



**The church magazine
for St Mary the Virgin,
Sixpenny Handley
with Gussage St Andrew
and St Rumbold's,
Pentridge**

Who's who?

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Also available in colour

A full colour PDF of The Seeker
is available from our website.

The Seeker

handleychurch.org.uk



Feb 2018

Come to Church *this* weekend – list three...

Here are twelve *more* reasons I am inviting you to church this weekend;

- 1 Because you want to come, really.
- 2 It's a pleasant experience, even fun sometimes.
- 3 You can get to put your Sunday best on (or your skinny jeans, depending which you like).
- 4 You'll be loved.
- 5 Jesus will be there and will remind you that you are not alone.
- 6 You're likely to learn something about God, the Bible, yourself, and others.
- 7 It may keep you out of trouble.
- 8 It will help give you a sense of purpose, even eternal hope.
- 9 It will give you something interesting to talk about over Sunday lunch and Monday coffee.
- 10 It will bring joy to your life and reflect a life lived beyond yourself.
- 11 You've been promising that you'll go and it's time to keep your word.
- 12 Because it's the right thing to do.

Why come to church this weekend? You'd be crazy *not* to, given all these reasons. There will another dozen next time.



As sure as Eggs is Chocolate

It is not long before we will be buying Easter Eggs.

Please remember to look out for the Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance logos on the chocolate you buy, to make sure no child labour is used in the production of the food we buy. And don't forget the Real Easter Egg, fairly traded and with the only egg to tell the Easter story, produced by the Meaningful Chocolate Company.

Make a Mother's Day

Join us for our annual (and very special) service on Mothering Sunday, 11th March, 9.30am at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley. We can all show mothering love, and this is something to celebrate together as well as in our families.

Mothers all over the world need our help and support. Through organisations such as The Mothers' Union we can give ethical gifts and support their work helping some of the poorest communities around the world through the work done by women. Gifts range from just £4. You can find out more about the work of Mothers' Union on their main website: www.mothersunion.org



News items
and articles welcome!

Please drop them in to
the Vicarage, or email;
ask@handleychurch.org.uk

Thanks!

FROM THE REGISTERS



The funerals took place of
Violet Rudd
Doris Bridges
Helen Rivers

A Prayer for Freedom

A thick and shapeless
tree-trunk would never believe
that it could become a statue,
admired as a miracle of
sculpture, and would never
submit itself to the chisel of the
sculptor, who sees by his genius
what he can make of it.

I ask for the grace to let myself
be shaped by my loving
Creator.

Insurance Helps

If you take out insurance with
Ecclesiastical.com — a church
of your choice gets £130 as a
celebration of the insurance
company's 130th anniversary.

You don't have to be a
connected with the church to
use the firm or take advantage
of this offer and help your local
community.

Dear friends...

People who think Ash Wednesday is depressing don't get it. Of course, I understand why confessing our sins, having a cross marked in ashes and reminding each other that we are all going to die isn't exactly Disneyland on Ice, but it should not be depressing. If anything it is refreshing.

It is refreshing because we live in such a death-denying culture, a world that tries to sell us the fake news that we can live forever if we just have the right combination of exercise, diet and expensive face creams: With enough money we can stretch, inject, massage and vacuum ourselves so that we look like we have not actually lived each day of our lives, one by one. And will go on and live for ever.

And it is a very tempting image. Yet we all really know that buying into all the anti-aging solutions society has to offer won't actually make us any younger. We'll just look rather shiny and stretched, which feels like rather a good metaphor for all our pathetic attempts at immortality.

So it's a refreshing thing that Christians all over the world do on Ash Wednesday. We remind each other of the truth. We remind each other of our mortality. We tell each other that we are dust and to dust we shall return. It's downright shocking that in the middle of a world so completely in denial, we just blurt out the truth as if it's not offensive.

But the thing about blurting out *this* kind of truth is that afterwards, we can finally let go. We can breathe out. It's like the moment when you stop having to spiritually hold your stomach in. Because all the while we are *denying* the truth, God is *delighting* in it. This truth about our mortality is only offensive if it's heard as an insult, and not a promise. It's only offensive when

it's heard as being the last word. And it is not the last word. It is the *everlasting* word!

