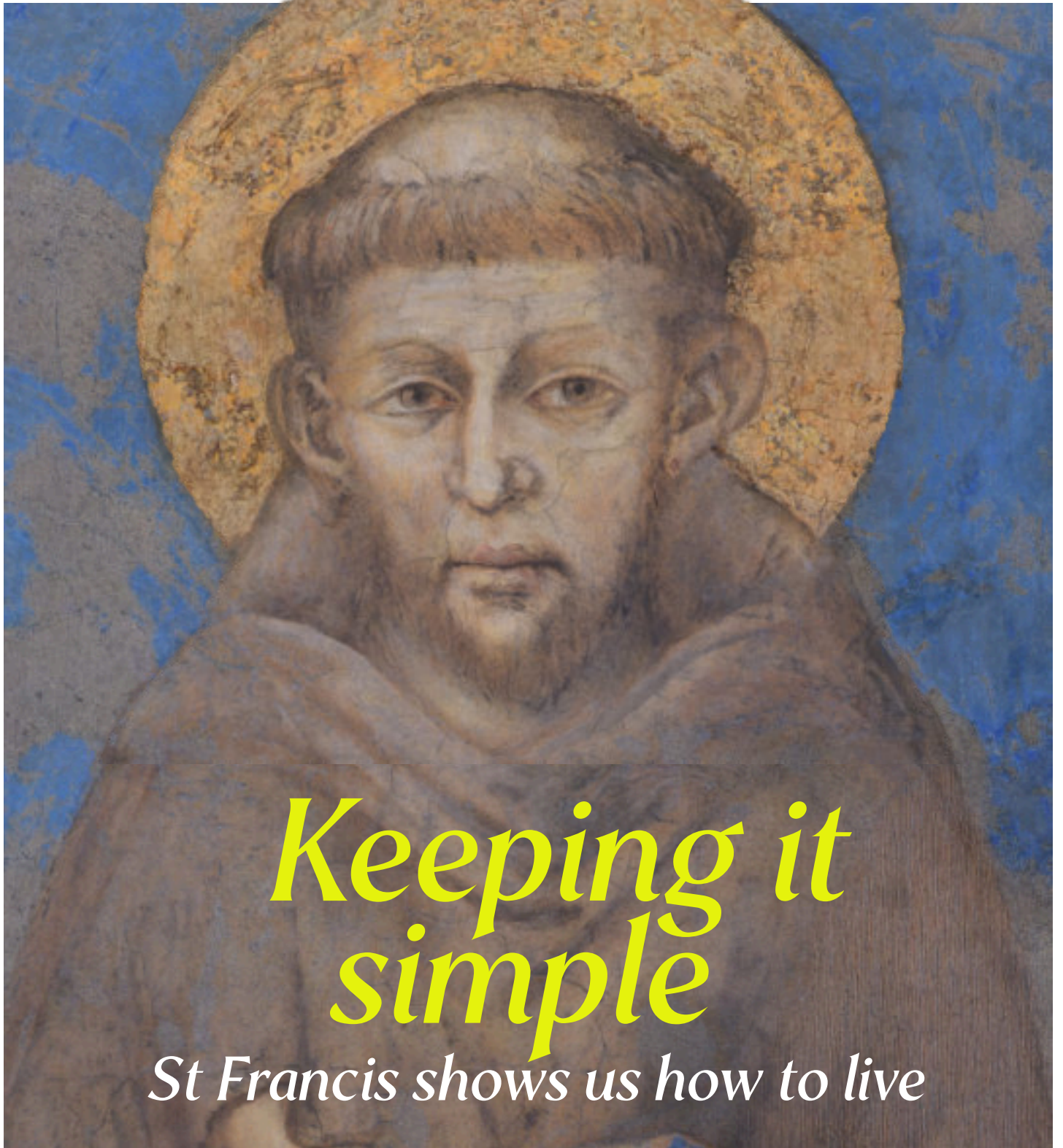




April/May 2026

# Spire

YOUR **FREE** COPY OF  
HAMPTON HILL'S PARISH MAGAZINE



*Keeping it  
simple*

*St Francis shows us how to live*

## WHO'S WHO



**Vicar Derek Winterburn**  
020 8241 5904  
vicar@stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk

Derek was born in Orpington, Kent, and ordained in 1986. He served in several London parishes before arriving here in 2016. He is married to Sandra, a teacher, and has two children. A keen photographer, he posts a picture daily. He can be contacted at any time other than Mondays, his day off.



