



Parish of St Peter & St Paul, Abington
- the Church in the Park -
**Welcome to our March Newsletter
2024**

Rector's Pastoral Letter

Ash Wednesday and Valentine's day

This year, Ash Wednesday and Valentine's day fell on the same day. How often do you think this happens? It happened in 2018 which was the first time in a century. And then this year. Then the next time will be in 2029. After that, it won't happen again until the year 2170!

It is a pretty rare occasion. I wonder if there is a message in this? In fact, I think there is something in common between the Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day. That is love.

Love? Wasn't Ash Wednesday about repentance? Wasn't that why we put ashes on our foreheads as a symbol of repentance and our mortality?

Yes, that's part of the story. But there is more to that story which I would like to talk to you about. It has to do with a story that is the beginning of all stories. The story of creation.

The Bible tells us that God created us and this world out of nothing. Before that there was nothing. This is the starting point of all Christian theology. *Creatio ex Nihilo*: Creation from Nothing.

So what made God to create us and the world? Well, there is no other reason than it was the choice that God made out of his absolute freedom.

He didn't have to make any of us. It wasn't like he needed a company or he was feeling lonely or bored. He didn't owe anything to anyone. And yet God, in his super abundant, overflowing love, chose to make each and every one of us. And he did so in such a unique way. Every single one of us is a handmade, limited edition, uniquely reflecting God's own image and glory. If we were on a

shopping catalogue for Valentine's day, we would have been the most expensive, unique item. *'Hand made by God'*. How about that as a tag to wear? But there is another message in it which is this: Our life didn't begin from us. Your life didn't begin from you. My life didn't begin from me. It began from God and his love. Before God's hands touched us, we were nothing. *Creatio ex nihilo!* So we hear the words as we receive ashes. 'Remember you are dust.' But did you notice, there is a profound hope in that phrase?

Our life didn't begin from us. It began from God. And because it began from God and his love, no matter how big a mess we make with our lives, it cannot undo what God has started in the first place. We are still uniquely handmade by God with his love. If we can remember that, those ashes become a sign of hope as well as repentance.

There is one more thing to remember. God who created us out of nothing does not want us to turn back to nothing. That is why we will hear the story of Noah on the first Sunday of Lent. Even in the deepest pit of sin and corruption, God leads Noah to renew his covenant with his creation.

In the same way, God will complete his creation in us that began in the beginning. If we can receive that promise through faith, then those ashes become a sign of God's promise as well as our mortality. Though our mortal bodies and organisms of this world may turn back to ashes, the work of God in us and the purpose of his love that breathed life into us will be fulfilled. He will bring all his creation into completion. Everyone and everything will be made anew. Nothing will be in vain. No one will be lost. And he wants you and me to be part of that work towards completion. This ultimate hope and promise of faith is the other story of Ash Wednesday.

So St. Paul said,

As we work together with God, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,

*'At an acceptable time I have listened to you,~
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.'*

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! As servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons

of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute.

We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything. (2 Cor 6.1-10)

Ash Wednesday calls us to remember not only the need for repentance but also the hope and promise in God's creation. Without them, repentance and the ashes on our foreheads is little more than the sad reminder of our mortality and limitations. But if we can remember that the foundation of Ash Wednesday and Lent is love and grace of God, then we can wear our ashes lightly. For these ashes will be to us a sign of hope, love and God's faithfulness that was shown in the beginning of the creation.

And perhaps then, our Ash Wednesday and this Lenten journey may be marked not only by the dark ashes on our foreheads but also by the smiles on our face and the joy in our hearts.

