

Lent  
and Easter  
Services inside

# st JOHN<sup>†</sup>s

Living God's Love

Parish Magazine

SPRING 2026

What's going on in the  
lead-up to Easter, and beyond



# st JOHN's

Living God's Love

SPRING 2026

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EDITOR

Susan Kerr

[magazine@stjohnsharpinden.org.uk](mailto:magazine@stjohnsharpinden.org.uk)

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# Vicar's Welcome

Welcome to St John's spring edition of the magazine!

Spring is my favourite time of the year, and it's a good time to reflect on all those good things that bring us life and joy - even in the midst of winter. Easter is early this year, so Lent, that season of honest vulnerable reflection and action in the church calendar, is soon upon us. With that in mind, and working out ways to do things together, we are holding a special Ash Wednesday Evening Eucharist at St Nicholas this year. On Sundays in Lent we will hold a short Bible Study on the 'Fruits of the Spirit' and on Thursdays, a video drama series. If you've ever wondered what the Vicar does during the week then you might be interested in a new item I've been encouraged to write on page 27. As always, we try to make this magazine not just about church life but also the life of our community – if you have an idea for the magazine, see our Contents page for the next deadline.

*With blessings,*

*Revd Tim*

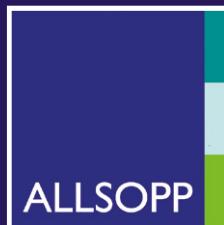
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*Tim and son Jem visited Worcester recently. The plan is to go to all of England's 42 Anglican cathedrals.*



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# A Wedding at St John's

St John's Church has always been very special to me. I was christened there and also witnessed my parents get married there, so I always knew it was where I wanted to get married myself. I'm so glad we chose St John's, as it made the day even more meaningful and special.



Vicar Tim was fantastic throughout the entire process, guiding us every step of the way and making everything feel straightforward and stress-free. He took care of all the logistics, which allowed us to relax and truly enjoy the excitement leading up to the day. Tim arranged the organist, the Junior Choir - which was absolutely beautiful - and also organised the live stream for guests who couldn't attend in person.

The church itself is stunning, and adding our own floral touches made it even more beautiful. We were also able to take photos on the common opposite the church afterwards, with St John's as the backdrop, which was breathtaking. If you are considering getting married here, we couldn't recommend it more highly.

*Rebecca and Rowan Akers*



Photography: @Rafe Abrook

*Rebecca and Rowan were married at St John's in July 2025. Rebecca Akers is Manager of Fusion Pre-School now based at The Grove Schools, Grove Road, Southdown, Harpenden.*

*More on weddings, see page 29.*



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# Music expands at St John's

As Director of Music at St John's for nearly eighteen months, it is greatly rewarding to see the choir grow in confidence and expand its repertoire. The introduction of our junior choir is a truly exciting development. With ten talented young singers already involved, this group brings great enthusiasm and makes a welcome contribution to the overall choral sound.

We have broadened our musical outreach with a concert series, a *Come and Sing Evensong* that attracted over 40 singers, and *Pimm's and Hymns* in the summer. A particular highlight was the *Service of Nine Lessons and Carols*, a huge triumph musically, enhanced by guest singers.

In 2026 look for further concerts, another *Come and Sing* event and possibly a choir visit to sing in a cathedral. We also hope to introduce a *Pipe Up* campaign, encouraging young musicians in the parish to explore our wonderful organ.

There are many opportunities for people of all ages to be involved in the music at St John's, whether as singers, instrumentalists or supporters, on a permanent or ad hoc basis. I warmly welcome ideas and suggestions for future musical activities.

Matt Harrison  
Director of Music  
[music@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](mailto:music@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)



## Christmas Appeal for the Anglican Hospital in Gaza

Thank you to everyone who gave so generously to our Christmas Appeal.

