

## Lent and Easter 2026 at St John's Harpenden

The season of Lent is an important time for all Christians – a time to deepen our relationship with God through prayer, reflection and study - as we prepare for Holy Week and our annual remembering of the Suffering, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This leaflet gives some suggestions to help you make the most of the coming 40 days of Lent. But they are only suggestions and you will know your commitments and spiritual needs. Whatever you decide to give up or take up, however you choose to observe the season of Lent, we hope that it will be a time of encouragement and blessing, a time that brings you nearer to God.

### Opportunities to join in with the beginning of Lent

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent (always a Wednesday to fit in the 40 days of Lent). As part of this service each person is marked with an ash cross on their forehead (made from last year's Palm Crosses) as a sign of their own mortality and as an encouragement to keep the season of Lent faithfully. It's a powerful way to begin this season in the Church year.

We are keeping Ash Wednesday in a number of ways:

On Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February there will be a 10.30am said Eucharist, with marking of ashes, in St John's beautiful Lady Chapel. The Vicar will be preaching, and the service will last about 40 minutes.

Later that evening, we will join with the congregation of St Nicholas, Harpenden at 8pm for a Choral Eucharist with the marking of ashes, where the Vicar will be preaching. This service will last about an hour.

However, we know that this year Ash Wednesday is during half-term and the service times might not be convenient for families with young children. So this year we are holding an 'Ash Sunday' Service. This is the same service as Ash Wednesday but will take place at 9.30am on Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, and will provide an opportunity for everyone to take part, and learn about, the tradition of marking our foreheads with ash to start the season of Lent.

### Opportunities to deepen your faith during Lent

Traditionally during Lent as well as giving something up we are encouraged to take something up or invest time in our faith. At St John's we are offering two extra activities which we hope will help you to enrich and deepen your faith.

#### Sunday Bible Study

Building on the success of our Advent Bible Study, we will again meet after church at 11am on every Sunday in Lent to provide a time to deepen our faith and explore the Bible in a deeper way. This will last about 45 minutes.

We have decided to explore the fruits of the Spirit (Galatian 5:22-23) and explore how Jesus lives them out in Holy Week, how we live them out in the church, and how we can live them out in our lives. Each session will start in the committee room in the Church Hall.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Suggested reading</u>
22 <sup>nd</sup> February	Love	John 13.1-15; John 19.16-30
1 <sup>st</sup> March	Peace	John 14.27; Luke 23.32-38
8 <sup>th</sup> March	Patience	Luke 22.39-46
15 <sup>th</sup> March	Kindness	Luke 23.39-43
22 <sup>nd</sup> March	Faithfulness	John 18.1-11
29 <sup>th</sup> March	Self-control	Matthew 26.47-56
and after Easter		
12 <sup>th</sup> April	Joy	John 20.1-18

### Lent Course: The Chosen

Our Lent Course will be "The Chosen" which portrays Jesus through the eyes of those who met him. Each session will take the form of watching an Episode together, followed by a chance to discuss further with others. This is available on Amazon Prime, so if you can't make the session, or would like to watch it alone, then you can do so if you have an account.

The session will take place over 5 weeks, lasting about an hour and starting 26<sup>th</sup> February 2026. We will hold just one session a week this year: Thursdays, 3pm @ The Vicarage.

Space is limited so please sign up for these sessions either in Church on Sunday or via the Parish Office.

### **Worship during Lent**

Of course, regardless of the season in the church year, our primary reason for gathering together is to worship our creator – God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. During Lent it's common for people to try and come more often. Why not consider coming to church more than you currently do, or at a different time and see how it feels?

### Our usual pattern of services in the Parish

#### Sundays

8am	Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel
9.30am	Parish Eucharist at St John's (All Age 1st Sunday) <i>During Lent this will include a Taize chant.</i>
5pm	Evening Service (every Sunday during Lent apart from 22 <sup>nd</sup> March (see below))

## Weekdays

Holy Eucharist is celebrated on Wednesdays at 10.30am in the Lady Chapel  
Morning Prayer is said Monday to Friday at 9.30am

## Mothering Sunday 9.30am 15<sup>th</sup> March

Our Mothering Sunday service will take place at 9.30am on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March. This takes the form of an All Age Eucharist, with prayers and readings by our Brownies and singing led by a Junior Choir. Each person receives the gift of a posy (prepared by our Mothers Union). We then finish with refreshments in the Church Hall. All welcome, and don't forget to bring your mum – whether in spirit or in person.

