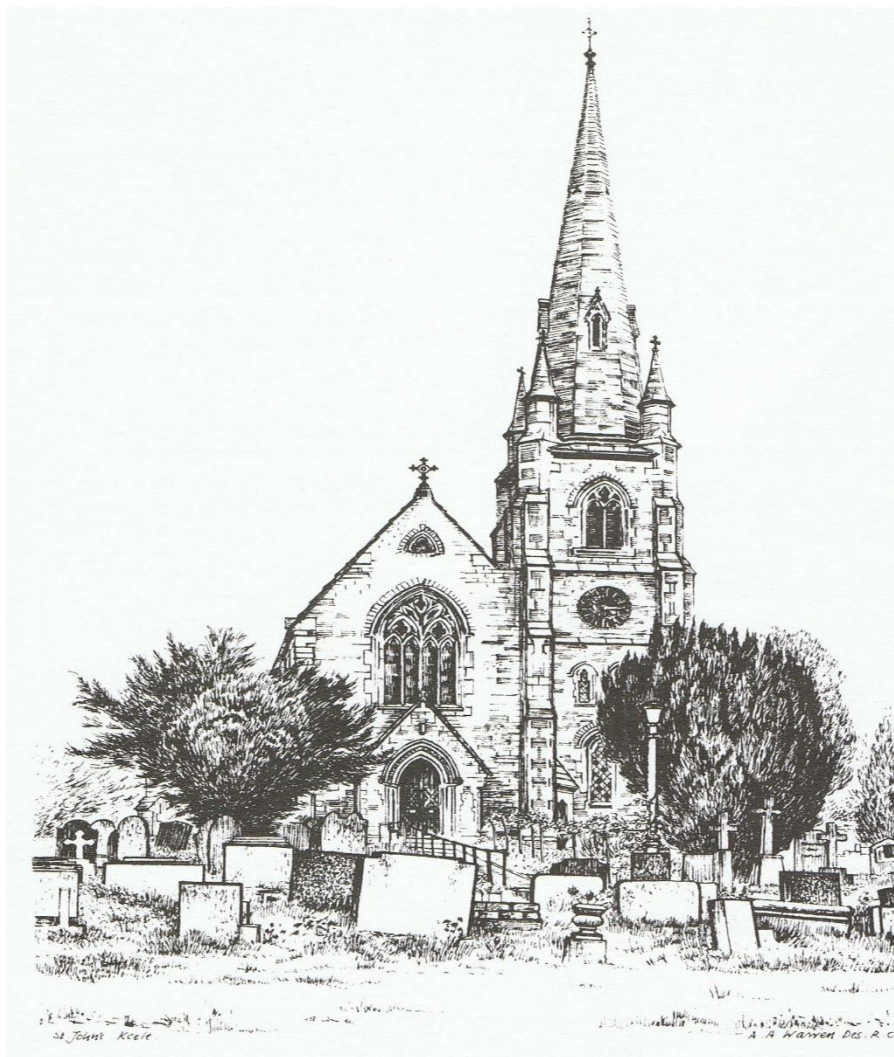


# PARISH MAGAZINE



## St. John the Baptist Church Keele

March 2019

50p

# Worship at St John's March - April

## March

Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Sunday next before Lent	11.15am Sung Eucharist
Wednesday 6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Ash Wednesday</b> Morning Prayer and Imposition of Ash (We shall be joined by pupils and staff of years 5 and 6 of St John's School)	<b>10.00am</b>
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup>	First Sunday of Lent	8.00am Said Eucharist 11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 17 <sup>th</sup>	Second Sunday of Lent	11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup>	Third Sunday of Lent	11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup>	Mothering Sunday	11.15am Sung Eucharist

## April

Sunday 7 <sup>th</sup>	Fifth Sunday of Lent	11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup>	Palm Sunday	8.00am Said Eucharist 11.15am Sung Eucharist
Friday 19 <sup>th</sup>	Good Friday – Stations of the Cross	2.00pm
Sunday 21 <sup>st</sup>	Easter Day	11.15am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup>	Second Sunday of Easter	11.15am Sung Eucharist