This month's preachers

3rd March, Lent 3: Prester Coleman

10th March, Mothering Sunday: Jan Jones (Reader Trainee of King's Heath)

17th March, Lent 5: Alison Barnes

24th March, Palm Sunday: Passion Gospel

28th March, Maundy Thursday: Rev. Tracy

31st March, Easter Sunday: Rev. Jun

Readers and Intercessors for this month

3rd March, Lent 3: Readers: Douglas Rutherford & Bob Purser

Intercessor: Alan Sutton

10th March, Mothering Sunday: Readers: Junior Church

Intercessor: Junior Church

17th March, Lent 5: Readers: Alan Sutton & Shirralee Smith

Intercessor: Alison Barnes

24th March, Palm Sunday: Readers: Dianne Ward & Owen Warr

Intercessor: Prester Coleman

28th March, Maundy Thursday: Readers: Richard White & Chris Waters

Intercessor: Matthew George
29th March, Good Friday: Readers: Alison Barnes & Jan Abel
Intercessor: Rhiannon George
31st March, Easter Sunday: Readers: Evgenii & Olga Bates
Intercessor: Hilary Hodge

Holy Week Services

Holy Communion during Holy Week

: 25 Mar(Mon)- 27 Mar(Wed) at 7.30 pm at Church

Maundy Thursday Service: 28 Mar, 7.30 pm

Good Friday Walk of Witness: 29 Mar, starting at St. Alban's at 10 am.

This will finish at the Church in the Park with songs of praise and hot cross buns at 11.50 am to which you are welcome to join. Craft activities will be provided for children inside the church. Please look at the poster at the end of this newsletter.

Good Friday Liturgy: 29 Mar, 2 pm

Holy Saturday Devotion: 30 Mar, 5 pm

Stewardship Campaign 2024

We are encouraging everyone to prayerfully discern their giving to the church as we run Stewardship Campaign. If you would like to be a regular giver to the church or would like to discuss ways to do that, please do not hesitate to contact Damian, Chair of Finance Committee at dpickard@virginmedia.com.

Here are some encouraging facts about stewardship. These are just part of the larger picture and the important differences you are making by your giving.

Since the last Stewardship Campaign (Sep 2019) and thanks to your generosity we have:

- Reached to adults over **12,191** times, to children over **1,337** times, and to those online over **11,191** times with the gospel through worship.
- Comforted **2,795** bereaved people through funerals at church, blessed **1,153** people who came to celebrate weddings and baptised **30** souls.
- Shared the gospel with children, young people and their families through Littles Fishes over **1,050** times, through Junior Church over **950** times, through bouncy castles, special events and services over **970** times, and through churchyard projects such as ribbons, hearts and trails more than **15,000** times. Also during the Lockdowns, we reached out to families in need over **70** times through cards and activity packs.
- Shared the love of Christ with the elderly through services in local care homes for **627** times, through home communion and pastoral visits for **308** times, through Bible Studies for **199** times, and through Communion at St. Christopher's for **5,369** times.

Introducing All-Age Eucharist

We are pleased to introduce you to All-Age Eucharist which will occur every two months. All-Age Eucharist is not just for children. However there is something that the Bible encourages us to learn from children. After all, we all are called to be children of God. So it is important that we, as a church, strive to build an identity of one big family that worships together. So our All-Age Eucharist aspire to make our worship simpler, humbler and more inclusive and accessible to all regardless of their age and where their might be in their journey of faith.

The first All-Age Eucharist will be on 10th of March, Mothering Sunday. And then following dates: 12th of May, 14th of July, 8th of September, 3rd of November.

Thank you message from Baby Basics

Last year, we filled several Moses baskets in church, filled with your love and helpful items for babies and mums as we continued to work together with Baby Basics, Northampton, a charity that supports babies and mums in need. This is one of the messages that we received from them.

A few weeks ago, a Health Visitor called who was extremely worried about a family in Northampton she had just met who didn't have a safe place for their baby to sleep and barely any of the essentials baby needed.

We were able to provide them with an emergency neutral starter pack that was held by St Peter and St Paul Abington Church in case of an urgent need in their community.

This meant they had a Moses basket, bedding, clothing, toiletries for baby, toiletries for the new mum and our referrer has peace of mind.

