



CONTACT

July 2026

For St Mary's, Burwell with St Etheldreda and the Holy Trinity, Reach

A welcoming church fostering a truer sense of Christian community and belonging by Revd Paula Spalding

In loving God and loving people, we are a church family seeking to offer a warm welcome to all so that we can grow together in faith, hope and love, sharing the good news of God's love. We have Visitors' Books in St Mary's and St Etheldreda's which give glimpses of the welcome people find and, only last week, received an email of thanks for being made so welcome at 'lovely St Mary's'. This is all very positive and, with the practical changes we were able to make at St Etheldreda's in the reordering, we have been able to extend our welcome in providing easier access and improved facilities.

Practical changes are more difficult at St Mary's for a number of reasons, but it's important to notice where our welcome may feel less warm, where a sense of belonging is hampered by difficulty. We pray to be continually aware of those around us and how we can extend our welcome. The Great Commission given by Jesus is for us to make disciples of all – this is God's design for the Church, the inclusive mandate. Our next step towards this at St Mary's is an experiment involving temporary removal of two short pews for improved accessibility and inclusivity. We have now received a licence for 'temporary minor reordering', which is valid for two years. Over this time, it is proposed that we remove a combination of two short pews at a time, from a total of four, so that wheelchair users, those with mobility aids and buggies can, with their families, access the main body of the nave seating, feel fully welcomed and included, integrated into the worshipping community of St Mary's. Sitting apart at the far rear of the church is isolating, with a severely restricted view of the altar, lectern and those leading the service which detaches those there from the heart of the service.

To this end, the PCC has agreed which two pews should first be removed (A and D in diagrams on page 2), undamaged, by a good local carpenter, and then stored safely for the duration of the licence. This two-year experiment is a time to 'test and learn', to receive feedback from those who use the new spaces, the wider congregation and visitors.

If the experiment is successful, the PCC aims to incorporate permanent change into a wider accessibility scheme. If not, the changes are completely reversible and the pews will be returned to their original places. We look forward to testing and learning together, sharing experiences and suggestions as we make changes for inclusivity.

Count Me In

As we consider changes to our buildings that might be necessary for inclusivity, what about what we do in them? As many of you know, chaplaincy is at the heart of my ministry, and I recently attended some training sessions run by a charity called Count Me In, with a view to supporting and enabling people with learning disabilities in our churches and communities. This was organised by the diocese with a view to commissioning a group of Companion Chaplains for people with learning disabilities who will share experiences and good practice as well as developing that in their own churches. I have been invited to attend a final session of training in September, to be followed by a licencing and commissioning in church, and am supported in this by Eleanor and the PCC.

