

Rev'd Amanda would appreciate it if anyone knowing of illness or any other trouble in the Parish would notify her as soon as possible on 020 3940 1897 so that she, or a member of the Church, can call without delay.

If you have any enquiry about baptism, marriage or another service, or if there is something else you would like to discuss with a member of the team, please make an appointment, through the Church Office (020 8462 1373) or by emailing:

info@stmaryshayeskent.co.uk

This month as we celebrate Easter, St Mary's curate, Rev Tim Aldred shares some thoughts on the events on the cross and resurrection of Easter.

WINDOWS ON THE CROSS

My former Methodist Minister, the late Rev John Tucker, once preached a sermon on the crucifixion. I vividly remember his words. "Jesus paid the price," he said, "but who was the price paid to? Certainly not to the Devil, and not to God either."

We sometimes speak about people who "pay the price" of helping others, perhaps through an act of bravery, or long-term commitment. However, we are not saying that they have literally "paid" anyone anything. We are simply recognising that bringing about goodness can sometimes mean tragic consequences. This, argued John Tucker, is what we see in Jesus' death on a cross.

The crucifixion, Jesus' death on a cross in Jerusalem, lies at the heart of the Christian faith. Through it, all Christians understand, God brings salvation for everyone – but they have different ideas about *how* God does this. Indeed, Christians have pondered the "*how*" of the cross since the days of the early church, and continue to do so today. Even the Nicene Creed says *that* Jesus was crucified, died and rose again – but does not set out *how* this leads to salvation.

One of the earliest ideas, known as "Christus Victor" (or "Christ Victorious") emphasises that through the cross, Jesus defeated evil and death. However, this victory is not accomplished with the violence often seen from human rulers. Instead, it comes about through divine love. When God becomes human for the love of humanity, Jesus' apparent "weakness" in dying on a cross subverts and overthrows the cruelty of evil. It is a bit like the ancient story of the Trojan Horse: Satan believes that in Jesus' death he has vanquished God – only to find that Jesus'

willingness to die for the sake of others has destroyed all the power of evil.

This idea often speaks to people experiencing suffering, for it reminds us that God is on the side of those who suffer. It has often brought strength to individuals and communities suffering abuse and oppression. Jesus suffers with those who suffer, and through this becomes victorious over suffering. As Paul writes in Philippians 2, Jesus “*being found in human form, humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death... therefore God highly exalted him, and gave him the name that is above every name.*” For Paul, all come to worship Jesus, not because he won a victory through force, but because of his all-too-human death on a cross.

Another common set of ideas, sometimes called “substitutionary atonement” theories, emphasise that on the cross, Jesus suffered for our sins, taking our sins upon himself, and in this way enabling forgiveness. The ideas are associated with Anselm of Canterbury who lived in the 11th Century, and were also popular with Reformation theologians. Biblical roots are found in passages such as Isaiah 53, which describe a suffering servant “pierced for our transgressions... by his wounds we are healed”. Many Christians find this idea of the cross helps them understand that God is willing to offer himself to bring forgiveness and reconciliation.

“Substitutionary atonement” ideas are sometimes criticised, especially if they are drawn on to describe an angry God who punishes Jesus, or are unhelpfully muddled with images of how human rulers deal with crime and punishment. If used in this way, the ideas can jar with the Christian understanding that God is loving and kind.

Responding to these worries, theologian John Stott emphatically argues that “we must not... speak of God punishing Jesus... as if they [God the Father and Jesus] acted independently of each other”. In other words, God is not “punishing” anyone. Rather, in the cross, we understand that God *in Trinity* is choosing to take the pain of sin *upon himself*. (see John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 1986). As my former Minister once explained, the “price” was not literally “paid” by Jesus to anyone, but was instead the consequence of bringing about goodness.

Substitutionary ideas of the cross may be helpful if we are worried about mistakes we have made. They may help us understand that God is ready to give himself for our sake, assuring us of God’s love and readiness to forgive.