**Associate Priest Jacky Cammidge**  
079 5012 2294  
jackycammidge@

stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk  
Jacky was born in Abertillery, South Wales, and ordained in 2015. She is a self-supporting minister, married to Alan, and has three children. During term times Jacky runs Hampton Hill Nursery School, based in the church hall, with her family.



**Assistant Priest Tim Marwood**  
073 6928 0040  
frtimmarwood@hotmail.com

Tim taught in London primary schools for 36 years. He was ordained priest in 1996 and spent 13 years at Petersham, retiring in 2021. He is now a part-time hospital chaplain. Married to Jane, a former headteacher, Tim supports Harlequins RFC and England cricket.

### Choir Director and Organist

**Thom Stanbury**  
thom.stanbury@



stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk  
Thom has been at St James's since 2019. He started his musical life in the church where he grew up in Staffordshire. He read music at Royal Holloway with organ as principle instrument. During the week he works in theatre production/management.

### Church Office Nick Bagge

020 8941 6003  
office@stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk  
Nick deals with general enquiries and church and hall bookings. The office is open 0930-1230 Mon, Wed and Fri, and 1230-1530 Tue and Thu.



### Parish Safeguarding Officer

**Annalea Gratton**  
grattonannalea@gmail.com

Annalea is the first person to speak to if you have any concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult. During the week she works as a teacher.



### Churchwardens

**Nick Bagge**

**Susan Horner**



office@stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk

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St James's Church, St James's Road, Hampton Hill, TW12 1DQ  
Charity Registration Number 1129286.

# From the Editor

The days are getting longer, the churchyard is full of new growth and it will be Easter very soon. After such a wet winter there is now so much to be thankful for and nature certainly plays a big part in keeping our spirits up. We are so lucky that we don't have to go far to unwind and be refreshed by nature. I have just returned from a walk in the Woodland Gardens, full of daffodils, four newborn Egyptian goslings, lots of birdsong and trees beginning to shoot, and have come back feeling so much better.

This year is the 800th anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi, a man who championed nature and living in peace. In our troubled world, Derek describes Francis's legacy.

May brings Christian Aid Week. This year the focus is on giving people the tools to feed and support their families and live sustainably. All the details are on page 7.

And on page 8, Ann Peterken shares her passion for theatre and the unrivalled choices we have, living in London.

A happy Easter to all our readers.

Best wishes,

*Janet*



Cover photo: Fresco of St Francis, Basilica of San Francesco, Assisi DMITRIY MOROZ

The magazine is published six times a year. We don't charge for it, but if you enjoy reading it we hope you will help towards printing costs. It costs us £1.50 a copy, or £9 a year. If you are able to make a larger donation we can distribute more copies across the parish. **Bank transfers** can be made to our CAF Bank account: 00032595, 40-52-40, or you can scan the QR code. Please use the reference *Spire* so that it gets to us.



## Spire

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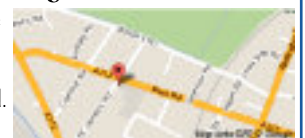
### Clerical Capers



Margaret *always* did the Easter flowers in the baptistry, as Mavis learnt the hard way

### Finding the church

We are on the corner of St James's Road and Park Road.



The hall is next door. Parking is unrestricted. Buses stopping nearby include R70, R68 and 285.

### Church and Hall Hire

The church and hall are available to hire for concerts, public meetings, regular classes, and parties or wakes. The church's AV system includes projector, large screen, a range of microphones, stage lighting and five cameras.

