



Issue 3 – April 2024



Pathway Church: News and Reflections from across the Benefice

Reflections from the Rector

This month we find ourselves in the midst of APCM season. All four of our parishes will meet for their Annual Parochial Church Meetings in April. Aside from being an annual legal necessity, the APCM can be a wonderful opportunity to reflect back on the year that has been and to look forward to the year that is to come.

There is much to celebrate in the life of our church - across all of our parishes - this past year. 2023 saw significant change in some ways, and I recognise that for some this change has been very difficult to navigate, but we have seen that with change has come new life, new opportunities and fresh perspectives on our mission and ministry across the Benefice.

As we look ahead to the rest of 2024 - and the year that is to come - I know there is much that we can look forward to as we seek out God's vision and inspiration for God's Church here in Whittlesey, Pondersbridge and Coates.

“For all that has been, THANKS, for all that is to be, YES!” (and Amen!) - *Dag Hammarskjöld*

APCM Papers will be published online (via our website: Church Life - Reports and Accounts) or paper copies can be picked up from church.

If you'd like to consider becoming a member of one of our Parochial Church Councils, then please do speak to Emily, a Churchwarden or PCC Secretary. You will need to be on the Electoral Roll for that parish.

Emily Davis
Rector

Services and Events for April

<u>Saturday 6th</u>	10am	Women's Breakfast	Not Just Café
<u>Sunday 7th</u>	9:30am	Morning Praise	Holy Trinity, Coates
Easter 2	9:30am	Holy Communion	St Andrew's, Whittlesey
	11am	Sunday Worship	St Mary's, Whittlesey
	6pm	Evening Praise	St Thomas, Pondersbridge
<u>Tuesday 9th</u>	10-noon	Friends Coffee Morning	St Andrew's Hall
<u>Wednesday 10th</u>	7:30pm	Holy Trinity APCM	Holy Trinity, Coates
<u>Saturday 13th</u>	11am	Explore Christening	St Andrew's Hall
<u>Sunday 14th</u>	9:30am	Holy Communion	Holy Trinity, Coates
Easter 3	9:30am	Morning Praise	St Andrew's, Whittlesey
	11am	Sunday Worship & HC	St Mary's, Whittlesey
	11am	Morning Praise	St Thomas, Pondersbridge
<u>Wednesday 17th</u>	7:30pm	St Andrew's APCM	St Andrew's, Whittlesey
<u>Thursday 18th</u>	6:30pm	Bible Study in the Pub	The George, Whittlesey
<u>Saturday 20th</u>	1:30pm	Wedding	St Mary's, Whittlesey
<u>Sunday 21st</u>	9:30am	Morning Praise	Holy Trinity, Coates
Easter 4	9:30am	Holy Communion	St Andrew's, Whittlesey
	11am	Sunday Worship	St Mary's, Whittlesey
		St Mary's APCM	St Mary's, Whittlesey
	6pm	Evening Praise	St Thomas, Pondersbridge
		St Thomas' APCM	St Thomas, Pondersbridge
<u>Thursday 25th</u>	6:30pm	Bible Study in the Pub	The George, Whittlesey
<u>Saturday 27th</u>	7:30pm	Friends Quiz Evening	St Andrew's Hall
Great Nights Quizzing - contact Lynn Palmer on November Quiz night poster for details.			
<u>Sunday 28th</u>	9:30am	Morning Praise	Holy Trinity, Coates
Easter 5	9:30am	Morning Praise	St Andrew's, Whittlesey
	11am	Sunday Worship	St Mary's, Whittlesey
	11am	Holy Communion	St Thomas, Pondersbridge

Regular Services and Activities:

Monday	9-11am	Trinity Tots	Holy Trinity, Coates
Wednesday	9:15am	Holy Communion	Holy Trinity, Coates
Thursday	9:15am	Holy Communion	St Mary's, Whittlesey

What's Happening Across the Team

Boiler Room Zoom Prayers 09.30 Tuesdays & Fridays

Morning Prayers for Pathway Church, this is to be a regular event where you may pray on your own or join us on Zoom you can do this by going to:

www.pathway-church.co.uk/theboilerroom and clicking on the link to join the video call.

