

# The St John's Messenger

Come to faith, grow in faith, and live out faith  
– News from St John the Baptist, Grove



## WHAT COMES NEXT?

The disciples have been through a lot. They experienced the rollercoaster of the Easter season, from the trauma and tragedy of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, to the triumph of Easter Sunday and the empty tomb. Jesus has met with them, taught them, and cooked for them, and now he is about to return to the Father. I imagine that they had a lot of questions about what comes next, how will this all work out, and who is going to guide them.

But Jesus left his followers with instructions; they would go out and share the Good News with others, but first they had to wait, to be ready, for what comes next. The Holy Spirit, the Advocate, was coming, and through the Holy Spirit's presence with them, they would see God's kingdom spread from across their country to all the corners of the world. That's the plan. As a community of followers of Christ, they were called to help people come to faith in Jesus, support each other as they grow in that faith, and live out their faith in the places and relationships God was sending them into, to love God and care for those around them.



We will be using the time from Ascension Day on Thursday 14 May, till Pentecost Sunday 24 May (called Ascensontide) as an opportunity to actively wait on God, to pray together and to reflect on where God is calling us as a church, through prayer events and activities. On Saturday 16 May, from 7pm in the church hall, we will be having our Annual Parochial Church Meeting and sharing where we are in our church vision process. **Continued on Page 2**

### Benefice Sunday Services in May

#### Sunday 3 May

8:00 AM BCP Communion, Grove  
9:30 AM Parish Eucharist, Hanney  
10:00 AM Holy Communion, Denchworth  
10:15 AM Holy Communion, Grove  
11:00 AM Parish Eucharist, Challow

#### Sunday 10 May

8:00 AM BCP Communion, Grove  
9:30 AM Parish Eucharist, Hanney  
10:00 AM Holy Communion, Denchworth  
10:15 AM Morning Worship, Grove  
11:00 AM Parish Eucharist, Challow

#### Sunday 17 May

8:00 AM BCP Communion, Grove  
9:30 AM Parish Eucharist, Hanney  
9:00 AM Holy Communion, Denchworth  
10:15 AM Holy Communion, Grove  
11:00 AM Parish Eucharist, Challow

#### Sunday 24 May

8:00 AM BCP Communion, Grove  
9:30 AM Parish Eucharist, Hanney  
10:00 AM Holy Communion, Denchworth  
10:15 AM Morning Worship, Grove  
11:00 AM Parish Eucharist, Challow

#### Sunday 31 May

8:00 AM BCP Communion, Grove  
9:30 AM Parish Eucharist, Hanney  
10:00 AM Holy Communion, Denchworth  
10:15 AM Holy Communion, Grove  
11:00 AM Morning Worship, Challow

Livestream access to the St John's 10:15 AM service can be found on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjvzip6GG1TzWUBwTu5KJtNQFKCfRAuQj>

**Continued from Page 1.** Like the disciples, we will spend time in prayer and worship, waiting on God and reflecting on the path ahead for us as a church over the coming years, before celebrating Pentecost together, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the formation of the church community.

We, too, will have questions about what God wants us to do as a church, how we will go about this, and where the needed resources will come from. This Ascension tide is an opportunity to ask for God's guidance and wisdom, while being reminded that the Holy Spirit is at work in us and through us, and that we are called to step out in faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit, praising and worshipping God our creator, in the power of the risen Christ. The journey may well be bumpy, with sharp turns and unexpected twists, surprises and hidden delights, as it was for the early church. But God will be with us, as we seek His path for our church community, relying on the Lord's strength, this Ascensontide and beyond. - **Revd Alec Gill**

# IRAN A PERSPECTIVE -

## looking back in March ?

I asked someone who had spent two extended spells in Iran and has since then worked with Iranian Christians and converts in this country how he viewed the present war. This was his answer:

"Iran? Where should I start?"

When I was in Iran the seeds of revolution were already germinating. European colonialism, regime change organised by Brilran Issuetain and others, the West's exploitation of Iranian (and the Gulf states) oil, helping themselves to over 90% of the profit generated by Iran's oil, were still running sores. The Shah was seen as a puppet of the US and amassing a personal fortune. Secret police were busy. The Mullahs hated the intrusion of Western values mainly propagated by Hollywood. The intelligentsia and students viewed the West and supported the communist Tudeh party, also strongly anti the capitalist agenda.

