



St Mary's Parish Church, Portchester

St Mary's News

No 126 April/May 2026



From the Vicar

The previous issue of this magazine was meant to cover both March and April, the next one being planned for May. However, so much has been happening recently and is being planned for the next few weeks that we couldn't wait until May – so here it is, an April edition. I hesitate to call it April/May, as May might also need its own issue!

I've been really blessed at St Mary's this month. The expressions of love and support on my 13th anniversary as your Vicar on 18th March were received thankfully. Hasn't the time flown by! There have been appreciative comments on my sermons on *The Lord's Prayer* at the 9.30am Parish Eucharist where numbers have started to rise again, as we hit a record of 90 adults recently for an 'ordinary' service. (On special occasions we get a lot more). The Lent evening services on the *Screwtape Letters* have been some of the best attended. So many of you have asked, "When's the book coming out?" Dear Lord – please keep me humble!



More than one person outside of our congregation has commented on the many services and activities we put on at St Mary's, compared with their own churches, many of which only have one service on a Sunday, in one particular style – take it or leave it. The Sunday and mid-week teaching and discipleship courses are the envy of many who wish their own churches could put on so much. All this is only possible because of our amazing ministry team and a host of lay worship and study leaders, and the support of those who attend.

Now here comes the "Lord, please keep me humble" bit ... For all that, on any given Sunday, MOST of the congregation of St Mary's are not present. We reckon to have around 350 adults (Electoral Roll + attenders not on the ER), but our total adult Sunday congregation is between 150-180. (OK, over 200 when you add children and mid-week services.) For some of our members there seems to be far more interesting things to do on a Sunday morning. Each new evening series begins with a good attendance, then dwindles as the weeks go on – some come, and after the first week decide it's not for them.

For all that, we still have one of the largest congregations in the diocese and in this day of general decline, at worst we are holding our own, and at best seeing slight growth. Thank you to several new people who have recently joined us. But the strength of a church is not in numbers alone. One member who had been working overseas for several months returned and felt that the spiritual temperature of the church had risen, as more people were taking discipleship seriously, talking more about their faith and eager to learn. It is felt that there is a lot more love and tolerance in the congregation and, where difficulties arise, people are keen to sort these out. There are several new initiatives coming up, particularly in our children and young people's work. The social events are working well and seeing good support. As well as providing meals and fellowship, a mark of the early Church (Acts 2:42), they give opportunities for people on the fringe of the church to meet us and enjoy sharing life with us. Perhaps this may lead to more.

The challenge is, do we sometimes take St Mary's for granted, feeling that its Vicar, ministry team, many services, and much activity will still be around when we feel like connecting a bit more sometime in the future? Jesus once said, "I must work the works of him who sent me while it is yet day. The night comes when no one can work." (*John 9:4*) This means making the most of every opportunity while we still have the chance. Who know what dark days might be ahead for the Church, and indeed for our world?

I don't take any of you for granted. Even if I am not able to spend a decent amount of time chatting to every one of you each Sunday, I hope I notice, wave, smile, acknowledge and shake your hand before or after. But whenever you want to chat at a deeper level (which we introverts prefer), I'm always up for a good chat over a coffee at your place or mine.

Your friend and Vicar, Ian

Saturday 14th March was a great day at St Mary's ...

Bishop Jonathan at Men's Breakfast

At 8.00am we had 32 men sit down for a full English breakfast cooked by Ron and Ian Parker (thank you!).

The speaker was Bishop Jonathan who spoke about two men who had greatly influenced him in his faith – his grandfather and his uncle Jack. Both of them had been “rough diamonds” in south London but were wonderfully saved at an evangelistic tent meeting. This led to a real transformation in the family when Jack went on to become the Probation Officer at the Old Bailey, receiving the MBE for this. The family had now connected with the Methodist Church.



Bishop Jonathan's own career in the church has been impressive including being a Canon of Guildford Cathedral, Dean of York Minister, Bishop of Southampton and then Bishop of Portsmouth (since 2022). Since his time here, the diocese has really come to life again with an emphasis on discipleship, the Kingdom of God, young people and the care of the elderly through Anna Chaplains. All this might not have happened, if Uncle Jack had not walked into that tent meeting.

A good discussion followed. Everyone was really impressed with our bishop, with his passion and compassion, and said it was so good to have him leading the diocese at this time. At the close, Bishop Jonathan paid tribute to our Vicar, saying it was a delight when he and the Dean appointed him as a Canon of Portsmouth Cathedral.

The next breakfasts will be on:

April 11th - Steve Oliver will speak on “Stories behind some of our famous hymns”

May 9th – Dave Pearse on “Lost churches of Portsmouth”

There will be no breakfasts in June, July and August, the next one being on 12th September, when Eric Standen will be the speaker.

10% Charity & Mission Fund: Bishop's Lent Appeal

At the close of the breakfast, we presented the bishop with a cheque for £1,000 towards the Bishop's Lent Appeal. This will be divided between three charities:

USPG (The United Society for the Promotion of the Gospel) an Anglican mission agency that partners with churches worldwide in God's mission to enliven faith, strengthen relationships, unlock potential and champion justice. The USPG was founded by The Revd Dr Thomas Bray in 1701. It sent priests and schoolteachers to America to minister to the colonists and take the message of the gospel to enslaved Africans and Native Americans. During the 18th century, its activities expanded into the West Indies, Canada, Australia and West Africa.

