

The

# Keston Magazine

News of your Parish and Village



April/May 2025

# Keston Parish Church

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Put your fingers here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe. *John 20:27*

# Thought for the month



## The Gift of New Life

The frosty early mornings when car windscreens demand to be scraped clear and salt-spreaders slow the traffic down, winter resolutely seems set to stay. It is not quite time to dry-clean thick woolly winter coats and dust off lighter water-proofs. Yet, hasty glances beneath the bare trees begin to reveal a riot of colour as green shoots emerge, and carpets of white snowdrops, followed by bright yellow, lilac and white crocuses poke out their exquisite dainty heads. Resounding signs of hope that Spring is on the way.

What could be more uplifting than the sight of ‘a crowd, a host of golden daffodils; beside the lake (or ponds?), beneath the trees, fluttering and dancing in the breeze’ as Wordsworth noted in his classic poem, *‘I wandered lonely as a cloud?’* Still, it is worth pausing a moment to take some time to ponder where these bright bursts of colour have been all through the Summer and Autumn and the wisdom this offers us. As the flowers approach the end of their magnificent display, they ‘retreat’ pouring all their energy into restoring the bulb which contains the nutrients they will need as they head towards the

following Spring. A time is spent in stillness and quietness underground, a time of waiting, of ‘reflecting’. This is a time of sensing all that is going on around, especially the seasonal changes and considering how this affects them. They seemingly die. Presently, it is time to re-surface again ‘renewed’.

In the Christian calendar, from Christmas until Easter, we also are drawn into a similar rhythm of retreating, reflecting and renewal. Easter, when Jesus died and rose from the dead, reminds us of the reason for Christmas, a celebration of the birth of a very special baby, God’s own son. And we retreat to this time of great joy to store up the promise and hope we have in him, revealed to shepherds and Magi alike, revealed to Jew and Gentile, revealed to each one of us.

As we enter the season of Lent, the mood changes and we settle into a period of reflection. God is with us. We are challenged to think, what does that mean for how we live our lives? We are invited to leave behind those worldly things that are not of God and follow Jesus. God does not promise that it will be easy. But he does promise to be right there, alongside us in our pain and suffering, in our waiting and our longing until such time as we repent and are open to be transformed.

Sitting patiently and expectantly with the pain of Good Friday and the emptiness of Holy Saturday, we are readied and invited to be renewed that we may know and show forth the joy of the resurrected Christ in the gift of new life. May the joy of the risen Christ be with you this Eastertide.

Rev’d Belinda Beckhelling

## From the Editor

Like me, I expect you find it heartbreaking to watch and read about the situation in Ukraine, and indeed other parts of the world, and feel powerless to do anything. However, I have now found out that there is something I can do to help, (as well as praying), as there is a local means of getting supplies to those so desperately in need – details are in the article opposite. How shocking that they are fighting in the trenches and need even the most basic of things – candles, food, warm clothing and bedding.

In this issue you can also read about what it was like growing up in a Communist country before Romania gained its independence. It makes me feel grateful for the religious and other freedoms we are blessed with in this country, even though we moan about the state of affairs here.

I was thrilled when the Bishop agreed to write a piece for me, the ‘What I Do’ page, as he will be coming to take our Easter Day service; and naturally this issue contains some Easter related items too. There are also a fair number of lighter humorous bits as it’s good to laugh. Personally, I feel I have failed after I read the Tips for looking after your husband on page 12. I hope you find this issue interesting and entertaining. Happy Easter!

Sally Churchus



## Cover Story and Photos of Keston

I took this photo at the beginning of April last year in Lakes Road on a sunny day. How lovely to have Easter decorations as well as Christmas ones nowadays to mark Christian festivals.

I’m always in need of photos of Keston and Keston people to feature in the magazine. For use on the cover I need room at the top to put the title, without it covering the main subject of the photo, but I can crop landscape photos if need be. If you have any high resolution photos that might be suitable, I would love to hear from you. Thank you.

Sally Churchus

## Gardener Wanted

Keston Parish Church is looking to employ a gardener/gardening service to tend to the upkeep of its churchyard and church grounds. Are you interested?

### **Please contact**

warden@kestonparishchurch.org.uk (until 20th April) and rector@kestonparishchurch.org.uk (from 20th April) to discuss the scope of the job. Suitable experience in maintaining large grassy areas essential. Tools and equipment provided.

