

St Mary the Virgin—North Shoebury

MARCH 2021



MONDAY 1ST MARCH—ST DAVID'S DAY

SUNDAY 14TH MARCH—MOTHERING SUNDAY

WEDNESDAY 17TH MARCH—ST PATRICK'S DAY

THURSDAY 25TH MARCH—ANNUNCIATION OF ST MARY

SUNDAY 28TH MARCH—PALM SUNDAY



The Church garden work party this month will be

on

Saturday

13th March

from 2-4pm



HAVE YOU ANYTHING FOR THIS MAGAZINE?

Thank you to David and Sue for their contributions this month. If you have anything which would be of interest, please contact the editor, Craig Hunter early in the month, so that your space can be reserved.

07932503644; chunter2009@hotmail.co.uk

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Vicar's Letter for March 2021

As I write this, we are still in lockdown. It is taking its toll, but with signs of Spring in the air, hopes are being raised. We are still waiting to hear from the Bishops and local health services about the re-opening of church buildings.

Easing Lockdown

“Stage One – 8th March”. This is the start of the easing. The government have said that all pupils will be able to return to school from 8th March. It is wrong to say that they will “re-open” as they have been open all this time. In many schools, teachers have been running classes in school for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers as well as online classes for those confined to their homes. It has been a tough time for pupils, teachers and parents, so please remember them in your prayers as we move forward.

If all goes well with this easing, the next key date is 29th March. At this time, I notice that weddings can take place in any circumstances. This is not quite true, as church weddings still need the Banns of Marriage to be read as part of a “public act of worship” on at least the three Sundays prior to the wedding.

“Stage Two – 12th April” If all goes well, Stage Two commences on April 12th. But this is after Easter, so at the moment, it seems that churches will not be able to open their doors fully for public worship at least until then. But like schools, the work of “church” has continued all the way though lockdown, but not necessarily seen. Streamed services have been prepared, technical skills learned, study groups run, and foodbanks have been supported. Morning Prayer is still part of everyday life for those few of us who meet on Zoom every morning at 9.00am. It all makes a difference and shows the world that we are there. When I started at St. Mary's in December 2018 I remember people being surprised because they had heard that St. Mary's was closed. The best way to demonstrate that this is not the case is to act like Christians, and like a church.

Maybe that during Holy Week, we are able to hold Morning Prayer in church, but numbers will need to be limited. I am not sure about a sunrise service, but a small service on Easter Day would be special.

“Stage Three” If all goes well, Stage Three begins on May 17th and then I hope all churches will be fully open, although I still expect that there might be limits on numbers.

At each of these “Stages” I have used the words, “**If all goes well**”. We need to remember that the virus does not listen to what governments might say. We know how to keep the virus at bay; that is by keeping a physical distance between people, and by remembering to keep our hands washed. Wearing face coverings helps to slow the spread, even though they are awful. We need to remember the sudden surge in rates of infections that happened after “Eat out to help out” followed by the reopening of schools. There was another surge after Christmas. Now is not the time to go mad.

We are commanded by Christ to “Love God, and love neighbour”. This is before we love ourselves. All we have to do is work out what that means to each of us, and we will each have our own way of doing this.

Lost in the tumult of this year has been Fairtrade Fortnight. This year Fairtrade Fortnight runs from 22nd February to 7th March. We often read in the press concerns about “food security” and yet we live in a world of plenty.

This is quoted from the Fairtrade website under the headline: “FAIRTRADE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE”

Millions of people across the globe who provide us with our food and fashion are on the front line of the climate emergency. They’re trapped in an unfair trading system that will only drive us further into crisis.

But crucially, together, we can still win a better future.

Fairtrade farmers and workers are fighting back demanding trade that will create a sustainable future for people and planet, and using sustainable farming techniques in line with our Fairtrade Standards.

They are already taking steps to tackle climate change. Will you join them? Add your name to stand with farmers and show businesses and the government in this country we will not accept inaction.”

I know that talk of “climate change” makes people yawn and it has become a political issue. But scientists around the world are in agreement, that now is the time to take positive, and maybe unilateral action. It is time to demonstrate that we care for our environment through action and words. I know I have already written about this, but if nothing else, support Fairtrade during Lent. It makes a difference.

