



# Horsell Matters

**The Village Magazine from your Parish Church  
February – March 2026**

# Horsell Directory

<b>St Mary's Church</b>	<a href="http://www.stmarys-horsell.org.uk">www.stmarys-horsell.org.uk</a>	
	Baptisms, Weddings or Funerals	772134
<b>Parish Office open</b>	Helen Gravette Tues 9am-4pm, Wed & Fri 9am-1.00pm	772134
	<a href="mailto:stmaryshorsell@btinternet.com">stmaryshorsell@btinternet.com</a>	
<b>Vicar</b>	Revd Dmitry Lutsenko <a href="mailto:vicar@stmarys-horsell.org.uk">vicar@stmarys-horsell.org.uk</a>	07365 356228
<b>Children &amp; Families' Worker</b>	Rebecca Connolly <a href="mailto:childrenandfamiliesstmarys@gmail.com">childrenandfamiliesstmarys@gmail.com</a>	772134
<b>Church Wardens</b>	Brian Sheriff Mark McMurtrie	474975 07815 635609
<b>Treasurer</b>	David Leach	07708 866196
<b>Pastoral Assistants</b>	Janet Johnson Margaret Johnson Hilary Mitchell	591756 762481 715459
<b>JAM (Jesus and Me)</b>	Rebecca Connolly (3+) 10am most Sundays	772134
<b>Tiny Treasures</b>	Rebecca Connolly, St Andrew's Room Tues 9.30am to 11.30am, term time	772134
<b>Bell-ringers and Servers</b>	Alan Nichols [occasional] Tues. evening practice	767852
<b>Trinity Methodist Church</b>	<a href="mailto:office@trinitywoking.org.uk">office@trinitywoking.org.uk</a>	730754
<b>Horsell Evangelical Church</b>	Revd Andrew Bents	822259
<b>To Book the Village Hall</b>	Paul Bowyer	764047
<b>Parish Institute</b>	<a href="http://www.horsell-parish-institute.org.uk">www.horsell-parish-institute.org.uk</a>	772134
<b>Horsell Village School</b>	Infants Head Teacher – Mrs J Reeve	714804
<b>Horsell C of E School</b>	Junior Head Teacher – Mrs C Wand	761531
<b>Woking High School</b>	Head Teacher – Mrs M Walter	888447
<b>Halstead St Andrew's School</b>	Head Teacher – Mr A Ward	760943
<b>Horsell Care</b>	Helpline	07552 553414
<b>Residents Association</b>	Alan Taylor <a href="mailto:ajrolyat@gmail.com">ajrolyat@gmail.com</a>	
<b>Scouts, Beavers, Cubs</b>	Ali Stubbs <a href="mailto:gsl@horsellscouts.org.uk">gsl@horsellscouts.org.uk</a>	07734 424568
<b>Explorer Scouts (14-18 Yrs)</b>	Roy Thompson <a href="mailto:explorers@woking.scouts.host">explorers@woking.scouts.host</a>	
<b>Guides &amp; Brownies</b>	<a href="http://www.girlguiding.org.uk/information-for-parents">www.girlguiding.org.uk/information-for-parents</a>	
<b>WI Horsell Afternoon</b>	Lyn Clark <a href="mailto:lyn.clark@btinternet.com">lyn.clark@btinternet.com</a>	01932 353382
	Meets on 1st Thursday at 1.45pm in the Village Hall	
<b>WI Horsell Evening</b>	Mrs Joan Cox	760783
	Meets on 4th Tuesday at 7.45pm in the Village Hall	
<b>Woking Police Station</b>	dial 101 from mobile or landline	

# Homily

Bishop Andrew of Guildford in his New Year's message encourages us to look to Jesus as we face the many challenges of daily life. He points to the disciple Andrew who finds Jesus through John the Baptist, and how knowing Jesus can transform lives, offering us hope in times of chaos. He encourages all Christians to have a deep thirst for God, the Word and the Spirit and to proactively share their faith with others.



