



**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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The Seeker

handleychurch.org.uk



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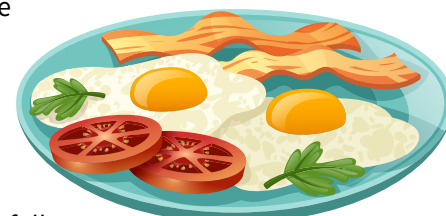
You may be wondering why this article has the rather sexist title 'FOR MEN ONLY'?

Lent and the new beginnings at Easter is a good time for us to think about the spiritual dimension of our lives. To aide our fellow **MEN** I intend to start a new men's breakfast club. The church has for many years had a tradition of women's groups meeting to share their faith and to learn more about the Gospel message. Many women have drawn great strength

from groups such as the Mothers Union, Wives Fellowship and mother and toddler groups. Sadly though, there has been no such arena where men with an interest in the Christian faith can explore concerns and issues related to them. Though you may not think it the bible does have advice on such issues such as whose round is it? The wedding at Cana John Chapter 2 and if all else fails then go fishing, John Chapter 21 vs. 3.

It is a commonly held assumption that men on the whole keep them themselves to themselves and do not enjoy spending time with one another. In my experience this is far from the truth, for one only need visit the village TAP to see that fellowship between men is alive and well.

The men's breakfast club will meet on the 3rd Saturday of the month at 8:00am in St Mary's. This will involve a simple act of worship or DVD presentation after which we will retire to Hanlega's for a full cooked English Breakfast and put the world to rights.



The first meeting will be on Saturday 20th April. If the 8:00am time is not very good, we can change it for the next meeting. During the breakfast I hope that we will be able to talk about issues that concern men today such as work, family and of course football and beer, as well as how our faith as Christians touches our daily lives. We will also arrange some guest speakers and some days out doing the sort of daft things chaps enjoy, be it watching a rugby match or a brewery trip! This group is open to all and you don't have to be a church goer to attend, simply being a bloke is all that's required.

If you are interested in coming along then do get in contact with me or sign up on the sheet in church. Coming once does not commit you to coming every month, though I hope for some it will be a regular point of contact. Also, if you have any suggestions for the group please let us know.

Ladies please don't feel hard done by! Plans are afoot for a new women's fellowship group as well. Watch this space...

Benefice Palm Sunday – April 14th

St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley with St Rumbold's, Pentridge and Gussage St Andrew will be joining together for a special procession and Easter Service. See page four for details.





**News items
and articles welcome!**

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

Thanks!



FROM THE REGISTERS



**The baptism took place of
Oscar Arthur John Alborough**

Remember!

If you would like to give your child a good start in life, talk to the vicar about a christening.

If you are getting married, you can get married in your local church if you live in the parish or have some other link.

And if a loved one dies, please talk to us about how the church may be able to help.

Contact the vicar for more information. We are here for you.

In full colour

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



DIARY OF A COUNTRY PARSON

Alleluia Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed!

Alleluia Jesus is risen, He is risen indeed. Our Easter declaration, which we should all shout with boldness, should be our rallying cry, not just on Easter morning but every morning for we are a 'Morning Church'. This hope of a new beginning each and every day is beautifully portrayed in the hymn 'New every morning is the love' by John Keble 1792 – 1866.

The resurrection takes place very early on the first day of the week. Mary goes to the tomb while it is still dark. The darkness that Mary walks through to the tomb on that first Easter morning is twofold. Firstly, it is the darkness of night (the sun has not yet risen in the sky) and secondly it is the darkness of a soul weighed with grief for her beloved friend and master, who she believes to be dead and laying in a cold tomb. This is the last time that darkness will make an appearance in the Gospels. Mary and the other women find the stone rolled away and the body of Jesus missing so they run back to tell the disciples who in turn run to the tomb.

Mary however can't believe for she is still shrouded in the darkness of grief, for her morning never seems to come. Her grief and despair is absolute. She frantically searches about the garden trying to find the body of Jesus but cannot. The grief and darkness, which surround her, are so great that even when Jesus is standing there, she mistakes him for a gardener. It would appear that unlike the disciples she is not prepared at this point to even contemplate that Jesus is alive. She pleads with this stranger to tell her where the body has been taken. It is only when Jesus calls her name that she stops and



realises who he is. It is a powerful scene; one can almost picture the weeping and distraught Mary being taken by the arm and Jesus saying in a firm voice 'Mary' almost as if he were trying to get her to snap out of her state of mind.

Jesus says to Mary "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" At first glance it could appear that Jesus is telling Mary not to touch him. But I don't believe this is the case, I'm sure Jesus would have touched Mary and would have welcomed her embrace. Jesus is telling Mary that she must not hold onto the earthly Jesus of the Crucifixion, the man who was born in Bethlehem and lived in Nazareth. She has to let go of this man for the risen Jesus is something far greater, he is one with God and the Holy Spirit. It is the risen Jesus that she must hold on to and place her trust in, as he promises a new kingdom free from sin and death.

Canon Richard Hancock. TSSF

New Graveyard Map



Work is in hand to assist visitors to St Mary's with a map and list of known graves. As well as making this available on our website, the map will be put on display, either inside the church or the porch.

Looking to the Future of our Churches

I have been with you now for six months and in that time, I have been getting to know people and looking at the challenges that are faced by our churches.