Over its 300-year history, USPG has sent over 15,000 missionaries worldwide. Many of these missionaries were pioneers, some were involved in tackling slavery, championing women's rights and opposing racism. They also helped to establish Indigenous Anglican churches in the countries where they worked, helping to build what is today the global Anglican Communion.

We have a local link – Rev Trevor and Mrs Samia Hubble went out to South Africa and Lesotho as missionaries under the auspices of the USPG.



Tearfund (The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund) was represented locally by Mr Simon Mitchell of Christ Church, Portsdown, who said, “In a broken world, we try to be God’s hands and feet and mouth. In places like Gaza and Ethiopia and the Sudan, God is building people up. One of the ways in which we see communities changed is by offering people Bible studies that help them realise their worth, and what they can do for themselves.”

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Vista is a local ministry based at All Saints Church, Commercial Road (part of the Harbour church network). They support vulnerable women who have been sexually abused – some are sex workers locally, and other are migrants or refugees who have been exploited in their country of origin, on their journey here, and once they arrive here. They have a paid team of four and around 12 volunteers who go into massage parlours and strip clubs and offer those women a confidential listening ear, and a chance to live a safer life. Funding is always a challenge, so this funding will really help.



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At St Mary’s, we give away 10% of our offerings to Christian mission work and charities. So please remember that when you give, either by the offering basket or through the bank, that a proportion of your money is used in this way, thus partly fulfilling our Mission Statement, “to reach out with the love of God into our local community and the world.”

Family Event

From 12 noon – 2pm we had a family event at the parish hall – 34 children and 34 adults, nearly all them connected with, and attending St Mary’s at different levels. We have not had so many families and children before. This ministry is really growing, thanks to Amy and Jennie (who organised the day). We had a professional children’s entertainer who entranced the children for almost an hour, then we sat down to a lovely buffet provided by the Tea Room. There was no charge for this, but a few people put a donation into the basket, for which are grateful. **The next one** is being planned for March 2027.



St Patrick's Irish Night

A huge thank you to around 60 people who joined us for the St Patrick's Day Quiz on Friday 20th March! It was a wonderful evening filled with fun, laughter, and a lovely sense of community. Many thanks to Dillon and the Social Team for organising it, and to Ron and the Tea Room staff for providing an Irish stew with soda bread.

During Lent, any profits from social events are not for the church but are given to charity as part of our Lenten "Almsgiving". We're delighted to share that we raised **£130 for TearFund**, supporting their vital work with some of the world's most vulnerable communities.



Castle re-opens with new site manager

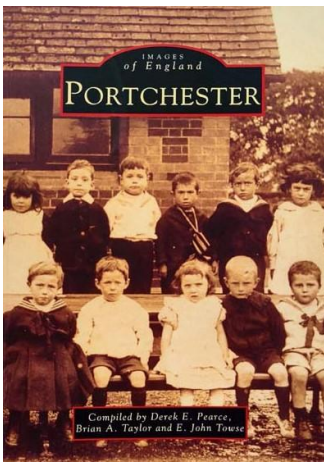
After being shut up over the winter months, Portchester Castle will reopen to visitors from Easter until October. The castle is one of English Heritage's most iconic sites with over 40,000 paying visitors each year. We reckon that around 20,000 of these also visit the church, and of course our Tea Room, so we will benefit from the re-opening.



Jenny Snook retired last year, and a new site manager has been appointed – Lydia Chadwick – who we look forward to working with. There have sometimes been tensions between church and castle (as there has been for hundreds of years), but particularly under Jenny's management, a good relationship has been established with staff and volunteers.

Issues of tension are usually around cars coming on to the site and parking on the road. A limited number of cars is permitted to park down by the church wall, either for disabled people or staff. Please be aware that there is usually plenty of free parking around Castle Street, although this will get busy during the summer.

Some of you have already met Bob Gray. Bob is an Irishman who has definitely kissed the Blarney Stone. He volunteers as a guide and we are very fond of him, and although he does a lot at the castle, we hope he'll also keep one foot in the church. Bob (in his 90s) plays the drum kit for Spinnaker Brass, led by his son David.



Death of Derek Pearce

Some of our members will have known Derek who lived most of his life in Castle Street, and who died recently after a long illness. Although not a member of St Mary's, he was a good friend to the church. As something of a local historian, he contributed to various histories of Portchester and handed in a few of his papers for the church archives. He greatly assisted Rev Ian in his book on *Haunted Portchester* by doing research into the local newspaper archives. He was also currently helping Rev Ian trace the history of the Sea Cadet unit in Portsmouth.

Unsung heroes

This month: Jennie Olding

Holly Brodrick writes ...

“Jennie is one of those rare people whose kindness genuinely melts your heart. She is gentle, humble, and quietly faithful in everything she does.

She serves our church in so many ways, often behind the scenes, and I suspect many of us don't even realise just how much she contributes.

Jennie attends the PCC and is always willing to give her time and thought to the life of the church. She started up St Mary's Lambs again a few years ago, after it had been dormant for a couple of years, and it's been a thriving part of Portchester community and a place for mums to meet. She also began the ladies' Bible study on Thursdays, she helps out as a team member for Cafe church, she organises social events and parties for the church, she helps lead the house group at Rachel Standen's house, she helps run stalls at the Christmas fayre and started up the Christian bookshelf at the back of the church!