These sentiments are reflected in St Mary's new mission statement: **Be rooted in God's word – Be immersed in prayer – Be led by the Holy Spirit - Share Jesus' love in our community.**

It was heartening to see so many from across the Horsell community attend the various Christmas services. We heard how much the nativity, school and nine lesson carol services were appreciated. As the Parish church we are here for all of you, each and every week, and not just for Christmas.

Many changes were introduced at St Mary's in 2025 to help make our services more accessible to those exploring the Christian faith. And this year we have more exciting plans to be actioned, including extending our building - addressing the need for additional toilets, more

meeting spaces and a modern kitchen.

As we enter the period of Lent, commemorating the 40 days Jesus Christ spent fasting in the wilderness, preparing for his public ministry, it is a time to ask ourselves: What can we set aside to grow closer to God? How can we better serve those in our community who feel forgotten? Where is God calling us to be more present in our daily lives?

We look forward to welcoming you to St Mary's, hopefully soon. Easter is rapidly approaching.

Mark McMurtrie  
*Churchwarden*

## SERVICES CARRIED AT ST MARY'S CHURCH

### FUNERALS, BURIALS AND CREMATIONS

*We offer our sympathy to the families and friends of those who have died:*

Doris Dinger

## ST MARY'S CHURCH DIARY **FEBRUARY 2026**

<b>Sun 1st</b>	8.00am 10.00am 6.30pm	Holy Communion (BCP) First Sunday Service Peaceful Prayer & Praise
<b>Mon 2nd</b>	9.30am 2.00pm	Junior School Communion Service Alpha Course – Session 3
<b>Tues 3rd</b>	9.30am-11.00am 2.00pm	Tiny Treasures Baby & Toddler Group Service at Kettlewell House
<b>Wed 4th</b>	8.00pm	Engine Room House of Prayer
<b>Fri 6th</b>	8.45am-12noon 10.00am	Pop In Coffee Engine Room House of Prayer
<b>Sun 8th</b>	10.00am	Parish Communion
<b>Mon 9th</b>	2.00pm	Alpha Course – Session 4
<b>Tues 10th</b>	9.30am-11.00am	Tiny Treasures Baby & Toddler Group
<b>Fri 13th</b>	8.45am-12noon	Pop In Coffee
<b>Sun 15th</b>	8.00am 10.00am 4.00-6.00pm 6.30pm	Holy Communion (BCP) Informal Service Messy Church Contemplative Meditation
<b>Mon 16th</b>	2.00pm	Alpha Course – Session 5
<b>Tues 17th</b>	9.30am-11.00am	NO Tiny Treasures Baby & Toddler Group
<b>Wed 18th</b>	2.00pm	Ash Wednesday Service
<b>Fri 20th</b>	10.00am-12noon	Pop In Coffee
<b>Sun 22nd</b>	10.00am	Parish Communion
<b>Mon 23rd</b>	2.00pm	Alpha Course – Session 6
<b>Tues 24th</b>	9.30am-11.00am	Tiny Treasures Baby & Toddler Group
<b>Fri 27th</b>	8.45am-12noon	Pop In Coffee

**THE CHURCH BUILDING WILL BE OPEN:**  
**Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays** from 11am until 3pm

St Mary's Church, Horsell: @StMarysChurchHorsell  
*All correct at the time of going to print.*

For further details please look at our website: [www.stmarys-horsell.org.uk](http://www.stmarys-horsell.org.uk)

