



Village

February 2026

Web

PET BLESSING SERVICE



Sunday 8th February

11.00 am

**St Swithun's
GREAT CHISHILL**

All creatures great and small are most welcome!

We will be thanking God for all creatures and blessing them just as He did and continues to do. You don't have to have a pet to come – just bring yourself and perhaps a special cuddly toy animal or a picture of your pet if you have one.

**18 February 2026 - final date for submission
of articles for the March edition**



February Services 2026

Sunday 1

9.00am *Traditional* BCP* Communion, St Nicholas **Little Chishill**
11.00am *Contemporary* Encounter@Eleven Café, Village Hall **Chrishall**

Sunday 8

9.00am *Traditional* BCP Communion, Holy Trinity **Heydon**
11.00am *Contemporary* **Pet Service****, St Swithun's **Great Chishill**

Sunday 15

9.00am *Traditional* BCP Communion, Hamlet Church **Duddenhoe End**
11.00am *Contemporary* Encounter@Eleven Communion, Holy Trinity **Chrishall**

Wednesday 18 Ash Wednesday

8.00pm *Traditional* Ashing*** Service St Swithun's **Great Chishill**

Sunday 22

9.00am *Traditional* BCP Communion, St Mary's **Strethall**
11.00am *Contemporary* Encounter@Eleven Communion St Nicholas **Elmdon**

Saturday 28

4.30pm *Contemporary* Saturday Gathering, Holy Trinity **Chrishall**

* BCP = Book of Common Prayer

** Pet Service = an opportunity to give thanks to God for all creatures – great and small – and bless them just as He did and continues to. Pets optional!

*** During this service, you are invited to receive a cross marked on your forehead with ashes, symbolizing repentance and the beginning of Lent.

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I'm not religious

People often say to me “I’m not religious” when they find out I’m a vicar. They are surprised when I reply “Neither am I”.

Let me explain.

Webster’s dictionary (no relation) defines religion as “a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices”.

In other words, religion is human centred and focuses on our attitudes, *our* beliefs, *our* practices. It is humanity reaching up to God through (Church) traditions, rituals, and doctrines. Its core question is “What must I do to find God?”

Christianity on the other hand, as the name suggests, focuses on a person – Jesus Christ. It’s a *revelation* (God revealing himself to us) rather than a *religion* (us trying to find God).

Why does God need to reveal himself to us? Simply because he knew we’d never be able to see him or know him left to our own devices. Conservative estimates suggest there are over 4,000 distinct religions worldwide today, proving the point!

Christianity shifts the focus from us to God. A God who took the divine initiative: reaching down to us; reaching out to us; and showing us who He is.

And of course He’s done this supremely, not by writing to us (e.g. the Ten Commandments) nor by sending messengers (prophets), but by becoming a living, breathing human being, just like us. A person that we could readily relate to, talk with, listen to and so on.

Jesus was unambiguous about who He was. “I and the Father (*i.e.* God) are one ... anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (*John 10.30; 14.9*). Such statements got him killed for blasphemy.

But such was His desire to be with us and for us to have a life-giving relationship with Himself and the Father, it was a price He was willing to pay.

This relationship is based, not on our efforts (doing the right thing) nor our goodness (adhering to a moral code) but solely on his love for





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us, his grace.

So, no, I'm not religious in the sense of my life being one of striving to please God, to be acceptable to Him or trying to reach Him by my beliefs, my worship, my moral living, my Church traditions, rituals and doctrines.

I have tried that, and it doesn't work. You just feel miserable – never 'good enough', never 'acceptable', never quite 'there'. I do lapse into that way of living now and again. As John and Paula Sandford put it "the constant propensity of [Christians] is to fall back to striving by human effort. Our minds and spirits know the free gift of salvation, but our hearts retain their habit to earn love by performing".

Rather than being religious - striving to earn love, forgiveness and acceptance – I know that my life (and I humbly suggest yours!) is best oriented towards Jesus. He's the revelation of the living God, who loves us unconditionally, who pursues us, and who invites us into an intimate relationship with him.