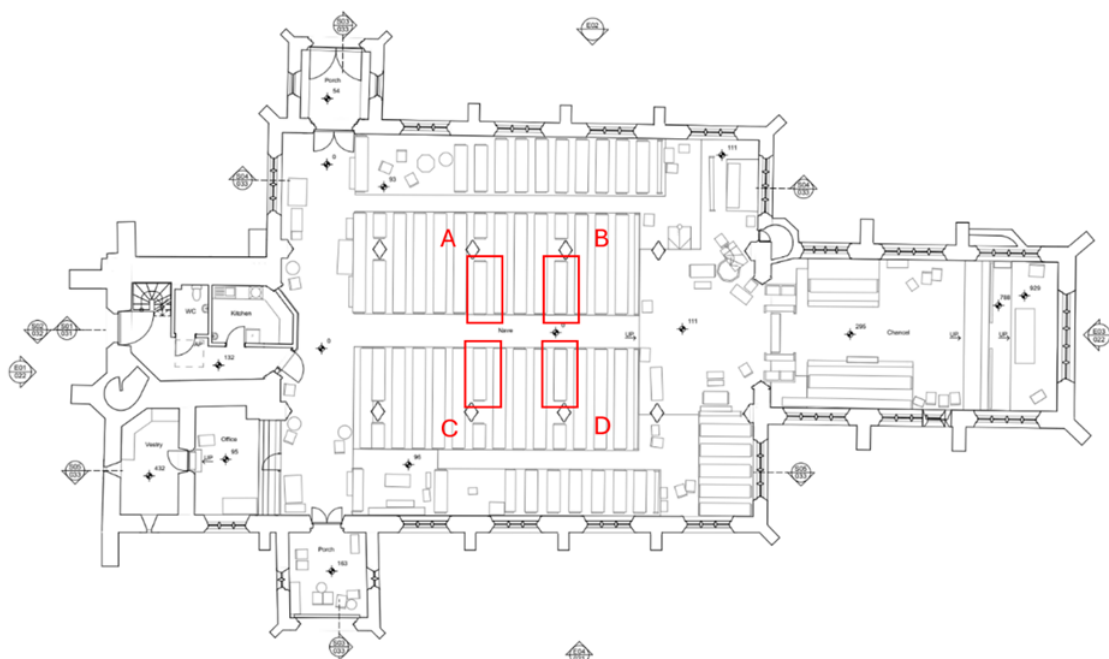
Continued overleaf

A welcoming church (continued)

The central message is that if we count everyone in, then no-one will miss out on Jesus! It's about making not just our buildings accessible, but also our communications and our worship; to move from welcome to belonging in mutual discipleship.

In the third century, a brave bishop, Lawrence, a deacon in the Church of Rome, was ordered by the emperor to bring the treasures of the Church before him. Lawrence gathered all the poor, the sick, the lame, the elderly and disabled people he could find, took them to the emperor and said, 'See, here are the treasures of the Church.' (*Disability in Mission – The Church's Hidden Treasure*, eds. David C Deuel and Nathan G John, Hendrickson, 2019)

Revd Paula Spalding



From the Parish Registers

Funerals

Rest in peace
David Bray
Elaine Lewis
James Webb
Mary Hardy



Summer of Pilgrimage

Please let Eleanor know if you would be interested in a bible study discussion group about Being a Pilgrim in later life.

There will also be some dates over the summer for mini pilgrimages at our two churches.

More information to follow.

Admission of Churchwardens



Bishop Sarah with Wendy Smith, churchwarden

Churchwardens usually serve for a number of years, but are re-elected and commissioned annually.

This year, the Admission of Churchwardens was incorporated into the Choral Evensong at the Cathedral on June 14th. The service featured beautiful choral singing and a deeply prayerful atmosphere.

Prior to this, a reception was held for churchwardens from every parish across the diocese. It was a welcome opportunity to unexpectedly catch up with the Revd Virginia over tea in the alcoves of the Lady Chapel, following which Bishop Sarah offered a speech of thanks for the faithful work of churchwardens throughout the diocese.

Thank You Wendy! for all your hard work and for being our Churchwarden again this year.
Scott Massey

St Mary's Burwell
St Etheldreda's Reach
Loving God, Loving People

Refresh Café @ St Mary's

Fridays 10.00 - 11.45am

A friendly and welcoming space for pre-school children and their grown-ups

Refreshments & simple lunch

St Mary's Burwell
St Etheldreda's Reach
Loving God, Loving People

Connect Café @ St Mary's

Wednesday 8th July 3.30-5.00pm

A Connecting Place for Families

*Connect with each other
Connect with God*

If you'd like to find out more about joining any of these groups, or about becoming a volunteer helper or supporting us in prayer and other ways, please speak to Eleanor, Paula or Jo.

Does AI have a place in Christianity? By Kevin Powell

In response to 'Artificial Intelligence - The Advice of the Church of England Ethical Investment Advisory Group'

AI **does have a place** in Christianity. It does not need to be avoided, provided it is developed, deployed, and invested in responsibly (and therein lies a big caveat, especially in organised religion such as the C of E). I like the above report's perspective that "AI, like all technological tools, offers undeniable opportunities for human flourishing" and there is "a clear case for investment in AI and the benefits it can bring to society and human flourishing through rapid advancements in healthcare and climate solutions... provided this is done responsibly and that the benefits of AI are distributed fairly." Using Christian ethics, I think we are well placed to answer what "fair" distribution means; after all, we are guided by Christian values; I like the framework they propose:

1. **Flourishing as persons**
2. **Flourishing in relationship**
3. **Standing with the marginalised**
4. **Caring for creation**
5. **Serving the common good**

Opportunities

Specific examples where AI positively aligns with Christian values are:

- **Medical Diagnostics:** AI-powered image analysis and decision support systems can serve the common good by increasing the speed and accuracy of diagnoses, freeing up clinician time, and reducing patient anxiety
- **Financial Products:** It can help accurately assess risk to prevent individuals from taking on unmanageable debt and allow bespoke, affordable insurance coverage for historically marginalised groups

Generative AI: Tools can boost productivity, enhance learning experiences, and assist with language translation to help immigrants engage with host societies.