## ST MARY'S CHURCH DIARY **MARCH 2026**

<b>Fri 2nd</b>	10.00am-12noon	Pop In Coffee
<b>Sun 1st</b>	8.00am 10.00am 6.30pm	Holy Communion Service (BCP) First Sunday Service Peaceful Prayer & Praise
<b>Mon 2nd</b>	2.00pm	Alpha Course – Session 7
<b>Tues 3rd</b>	9.30am-11.00am 2.00pm	Tiny Treasures Baby & Toddler Group Service at Kettlewell House
<b>Wed 4th</b>	8.00pm	Engine Room House of Prayer
<b>Fri 6th</b>	8.45am-12noon 10.00am	Pop In Coffee Engine Room House of Prayer
<b>Sun 8th</b>	10.00am	Parish Communion
<b>Mon 9th</b>	2.00pm	Alpha Course – Session 8
<b>Tues 10th</b>	9.30am-11.00am	Tiny Treasures Baby & Toddler Group
<b>Fri 13th</b>	8.45am-12noon	Pop In Coffee
<b>Sun 15th</b>	8.00am 10.00am 6.30pm	Holy Communion (BCP) Informal Mothering Sunday Service Contemplative Meditation
<b>Mon 16th</b>	2.00pm	Alpha Course – Session 9
<b>Tues 17th</b>	9.30am-11.00am	Tiny Treasures Baby & Toddler Group
<b>Fri 20th</b>	8.45am-12noon	Pop In Coffee
<b>Sun 22nd</b>	10.00am 4.00-6.00pm	Parish Communion Messy Church
<b>Mon 23rd</b>	2.00pm	Alpha Course – Session 10
<b>Tues 24th</b>	9.30am-11.00am 9.30am	Tiny Treasures Baby & Toddler Group Horsell Junior School Easter Service to rest of the school
<b>Wed 25th</b>	9.30am	Horsel Junior School Easter Service for parents
<b>Fri 27th</b>	8.45am-12noon	Pop In Coffee
<b>Sun 29th</b>	8.00am 10.00am	Holy Communion (BCP) Breakfast Church
<b>Tues 31st</b>	9.30am	NO Tiny Treasures

## ST MARY'S CHURCH DIARY **APRIL 2026**

<b>Sun 1st</b>	8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)
<b>Thurs 2nd</b>	7.30pm	Maundy Thursday Service
<b>Fri 3rd</b>	9.30am 10.30am	Good Friday Family Service Pop In Coffee
<b>Sun 5th</b>	8.00am 10.00am	Holy Communion (BCP) Easter Day Family Service



# Illustrated Scripture Exhibition

St Mary's is in the process of creating an Illustrated Scripture Exhibition of favourite Bible verses.

We invite anyone interested to share a Bible verse that is meaningful to them, along with a few lines about why it speaks to them. The verse and reflection will be illustrated on canvas and displayed in our upcoming exhibition at St Mary's Church.

Forms are available from the back of church or send your verse to the Parish



Office if you would like to contribute. Our aim is to bring Scripture to life together through art and personal stories.

## Churchyard Cat

Candlemas on 2nd February is a midpoint of Winter, when we can all hope for better weather, but more importantly marks the presentation of Christ at the temple, when in accordance with Jewish law, Mary and Joseph took the 40-day old, infant Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem.

Recently I have noticed more people coming through my churchyard on a Monday afternoon, all going to an Alpha Course, not for us cats, but seems popular with my humans.

I understand that work is starting on extending the St Andrew's room into my churchyard, to enable my humans to have better toilet and kitchen facilities, more room for children to play on Tuesdays at "Tiny Treasures"



and folk to enjoy their tea, coffee and cakes on a Friday morning. It will make a big difference after Sunday services, too, but maybe not in time for bacon and eggs on Sunday 29th March, when my humans tuck into a cold breakfast at the 5th Sunday breakfast church service, which also happens to coincide with Palm Sunday. Think I'll check this out for tasty morsels.

However, I plan to keep well out of the way during the building works. It's not that I'm lazy, but at this time of year, I go into energy saving mode; after all I don't want to fall into a hole or get mud on my ginger fur.

# St Mary's Building Works

Exciting news – work starting on improving facilities.

We are pleased to let you know that enhancements are being made to the St Andrew's room, the church's meeting space, which will, when completed, benefit all in the Horsell community who visit St Mary's for a service, concert, school or community event. This includes the provisions of additional toilets to remove the current queue, a modern kitchen to allow improved catering options, and much needed meeting and storage space.

The works are anticipated to take 6 months; some inconvenience is inevitable during the building work. We ask for your understanding during this time. Alternative provisions for meetings and activities will be arranged and communicated in due course. Services will continue as

normal. For those who walk through the church yard, as a short cut to the schools and village, then you will need to follow the signage and walk around the South side of the church, to ensure your safety.

