



St John's News

St John's Methodist Church, Baker Street, Potters Bar EN6 2DZ
www: stjohnbsp.org.uk email: sjnews@stjohnbsp.org.uk

Registered Charity No 1130633

SERVICES

Sunday 6th March

10.30am Morning Worship
with Scout Parade
Graham Phillips

Duty Steward - Dave Best

Plus Praise & Play for under 7s

Sunday 13th March

10.30am Morning Worship
Rev Rosemary Fletcher

Duty Steward - Myra Sloper

followed by General Church Meeting

7.00pm Café Church

Rev Atalie Gaines

informal service with

music, readings and prayer

plus coffee and cake

Duty Steward - Helen Jeckells

Sunday 20th March

**CREATIVE CHURCH and
CHURCH ANNIVERSARY**

10.30am Morning Worship in church

Rev Alan Combes plus

Crafts in Rainbow Room

followed by Celebration

Duty Steward - Dave Best

Sunday 27th March

10.30am Holy Communion

Rev Sue Stilwell

Duty Steward - Robin Burns

Families are welcome to all of our 10.30am services. Under 3s are welcome in church and in the adjoining crèche area at the back. Other children are invited to join Praise & Play or Junior Johns. Contact: Jackie Hart 07825 211657

St John's Methodist Church is part of
The St Albans and Welwyn Circuit
www.midhertsmethodists.org.uk

Superintendent:

Revd Rosemary Fletcher

Circuit Administrator:

Chris Hancock

Circuit Office: 01727 854211

admin@midhertsmethodists.org.uk

March 2022

Dear friends

As you all know, the legal Covid restrictions have now been lifted.

Thank you all for continuing to wear masks even after it stopped being mandatory. The Leadership Team recognises the desire to worship without masks and this is now your own choice but we would ask you to be mindful of others who may be more vulnerable than yourself.

Blessings to you all - St John's Leadership Team



St John's outside notice board

March sees the start of Lent, the six-week period leading up to Easter. In the early Church, it was a time when new converts were instructed in the faith, ready for their baptism at Easter. Over the years, Lent has become a season of penitence, self-examination and fasting. Jesus began His earthly ministry by fasting in the wilderness for 40 days and taught his disciples to fast, 'when you fast.' (Matthew 6:17).

Fasting might involve missing a meal in a day, refraining from TV or alcohol, or whatever gets in the way of us fully focusing on God. What are the reasons for fasting? These are some of the reasons Christians give for fasting:

- The act of giving up something is a tangible sacrifice to God, reminding us of our desire to put him first in our lives.
- Giving up things I value shows me how dependent I can be on other things

rather than God.

- Fasting helps me to surrender my 'idols' to God. When fasting I am reminded of a deeper hunger and need for God in my life: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.' (Matthew 5:6).

I learn to be more dependent on God, while releasing the stuff I depend on in my life.

Lent can also be a time to embrace new spiritual disciplines e.g. joining a study group, 'random acts of kindness', giving more time to prayer and Bible study. Jesus takes it for granted that his disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian's life. Such customs have only one purpose – to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done.' (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

*Come, all who are thirsty
says Jesus, our Lord,
Come, all who are weak, taste
the living water that I shall give.
Dip your hands in the stream, re-
fresh body and soul,
Drink from it, depend on it,
for this water will never run dry.
Come, all who are thirsty
says Jesus, our Lord.*

*Prayer from John Birch: Faith and
worship https://www.faithand-worship.com/prayers_Lent*

serve the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian's life. Such customs have only one purpose – to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done.' (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).



Church Flowers - to remember a special date or event

If you would like to donate for the flowers to decorate the church to remember a loved one or to celebrate an anniversary or for any other reason, the list is on the notice board in the vestibule. Please write your name by your chosen date and pass your donation nearer the time to Margaret, Barbara Thompson or one of the stewards.

Many thanks, Margaret Bland (01707 642086)

FAMILY NEWS

Pat Ware and her family would like to invite you to a service on Palm Sunday 10th April at 2pm for a service of celebration and thanksgiving for the life of Tony, her husband of nearly 60 years. The strong work ethic he had always stood him in good stead when he had his own 3 sons, Graham, Colin and Alan. Tony took a lively interest in many things contributing much to wherever he called home. He will be missed for the contributions he made to the various activities he attended.

John Palmer a much loved previous minister at St John's has now moved to a care home in Redbourn. Pat was very grateful for the 'phone calls and messages received from friends at St John's over the last few weeks. We think of Pat, Nicky, Damon and Kirsty and hold them in our prayers at such a difficult time.

