



St Mary's Church
Stotfold & Fairfield Parish Church
Church Road
Stotfold SG5 4NE
www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk
Charity No: 1131275

Spring
2022

Parish Magazine



Snowdrops in St Mary's Churchyard



Inspired by *The Queen's Green Canopy* to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee this year and lacking the space to create a 'Green Canopy' a number of us gathered on a wet Monday afternoon to plant 150 'Snowdrops in the Green' for future generations to enjoy.



Let's hope we have not provided breakfast, lunch and dinner to our squirrels!



Your Parish Church is Open Every Day

for a time of quiet or personal prayer
or reflection or to light a candle.

There is also a Prayer Box where you can ask the vicar to pray for a person or situation at our daily services.

Mon - Sat: 9.30am to 4.30pm

For current information on all our services: stotfoldchurch.org.uk
To receive the Weekly Messenger email: stotfoldparishchurch@gmail.com



While the Bible does not provide a scientifically accurate description of how God created the world and everything in it, it does explain why God made it. God created the world out of love; said it was good and gave humans the responsibility of helping him to sustain it by tilling the soil and being good stewards and caretakers.

In the first chapter of Genesis God said: "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth..."

However, because of the sins of humanity, the world isn't how God intended it to be. We don't always love God, each other or the created world as we should.

Shortly before she died in 1941, Evelyn Underhill, one of England's most important writers on Christian spirituality, described God as the Eternal Artist who created the world and continues to sustain it with what she calls 'the Music of Eternity'.

Humans have introduced disharmony reflected in war, poverty, racism and mistreatment of the environment.

God's solution was and is to send his Son Jesus Christ to show us how to help him restore harmony, to create a new heaven and a new earth and a new and more just society. The Lord's Prayer invites us to join in this task. In it, Jesus teaches us to pray for God's Kingdom to come, His will to be done.

Underhill wrote that if we slow down and carefully listen to God's 'Music of Eternity', we too can join in God's continual song of love.

In an introduction to the book "Saying Yes to Life", The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby wrote this: "As part of the global church we are called to care not just for God's creation, but for our brothers and sisters all over the world who face having their families uprooted and their livelihoods destroyed by the effects of climate change. Every single one of us has a responsibility as part our discipleship to Christ to live a life that cares for God's world and its creatures."

So how might we do this? What part can we play?

A starting place would be to learn more about the environment from a Christian perspective by visiting Christian environmental websites such as A Rocha www.arocha.org.uk, Climate Stewards www.climatestewards.org or Green Anglicans www.greenanglicans.org

For instance, A Rocha has some suggestions for how to commit to a 'Green Lent' by choosing from one or two of these ideas for the 40 days of Lent:

- **Go plastic free.**
- **Switch off from digital.** Switch off the internet for the first hour in the morning and the last hour at night or have 'switch off Sundays'.
- **Buy less or buy second hand.**
- **Buy local or in bulk.**
- **Spend more time in nature.**
- **Try a plant-based recipe or diet.**

Who knows, maybe a 'Green Lent' will inspire us to tread more lightly upon the earth. It could be a prelude to a new way of living.

Bill

Stotfold Parish Church

As part of our commitment to being good stewards of the environment we have committed to purchasing electricity that is 100% generated from renewable sources as accredited by OFGEM through the Parish Buying Energy Basket 1 October 2021 - 30 September 2022.



The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it
Psalm 24: 1



Join with thousands of Christians around the globe and
Let's Light Up the World in Prayer!

The 7th annual Thy Kingdom Come initiative occurs from
Ascension to Pentecost
and therefore will take place from 26th May to 5th June



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'There are decades when nothing happens: and there are weeks when decades happen' Vladimir Ilyich 'Lenin' (1870-1924)

Since Covid

The coronavirus crisis will be seen as the most significant event to have occurred globally since the end of World War II. Historically this event will be a point used to measure the world pre-Covid and post-Covid in the way that 'pre-1939' and 'post-1945' have been used to define eras and the turning of the pages of history.