We are incredibly thankful for the support of the church and a particular thank you to Melissa who made herself available to meet the Health Visitor to hand over the pack 🧡

The church will hold this family in their prayers at their service today. St Peter and St Paul Abington Church have provided so much generosity to us already over the last 12 months and this emergency referral showed the importance of our community working together to support vulnerable families in Northamptonshire 🧡



To this, another local charity responded, saying

Thank you for sharing this heartwarming story! ❤️ It's truly inspiring to see communities coming together to support those in need. Sending thanks to St Peter and St Paul Abington Church for their generosity and to Melissa for her kindness in helping the family. Baby Basics Northampton please let us know if you need any help. 👍 😊



Thank you message from Read Easy

We supported Read Easy through our Christmas Charity Appeal, raising in total £1,200 for them. Read Easy is a charity that supports people who struggle to read. This is a message we received from them.



Thank you so very much for the very kind donation to Read Easy Northampton and for helping Jill to raise our profile within your church.

I have thanked Jill too and told her that it must have been an amazing message that she put over. She is such a blessing to us

Please thank everyone in church for their kindness and encouragement – it is so appreciated as we try to do all we can to help the people who need us. Thank you.

*Lynne Parker
Team Leader of Read Easy Northampton*

Thank you message from Christians Against Poverty

Thank you for the donation of £1,200.00 from your church towards the work of Christians Against Poverty. Each gift is so valuable and will be used to transform lives, equip churches to thrive and move towards an end to UK poverty.



You're playing a huge part in transforming lives across the UK. Every year, our local church-based services get to share the hope of Jesus, and many respond to the gospel. One CAP client said, ***'I am no longer scared about the future; I am now debt free and I can breathe again. Since joining CAP I became a Christian and was baptised last May. I am now proud to say that I have the Lord in my life and in my heart.'***

We rely on the generosity of churches and Christians like you who share our passion to bring justice and salvation to the lost and hurting. Thank you for joining us, as together we strive towards the world we want to see: transformed lives, thriving churches and an end to UK poverty.

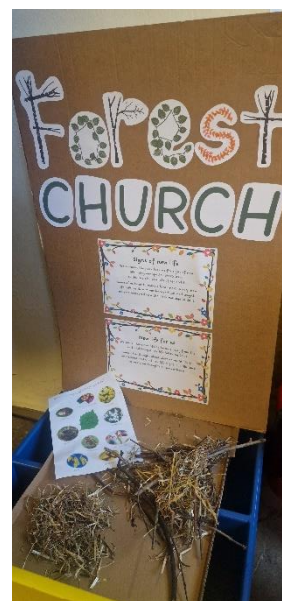
Every blessing,

Ben Stickland, Supporter Care Team

Forest Church

The second Forest Church took place on Monday 19th February at 2 pm at the church. Twenty adults and fifteen children met in the churchyard and Revd. Tracy encouraged us to listen to the world around us. Then we were invited to go out into the park to look at God's creation. We were given a sheet of things to find, like snowdrops and daffodils, new leaves and buds – signs of new life. Some people decided to have a go at making a bird's nest – not as easy as it sounds, and certainly a lot easier for birds to accomplish!

Then we were invited into the church to share what we had seen and found, to sing about the things God has



made (including ourselves!) and to pray. Revd. Tracy encouraged everyone that we can always turn over a new leaf and start afresh, with God's grace.

We then enjoyed a time of fellowship and refreshments, served by Hilary and Rhiannon. Thank you.

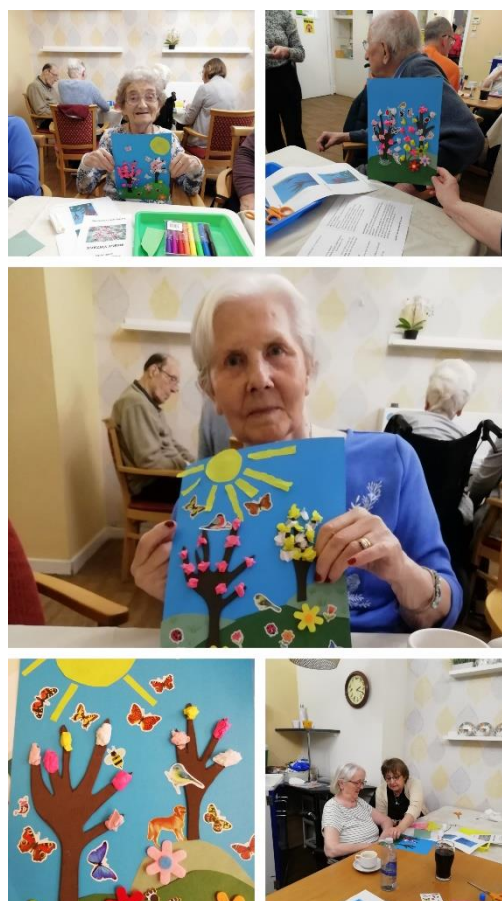
Cathy Tinsley, Children and Youth Missioner

