

**Good News**  
**Parish Magazine**  
*High Downs Parish*

*Serving the villages of  
 Eastling, Otterden,  
 Stalisfield and Throwley*

[www.goodnews.rf.gd](http://www.goodnews.rf.gd)



- 1st Otterden & Stalisfield W.I.  
Stalisfield Village Hall 7.30pm
- 6th Relaxation /Mindfulness taster session  
Charing Surgery 5 - 6.30pm
- 8th Arts Society lecture, Egerton  
Millennium Hall, Egerton 2.30pm
- 8th Stalisfield Youth  
Stalisfield Village Hall 7 - 8.30pm
- 9th Singing Kettle Song Group  
Newnham Village Hall 2 - 3pm
- 9th History Society  
Charing Parish Hall 7.30pm
- 12th All Together Now  
Lynsted Church 10.30am
- 20th Copy Deadline for March G.News  
[goodnewsmagazine@me.com](mailto:goodnewsmagazine@me.com)
- 22nd Stalisfield Youth  
Stalisfield Village Hall 7 - 8.30pm
- 22nd Ash Wednesday Service  
Newnham Church 7.30pm
- 23rd Arts Society lecture, Faversham  
Alexander Centre 11am
- 24th Eat, Pray, Walk  
Doddington Church 1.30pm
- 25th Quiz Night  
Eastling Village Hall 7pm

**MARCH**

- 1st Otterden & Stalisfield W.I.  
Stalisfield Village Hall 7.30pm
- 10th & 11th Treasure Island Pantomime  
Stalisfield Village Hall 7.30pm
- 19th Mothering Sunday Service  
Stalisfield Church 10.30am



**at EASTLING VILLAGE HALL**

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023 – 7pm start**

By popular demand, the famous **QUIZ NIGHT** at Eastling Village Hall is returning!

Tables of up to 8 people

Bring your own food, drink, plates and glasses

£5 per person, payable on the night.

To book, please email Annie on

[jacksonandadams@btopenworld.com](mailto:jacksonandadams@btopenworld.com)

*(Please let us know who is in your team to avoid duplicate bookings)*

If you'd like to come but don't have a team, please book anyway and we'll try and put you in a team.

There will be a raffle on the night so raffle prize donations gratefully received.

***\*And remember, the Quizmaster's decision is final – regardless of what Google might say!!\****



Pancake Day  
 Shrove Tuesday -  
 21st February

**Service of Holy Communion  
 On Ash Wednesday  
 22nd February  
 7.30pm  
 Newnham Church**



**Ash Wednesday, a good time to admit you are sorry**

Have you done something which haunts you? Which makes you feel restless and defensive, every time you think of it? Why not deal with it this month, and put it behind you? Whatever your mistake has been, consider what the Bible has to say to you: 'I have not come to call the virtuous but sinners to repentance' (said Jesus). (Luke 5.32)

God is inviting you to come to Him this Ash Wednesday. What a wonderful offer! Make the most of it and remember how the prodigal son was welcomed back by his compassionate father.

# February Message

'All you need is love'. So sang the Beatles and in various ways so say all the Valentines cards that are exchanged this month. Love is surely the most powerful thing in the universe. Nothing else can make us feel so happy or so miserable. And there are those who believe that one day scientists will discover that love is the basic energy force of the planet.

Throughout history, millions of people have believed that God is love. The idea that God is our parent is present in ancient Hebrew writings and crosses religious and cultural boundaries. If we are God's children then we will want to be loved by our God. In fact I suggest we need to be loved by our God in order to thrive, just as we need the love of earthly parents in our early years. Of all the relationships in our lives, I think that the connection we have with God is the most vital. So how do we encourage that connection? We may, or may not know that God loves us, but do we feel that God loves us? How, if at all, are we receiving God's love?

In order to answer that, we need to look at our human relationships and how we give and receive love through those. Dr Gary Chapman has spent a counselling career looking at this and concluded that there are 5 main ways in which we

express our 'love language'. Maybe you feel loved when someone speaks words of affirmation – telling you how wonderful you are and how much they love you. Maybe you feel loved when someone sets aside time to devote just to you, creating a quality time together. Maybe you feel loved when someone gives you a gift – it doesn't have to be expensive, perhaps just a posy from their garden or a stone from the beach. Maybe you feel loved when someone performs an act of service for you – making you tea or washing your car. Or maybe you feel loved when someone gives you a hug; or touches your arm. When we understand our preferred ways of giving and receiving love, we can not only express love more fully to each other, we can feel loved and begin to find the ways that God is communicating his love to us and through us.