Our provisional total is:

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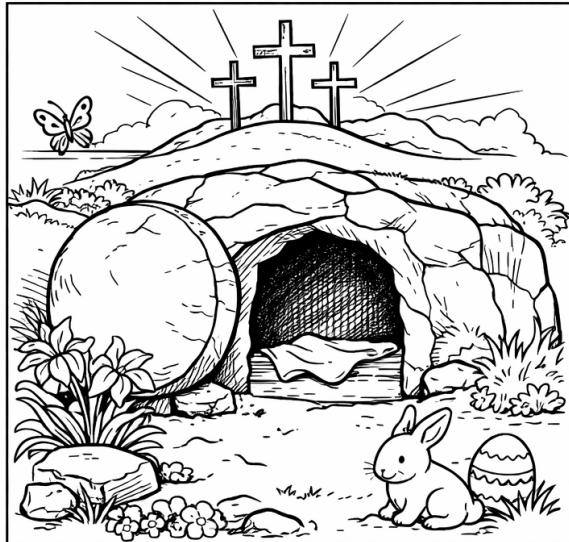
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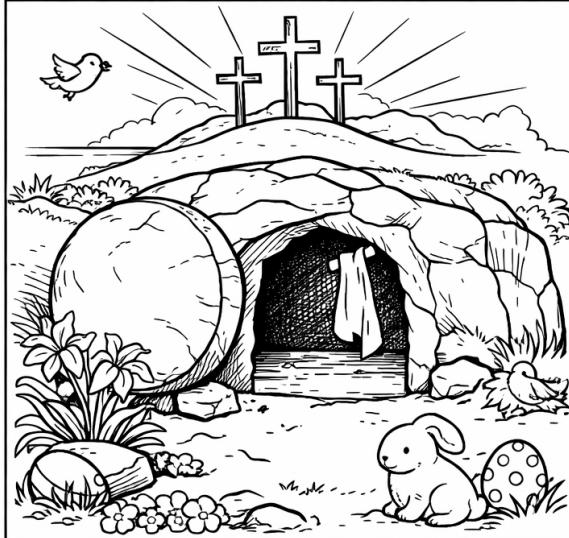
# Spot the Difference Easter Garden

Hiding in plain sight - can you find 8 differences? Mark them and then why not colour in the gardens?

A



B



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## DID YOU KNOW?

Do you ever wonder? One unique and compelling difference about this cross over St John's altar is that the centre is empty. And yet... it is a centre. A place for your thoughts, a place for your imagination, a place for your self, perhaps. The cross was designed by award-winning artist-blacksmith Charles Normandale and made from forged iron and polished forged brass.

Is there something in the church, or in Southdown, that makes you wonder? Ask the editor, or the Vicar, and we'll try to learn more.



## A next step in faith

### Confirmation at St John's



St John's is to host the deanery confirmation service on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm. Bishop Rob Wickham will conduct the service for candidates from all the parishes in our area. If you are looking to explore the next step in your faith, then it would be great to do so at St John's. We are starting preparation sessions from March for adults and children Year 7 and up aimed at helping you explore what it means to be a Christian and be a follower of Jesus. If you (or someone you know) might be interested in learning more, speak to (or email) the Vicar, Revd Tim Vickers.

## Swift nest boxes

Soaring, screaming swifts are one of the evocative sights and sounds of summer, here to breed for a few months before returning to Africa. Every April I look out for them, hoping they will return, as sadly their numbers have plummeted by 65% in just 25 years. You can still see swifts in Harpenden, especially around Milton Road/Topstreet Way, but they are in serious trouble.

Swifts are in decline because they have fewer places to breed and less food. They nest under the eaves of buildings or in crevices in walls. This is bad news when building refurbishments mean these nooks and crannies are lost. Swifts eat as many as 100,000 flying insects a day. It's a huge energy requirement, and with insects declining at a faster rate than ever before, many swifts just can't find enough food to sustain themselves.

However, there is hope. In Herts dedicated local groups are taking action to protect and support swifts. These groups run surveys to find breeding sites, work to prevent nesting holes from being blocked, install nest boxes, and raise awareness.