### Support Us

The church does not receive grants towards running costs. To donate, go to: <https://bit.ly/Give2StJas>



## DEREK WINTERBURN

# Seeing is believing? Faith should never rely on proof positive

I read an article recently that argued that churches might do well at teaching Bible Stories, but that was not sufficient to help young people stick with their faith when older. Rather, what we need to do is help the rising generations not only know what they believe, but why they need to believe it - and while they still believe it.

Given that this turned out to be a sales pitch for a particular course, I think we might dismiss this as over-simplistic. However, I think there is a grain of truth in the observation.

But first a word in support of teaching Bible stories.

There is a range of evidence that shows that children are open to the 'beyond-natural'. Children's storybooks, from the Gruffalo to Harry Potter are rarely true to life.

## Bedtime reading

CS Lewis deliberately used imaginary worlds to explore what life was like with God in it.

I recommend that parents find a good children's Bible and weave that into their bedtime stories (or other times). That is not to treat them as just fairy stories, but to embed them into a child's mental furniture. Then, as children grow older, they need to see adults read the Bible in more mature modes and find for themselves that it is true in the most profound ways.

Now the article I read was promoting a course on 'apologetics for children.' Apologetics is the field of giving good arguments for Christianity. It imagined the church-going youngster in the modern religious studies classroom, surrounded by

critics: 'Jesus didn't exist', 'No one believes God made the world', 'The Bible is racist and sexist'.

The course aimed to provide some counter-arguments. I agree that there is little point in children being well versed in the Bible's account of Creation if they are not aware of how that might connect with the best science. Not that science is exactly settled on many things that are fundamentally important. A recent issue of the *New Scientist* gives a good account of the furious debates around the Big Bang and human origins. We are exploring these questions with our families in our Sunday afternoon service.

However an adult Christian faith is not simply about being able to argue against atheist Richard Dawkins. In fact we need to be careful about

*We might question whether there could ever be enough evidence to prove God's existence*

thinking that we can 'prove Christianity.'

Blaise Pascal was a scientist and intellectual in the 17th century, but he concluded that outside faith and revelation, there is no certainty at all as to whether humankind was created by a good God, an evil demon or simply by chance.

There is no knockdown argument for God. Rather, Pascal says, God partially hides from us. In rushing to 'prove God' beyond doubt we miss Scripture's plain description of God, who gives Adam and Eve space in the garden and the gospels' accounts (especially in the Holy Week narratives) of how people could not see God amongst them - Jesus.

On his death-bed Bertrand Russell was asked what he would say to God if he had been wrong and there was a god. He replied, 'Sir...Why did

you not give me more evidence?'

But someone might question whether there could ever be enough evidence. Pascal's bold judgement is: 'He hides himself from those who test him, and he reveals himself to those who seek him.'

There are many factors that fuel the decline in Christian faith. What's called 'Bible literacy' is important. We need to be confident that we can believe in God in 2026 and have answers to the challenges from non-believers.

## God in our everyday lives

In Holy Week and Easter we dig deeply into the gospel narratives of Jesus's last days. We can reflect on the history and the theology and the pathos. But to commend our faith we need to show that our faith in Christ, crucified and risen, is an essential part of our life, life-saving in the hard times and life-guiding in the good times. We need to continue to seek him through Easter and beyond.



PEXELS

# A simple saint armed with joy

On the 800th anniversary of his death, **Derek Winterburn** looks beyond the superficial image of St Francis and finds a man we should all follow

**Pilgrims' progress** Work on the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi began in 1228, two years after his death.  
FEDERICO MICCIONI

It was said 'a week is a long time in politics'. Everyone's reputation fades over time, but imagine how impressive a person must be for his reputation to grow over 800 years!

This year, the 800th anniversary of the death of Francis of Assisi, is being commemorated by putting his mortal remains on display for the first time.