Risks

There are significant 'unethical risks', which need to be considered and managed:

- **High-Stakes Autonomy:** Autonomous decision-making that has an irreversible impact on safety or rights (such as AI in weaponry) should be avoided, emphasising that there must always be "a human in the loop."
- **Devaluing Human Relationships:** Replacing authentic human relationships with AI surrogates—especially for vulnerable groups like children or dementia patients—can downgrade humanity and substitute real empathy with simulated, sociopathic responses
- **Systemic Injustice:** Ethical issues arise when AI perpetuates bias against protected characteristics, causes unmitigated job displacement without reskilling opportunities, invades privacy without explicit consent, or generates malicious disinformation (heaven knows, we human beings do enough of this already!)

Environmental Harm: The high energy and raw material consumption of data centres must be weighed proportionately against the value of the output. As a member of Carbon 13, I feel this imbalance acutely and we need to start counting the carbon cost of each calculation, much like I read the back of snack packets for sugar grammage, to establish if the gain is worth the pain (I am guessing that unless it aligns with the opportunities above, the answer to that will frequently be no).

No doubt AI can coexist with Christian ethics, provided companies, NGOs, government bodies, religious institutions and citizens commit to **human-centred design, accountability, and transparency**.

Looking at the question through a more narrow lens of Christianity, it has neutral practical elements that can advance faith much like the printing press, word processors, databases and the Internet, i.e. speeding up translation/accessibility, reducing admin burden and allowing massively more powerful cross-referencing in theological studies.

We already have a lot of Gen Z and Gen Alpha forming relationships (romantic and otherwise) with AI bots; needless to say, there is a real risk that AI will similarly become a spiritual proxy (after all, Christianity is about communion, community, and incarnation). I agree with some archdeacons on the subject of using AI in ministry (some are a little too enthusiastic in their support of AI): I find AI does a credible job in helping to write the purely technical elements but it fundamentally lacks the personal and spiritual connections with God; we cannot reduce our relationship with God to a 'mechanical' activity.

The Bible is the Word and we cannot and must not allow AI to contradict or confuse biblical teaching on human dignity. After all, humans are made *Imago Dei*; consciousness, moral agency, and creativity are unique divine gifts and are not characteristics to be conferred on AI.

Finally, I must admit that I lean toward deontological 'duty-based' ethics as opposed to Consequentialism or Utilitarianism. As such I often ask myself, what would Kant say? Given current AI lacks consciousness, free will, and the capacity for moral reasoning, Kant would view it **not** as a moral *agent* (capable of doing right or wrong), but as a **tool**. This means that the awesome responsibility of making moral decisions lies with humans and not AI; we must stop shifting accountability for moral choices onto a tool. We hold the moral duty to ensure AI architecture respects human dignity and autonomy and this is fundamental to continuing the work of Christ on Earth.



In this, our 150th year, our celebrations are gathering pace! We enjoyed a packed-out diocesan Picnic Tea in the Bishop of Ely's garden and, by the time you read this, we will also have enjoyed a Garden Party in my garden at Mill Bungalow for members throughout the Diocese.

Still to come, on 29th July, we will be hosting a Pop-Up Tea in St Mary's from 2.00pm, please come and support us and enjoy a cuppa with a sandwich and piece of cake. We will be in Ely Cathedral on 7th August for a combined Branches service, and finally, on Sunday 9th August, which fortuitously happens to be Mary Sumner Day, the Burwell Branch will be leading the Sunday morning service in St Mary's. Do join us and help us celebrate!

