construction, heating and electrical services, both design of, or installation.
- Project Management, preferably construction related, but other types of project management have transferable skills to what we do.
- Normal DIY skills to a reasonable standard.
- Secretarial skills, particularly taking minutes of meetings, but also filing, record keeping etc.

There are typically 6 regular meetings of the Committee per year, very occasional one-off meetings if the need arises, and then DIY sessions, at present usually on a Wednesday morning for about 2.5 hours, but other days are possible. These occur as frequently as DIY jobs occur and enough of us are available to do them. They are a pleasant social interaction, and we always stop for a coffee and a chat, and they help maintain St Oswald's at a much-reduced cost than employing contractors.

This is not a "dark art" beyond the average person. We are only doing the sort of things many of us do to our own homes, care and maintenance, improvements, replacements, refurbishments, obtaining quotations, DIY – just to a bit larger building of a different character. We will help you settle in.

If any of you would like to join us, in either the committee direction, or the DIY direction, or both, helping to maintain St Oswald's in good order, then please come forward and speak with either David, Muriel or John whatever your age, albeit some people a bit younger to help would be particularly welcome.

David Smith, Muriel Jones, John Abram

BELL RINGING NEWS

BOXING DAY ZIP WIRE

The bell ringers once again hosted our teddy bear (or any other cuddly toy) zip wire on Boxing Day. A fine team of volunteers arrived from just after 9am on a fine (but very cold day) to get things set up for the anticipated visitors. Particular thanks go to Peter Woollam who, whilst no longer able to ring with us regularly, still lends and sets up his equipment for us.

A big queue had formed by 10:30 and it was a non stop line of families and brave toys ascending the tower until well after our advertised finish time. Each toy and its owner received a certificate of achievement (and a chocolate) and we are very grateful for many generous donations that will help towards maintaining our current bells and improving our training capabilities.



TRAINING BELLS PROJECT BEGINS

The 5th of January saw delivery of demountable scaffolding and the start of our project to install two “dumb” training bells in the tower. This follows the granting of a faculty to carry out this work by the Diocese.

Griffiths Hire Shops were on site at 8:20am (just after many schools announced they were closed!) to deliver the scaffolding and we are most grateful for their support with our project. The pieces of scaffolding just fitted (by about an inch at one door) up the stairs, with myself, Ben & Isla getting it all up into the ringing room in just over an hour.

Our steeple keeper John Hobley arrived and the next job was to put it all together, which you can see we managed! Over the next four days, John and I have created new holes in the ceiling for the training bells and other holes to adjust the rope positions of 3 of our existing bells. To achieve this, we are using the space in the clock room



(which is between the bells and the ringing room) to divert the ropes. This involves attaching pulley block to both floor and ceiling and the creation of a chute to cradle the rope. John is making these chutes himself and is rightly very proud of his first one!



The intention is to improve the layout of our existing rope circle whilst creating room for the 2 training bells. These will ultimately fit into a circle of 10 "bells" that we will be able to hear through a computer simulator.

These changes will make it easier for new ringers to have their first experience on bells and enable a more interactive experience for visitors. They will also help existing ringers progress through the creation of the 10 and, more importantly, a lighter ring of 6 for practice. We are doing this work in memory and as a tribute to our dear friend and colleague Andrew Harris - who had an ambition for 10 (all real) bells at St Oswald's. We are hoping to get the training bells installed by the end of February.