These are just two ideas of the cross, and there are others which I do not have space to write about here. It may seem confusing that there are different ways to understand the cross, but this is not a case of

“choose one or the other”. Instead, these different ideas with their strong Christian traditions can work together to make up a bigger, fuller picture.

And, at different times in our lives, one idea or another may be especially helpful. If we are suffering, the idea of “Christ Victorious” may be what God wishes us to hear. If we have made mistakes, the idea of substitutionary atonement may help us understand God’s commitment to us, and God’s radical forgiveness. Other “windows” onto the cross may offer us other insights and inspiration. I hope that whichever “window” we look through towards the cross, what we see most of all is God’s love for you, me, and everyone.

Rev Tim Aldred



MOTHERING SUNDAY

Mothering Sunday, we once again welcomed families and children. Posies were given out, which were prepared by a dedicated team of volunteers and our Duke of Edinburgh volunteers from our local school.

A big thank you to all the team who made the service such a success and so welcoming to our local families.



EASTER STORY SCHOOL VISIT 12TH MARCH 2026

We welcomed Hayes Primary School Year 5 pupils to experience the Easter Story, with their teachers and parent helpers. It is the third year we have been able to tell this wonderful story of all that Jesus has done for us.

We had a willing band of actors from our congregation and Kate from Spinnaker.

One comment was 'Well done to you and the team for another great Easter Experience. I really enjoy being involved, so thank you for including me.'

It certainly was a fun and interactive way of sharing the Christian message of Easter.



Rev Amanda

Photos by Sue Powell



Before writing my review for Mothers' Union I really feel that I must mention how much I, and indeed the congregation, enjoyed the Mothers' Day 10.30 service. It was lovely seeing the children absorbed by the telling of Moses and the bulrushes.

At our last meeting Rev Tim Aldred took a communion service and spoke to us. It is always inspiring when we take communion together, getting the sense of fellowship. Afterwards we spent time updating the 'children's bags' ready for Palm Sunday and Easter.

Our next meeting in the Meetings Room will be on **20th April** when Allan Evison will be telling us about his role in 'Anna Chaplaincy'. I am sure that many of you are curious as to why Allan wears an Anna Chaplaincy lanyard. This is your chance to find out, so we have opened our meeting to members of the congregation and others. All are welcome.

By the time you read this several of us will have attended a 'Lady Day' service at St Nicholas, Chislehurst. 25th March 2026 is the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord to the Blessed Virgin Mary commonly known as Lady Day.

The Rochester Diocese Spring Members Meeting and AGM is on Saturday, 25th April 2026 (9.30-2.30) at St Nicholas Church, Leamington Avenue, Orpington, BR6 9QB Please let Avril (0208 468 7785) know if you would like to go. The Hall will be open from 9:30am for refreshments before the meeting, which will start at 10:00am followed by the day's program. The day will end at 2:00pm. Members should bring a packed lunch and a re-useable cup with them.

Guest Speakers

Magali van der Merwe is the Lead Community Engagement and Social Action Advisor for the Diocese; she will be a speaker at the AGM. Magali will be talking on how we can be involved with the diocesan social action

projects, most particularly Modern Slavery. We will also have Comfort Idowu-Fearon, Provincial President address us. Please contact Avril Ashford if you would like to attend, or have any questions, by email: avrilashford@hotmail.com

The Diocese Trustees look forward to welcoming you to the meeting.

A letter from our Diocesan President Mary Margaret Yates

Lighting the way for generations to come is the theme of the events marking our 150 Anniversary. This means encouraging new members, activities and projects to be God's hands in the world.

You may remember in the last Triennium we set up a fund for new projects. I asked you for ideas of new projects to meet the needs in your parish and area, offering funding to start-up grants. At the time I thought perhaps branches would get involved with the Diocesan Warm Space projects. Those that did obviously did not need money for equipment because no one asked. Many children go hungry during the school holidays, when they do not get free meals, could your branch offer meals? Again, we can help with a start up grant. You may have another idea, don't keep it to yourself, share and find like-minded members who will join you. These can be across multiple branches, get Diocesan members to help you.