**The Eucharist is celebrated at St Luke's Church, Silverdale  
Sundays at 9.45am and Wednesdays at 4pm**

# From the Vicar's Desk

*The Vicar writes ...*

I'm never sure whether this bit of the magazine is called 'The Vicar writes ...' or 'From the Vicar's desk ...'. I don't suppose it is of much consequence. We do find, though, that what we call things matters deeply. (Did I ever tell you of the couple who came to see me more than 20 years ago seeking permission for their son's baptism to be held in the parish from which they came? As I typed out the letter of permission, I asked what they were going to call their new son. The reply came back: 'Napoleon Bonaparte Jenkins' - *surname altered for present purposes, you understand*. I laughed, then turned around to face the parents. They weren't laughing.

What we call things - or people - is very important. I sometimes wonder how that poor child has coped over these years. Perhaps he's learned to cope (but why should he *cope*?). Thugs, I'm told, need to call their victims names before they rob or beat or kill them. People deserving of our help but recipients of our ignorance or our indifference are dismissed as 'scroungers' or 'immigrants'. And so on.

Lent begins with an astonishing bit of ritual. We have our heads smeared with ash (I don't like to make the sign of the cross with the ash: it sort of 'churchifies' it). Our faces thus soiled, the priest goes on to say: 'You are dust! To the dust you shall return' - a biblical quotation, of course (Genesis 3: 19), and a phrase used in the 'old' funeral liturgy of the Church in Wales (much better than the banal 'Common Worship'; but don't tell the Bishops!). So, being smudged by ash from the grate and being told that we're no more than what we came from, are we being called names? Isn't this the Church up to its old guilt-tripping again?

No! The Ashing of Ash Wednesday reminds us of three things. First, it reminds us that we're human: that's what God makes us. Second, it reminds us that sin is best defined not by referring to our human nature ('human, all-too human') but by recognising that sin is our resisting or denying our humanity - denying what we are. And, third, Ash Wednesday reminds us, very powerfully, that salvation, healing, transcendence, is us being returned to our humanity, not distanced from it.

If that's what being Christian is about, then call me 'Ash'

Fr Peter

# The Bishop's Pastoral Letter

## Deservedly Famous

### *True celebrities and icons of our time*

Q: 'What are you famous for?' A: 'I'm famous for being famous'.

'Famous for being famous' is a phrase which sums up one of the more empty dimensions of our contemporary culture rather well. It refers to somebody who is well-known not because of any particular talent, achievement or position, but simply because she or he is well-known. So pervasive is this celebration of celebrity culture for its own sake that we could all think of people in that category, much as we might to pretend that we cannot. Oddly enough, many such celebrities first appearances were on what is called 'reality TV' – which is in fact a depiction of events about as far removed from normal reality as it is possible to get. And another word which is pressed into the distorted service of fame for fame's sake is 'icon', meaning a representative symbol of some enthusiasm or aspiration: 'icon of empowerment', 'icon of style', 'icon of youth', 'icon of and so on' – Wikipedia will give you plenty of answers as to which famous celebrity belongs where.

If all that is part of popular contemporary culture, then our faith asks us to be profoundly counter-cultural, and we can see that in the way we as Christians use words like 'reality', 'icon', 'celebrity'. The reality in which we are called to live is one in which our extraordinary God inhabits, blesses and transforms the very ordinary, everyday things of life. It is a reality of repeated acts of kindness and care, constant glimpses of the holy breaking through into the secular, unremarkable men and women becoming temples of the Holy Spirit. I come across this down-to-earth-lifted-to-heaven reality in churches and communities across our diocese, and it is far more absorbing and interesting than any TV show.