March 

This is enough. We continue to journey through Lent, and as we get closer to Easter, Resurrection Day, let us hold in our hearts the Gospel account of the events Jesus passed through, and try to ask ourselves why. Why did the Romans fear Jesus so much that they crucified him.

As we read through Mark's Gospel in our "Thursday Thinkers" study group, this will be one of the important themes that we will follow.

Take care in the coming weeks as we begin to rebuild our lives. Do not take risks, and keep safe.

God bless

David

March 2021



March 



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21st March: Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury & Reformation Martyr

If you have ever been caught up in a great event at work, which has gone on to change your own life, then Thomas Cranmer is the saint for you. He was the first ever Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, following King Henry VIII's decision to pull away from Rome, and set up the Church of England.

Born in Nottingham in 1489, Thomas Cranmer became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533. He was adviser to both Henry VIII and Edward VI. He helped Henry with the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and along with Thomas Cromwell, supported the principle of Royal Supremacy (where the king is sovereign over the Church in his realm).

Under Edward VI, Thomas Cranmer made major reforms to the C of E. He put the English Bible into parish churches, compiled the first two versions of the Book of Common Prayer, and worked with continental reformers to change doctrine on everything from the Eucharist and veneration of saints.

But kings and queens, like American presidents, change, and the Catholic Queen Mary I was determined to wipe out Protestantism. Thomas Cranmer was imprisoned for two years, found guilty of heresy, and burned at the stake on 21st March 1556.



**A WARM WELCOME
TO
DAVID AND SUSAN
WHO MOVED INTO THE
PARISH THIS MONTH, WISH
THEM WELL FOR A LONG,
PROSPEROUS AND HAPPY
NEW HOME.**

St James the Least of All

On how to deflect those staff appraisals

The Rectory

St James the Least of All



My dear Nephew Darren,

So, your vicar has introduced staff appraisal for all the officers who work for your church, including yourself. It seems a very dangerous innovation; as far as I am concerned, ministry is only successful when parishioners have no idea what the clergy get up to.

I imagine that he will look at the number of services you take in a year. Funerals can only be increased if you resort to murder, which is likely to be frowned on – although I have been sorely tempted during endless church council meetings. Perhaps if you take a flask of water wherever you go and if you find a baby unattended, you could resort to a spontaneous baptism. That would get your numbers up, even if returning mothers may marvel at the highly localised and brief shower that seemed to have taken place over the pram. Visiting targets are easily increased. Compile a list of when parishioners will be out and call on those days; a card through their letter-box will prove to your vicar that you were there. Should they happen to be in, mention that you are collecting for the organ fund and they will immediately excuse themselves for an important appointment. You are then free to move on to clock another visit.

Your vicar is also bound to want to see the congregation increasing. This is not sustainable, and you should put a stop to such ambitions at once. It is easily done. All you have to do is to approach your friends at the local football club and bribe them with your homemade beer to come along to church several Sunday mornings in a row. If you give them enough beer BEFORE the service, they will be likely to make just enough muted disruption as to leave your vicar a bit rattled, and thinking that perhaps after all, 'less' is 'more' when it comes to the congregation. But whatever you do, make sure that you never preach a better sermon than he does. You don't want anyone thanking you at the door for your 'so interesting sermon' in front of him, when they have been sleeping through his sermons for years. If you offend the vicar this way, he will take swift revenge, and ask you to organise the parish summer fete.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

A Song 1790

I murder hate by flood or field,
Tho' glory's name may screen us;
In wars at home I'll spend my blood-
Life-giving wars of Venus.
The deities that I adore
Are social Peace and Plenty;
I'm better pleas'd to make one more,
Than be the death of twenty.

I would not die like Socrates,
For all the fuss of Plato;
Nor would I with Leonidas,
Nor yet would I with Cato:
The zealots of the Church and State
Shall ne'er my mortal foes be;

But let me have bold Zimri's fate,
Within the arms of Cozbi!