This is exciting news as the improvements will benefit many for decades to come. Please accept the short-term disruption for the long-term benefits.



## Church Clock Matters

Many have expressed their disappointment when the church clock stopped working. After multiple visits by the original clock manufacturer and repairs at their workshop the complex clock mechanism has been returned. After a few false starts and minor adjustments in situ, the clock is keeping time and chiming once again (at the time of

printing). Rest assured, if it stops again, we will arrange for the clock engineer to return.

We thank the members of the Horsell community who made donations to fund its restoration.



# Local Lectures

Welcome Church, 1-5 Church Street West, Woking, GU21 6DJ  
Thursday 12 February and 12 March, both at 10.30 am

**February Lecture: Dutch & English Delft Speaker: Jane Gardiner**

This lecture will consider the importance of Dutch and English delftware for the history of European pottery and how these wares dominated seventeenth century ceramic production. It will demonstrate the impact of Chinese blue and white porcelain on the wares of both countries along with other developments.

**March Lecture: A Short History of Fakes & Forgeries Speaker: Tom Flynn**

This talk offers a comprehensive overview of the most significant and notorious cases of art forgery over the last 150 years. The lecture focuses on the core motivations of art forgers and how the majority of the most prominent art forgers started out as failed artists whose work was ignored by many including 'experts'.

Lectures are free to members of TASM, £10 for visitors.

For more information, see <https://theartssocietymayford.org.uk>

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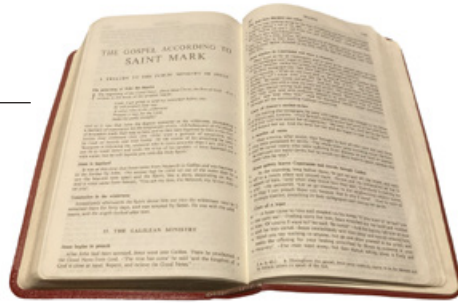
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# Gospel Matters



The New Testament of the Bible opens with four Gospels – the word means ‘good news’ – providing records of what Jesus did and said. In the next four issues, we will look at each in turn, starting with the **Gospel of Mark**.

**M**ark’s is the shortest of the four Gospels and is quite a quick read. The words and actions of Jesus had been told and retold by the early Christians by word of mouth, but Mark was the first to write the story down. In his Gospel Mark sets out his account of the life, ministry, death, resurrection and teachings of Jesus. He is likely to have written it in Rome in about 65 AD/ CE. Mark gives us a striking, vivid and fast-moving account. His opening words sum up all that follows: *‘The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God.’*



He uses the word ‘immediately’ many times and there are details of the impact that meeting Jesus had on people during his ministry.

Mark may have met Jesus during his last few days if the reference to a ‘young man’ in ch14 v51 is about himself. Some of the first Christians met for a time at Mark’s family home in Jerusalem. Mark knew the apostle Peter well and has recorded Peter’s

account of many events. After the execution of Peter, Mark decided to record for future Christians what he remembered of Peter’s teaching about Jesus. The Gospel has eyewitness recollections of Jesus’s charisma and the powerful impact Jesus made on all who met him. It tells how Jesus’s claim to have the

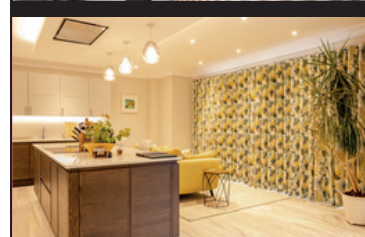
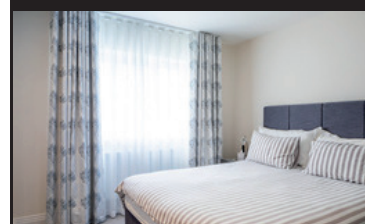
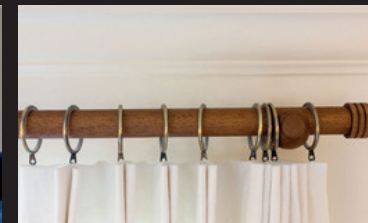
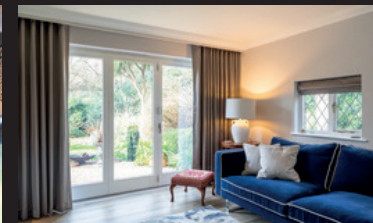
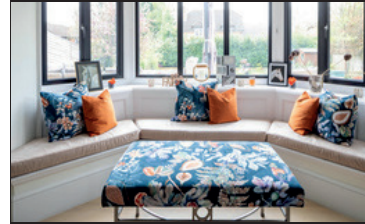
power to forgive sins, his association with the outcasts of society, his interpretation of the sabbath laws and his radical teaching shocked the religious authorities of the day; they soon felt threatened and wanted him dead.

