

**Parish of Cirencester with
Watermoor and Chesterton**

Parish Life Magazine

*Be still, for the
presence of the
Lord...*



£1

February 2026

Parish of Cirencester with Watermoor and St Lawrence (Chesterton)

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Parish Magazine articles (submitted by 16th day of previous month)

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Lead article

Some of our favourite Christian festivals have taken place in the last month and you may well feel now what? February for me has always been an exciting month. As a child it often would snow meaning that events planned if they took place became extra special. Many family events took place, lots of birthdays, wedding anniversaries, half term holidays and an air of expectation.



As I have grown older there is still, for me, anticipation of what lies ahead. A time to pause and take stock before the Christian year moves on with the end of the Christmas season on February 2nd and moving into Lent. Decisions need to be made of how we mark these events.

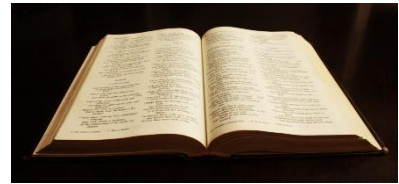
In this parish we have Lent lunches, study groups, prayer groups and time to just stop and be. We are spoilt for choice in so many ways that we can feel overwhelmed and end up doing nothing, this is the easy option. I usually end up reading a book that is recommended for the season or re-reading a book. We have a wonderful bookshop with people only too happy to give a helping hand in showing us the way. Taking up the habit of daily prayer venturing to the church to join others. Gathering every Sunday we know the benefit of corporate worship - it can give us a new meaning to our prayers. Adverse weather conditions shouldn't put a stop to taking that step into a new Lenten discipline.

As we journey on can we bring the excitement that we had just over a month ago back. Decorations and trees and special food shouldn't stop us feeling excited when they disappear and our lives become more mundane. As I write we have remembered the Baptism of Christ - what a moment that was. John standing in the water faced with our Lord asking to be baptised. No wonder John felt overwhelmed. Did he shirk what he was being asked to do? He took that moment and obeyed. We never know what we may be asked to do by God and this is a time when we can stop and listen to his voice, a time of anticipation and excitement of what lies ahead. I long to hear your stories at the end of the month. So whatever the weather we need not be phased but be prepared to walk with God in our exciting journey called life.

Revd Rosemary

Musings in Mark

2026 Feb Mark 9:2-4,7



After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. [3] His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. [4] And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus..... [7] Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

They were probably pretty tired by the time they arrived at the top of this “high” mountain where they expected teaching, prayer or just time with Jesus. What they were not prepared for was the move into the edges of the glorious kingdom. Jesus taking on all his glory, bright beyond human description generating fear rather than delight. Probably the arrival of Elijah and Moses didn’t help the shock, and Peter’s reaction to put up tents for each of them was a reaction of insecurity.

Perhaps we don’t fully get the picture of what is happening here. They are so used to Jesus, the man, looking like themselves, behaving in a human way, that it’s easy to forget who he fully is. A sight of his glory, his talk with the two prophets (to whom we’ll also be able to talk one day!) as he gives us just a glimpse of the fullness of the kingdom which we call home.

Many of us are closer to our heavenly home than we are to our birth, and this taste of the kingdom should give us hope for our future home. The change in Jesus might give us an idea of how our new home will be for its colours, sounds, variety and the people we shall see.

Someone has said of their impending death “I feel I’m on the way out”. A more preferable understanding is that “I’m going home”!

Rev Paul



Celebrating 150 Years of Mothers' Union: Join Us, Join In – Lighting the Way for Generations to Come

2026 marks 150 years since Mothers' Union was founded in the small parish church of Old Alresford, Hampshire, by Mary Sumner - a home-educated young vicar's wife with a powerful vision. She dreamed of women, regardless of class or status, coming together in faith to support one another and strengthen family life within the church.

From that small flame of an idea, a global movement was born. Today, 150 years later, Mothers' Union has grown to around 4 million members in 84 countries, working to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities around the world. At the heart of all we do is our belief that faith and compassion can transform lives.

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

And shine a light is what our members do. Whether someone finds themselves unexpectedly in the hospital, a family is grappling with a parent going to prison, or a baby is born prematurely, Mothers' Union members are there offering care, support, and love without judgment. We speak out against injustice, create safe spaces for conversation, and run parenting support groups - all helping to build stronger, more resilient communities.

