

2Gather

Parish Magazine of the East Dartford Benefice

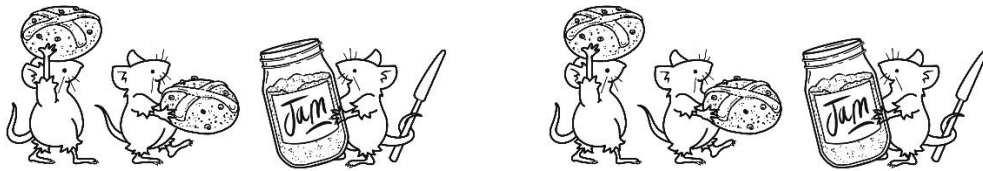


happy easter

March 2023

East Dartford Benefice
St Edmund &
St Alban
www.2dartfordchurches.org





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Hello everyone

Dear Friends

Welcome to this Easter edition of our parish magazine, our sixth overall and our first as the East Dartford Benefice, and newly entitled 2Gather.

Spring is coming, (technically it's here but it doesn't feel like it today as I write). And if Spring is coming, so too is Easter. Easter, unlike Christmas, is a moveable feast. This means it is not always on the same date each year, though it is always between late March and early April. You can work out the date by looking on a calendar for the Sunday following the first full moon after March 21st. You can also count forward 46 days from Ash Wednesday (the day after Shrove Tuesday/pancake day) to find the date Easter will fall on – 46 days because you have the forty days of Lent and then six Sundays. Is it too late to tell you that you can break any Lenten discipline on the Sundays?

Anyway, Easter Day this year is on April 9th. At St Edmund's there is traditionally a dawn service on Easter Day. And as dawn on the 9th is at 6.18am our service begins at five thirty. Do join us, especially if you're an early bird anyway. It's beautiful at that time of day, watching the sun rise. And a beautiful service. Afterwards we will have breakfast, including vast amounts of coffee, I hope. Later that morning we all gather at St Alban's for a celebratory Holy Communion service with all our favourite Easter hymns. No doubt too there will be an easter egg hunt.

There's lots going on throughout Holy Week – the days between Palm Sunday and Easter Day - as we journey together these last few days to the Cross of Good Friday and, crucially to the empty tomb beyond.

May I wish you all the blessings of Easter, and I hope you enjoy this parish magazine.

God bless,

Mandy





Monday of Holy Week – 3rd April

On-line homily.

Tuesday of Holy Week – 4th April

Prayer walk through our communities starting at 11am at St Edmund's and finishing at 12:30pm at St Alban's with coffee and a light lunch.

Wednesday of Holy Week – 5th April

Agape meal (agape is the Greek word for the unconditional love of God). A simple meal followed by a short service. The Agape is at St Edmund's – 7pm for a 7.30pm start. Do let us know if you'll be joining us to give us an idea of numbers.

Maundy Thursday – 6th April

Holy Communion with Stripping of the Altar at St Alban's at 7:30pm

Good Friday – 7th April

We are at St Edmund's. Between 12noon and 2pm there is time for quiet reflection and prayer interspersed with readings and prayers.

At 2pm we mark the last hour of Jesus on the Cross with a Service of the Word.

Holy Saturday – 8th April

both churches are closed.

Easter Day – 9th April

Dawn service of light with Communion at 5.30am at St Edmund's followed by breakfast. Then at 10:30 a service of Holy Communion for Easter Day at St Alban's.

Why do they do that? – number 6

Why do most Christian communities make sharing bread and wine a key part of many acts of worship?

During the Thursday of that first Holy Week (the week leading up to the death of Jesus on the Cross) Jesus gathered his disciples together for a last meal which became known as The Last Supper for fairly obvious reasons. He knew he must die soon; the disciples at this moment did not, though they were desperately anxious and uneasy.

Jesus could have said to them, ‘this is going to end badly tomorrow – we need to leave while we still can’. He could have said this but, of course, he did not. Or he could have spent that last meal going over and over what he had taught them, making sure they got it, really got it, and could pass on his legacy. He could have, but he did not.

Instead Jesus spent that last evening together with his dearest friends simply sharing tangible reminders of God’s love for us, and reminders too of how the disciples – and us – might share that love.