Mark shows that Jesus had an aura of holiness and otherworldliness about him. He made a huge impact on people as he toured his home district of Galilee in northern Palestine, preaching, teaching and healing the sick. After this Jesus headed south to Jerusalem where the Gospel ends with his crucifixion, death and resurrection.

Roy Wernham, *Licensed Lay Reader*

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# Grave Matters

Among those buried in St Mary's Churchyard with inspiring epitaphs is a former landlord of The Wheatsheaf, Thomas Mortimore, who died, while still active in his work, in 1895.

Mortimore appears to have been born Thomas Martin, in Wootton Rivers, Wiltshire in 1837 and was baptised there on 23 April that year. He was the fifth of the nine children of George and Elizabeth Martin, a labouring family. Thomas was an agricultural labourer by his 14th birthday in 1851, by which time his father had been widowed and remarried.



Mortimer Grave

Thomas probably moved to Andover as an apprentice shoemaker by 1861 and when he married Lois Gurney in Bethnal Green in 1863 he is described as a shoemaker and had changed his name to Mortimore.

By 1871 there was a change of career to being landlord of the Royal Charter in Kingston-on-Thames (the pub lasted until the 1980s with a mixed reputation), but by 1881 he was living in the same street in Kingston as a 'publican out of work'. However, the family moved to Elstead and seem to have kept their Kingston and Elstead properties when they moved to the Wheatsheaf by 1886. The Wheatsheaf, according to surveys of 1892 and

1903, served mainly the 'labouring classes', and had stabling but no accommodation. It hosted a flourishing benefit club and was home to athletics and cricket clubs; Thomas's daughter Jane, was treasurer of the Horsell Recreation Cricket Club. Thomas's father George was widowed a second time in 1891 and came to live with Thomas at The

Wheatsheaf, recorded as Mortimore in the 1891 census, but his burial is recorded at Horsell under the name of Martin in 1899, age 99 (actually 91). But meanwhile Thomas had died and his widow and four surviving daughters (out of seven) moved to 'Holly Nook', now Churchill House, in Chobham Road, where Lois died in 1904 and the daughters went their own ways. But Thomas and Lois are remembered by the inscription:

*'Gone from us but not forgotten / Never shall their memory fade/ Sweetest thoughts shall ever linger/ Round the place where they are laid'*

Rosemary and Richard Christophers

# The Quiet Revival

During the covid 2019 pandemic the then government briefly stopped people from meeting in confined spaces to limit the spread of disease. Churches closed for a time although some provided worship materials electronically. Since churches reopened, attendance has grown as public confidence has returned.



Roy Wernham

'The Quiet Revival' is the name of the report of a recent survey by YouGov for the Bible Society. It tells how Church of England churchgoing has risen by 50% over the last six years, especially in cities. Key findings from The Quiet Revival include strong growth in church going by young adults aged between 18 and 34. Men (13%) are now more likely to attend church than women (10%). The Church of England has become more diverse; one in five churchgoers now come from an ethnic minority.

Bible reading has grown. Two-thirds of churchgoers say they read the Bible at home, not just in church, and at least weekly. Churchgoers are more likely to participate in community activities like donating to food banks, volunteering or giving to charity. Churchgoers are also more likely to report higher life satisfaction and feeling connected to their communities and less likely to feel anxious or depressed.

