

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

VIRAL BULLETIN

26 April & 3 May 2026

4th and 5th Sundays of Easter

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 Downing College

Cambridge

In this issue:

Sheep and Signs: Ali Miller * Worship this week and next * Knit and Natter *
Thingoe Deanery Choral Evensong * Pilgrimage to Walsingham * Praying
Together ~ May * Bury Town Pastors * Caption Competition * Contacts

4th & 5th Sundays of Easter

4th: Acts 2.42-end Psalm 23 I Peter 2.19-end John 10.1-10

5th: Acts 7.55-end Psalm 31.1-5,15-16 I Peter 2.2-10 John 14.1-14

Sheep and Signs

Walking the fields and paths by the Rectory brings sight of sheep and lambs, and this week, I have had occasion to drive through the countryside too: again, a pastoral idyll of woolly new life on display. The joy of new life is always fitting during Eastertide but it resonated particularly this week as I contemplated this coming Sunday, known as *Good Shepherd Sunday* or *Vocations Sunday*, especially when watching a line of sheep and lambs heading to where a shepherd waited for them on the other side of the field.

On *Good Shepherd Sunday* we delve into the realms of comfort and challenge. In Psalm 23 we learn that the Lord is our shepherd; in John 10 we hear reference to a shepherd and how he cares for the sheep (and later on in chapter 10, Jesus will indeed say he is the Good Shepherd), but we also discover that Jesus is the 'gate for the sheep'.

Well, we'll return to the 'gate' later ... and let us sidestep the shepherd for now ... instead let us begin with the flock. You see, if Jesus is our shepherd, you know it makes us the sheep. And that's quite interesting. For a start, being referred to as sheep is usually meant as an insult, a derogatory comment that suggests one cannot think for oneself and simply follows the herd mindlessly from one place to another.

However, sheep are social creatures too and so are we; it isn't a surprise we look to each other when we make decisions. Perhaps we simply trust someone who trusts someone else: they seem genuine, so in good faith we end up making a decision, bad or good. And the truth is we don't always want to do something that makes us stand out, that can prove unpopular, be uncomfortable.

Remember however, we are at the mercy of the hands of the shepherd. Sure, in Jesus's time there were warnings about false prophets and teachers

leading people astray. It is the same for us too: we live in a time of so-called well-being experts, fake news (or is it?), of leaders and governments whose behaviour is not always edifying and often terrifying. It can be confusing – making one's head spin or simply hang in despair.

The ongoing Covid inquiry reminds me of such. Just last week, the fourth report from the inquiry stated that the delivery of the Covid vaccine and the largest immunisation programme was praised as an 'extraordinary feat'. And it really was incredible.

I remember though, the bewilderment of my daughters after encountering the behaviour of the anti-vaxxers when we first moved to Bury, complete with dodgy tactics of handing out leaflets which were printed NHS-style, so they looked official but pedalled nonsense. The impact of such misinformation across the country is low uptake of childhood vaccinations since Covid. Prophets and false prophets abound.

Similar patterns of trust and mistrust issues are played out with the big things concerning our world: the environmental crisis, immigration, war. And all this relates to our politics too. That was the other thing that was stuck in the fields on my jaunt into the countryside: signs saying vote this way, vote that way - because we will be heading to the voting booth for the County Council elections on Thursday 7th May.

Are we like sheep? Following one herd or another, some of us stuck in the middle of the field, paralysed with indecision, not knowing who or what to trust. It is tricky. Since we are also concerned with church matters, let us return to our shepherd, the Good Shepherd. The shepherd knows all the sheep by name, goes ahead of them to show them the way, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice when he calls to them.

We follow the Good Shepherd in confidence; it is a relationship of love and trust. We follow him to the good grass, the green pastures, to find rest and nourishment, and we are refreshed by the cool, still, fresh water. In the places of danger or evil, in the valley of the shadow of death, we fear not because the Shepherd is by our side and helps us through. The Shepherd will even lay down his life for the sheep so one day we may dwell in the

house of the Lord for ever. We really are fortunate sheep, for the Good Shepherd blesses us with abundant grace and comfort.

The Good Shepherd also happens to be the Gate. Sometimes I think we may get confused and think that we are the Gate. We are not! We don't get to pronounce who is in and who is out of the sheepfold. Now we may find this exciting or we may be uncomfortable because when the Gate of Jesus swings open, with a gust of the Holy Spirit, then the sheepfold expands to accommodate many people. The Good Shepherd will serve and protect *all* his flock ... not just those who look or think or behave like us.

