

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

VIRAL BULLETIN

25 January 2026

Conversion of Paul

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



**Push past mulch-frost-snow
Delicate bells sway and chime
Wintry carillon**

*Snowdrops in the churchyard at Fornham St Martin
Photograph and haiku by Ali Miller*

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Conversion of Paul

Jeremiah 1.4-10 or Acts 9.1-22 Psalm 67
Acts 9.1-22 or Galatians 1.11-16a Matthew 19.27-end

"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

This is probably one of the best-known questions in our holy scriptures. We really cannot underestimate the importance for the developing church when Saul – or Paul as he was known later on – meets the risen Christ on the Damascus road.

This experience is, quite simply, a turning point for Paul personally. He speaks of it several times in his letters (including our reading from Galatians this morning which echoes our reading from Jeremiah) and we find it mentioned on two more occasions in Acts.

Paul's conversion led to him being called to a ministry which would have a massive effect on the way the church was to grow and learn how to live as the body of Christ in the world. It's actually quite a shocking episode – the effect on Saul is so great that he falls off his horse on to the ground. This force of hearing the voice and seeing the light comes at him so powerfully that he cannot stay upright.

Actually, there's no mention of a horse in the Acts account but it's very likely that Saul was on horseback on his journey. Artists have often depicted Saul as falling off his horse in order to emphasize the magnitude of his fall because to ride a horse then was a sign of power and authority. It's one thing to fall over when you are standing up or walking along slowly. It's quite another to fall off a horse moving at speed.

One moment Saul is riding high, maybe a bit pleased with himself for being permitted by the authorities to arrest any Christians – those followers of the Way with their challenge to the religion of Saul and his forebears and their talk of the Messiah who has risen from the dead. Saul may well have felt that he was indeed doing God's will in trying to get rid of them.

The next minute, bang! Saul is utterly helpless, grovelling on the ground, maybe winded and bruised from his fall, blinded by the light and needing help to get about. We are told he was like this and was fasting and praying for three days – the same amount of time that Jesus lay in the tomb before his resurrection. This experience is literally a huge come-down for Saul, he's been laid low and humbled by the one he was trying to annihilate.

Saul isn't just any old person either, he's highly educated, he's really bright and clever. His tutor was Gamaliel who was one of *the* great rabbis of the age. Saul is the sort of person who would have picked up every prize going at university and might confidently have had the prospect of a really glittering career ahead of him. Furthermore, he is a high-status Pharisee and also a Roman citizen. He has everything going for him.

And then this happens. He sees the risen Lord. He hears his voice. Nothing for Saul will ever be the same again. His life is turned upside down. Instead of giving orders and being in charge, he is ordered to go into the city and await instructions. So for three days Saul does nothing, he doesn't eat or drink. He has to wait for an ordinary disciple, Ananias, who is a nobody, not an apostle, just a faithful follower of Christ to come to him.

Now when Ananias learns what he is to do, he starts arguing and tries telling the Lord a few home truths about Paul – just in case the Lord needs to be told.

I expect we've all done something similar and have tried arguing with God about something. Sometimes we forget that God knows everything and we



Conversion of St Paul

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, 1600

feel we have to put him straight and tell him what's what. Ananias is being very brave because he is very likely somebody that Saul would have had arrested without a second thought before all this happened. But the Lord simply tells Ananias to get on with it.

So Ananias puts his trust in the Lord, takes his courage in both hands, and he does what he is told. We notice that he doesn't rebuke Saul or tell him it serves him right that he can't see – no, he simply comes up to him, lays his hands on him and calls him Brother.

To call someone Brother when you know that not so very long ago this person would have been out to get you is quite something. By obeying instructions, Ananias enables Saul to regain his sight immediately and be baptized.

Paul has to shed his pride and be humbled before the Lord. Who knows, maybe he had had a sense that he was being called by Jesus to follow him on previous occasions, but had ignored the gentle touch of the Lord. Maybe this very forceful, direct experience was the only way the Lord could find to get Paul to pay attention.

Because of this experience Paul has to completely re-evaluate who he is and rethink his personal and cultural identity. It may be that some of us today have experienced something similar when we have had to reconsider exactly who and what we are under the gaze of the risen Lord.

This is not an easy thing to do, it may be very painful. That's why if we have been fortunate in having someone like Ananias alongside us we should give thanks. That's why many Christians find it helpful to have a spiritual director or soul friend to go to for guidance and to help with discerning where the Lord is leading them.

In fact, we should be thankful for all the good people who have helped us on the Way as we follow Christ. Today, let's remember and pray with thanksgiving for all those who have ministered to us as kindly as Ananias did to Paul.