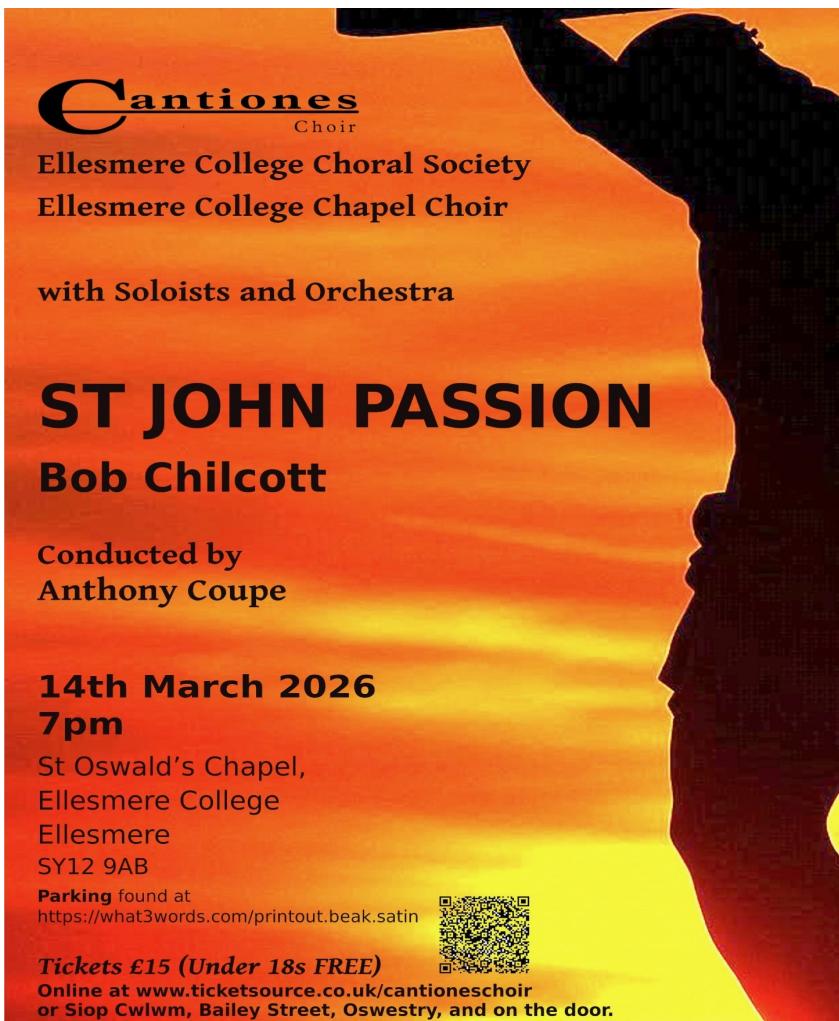
We're very grateful to Griffiths Hire Shops, Oswestry Town Council, Whittington Parish Council, the Shropshire Association of Church Bellringers, the church wardens and Harvey for support with our project.

Hope to give you a further update next month!

Brian Rothera

EXCITING THREE CHOIR CONCERT IN ELLESMORE MARCH

Cantiones will join Ellesmere College Choral Society and Ellesmere College Chapel Choir to present Bob Chilcott's dramatic St John Passion. It should be emotional, with the benefit of having a small orchestra featuring a large brass section and excellent soloists. In addition each choir will present individual items to showcase their skills. All in all this should be a concert not to be missed. It will take place at 19:00 at St Oswald's Chapel in Ellesmere College on Saturday 14th March. Tickets are £15 (U18s free) and are available online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/cantionesschoir, from Siop Cwlwm in Bailey Street, Oswestry and on the door.

A large, stylized silhouette of a person's head and shoulders, facing right, set against a background of warm orange and yellow sunset or sunrise colors.

Cantiones
Choir

Ellesmere College Choral Society
Ellesmere College Chapel Choir

with Soloists and Orchestra

ST JOHN PASSION

Bob Chilcott

Conducted by
Anthony Coupe

14th March 2026
7pm

St Oswald's Chapel,
Ellesmere College
Ellesmere
SY12 9AB

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<https://what3words.com/printout.beak.satin>

Tickets £15 (Under 18s FREE)
Online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/cantionesschoir
or Siop Cwlwm, Bailey Street, Oswestry, and on the door.



**CHURCH SPRING CLEAN
SATURDAY 28TH MARCH 9.30AM—3.00PM**

As many people as possible are needed to give St Oswald's its annual spring clean in time for Easter. Please come along with brushes, mops, vacuum cleaners, etc. etc. so we can clean those places which are not done on a weekly basis. We welcome newcomers to St Oswald's, as well as our regular helpers, to assist with this annual task.



A list of areas to be cleaned will be available in church and it would be appreciated if you could please indicate which area you have cleaned so that cleaning isn't duplicated.

Natasha Bell and Muriel Jones

ST. OSWALD'S LADIES GROUP

Unfortunately, our January meeting was cancelled due to the snow. David Preston has agreed to join us later in the year to speak to us.

Our next meeting will be on Monday 2nd February when we welcome Justin Roper to speak to us about Battle of Agincourt - John of Shrewsbury.



We are always pleased to meet new members at our meetings which are held in the Parish Centre on the first Monday in the month at 2.30 p.m.

Ann Sagar

MOTHERS` UNION FELLOWSHIP GROUP

The January meeting was cancelled due to bad weather.

Our February meeting will take place on the 12th and we will be using our WAVE OF PRAYER SERVICE. The meeting will be in the Parish Centre at 2.15 as usual and our speaker is Richard Major. All welcome.

Pam Musson

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A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE – 271

SOME THOUGHTS ON SURNAMES

One weekend last month I was driving, or being driven, from Shrewsbury to Newport, for a brisk walk along the former canal there, and we passed a road sign indicating a turning to a village, or perhaps a hamlet, called Rodenhurst. I remember saying that Rodenhurst must have been home to someone of that name who had been a priest in Oswestry in medieval times.