Jesus said "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me" (*Revelation 3:20*).

God's desire has always been not only to dwell with us - to walk with us in the cool of the day as depicted in the garden of Eden - but to dwell in us.

"As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us ... so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (*John 17:21, 26*).

This intimacy is neither religion nor sterile theology - it's a lived encounter.

I opened the door of my life to Jesus over 40 years ago. My only regret is not doing so earlier – it would have saved so much heartache! I still need to keep the door open – a challenge at times.

But I would encourage you too to open the door of your life to Him and to keep it open – I guarantee you won't regret it!

With love and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the closing text.

Vale: John Hughes

We are so sorry to have to record John left us on 29 December 2025. It was impossible not to love that gentle, kind, soft voice and his brilliant mind. In 'retirement' (John actively maintained his role as Trustee of several charities, including Radio Lollipop and the Yehudi Menuhin Trust) he gamely developed his leadership of the Parish Choir, including a magnificent performance of Stainer's Crucifixion. John is survived by his dear wife, Carolyn, their 3 cherished children and grandchildren. Please continue to hold them in prayer as they feel the sharp pain of loss of this great man. There will be a private family funeral followed by a memorial service on 7th April.

Sloe Gin

Did you make any sloe gin, or other fruit and spirit combination, this autumn or have you tried your hand at homebrew beer? Why not enter Great Chishill's very own Sloe Gin Competition which will be held on Saturday 28th February. Entries need to be dropped off at 19 Heydon Road by Mon 23rd Feb at the latest, with a completed entry form, available from <http://greatchishill.org.uk/>



This traditional bit of village fun was started decades ago by bellringers, to ward off the winter chill and therefore all proceeds contribute to the maintenance fund of the bells of our parish (which receives no funding from the Church). We are particularly keen to encourage entries and partygoers from all the villages of the Icknield Way Parish. The results party is on **Saturday 28th February, at 7.30pm in the URC Schoolroom, 7 Barley Road, GC.** Everyone (over 18) is welcome to this friendly event and all the entries will be there for you to taste (free with entry) as well as canapés and a bar. Classes are: Nouveau, Vintage, Ringers' Delight and Homebrew beer/lager. Entry £8 or £10 (just party entry). For full details please look at the entry form on <http://greatchishill.org.uk/>
...with Valentines day this month, why not celebrate with some

Saturday Gathering

'a triumph' 'unbridled joy experienced, thank you!'

The largest Cambridge University gospel choir yet graced Chrishall church in November for the last Saturday Gathering of the year. On this their 3rd visit, the choir led by Dean captivated everyone present. The school choir energetically partnered the choir for several songs. The event was free with donations invited for the parish Charity of the year, XLP, who work to offer alternative outcomes and positive futures for young people though encouragement to believe they can set their own goals, not accept the future dictated to them. Thank you to everyone who participated.

Our next Saturday Gathering kicks off at 4.30pm with food for all on 28 February when we shall explore where Jesus is in this upside-down world.



Spiritual Life Support

I must be one of the most fortunate people alive.

I say alive because I have been saved by medicine, prayer and support from family and friends. Saved from death and or disability, after a serious stroke brought on by extremely high blood pressure. After being urgently blue lighted to Addenbrookes by ambulance and all the life-saving drugs were

administered, I was taken in a semi-conscious state to the initial recovery ward where I met fellow stroke survivors.

The staff were caring and attentive to our immediate survival needs. My life for the next 2 weeks was spent in a hospital bed being cared for.

Family and friends visited and encouraged my recovery.

I spent most days sitting on my bed knowing that I was being held in prayer and love by family and friends.

Looking back over my time there, and my recovery I remember sitting on my bed, slightly light-headed as though I was on a cushion buoyed by prayer.

