

## NEWSWIRE: 28th February 2025

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### *A message from Duncan*

A little time in the garden was possible last weekend. I'm writing this as the rain pours down outside my window but then it was brilliantly bright and dry. One of the jobs, far from complete, was to attack the ivy which has enjoyed hassle-free time to spread its tentacles across the boundary walls and fences. In some places it seemed well established, as if it had always been there, until I realised we painted the fence below its vines not that long ago. In reality it was a recent incursion fooling us that it was part and parcel of the business of a flourishing garden. It was time to strip it back.

One of the blessings of the annual return of Lent (next week) is that we are afforded a similar opportunity to examine, prune and strip back our own lives. All sorts of activities, habits and other priorities creep silently in until we assume they have always been part of the fabric and contours of daily living. Taking time to remove these things, and return us to those foundational, godly priorities, will enable our lives to flourish in Christ.

Jesus used the image of his Father as the vinedresser to our vines. *"Every branch that bears fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit"* (John 15.2) Pruning and stripping back can be a painful process. It can make us feel vulnerable. The unhelpful growth in our lives often becomes a covering that we think protects us. As the back wall became free from ivy it suddenly looked exposed and vulnerable. In reality, had the ivy remained it would have destroyed the wall. Its roots were penetrating the mortar and breaking apart the stones. The whole process left a bit of a mess, and it isn't until there is new growth that is right for the garden, that things will begin to look healthy again.

So the Lenten journey is not a comfortable one. It can leave us feeling vulnerable and exposed, with a sense of barren waiting. But the vinedresser who applies his shears with careful, wise and loving eyes can be trusted. We know he loves us and knows exactly what is needed for the garden of our lives to flourish with Christ-like growth when the Spirit breathes upon us again.

Grace and peace to you all,

Duncan

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### Collect for the Sunday next before Lent

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross:  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

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### SERVICES ON SUNDAY

#### 9.30am - Holy Communion at St Peter's

*Readings: Exodus 34.29–end; Luke 9.28–43a*



#### 10.30am - Morning Worship at St Leonard's and live streamed on [this link](#)

*Readings: Exodus 33: 12-23; 1 Kings 19: 7-13; Luke 9: 28-36*

If you have difficulties accessing the service on the livestream link above, please try accessing [our youtube channel](#) directly.

#### 7pm - Revive at St Leonard's

### NEXT WEEK

#### Monday 3rd March

**Bump to One meet on Mondays from 10.30am to midday in St Leonard's**

**Walkie Talkies meet on Mondays (term time) from 10am to 11.30am in St Leonard's church hall.**

### **Tuesday 4th March**

**Mum's Bible Study** meets on **Tuesday** mornings (term time) from **10 - 11.30am**. Please contact Jo Shaw for more details. Email: [jollypops@gmail.com](mailto:jollypops@gmail.com)

**Tinies and Toddlers** meet on **Tuesdays** (term time) from **1.30pm - 3pm** in **Cassington Village Hall**.

### **Ash Wednesday 5th March**

**Warm Welcome Wednesday** from 10.30am to midday in **St Leonard's church**.

**Ash Wednesday BCP Holy Communion at 11am at St Peter's**

**Ash Wednesday Holy Communion at 7pm at St Leonard's**

### **Thursday 6th March**

**Cassington Cafe** from **10am** in **Cassington Village Hall**

### **NEXT SUNDAY - 9th March**

9am - Holy Communion at St Leonard's

9.30am - Morning Worship at St Peter's

10.30am - Morning Worship at St Leonard's and livestreamed

4pm - Families@4 at St Leonard's

### **Looking further ahead**

**Youth Weekend Away: 14th - 16th March (see below)**

### **Annual Parochial Church Meetings**

Cassington - Sunday 23rd March

Eynsham - Sunday 6th April

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### **Duncan's Sabbatical**

Clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers in the diocese are encouraged to take a three-month sabbatical for every ten years of ministry. This sustained period away from normal duties promotes professional development and personal enrichment. I have been in ministry for 12 years now and I have the privilege, for which I am immensely thankful, of being able to take a sabbatical this year for the months of May, June and July. The Sabbatical consists of three elements. Firstly, times of retreat for deepening my relationship with God. I am heading to north

Wales for a 6 day silent retreat in a Jesuit Retreat centre, and a walking retreat camping in Herefordshire churches. Secondly rest and refreshment, which is not just holiday, but restorative activities: I intend to be writing music and engaging in art, as well as spending time away with the family. The greater part of the time is spent in personal and professional development through study and theological reflection. I will be studying the Pentateuch (Genesis - Deuteronomy) with a particular focus on the law in Exodus and Leviticus, and how Jesus fulfills the law, and how the church is, in turn, to fulfil the law in the New Covenant (following on from our time in the Sermon on the Mount last year). It feels like I have bitten off more than I can chew in the time but we'll see how I get on!

I would like to thank Margaret in particular for organising preachers and service leaders in my absence, many of whom are doing more than usual to cover for me - thank you. We have a number of visiting preachers who I know will be a blessing to the worshipping life of the Benefice. Revd. Andrew Bunch, our Area Dean, will be stepping into various legal responsibilities, and we are making progress with ensuring there is pastoral support available in my absence. If you have any queries or concerns please do get in touch.

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**Lent Course** - We will be following the 24-7 Prayer course II "Unanswered Prayer" during Lent this year. You can find out more information about the course on [this link](#).

Some homegroups will be running the course as part of their regular meetings. If you are not in a homegroup but would love to join in with a course, please could you indicate by signing up below. There is one sign up for a daytime (afternoon) course and one if you could only manage an evening course. The link will take you to a course which says it is happening on a Wednesday. But It will either be a Wednesday or a Thursday depending on the availability of the group and those co-ordinating the group.

