

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

VIRAL BULLETIN

2 & 9 March 2025

Ash Wednesday double issue

Please forward this to anyone you know who might not be in our Google group.

For information about us please visit: www.northburychurches.org.uk



At Cambridge University Botanic Garden

20 February 2025

In this issue:

Ash Wednesday: Ali Miller * Love Ill by George Herbert * Worship this week and next * Stagecoach Spring Showcase * Threads of Lent 2025 * Wonder Club at Lackford * Coffee Mornings at All Saints', Bury and West Stow * World Day of Prayer 2025 * Ash Wednesday Eucharists * Stations of the Cross * Lent Course: Searched Me Out and Known Me * Lent Lunch at Fornham St Martin * New Eco Church Survey Launches * Caption Competition * Robin Wakefield and his Street Organ at All Saints' * Culford Saturday Café * "I Will Follow Him": Mead Singers at St George's * Contacts

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2.1-2,12-17 Matthew 6.1-6,16-21

Each year on Ash Wednesday it was the custom of my theological college to welcome a visiting cleric who would minister to us and journey with us in the keeping of this solemn day. They were to lead us in prayer and preach homilies on a number of occasions throughout the day, as well as offer the sacrament of confession to whoever wanted it. Finally, in the evening, they would impose the ashes and celebrate the Eucharist.

One year we had a bishop do the dusty honours. At Morning Prayer he looked incredibly austere as he approached the lectern to deliver his first homily; we shrank in our seats braced for being told what pathetic sinners and miserable offenders we were ... then he eyeballed the room, his face stretched into a broad grin and he shouted, 'Merry Lent'!

This it turns out was a phrase he once heard at an Ash Wednesday homily and he rather liked it, so decided to use it for us, and now myself. 'Merry Lent'. I know. It sounds rather a misnomer for Ash Wednesday, rightly regarded as the most penitential, sorrowful day of the church year.

If such a day is anything like the one the prophet Joel describes – one full of gloom, with clouds of thick darkness which leaves us trembling in its wake, then I can understand you making a hasty bid for the exit. Far too often have I heard people describe this day, and the period of Lent which follows, as the Church's exercise in making people feel awful: a voyeuristic delve into other people's sorrows and mess in order to castigate them about it. Well, I'd like to try and rehabilitate Ash Wednesday and hopefully we will find a restorative balance, perhaps even some joy to hint at a 'Merry Lent'.

For me, the two things necessary for engaging fruitfully with this day, and this whole season of Lent, are **Love** and **Movement**.

Firstly, **Love**.

At the risk of sounding like a stuck record ... I have mentioned before that each night I do St Ignatius of Loyola's examination of conscience or the Examen. This involves prayerfully replaying your day with its triumphs, follies and most likely mundane normal stuff. But before doing so you first have to remind yourself that everything is held and examined under the loving compassionate gaze of God.

Ash Wednesday and Lent is a little bit like doing the Examen on grand scale and it can only be done - or perhaps even *should* only be done - if we fully accept that God gazes upon us through the lens of love and wants to see us thrive.

The ash we use today - the dust from which we came, the dust to which we will return - speaks to us of our very mortality, our very human condition. And of course, the painful part of being human means accepting that somewhere along the way we will have accumulated baggage, some of which we'd classify as sin. The realm of such baggage is 'doing the things we ought not to have done and not doing the things we ought to have done'.

We have imaginations; we know what this means. Ash Wednesday covers both private sorrows and even corporate sorrows: failings of institutions, for example. The burden of such baggage can be unbearable. Even after confession we may struggle to believe we really are forgiven and some of the kindest most compassionate people I know are harshest with themselves.

So, we need to tread carefully, for this is not meant to be an exercise in beating up oneself, rather it is about asking for help to get rid of the baggage and knowing that when we do so God's infinite love can shoulder the weight of it as if it were nothing but a feather. God's arms are widespread ready to take it from us.

