

*Patronal
Festival
inside*

st JOHN'S

Living God's Love

Parish Magazine
SUMMER 2026
*What's going on in
St John's and Southdown*

I haven't got the faintest clue
What festive season's skies will do
So please ensure you're weather-wise
And heed the following advice...

Blackened skies may be an omen
So batten down your blow-up snowmen.
Do not on festive trips embark
Remain at home and build an ark.

If temperatures hit 32
Then gather round the BBQ
With turkey burgers, beers on tap
And pigs in blankets stuffed in baps.

If it's (more than likely) wet
Leave the latest lego set
Ditch the x-box, socks and smellies
And don your smart new pair of wellies.

Should there be a small tornado
Fireworks are strictly no no
In thunder claps and lightning strikes
I'd cancel plans for rides on bikes.

But hail or gale or monsoon rain
One thing that's certain to remain
Is God the Father's love for you
Never failing, faithful, true
Constant through life's droughts and storms
Here and now and evermore.

This forecast was brought to you by Gill's Weather Watch

Poem by Gill Meredith with three stanzas omitted due to space limitations (copyright unknown).

Thoughtful, and this time humorous, this page in the magazine is intended as a space for reflection. St John's Church and its Remembrance Garden is open every day from 10.00am to 5.00pm for anyone who wants a quiet place for personal reflection.

st JOHN'S

Living God's Love

SUMMER 2026

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Vicar's Welcome

Welcome to the wonderful St John's Parish Magazine for the Summer of 2026.

Thank you for picking this up and having a read. I think it gives a really good flavour not just of what sort of community we are, but also further afield into your community. But don't take my word for it – you're always welcome to join us, whether for a service, event or concert. If anyone reading this comes from Latin America, then you might be interested to know our preacher for this year's Patronal Festival (not sure what this is, see page 21) on 21st June is the Dean of the Anglican Cathedral in Peru. I hope you enjoy reading.

With every best wish and blessings,

Revd Tim

www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk



Revd Tim and son Laurie chalk up another Anglican cathedral on their national quest. This time: York.



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To be a pilgrim



Local pilgrims met at 10.00am Easter Monday at St Nicholas, Harpenden to walk the 7.5 miles to St Albans Cathedral. Alison Bygrave joined Revd Sally Goodson of St Mary's, Kinsbourne Green and four others, first stop: St John's. With the theme of Hope they progressed through sunny spring landscape where they had a welcome break at St Mary's, Childwickbury. Reaching Verulam Park for a picnic lunch, they watched as pilgrims gradually gathered for the 3.00pm cathedral service.



Six hundred pilgrims from across the Diocese arrived for the 80th annual Easter pilgrimage to St Albans Cathedral. They circuted the shrine of St Alban and then dogs, children and pilgrims of all ages sat on the floor for rousing worship and songs. Formal Eucharist was held, with stations around the cathedral. "That volume of people together, and the band, made for a really good sing!" says Alison. "People should plan to come next year. Or don't wait, join the Alban Day Pilgrimage and Festival on 20th June!"

<https://www.enjoystalbans.com/event/alban-day-2026/>




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Grand entrance?

As the main point of entry to St John's, the porch is also the first impression of the church for the congregation, community and newcomers. But lately it's not been too impressive, as you can see from the picture.