### **We are looking for someone to:**

Keep the hedge trimmed, keep paths clear (including around the graveyard), remove seedlings, saplings and weeds before they get established, keep plants and bushes pruned, clear leaves and rubbish and tend graves on a rotational programme.

# Helping Ukraine



Fighters with charitable donations

My husband and I enjoy travelling and one of the last places which we visited, prior to Covid, was

Lviv, in the Western part of Ukraine, for a long weekend. Such a vibrant, happy, and beautiful city, with plenty to keep us busy. I think that when one has a personal affinity to somewhere that has been thoroughly appreciated, and loved, it is natural to take a closer interest in the fortunes or otherwise, of such places. We most certainly did, and when the Westerham University of the Third Age (U3A) took a keen interest in wanting to help the people of Ukraine, I was hooked.

A collection point was established by Ron Alexander in Brasted. He advertised for people near and far to drop off whatever was requested, at his home. I began to think – Brasted is not very far away, and yet I felt that it was more likely that vital necessities would be donated if I were to advertise in my home area, for goods to be donated and maybe collected by me and then delivered to Ron, who would then forward them on for the next stage of the journey to Ukraine. This proved to

be the case. Biggin Hill residents readily gave. I continue to make regular and frequent journeys to Ron's home, and yes, the donations keep coming.

We think we are suffering from the damp, cold and miserable weather in England. We really can't begin to understand the brutal conditions in areas of Ukraine embattled by war with Russia. Severe cold often reaching  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Soldiers fighting in trenches...yes, trench warfare!

Melting down candles to make giant cans of wax; adding wicks, so that they can heat water for instant meals/drinks. Also giving out a little welcome warmth. Last winter we were asked to provide redundant tennis nets, so they could attach leaves to them to provide camouflage. Sleeping bags that can withstand drastic temperatures; tents; base wear for the troops.

I am only one of a much larger band who collects gifts of non-perishable foods, unused medicines, crutches,



Ukrainian child with donations

bandages, beds, weights for rehabilitation. We also collect baby necessities and so on and so forth.

My contact Ron takes these vital lifelines to one of three depots, near here – South Croydon, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. From there, Polish lorry drivers and their now empty lorries backload the donations and take them to the Polish/Ukrainian border for distribution to troops, displaced families, hospitals and orphanages.

Although it is mainly Eastern Ukraine that comes under Russian fire, the rest of Ukraine supply troops and much needed necessities to the desperate families in the war zones. The scale of the war requires support from other nations too, especially given unending conflict.

### Items most needed

- Unwanted medicines and First Aid items
- Camping gear eg. sleeping bags (preferably to -10°C), camp beds, mats and groundsheets, single bedding
- Generators
- Food eg. tinned/packet items, plus coffee, cocoa, sugar, long life milk, nuts, dried fruit, biscuits, peanut butter, jam, energy bars, cereals etc.
- Items for babies and children's food
- Candles
- Military uniforms and warm clothing and boots. Outdoor and waterproof clothing, T shirts, pants, workwear gloves
- Warm clothing for the local people
- Rehab items for injured people

Lynne Martin Tel: 07809 198202  
email: [funkystork2@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:funkystork2@hotmail.co.uk)

## Charitable Giving

Every year Keston Parish Church raises awareness and funds to support local and national charities close to our hearts. During 2024 we raised almost £4,000 towards the following charities: Bromley Foodbank, Welcare in Bromley, Friends of Rochester Cathedral, Spinnaker (Christian Schools work), St Christopher's and Demelza Children's Hospices, Macmillan Cancer Support, the Royal British Legion, the Salvation Army's appeal for gifts for children at Christmas and the Children's Society. Plus Bromley's Latch Project, Living Well Bromley, Wrap Up London and Centrepoint that support the homeless.



During 2025 we hope to continue supporting the above and more good causes.

Anna Bailey, Treasurer

## Easter eggs eaten

On Friday 7th March, we were astounded to find that three nets of little Easter eggs that had been donated for the Easter egg hunt had been eaten! An investigation is being launched... currently mice are our top suspects, although a two legged animal cannot as yet be ruled out.



