

*St Nicholas, Marston and St Thomas of Canterbury, Elsfield*  
**MARSTON & ELSFIELD MESSENGER**  
*February 2021 ~ a church newsletter during the pandemic*

It's February: many of us are tired and a lot of us are fed up. There isn't a huge amount left in the tank and we may feel pretty disenchanted with the way things are. COVID - and everything that goes with it - continues to cast a real shadow, to cause real strain, sadness, illness, loneliness and death. It's really hard. Of course, we have good things to look forward to. There is light at the end of the tunnel, even if the tunnel might prove to be rather long. We have passed the shortest day of the year and we will have noticed the longer, brighter days already. I've even seen a couple of shoots in my garden, peeking out of the grass and soil. It is a comfort to me, and perhaps to you, to know that the seasons roll on and the season of physical darkness is waning.



What have comforted me most in recent weeks, though, are the kindnesses of other people, in which I see the love of God breaking out, sometimes where I would hope to see it, sometimes in very unexpected places. An unexpected bunch of flowers; a phone call from an old friend; an email from a colleague; someone who anonymously provided food and money for individuals and families in need over Christmas. The donations to the FoodBank that are left by our SESI refill station (outside the Vicarage) and in other places across the Parish each week (see below for where to find them).

Jesus talks a lot about little things making a big difference. He talks about the widow's mite – a tiny financial contribution given with a big heart. He talks about a tiny bit of yeast raising a whole basin full of flour. He talks about a mustard seed of faith growing into a great tree. He talks

about someone who offers a little one a cup of water being rewarded in heaven.

In this lockdown, we may feel helpless or useless, but we can all do little things which bring light, encouragement and comfort to others. When you go out to buy necessities, make a point of thanking the person who serves you at the till. If you live on your own, perhaps you could call a friend and hear their news. If you live with someone else, perhaps you could be the one to put the bins out. If you have a neighbour who is homeschooling their children, could you offer to pick up something for them at the shops so they don't have to drag the whole family around Sainsbury's?

All of you, I am sure, will carry memories of small acts of kindness which have made a big difference to you. It's not rocket-science: kindness really works. It transforms people's lives.

I pray that each and every one of you will experience the blessing of giving and receiving unexpected small kindnesses in the coming weeks. Stay strong ... the tunnel will come to an end and there will be light.

Rev Skye

*Lord Jesus, be near to us and comfort us in this difficult time, but help us also to listen and respond when you call us to small acts of kindness; give us sight to observe the needs of those around us even as we ourselves need our community and our faith to pull through. We pray for strength to reach the end of the tunnel. Amen*

We currently have two collection points for delivery to St Francis and/or Rose Hill Food banks. One is at Marston Vicarage behind the garage (although you can drop it off at St Nicholas Church if that is easier; both have the same postcode: OX3 0PR) and the other is with Allan and Judy at 81 Crotch Crescent

Rev Skye - 202988 or joskso@yahoo.co.uk

Alison Edwards – 580354 or administrator@stnicholasmarston.org.uk

Website – stnicholasmarston.org.uk

Facebook – marston@stnicholasmarston

### Our Easter Trail

As a follow up to our much-enjoyed living Advent Calendar, next we shall be creating an Easter Trail. Those who would like to take part are asked to decorate either a tree, hedge, bush, front door, gate or pot in front of their house with an Easter theme (eg eggs, rabbits, flowers, bonnets or even a cross!) They will be revealed on Easter Sunday morning and kept there for the following week (Easter week). There won't be a ceremony but your decoration will be available to be seen from Easter Sunday.

Participating decorators will also be given a letter of the alphabet by Judith who will create a map so that people can follow the Easter Trail and make a note of each letter that they find; together these letters will make up an Easter Statement. There will be a prize if you get the statement correct (and the answer will be available on your return).

If you would like to have a letter and take part in the Easter Trail, please contact Judith (764693).

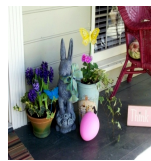
### The Easter Tree

The trail will begin and end outside St Nicholas Church by the big tree at the entrance. We would like to hang lots of knitted, crocheted, Hama beads or painted Easter eggs on this tree (anything as long as egg-shaped and sized and they have a handmade element).

We would also love as many Easter eggs in the tree as possible. If you would like to help, we can supply knitting and crochet patterns. Contact Judith if you would like one of these; otherwise we trust your creativity.

Let's create a splash of colour for Easter!

Some ideas for Easter decoration....



# FREE LENT RESOURCES



## BENEFICE OF MARSTON & ELSFIELD



**The new  
Worship at  
Home Booklet  
for Lent to  
Easter.  
Filled with  
Prayers and  
liturgy for  
church  
services.**



**A Free resource.**

**An opportunity to journey through  
Lent as an individual, family or  
support bubble. Within the bag you  
will find symbols of the Lenten  
Journey.**

**Both Available to collect from St Nicholas  
Church (OX3 OPR) & the Vicarage from the  
5th Feb & St Thomas in Elsfeld (OX3 9UH)  
from the 17th February**



As we head down this rather long tunnel lots of us are reflecting on our faith or asking deep questions about faith at this time. *Come and See* is an invitation to everyone and anyone who feels adrift in this pandemic, whether or not they know anything about the Christian faith.

As a Benefice we will be offering an online course on Friday evenings, for five weeks during Lent. (19th Feb - 19th Mar ) There is no obligation at the end of it and no expectation to attend every week but it is there for you. If you would like to know more please do look at the Diocesan website and our Benefice one, or you can email me [vicar@stnicholasmarston.org.uk](mailto:vicar@stnicholasmarston.org.uk).

If you are interested but don't have online access, then do contact me - for a weekly handout sheet and a mentor to work with you for support.