News from the Pastoral Team

Liz, accompanied by Janice and Pat, led Evening Prayer during the Songs of Praise service on 7th February. We read the story of Simeon and Anna from St Luke's gospel and talked about how we can all continue to serve God no matter how old we are. Thirteen residents, family members, and friends enjoyed singing some favourite hymns, including 'Abide with me' and 'The day thou gavest.'

Then on 21st February, Liz, Jackie, Janice, Sandra, Hilary, Elaine, and Jan took part in a wonderful afternoon of Messy Vintage.

The theme was 'A Time for Everything' and we read the well-known passage from the book of Ecclesiastes, 'For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.' (Eccl. 3.1-8). The craft activity was to turn a winter scene of bare tree trunks into a vibrant and colourful spring picture. Everyone enjoyed creating their scenes and here are some photos of the results.



We held a short service of worship at the end starting with this prayer which reminds us that God is always looking after us.
'Faithful God, we come to you with all of our joys and heartaches in the sure knowledge that, no matter what our circumstances, you are always there bringing hope and promise. Amen.'

To celebrate the beauty of nature that we had been thinking about as we created our spring scenes, we ended by singing the hymn, 'For the beauty of the earth.' Everyone agreed that it had been a wonderful afternoon.

Abington Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team continues to support parishioners through regular telephone calls, prayer, and pastoral visits. Home Communion is available too. If you, or anyone you know, would like someone from the pastoral team to get in touch, please contact Liz Kelly, Lay Pastoral Minister and Anna Chaplain. Her contact details are lizmk@outlook.com and telephone 01604 636947 or 07745 604591. We offer a listening ear, someone to pray with, bereavement support, or a friendly visit. Thank you all for your prayers for the Pastoral Team, and for the staff and residents of Abington Park View and St Christopher's Care Homes.



Abington Church Mothers' Union



There has been a Mothers' Union branch at Abington Church for over 100 years. However, after lengthy discussions and prayer, a decision was made last year, that unless a new leader could be found, the branch would need to reimagine itself if it was to continue. We are grateful that both St Alban's and Weston Favell Mothers' Union branches have invited members to join them in fellowship on a monthly basis.

So, as of 2024, there is no MU branch leader or leadership team at Abington Church. 10 members renewed their membership, for which we are grateful. Members are encouraged to attend meetings at St Alban's church, which take place on the second Monday in the month, meeting at 2 pm. For further details please contact the Branch Leader, Jill Kearns, on 01604 555206. Weston Favell MU meetings generally take place on the third Tuesday in the month at 2.15 pm. The Branch Leader is Clare Pearce and she can be contacted on 01604 450026 or ace.pearce@ntlworld.com

There is a **Lady Day service** on **Monday 8th April at 2 pm at St David's Church in Kingsthorpe**. It would be lovely if a few members from Abington Church could attend this service.

Finally we give thanks for the service, support and fellowship of Mothers' Union at Abington Church over the last century. We thank God for His goodness and blessings, and for all the members, past and present, who have served faithfully in this place.

Cathy Tinsley

Previous Branch Leader

**I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cathy, Dorothy, Sue, Jenny and all those who served as the branch leaders in the past for their years of service and dedication for Abington MU. We do hope that we can find an opportunity to recognise this in an appropriate way in the future. But for now, as this decision is announced publicly, let me say thank you on behalf of the parish for your faithful service which continues in many other ways for which we give thanks to God. Thank you.*

With gratitude, Jun

Lent Lunches

We hosted our first Lent Lunch on Saturday 17th February, and it was well attended. We are hosting two more on March 9th and 23rd. All donations at our lunches will be going to our Lent Charities; the Chole Breakfast Club (more info below) and Christian Aid. Please come along and support if you are able.