Bible reading and confidence is growing overall, but there's a clear need for more discipleship around Scripture.

Around a third of churchgoers say they lack confidence in navigating or understanding the Bible and speaking about it with others. Among younger churchgoers, rates of Bible reading, Bible confidence and interest in learning more about the Bible are high.

For the future, 'The Quiet Revival' urges churches to prioritise discipleship, grow Bible confidence, make space for intentional intergenerational conversation, and build interpersonal relationships.

Prayer has been a big factor. Not only within church buildings, but a culture of prayer at home and within the community wherever the Spirit has been at work.

At St Mary's we welcome people of all faiths and none and seek to share the love of Jesus for his people in Horsell. This is reflected in our mission statement. In our prayer and Bible study, we find that Jesus is a presence in our lives not just a name in a book.

Roy Wernham, *Lay Minister*

## Horsell Matters: Next Edition April/May 2026

Copy to be sent by 1st March by email please to: [stmaryshorsell@btinternet.com](mailto:stmaryshorsell@btinternet.com)

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## 1ST & 3RD SUNDAY INFORMAL WORSHIP

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Every month at 10am

1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> February  
1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> March

Saint Mary the Virgin  
Horsell

## JESUS AND ME



Jesus and Me

A time for children aged 3+ to learn  
and worship together during our  
10am Sunday Services

Every Sunday except the first  
Sunday of the month  
when we are all together in church

Saint Mary the Virgin  
Horsell

## FRIDAY POP-IN COFFEE

8.45am until noon  
(term time)



10am to 12 noon  
(school holidays)

Why not drop in for a  
cuppa, a piece of cake and  
a chat once you have done  
the school drop-off?

Saint Mary the Virgin  
Horsell



4.00pm to 5.30pm

15<sup>th</sup> February  
22<sup>nd</sup> March

Explore a Bible theme through  
craft, food, games or nature.  
There will be a short celebration  
with a story, songs and prayers.

For all ages! Picnic tea provided

Messy Church is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), a  
Registered Charity.  
brf.org.uk

Saint Mary the Virgin  
Horsell

## HOLY COMMUNION SUNDAY 8AM

A formal service of  
Holy Communion  
on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays



Also, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays  
a laity-led Communion  
by extension service



Saint Mary the Virgin  
Horsell

## 2ND & 4TH SUNDAY HOLY COMMUNION



A formal  
service of Parish  
Holy Communion  
at 10am  
All welcome



Young children can enjoy their own time  
at 'Jesus and Me' during the service  
before returning as we take communion.

8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> February  
8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> March



Saint Mary the Virgin  
Horsell

## TINY TREASURES

Baby and Toddler Group  
Every Tuesday (term time)  
9.30am to 11.00am

No session on  
17<sup>th</sup> February  
31<sup>st</sup> March

In the St Andrew's Room  
St Mary's Church, Horsell

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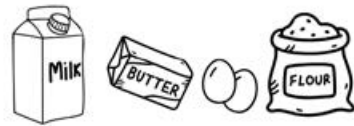


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# COLOUR AND LEARN ABOUT SPECIAL DAYS IN THE RUN UP TO EASTER

17th February is Shrove Tuesday. It is known as 'Pancake Day' when we use up butter, eggs and sugar before starting Lent.



18th February is Ash Wednesday, the day Lent begins, and lasts for 40 days finishing on Easter Sunday.



29th March is Palm Sunday, when Jesus entered Jerusalem and was greeted with palm branches as a king.



2nd April is Maundy Thursday, when Jesus had the Last Supper with the Disciples.



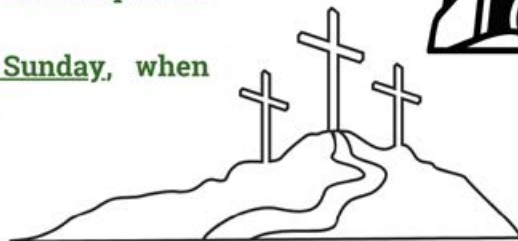
3rd April is Good Friday, the day Jesus was crucified.



4th April is Holy Saturday, a time of reflection, mourning and anticipation.



