



Tacket Street, Ipswich, IP4 1AU



COMMENT
FEBRUARY 2026

THE MINISTER WRITES ...



Dear All,

I'd like to share some thoughtful words written by one of my favourite writers, progressive New Testament Theologian Marcus J. Borg in his book *'The God we never knew'*:

"God wills our liberation, our exodus from Egypt. God wills our reconciliation, our return from exile. God wills our enlightenment, our seeing... In short, God wills our salvation, our healing, here on earth. The Christian life is about participating in the salvation of God."

For me, this is a fitting thought that is worthy of reflection as we move into the season of Lent during February. This quote invites us to reclaim salvation not as an escape from the world, but as God's ongoing work within it. The story of faith begins not with abstraction, but with people freed from chains, led out of Egypt and communities restored from exile. We grasp that God's will is liberation – historically and right now, today, and in concrete, real ways, and in ways that are both communal and deeply personal. We understand that salvation is not postponed to another life; it unfolds here and now, "in the fragile soil of our shared humanity".

During Lent, we are invited to see more clearly: to notice where we are complicit in bondage, where others remain oppressed, and where God is already stirring freedom. Repentance, then, is not self-loathing but reorientation—turning again toward justice, mercy, and healing. Enlightenment is learning to see our neighbours as beloved, and ourselves as participants in God's reconciling love.

To live the Christian life is to join this movement of salvation: to walk alongside those seeking freedom, to bring healing where there has been harm, and to trust that God's work of restoration is wider than we could ever imagine. Lent calls us not to withdrawal, but to deeper participation in the saving work of love for all people and indeed, for the whole of creation.

With much love,

Neil

A blessing for Lent:

Now may God, who gives seed to the sower and grain to the reaper, provide all that we need so that we may produce a rich harvest of faith, freedom, love, justice and joy for the good of the earth and its people, and to the glory of God. Amen.

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TSBBOB ASSOCIATION CHRISTMAS FAYRE 2025

As a result of our efforts, we raised a total of £630. Thank you to Church members who supported us and provided items for sale.

The amount raised has been split 50/50 between Church funds and TWAM, for which a letter of thanks has been received and is displayed on BBOB notice board in Church Hall.

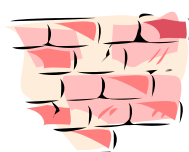


I have had several offers of items for TWAM. If church members have any to donate please place them at back of church or else I can collect.

Ron Baker

OVER THE GARDEN WALL

... from our neighbours at St Pancras



Dear friends

Happy New Year to you all. Some of you will have heard that Fr Joseph has been unwell, effectively since New Year. Other priests said Mass on the Feast of the Epiphany and on each Sunday, but otherwise there have been no services since 2nd January. It must be a long, long time since there was so little worship at St Pancras over such a long period. We are hoping that by the time you read this, things will have returned to normal, and that Fr Joseph will have recovered and will take great care of himself.

This year is special for our diocese. It is 50 years since it was formed by dividing the huge diocese of Northampton in two, including more than 50 parishes in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire in the new diocese of East Anglia. On 13th March 1976 Rt Rev Alan Clark was established as first bishop of E Anglia. What had been the large parish church of St John's, Norwich was consecrated as the new cathedral in June 1976, so the major celebration will be in June this year. Hopefully in due course we shall hear what sort of celebrations will take place. Incidentally, I became a member of St Mary's parish in 1977, just a year after the diocese was founded.

As I write, we are in the middle of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. I'm sure you are celebrating that at Christchurch. I was not in Ipswich last Sunday and cannot find online any reference to it in our local churches, but Pope Leo met with an ecumenical delegation from Finland and praised the long-standing cooperation between Lutheran, Orthodox and Catholic Churches there. He recalled that the week dates back two centuries and, exactly 100 years ago, was enriched for the first time by the Suggestions for the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity. He recalled this year's theme: There is one Body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling (Eph. 4:4). The prayer and reflection this year were prepared by an ecumenical group coordinated by the Armenian Apostolic Church. Pope Leo invited all Catholic communities 'to intensify their prayer during these days for the full, visible unity of all Christians.' This call to communion is accompanying

reflections throughout the week and will conclude with Vespers on 25th January, the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul.

In the midst of a world troubled in so many ways, let us all join in praying for the full, visible unity of all Christians. What a wonderful witness to the world a United Christian voice would be.

Your Catholic friend

Jean



Forum carries on as usual in spite of rain and dark winter weather, which means some guests are unable to attend. Those of us who have made it have been treated to wonderful talks and food, as always.

We started with the star of the show being a 'hearing' dog helping deaf people get out and about. The next week we were able to shrug off the cold and damp with chair exercises thanks to Julie Stokes from Activlives. This is one of the many services the charity offers to improve the lives and health of local people. The next speaker had to cancel because of ill health

but Rob King stepped in at short notice and told us about his career in the Suffolk County Architect's Office. We'll look at the many schools and public buildings he has been involved in designing with a new perspective now and we're very grateful for Rob's fascinating and modest talk. On 29th January we heard about what a mayor does, from the deputy mayor of Ipswich, Pat Bruce-Browne (she has attended Forum before as the leader of the Reggae group last year)

For the future I can recommend to you:

What was everyday Tudor life like? (Phil Roberts will guide us)

What does the current libraries service look like (it's been restructured recently)?

