



St Swithuns with St Andrews Exton

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The Rector writes:

The very early date of Easter this year means that March is full of exciting church occasions, many of which have some special and interesting traditions attached! Our Lent Group will be also be continuing on Thursday afternoons at Exton Church 2:30pm-3:30pm followed by coffee, with the final session on Thursday 17th.

The first Sunday - 6th March - is Mothering Sunday, so there will be special services taking place – do check the list for times at your church, or come to whichever suits your Sunday best. Mothering Sunday was traditionally the time at which young people working away were allowed to go back home to visit their families, and so they would also be able to come back to their 'mother church'. They would collect spring flowers along the way to make a posy for their mother, which is why at many churches there is a tradition of handing out little posies at this service.

Then back to Lent for the next Sunday (13th) – and although it may not be specially named on the official church calendar, for our churches this seems to be Baptism Sunday this year, with a bumper crop of christenings booked! It is always a joy to welcome new members of God's family, and it is a special time for the local churches as well as for the parents, God-parents and other family and friends. The tradition of lighting the little Baptism candle from our big candle reminds us that every Baptism is a commission to carry God's light into dark places – something we never grow out of, unlike those lovely Christening gowns which symbolise the purity of Christ's goodness covering our human frailty.

The following Sunday (20th) is Palm Sunday and two of our churches – Woodbury Salterton and Woodbury are hoping to have a visit from the two lovely little donkeys who came to our service at Woodbury last year. The cross on their backs is supposed traditionally to have been given to them as a mark of honour for having carried Jesus into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. The other tradition followed on that day is the blessing and distribution of Palm crosses, usually made in the Holy Land. Many people take one away and keep it all year, perhaps pinned to a noticeboard, as a little reminder of God's love, blessing and forgiveness.

The next week is Holy Week, and there will be a special service at Farringdon Church on the evening of Maundy Thursday. Various traditions are associated with this day, including the distribution by the Queen of 'Maundy Money' and also services which recall the time when Jesus washed his disciples' feet to show them that Christian leadership was a matter of humility and service, not worldly power. Other traditions are the gathering of clergy and others at the Cathedral for the Blessing of Oils, the monastic service of 'Tenebrae' or 'Shadows' which ends with a 'thunderclap', and special Communion services which recall the Last Supper which Jesus ate with his disciples. Often, the service will finish with the solemn 'stripping of the altar' or a prayer vigil as we remember Jesus praying desperately at Gethsemane the night before his crucifixion.

Friday, of course is the strikingly named 'Good' Friday – good because the terrible events of Jesus's death opened the door for our forgiveness and for the joy of his resurrection. Several churches have special services on that day, and you are very welcome at any of them.

The fact that our calendar is so full this month reflects the importance of the events of Easter in our faith. God is not 'up there' looking down at us, but suffering along with those who suffer, and kneeling down in loving humility to help us get back on our feet when we fall down. Believing in a God like that changes us – and through us, God can change the world. Have a very blessed Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

Easter Sunday

SERVICES IN THE MISSION COMMUNITY



8.00 am **CW Said Eucharist at Woodbury**

9.30 am **Eucharists at Exton, Farringdon, Aylesbeare, Woodbury Salterton and Clyst St George.**

11.00 am **Eucharist at Clyst St Mary**

11.15 am **All Age Eucharist at Woodbury**

FLOODLIGHT DEDICATIONS

10th March 'Happy Birthday Joyce' Love from Mike and all the family.

To have the church floodlit for your special event, contact Mike Jeans 01395 232544

COFFEE AND DRAW

The draw will be made at the Charity Coffee Morning on the third Tuesday of each month. February's winning ticket was held by **Janet Brown**.

BIBLE STUDY/HOUSE GROUP

Open to everyone in the Mission Community at the home of Eileen Pratt, The Greenhouse, Station Road, Exton. EX3 0TR

2.30-3.30 pm on the **fourth Thursday** in the month.

LENT COURSE

Thursdays in Lent at Exton, **2.30-4pm** followed by tea, coffee and biscuits.

LYCHGATE STALL

The next Lychgate stall in church will be on **Saturday 5th March**. More volunteers are required to keep Lychgate Stalls running.



THE CROSS OF CHRIST

This service will be at 9.30am on Good Friday and is a reflective sequence of readings, anthems and hymns for Passiontide.

The choir will be the joint 'Mission Community Choir' and we are always seeking additional singers. If you would like to join the choir for this service, please contact Colin colinashby@gmail.com

Rehearsals will be Tuesday evenings, 7.30-8.45 at Clyst St Mary, starting on 1st March.