# My Faith Journey



I was born in Bucharest, Romania, back in 1960 and one of my first memories is mum saying a prayer to my angel, every evening when going to bed. She was telling me that my angel was always there for me, to help and take care of me. Maybe it did not mean very much for me at the time. I had a very happy childhood with extended family, friends and neighbours smiling and being kind to me.

We were, of course, celebrating Christmas and Easter but very soon I came to understand that the “official” version of Christmas was different from the one at home. The Old Man Frosty was bringing a decorated tree with presents underneath to good children. Nothing to do with Jesus. He did not exist. At home I was told about Jesus who came to earth to teach us to be kind to each other and he personally paid with his life for this but is now alive in spirit and loves us all. It was dangerous to share this with anyone you

did not know and trust. We were living in a dictatorship.

Somehow, the Spring school holiday was always two weeks around Easter. On Easter Eve we all walked to the local church to be there at midnight, (no going to bed early), to sing about Jesus rising from the dead and walked back home with lighted candles. Then we cracked and ate painted eggs while the candles burned down at home. I loved it.

But we only went to church on Easter Eve because it was dark and it was a **big** crowd. Difficult to be spotted. Elderly cared less but as young graduates, like my parents, hoping for a good professional career it was too risky. They did not even have the courage to have a church blessing for their marriage. Mum did not have a bridal dress. A family friend, a priest, was usually invited at home to baptise the new born.

Maybe this situation of secrecy made me curious to ask questions. But things were kept simple for me. Jesus and the angels. Follow Jesus, try to be like him. Ask angels and Jesus for help.

Spending time with my maternal grandparents in Transylvania, I came to learn that my grandma was Roman Catholic before she married my Orthodox granddad. So she was celebrating Easter twice a year as well as other important days both Catholic and Orthodox. Jesus was only one...why were his followers divided in more than one church? I found out from family and friends that there were many Christian denominations around the world. That made me sad and confused. For sure this was not Jesus' will.

I was baptised Orthodox, my husband Catholic, but we decided to get married in C of E by our dear friend Rev'd Eric Heselwood. A church where we find nice, loving, compassionate people is where we feel good.

I still pray to Jesus and my angel all the time. Although my life was full of difficult times, I've always felt that somebody had been taking care of me and always gave me the right thoughts and the right advice. Most of the risky decisions I've taken in life, I've used my instinct rather than any sort of rationality. It's worked out ok. I consider myself a very blessed being.

Very often I feel the need to ask myself: "What would Jesus do in my place?" I certainly fall short of the answer but I keep aiming to follow in his steps.

Lidia Toher



*"Finally, we're still waiting for someone from last week's Messy church to come and claim this lost property..."*

**Messy CHURCH**

In Easter Holidays

**10 am - 12 noon Tuesday 8th April**  
Keston Parish Church Hall, Church Road BR2 6HT  
10am Welcome drinks and snacks  
10.15am Crafts and Activities  
11.30am Celebration with music  
11.45am Lunch (provided)  
Theme: Easter **Next Date: 27th May**

# Holwood Farm Café under new management



A month ago, Jose Fernandes took over management of the café that is upstairs at Holwood Farm Shop. He's a seasoned restaurateur who previously worked at Enzo's Pizza & Grill in Sidcup. With his expertise and passion for great food, Jose is committed to making Café Nico a great place to enjoy coffee, cakes, breakfast and lunch. The new team are offering mouthwatering Sunday roasts and hearty all day breakfasts, ideal for an outing and spending time with family and friends. As well as indoor seating, there is a lovely garden with beautiful views for use if the weather is good.

Jose lives in Bickley with his family, he was born in Madeira, came to England in 1994 and is Portuguese but speaks

several languages. The amazing looking cakes are made by his mother and grandmother!

Sunday roasts are served between 1pm and 4pm: Roast Chicken £15.95, Roast Beef £17.95, Nut Roast £14.95, Children's portion £10.95, all served with roast potatoes, honey glazed parsnips, cabbage, peas, carrots, Yorkshire puddings and gravy. Please make your reservation on 07833 253724 or email [nicokeston@hotmail.com](mailto:nicokeston@hotmail.com). Jose and his team look forward to welcoming you!