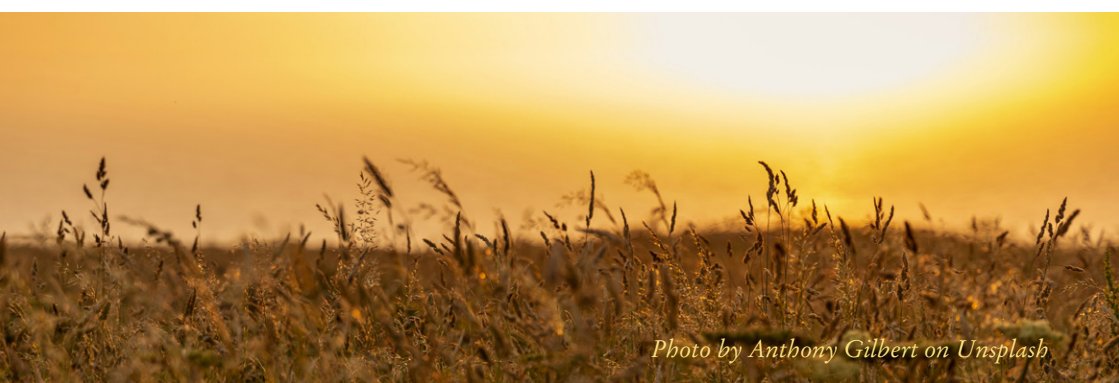


During Lent St John's embarked on a campaign – a Lent Challenge – to raise money for the purposes of repairing, remediating and redecorating the porch. Built in 1999 as an extension to the west end, it has sadly suffered from persistent damp ingress over recent years, leading to extensive and unsightly damage to the paint and plasterwork.

St John's is delighted with the response. As a result of the generosity of the congregation, by Easter Day close to £30,000 had been raised. This achievement brings celebration and confidence that work will be commissioned and completed later this year.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed so willingly and so generously. The porch means so much more than bricks, mortar, plaster and paint - when it has been restored it will once again represent the warm welcome that we strive to give to all who enter St John's.

James Hillman



Susan Hammersley
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BRAIN TEASER: HIDDEN BOOKS OF THE BIBLE



I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible (merely by a fluke). It kept people looking so hard for the facts and for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially since the name of the books were not capitalised, but the truth finally struck home to numbers of readers. To others it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you. Yes, there will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to find one of them, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea so she can concentrate better. See how well you can compete. Relax now. There really are sixteen names of books in this story.

Answers, page 15. Thanks to Elizabeth Gordon-Smith for this contribution, copyright unknown.



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DID YOU KNOW?

Harpenden Common is home to the herb St John's Wort. With bright yellow flowers and a raggedy wildflower look, it blooms from June to September. It is named for the birthday of St John the Baptist on 24th June. He's the patron saint of our church - don't miss St John's Patronal Festival on Sunday 21st June!

The small green leaves look like they have little holes in them, which is where the Latin name *Hypericum perforatum* comes from. Actually these 'perforations' are see-through glands. Altogether this wild herb has a lot to offer. You may have heard of its use as an antidepressant. It can also heal wounds and burns, its stems can make a reddish dye and the flowers a yellow or orange dye.



'St. John's wort - flower and buds'

By Didier Descouens - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0

Caution: look but do not touch! St John's Wort can irritate the skin and lead to sun-sensitivity. And it takes a qualified herbalist or medical expert to turn its helpful properties into something safe to use.



A delightful afternoon of music

Sunday 19th July 3.00pm

St John's Junior Choir



A recital programme showcasing a range of uplifting and inspiring choral music, including

Mozart, Peter Hurford, Philip Wilby, John Rutter and Barry Rose.

Admission free. A collection will be taken to support provision for music at St John's.

All are warmly welcome to attend and support our young singers!

Meaning of Life Discussion Group

We are starting a new discussion group!

Monthly after church on Sundays.

Meetings to start in the committee room at 11am after the 9:30am Eucharist and to last 45–60 minutes.

Everyone welcome!



7th June:
What makes a human life meaningful?

5th July:
Is love the meaning of life?

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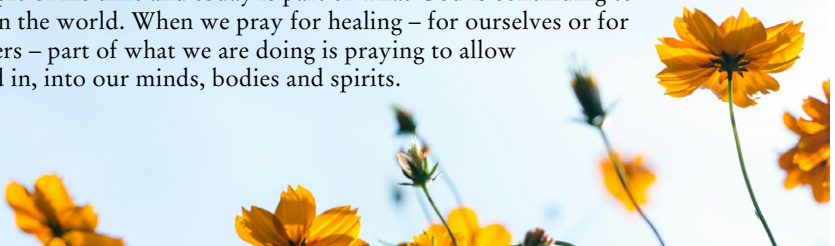
www.facebook.com/flexexercisewithmary

Need a prayer?

St John's is open for private prayer every day from 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. At the monthly short service we share any updates on those for whom we pray, and add others, including those mentioned by the Ministry Team.

