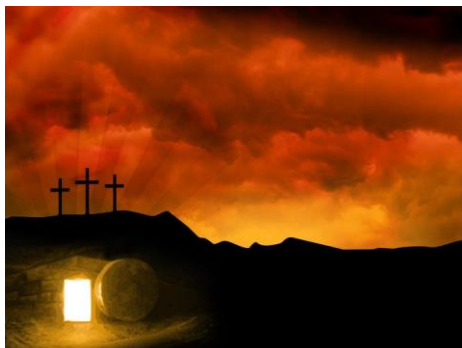
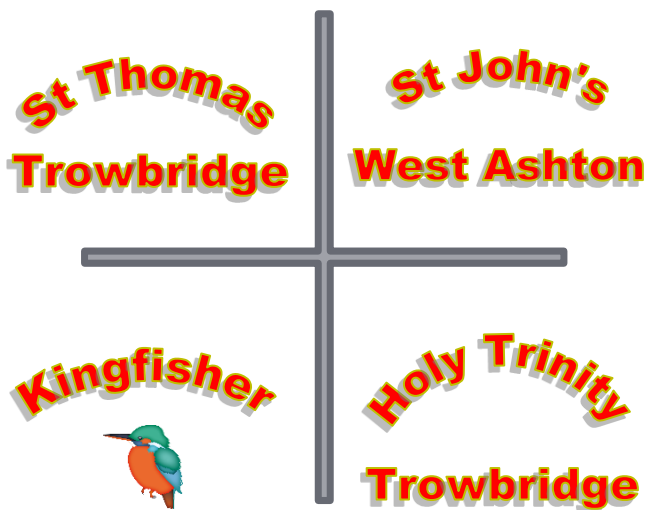


St Thomas', Trowbridge and St John's, West Ashton Monthly News April 2025



"A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act."

– Mahatma Gandhi

Churchwarden's Letter

One of the challenges of preparing worship, or choosing worship music, during Holy Week is to decide to what extent to include mention of Christ's resurrection before we get to Sunday. Is it all right to include songs that mention both the cross and the resurrection while we're still on Good Friday?

As we reflect on Jesus' journey to the cross, there is something to be said for trying to put ourselves in the place of the disciples as they journeyed with Jesus, seeing him arrested, unjustly tried and finally executed – to try to understand their despair and dashed hopes. To get inside their experience, we may have to put aside briefly what we know about both the immense significance of Christ's death and what we know about the rest of the story.

But in reality, we *do* know how the story continues! We *do* know that what looked to the disciples like defeat on the Friday was actually the greatest act of love that the world has ever known, and we *do* know that two days later death itself was to be swallowed up in the victory of Jesus' resurrection.

So, I think we are bound to walk through the events of Holy Week with the whole story in our minds. Indeed, the events of Jesus' journey to the cross only make sense when we see the bigger picture of his death, his resurrection and his heavenly reign.

The evangelist Tony Campolo used to use the phrase 'It's Friday, but Sunday's coming', which I think describes very well how the knowledge and hope of the resurrection affects how we approach the seemingly darker feelings of Good Friday. It has significance for us not just in our Easter celebrations, but throughout our lives when we might feel we are experiencing darker 'Friday' times – we have the very real hope that 'Sunday is coming'.

I hope you will feel able to join in with some of the various events in Trowbridge and West Ashton during the Easter period, including the Thursday Tenebrae, the united service and march of witness on Friday morning, the Hour By The Cross at West Ashton on Friday afternoon, and the Easter Sunday celebrations at both churches. What a joy that we are able to celebrate all of these different events with our heads

held high in the confidence that comes from the full story of Christ's death *and* resurrection. Praise to God for his great grace and power! Easter also brings with it an extra sense of excitement for our two parishes this year, as we will be getting very close to welcoming Simon Pope to become our new vicar. Practical arrangements are moving forward with Simon and Elle. They plan to move into the vicarage during the week after Easter. Simon's licensing will be on 22nd May at 7:00pm, and we're in the process of planning that event – more details to follow. During the period between moving and the licensing, Simon and Elle will be on leave to give them time to settle in to the house and area. We will be asking people to respect their privacy during this time. Over the last couple of months a subgroup of the PCC has been thinking about the care and support of our new vicar, and there is a separate article in this magazine with some thoughts that have come out of that group. We will all, I'm sure, want to support Simon as he takes on this new and challenging role. It just remains for me to wish you all a very happy, meaningful and blessed Easter season.

