

READINGS for SERVICES in FEBRUARY 2024 - YEAR B

February 4	1 st Reading	Proverbs 8. 1, 22-31
2 nd before Lent	Psalm	104. 26-37
Green	2 nd Reading	Colossians 1. 15-20
	Gospel	John 1. 1.14
February 11	1 st Reading	2 Kings 2.1-12
Next before Lent	Psalm	50. 1-6
Green	2 nd Reading	2 Corinthians 4. 3-6
	Gospel	Mark 9. 2-9

PLEASE NOTE

St John's will be closed for Sunday Services during the Fete du Citron
 The following readings are for the SATURDAY SERVICES
 which will take place in St. John's Church at 5.00pm :

February 17	1 st Reading	Genesis 9.8-17
LENT 1	Psalm	25. 1-10
Purple	2 nd Reading	1 Peter 3.18-22
	Gospel	Mark 1.9-15
February 24	1 st Reading	Genesis 17.1-7, 15-16
LENT 2	Psalm	22. 22-30
Purple	2 nd Reading	Romans 4.13-25
	Gospel	Mark 8.31-38

**BAPTISMS, CONFIRMATIONS, MARRIAGES, FUNERALS
 arrangements may be made by contacting the chaplain**

The Church of Englnd invites to Holy Communion all baptised persons who communicant members of other Churches which subscribe to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and who are in good standing in their own church. Those who are prevented by conscience or the rules of their own Churches from receiving the Blessed Sacrament are invited to receive a blessing.

Reflections from our Chaplain Chris

'Be Present'

Over the past month, these words have kept appearing in some way or other as I get on with my life. And in preparing this reflection, I noticed the idea of 'Being present' first emerging in my words for the Cross Border in January..... so it feels right to continue it here!

This year Easter comes early, placing Lent only two weeks after Epiphany. Life is moving on quickly - too quickly! I know we all get that feeling from time to time. We have barely finished reflecting on the message of Christmas and Epiphany and now we are on to the next thing. So as I walked along the seafront, I felt this voice (and the sea) say, 'Be present to the moment, even if the moment passes quickly!'

As we do indeed turn to Lent I see a key message of Lent is 'being present'. When I meditate on Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness, being tempted, just as he is about to set out on his life ministry, I realise how 'present' he must have been to what was happening in that moment. We might imagine that after being baptised, presented to the world and showing signs of being a very special type of leader, Jesus would have been eager to get on with the job. But no! He was present to the moment, and in that moment, he felt the brakes being put on – to spend 40 days in solitude.

Many approaches to achieving psychological well-being nowadays focus on this idea of 'being present'. Mindfulness is a well-known example. Recently, I came across the Welcoming Prayer as a form of prayer to use when dealing with difficult or strong emotions, which I have been finding very helpful. In this practice you first spend time *noticing* where the emotion is affecting you in your body physically. You then move to trying just to *accept* those sensations, rather than to just get rid of them. Finally, (only when you have properly spent time with these first two steps), you *hold them before God* and bring God into the conversation. So it's all about 'being present'.

May we each grow deeper in our ability to be present! God bless.

Chris

Church Council Meeting Tuesday 6th February at 9.00am

Fete du Citron/The Lemon Festival

St. John's Church will be closed on Sundays during the Fete du Citron as the church is on the route where the Parade takes place. The three weekly Eucharist Services will therefore take place in Church on the Saturdays 17th and 24th February and 2nd March at 5.00pm(17h00). Refreshments afterwards as always.

Eucharist – Bordighera English Cemetery Chapel Instead of the second Wednesday in the month the Eucharist will be celebrated on Tuesday 20th February at 10.30am by our Chaplain The Revd. Chris Parkman. Looking forward to seeing you.

Lent Course Chris is organising a six-weekly Lent Course to take place in the Library **beginning on Ash Wednesday 14th February** from 12.45pm to 2.15pm. “ We will share a bowl of soup,” Chris says, “and reflect on our Christian Life and Call, using the six-day narrative of Genesis as a lens of how we are called to live well on our planet, using as a guide 'Saying yes to Life' by Ruth Valerio. It was the Bishop of Canterbury's Lent Book for 2020. 12 copies of the book have been bought which can be picked up in church for those who want to take part.”

Chris is also very open to running the course by zoom on-line for those who cannot make it all (or part) in person. “Tuesday evening 6pm(18h00) to 7.15pm(19h15) – starting Shrove Tuesday 13th February – if there is enough interest”, writes Chris. “I hope this might mean some of our dispersed community might be able to join us – but they will need to source the book separately – and need to let me know their interest.”

**So, please contact Chris as soon as possible
to let him know if you wish to take part in the Lent Course.**

Coins for Funds Do you remember 'Barbara's Bottle' which used to be at the back of the church to collect any current euro or sterling coins which were no longer needed by people returning to their home countries or which were weighing too heavily in their purses? Well, Beatrice has now taken on the collecting of such coins in aid of our Church funds, so please give the coins you no longer want to Beatrice. Thank you.