I'm sure I could think of a few more, Jennie is a walking example of Christ's selflessness. She's a city on a hill, a true light in the darkness.

Perhaps most importantly, Jennie is simply always there for people. She is the kind of friend who listens, encourages, and seems to appear just when you're feeling low as if the Holy Spirit has prompted her!

What makes all of this even more remarkable is that she does all of this while working two jobs: as well as being a theatre nurse at QA Hospital, she cares for her family, her two children, husband, and household, talk about a Proverbs 31 woman!

Jennie gives so much of herself to our church community with humility, never seeking recognition. For that reason, she truly embodies what an Unsung Hero is.”



Keeping In Touch

Mobile phones and Facebook: A curse or a Blessing?



Recently in America, the parent company of Facebook was fined millions of dollars when a mother brought a lawsuit, blaming them for her daughter's addiction to her phone and Facebook. It is now being recognised that this is an addiction as much as drugs or alcohol – take their phone off them and witness the withdrawal symptoms. A recent BBC News article even suggested that this could be the end of social media, in which case there will be a tsunami of mental health issues among young people.

However, it is not all harmful as

Sharon Pearse reminds us of some of the blessings from these

“Once a week, my phone gives me Statistics from the previous week, “On average you have walked this many steps/this far, last week. This is more/further/less/less far than last week/last month/this time last year.”

Bearing in mind the temperatures at times recently, I was well down on my steps. For instance, one Monday and Tuesday, for most of the day it was too hot to move more than fingers. Occasionally it was too hot even for that. I still haven't written that letter.

Then there are other statistics: "You spent 'so long' on Social Media, Creativity, Work." Usually, the longest time spent is on social media.

No, I am not scrolling through TikTok or getting led into Echo Chambers by Facebook or Twitter Algorithms. Most of the Social Media time is Keeping In Touch on WhatsApp or by Texts.

Keeping In Touch with family, friends, Prayer Pastors, School Pastors, even Street Pastors out on Duty of a Friday and Saturday night. Useful stuff like that! Occasionally, I'll use it to Keep In Touch with my husband. Sometimes he responds.

Apparently, one of the scourges of Modern Times is Loneliness. People of any age – from pre-teens to Pensioners – do not have anyone with whom they can communicate meaningfully. Do not have anyone who will actually Listen to them. And their mental health is suffering as a result.

So, I shall continue to spend a fair amount of time on WhatsApp, Keeping in Touch. I shall even get that letter written (typed, cos they need to be able to read it too!).



Is there anyone with whom you need to Keep in Touch - via WhatsApp, text, phone call, or even a letter? And I shall make time to Keep in Touch with Almighty Father God. Daily, if not more often. Will you?

Another 10% Charity project:

St Mary's plays a pivotal role in supporting the launch of a new community band

We are delighted to announce the launch of the Portchester Volunteer Marching Band (PVMB), a vibrant new community group dedicated to celebrating local spirit, fostering musical talent, and bringing people together through music. This exciting initiative has emerged in response to changes within our community. When Commander Steve Shaw informed us that TS TENACITY would no longer be able to support the Portchester Remembers ceremony, we realised we faced a real challenge. For 47 years, the band of TS TENACITY played a vital role in local life, leading the Gala Day procession and providing music at Portchester Remembers, as well as other events. Its contribution to nurturing young musicians and enriching our shared traditions was truly invaluable.



On hearing this news, Rev Ian Meredith and Commander Steve Shaw RN (Rtd), organiser of Portchester Remembers, worked together to see what could be salvaged. Their collaboration sparked the decision to relaunch the band as the Portchester Volunteer Marching Band. This has brought renewed enthusiasm, especially among the young members, whose emblem now features a phoenix – symbolising rebirth and new beginnings, inspired by the Easter resurrection story.

The PVMB welcomes everyone, whether you are a young person keen to try an instrument for the first time, an adult wishing to rekindle your passion for music, or someone eager to help run the association. Their aim is to create a supportive environment where all – regardless of age or ability – can learn, grow, and have fun. Through regular rehearsals, performances at local events, and a strong emphasis on teamwork, they offer developmental opportunities for all, from building confidence and making friends to acquiring leadership skills and musical expertise.

St Mary's Church is committed to supporting this new community project. We have donated £1,000 from our charity fund, especially to fund instruments as it starts its new journey. Additionally, we are providing the church for Thursday evening rehearsals free of charge until the end of the year, helping the PVMB to establish itself and build its resources.

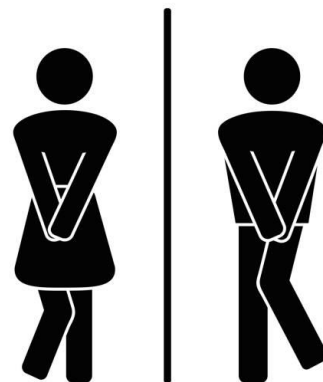
The band's first public engagement will take place on Sunday, 31st May, with a service at 14:00 at St Mary's for the D-Day Veterans. Everyone is invited to join this special occasion, marking the beginning of PVMB's journey in our community.