5th April is Easter Sunday, when Jesus rose back to life!



We invite you and your family to join us for the Easter services at St Mary's Horsell.

## Mission Matters



Vanessa McMurtrie

Be rooted in God's word - Be immersed in prayer – Be led by the Holy Spirit – Share Jesus' love in our community.

We have recently updated St Mary's mission statement to the above. A mission statement is a concise declaration defining an organisation's fundamental purpose, explaining what it does, who it serves, and how it achieves its goals, serving as a guide for present operations, decision-making, and communicating values to stakeholders like employees and customers.

How does this apply to a church? Everyone who walks through the church door is a 'customer' but the 'shop' extends out into the community it serves. That is why "Sharing Jesus' love in **our community**" of Horsell is a key part of our mission statement. And the regular folk that are part of the congregation, not only invest their own time in worship, and church related activities, but by action, **share the love** they believe comes from Jesus with those they meet. Not necessarily overtly, but in a way that makes the recipient feel loved too.

Take the Christmas services as an example of how we are **rooted in God's word**. The ever popular 9 Lessons and Carols service has nine bible readings – it tells the story of salvation, from humanity's fall to Jesus' birth, through a sequence of nine scripture readings (lessons) interspersed with Christmas carols and hymns, celebrating the true meaning of Christmas and God's redemptive plan in a way that's both deep and accessible for worshippers.

At the Nativity service held on Christmas Eve, quite spontaneously, young children came up to the front to gather around the crib in which the baby laid. What led them to do this? A child's natural curiosity and lack of embarrassment at joining in? But maybe the Holy Spirit had a hand in this, too, moving them to participation.

We are now fully into the Alpha course, which is a series of friendly, informal sessions exploring the basics of the Christian faith, designed for those curious about or new to Christianity, covering topics like the meaning of life, Jesus, **prayer**, and the Bible through talks (often videos) and small group discussions, all in a no-pressure, open environment.

St Mary's seeks to serve the needs of the entire Horsell community throughout the year, supporting parishioners in good and sad times, helping mark significant national occasions and religious festivals, engaging with our schools, providing a venue for community concerts and hosting events like weekly pop-in coffee, a toddler group and the Christmas tree festival which will return in 2026.

Without necessarily realising it, just by reading to the end of this article, you are a customer as a member of the Horsell village community. Thank you for investing your time in so doing.

Vanessa McMurtrie, *Editor, Horsell Matters*

# Garden Matters

It may be cold outside in February, but tomatoes, peppers and chillies will happily germinate in a propagator on a warm window sill.

Provided the soil isn't frozen, soft fruit bushes, rhubarb and garlic can be planted outside. In March, the germination of weed seeds is a good indication that it's time to sow calendula, poppies, cornflowers, nasturtiums, wild carrot and other hardy annuals.

This year I am growing more edibles vertically to maximise my growing space and hopefully also my yield. It's better for the environment and can look very attractive. Also, as plants are off the ground with better air circulation, they are less susceptible to disease and rot fungi. Better air circulation also means that more air is being purified by the plants, great for your lungs. It's also possible to save water. For example, a three tier pot



system with a large pot at the bottom and the smallest on top could house strawberry plants, some planted around the base of the top two containers. Watering the top container thoroughly means plants in lower pots will receive the benefit too.

Most tomato varieties, squashes and soft fruit bushes (the latter fan-trained) can be encouraged to grow vertically on frames leaving very little growth protruding and runner beans look super trained over an arch. Structures are easy to build (there are lots of ideas and explanations on YouTube) and it's a great way to recycle redundant materials. Many examples can be found in RHS Wisley World Food Garden.

Elna Broe



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We often get more enquiries about Cunningham House in January and February, when families have spent time together, and realise that an older relative is lonely or struggling to cope on their own.

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# Recipe: Cheesy Savoury Oatcakes

Here's a savoury alternative to pancakes that feels comforting. Unlike a sweet oatcake (which is more like a biscuit), the Staffordshire Oatcake is a soft, yeast-raised pancake made with oatmeal. It's hearty and traditionally filled with melted cheese, mushrooms and bacon.