A short order of service is available at all of the Churches for you to take away and use.

We are praying that our community may be Blessed.

Stay curious, try Alpha.



The current Alpha is now well underway and was fully subscribed if you are curious to find out more or know someone who may be interested then speak to one of ministry team about booking for the next one or you can book through Alpha website.

Alpha is a great way to explore Faith and Jesus with others sharing friendship and food in a relaxed environment enabling you to explore Faith without pressure.

Parish News

Holy Trinity Coates

Regular Trinity Tots continues to meet on Monday Mornings.

This continues to be a success and with a couple of the regulars having left to go to Nursery there are places for newcomers so please spread the word.

St Marys Whittlesey. The church will be filled with the sounds of Four Seasons

Sunday 21st April, Evening. Bar available too 😊 .

THE RAGDOLLS

In Concert

Celebrating the music of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons

JERSEY BOYS

★★★★★
BUTLINS AWARD WINNERS

★★★★★
VOTED BEST CLUB
SHOW 2019- 21 - 22

★★★★★
NORTH PIER BLACKPOOL
TOP SHOWS ACT

★★★★★
NORTHERN CLUB
AWARDS WINNERS 2022

All those famous Hits From The West End Show & much more

LICENCED BAR

SUNDAY 21st APRIL 2024

St MARY'S CHURCH WHITTLESEY PE7 1TF

ALL TICKETS £12 Available from Bobs Records

ONLINE www.ticketsource.co.uk/more-muzic-radio-cic

St Andrews Whittlesey

Please see below poster for future event. Get swotting and get teams together for this great quizzing event!



Friends of St. Andrew's Church
Whittlesey



QUIZ NIGHT

AT ST. ANDREW'S HALL

ON SATURDAY 27th APRIL 2024

7.00pm for 7.30pm start



CASH PRIZE for WINNING TEAM

RAFFLE



**BRING YOUR OWN
BANQUET AND BEVERAGES**



TEAMS OF UP TO 6, TICKETS £5.00 PER PERSON

TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE

RING LYNN 07767 373264 OR PAT 01733 203152

or email: lynn.palmer20@btinternet.com

St Thomas Pondersbridge

2024 has seen **St Thomas'** continue to be very active and present within the community of Pondersbridge as supporters of our outreach and mission events, have given no opportunity for a new year break. We would like to say a very big thank you to everyone for their outstanding support.



Our “**Open Breakfast**” sessions over the winter months, have proved very popular and by request, it was decided and announced at the March session that we would pop in an extra one to be held on **Saturday 6th April, serving between 9.00 – 10.00 am.**

For those who haven't been before, a selection of breakfasts are cooked to order, on arrival, from a provided menu, the most popular, unsurprisingly, being the “Full English”. Average attendance per session has been 34 people, with all ages catered for. Give it a try.

Can we just ask that you book your seat, by calling 01733 844497 or 07720719420 by the end of Wednesday 3rd April to verify numbers. Thank you.



Our fortnightly Thursdays sessions of “**Crafty Times**” gives those who attend, a time of relaxation to do what appeals to them on the day, be it a craft they choose to bring, a chance to try a new one, to read, unwind, take part in invigorating conversation, or just listen. Sessions of mixed gender and generational support, from infant to 80+ years works well for all, giving a feel of caring inclusion. Held in Pondersbridge village hall (PE26 2TR), light refreshment is provided with a starting time of 2.00pm.

Half Term Activities for Children and Families, continues. Our February session took on the theme of Wildlife, with the Wednesday seeing a total of 15 Bug Boxes, bird boxes and a hedgehog house all made from recycled wood and various products.