Commander Steve Shaw, Patron and Chair, writes: "I am delighted to welcome the newly formed Portchester Volunteer Marching Band. The establishment of this Band marks an exciting moment for our community, creating opportunities for people of all ages to come together, learn new skills, share music, and contribute to something truly special. The Band has been created with a clear and positive purpose: to bring people together through music, performance, and community spirit. It offers a wonderful chance for young people to develop confidence, teamwork, and musical ability, while also providing more mature members of our community with a meaningful way to share their experience, stay active, and enjoy being part of a vibrant local group."

If you're interested in joining the band, learning an instrument, or helping to shape the future of PVMB, they'd love to hear from you. Please contact info.pvmb@gmail.com or reach out directly to Steve on steve.pvmb@gmail.com

New toilets may be coming!

Our architect Julian Vallis attended the February meeting of the PCC to update us on the bells and building projects (all of which are being held up by the slow response of other people). He asked us what our priorities were and we all unanimously said “toilets”! The fact that St Mary’s only has one toilet for the hundreds of people who sometimes attend services and events is embarrassing, disgraceful and probably contravenes some health and safety requirements. We know that several people don’t attend the church because of this, and this summer the Community Choir are not holding their annual concert at St Mary’s, mainly because of the lack of toilets.



We identified the space between the church and the Tea Room where there is currently a cupboard, as being an ideal area. The architect is currently drawing up plans, and we are submitting a planning application for **two toilets** to Fareham Borough Council and then the DAC. If all goes well, they should be in operation in the autumn – should we ask the Bishop to pull the first flush?!

The incredible thing was that no sooner had we decided on this when we received a **very generous legacy!** We think this will cover the costs, so no fundraising is required. Isn’t God good!



Speaking of legacies, now is probably the time to mention this, as you can see how such a gift can make a massive difference to the church. We realise that most of you who have made wills have rightly so included your family and your favourite charities, but how many of you would consider leaving something to your church as well? This is particularly so, where there is no immediate family. It may surprise you that very few people leave anything in their will to St Mary’s, and a recent survey done by the diocese showed that St Mary’s was near the bottom of the scale for legacies. All the other churches seem to do much better.

A legacy left in a will does not go towards the general running of the church, but is put into a separate legacy fund and only used for special projects. These are mainly fabric projects (like toilets!) or to fund a ministry, for example a youth leader for a few years. Over the years, legacies have been used to repair the roof, install heating and lighting, or buy equipment.

If you have not written your will, please do so soon, and if you already have and have not included St Mary’s, then you could have a solicitor write out an addition to it known as a Codicil. Your solicitor will help you, or you could contact our Parish Administrator (Chris Hayes) or our Treasurer (Steve Oliver).

“The Quiet Revival”

Did they get it wrong?



Last year, the Bible Society brought out a report *The Quiet Revival* stating that monthly church attendance among adults in England and Wales rose from 8% in 2018 to 12% in 2024. Among 18 to 24-year-olds, the increase was said to be even more dramatic — from 4% to 16% — with young men reportedly leading the surge. Attendance among young women in the same age group was said to have risen from 4% to 12%.

YouGov, which carried out the two surveys after being commissioned by the Bible Society, has apologised after admitting it recently found major flaws in its data collection. YouGov have taken full responsibility for the error and have said that in no way was the Bible Society to blame stressing that “the Bible Society has at all times accurately and responsibly reported the data we supplied to them.”

Last month, David Voas, professor of social science at University College London, told the *BBC* that if the growth suggested in the data were genuine, it would amount to “literally millions of new churchgoers” who would have had to be “very quiet indeed — not to say invisible — to have escaped our notice”.

However, just before the secularists and atheists start jumping with delight, it should be pointed out that there is still something interesting happening in the spiritual life of the nation. Other indicators over the past year which are verifiable, including Bible sales soaring, more baptisms, a rise in participation in the Alpha Course, and record numbers of confirmations in the Catholic Church, are signs that an interest in Christianity is growing.

Last year, a Savanta ComRes study found that 12% of non-Christian students say they read the Bible at least once a week. A separate study from the research firm also found 50% of all students said that they viewed the Bible as relevant, and 44% find it to be reliable.

Phil Knox, an evangelist and missiologist at the Evangelical Alliance, which also conducted research over the past year and who has recently spoken at St John’s Locks Heath, supporting the idea of a quiet revival, said, “I was with a church leader who has baptised over 200 people in the last five years. The week before that, I was at a new men's conference with around 400 men. The average age had been under 30, and the organisers were blown away that...all these stories and the stats are pointing towards something really significant.”

It may not be a “revival” quiet or otherwise, but there is certainly a growing interest in Christianity among younger people and men in particular. At a meeting of the clergy of Fareham Deanery recently, most churches had witnessed an increase in attendances and new people just turning up, wanting to know about Jesus and Christianity. We have certainly seen this at St Mary’s. Something is happening.

New appointment at St Peter & St Paul Church, Fareham

Rev Mack Deptula

For the past few years, there has been a strong vision for rejuvenating the Anglican Church in central Fareham. The town has three parishes: Holy Trinity with St Columba; St John the Evangelist; and St Peter and St Paul. Last year, Rev Henry Kendall was appointed Vicar of St John's with a view to reviving the parish of St Peter and St Paul by planting a new congregation (alongside the existing one) in Fareham's oldest parish church.