What you may not be fully aware of is that I have two half-time roles; one as your vicar, the other as Rural Field Officer for Dorset. This involves working with churches to look at how they can grow and develop in their communities. The rural church has been in decline for the past 30 years. Salisbury Diocese has been given a £1.27 million grant by the Church Commissioners for a four-year project to try and reverse this trend. I'm part of a team, known as *Rural Hope*, working across the Diocese to attempt just this. My geographical area is East Dorset or the Dorset Archdeaconry, and this includes the Handley Benefice of St Mary's Handley, St Andrew's Gussage and St Rumbold's Pentridge.

This fact is significant because it means that the Handley group of parishes no longer have a full-time vicar. This ended with my predecessor Mel Durrant. It's also important to know that this post is limited to just four years. So, a key part of both my roles is to look at developing and securing the future of our parishes here. However, the challenges are significant, and it will take all of us as a community both churchgoers and those living in our villages to change the fortunes of our churches.

The first problem as always is finance. Every organisation is facing the challenge of meeting growing costs with reduced income and the church is no exception. Many people view the Church of England as a very wealthy institution. This is true in part, the CoFE owns a lot of real estate around the UK, however like many large institutions it's struggling to meet its financial responsibilities. The CoFE has a very large pension fund to manage with fewer clergy now contributing to it, so a large proportion of its income goes on maintaining this. Sixty years ago many of the churches in this area all had their own vicar now churches are grouped into benefices, some with ten parishes and only one vicar.

What many people are often not aware of is that the Church Commissioners do not fund parish churches or their clergy directly.

The opposite is true, every parish church is expected to pay a share to the Diocese and pay for its own upkeep and maintenance. Last year the share for St Mary's and St Andrew's was set at £33,000. This is far more than the parish can afford and the PCC had to make the difficult decision to only pay £17,000 so as not to deplete our reserves and be able to pay for the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings. This effectively leaves us £16,000 in debt to the Salisbury Diocese. In the 2017 financial year it cost approximately £46,000 to run St Mary's and St Andrew's. Not a single penny came from the central funds of the CoFE but from the generous giving of parishioners, fundraising, small investment income and reserves. As you will appreciate this can't go on indefinitely.

We are not the only churches facing this problem and as a result Salisbury Diocese is having to conduct a serious review of its finances. If this trend can't be reversed, then the worst-case scenario is that churches will lose their vicars or even close if they can't raise funds locally. Thankfully the Handley Benefice churches are some way off from this, but it means we have to act now or in ten years' time this could be a real possibility.

As part of this the Handley PCC and I have begun to develop a ten-year strategic plan known as a Mission Action Plan or MAP. This looks at all aspects of church life including finances. The prime aim of our churches is to be a spiritual focus, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and serving the communities in which they are situated. The parish church is there for everyone in the community no matter how often they come to church. Our ancestors built these churches for us. A key part of this ten-year plan is looking at how we can make the church more relevant to people today and better serve our communities. In conjunction with this we have set up a new finance team and are in the process of developing a five-year financial plan. The Archdeacon has agreed that if we do this our share contribution can be reduced for the next three years in order for us to get the Handley



RENEWING HOPE THROUGH RURAL MINISTRY & MISSION

churches back on an even keel. I hope to begin a similar process with St Rumbold's in Pentridge.

One key area of this will be the development of a friend's scheme for our churches. Many people in the community may feel that they don't want to contribute to the religious work of the church, which I can understand. But I hope that those people would want to contribute to the heritage of our community and help support the beautiful buildings so that future generations can enjoy them and be married, christened and buried there. I will in due course be writing to everyone in the community to ask them to consider becoming a friend to the church to enable just this to happen. The worshiping community will then have to look at how it funds the religious and spiritual work of the church including funding a vicar in the future.

I look forward to working with the whole community to meet these challenges and developing the life of our churches. I want everyone to feel that the church is there for them, regardless of whether they are a churchgoer or not.

If you would like to know more then please come to our APCM on Wednesday 10th April 7pm in St Mary's Handley where I will present our ten-year plan.

Blessings

Canon Richard Hancock. TSSF



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



Men's Breakfast Club

3rd Saturday of the month at St Mary's at 8.00 followed by breakfast at Hanlega's. Signup form at back of church or email; canonrick@icloud.com

* Special Event

Please refer to the main text for details of special events marked on the calendar.

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.

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	Gussage St Andrew	St Rumbold's Pentridge	St Mary's Sixpenny Handley		
	9.30am	11.15am	9.30am	10.00am	6.00pm
April 7 th	#	HC	HC	#	Evensong
April 14 th	Benefice Palm Sunday (from 9.30am – see below) ➤				HC
April 21 st	HC	HC	HC	#	#
April 28 th	#	#	#	Family	#
May 5 th	#	HC	HC	#	Evensong
May 12 th	HC	#	Informal	#	Evensong
May 19 th	#	MP	HC	#	Evensong
May 26 th	Matins (MP)t	#	#	Family	Evensong

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

Benefice Palm Sunday

The Benefice will be coming together on Sunday 14th April to begin the Easter Story with a procession at 9.30am from the Village Hall to the church. Join us for this very special service, followed by refreshments.



Thursday 18th April, 7:30 pm
Holy Communion & Feet Washing
St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley

Good Friday 19th April
Children's Easter Garden Activity
8:30am at St Mary's

Good Friday Meditation
2–3:00pm at St Rumbold's, Pentridge



St Mary's Teddy Bears

All pre-school children and their carers are invited for a drink and a biscuit, a good natter and a play in the church. There is no charge and you don't need to come to church at other times – we just love seeing you! Come along for as long as you can between 10.30 and noon during school term time and make your Thursdays brighter.



April

See side panel for key to symbols

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

May

See website for updates

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