What is a leap year? A leap year means there's an extra day in the calendar. It takes approximately 365.25 days for Earth to orbit the Sun – a solar year. We usually round the days in a calendar year to 365. To make up for the missing partial day, we add one day to our calendar approximately every four years. That is a leap year, according to NASA. It's still not perfect but the resulting deviation is very small.

What is a leap day? During a leap year, the month of February has an extra day added to it. So this year there will be 29 days in February, rather than 28. That 29th day is also referred to as a “leap day”.

How can you calculate a leap year? There is a set of rules for determining whether a year is a leap year. According to the Farmer's Almanac those are:

1. a year may be a leap year if it is evenly divisible by 4.
2. Years divisible by 100 (century years such as 1900 or 2000) cannot be leap years unless they are also divisible by 400. (For this reason, the years 1700, 1800, and 1900 were not leap years, but the years 1600 and 2000 were.)

What if you are born during a leap year? According to the Almanac, people born on a leap day during a leap year are known as “leaplings”.

Another unusual fact is when February has five Sundays. For this shortest of months to achieve this it must be both a Leap Year and 1 February must be on Sunday. This has only occurred five times in the last hundred years - 1920, 1948, 1976, 2004, and this year. The next time it will happen will be in the year 2032. Your Editor hopes to be around to witness the next five-Sunday February, but she will be 93 years old by then, so she may not still be editing the Cross Border.



Thought for the month

“Every time we say, 'I believe in the Holy Spirit',
we mean that we believe that there is a living God
able and willing to enter human personality and change it.”

God in Music

'Glorious the song when God's the theme': the Nunc Dimittis

This month we look at the New Testament where St. Paul exhorts the Christian community to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God. St. Luke tells us in his Gospel that the angels sang praises to God at the birth of Jesus, and he has given us three poems that have become part of Christian song: the Magnificat, the Benedictus and the Nunc Dimittis.

The first two are full of praise and rejoicing. The last comes as Mary and Joseph fulfil the Law of Moses and bring the child Jesus to Jerusalem. In the temple they meet Simeon and Anna. Simeon represents each of us who can look back over life with gratitude in the face of death as he says, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.' It is a story that has inspired preachers (Origen preached four sermons on it) and artists, and also composers.

In the Christian Church these words of the Nunc Dimittis have become part of worship at the end of each day, not just the end of life. Cathedrals and parish church choirs have sung settings of these words in that great tradition of Anglican choral music at Evensong – settings that have captured the sense of quiet resignation, but also conveyed the glory of the light that is Jesus shining for all people. The setting I commend to you this month is Rachmaninov. It is part of his Vespers, the night-long vigil sung in the Russian Orthodox Church of the eve of great feasts.

Rachmaninov composed the work (and it comprises 15 pieces) at great speed. After just two weeks he finished it in this month of February 1915. In England this work was only heard at All Saints Church, Margaret Street in London until recent years, when its place in choral music was reassessed. Performances and recordings soon followed and the Vespers are now seen as one of the great masterpieces of religious music.

This was no more so than in the beautiful setting of the 5th canticle, the Nunc Dimittis. Just 36 bars long, it begins with a rocking, undulating figure in the upper voices. A solo tenor enters as the voice of Simeon, and it ends with the basses slowly moving down to a low B flat: 'a sigh of wonder and resignation on the threshold of eternal rest and peace,' one critic has called it.

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Rachmaninov later recalled, "After I played the passage at the end of the 5th canticle where the basses slowly descend to that low note, the conductor shook his head, saying 'Now where on earth will we find such basses? They are as rare as asparagus at Christmas!'" Nevertheless he did find them. It was one of the composer's favourite pieces, and he asked for it to be sung at his funeral in the hope that it would send his 'ship of death gently towards the unknown region.'

On 2 February we shall hear these words as part of the Gospel on the feast of Candlemas. Simeon prays them because his cup is now overflowing. He has looked on the salvation of God. Music allows us to look on that glory and salvation also, and Rachmaninov, in his moving setting, has captured the calm trust of that moment, which shines out like the brightness of the light of Jesus.

(by The Revd. Michael Burgess looking at great works of music)

Kermesse at St. John's, Menton

16th March 2024 - 14h00-18h00

St. John's will be buzzing!

We'll be selling items (clothing, books, art, toys) and refreshments (cake!) and running a tombola. Craft workshops for kids and drum roll the first ever **Great Menton Marmalade Contest!** We aim to raise funds for St. John's and to offer a warm welcome to all who come through our doors.

To make this happen, we need **you!** We are looking for items in all categories - quality items that will bring in funds for the church rather than a way to dispose of unwanted low quality things.

We are also looking for volunteers to set up/clean up, run a stand and make beautiful goodies to sell at the refreshment stand. Quintessentially British treats specially welcome – and your marmalade submissions!

Can you help? Email: stjohns.kermess@gmail.com to set up a donation drop-off time or to offer your time as a volunteer or baker.