At St John's we are installing two swift nest boxes on the north side of the church, with help from the Northeast Herts Swift Group. The money for the boxes has been donated in memory of Liz Neville, who was a great supporter of Eco church, and very keen to help swifts. Several members of the congregation are also getting swift nest boxes installed.

If you are interested in finding out more, visit the Herts Wildlife Trust website:  
<https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/actionforswifts>

*Margaret Charlston,  
 St John's Eco Church.*



*Swift nest box installed in Harpenden.  
 Spot the new swift nest boxes on St John's church north wall.*



# Special for Lent

Following Shrove Tuesday ('Pancake Day') the forty day season of Lent is a time of preparation for Holy Week and Easter. St John's invites you to join these thoughtful opportunities.

## ASH WEDNESDAY

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February

10.30am

Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes in the Lady Chapel. Traditionally, the season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, this year 18<sup>th</sup> February. It is a very moving service where we are marked with the sign of the cross in ash and reflect on the reality of our relationship with God as we start the season of Lent.

8.00pm

Sung Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes at St Nicholas Church, Harpenden where Revd Tim will preach.

## ASH SUNDAY EUCHARIST

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 9.30am

Wednesday, being mid-week, makes it harder to explain (and experience) the tradition of Ash Wednesday to those who are new to the church, especially as this year it falls during half-term. So, if you can't attend at 10.30am or 8.00pm on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February, we bring this service to you on the following Sunday with a special Eucharist and the Imposition of Ashes where everything will be explained. Suitable for all ages.

## LENT BIBLE STUDY

Short bible study on the six Sundays in Lent after church and coffee in the hall on the theme 'Fruits of the Spirit.'

22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1<sup>st</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> March. Followed by 12<sup>th</sup> April after Easter.

## LENT GROUP

*The Chosen:* over five sessions watch and discuss a drama series depicting the life of Jesus through the eyes of those who knew him.

26<sup>th</sup> Feb – 26<sup>th</sup> March, Thursday afternoons 3.00pm at the Vicarage

# Lent, Holy Week and

## *The heart of the church year is Holy Week,*

### Lent

Lent begins on 18<sup>th</sup> February and continues for forty days, a time of preparation for Holy Week and Easter. See page 15 for details of Lent groups and activities.

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February

10.30am

8.00pm

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February

9.30am

5.00pm

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March

9.30am

5.00pm

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March

9.30am

5.00pm

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March

9.30am

5.00pm

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March

9.30am

7.00pm

### ASH WEDNESDAY

Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes in the Lady Chapel. Those unable to attend in the morning are invited to join us at St Nicholas, Harpenden for 8.00pm or St John's on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

Sung Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes at St Nicholas Church, Harpenden where Revd Tim will preach.

Ash Sunday Eucharist (see page 15 for details)

Evening Prayer

All Age Eucharist

Faith and Light

Parish Eucharist

Book of Common Prayer Evensong

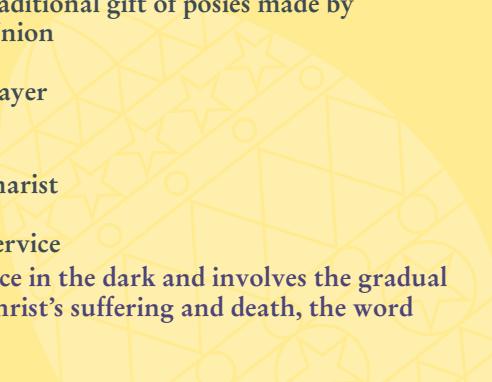
Mothering Sunday All Age Eucharist  
With the traditional gift of posies made by  
Mothers' Union

Evening Prayer

Parish Eucharist

Tenebrae Service

A traditional Christian service that takes place in the dark and involves the gradual extinguishing of candles. A meditation on Christ's suffering and death, the word tenebrae is Latin for 'darkness.'