Our thoughts and prayers are very much with **Anne and Roger Croughton** following the death of Roger's sister in law Cynthia.,

Valerie Vessey is recovering well at home after recent surgery on her shoulder and for that we are very thankful. Several members of our church family have had health issues this year. Please if you are able, phone or write to friends from Church - it is important. Many people are still lonely, unable to go out or meet with their friends.

June, one of our Women's Guild ladies, has sadly died in Watford hospital after having surgery on her broken hip. Our sympathy goes to her two daughters. Kim has asked for our prayers at this very difficult time.

John Wilson moved from Hertfordshire in February to be nearer his sister in Devon. Unfortunately the purchase of his new home was unsuccessful. Whilst waiting for a new home he is enjoying living with Margie, his sister. We hope the process will be swift for John.

Helen Barlow (01707 662254)
foodtech16@hotmail.co.uk

Creative Church

In January we looked at the story at the beginning of the bible about Noah. Because of the ark, there was a new start, a rainbow up above, a new start down below. One of the first things Noah did in this new start was to plant a vine tree. Noah put his trust in God and the new start gave him confidence to start again. Perhaps the vine was the symbol of a new start? The fruit from a vine tree are grapes, but sadly Noah became greedy with the grapes as after the ark, Noah did let God down.

In February we moved to the new testament where in John 15: 3 Jesus said: *"I am the vine and you are the branches whoever remains in me will bear lots of fruit."* The roots of the vine that are in the ground represent Jesus - God's Son. The branches represent us. Branches are connected to the vine so we can be connected in friendship with Jesus, but branches can become disconnected in a storm. In the storms of life we can become disconnected in our friendship with Jesus, but by saying sorry and saying yes to Jesus - God's Son, we are special, loved, accepted and forgiven. If we remain friends with Jesus we will bear lots of fruit which gives us confidence in knowing Jesus as a friend. Our crafts this month were pipe cleaner vine trees, planting bulbs and painting pots, fruit flans which included grapes of course! and bead bracelets to remind us to stay connected to God.



Pipe cleaner vine tree and painted pot below



David Rhodes

Lenten Study Group: Songs of the Spirit

Circuit Superintendant Rosemary Fletcher, is hosting a Lent group called Songs of the Spirit on the Psalms, Monday evenings at 7.30pm in Lent on Zoom. There is no need to buy any books - just read the psalms beforehand.

Topic: Monday Lent Group on the Psalms (same Zoom details each week)

Meeting ID: 967 5226 6950 Passcode: 794959

Monday 7th March - Psalms 25 and 51

Monday 14th March - Psalms 2, 8 and 65

Monday 21st March - TBC

Monday 28th March - TBC

Monday 4th April

Monday 11th April



Ash Wednesday Circuit Service - Wednesday 2nd March at 2.30pm

Rev Rosemary Fletcher will be leading this at Hatfield Road Methodist Church which where there will be an optional time in the Service when those attending are offered ashes and these words are said:

'Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.' (Genesis 3:19)

Easter Explained

Have you ever wondered why the first day of Lent is called ASH Wednesday and what is its background?

The "modern" Lent begins 40 days before Easter Day with Ash Wednesday. Lent ends on Easter Eve/ Holy Saturday and in calculating the 40 days, Sundays (the day of celebration of God's creation and redemption) do not count.

But what about the ashes? The Old Testament has several references to the use of ashes as a sign of penitence, and they often went with either wearing a hair shirt or rending one's clothes:

Genesis 18: 27; 2 Samuel 13: 19;

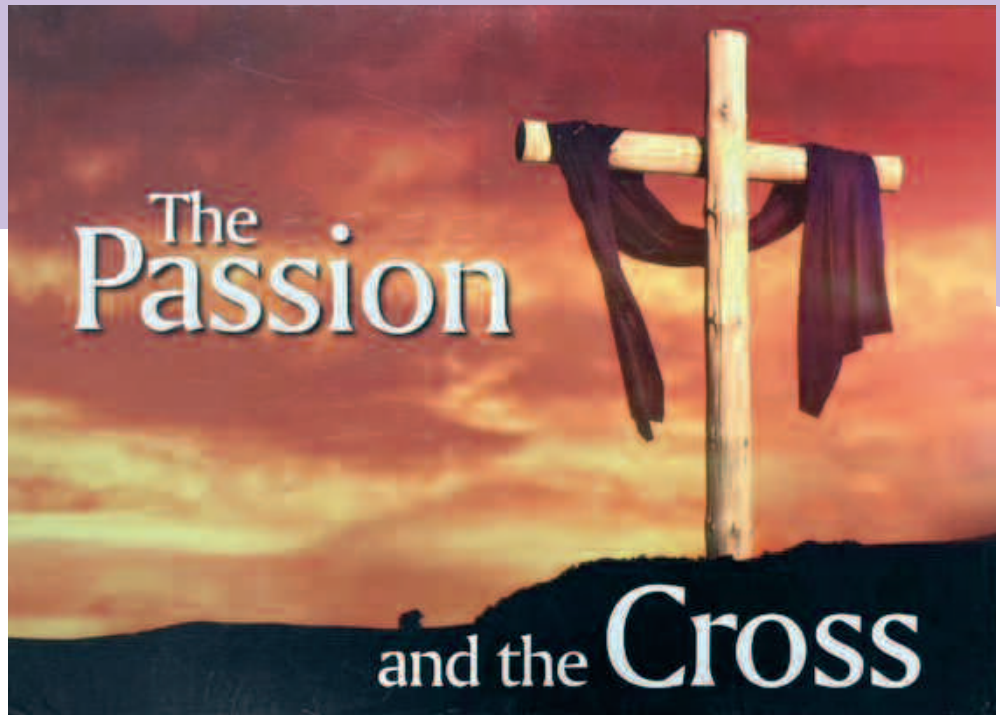
Esther 4: 1-3; Job 2 v 8, 30: 19, 42: 6;