Praying for those who are unwell has been part of what Christians do since the earliest days; it arises from Jesus's own ministry of healing among the people of his time and today is part of what God is continuing to do in the world. When we pray for healing – for ourselves or for others – part of what we are doing is praying to allow God in, into our minds, bodies and spirits.



Eco-friendly loo roll?

Did you know that globally nearly one million trees a day are felled to make toilet paper and other household paper products (tissues, kitchen roll, etc)? We use a lot of toilet roll and other paper products in the UK and our shopping choices can make a big difference to the environment.

There are three main types of toilet roll:

- **Virgin paper** – made directly from trees, which are mainly grown in plantations and imported.
- **Bamboo** – regrows after harvesting, so it can be harvested repeatedly. Generally more sustainable than virgin paper, but it is imported (usually from China) so there are carbon fuel consequences.
- **Recycled paper** – the most sustainable option. No trees or bamboo forests are cut down, so it uses less energy and water. Crucially, it makes use of paper that might otherwise be sent to landfill. Usually not imported, but check where it is made.



Photo by Nick Fewings on Unsplash

How to read codes: **FSC Recycled** means it is 100% recycled content, yay! **FSC Mix** or **FSC 100%** show it includes virgin tree pulp. The same codes apply to the packaging for toilet paper. FSC means Forest Stewardship Council. Ask yourself, do I need to cut down trees for toilet roll?

PS Money-saver: most supermarkets sell own-brand recycled toilet paper, which is generally cheaper than many of the well-known brands made from virgin paper.

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



Hidden books of the Bible answers:
1 Acts / 2 Amos / 3 Esther / 4 Hebrews / 5 James / 6 Job / 7 Judges / 8 Kings / 9 Lamentations / 10 Luke / 11 Mark / 12 Numbers / 13 Peter / 14 Revelation / 15 Ruth / 16 Titus



A happening church

The transition from Spring to Summer is a time of new energy; a surge of the spirit. This is especially true at St John's where we began Lent with a combination of spiritual and practical renewal. Mary and Martha were both there; Mary at our Bible studies and Martha in the church. A special mention has to go to the team that made the church gleam at Easter, transformed the Lady Chapel and took down cobwebs that had probably been hanging over the congregation since the turn of the century.

As Church Warden I'm quite proud of what has been happening at St John's over the last few months. See page 9 for the response to the challenge of our church porch. Then there's the unseen efforts to keep the church boilers working; the amazing work of the children and families group at the back of church and in the hall; Thursday soup in the winter, a quiz at New Year, Mothers' Day posies, a plant sale for the children's choir, and a scrabble session in the spring. It goes on....

More than proud, I'm excited – because I'm privileged to know what's coming round the corner. I won't spoil the good news – watch this space!

Ian Pritchard,
Church Warden



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SPACe Southdown Performing Arts Centre

You will probably have seen some building work taking place. This is to provide step free access and an additional toilet at SPACe. ***Please see our website to check where the events listed are being held as we may need to relocate.

Friday Afternoons at SPACe

2.30 Tea, cake and entertainment. Tickets,£5, from Southdown Hardware

June 5th Lulu and the Hullabaloo's - Jazz

July 3rd Frisson - Acapella quarter

August 7th Call My Bluff – back by popular demand!

Saturday June 13th

Acting Workshop with Paul Birch – see www.southdownspace.org for details

Stage Explorers – our Drama Club meets every Monday after school and you can join at any point during the term or come along for a taster session. There are two groups – 7-11 & 11-16 year olds.

For more information about us or our events email
office@southdownspace.org

SPACe, 116 Southdown Road, Harpenden, AL5 1QQ

Check our website for the latest information.

www.southdownspace.org



Patronal Festival

St John the Baptist, Harpenden

Sunday 21st June 2026

11.00am

Patronal Eucharist

(with incense)

With special guest preacher

The Reverend Bliss Spillar

Dean of the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, Lima

Junior and Mini Church in the vicarage garden
(or in the hall if weather demands)

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Thought for Summer

Rest awhile... in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, what do you do to relax? Have a few days away? Spend some time in the garden? Maybe, go for a walk. I love walking and even when the weather is not too good, it is a great way to relax, to blow off the cobwebs and to have some precious moments alone.