For Mother's Union to continue in the future we need to be active members, projects and positions in the leadership, locally and at Diocesan level, offer us opportunities to demonstrate our love of God, living our lives in His service.

Later this month we will be distributing a survey of gifts and how you can use them and how you can contribute to Mothers' Union. As Peter says in his 1st Epistle, chapter 4 verse 10 "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

What gifts has God given you and how can you use them to help grow the Kingdom of God?

Please come to the AGM and Spring Members' meeting. We have two guest speakers; Maglali van der Merve, Lead Community Engagement and social Action Advisor for the Diocese of Rochester will be speaking in the morning on how we can get involved with the Diocesan initiatives, especially Modern Slavery, and Comfort Idowu-Fearon, the Provincial President of the Diocese of Canterbury Province will speak in the afternoon. I am sure that both women will have much to say which we can get excited about.

No-one is expected to take on a mighty project but if we all work together, we shall succeed.

Mary Margaret Yates

If you are interested to find out more about Mothers' Union please contact me on **020 8468 7785**. Remember you are always welcome to join us.

Avril Ashford



**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS**

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on **Sunday 3 May** following the **10 am Morning Service** in the Church.

We are combining our 8am Communion and 10.30am Morning Worship in the expectation that as many as possible can be with us for this important part of our on-going Church administration.

We will be electing Churchwardens and new PCC members: Mary Stannard will be retiring. We are extremely grateful to Mary for her keen on-going service and input into our deliberations.

If you would like to stand for election, please indicate this to Reverend Amanda, Reverend Tim, Churchwarden Sue Powell or any member of the PCC. Please consider standing as an Assistant Churchwarden and also for PCC (there are 5 meetings of the PCC planned for the year – so not onerous and we really do need you!). There is a great need for members of our Church to volunteer for these roles – do not be daunted in offering your services in any way! These are exciting times for St Mary's and you can play your part and support the organisation and running of YOUR church.

So, make a note in your diary and do think about standing for election. The documents and papers will be available in early April.

**Mary Whytock
Secretary to the Parochial Church Council**

ST. MARY'S CHURCH DIARY APRIL 2026

Morning Prayers take place daily at 9.15am Monday to Wednesday on Zoom* and Monday to Friday in Church (10am on Saturday) throughout the year, except Bank Holidays.

Wednesday 1st	12.30-3.00pm 2.45pm	Warm Welcome Space** Hayes Men's Fellowship In OCS
Maundy Thursday		
Thursday 2nd	4.30pm	Holy Communion
Good Friday		
Friday 3rd	9.30am 10.30am 12.00-3.00pm	Walk of Witness from Hayes Village Hall Joint service at Hayes Free Church Meditations and Proclamation of the Cross
Easter Saturday		
Saturday 4th	11.00am 8.00-9.00pm	Easter Twinkles** Easter Vigil

EASTER SUNDAY

Sunday 5th	8.00am 10.30am	Holy Communion BCP Parish Communion CW Sunbeams session** (age 3-6)
Tuesday 7th	11.00am-12.15pm	Bible Study**
Wednesday 8th	12.30-3.00pm	Warm Welcome Space**
Thursday 9th	10.30am-12.30pm	Craft Group**
Saturday 11th	12.30pm	Churchyard Tidy Up

2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Sunday 12th	8.00am 10.30am	Holy Communion BCP Parish Communion CW Sunbeams session** (age 3-6)
Tuesday 14th	10.00-11.00am	Prayer Group

Wednesday 15th	12.30-3.00pm	Warm Welcome Space**
Friday 17th	10.00-11.00am	Twinkles – singing, story, snacks**

3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Sunday 19th	8.00am	Holy Communion BCP
	9.15am	Fresh Start
	10.30am	Morning Praise
Monday 20th	10.30am	Mothers' Union**
Tuesday 21st	11.00am-12.15pm	Bible Study**

Wednesday 22nd	12.30-3.00pm	Warm Welcome Space**
Thursday 23rd	10.30am-12.30pm	Craft Group**

4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Sunday 26th	8.00am	Holy Communion BCP
	10.30am	Parish Communion CW (Blaze Session – age 6-10)
Tuesday 28th	10.00-11.00am	Prayer Group

* for Zoom link please contact the Church office

** denotes Meetings Room

The church is also open for quiet space on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10.00am to 12.00noon unless there is an event taking place. Details of these will be given in the weekly pew sheets.