Paul

Deadline for articles for May's magazine: Friday 25th
April

St John's Update

Here we are in British Summer Time - the first quarter of the year has gone - scary. However, we have long sunny days ahead topped off with the impending commencement of a new vicar.

March has been busy at St John's - mowing of churchyard (please note the pictures of the beautiful primroses); the stark lent cross was placed in the chancel; a set of Banns of marriage had been read; lawn feed put down in the churchyard; gutters were cleaned out and the down pipes cleared of debris.

Communication with the damp wall specialists had taken place and a site meeting is to be held in April.

Three services were held during the month culminating with a Mothering Sunday Service. Even with the clocks springing forward one hour, St Js managed to acquire 25 in the congregation for this service. Rev. Ruth Gillings ministered an excellent service and Jean Covington provided very decorative posies for the ladies. (See separate picture).

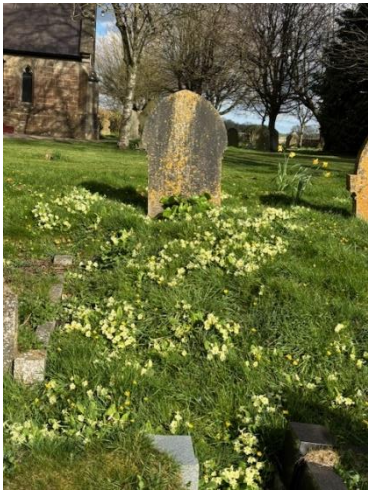
We enter into April with its Easter Services, Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Day - see separate poster for details. A warm welcome awaits you.

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" - these are the words spoken by the risen Christ to His disciples. At Easter, once more, let us try to remember His words and His actions. Let us try to live a better life, to spread His message of love to all mankind. With His help we can do it, for did He not say "Lo, I am with you always". Easter is a time of faith, a reminder of God's unending love. It's a feeling of hope and renewal. Amen

Wishing you peace this Eastertide (and loads of Easter Eggs).



Jean



Bishop's April Letter

Hope in Springtime

'Hope is the bird that waits for dawn and sings while it is still dark.'

This is one of my favourite quotations, which particularly comes to mind this month as the birds start to sing

melodiously and signs of colour start to appear in our gardens. The long dark months of winter are over, and we can imagine once again those hazy lazy days of summer.

And as the light of the days lengthens, we enter the celebration of the Son, Easter. April is certainly the month of hope.

Yet looking at our news headlines, hope feels in short supply. It is hard to remain hopeful for our planet, as world leaders vie for power, and our extreme weather systems indicate all is not well. Sitting in our crowded cathedral at the beginning of Lent speaking to Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and hearing her story of imprisonment as a hostage in Iran and injustice, I was reminded of a religious painting in the Methodist Art Collection. The painting is of the inside of the tomb on Easter morning. It shows the stone rolled away, not allowing us in, but allowing us to step out.

Nazanin recalled her experience of re-adjusting to the light of freedom. Stepping out into a life of hope means adjusting to a long-term view, believing that there is more goodness to come. It means enjoying the colour now and living in the hope of all eternity.

As Christians Easter strengthens our belief that hope triumphs over despair, that light overcomes the darkness, and love wins. That is our song, which together we are called to sing. Despite everything, including the differences we live with every day, Jesus is Lord, the stone was rolled away so we can walk free and know eternal life.



Bishop Karen

Caring for our New Vicar

With a new vicar soon coming to our two parishes, your PCC wanted to consider how we can ensure that we support and care for Simon and his family. There are various useful publications available from the Church of England and other sources, and a group has met to start thinking about how this guidance applies to us.

