

When does Spring start?



To a meteorologist, 1st March, with summer starting on 1st June. To an astronomer, it begins at the Spring equinox: 19th, 20th or 21st March, depending on the year. To the rest of us, it's hard to say. We see the first signs as early as January, as the snowdrops begin to appear, when it is clearly still winter. Sometimes winter seems to give up trying around Candlemas, 2nd February; sometimes it persists well into March or even later.

Chaucer's pilgrims to Canterbury clearly thought April was safe enough, but I remember building a snowman with my children in the middle of April, and a sharp frost on 1st June 1976 spoiled my early potatoes – followed of course by the famous hot dry summer.

After our soggy wet winter, Spring seems to be well under way as I write this in early April on holiday on Dartmoor. Everywhere here is ablaze with gorse (where, that is, the gorse hasn't been burned off in the annual "swaling") – I don't remember seeing such a lot of gorse blossom, making a solid mass of colour, its glorious gold shining in the sunshine. Of course the weather may not last – "April is the cruellest month" – but the progress of the seasons feels inexorable.

Traditional springtime celebrations have mostly taken place in May – Maypole dancing, with its pagan links to tree worship; the Celtic fire-festival of Beltane; the Helston Furry Dance. Philip Larkin in his poem "The trees" clearly thinks of May as the time of re-birth. As the "recent buds relax and spread", "last year is dead, they seem to say – begin afresh, afresh, afresh."



On Rogation Sunday, we ask for God's blessing on our crops in the coming growing season and harvest.

Ascension Day is (almost always) in May, followed by Pentecost ten days later. The coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples at Pentecost is recognised as the birth of Christianity. It is truly appropriate that we should mark our own attempts and hopes for spiritual renewal at the time when the natural world around us is really getting into its stride.

LG

Family Services

Water of Life

May 11th Baptism in the river Jordan
John 1, 19-34

After 400 years of silence the voice of a prophet was heard in Israel. John had spent many lonely years in the desert aware of the wickedness in the country, a king who made an unlawful and evil marriage, leaders of religion with their ritualistic observances and the ordinary people unaware of God.

Now John had a message from God: *'Repent, turn away from evil and turn to God.'* People received this message with humble enthusiasm and journeyed into the desert to hear him. *'Repent and be baptised with cleansing water.'* To John's surprise Jesus came, identifying Himself with ordinary people, their sorrow for sin and their need of God. The baptism by water was a guarantee of greater blessings to come. Jesus would teach and heal and open up God's plan of salvation for all.

Each of us has something to regret. Jesus invites us to look on Him as a friend who listens and forgives. Trust Him!



June 1st Life-long water
John 4, 1-42

Jesus took a shortcut from Galilee in the north to Judea in the south. He had to walk through Samaria, a country where there had long been ill-feeling between Jew and Samaritan. Jesus and His disciples stopped at a fork in the roads, at Jacob's well where Jacob's sheep had once grazed. Jesus was tired and thirsty

and sat down to rest while His disciples went into the town of Sychar to buy food. To the well came a Samaritan woman whom Jesus asked for a drink. She was surprised that a Jew should ask her for anything. Jesus replied that He could give her living water which would quench her thirst for ever. It was not water from a stream or a well but a gift from God.

Jesus said, *'Whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never thirst again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring which will provide him life-giving water and give him eternal life.'*

Have you claimed your gift?

THE DUKE'S KITCHEN GARDEN, 1873. - Another glimpse of Victorian Stowe & Dadford.

Hiding among the raspberry canes in the Duke's kitchen garden, Dadford's George Hutchings mused glumly. How rotten that the pair of under-gardeners had told him to give up his lunch hour to spy on any village rascals making illegal entry. The kitchen garden (overlooking the Grecian Valley on the Queen's Temple side) surely needed no guarding? Nobody used to mind a missing vegetable or two. But now that awful Thomas Beards Junior, the new Stowe estate manager, had told those bossy under-gardeners, Saxby and Harris, that all petty pilfering was to be punished.

After much musing on his discomfort, partly from raspberry canes and partly from fear of becoming an unpopular sneak, George began to doze, confident in the efficacy of the new stone wall with wire on top. Great was his surprise, then, when he was woken by a trio of giggling villagers who had skipped over the wall to the bushes, where, under a big tree, their bags were being filled with ripe red gooseberries. Goodness! There, surely, was that cheeky youngster 'Curly' Jackman! And the dainty Susie Ford! And the even daintier Susie Varney!

The raspberry-stained George, having gathered together his shocked senses, duly broke cover, emitting what he hoped would be a loud enough yell to alert the gooseberry-pickers. It did. Having sprinted to where the wire on top had been flattened, the trio nimbly vaulted the wall and ran off laughingly through the trees down to the Grecian Valley.