The US has never forgiven the American Embassy hostage event and its humiliation in the ousting of Jimmy Carter. The American imposition of sanctions on Iran has been damaging the economy and the well-being of Iranians ever since. Netanyahu has been explicit in his ambition to cripple Iran for 40 years.

Mgr Nazir Ali wrote a very perceptive article for the Telegraph a few days ago saying that the Trump administration have got into a war they



cannot win because they have no understanding of the Shia mindset.

Shia Islam has its origin in the martyrdom of Ali and Hossein, and its followers, the republican guard et al, still see martyrdom as a fate to be welcomed. The Iranian soldiers in the Iran-Iraq war went into battle equipped with a green key, the key to Paradise. If there is a ground invasion or takeover, the insurgency will be unrelenting.

Meantime the wanton destruction by a president who describes bombing as fun is devilish.

Oliver McTernan popped up with a comment yesterday that the assassination of Ali Khomenei was a big mistake. That he had always been adamant that to make a nuclear weapon was incompatible with Islam and that his removal opened the door for others less principled to look for a nuclear weapon as the ultimate deterrent to those who attack Iran, as it is for North Korea. His removal makes that more likely not less. Of course Trumpians do not understand religious conviction."

- **Michael Wenham**

# COUNTING PLASTIC!

I like to think of myself as a bit of an eco-hippy at heart, and I had done the Big Plastic Count before in 2022 and 2024, so I thought: How bad could it be? Dear reader, it was a lot worse than I thought. Not only did I not hold steady compared to previous years – we got through 71 bits of plastic in 2024 - our family gets through more disposable plastic now than ever before, at a shocking 121.

You may be wondering why disposable plastic is a problem in the first place, so I will give you a few stats to paint a picture:

- In the UK alone, households throw away 1.7 billion pieces of plastic per week, or around 90 billion per year
- Only 17% of our plastic is recycled even once. The rest is exported to other countries (14%), buried in landfill (11%), or incinerated (58%).
- Plastic is carbon-intensive to produce, with around 4% of global CO2 equivalents being caused by the production of plastic (Source)
- Plastic doesn't biodegrade well – it just sits wherever it gets left or washes up, slowly breaking down into small fibres called microplastics, which may have detrimental effects on our health and the environment. Microplastics have been found everywhere from the air to the bottom of the ocean, to the remotest corners of the earth, and deep within the human body (Nature Medicine Editorial)

As I can be quite a competitive person, it was personally dismaying to see my high score evaporate before my very eyes, but the truth is plastic isn't an individual problem – it is growing because shops find it convenient, plastic producers are happy to make more money, and society hasn't really laid down any rules yet. As an individual, you don't get a choice in whether your cucumber comes in a plastic sleeve or your toothpaste comes in anything else than a squeeze tube. That's why the **most important thing you can do** is write to MPs and ministers and encourage them to support better laws, such as the attempt at the UN Global Plastics treaty last year. Initiatives like the Big Plastic Count help as well, because they shine a light on the scale of the problem.

Having said that, I don't know of any plastic treaties being negotiated at the moment, and there are things you can do to get a better high score reduce your plastic footprint.

- Thomas Jones



## Eco Tip

There's some great low-hanging fruit in plastic reduction:

- Avoid individually-packaged anything. Buy a sharing bag of crisps, get a single big bottle of juice, buy a roll of biscuits and pack them individually into a lunch-box. And: buy things loose, or in cardboard, glass, or tins where you can!
- A huge amount of our microplastic pollution actually comes from washing polyester clothes. Avoid polyester clothes where you can, or if you can't and you have the money, consider fitting a [microplastic filter](#) to your washing machine.
- Pass along old-but-still good clothes, kids' toys, and household appliances to your friends or to a charity shop. Buy things second-hand. Every plastic item you don't have to buy new is one less thing to go into landfill!



# CHRISTIAN AID WEEK



Spring is now firmly upon us with the bluebells and the wisteria starting to bud. Like the seasons, the second week of May appears and with it, Christian Aid Week, with the flurry of red bunting and envelopes. In Grove, we will be celebrating Christian Aid Week on Sunday 10 May, if you like to note these things in your diary.