*Holwood Farm Shop is situated on New Road Hill, Keston BR2 6AB, near the end of Shire Lane. They are closed on Mondays.*

## Mother's Day Sunday 30th March

The café is offering a free glass of Prosecco for all mums with a three course set menu at £40 per person. From 1pm onwards there will be a live performance by Karen Bizzell with tributes to Barbara Streisland, Shirley Bassey, Dusty Springfield and more. Please book, details as above. Thank you.





JOIN US FOR AN

# Easter Egg Hunt



April 20th

After the 10am

Easter Day service at

Keston Parish Church BR2 6HT



# Church Services

## Sunday 30th March

8.00am

10.00am

## Mothering Sunday

Holy Communion using Book of Common Prayer (1662)

Celebrational Worship (non Communion)

## Sunday 6th April

10.00am

Holy Communion

## Sunday 13th April

10.00am

## Palm Sunday

Holy Communion with distribution of Palm Crosses

## Thursday 17th April

6.00pm

7.00pm

8.00pm

## Maundy Thursday

Bring your own meal to eat together in church hall

Holy Communion service with washing of feet

One hour Vigil (stay as long as you want)

## Friday 18th April

10.00am

10.40am

## Good Friday

Walk of Witness from Village Sign to church

*All ages (and dogs) welcome!*

Short non Communion service

*Followed by hot cross buns and tea/coffee*

## Sunday 20th April

10.00am

## Easter Day

Easter Day Holy Communion

with Bishop Simon Burton-Jones

*Followed by children's Easter egg hunt*

## Sunday 27th April

10.00am

Holy Communion

## Sunday 4th May

8.00am

10.00am

Holy Communion using Book of Common Prayer (1662)

Celebrational Worship (non Communion)

## Sunday 11th May, Sunday 18th May and Sunday 25th May

10.00am

Holy Communion

## Thursday 29th May

3.00pm

## Ascension Day

Holy Communion

## Every Monday

7.40am

8.00am

Morning Prayer

Holy Communion (said)

## Except on 21st April

# Tips to look after your husband

## \* **Have dinner ready**

Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal on time. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospects of a good meal are part of the warm welcome needed.

## \* **Prepare yourself**

Take 15 minutes to rest so you will be refreshed when he arrives. Touch up your makeup, put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh looking. He has just been with a lot of work weary people. Be a little gay and a little more interesting. His boring day may need a lift.

## \* **Clear away the clutter**

Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before your husband arrives, gathering up school books, toys, paper etc. Then run a dust cloth over the tables. You husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift too.

## \* **Prepare the children**

Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and faces (if they are small), comb their hair, and if necessary, change their clothes. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part.

## \* **Minimise all noise**

At the time of his arrival, eliminate all noise of washer, drier, dishwasher or vacuum. Try to encourage the children to be quiet. Be happy to see him. Greet him with a warm smile and be glad to see him.



Image by Oberholster Venita from Pixabay

## \* **Some don'ts**

Don't greet him with problems or complaints. Don't complain if he's late for dinner. Count this as minor compared with what he might have gone through that day.

## \* **Make him comfortable**

Have him lean back in a comfortable chair or suggest he lie down in the bedroom. Have a cool or warm drink ready for him. Arrange his pillow and offer to take off his shoes. Speak in a low, soft, soothing and pleasant voice. Allow him to relax - unwind.

## \* **Listen to him**

You may have many things to tell him, but the moment of arrival is not the time. Let him talk first.

## \* **Make the evening his**

Never complain if he does not take you out to dinner or to other places of entertainment. Instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure, his need to come home and relax.

## \* **The goal**

Try to make your home a place of peace and order where your husband can renew himself in body and spirit.

*(Extract from 1950 Home Economics Book)*

# Obituary

Jo Blake 9/3/1933-30/12/2024



Jo Blake was born on 9th March 1933 in Forest Hill. She was named Jocelyn, a name she really disliked, and so she was Jo to family and friends and Josie to the amateur dramatics community.

When she was 11 years old her beloved father passed away and her mother sent her to board at St Anthony's convent in Sherborne, Dorset, where she stayed until she was 16. She developed a lifelong relationship with her heroines, the nuns, who she loved very much and it was here that she acquired her love of music and drama.

After leaving the convent she worked in Forest Hill library for two years and at 18 joined the RAF where she became a fighter plotter and then went into air traffic control ending up a sergeant. Whilst in the RAF she met John Blake, they were married in 1955 and were together for 63 years until John passed away in 2018.