He did two things. One, he got down on his knees and washed the feet of Peter – the job of a slave not a great rabbi – and said, love one another as I have loved you, that is, love humbly and sacrificially. Thus foot washing - which some churches still do every Maundy Thursday - becomes a visual reminder, more powerful than a thousand words, that we serve God’s people best by putting our lives at their service, not by lording it over them.

The second memory Jesus planting with his disciples that night was equally visual and kinaesthetic. At a meal which would have included other foods too, he focused on the bread and wine – symbols of his body (the bread) which would the following day be broken for the world; and his blood (the wine) which he would shed for the world.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

There are different views on what, if anything, is happening ontologically in this act of Communion (sharing). But most if not all Christians agree that, as we faithfully remember and obey this command, we are, at the very least, reminded that we, the Church, across time and space, are indeed the Body of Christ. His Body on earth. His hands, his feet, his heart. Doing his will.

PS – this sharing of bread and wine has different names – some call it Mass and others the Eucharist. Some refer to it simply as The Lord’s Supper and others still Holy Communion. But whatever we call it, we know that in the act of remembering we are obeying the last earthly command of Jesus Christ, and truly re-membering (the word ‘remember’ means to become a part of again).

God bless, Mandy

ROB'S RAMBLE



11am Depart from St Edmund's

11:20am St Alban's

12noon Heath Lane Car Park
entrance to heath

Ramble following Green Route
BYO picnic lunch

2pm return to car park
and walk back to St Edmund's

EASTER MONDAY
10TH APRIL | 11AM-3PM



St George of the Golden Legend

The Saint of an English Army before he was Patron Saint of England, St George may have been a soldier, but he was no Englishman. Some stories say that he was an officer in the Roman army under Diocletian, who refused to abandon his faith during the Terror, and was martyred at Lydda in Palestine about the year 300 AD - supposedly 23rd April. Over the years St George became the example of a Christian fighting-man, a powerful helper against evil powers affecting individual lives. He was the soldier-hero of the Middle Ages, of whom remarkable deeds were reported.

In the Golden Legend of the 13th century, Jacobus de Voragine gave St George a handsome write-up. The story runs thus:



One day, St George rode up to the heathen city of Sylene in Lybya where he found the citizens in great distress. A neighbouring dragon had forced them to surrender two sheep each day for its

dinner, and when the sheep gave out, two of their children; and now they were about to sacrifice the King's daughter, dressed as if for her wedding. St George encountered the little party by a stagnant lake, where the dragon lived, and persuaded the sobbing Princess to tell him why she was so miserable. At that moment the dragon appeared, looking inexpressibly revolting. St George charged forwards and drove his spear into the dragon's gaping mouth. To everyone's amazement, he tumbled the monster over and over.

Then St George borrowed the Princess's girdle, tied it round the dragon's neck, and persuaded her to lead it back to Sylene herself. The sight of her approaching with the befuddled dragon on its makeshift lead emptied the town. When the inhabitants timidly crept back, St George promised to behead the dragon if they would all believe in Jesus Christ and be baptised.

It was a most effective form of evangelism, for everybody said 'yes' at once. So, 15,000 people were baptised, and four carts were commissioned to remove the dragon's body.

St George thus became a symbol of the war against evil, and he is usually portrayed trampling the dragon of sin under his horse's hoofs. The Crusaders had a vision of him helping them against the Saracens at Antioch, during the first Crusade, and so brought the story of St George back with them from Palestine. Presently England put herself under the protection of the Saint. His day was declared a holiday in 1222. A red cross on a white field is the flag of St George.



Church meetings are brilliant APCM's are even better!

Your opportunity to:

- Become a church warden

- Join the PCC

- Become our Deanery Synod representative

- Join the Electoral Roll

- Hear what has been happening and what our plans are.

Please come to the APCM after the joint service on 30th April at St Alban's

Mandy's lost her iPad ...

The Vicar's lost her iPad –
Disaster's come to church!
Her sermon's on that iPad
It's left her in the lurch!

She's been looking for that iPad
For most of half an hour,
She's searched the chapel and the vestry
So now she's up the creek!