Also don't forget as a Benefice we have a prayer list which is prayed through daily. Do let us know your prayer requests.

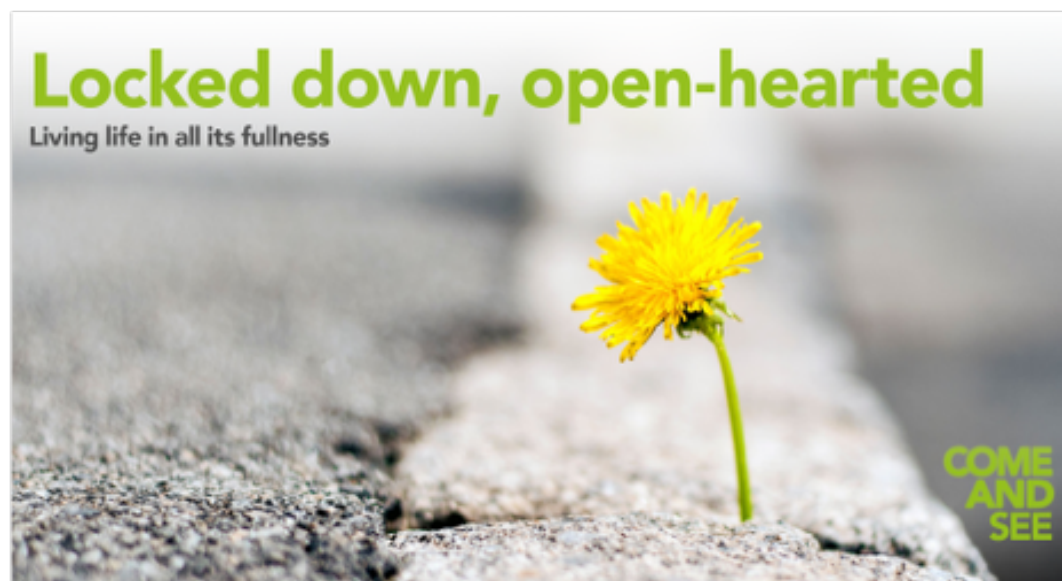
We are here for you.

Rev Skye x


Tel: (01865 202988)

[Diocesan website - oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see](http://oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see)

[Benefice website - stnicholasmarston.org.uk](http://stnicholasmarston.org.uk)




Benefice of Marston & Elsfield



*Ash Wednesday*

Online Service  
Wednesday February 17th available from 8am from YouTube - St Nicholas Church, Marston

At Home Resources



Please pick up these free resources from St Nicholas church, OX3 0PR

*All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.*  
*Ecclesiastes 3:20*

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### An acrostic for February

The first letter of each answer forms two words

1. Part of a poem.
2. Cupid's weapons
3. All you need is this, according to the Beatles
4. All of us
5. Marston's saint
6. It waits for no man
7. July 4<sup>th</sup>
8. He built a boat
9. Try
10. The day of rest
11. Silly dwarf
12. Hole
13. Chinese river

### What to cook in February?

Pancakes of course! Put 100g flour, 2 large eggs and 300ml milk into a bowl or food processor and beat/whizz until smooth. Pour into a jug, heat a frying pan, add a little butter or oil and start cooking. Your first two or three pancakes will almost certainly not be perfect: don't give up, because you will get better and better. Serve with *whatever* you like: lemon and sugar are traditional, but I prefer damson jam..

### Old Marston Parish Council

During the pandemic, please be aware that you can still find the Parish Clerk's minutes of each meeting via [www.oldmarston-pc.gov.uk](http://www.oldmarston-pc.gov.uk), Facebook or Twitter.

### Nature notes: what to see during February

There are lots of winter wonders to spot on your daily walk this month: frosty leaves, birds feasting on berry-laden trees, flocks of geese overhead, early primroses and snowdrops. Male blackbirds are busy



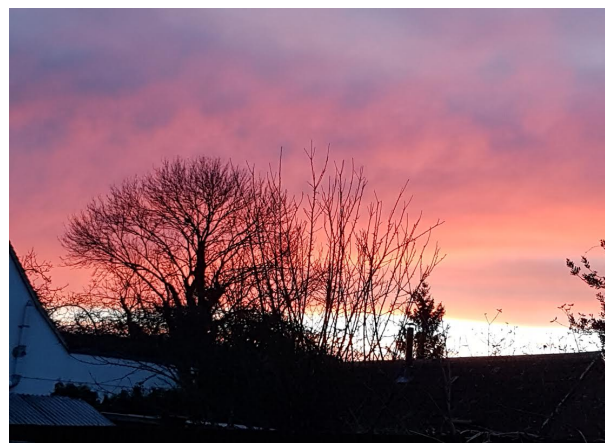
marking the boundaries of their territories, while other birds are pairing up, such as bluetits who will be checking out bird-box options.

Look out for starry bright yellow coltsfoot flowers, members of the daisy family. They're an early Spring delight and are often found on waste ground. February is a hungry month for birds so keep feeding them and putting out clean water for drinking and bathing.

### What to quote?

#### He Knows No Winter by Sudie Stuart Hager

He knows no winter, he who loves the soil,  
For, stormy days, when he is free from toil,  
He plans his summer crops, selects his seeds  
From bright-paged catalogues for garden needs.  
When looking out upon frost-silvered fields,  
He visualizes autumn's golden yields;  
He sees in snow and sleet and icy rain  
Precious moisture for his early grain;  
He hears spring-heralds in the storm's turmoil  
He knows no winter, he who loves the soil.



### A January dawn in Marston

Do you have a photo to share? Our first photo theme is *a scent of Spring*. Send your entry to [marstontimes@gmail.com](mailto:marstontimes@gmail.com). The judges' favourite will be published in the March edition of The Messenger.