This year, Christian Aid Week is celebrating an organisation called 'Beacon of Hope' in Kenya. Beacon of Hope has deep roots in the community of Dagoretti, one of the high density urban settlements in the country's capital, Nairobi. Dagoretti is a tough place to live with land pressures, food pressures and climate challenges, alongside a lack of basic services and facilities. Christian Aid works with Beacon of Hope to support widows, such as Fridah, to build confidence, gain stability and to enable them to face the future. Life as a widow with children and grandchildren to support was really tough. Finding enough money to pay bills and keep a roof over their heads, to put good quality food in their stomachs and ensure school fees were covered – all this was really challenging without her

husband. With the support of Beacon of Hope, Fridah has become so proud today. While she used to think that there wasn't enough space to do anything, she has started a kitchen garden. She now uses small pockets of land incredibly creatively to grow food wherever she can, she has a tiered garden made from potato sacks, uses hydroponics to make use of every drop of water in her garden and maximises the organic compost. Fridah now has an abundant harvest!

Now, Fridah is not only a gardener, but also a businesswoman. She sells her vegetables at the market and she is able to provide for her family. She no longer has the gnawing fear of where will the money come from to meet their basic needs. Now she knows that she will be able to send her children and grandchildren to school and that she can afford to pay her bills and buy food.

This Christian Aid Week, could you support women like Fridah to grow confidence and a build a future? Maybe you would like to grow some seeds in solidarity with Fridah. There will be some seeds available at St. John's on Sunday 10 May that you can grow. So, plant a seed of hope, for we are reminded in the gospels of the mustard seed. As tiny as it is, it grows into a big tree! Likewise, if we have faith no bigger than a mustard seed, it moves mountains. - **Johanna Fadipe**

## CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 10-16 May

There will be a dedicated collection for Christian Aid at the 8.00am & 10.15am services at St John's on Sunday 10 May. Donations can be made via the card reader (on Sunday 10 May only) & Christian Aid envelopes will be available. This year's appeal focuses on urban farming projects in Nairobi, Kenya. Through Christian Aid's partner, Beacon of Hope, women living in urban poverty are being given tools, seeds & training to grow fresh vegetables in small city spaces - food they can cook for their families or sell for income. **Thank you for your support!**





## Annual Ministry re-dedication service

During Holy Week Alec, Miriam and Sarah rededicated themselves to their ministry in the Vale Benefice. The Chrism Eucharist is an annual service held on Maundy Thursday at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. During this significant Holy Week liturgy, the oils used for baptism, confirmation, and anointing are blessed and distributed, and bishops, clergy, and Licensed Lay Ministers renew their ordination and licensing vows as a public reaffirmation of their commitment to ministry. The service brings together participants from across the Diocese, including friends and supporters, with opportunities for those in ministry to robe and join the procession by prior arrangement, and it is often followed by a midnight silent vigil in the Lady Chapel.

# ST JOHN'S DIARY OF EVENTS

**St John's Toddler Group** – Wednesdays in term time – 9.15am – 11am – Hall

**BoW (Badminton on Wednesdays)** – Every Wednesday – 2pm – 4pm – Hall

**Thursday Bible Group** – Bi-weekly (not August & December) Thursdays – 2pm – 3.30pm – Lower Room

**Thursday Badminton** – Every Thursday – 8pm – 9.30pm – Hall

**Friends on Friday** – Monthly (not August) - 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays – 2pm – 3.30pm – Hall, (3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays is a Holy Communion)

**Church Sunday Club** – Run on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of each month during term time in the hall or in the St John's Rooms

**Sunday Club Social** – Run on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays, and during school holidays. Activities in the hall, children must be accompanied by an adult.

**Board Games Afternoon** – Monthly (not August & December) – Usually 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday – 2pm – 5pm – Hall

**Craft & Fellowship Afternoon** – Monthly – 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays – 2.15pm – 4.30pm – Hall

**St John's Senior Youth Group** – Sundays during term time – 6.30pm – 8pm – Hall

(on Sundays where there is a Boardgames event in the hall, Youth Group starts at 7pm)

**Grove & Wantage School Prayers** – 3 times a year – Wednesdays – 4pm – 5pm – Lower Room

(once a school term = late September, January and April).

**Saturday Morning Prayers** – Every Saturday (not 2<sup>nd</sup> of month) – 8.30am – Frances Gillott's house, Grove

## Additional Benefice Services in May

### Wednesday 6 May

10:00 AM Holy Communion, Grove

### Thursday 7 May

10:00 AM Holy Communion, Challow

### Thursday 14 May

10:00 AM Ascension Day Holy Communion, Challow

8.00 PM Ascension Day Worship Evening, Grove

### Friday 15 May

2.00 PM Friends on Friday Holy Communion, Grove

### Thursday 21 May

10:00 AM Holy Communion, Challow

# NEWS FROM ST JOHN'S



## Our APCM

This will be held on the Saturday 16 May at 19:00 in the St John's Church. Come along to find out what's going on at St John's and our vision for the future of the church

## St John's Church Fete

We are looking forward to hosting our St John's Church Summer Fete on **Saturday 11 July 2-4pm**. We will need a team of volunteers to help with stalls, refreshments, children's games etc. Please save tins, jars and bottles of food, drink, toiletries for the tombola, nearly new toys, books, and raffle prizes etc. Please grow plants for our plant stall. Last year we had a great time, with many people coming in from our community. There is a sign-up sheet in the church foyer, please put your name against a stall that you would like to run.