In the bible, John writes: 'God is love' and 'We love because he first loved us'. So as we celebrate the gift of love this Valentine's Day, I would encourage you to think about how you feel loved and how others around you feel loved too so that we can harness its amazing power to do good in the world and thank God for it!

With love & light and the blessings of Christ  
Lissie Bayford



## Penny Fenton

Many of you will remember Revd. Penny Fenton who was Priest-in-Charge in past times to the churches and communities here in High Downs, although then part of the Ospringe Benefice. Penny led services and immersed herself completely in parish life with her own very approachable and generous style. In later years, you may have seen her in Faversham where she would always stop for a chat and want to know how you are - for many she would be the go to person with the highest integrity, a wise head and a sharp wit.

Sadly, we received the news of Penny's death on 18th January. We can all give such thanks for her friendship, her life of service and her love for her Lord Jesus with whom she now rests. As soon as we have news of her funeral arrangements, we will post them on the website: [www.achurchnearyou.com/church/11982/](http://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/11982/)

## Prayer Pointers February 2023

**Mondays** - As winter continues, pray for those unable to heat their homes.

**Tuesdays** - For a helpful resolution for workers seeking better pay and conditions

**Wednesdays** - Give thanks for those who help us during difficult times.

**Thursdays** - For all suffering from disease or mental health problems.

**Fridays** - For local food banks and all who need to use their services.

**Saturdays** - Give thanks for early signs of Spring.

**Sundays** - During Lent, pray for a deeper understanding of our faith.



## Revd Canon Jonathan Russell,

vicar of Throwley parish for many years in the past and Area Dean for Ospringe Deanery, died a short while ago. His funeral will be on 17th February in Canterbury Cathedral at 11.00 and afterwards in the conference facility there.

## Eastling Church Flower Rota February 2023



Feb 5th & 12th - Susie

Feb 19th - Di

Feb 26 - Lent, no flowers

If you would like to join the flower arranging rota, please call Bay on 01795 892036.



## New pew cushions at Eastling church

Those who have visited St Mary's over the Christmas period will have found the nave and choir pews have been given a makeover with the purchase of new and very comfortable pew cushions. These will greatly enhance the comfort and worshipping experience for all.

It was possible to make this purchase helped by donations given in memory of Wendy Allen who died last year.

## Wags & Tales



**Professional**

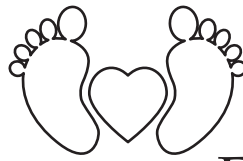
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Brand new class starting on  
Wednesday 1st February 2023!



Book your place now!

Contact Details:

Carla & Gary : 07961 090233  
CandGlinedance@outlook.com



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## Otterden & Stalisfield W.I

We are well into 2023 now, but as this is the first W.I. column for this year - Happy New Year to you all.

Otterden & Stalisfield W.I Group did not have a meeting in January, but instead we had two outings for those that wished to come along. On Tuesday 17th January a good number of us met up at Dobbies Garden Centre for an informal lunch, which was most sociable. It was particularly good to see a returning Member who had not been able to attend our gatherings for some time, as she had been caring full time for her husband. It also gave us the opportunity to collect our tickets for an outing to the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury the following evening. Our President, Helen Brooks, efficiently organised reserved seats for the production of *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* performance, which had several well-known actors in the cast. Helen had also contacted other neighbouring W.I. Groups, so not only were our Group attending, but also ladies from Hucking and Lenham. There were over 20 of us altogether, which meant we were able to purchase the seats at a reduced rate. Everyone enjoyed themselves, so many thanks must go to Helen for a good evening's entertainment.

Our first proper Meeting of the year, will be at Stalisfield Village Hall, commencing at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday 1st February. It won't be too strenuous as Helen has contacted Peter from East Kent Yoga who will take us through Chair Yoga, which will be most helpful to those of us who are not as flexible as we once were.

If you wish to join our monthly meetings on the first Wednesday of each month, please contact either Helen Brooks on 07477580727 or Ellie Cameron on 01795 892016. Guests are always welcome at a small cost of £3.