Francis was born in 1181 and died in 1226. Just two years later he was made a saint. Pope Leo has declared a special jubilee to celebrate, and the feast of Saint Francis (4 October) has been re-established as a public holiday in Italy. I believe we should remember Francis too, although I'm neither a Catholic nor Italian!

## Nature matters

Part of his legacy is an awareness of nature's spiritual value. This was recognised by HRH Prince Philip when he was instrumental in organising the conference between five major religions in 1986 in Francis's hometown, Assisi.

On the doors of St Mary and the Angels are engraved reliefs displaying this very important conference. This is the church that contains within it Francis's own church base, the Portinuncula.

There is no doubt that Francis's popularity has risen in recent years

with our greater concern for the natural world. The former Pope took his name, and his great teaching document on the environment is called *Laudato Si: Praise Be* - Francis's own words.

## Born into wealth

Francis was born into a well-to-do family. His father was a prosperous cloth merchant, but his wealth led him into what he himself described as 'foolish ways'. He even sought glory as a mercenary, which resulted in him living in captivity for a year until his father paid a ransom. Back home, his conscience became more

and more sensitive to the poverty he saw around him. There were numerous episodes of him giving away his father's stock or money to those who asked.

At the same time he was turning over in his mind what his future held. One time when he was out walking, he visited a broken-down chapel. There, he believed that the crucifix spoke to him, saying, 'Go and repair my house, which you can see is all being destroyed.'

Francis threw himself into the restoration of the Chapel of San Damiano but, of course, he needed money and he took more and more from his father, who lost patience

with his eccentric son. It all came to a head when Francis was hauled up before the local bishop. The bishop seemed to agree with Francis's father and said, 'If you wish to serve God, return the money you have, because God does not want you to spend money unjustly acquired for the work of the church.'

Francis accepted the authority of the church and so he took off all his clothes and laid them all at his father's feet. Happily the bishop covered the young man with his own robe!

## A life of poverty

Francis then lived a lifestyle of



MARTIN OPHUC

poverty, depending on the charity of others. He bound himself to eat whatever was provided for him. When he heard the words of Jesus, 'You received without payment, give without payment, take no gold or silver or copper in your belts....' he vowed to put those words into practice in his life.

In particular he cared for lepers and made a point of embracing them and treating them as equals. He would preach outside churches in Italian. His message was a call to penance and to keep God's commandments. Frequently Francis would be joyful but often he would be fiery. He meant what he said.

### Franciscan order

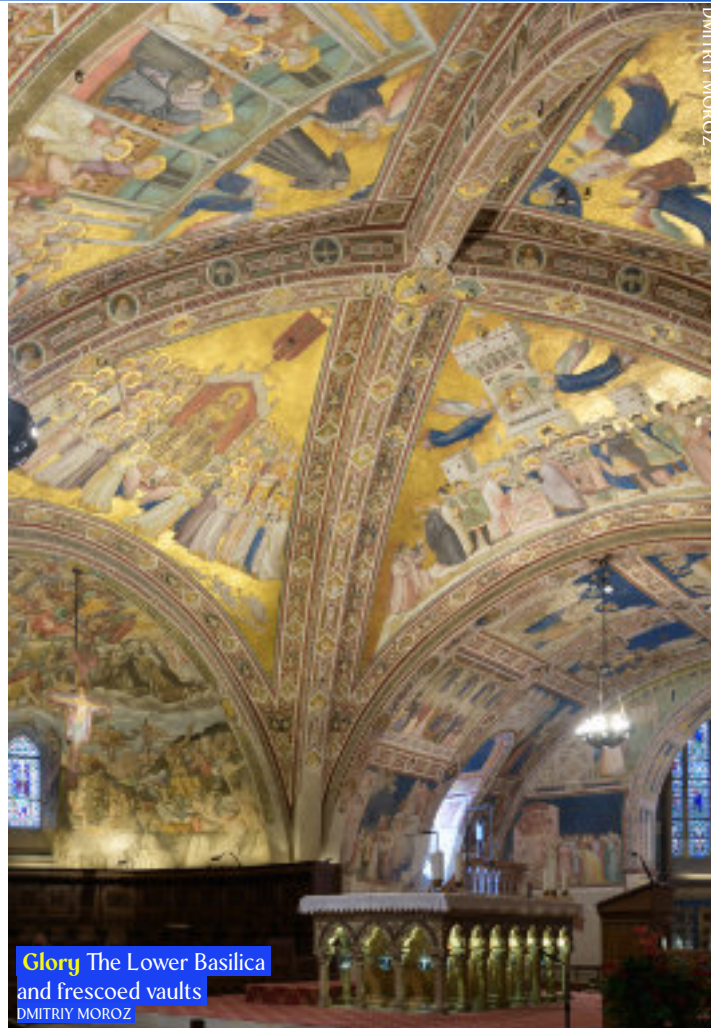
Francis' magnetic personality and clear message meant that he soon drew a following. Some men joined him in a lifestyle of obedience and poverty. Soon Francis was required to seek permission for his order from the Pope.