The same is true about what the Church calls *confessing our sins*. Some people tell us that *sin* is out of date. Sin only makes us feel bad about ourselves, and these days anything goes. Others tell us that sin is the same as wickedness and therefore avoidable if we just try harder, and are really, really good! Or sin is something that other people do to us, and therefore we deserve compensation. Or sin is boiled down to low self-esteem and becomes something we think we can control, rather than something we are bound to come up against, time and time again. All these ideas might have a glimmer of truth in them, but are not very helpful in the end.

I came across this image of Ash Wednesday the other day: Think of our lives as a long piece of fabric with our christening on one end and our funeral on the other, and us not knowing what the distance is between the two. Ash Wednesday is the time when that fabric is grasped in the middle and held up so that our baptism and our funeral meet.

With the ashes of Ash Wednesday, and the words '*remember you are dust and to dust you shall return*', it is as though the water and words from our baptism plus the earth and words from our funerals have come together. And in that meeting we are reminded of the promise of God to be with us always. The same God who created the stars and planets, and made us from the very earth to which we will return, the God of Moses and Sarah and Abraham, is also God for you and me. Right here, right now. Always.

Your friend and vicar, Mel

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Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, after Shrove Tuesday, or 'Pancake Day'. Unfashionable words like *repentance* and *reconciliation* are at the heart of Lent, as I write about above. It is about preparing ourselves, giving ourselves a spiritual spring clean. Lent prepares us for Easter, and only Easter makes sense of life and death. Lent reminds us that we do not earn our place in heaven: Jesus has already done that. And we do not earn God's love, because love cannot be earned. All we can do is respond to the love that is already there.

The BIG Question

I am reading a book called *'All Questions Great and Small'*. In one chapter, the writer Jeff Lucas is asked about the biggest thing he has learned as he has got older. And he comes up with a very serious answer – something that is good to think about through Lent, and I am learning more and more, too.

He says, *Everything is broken*. There is nothing that is without cracks, flaws and fault lines. Every organisation, every person, every project, every relationship, you, me – it is all, *we are all*, broken. And the sooner we get used to the fact, the happier we'll be. And I agree.

'Cynic!' I hear someone cry, saying I have become jaded and (well) cynical. But I don't see it like that. I see it as an honest, even positive thing. I am not running up the white flag. I am not saying that everything is only second best. I think I'm just reflecting what Scripture tell us, and what the Prayer Book means when it says we are all sinners.

Simply, this side of heaven, none of us is perfect. The world is not perfect. Just look around. Good, yes, often. Beautiful, undoubtedly, very often. But definitely not perfect. There are many hints and touches of the Kingdom of God about us – I talk about them all the time – I see them and they are wonderful. But all will only be complete on that great and glorious day when the Kingdom comes, fully inaugurated and finally established *on earth as it is in heaven*. We pray for this every time we say the Lord's Prayer.

In the meantime we live in the mean times. And realising that everything is broken means that we don't have to be shattered by disappointment, stalked by disillusionment, or bewildered when our idealistic expectations aren't met. People are people. Things go wrong. People get ill. We die. And the world and the Church are full of people who are not perfect – yes, that's you and me.

This is why Christians openly declare that we are sinners in need of God's grace and forgiveness, and have a confession every week. This is why we share crumbs from the rich man's table in Holy Communion, and why we can come to Jesus, honestly sharing our concerns. You may have heard me say that I should wear a label that says *'Be Patient, God's not finished with me yet'*. Perhaps that should be our motto as a church, as a world.

Fortunately for us, God only uses fragile, broken, under-construction people to do His work, to spread his word. People like you and me, in fact. So don't believe a word said by anyone who thinks they are perfect, the endlessly sleek we've-got-it-altogether types. Beneath the surface and the sheen, there are always cracks. It is part of who we are. And, most importantly, it is through the cracks that God gets in. God gets in. And, in God's good time, as Julian of Norwich said nearly eight hundred years ago, *all shall be well, all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well*. **Mel Durrant**

Remember — We are here for you. We are your church

If you would like to give your child a good start in life, talk to the vicar about a christening or a blessing. If you are getting married, you can get married in your local church if you live in the parish or have some other link, such as your parents living (or having lived) here. And if a loved one dies, please talk to us about how the church may be able to help. Reach us at the Church Office.

