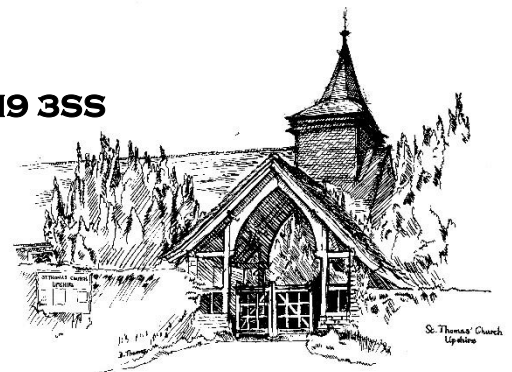


ST THOMAS' CHURCH, UPSHIRE EN9 3SS

NEWSLETTER

February 2026



Rector: Revd Peter Smith, 01992 767897
Team Vicar: Revd Jane Yeadon, 07960 604416. Email janeyeadon@gmail.com
Benefice Office: Abbey Church Centre, Waltham Abbey, EN9 1XQ. 01992 767897
Church address: Horseshoe Hill, Upshire, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 3SS.
Website: <https://stthomaschurchupshire.com>
Email: lynanddavewackett@hotmail.co.uk

This Newsletter is free: donations to Lyn Wackett. Copy date for March Newsletter: 14th February

We are committed to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. The PCC has adopted the Church of England's policies and best practice on safeguarding which may be found on the Church of England website and also on the Diocese of Chelmsford website.

SERVICES AND DIARY FOR FEBRUARY

Sunday 1 st	Presentation of Christ in the Temple 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Malachi 3:1-5	Luke 2:22-40
Saturday 7 th	3pm-4pm SEEDLINGS meet in the church	
Sunday 8 th	Second Sunday before Lent 9.15 am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Genesis 1:1 – 2:3	Matthew 6:23-end
Sunday 15 th	Sunday next before Lent 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Exodus 24:12-end	Matthew 17:1-9
Wednesday 18 th	11.30am for 12 noon COMMUNITY LUNCH in church. 07899 846711 to book, Please let us know if you have to cancel	
Sunday 22 nd	First Sunday of Lent 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7	Matthew 4:1-11
Sunday 1 st March	Second Sunday of Lent 9.15am HOLY COMMUNION Readings: Genesis 12:1-4a	John 3:1-17

PRAYER REQUESTS

You are invited to offer names to be added to our prayer diary to remember those who are unwell or unhappy. First names only are required as God will know who we are praying for.

Contact Lyn Wackett on 01992 711573 or email lynanddavewackett@hotmail.co.uk

This month we pray for Laura, Alan & Pam, Lesley, Charlie & John, Anne, Pam & John, Barbara, Vernon, Mal, Sue, Ann & Cyril, Rosalind, Doreen, Maureen, Carol & George, Terry, Jackie, Andrea & her Mum & Dad, Nina, Carmel & the Price family, Nigel, Lola, Pearl, Susan & Alan, Jackie & Linda, Graham, Christine, Chris, Izzie, Pennie, Tim and Mike

THE VICAR WRITES

At the beginning of February, when winter feels like it still has a strong grip and brighter days seem a long way off, the Church celebrates the Feast of Candlemas — the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. It is a quieter festival than Christmas or Easter, yet it is one, I believe, that speaks deeply into the realities of everyday life.

Recorded in the second chapter of Luke's Gospel, Mary and Joseph bring the infant Jesus to the Temple, as all Jewish parents would have done at that time. There is no fanfare or spectacle. Yet in this ordinary moment, something extraordinary is recognised. Simeon, who has spent a lifetime waiting and praying, takes the child in his arms and proclaims him to be "a light for revelation." Anna, too, sees and understands who this child is. God's promise is fulfilled not in grand displays of power, but in patience, faithfulness, and trust.

Candlemas reminds us that God's light often enters the world quietly. In a culture that values speed, visibility, and constant activity, this can feel counter-cultural. Many of us live with busy schedules, full diaries, and endless notifications competing for our attention. We can easily miss the gentle movements of God simply because we are rushing on to the next thing. Simeon and Anna invite us to slow down, to wait, and to pay attention.

February can be a demanding month. The initial optimism of a new year may have faded, worries about work, finances, health, or family may press in, and the darker evenings can take their toll on our spirits. Candlemas does not deny these realities. Instead, it speaks directly into them, reminding us that Christ's light is not dependent on perfect circumstances. It shines precisely where life feels challenging or uncertain.