The intention was to place them in the churchyard the following day. However, Thursday saw torrential rain, but to our surprise it offered the opportunity of having them enthusiastically blessed by Rev. Jenny Webb, the following Sunday. Immediately following the service, the families and church members placed them around the churchyard, which will enable the children to have a continued interest, by surveying them throughout the year.

On **Easter Saturday** afternoon, our families are looking forward to being back in church to explore the story of Easter, with relating activity and song and to enjoy an egg hunt.

Early spoiler - in response to their successful concert in November 2023, St Thomas's PCC are arranging another concert with “**Echoes From The Past**” performing again in **St Thomas Church on Saturday 8th June, at 7.00pm.** Proceeds will be given to a local Mental Health and Well Being charity in line with our Lent Appeal. Full details will be given out in due course. Please make a note in your diary so that you don't miss this special event.

Watch out too, for details of some of our proposed events:- Afternoon Tea, Suppers, Our own P'Olympics to celebrate the Olympic Games of 2024.

Other News and Information



Mothers' Union for the March Deanery

The March Deanery Mothers Union Branch was formed over 25 years ago. Initially it was so that women working could take part in the world of the Mothers Union. We continue to meet during the pandemic online and when we went back to in person meetings decided to meet in the afternoon, as those outside March town might find it easier to get to meetings.

Like all MY Branches, we meet monthly and have speakers and activities. One of our main projects is support in various ways for the Fenland Women's Refuge. With this we also work to raise awareness of gender-based violence.

We meet in each others homes on the third Tuesday of each month at 2:30. The main difference is that the March Deanery Branch is open to **anyone** in the Deanery. We know that the number of MU Branches in the Deanery have closed and that new people are moving into parishes all the time and we want to extend an invitation to anyone interested in the work of the Mothers Union to know they are welcome to join our meetings and our Branch if they wish.

For more information contact:

Sue Rutter on 01354 651892 or email derek@rutter-force9.co.uk

What a busy time April is so much going on !!

If you like a Pint with your Bible study, or coffee or Cola see session of Bible studies to run at The George starting in April. Poster below .

Mothers Union has a deanery group open to all info below and Roger Brown has sent me a picture and update to add to the over seas Whittlesea down under post from last month.

Any info or additions for May (yes May !) can you please e mail me by 20 April.

Belinda.clapperton@pathway-church.co.uk.

Colossians

and Philemon at The George

*A Bible reading series over five weeks,
exploring Jesus and the church
through two of Saint Paul's letters.*

**Thursday evenings
from 6:30pm at
The George**

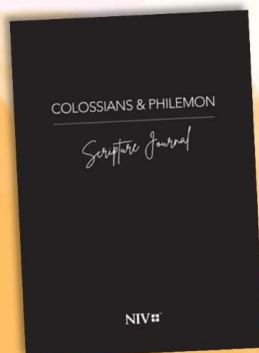
- 18 April — Colossians ch. 1
- 25 April — Colossians ch. 2
- 2 May — Colossians ch. 3
- 9 May — Colossians ch. 4
- 16 May — Philemon

**Please read the chapter
before the session and
consider these questions:**

What surprised or
excited you about God
in the chapter?

What made you feel
uncomfortable or unhappy?

What left you confused?



An accompanying Scripture Journal with space for notes is available to buy at www.pathway-church.co.uk/bookshop which is not essential but may be useful.

Any questions regarding this study series can be sent to lloyd@pathway-church.co.uk

Prayers across the water



We now have this picture update of Pat Marston with Rev. Walter and on this occasion, there was 9 in the congregation.

Roger Brown has shared this email with us from Australia they sure are facing challenges but it appears Prayers are being answered and they are rebuilding the structures and the size of the congregation.

On Sunday 4th February the parishes of our benefice and the parishes of Christ Church Whittlesea and St Peter's Kinglake in Australia especially prayed for each other. Our prayer requests were for the ministry and mission of the Church in the benefice; for Revd Emily and the Ministry Team, for the people of our parishes and for guidance as we look at 'Leading your Church into Growth.' For help with the costly maintenance of our church buildings remembering the work of our churchwardens and church council members.