I say that because I had cards full of Bible readings, prayers and love, a book of psalms beside me, visits and blessings from our vicar James and the Hospital Chaplaincy team (which included a Catholic priest) willing to pray with me for peace, health and recovery.

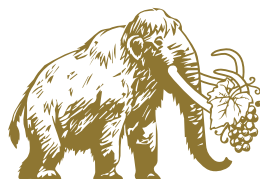
Alison seemed to visit most days to chat and pray. One day she took me to the hospital chapel for a memorable, ecumenical, lunchtime service of uplifting singing and healing prayers.

Obviously, I had excellent medical treatment and loving support from my family, but did feel grateful for all the prayers and spiritual support, which has certainly aided my road to recovery.

Angela Patrick Sutcliffe



Something to Celebrate



SAFFRON GRANGE

ENGLISH SPARKLING WINE

local fizz?

Nestled amongst the chalky slopes of Saffron Walden lies Saffron Grange Vineyard: a 40-acre site dedicated solely to producing premium-quality sparkling wines.

The Edwards' family began planting vines on site in 2008 - though they waited over a decade to launch their very first release. Aside from racking up multiple awards for their sparkling wines, Saffron Grange is committed to improving biodiversity onsite by following 'minimal intervention' and regenerative viticultural practices.

Wildflowers and cover crops thrive between vine rows and in adjacent meadows and over 8,000 trees have been planted on site to date.

Long before vines took root, woolly mammoths roamed the fields at the end of the last Ice Age and now their legacy lies underground; layers of history that make up the soils the vines thrive on today. The tusks and teeth of these woolly, ice age giants which were uncovered in the stream along the bottom of the site, are proudly on display at the local museum.

Informal but educational tours and tastings run throughout the year at the vineyard (pre-booking required) as well as supper clubs featuring local chefs with all the plates carefully thought out to pair perfectly with their range of sparkling wines.

Saffron Grange's sparkling wines are all made in the traditional method, aged on the lees and then allowed additional time in the bottle before release. The limited-edition sparkling wines can be purchased at the vineyard Thursday - Saturday or online at www.saffrongrange.com.

Aimie Edwards (operations manager)

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Hidden in Plain Sight

Sophie Williams spent her childhood living in Chrishall, attending Chrishall Preschool and Primary School. Regularly attending church and Sunday clubs involved spending a lot of time in our seven significant church buildings. Just like most of us, she found it easy to take the beauty and history of our parish for granted.

Following an undergraduate degree reading Historical Archaeology, at University of York, Sophie focused on Medieval Archaeology for her Master's degree. She found herself immersed in building archaeology, initially looking at Listed Buildings and then Anglo-Saxon Church Crypts. Learning to identify age or importance of a building through the styles and techniques used, she began to see how much history had been hidden in plain sight. Sophie has kindly undertaken a new series for *The Village Web*, focusing on each of the church buildings in our parish and describing features we might not have noticed or realised before. Here she introduces the background to her series

Why churches?

I specialised in buildings, specifically churches, as they show us the history of everyday people. While I speak in styles and centuries, each design is a reflection of the people who lived in the same places we live today; lack of change can often reflect financial hardships, consistent change can show wealth and fashions of the local people. Religion was an important pillar of the English communities from the introduction of Christianity in the 4th century, and that care and importance is reflected within these buildings. The grand 15th century churches of Suffolk are an extreme example of this – churches being completely rebuilt in the economic boom of the wool trade; economic collapse then preserving these churches and surrounding towns as there were no extra resources for any later alterations, leaving entire towns in the medieval period as the country marched into the modern age. While houses dating from the 16th and 17th centuries are common in East Anglia, there are very few houses in England which date from the 15th century or earlier, whereas churches often date from the 12th to 15th centuries, allowing three hundred more years of understanding and connection to ordinary people.

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eight church buildings, seven churches (St Dunstan's is a privately owned ruin) spanning over a millennium of worship, baptisms, weddings, and funerals of ordinary people.