Jo's love of amateur dramatics led her to St George's Players in Beckenham where she played a number of roles including Scrooge, she was also in a guitar group visiting care homes and

entertaining the residents. Her family was her greatest passion and she was the matriarch of a large family including eight great grandchildren.

When John retired around 1980 they moved to Woodchurch, a village in Kent, where they spent an idyllic 30 years. Jo sang in the local church choir and joined the drama group the Woodchurch Players. While living in Woodchurch Jo and John took advantage of living close to Folkestone to travel to their daughter's house in The Dordogne, France, helping with overseeing renovations and getting the overgrown garden under control. They were still making the eight hour drive from Calais when John was 86 years old!

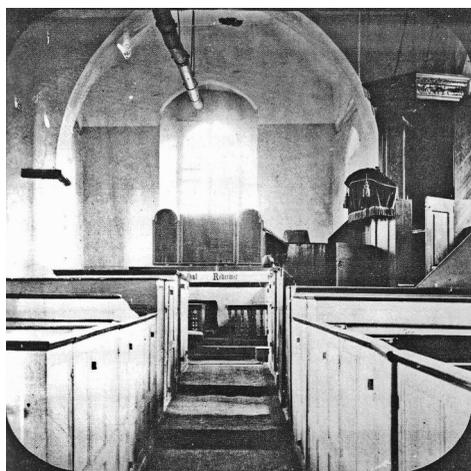
As John's health started failing they moved back to Bromley and Jo joined Keston church choir, enjoying the shared faith and camaraderie of the congregation. She also enjoyed membership of Keston WI. Jo loved poetry and was good at keeping in touch with her friends, often by dropping them a letter or note. She had a very positive outlook on life.

After John's death she moved to a retirement flat in Coney Hall. Jo powered on until she was 90 when she began to suffer from ill health and passed away peacefully on 30th December 2024.

Sarah Mean



# Snippets from past Parish Magazines



Austere interior of Keston church before the extensive work began in 1877. The large pipe suspended from the ceiling was a heating duct, a luxury item in the days when hardship was considered a virtue.

**May 1939**

## **Keston Outlandish**

The raised wooden platform in the chancel of the Parish Church has had to be taken away. It was discovered just before Easter that dry rot had attacked it, and its immediate removal was essential to prevent the rot spreading to other parts of the building.

In the course of taking up the flooring an interesting (though not entirely complimentary) note, written in pencil on the underside of one of the floor-boards, was found. It runs: 'E.M. Nicholls and his mate John H. Amos of Whitstable. This floor was laid Oct. 25. 1877. Hope soon to get away from Keston. 3 months have we been transported in this outlandish crib. 3 miles from nowhere and everything a

shilling a pound, all but butter and that was one shilling and sevenpence.'

**June 1939**

## **All is Forgiven**

The note concerning the writing found under one of the floorboards of the Chancel appears to have caught the eye of an enterprising journalist. Under the heading 'Heart-Cry of 1877 is Found in Floor', the story found its way to the Daily Herald. An interesting sequel to this story of the 'Heart-Cry' came in a letter to the Rectory the day after the article appeared. The letter ran: 'Dear Sir, - I was very interested in an article in to-day's issue of the Daily Herald, entitled "Heart-Cry of 1877 is Found in Floor"'. The reason is that the John H. Amos mentioned was my father (now deceased). Far from being an outlandish crib to him, I know the few weeks when my mother and her three children, aged 1 year, 3 years and 5 years, went to Keston to stay whilst the work was in progress, were very happy ones for him. I was 3 years old at the time and cannot remember much about it, but my mother has often talked about



A lighter and more welcoming church after completion of the extensive internal and external works of 1877-1887.

Photo taken about 1902.



West window after damage

the good time they had there. One thing I can remember is that when we came away from Keston.... the Vicar's wife (I believe the name was Huxley), presented me with a large wooden horse, of which in my very young days I was justly proud...'

Perhaps, after all, Keston wasn't such a bad place in 1877 in spite of Mr. E.M. Nicholl's Heart-Cry!