Despite the stunned silence, perhaps the indifference, that greeted this nugget of information, it stayed with me – and I was able to find John de Rodenhurst, in 1338, in the records of Haughmond Abbey: he had been granted a lease, for life, of the hospital of St John in Oswestry – its chapel, houses, gardens, three crofts, and a dove-cot, on condition that he should celebrate mass there at least five days each week, keep the buildings in repair, and entertain (that is, accommodate) the abbot of Haughmond and his canons when they might come to Oswestry.

At different times during the years that this column has featured in the parish magazine, the subject of names has been discussed. We have looked at changing fashions in the choice of forenames, at the surprisingly rare choice of Oswald as a forename, at Welsh surnames and the widespread use locally of Welsh forms of surnames (the use of *ap* and *ferch*). We may have touched upon surnames reflecting someone's trade – noting for instance that the churchwardens' accounts at the start of the 17th century recorded work carried out to the church roof by Edward Tyler. And we know that so many local surnames – on both sides of the border – reflect the name of an ancestor – always a male ancestor – from many generations ago: names such as Williams, Jones, Roberts, and Davies.

Most surnames, historically, fall into one of four or five categories – reflecting a trade or occupation; the name of an ancestor; sometimes a physical attribute of an ancestor who may for example have been tall, short, strong, or red-haired; or (like John de Rodenhurst) reflecting where an ancestor was from, either a place name, or a feature in the landscape. Readers will know of many such 'locative' or 'toponymic' surnames: for example the newsreader Julie Etchingham's surname recalls a Sussex village. Normally, to be adopted as a surname, the subject had to move away, and to be given the name reflecting his or her origins. In medieval records of Oswestry – from the 13th and 14th century – we can see townspeople with the surnames Clun ('de Clune'), Trafford (a village north

-east of Chester), Muckleston (Mucklestone, on the Shropshire-Staffordshire border), and Stanney (another village north of Chester).¹

In each of these cases, they, or their ancestors, had moved to Oswestry. In the case of the Mucklestons and Stanneys, they went on to become major players in local life. St Oswald's had a curate called William Muckleston from 1578 to 1592, and a vicar Richard Muckleston from 1612 to 1624; John Muckleston was Mayor of Oswestry in 1692. The Stanney family were prominent in local life from the end of the 15th century through to the mid-17th century; they served as Bailiffs (the senior-most councillor, equivalent of Mayor) on numerous occasions, and St Oswald's still has a fine chalice and paten donated by Richard Stanney in 1575.

That said, the number of locative surnames in use in Oswestry in, say, 1600, was small when compared to other types of surname, especially those based on the father's name. Looking at the church's gilt-lettered boards listing former vicars of St Oswald's, there are no more than four or five examples: Richard Muckleston we have already noted, also Nathaniel Tattersall (from Tattershall, a village in Lincolnshire with an early brick-built castle), John Betton (from either Betton Strange or Betton Alkmere, hamlets south of the A5, to the east of Bayston Hill), possibly John Cotton (perhaps from Coton, just to the north of Shrewsbury), and, the earliest, Walter Hangmere, whose name is likely to derive from Hanmer, just over the border in what was formerly Flintshire, to the west of Whitchurch.

And a quick skim through the printed Churchwardens' Accounts for the years 1579 to 1615 identified only a small number of examples including the bellfounder William Cleeberie, the locksmith Hugh Erthig, and John Blodwell, a churchwarden in 1594 and 1607.²

Finally we might reflect on Oswestry as a surname. I have never come across someone with the name and I recall, when I was much younger and had access to a full set of phone books, checking each one in the hope of finding an example. That said, I have come across examples in lists of medieval documents, such as Reginald and Edmund Oswaldestre from Shrewsbury, and Owen Oswestrie, transferred from a church in St David's diocese to a parish in St Asaph.³ Presumably they were people with roots in Oswestry who (or whose parents) had moved elsewhere, and

¹ All four places had close links, as did Oswestry, to the FitzAlans

² There are several instances of members of the Blodwell family serving as Bailiff, from at least 1529 through to 1668

³ From 1402 and 1433 respectively: Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1401-1405, p166, and 1429-1436, p265

had adopted, or been labelled by others. It can be the luck of the draw whether a surname survives from generation to generation, century to century. Oswestry as a surname seems to have died out whilst the name Muckleston has thrived – look it up on the internet and you will find Mucklestons right across the world, and a society devoted to the research of the name and its Shropshire links.