Alternatively, please email

[nicky.gibbard@valebenefice.org.uk](mailto:nicky.gibbard@valebenefice.org.uk)

Please let me know if you can help put up gazebos in the church garden. We will do this from 9.30am on the day. Many thanks, Nicky

## An Evening of Music & Hope:

# JUNGLE

Wheaton Symphony Orchestra:

**Monday 18 May, 7:30 PM at St Andrews Church (OX2 6UG)**

Join us for an inspirational evening in aid of The Jungle - a "community living room" in Cowley providing radical hospitality to those in need. We are delighted to host the Wheaton College Symphony Orchestra, visiting from the renowned Christian theology college in the US. In a unique collaboration, they will be joined by Oxford rap artist BENZA for a program featuring breathtaking orchestral music, C.S. Lewis reflections, and hymns. Suggested Donation: £15

RSVP/Tickets: [victoria.luker@oxfordinitiatives.org](mailto:victoria.luker@oxfordinitiatives.org)

More about Oxford Initiatives can be found on their website - <https://www.oxfordinitiatives.org/>



## Newsletter Article Ideas

With the new newsletter layout we have the opportunity to explore many of the activities we participate in at St John's in more detail, some ideas are listed below.

If you have an idea for an article please get in touch with the Newsletter Team to discuss. Articles should be no more than 500 words in length, possibly with a picture.

[news@valebenefice.org.uk](mailto:news@valebenefice.org.uk)

- My Spiritual Journey
- Book Reviews
- Sub-Committee Updates
- PCC Update
- School Outreach
- Explanation of Services in church (e.g. Christingle)
- Church Group Updates
- Mission Partners
- Church and Community
- Interviews with church members



## Saying Goodbye Remembrance Service Oxford, Oxfordshire

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL OXFORD

SATURDAY, 16TH OF MAY, 2026 - 1PM

A SERVICE FOR ANYONE WHO HAS LOST A BABY IN PREGNANCY, AT BIRTH OR IN EARLY YEARS, WHETHER THE LOSS WAS YESTERDAY OR 80 YEARS AGO. THIS EVENT IS ALSO FOR THOSE GRIEVING THAT THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO HAVE A CHILD.

[SAYINGGOODBYE.ORG](http://SAYINGGOODBYE.ORG)

SAYING GOODBYE IS A DIVISION  
OF MARIPOSA INTERNATIONAL

On the Saturday 16 May at 1pm in Christ Church Cathedral, the Mariosa Trust will be hosting one of our Saying Goodbye Services and as this is the most local service to you this year we wanted to share this information with you.

The service is for anyone who has either personally lost a baby at any stage of pregnancy, at birth, or in early years, or who has been affected by family members' or friends' loss. Whether the loss was recent or 80 years ago, everyone is welcome to attend. We have also extended the services, and gladly welcome anyone who is grieving the fact that they haven't had children. This may be due to circumstance, infertility, or for other reasons - but all are welcome. Babies and children are also invited to come with their families, as the Saying Goodbye service is truly a family event for all.

### “Items offered for Free” and “Wanted/Needed”.

Starting next month we are planning a section of the newsletter dedicated to items you might no longer need but are still serviceable coupled to a section on wanted or needed items. These can be for yourself or for someone else in need.

### Craft and Fellowship afternoon

Sunday 24 May – 2.30-4.30pm

The next session is on 24 May and Carol will be showing us how to make a simple table decoration with a few flowers and some foliage. Anyone over 18 is welcome to join us. Please let Sue Powditch know by 20 May if you are going to come, so that she can let Carol know how much greenery to cut and bases to provide. Email Sue at [suepowditch@gmail.com](mailto:suepowditch@gmail.com) or text on 07833 503674. Also, if anyone is happy to make cakes for our tea at these afternoons then please let Sue know.



