



St Mary  
Magdalen  
OXFORD

# **Parish Notes**

## **March 2026**

# **Our new Vicar to be installed on May 27th**

**The PCC is delighted to announce that our new Vicar, Father Jonathan Lewis-Jong, will be installed in church on May 27<sup>th</sup> at 6pm. Do join us for this solemn celebration if you can.**

## **Services**

### **Sundays**

Matins 10 am High Mass at 10.30 am

### **Weekdays**

Eucharist at 12.15 pm and 6.00 pm  
Morning Prayer 8.15 am, Evening Prayer  
5.40 pm

### **Confessions**

Daily after the 12.15 pm Mass,  
Wednesdays & Saturdays at 6.30 pm  
Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage by  
appointment with the Parish Priest

### **Parish Clergy**

We are in Interregnum just now,  
awaiting the appointment of our new  
Vicar on May 27<sup>th</sup> at 6pm

### **Associate Priest**

The Reverend Dr Mel Marshall  
Telephone: 01865 436243  
mthrmelanie@gmail.com

## **Administration**

### **Parish office**

Matthew Watts  
admin@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

Phone: 01865 246143

### **Website**

www.stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

## **X**

Parish: @marymagsoxford

Choir: @magschoir

### **Facebook**

stmarymagdalen.oxford

### **Safeguarding**

The PCC is committed to making St Mary Magdalen's a safe environment for everyone and two new Safeguarding Officers, Henry Jestico and Francesca Holloway have just been appointed. If you have any questions about safeguarding matters or wish to report a concern, please email:

[safeguardingsmmo@gmail.com](mailto:safeguardingsmmo@gmail.com)

### **Treasurer**

"Mary Mags Oxford costs £470 per day to run and is supported by your generous donations. We have to be self-funding. This means that we do not receive any funds other than the income we raise through planned giving, fundraising, etc.

We are constantly aware how the cost of living is affecting every one of us differently. We want you to know that we appreciate every penny you give and do not take your generosity for granted.

If you would like to discuss giving options, please contact the Treasurer, Oscar Riba-Thompson at [marymagstreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:marymagstreasurer@gmail.com)"

# Notices

## **Our Churchyard and Railings project – an update**

Three years ago our churchyards, which occupy a prominent position in the centre of Oxford, were plagued with all sorts of litter, ranging from vodka, wine and beer bottles to drug paraphernalia. A major litter blitz with regular follow-ups has much reduced the problem. Bulbs and perennials have been planted to enhance and extend the glorious display of flowers. The canopy of the big trees has been raised. The beautiful Ward monument was restored in July 2024, and other gravestones have been cleared of ivy and brambles. Major fundraising from individual donors, colleges and trusts (including the Oxford Historic Churches Trust and the Ironmongers' Company) has enabled the project to proceed.

The railings are of historical interest, as shown in a report by David and Genefer Clark written in 2020 for the Oxford Preservation Trust. The oldest sections date from the 1850s. The wrought iron railings are set in a sandstone plinth. Between the tall standards are dog bars with arrowheads, many of which are currently missing. Restoration will involve repair and, where necessary, replacement of standards, forging of around 200 dog bars to fill the empty spaces, and significant work at the very North of the churchyard where the stone plinth has been seriously damaged and split. The historic lamp posts at the northwest and southwest corners will be restored. Finally, all railings will be painted, not least to protect them from further damage from weather and wear.

Donkeywell Forge Ltd., based in Quenington, just outside Cirencester, have been commissioned to undertake this work. They began forge work in February, mainly forging replacement dog bars, and work on site started on March 9th. They are a small, independent, family-based forge, with a team of highly skilled Master Ironworkers, using traditional skills and materials. They will be working at St Mary Mags for about six to eight weeks, and we hope that restoration will be complete shortly after Easter.

Just now, the spring flowers in the churchyards are flourishing as never before. Summer flowers will follow. Soon the railings will be in better condition than they have been for decades. A key part of the city centre will look as it should do as we welcome visitors in large numbers to Oxford once more.

Ingrid Lunt and Hugo Brunner

*(Professor Ingrid and Sir Hugo have been pro-active leaders of this project since its inception, and both Churchwardens and the PCC would like to offer them our profound gratitude)*

## **Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

Our Annual Parochial Church Meeting will take place on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April after the High Mass. At this meeting, we shall elect our churchwardens for the coming year, and several representatives to the Parochial Church Council. This year we shall also elect three representatives to the Deanery Synod. The parish's accounts for 2025 will be presented by the Treasurer, and reports on various bodies and activities will be provided. It is also an opportunity for us to come together as a congregation, to reflect on the year past, and look forward to welcoming and working with a new vicar. Please make a note of it in your diary and join us if you can.