St Peter and St Paul has traditionally been an Anglo-Catholic (very high church!) parish, but over the last few years has declined considerably, having around 25 people at their main service. However, it needed the right person to come along, and we believe Rev Mack Deptula is the right fit. The idea is also to plant a new church in Welborne in a few years' time.

Mack is currently a curate and church planter in Exeter diocese. Before that, he studied theology at St Mellitus College. He would describe himself as evangelical, but originally grew up as a Roman Catholic in Poland before moving to the UK.

Mack writes, "I genuinely cannot wait to get started. I'm buzzing with ideas about how we could do this. I'm also really happy that there is already a congregation that prefers to worship in a more traditional style. My background is Catholic and over the past couple of years, the Book of Common Prayer has also become really important to me. I see traditional and contemporary worship as like bread and water – they complement each other, and I can't survive on a diet of just one of those things."

Mack came originally from Gdansk in Poland and began work at the age of 16. Among other things, he worked in the fashion industry, in logistics and even modelling some of the clothes. In 2012, he came to England, settling in Leicester with only £70 in his pocket. He worked in a warehouse, working his way up to team leader, and then in digital marketing and e-commerce.



He made a firm commitment to the Christian faith aged 24, and at 29 became an intern at a Church of England church in Leicester. He decided he wanted to study theology and signed up initially as an independent student at St Mellitus College.

Mack is married to Alison who is from Colombia, and they have a one-year-old daughter. He expects to be licensed by the bishop on 10 June.

As St Peter and St Paul is our neighbouring parish, and as Mack sounds like someone we can work with, let's do what we can to encourage this new ministry. We have also enjoyed the fellowship of two members from that parish who have attended our mid-week services: Margaret, their Churchwarden, on Wednesdays; and Christine on Fridays.



Anna Chaplaincy (Ministry to the elderly)

Sue Oliver writes:

The number of Anna Chaplains within the Portsmouth Diocese is now 56 and is still growing. More will be commissioned and licensed this year, increasing this number.

The Bible Reading Fellowship

Anna Chaplaincy is overseen and managed by BRF (Bible Reading Fellowship) and this month I wanted to include an article about its history and how it all began. The Bible Reading Fellowship started in an Anglican Church in Brixton, South London, towards the end of 1921. The Vicar, Rev Leslie Mannering, was talking with a few individuals in his congregation about the spiritual needs of the Church and asked the question what could be done to help people 'get a move on' spiritually.



In January 1922, the fellowship of St Matthew was launched with the aim of encouraging spiritual growth in the areas of prayer, Bible reading and communion. A monthly leaflet provided Bible passages for daily reading with brief explanatory notes and prayer needs for the parish, the wider church and the world.

The church started weekly fellowship services on Wednesday evenings, more churches began requesting copies of the leaflets. In 1926, the fellowship of St Matthew became known as the Bible Reading Fellowship and, by 1939, 238,000 copies of the Bible reading notes were being printed to reach an international audience.



At the start of WWII, a special services edition of BRF notes was produced and, by the end of the war, readership had increased to 80,000. Its silver jubilee was celebrated in 1947, Queen Elizabeth the Queen mother became a patron in 1952, having testified to using the notes herself. In 1961, circulation of BRF notes passed 500,000 copies per issue. 1981 saw the BRF established as a leading publisher of lent and Advent resources.

Anna Chaplaincy begins

Anna Chaplaincy became BRF's first ministry in 2014 with its founder Debbie Thrower being included in the running and management. Although it has seen many changes, it continues to thrive and produces a prayer diary. Take look for yourselves by visiting their website.

Ladies' Breakfast

Our ladies' breakfast in February saw a visit by Sue Neat from Home Instead, who gave an interesting talk to our ladies on being prepared for entering a period that we do not really want to talk about, and that is increasing age. She talked about the many things we can do to help this transition. Having power of Attorney in place and giving thought to our wills and maybe a living will. If anyone needs more information, I am happy to give you Sue's details and you can contact her.

March saw our own Sharon Pearse give a presentation on the work of Tear Fund. We have up to 20 ladies attending, but there is room for more. Come along and see for yourselves.

April's breakfast has sadly been cancelled due to the speaker cancelling, and it being Easter Saturday, but will return on **2nd May** when we will welcome Fiona Mackintosh from Health and Independent living (Hils) who will talk to us about what they do and what they can offer people in our community.

Look forward to seeing you there.

People asking for money



A particular gentleman has been attending our services recently and asking for money – sometimes even as a “loan” (which will never be paid back). We are asking you not under any circumstances to give him money, or anyone else attending services or hanging around outside. Christians are kind and compassionate people who have a heart for the marginalised but are often seen as a “soft touch” by unscrupulous individuals who are sometimes looking for money to feed their drug habit. We have a fund in the church called The Farmer & Ruel Fund (named after two artists who left money in their will). Refer anyone asking for money to the Vicar when help can be given to those in genuine need. Likewise, if you or a member of your family is in real need, please speak confidentially to the Vicar, as only he knows who is given money from this fund.

Families and children at St Mary's

Now that Café Church has finished, we are trying out a new style of family's ministry called

"Third Sunday Special"

This will be held on the third Sunday of the month as an extension of the 11.30am service, and the idea is that while some families might want to attend everything, other might just want to jump in at various times.