Innocent III was cautious in his support for Francis, but he realised that he could not stand against him because Francis's ideas were so clearly based on Jesus's own lifestyle.

Within some basic controls, he gave Francis permission to create a monastic order. Francis's influence was immense; the brothers were regularly sent out to preach.

Although initially they were misunderstood, lessons were learned. Ten years after the Pope gave the movement his blessing, there were Franciscans in Germany, Poland, Romania and Norway. (Five years later, in 1224, nine brothers landed at Dover.)

In 1219 Francis travelled to Egypt to minister among the Crusaders. Eventually he gained permission to cross the enemy lines to talk to the Saracen Sultan. The plan presumably was to preach his standard message of penance. However, the Sultan's advisors refused to listen and stormed out after they demanded



**Glory** The Lower Basilica and frescoed vaults  
DMITRIY MOROZ

## *In a time when desire for wealth and status dominate our society, Francis's life invites us back to simplicity, humility and joy*

that the ruler should execute Francis. The Sultan refused and, having unsuccessfully tempted Francis with money and fine clothing, let him return to his own side.

### Trouble at home

This setback seems to have deflated Francis for a time and he wandered the Holy Land. However, news reached him that there was trouble back among the brothers in Assisi and he returned home. The later part of Francis's life illustrates

the difficulties and complexities of leaving behind an organisation, in which there are competing ideals. Francis, although the founder, never wanted to be a leader. He stepped down as head of the order, ensured the local bishop was its protector and anointed a successor.

One of the legacies of his message was to celebrate the humanity of Jesus. It was Francis who invented the nativity crib with real animals and people to show the humility of Jesus's birth. Christian art had been

dominated by pictures of Christ in resurrection glory. Francis's influence led to portrayals of Jesus as a man, and in particular his suffering on the cross.

### Be joyful

There are stories of Francis preaching to the birds and pacifying the wolf of Gubbio. However, his commitment to Creation is better anchored in the *Canticle of Brother Sun*, which he wrote when he was challenged by God to 'Be glad and be joyful'. In it he praises God in turn for Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Sister Water, Brother Fire and Mother Earth.

Francis became more withdrawn and spent days away on retreat in the mountains. On one occasion he experienced a vision of Christ on the cross and he understood that he was to become more and more like Jesus in his suffering.

After the vision Francis bore 'stigmata' - the marks of the crucifixion. Although he tried to hide these wounds, many people did see them. There is speculation about their origin, but it is clear that Francis ascribed them to God, and that these open wounds (as well as his generally poor health) contributed to his death within two years, aged 45.

As he died, he begged his brothers to sing joyfully over and over again the *Canticle of Brother Sun*, with an additional verse praising God for 'Sister Bodily Death'.

**F**rancis's immediate impact was great. Although perhaps he has been rather sentimentalised or co-opted, his name is used to support campaigns for peace (The Prayer of St Francis: Make me a channel of your peace) and environmentalism.

While Francis would endorse both those causes, perhaps it is harder for modern people to follow his central call to a simple lifestyle, and obedience to something bigger than ourselves.