## **Electoral Roll revision**

The Electoral Roll of the parish is a register of all lay members of the parish church who are entitled to vote at the APCM. We will be updating it in advance of the meeting – if you would like to be added to it, please pick up and fill in an enrolment form (available at the back of the church by the north door), or email [admin@stmarymagdalenoxford.org](mailto:admin@stmarymagdalenoxford.org) to request one.

## **Deanery Synod representatives**

Every diocese is divided into smaller groups of parishes, known as deaneries, and each deanery has a synod, the members of which meet periodically to hear about and discuss mission and ministry in the area, and to determine the parish share allocation. Each parish within the deanery is entitled to elect a certain number of lay representatives to attend the synod (who are also ex officio members of their own parish church council). Being a Deanery Synod representative is an excellent way of gaining a wider perspective on the Anglican church in the city of Oxford, and as a whole – if you would be interested in taking on this role, please speak to one of the Churchwardens.

## Events

### Concerts

Two old friends return this month. The superb Chamber Choir **Antiphon** are in church on Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at 7pm with **“Love Bade Me Welcome”**, a romantic collection by various composers, including Rachmaninov, Victoria, Handl and Walton.

Then near the beginning of Holy Week on Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup> at 7.30 you can enjoy a World Premier by Liz Dilnot Johnson sung by **Papagena: “Passia”** which is The Passion retold through women’s voices.

### Tallis in Wonderland

Exciting news about the next fundraiser led by our musicians. Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April is the date. Ten hours of Tallis in a single day! If you want to make a donation online please follow this link

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/tallisinwonderland>

### Sunday readings

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March: Gen 12: 1-4a. 2 Timothy 1: 8b-10. Matt 17: 1-9

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March: Exod 17: 3-7. Rom 5: 1-2 & 5-8. John 4: 5-42

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March: 1 Sam 16: 1b & 6-7. Eph 5: 8-14. John 9: 1-41

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March: Ezek 37: 12-14. Rom 8: 8-11. John 11: 1-45

Palm Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March: Isaiah 50: 4-7. Phil 2: 6-11. Matt 26: 14-27: 66

### Intercessions

*Please pray for the long-term sick and those in special need, among them: Beryl Dryden, Joyce Day, Susannah, Vernon Porter, Sophie Brown. Eleanor Sartain, Guy Westwood, Jill Maton, Fr. Barry Hammett and Fr. Ian Michael.*

**If you would like any name added to this list (or removed from it, post recovery) ask [admin@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk](mailto:admin@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk). Please note that unless we are advised that the illness could be protracted, names may be taken off after three months.**

## Our Mary Mags

Every month we highlight a feature of the Church (**Our Mary Mags**) or invite members of the community to describe how and why they hooked up with it (**My Mary Mags**). This month, our Churchwarden Charl Engela continues his fascinating tour of our wonderful windows:

### The West Window: a Romantic Vision of Our Beginnings



Visitors entering St Mary Magdalen often pause at the great west window, not because it overwhelms with colour or scale, but because it quietly invites attention. Its softer tones and narrative clarity distinguish it from the more emphatic Victorian glass elsewhere in the church, and its story repays a closer look.

The window was given to the parish in 1897 by the Revd S. R. Wigram and designed and painted by his wife, Elizabeth. Although neither had a long personal association with St Mary Magdalen, both were deeply engaged with Oxford's mediaeval past. Wigram had returned to the university in later life as a historian and editor of the St Frideswide cartulary, and the window

reflects a shared fascination with the city's early religious foundations rather than a narrow concern with parish history alone.

Elizabeth Wigram's artistry is notable for its restraint. The colours are lighter and more translucent than those of the earlier east-end windows, allowing the scenes to read clearly while filling the west end with a calm, reflective light. What she presents is not a strict chronology but a coherent vision of origins: how church, city, and monarchy were imagined to have come together.

On the left, King Richard I is shown receiving the sacrament from St Hugh of Lincoln. The pairing is symbolic as much as historical, linking royal authority with pastoral holiness and reminding the viewer that St Hugh was remembered locally as founder of the church. In the upper centre, St Frideswide stands as a figure of continuity, representing the monastic heart of medieval Oxford and the priory that once occupied the site of today's cathedral.