### Defibrillator

## Eastling Defibrillator Update

As many of you are aware, we are lucky enough to have a community defibrillator in Eastling. Whilst we all hope that we never need to use it, it can be life-saving in the event of a cardiac arrest, especially given our

rural location and the well-publicised difficulties that the ambulance service finds itself in. It seems timely, therefore, just to remind everyone of its availability and how to access it.

If you find someone collapsed and not breathing normally, the most important thing is to call for help and dial 999. The emergency call handlers are very used to talking people through these situations and will also know the location of the nearest defibrillator. You do not need any training to use a defibrillator; once you have switched it on, it will tell you what to do.

**The defibrillator in Eastling** is at 1 Manor Lees, which is about 70m from the Carpenters Arms, heading towards Otterden. It is in a white cupboard, at the front of the bungalow and clearly marked with a green AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) sign. In addition to the defib, there is also a first aid kit. No keys or codes are required to access it.

As already mentioned, you do not need any training to use a defibrillator and its use can save a life. However, learning CPR is a fantastic skill and online training is available for free from The British Heart Foundation at [revivr.bhf.org.uk](http://revivr.bhf.org.uk). It covers CPR and use of a defibrillator. Well worth doing if you have a spare 15 minutes.

Cllr Caroline Gilbert



**The Plough Inn, Stalisfield;** a family run, independent, award winning pub & restaurant offering an extensive menu of both 2 AA rosette dishes and your traditional pub classics.

Celebrate Valentines at The Plough Inn this year, with a special menu running from 11th throughout the week, stay in one of our luxurious suites, spoil your loved one with champagne & chocolates, book now to 'bank your brownie points'!

Remind your Mum on Mothering Sunday how special she is. Book now for our traditional Sunday roast and let her relax, minimum 2 courses and if you can't make it on Sunday 19th then why not buy her a gift voucher to enjoy at her leisure.

See our Facebook page and our SHINY NEW website for more details.

Keep up to date by following us on Facebook or Instagram

Stalisfield Road, Faversham, Kent, ME13 0HY

Tel: 01795 890256 Email:

[info@theploughinnstalisfield.co.uk](mailto:info@theploughinnstalisfield.co.uk)

# Thank You

To the Dad's Army Shoot,  
in particular Peter and  
Graham, for the beautiful  
Christmas tree which was  
so visible on the village  
green at Stalisfield.





# THE ARTS SOCIETY EGERTON

*The Arts Society brings people together through a  
shared curiosity for the arts*



We meet at Egerton Millennium Hall on the second Wednesday of each month at 2.30 p.m. (doors open from 2.00). Our next lecture will be:

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February at 2.30 p.m.**

## **SINGING IN SECRET: William Byrd, Queen Elizabeth and worship under wraps**

Four hundred years ago in July 1623 saw the death of the outstanding English composer William Byrd; prolific and successful, he was a favourite at the court of Queen Elizabeth. But Byrd led a complicated existence as a devout Catholic in troubled Tudor times, when to infringe strict religious rules ran the risk of imprisonment or even death. Forced underground, he created some of his most expressive music for fellow Catholics to use in secret worship. This talk celebrates the best of Byrd's awe-inspiring work and reflects on what it means to create superb art in circumstances of great danger

Our lecturer, **Sandy Burnett**, is one of the UK's most versatile music commentators, enjoying a career that combines broadcasting, performing and lecturing. After studying at St Catharine's College, Cambridge and working as music director for the RSC, National Theatre and in London's West End, Sandy Burnett spent a decade as one of the core team of presenters on BBC Radio 3.

Visitors are always very welcome at £5, refunded if you join. 6 months membership costs £24. For further information please contact Christine Willis, our Membership Secretary via [cmwillis75@gmail.com](mailto:cmwillis75@gmail.com) or 01233 756377.

See also our website [www.theartssocietyegerton.org.uk](http://www.theartssocietyegerton.org.uk)

## **'Happy times with old songs, tea & chatter'**

Come and join us in singing for fun  
on Thursday afternoons:  
9<sup>th</sup> Feb, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 13<sup>th</sup> April  
from 2pm – 3pm at Newnham Village Hall  
£5 per person pay-as-you-go

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## **The Arts Society Faversham**

We run regular monthly lectures on the fourth Thursday at the Alexander Centre, Faversham. Subjects cover all aspects of the Arts in its widest sense and are given by experts in their chosen field and include university lecturers, broadcasters and tour guides. Come along to a lecture as a guest (£5 fee) or join for a year's lectures.