There is little doubt that what we have experienced since March 2020 may justifiably be called revolutionary. Living through revolutionary history is much harder than simply reading about it in history books or the Bible – Steve Apted (Head of Procurement Salvation Army)

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Knock Knock

The passenger tapped the taxi driver on the shoulder to ask something.

The driver screamed, lost control of the car, nearly hit a bus, went up on the pavement, and stopped inches from a shop window.

For a second everything went quiet in the car, then the driver said, "Look mate, don't ever do that again. You scared the daylight out of me!"

The passenger apologised and said he didn't realise that a little tap could scare him so much.

The driver replied, "You're right. I'm sorry, it's not really your fault. Today is my first day as a taxi driver. I've been driving a hearse for the last 15 years."

For many years we have supported Tariro a charity that was so close to Andrea Charsley's heart. This is an excerpt from their newsletter received a few weeks ago and written by Father Nicolas.

TARIRO Hope for
Youth in
Zimbabwe



.. .. For me it is the individual youngsters that really make this work so exciting. Lamech is very happy doing an excellent course on agriculture and can now talk in a really informed way about how agriculture in Zimbabwe needs to take account of climate change.. ..

.. .. Then there is Willard, a delightful lad from an abusive home life. Despite that trauma he did well in school and is now in an excellent boarding school where he should flourish and learn to be happy.. ..



www.tarirouk.com

With all your help so far this year we have managed to send over 225 pairs of glasses to help those in need in Zimbabwe. Thank you to you all. There is a collection basket in the north aisle should there be any still lurking in anyone's drawers or other hideaways.



The story of the yellow ribbons

We are loved with everlasting love! One of the greatest and most comforting doctrines taught in the Bible is the love of God for His people. In the Law and in the Prophets; in the poetical and historical books; in Gospels and Letters – all agree to tell us what God said to His people through Jeremiah. “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3).

It was that love that moved the Father to send His Son into the world (John 3:16). Paul writes glowingly of “that great love with which He loved us” (Ephesians 2:4). John emphasises the same great truth in a magnificent creed of just three words: ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8). Quite simply there is nothing in all creation more reassuring, more comforting, more encouraging, more uplifting than to know that God loves us. And we can go further and put it in personal terms as Paul did. ‘He loved me and gave Himself for me’ (Galatians 2:21).

How can we illustrate the illimitable love of God? One such illustration was told by the Rev John Wilbur Chapman of Indiana, an ordained Presbyterian minister who in 1893 went into full-time evangelistic ministry.

One evening Chapman was travelling by train in a rural part of Kansas. The other passenger in the carriage was a young man who kept glancing out the window and then covering his face with his hands. Chapman asked if he could help.

The young man confessed that many years before he had run away from home and ‘sown his wild oats.’ He had not written to his parents at all, until a few weeks before, telling them that he would be travelling on this train. At a certain point it passed very close to his home. In the letter he had begged his parents’ forgiveness and asked if they wanted him to come home. If so, they were to tie a yellow ribbon on the old apple tree that grew right beside the railway lines.

“Sir,” he said to Chapman, “the train will soon pass my home but I’m afraid to look. If there’s a yellow ribbon on the tree, I’ll get off at the next station and go home. If there’s no ribbon, I’ll just travel on. But I’m too afraid to look out for the tree.” So Chapman offered to look for him.

“You can open your eyes now,” he said a few minutes later. The returning prodigal looked at Chapman with tears and quivering lips. ‘All is well,’ said the evangelist. ‘There is a yellow ribbon on the apple tree. In fact, there’s far more than one. Every branch is hanging with yellow ribbons, scores and scores of them. Your parents love you that much, they want you to come home.’

If parents can love their wayward children like that, how much greater is the love of God! Truly, we are loved with everlasting love.

Dr Herbert McGonigle, former Senior Lecturer in Historical Theology & Church History, Nazarene Theological College, Manchester

The truth is (still) out there

If you have been in Letchworth recently you may have noticed one more shop has disappeared from Leys Avenue. The Christian Bookshop closed in February after more than fifty years on the high street in North Herts.