Oh! Where's she put that iPad?
She had it when she came!
She's searching high and searching low
It's driving her insane!

The angels in the hammer beams
For several hundred years
Have witnessed proper order
But now they're all in tears.

For chaos reigns below them
Upon this modern day
For everyone is searching now –
Both clergyman and lay!

The Vicar found her iPad
Tonight, we'll all be sleeping!
She sent a message from her phone
And set her iPad beeping!

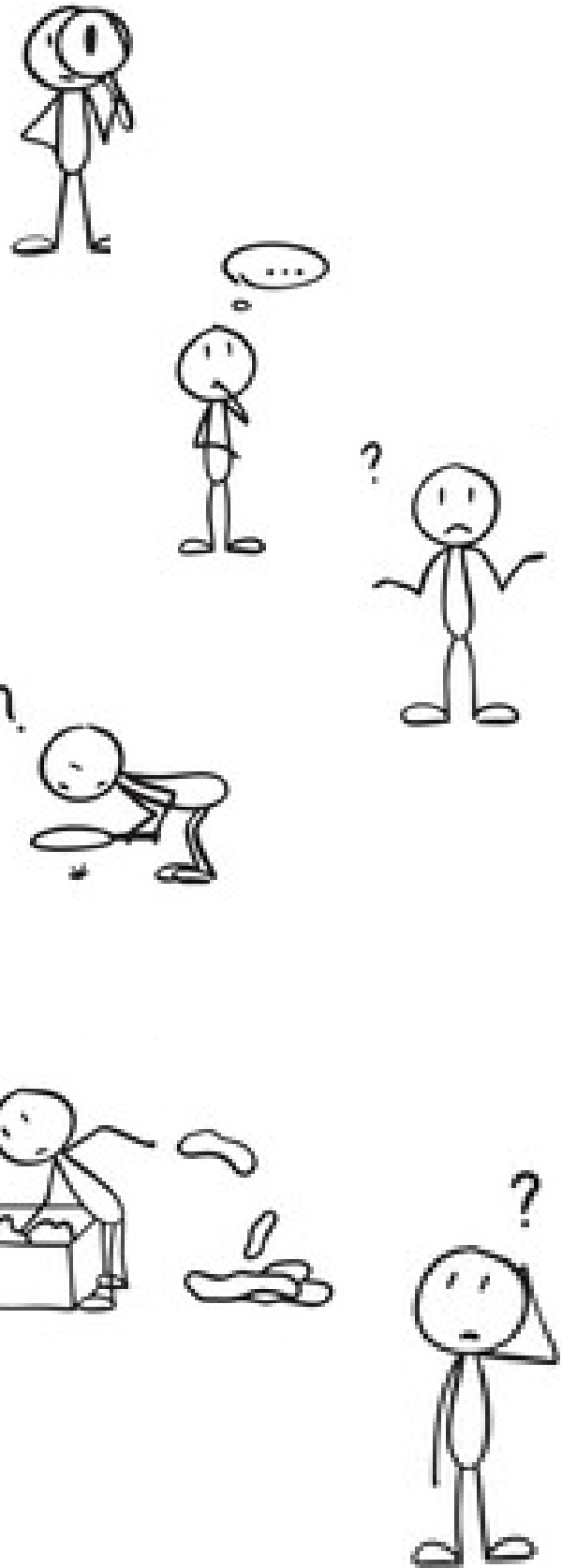
And as she holds her iPad
We feel her happy glow;
But could she not have done that trick
That half-an-hour ago?

The answer comes upon us
That trick she could not do!
For, in the caverns of our church
She'd lost her smartphone, too!

By Nigel

Beeton

*Editor It's as if the author knows Mandy!
Not only could it be her iPad, but it could
also be her glasses, her keys, her phone,
even her coat!*



We all need help sometime



Important Notice

The Foodbank is closed on the following dates Please make sure that you make other arrangements.

Monday 10th April (Easter Monday)
Monday 1st May (Bank Holiday)
Monday 8th May (Bank Holiday)
Monday 29th May (Bank Holiday)
Monday 28th August (Bank Holiday)

Book Reviews by Andrew Carr, Reader



Godforsaken by Stephen Cottrell

"It is wise to remember that Jesus didn't speak English" challenges the us as to how we translate into the cultures and languages of today, the story, beliefs and values that we see and receive in Jesus Christ? The cross is real. It is horribly real. It is real horror and real pain... Yet in the midst of our own real pains when we worship, we are taken into something bigger than ourselves. For at worship's heart, I believe, we find Jesus.