John Pryce-Jones

BONUS BALL

Congratulations to the December winners of the weekly Lotto Bonus Ball draw who will each have received £29. The winners were:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Ball Number</u>	<u>Winner</u>
6 Dec	40	Hazel Pryce
13 Dec	59	Judi Neale
20 Dec	47	Elizabeth Steele
27 Dec	21	June Williams

I have a number which will become available at the beginning of March when the new Bonus Ball year starts. The cost of joining is £13/quarter which is collected either annually, half yearly or quarterly.

If you would like to join the St Oswald Bonus Ball, please let me know.

Paul Crosby
658606

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A MONTH IN MUSIC

After my first month as Director of Music, I can honestly say it has been a blast. You have all been so welcoming and supportive, and for that I am eternally grateful.

The choir, Jo and I are still getting to know one another, but even from the very first rehearsal and service, I could already hear and feel a difference. With the incredibly encouraging feedback we've received, it's clear that this is only the very beginning of something special. To quote just two of the comments we've had: *"The choir sounded absolutely amazing — every note felt like an offering,"* and *"I especially loved 'Three Kings' — I haven't heard it like that before!"* Comments like these mean so much to us and really affirm the joy of making music together in worship.

News from the Suggestions Post Box!

There haven't been many suggestions so far — so either you're very happy, or you haven't found the box yet! It's on the notices table as you come into church, on the right. I'll leave it there for another couple of weeks, so please do take the opportunity to share any thoughts or ideas if you haven't already.

New Repertoire

I've been searching high and low for more inclusive morning settings and small anthems and hymns for us to sing, and I've found a couple that I'd love us to try. To that end, I would like to invite you all to a **singing workshop on Sunday 8th February**, where we'll go through the new pieces together.

We'll be learning **Macmillan's St Anne's Mass** and **"Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive"** (arr. Baldwin), which we will sing during the Ash Wednesday service and towards the end of Lent. The session will take place straight after the morning service (around 12.15pm) and will last around **1-1½ hours** — and a light lunch will be provided as a reward for all our hard work!

Jo and I are also working on providing learning tracks, which will be uploaded to **St Oswald's YouTube channel**, so you can listen and sing along at home. The more you immerse yourself in the music, the easier it becomes. A handy trick of mine when learning new music is to sing along while doing the housework — so brush off those vocal cobwebs while finishing the washing up! Of course, you'll have my full support if you have any difficulties, but I have great faith that you'll do just fine.

Choir Recruitment

We are also recruiting new members for the choir! Please do get in touch if you'd be interested in singing. Being able to read music is always helpful, but it isn't essential — that's something we can teach. All we ask for is enthusiasm and a voice.

Joining the choir begins with a simple session with me, just to see where we're at. If that goes well, you're invited to try the choir for a six-week probation period, with absolutely no obligation to stay afterwards. With singing, it's important that it's the right fit — both for the singer and for the choir as a whole.

Malcolm Powell

As a choir, we are so sad to hear about the passing of Malcolm Powell who gave so much dedication and artistry, playing the organ for the choir when Veronica was poorly. We are all keeping his family in our minds and give thanks to his gift of music to us. Wishing you a restful sleep, Malcolm.

That's all from me for now. Thank you all again for entrusting me with the music of this fine church and community. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or concerns. I wish you a pleasant month, full and enriched with music.

With warmest wishes,

Samantha Lewis-Widnall
Director of Music
St Oswald's Parish Church, Oswestry

COFFEE ROTA FOR FEBRUARY

1	Judi Neale	Babs Bone	Elaine Leek
8	Hazel Pryce	Dilys Lloyd	Jane Mayne
15	Val Hamer	Glenda Evison	KayCole/Fiona Pearson
22	Ann Sagar	Dilys Lloyd	Olwen Phillips



It was

80 years ago, on 11th February 1946, that the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was published. It was the first major English-language update of the Bible since the King James version was published in 1611.

Services at S. Oswald's

February 1 <i>Candlemas</i>	08:00	Holy Communion
	10:30	Parish Eucharist with sung setting
	18:00	Sequence of Music and Readings for Candlemas
February 8 <i>2nd before Lent</i>	10:30	Parish Eucharist with sung setting
February 15 <i>Sunday before Lent</i>	08:00	Holy Communion
	10:30	Parish Eucharist with sung setting
	15:00	Celebration of Community with Mayor Cllr Rosie Radford
February 22 <i>Lent 1</i>	10:30	Parish Eucharist with sung setting
	17:30	Reflective Space
Every Thursday	10.30	Holy Communion (BCP)

*Wednesday 18—Ash Wednesday : 1030 - Eucharist (said)
(There will be the imposition of
Ashes at both Eucharists) 1900 - Sung Eucharist*

MORNING PRAYER is streamed online through the church Facebook page at 9 o'clock on Wednesday and Friday. Sunday worship is on the YouTube page.