## February 1941

### Who Needs Enemies?

Last year when Kent was subjected to so many air-raids, we were grateful that so little damage had been done to our ancient and beautiful little Parish Church. I am deeply sorry to have to record that this week, considerable damage has been sustained to the West End of the Church, the Vestry and the Churchyard wall, but not by enemy action. It appears that the Local Authority, in order to see what effect falling masonry might have on an indoor Anderson shelter, erected one within the walls of Glebe House (at the

end nearest to the Church), and fired charges of dynamite to bring down the parts of this building which remained standing. This experiment has had serious consequences so far as our Church is concerned. To me, it seems deplorable that when most people, at least, are mourning the mutilation and destruction of so many of our ancient churches and monuments, this experiment should have been allowed to be carried out in such close proximity to a sacred building dating back to the 11th century.

*Extracts taken from Keston Jubilee Souvenir booklet 1977 and with thanks to Edward Williams for the old photos.*



West window today. During the Battle of Britain all the stained glass in the church was damaged. The 'Love' window on the north side was reconstructed using original glass from the four Burne-Jones windows – the others were Faith, Hope and Prayer. Fragments of the lost windows were also mounted among clear quarries in the west window.

# Habitat management to support wildlife



Area by the stream just below the 3rd pond, the wildlife pond

The idverde rangers, Friends of Keston Common and Bromley Countryside volunteers have been working hard this winter to remove large areas of the invasive non-native *Rhododendron ponticum* from the common.

*Rhododendron* plants are a huge problem for woodlands all over the UK, growing very large over time, shading out the traditional woodland understory and ground flora, whilst producing leaf litter that is toxic to many other plants. They also carry the disease *Phytophthora*, a fungus-like pathogen, which can be fatal to more than 150 native plant species.

*Rhododendron ponticum* has also been found to have chemicals called diterpenoids present in its nectar,

deemed toxic to our native honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) and a native mining bee species (*Andrena scotica*) contributing to the worrying decline in pollinator species. If left uncontrolled, *rhododendron ponticum* could eventually dominate the UK woodlands to the detriment of our native ecology. idverde and the Friends of Keston Common are committed to controlling all non-native invasive species on Keston common.



Biodiversity  
Manager idverde

To enjoy your garden, you need to put on some old clothes, a hat and a pair of old shoes take the tools from the shed 0– and tell the man where to dig.

# Little Green Men?



Man orchid in Keston

I was delighted to be invited to visit David Clapham's garden and meadow in Keston in May last year to see some Man orchids. I have enjoyed seeing other types of orchids near Keston church and in the Ravensbourne meadows, but this was definitely special. Apparently they are common in Mediterranean Atlantic European countries such as Portugal and France, but very rare here, listed as 'nationally scarce'. However, Bob Harrop did see one last year near the little meadow on Hayes Common nearby.

Their official name is now *Orchis anthropophora*. The genus name *Orchis* means testicles, a reference to the twin tubers of this genus and the word *anthropophora* means 'bearing men' because of the likeness of the flowers to humans. It took me a while to see that the head is hidden with the torso and limbs dangling down on the greenish yellow flowers. Basically like tiny green men in space helmets!



Man orchids preferred conditions are: moderately sunny meadows, short, chalky grasslands with undisturbed and unimproved soil. David's meadow is at the beginning of the chalk ridge slope on Fox Lane which becomes more prevalent at Jackass Lane.

Man orchids are evergreen, maintaining their leaves throughout winter and producing flowers from April to June depending on location. They grow to about 30cm.

Whilst talking to an Italian Keston resident, I was told about the Naked man orchid, or Italian orchid, *Orchis italica*. It is pink, and has a similar man like shape – but has an extra appendage! I won't go into further detail as this is a church magazine!

Sally Churchus



Italian Man orchid

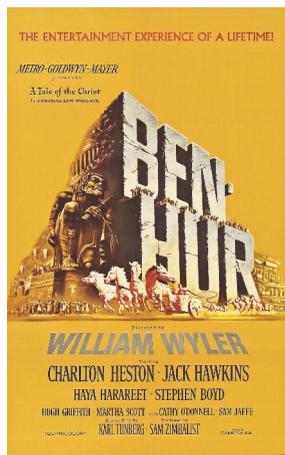
# The story behind the story of Ben-Hur

There is a story to be told of the writing of *Ben-Hur*, the book that became the 1959 block-buster film featuring Charlton Heston.