'The words that Jesus cries out as he dies are terrifying: My God, my God why have you forsaken me?' are taken from the beginning of Psalm 22. The author

challenges us to consider that 'no amount of clever explaining away eliminates or reduces the stupefying horror that maybe, just maybe in those final agonising moments Jesus himself stopped believing in God, stopped reckoning himself the Messiah, was utterly defeated and abandoned. Isn't this what the words actually mean? Or is it? Is there something else?' The author challenges us to meditate and wrestle with the thought that 'God is forsaken by God... There is, if we can even begin to imagine such a thing, a kind of breakdown in the very life of the Trinity... We know that being human means being frail and mortal. We suffer. We die. God now knows that too.' The book is worth it for this chapter, chapter six, alone.

I highly recommend this profound book to all and not just for reading during Lent and Holy Week as it does indeed reveal the deepest truth about God's passionate involvement with the world He loves.



The Longest Week: The Truth about Jesus' Last Days by Nick Page

Reconstructing the moments; day by day, hour by hour, the author examines the historical evidence to discover what really happened during Jesus' final days in what is now known as Holy Week. The author, by his own admission: *"a writer, speaker, unlicensed historian and general ranter who lives in Oxfordshire with his wife, some of his three daughters and a dog called Bill. He also speaks at many churches, church weekends, retreats..."*

What really happened during Jesus' final days? It was, historically speaking, nothing much; a death in Jerusalem, a routine execution amongst other routine executions at the edge of an empire. Yet that execution - and the events surrounding it - were to have a profound effect on the history of the world. The last week of Jesus' life on earth was probably the most important in history.

This book aims to reconstruct the events of those days, taking in the political and religious aspects which were at the heart of what went on. The city was packed with Passover pilgrims, soldiers from an occupying army, the citizens of the city itself and growing tensions between Roman rule and religious fanaticism. From Jesus' entry to Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday, to his resurrection a week later (suggested as Sunday 5 April AD 33); this book looks seriously at the evidence of the gospel accounts, without avoiding the controversies and contradictions that are there. It focuses on the history rather than the spiritual and theological significance of events and uses archaeological research and detailed Biblical analysis.

An ideal book for Lent and Holy Week to read and reflect upon which I highly recommend.



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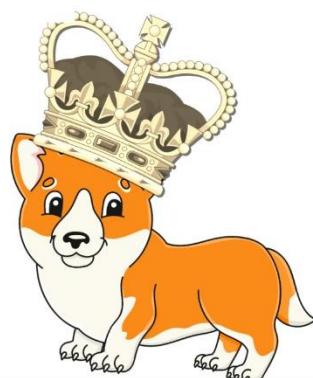


Supported by...

DARTFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



St Edmund's Children's Coronation Celebration



Monday 8th May | 11am-2pm

FREE TICKET EVENT

Puppet show, magician, balloons & lunch

Book ASAP - email 2dartfordchurches@gmail.com

Little Parish People

@ Alban & Edmund



Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Mt 21:1-11, Mk 11:1-11, Lk 19:28-38, Jn 12:12-19

Thousands of people went to Jerusalem to
celebrate the Passover feast each year.
This year Jesus and his friends went too.

Two miles outside Jerusalem
Jesus said to two of his friends



Go into that village and bring
back the donkey you find there.

If anyone asks, say
'The Lord needs it.'



So off they went...

and they found it
as Jesus had said



Why are you
taking our donkey?

The Lord needs it.



That's alright then

They brought it back to
Jesus, and made a saddle
from a cloak.



They spread more cloaks
on the road to make it a
way fit for a king.



Others cut palm branches and
waved them.