Enquires for Baptisms, Marriages etc should be made to the Parish Office. Please email the Parish Administrator (stoswald.office@gmail.com) for an appointment.

Services at Rhydycroesau

<i>First Sunday February 1</i>	09:30	All Age Service
<i>2nd before Lent February 8</i>	09:30	Holy Communion
<i>Lent 1 February 22</i>	09:30	Holy Communion



Parish Church of St. Oswald, King & Martyr

MUSIC LIST - FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday	1st February	Presentation of Christ in the Temple
10.30am	<u>Parish Eucharist</u>	Setting: Archer - St. Albans Service Anthem: O thou the central orb (Wood)
6.00pm	<u>Sequence of Music and Readings for Candlemas</u>	
Sunday	8th February	2nd Sunday before Lent
10.30am	<u>Parish Eucharist</u>	Setting: Mathias – Common Service in C Anthem: The Heavens are telling (Haydn)
Sunday	15th February	Sunday next before Lent
10.30am	<u>Parish Eucharist</u>	Setting: Shephard - Addington Service Anthem: Christ be our light (Farrell)
3.00pm	<u>Celebration of Community with Mayor Cllr. Rosie Radford</u>	
Wednesday	18th February	Ash Wednesday
7.00pm	<u>Parish Eucharist</u>	Setting: MacMillan - St. Anne's Mass Anthems: At the Ashing: Forgive our sins as we forgive (trad. Arr Baldwin) At Communion: View me Lord a work of thine (Lloyd)
Sunday	22nd February	Lent 1
10.30am	<u>Parish Eucharist</u>	Setting: Archer - St. Albans Service Anthem: Salvator mundi (Tallis)

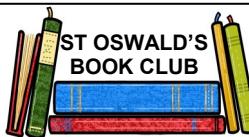
Palm Crosses – Ash Wednesday (February 18) is soon upon us so can you please return your palm crosses from previous years so we can use them to make the ash for this year. Please place them in the basket provided.



CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY 2026



Monday 2	1000	Clergy Eucharist and Meeting
	1430	Ladies Group—Parish Centre
Tuesday 3	1030—	1230 Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Wednesday 4	0830—	0940 Oswestry School Assembly
	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
	1900	<i>Praying for Our World</i> — Reading Area
	1930	Scholars & Gentlemen—Parish Centre
Sunday 8	1215	New Repertoire Singing Workshop—see page 18
Tuesday 10	1000	Home Communion Service—St Catherine's
	1030—	1230 Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Wednesday 11	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
	1930	Scholars & Gentlemen—Parish Centre
Thursday 12	1415	Mothers' Union Fellowship Group
Tuesday 17	1030—	1230 Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Monday 23	1930	Guild of Servers Mass
Tuesday 24	1030—	1230 Place of Welcome - Parish Centre
Wednesday 25	0830—	0940 Oswestry School Assembly
	1000	Under 5's Playgroup—Parish Centre
	1930	Scholars & Gentlemen—Parish Centre



St Oswald's Book Club continues to meet fortnightly on a Wednesday at 7.30pm in the Parish Office. Our present book is 'Praying by Heart, The Lord's Prayer for Everyone' by Stephen Cottrell.

All are welcome to join us for coffee and cake and lively discussion! We look forward to seeing you there.

Please check St Oswald's website and weekly pew sheet for information on dates

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Helen Emery, the diocese's Whole Life Discipleship Officer is excited about ways of adding meaning to Lent this year.

- Opening the curtains each morning and seeing the light which floods the room as God flooding my day with His light of love.
- Savouring the first sip of coffee I take, thanking God for the joyful flavour and asking to be shown joy in whatever the day has ahead.
- Seeing my shower as a mini – baptism preparing me for the day ahead.
- Using my commute to work or my drive to the supermarket as an opportunity to pray for those I will encounter there.
- Asking God to take away any rubbish which is not helpful in my life as I take the bins out each week.

These are all ways of infusing our everyday habits with deeper, life-giving meaning. It is nothing new – these are all suggestions I have heard over the years from fellow disciples on the faith journey. I am sure you have similar habits which can turn into tiny yet significant rituals.

The challenges for me – as a disciple and in my role as Whole life Discipleship officer for Lichfield Diocese – is to take the big picture of what I believe about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the mind-blowing, eternal significance of it, the heart-swelling enormity of it – and ensure it makes a difference to the tiny detail of my every day, ordinary, here and now life. However you do that – whether it be through actions and reactions, prayers and practicalities – I believe it is the essence of Lent. Self-examination, repentance and sacrifice.

For Lent 2026, resources published from Church House will be under the banner of "Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent". So this theme of building our 'rhythms of life' – habits and patterns which help us grow as disciples of Christ day by day – is particularly current.