Deadline for next Digest **Monday 21st March**
Please send items of Church or School news to the editor at st.swithuns.digest@gmail.com

OPENING UP TO GOD - A Course of Quiet Prayer
Every first Tuesday, 7.30pm to 9.00pm, Woodbury Church Rooms
For further information please contact Carolyn Keep 01395 232318 or Viv Armstrong-MacDonnell viv.a-macdonnell@tiscali.co.uk



Introducing Myself - Christine Grist

Most of you who worship in St Swithuns, Woodbury or any of the other six churches of our White Cross Mission Community will already know that I am a Church of England Reader. I haven't been asked this question here, yet, but I have often been asked 'What is a Reader? What do they do?' And I also asked these same questions of a friend who was going through Reader training while we were both living in Cyprus. I must add here that my husband, Pete, was in the Army hence our posting to Cyprus.

When I met my friend, I was intrigued to know why she was always assisting in leading the worship with the Padre. She said she was training to be a Reader and as I didn't know what that was I just replied with something inane like 'That's seems nice!' Well over the next eighteen months or so I periodically asked her what it was she does and what it meant - was she training to be ordained? - if I wanted to start reading the lesson in church, would I also need to be trained? - and other questions. She was always patient with me and answered my questions so I could understand.

Well, to cut a long story short, during her Licensing Service we were singing the hymn - 'I the Lord of Sea and Sky' - and as we sang the chorus 'Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord?' I felt a strange wave of warmth travelling up and down my back. Now I don't really know if this was the moment I was called to ministry but like to think it is. I thought about this moment over the next few weeks and eventually plucked up courage to speak to the Padre. Well, he just looked at me smiling and said that he had been waiting for eighteen months for me to come and talk to him as he told me he knew I was being called by God. I asked him why he hadn't said anything to me before and he replied that he was waiting for me to realise for myself that I was being called!

I embarked enthusiastically on my training which involved both pastoral assignments and academic studies and was licensed as a Reader in 2010.

Back to the question 'What is a Reader'. Reader ministry primarily involves preaching, teaching and leading worship, but also often involves pastoral work outside of the church service such as visiting the sick both at home or in hospitals, educational work which may include leading Bible study groups, baptism preparation, confirmation classes and Sunday school. They also take some funeral services. Some Readers are also trained in counselling or spiritual direction and much, much more. So the second part of the question 'What do they do?' isn't that easy to answer!

Lent is a good time to reflect and think about whether you feel called to Reader ministry - or any ministry, Ordination perhaps! Rev'd Karen Spray, Rev'd Chris Cant or myself will be pleased to talk to you if you feel you are called to ministry, and will direct you on the right path. Serving God and his people can be hard work at times but it is rewarding, insightful and a duty that is ultimately a pleasure.

MISSION COMMUNITY SERVICES MARCH 2016

Sunday 6th March - Mothering Sunday

8.00am	BCP Said Eucharist	Clyst St George	Rev Karen Spray
9.30am	Eucharist	Aylesbeare	Rev Chris Cant
9.30am	Family Service with Communion	Woodbury Salterton	Rev Karen Spray
11.00am	Family Service	Clyst St Mary	Rev Karen Spray
11.15am	All Age Eucharist	Woodbury	Rev Chris Cant
3.00pm	Sunday Club	Aylesbeare	Rev Karen Spray
6.00pm	Evening Service	Exton	Rev Karen Spray

Sunday 13th March - Lent 5

9.30am	Eucharist with Baptism	Farringdon	Rev Karen Spray
9.30am	Morning Worship	Exton	Lay Led
11.00am	Morning Worship with Baptism	Clyst St. George	Lay Led
11.15am	Eucharist	Woodbury	Rev Anne Smith

Sunday 20th March - Palm Sunday

9.30am	Eucharist	Clyst St. George	Rev Chris Cant
9.30am	Morning Worship	Exton	Lay Led
9.30am	Family Service	Woodbury Salterton	Lay Led
11.00am	Sunday Club in the Church Rooms	Woodbury	Junior Church
11.15am	Morning Prayer	Aylesbeare	Rev Dr David Keep
11.15am	Eucharist	Woodbury	Rev Karen Spray
6.30pm	Evensong	Woodbury	Rev Geoffrey Wrayford

Thursday 24th March - Maundy Thursday

7.00pm	Meditative Service	Farringdon	Mrs Christine Grist
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Friday 25th March - Good Friday

9.30am	'The Cross of Christ' (Passiontide readings and music)	Clyst St Mary	Rev Karen Spray
2.00pm	Meditation on the Cross	Aylesbeare	Mrs Christine Grist
2.00pm	Meditation on the Cross	Clyst St George	Lay Led
2.00pm	Service of Meditation	Woodbury	Rev Chris Cant

Sunday 27th March - Easter Day - see panel for EASTER SERVICES