One of the key things will be for us to discuss this subject with Simon when he comes and understand how best we can support him (indeed, we've already started to discuss some of the more practical topics with him). But underpinning our approach there are some key commitments which we have adopted from the documents we studied, and which we think are useful for everyone to be aware of. We share below just the commitments of the local church, but alongside these there are suggested commitments for the minister(s) and the wider church.

The local church commits:

- to ensure that the ordained minister has, and takes, opportunities for rest, recreation, training, retreat and study.
- to do what it can to safeguard the minister's availability for pastoral ministry, especially at times of deepest need, by relieving them of tasks that can be undertaken by others.
- to recognise that the calling of the minister is to both church and community, and to work with the minister in a mutually accountable way.
- to work with the minister to ensure that boundaries in relation to the minister's household are respected and, where necessary, enforced.

You might like to reflect on these and think about how we can all play our part in supporting Simon and his family.

Paul

What on Earth is an APCM?

What is the APCM? The Annual Parochial Church Meeting on Tuesday 29th April at 7-30pm is the occasion when Churchwardens and the Parochial Church Council (PCC) are elected, Annual Reports and Accounts are presented, and the Vicar would normally give an overview of the past year and the future direction of the church (this year we are planning something a little different!).

What are Churchwardens? Two representatives of the church who have wide ranging responsibilities for the practical running of the church, care of the church buildings (including Holy Trinity) and generally assist and support the Incumbent (Vicar) and Staff Team.

What is the Parochial Church Council? A group of people (some elected, some ex officio e.g. LLMs) who share with the Vicar and Wardens in major decisions about the church and serve as trustees of our finances under charity law.

Who is eligible to vote? Anyone resident in the parish, plus those on the electoral roll, can vote for Churchwardens. Only those on the electoral roll may vote in elections to the PCC.

What is the electoral roll? A list of those who are regular worshippers or supporters of the church. To be eligible you must be over 16, baptised (in any Christian church), and resident in the parish **or** a regular worshipper at the church for at least six months. (John Reynolds is our electoral roll officer and keeps this up to date.)

Does it really matter? Yes. Attending the APCM and, possibly, standing as a Warden or for PCC, is a real opportunity to contribute positively to the implementation of the vision for St Thomas', St John's and Holy Trinity.

So, what should I do? Make sure you are on the Electoral Roll (John has just published the latest version) and have the date of the APCM in your diary. Prayerfully consider standing for the PCC. Pray for those who will be elected. If you are considering standing or nominating someone, please have a word with Harriet Heard (PCC secretary) ideally before the APCM so we have an idea of whether a contested vote will be needed.

(With thanks to Rev Coutts for drafting most of this years ago)

Youth Alpha

Since Christmas we have been running a Youth Alpha Course with brand new, updated material. Our sessions have started with cake (kindly provided by members of the congregation and for which we have been very grateful), drinks and games. We have then watched the video presentations, pausing at regular intervals to discuss questions. The materials have been of a very high quality and have involved teaching and testimonies taken from around the world and pertinent to this age group and have, in the main, been well received by the group. The young people have been brilliant at inviting friends along and we have regularly numbered between 15-20, so much so that we have had to move out of the Audrey Prentice room into the Church Lounge and watch the videos via projector.

We very much enjoyed the Youth Alpha Day (aka the Holy Spirit weekend) where Lyndsey and Simon W did a fantastic job of catering for us with homemade pizza. We also treated ourselves to dessert at The Little Dessert Shop before a game of a rounders in the park. As well as being blessed with great food and weather we also had Beth and Jay Cook with us in the afternoon to lead us in worship and prayer. It was a real privilege to see the young people praying for each other and experiencing God's Spirit in what may have been a new way for many of them. The weekend was rounded off by a wonderful visit from Bishop Andrew who gamely answered our questions – and we saved the particularly difficult ones for him!