# *Easter... St John's 2026*

*which this year is 29<sup>th</sup> March - 5<sup>th</sup> April*

## *Holy Week and Easter 2026*

This is the most important week in the church year. We encourage you to immerse yourself in these powerful services in Holy Week as we enter a kind of 'real time', reliving and being drawn into the dramatic events of the final days in Jesus's life that lead to our salvation.

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> March  | <b>PALM SUNDAY</b>  |
| 8.00am                         | Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel   |
| 9.30am                         | Procession of Palms<br>Starting outside Southdown Performing Arts Centre, leading to St John's for Parish Eucharist with Reading of the Passion   |
| 5.00pm                         | The Way of the Cross<br>Choir with Readings for Holy Week   |
| Thursday 2 <sup>nd</sup> April | <b>MAUNDY THURSDAY</b>  |
| 7.00pm                         | Maundy Thursday Meal. Bring and share a meal in St John's Church Hall, followed by a candle-lit procession to the church for the Service of the Watch. All welcome, but please sign up via the Parish Office. |
| Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup> April   | <b>GOOD FRIDAY</b>  |
| 10.00am - 11.00am              | Easter Messy Church in the Church Hall<br>Story, craft, worship and food. Ideal for families with young children. Free and no need to book, but all children must be accompanied.                             |
| 2.00pm                         | Good Friday Liturgy with Ante-Communion   |
| Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> April   | <b>EASTER DAY</b>   |
| 8.00am                         | HOLY COMMUNION in the Lady Chapel   |
| 10.00am                        | ALL AGE EUCHARIST<br>Followed by Easter Egg Hunt  |

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## SPACe Community Culture

### Events happening at SPACe this spring!



*The Stranger* by Agatha Christie, performed by High Street Players – 25-28<sup>th</sup> March. Tickets £12. See <https://hsplayers.org.uk/> for information.

Regular monthly Friday afternoon entertainment with tea & cake. Tickets £5 from Southdown Hardware – check SPACe website for dates.

*Three Marys* Drama performance – Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> March.

Acting Workshop led by Paul Birch from the professional drama company Riding Lights on 13<sup>th</sup> June. Email [info@southdownspace.org](mailto:info@southdownspace.org) to find out more and enrol.

Stage Explorers Drama Club - weekly after school on Mondays for ages 7-11 and 11-16.

SPACe, 116 Southdown Road, Harpenden, AL5 1QQ

Check our website for the latest information.

[www.southdownspace.org](http://www.southdownspace.org)

### IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW NEEDS PRACTICAL HELP...

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HertsHelp. Trained friendly advisors are on hand to offer confidential assistance and can put you in touch with helpful services and support locally. Call 0300 123 4044, email [info@hertshelp.net](mailto:info@hertshelp.net) or visit [www.hertshelp.net](http://www.hertshelp.net)

## CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 10<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> MAY 2026

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# Thought for Spring

Only yesterday I was commenting to a friend how much I love the bare branches of trees in the winter when it's possible to see the shape of them. Yet, if you look closely, you will see the buds beginning to swell – and I'm writing this on New Year's Day! It's a reminder that nature is never stationary. As the days get longer so new growth appears from spring bulbs to green leaves. I wonder if we take enough time to consider our own growth as Christians.

*Anne Edwards,  
Reader at St John's*



*Photo: Anne Edwards*

*St John's magnolia. Rumor says it is the largest magnolia in Southdown, or even in all of Harpenden. What do you think?*

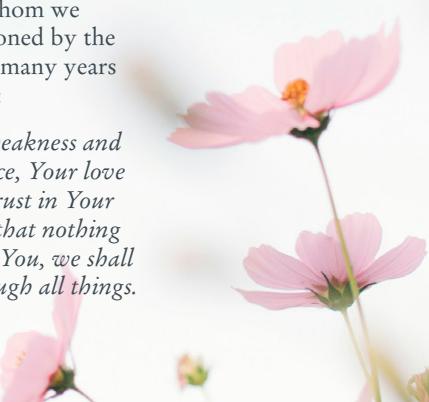
## Need a prayer?