In our modern lives, holding the light of Christ may look very simple. It may be choosing kindness when patience is thin, taking time for prayer when life feels crowded, or being present to someone who feels lonely or overlooked. It may be resisting the pressure to have everything sorted, and instead trusting that God is still at work, even when the way forward is unclear.

Candlemas also gently points us towards Lent, encouraging us to reflect on what we carry and what we might need to let go of. What dims our ability to see God's light? What habits, distractions, or worries weigh us down? And where might God be inviting us to live more lightly, more attentively, more faithfully?

So as we move through this season, may we be people who carry Christ's light into the ordinary places of life — into our homes, our workplaces, our conversations, and our community, for even a small flame, carefully tended, can offer warmth, guidance, and hope.

Revd Jane Yeadon,
Team Vicar St Thomas, Upshire and Holy Innocents, High Beech
Benefice Youth Missioner MB 07960 604416

St Thomas Church, Upshire Bank details

St Thomas Church Upshire PCC

HSBC Bank

Sort Code 40 45 20

Account number 00724505

Any queries regarding setting up a Standing Order, giving a donation to the church, Gift Aid or about joining the Parish Giving Scheme please contact our Treasurer, Ruth Moore on 07852 668633

Ruth4366@gmail.com

If you are able to Gift Aid donations this increases your gift without any extra cost to yourself.

CHURCH FLOWERS

Following Lent (18th Feb until 2nd April) the Easter Lilies will be the focus of our floral arrangements. Easter Lilies need to be ordered in advance (£2 per stem) with memorials to be recorded in the dedication book. Please confirm your order and dedications in good time by Contacting Kate Dale, by 21st March please.

Each month we can create memorial dedications, wedding, anniversary or special occasion flowers - Contact Kate Dale email: dalek16@btinternet.com

GROWER'S CORNER

The garden is slowing waking up and the sap rising. We are getting closer to spring... and the days are getting longer, yippee. It has certainly been chilly and we've spent less time outside. Unfortunately the winter lurgy has also struck so that has also hampered gardening jobs. On the bright side we have a mini break booked (as my birthday falls this month) so looking forward to hopefully seeing some winter sun. I need to prepare my indoor growing station. This includes grow lights and heated propagators to start off the seeds that need a long growing season such as chillies, aubergines and tomatoes.

Update on the plots:

There's not been massive developments, just slowing preparing for spring. We still have tidying to do, sheds to sort but I have done some weeding of the beds and cleared the older foliage around the hellebores. We have 'new to me' bench kindly given to us by my sister. It needs a little fix and to be oiled but will be lovely to have another vista on the plot when having a cuppa.

February to do:

- Prepare a seedbed and cover with polythene to warm the soil
- Organise the shed(s) (I still have this to do)
- Put down slow release fertiliser for over wintering plants
- Prepare the asparagus beds, clear perennial weeds and put down well-rotted manure or compost
- Order dahlia tubers for summer flowering
- Feed the birds/ ensure they have access to fresh water
- Keep greenhouse/polytunnel ventilated

February planting/sowings:

- Jerusalem artichokes can be planted
- In a cold greenhouse and undercover you can sow early summer cabbages, spinach and early cabbages, perpetual spinach
- Continue with successional sowings of chicory spring onions, beetroot and salad rocket
- Sow early peas in guttering in the greenhouse
- If you have access to heated propagator you can sow tomatoes, aubergines and chillies indoors.

Flowers/shrubs/trees

- Sow sweet peas indoors
- Sow slow growing annuals such as antirrhinum
- Sow Cobaea
- Trim back perennials
- Divide congested clumps of perennials and grasses to make new plants for free
- Check stored tubers- dahlias
- Prune apples and pears to establish an open, well-spaced structure. Prune peaches at the end of the month if not already done. Avoid pruning cherries, plums, and apricots to prevent silver leaf disease.
- Prune blackcurrants by removing one in three older, darker stems at ground level. Prune gooseberries and redcurrants to maintain an open, goblet-shaped, productive framework.
- Cut back autumn-fruiting raspberry canes to ground level. Tip back summer-fruiting canes to 15cm above their top support.

Tip: I have found rose prunings on top of containers have help stop the squirrels and foxes from digging up the bulbs.

'A Garden is a friend you can visit anytime' . Anonymous

Happy gardening, Love Louise.