Isaiah 58: 5; Jeremiah 6: 16; Jonah 3: 6.

The ash was sprinkled over one's head as a personal response to sudden changes in circumstances. In the New Testament, Jesus challenges Chorazin in Bethsaida to repent (Matthew 11: 21; Luke 10: 13). But he warns against public show in personal religion. (Matthew 6: 1-6 and 16-21, the most usual Gospel reading for Ash Wednesday)[1].

In the early Church it was the penitent sinners who had ash sprinkled upon them but soon other worshippers wanted to take part in the custom. The traditional OT scripture for this day became Joel 2: 1-2 and 12-19. Which includes the word: *Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³ rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.*

By the 13th Century, worshippers had started to bring back the palms from the previous year to be burnt into ashes. The custom of ashing was abolished in the Protestant Reformation. In recent years the Protestant Churches have recovered many old practices and now see once again the potency of symbols. The Psalm



traditionally associated with Ash Wednesday is Psalm 51. Ashes also express the brokenness of our nature and their use in liturgy points to God as the source of wholeness.

And have you ever wondered where the word Lent comes from?

The word "Lent" is apparently derived from the Old English *lencten*, which means "lengthen." [2] It refers to the lengthening of the daylight hours that occurs in the northern hemisphere as spring approaches. It is in this time of the natural year that the Christian season of Lent falls. Other sources say that Lent comes from the Latin *lento* which means slow and refers to a slower pace of life for reflection.

The origin of Lent was as a time of preparation for remembering the death of Jesus and celebrating the resurrection of Jesus. The observance of Lent was first undertaken by candidates for baptism in the early church, for whom it was the final part of their preparation before initiation into the Church in the Easter liturgy. Those who had been excommunicated would also be readmitted to the sacramental life of the church after a period of penance. It was not long before the early church added fasting to penitential prayer as part of its preparation. Later the church decided to parallel the time of Jesus in the wilderness and thus a period of 40 days was thought to be appropriate. Giving up things for Lent is part of the spirit of penitence and also to provide a contrast with the joys of Easter. Also, as we are tempted, so we remember Jesus in the wilderness and also as we

desire the things we are denying ourselves, so we reflect on our desire for God. So as Lent progresses, Christians are invited on a journey of prayer, fasting, self-examination and self-denial, and asked to read and meditate on God's holy word. In many Churches across the world it is a time of taking on extra Bible Study. Some churches cancel business meetings in Lent in order to free people up for Study and Prayer. Some Churches do not allow flowers in the Church, and traditionally the "Alleluia" and "Gloria" acclamations are not used. This is what the Church gives up in order for Easter to be a joyful contrast. However, it is essential to remember that nothing we do through fasting, self-denial, or good works can ever earn God's forgiveness or "pay Him back". Love, mercy and forgiveness are the free gifts of God. Lent is not about our giving up something to please God. Lent is about what Christ gave up for us.

The first Sunday in Lent is traditionally a time when the temptations of Christ are remembered.

But as we prepare to enter Lent, is God asking us to give up something or maybe take up something for him? A time for prayer and reflection? An increase in our giving to church and good causes?

How is our journey through Lent to be marked?