Robert Burns

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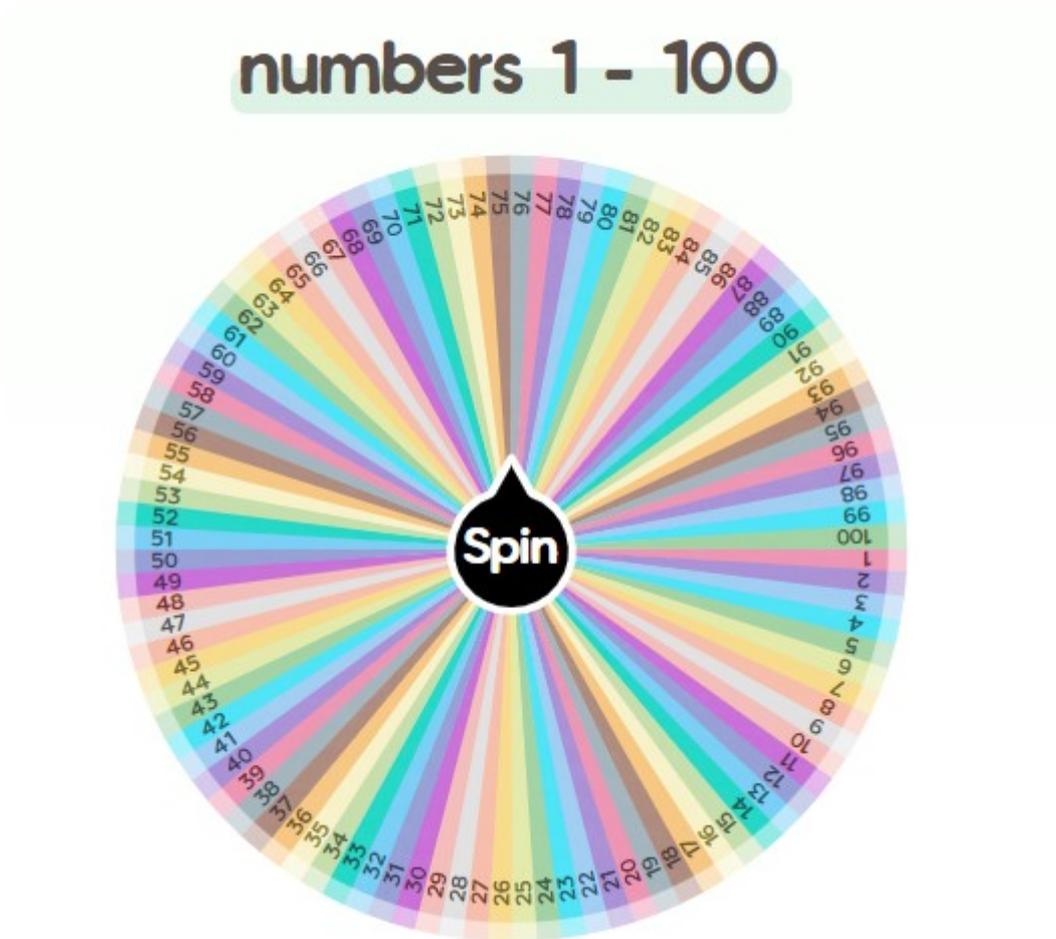
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St Mary's Rational Lottery 100 Club

As we go to print we have sold 65 numbers so there are still 35 places for friends, neighbours, family members, work colleagues and others to join in before the next draw on **28th March** It would be so good to carry on the year with a “full house”. Please make one last effort to get one more participant each!

Some of you will know former members of the congregation who have moved away—please ask them to join.



Winning numbers in February were:

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2nd Prize £12.25 Number 86 DP



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Combatting the spread of FGM

28 Too Many, a UK based research charity set up to campaign against the continuing practice of Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] is running a series of workshops in an effort to halt the resurgence of FGM which has occurred worldwide, including the UK, during the coronavirus pandemic.



Dr Ann-Marie Wilson, the founder and executive director of 28 Too Many and a Church Mission Society mission partner, said: “At the start of 2020 many countries were reporting their lowest levels of FGM since records began in 2004 yet with the escalation of Covid-19, thousands of girls and young women are at risk of being ‘cut’ and sold into marriage or forced to work in the sex industry.”

Across Africa, from Kenya to Senegal, and Nigeria to Sierra Leone, multiple factors emanating from the coronavirus crisis have combined to cause charities and NGOs concern. Ann-Marie explains: “Restrictions on travel, reductions in funding for FGM programmes and the fear of contracting the disease, as well as the closure of the school year for pupils across Africa, has meant many girls are now isolated, under the radar and exposed to the dangers of FGM.”