Prep time: 5 mins (plus at least 30 mins resting).

Cook time: 25-30 mins.

## Ingredients

225g/8oz fine oatmeal  
(or blitz porridge oats in a blender)

100g/3½oz wholemeal flour

100g/3½oz plain flour

1 tsp quick-action yeast  
pinch salt

1 tbsp baking powder

4 tbsp vegetable oil

12 rashers streaky bacon

1 tbsp olive oil

150g/5¼oz chestnut mushrooms, cut in half

300g/10½oz mature cheddar cheese, grated

## Method

*Mix:* In a large bowl, mix the oatmeal, wholemeal flour, plain flour, yeast and salt in a bowl until well combined.

*Combine:* Gradually pour in the warm liquid, whisking until you have a smooth batter (it should be the consistency of single cream).

*Rest:* Cover and leave in a warm place for at least 30–45 minutes, (or longer – up to 3 hours) until bubbles form on the surface.

*Fry:* Lightly grease a non-stick frying pan with oil or butter over medium-high heat. Pour in a ladle of batter and tilt the pan to coat the bottom.

*Flip:* Cook for 2–3 minutes until the top looks dry and the edges lift, then flip and cook the other side for a further 1 minute.

*Set aside:* set the oatcake aside on a warm plate and cover with a sheet of greaseproof paper. Repeat the cooking process with the remaining batter mixture, to make about 12 oatcakes. Stack them on top of each other, separated by greaseproof paper, and keep warm.

*Meanwhile:* grill or fry the streaky bacon and fry the mushrooms. Set aside and keep warm.

When ready to serve, heat a frying pan over a medium heat. Return one of the cooked oatcakes to the hot pan and sprinkle a bit of the grated cheese on one half. Once the cheese starts to melt, add some cooked mushroom and crispy bacon bits over the top and heat for another minute or until the cheese is fully melted. Roll or fold it up. Repeat the process with the remaining oatcakes. Serve immediately.



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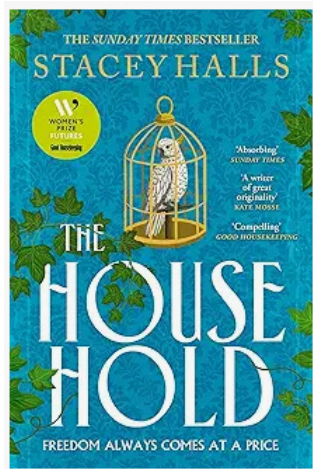
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# Book Review

Stacey Halls' **The Household** is a piece of historical fiction that shines a light on a radical, often forgotten experiment in Victorian London. Set in the 1840s, the novel centres on Urania Cottage, a "home for fallen women" founded by millionaire heiress Angela Burdett-Coutts and her confidant, Charles Dickens.

The narrative weaves together the lives of women from opposite ends of the social spectrum. We meet Martha, a young woman trapped in a cycle of poverty and desperation, and Angela, who, despite her immense wealth, is stifled by the rigid expectations of high society and the constant threat of a shadowy stalker. Halls excels at dismantling the "fallen woman" theme. Rather than presenting the residents of Urania Cottage as mere objects of pity, she gives them agency and complex backstories. The domestic setting of the cottage becomes a character in its own right—a sanctuary that feels both hopeful and fragile.

The bond between the women attempts to transcend class, highlighting the shared vulnerabilities of the era. It also questions whether charity is truly about empowerment or just a different form of surveillance. The inclusion of Charles Dickens is handled with nuance; he is portrayed not just as a literary giant, but as a flawed, driven reformer.



Halls' prose is elegant, capturing the grime of London's slums and the stifling luxury of Mayfair with equal precision. While the pacing is deliberate, the tension builds steadily as the two worlds inevitably collide. *The Household* is a poignant, well-researched exploration of power, redemption, and the cost of freedom. Another good novel by Stacey Halls, her others being *The Familiars*, *The Foundling* and *Mrs England*.

"Reading is an exercise in empathy; an exercise in walking in someone else's shoes for a while." – Malorie Blackman

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