It was written in 1880 by Lew Wallace, an American lawyer, Union general during the Civil War, and then governor of the New Mexico Territory. (His statue still stands today on Washington's Capitol Hill).

Wallace had told his wife that he intended to examine the New Testament, and then write a book that would explode what he called "the myth of Christ's resurrection". Wisely, his Christian wife did not argue with him, but simply prayed.

The months passed, and Wallace read and reread the New Testament, and wrote and rewrote his draft chapters. Finally, he confided to his wife that he could not refute the resurrection of Christ, and that therefore his book would not be written.



Wallace's wife disagreed. She persuaded him to write his book, but from a new and different standpoint altogether. '*Ben-Hur: A tale of the Christ*' was the result. It is the story of a high-born Jewish man who is taken prisoner by the Romans, who encounters Jesus, and whose life is gradually transformed. Oh, and there is a battle at sea and a chariot race in the story as well!

In the past 145 years since it was written, '*Ben Hur - a tale of the Christ*' has never been out of print. And the film is nearly always on TV over Easter!

Parish Pump

## Hallelujah! You, Lord, have risen!

We celebrate and praise the God of life, who wipes away the sins of the world.  
We celebrate and praise the God of life, who gives us hope for the future.

On this resurrection day, Lord, we pray for justice and mercy in our world.  
On this resurrection day, Lord, we pray for help to be generous in our actions  
and with our material possessions.

Lord, we pray that you keep our hearts and minds attentive to the needs of  
those who are poor.

Lord, we pray: let your kingdom come, and your will be done in the world. Amen.

# What I Do



My name is Simon Burton-Jones and I am the Bishop of Tonbridge; I will be attending the service at Keston Parish Church on Easter Sunday.

It's understandable that people think I just look after the town of Tonbridge in my ministry, but it's a misleading title; in reality I help with over 250 churches across the diocese of Rochester, which covers the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley, Dartford, Gravesend, the Medway towns and everything south of these down to market towns like Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and, yes, Tonbridge itself.

I didn't plan to become an ordained priest, let alone a bishop. When I was in my twenties, several people tried to convince me I should be ordained, but being told what to do by others only made me dig my heels in. But there was a point when, as people of faith will know from experience, I felt a very strong prompt from God to figure it all out.

Much of my ministry was spent in Bromley borough, at churches in Biggin Hill, Bromley and Chislehurst and our children grew up there, so Bromley and its surrounds will always have a special place in my affection.

As Bishop of Tonbridge I share in the oversight of the people of God in Church of England churches with the Bishop of Rochester. Teaching and preaching, articulating faith in Jesus Christ and its relevance in volatile and uncertain times, offering pastoral care to those in need and advocating for the marginalised and voiceless are parts of my role, as well as offering support to ninety Church of England primary and secondary schools.

I love being able to talk about issues of faith with people, and celebrating with those who express new found faith. As is common in so many roles in life now, more time has to be spent in front of a computer, and 'email tennis' round difficult issues is especially sapping. This is why I try to get out to meet people and do things as much as possible: it says of bishops that they should know their people and be known by them.

I am married to Julia and we have two adult children in Tim and Helena, who are also married. It was a special privilege of my role to conduct those services for them.

It is a while since I have visited Keston Parish Church, and it will take me right back to the mid-1990s, when I lived locally and remember Mike Keirle as your incumbent. I'm looking forward to celebrating with parishioners the belief that Jesus rose from the dead .

Simon Burton-Jones

## Richard's Ramblings



Many years ago in the summer, when the children were young, we used to go to Birling Gap. We went in my 1934 Standard Ten motor car, which I still own in restored condition. Birling Gap is on the East Sussex coast and is the lowest point of the Seven Sisters range of cliffs. They rise at Eastbourne and go as far as Newhaven. There's not much there but you can get down to the beach and when we went in the 70s and 80s there was a café and bar at the Birling Gap Hotel. I've not been for many years and with coastal erosion taking place I'd be surprised if anything exists. A terrace of coast-guard houses, end on to the cliffs was gradually falling into the sea even back then.

Now all this is just to set the scene. Some time in the 80s I went with my teenage son and we decided to walk along the shoreline back towards Eastbourne. Once past Beachy Head and the lighthouse, it is possible to scramble up the cliffs, which are lower and less steep, and as a bonus there's

the Beachy Head Hotel to stagger into and relax and have some refreshment. After this the coast road winds its way back to Birling Gap and in about an hour you're back to your car and off home.