Rev Rosemary Fletcher

[1] Kenneth Stevenson, *All The Company of Heaven* (Norwich, Canterbury Press) p 152

[2] Colombia University Press Encyclopaedia, <http://answers.org/issues>

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Senior Steward: Myra Sloper 01707 875846 (seniorsteward@stjohnspb.org.uk)

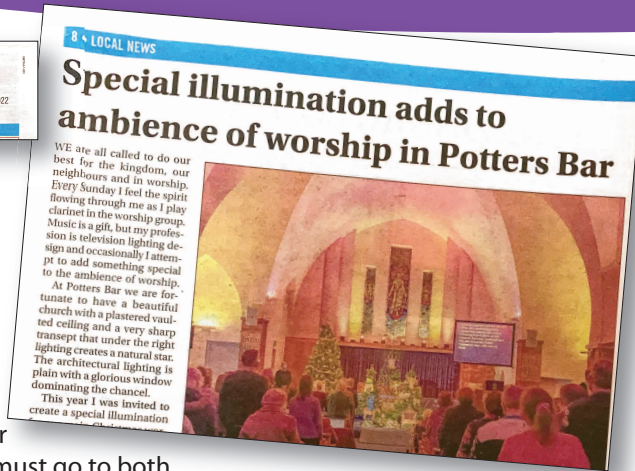
Treasurer: Rob Ward 01707 645343 (treasurer@stjohnspb.org.uk)

Lettings: Chris and Lesley Humphreys 01707 851320 (bookings@stjohnspb.org.uk)

Nursery Playgroup: Celia Mills 07969 924482

Copy deadline for next issue is Sunday 20th March

Articles in 'St John's News' contain personal opinions of contributors and may not reflect the opinions of the Editors, Minister or Members



St John's in the news

Our beautifully illuminated All Age Nativity Service has been mentioned in the national Methodist Recorder newspaper! Special thanks must go to both Don and Les for planning and producing the wonderful display.

World Day of Prayer - Friday 4th March

'I Know the Plans I Have For You'
Jeremiah 29:1-14.

2022 is a special year for the World Day of Prayer in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWN). These 'home nations' have prepared the World Day of Prayer.

The program is based on the letter that the prophet Jeremiah wrote to the exiles in Babylonia. The exiles were suffering uncertainty and opposing views on how to respond to the moment. The WDP 2022 theme is an invitation to place our trust in God in times of suffering.

Through the service worshippers will hear the stories of women who feel excluded, listen to the fear of a child

refugee and learn the context of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-faith society in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



The WDP 2022 artwork, created by Angie Fox, depicts key words such as, Freedom, with an open door to a pathway across an endless open vista; Justice, with broken chains; God's Peace and Forgiveness, with the dove of peace and a peace lily breaking through the pavement. Above is a rainbow from the story of Noah which is a symbol of

the overreaching love of God.

More information including local events and downloadable resources, can be found at <https://www.wwdp.org.uk/>

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

more details on website

- Mondays** 10.00 - 11.45am Jumping Johns Toddlers (*Margaret 01707 659845*)
10.00am - 12.00pm Can We Fix It Group (*Roger 01707 650438*)
2.30 - 4.00pm Women's Guild (*Barbara 01707 656483*)
- Wednesdays** 6.30 - 8.00pm Cubs (www.4thpottersbar.scoutsonline.co.uk)
8.00pm Strafford Gate House Group (*David Carter 01707 658297*)
8.00pm Bible Study in Clifton Room (*Lesley Humphreys 01707 851320*)
- Thursdays** 7.00 - 8.30pm Scouts (www.4thpottersbar.scoutsonline.co.uk)
- Fridays** 10.30am - 12.00pm Morning Coffee in the Clifton Room
2.00pm Byng Drive House Group (*Dawn Fenner 07969 924346*)
6.15 - 7.15pm Beavers (www.4thpottersbar.scoutsonline.co.uk)

A message from our Treasurer

As we approach a new tax year, I invite members to review and, if they feel able, increase their regular giving to the Church.

Our preferred method for receiving regular donations is by means of a standing order in favour of the Church bank account. If any members or friends would like to set up a new standing order please speak to me or any of the Church Stewards and we will be pleased to help you.

The leadership team is extremely grateful to all our contributors for their ongoing generosity in these difficult times. This has enabled the Church to honour all its financial commitments, for example for Circuit ministry, and ensure that the premises are well maintained and fit for purpose.

Robert Ward

treasurer@stjohnspb.org.uk

Fire Safety

Thank you to everyone who took part in the recent fire drills which were held as a post lockdown catch-up as we were informed that we had a Herts Fire Brigade inspection for 14th February.

Three were held. The first was after the service on Sunday 30th January when 74 people were evacuated safely from the building. This was one of the best evacuation drills we have had, although in future we need to move a bit more quickly to meet the target times of 2 minutes - please!

The Playgroup held two drills because there was a lot to learn from the first one and resulting in the second one going well.

The Fire Brigade inspected all our systems and records on 14th February as planned, and gave us an excellent report. They have suggested we transfer some of our records to a computer storage system off site to prevent them getting destroyed in any fire. This is already underway.

Peter Barlow