The booklet and app will focus on 6 aspects - worshipping together, praying, exploring the Bible, sharing communion, offering service and sharing the good news with others.

So I invite you this Lent to join me in striving to bring our discipleship that little bit more into the 'whole of life' - and seeing the transformation it can bring to our relationship with God, ourselves and each other.



Look out for the 'Draw Near' resources on the Church of England's various channels: www.cofe.io/DrawNear and join in individually or as small groups on social media channels (@thechurchofengland and the 'Everyday Faith' app on smartphones. If you're considering running a small group during Lent and want ideas, do talk to Helen who has scoped out a large number of options and can make suggestions appropriate to your setting: helen.emery@lichfield.anglican.org

PUBLICATION DETAILS FOR NEXT MONTH

Material required in the Office SUNDAY, 8 FEBRUARY

Make-up day for working party, and publication: Tuesday, 17 February

PLEASE COULD ALL ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS IN THE CHURCHES TRY TO SEND SOME NEWS IN - EVEN IF YOU'VE NOT BEEN IN THE HABIT OF DOING SO.

Why not nominate a Correspondent?

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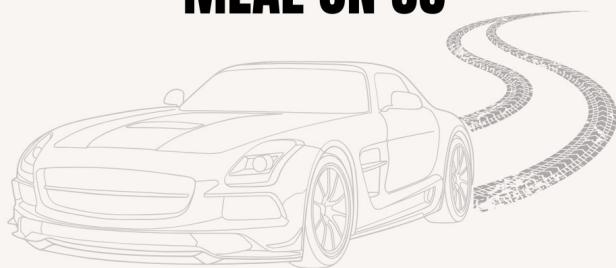


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SPRING MESSENGER

As winter starts to draw to a close and the days are getting noticeably longer we all start to search for signs of spring. One of the first spring flowers is the Lesser Celandine. This little plant, often viewed as a garden weed, lights up our churchyards with bright, shiny, yellow stars set off beautifully by the surrounding dark green heart-shaped leaves. An old name for Lesser Celandine was 'Spring Messenger' and, like the Snowdrop, it can lift the spirits with the message that spring is coming.

Another old name is Pilewort, suggesting that this plant was used to treat haemorrhoids. Richard Maybey in his *Flora Britannica* considers this prescription to have been due to the Doctrine of Signatures, a belief that similar shaped plants could cure specific ills. In the case of Lesser Celandine it is the knobbly tubers that were thought to resemble piles!

Lesser Celandine is a common plant which can spread fast and likes shady damp areas, but it is not fussy and can be found in grassland, at the base of walls or monuments, on banks, verges and along path edges and is always to be found within churchyards, chapel yards and cemeteries. The cheerful yellow flowers can carpet the ground offering an important early nectar supply to emerging insects such as queen bumblebees, beetles and other pollinators.

Although small, the Lesser Celandine has attracted the attention of the famous. Wordsworth wrote three poems about it and the naturalist Gilbert White of Selborne in Hampshire recorded when he saw his first Lesser Celandine each year, the average date being the 21st February. This date has been known as Celandine Day since 1795. Now, due to climate change, the flowers can be seen earlier in the year with some coming into bloom in late January.

Enjoy the Lesser Celandine in February, its flowers and leaves both die back in late spring so please make a record of it using iNaturalist, as anyone looking at plants later in the year may not find any remaining traces of it so it can easily go unrecorded. Although a common plant it is an important one and one on which our early pollinators rely.

All the best,

Harriet

Harriet Carty,

Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Advisor, harriet@cnga.org.uk, www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk - individuals and groups in the diocese

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The logo for R.J. Christian LTD is centered on the page. It features a circular emblem with a decorative, scroll-like border. Inside this border is a smaller circle containing a stylized crown. Above the emblem, the text 'EST. 1906' is printed in a serif font. Below the emblem, the company name 'R.J. CHRISTIAN LTD' is printed in a large, bold, serif font.

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The new term will soon begin, and as I wait in anticipation for what God will do in our schools this term, I can reflect on the blessings from last term. 13 Advent in a Box workshops took place over November and December. These workshops were well received from both pupils and teachers as they discovered more about the Christmas story, and the importance of Jesus through the themes of Advent. The children were delighted that they were able to take home their own mini box, full of activities from the session. Many of the Children told me that they enjoyed learning about some of the less common people within Jesus' story such as Zechariah and Elizabeth and Simeon and Anna. Staff in the schools also thought this workshop was just as good as Christmas in a Box, and were impressed by the quality of the resources and activities.

The SCWP would like to thank all our supporters for your prayers and kind donations to allow this valuable initiative to take place.