Julia Mann

Lark Valley and North Bury Churches

SERVICES WEEK BEGINNING 25 JANUARY

SUNDAY 25 January Conversion of Paul

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
12 noon	Holy Communion (BCP)	Flempton

Monday 26 January Timothy and Titus, companions of Paul

Tuesday 27 January

6.00pm	A Quiet Space	St John's, Bury St Edmunds
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Wednesday 28 January Thomas Aquinas, priest, philosopher, teacher of the faith, 1274

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

Thursday 29 January

9.30am	Eucharist (CW)	All Saints', Bury St Edmunds
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Friday 30 January Charles, king and martyr, 1649

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

Saturday 31 January John Bosco, priest, founder of the Salesian Teaching Order, 1888

SUNDAY 1 February Presentation of Christ in the Temple Candlemas (transferred)

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

WONDER CLUB

Wonder Club is our monthly
All Age afternoon benefice service,
using Godly Play.

We meet at St Lawrence, Lackford, 3pm
Expect stories, wondering, craft, cake



2026 dates
1st February
1st March
12th April
3rd May
7th June
5th July

What does Godly Play offer?

Ways to be community - Building trust and exploring together

Ways to create sacred space - Making a place to wonder, and taking time to reflect

Ways to get inside stories - Discovering the languages of word, gesture, symbol and silence

Ways to search for meaning - Supported by community, story and space, deepening spiritual meaning in our lives

Lark Valley and North Bury Team Ministry

Praying Together ~ February 2026

For the wider community and church

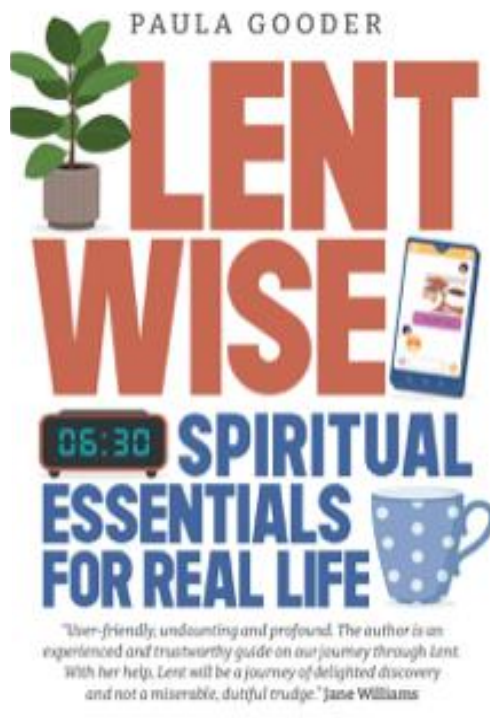
- 1 S For all with money worries
- 2 M The sugar beet factory
- 3 T The Job Centre Plus office
- 4 W Bury St Edmunds Library; The Lark Valley Library Van
- 5 T Bury St Edmunds Market
- 6 F Springfield Road housing area
- 7 S The Suffolk Regiment museum; The Territorial Army centre

- 8 S The Leisure Centre
- 9 M The Westley Estate
- 10 T County High School (formerly Westley Middle)
- 11 W Adults and children with special needs
- 12 T Social Care Services & for all caring for relatives at home
- 13 F The emergency services, fire, police & ambulance
- 14 S The East Anglian Air Ambulance

- 15 S The Railway Station
- 16 M The Bus Station
- 17 T Local public transport
- 18 W Spring Lane & Thingoe Hill housing areas
- 19 T All who live in Hengrave
- 20 F St John Lateran, Hengrave
- 21 S Hengrave Hall

- 22 S Beetons Way, Tollgate Lane & Fornham Road areas
- 23 M The Howard Estate; Newbury Community Association
- 24 T Tollgate Primary School
- 25 W County High School (formerly County Upper)
- 26 T St Benedict's School; Howard Community Academy
- 27 F For all affected by family breakup
- 28 S For those who are lonely or who have lost faith in the Church

LVNB Lent Course



It is time to make our Lenten journey together and this year our course is from Paula Gooder's updated book, Lentwise.

The session titles are Compass, Nourishment, Light, Shelter, Water.

Each week the journey is aided by passages from John's Gospel.

It is not necessary to purchase the book.

And don't worry if you cannot make every session – just come to what you can.

Saturdays: 21st, 28th February, 7th, 14th, 21st March

10-11.30am St John the Evangelist, St John's St, BSE

**Simply turn up, or, to express interest, contact Mother Ali
teamvicarlvnb@btinternet.com**

A Rocha UK

Easy Eco Tips 2026

The RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch (Friday 23-Sunday 25 January) is the world's largest garden wildlife survey. Last year, nearly 600,000 people took part and over nine million birds were counted.

We've lost a staggering 38 million birds from UK skies in the last 60 years. With birds facing so many challenges, it's more important than ever to get involved in the Birdwatch.

To take part, spend one hour counting the birds you see in one location – your garden, balcony or a local park (*or perhaps your churchyard?*). Then submit your findings to the RSPB. You can download a free guide and ID chart to help you identify the birds you spot on the RSPB website.

Contacts

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We also have assistance 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.