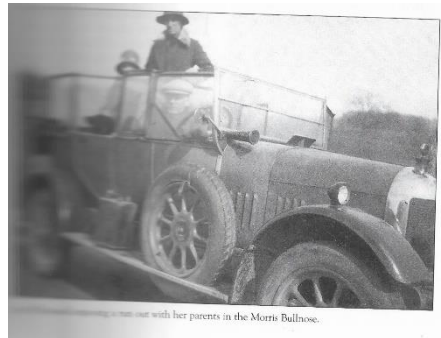
We have now finished the Alpha course and are considering how we should follow and build on it. Please join with us in praying about how to continue to best support such a talented, fun-loving and caring group for which we, as a church, are truly blessed to have.

Helen S

A Brief Glimpse of Trowbridge Through Local Eyes

Ivor regularly visits Tony L for a coffee and chat and sometimes his neighbour, Brian R, joins them. Both Tony and Brian have a vast knowledge of Trowbridge and how things use to be, including Keevil and its airfield. Tony and Brian also have a vast number of books and photographs regarding Trowbridge. Often a selection of these are looked at whilst chatting and occasionally Ivor brings one home for a read. From talking to them he learnt there use to be two Spitfire factories, one along the Bradley Road and one on Hilpertown Road near Victoria Road; we only knew about the one on Bradley Road.

Recently he was sent home with the book *Trowbridge Voices*, which is recollections of local people. We found a number of snippets by Jessie W, a former member of St Thomas, plus a photo of her and her parents in a Morris Bullnose. There was also a photograph of her grandfather's boot and shoe shop in Church Walk.



Jessie talked about attending Spring Cottage School, which was located in Clark's Place, just off Ashton Street. She reminisced that there were about fourteen pupils, and they read the Bible every day.

Tony remembers the fire in the clock tower at County Hall in 1958; there's a photograph of the damage in the book. He says they all still had to go into work even though there was water flowing down the main stairs from putting out the fire. Not sure that would happen today!

Ivor came across a photograph of Case & Sons butcher shop on the corner of Mortimer Street and Bythesea Road and exclaimed "I remember that! My brother worked there."

On almost the last page of the book there is snippet from Mavis Burt who heard about a verger's job at St Thomas', which she applied for and got; this came with a beautiful little cottage by the gates. Her

tasks involved cleaning, handing out hymn books, putting on the heating, pulling the bell and pumping the organ. These last two are no longer on the required task list!

If you want to know more about the history of Trowbridge or St Thomas' then have a chat with Tony, you won't be disappointed.

Val S

Church Weekend Away November 21st - 23rd

It would be great to see as many of St Thomas' family at the weekend. Deposits by the end of April please, if you'd like to come.

Cost for the weekend accommodation and meals is between £90 and £110 depending on the accommodation (see booking form for more details).

Fellowship, worship and teaching! What more could you want?

We are planning on activities for children and young people.

It will be a great opportunity to get to know Simon and Elle a little better.

Booking forms from the back of the church or see Val S or Jo D for more details.



Eighteen Months In

It has been about 18 months since my original article for the magazine at the start of my illness, so I thought it was about time for an update. I'm also in a position to set out things quiet clearly for now.

Firstly, I want to thank you all for your prayers and continued interest in my situation I feel very blessed to be part of this community.

I am in a position which my consultants describe as safe and steady, which is good, although I am also not fully "cured", which is where I would prefer to be. My blood counts have been pretty stable since Christmas – I have my bloods tested every three weeks to ensure this remains the case – these test look both at medication levels and various bodily functions to check that the medication is not have any side effects. To give an example, my haemoglobin levels are currently 112, for a healthy adult they would look for them to be between 130 and 180, so we are some way off those figures.

For me this means that I still suffer from fatigue, and I am also still immune suppressed – which is the main reason I sit at the back of the church. I have been able since January to return to work and am currently allowed to work up to three non-consecutive days a week. I have done this once and could feel it's effects so I cannot see this increasing any time soon. My employer though continues to be very supportive and understanding of my situation. Work is arranged not to exceed what I am capable of doing and around any medical appointments.