***The Rev David Mayne** is the Lead Pastor of Shoeburyness & Thorpe Bay Baptist Church, and currently serves as Moderator of the Baptist Union Council. David’s work with local churches, national and international Baptist groups, and with ecumenical partners has consistently been focused on issues of justice and inclusion, particularly in relation to gender. David is also the Chair of Trustees for the charity 28 Too Many, and a member of the Strategy and Policy Group for the Joint Public Issues Team.*

Help support this work at: <https://www.28toomany.org>

March 

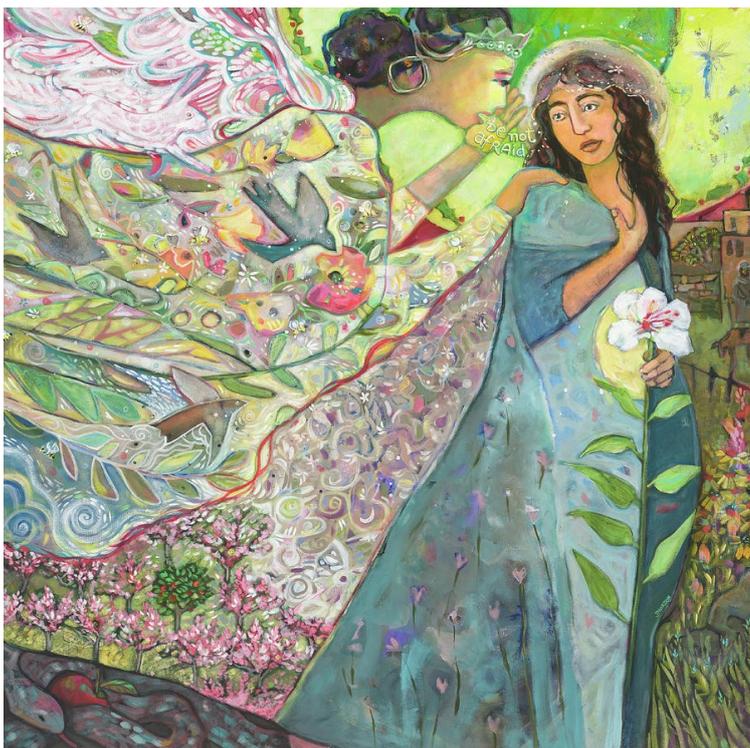
How Sunday became a Christian day of rest

It was 1700 years ago, on 7th March 321, that the Roman Emperor Constantine 1 (Constantine the Great), who had converted to Christianity, decreed that Sunday should be a day of rest throughout the Empire.

This was a change from normal Roman Empire practice, which was to regard Sunday as just another work-day – something the UK seems to be reverting to. But Constantine’s civil decree made Sunday a day of rest from labour. It said: “All judges and city people and craftsmen shall rest upon the venerable day of the sun.”

This was not intended to replace the Jewish Sabbath, which starts at sunset on Friday and continues to sunset on Saturday. Such Jewish observance was regarded by most Christians as being bound to the old law instead of the Spirit, and so was resisted. Christians backed the Sunday rest because it was the day on which Jesus had risen from the dead and the Holy Spirit had come – despite possible doubts about the phrase “day of the sun”.

Christians meeting for worship on Sunday in fact dates back to the Acts of the Apostles, and it is mentioned historically about 115AD. Actual practice varies across the world and through the years.



25th March—The Annunciation

This beautiful event (Luke 1:26-38) took place in Nazareth, when Mary is already betrothed to Joseph. The Archangel Gabriel comes to Mary, greets her as highly favoured, tells her not to be afraid, that she will bear a son Jesus, and that her elderly cousin Elizabeth is already pregnant (with John the Baptist).

CONTACT DETAILS

For all enquiries, including weddings, baptisms, blessings etc. please, in the first instance, contact Pat Fitch.