HAYES MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

April beckons with a full programme of activities with Spring fully under way getting more folk out and about.

We did not manage a walk in January because our usual walk leader was unavailable but, it is an excellent reflection of our members' participation, that three different members volunteered to lead walks in February, March and April. Thank you to each of them. This willingness to volunteer is part of the reason the Fellowship have been able to continue so successfully for over 60 years - and counting!



We begin our reports on recent activities with our outing to the BMW Mini Plant in Oxford. This site has been home to car production for over 100 years – indeed some parts of the Assembly Building are from that era but there was nothing old fashioned about the high tech production processes going on. The plant assembles vehicles from parts mainly made elsewhere (eg body panels from Swindon, or engines from Birmingham) which are delivered to the plant just in time and just in sequence for every vehicle (all pre-ordered). Apart from the paint shop, our members and guests were able to see each stage in the process. In one hall workers moved stacks of body panels to bays where robots pick them up and weld them together, eventually creating the “Body-in-White” – just bare metal. Then we went to a hall where robots deliver components for workers to fit to the painted body shells which travel on large jigs along the production line. And finally we saw the completed vehicles taken away for testing before delivery. Altogether a fascinating experience.

Next was our walk in the Greenwich Park area. Our group was blessed with a fine springlike day - light winds, bright, sunny and distinctly warmer. They started from Greenwich Station, calling in at St Alphege Church before stopping briefly at the Cutty Sark. The walk then took them through the Old Naval College, up over the Observatory Hill around to One Tree Hill before dropping down to the Plume of Feathers pub just before 1pm. Some well earned refreshments were enjoyed before they took the short way back to Greenwich Station. The walkers covered about 4 miles.

The last item for us to report on this month is our President's Afternoon – like a normal meeting but chaired by our President, Revd Amanda Spence, who by tradition provides us with a mystery speaker. The talk was intriguingly entitled “Hayes, and our part in the American Revolution or How a man's love of Hayes changed the History of the World” and our mystery speaker revealed to be Nick Goddard who is a long time Hayes resident, Hayes Village Association Committee Member and current editor of the Hayes Review. The connection to Hayes was through Hayes Place and the residence there of Pitt the Elder. He masterminded victory in The Seven Year's War from Hayes, with Hayes being described as “the nerve centre of the nation!”. He invited General Wolfe from Westerham to meetings at Hayes prior to Wolfe's successful campaign in Quebec. In his lifetime, he was a titan of British politics, known as “The Great Commoner””, and was the most influential politician of his time and married Hester Grenville, a remarkable woman whose husband, brother, son and nephew would all be Prime Minister. The talk was very well received by the members present and very much justified the choice of title!

If you are interested in joining HMF, our basic membership requirement is that you are a retired or semi-retired man of any faith or none with time to fill after the demands of employment and seek our convivial and welcoming company. You can obtain details of our activities on our website at www.hayesmensfellowship.org or for a friendly chat please use the contact details below, or the bargain offer is a free cup of tea and biscuit if you care to drop in to one of our meetings on the first Wednesday of most months! Our current annual subscription is £20.

We look forward to meeting you whenever, or every month here in these pages.

Allan Evison, Asst Secretary **Graham Marsden, Secretary**
Contact details: secretary@hayesmensfellowship.org
or phone 07764 153383

HELPING OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN MPWAPWA DIOCESE

Mpwapwa Diocese in Tanzania is a companion Diocese to Rochester and as a PCC we've recently been discussing how St Mary's might be able to support them in some way.