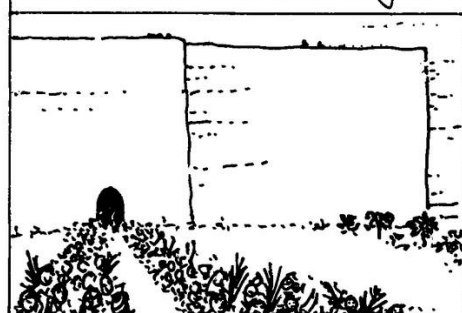


They shouted the traditional
welcome to the Passover feast

God bless the one
who comes in the
name of the Lord!



As they got closer to
Jerusalem the crowd grew.



Everyone shouted to
welcome Jesus as king



The teachers of the
laws were angry

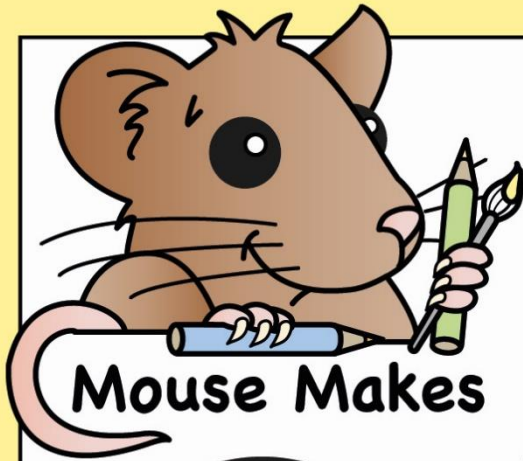


Teacher, you should stop
them calling you 'king'.

But Jesus replied

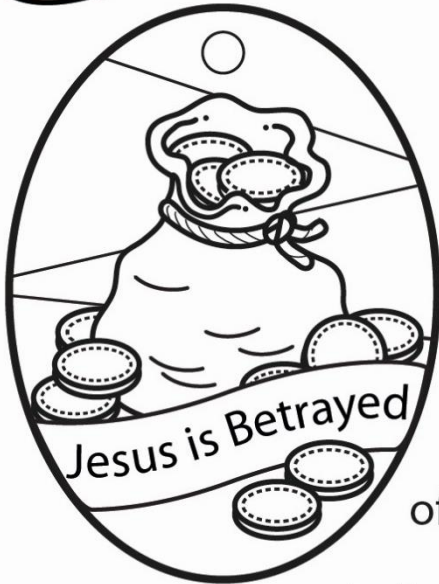


What they say is so
true that even if I made them
stop, the stones would shout!



HE IS RISEN!

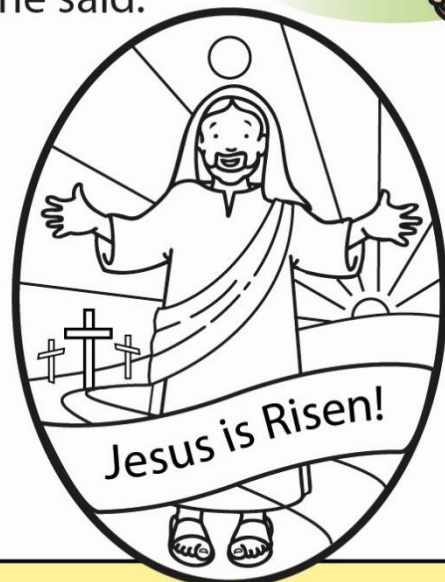
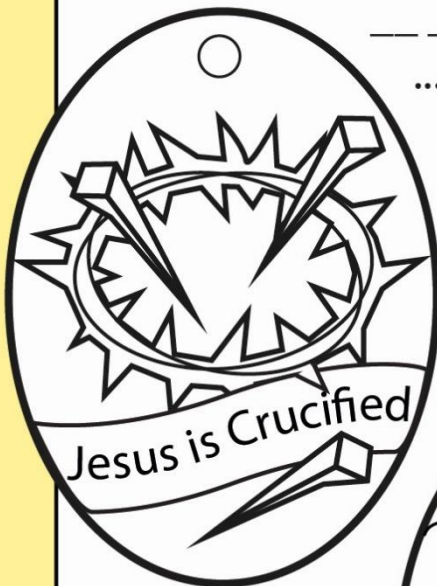
Read the story of
The Resurrection in
Matthew 28:1-20



An _____

of the Lord came down from
_____ and going to the
_____ rolled back the _____

... the _____ said, "Do not be
_____, for I know you are
looking for Jesus who was
_____, He is
not here; he has _____,
just as he said."