Half an hour later, on their return, the bossy under-gardeners heard the bad news and followed down to the Grecian Valley. There, a satisfying villagers' picnic had turned into a noisy party. There was no sign of 'Curly' Jackman. No gooseberries either. Just a lot of shaking of heads and glaring at the uncomfortable George, forced to play the sneak. 'Mr Beards will take you all to court!' thundered the bossy couple.

Sitting in the courtroom, days later, George was feeling uncomfortable again. Under-gardener Saxby had spoken sternly of red-haired gooseberries on the slopes of the Grecian Valley, and the terrible loss of goods worth a full six pence. George, however, on being cross-examined, seemed confused by the villagers' representative. 'Curly' Jackson, it was eventually established, may not have been among the gooseberry-snatchers after all. The Bench only briefly retired before announcing the case's dismissal. If labourer Hutchings was mistaken in the identity of the boy, they declared, he might also be mistaken in the women.

Only a week later George Hutchings, thanks to Thomas Beards Junior, found himself in court again. This time his words were even reported in the local press: 'I am a labourer, living at Dadford. I was returning from work about a quarter past 6 in the evening and when near the rickyard and reservoir, Alice Varney [Susan's mother] caught hold of me with both hands by the collar, and shook me and said, "d----- you, I will duck you in the reservoir." I told her to stand off. But she collared me twice.'

Under questioning, however, George began again to be confused by the opposition. The charge of assault against Mrs Varney was dismissed. Perhaps George's confusion was precipitated by fear of even further Dadford reprisals; perhaps, alternatively, by catching the eye of Alice Varney's pretty daughter. The only thing we can be sure of is that George Hutchings' taste for ripe red gooseberries was never quite the same again.

TM



News from Nepal Tailoring 2025

Once, a wise man said, you are an answer to somebody's prayer! This year, we have ladies who are ready to embark on a new journey full of hope and enthusiasm. They had been praying and waiting for God to open doors.

The last group of tailoring women were amazing, so keen to learn, all finished the course and were given machines so can now start earning extra money. Please pray for them, that they will have the skills and confidence to ask friends and family for money to make their clothes. We are now just starting a new tailoring group in Dhapsi Kathmandu, six women so grateful to get the opportunity and in addition to this, pastor David and Maria have helped set up running a tailoring class in Tikatali, centre of Katmandu. This is taking place in a pastor's house, and his wife is helping supervise the course. These women have now been learning for two months and doing well making baby clothes and women's clothes.



Food for Thought - a Cross is

a picture of violence, yet the *key to peace*;
a picture of suffering, yet the *key to healing*;
a picture of death, yet the *key to life*;
a picture of utter weakness, yet the *key to power*;
a picture of capital punishment, yet the *key to mercy and forgiveness*;
a picture of a vicious hatred, yet the *key to love*;
a picture of supreme shame, yet the *Christian's supreme boast*.

Quoted by the Rev David Watson (March 1933 – 18 February 1984) English Anglican priest, evangelist and author. Original Author unknown.

News from National Trust Stowe

It has been a busy few months and the recent warm weather gave us a great Spring flower display throughout the gardens showing off beautiful displays of our native Lent Lily Daffodil, Snakeshead Fritillary, Wood anemones and Bluebells too.

We were also able to carry out some of our annual maintenance on grass path edges within places like Sleeping Wood. We have also been continuing our restoration work at Bellgate Lodge with the addition of the new planting and turfing. This will be watered in dry periods for the first year to ensure the planting has time to establish and then it will be able to sustain itself. We are proud that the water we now use is from our newly installed rainwater harvesting system that has been installed at our Gardeners' yard and collects rainwater off the roof of our building, yet another great way of us becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly in our day to day work.

AT



Dadford Craft & Coffee morning and Stowe Lent Study Group.

I would like to say thank you to everyone who supported our coffee and craft morning in Dadford Village Hall before Easter. The children made lovely Easter gardens, bonnets, crowns and other Easter goodies and the refreshments were delicious.

Thank you, too, to everyone who attended our Lent group looking at the letter written by James. I think we all benefited from James' straightforward and no nonsense advice and from sharing our experiences and faith with each other. I hope that both the Bible study and the coffee morning will become a monthly event in Dadford, so watch this space!

At Easter, we celebrate Jesus rising from the dead and the hope that gives to all of us. The hope of forgiveness and eternal life in God's kingdom, and the hope that comes from knowing that we are each loved so much by God. May we continue to feel the hope, love and joy of Easter in our lives in the weeks ahead and always.

Christ is risen!

Rev Cathy Pearce
01280 821976



What's been happening at St. James and St. John Church of England Primary Schools in Akeley and Chackmore

As we enjoy the warmer, brighter days of Spring, we reflect on the wealth of learning at both sites and the opportunities we have enjoyed over the last half term.

At the start of March we enjoyed the excitement and costumed delights of World Book Day, where we shared the joy of reading and enthused each other with new books to discover. Alongside time spent reading around school and reading related activities, all year groups took part in the BBC's Big Readalong, where we learned about different genres and non-fiction categories before joining in reading with other children from around the country. We finished the day with a wrapped book swap where children could swap age appropriate books and get a surprise to take home.