All of our work is guided by our three core pillars of transformation: Ending Violence – promoting peace and safety, Ending Injustice – advancing gender justice and Ending Poverty – fostering self-reliance and resilience

Our global programmes include literacy and savings groups, parenting and resilience training, and domestic abuse awareness campaigns. These initiatives are rooted in local communities - we listen first, then respond with practical, faith-led action. Every day, globally, our

members carry out thousands of quiet acts of service that bring hope and healing.

Mothers' Union today reflects the diversity of the modern world. We are a movement that continues to evolve, welcoming people of all backgrounds and identities. While we are a women-led movement, men are welcome to join! 150 years of courage, care, and community, and we're just getting started – so why not join us?



Mothers' Union Letter



Dear Members and Friends,

It seems only a short time ago that I was writing for the 2024 February magazine. Time seems to fly as one gets older.

Then I spoke about Candlemas, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Simeon and Anna had waited many years for the Messiah to be made manifest. Epiphany means 'manifestation', when we see everything plainly as we walk in the light of God. We pray that our members help to shine that light.

2026 is a special year for Mothers' Union - we'll be celebrating 150 years since Mary Sumner began her work. (See the article in this magazine)

There will be the 150th Celebratory Service at St Paul's Cathedral in London on 10th June at 5pm.

The Annual Gathering will take place on 11th June at the Emmanuel Centre (next to Mary Sumner House) from 10.30am to 4.30pm.

A Global Gathering is planned for October 2026 in South Africa, date to be confirmed.

Also in June we hope that MU members will take part in local church

services, to share the story and impact of Mothers' Union in their communities.

MU Big Picnics are being planned across the country, with joyful community events to connect neighbours, sharing food and fellowship (see the MU website for information)

Looking forward to all the celebrations..

With love,

Rosemary Roberts

Diary Dates:

February

Wed 4th 2.30 pm. Parish Hall, Watermoor. AGM with poems.
Bring and Buy

Wed 11th 12 noon - 1.15pm MU Soup Lunch. MUe stall, cards on sale

Wed 18th Ash Wednesday

Wed 25th Members' Day at Ss Philip and James Church, Hucclecote,
10-1pm
(bring lunch)

Thurs 26th MU Corporate Communion 12 noon at the Parish Church
7.30pm Chill & Chatter

March

Wed 4th 2.30pm Parish Hall, Watermoor
Speakers: Pauline Skinner and Caroline Winter: 'A Brief
talk about their Lives'. Bring & Buy.

LUNCH

Home-made soups, bread and cheese, fruit
& coffee

£4.50

PARISH HALL, WATERMOOR

Car Park from Trinity Road, GL7 1NE

Noon – 1.15pm

Wednesday 11th FEBRUARY 2026



Mothers' Union Cards etc. on sale

Funds raised will go to Mothers' Union projects

St Nicholas Toy Service

St John Baptist



The children discovered golden (chocolate) coins in their shoes!

Pam and Alan Barnes



Spiritual Growth: February is a month for reflection and renewal. Verses like Isaiah 40:31 encourage us to wait on the Lord for renewed strength.

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

St Valentine: Love That Lasts

Each February, St Valentine's Day arrives wrapped in cards, flowers, and chocolates. Yet behind the hearts and ribbons stands a Christian witness whose story still speaks quietly but powerfully to the life of the Church.



Very little is known with certainty about St Valentine. In fact, there may have been more than one Valentine, all martyrs of the early Church. The best-known tradition tells of a priest in third-century Rome who lived at a time when Christianity was illegal. The Emperor Claudius II is said to have banned marriages for young men, believing that single soldiers fought more fiercely. Valentine, however, continued to marry couples in secret, affirming the Christian belief that faithful love is a gift from God, not a privilege granted by the state.

For this, Valentine was imprisoned and eventually executed. According to legend, before his death he befriended his jailer's daughter and left her a note signed "from your Valentine" — a small, human gesture in the face of suffering.

Whether or not all these details are historically exact, the heart of the story remains true. Valentine stands as a witness to love that is costly, faithful, and rooted in God. His was not the love of romance alone, but the love that chooses courage over safety, service over self-interest, and hope over fear.

In a world that often treats love as fleeting or conditional, St Valentine reminds us that Christian love is deeper and more demanding. It is seen in marriages sustained through patience and forgiveness; in friendships that endure change and loss; in the quiet acts of care offered to neighbours, family members, and strangers alike.