**Our next lecture is on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 at 11.00am on "History of Cartoons from Hogarth to Private Eye" by Ian Keable. Coffee and biscuits will be served from 10.20am**

The first time the word cartoon was used in the sense that we know it today was in 1843 in *Punch* magazine. But the employment of satire, caricature, speech bubbles and the writing of captions had been around long before then. In this talk Ian tracks the early stages of cartoons and how, through the works of Hogarth and James Gillray, they gradually evolved. Copious illustrations abound from the masters of their craft such as John Tenniel, John Leech, David Low, Vicky, Ronald Searle, Heath Robinson and Giles; and, bringing it right up to date, with Gerald Scarfe, Steven Bell and Peter Brookes.

Biography: Ian gained a First Class degree from Oxford University, qualified as a Chartered Accountant and then became a professional magician. He is a Member of The Inner Magic Circle. In 2014 he published *Charles Dickens Magician: Conjuring in Life, Letters & Literature*. He now divides his time between performing magic, giving talks and researching and writing. His latest book, *The Century of Deception: The Birth of the Hoax in Eighteenth-Century England*, is to be published in September 2021.

## **Witchcraft in 17th Century Kent - Murder and Mercy at the Maidstone Assizes**

*This talk examines a single trial in the 1650s uncovering the experiences of those involved and unpicks the way rumour, accusation, indictment and trial engulfed communities and destroyed lives.*



**Speaker: Rebecca Warren**  
**When: 9th February 2023**  
**Where: Parish Hall, Station Road**  
**Time: 7.30pm doors open**  
**Talk starts promptly at 8pm**



CHARING & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

[www.charinghistory.co.uk](http://www.charinghistory.co.uk)

## **EASTLING VILLAGE HALL**

To book ring Annie on  
07754 114670

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A beautiful hall in a lovely village location for your wedding, club, sports or meetings.  
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## Eastling Neighbourhood Watch

**Village Warden** 07794 010 394  
or 01795 890848

**Police** 101    **Emergency** 999

There have been a couple of serious incidents over the last month .

One was at Spuckles Cottage which is on the footpath down to the valley from the S bend into the village. This property was severely vandalised by its windows being shot out by ball bearings, probably via catapults. This weapon is mostly used by persons poaching within the locality. So if anyone person with information relating to this please advise the police or give me a ring.

The other incident occurred around the Tonge Lane area at the back of the farm buildings there. A small caravan which had been stored there for quite a long time was set on fire. If this fire had spread to the farm buildings there would have been a massive explosion which would have probably caused injuries and damage to property. If any person has any information as to who may be responsible, please pass it on as usual it will be treated in confidence.

We are now into the animal breeding season so please keep your dogs on a lead when in the presence of farm animals especially sheep. Always keep in mind the farmers have the right to shoot any dogs attacking or worrying their livestock. Again keep in mind not to go into a field especially with a dog where there are cattle as there is a danger they will attack especially if they have young with them.

Again a reminder that we do have a defibrillator in the village which is owned and maintained by the community. This is for the use of everybody who lives in the village or is visiting or passing through, there are no restrictions. The machine is simple to use and does issue vocal instructions to assist. Chest compressions are a must in conjunction with machine.

It is imperative to dial 999 and request medical assistance before any other action is taken as the call handler will provide the necessary advice.

The defibrillator is situated at no 1 Manor Lees which is the first white bungalow past the Carpenters Arms going towards Otterden or just before The Carpenters if coming from Otterden. It is held in the cupboard next to the front door marked 'Emergency Defibrillator'. Open the unlocked cabinet and remove defibrillator. If assistance is needed please call me as this is my property and I will do my utmost to assist.

Let us hope it is not needed but is available just in case. Please be extra aware as there are many scams going around at the moment and do not pass on any of your private information.

Have a good month  
Take Care, Alan

### TRUSTEES OF EASTLING VILLAGE HALL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 11 April 2023 at 7.30pm

The Annual General Meeting of the Trustees of Eastling Village Hall will be held on Tuesday 11 April 2023 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. The Village Hall meeting will be followed at 8pm by the Annual Parish meeting of Eastling Parish Council. All Eastling residents are invited to attend both meetings.