Medical experts constantly tell us that relaxation is good for the body as well as the soul: that we need to have a proper work/life balance if we are to stay healthy. A simple walk across the common, for example, is a chance to appreciate our surroundings. We see the wonders of nature in the trees and plants and wildlife. As we gently stroll, we also have space to think of those dear to us. In a world where we can take too much for granted, it can be a time to say thank you for everything.

Rest awhile – it's what Jesus said we should do.

*David Nye,
Reader at St John's*

It's not just Sundays... **What's a patronal saint?**

On 21st June (the Sunday nearest 24th June), St John's celebrates the birth of our Patronal Saint. We also celebrate his death on 29th August (slightly less joyful as he had his head chopped off!). But why are some churches named after saints?

This tradition dates back to the early Church, where churches were often built over the graves of martyrs, serving as a reminder of the communion between earth and heaven.

Nowadays churches are named after saints to honour holy figures, honour local history, or establish a 'patron saint' as a heavenly protector and spiritual role model for the community.

We are not 100% sure why St John the Baptist was chosen as our Patronal Saint but we know that the turf was cut for our present church building on 24th June 1907. Either way, as the forerunner of Jesus, we are very pleased he is our heavenly protector.

Rev'd Tim



St John the Baptist stained glass window in St John's (in the north aisle if you want to see the original).



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Little Acorns

Little Acorns is a friendly toddler group for babies, pre-school children and their carers. Parents and carers have a chance to have coffee, homemade cake and chat. The children enjoy a healthy snack, activities, a story and singing. We meet in St. John's Hall on Tuesdays in term time, 10.00 – 11.30am.



We are delighted to have a buggy shelter which Revd Tim blessed on Mothering Sunday. Do join in our fundraising events during the summer term to help towards the cost: a cake sale in May and a toddler toddle round the church Tuesday 23rd June.

Term time dates:

No meeting on 26th May as it is half term
 Summer term continues 2nd June – 21st July
 Autumn term begins 8th September

All are welcome. No booking necessary. A voluntary donation is all that is asked. For more information, please contact parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk
 Telephone 01582 712776



Revd Tim blesses Little Acorns new buggy shelter.



Toddler Service

Thursdays, 10.15am

Current term 4th June – 23rd July. Resuming in September.



You and your toddler are invited to St John's inclusive, relaxed toddler service Thursdays at 10.15 in term time. We start at the church and this season we are focussing on Bible stories that take place outdoors, hoping on warm, sunny days to move outside. We will finish with a bring and share lunch at the Vicarage. You don't need to be baptised or a member of St John's to come. All are welcome, do join us! To find out more, email the Vicar at vicar@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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Mothers' Union



Shining a light in the darkness for 150 years

On June 10th at 5.00pm in St Paul's Cathedral there will be a Thanksgiving Service for the 150th birthday of Mothers' Union. MU was founded in the small parish church of Old Alresford, Hampshire by Mary Sumner, a vicar's wife. She believed that women, regardless of class or status, could come together in faith to support one another and strengthen family life within the church. MU has grown to 4 million members, now including men, across 84 countries.

We meet at 2.30pm in the church Committee room on the first Thursday of the month. We are delighted to welcome visitors! Upcoming events:

June 4th Jean Macintosh gives perspective on how MU has changed, what it has achieved and what exciting developments are planned for the future.

July 2nd Revd Tim Vickers shares stories of recent adventures and life changing experiences.

August 2nd Summer Party in the lovely garden of a member, including MU members from across the Diocese.

Carol Cooke, Branch Leader. Contact parish.office@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

Meet Father Bliss

Guest preacher at St John's Patronal Festival

Bliss Spillar III serves as the Dean and Vicar of the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in Lima, Peru, a city of eleven million. The cathedral serves not only residents of Lima but also a large English-speaking expat community.

Fr. Bliss grew up in San Antonio, Texas. After a science degree from the University of Houston he attended theology school. He went on to serve in the United Methodist Church for fifteen years before entering into Christian education as a science teacher. He is father of three children and grandfather of two, and his son Bliss IV is an Anglican Priest in Virginia. Widowed in 2020 he expanded his horizons, entering the mission field and teaching internationally in Brazil and Peru. Bliss's heart has always been in the ministry and in 2023 he had the opportunity to serve at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd. He was ordained into the Anglican Church that same year. Bliss enjoys storytelling, gardening and cooking.