As we mark St Valentine's Day, we might give thanks for all the forms of love in our parish — romantic, familial, and communal — and pray

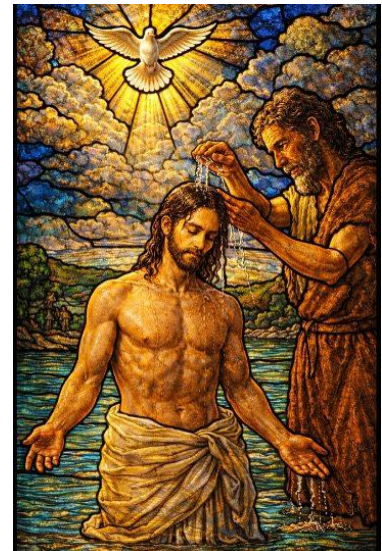
for those who find this season difficult through loneliness, grief, or broken relationships. Above all, we can remember that love, in its truest sense, is not something we manufacture ourselves, but something we receive from God and are called to pass on.

St Valentine's life, however fragmentary its details, points us back to that enduring truth: that love, when it is grounded in faith, can outlast even death.



The Baptism of Christ: A Beginning for Us All

The story of Jesus' baptism is one many of us know well. Jesus comes to the River Jordan, where John is calling people to repentance and new life. John is hesitant – surely it should be the other way round? Yet Jesus insists, and as he is baptised, the heavens open, the Spirit descends like a dove, and a voice is heard: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”



It is a moment of revelation. Jesus has not yet performed miracles or taught the crowds, yet here he is affirmed and named as God's beloved. Before he does anything, he is loved. That matters, not just for understanding who Jesus is, but for understanding who we are.

When we think about baptism today, it is easy to focus on the practicalities: the water, the godparents, the candle, the family gathering afterwards. These things are important and joyful, but the heart of baptism goes deeper. Baptism is about identity and belonging. It is about being named and claimed by God, just as Jesus was at the Jordan.

For those baptised as infants, baptism speaks before we can. It says that God's love does not depend on our achievements, our understanding,

or our behaviour. For those baptised later in life, it marks a conscious turning towards God and a new beginning. In both cases, baptism is not an end point but a starting place – the beginning of a lifelong journey of faith.

Baptism also reminds us that faith is never just private. Jesus' baptism takes place in public, among others who are seeking change. In baptism we are joined to a community, the Church, and called to live out our faith in the world: to seek justice, to show compassion, and to walk humbly with God.

Each time we witness a baptism, we are invited to remember our own. We are reminded that we, too, are God's beloved children, called to live in the light of that truth. As we move through the year, the Baptism of Christ asks us a gentle but profound question: if we truly believed we are loved by God, how might we live differently?

In the flowing waters of the Jordan, Jesus' ministry begins. In the waters of baptism, ours continues.



Saints Remembered in February

February may be the shortest month of the year, but it is rich in saints whose lives continue to speak to the Church today. As winter begins to loosen its grip and the days slowly lengthen, these commemorations invite us to reflect on faithfulness, courage and love lived out in ordinary and extraordinary ways.



Candlemas – 2 February

The month opens with the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, often known as Candlemas. This day recalls Mary and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, where he is recognised by Simeon and Anna as the promised Messiah. Simeon's

words, “a light for revelation to the Gentiles”, have made this a festival of light, traditionally marked by the blessing of candles. Candlemas reminds us that Christ is the light who enters the world quietly, yet changes everything.

St Aidan – 2 February

Also remembered on this day is St Aidan, the great missionary bishop of Lindisfarne. Sent from the island of Iona to re-evangelise Northumbria in the 7th century, Aidan was known for his humility, generosity and gentleness. He travelled on foot, speaking with people where they lived and worked, and insisted that Christian faith should be shown through kindness to the poor and vulnerable. His life is a reminder that effective witness is rooted in compassion.

St Blaise – 3 February

St Blaise, bishop and martyr, is remembered especially as a healer. According to tradition, he cured a child who was choking, and he later became associated with prayers for those suffering from throat ailments. In some churches the day is marked by the blessing of throats. Blaise’s story reminds us of the Church’s long concern for healing in body as well as soul.

St Agatha – 5 February

St Agatha was a young woman from Sicily who suffered martyrdom in the 3rd century after refusing to renounce her faith. She is remembered for her courage and steadfastness in the face of cruelty. Agatha has become a symbol of dignity, resilience and the refusal to let faith be crushed by injustice.

St Valentine – 14 February

Often overshadowed by cards and chocolates, **St Valentine** was a Christian priest, and possibly bishop, who was martyred in Rome.