Christmas assemblies were also well received, allowing pupils to consider how they can make room this Christmas for Jesus and the difference he can make in our lives.

When schools return after the Christmas break I will be making bookings for assemblies, lessons and Diary of a Disciple workshops. Please pray for schools as they book each activity.

Thank you for your continued support of the project.

Blessings

Jane Webber

Things to Pray For

- Bookings for the Spring Term
- Safety as pupils and staff travel to and from school in the winter weather
- Opportunities to build deeper relationships with schools, staff and pupils

It was

25 years ago, on 19th February 2001 that the first case of foot-and-mouth disease in the 2001 UK outbreak was detected at an abattoir in Essex.

INTRODUCING DAME SARAH MULLALLY - THE 106TH ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE officially became Archbishop of Canterbury on 28th January 2026, when she was legally confirmed at St Paul's Cathedral.

Most people know that she had been Bishop of London for several years, and that she is the first woman to ever become Archbishop of Canterbury. But what else do you know about her?

- ◆ She was born in Woking in 1962, and is one of four children, with two sisters and one brother.
- ◆ She attended Winston Churchill Comprehensive School and Woking Sixth Form College. She went on to South Bank Polytechnic and Heythrop College, University of London
- ◆ She worked as a nurse in the National Health Service, which she has described as "an opportunity to reflect the love of God". She specialised as a cancer nurse and became a ward sister at Westminster Hospital, before being made Director of Nursing at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.
- ◆ In 1999, at the age of 37, she was appointed the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England in the Department of Health. She was the youngest person ever to be appointed to the post. Bishop Sarah was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 2005 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nursing.
- ◆ She had become a Christian at the age of 16. While working as the Chief Nursing Officer for England, she discerned a call to ordination and entered training ministry at the South East Institute for Theological Education.
- ◆ She was ordained in 2001 and served her curacy in St Saviour's Battersea Fields, initially as a self-supporting minister, before leaving her government post in 2004, which she has described at the time as "the biggest decision I have ever made".
- ◆ Archbishop Sarah is married to Eamonn, an Irish-born IT and Enterprise Architect who enjoys beekeeping and volunteering as a London tourist guide.
- ◆ The couple have two grown-up children, Liam and Grace.
- ◆ She is Chair of Christian Aid.
- ◆ In her spare time, she loves cooking, walking and pottery.

(Parish Pump— February 2026)

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE/ CANDLEMAS

Candlemas, 2nd February, comes exactly 40 days after Christmas. In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child - to 'present Him to the Lord'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Luke 2: 22-40). So where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day.

Candlemas
Forty
Days
After
Christmas
New
Testament
Important
Age
Baby
Boy
First
Public

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

Appearance
Mary
Jewish
Temple
festival
presentation
described
light
world
candles
lighting
early

Sudoku Easy

1	9					5		8
	2	6		3	8	1		9
8				7		4		
				9				6
3	4		8		6		1	7
2				1				
		4		8				1
7		3	9	2		6	5	
6		2					8	3

PUZ?LES

Solutions
on
page 35

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Across

1 'If you love those who love you, what — is that to you?' (Luke 6:32) (6)

4 'They threw the ship's — overboard' (Acts 27:19) (6)

7 The first murderer (Genesis 4:8) (4)

8 He was the head Levite in charge of the singing when the ark of God was brought back to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:22) (8)

9 Samson was noted for this (Judges 16:6) (8)

13 Solicit money or food from passers by (Acts 3:2) (3)

16 What William Booth's Christian Mission became in 1878 (9,4)

17 Alliance of Religions and Conservation (1,1,1)

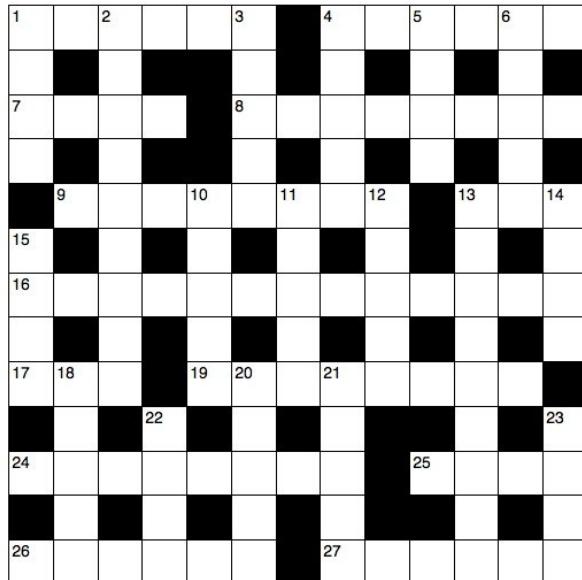
19 'I will praise your name for ever and ever. — — I will praise you' (Psalm 145:1-2) (5,3)