The remaining scenes focus on Robert d'Oilli, the Norman knight who built Oxford Castle. Here the window gently simplifies history, showing St Mary Magdalen being transferred smoothly from monastic to parochial oversight and attached to the castle chapel of St George. In reality, such transitions were rarely so orderly, but the visual logic is deliberate: the window offers an intelligible story rather than an argumentative one.

At the base, heraldry replaces narrative. The seal of Oseney Abbey appears alongside the crescent and star associated with Richard I's crusading device, while the arms of the Wigram and Clayton families quietly anchor the medieval story in the nineteenth-century parish that commissioned it. Horace Evelyn Clayton, vicar from 1884 to 1916, was instrumental in shaping the church at this period, and his presence here acknowledges that heritage is always interpreted by those who receive it.

The window therefore asks an implicit question: does it matter if it shows what ought to have happened rather than what strictly did? Perhaps not. Its purpose is not correction but orientation — to place St Mary Magdalen within a remembered landscape of faith, learning, and civic life. In doing so, it reminds us that every generation receives the past not as a fixed record, but as a story entrusted to its care.

*Based on the account in **Alan Palmer, St Mary Magdalen Oxford: a thousand years of a church and parish (privately published, 2001).***

## **Sermons**

Parish Notes now contains two sermons delivered in the previous month. Herewith the final sermon delivered here by +Steven Croft before he retires as The Bishop of Oxford, then Fr. Martin Henig's Ash Wednesday sermon. Our thanks to them.

*Preached on February 15<sup>th</sup>, the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, by Bishop Steven:*

It's very good to be with you today part way through the vacancy. Thank you to Mother Mel, to the Wardens and all who are sustaining the life of this parish through these months. Thank you for all your prayers for the appointment process. Prayers will continue as you prepare to welcome Father Jonathan and his family in a few months time.

Everything about the story of the transfiguration leads to one simple, powerful, life changing conclusion. If only we could hear these words afresh today our whole lives would be transformed. Our whole world would be changed. These are words which make a difference. Everything leads up to them.

There is the long journey through northern Galilee to the mountain. Six days from Caesarea Philippi on the coast where Simon Peter made his majestic declaration: You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. We are not told which mountain. Perhaps it was Carmel, where Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal.

Then there is the calling of Peter, James and John and the long climb into the hills. Jesus is transfigured before them. This moment is so different, so unusual, that we have a unique word in English which is used in no other context. It means changed, transformed, but still the same. A curtain is drawn back.

The face of Jesus shone like the sun, his clothes became dazzling white. Moses and Elijah appear. Moses and Elijah confirm that Jesus is part of the long story of salvation and the culmination of that story. They confirm Jesus's continuity with the Scriptures, with the law and the prophets and, as we will see, the writings.

There is the offer from Peter to make three dwellings, to capture the moment. To provide, to serve in this place, to remain here. A bright cloud overshadows them. Light is surrounded by light. From the cloud, in the midst of the cloud they hear an audible voice.

This is the second time in Jesus' ministry in the gospel this voice has spoken. The words are almost exactly the same as at the baptism of Jesus by John in the Jordan. Almost. "This is my son, the beloved; with him I am well pleased". The Father speaks words of love to the Son, affirming his identity, quoting Psalm 110, the writings, the oracle to the anointed king: You are my Son, today I have begotten you.

And then we come to the words which make today can make a difference to our lives, to our church, to our nation, to the whole world. Two words in Greek. Three words in English.

"This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him."

Listen to him. These are the words I want you to hear today as we stand on the threshold of Lent, this wonderful season. Listen to him.

All of our faith, our journeying with God, is centred on listening, on attending to the life-giving words God would speak deep within our lives. Each day these disciples would hear and confess the most solemn words of their faith which begin with the call to listen: Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. Again and again in the Law, the Prophets and the writings comes the invitation to listen, to be still, to hear God's call and to follow – the Hebrew word to listen carries also the meaning of obey.

Human life is transformed by the simple act of listening. Marriages, friendships, families, churches can be changed by listening, by growing big ears. We are changed when we truly listen to another, when we listen to the cries of the world. How much more are our lives transformed when we listen to Jesus, the culmination of this story. Our humanity is restored through perspective, through proportionality, through value, through depth.