So, that Gate opens to people irrespective of ethnicity and colour, or sexuality and gender, or wealth or physical and mental health; it opens to the oppressed and the war-torn and the refugees; it opens to the lost and the lonely. We are not gate-keepers. We are simply part of a flock, each of us loved and valued no less, and who welcome all those stumbling or trotting across the threshold; we emulate the Good Shepherd's abundant hospitality and compassion and protection.

This is radical living.

Are we like sheep? Well, Western society encourages us to be independent almost to an unhealthy degree, such

that one may seem a failure for requiring or daring to ask for any sort of assistance. This to me is just plain wrong. At various times in our lives - through age, health, or bereavement; from breakdown of relationships to job losses to the financial crisis; right through to the environmental crisis and war - some of us will be vulnerable, and some of us will be fully dependent on others. Maybe it is more fruitful to reimagine this.



Instead of it being independence versus dependence, perhaps we need to think more about *interdependence*: how we care for each other, enable and empower each other, how we recognise the value of each other. And that we all have something precious to offer which just may not look like what is traditionally deemed useful or acceptable, but it may very well be enriching and humbling and teach us something else - not least about the One in whose image we are made. I reiterate: we need to reimagine, to think outside the box, for the good of community - and for harmonious, just and compassionate living.

Then we are close to that early community mentioned in the second chapter of Acts, the one formed by Jesus's apostles after He ascended to heaven and sent His Spirit. Living that way was not always easy, especially when persecution was brought into the mix; it was, still is, a challenge - but the Way of the Shepherd is God's Wisdom.

Back to sheep and electoral campaign signs in the fields of Suffolk. I believe religion and politics *do* mix; they do need to be in dialogue with each other. How we understand the Good Shepherd and how he relates to us influences our compassion and ethics, influences how we as sheep interact with our whole herd, our communities small scale and wider, and it will influence how we vote.

But first, remember who we follow. Jesus: the Good Shepherd, the Gate, the One who deals in abundant life. Read through the Psalm and the Gospel afresh. Look at your own life, look at others' lives.

Who is welcomed? Who is shut out? Why is this? How can we change it? How can we exercise Christ's compassion? Who has plenty? Who needs more? How can it be shared? Pray and take time to dare to reimagine abundant life for our neighbourhoods.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd and the Gate, offers comfort and challenge along with an abundance of grace: let us be open to how this may change us in our thinking, doing, loving, caring, and living. It may even change our voting!

Jesus said, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'

Ali Miller

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 26 APRIL

SUNDAY 26 April 4th Sunday of Easter

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)	Culford
10.00am	Eucharist (CW)	Fornham St Martin
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
12noon	Holy Communion (BCP)	Flempton

Monday 27 April *Christina Rossetti, poet, 1894*

Tuesday 28 April *Peter Chanel, missionary, martyr*

6.00pm	A Quiet Space	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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Wednesday 29 April *Catherine of Siena, teacher of the faith, 1380*

8.30am	Morning Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Thursday 30 April *Pandita Mary Ramabai, translator, 1922*

9.30am	Eucharist (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
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Friday 1 May *Philip and James, Apostles*

5.15pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
6.00pm	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Saturday 2 May *Athanasius, bishop, teacher of the faith, 373*

SUNDAY 3 May 5th Sunday of Easter

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	Fornham All Saints
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
3.00pm	Wonder Club	Lackford

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 3 MAY

SUNDAY 3 May 5th Sunday of Easter

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	Fornham All Saints
11.00am	Sung Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
3.00pm	Wonder Club	Lackford

Monday 4 May English saints and martyrs of the Reformation Era

Tuesday 5 May

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

Wednesday 6 May

8.30am	Morning Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
9.30am	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
5.00pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	St George's, Bury St Edmunds

Thursday 7 May

9.30am	Eucharist (BCP)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
6.00pm	Adoration and Benediction	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Friday 8 May Julian of Norwich, spiritual writer, c1417

5.15pm	Evening Prayer (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
6.00pm	Eucharist (CW)	St John's, Bury St Edmunds

Saturday 9 May

SUNDAY 10 May 6th Sunday of Easter

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

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH
ANSELM CENTRE
IP32 6JZ

KNIT AND NATTER

**FORTNIGHTLY
TUESDAYS**

**2:00PM -
3:30PM**



We knit squares to make blankets to help support the work of Hamlin Fistula UK.

<https://hamlinfistulauk.org>

This registered charity is dedicated to the prevention and treatment of childbirth injuries in Ethiopia.

For information about knitting squares contact

jc.mann@btinternet.com

Thingoe Deanery
Choral Evensong
Sunday 10 May at 3pm



St Peter's Church
Thurston
Followed by refreshments
All welcome!

NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE

to the

Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham

Bank Holiday Monday, 25th May 2026

Leaving St John's at 8.45am

following Morning Prayer at 8am



12 noon Solemn Mass *in the* Abbey Grounds
followed by a picnic lunch

2.45pm Sermon
followed by Procession and Benediction

5pm Depart

Book to join us on our minibus ~ fare £30
payable to Michael Wilde in advance.

Come with £5 to buy an entry programme, bring a picnic
and something to sit on, and be prepared for all weathers.

*Please contact Mother Ali on 01284 728714
or teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com*

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

Praying Together ~ May 2026

For the wider community and church

- 1 F For all badly affected by cost of living difficulties
- 2 S West Suffolk Council

- 3 S** Suffolk County Council
- 4 M Parish Councils
- 5 T Bury St Edmunds Town Council
- 6 W Deanery Synod
- 7 T Our Churchwardens and PCC members
- 8 F Deanery Synod; our Rural Dean, the Revd Dr Andrew Miller
- 9 S All who contribute to and read our magazines and news sheets

- 10 S** For those maintaining and using our website & other communications
- 11 M St Catherine of Alexandria, Flempton
- 12 T *Growing in God* worship, work & witness in Flempton
- 13 W All who live in Flempton
- 14 T All who are unable to attend church
- 15 F Bury Christian Youth
- 16 S Our work with children, families & schools

- 17 S** Mustow Street, Cotton Lane & Eastgate Street area
- 18 M Northgate Street area; Suffolk Deaf Association
- 19 T Crosspenny Court & Redwood Gardens sheltered accommodation
- 20 W Mental health services
- 21 T All who live in Fornham St Martin cum Fornham St Genevieve
- 22 F Fornham St Martin church
- 23 S *Growing in God* worship, work & witness at Fornham St Martin

- 24 S** Fornham House Care Home
- 25 M The Pines assisted living residence
- 26 T Havebury Housing
- 27 W Our organists, choirs and other musicians
- 28 T For all affected by domestic violence, child & vulnerable adult abuse
- 29 F Our Parish Safeguarding Officers
- 30 S Water, energy & telecommunications providers

- 31 S** Pubs, cafés & restaurants in our benefice

Bury Town Pastors

URGENTLY need **Town Pastors** and **Prayer Team** members.

It is such a privilege to be able to show the love of Jesus while caring for people on the streets of Bury St Edmunds on Saturday nights from 10pm to 4am. We are urgently in need of some more Town Pastors, and Prayer Team members (who support by praying at our base at St John's Centre in town or in their own home).

- Please prayerfully consider applying to be a Town Pastor, or to be part of the Prayer Team, praying at our base or in your own home.
- We would ask you to be 'on-duty' on one night each month (on a date that is convenient for you) as a Town Pastor or praying in our base, or one hour on one night each month praying at home (at a time between 10.00pm - 4.00am that suits you).
- If you are unsure, please contact Jo Copsey to have a chat and/or to arrange to come out with the Town Pastors for an hour or two, or to visit the Prayer Base.

Town Pastor Training Dates:

Sat 16th May 2026 (9am – 4pm)

and 4 evening sessions on:

Wed 20th May, Thurs 4th June, Mon 8th June, & Tues 16th June.

There is one training session for Prayer Team members.

If possible, Town Pastor applications should arrive by Tues 5th May 2025.

Applications received after this date will be considered as long as places are still available on the Town Pastor training course.

Prayer Team applications are welcome anytime.

Download information and application forms from the website:

www.burytownpastors.org.uk

or contact Mrs Jo Copsey, tel: 07594 334215

or email: jocopsey@burytownpastors.org.uk

Caption Competition Result



This week's entries included ...

Michael thought he'd better erase the graffiti before the next service.

Gail Bate

'Even Michelangelo had to start somewhere ...'

Julie Morrison

'Now we know what Banksy is short for - Bank Manager!'

Matt Roecer

Michael had just started work on a new Station of the Cross.

Lesley Langley

As he painted, Michael hummed 'A Whiter Shade of Pale'.

Gina Robertson

Michael was sure that a chequered effect would strengthen the application for a Faculty.

Valerie Wilde

Having seen notable successes elsewhere in the press, the Treasurer decided to see if he could produce something that could be auctioned off in future in aid of the roof fund.

Matt Roecer

And the winner is:

Hobbycraft's new art sensation, painting by squares.

Maggie Kealy

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 our Assistant Priest, Sarah Gull, and from priests within the benefice who have 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, but please don't forget to ask permission of those who may therefore appear in the Viral Bulletin.