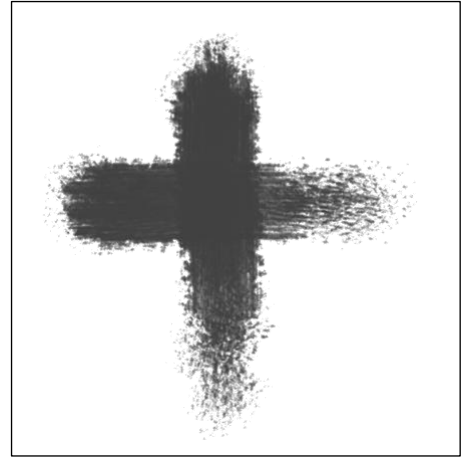
To reinforce this: when we arrive at the point in our service for the self-examination and confession, but just hear the introduction to it, let us call to mind our sin and the infinite mercy of God. Infinite mercy. Not a bit, not a smidgen, but the *infinite mercy* of God. As Joel explains: the Lord is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love.

During this part of the service, the *Liturgy of Penitence*, there is a period of silence – whatever comes to mind for each of us in that time, I cannot stress emphatically enough that in this silence we will not be alone, for whether we perceive it or not, we will be accompanied by the loving presence of God. Infinite mercy, infinite love.

Love is our first thing in approaching today and the second is **Movement**.

Ash Wednesday heralds a pilgrimage in knowing oneself better – it is the beginning of a journey through Lent. It is the way of holiness, a journey with Christ as our companion. The ash we will receive, marked as a cross upon our foreheads, is an echo of the cross marked upon us with the holy oil at our baptism. Christ claimed us for his own then; he is not about to abandon us now. Christ is a faithful companion.

Through such self-examination, the shedding of the baggage, the ash, the absolution given and so on, then hopefully we will not see ourselves as static, trapped in a constant Ash Wednesday or permanent frost of Lent and the misery perhaps of our own making – no, instead we will see and experience ourselves as dynamic, our hearts and souls moving along a path to liberation.



Indeed, we may experience this as catharsis, for there is an inner and sometimes outer joy which accompanies such awareness of forgiveness and release. God desires us to be free from the baggage and burden, to move ever more freely, to live and love well. So let us approach this time in confidence that God gazes on us through the lens of the deepest transformative love possible – God loves people into holiness rather than frightening them into submission. Here is the spirit of Merry Lent.

And by the time we get to Holy Week then we may feel prepared enough to be Christ's companion as we relive his journey from Jerusalem, to Gethsemane, Golgotha, and beyond: tough going yes, yet we have the luxury of knowing the end of the story: Jesus' defeat of death, his resurrection gifting us the promise of our eternal life and the grace of salvation. This means we can approach journeying with Jesus through Holy Week in confidence because we gaze through the lens of the resurrection – we know the outcome which enables us to brave engaging more deeply and imaginatively into Jesus' experience.

So then, **Love** and **Movement** are the underpinnings for us making this 40 day spiritual pilgrimage. The waymarks which keep us on track may include some or all of the following: prayer, fasting or self-denial, and almsgiving – the traditional spiritual disciplines which actually fill our bellies such that the fast turns out to be a feast. Jesus mentions these things in our Gospel reading – they are what the good Jewish folk should be doing and us, too. He just urges us to do so not with ostentatious displays and grimaces, rather get on with it faithfully and with humility, and the reference to putting oil on our heads suggests doing so with a spirit of gladness. Such gladness perhaps gives a hint of Merry Lent there as well.

This Lent I encourage you to make use of the waymarks we offer in our Benefice, whichever may be helpful to you – the Lent Course which will see us meditating upon scripture as we journey with the psalms, the mutual encouragement of a Lent Lunch, opening one's hearts and minds creatively through craft projects at

Threads of Lent, weekly Stations of the Cross, regular prayer times of Meditation and midweek Eucharists.

Basically, I encourage you to try out a few things as a way to enable yourself to experience just 'being' with God. Of course, we don't live in a vacuum – our spiritual lives affect our whole way of being and in turn how we live and interact with each other, with the whole environment. Perhaps therefore, this Lent, be aware for the potential surprise that out of 'being' may emerge a sense of 'doing' through the transformative work of the Spirit.