But we know that of all the generations which have come before us, we find listening the most difficult. We are surrounded by noise, burdened by distraction, tempted continually by trivia, immersed in darkness and shadow. It is hard to find a moment to be still, to attend, to listen for the murmur of a gentle whisper which is able to set us free. We cover over the longing of our hearts, the unease which tells us that deep is calling to deep.

So may I invite you on the threshold of Lent, simply to spend some time to respond to the lesson of the transfiguration: to listen to him. It takes time to listen, to come apart: six days in this story. When we reach the mountain, like Elijah, we find that God is not speaking in earthquake, wind or fire. God's voice

cannot be heard above the clamour of social media or in the streets of the city or the endless scrolling.

To find our life again we need to listen to Jesus: to his life as well as his words. To read the gospels. To enjoy quiet time. To have time in our prayers to listen. To draw near in the Mass. To listen in the general and in the specific. To bring our questions and our anger. For deep to call to deep. Listen to him.

It's likely that, like the saints before us, the words we hear will be the simplest words. We are likely to hear how much we are loved. We will hear the words often as the disciples do hear: Do not be afraid. We will hear the call to rise up.

2 Peter calls these words, spoken deep in our hearts, to a lamp shining deep in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts: a word to keep us going in the midst of the winter until the spring is heard.

Listen to him. Three words to change the world; to change the church; to transfigure our own lives; to help us know and share his glory. Listen to him.

Amen.

*Preached on Ash Wednesday by Father Martin Henig:*

*And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him [Mark 1:13]*

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lent is a season of lengthening days, the onset of spring. It is certainly a thoughtful season, but certainly not a gloomy season. The imposition of ashes, both reminds us of our mortality, something we already knew, but also of the cycle of Nature. And that can lead us to the creation, and to Christ who at the beginning of his ministry spent forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, according to Mark, with the wild animals. That might remind us that in the second creation myth in Genesis, Adam was in Eden with the animals and gave them their names. While Mark simply says Jesus was tempted by Satan, the accuser, in the wilderness, Matthew presents Satan challenging Jesus to show his power and even promises him all the kingdoms of the world if only he worships this adversary, temptations that Jesus resists. In Lent we can see ourselves in this same wilderness confronting the temptations, the murkiness in our own lives.

Jesus emerges from the wilderness to find disciples and to embark on a ministry of teaching mainly in his native Galilee often by means of graphic parables, healing and miracles, a period of no more than a couple of years, before making his way to Jerusalem, which is to be the culmination of all that he has done before. In Lent we follow that journey which we see as following a path to bring salvation to Israel, to mankind and to all creation and which we, in the light of the well-known gospel narratives, know will lead to Passiontide and the Cross. Indeed, Jesus seems to know this in our various narratives, and is tempted not least by Peter who takes the same position as Satan in the wilderness to deflect him.

Seen in human terms, Jesus' life was very short, as I remember every time I ring the bell thirty three times before services in my little church of St Margaret's in the fields of Binsey. Yet we believe Jesus' life was the ideal life, a fulfilled life of positive action, of contemplation, and of heavenly wisdom. It challenges us to use our time on earth productively, whether it is no longer or even shorter than Jesus or three score years and ten or even fourscore years, and some of us are living on borrowed time!

Oxford is a world-renowned university city and many of us in the congregation teach or study here. Christopher Marlowe's morality play *Dr Faustus* written c 1588/90 presents a leading academic of Württemberg, the premier university in Germany, a renowned doctor who seems to have mastered all the major studies of his day, Philosophy, Medicine and Divinity who, in a fit of *accidie*, turns to magic, sells his soul to the devil for twenty four years of living 'in all voluptuousness'. The central scenes of the play show him living a life of complete banality which all too soon ends in the great final scene of Faustus' terrifying last hour when it is too late to call on Christ, to avert his inevitable fate. Of course this is literary conceit...but what is so striking in Marlowe's play is the very ordinariness, the very pettiness, the very triviality of Faustus' actions all of which, as they are in defiance of God, are sins. He has squandered a respected career for a life of triviality. In the more historical context of Shakespeare's *Richard II* who, after his fall and just before he is murdered, self-pityingly proclaims: 'I wasted time, and now doth time waste me'. (Act V, Scene 5), Faustus in his brief life on earth has wasted his talents and now awaits judgement and damnation.