Though details of his life are uncertain, he has long been associated with love and faithful commitment. For Christians, Valentine's Day can be an opportunity to reflect on love not merely as romance, but as self-giving, patience and loyalty — qualities at the heart of Christian discipleship.

St Matthias – 24 February

Towards the end of the month we remember **St Matthias**, chosen to replace Judas Iscariot as one of the Twelve Apostles. Matthias had been with Jesus from the beginning, yet remained largely unseen until he was called forward. His story reminds us that God often calls those who have served quietly and faithfully, even when they have not sought recognition.

Together, the saints of February offer a varied picture of Christian life: light and witness, healing and courage, love and quiet faithfulness. As we journey through this winter month, may their examples encourage us to live our faith with renewed hope and trust.

Articles submitted by HG



Highlights from the Parochial Church Council (PCC)

The PCC last met on the 15th of October 2025 and the Standing Committee met on the 19th of November 2025. The full PCC will have their first meeting of the year on 21 January 2026 (after submittal of this article).



The PCC is pleased to report that based on a suggestion from one of our parishioners and a pledge to cover the £60 annual membership, we are now a Corporate Member (which includes all 3 churches) of *The Prayer Book Society*. *The Prayer Book Society* is a registered charity

which amongst other things was established for the advancement of the Christian Religion as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. We have a group of faithful parishioners worshipping at our Book of Common Prayer 8 am services at St John Baptist on Sundays which is flourishing, and *The Prayer Book Society* provides excellent resources. More information on The Prayer Book Society can be found on their website at: <https://www.pbs.org.uk/> .

We have numerous projects we will be tracking and closely monitoring this year. We are particularly pleased that our Diocesan Chancellor has recently approved the Faculty for the St John Baptist Project — which includes the installation of seven toilets with washing facilities, of which three, including one fully accessible cubicle, will be inside the church and four within the South Porch; creating a permanent but flexible catering station in the South Aisle; and adapting oak pews, with castors, so that they can be easily moved to accommodate events or functions. Mr Alan Jones and the project team will be working to finalise the schedule of work and specifications for Diocesan Advisory Committee approval prior to construction work starting.

The Parish Church Noticeboard was recently relocated to the area west of the South Porch, next to the external wall of the south aisle behind the bench there, as part of the St John Baptist Churchyard Pathway Project — which included new paving stones, work on the drains, ironwork, lighting, and installation of bin storage. The project is essentially complete now with the exception of refurbishment and modification of the bench in front of the noticeboard.

Other major projects include the preparation and planning for installation of Solar Panels at St John Baptist, repairs to the North Clerestory Wall in St John Baptist, refurbishment of the Parish Hall roof, and extension of the Garden of Remembrance in Holy Trinity Churchyard. We will try and provide current and relevant updates in the Magazine as we progress along.

We will also continue to focus on good governance in 2026, including review and update, if required, of relevant instructions, policies and regulations some of which can be found on the Parish website.

At the end of 2025, the PCC promulgated a new *Safeguarding Policy* which adopted the National and Gloucester Diocesan Safeguarding Policies including the parish safeguarding handbook and Promoting a safer church policy statements.

Finally, the PCC will be starting preparations for the Annual Vestry and Parochial Church Meeting which is currently scheduled for Sunday 19 April 2026 after the 10 am service at St John Baptist.

Mark Dennis, Secretary



A message from a Church Guide

I wonder if you have ever thought about becoming a Guide in the Parish Church?

I have been asking my fellow Guides what they like best about leading guided tours. Here are some of their responses:



“You meet people from all over the world”

“Such a rewarding way of volunteering. I have learnt such a lot”

“I really enjoy meeting people through Church Guiding. Those who choose to come on a tour are people with interest. I love it when I see a ‘light bulb’ moment when I share a story or explanation of something in the church. I feel they are taking away something that has had a real impact on their lives”

“Visitors love the stories behind the history of the building”

“It’s a privilege to be part of sharing this beautiful building with others”

“Learning to be a guide helped me to learn more about my town and its history as well as just learning about the church itself. The more you uncover, the more interesting it is, and the more you realise you have to learn”