The medical consensus seems to be this might be it with regard to my recovery from this phase of treatment – which started back in October 2023. They importantly do not see any reason for me to deteriorate, but they will never be 100% sure on this. There are some further options that can be considered but for the moment these are not been pursued.

So, I continue to have my bloods tested every three weeks, I speak to one of my consultants – I have two different teams in two different hospitals just to add to the fun – once a month to every 6 weeks. Once every eight weeks I have an injection (thankfully at home) for my secondary condition and carry on life. I'm also due to have another bone marrow biopsy soon. The results of which could be the one thing

that does cause things to change. I remain generally positive and thankful to have recovered from where I started off. Unsure of where this will all end up, but it will be where God intends it.

Martin B



To The Moon and Back

A truly wonderful sight of the 3D suspended installation of the moon in St Denys Church, Warminster.

Part of the 2025 Starfest Celebration in Warminster.

Kadugli Newsletter and Prayer Diary

“Please do not grow tired of praying for Sudan” (Archbishop Ezekiel)

Recent News on Sudan.

There are further signs that the momentum in the struggle between the two main combatants in the civil war, the SAF and RSF, may be shifting in favour of the SAF. Radio Dabanga reports SAF sources as claiming that on 27 March they cleared the last remaining pockets of the RSF from Khartoum and freed dozens of prisoners from RSF- run detention centres in Jebel Aulia several miles south of the capital. These claims are disputed by the RSF, who deny they have been defeated.

SAF's claims do not mean peace is imminent. RSF have considerable forces across Sudan, including notably the Kadugli/Nuba Mountains area, and even if SAF do emerge the victors it would take some time to establish an effective and stable government that would enforce peace.

It may be worth noting that both SAF and RSF have the support of certain outside countries representing different streams of Islam. Please pray that whichever side wins, freedom of religion will be respected.

Beyond the area of Khartoum, violence continues, some of it unspeakable.

Although it is generally accepted that the worst of this is perpetrated by RSF, it is also generally reported that the SAF is by no means innocent.

There is another major player in all this - the Sudan People's Liberation Movement - North (SPLM - N). They add another level of confusion to a complicated situation but seem to be active chiefly in the region of Kadugli Diocese.. Reports suggest they were allied with SAF but may now be supporting RSF. The Sudanese Human Rights and Development Organisation (HUDO) has accused the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North of bombarding the South Kordofan capital Kadugli on February 3, in response to an SAF attack. This may be the reason for Bishop Hassan's request last month for protection against bombing. There is some doubt over the accuracy of HUDO's accusation; while SAF has an air force, there are no reports that RSF or SPLM-N also have one.

As previously reported by Radio Dabanga, the SPLM El-Hilu fiercely denied the allegations at the time, and in turn condemned the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) for attacking their sites. At least 44 people died, and 28 others were injured, according to figures received by Radio Dabanga, in an artillery bombardment on the city of Kadugli in South Kordofan in early February. Many of the casualties happened when a bomb or missile exploded near “Kadugli Church” (the cathedral?). The figures would not have been so bad if there had been even the normal level of medical facilities available to treat the injured.

Overall, sadly the violence seems to continue.

And What of the Church in Sudan?

To us in England, the situation in Sudan seems very depressing, yet in his requests for our prayers (see below), the first thing Bishop Hassan says is “We thank God for the success of training the servants of men and women in the Church of Salvation and was very very happy and they asked to continue training from time to time in order to help them in the written knowledge and some leadership skills. They were 115 individuals.” Surely, we must be moved by their commitment to the Lord Jesus.

Another source of encouragement comes from the Mothers’ Union. In a recent newsletter the UK-based MU say “The displaced Sudanese now based in the Nuba Mountains have been facing huge challenges in terms of food, water, health and education. Mothers’ Union has a strong presence and has been key in providing practical and spiritual support to those fleeing the crisis in other parts of Sudan.” Let us give thanks for the Mothers’ Union in Sudan.



Members of the Mothers’ Union (plus a few others) Kadugli 2019. **What about**

Kadugli?