We believe it will be sadly missed, not just by regular churchgoers, but by all those who have a sneaking suspicion that the fundamental answers to the meaning of life are found in the words of the bible and the life of Jesus Christ – but haven't quite got round to following it up yet. The shop provided a place on the high street to ask questions, find bibles and books to help, or maybe just sit awhile in a place of peace and welcome.

Of course, times have changed. When the shop opened, there was no internet, no credit card machine, no online shopping, no streaming of music and video, no e-books, and of course no Covid 19. Even for a non-profit organisation it has been increasingly difficult to survive these changes.

But to quote the writer of Ecclesiastes "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven". For those fifty years the Christian Bookshop was the right shop in the right place. It has now retired to let other initiatives take over. You can now find the words of Jesus on a smartphone bible app without having to buy a bible. If you would like to buy a bible or explanatory book you can do so online without leaving home. Our churches are accessible in person or online to those who want to drop in and ask questions or join an Alpha group.

So for those with that "sneaking suspicion" here is another quote, this time a promise from Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "Seek and you will find" - or to pinch that tagline from the X factor "the truth is out there"!



Friends of St Mary's Church

Invite you to attend a talk entitled:

"St Mary's Church, Stotfold: The history and life of our parish church"

Speaker: Theresa Britt

Thursday 19th May 3pm in church

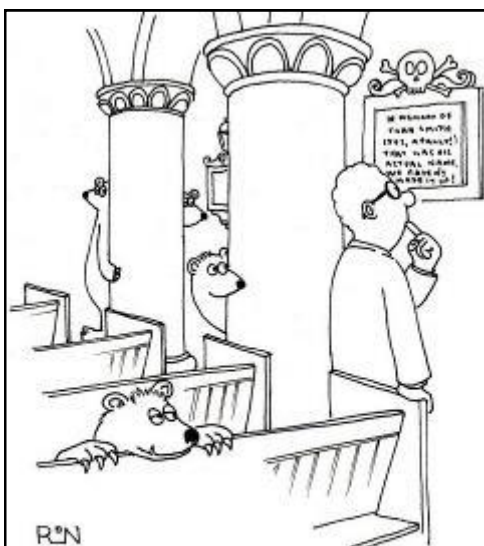
Refreshments • Donations welcome



Are you interested in joining a discussion group, bible study or Christianity course?

If so please contact:

Revd Bill Britt on 01462 730218 or
email: revd.bill.britt@gmail.com



*Dennis spent a long time in church
looking for his forbears*

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The Bark and Read Foundation helps dogs to
help children develop a passion for reading.

It was set up to support and promote the amazing
work of charities tackling the UK's literacy
problems by taking dogs into schools as reading
volunteers.



Funded by The Kennel Club Educational Trust, the Bark and Read
Foundation is working with charities, social enterprises and individuals in
schools and libraries around the UK, helping children to read with their
specially-trained support dogs.

www.thekennelclub.org.uk

We are shaped and fashioned by what we love. – J Von Goethe

Love does not say, 'Give me', but 'Let me give you.' – Anon

Empathy is your pain in my heart. – H E Luccock

If Christ lives in us then he prays in us and our chief concern should be to provide a place in which he can pray. We know the joy of slipping into a silent church out of the din and roar of the traffic. What joy for him to push open our swing doors and find in us a place of silence where he can pray his prayer.

Mother Maribel of Wantage

Dear planet earth:
the Light of all light shine on you
the Power of all power energise you
the Love of all love transform you

Dear people:
The Love of all love transform you

IN CASE YOU ARE STRUGGLING AND NEED A LISTENING EAR:

The Samaritans: 116 123

Whatever you're going through, you can call us any time, from any phone for free

Anxiety UK: 03444 775 774

Our team often have their own lived experience and understand the distress, isolation and misery that anxiety can cause. We are here to help and can support you to find ways to control anxiety instead of it controlling you.