At the Village Hall meeting the Members of the Committee of Management will be elected. The Trustees have recently updated the Trust Deed as it relates to membership of the Committee. Formerly the Committee was made up of representatives of user groups. However, many of the original user groups no longer exist and the Trustees felt the Trust Deed should better reflect the current position. Consequently, the Committee will now consist of up to 10 and no less than 5 members elected at the Annual General Meeting.

Representatives of the Parish Council and current user groups are encouraged to put forward candidates for election and any villager interested in joining the Committee may also come forward as a candidate for election at the AGM. The period of office will be for one year with all members retiring at the AGM although existing members may be re-elected.

People may not serve as Trustees if they are:

- under 18 years of age;
- adjudged bankrupts;
- making a "composition or arrangement" with creditors or
- convicted for dishonesty or deception.

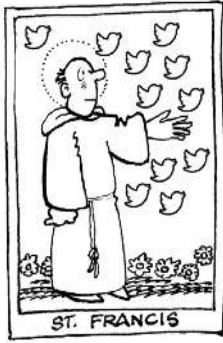
If you wish to put up a name as a candidate for election (by show of hands) at the AGM, please complete a nomination form, duly supported by a proposer, obtainable online at [www.eastlingvillagehall.co.uk](http://www.eastlingvillagehall.co.uk) or by contacting Sue Parry, Honorary Secretary to the Trustees, on tel: 01795 890254 or [sueandpeter@live.co.uk](mailto:sueandpeter@live.co.uk). Completed nomination forms should be returned to Sue by Tuesday, 4 April 2023



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He's been updated. He's now the patron saint of tweeting!



**Mothering Sunday**  
Service at Stalisfield Church on 19th March at 10.30am.

Join us afterwards for light refreshments.

**February 2023**

Wednesdays 7.00 - 8.30pm  
11 - 18 yr old welcome  
8th and 22nd February  
Stalisfield Village Hall

contact:  
[clnwood@doctors.org.uk](mailto:clnwood@doctors.org.uk)  
for more details

Stalisfield Youth Group continues on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at Stalisfield Village Hall 7-8.30pm. 11-18y old welcome, free entry.

Tuck shop, music, cake, gaming, table tennis, craft, games and other activities. All welcome! See our Facebook Page or contact Catherine on [clnwood@doctors.org.uk](mailto:clnwood@doctors.org.uk) for any more information.

**Mouse Makes**

What was the special meal Jesus was preparing to eat?  
-----  
*Matthew 26:18*

What did Jesus take, bless and break?  
-----  
*Matthew 26:26*

What did Jesus give thanks for and share?  
-----  
*Matthew 26:27*

What did Jesus say this represented?  
His -----  
*Matthew 26:26*

Jesus instructed his disciples to continue to break bread and share the cup "in -----  
-----  
of me."  
*1 Corinthians 11:24-25*

**WORD SEARCH**

O R F B R O K E J H O L Y C  
R O O M B C U P T O O K E H  
L O R D R U B A W G D J A R  
T E G J E S U S E E R E T I  
M U I N A N E S L V I S O S  
L C V C D E C O V E N A N T  
B H E O C I N V E N K B I B  
L A N M W A T E R I L L G O  
O R E M E M B R A N C E H D  
O I S U P P E R I G O S T Y  
D S S N M U G I V E N S H D  
E T D I S C I P L E S I N S  
B S T O G E T H E R W N A  
T H A N K S K L A M B G

Find the words from the questions too!

# News from Citizens Advice Swale



We're currently experiencing a significant increase in the need for energy advice. People struggling the most are having to choose whether to heat their homes or eat - many can't afford to do either. Even with government support measures, we know it's going to be an incredibly tough winter for the people we help.

The government's support with energy bills will go some way to help, but it won't be enough to reverse the devastating trends in people seeking our support. Our staff and volunteers are working flat out to help people, but there's still a lot of people out there who find it difficult to get through to us. And we need to make sure they have somewhere to turn.

Following the success of our Faversham drop-in sessions, we're pleased to announce that from Monday 16 January we'll be holding face-to-face sessions at Swale House 10am-12pm every Monday.