The programme will be roughly:

Part 1

11.30am Later Service – pretty much as normal, but during the Junior Church slot, the children will be either making something or rehearsing some for the later part.

Part 2

12.30 After church coffee and “Bring & Share” lunch for everyone

Part 3

1.00pm – 2.00pm Family time (worship, talk, drama, activities etc)

Should finish around 2.00pm.



This might not work, but we'll try it anyway.

As Hudson Taylor (missionary to China) once said, “I'd rather attempt to do something for God and fail – than attempt to do nothing and succeed.”

Theme based:

April 19th “Leggo Church”

May 17th “Try Praying”

June 21st “The World Cup”

Services and Events coming up soon

Continuation of *The Lord's Prayer* sermon series

After a two-week break for Palm Sunday and Easter Day, the series will continue at the 9.30am Parish Eucharist on 12th April with Carol Gay speaking on "Give us this day our daily bread."

Rev Ian will finish the series with:

April 19th – "Forgive us our sins"

April 26th – "As we forgive others"

May 3rd – "Lead us not into temptation"

May 10th – "Deliver us from evil"

May 17th – "Kingdom, power and glory forever."



If you missed any of the previous sermons or would like to listen to any again, these can be accessed via the church website's home page or click on to

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqgh9ekis0vvTRvSpVYjDWw>

Evening services at the Parish Hall continue

After our successful five-week Lenten series on the *Screwtape Letters*, we will have a break of one week as there will be no service on Easter Day.

On 12th April, we begin an Easter series over the six weeks of the Easter season:

Six men and women of the Bible.



Joe Snowden will speak firstly on three **Old Testament men** (Abraham, Jacob and Ezra) to be followed by Rev Ian Meredith who will speak on three **New Testament women**: Mary Magdalene, Dorcas/Tabitha and Lydia.

Much of the teaching of the Bible comes through studies of the various people in it – stories of ordinary people, with sinful traits alongside holy habits, but all of them became followers of 'The Way', and their lives are examples for us to follow as Jesus' disciples.

The series will finish for the summer on **17th May**, and evening services will recommence on **13th September**.

“Time out for Parents”: A Parenting Course



will start on **Thursday 16th April** and will run for four Thursday evenings at the Hub – Portchester Community Association (enter by the car park). The course is produced by Care for the Family and will be led by Rev Elizabeth and Sara Lane.

It includes group discussions and practical tasks to help you build on your strengths and will give you time and space to think about any changes you want to make.

Sessions are based on the following:

- What being a parent is really like. Children’s needs.
- Feelings and listening. Boundaries and parenting styles.
- Keeping safe.
- Building strong families.

The primary years (5-11) are an exciting time when children are developing friendships and discovering more about who they are and what they can do. The course helps parents to support their child’s emotional wellbeing through understanding their temperament, meeting their needs and communicating well.

A handbook will be provided for those participating. And a creche will be available, if finding a babysitter is difficult.

Curry & Chilli Night – 18th April

Tickets are now on sale for our Chilli & Curry Night on Saturday 18th April!

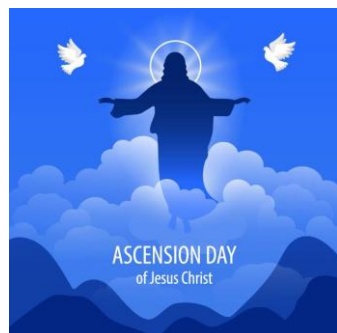
It promises to be another fantastic evening of good food and good company, so do grab your tickets soon and bring a friend along.

We’d love to see you there!

Thursday 14th May – Feast of the Ascension.

Today brings the Easter season to a close as we recall Jesus completing his earthly ministry and returning to heaven from where he came. It was while on this mountain that he gave ‘The Great Commission’ to his disciples (and by extension, to us) to make disciples.

There will be a Eucharist at 7.30pm (no service on Wednesday 13th).



St Mary's Portchester

St Mary's 900 1128-2028

CHILLI & CURRY NIGHT!

Date : Saturday, April 18, 2026

Time : 6:00 PM

Location : St Mary's Church Portchester
Highlights : Spicy Dishes, Disco & Raffle

Tickets £10
Available from the Tea Room, Parish Office, My ChurchSuite or QR code

Bring Your Own Drink

Saturday 9th May – Rogationtide Prayer Walk

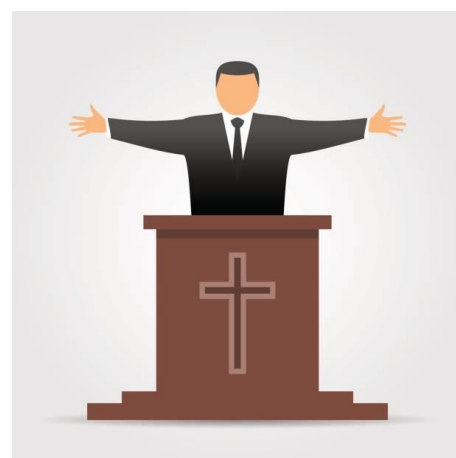
Prayer Walk



Each year at Rogationtide, we observe the centuries old tradition of “beating the bounds of the parish”, but with a particular emphasis on praying for and blessing the parish. We take a section of the parish boundary each year, and this year we are doing the western and northern boundaries. This will be the most difficult of the terrains, so you might want to just to part of it. We will be meeting outside 49 Rockingham Way at 10.30am, and going round the Crematorium, up and then along Portsdown Hill finishing at Anson Drive and Highslopes Community Centre. Map and details are on the notice board.