Last year we found out that the priest that was there, left in May 2022 and that a locum priest the Revd Pirrial Clift was looking after the parishes. Pat Marston visited Whittlesea last March but Revd Pirrial contracted Covid-19 and had to cancel services. Since then, a new priest has been appointed, the Revd Dr Walter Firth and prayer requests were received from him as follows.

Dear Roger,

Thank you for your email. Happy to pray for you all on the 4th Feb. It's quite a fitting thought that the mutual prayers for one another usually occur close to the Feast of St Charles King and Martyr.

Currently our only prayer request is that all my planning is successful.

You may not have been aware at the time of Pat Marston's visit how dire the situation in the Parish was. When I took it on not only was the church condemned, but that the vicarage had holes through the roof, mould on the ceiling, a broken oven that hadn't worked since 2017 and broken storm water pipes through the front yard; the hall also had holes in the ceiling and large segments in the hall proper had rotted out; financially the Parish had a \$100,000 debt (approx £52,000) and also a negative bank account at -\$38,000 (-£20,000). The op shop site also was costing us significantly for its rent and required us to return the building back to its shell to leave. The congregation was no longer using the Whittlesea site at all, services and services had ceased there, and there were only four regulars worshipping at the fortnightly Saturday service that was still continuing at Kinglake.

Since my arrival, I have repaired the vicarage and all associated damage: it's now lived in by a church family, the hall has been repaired and will be opening as our op shop on the 5th Feb, much of the rented op shop site has been restored to its original condition (though there's a little more to still do before the lease expires at end of March), the church at Whittlesea has been reopened with regular worshippers and Kinglake too, has grown in size since moving worship to every Sunday morning (there's now approximately 10-16 people on any given Sunday in both congregations). In doing all this have also managed to cut the overdraft account down to -\$19,000 (-£10,000).

So as it appears what I'm doing is working, our only prayers are that my plans work and are fruitful.

Kindly,
W

The Revd. Dr. Walter Bayliss Firth IV

There is still time to book for next Ride & Stride, the date for the next annual Ride & Stride: **Saturday 14th September 2024** – you don't have to Ride or Stride – do whatever you have the time. We will be opening the churches in support on the day.

To see some of the highlights from the 2023 day, or send your own images and stories from the day please visit the Trust's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Cambshct/> or email canonannettereed@gmail.com.

For more details about the Trust visit our website where you can become a member and/or take out Gift Membership, go to <https://camhct.uk/>.

Prayers of Love and Faith

Living in Love and Faith

Living in Love and Faith has been a process of listening and theological reflection around sexuality and gender identity, that the Church of England has been exploring since 2017. The outcome of this is the Prayers of Love and Faith which were published and agreed by General Synod last year.

Prayers of Love and Faith

The Prayers of Love and Faith are a series of prayers that are intended to be used for same-sex couples by ministers. They are intended to be used to pray with and for a same-sex couple who love one another and who wish to give thanks for and mark that love in faith before God.

The Prayers of Love and Faith are not a form of marriage service. They are offered as a form of pastoral provision because there is currently uncertainty about the outcome of the Church's discernment in relation to same-sex relationships.

Where can Prayers of Love and Faith be said?

The Prayers of Love and Faith were authorised for use from last December (2023) and can be used in private prayer or as part of a regular service, i.e. a service which would take place irrespective of whether the Prayers were to be said.

Currently the Prayers of Love and Faith cannot be made the principal focus or structure of such a service - but General Synod voted last year for a trial period where the Prayers of Love and Faith could be the principal focus of a service. The details of this trial - when it might begin - are yet to be decided.

How does this affect our parishes?