[DAYTIME LENT COURSE SIGN UP](#)

[EVENING LENT COURSE SIGN UP](#)

## **Pastoral Care Training Day:**

*9.45am-3.15pm, Saturday 22nd March, St Leonard's Church Hall*

On March 22nd we are planning for a Pastoral Care Training Day. We have been aiming to establish a Pastoral Visiting Team for the Benefice but this training day will appeal to many others who are involved in pastoral care in different contexts: including homegroups and other ministry areas. Attending this training does not comprise a commitment to become an official part of the visiting team. We want to keep the training open to as many as possible in order to learn from each other. We will be considering how our faith informs our pastoral care, desirable skills and qualities, helpful guidelines, safeguarding, as well as sharing our collective wisdom and experience together.

**Please sign up for the training by Wednesday 13th March** to help us plan.

[SIGN UP HERE](#)

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**Electoral Rolls** - Many thanks to everyone who has already completed a new Electoral roll form. If you wish to be included on the Electoral Roll you **must** complete a form, even if you have been on the roll in previous years. You can do this easily online, by clicking the link below. You will also find paper application forms in both churches.

[Cassington Electoral Roll Form](#)

[Eynsham Electoral Roll Form](#)

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## **Youth weekend away - please pray**

Two weeks today we will be taking a group of our young people away for the weekend to Adventure Plus in Clanfield, Please pray

- For safety, good organisation and activities
- For fun, building friendship and no-one feeling left out
- For everyone to know the touch of God in their lives and to move on in their faith journey

We would like a small team of people to commit particularly pray for us over the weekend several times a day so if you would like to do this please contact Margaret Thornton.



Dear St. Leonard's Church Family,

I'm reaching out to ask for your support in raising funds for the Access - London to Amsterdam 2025 event in June, which benefits Young Lives vs Cancer. This cause is close to my heart, and with your generosity and prayers, we can make a real difference in the lives of young people facing cancer.

Every donation, no matter how small, can provide vital support to those in need. If you feel called to contribute, it would mean so much to me and to the young lives we are helping. Together, as a church family, we can bring hope and make a positive impact.

You can donate on this [link](#) to the charity fundraising page, or use the QR code in the photo above. I can also accept cash donations, which I will add the charity page on your behalf.

Thank you for your kindness, support, and prayers. God bless you!

Kind regards, Ginta

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The Muslim fast month of Ramadan starts on Saturday March 1st and ends on March 30th. For over thirty years, the **30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World** prayer guide has been helping Christians to learn about, love and pray for Muslims around the world. The compilers hope that this guide will inspire us to discover and pray for the unique challenges faced by Muslims in cultures near and far. Rosemary Foster is ordering copies of this booklet for £1.50 each. Please contact her at [derekrosemary@gmail.com](mailto:derekrosemary@gmail.com) if you would like a copy.

# JOURNEY INTO LIFE

reflections through art for easter week

I know Easter is a while off but this notice needs a bit of forethought and time. Last year we used a Church of England 'Stations of the Cross' resource as a tool to meditate on the person and work of Christ, accessible for anyone who visited the church during the Easter period. I know there are a number of keen artists, of different disciplines, in our churches and villages and so I wondered whether we could produce the art ourselves, making the reflective journey much more local and meaningful. Anyone who loves making art from our churches or artist friends in our communities could get involved in producing a piece. I have prepared the [concept document which you can download here](#) and then share with others you might think will be interested. It includes the stations we can include. Eventually you might [sign up for one of the stations here](#), but do get in touch with me if you are at all interested in the idea and getting involved. *You may even be up for helping with the coordination of the project? Pretty please!* If there is the appetite for this I think it could be an exciting and special project enabling us to share the amazing Jesus with others. *Duncan*

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## **Please pray for:**

- Dave following his recent move to a care home.
- Ben and healing for his mental health.
- Scarlett's recovery from long Covid.
- Katie suffering with epilepsy. Please pray that the right medication be found to control her seizures.

To add names to the prayer list, please contact the Church Office ([stleonards\\_stpeters@btconnect.com](mailto:stleonards_stpeters@btconnect.com)) Names will be added to the list by express permission, and only first names will be published.

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## Open Morning at The King's School, Witney

Join us for our whole school Open Morning on Tuesday 4th March from 10:30 am until midday. Discover The King's School, a small and friendly Christian school, for ages 3-16, on the outskirts of Witney.

- Date: Tuesday 4th March
- Time: 10:30 am - 12:00 pm
- Location: The King's School, New Yatt Road, Witney, OX29 6TA
- Website: [www.tkswitney.org.uk](http://www.tkswitney.org.uk)
- Please join us by [registering here](#)

At The King's School, we believe this is an amazing space to be all God made you to be. Children are truly known, loved, and nurtured. A place where academic success and spiritual growth go hand in hand.

We warmly invite prospective families to explore our welcoming school community. To find out more about the Open Morning, please email Olivia, our Registrar, [registrar@tkswitney.org.uk](mailto:registrar@tkswitney.org.uk).

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[www.stleonardseysham.org.uk](http://www.stleonardseysham.org.uk) | [www.stpeterschurchcassington.org](http://www.stpeterschurchcassington.org) | [Youtube channel](#) | [facebook page](#)

*Church Office - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 9am – 1pm*

*Tel: 01865 883325 E-mail: [stleonards\\_stpeters@btconnect.com](mailto:stleonards_stpeters@btconnect.com)*

*Revd Duncan Fraser: 07810 324088 (Day off – Friday)*