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.

Summer Term Dates 2026

7th June All Age Eucharist

14th June Junior and Mini Church

21st June 11.00am Junior and Mini Church – Patronal Festival

28th June Junior and Mini Church

5th July All Age Eucharist

12th July Junior and Mini Church

19th July Junior and Mini Church

There is generally no special children's provision on Sundays either side of half-term and on 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@stjohnsharpenden.org.uk
Telephone 01582 712776

Local Treasures: Chris Hewitt

Harpenden's longest established cycle business is right here in Southdown: Chris Hewitt Cycles. Chris has deep Southdown roots – his parents married at St John's and he was baptised here in 1948. His cycling passion began in his teens and grew into special interest memberships, including the Veteran-Cycle Club. In 1968 he started his business servicing and repairing cycles, and carrying out renovations of classic and veteran bicycles, tricycles and tandems. Some of these end up in museums and family heirlooms.

Can you help Chris on a quest? It will come as no surprise that he has written several cycling books; he is currently writing one about George Bernard Shaw. GBS was a keen early cyclist, and it is known that in the 1930s he rode a tricycle around the local lanes near his home in Ayot St Lawrence, and nearby. 'I have several testimonials from local residents who had seen him on his tricycle or had seen a picture of him on it, but could not remember where! To date, I have been unable to find a picture of GBS on his tricycle.' If you know of such a picture (or if you need a cycle serviced!) please phone Chris on 01582 763622.



Chris in his workshop

GROVE SCHOOLS' PTA

SUMMER FESTIVAL

GROVE SCHOOLS' PLAYING FIELD

SATURDAY,
JUNE 20

2:00PM TILL
6:00PM

FREE
ENTRY

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

LIVE MUSIC FROM NUMBER 7 - INFLATABLES -
GAMES - ACTIVITIES - FOOD & DRINK -
RAFFLE & MUCH MORE...

www.pta-groveschools.org.uk



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Parish registers

Funerals in Church

May they rest in peace

7th January 2026

David Young

3rd February 2026

Mary Nanson

5th February 2026

Daniel Lagdon

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

Telephone 01582 712776

For information about planning a wedding in a Church of England church, visit: 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.
All Age Eucharist, *normally first Sundays of the month*
5.00pm Evening service, please see website, weekly e-newsletter, pewsheet or church porch

Wednesdays

- 10.30am Holy Eucharist is celebrated in the Lady Chapel

Monday - Friday inclusive

- 9.30am Morning prayer is said

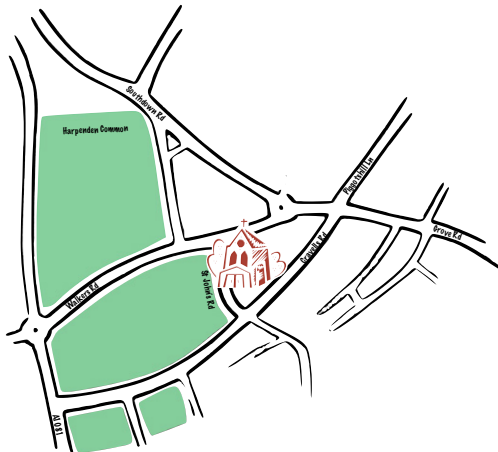
Church is open every day from 10.00am to 5.00pm.

Service times may change so please check the calendar on our website or sign up there to our weekly or monthly newsletter www.stjohnsharpenden.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@
stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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

Parish Directory

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

We are very grateful to those who write contributions and the many volunteers who distribute and deliver the magazines, come rain or shine, to everyone in the parish.

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

St John's PCC takes no responsibility for statements made in advertisements or other content in this magazine nor linked websites, nor for any matter arising therefrom.

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

*Patronal
Festival
inside*

stJOHN⁺s
Living God's Love

What's going on in St John's and Southdown

www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk
St John's Church, 5 St John's Road, Harpenden, Herts AL5 1DJ
Parish Office 01582 712776

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