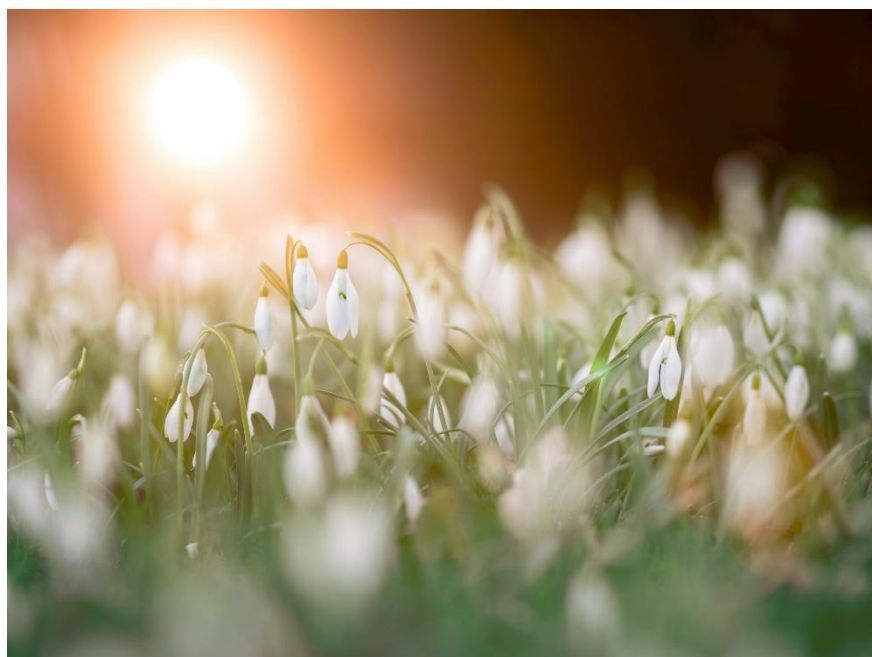
“I’ve had a lot of fun with the children’s groups. Such wonderful questions!”

“Helping children learn about the church is wonderful. They really enjoy seeing the building as a site of exciting stories, like the beheading of earls or of prisoners being held captive in the Civil War. I hope our tours help them to develop their sense of curiosity”

At the moment our friendly team of guides are looking for a few more volunteers to join us. We provide training and support and offer a flexible system of commitment, depending on individuals’ preferences, with tours between March and October.

If you think this might suit you, please get in touch via Sarah Marshall in the Parish Office (office@cirenparish.co.uk) to find out more.

Pippa Burgon



And finally...

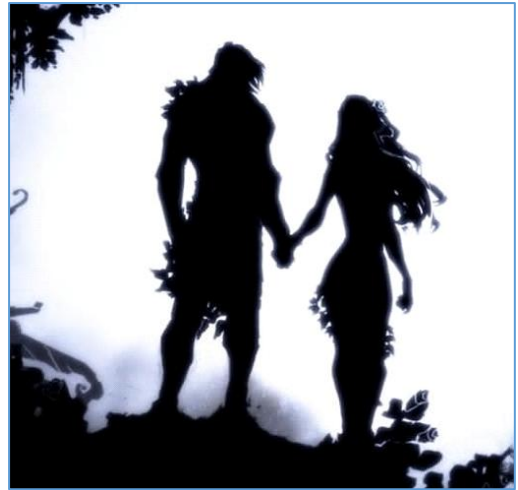
In the beginning.....

In the beginning there was Adam.

So God asked him, ‘What is wrong with you? Why so sad?’

Adam said he didn’t have anyone to talk

to, so God said He would make Adam a companion and that would be a woman.



God said, ‘This person will gather food for you, cook for you and, when you discover clothing, she’ll wash it for you, She will always agree with every decision you make. She will bear your children and never ask you to get up in the middle of the night to take care of them. She will not nag you and will always be the first to admit she was wrong when you have had a disagreement. She will never have a headache and will freely give you love and passion whenever you need it.’

Adam thought that was wonderful and then asked God, ‘What will a woman like that cost?’

God replied, ‘An arm and a leg.’

Then Adam asked, ‘What can I get for a rib?’

The rest is history.....

From a Bucket of Surprises by J John and Mark Stibbe.