It is also an area which is incredibly rich in archaeology. The Icknield Way itself is a prehistoric ridgeway. Nearby Grantchester, and Great Chesterford, are Roman settlements, with villas and homesteads extending out into the countryside. The Anglo-Saxons were incredibly active in this area, as the villages are on the borders of Mercia and East Anglia, two powerful kingdoms in the Early Medieval landscape.

During the Norman Conquest, the domination of the Norman force spread across England, systematically replacing every cathedral, abbey, and collegiate church, redistributing lands and completing the Domesday Survey. Locally Saffron Walden gained a Norman Motte and Bailey, and Walden Abbey, two incredibly dominant powers in the local landscape. The systems of manors, castles, and abbeys set up in the Norman period progressed into the medieval period, until the Reformation in 1536. Henry VIII creating the Church of England significantly altered the experiences of churches, still reflected in the churches today – whitewashing of wall paintings, removal of rood screens, and the dissolution of monasteries. Being so close to London, the Icknield Way Villages would have had no choice but to comply with the Reformation. Only a century later, stronger Puritan reforms spread across England with the rise of Oliver Cromwell and the Civil War. Once again, the Icknield Way Villages had no choice but to comply, as these reforms came out of Cambridge and London, and Cromwell was even based in Saffron Walden for a time.

The Victorian Gothic revival began to reflect back on the pre-reformation decorated churches, and communities would restore parish churches to the idealised height of medieval beauty.

The churches in this parish have scars and echoes of not only significant historical events, but the people who sought refuge and guidance during these periods, the people who carried on with ordinary life despite political upheavals, and the people who fought for what they believed in. In Christianity, a church is not the building, but the people who come together, and the church buildings of today still remember the churches of the past.

Sophie Williams

iSingPOP and iSingSaturday

Monday morning – in the dark. Thursday afternoon – shining on stage. This was the extraordinary transformation that took place amongst all the pupils of Chrishall Primary school just before Christmas, as the iSingPOP team came and worked their wonder.

Hannah came and taught the children several songs, with complex choreography, and with less than 4 hours contact time, they were ready! The fact that most of the children chose to perform at both concerts – the second one being voluntary – speaks volumes about how engaged they were and how much they loved the experience. The audiences loved it too!



Building on this, we will be having our second **iSingSaturday** on **14th March, 4pm in Chrishall Church**. This will be a child-led, family oriented worship event which will begin with food, drinks and craft activities, during which children who wish to lead the later worship will prepare and practice.

The worship event itself will revolve around iSingPOP songs that the children already know, exploration of a Bible story, and some children's prayers.

Everyone is welcome, whether you have or are connected with children at the school or not.

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iSingSaturday

A NEW CHILD-LED FAMILY EVENT

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28th February, 4.30-6pm)*



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Six Nations Ahead

Maro Itoje is one of the rugby greats now. He has played in nine straight Lions Tests.

His captaincy is low-key, almost gentle. When he wants some fire and brimstone in the dressing room he tends to call on others to deliver it. He once described himself as "deeply thoughtful, prone to overthinking, actually" - but that's part of what makes him interesting.

He's a rugby player but also a Christian, a collector of African art - "it speaks to my soul" - a philanthropist, a strong voice on anti-racism - "it has happened so often in my life" - and a lover of politics. When asked what was the coolest message he's received since wrapping up the Lions series, he says it was from foreign secretary David Lammy.

Itoje is also in the pantheon - a lock who wreaks havoc with his power, his nous and his strategic brilliance. His durability is astounding. He's played every minute of every Six Nations game going back six years. In 37 of his past 38 games for England and the Lions he's gone the distance. Softly spoken, he's as hard as they come. A player who came to rugby late and to captaincy later still, but who's left his mark on the game and with years on his side - he's only 30 - to make that mark even bigger.

What will he remember about his tours the rugby or the people? "It's hard to differentiate it. Ultimately, it's going to be the people but the rugby makes it sweeter," says Itoje.