Our new opening times are as follows:

## Drop-in sessions (no appointment necessary)

Mondays 10am-12pm, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne

Wednesdays & Fridays 10am-12pm, 43 Stone Street, Faversham

**Telephone advice** Call Adviceline on freephone 0808 278 7979 Monday-Friday 10am-4pm

**Email advice** Contact us online at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/email-general-advice](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/email-general-advice),

**Debt advice** Request a call back from our money advice team at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt)

To stay up to date with our opening times, please visit [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or follow us on Facebook or Twitter.

## Drop-in sessions

Speak with our advisers face to face. No appointment needed.

**Mondays 10am-12pm**

Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne

**Wednesdays & Fridays 10am-12pm**

43 Stone Street, Faversham



Alternatively you can call Adviceline on 0808 278 7979 (10am-4pm Mon-Fri) or email us at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/get-advice](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/get-advice)



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Join me at:

Stalisfield Village Hall, ME13 0HY - Thursdays 18.30 - 19.30

Lenham Community Centre - Tuesdays 6.45 - 7.45pm  
and Saturdays 9-10am

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Canon Paul Hardingham considers what showing love can mean in everyday life.

## The Language of Love

Valentine's Day reminds us of the importance of expressing our love to those close to us. But how can we go beyond simply offering flowers and a card?

Jesus says: 'A new command I give you: Love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another' (John 13:34).

How can we express love like Jesus in our everyday relationships to our partner, children, neighbours or work colleagues?

### Listening

We need to listen to others, just as Jesus did. He asked questions of people and waited for them to process their answer. According to James, 'everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry' (James 1:19). How well do we listen to others? How often do we find ourselves already thinking of what we want to say before somebody's finished speaking? Listening takes time; don't rush it!

### Touching

Jesus reached out to touch the untouchables in His world, including lepers, the sick and children. This was completely out of character for rabbis of His day. For us today, a warm handshake may be of value. Of course, it should always be an appropriate touch – helpful for the other person, not just for ourselves.

### Speaking

Jesus' conversation was always full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Do we speak words of *grace*, by offering comfort, giving encouragement or expressing care and concern? However, we should also be ready to speak words of *truth*, in asking for forgiveness, seeking reconciliation or addressing conflict. As Paul urges us, don't avoid: '*speaking the truth in love*'.

Where is the challenge for us in expressing love this Valentine's Day?



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### 5th February 3rd Sunday before Lent

1 Corinthians 2. 1 - 16, Matthew 5. 13 - 20

Eastling 10.30am Holy Communion

Norton 10.30am Morning Worship

### 12th February 2nd Sunday before Lent

Romans 8. 18 - 25, Matthew 6. 25 - 34

Eastling 9am Holy Communion BCP

Throwley 10.30am Morning Prayer

Lynsted 10.30am All Together Now

### 19th February Sunday before Lent

2 Peter 1. 16 - 21, Matthew 17. 1 - 9

Newnham 9am Holy Communion BCP

Eastling 10.30am Morning Worship

### 22nd February Ash Wednesday

2 Corinthians 5.20b - 6.10, Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21 or  
John 8. 1-11

Newnham 7.30pm Holy Communion

### 26th February Lent 1

Romans 5. 12 - 19, Matthew 4. 1 - 11

Throwley 10.30am Holy Communion

Newnham 10.30am Morning Worship

### 5th March Lent 2

Romans 4. 1-5, 13-17, John 3. 1 - 17

Eastling 10.30am Holy Communion

Norton 10.30am Morning Worship

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### CONTACT THE GOOD NEWS EDITOR

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If you would like to submit articles, or to advertise in  
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The Ven John Barton considers what you need to remember when you pray.

## Some hints about prayer this Lent

We pray by invitation. Again and again, Jesus encouraged His companions to pray. A couple of His parables on the subject have been misinterpreted as instructions to persuade a resistant God to do what we want. Have a look at Luke 18, verses 1-8, about a widow whose perseverance finally persuaded an unwilling judge to rule in her favour. The lesson is that God is *not* like that! Similarly, an unwelcome neighbour who persistently calls for help in the middle of the night gets what he wants (Luke 11:5-13).

The lesson?

If tenacious lobbying can overcome human unwillingness, *how much more* our gracious God will heed His children's cry.