Glue this page onto
card. Cut out the
ovals then colour in.
Punch a hole at the
top and hang up
for Easter

The doctor and the ill person

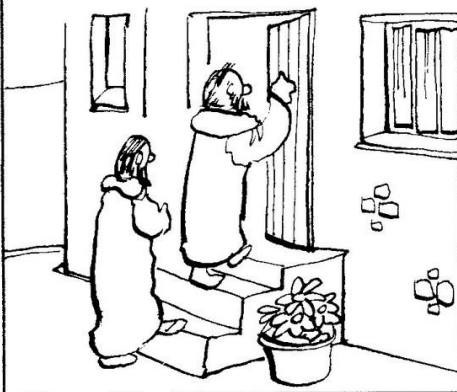


JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ON ONE OCCASION JESUS CALLED MATTHEW - A TAX COLLECTOR TO BE HIS FOLLOWER.

JESUS EVEN WENT TO MATTHEW'S HOME.



THIS SET PEOPLE'S TONGUES WAGGING. THEY THOUGHT JESUS WAS LETTING THE SIDE DOWN!

BUT JESUS EXPLAINED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO TALK TO EVERYONE!

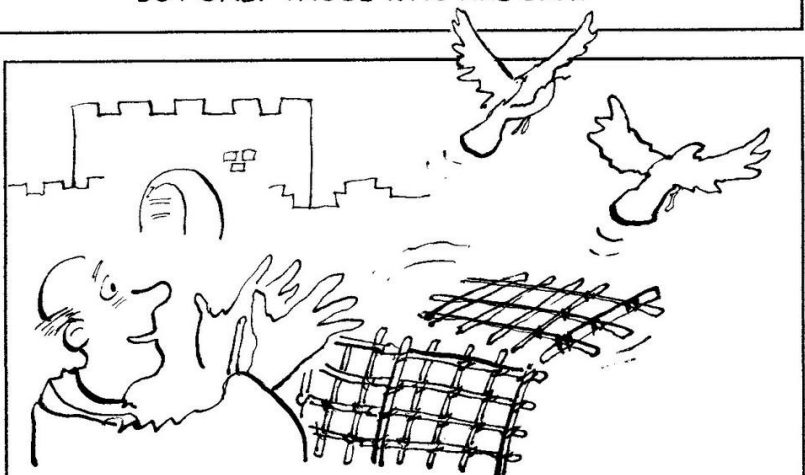


"PEOPLE WHO ARE WELL DO NOT NEED A DOCTOR"



"BUT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE SICK"

"IT IS KINDNESS THAT GOD WANTS"



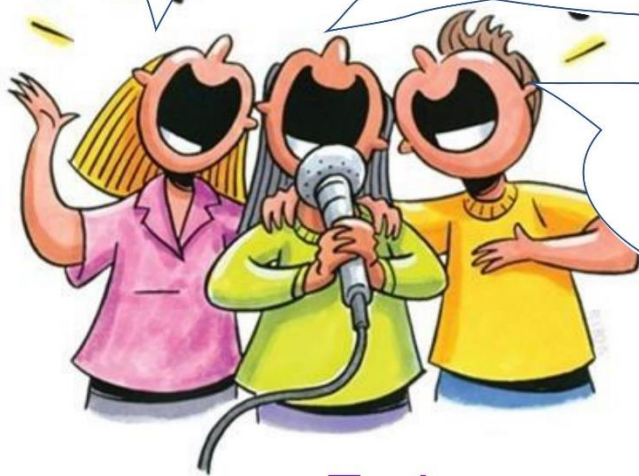
"NOT ANIMAL SACRIFICES!" see Matthew Ch. 9 v.9-13

SING *All Together Now* ALONG *With Sara*

I see a little
silhouetto of a
man!

Scaramouch,
Scaramouch, will you
do the Fandango!

Thunderbolts and
lightning, very, ver,
frightening me



Love to sing?
Can't hold a tune?

Embarrassed to sing in front of others?

Come and join us and sing out loud!

