

News from the Village Churches

So, it's Lent again; we know this because the chocolate eggs have been in the shops since before the end of Christmas!

Anyone would think that the purpose of the forty days (plus Sundays) before Easter was to stuff ourselves as much as possible with creme eggs and other goodies in a massive display of over-consumption.

In fact, as we know, the purpose of this season of the church is to help us to grow (it is Spring after all) by setting aside distractions and disciplining ourselves for the health of our soul. To avoid those things which get in the way of following Jesus. Using the example of his time of temptation in the desert is one example. As the hymn puts it: "Give us the self-control that springs from discipline of outward things."

Picture Proverbs

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS IS A COLLECTION OF 'WISE' SAYINGS FROM THE HEART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.



St Valentine's Day - February 14th

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century - one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome.

And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer's time the link was assumed to be because on these saints' day - 14th February - the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine's Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or 'sweethearts' during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love - Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

The very first Valentine card - a legend

The Roman Emperor Claudius II needed soldiers. He suspected that marriage made men want to stay at home instead of fighting wars, so he outlawed marriage.

A kind-hearted young priest named Valentine felt sorry for all the couples who wanted to marry, but couldn't. So, secretly, he married as many couples as he could - until the Emperor found out and condemned him to death. While he was in prison waiting execution, Valentine showed love and compassion to everyone around him, including his jailer. The jailer had a young daughter who was blind, but through Valentine's prayers, she was healed. Just before his death in Rome on 14th February, he wrote her a farewell message signed 'From your Valentine.'

So the very first Valentine card was not between lovers, but between a priest about to die, and a little girl, healed through his prayers.

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News from the Village Churches, cont

Lent

Lent is a time for Christians to re-examine their lives and what it means to be a follower of Christ.

All Christians should take Lent seriously, as an opportunity to grow in faith and love, and to come nearer to Jesus.

“For in these forty days you lead us into the desert of repentance that through a pilgrimage of prayer and discipline we may grow in grace and learn to be your people once again.”

We are invited to do this by:

- *Being regular in our attendance at worship*
- *Renewing our commitment to worship, prayer, and study of scripture*
- *Setting aside time for prayer, self-examination and confession*
- *Learning more about the christian faith*
- *Practising self-denial in what we eat and how we use our time; avoiding indulgence and waste.*
- *Giving alms, and acts of charity; and critically reviewing our use of money and time and our giving, .*

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17th

Sunday Worship in February

7th	2nd before Lent	(1st Sunday)
8am	Eucharist	SINGLETON
10am	Parish Eucharist & Sunday School	EAST DEAN
4pm	Evensong & Sermon	SINGLETON
14th	Next before Lent	(2nd Sunday)
8am	Eucharist	EAST DEAN
10am	Parish Eucharist & Sunday School	SINGLETON
4pm	Evensong (with choir)	WEST DEAN
17th	ASH WEDNESDAY	Lent begins
This is a day when all Christians should be at worship		
9:30am	Eucharist & ashing	SINGLETON
6:30pm	Eucharist & ashing	WEST DEAN
21st	1st in Lent	(3rd Sunday)
8am	Eucharist	SINGLETON
10am	Parish Eucharist & Sunday School	WEST DEAN
4pm	Evensong	EAST DEAN
28th	2nd in Lent	(4th Sunday)
8am	Eucharist	EAST DEAN
10am	Family Worship	SINGLETON
a short service for all ages		
4pm	Evening Prayer	WEST DEAN
Please ask if you need a lift to any service		



George always wore his hat, just in case someone should ask him to calculate the date of Easter.