ST THOMAS' SEEDLINGS

1st Saturdays of each month (unless otherwise stated)

A free Stay and Play church group for children and those who care for them
Join us Saturdays 3-4pm for messy craft, play, songs and stories along with a welcome cuppa
St Thomas' Church, Horseshoe Hill, Upshire, EN9 3SS



ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

Our mailing list to receive the electronic version of the Newsletter is now in excess of 100 participants so if you are not one of those and wish to be included please send your email address to Kate at dalek16@btinternet.com or phone 02085083942. We are looking to reduce our 'paper footprint' for climate change by printing fewer copies – your contribution will help. Thank you.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

Thank you to the people who have sent in articles to be included in the Newsletter. Please keep them coming! Anything: maybe a poem you have written, what you have been doing in the garden, childhood memories, something that happened to make you smile, it all makes for interesting reading.

ANAGRAM Unscramble this 10 letter anagram: OPOORFUNDS . The answer will be found elsewhere in the Newsletter.

ST THOMAS' CHURCH COMMUNITY LUNCHES 2025

3rd Wednesdays, 11.30 for 12noon start

18th February, 18th March, 15th April, 20th May, 17th June, 15th July, 19th August, 16th September, 21st October, 11th November (a week earlier than usual), 2nd December (Christmas Lunch)

If after booking you are unable to come, please phone to cancel,
we can then offer a place to people on the waiting list.

UPSHIRE MOTHERS' UNION

In December we held our Communion and Carol service, thank you Revd Jane Begley, followed by tea and festive treats in the church. Thank you to all who came along to joined us for an enjoyable afternoon.

In 2026, Mothers' Union will celebrate 150 years since it was founded in the small parish church of Old Alresford, Hampshire, by Mary Sumner a young vicar's wife with a bold vision. She believed that women, regardless of class or status, could come together in faith to support one another and strengthen family life within the Church.

From that single spark of an idea, a global movement was born and Mothers' Union has grown to 4 million members across 84 countries. As they look to the future their members will continue working to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities around the world.

Upshire Mothers' Union is in the Diocese of Chelmsford which works in the heart of rural and urban communities, (London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Epping Forest, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest), as a church charity working with and in our local parishes and communities, supporting those in need and delivering events and activities that reach out to the wider community.

As our Mothers' Union branch looks ahead to this remarkable 150th milestone, we invite you to be part of it. We will be hosting a Cream Tea afternoon in May in the Village Hall. We have a Mothers' Union Trustee as our speaker in April, giving a mystery talk for the 150th Anniversary. We are planning a picnic with the church Seedlings Group in June and in September we will have our church service where members will rededicate themselves to Mothers' Union and our Mothers Union Banner will be blessed. More details will follow about these activities and everyone will be welcome to join us and join in.

There is no Meeting in February.

STAMPS

Please continue to save your postage stamps and foreign or out of circulation coins as the charities we support can use them to raise funds. At present we collect the coins for Essex and Herts Air Ambulance and The British Legion and stamps for British Heart Foundation. Stamps and coins can be left with Lyn & Dave at 94 Upshire Road – please leave in the porch if no reply. Please leave about ½“ of envelope around the stamps. Thank you.

HIGH BEACH CHURCH

Don't struggle at home trying to make a pile of perfect pancakes! Come to High Beach Church instead where from 5.00 to 7.00pm on Tuesday 17th February Adam Scott will be flipping pancakes and you can choose your favourite filling. There will also be various activities for the younger ones to enjoy as we prepare for the season of Lent. No charge for the pancakes or activities but donations much appreciated.

ANAGRAM The answer to the anagram is SOUNDPROOF.

At **HOME INSTEAD** Epping Forest we recognise that as we get older, you may need help to be able to stay living in your own home. We Tailor our care packages to meet your needs making it possible for you to stay living in your own home where you are happiest.

Our services include Dementia Care, Personal Care, Home Help, Companionship and much more.

Our monthly Memory Lane and Singing for the Brain Sessions are held at Theydon Bois Village Hall providing lots of fun complimented with refreshments served by our lovely Team. Why not contact us to find out more and to get a copy of our What's on Where Guide (WOW Guide) and future newsletters.

Telephone 01992 666777 or email: Victoria.rigby@homeinstead.co.uk

ABBEY CHURCH Music for Lunch – Saturdays at 12 noon. Refreshments available from 11.30am. All welcome, free admission with retiring collection.

February 7th: A10 Strings with David Boarder conductor

February 14th: Choir 18 Programme for St Valentine's Day

February 21st: Piano recital

February 28th: Michael Szostak plays the organ

UPSHIRE SHORT MAT BOWLS CLUB

Held in Upshire Village Hall, Mondays 2.00-4.30pm, Tuesdays 7.00-9.30pm No experience necessary. Tuition and bowls available. It's fun to play! Contact Fred on 01992 711720 or Jean on 07733 084815.