Mind: 0300 123 3393

If you're finding things hard emotionally right now, you're not alone. Mind are there to provide information and support.

Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247

We can talk in confidence, in many different languages, 24-hours a day, 365 days a year, for as long as you need.

Child-line: 0800 11 11

We are here for all young people, whatever you're going through.

Human Trafficking: one of the greatest violations of human dignity

If you suspect an instance of trafficking in your area you can contact:

- The Police (101 or 999 if someone is in immediate danger)
- The National Modern Slavery Helpline 0800 0121 700
- Crimestoppers 0800 555 111

Do not confront a suspected trafficker or victim of trafficking. Your safety and that of any possible victims is of primary importance.

 Supporting all through a personal cancer journey



"When "I" is replaced with "we" even illness becomes wellness."

— Malcolm X

Your own personal journey through diagnosis treatment & beyond

Our vision is to create a warm and welcoming environment for all to come along, gain support, valuable information and the tools and techniques to gain positivity.

Contact us for more details:
Anna Davies: 07968 014720
Clare Teale: 07776 481481

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**Please feel free to join us
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Christian Aid Week 15-21 May 2022

If you would like an arrangement to
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 or in remembrance of a loved one



Contact:
Anne Scarr - 01462 834844

**Would you like to enter a scarecrow in
St Mary's Church
Community Scarecrow Festival
being held the weekend 18/19 June?**



Groups, businesses and individuals can indicate their interest in taking part by emailing stotfoldparishchurch@gmail.com with their name, organisation if applicable, address and telephone number.



The Meeting of Three Public Footpaths



Thank you to Central Bedfordshire Council for the recent tarmacking of the footpath from the end of Chequers Close which runs through our churchyard.

St Mary's Church Hall



Hall dimensions are:

15.5m x 6.4m (51'x21')

The ceiling is 3m high
and therefore can accommodate
some bouncy castles.

Kitchen facilities

Booking Secretary: Maureen Winters 07727 688877
or email: stotfoldparishchurchhall@gmail.com

Library Outreach Service - Not able to come to the library?

In partnership with Stotfold Library and Stotfold Good Neighbour Group, the Library Outreach Service is designed for anyone who wants to borrow books, audio books, DVDs or jigsaws and has no one else to choose and collect them from the library. It is also available to carers. You will receive a monthly delivery of items tailored to your interests.

If you are interested, contact the library:
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Please think of us when shopping at Amazon over this Christmas period and use AmazonSmile at <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1131275-0> as they will then donate 0.5% of the net purchase value of many products to The Parochial Church Council Of The Ecclesiastical Parish Of St. Mary The Virgin, Stotfold, at no cost to you, if you have chosen us as your charity.

Use the link above which will launch to our page and press 'start shopping'. You can then enter your normal Amazon log-in details and all your account history, addresses, card details etc will appear as normal. Should you already donate to a charity and wish to change to ourselves just click the charity you currently support on your header and click change charity. Unfortunately, we have a very long charity name 'The Parochial Church Council of The Ecclesiastical Parish Of St. Mary The Virgin, Stotfold' and so the easiest way to find us is to search Stotfold and we come up as one of the options.

To support us in future you just need to remember to go to smile.amazon.co.uk whenever you wish to place an order, or why not bookmark this as Amazon Smile which then makes it all so simple.



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A True Reminder of Just How Special Friendship Is!



In 2020 in support of his friend and team-mate Rob Burrows who had been diagnosed with MND Kevin Sinfield OBE ran seven marathons in seven days and raised £2.7million for the MND Association. That smashed the former England playmaker's initial target of £77,777, a nod to the number seven shirt which Rob Burrow wore for Leeds during his 17-year rugby league career.

Then last November Kevin completed another incredible fundraising feat called 'The Extra Mile Challenge'. He put his running shoes back on in Leicester and completed 101 miles within 24 hours to arrive at Headingley Stadium. Kevin's initial target for this was to raise £100,000, however the total donations split between MND Association and Leeds Hospitals Charity currently stands at just over £2.1 million.