Finally, as we contemplate **Lent**, **Love** and **Movement**, we need food for the journey, real sustenance for these 40 days: we need the bread and wine. As the late Bishop of Gloucester Michael Perham said: 'The Church may give us ash at the beginning of Lent, but God continues to give us bread for the journey'. Each week we gather across the benefice to celebrate the Eucharist and receive the continued nourishment and grace to sustain our Lenten pilgrimage.

There is a joy in knowing we will be fed, that God desires us to come to the table, and it is Merry Lent once more – we drop the baggage we were clutching and hold out our empty hands in confidence, ready to receive the best food we will ever taste, for God longs to feed us.

There is a tender poem which captures the joy and surprise of being welcomed to the table and it sits particularly well with the feel of Ash Wednesday. It is by the 17th century priest and poet George Herbert, rather fittingly whose day we celebrated in the Anglican calendar just last week on the 27th February. The poem is titled 'Love'. You can read it here, next, in this issue of the *Viral Bulletin*.

Keep coming to the table that we may ever more grow in faith and devotion: the **Love** and **Movement** that sees us keep a **Merry Lent!**

Ali Miller

Waymarks for keeping a Holy and Merry Lent:

- * **Stations of the Cross**, 6pm, every Friday evening in Lent at St John's
- * **Lent Course**, *Searched Me Out and Known Me*, journeying Lent with the psalms, 10am, every Saturday mornings in Lent (but **not** 22nd!), St John's – just turn up, you don't need to have a copy of the book unless you want one.
- * **Lent Lunch**, 12-2pm, Friday 14th March, St Martin's, Fornham St Martin
- * **Threads of Lent**, 2pm, Wednesday afternoons (12th March-9th April), St Mary's, West Stow, bring your own craft project
- * **Plus** all the usual mid-week **Meditation** and **Eucharists** ...

Love (III)

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eye'd Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lack'd anything.

A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
 Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
 My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
 So I did sit and eat.

George Herbert (1593-1633)

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 2 MARCH

SUNDAY 2 March Sunday next before Lent

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Timworth
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	West Stow
10.00am	All Age Worship (CW)	Fornham All Saints
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
3.00pm	Wonder Club	Lackford

Monday 3 March

Tuesday 4 March

10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham St Martin
6.00pm	A Quiet Space	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Wednesday 5 March ASH WEDNESDAY

8.30am	Morning Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Solemn Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
7.00pm	Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes (CW)	Flempton

Thursday 6 March

9.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
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Friday 7 March Perpetua, Felicity and companions, martyrs, 203

5.15pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
6.00pm	Stations of the Cross	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Saturday 8 March Edward King, bishop, 1910 Felix, bishop, 647 Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, priest, poet, 1929

10.00am	Lent Course: Searched Me Out and Known Me	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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SUNDAY 9 March 1st Sunday of Lent

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Culford
8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Lackford
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham St Martin
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 9 MARCH

SUNDAY 9 March 1st Sunday of Lent

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	Culford
8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Lackford
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham St Martin
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Monday 10 March

Tuesday 11 March

6.00pm	A Quiet Space	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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Wednesday 12 March Ember Day

8.30am	Morning Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
2.00pm	Threads of Lent	West Stow
5.00pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds

Thursday 13 March

9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
6.00pm	Adoration and Benediction	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Friday 14 March Ember Day

5.15pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
12-2pm	Lent Lunch	St Martin's Church, Fornham St Martin
6.00pm	Stations of the Cross	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Saturday 15 March Ember Day

10.00am	Lent Course: <i>Searched Me Out and Known Me</i>	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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SUNDAY 16 March 2nd Sunday of Lent

8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Holy Communion (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Matins (BCP)	Timworth
10.00am	Said Eucharist (CW) <i>preceded by breakfast at 9.15am</i>	West Stow
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham All Saints
10.30am	All Age Worship	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds



STAGE
COACH

Bury St Edmunds & Stowmarket

SPRING SHOWCASE

A medley of songs, dances and cabaret acts
performed by the students of Stagecoach
Bury St Edmunds

SATURDAY 1ST MARCH
2PM & 5.30PM

St Johns Church, St Johns Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1SP

www.ticketsource.co.uk/stagecoach-bury-st-edmunds



Threads of
Lent 2025

Calling all Crafters!