The playgoer or the reader of these plays is in a God like position, and accepts these judgements as fair and reasonable, but does not necessarily apply them to his or her own life. The sins of triviality of wasting time are our sins. We exist in a world of short cuts. Computers with their AI facility, shorten our attention spans and encourage us to skim over difficulties in our daily existence but is that living? It is the task of the priest, the deacon, in fact of every citizen to renounce evil and for the most part we see this in major acts of wickedness, from the abuse and bullying in our own society to the acts of evil dictators abroad. When I so preach I hope it defines where I think a reasonable Christian should stand and I rather think all the time that I am preaching to people who more or less see life in the same sort of way, so I give encouragement and we can all feel good as we drink coffee or something stronger.

But Ash Wednesday and the entire season of Lent asks us to dig deeper into our own souls for a necessary spring-cleaning. Have we, like Faustus, like *Richard II* wasted time through frivolity? Have we too neglected to employ our talents to the best of our abilities to make life better for others, and for the world? We may not have committed any major sins, but what about sins of omission? An older fifteenth-century morality play, *The Somonyng of Everyman*, presents Everyman confronted by Death and future judgement having to find a sponsor to speak for him. Fellowship, Kinship and Cousin refuse and so ultimately do Beauty and Strength. Following Confession and Penance, only Good Deeds will accompany him to judgement and ultimate salvation.

*'Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide, In thy most need to go by thy side'*

As we spend this month, joyfully, perhaps by giving up all or most of our online time remembering Kafka's pronouncement that 'Films are iron shutters' in order

to free ourselves to rejoice in the Natural World. There are real wild daffodils in our churchyard. For Christ's sake do not mope. Go bird watching, do something good for the other creatures with whom we share our planet, restore habitats. That is much more productive than some of the ridiculous penances people indulge in like giving up wine or chocolates which feed depressed feelings if you fail and breed a false feeling of pride and false virtue if you succeed. Remember at all times that walking with Our Lord is not a gloomy route march which ends death on the cross but rather, I suggest, a pilgrimage of love, a pilgrimage that will end with destroying death in any meaningful sense and, through faith, brings the gift of everlasting life to each one of us and to all creation. Remember the end of the story and get real!

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,  
[beset by] these rebel powers that thee array,  
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,  
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?  
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,  
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,  
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?  
Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss  
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;  
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;  
Within be fed, without be rich no more.  
So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,  
And, Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

[Shakespeare, Sonnet 146]

+ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Poem of the Month** (which has already examined the above sonnet quoted by Father Martin) will return in April.

### **Easter Services**

**Maunday Thursday April 2<sup>nd</sup> 7.30pm**

**Good Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> Readings 12pm**

**Good Friday High Mass of the Lord's Passion 3pm**

**The Easter Vigil 7.30 Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup>**

**High Mass, Easter Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>**

## March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent</b>	<b>2 Feria</b>	<b>3 Feria</b>	<b>4 Feria</b>	<b>5 Feria</b>	<b>6 Feria</b>	<b>7 Perpetua and Felicity Ms</b>
Parish Community	Steven our Bishop	The PCC	Sarah our Archbishop	Penitence	Oxford City Council	The persecuted church
<b>8 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent</b>	<b>9 Feria</b>	<b>10 Feria</b>	<b>11 Feria</b>	<b>12 Feria</b>	<b>13 Feria</b>	<b>14 Feria</b>
Parish community	Parish clergy	Aid workers	Refugees	Healing ministry Anointing 12.15	Schools	Students
<b>15 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent</b>	<b>16 Feria</b>	<b>17 Patrick B</b>	<b>18 Feria</b>	<b>19 Joseph, Husband of the BVM</b>	<b>20 Cuthbert B</b>	<b>21 Feria</b>
Parish community	The homeless	Ireland	Teachers	Family life	Pilgrims	Missionary work
<b>22 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent</b>	<b>23 Feria</b>	<b>24 Feria</b>	<b>25 Annunciation of the Lord</b>	<b>26 Feria</b>	<b>27 Feria</b>	<b>28 Feria</b>
Parish Community	Emergency services	Vocations	Thanksgiving for the Incarnation	Choir and Musicians	The faithful departed (Monthly requiem)	Peace in the Holy Land
<b>29 Palm Sunday</b>	<b>30 Monday in Holy Week</b>	<b>31 Tuesday in Holy Week</b>				
Parish Community	Preachers	Confessors				