24 Simon had (anag.) (8)

25 Desperate (Deuteronomy 28:48) (4)

26 Elisha witnessed the boy he was seeking to resuscitate do this seven times before opening his eyes (2 Kings 4:35) (6)

27 The belly and thighs of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream were made of this (Daniel 2:32) (6)



Down

1 'Before the — crows, you will disown me three times' (Matthew 26:75) (4)

2 Relating to the books of the Bible between Acts and Revelation (9)

3 'They have — the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' (John 20:2) (5)

4 Belief (5)

5 'Take the following fine spices: ... 250 shekels of fragrant — ' (Exodus 30:23) (4)

6 'Do not — Jerusalem, but wait for the gift' (Acts 1:4) (5)

10 A seer (anag.) (5)

11 'Even there your hand will — me' (Psalm 139:10) (5)

12 The wild variety was part of John the Baptist's diet (Mark 1:6) (5)

13 A non-Greek speaker who was looked down on by civilized people (Colossians 3:11) (9)

14 Famous 1950s musical whose characters included members of 16 Across, — and Dolls (4)

15 The province from which Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:19) (4)

18 'He was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring — — his hand' (Ezekiel 40:3) (3,2)

20 'Today, if you hear his — , do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion' (Hebrews 3:15) (5)

21 The Jericho prostitute who hid two Israelite spies on the roof of her house (Hebrews 11:31) (5)

22 'And now these three remain: faith, — and love. But the greatest of these is love' (1 Corinthians 13:13) (4)

23 'God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end' (Daniel 5:26) (4)

PUZ?LES Solutions on page 35

							7	2
					9	5		3
6	7			3	2	9		
9				1				
4	1	6				7	9	5
				6				1
		3	1	8			4	6
2		7	4					
8	4							

**Sudoku
Medium**

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It was.....

65 years ago, on 9th February 1961 that the Beatles played at the Cavern Club in Liverpool for the first time.

50 years ago, on 11th February 1976 that John Curry won Britain's first-ever Olympic gold medal in figure skating.



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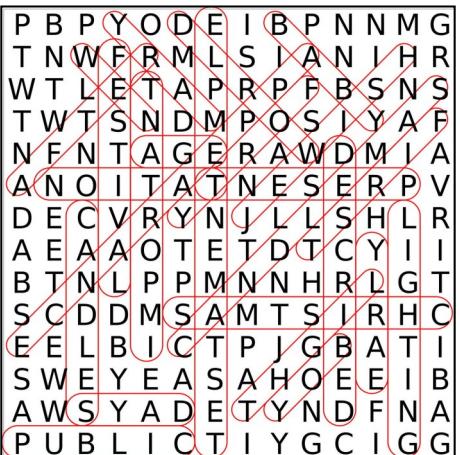
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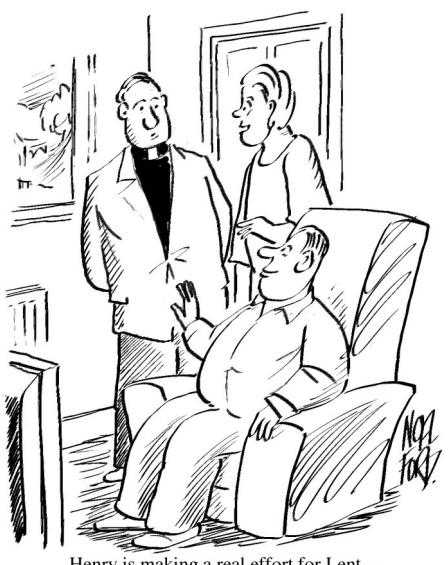


Easy

1	9	7	2	6	4	5	3	8
4	2	6	5	3	8	1	7	9
8	3	5	1	7	9	4	6	2
5	7	1	3	9	2	8	4	6
3	4	9	8	5	6	2	1	7
2	6	8	4	1	7	3	9	5
9	5	4	6	8	3	7	2	1
7	8	3	9	2	1	6	5	4
6	1	2	7	4	5	9	8	3

Medium

3	5	9	6	4	1	8	7	2
1	2	4	8	7	9	5	6	3
6	7	8	5	3	2	9	1	4
9	3	5	7	1	4	6	2	8
4	1	6	3	2	8	7	9	5
7	8	2	9	6	5	4	3	1
5	9	3	1	8	7	2	4	6
2	6	7	4	5	3	1	8	9
8	4	1	2	9	6	3	5	7



Henry is making a real effort for Lent – he's giving up the remote control and walking to the TV

Smile-lines....

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