Organ Recitals At St John Baptist

Wednesdays at 1.10pm 2025 - 26



Wednesday 1st October
David Price (Portsmouth Cathedral)

Wednesday 5th November
Andrew Parnell (Ely Cathedral)

Wednesday 3rd December
John Wright (Cheltenham)

Wednesday 7th January
James Henderson (Sherborne Abbey)

Wednesday 4th February
Timothy Selman (Lincoln Cathedral)

Wednesday 4th March
Stephen King (Brentwood Cathedral)

Wednesday 1st April
Pavlos Triantaris (Letchworth)

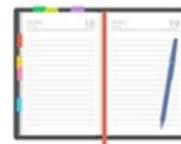
Wednesday 6th May
Johannes Opfermann (Freiburg)

Wednesday 3rd June
Barney Silverstone (London)

Wednesday 1st July
Mark Brafield (Guildford)

Wednesday 5th August
Charles Wooler (Concert Organist)

Dates for February 2026



Weekdays

9:15 – 9:45am	Morning Prayer	St John Baptist
12 – 1pm	Eucharist - Catherine Chapel	St John Baptist

Saturdays

10 – 10:30am	Said Eucharist - Catherine Chapel,	St John Baptist
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Monday, Wednesday & Friday

5 – 6pm	Evening Prayer	St John Baptist
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Weekdays

9am – 10am	Wednesdays Drop In at St Lawrence
10am – 12pm	The Parish Forum Open (except Wednesday)
10am – 12pm	Thursdays Drop In at The Parish Forum

1 Feb, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	All Age Eucharist	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Non-Eucharist Family Service	Holy Trinity
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Choral Evensong	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Restore@4	St Lawrence

2 Feb, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5 – 5:30pm	Organ Vespers	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum

3 Feb, Tue

6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	St John Baptist
7:30 – 9:30pm	Christian Wellbeing Course	St Lawrence

4 Feb, Wed

10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
1:10 – 1:50pm	Organ Recital	St John Baptist
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

6 Feb, Fri

3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
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7 Feb, Sat

2 – 3pm Nicholas Morrow Brown Guitar Recital St John Baptist

8 Feb, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Service of the Word	St Lawrence
12:30 – 1:30pm	Baptism	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Evening Prayer	St John Baptist

9 Feb, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum

10 Feb, Tue

6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity
7:30 – 9:30pm	Christian Wellbeing Course	St Lawrence

11 Feb, Wed

12:45 – 4:15pm	St John Baptist shut for essential maintenance	
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity

12 Feb, Thu

9:15 – 10:45am	Seedlings	St Lawrence
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13 Feb, Fri

3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
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15 Feb, Sun

8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
12:30 – 1:30pm	Baptism	Holy Trinity
12:30 – 1:30pm	Baptism	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Choral Evensong	St John Baptist
4 – 5pm	Restore @4	St Lawrence

16 Feb, Mon

9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
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7:30 – 9pm	Quarter Peal	St John Baptist
17 Feb, Tue		
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity
18 Feb, Wed		
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
20 Feb, Fri		
3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall
22 Feb, Sun		
8 – 9am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
8 – 9am	Holy Communion BCP - Lady Chapel	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St John Baptist
10:30 – 11:30am	Eucharist	St Lawrence
4 – 5pm	Evening Worship	St John Baptist
23 Feb, Mon		
9:45 – 11am	Little Angels	St John Baptist
5:30 – 6:30pm	Vicars Open Office	Parish Forum
7:30 – 9pm	Lent Group	Parish Forum
24 Feb, Tue		
6:30 – 9pm	Bell Ringing	Holy Trinity
7:30 – 9:30pm	Christian Wellbeing Course	St Lawrence
25 Feb, Wed		
7 – 8:30pm	PCC Standing Committee	St Lawrence
7 – 8pm	Eucharist	Holy Trinity
26 Feb, Thu		
9:15 – 10:45am	Seedlings	St Lawrence
12 – 1pm	Mothers' Union Corporate Communion	St John Baptist
27 Feb, Fri		
3 – 5pm	Cirencester Food Pantry	Parish Hall

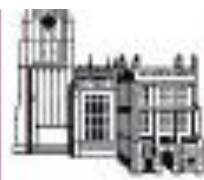
Extracted from Parish Calendar 17/01/2026

Restore @ 4

*1st and 3rd
Sunday
of each month
4pm*

*A time of contemporary, refreshing worship, prayer,
bible study, a cup of tea and a chance to chat,
all relevant to today*

*St Lawrence Church Centre, Countess Lilias Road,
Chesterton*



CHURCH SHOP



Open Monday to Saturday 10am ~ 4pm

Why not take a look at our Parish Church Shop, there's more than you expect!

Books
CDs

Gifts
Cards

Souvenirs
Bibles

Diaries
Calendars

Maps
Pictures

Icons
Prayer Books



Website: <http://www.cirenparish.co.uk>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/churchshop>

Tel: 01285 659317