Are you wanting to have a sort-out for Lent ?
Nurture your creativity?
Complete a half-done project?
Try something new?

You are welcome to our "Threads of Lent" Group
at: St Mary's Church in West Stow
On : Wednesday afternoons from 2pm
Starting on: Wednesday 12th March and then each
Wednesday until the 9th April

Easy parking
Tea and coffee
Bring your own materials

Enquiries to Sarah Gull seg30@cam.ac.uk

Wonder Club

Story
Wondering
Craft
Prayer
Cake



**St Lawrence,
Lackford**
2nd March, 3pm

Donations to **Leukaemia Care**
YOUR Blood Cancer Charity

Coffee Morning

Tuesday 4th March

10:00 - 11:15 am

All Saints Church

Coffee or tea, cake and chat

All Welcome

Lark Valley & North Bury Team Ministry www.northburychurches.org.uk

WEST STOW CHURCH

MARCH 5TH

**CHAT, COFFEE, TEA,
BISCUITS**
9.30 – 11.30

**Donations in aid of
RESTORE**

(Formally BURY ST EDMUNDS WOMEN'S AID CENTRE)

this month

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2025 Friday 7 March

A service for everyone!

Please join us at the Services:

10.30am St Mary's Church,
Honey Hill, Bury St Edmunds
IP33 1RT

7.30pm St Edmunds Catholic Church,
Westgate Street, Bury St Edmunds
IP33 1QG

All Welcome

Cook Islands *I made you wonderful*

INFORMED PRAYER | PRAYERFUL ACTION
24-7 365 Days a year Prayer movement Ecumenical International Women-led
wwdp.org.uk Registered Charity Number 233242

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches



Ash

Wednesday

5 March 2025

HOLY EUCHARIST

with

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

St John the Evangelist 9.30am

Flempton, St Catherine 7.00pm

Fridays in Lent
at 6pm

from
7th March
to
11th April

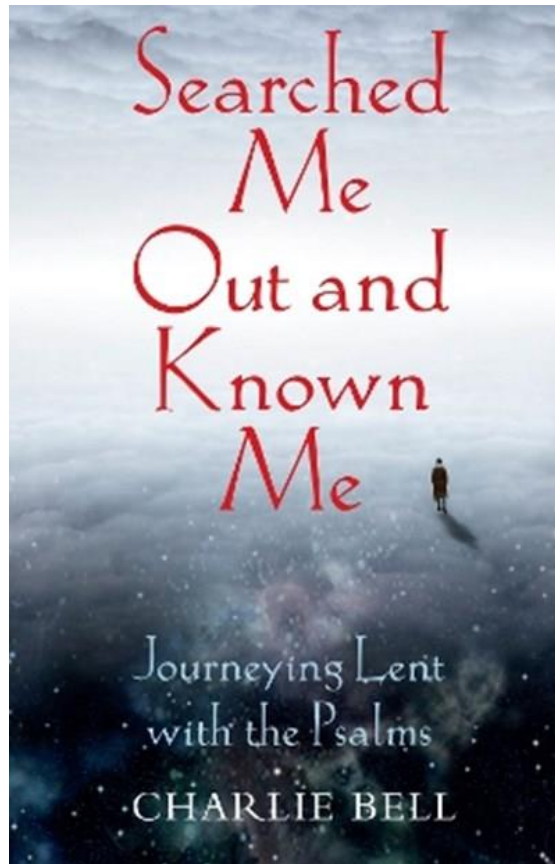
St John's Church
Bury St Edmunds



Stations of the Cross

Reflections following
the narrative
of Christ's passion
using the pictures
created by Iain McKillop

**LENT IN THE
LARK VALLEY NORTH BURY TEAM**



Every year we make our Lenten journey together – but this year we will do so accompanied by the Psalms.