Preaching Workshop – 4 sessions from 21st May

As part of our ‘making disciples’ and ‘school of ministry’ on Thursday evenings at the Hub, Rev Ian will be leading a 4-part course starting on 21st May 7.00pm – 8.30pm. Preaching a sermon is not just a case of standing up and saying what the Bible says – it is a craft known technically as ‘Homiletics’. The course is open to anyone, but obviously those who may find themselves preaching, teaching or even giving short talks are welcome. There may be opportunities to preach for some who attend this course. We will be looking at the difference between preaching and teaching. Please sign up on the notice board, via the Parish Office or let Rev Ian know.



Saturday 23rd May – Vision Morning with Rev Neil Smart

Parish Hall 9.30am – 1.00pm

- Are you a leader or a potential leader?
- Have you attended an Alpha course and would like to know what the next steps are?
- Are you interested in helping us develop the vision for St Mary’s.
- Would you like to know how to help others on their spiritual journey?



As part of our strategy to growing disciples at St Mary’s, you are invited to a Saturday morning to be led by Rev Neil Smart the Diocesan Lead for Revive. Neil led this day in February, and so enthusiastic was the response that we felt it should be opened up to the wider church.

The Rev Neil Smart’s, role is to help those in spiritual leadership in our diocese to have faith that is vibrant, growing, deep, and attractive. It’s part of our [diocesan strategy](#) for the next five years, which aims to [Revive](#), [Revitalise](#) and [Renew](#) the Church in this area.

The conference will finish around 1.00pm with a sandwich lunch, but you are welcome to leave before that. We are hoping that a half day rather than a full day will attract more people to come.

You can sign up via the notice board, Parish Hall or let Rev Ian know. As we need to know how many to cater for, please let us know as soon as you can, but by **17th May** at the latest.

APCM

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Tuesday 26th May 7.00pm APCM

The Annual Parochial Church Meeting will take place at the church on 26th May. Annual reports and financial accounts for 2025 will be sent by e-mail to all on the Electoral Roll, and there will be a few paper copies available.

This gives us a chance to be accountable to one another and to give an account of our stewardship. At this meeting we also elect or appoint:

- Two Churchwardens for the forthcoming year (currently Denise Simmons and Ian Parker)
- New (and re-elected) members of the PCC
- External Examiner (for accounts)
- Three reps to the Deanery Synod (currently Gerry Anderson, Peter Bradley & Steve Oliver)

Nominations should be in two weeks before the meeting – **12th May** and given in to the parish office, to Denise Simmons as Electoral Roll Officer or to the Vicar.

You need to have been on the Electoral Roll for 6 months before you can stand for PCC. We have a large number of people who regularly attend St Mary's but who are not on the Electoral Roll. Please consider coming on to this, as it is the nearest we have to a membership, it helps the diocese to see the real strength of the church and enables you to participate more fully in the life of St Mary's. Forms are available from the Parish Office or from Denise Simmons or are on the notice board.



St Mary's does outreach all the time through things like St Mary's Lambs, pastoral contacts through baptisms, weddings and funerals, Sunday services, not to mention the Tea Room and social events. The Vicar's ministry in the wider community.

However, in the coming months we have some opportunities to take the Good News even further into our community and we invite you to be part of this to share your faith.

Market Outreach

Prior to Covid, we used to do this each week (weather permitting). Starting on 22nd April, we will do this each week from 10.00am until 12noon. We'll have the new literature stand, and just meet people who come to the market. It's a great way of meeting new people, friends on the fringe of the church and letting passers by know of our presence. After all, if the JW's can sit around for hours in the cold at the precinct with hardly anyone speaking to them – why can't we do something?!

Open Air Praise

On the 3rd Saturday of the month at 10.00am, Joe and Kathy Snowden will lead a time of praise at the precinct. Again, we will have our literature stand, so this will be a great opportunity to share our faith. Imagine the impact of a group of Christians singing songs of praise out in the open. Recently they did this and when Kathy was singing "Lord of the dance", the whole queue in Soothills the bakers started singing along – and dancing!

trypraying.

“Try Praying”

This is a national project and in several cities in the UK people will see the logo “Try Praying”. The idea behind it is to connect with the fact that most people pray, even those who don’t consider themselves very religious. Church members will be given a Seven-Day booklet to help them to pray for seven days and see what happens! Then the member passes the booklet on to a friend who either

doesn’t come to church or would be a believer in the sense of knowing Jesus – and see what happens.

We’ll be launching this on Sunday 17th May, and this will also be the theme of our services that day. We also have special booklets on this theme for children, young people, Cadets and the military.

Another 10% Mission Charity we support ...

Recent Faith and Football Mission to Uganda (Mick Mellows)

A team of seven have just returned from a physically and emotionally challenging but very fruitful trip to Uganda. All this was made possible through our many supporters helping us make a significant impact.

At the Naomi Hub, where we support 100 single mums and over 300 children, we were able to extend help not only to them but to the wider community and continuing building and growing a church congregation. We distributed over 80 mosquito nets to protect families from malaria, along with flour, clothing, and shoes. We also ran training in small income-generating skills such as hairdressing, tailoring, and animal rearing for our single mums. Gardens were cleared for crops, and we were able to partially complete a building that will house milling equipment to support long-term sustainability.