## Tenebrae Service 7pm Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March

Last year we held our first Tenebrae service and will be doing so again this year. A Tenebrae service is a Christian tradition that takes place in the dark and involves the gradual extinguishing of candles. The word Tenebrae is Latin for "darkness". The service is a meditation on Christ's suffering and death, through music and readings from the Bible.

## **What's on for Families during Lent**

For families with young children it might be useful to know which services are family friendly. It goes without saying that everyone is welcome at all of our services and we have a family area at the back of church to support families who come. However, the following might be more suitable for families with young children.

### Toddler Service:

When: Thursdays 10.15am on 26<sup>th</sup> Feb, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 19<sup>th</sup> March & 26<sup>th</sup> March.

Lasts for: 45 minutes

What is it? This is an informal service for preschool aged children and their parents / grandparents and nannies. We meet in the Church, start with a cup of tea, hear a Bible story, make a craft, pray and enjoy time together and with God. All welcome.

### All Age Eucharist:

When: 9.30am on 1<sup>st</sup> March & 15<sup>th</sup> March

Lasts for: about an hour

What is it? This is a Eucharist service where the whole church family worships together in Church. It includes an all age talk, and a more accessible liturgy where every is encouraged to take part. It is followed by Coffee in the Church Hall.

### Junior and Mini Church:

When: 9.25am on 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> March

Lasts for: 30 minutes in the Church Hall before joining everyone else in Church

What is it? on Sundays during term-time (and when there isn't an All Age service) we run a Junior and Mini Church in the Church Hall. They start about 9.25am and offer an age-

appropriate way to explore the readings set for the day. Everyone is welcome, but children need to register if not been before.

## Good Friday Messy Church:

When: 10am on Good Friday (3<sup>rd</sup> April)

Lasts for: about 90 minutes but come and go when you need to.

What is it? We meet in the Church Hall and start with some crafts on Holy Week and Easter, hear an interactive story (and some contemporary songs) and finish with something to eat. All welcome. Especially good to help your young person learn about Holy Week and Easter in an informal way.

## Holy Week and Easter 2026

*The season of Lent leads us to Holy Week, the most important week in the church year. In Holy Week we enter a kind of 'real time', reliving and being drawn into the dramatic events of the final days in Jesus' life that lead to our salvation.*

## **PALM SUNDAY – 29<sup>th</sup> March**

8.00 am	Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel
9.30 am	PROCESSION OF PALMS starting outside Southdown Performing Arts Centre <i>Followed on the arrival at church with</i>
	PARISH EUCHARIST with Reading of the Passion
5.00pm	The Way of the Cross, a service led by our choir with readings and music for Holy Week. A poignant way to get ourselves ready to enter Holy Week.

## MAUNDY THURSDAY – 2<sup>nd</sup> April

7.00 pm Maundy Thursday Meal. An immersive celebration of the Eucharist, over a simple dinner in St John's Church Hall, followed by a candle-lit procession to the church for the service of the watch. All welcome but do sign up via the Parish Office.

## **GOOD FRIDAY – 3<sup>rd</sup> April**

10am GOOD FRIDAY MESSY CHURCH at St John's Church Hall  
2pm GOOD FRIDAY LITURGY with ANTE - COMMUNION at St John's

## **EASTER SUNDAY – 5<sup>th</sup> April**

8.00 am HOLY COMMUNION in the Lady Chapel  
10.00am ALL AGE EUCHARIST at St John's followed by Easter Egg Hunt

If you have any questions or would like to get in touch with someone at St John's, you can do so in the following way:

Vicar: Revd Tim Vickers  
[vicar@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](mailto:vicar@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk) & 01582 469343

Parish Office: Amanda Knights  
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