It's FREE and it's FUN

We will be singing songs by Queen, Abba, The Beatles, Elvis, Tom Jones, The Rolling Stones, Procol Harum, The Animals, Neil Diamond, The Beach Boys and many more ...

Saturday 22nd April @ 6pm

Song sheets provided, bring your own drinks & nibbles!

St Alban's Church, St Alban's Road, Dartford DA1 1FT

Everyday Faith | Adam Boucher



In this article I aim to discuss the delicate subject of discrimination in the church. The discrimination I wish to talk about is the discrimination towards the disabled. It has nothing to do with the

buildings - I accept that given the age of a lot of today's churches, they would not have had wheelchair access in the original plans. But there are other more subtle forms of discrimination. And churches need to ask what we are doing to overcome them?

Jesus cared about those on the margins, including the disabled. In his earthly ministry, though he did preach on occasion in the temples, much of his message of good news and inclusion was worked out in everyday interactions with those he met and lived amongst. And a lot of these people whom he engaged with were those who were discriminated against because of physical disability – the blind, the lame, lepers.

His view of disability was radical. In John, chapter 9 (verses 2 to 4), a disciple asks Jesus if a man who was born blind was so because of sin he had yet to commit or because of the sin of his parents. Sadly, some still do believe that disability is due to sin. But Jesus challenged this view - Jesus replied why can't it be for the glory of God.

In Mark, chapter 2 (verses 1 to 2) four men bring a disabled friend to Jesus. Due to the crowd, they are unable to get to Jesus directly. Instead, they carry their friend up onto the roof and lower him down to Jesus to be healed. Jesus on seeing their faith heals the Paralytic. Sometimes the disabled need to do things slightly differently, not wrong, just differently!

An Old Testament verse is the calling of Moses through the burning bush. Moses tries to find ways to get out of the calling even using that he believes he has a speech impediment. However, God wants Moses to lead his people to the promised land, so he promises Moses that he will tell Moses what to say and he will send his older brother

Aaron who was a more comfortable public speaker.

In Mathew a Canaanite woman goes to Jesus for healing for her daughter and Jesus claims that he is there for the Jews only, saying rather harshly, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs". The mother replies, "yes Lord even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their Master's table". In the verses that follow after this we find out Jesus was testing the woman's faith and she passed the test, and he healed her daughter.

For myself, I have sometimes experienced discrimination in the church. But I am inspired by the footprints poem to know that God walks with me, through the presence of his Holy Spirit. At times it has been this alone that has kept me going. When things are bad, I turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance though more often than not before I can turn to it for help it is already there with exactly what I need.

So my message is this – if you have people with disabilities in your church get to know them; disability affects every person in different ways. You may think you understand their needs, but maybe you don't. And remember, just because someone has a physical disability, do not assume there is any mental impairment. Finally, instead of telling them what they can't do, try to get them involved and look with them for what they can do. We all have our gifts and our challenges, and the Body of Christ can only flourish as God intends if the disabled and the able-bodied love and learn and worship together.

If you have a disability, find opportunities to use your faith and insights both inside and outside of the church. You can make the difference. Sadly, we do live in a society where it seems that things are sometimes still judged on appearances, but we are called to be counter-cultural; things can change and will change.

And never give up hope as God will never give up on you.

Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamed...

I was walking along the beach with the Lord.
Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.
In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.
Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,
Other times there was one set of footprints.

This bothered me because I noticed
That during the low periods of my life,
When I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat,
I could see only one set of footprints.

So I said to the Lord, "You promised me Lord,
That if I followed you, you would walk with me always.
But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life
There has only been one set of footprints in the sand.
Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?"

The Lord replied, "The times when you have seen
Only one set of footprints in the sand, is when I carried you."

—Mary Stevenson

[illegible]

Books

[illegible]

Records

[illegible]

ST ALBAN'S

COFFEE MORNING SALE

Saturday 27th May | 10am-12noon

**18
JUNE**

@3PM



East Dartford Benefice
St Edmund &
St Alban
www.2dartfordchurches.org



ANIMAL BLESSING

*Followed by
refreshments*

@ Spirit's Rest Animal Sanctuary, The Bridge, DA1 5RE

Bring your pets for a Blessing

All pets must be kept under control at all times

**Donations for Spirit's Rest and
East Dartford Benefice**

St James the Least of All

The Rectory
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren



You agonised recently over your ecumenical service: who should be invited? Who should preach? What about the order of service? If you had attended our recent combined churches' choir festival, your own dilemmas would have seemed a little less acute.