The use of the Prayers of Love and Faith is ultimately at the discretion of the minister with cure of souls - they cannot be forced by a PCC to offer the Prayers, nor can a PCC veto their use. However, it has been strongly recommended that the incumbent minister (Emily) speaks with each PCC before the Prayers might be used.

We will be discussing the use of Prayers of Love and Faith within our parishes at our PCC's and Emily has said to PCC's that she will respect their decision as to whether each PCC wishes the Prayers to be used in their parish church or not.

Why do we need to make a decision?

Within the Church of England there is a strong difference of opinion on whether the Prayers of Love and Faith - particularly the prayers of blessing for same-sex couples - should be used. Some Christians feel very strongly that this is to go against God's teaching in the Bible, others feel very strongly that God would delight in these blessings. Knowing that there is strong feeling on either side of this debate within the wider Church of England, and possibly within our parishes, we are asking each PCC to carefully consider this decision.

What about me - and what I think?

If you have any thoughts or feelings on whether the Prayers of Love and Faith should - or should not - be used within our parishes, your PCC would really like to hear your thoughts. You can speak to your Churchwardens, PCC Secretary or PCC members directly, or you can write to your PCC:

PCC Secretary (please say which parish!)

c/o The Rectory, 9a St Mary's St, Whittlesey.

Our PCC's will be looking at this in the autumn - but if you'd like to let your PCC know your thoughts, please feel free to do that sooner rather than later.

Why is there such a difference of opinion? Some theological perspectives (in brief):

All Christians value the importance of the Bible as the revelation of God's Word to us. Some Christians believe that Scripture clearly shows that same-sex relationships go against God's word and God's plan for creation. They point to passages such as 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 in particular and believe that by taking a different view - and potentially using the Prayers with same-sex couples - we could be leading others astray and risking the salvation of others.

Other Christians would argue that the Bible is not clear on this matter; for example, references in Genesis and Judges are clearly more about hospitality than sexuality and verses in Leviticus need to be seen in the context of the law - much of which we don't follow now anyway. There is no record of Jesus saying anything about same-sex sexuality, but when he spoke about marriage, he was clearly speaking within the context of Jewish marriage, as they understood it at the time; and when Paul talks about same-sex practices in his letters,

can we truly know that what he was writing about bears any resemblance to the committed same-sex relationships we know in society today?

Some Christians, when reflecting on this subject, would point to what we call Natural Theology or Systematic Theology. We believe that God created the world and humanity - and that God delighted in creation. Scientific understanding has developed in recent centuries and we know that sexuality is something we are born with, and that same-sex sexuality as well as heterosexuality is to be found across the animal kingdom - not just in human nature. Could a variety of sexuality be part of the rich tapestry of God's creation? Something to celebrate just as God delights in creation? Or is it part of our fallen world?

Some Christians would point to the 'Big Story' of what the Bible reveals to us of God - rather than focusing on specific verses that we can pull out. The Bible tells us that God is love, that God created each and every one of us and loves us just as we are made. When Paul writes that same-sex sexuality is to go against the kingdom of God, he never provides an explanation for why this is. Yet so much of what we know of sin is to clearly go against God's plan for us and for God's kingdom - those things which hurt others, those things which devalue others and God's creation, those things which get in the way of us sharing God's love and God's life with others. It is difficult to see how a committed same-sex relationship can be conflated with these things. If 'God is love [and] whoever lives in love lives in God, and God lives in them' (1 John 4:16), then surely God would delight in the wholesome and committed love shared between two people - regardless of gender? Whilst others would argue that we don't need an explanation and if the Bible says that it is contrary to God's kingdom, then that is the final word.

That is to sketch out some different theological perspectives in brief. If you'd like to explore this any further, you can either order or download a much more detailed theological and scriptural exploration of this in the Living in Love and Faith book here: www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith/living-love-and-faith-book

If you would like to speak to Emily, or any member of the ministry team, about this - please do contact us and we would be happy to talk with you about this.

Contact Us

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