For those who enjoy lunch together, the next Fellowship Lunch at the Day Centre, open to all, members and non-members, will be on 8th July, book with me as usual. If you are not a member but interested in the work of the Mothers' Union here in the UK and around the world and would like to know more, please contact me. We welcome women and men who support our aims, which relate to the Christian support of families and family life.

Philip Baker



INVITATION



Philip Baker warmly invites all his friends to a Bring-and-Share Garden Lunch to celebrate his 80th birthday.

He would be delighted if you could join him for an afternoon of good company, good food, and the simple pleasure of being together in the garden.

Date: Sunday 19th July 2026

Time: From 12 noon

Location: Mill Bungalow, Mill Lane, Burwell CB25 0HJ

Please bring along a favourite dish to share - finger food is best! (Indoors if wet).

DISCOVER NATURE

At Spring Close field and St Mary's Churchyard
 Sunday 19th July 2026
 Drop in between 2 and 4pm

Try our scavenger hunts!
 birds butterflies mammals wildflowers fungi trees insects

Welcome and info at the accessible gate on Spring Close field CB25 0HF //suffix.crank.caused

We will help identify your finds and lead explorations around the sites

Bring your own snacks and drinks, and dress for the weather
 Event suitable for all ages, accompanied children very welcome

Event is FREE and run by Wild Burwell in association with Burwell Parish Council, National Trust Wicken Fen, St Mary's Church

St Mary's church is joining in partnership with Wild Burwell, Burwell Parish Council and National Trust, Wicken Fen for this nature event on Sunday 19th July..

For more information speak to Caroline Smith or Eleanor Williams, and also if you are interested in supporting the church's Eco Church and Wildlife Trust Churchyard Conservation projects. We currently hold Eco Church silver awards for St Mary's and St Etheldreda's and a Bronze Churchyard award.

ECO CHURCH





CentrePeace

If you know any keen cricket fans, they might be interested in the Wisden Almanacks we currently have in stock, covering the years 2000-2025, at just £25 for the set, or one or more of the Anthologies at £2 each or £5 for set of 3.

Opening Hours

Tuesday	10.00am—12.30pm
Wednesday	10.00am—12.30pm 2.00pm—4.00pm
Thursday	10.00am—12.30pm
Friday	10.00am—12.30pm
Saturday	10.00am—12.30pm

Environment Matters

A Rocha is the organization that supports churches and their congregations to take practical action on caring for God's earth, including Eco Church and a monthly calendar of ideas for small actions that we can all take as part of our commitment to a greener lifestyle.

A Rocha Eco Tips for July

It's Plastic Free July and this year we're thinking about laundry, a top source of microplastic pollution. Fibres from synthetic clothes (polyester, nylon, and acrylic for example) shed tiny fibres during washing and drying. These enter the sewage systems and are hard to filter out but you can use a microfibre bag or ball to catch the fibres. Learn more about reducing plastic pollution in the laundry process at <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/get-involved>.

What's on this month

		Wed 1 Fri 3 Sat 4	10.30 10.00 9.00	Holy Communion at St Mary's Refresh Café at St Mary's Village Green Pray-ers
8.30 10.00	Sunday 5th July Trinity 5 Holy Communion at Reach Café Church at Burwell	Wed 8 Fri 10 Sat 11	10.30 15.30 10.00 9.00	Holy Communion at St Mary's Connect Café at St Mary's Refresh Café at St Mary's Village Green Pray-ers
10.00	Sunday 12th July Trinity 6 Holy Communion at Burwell	Wed 15 Fri 17 Sat 18	10.30 10.30 10.00 9.00	Holy Communion at Reach Morning Prayer at Ness Court Refresh Café at St Mary's Village Green Pray-ers
8.30 10.00 14.00	Sunday 19th July Trinity 7 Holy Communion at Burwell Holy Communion at Burwell Discover Nature event	Wed 22 Fri 24 Sat 25	10.30 10.00 14.30 9.00 12.00	Holy Communion at St Mary's Refresh Café at St Mary's Thanksgiving for Marriage at Reach Village Green Pray-ers Wedding at St Mary's
10.00	Sunday 26th July Trinity 8 Holy Communion at Burwell	Wed 29 Fri 31 Sat 1 Aug	10.30 10.00 9.00	Holy Communion at St Mary's Refresh Café at St Mary's Village Green Pray-ers
8.30 10.00	Sunday 2nd August Trinity 9 Holy Communion at Reach Café Church at Burwell	Wed 6 Fri 8 Sat 9	10.30 10.00 9.00	Holy Communion at St Mary's Refresh Café at St Mary's Village Green Pray-ers