And what are icons in this reality? They are pictures of those in whom the light of God shines, images of what our humanity looks like when it is restored to the likeness of the One who created us. I have many icons in my house. A few are representations of canonised saints, and they remind me of the great communion of holy ones across time and space who pray with

me and for me. But most are photographs of family, friends, colleagues, and they too hold before my eyes the networks of love and care that accompany and encourage me on my journey. Well-known or obscure, all these icons are of people whose life is hid with Christ in God, and they mean more to me than anybody posing as a symbol of any fashion.

And who are our celebrities? They are people whose contributions are often hidden from public notice, who commit themselves to serving their neighbours, loving their God, and showing the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. You will know many such people in your own churches, and you will know that these are the people who really do deserve to be famous – but, of course, they would not be the people they are if they wanted to be known for being famous. They are the people Jesus described as the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and without them the world would be a dark and unsavoury place. They are people who, like our first bishop St Chad, ‘act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God’. And at our St Chad’s celebration this year, on 4th March at our Cathedral, I will be presenting seven of them with the first awards of our new St Chad’s Medal, given to recognise devoted service of God and neighbour by people in our diocese. These are our celebrities indeed.

**+Michael**  
Bishop of Lichfield



# From the Church Wardens

Dear Friends,

The unseasonably warm early February weather has definitely turned our thoughts towards Lent and Spring, as I write this I do hope though that we do not get a repetition of last year's Beast from the East! The strong winds of January have left their mark on the Church. One of the windows in the belfry, that has long borne the brunt of the weather, has had to be removed and has temporarily been replaced by a perspex panel. We are extremely grateful to the bell ringers who had monitored the window for a while and removed it before it fell out and broke, which would have been far worse for us. They are now looking into a specialist who can replace the window frame and remount the glass for us.

We are replacing a number of the light bulbs in the church with LED bulbs as the current bulbs have begun to fail and are difficult to obtain. The LED bulbs, we are informed should last for twenty years, I cannot promise to let you know if they last that long! Even a simple task like this is more expensive than I had imagined, but at least it is a cost that will not regularly have to be repeated.

In our ongoing efforts to keep the churchyard tidy and presentable we are looking to have the old oil tank removed and are in the process of costing that work and the tank's safe disposal. Also, the local Scout group have kindly offered to spend some time in the churchyard tidying up for us, an offer we have gratefully accepted and we are looking at suitable dates and activities that they can undertake.

Diane and I hope to welcome you all in Church during the Lenten period, the Ash Wednesday service will be at 10.00am on March 6th, the following service dates and times are in this magazine and in our parish newsletter. Our Annual Parochial Council Meeting will be held on April 30<sup>th</sup> at which all are welcome and it is where, amongst other things, we elect our church officials.

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

Kindest Regards

Diane & Nigel

# Belfry Bat

Back to normal on January 8<sup>th</sup> – our first Tuesday practice for three weeks. Similarly on the following day for our Wednesday morning Woodlands band and St John's practice, for which we were joined by some of the Betley band. Eleven attended, and we had a good practice. On Sunday morning there were seven of us in spite of two medical absences, and we were pleased with the ringing.

The first significant rain for some time was forecast for Wednesday January 16<sup>th</sup>, and we were pleased to see it, but it wasn't enough to raise the water level in our new pond by very much. Several people were unable to come to the practice on January 16<sup>th</sup>, so I left the silencers on for individual practice on the simulator.

On Friday evening I set out for the practice at Checkley but turned round at the university entrance as the snow was much deeper there than at home. By Saturday the roads were clear for our journey to visit my daughter in Sheffield, but as a precaution we came home via Chesterfield and Derby rather than across the Peak District. On Sunday several of the band were missing, but we rang five quite nicely.

It was snowing quite hard at four o'clock on Tuesday January 22<sup>nd</sup>, so I cancelled the practice. Inevitably, by six the weather was much better. The snow also raised doubts about the viability of our Wednesday morning ringing, but everyone arrived on time. But the evening practice turned out not to be viable, although none of the small number who could have come minded staying in.