01702 585289

Phone numbers are all area code 01702 unless stated

Lead Minister	Revd. David Pierce	07305 710265 david@revdavidpierce.net
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THE CHURCH WEB SITE

www.stmarynorthshoebury.org.uk

God in the Sciences

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

What will March bring? Mental health ideas for uncertain times

We may all have rather mixed feelings on reaching March this year. On the one hand, it is lovely to see the onset of Spring, and vaccinations and better weather may make handling the pandemic a little easier. On the other hand, marking a year from the start of the first UK lockdown will be painful for some, especially as many of us are likely to be experiencing restrictions or ongoing hardships for quite some time. We may need to find new ways to keep going, so here are some suggestions that draw on both science and Christian theology.

Getting outside

Time outdoors in a natural environment is very good for you – and you can't argue with the happy hormones produced by exercise. Attending to the details of nature can also inspire awe, which has been linked to positive mood, and increased life satisfaction. Enjoying creation can also help us connect with God.

Looking outside

If you are truly stuck indoors, try putting bird feeders outside your window so creation comes to you. This is also an act of kindness (see below)!

Lament and praise

The Psalms are a rich resource to help us express both our grief and our thanks to God. Try reading one or two each day.

Journaling tell us what you are doing, on whatsapp or share photos

Keep a journal of thoughts, experiences or practices you have engaged with during the day. Constructing a personal narrative or story is now recognised as a very powerful psychological and spiritual tool for building resilience. It is also a vital learning tool that we can go back to when tough times return in the future.

Acts of kindness

Helping or encouraging someone else is obviously a good thing to do in itself, but it also has a very positive effect on the giver - spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and even physically. Whichever way you look at it, finding new ways to show kindness to others can be a very effective way to help ourselves feel better too.

Gratitude

Gratitude is another natural drug – in a sense – that can help us feel better. Try keeping a grateful diary, adding a few things each day.

Laugh, sing, make music, dance

All of these activities are deeply rooted in our physical and mental makeup. You may have forgotten how great they feel, especially in times of sadness, but we can learn from children who do them very naturally.

I hope these ideas may help bring us closer to God, each other, and His creation.



Jesus at the gates of Jerusalem

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, when the Church remembers how Jesus arrived at the gates of Jerusalem just a few days before the Passover was due to be held. He was the Messiah come to His own people in their capital city, and yet He came in humility, riding on a young donkey, not in triumph, riding on a war-horse.

March 

A conscientious minister decided to get acquainted with his new neighbours and so he visited them one Spring evening. After his knock on the door, a lilting voice from within called out, “Is that you, Angel?”

“No,” replied the minister. “But I’m from the same department.”

Looking forward to things after lockdown eases—Tell us your hopes!

I thought it would be nice to hear of your hopeful plans, could you please send me a short note of something you wish we could do once we have a little more freedom?
chunter2009@hotmail.co.uk

Thank you to **Jackie** who suggested ...

When chest tombs were mentioned last week and more recently, Lady Hamilton, etc., I again looked at my booklet of local history. Gives much of Parsons and Benton family history and names of quite a few buried in churchyard from 1700's onwards.

Also a snippet re. Morton Miller connection to the Parson family . The booklet refers mostly to dates of births/marriages . **I think when we are allowed to meet up again we should hold a session in the churchyard** , complete with booklet. The book was published by the Rochford Hundred Historical Society in the 1980's.



17th March—St Patrick’s Day

May the strength of God pilot us,
may the wisdom of God instruct us,
may the hand of God protect us,
may the word of God direct us. Be
always ours this day and for ever-
more. – *St Patrick*

March 

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Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani has become the Church of England's Lead Bishop for Housing, to spearhead the Church's efforts to help ease the UK's crippling housing crisis.

Bishop Guli, currently the Bishop of Loughborough, will take up the new role later this year when she becomes **Bishop of Chelmsford**.

The new post will involve leading efforts to implement the recommendations of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Housing, Church and Community, which was published in late February.

Give it UP for LENT !

It may be that you have missed a few weeks of our Lent study group but please consider joining us on Zoom on a Thursday evening where we are reading Mark's Gospel. This is proving a lively, refreshing and exhilarating meeting giving each a fresh outlook on the word and meaning for our church and mission. We would greatly value your contribution (or criticism) and another viewpoint as there is SO MUCH content– we would not like to miss any small part.

Join using the link below or contact Craig or David for your own individual personal invitation.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88664184415?
pwd=T08vQUYySkVUczZGVXMrZjRRWjd6QT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88664184415?pwd=T08vQUYySkVUczZGVXMrZjRRWjd6QT09)

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