We organised a football tournament and shared the gospel through an evening outreach. This led to new connections, with several players now attending church and a new Bible study group established with them. Over 60 Bibles were also given to players and young people.

We visited local schools, sharing encouragement and biblical teaching, and spent time in a Kampala slum, providing food and praying with families.

Looking ahead, we hope to establish a school to support some of our children who are currently unable to access education through lack of the necessary funding.

Thanks again to all those who have supported us in sustaining this invaluable work with the poor.



26 March 2026

Re: Parish share 2025

Dear All PCC members – Portchester

Passiontide greetings to you all. I trust this finds you well and in good heart. Be assured that you are prayed for each day, with thanksgiving, here in Bishopsgrove.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to you, your PCC and congregation for contributing parish share of £109,271. In the midst of a cost-of-living crisis and on-going uncertainty within the world, this is a wonderful achievement. I interpret it as a reflection of your love for Christ and your readiness to seek and serve God's kingdom in our day.

Your generosity makes a profound difference: it enables our diocesan community of communities to serve the Lord in a host of life-giving ways. For example, it ensures there is ordained ministry in places which simply could not afford to provide it for themselves. It supports lay and ordained vocations and training. Behind the scenes, serving the parishes, chaplaincies and our cathedral church is our diocesan team, based at Peninsular House. Working in focussed, effective and coordinated ways, it provides constant support for safeguarding, management of our properties and finance, provision of the DAC's advice to parishes and exemplary assistance to our network of church schools. All of this is enabled by your generosity.

I wanted also to draw attention to Philip Poulter's open door. As Diocesan Secretary, he has worked closely with Elaine Coe and our finance team to develop a process whereby any parish anticipating affordability issues in relation to parish share can ask for an informal conversation. The process can be found here [Parish_Share_affordability.pdf](#). To arrange a meeting with Philip please contact his Executive Assistant, Sarah Jay at sarah.jay@portsmouth.anglican.org or call on 023 9289 9650. Do let him know, as early as possible, if you can foresee any issues or if you have any queries about calculations. He will be keen to plot a way forward together.

Please do remain steadfast in your commitment to paying parish share in full. By so doing, you will help to ensure sustainable ministry in East Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and will continue to make a transformative impact within the communities God has called us to serve together.

Please would you pass on my thanks to PCC members and your congregations.

With love and prayers,



Jesus-centred, Kingdom-seeking

Your giving to St Mary's

You will see from this letter from the Bishop that our parish share (our largest expenditure) has gone up to £109,000 per year or £9,561 every month.

Everything you have read about in this magazine has to be paid for – even the magazine itself.

You will see that we give away a lot of stuff freely (literature, courses, donations from the Farmer & Ruel Fund, etc – even meals from the Tea Room for those genuinely not able to pay or whose card doesn't work!)

Our Vicar works longer hours than most other working people, and is always pleased to welcome people to the Vicarage. All of our staff work above their contracted hours; all do it as a calling and vocation and not as job. Our staff wages are increasing in April, and we pay all of them above the minimum wage. There is also the rent for the various halls we use to provide teaching, training and social events, as well as the ongoing maintenance of the building. The children's work and Anna chaplaincy all cost money and we still manage to give around £1,000 each month through our 10% charity fund.

We don't go on and on about money (perhaps we should speak about it more!) but we just about manage each month. However, if we are to continue and even expand our ministry, we need to increase our income.

Here are ways in which you can give:

- If you contribute regularly through the collection basket, please consider giving through the bank
- or even better through the Parish Giving Scheme. Details of this will be given out soon.
- If you are a tax payer, Gift Aid will be automatically applied for through the PGS. If you give cash and are a tax payer, please consider putting your money in the special Gift Aid envelopes (remembering to fill in the front).
- Your giving, as well as paying for books, tickets for events can all be done through our QR Code.
- We also have a card reader by the donation station at the organ.

Baptism and Confirmation

We had no candidates for **Confirmation** this Easter. The next confirmations at the cathedral will be on Saturdays 18th July and 14th November, both at 6.45pm. Confirmation is a ceremony at the cathedral when the Bishop anoints you with oil and lays hands on you for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to come upon you. It follows adult baptism or those who have been baptised but wish to publicly declare their faith and own their baptism.

As well as baptising infants, we practice **baptism by full immersion** for adults, although baptism by pouring is also practiced. So far, we have no candidates who have expressed interested, but if you think that either baptism or confirmation (or both!) may be for you, have a word with Rev Ian.

**Sunday Services: 8.00am; 9.30am & 11.30am (church in the castle) & 6.00pm (Parish Hall)
Wednesdays 6.30pm at the church and Fridays 10am at the Parish Hall.**

Parish Office: Portchester Parish Hall, Assheton Court, Portchester, PO16 9PY

Tel: 02392 321380; E-mail: office@stmary-portchester.org.uk

Office hours: Tuesday – Thursday 9am – 4pm; Friday 9am – 1.00pm

Website: www.stmary-portchester.org.uk

Vicar: Rev Canon Dr Ian Meredith, Tel: 02392 375422; E-mail: irev@ymail.com