Can you develop the 'art of slow looking' when studying paintings? Viola Jones will lead us again. If you couldn't make it last time, it is a treat not to be missed.

What does the Fishermen's Mission do – we ought to know, as a maritime county. Andy Malcolm, the fundraising manager of the East of England branch will help us this week.

And if none of this excites you, just come for the food, friendship, and warmth.

ECO CHURCH – CREATION CARE

As Storm Goretti barely affected us here in Suffolk, it is easy to forget that, in Cornwall in particular, there is still much to do to clear up the aftermath. On St Michael's Mount, a place many of us will have visited, 80% of trees were uprooted and similar damage was caused throughout the county. It is well established that severe weather events such as this are to be expected in our warming climate and sadly the damage they cause further depletes the environment. A significant loss of trees, for example, results in loss of habitat and therefore biodiversity as well as the capacity of those trees to capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The last three years were the world's warmest ever recorded, bringing the planet closer to breaching international climate targets. The global average temperature in 2025 was more than 1.4C above "pre-industrial" levels of the late 1800s. 1.4C may not sound much but this is an average and therefore masks the greater extremes of temperature that many places are experiencing.

Meanwhile, in the face of the geo-political turmoil in the world at present, climate matters seem to have slipped down the agendas of world leaders. However, this definitely does not mean that we should lose heart - thankfully, there are many examples of progress, innovation and real stories of people restoring our planet.

Here are just a few good-news examples. Green sea turtles have officially been reclassified from “endangered” to “least concern” thanks to decades of marine conservation. This year, for the first time on record, renewable energies combined generated more power than coal. A new study from the University of Surrey named solar energy the cheapest source of power, outranking coal and gas as well as other renewables. Aerial photos are revealing a huge and rapid spread of wind and solar projects in China. On a smaller scale, many residents in central Athens are looking after beehives on the rooftops of their apartment buildings and, more locally, at the Martlesham Wilds Nature Reserve the Suffolk Wildlife Trust are working successfully to restore habitats to allow nature to recover and re-establish.

Yes, we need commitment and action by the big and powerful, but many small, local actions can also produce very meaningful change. We can all be a part of that.

Eco-Tip for February

Can you manage a whole month without using cling film? It is produced, using vast amounts of energy, from petroleum and natural gas and does not break down after use, creating dangerous micro-plastics. Cover food instead with a plate or clean tea-towel or store in an air-tight Tupperware type box. (Clingfilm can be useful in a medical emergency for burns and scalds so it is handy to have some nearby but put it to the back of the cupboard!)

PRAYERS FOR FEBRUARY

1st February

Today we think about the work of Leprosy Mission and give thanks for all the dedicated people who work to improve lives and outcomes for those affected by this devastating disease. We think of all those suffering from and impacted by leprosy and pray that our giving will allow many more to be helped and healed.

8th February

With the start of the Winter Olympics, we give thanks for the beauty of winter and the opportunity to witness these athletic feats. May they be played with courage, respect for others, never rejoicing in another's adversity. May the games inspire us to world peace and harmony, reminding us of our shared humanity.

15th February

With Shrove Tuesday on its way we thank you for the food we eat, the work of those who grow and provide it and our access to facilities to store and cook it. When times are hard, may we show kindness and compassion to those in need. We give thanks for the work of FIND and all those who provide food and shelter.

22nd February

In this first week of Lent, help us reflect on how we are marking this season. Whether we are giving something up, starting to do something new or simply taking time to focus on your journey and sacrifice, be with us and help us come to a better understanding of you, our God.

DIARY DATES FOR FEBRUARY

Emmaus Groups

Mondays at 10.30am in the Lounge

2nd & 4th Wednesdays at 7.30pm

1st & 3rd Thursdays at 10.30am in the Lounge

Thursday 5th February Deacons' Meeting (7.30pm)

Friday 6th February Church Life (7.30pm)

Sunday 15th February Church Meeting (12.30pm)

DATES FOR 2026

All dates are subject to change

Church Meetings 15th Feb, 26th Apr, 28th June, 4th Oct,
22nd Nov (with AGM)

Deacons' Meetings 5th Feb, 12th Mar, 16th Apr, 14th May, 11th June, 9th July (emergencies only), 10th Sept,
15th Oct, 12th Nov, 10th Dec (emergencies only)

Youth Parades 17th May, 11th Oct (Harvest), 13th Dec (Gift Service)

SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY

All Services will be led by our Minister, Revd Neil Coulson unless otherwise stated.

Sunday 1st February

10.45am Leprosy Sunday All-age Worship with Holy Communion led by Matthew Henderson from The Leprosy Mission.

This service will be followed by a Church Family Lunch to raise money for The Leprosy Mission.

Sunday 8th February

10.45am Family Worship

Sunday 15th February

10.45am Family Worship followed by the Church Meeting.

Please bring a packed lunch to eat before the meeting, which will start no later than 12.30pm

Sunday 22nd February

10.45am Family Worship led by The Very Reverend Keith Jones
Keith is the Dean Emeritus of York Minister

Sunday 1st March

10.45am Family Worship with Holy Communion