At the pre-meeting, there was heated discussion about whether those choirs who normally wore robes would be comfortable standing among those who didn't. The more aesthetically sensitive worried whether St Agatha's pea green cassocks may clash with our red ones. Intending to be helpful, but phrasing it rather badly, someone suggested that the normally robed choirs should wear nothing. Colonel Wainwright was a little too quick to chuckle.

I began to wonder if a prize was to be awarded to the person who raised the greatest number of concerns: Should the choirs stay separate? Would the tenors be next to the altos or the basses? Where would extra seating be placed? Would the heating be on for the rehearsal? Then came what you would call the 'elephant in the room': of all the choirmasters, *who would conduct and who play the organ?* Tension mounted, and expressions grew grim. But before the committee started to dig trenches in my carpet and position howitzers under the desk, I briefly left the room, turned off all the electricity and claimed we'd had a power cut. This is a useful device for truculent committees; sadly, it can be used only rarely.

Come the day, an uneasy truce lasted while everyone adopted the traditional solution to disagreement within congregations, and simply did exactly what they wanted. Some were robed, some were not, some choirs congealed in their own huddles, while others joyfully sat next to people from other churches – mainly so they could point out their neighbour's wrong notes. Some sang in the right key, some sang in the wrong key, some sang what sounded like quite different songs altogether.

The service ended with one choir thinking that the organist had played too loudly, while another choir thought that the conductor wasn't up to much. Everyone agreed afterwards that we must do it again, while firmly stating that if their own choirmaster didn't conduct next year, they wouldn't be there.

Thankfully, one fundamental thing on the day united them: they all said that our church was too cold, and they all went down to the pub afterwards to warm up.

Your loving uncle, Eustace



ICE CREAM PARTY



**SATURDAY 24TH JUNE
ST EDMUND'S CHURCH**

BINGO AND BEETLE DRIVE

**ICE CREAM PARTY, COME AND HAVE AS MUCH ICE
CREAM AS YOU WANT (WITH TOPPINGS) AND PLAY
BINGO AND JOIN IN THE BEETLE DRIVE!
£5PP ENTRY FEE**

East Dartford Benefice
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www.2dartfordchurches.org



Summer Songs of Praise

Sunday
30th July @3pm

St Alban's Church, St Alban's Road, Dartford DA1 1FT

Contact: albanandedmundonline@virginmedia.com for details

Hedgehogs need your help this Spring

During the winter when hedgehogs hibernate, their heart rate drops from around 190 beats per minute to just about 20. They breathe only once every few minutes. So, to rouse themselves from that depth of torpor and get back into normal life takes a huge surge of energy.

Which is where you can come in. Hedgehogs are hungry in the Spring. Very hungry. Most of them will have slept until mid-March, and so will now be awake - but starving.

So why not put out some shallow dishes of meaty cat or dog food or cat biscuits and water?

You can even buy or make special hedgehog feeders.

Hedgehogs have always been popular, but they are now sadly classed as 'vulnerable to extinction'. Numbers have been plummeting, and now there are less than one million left in the UK.

"With their coat of prickles and inquisitive nose, alongside a penchant for snuffling around our back gardens snaffling up slugs and earthworms, hedgehogs are a childhood memory of delight," said one scientist. "Sadly, hedgehogs might be banished to memories alone and lost as a source of wonder for our children and grandchildren."









"Police? This is St Mary's Ladies' Knitting & Vigilante Circle. We've detained two gents trying to nick the church silver."

Getting in touch....

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|curateindartford@gmail.com

Canon Mandy Brown | 07772 121277

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|albanandedmundonline@virginmedia.com

St Edmund's Centre Co-ordinator: Janet Jones (except Fri)
stedmundsdartford@gmail.com

St Alban's Churchwardens: Segun & Debbie www.stalbansdartford.com

St Edmund's Churchwardens: Janet Gunner & Lorraine Bathgate
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