There have been several sports competitions this half term that we have had teams participate. Our Year 1 and 2 team enjoyed a Targetball competition and a group of Year 5s took part in a Netball tournament. We were delighted and proud of them all for the teamwork, perseverance, positivity, resilience and sportsmanship shown.

We have been lucky to welcome Pets as Therapy to the school in weekly visits, during which the dog (and their human companion) have been enjoying some reading with several of the children across the Chackmore site.

The whole school has also taken part in some interesting science sessions as part of the school's celebrations of Science Week in March. As well as various experiments in class, children also thought about science in the world around us, including what type of scientist they might like to be one day! To end our week each class had a science workshop with Spark Science, involving bubbles, fire and a lot of fun!

At our Chackmore site, the Year 3s and 4s have been working hard on their musical production of Robin Hood and his Sherwood Hoodies, which we are looking forward to watching at the end of term. We finished the term off with Mother's Day assemblies at both sites and a celebration of Easter, with our annual whole-school Easter Eggstravaganza.



Next half term is a short one, but we have still got some local trips for the children to enjoy. Years 5 and 6 are visiting the Gawcott Solar Farm to learn more about solar panels and how they generate electricity. Year 2 are off to Evenley Wood Gardens and Years 1 and Foundation will be visiting Hogshaw Farm. Year 3 will be taking a trip to the Roald Dahl Museum to explore more about the author and his books.

With Spring fully taken a hold, we look forward to warmer, brighter days, with the welcome return of the flowers and birds around us and the opportunities this time of year brings.

Date 2025	Warden/Sidespeople		Prayers	Refreshments
May 4th	Laurence Gibson/Chris Close Smith		Liturgy	Tamara Kimpton
May 11th	Nancy Pullin/Patricia Forbes			Gill Smith
May 18th	Tamara & John Kimpton		Tamara Kimpton	Kay Murray
May 25th	Gill Smith/Loreen and Hilary		Tony Meredith	Gillian Macdonald
June 1st	Andrew Rudolf/Lyn & Ray			Germaine Radcliffe
June 8th	Laurence Gibson/Chris Close Smith		Liturgy	Nancy Pullin
June 15th	Tamara & John Kimpton		Gillian Macdonald	Elsbeth Mullineux
June 22nd	Richard & Essex Close Smith		Gill Smith	Lyn Est
June 29th	Laurence Gibson/Lyn & Ray East		Andrew Rudolf	Tamara Kimpton
Date 2025	Flowers		Cleaning	Prayer-board
May 4th	Loreen Williams			John Kimpton
May 11th	Lyn East			Gillian Macdonald
May 18th	Lyn East for Rosie		Alice, Josh and Family	Gill Smith
May 25th	Gillian Macdonald			Kay Murray
June 1st	Richard Close Smith			Lyn East
June 8th	Heather Meredith		Lyn and Ray East	Tamara Kimpton
June 15th	Kay Murray			John Kimpton
June 22nd	Hilary Hawkins			Gillian Macdonald
June 29th	Loreen Williams		Nancy Pullin & Hazelwoods	Gill Smith
Date 2025	Time	Service	Lead/Preach	Chalice
May 4th	9.45	1662 Communion	Rev Hans Taling	John Kimpton
May 11th	9.45	Family Service	Rev Cathy Pearce	
	18.00	Dadford Evensong	Andrew Rudolf/Rev Cathy Pearce	
May 18th	9.45	Common Worship	Rev Cathy Pearce	Lyn East
May 25th	9.45	Morning Prayer	L-Gillian Macdonald P-Andrew Rudolf	
May 29th		Ascension Day		
June 1st	9.45	Family Service	Kay Murray	
June 8th	9.45	1662 Communion	Rev Cathy Pearce	Andrew Rudolf
	18.00	Dadford Evensong	Gillian Macdonald/Rev Cathy Pearce	
June 15th	9.45	Common Worship	Rev Hans Taling	John Kimpton
June 22nd	9.45	Morning Prayer	Rev Cathy Pearce	
June 29th	8.00	1662 Communion	Rev Cathy Pearce	
	9.45	Mission Morning	Rev Val Plumb (tbc)	

The North Buckingham Parish is part of the Diocese of Oxford in the Buckingham Archdeaconry. www.nbpchurches.org.uk for viewing the different villages and places of interest and details of services.

Rector: Rev. Hans Taling, The Rectory, Maids Moreton, MK18 1QD

Email: rector@nbpchurches.org.uk

Office Contact/Administrator: Val Rickwood, St. Edmund's Church Office
Telephone: 01280 814430

Parish Office Email: office@nbpchurches.org.uk

Licensed Reader: Margaret Culley.

Youth Work Co-ordinator: Rev Cathy Pearce