A Prayer Sidebar

An Early Morning Prayer

You are the glorious morning,
You are refreshment and peace.
You are the sounds as the dawn breaks,
You are the rose that smells sweet.

You are the Lord, my creator,
You are the wonder of life.
You are the great words of wisdom,
I read them and fill up inside.

You are the wonderful sunrise,
You are restorer of hope.
You are the air that we breathe now,
You are the warm winter coat.

You are the Lord, my creator,
You are a love without end.
You are all grace and forgiveness,
I stand loved and free as your friend.

An Evening Prayer

When I see the moon in the night sky
I speak my evening prayer:
Praise be to the Being of Life
For His kindness and His goodness.

A Nighttime Prayer

O Lord our God, King of the Universe.
Let the wings of sleep fall upon my eyes,
and upon my eyelids.
O Blessed One,
Let me lie down in peace,
and rise in peace.
Into Your hand I entrust my spirit.

A Prayer for Lent

Remind us often Lord, when we are feeling proud, arrogant, beyond reproach, pleased with ourselves, self sufficient in our ways, that for such as us and better and worse you walked a road that took you to a cruel cross, and rose again to show us where we might look for rescue as from this lofty perch we fall.

A Prayer for Easter

Lord God, You loved this world so much,
That you gave your one and only Son,
That we might be called your children too.
Lord, help us to live in the gladness and grace

Of Easter Sunday, everyday.
Let us have hearts of thankfulness

For your sacrifice.
Let us have eyes that look upon
Your grace and rejoice in our salvation.
Help us to walk in that mighty grace
And tell your good news to the world.
All for your glory do we pray, Lord, Amen.



+ Bible Study Group

As we hope you see from *The Seeker*, the Bible is THE Book! Read it and understand more in good company on alternate Thursdays at 7.15pm.

Details from Mike on 01725 552 720.


Come and meet friends


L Church Lunch

Join us at Hanlega's, at the campsite, on the first Sunday of the month for Sunday lunch – Everyone is welcome.

T Teddy Bears

Pre-school children and their carers are invited to St Mary's on Thursday mornings during school term from 10.30am to noon, for fun, drinks and biscuits and maybe a Bible story or two. There is no charge.

 **Men's Group** – A beer and a chat to finish off the month at 7.30pm. Details from David Lockyer (552 492).

 **Mothers' Union** – Tea, company and a good talk, usually every second Thursday of the month, from 2.30pm. Details from Mary (552 041).

SUNDAY SERVICES	St Mary's Sixpenny Handley		St Rumbold's Pentridge	Gussage St Andrew
	9.30am	6.00pm	11.15am	9.30am
Feb 4 th	HC	Evensong	HC	#
Feb 11 th	Informal	Evensong	#	HC
Feb 18 th	HC	Evensong	MP	#
Feb 25 th	Informal	HC	#	MP
Mar 4 th	HC	#	HC	#
Mar 11 th	Mothering Sun	Evensong	#	HC
Mar 18 th	Informal	Evensong	MP	#
Mar 25 th	HC	Evensong	#	MP
April 1 st	Easter Sunday	#	HC	#

HC Holy Communion **MP** Morning Prayer **SofP** Songs of Praise **#** No service

Our Informal service is geared more towards families and includes activities for children.



Lent and Holy Week

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, which falls on Feb 14th this year.

Our churches are decorated very simply through Lent. Then, in the week before Easter, called Holy Week, St Mary's will once again tell the story of the cross in a special way.

Ash Wednesday – 14th March

6:00 pm HC and Ashing, St Mary's

Palm Sunday – 25th March

Maundy Thursday – 29th March

6:00 pm Holy Communion, St Mary's

Good Friday – 30th March

2–3:00 pm Quiet Time, St Rumbold's

6:00 pm Readings and Hymns, St Mary's

Easter Sunday – 1st April

9:30 am Holy Communion, St Mary's





11:15 am Holy Communion, St Rumbold's

26–31st March

Come along to St Mary's and see the Installations of the Cross and revisit the most important story ever.


February

See side panel for key to symbols

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 T 	2	3
4 L	5	6	7	8 T 	9	10
11	12	13	14 HC	15 	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 T 	23	24
25	26	27	28			

March

See website for updates

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 T	2	3
4 L	5	6	7	8 T 	9	10
11	12	13	14 HC	15 T	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 T	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31