St Mary's initially got involved with Mpwapwa through ChildAid a few years ago. As part of that, in 2019 we decided to specifically support the young people at All Saints Cathedral, Mpwapwa, along with the 'Compassion International' project located in the cathedral grounds. The last contact was back in 2023 when a donation of £263 was sent via Rochester. This was used by Mpwapwa to buy footballs, stationery, and other treats for the children at the Cathedral and at the Compassion Project.

We've approached the link team based in Rochester Diocese to let them know we're keen to be involved again and as a result we now receive regular updates showing what's going on in Mpwapwa. In January the update explained that the area was experiencing a serious food crisis and included an appeal for help to feed the Pastors and their families. After discussing within the PCC we decided to donate £40 on behalf of St Mary's which was enough to provide 100Kg of maize to sustain a family until April when the next harvest is expected. We received a lovely thankyou email with pictures of some of the families receiving the supplies.

We've also invited the link team to come and share more details of Mpwapwa with us at a Sunday morning service sometime soon.

Stuart Spence

RIGHT PRIORITIES

It was a gamble and should not have succeeded. But it did. In January 1945, as the US forces had begun recapturing the Philippines, the military command were increasingly fearful about the likely fate of over 500 Allied POWs in the Cabanatuan camp. They decided to take action. The camp was still 30 miles behind enemy lines. So in a daring rescue mission (not surprisingly now recorded in movie and book), one hundred and twenty US Army Rangers together with local guerilla forces, managed to extract all the POWs. To succeed required stealth, urgency, meticulous planning and good fortune. Many of the prisoners had been so weakened by starvation and beatings that they had to be carried out. It is reported that one prisoner, being urgently guided to the front gate by a US Ranger, turned to his rescuer and insisted that he had to go back to gather up some papers to prove a fellow inmate had stolen his cat for food. He wanted him to be court martialled. The rescuer refused. 'But the man ate my cat!' said the now rescued prisoner. The US Ranger picked him up and carried him out.

Our priorities of the moment can dim perspective, and often the trivial can seem overwhelmingly important. And difficult to ignore, particularly when the passions of the moment cloud all else from view (and it may be that in this case mental and physical strain from a long period of oppression could have played a part).

During the period of Jesus's ministry in and around Galilee, in northern Israel, several delegations were sent from the religious establishment in Jerusalem to find out if He was the 'real deal', and whether they could work with Him. They decided very soon that Jesus presented too much of a threat. They needed to silence Him.

In the Gospel of Mark (chapter 7), the subject of one of our recent Bible studies, we read about one such delegation. Some Pharisees and religious scribes confronted Jesus, not directly at first but through what His disciples were doing. Or not doing. Now we need to bear in mind that in the previous chapters Mark has been describing for us the absolutely extraordinary things Jesus has been doing: showing unique wisdom and authority in His teaching, feeding over 5000 people from almost nothing, healing people of all sorts of illness and disability, and even suspending the laws of nature by walking on water. But their argument with Jesus is that...His disciples were not washing their hands before eating. In fact, this was not an issue of personal hygiene but a question about the disciples ignoring the traditions of the religious leaders, actually not a requirement set out in the commands of the Old Testament law but a traditional interpretation of their own.

Clearly their refusal to accept the evidence of their eyes, as Jesus said, fulfilled one of the prophecies of Isaiah (from several hundred years previously) about honouring God with their lips whilst their hearts were far from Him. But what appalled Jesus was not just their failure to rightly grasp God's priorities, proclaimed perfectly in the person and activities of Jesus; but also the blatant hypocrisy of using hand washing as a marker of their religious commitment whilst at the same time undermining God's plan for the family, for example making it possible to set aside the divine command to honour parents.

A constant theme in Mark is 'who is this man Jesus?', and the importance and urgency of deciding how we respond. At the crucial point (literally!) it is a pagan, a Roman centurion who at the foot of the cross declares Jesus to be the Son of God (Mark 14:39).