Our pond runneth over – almost. The rain on Thursday night raised the water level almost to its maximum – just waiting for dryer weather now so that we can finish off the margins. There were seven of us on Sunday morning, and we were very pleased with the ringing. Monday was a beautiful day, but possibly the calm before the storm – it always seems to snow on a Tuesday, and I cancelled the practice. We also cancelled our Wednesday morning peal because some of the band travel quite a long way, but the Keele practice that evening was viable. There were seven of us, and we had a good practice.

The February meeting of the North Staffs Association is the one where we welcome new members elected during the previous year, and this year, most unusually, there were four from Keele. John and Imelda Digan started learning a year ago and are now regular members of the band, and we have also been joined by two experienced ringers, Amy Robson and Roland Wakefield. So with Rowena and me, there were six from Keele at the meeting at Dilhorne. This was John and Imelda's first ring away from Keele, and they both did very well. Steve, Pauline and Ruth were away and Imelda was working on Sunday, but with our new strength in depth we were able to ring five very nicely.

A few weeks ago I was contacted by a ringer from Nether Alderley, in Cheshire, who was looking for tuition in raising and lowering, an essential ringing skill which is often neglected. On Monday February 4<sup>th</sup> a group of five came for an evening's practice which went very well. So well in fact, that they want a follow-up, which we will do in four weeks' time.

The following Wednesday was the first of the month, so we were joined for our practice by Denzil Spencer from Betley. Also visiting was Denise Bryning, who although a regular hasn't been able to ring with us for a while, so it was good to see her. The seven members of our own band took advantage of the outside help to attempt and ring Cambridge Surprise Minor, the most advanced method we have tried for a long time. By Thursday morning the water in our pond was at its maximum level, fuller than it has ever been. Just in time for the frogs. Very pleasing!

The snowdrops flowering in the churchyard on Sunday morning reminded me of the verse from the Song of Solomon: *For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.* My criterion for assessing our Sunday ringing is to imagine that we came down the tower to find that a ringer had been in the churchyard listening. Would we be embarrassed? Definitely a no-embarrassment day!

Phil Gay







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## **Community seed share.**

**Cornerstone Centre, Mill Street, Silverdale. 10 – 2 on Sat March 9<sup>th</sup>**

It might feel like deep winter at the moment but Spring is not very far around the corner and in preparation and celebration we will once again be holding our Community Seed Share.

**EVERYONE WELCOME!** Entry is free, although any donations to help cover costs will be most welcome.

As well as the opportunity for meeting up with fellow gardeners, there will be plenty of seeds to share - flowers, vegetables, fruit, shrubs, herbs .... Please bring your own spare seeds to share if you have some. If you are a new gardener please take what you need and bring some seeds back next year

We will have some envelopes, pens etc available for seed packeting, but if you could bring your own materials that would be great.

There will also be some plants and cuttings, as well as a reading library, a diversity of info and local herbal teas.

If you want to share some seeds but can't make the event or if you just want to find out more, you can contact Matt  
[communityseedshare@mailfence.com](mailto:communityseedshare@mailfence.com)

There will also be a Plant Share on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April, 10 – 2, at the same venue.

# The Garden Guild

Gwen Johnson's superb photographs illustrated a year in the life of Stansley Wood, which lies around Blithfield Reservoir, which was opened by the Queen Mother in 1953. It is owned by South Staffordshire Water. The buildings and information boards could do with some TLC, but this does not detract from the beauty and rich diversity of the area.