**Impressive** A view of the medieval town of Assisi in Umbria



# The Son rises

And that's something to shout about!

**O**n Easter Sunday the services at St James's will include the Bible reading from Matthew 28: 1-10. It tells

the story of Mary Magdalene, who on Easter Day visited the tomb where the body of Jesus had been laid on Good Friday.

Mary meets an angel who shows her that the tomb is empty and tells her, 'He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said.'

**From darkness to light**

The Church of England begins services without any light except for the Easter candle which is brought into church with the words 'The Light of Christ.' The congregation responds with, 'Thanks be to God.'

These words are repeated twice more until all the lights and candles are lit and the Easter candle is placed at the front of the church with the ancient greeting 'Christ is risen,' with the response 'He is risen indeed!'

**14th century hymn**

The hymn *Jesus Christ is risen today* is then sung at the beginning of services in many churches. The first verse was written in Munich in the 14th century. *Surrexit Christus Hodie*



**Tim Marwood**

is Latin for *Christ is risen today*. Over five centuries the words evolved into the three verses that follow, which were published in 1816.

The tune, known as *Salisbury* or *Easter Hymn* has remained the same down the years. The identities of the original composers of both words and music are unknown.

**Something to shout about!**

For Christians, the Easter Day service is the most important of the year as it celebrates the resurrection, Jesus overcoming death and rising to new life.

The Easter Day services, with the symbolism of light overcoming the darkness, the joyful words and stirring hymns with repeated 'Alleluias' are an opportunity to express our faith in the saving power of Jesus in a more dramatic way.

We have Good News to share, so let's shout about it!

**Jesus Christ is ris'n today**

*Jesus Christ is ris'n today, alleluia!  
Our triumphant holy day, alleluia!  
Who did once, upon the cross,  
alleluia!*

*Suffer to redeem our loss, alleluia!*

*Hymns of praise then let us sing,  
alleluia!*

*Unto Christ, our heav'nly King,  
alleluia!*

*Who endured the cross and  
grave, alleluia!*

*Sinners to redeem and save,  
alleluia!*

*But the pains which He endured,  
alleluia!*

*Our salvation have procured;  
alleluia!*

*Now above the sky He's King,  
alleluia!*

*Where the angels ever sing:  
alleluia!*



**Love others as I have loved you...**

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
Son of the living God, comforter of the widows, washer of feet, show us how to care for each other. Teach us to love as you did - unconditionally, unilaterally, without fear or favour, pride or prejudice. Give us open hearts and wise minds and hands that are worthy to serve in your name. Amen.*

Sheila Cassidy

I have chosen this prayer because in March I will retire from the Chaplaincy Team that serves both Teddington Memorial and Kingston Hospitals.

During my time as a hospital chaplain, I have seen some wonderful service to patients and their relatives by the remarkable people that work at all levels in these hospitals.

At the Last Supper, which we remember on Maundy Thursday (2 April this year), Jesus knelt before his disciples and washed their feet, the lowest job in any household in those times. Jesus did this to demonstrate love and service to those who would follow his commandment (*mandatum* in Latin) to 'Love one another as I have loved you.'

Dr Sheila Cassidy, born 18 August 1937, is known for her work as a medical doctor, as a survivor of torture, as a Christian writer, and through her work in the hospice movement.

I chose her prayer because it is about service to others, the kind of self-giving love that I have seen in action in the hospitals.

**REGISTERS**

**JANUARY**

No entries

**FEBRUARY**

**Funeral**

3 Brian Edwin Newman, 90, Hampton Hill





**Family** Fridah with her grandson, Quillan, outside their house in Dagoretti, Nairobi  
DAVID MACHARIA/CHRISTIAN AID

In the crowded and noisy settlements of Nairobi, most parents wake every single day knowing that they must go and earn money, otherwise their children won't eat that evening.



**Liz Wilmot**

# When hardship means hunger, urban farmers grow hope

With no formal work opportunities, heartbreakingly low pay, and no social support, it's a precarious, daily struggle that no family should have to face.