As we read the New Testament Gospels, we are constantly urged to think about what is most important to us. Jesus, the incarnated Son of God, came to the world to free us from our sins. The most important rescue mission in world history.

Everyone is warmly invited to join us in our Bible Study group. We are currently studying the Gospel of Mark. The central Bible Study meets first and third Tuesdays in the Church Meeting Room. 11am -12.15.

David James

HEARD BUT NOT SEEN!

A couple of weeks ago Peter Wickert was telling me about all the birds he had picked up on his Merlin Bird App. I too have this app and when we were in the churchyard a couple of weeks ago we stopped to tune into the app and were amazed at the birds that were singing around us.

However, when we got home and sat on the patio with a cup of tea, we tuned in again and the most amazing list came up within about 15 seconds and the Robin was not the first!

In order of "appearance":

A Red Poll, Red Wing, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Starling, Robin, Parakeet, Collared Dove, Wren, Great Finch, Jackdaw, Pigeon, Magpie and Greenfinch. We do have other birds that visit regularly who did not pop up this time. Our own personal Evensong.

It was difficult to identify each bird as it sang, although the app does highlight them, but so lovely to know they were all around us even

though most of them were hidden from sight, even with the aid of binoculars. (I had to look up what a Red Poll looks like as we cannot recall ever having identified one before.)

Such a joy though to know they were all there – like being a Christian – believing, but without seeing.

Yvonne Pickford



Greenfinch



Starling



Wren

RNLI HAYES (KENT) BRANCH

Greetings all and yes Hayes now has its own Branch. Thank you to all who visited our stand at Hayes Fair last year, and all being well we will be there this year. Also, many thanks to all who supported our coffee morning at St Mary's Church; both events raised almost £300 each.

Our next event is Monday 18th May 2026, a Flower Arranging Demo, title: "From my Collection" by the renowned arranger Graham Harmer, Florist NDSF, also Chelsea Gold Medal Winner. All arrangements will be raffled. Hayes Free Church, Pickhurst Lane, doors open 1.30pm. Tickets are £10, available with very kind permission/support from Richard Hodge of Motique Al Motor Stores, Station Approach, from Monday 20th April 2026.

After this event the next is Saturday 11th July 2026, an evening with the London Concert Chorus, details to follow. We are still looking for a Treasurer, so anyone available, and anyone else who would like to join us, please call the number below.

Regards

Jenny Peel, Chair
07484794144

MILLIONS FACE 'RELENTLESS STRUGGLE' TO MAKE ENDS MEET, GENERAL SYNOD HEARS

The General Synod has backed a call for the C of E to recommit to ending poverty.

General Synod members voted to mark the 40th anniversary of the publication of the landmark report *Faith in the City*, and its impact on Christian social action, including the work of the Church Urban Fund. Churches must listen to people who are living in poverty, the General Synod agreed, in their mission to witness to the love of God through service to their communities. The battle against poverty should include 'asking questions' about the causes as well as responding through services such as food banks, the Synod said.

Mark Sheard, from the Archbishops' Council, said that 40 years on from *Faith in the City*, poverty continues to hinder the health, wellbeing and life chances of millions of people.

"The awful truth is that there are 14 million people living in poverty in our nation, one in five of our population," he told the General Synod. "Each has their story, their own struggles, their own reason to feel hopeless and abandoned by society – and maybe even by God."

Faith in the City, published in 1985, was commissioned by the then Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie amid concerns about inner city decline and the 1981 riots in English cities. The report was a catalyst for Christian social action and led to the founding of Church Urban Fund.

The latest figures from the Church of England show that more than 31,300 social projects are run or supported by Church of England churches. These include nearly 8,000 food banks and more than 3,000 community cafes.

PP News April 2026

Photo on p.10 by Graham Marsden

Items for the May issue by 16th April please. Copy to the Editor.

May magazines will be ready for distribution on 26th April.

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