50/50 CLUB

Congratulations to the winners of the 50/50 Club Bumper Draw in December who were:

1 st :	£40	No. 29	Mike McKinley of Upshire
2 nd :	£30	No. 86	Joan Bingham of Waltham Abbey
3 rd :	£25	No. 54	Brenda Wood of Waltham Abbey
4 th :	£20	No. 24	Pauline Callaghan of Waltham Abbey
5 th :	£15	No. 20	Phyllis Huxter of Claverhambury

It is now time to begin Draw 17 of St Thomas' 50/50 Club.

There will still be monthly draws and the entry fee is £12.00 every six months (or £2 for every month of membership). Each member is entitled to a maximum of two entries, couples can have four. Please complete the form below and return it to me; payment by Bank Transfer is preferred or alternatively you may pay by cheque or cash to the address stated. Please let me know if you pay by Bank Transfer so I can include your number in the Draw (email lynanddavewackett@hotmail.co.uk or phone 01992 711573).

Our thanks to all our members for their support of St Thomas' Church. Good luck to everyone who enters.

St Thomas' Church 50/50 Club Draw 17

January to June 2026

I wish to become a member of St Thomas' 50/50 Club and have paid by Bank Transfer to HSBC Bank, A/c St Thomas Church Upshire PCC, Sort Code 404520, A/c No: 00724505.

OR I enclose cash/cheque of £12 per entry (maximum 2 per person). Please make cheques payable to St Thomas' Church Upshire PCC and return your entries to Lyn Wackett, 94 Upshire Road, Waltham Abbey, EN9 3PA.

Name:
Address:
Telephone:

SHOE BOXES

Last year, with the help of members of the community, High Beach Church and Jane B's Brownies, we were able to send 148 filled shoe boxes to Blythswood Care who distribute them to Ukraine and other countries in Eastern Europe. Please continue to save your shoe boxes ready for filling later in the year, also watch out for bargains in the sales and start buying early! Any contribution is warmly welcomed. Boxes (and items to go in them) can be left with Lyn at 94 Upshire Road, (leave in porch if no reply). I recently received a letter of thanks from Blythswood which I now share with you:

"Dear Friends,

Who do you share your shoes with? Do you wear them one day and someone else wears them next? Or do you take turns morning and afternoon?

We delivered your gift-filled boxes to one family in Kosovo and discovered the boys took turns at wearing their one pair of shoes. The one who didn't have shoes was barefoot. He was glad to find socks in his box. The toddler in the family had nothing from the waist down. New underpants in the shoebox were put to good use very quickly.

Another family had a foam mattress blocking the space where an outside door should be. It kept some cold out, but it didn't stop rats coming in. Dad was in prison and mum had no money for Christmas presents. Imagine how much your gifts meant to them!

The poverty of others is less obvious. Some young people were brought by their parents to a centre for people with disabilities to receive the boxes you had sent. It was so good to see them leave with smiles on their faces.

Thank you for all you have done to help us with our shoebox appeal. In eight countries across Southeast Europe, people who are poor and disadvantaged in other ways were thankful to receive a box. We could have given away more. There are never enough but our partners know their communities and make sure your boxes go to the people most in need. They couldn't do it without your contribution.

The people who give out shoe boxes asked us to thank you. And we know that the children and adults who received a box all for themselves want us to thank you, too. You made them so happy!

Wishing you the very best in 2026.

The Administration Team, Blythswood Care."

WOOL Several of our members and their friends knit items for various charities but our supply of wool is running low again. If you have any spare wool you no longer need we would appreciate it: donations can be left with Lyn at 94 Upshire Road (leave in porch if no reply). Thank you

WALTHAM ABBEY POPPY PROJECT

Saturday 14th February 1.00-3.00pm. Monthly meet up at Waltham Abbey Library. Come along and get involved.

TAKING THE WATERS!