The aching hunger is bad enough. The relentless stress is overwhelming. Fridah Moraa, a recently widowed grandmother, trying to support her family, said, 'Now I'm responsible for everything.'



**Support** Fridah grows food to feed her grandchildren, Abuid, Quillan and Eliud  
DAVID MACHARIA/CHRISTIAN AID

### Food is a constant worry

With school costs, rent and water to cover, providing food for every meal is a problem that never goes away. But Fridah's faith in God, and in her own ability to provide, is unwavering. With tools, seeds and specialist training from Christian Aid's partner, Beacon of Hope, Fridah is making the most of a small space in the city to grow fresh vegetables that she can cook for her family or sell.

Reflecting on her new role in life, she said: 'I never thought a woman could also be a provider.' But with

her inner strength, unstoppable resolve, and help from Christian Aid, Fridah is feeding her family and protecting them from malnutrition.

'When I harvest what I've planted, it makes me happy. Urban farming has changed my life.'

Help someone like Fridah to grow food, and nurture hope:

- £5 would buy seeds
- £10 would buy two chickens.
- £15 would buy tools.

### Fundraising lunch

Enjoy a £15 two-course lunch in the hall after the annual meeting on **Sunday 10 May**. Go to:

<https://bit.ly/StJCALunch26>, or scan the QR code. Book by 30 April.

If you would prefer to just support the appeal, go to:

<https://bit.ly/StJCA26> or scan the QR code.

Thank you.



### NEWS

## Church gates in memory of former parishioner

Alan and Helen Taylor were long-standing members of St James's who lived in Park Road with their four children Huw, Ruth, Oliver and Christopher. They were both very involved with the church and Alan was a lay reader for 40 years.

On retirement they moved to Norton, Suffolk. Alan passed away in August 2024 and in his memory Helen commissioned a



set of gates for the entrance to the village church of St Andrew's. The old gates were dismantled and the ironwork reused on the new oak gates. I am sure Alan would be pleased with Helen's

use of a local carpenter to make such a lovely set of gates in his memory.

Janet Nunn



## WHAT'S ON

### Services Sundays

Holy Communion (Said) 8am

Parish Communion 9.30am  
5, 12, 19, 26 April; 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 May  
Streamed on our Facebook page

Together 3.30pm  
19, 26 April; 3, 10 May

Our shorter, all age service, particularly for young families

Messy Church 3.30pm  
17 May

Songs, stories, crafts and food!

### Tue, Thu, Fri

Morning Prayer 9am

### Wednesdays

Midweek Communion 9.30am

### Groups Mondays

Ark Playgroup 10am-12noon  
13, 20, 27 April; 11, 18, May

### Tuesdays

Connections Cafe 10.30am-12.30pm  
7, 14, 21, 28 April; 5, 12, 19, 26 May

## Easter

Sung Compline 8pm

Mon-Wed 30, 31 March; 1 April

Maundy Thursday 8pm

Thursday 2 April

Communion + Washing of Feet

Good Friday

Friday 3 April

Behold! (children and adults) 10am  
The Cross of Christ 2pm

## Events

St James Entertains presents  
Kiki Dee in Concert

Fri 24 April 7.30pm  
Join us for a night of non-stop hits from the singer. Tickets £25  
<https://bit.ly/StJKiki>



Annual Meeting

Sunday 10 May 10.45am

Review of past year and future plans. Show your support and maybe stand for election.

Christian Aid Week Meal

Sunday 10 May 12noon

See *Our Charities* story (left).

Summer Celebration

Saturday 4 July 2-5pm

Our festival weekend begins with an open day. Learn about nature, plus tower and church tours, stalls and refreshments.

Sunday 5 July 11am

St James's Day service with guest speaker Rev Mike Starkey, a freelance writer, broadcaster and former London vicar, followed by a barbecue lunch in the vicarage garden (weather permitting).