**We will be using the wonderful book,
Searched Me Out and Known Me, by Charlie Bell.**

You may like to purchase your own copy - not least so you can continue to use it in Holy Week - but it is not essential.

**Don't worry if you cannot make every session.
Come to what you can. And bring a friend while you are at it!**

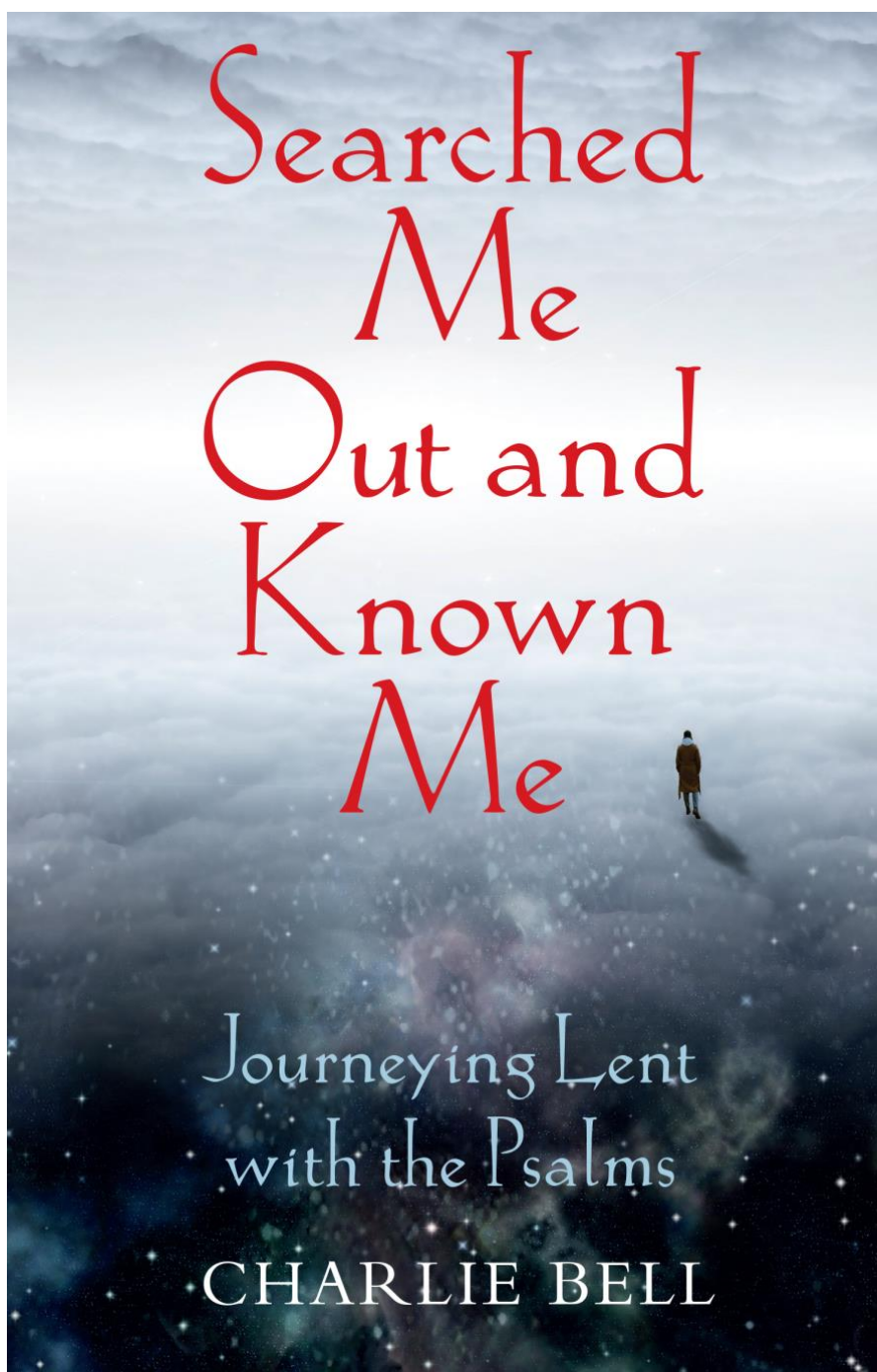
When: Saturday, 10-11.30am

Dates: 8th, 15th and 29th March, 5th and 12th April

Where: St John the Evangelist, St John's St, BSE

Further details: Mother Ali teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com 01284 728714

If you'd like to have your own copy ...