Aside from the references to Kadugli already in this newsletter, further information can be gleaned from the matters about which Bishop Hassan has requested prayer. These are:

- 1 the evident enthusiasm for learning more about their faith and how to share it.
- 2 security is very difficult in Sudan, especially in conflict areas in the Nuba Mountains.
- 3 peace and stability are lacking in Sudan.
- 4 the Church needs to be visible in the midst of these dangerous circumstances, and needs to maintain its witness and live as a light, salt, and a pleasure for every human being, but at present this is very difficult.
- 5 families, especially children, are a constant concern and need God’s protection and provision so they may have success in their schools.

The last point, about families, brings home the natural concern all families feel for their children. Bishop Hassan has his share of these worries. Last month we shared the need for money to pay for university fees for Hassan's son Yassa. Thanks to some remarkable generosity, the fees for the first six months have been donated, and we are faced with the need to raise a further amount of £650 for the next half year's fees due in the autumn. Please consider how you might support this.

We also need to support the desperate need for food and other essentials. Can we help? For administrative and other reasons any money given for Yassa would need to be kept distinct from other funds, so anyone wishing to donate for Yassa can use the same payment details as for other funds for Kadugli, but with the reference "Yassa" instead of Kadugli."

Across Bradford Deanery there has been a continuous warm and generous response to this need; thank you all. Please continue to give via your church if you can, or directly. The account details are:

Bank: Lloyds Bank Trowbridge

Name of Account: Bradford Deanery

Sort Code: 30-98-75

Account No. 00710285 Reference Kadugli. Or, as mentioned above, Yassa. (N.B. This is important)

Please also consider ways of raising funds for Kadugli. And as always, we ask you to pray.

Prayer Diary

"Please do not grow tired of praying for Sudan" (Archbishop Ezekiel)

Bishop Hassan has written:

- 1 We thank God for the success of training the servants of men and women in the Church of Salvation and was very very happy and they asked to continue training from time to time in order to help them in the written knowledge and some leadership skills. They were 115 individuals.
- 2 Pray for the security situation which is very difficult in Sudan, especially the conflict areas in the Nuba Mountains.
- 3 Pray for peace and stability in Sudan.
- 4 Pray for the Church to be visible in the midst of these circumstances; it needs to maintain its witness and live as a light, salt, and a pleasure for every human being, but at present this is very difficult.
- 5 Pray for Hassan's family and children, and all families and their children, and may God protect and provide for them so they may have in their schools.

In addition to Bishop Hassan's requests, please give thanks for the work of the Mothers' Union, and ask God to bless and protect it.

St John's Parish Church, West Ashton

Warmly invite you to worship and witness the following Easter Services

Palm Sunday, 13th April 2025

Join us in our Palm Sunday Service - 10.30AM

When palm Crosses will be given out

Acknowledging Jesus' ride into Jerusalem.



Good Friday, 18th April 2025

An Hour by The Cross - 2.00pm

The reading of the Passion of our Lord's Death on the Cross.

There is a green hill far away, outside a city wall,
where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell, what pain he had to bear. But we believe it was
for us, he hung and suffered there.

Easter Sunday, 20th April 2025

Communion Service - 10.30am.

The Day of the Resurrection

Christ is Risen He is Risen Indeed - Alleluia

We remember the first Easter Day bringing a
new Beginning and Hope to God's People.



Good Friday is a time of sadness, Easter is a time of gladness. On Good Friday
Jesus died, but rose again at Eastertide

All Thanks and Praise to God.



Good Friday March of Witness

Service at St James' Church
at 10am

Children's activities at Vineyard
(Emmanuel's Yard)

March starts
outside Sainsburys'
at 11am

Easter Services

Sunday 13th April Palm Sunday 10.30am

Morning Worship John Chettleburgh

**Thursday 17th April Maundy Thursday 7.30pm
for 8pm**

Tenebrae Martyn and Jill Perratt

Friday 18th April Good Friday 10am

**Joint service at St James' followed by March for
Witness**

Sunday 20th April Easter Sunday 10.30am

**All Age Holy Communion Martyn and Andrew
Gough**