### Cornerstone Café and Bookshop

is located on Savile Way, Grove and is open from 9.30 until 4 on weekdays and 10.00 until 3.00 on Saturdays. We serve breakfast and lunch until 2.00 and drinks and cakes until closing. The award-winning Christian bookshop has a wide range of Bibles, Christian books, cards, gifts and fair-trade products.

Advanced notice – Our AGM will be on Tuesday 9 June at 7.30. All welcome to support the trustees as they talk through the past year.

Email: [office@cornerstonegrove.org.uk](mailto:office@cornerstonegrove.org.uk)

Tel: 772280

### Little People need girls clothes!!

The Little People Charity of Grove & Wantage: - desperate for all girls clothes (birth – 15yrs).

Especially needed from birth to 5yrs. Small premature sizes needed too. If you can help please contact the Benefice Office ([office@valebenefice.org.uk](mailto:office@valebenefice.org.uk)).



## It's a sign, as Parish Ale is served again in Wantage

As Wantage Parish revives the ancient tradition of brewing a Parish Ale, the church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul is creating a "Free House" sign to invite the local community in for a pint.

On Saturday 9 May, Wantage Parish will hold its second annual Parish Ale festival, offering two chances to enjoy DiscipAle, brewed by Indigenous Brewery in Chaddleworth.

The lunchtime session starts at 12:00 with performances by the Icknield Way Morrismen and Mabel Gubbins, an all-women traditional sword dancing side. At 7pm, the church will again host the Cakes and Ale Ceilidh featuring Oxfordshire folk band Melobo.

To promote the event, parishioner Christopher Howson, with extensive graphic design experience, painted a sign for outside the church, showing crossed keys for Saint Peter and a sword for Saint Paul.

Christopher said: "I was delighted to paint the sign. The sword and key symbols are familiar around Wantage,

like the Church School badge. I based the Free House sign on old ironwork in the gate between the churchyard and vicarage."

Vicar of Wantage, Revd. Katherine Price said: "After reviving the Parish Ale tradition last year, we're pleased to run this event again. It reflects the Church's commitment to hospitality. We view our church as a Free House—God's House is open to everyone in the community. So we put that on the sign!"

Tickets for the ceilidh are available at: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/wantage/wantage-parish-church>

wantage parish

SATURDAY 9 MAY, WANTAGE PARISH CHURCH

SECOND ANNUAL  
**PARISH ALE FESTIVAL**

DISCIPALE

**12 noon: Lunchtime Session**  
With performances by The Icknield Way Morris Men and Mabel Gubbins Rapper (sword dance team)  
Serving "DiscipAle", brewed with and for Wantage Parish  
Light lunches until 2pm  
No booking necessary

**7pm: Cakes & Ale Ceilidh**  
Dancing to Oxfordshire folk band Melobo  
Ticket price includes your first half-pint of DiscipAle plus a piece of cake!  
£8 adults, £6 under-18s (soft drinks only)

BOOK NOW!  
Tickets at [www.ticketsource.co.uk/wantage-parish](https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/wantage-parish)

Supported by

## Contacts

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**Associate Vicar:** Rev Miriam Jones  
07474095190

[vicarmiriam@valebenefice.org.uk](mailto:vicarmiriam@valebenefice.org.uk)

**Licensed Lay Minister:** Sarah Shackleton  
07587776609

[SarahLLM@valebenefice.org.uk](mailto:SarahLLM@valebenefice.org.uk)

**Benefice Office:** Grove Parish Church, Main Street, Grove, OX12 7LQ

Open: Mon–Fri. 10–12 noon.

01235 771479.

[office@valebenefice.org.uk/](mailto:office@valebenefice.org.uk)

## Useful email addresses

[news@valebenefice.org.uk](mailto:news@valebenefice.org.uk) - Ideas for articles, news items or even if you have feedback

[prayer@valebenefice.org.uk](mailto:prayer@valebenefice.org.uk) - If you have any prayer requests, please send them to the above email address. There is a group that meets regularly to pray together for those requests in confidence.

[QuestionsOfFaith@valebenefice.org.uk](mailto:QuestionsOfFaith@valebenefice.org.uk) - for any questions relating to faith, big or small. These are treated in confidence by our clergy team, only.

[itsupport@valebenefice.org.uk](mailto:itsupport@valebenefice.org.uk) - for any questions relating to St John's related IT issues

[DP\\_Team@valebenefice.org.uk](mailto:DP_Team@valebenefice.org.uk) - for any data protection issues you might have