The government has pledged to put at least £50m into MND research over the next five years.

Currently there is no cure for MND, but there are treatments to help reduce the impact it has on a person's daily life.



For a number of years we have collected used postage stamps in support of designated charities.

We are now supporting MND, a charity supported by Keryle Rutherford and family in memory of Iain.

Please either give your used stamps to Keryle or alternatively leave in the basket on the shelf by our north door.

The MND Association is a charity focused on improving access to care, research and campaigning for people affected by motor neurone disease.

For more information: www.mndassociation.org

Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science & Religion in Cambridge writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

The Love of Wisdom of Natural Things

Some time ago a scientist was invited to speak at the Dewsbury Women's Institute. He spoke about his research on polymers, hoping that the women of this Yorkshire mill town would connect with his desire to develop new fibres.

One person in particular, a woman called Betty who had worked in a mill since the age of 15, listened as if her life depended on it, and peppered him with questions afterwards. She had always been interested in how things work, but until that day had not found anyone to answer her questions. Whenever she had asked about the processes that they were using in the mill, she was just told to get on with her job.

From the outside, science can seem a closed specialty, hemmed in by intimidating jargon. When McLeish described science as 'the love of wisdom of natural things', however, he realised he was opening a door. He was moved to see that Betty was not the only person who shed a tear when her questions were finally taken seriously, confirming that her enquiring mind was indeed probing in the right direction – only fifty years too late.

Hearing about people like Betty reminds me that science is a very natural activity for anyone to be involved in. McLeish is convinced that there is a future in 'science therapy'. In his book *Faith and Wisdom in Science*, where this story appears, he asks the question "If a reintroduction to the activity of representing both inner and outer worlds in paint, music and drama can help to heal minds, what hope might there be for a participation in a gentle and contemplative science in restoring a broken or misunderstood relationship with the physical world?"

This story inspired me to run a number of hands-on science activities with adult audiences in churches. I have extracted DNA from strawberries with a midweek group for older people, organised hands-on exhibits to liven up lecture or discussion events, and even had groups extracting DNA from their own cheek cells.

Every time I lead activities like these, I find that grown-ups are grateful for the opportunity to have a go at science themselves. I love helping church-based groups, in particular, to reconnect with science and celebrate what they find. Science is not just for children and professionals – it is for everyone to enjoy and explore the world God made.

Social Dates for Your Diary - *ALL ARE WELCOME*

- **TABLE TOP SALE**
St Mary's Church Hall
2 April 10am -12 noon
- **PLANT SALE & COFFEE MORNING**
St Mary's Church Hall
14 May 10am - 12 noon



COMMUNITY COFFEE MORNINGS

1st Wednesday of each month
In Church 10.30am - noon

St Mary's Women's Fellowship

Church Hall - 3rd Wednesday of the Month - 3pm

March 16th	Margaret Brewer - Gospel Messages in Flowers
April 20th	Talk by British Red Cross Response Team
May 18th	Pam Rhodes - "Dropping In"
June 15th	William Armstrong - David's Bookshop

Hymn Singing: for all those who love them

Do come and join us in the Church
on the second Wednesday of the month at 2pm

Everyone is welcome: come along and have a good sing

Men's Big Breakfast

Join us for breakfast and an informal chat at The Wilbury, Letchworth.
Last Saturday of the month at 9am. Contact Roger: 730103

Friendship Lunch

Last Wednesday of the month at The Stag. 12 noon for 12.30. If you would like to come along please put your name / menu choices on the sheet in Church or contact Carolyn Bleach 07759 914891 or carolyn.bleach@sky.com



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The Revd Michael Burgess looks at 'The Potato Planters' by Jean-Francois Millet, which hangs in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Enter my rest

At this time of the year, we are planning our gardens for the Spring and Summer ahead. The book of Genesis opens with a glorious account of God's work of creation, and it also tells us that God rested on the seventh day.