"There is a verse that I can't quite remember what book it is from in the Bible [Mark 8:36], but it says 'What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his soul?' If we won every game and we absolutely hated one another - I think life is more than that."



In a Nutshell

The Men's Group will take a short break for February and will meet again on **Thursday March 5** at 8pm in the Red Cow at Chrishall.

The regular Great Chishill Coffee Morning will take place on **Wednesday 11 February**. Do join us for delicious home baked cakes and hot drinks and plenty of friendly chat.

Pancake races for young and old at Holy Trinity, Heydon on **Saturday 14 February 10am – 12 noon**.

Heydon Films meet again on **Friday 20 February 7.30 for 8.00pm** at **Mission Hut, 14 Chishill Road**, further details can be found on page 19.

Saturday Gathering at Holy Trinity, Chrishall on **Saturday 28 February at 4.30pm**.

Sloe Gin results party to be held on **28 February** in the **URC Schoolroom from 7.30pm**

You are invited to a **Marmalade Breakfast** at Great Chishill Village Hall on **Saturday 21st & Sunday 22nd March 2026**.

A Spring Fair is planned in Gt Chishill Village Hall in aid of Gt Chishill Windmill and other local groups. During the weekend we are holding a Marmalade Breakfast.

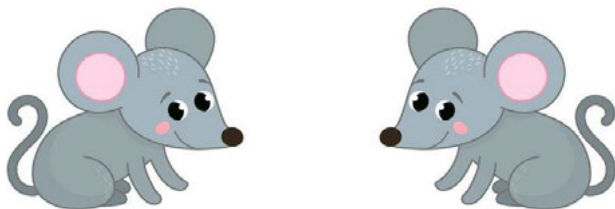
If you like making marmalade, or you know someone who does, please consider donating a jar to be opened and tasted. Or if you like marmalade, but you don't make it, you're very welcome to come along and sample. More details to follow.



Pancake races return to Holy Trinity, HEYDON on Saturday 14 February, 10am – 12 noon.

Do come along and enjoy the fun (and maybe win a prize).

Church Mice



Every term-time Tuesday, a small group of babies, toddlers and the adults who look after them, meet in the morning in **Chrishall Village Hall** and we have a lovely time together. The atmosphere is pleasantly relaxed as the adults and children enjoy each other's company. Before long, some delicious home-made cake and a selection of fresh fruit are served and we all sit down together and chat. Then it's time for some craft, if your child likes craft but you don't like the clearing up, then this is the perfect solution for you! We do a different craft every week and it's the perfect way to ease into the Bible story that follows. It always makes us smile because around about this time, the children automatically head to the carpet and lie on their tummies ready to sing 'Sleeping bunnies'. The morning comes to an end at 11.00 after a spot of singing.

It is a delightful way to spend the morning. So, if you would like to spend your Tuesday mornings in a gentle and caring environment, then pop along from **9.30 to 11.00**. You'd be warmly welcome.

Heydon Films

Friday 20 February 7.30 for 8.00pm

Touch (Iceland, 2024) romantic drama: a cleverly spliced story, spanning decades and continents, of one man's journey to find his first love before time runs out.

Shortlisted for, but failed to win, a Foreign Language Oscar.

Icelandic/Japanese (with English subtitles) and English, 120 min
Mission Hut, 14 Chishill Road; call/e-mail Rollo Barnes, 838309, rb@rollobarnes.com. £5 (inc refreshments) – all to church funds