The Chole Breakfast Club, Debre Birhan, Ethiopia

A couple of weeks ago Bishop Andrew spoke to us about The Chole Breakfast Club. Here is summary of what he said.

Chole Primary School is in Debre Birhan, one of the poorest regions of Ethiopia, Children were often skipping school; and those who came to school hungry often collapsed in class because they had had to walk for two hours, on an empty stomach, to get there. The situation became so bad that teachers started giving up their monthly salaries to give the children breakfast.



The Breakfast Club brought positive change in the well-being of children, especially their health with many suffering from anaemia making massive improvement. Children's education performance also showed significant improvement. The School now provide children with a nutritious breakfast, they also provide the uniforms, books and writing materials. The School also works with parents or guardians, providing training in basic business skills. Parents are also given advice on how to feed their children cheaply and healthily, to reduce malnutrition.

Our money will help 60 children:

- Providing food over 20 days a month for 10 months a year for each child £16,500 (that's £1.30 for each meal)
- Providing uniforms and school materials £2,100 (that's £35 for each child)
- Providing parents/guardians' with business training and some seed funding £7,483 (that's £124 for each guardian/child)

Bread Baskets

Do you have a spare breadbasket at home? Do you have a breadbasket that came from the rooms? If the answer to either question is yes, please could you give them to Dianne Ward. Many thanks

The Northampton Philharmonic Choir

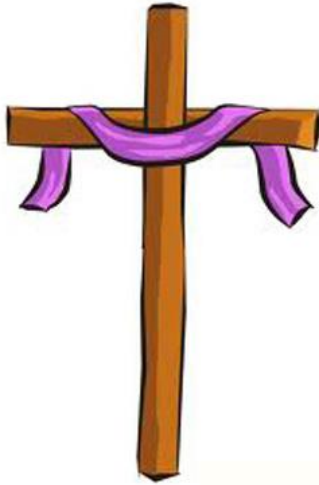
The Northampton Philharmonic Choir are hosting a Come & Sing: Choral Classics event on Saturday 16th March at St Michael's & All Angels, 10.30 am. For more information please visit the website:
<https://www.northamptonphilharmonicchoir.co.uk/>

[Draft Minutes from the last PCC Meeting](#)

Please click the title above to access the link.

Zoom Compline

This is a weekly service at 7.00pm on Tuesdays. In case you don't know, Compline is a quiet, reflective service at the end of the day and includes an open prayer time, so we are able to continue to support one another. The joining details are: Meeting I.D. 815 8020 8528. Passcode 409450 Please talk to Liz Kelly if you want to know more about this and to receive a weekly invitation by email, which enables one-click joining. Her contact details are: lizmk@outlook.com or telephone on 07745 604591.



GOOD FRIDAY WALK OF WITNESS

starting at **10.15 am prompt** from
St. Alban's Parish Church
Broadmead Avenue (coffee from 10 am)

Friday MARCH 29th 2024

Join the walk at any point along the route -

St. Alban's Church - 10.15 am; Broadmead Community
Church - 10.30 am; St. Gregory's Catholic Church - 11 am;
Park Avenue Methodist Church - 11.10 am;
Abington Park Gates 11.30 am;
The Church in the Park - 11.50 am (all times are approximate)

**At 11.50 am if you have children and would like them to join a craft activity
while you join the short service at the Church in the Park,
this will be available in the church**

Organised by Abington Churches Together:-

Abington Avenue United Reformed Church; Broadmead Community Church; Christ
Church; Park Avenue Methodist Church; St. Gregory's Catholic Church; St. Albans
Church; Ss. Peter and Paul



**EVERYONE IS VERY WELCOME TO JOIN US
ON THIS WALK OF WITNESS**