We all need to find that balance of work and rest, of activity and slowing down in our lives. And we are not always good at that because our world seems to be in the fast lane. We rush everywhere, we rush out of habit, and we rush because everyone around us is rushing.

'The Potato Planters' by Jean-Francois Millet, a 19th century French artist,



portrays two peasants at work. They don't seem to be rushing, but Millet has certainly portrayed the hard toil of their work, digging in the earth from sunrise to sunset to eke out a living. Millet was the son of a farm labourer and many of his paintings convey the severe realism of peasant life. We can sympathise with the couple working on the land, and our eyes focus on them as they dominate the canvas.

But in the corner under the shade of a tree there is a donkey and a sleeping child. The donkey knows only too well the reality of toil and work, but here he is resting, enjoying the peace and the shade. Andy Merrifield, an American philosopher, has just published an account of his travels with a donkey, Gribouille. As they journey together, the donkey teaches him the value of patience, the importance of going slowly through the world, and the preciousness of tender friendship between humans and animals. They are all caught up in the little donkey in this painting.

The man and woman in the foreground may reflect our own lives with the duties, the expectations and the demands called of us at work. Take time to focus on the donkey, enjoying his rest. Take time this Spring and Summer to find relaxation and recreation. The world may carry on spinning around us, but we can stand apart, and enter into the rest that God enjoyed after His work of creation.



Every gift. Every action. Every prayer. Every one of us can change lives.

Drought starves. It robs women of the power to farm and grow food for their families.

Now, for the first time in a generation, global poverty is rising. Covid-19, conflict and the climate crisis are pushing more of our global neighbours into a struggle for survival.

Women and men in Zimbabwe are hungry to provide a more hopeful future. Mums often skip meals to share with their children what little food they have.



One of these mums is Jessica Mwedzi. Drought makes every day a struggle for survival. Jessica is hungry. Hungry for a good meal. Hungry to earn a decent living. Hungry to provide a more hopeful future for her family. 'My children crave a good meal, but I can't provide.' Jessica says. 'It pains me to send them to bed hungry.'

Your gift could help Jessica grow drought-resistant crops. You could help her set up a water tap on her farm and learn how to grow food in the harsh climate. She'll turn her dry, dusty land into a garden of hope.

This Christian Aid Week, you can be one of the hundreds of thousands of our supporters who give, act and pray – stepping out in love for our global neighbours. With you by our side, we won't stop until everyone can live a full life, free from poverty and hunger.

Christian Aid Week brings people together as one community helping those living in poverty to transform their own lives.

This Christian Aid Week (15-21 May), please:

- Give generously to help women grow crops that survive in the drought.
- Act and raise your voice for justice. Join our Loss and Damage campaign.
- Pray that families will stay strong during tough times of drought.

Together, we can turn hunger into hope.

Join us at caweek.org

WORSHIP SERVICES

Mon - Sat 9am: Morning Prayer

A short service where we pray both for our community and the wider world.

Wed 9.45am: Holy Communion

Sunday Services

Every Sunday: 9am Morning Prayer 10am: Parish Communion/Sunday School

First Sunday of the Month: 8am: Said Communion 9am: Morning Prayer
10am: Parish Communion / Sunday School 4pm: Tea Time Praise