Parish Contacts - *Telephone codes are 01763 unless stated*

Rector: Revd Dr James Webster,

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Elmdon – Ned Tozer 838890

Gt Chishill – Angela Patrick Sutcliffe 837353

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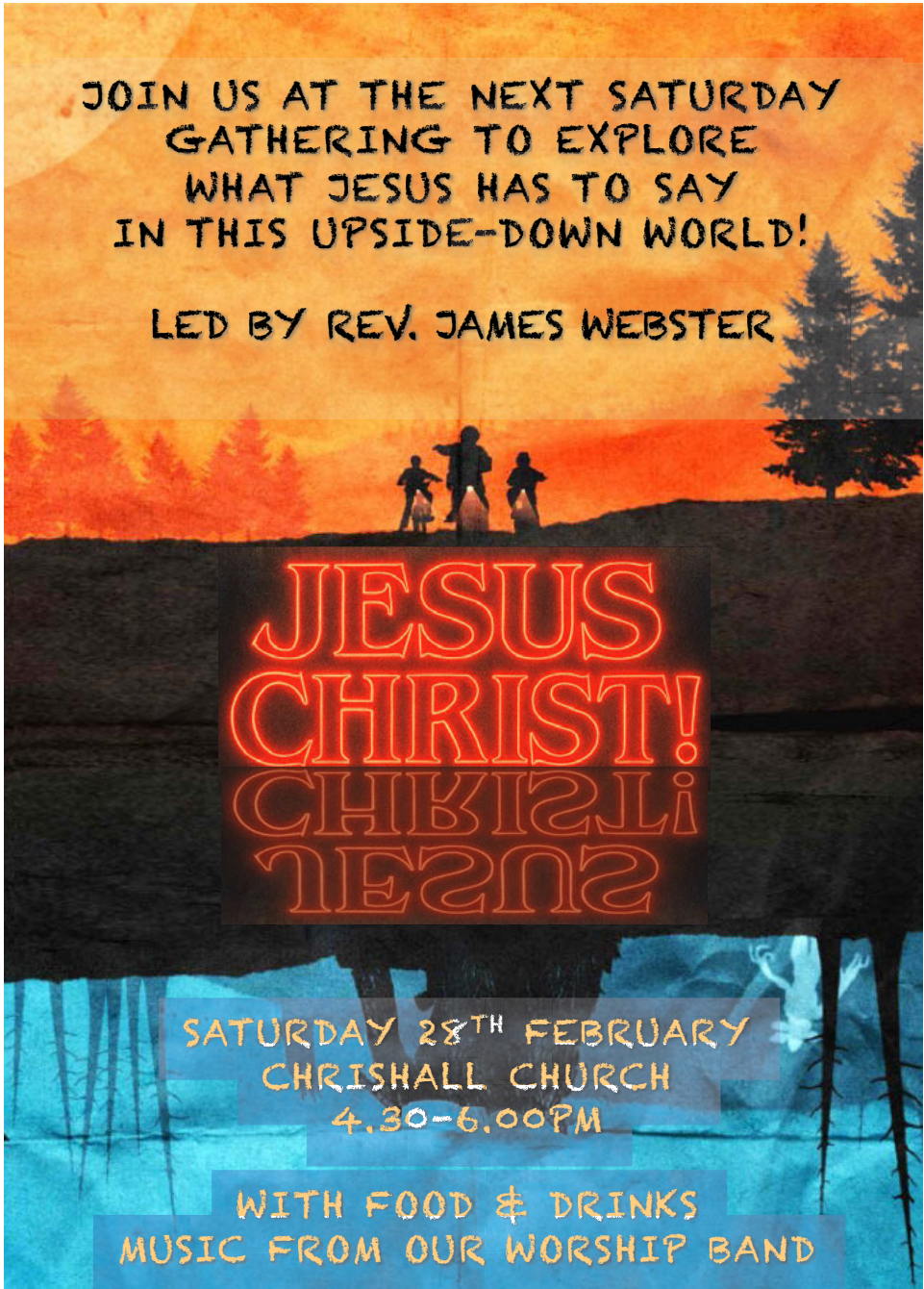
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GATHERING TO EXPLORE
WHAT JESUS HAS TO SAY
IN THIS UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD!

LED BY REV. JAMES WEBSTER

JESUS CHRIST! CHIKIZLI NEZNE

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CHRISHALL CHURCH
4.30-6.00PM

WITH FOOD & DRINKS
MUSIC FROM OUR WORSHIP BAND

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