Each year I receive free tickets to ride on the GWR. Not 'God's Wonderful Railway' or even the 'Great Way Round' as the Great Western was often referred to but the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway which has a terminus station at Cheltenham Racecourse. To get there I had to travel on the Great Western from Paddington which in the past has been a pleasure. Presumably with the impending cessation of its franchise and nationalization the company is reducing its investment. The service used to be a ten car train but mine was only five, so packed with passengers and definitely in need of refurbishment. It felt that one was sitting on planks of wood rather than comfortable seats! However, the service did run to time and very quickly on electric propulsion as far as Swindon where we turned off the main line to run the rest of the way on diesel power but still to time despite the winding rail track through pretty little valleys to Gloucester where our driver changed ends and reversed the train to its terminus at Cheltenham. The Great Western was the only one of the 'Big Four' railway companies to retain its original name after the Great Grouping of 1923. This was when thirty or so railway companies throughout Britain were amalgamated into either the London, Midland and Scottish, the London and North Eastern, the Southern or the Great Western railways. Surprisingly, there were about another fifty that were not included, these being railways like the London Underground, in other words autonomous workings.

The Great Western had two other distinctions, one being that it was originally built to the 'Broad Gauge' of seven feet and a quarter inch which evidently provided for a very smooth and stable ride. With the rest of the country built to the 'Standard Gauge' of four foot eight and a half inches the GWR had to eventually adapt which it famously did in a weekend. The other was that it was probably the first international railway, well before the boat trains that ran in the inter-war period. The trouble with the boat trains is that at Dover the carriages had to be disconnected from each other, shunted onto the ferry where they'd be chained down with the process being reversed at Calais. The resulting noise evidently meant that no one had a good night's sleep! The GWR's international service primarily was to ferry post to Dublin, Ireland at that time being a part of the Empire. Trains ran to South Wales where ferries would take the post and passengers to Rosslare to connect with a train service to Dublin through the Wicklow Mountains. Much of the track was designed and engineered by Brunel of GWR fame and is still being used to this day.

Cheltenham Spa station is a funny little affair, set in a cutting it hasn't the room to be expanded so with the quite considerable number of trains that use it which apparently travel to many parts of the southwest, it can get quite congested. Outside are bus stops to serve the buses that go to the racecourse which are quite frequent except that they have the strange habit of stopping in the town centre for around five to ten minutes. Invariably the driver gets off for a crafty cigarette; why they stop this long has never been explained but they do it travelling both to and from the racecourse. Travelling through the town on the bus one gets a good look at the large villas that line the streets – obviously it was a very prosperous town in its day, no doubt due to the spa that people flocked to use. The racecourse is now well outside the town boundary but it used to be in the town until it was thought that the associated gambling was bad for the town's reputation. The bus drops one off at one of the large car parks that serve the racecourse. Some sort of 'park and ride' takes place on non-race days although I've never seen much evidence of this. Bizarrely, travelling to the racecourse using a bus pass the journey is free but on the return you are required to pay a £1. None of the drivers to whom I have asked for an explanation have been able to explain why although one did say that the Council requires it! From the bus stop it is a ten-minute walk to the steam railway but it does give very good views of the racecourse which is immaculate. If arriving by car it is possible to park at the station as there is a designated car park.

Cheltenham Racecourse station is also set in a cutting but is completely different from the one on the main line with well-tended flower beds, spotless platforms and staff who are happy to pass the time of day with you whilst waiting for the train to arrive. My train, when it arrived turned out to be hauled by a behemoth, a 4-6-0 locomotive weighing in at 122 tons more used to pulling express trains and large freight work than our few carriages at a sedately 25mph which is the limit for heritage railways. Nevertheless, the journey was smooth even if leisurely but it gave ample opportunity to enjoy the scenery and wildlife of the beautiful Cotswold countryside; hares, buzzards and kestrels being to the fore. The line runs through several quaint stations all set out as they were in GWR days, a tunnel, supposedly haunted; a long viaduct and signs of ancient farming practices – the traditional ridge and furrow ploughing method. If you pick your day of travel carefully you will be able to spot the gravity-fed water fountain which attains an impressive height of three hundred feet set in the village of Stanway. Returning to the Racecourse station you pass through a recently reconstructed halt at which trains only stop on request, Hayles Abbey. It is but a short walk from here to the famous Hailes Abbey and the small ancient parish church which is situated opposite the remains of the Abbey. Arriving back at the Racecourse station the ten-minute walk to the bus stop is, thankfully, downhill and one must remember to have the pound coin ready for the journey back to the main line station in Cheltenham. Adrian J. Liddle

SUNDAY AFTERNOON TEAS AT HIGH BEACH CHURCH

Although the weekly Sunday Afternoon Teas season does not start until 3rd May, we will be holding Sunday Teas for those with withdrawal symptoms on 1st February and 1st March from 12 noon to 3pm. Everyone is welcome, please spread the word.

Some flowers to protect their beauty grow thorns. Our life is sometimes like that.
As we look back we see that difficult times or people are sometimes a blessing in disguise