Holy Week & Easter Services

Palm Sunday

10 April Sunday 9am Morning Prayer

10 April Sunday 10am Parish Communion

10 April Sunday 4.00pm Families at Four

10 April Sunday 6.00pm Stations of the Cross

11 April Monday 7.30pm, Holy Week reflection and Compline

12 April Tuesday 7.30pm, Holy Week reflection and Compline

13 April Wednesday 7.30pm Tenebrae service

14 April Thursday 6.30pm Maundy Thursday Last Supper meal

14 April Thursday 9.30pm Stripping of the altars and vigil at the altar of repose

15 April Friday 2.00pm Good Friday Hour before the Cross

16 April Saturday 7.30pm Easter Eve – Service of Light and Renewal of Baptism Vows

17 April Sunday 6.30am Sunrise Service at the Beacon

17 April Sunday 10.00am Easter Day Communion Service



Sunday School

In the Church Hall at 10am

God the Creator - by Paul Hardingham

For many today the universe began with a big bang, in which a lump of matter, smaller than a pinhead, exploded 15 billion years ago. It's a story that defines who we are and where we come from. However, the Bible gives us another perspective on this event, revealing God as Creator: *'By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible'* (Hebrews 11:3). What does Genesis 1 say about God as Creator?

'In the beginning, God'

Whereas science can offer answers about the **how** of creation, the Bible tells us about the **why** i.e. the purpose of the Creator! Creation reflects the character and glory of God, inviting a response of dependence and praise!

'God created the heavens and the earth'

God shaped the universe, as expressed in the *'6 days'* of creation. They speak of an ordered and purposeful universe that expresses God's will: He spoke and it was done! An alternative translation is *'God began creating'*, reminding us that creation is also an ongoing process, where the Holy Spirit is still at work in our lives and world.

'God created man in His own image'

In the account, human beings are presented as the climax and crown of creation. We share the sixth day of creation with other creatures, as well as 95% of the same DNA. However, we are distinctively made in the **image of God**, created for relationship with God, with a responsibility to care for the created order.

'And God saw that it was good'

Like an artist, God described His work as *good*. We should always approach this story with wonder, enjoying God's world and affirming creativity in ourselves and others.

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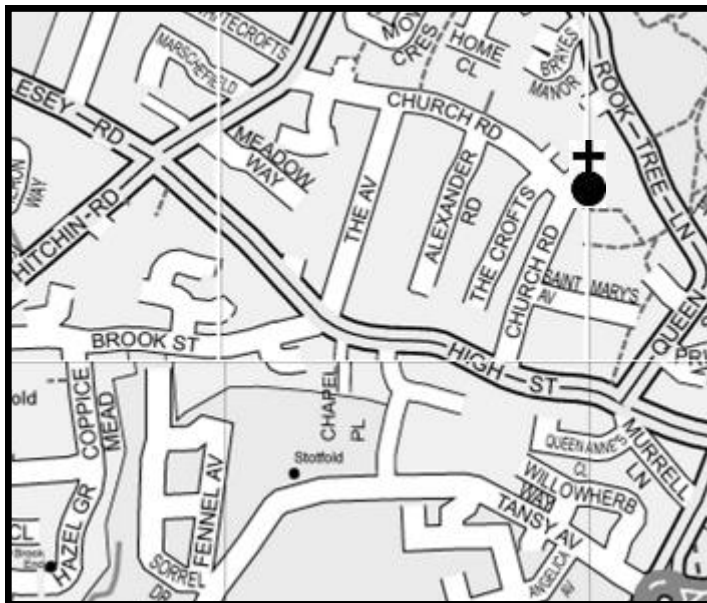
All Enquiries Welcome

07837 866922

kentonsmoore@hotmail.co.uk

St Mary's Church

Church Road Stotfold SG5 4NE



www.stotfoldchurch.org.uk

RECTOR:

Revd Bill Britt	01462 730218	revd.bill.britt@gmail.com
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CURATE:

Revd Graham Clark	01462 625270	graham.clark20@ntlworld.com
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CHURCHWARDENS:

Steve Hardman	01462 733861	stevehardman@outlook.com
Jane Hyde	01462 730305	janehyde50@hotmail.co.uk

BAPTISMS:

Sara Clark	01462 625270	sara.clark3@ntlworld.com
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WEDDINGS:

Revd Bill Britt	01462 730218	revd.bill.britt@gmail.com
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CHURCH HALL:

Maureen Winters	07727 688877	stotfoldparishchurchhall@gmail.com
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TREASURER/

MAGAZINE EDITOR:

Alison Collis	01462 625637	alison.collis@ntlworld.com
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