Along the shoreline there's always lots of flotsam and jetsam, (strange phrase?). However, this time, there, perched on the rocks at the water's edge, was something unusual. A walking stick – but no ordinary walking stick! What attracted our attention were the badges attached to it and the material of which it was made. These badges were all of towns in Germany, the land of my birth. The other interesting thing is from whence had it arrived at this spot? Had it tumbled over the cliffs on its own or, dare one think it, in someone's hand? Ooh – I hope not! Then again, did it come off a ship one stormy night? How long had it been bobbing along on the waves? Who knows.

For a long time I didn't use it and it sat quietly in the cupboard under the stairs with welly boots, coats, caps and scarves. I already had a stick I'd made from a thick branch with a knobby end which sat snugly in the palm of my hand. As I used it for slashing back nettles in the summer, dead sticks out of the way in winter, plus balancing along muddy tracks it became a bit tired so into use came my new found friend.

The wood from which it is fashioned is *Lignum vitae* – the hardest wood in the world, which grows in South America. It is also known as Ironwood and palo santo – Spanish for 'holy stick'. *Lignum vitae* is Latin for 'wood of life' due to its medicinal uses.

Richard Geiger

# What's On

## • Prayer Walks

**1st Tues & 3rd Wed 9.30am**

**The Green opposite Greyhound pub**

We usually return about 11am. Well behaved dogs welcome too!

## • Men's pub social

**3rd Wed 7pm The Greyhound**

Join us for chat and drinks, plus a meal for those who want it. More details from Martin Becker on 07484 609102.

## • Keston Book Club

**1st Wed 7pm The Fox**

More information from 07503 268001 or angelahollamby@gmail.com.

## • Friends of Keston Common Walk

**1st Wed 2pm from Keston Village Sign opposite The Greyhound**

Walks last up to 2 hours. Well behaved dogs welcome. Good footwear advised.

## • New Keston WI

**2nd Wed 1.30pm-3.30pm**

**Keston Church Hall**

Contact Helen Best on 07715 880889.

## • St Christopher's Walk

**Sun 11th May from Keston Village Sign opposite The Greyhound**

The Pink route, 5.5 mile walk runs past Keston church which will be open. Do pop in en route for refreshments, toilets or to light a candle and say a prayer.

## • Book Reading Fellowship

**Mon 12th May 2pm Gravel Road**

Come and discuss books with some Christian content that you have read over tea/coffee and cake. Please let Sally Churchus know on 020 8462 8750 or editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk if you would like to come.

## • Keston Village Residents' Assoc AGM

**Tues 13th May 7pm**

**Keston Church Hall**

Refreshments will be available after the meeting. Everyone welcome.

## • Keston Church APCM

**Sun 18th May 11.30am**

**Keston Church Hall**

Anyone interested in the work of the church is welcome to attend.

## • KestFest 2025

**Sat 7th June 1-5pm**

**On the Green opposite The Greyhound**

# Magazine Deadline

Please send material for the June/July issue of The Keston Magazine to the Editor, Sally Churchus, before Wednesday 7th May by email to: editor@kestonparishchurch.org.uk or contact her to discuss ideas on Tel: 020 8462 8750. Thank you.



**Sunday  
25th  
May**

# Parish Walk

- Meet 2.15 Keston Church Car Park BR2 6HT
- Takes about 2 hrs
- Finishing at Keston Church Hall for tea and cakes
- Well behaved dogs welcome

**Everyone welcome!**

# Laughlines

☺ **Uncomprehending Pontius Pilate**  
Pilate: “Joseph, I don’t understand. You’re one of the richest men in the region, have spent a fortune on a tomb ready for yourself and your family, yet you want to give it to that man Jesus!”  
Joseph: “It’s only for the weekend!”

☺ **Good Friday**  
I was standing in line at the bank when there was a commotion at the counter. A woman was very distressed, exclaiming, “Where will I put my money?! I have all my money and my mortgage here! What will happen to my mortgage? You can’t do this to us!” It turned out that she had misunderstood a small sign on the counter: WE WILL BE CLOSED FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

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