... the book *Searched Me Out and Known Me* will soon be available from the Cathedral bookshop ...

... and St John's bookstall also has copies available at a special discounted price ...

... but *please note* that (like the editor of the Viral Bulletin) you may come to the Lent Course *without having read the book!*

THE SEASON OF

Lent

JOIN US FOR A LIGHT LUNCH

FRIDAY 14TH
MARCH

FORNHAM ST
MARTIN CHURCH

12 - 2 PM

LENT IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION.
GROWTH TAKES TIME AND EFFORT.

HOW IS LENT MEANINGFUL FOR YOU?

ECO CHURCH

AN A ROCHA UK PROJECT

The New Eco Church Survey Launches!



It's here! We're thrilled to launch our brand-new **Eco Church Survey!**

Now in its ninth year, Eco Church continues to support churches across England and Wales in taking meaningful action for climate and nature. At its core, Eco Church is about people and a practical survey that guides churches, step by step, on their journey towards change. Our newly launched survey offers greater flexibility, ensuring that every church, regardless of size, setting, or resources, can take action and make a real impact.

New Pathways

A key highlight of the new survey is its inclusive pathways, designed to support a wider range of church settings. Whether you're part of a cathedral, a church with little or no land, or one without a building, the updated survey ensures everyone can get involved.

Refined Categories

We've expanded our survey categories, with a stronger focus on Worship & Teaching. This now includes vital topics such as eco-anxiety, lament, and pastoral care, equipping churches with resources to navigate these pressing issues within their communities.

Built for Today's Challenges

This updated survey reflects the urgency and complexity of the climate and biodiversity crises, and is designed to match the scale of action needed. It stretches churches further than the old survey, yet still provides a framework that's both ambitious and achievable.

FEBRUARY'S ECO TIP: Plan this year's holidays, with creation in mind

At this time of year, our thoughts can often turn to the hope of warmer weather and planning a summer holiday. Visiting new places and seeing God's creation is a great way to be refreshed and rested. Yet how we travel and where we stay, can either be positive or negative for the very environment we care about. Follow the link for simple prompts to help you plan a greener break this year:

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

CAPTION COMPETITION



A choice of fairtrade wine or chocolate awaits the person who can contribute the winning caption for this photograph, kindly provided by Gina Robertson.

Please send your entries by Monday 10th March to the Viral Bulletin at adrian.mann@btinternet.com



***Claire Rose writes
from All Saints',
Bury St Edmunds:***

Here are three photos from our Big Coffee Morning last Saturday, 22nd February.

We were entertained by Robin Wakefield and his Street Organ.

Robin is in the first photo with Jenny. Robin built the organ himself.

The second photo is Peter and the third Kath.

(And by the way, the monkey is a toy!)

With many thanks to Sheila Green for the photographs.




St George's invites you to a concert featuring

The MEAD SINGERS


"I Will Follow Him"

music and readings for Passiontide

Conductor: Michael Phillips
Accompanist: David Honeyball



at St George's Church,
Anselm Avenue, IP32 6JZ
on Sunday 6th April at 3pm



Contacts

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 Revd Ali Miller 01284 728714 teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com
 Team Office 01284 700400 NBTLVB@outlook.com

We also have assistance from priests within the benefice with permission to officiate.

Please don't forget ...

to let Julie Hooton NBTLVB@outlook.com
 and the 'Viral Bulletin' adrian.mann@btinternet.com
 have news and details of events which have happened
as well as events which are coming up at your church.

And your photographs are always welcome.