St John's is open for private prayer every day 10.00am - 5.00pm. If you would like someone to pray for you, please do get in touch with the Vicar or with our St Luke's Cell Prayer Group (01582 765576).

St Luke's group prays individually and meets monthly to pray together for anyone in the parish who asks for themselves or for others. The Cell has been continuously a part of St John's since the 1960s. At the group's monthly short service we share any updates on those for whom we pray, and add others, including those mentioned by the Ministry Team. Sometimes a prayer written many years ago can give us the words we need just now:

*Jesus, when all is darkness and we feel our weakness and helplessness, give us the sense of Your presence, Your love and Your strength. Help us to have perfect trust in Your protecting love and strengthening power, so that nothing may frighten or worry us, for, living close to You, we shall see Your hand, Your purpose, Your will through all things. Amen.*

*(a prayer of Ignatius of Loyola)*





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# Little Acorns

Little Acorns is a friendly toddler group for babies, pre-school children and their carers. We meet in St. John's Hall on Tuesdays, 10.00 – 11.30am.

10<sup>th</sup> March getting ready for Mothering Sunday

24<sup>th</sup> March – Easter activities

In this lively group parents and carers have a chance to have coffee, homemade cake and chat. All are welcome. The children enjoy a healthy snack, activities, a story and singing.

Term time dates:

Spring term 16<sup>th</sup> February – 24<sup>th</sup> March

No meetings 31<sup>st</sup> March – 7<sup>th</sup> April  
(Easter holidays)

Summer term 14<sup>th</sup> April – 26<sup>th</sup> May

No booking necessary. A voluntary donation is all that is asked.

For more information, please contact  
[parish.office@stjohnsharpinden.org.uk](mailto:parish.office@stjohnsharpinden.org.uk)  
Telephone 01582 712776



*Songs, rhymes and props captivated Little Acorns in a fast-paced December session with guest leader Jodie and Cha Char Chimps. We hope for another visit!*

## Toddler Service

Thursdays, 10.15am

Current term 26<sup>th</sup> February – 26<sup>th</sup> March

You and your toddler are invited to St John's inclusive, relaxed toddler service Thursdays at 10.15 in term time. We start in church with a beverage and cake, then tell a Bible story with an interactive craft. You don't need to be baptised or a member of St John's to come. It's a welcoming space, do join us! To find out more, email the Vicar at [vicar@stjohnsharpinden.org.uk](mailto:vicar@stjohnsharpinden.org.uk)

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# Mothers' Union



**'For we are God's handiwork,  
created in Christ Jesus to do good works.'**

*Ephesians 2:10*

150 years ago Mary Sumner had a vision of women supporting and encouraging each other in their faith and families. Today, four million members in 84 countries continue her legacy, supporting families and communities and offering women new opportunities to better their lives. On June 10<sup>th</sup> some of our members will attend a special service at St Paul's Cathedral to celebrate the Mothers' Union 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March, *The History of Harpenden*, an entertaining and informative PowerPoint presentation by David Crew

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April, *Women in the Easter Story*, the background we need to fully understand, by Lauryn Awbrey

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May, *Prayers, Hymns and Psalms* led by Andrew Ballard

We meet in the church hall Committee room at 2.30pm on the first Thursday of the month. We are delighted to welcome you to any of our meetings.

*Carol Cooke, Branch Leader. Contact [parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](mailto:parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)*



*Crafting and laughing. Mothers' Union made 120 Christingles for Christmas 2025, and they'll be equally busy making posies for everyone in church for Mothering Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March.*



## St John's Junior and Mini Church

St John's expanded provision for children is tailored around school term dates. Junior and Mini Church meet at 9.25am in the church hall and rejoin their families half-way through the service so we share in Communion together.

**Junior Church** - For primary school ages, reception and up. Children learn about God in a fun and inclusive way, exploring arts and crafts and playing games for greater understanding.

**Mini Church** - For preschool children under 5 years old with their adult. A chance to explore, play and hear the story that Junior Church is learning.