Pushing at an open door. Jesus is already praying for us. So, when

we start to pray, we step on to an already moving staircase.

Sometimes prayer seems tougher than it need be. Jesus invited us to be linked to Him, in the way an inexperienced bullock is yoked to a mature ox. Have a look at Matthew 11:28-29, which concludes "for my yoke is easy and my burden is light". When Marion Bartoli unexpectedly won the 2013 Women's Wimbledon final, she said "I believe if you put all your heart and effort into everything you are doing, then God is there to help you."

Is your prayer on the right lines? Try adding "for Christ's sake" at the end. "Please let my marrow win the Gardening Club competition"? No. "Not my will but yours" is the key. So when praying, don't give God instructions, just report for duty.

Prayer is instinctive for human beings, even those who don't regard themselves as religious. You are standing at a bus stop in the wind and the rain, thinking 'I do hope the bus will come soon'. It's an inner yearning. It defies logic: either the bus is coming, or it isn't. But we all do it. It's instinctive and it's the raw material of prayer. Hoping for something better is basic. Like all instincts, it needs to be trained.

To whom do we pray? What you pray, and the way you do it will be shaped by your view of God. Christian prayers are fashioned by what we know of Jesus and what He taught about prayer.

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# What the temptations mean for us

by Canon David Winter

Immediately after His baptism in the River Jordan, Jesus faced and resisted three powerful temptations during 40 days in the wilderness of Judea.

This time of testing and temptation was His preparation for the work God had sent Him to do on earth. It's the principle behind the season of Lent, which begins on 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

Although the temptations were personal to Jesus, many of us will recognise their relevance in our own lives.

The first was simple. *'You're hungry. You can do miracles. Well, turn these hot stones at Your feet into loaves of bread'*. It sounds quite plausible, but in fact it's an invitation to put one's own needs first.

Temptation rejected.

Then came the second: *'throw yourself off a pinnacle of the Temple. You know that God will send His angels to catch you before you hit the ground'*. Again, it's plausible (there was even a



verse from the Bible to back it up). But this would be to substitute one spectacular publicity stunt for the hard slog of travel, preaching, healing and touching individual lives.

Temptation rejected.

The third was outrageous. *'Fall down and worship corrupt and evil power, and You will have infinite worldly power and success'*. In other words, the divine Son of God should deny His Father and worship the devil, to glean success without going to the Cross.

For the third time, temptation resisted.

I know these temptations were tests of the Messiah Jesus, but can't we see in them temptations that come to all of us from time to time? Look after number one, and all will be well. Take the short cut to success and avoid all the hard slog. Compromise your integrity, in order to fulfill your ambitions. Or choose the hard way: walk the narrow path of honesty, commitment, and truth. That's really the Lenten choice.



## A Nice Place to be Born

By Audrey Keen

When I was a child in the 1950s, it was not unusual for a cottager to keep a pig in a sty. We did and our pig lived beside the wood shed, some way from the house. We also kept chickens, geese and lambs that were hand fed and kept as pets.

It was on the roof of the wood shed that a blackbird chose to stand and sing. He would call for us from spring through to the following winter. He was always there and his loyalty to us reminds me of the love given to me by my mother who cared so much for her family. It also reminds me of the happy times I spent with my father and sister, specially at holiday time or Christmas, when we would gather holly and other evergreens to decorate the cottage walls.

The blackbird even makes me think of log fires in winter afternoons and coming home into a warm room, drinking hot milky drinks from a special mug with a blue plastic lid. My mother would be baking cakes or getting ready the evening meal. It was a cosy time and the blackbird was always outside, on the roof, singing.

We would often go for walks as a family into the woods by the cottage, or on the narrow pathway close to the farm - our neighbour. I would enjoy the mysteriously winding track, the snow topped hedges and the brown leaves underfoot, sporting a coat of frost. I would take note of the colours of the pheasant, the rabbit, the hare and every creature, wild and free, that passed by.

I would be aware of the meagre sunlight which, to be fair, did try hard to warm the afternoon. But, all the while the blackbird, this enchanting friend, would sing from his place on the shed roof.

And, even though time has passed, over seventy years in fact, and I have moved on, a blackbird, whether he sings from branch or fence post, roof or hedge, is still a comfort to my country soul.

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