To learn how to submit your marmalade to the Great Menton Marmalade Contest visit www.anglicanchurchmenton/kermesse (coming soon)

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Life at St. James-the-Least

The Rectory,
St. James-the-Least

My dear Nephew Darren,

I confess to being rather disappointed that little Miss Asquith retired from stoking the church boiler last month. She was ideally suited to the job; being only five feet, two inches tall, she didn't have to stoop too much to get into the five foot high cellar.

That she had done the job for the past 50 years seemed another good reason for her continuing. But no, just because she turned 94 at the end of last month and was finding it difficult to negotiate the cellar steps on her two sticks, she decided to throw in the towel. And her rash decision placed us in a dilemma.

The boiler has been lit every Wednesday, so that the church becomes almost bearable by Sunday morning. It therefore means that it has had to be stoked three times a day for four days – not too onerous a duty I would have thought, especially as it gives an ample three days afterwards for recovery. Admittedly, the fact that a complete change of clothing is necessary after each visit is a slight handicap, but no one could be persuaded. Such is the level of Christian commitment these days.

And so we have become very modern and now have a gas boiler. No longer used, the cellar was instantly invaded and occupied by the flower arrangers and is now full of chipped vases no one can bring themselves to throw away and lengths of string and chicken wire that seem indispensable to their art.

There was an attempted second invasion by the Scouts looking for somewhere to store their tents, but they were repulsed by volleys of Oasis from the female occupying forces. They initially also took hostages, until the police convinced them it was not an entirely good idea.

We now have a system with frost detectors, thermostats and so many options on the time clock that it renders the system incomprehensible. Apparently a simple on/off switch was an option the plumbers were unaware of. I also miss that deep rumble beneath our feet during Matins, sounding like the Queen Mary coming into port, letting us know that the ancient boiler was attempting to get the water lukewarm. Naturally there have been teething troubles; for several weeks, the church was

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admirably heated on Tuesday mornings and Friday afternoons when it was unused, but arctic on Sundays. On another occasion, the frost stat took over, but would then not let go, keeping the building heated for 14 days continuously. We shall probably need a loan from the International Monetary Fund to pay the bill.

And so twenty-first century technology is beginning to make a not altogether welcome appearance at St. James'. Miss Asquith has a lot to answer for.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

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A REQUEST

Male parishioner of St. John's based in UK, aged 69, seeks a furnished room to rent, preferably in Menton, for about a month each year at a mutually convenient time.

Please contact Chris: Telephone +44 (0) 780 380 6887  
email: christopherhuband@yahoo.co.uk

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A CHEROKEE BLESSING

May the warm winds of heaven blow softly on your home,

And the Great Spirit bless all who enter there.

May your moccasins make happy tracks in many snows

And may the rainbow always touch your shoulder.

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SAINT OF THE MONTH - Do you ever look at the names of people commemorated in the Lectionary (the Church's schedule of readings, etc.) and wonder who they were and what they did that gave them the honour of being remembered officially in the church's liturgy? This month - 14th February – is St. Valentine's Day – so here is some information about him

ST. VALENTINE

There are two confusing things about this day of romantic and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century – one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the Emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer's time the link was assumed to be because on this saint's day - 14th February – the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St. Valentine's Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or 'sweethearts' during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love – Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

THE VERY FIRST VALENTINE CARD - A LEGEND

The Roman Emperor Claudius II needed soldiers. He suspected that marriage made men want to stay at home instead of fighting wars, so he outlawed marriage. A kind-hearted priest named Valentine felt sorry for those who wanted to marry, but couldn't. So, secretly he married as many couples as he could – until the Emperor found out and condemned him to death. While he was in prison waiting execution, Valentine showed love and compassion to everyone around him, including his jailer. The jailer had a young daughter who was blind, (9)

but through Valentine's prayers, she was healed. Just before his death in Rome on 14 February, he wrote her a farewell message signed 'From your Valentine'.

So the very first Valentine card was not between lovers, but between a priest about to die, and a little girl, healed through his prayers.



Smiles from Reader's Digest over the years

Once my father came home and found me in front of a roaring fire. That made my father very mad, as we didn't have a fireplace. (January 1950 issue)

“Your mother has been with us 20 years” said John. “Isn't it time she got a place of her own?”. “My mother?”, replied Helen, “I thought she was your mother.” (December 1987)

According to unofficial sources, a new simplified income-tax form contains only four lines:

1. What was your income for the year?
2. What were your expenses?
3. How much have you left?
4. Send it in. (March 1945)

One of the oddities of Wall Street is that it is the dealer and not the customer who is called broker. Dallas News October 1929 – *The Stock Market crash*

You can't believe everything you hear - but you can repeat it. (August 1931)

2 Hollywood stars ran into each other at the door of their psychiatrist's office. “Hello there”, said one, “Are you coming or going?” “If I knew that,” said the other “I wouldn't be here.” - The American Weekly (November 1958)

At a party, a young wife admonished her husband, “That's the fourth time you've gone back for ice cream and cake. Doesn't it embarrass you?” “Why should it?” answered her spouse. “I keep telling them it's for you!” (March 1981)

Did you hear the one about the shepherd who drove his sheep through town and was given a ticket for making a ewe turn?

..... the nurse who was checked out by the doctor because she was absent without gauze?