**All Age Eucharist** - At 9.30am we are all in church together, in a Communion service with the sermon and hymns geared for younger members.

### Spring Term Dates 2026

- 1<sup>st</sup> March Junior and Mini Church
- 8<sup>th</sup> March Junior and Mini Church
- 15<sup>th</sup> March All Age Eucharist - Mothering Sunday
- 22<sup>nd</sup> March Junior and Mini Church - last one of term
- 29<sup>th</sup> March Palm Sunday Procession of Palms leading to St John's
- 5<sup>th</sup> April 10.00am All Age Eucharist – Easter Sunday
- 26<sup>th</sup> April Junior and Mini Church - first one of term
- 3<sup>rd</sup> May All Age Eucharist
- 10<sup>th</sup> May Junior and Mini Church
- 17<sup>th</sup> May Junior and Mini Church



There is generally no special children's provision on Sundays either side of half-term and Sundays in school holidays but we always have children's books and colouring sheets at the back of church.

For more information contact  
[parish.office@stjohnsharpinden.org.uk](mailto:parish.office@stjohnsharpinden.org.uk)  
Telephone 01582 712776



# What does a vicar do?

## It's not just Sundays...



**Prayer and lead worship:** This might sound obvious, but the church doesn't only meet to worship and pray on Sundays. St John's holds a service of Morning Prayer every weekday morning at 9.30am, a midweek Eucharist on Wednesdays at 10.30am, a Toddler service on Thursday at 10.15am, and a monthly Healing Prayer service (the St Luke's prayer cell - see p21). It's a great privilege to pray for the world, community, church, the sick and the dead, so when we say we will pray for you we really do mean it.

**Entertainer:** Whilst I don't get booked to entertain at parties, sometimes my job as a vicar requires an aspect of showmanship – whether it is leading 'Beer and Carols' or getting a point across at a school assembly. The truth is that this is not my natural personality type so I've had to learn how to nurture this aspect of myself in my nearly 10 years in ministry. You'll have to be the judge of how well I manage.

**Swimming:** Now I don't get paid to swim, nor is it part of my job description, but whilst I can be called on at any hour to visit the sick or dying, I can also fit in during my days (when I'm organised) things that matter to me for my health and well-being. Swimming is where I go to process and think things through – it's where a lot of my good sermon ideas come from. So if you see me at the pool you'll know why. Where do you go to help yourself process and reflect?

*Revd Tim*



## Happy Guides

3rd Harpenden Guides have been happily meeting at St John's parish hall since September 2025. Longstanding Southdown residents may remember Guides meeting in the hall years ago, and now it is 'home' again.

Guides follows on from Brownies and offers fun and adventure for girls aged 10 to 14. To celebrate International Day of the Girl we asked the Guides what their priorities are for the future and what they would like to change in the world. They then created art work inspired by their hopes and plans. For their own futures the Guides prioritised family, friends and a home to live in and quite a lot of pets! The art they produced focussed on peace throughout the world, ending world hunger and kindness to animals and the environment.

Girlguiding seeks to inspire and give the Guides some of the skills and tools they need to make a positive impact. Later in the year, we look forward to campfires, outdoor adventures and getting out onto the common from our new home at St John's.

For information contact Caroline Warren  
[the3rdharpendenguides@hotmail.com](mailto:the3rdharpendenguides@hotmail.com)



*Dexterity, cooperation and laughs: Guides have to move around the circle and catch the next stick before it falls!*

## Parish registers

### Baptisms

*Welcome to the family of God*

12<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Samuel Cantor

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2025

Olivia Jayne Williamson

Lyla Patricia Williamson Woollard

Lucia Margret Williamson Woollard

### Funerals in Church

*May they rest in peace*

10<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Roy Brimblecombe

7<sup>th</sup> November 2025

John James

## Weddings at St John's

If you live in the parish, or have a connection to the area, we invite you to consider St John's church for your marriage ceremony. Contact the church office to arrange a time to discuss your plans. The organist, the Junior Choir and other special options are available. We would love to be a part of your special day.

[parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](mailto:parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)  
Telephone 01582 712776

For information about planning a wedding in a Church of England church, visit: [www.churchofengland.org/life-events/your-church-wedding](http://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/your-church-wedding)





## Regular Services at St John's

### Sundays

8.00am      Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel  
9.30am      Parish Eucharist (*also live streamed*) followed by coffee in the hall.  
5.00pm      All Age Eucharist, *normally first Sundays of the month*  
5.00pm      Evening service, normally 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays of the month  
please see website, weekly e-newsletter or pewsheets

### Wednesdays

10.30am      Holy Eucharist is celebrated in the Lady Chapel

### Monday - Friday inclusive

9.30am      Morning prayer is said

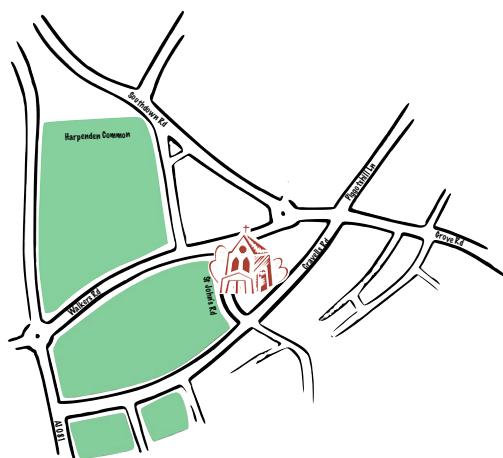
Church is open every day from 10.00am to 5.00pm.

Service times may change so please check the calendar on our website or sign up there to our weekly or monthly newsletter [www.stjohnsharpden.org.uk](http://www.stjohnsharpden.org.uk)

Watch our Parish Eucharist and other special services on our YouTube channel - search for "St John's Church, Harpenden" or visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/StJohnsChurchHarpenden>

The Parish Office is open Monday – Thursday 10.00am - 2.00pm



## **PARISH OFFICE**

*For enquiries, including marriages, baptisms, funerals and hall bookings, please contact the parish office.*

### **OPEN**

**MONDAY - THURSDAY**

**10.00am - 2.00pm**

### **Amanda Knights**

Telephone: 01582 712776  
parish.office@  
stjohnsharpden.org.uk

*If you are in need of help or know anyone in need of support, please contact support@stjohnsharpden.org.uk*

## *Parish Directory*

### **VICAR**

#### **Revd Tim Vickers**

Telephone: 01582 469343

[vicar@stjohnsharpden.org.uk](mailto:vicar@stjohnsharpden.org.uk)

### **READERS**

#### **Lauryn Awbrey**

Telephone: 01582 624823

[lauryn.awbrey@stjohnsharpden.org.uk](mailto:lauryn.awbrey@stjohnsharpden.org.uk)

#### **David Nye**

Telephone: 01582 762785

[dandhnye@btinternet.com](mailto:dandhnye@btinternet.com)

#### **Anne Edwards**

Telephone: 01582 767449

### **WARDEN**

#### **Iain Pritchard**

[wardens@stjohnsharpden.org.uk](mailto:wardens@stjohnsharpden.org.uk)

### **DIRECTOR OF MUSIC**

#### **Matt Harrison**

[music@stjohnsharpden.org.uk](mailto:music@stjohnsharpden.org.uk)

### **TREASURER**

#### **Alison Bygrave**

[treasurer@stjohnsharpden.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@stjohnsharpden.org.uk)

### **MAGAZINE DISTRIBUTION**

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Our magazine is published four times a year and is delivered free to all homes and businesses in the parish.

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We welcome advertisements and are delighted to be able to provide full colour.

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To protect privacy, personal email addresses do not appear in the web edition, unless requested.

*Lent  
and Easter  
Services inside*

# st JOHN<sup>†</sup>s

*Living God's Love*

*What's going on in the lead-up to Easter, and beyond*

[www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk](http://www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk)  
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