The water level dropped very low last year; the reservoir only began to fill again in mid January. There is a splendid new hide for the use of members of the West Midlands Bird Club. Recently spotted from there are ringed plover, wigeon, goosander, great crested grebe, cormorant (hanging out his wings to dry). The snowdrops looking purely lovely as the first heralds of spring. The petrified pool looks prehistoric with lots of dead trees left for the insects. Catkins quiver like little lambs' tails. Primroses (a favourite of Gwen's) start to flower, along with kingcups in the boggy area. Nesting boxes on oak trees have metal plates to keep out squirrels, who may be public enemy no 1 but still look cute. There are gorgeous twin lambs to be seen. Cowslips are multiplying. The great tit has a fledgling looking bedraggled. The blackcap (another of Gwen's favourites) sings gorgeously. The tree creeper is well camouflaged. The wild cherry blossom shines white against the blue sky. The reed bunting looks like a vicar with his white collar. A mallard has five ducklings including one white one (albino?) The black swans (from Australia) are escapees from some water park. The snowdrops are replaced by hazy drifts of bluebells. The oystercatcher with his handsome plumage calls piercingly. The common sandpiper and the elegant great crested grebe who can swim underwater for minutes at a time. The pheasant is beautifully marked and tastes quite good. The wren flits shyly by, his small cousin the goldcrest is too quick for the camera. Other birds seen in springtime are the long-tailed tit, the greater spotted woodpecker, the grey lag goose, the shelduck (beautifully elegant with a hooked beak), the shoveler, the osprey is a passerine travelling north, wagtails are pied, yellow and grey.

In summer the woods are full of foxgloves (which will seed in gardens) – also black knapweed and thistles – here is a good place for Gwen to do a butterfly count. Dragonflies and damsel flies abound. A fox may be spotted, but not an otter. The oxeye daisy in the wild flower meadow has been superseded by sorrel, clover, wild rattle and buttercup. Cones are growing in the delicate foliage of the larch. Swallows perch on the toilet roof; in summer they are

joined (not on the roof) by pochard, dunlin, little ringed plover, lapwing, common tern (Gwen is wary – she was once attacked by a pair of these), teal, little egret, wheatear. Geese clamour over the water, and once Gwen saw three Egyptian ones, strange looking with fluffy necks. The heron is harried by other birds. The wild flower meadow is grazed by sheep, naturally fertilising the ground.

The trees display gorgeous colours in the autumn sun as the jay comes seeking acorns. The fieldfare strips the hawthorn; the robin sings his rattling song. Tufted duck, goldeneye, and briefly whooper swans. The heron stands shivering in the shallows, the sheep dangle earrings.

Winter looks beautiful with snow and hoar frost whitening the trees. A series of sunrises, like a great red ball, bring a magical evening to a close.

Our next meeting is on March 11, when the Annual General Meeting will be followed by a buffet supper.

Peter Hough

## ***Beauty of The Month of March Both Winter and Spring***

***As winter's cold days and longer nights end, and the last of snow and ice melt away, there is a short window of time, a month that shares itself with winter and spring, March. Although it only has 31 days, so much change happens to the earth, weather and nature. March makes her presence known, with her high pitch song of whistling winds, the wild gusty breezes, her clouds and sky become full of white like fleece set in deep blue sky, shorter days, longer nights. March sings out, waking Spring!***

## **Flowers at Easter**

**Janet would be pleased to receive donations towards flowers this Easter. Her floral displays are always such a delight and with your help she will make our church even more beautiful for this most wonderful season.**

# W.I. Report

Our February meeting included a talk by popular speaker Barbara Andrew. We have followed Mrs. Andrew on a variety of subjects, such as “Recycling Rubbish”, “Sylvac china”, “Noel Coward songs”, but on this occasion we returned to an early interest in female suffrage, with the life and writings of Vera Brittain. The interest of the authoress – best known for her 1925 semi-autobiographical novel “Testament of Youth” (not the only “Testament” among her titles) - was enhanced for the Keele audience, by the fact that the authoress was born in Newcastle-under-Lyme, where a blue plaque nowadays marks her birthplace at 9 Sidmouth Avenue, with the inscription “Writer and Reformer” (1893 – 1970) and “Blessed are the peacemakers”. The family, whose father was the successful owner of a print-mill at Cheddleton, later moved to Buxton.

Had it not been for the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Vera Brittain’s life might have been very different. Careful education, marriage and family centred on home life were expected. Vera had been sent, since her parents were well-off, to a boarding school for young ladies in Surrey, but this inspired her to think of the possibilities of further education, even university. After preparation at home in Buxton, she passed the entrance exam for the women’s college of Somerville, and did a first year at Oxford. Her thoughts were already turning to female emancipation.