# Curtain up on another night of human drama



Encore Ann, right, in the West End with Rae and Nate to watch *Just For One Day*

I am in the fortunate position of being able to indulge my love of theatre. We are blessed with many venues locally, while London delivers an abundance of choice – the National and the Old Vic conveniently close to Waterloo and the West End a short hop further on the bus or tube.

The intimacy of attending a live performance appeals to me more than film. I love the anticipation beforehand, the audience's reactions and the applause at the end – so unlike the cinema where people drift away as soon as the credits start rolling.

I am constantly in awe of the talents and creativity on display, from the performers through to the entire team, that bring a play to life.

There was nothing in my younger years to nurture this love of theatre. An occasional



pantomime at Christmas, the study of various Shakespeare plays in secondary school and a small role in a fourth form (year 10) production.

What I believe sowed the seed was a London production of Peter Shaffer's *Equus* in my early twenties. I recall being stirred by what live theatre can achieve, though regular visits were only to materialise in my later years.

## A mirror on the human condition

A theatre visit is of course entertainment, but I also like it to be something more. While enjoying comedies and musicals for pure pleasure, I love plays that hold a mirror up to the human condition and make you think, with playwrights Henrik Ibsen, Bertolt Brecht, Arthur Miller, Tom Stoppard and David Hare among my favourites.

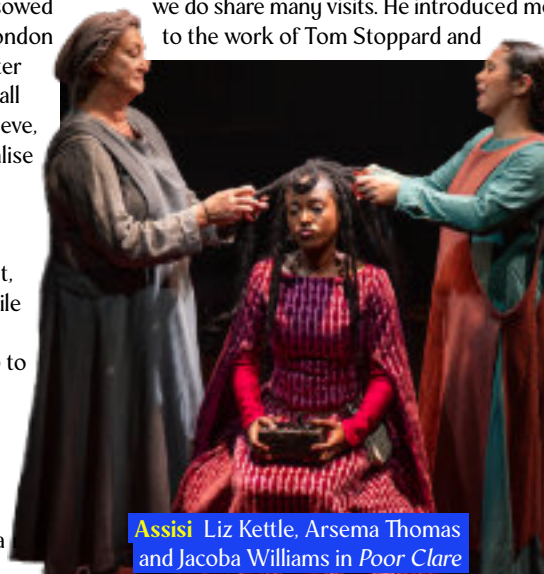
Many productions benefit from some homework beforehand and for me this is a must for any play by Shakespeare.

Having knowledge of the characters, locations and general plot greatly help my enjoyment, especially for his history plays. The Globe Theatre adds an authenticity and the hired cushions add some comfort.

Seeing young people grow in confidence through performing is always a delight and I am blessed to have two goddaughters whose children love musical theatre. Paul and I enjoy seeing them perform in school and college shows. The oldest is just about to embark on a career in theatre, so I will have a new name to look out for.

## A shared or solo experience

While Paul prefers music concerts to theatre, we do share many visits. He introduced me to the work of Tom Stoppard and



Assisi Liz Kettle, Arsema Thomas and Jacoba Williams in *Poor Clare*

has a collection of the scripts which come in very handy. Other times I go to the theatre with friends or by myself. Going solo avoids the task of fixing a date and allows me to be fully engrossed in the play.

I try to keep a list of my theatre visits, to better appreciate what I have seen. A highlight from last year was *Poor Clare* at the Orange Tree, a play based on the lives and legend of Clare and Francis of Assisi. By young American Chira Attik, it tackles how we deal with wealth and poverty with insight and humour. In the photo the maids are gossiping while fixing Clare's hair, just as we would gossip today.

## Watched for a record seventh time

I have seen many plays and musicals more than once, but this year I reached a record when I saw *Just For One Day* for the seventh time, a show that tells the story of the Band Aid record and Live Aid concert in the mid-1980s. The show has now closed in London, but after touring the country next year may be back – oh dear!

I am no expert on theatre and have much to learn, right from the earliest days of the Greeks. I hope to continue to do this, as theatre visits make me feel fully alive in a very special way.