RIDE + STRIDE
for Churches

SATURDAY 12TH SEPT. 2026

Discover and support Cambridgeshire's historic churches.



Join us and get sponsored to visit beautiful churches and chapels by bike, foot, horse or whatever way takes your fancy. All money raised will be shared between the Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust and your chosen church or chapel of any denomination and will help to repair and maintain these amazing buildings.

Join Us

For more information visit www.camhct.uk or email r-s-treasurer@camhct.uk

Your local church is
St Mary's Burwell
and St Etheldreda's Reach
Please contact
Vicar, Churchwarden or Administrator



Find out more at www.camhct.uk

Charity number 25986

Supported by the National Churches Trust
Charity number 10046



WEEKLY GATHERINGS

We have a number of small groups for adults meeting during the week, including:

Monday 7.30pm St Mary's Bellringers meet to practice most weeks (check pew sheet)

Saturday 9.00am A Prayer Group meets at Village Green Coffee Shop

There are also bible study/fellowship groups that meet during the course of the month.

In response to a request, we are considering whether an occasional afternoon service would be a better option for some, with early morning constraints on their time. Please let Eleanor know if you would be interested.

Please also speak to Eleanor if you would be interested in joining a bible study group, or are wondering whether baptism and/or confirmation might be the next step for you on your faith journey.

**Pop-Up Pantry
at Burwell Day Centre**
Usually 1st Friday of month

**Friday 3rd July
and Friday 7th August**
2.00 - 3.00pm

***Check Facebook page
for updates***

**If you're struggling
to make ends meet,
you can pick up
a bag of groceries**
No voucher needed
Voluntary £5 contribution

**Pop-Up Pantry is working
towards reducing waste
and offers short life food
and more as is available**

Part of Burwell Food Support Group

Vicar

Rev'd Canon Dr Eleanor Williams

22 Isaacson Road 01638 741262

vicar@stmarysburwell.org.uk

Associate Priest

Rev'd Paula Spalding 07849 936085

associatepriest@stmarysburwell.org.uk

Duty days Wednesday, Friday and Sunday)

Priests in retirement

Rev'd David King

Rev'd Dr Roger Williams

Licensed Lay Ministers

Jo Proctor

Kevin Powell

Churchwardens

Wendy Smith 01638 741888

Churchwardens' Assistants

Stephen Martin 01638 742667

Caroline Smith

Kevin Powell

Administrator

Kathy Ogilvie

administrator@stmarysburwell.org.uk

We're also on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/stmarysburwell>

<https://www.facebook.com/messychurchburwell>

<https://www.facebook.com/centrepeaceburwell>

**Supporting St Mary's
and St Etheldreda's**

Could you support the work of our church by making a donation? There are various ways to do this.

At one of our services or events, you can give cash or a cheque, made payable to 'Burwell PCC' or use the card reader.

Alternatively, go to our website

www.stmarysburwell.org.uk/donate

for information about how to make a single or regular donation by credit or debit card. You can also download forms to set up a Standing Order or a Gift Aid declaration.

For more details, please see our website or speak to our Gift Aid Officer, Ian Richards or Email:

administrator@stmarysburwell.org.uk

Keeping in Touch

We send the weekly pew sheet and monthly Contact magazine by email. There are usually a few spare paper copies in church.

Both the pew sheet and Contact are also available to download from our website:

www.stmarysburwell.org.uk/about-us/newsletters/

**QR code for
church website
home page**



We welcome your contributions to Contact. Please do keep sending them!
Send to Pat Chalmers, Contact Editor at pat@patchtcs.co.uk

To join the circulation list please fill in a Keeping in Touch form available in our churches or on our website