What followed is the subject of many of her writings, drawn from the sad experiences of war. The enthusiasm of her beloved brother and her fiancé and their friends, young men eager to fight, but destined for an early grave in France, or, in the case of her brother, in Italy, caused her to postpone her studies in order to train as a volunteer nurse. The series of blows to hope and patriotism were to influence her life and her creative writing fundamentally. After the war, she returned to Oxford, a co-student with other women who were to become notable authors, including Dorothy L. Sayers.

In 1925 she married academic George Catlin, and of course today we still have the witness of her celebrated daughter the politician Shirley Williams – another testament to female endeavour.

Barbara Andrew arranged – with the help of husband Joe and in the presence of their little dog – a fine array of photos of her subject, family and friends, plus copies of the books written by and about Vera Brittain. We are certainly encouraged to read further!

Peggy Chaplin

Our next meeting is the A.G.M. at 7.15 p.m. in the Village Hall on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March.

# Dates for your Diary

## **Pancake Fling! Tuesday March 5<sup>th</sup>**

I shall be hosting ‘open house’ from 11am to 3pm on Shrove Tuesday when pancakes (with a choice of fillings) plus tea and coffee, (sandwiches over the lunchtime period) will be available. There will be a raffle, a donations plate and gift aid envelopes, with proceeds going towards the fabric of the church. Do please come and ‘Have a Fling’ at 25 May Street, Silverdale. Any offers of help on the day would be really appreciated! Diane.

## **Lenten Reflections and Frugal Lunches** (all starting at 12 noon)

**Tuesday March 12<sup>th</sup> Frugal Lunch** at Dorothy Clifford’s home

**Tuesday March 19<sup>th</sup> Lenten Reflections** at Rick & Ruth Marshall’s home

**Tuesday March 26<sup>th</sup> Lenten Reflections** at Eunice & Colin Mortimer’s home

**Tuesday April 2<sup>nd</sup> Frugal Lunch** at Wendy Harrison’s home

**Tuesday April 9<sup>th</sup> Lenten Reflections** at Jane Andrews’ home

**Tuesday April 16<sup>th</sup> Frugal Lunch** at Angela and Robin’s home

**NB** Please contact Diane Vogler (01782 632997) for addresses etc.

## **Yew Knight Supper - Wednesday April 17<sup>th</sup> - Keele Village Hall.**

**£12 per head.** There will be a hot self-service buffet, provided by Party Pigs Hog Roast. There are three main menu options

- \* **Pulled Hog Roast with roasted stuffing**
- \* **Chicken biryani (curry chicken mixed with rice, sultanas, nuts, coconut and coriander)**
- \* **Cauliflower cheese with dauphinoise potatoes, red onions, roasted almonds and roasted peppers (V)**

All accompanied by various salads and sides, plus a selection of desserts.

**BYOB + Your Own Glass**

**Our speaker will be Dr Jordan Kistler, who will be talking about her research into the way museums present their material to the public.**

**To book your place and give mains option, please e-mail Becky Bowler  
r.m.bowler@keele.ac.uk or phone 07864 971321**

# Church Officers

Clergy	Rev. Peter Jones The Vicarage, 21 Pepper Street, Silverdale ST5 6QJ Email tadjones@btinternet.com	01782 624455 (Day off Friday)
Church Wardens	Nigel Bostock Email nbbmjb@hotmail.com Diane Vogler	01782 663035 07702 361646
Asst Church Wardens	Watson Fuller Angela Studd Email astudd@btinternet.com Janet Thornhill	01782 627220 01782 626372 01782 618290
Organist& Choirmaster	Freddie Clitheroe	01782 750387
PCC Treasurer	Steve Mellor	
PCC Secretary	Rick Marshall	01782 627733
Captain of the Belfry	Phil Gay	01782 750038
Sacristan	Janet Thornhill	01782 618290
Gift Aid Secretary	Kevin Chawner	01782 644283
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**NB Articles for the magazine should be sent to the editor by the 12th of the preceding month.**

