

# Rector's Letter - February 2023

*The Reverend Christopher Harrison*



The forty day Christmas period ends on February 2<sup>nd</sup> with Candlemas, or the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. By this time we are well into the season of Epiphany, which begins to recede into the background as Lent draws near. This year the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, falls on 22<sup>nd</sup> February; you are all strongly encouraged to come to one of our two services on that day, at 12.00 noon at All Saints' and 7.30 pm at St Peter's. This is when our forty day period of prayer, penitence and self-denial begins, which of course culminates with Holy Week and the great celebration of Easter.

What not many people today realise, however, is that today's Church has lost a minor season, which traditionally fell between Candlemas and Ash Wednesday. This was called 'Septuagesimatide' and began on the third Sunday before Lent, which this year falls on February 5<sup>th</sup>. Those of you who are familiar with the Book of Common Prayer will recognise this name from the Collect and readings for the three Sundays before Lent, which were historically known as Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima. These names come from the Latin words for seventy, sixty and fifty respectively; sometimes the first Sunday in Lent was also called Quadragesima, from the Latin for forty, and indeed Lent itself was called Quadragesima in some churches. (Don't ask me to explain the arithmetic; Septuagesima Sunday is in fact sixty three days before Easter, not seventy; this is probably because the ancient leaders of the Church started with Quadragesima and counted back, week by week, on a basis which was more rough and ready than accurate).

Not many churches observe the season of Septuagesimatide these days. However, when I was vicar of St Mary's in the Lace Market, I was delighted to find that they did so. Churches like St Mary's begin using purple vestments on the third Sunday before Lent; from Ash Wednesday onwards purple is not used but what is called 'Lent array', which at St Mary's was a rough and coarse fabric resembling sackcloth. Whenever the processional cross was used during Lent it was veiled, which meant that it bore a covering made from Lent array fabric; this is meant to heighten the sense of preparation for Easter.

In the 1960s, some liturgists in the Catholic and other churches argued that Septuagesimatide was not necessary, as it was essentially a period of preparation for Lent, which was itself a period of preparation for Easter. The Catholic Church therefore did not include Septuagesimatide in the new liturgies which were introduced in 1970. This was the time when the Church of England was also drawing up modern liturgies which came to take precedence in many churches over the Book of Common Prayer, which is why Septuagesimatide has now largely been lost in the Anglican Church too.

The aim of Septuagesimatide was to encourage Christians to reflect upon the nature of human sinfulness as Lent approached, but also to give thanks for God's mercy and compassion towards humanity, shown most fully in Jesus Christ. These themes lie at the heart of the traditional readings for the three Sundays before Lent. The aim was not to extend unnecessarily the penitential season of Lent, but that the Epiphany theme of the revelation of Christ to the world should move logically towards a season in which we start to look more deeply at the human condition. This means focusing particularly on the alienation from God which results from sin, but also the nature of the salvation which is made possible for us through the life, death and resurrection of Christ. In some ways, therefore, this represents a continuation of the themes of life, light and hope which characterise Epiphany, whilst holding alongside these the sad reality that many people do not know God or follow his ways. We are encouraged, therefore, during Septuagesimatide to renew our confidence in God's forgiveness and his ability to bring new life and hope following past hurts or failings, knowing that even in times of deep sadness and distress God is with us and his grace is available to us.

This does not always mean that life will suddenly become easier, however, and we must not fall into the trap of expecting God to provide anything or everything that we might decide we need. Sometimes it's more about listening to what God tells us we should be doing, which is often about helping and supporting other people as well as meeting our own needs. It's important therefore to ensure that our hearts are always open to the gentle guidance of God, while drawing strength and hope from the knowledge that God is always faithful even when our own faith is weak. In this way, we can approach Ash Wednesday having already made ourselves ready for the journey of Lent; and we can receive the sign of the cross, marked in ash on our foreheads, in a spirit of penitence which has already taken root deep within us.

## Services in February

|   |          |  |             |
|---|----------|--|-------------|
| <b>Sunday 5<sup>th</sup></b>                      | 8.15 am  | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |
|   | 10.30 am | Sung Eucharist   | All Saints' |
|   | 10.45 am | Matins*  | St Peter's  |
|   |          | Responses <i>Clucas</i><br>Te Deum in C <i>Britten</i><br>O Lord, give thy holy spirit <i>Tallis</i> |             |
|   | 5.00 pm  | Holy Communion with prayers for healing  | St Peter's  |
| <b>Monday 6<sup>th</sup></b>                      | 1.15 pm  | Meditation   | St Peter's  |
| <b>Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup></b>                     | 11.00 am | Holy Communion   | All Saints' |
|   | 1.15 pm  | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |
| <b>Thursday 9<sup>th</sup></b>                    | 11.00 am | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |
| <b>Sunday 12<sup>th</sup></b>                     | 8.15 am  | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |
|   | 9.45 am  | Family Service   | St Peter's  |
|   | 10.30 am | Sung Eucharist   | All Saints' |
|   | 10.45 am | Sung Eucharist   | St Peter's  |
|   | 6.00 pm  | Choral Evensong*   | All Saints' |
|   |          | Responses <i>Reading</i><br>Walmisley in d<br>Heilig <i>Mendelssohn</i>                              |             |
| <b>Monday 13<sup>th</sup></b>                     | 1.15 pm  | Meditation   | St Peter's  |
| <b>Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup></b>                    | 11.00 am | Holy Communion   | All Saints' |
|   | 1.15 pm  | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |
| <b>Thursday 16<sup>th</sup></b>                   | 11.00 am | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |
| <b>Sunday 19<sup>th</sup></b>                     | 8.15 am  | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |
|   | 10.30 am | Sung Eucharist   | All Saints' |
|   | 10.45 am | Sung Eucharist*  | St Peter's  |
|   |          | Missa Brevis <i>Ives</i><br>Quicumque Christum quaeritis <i>Victoria</i>                             |             |
|   | 5.00 pm  | Taizé Service  | St Peter's  |
| <b>Monday 20<sup>th</sup></b>                     | 1.15 pm  | Meditation   | St Peter's  |
| <b>Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup></b>                    | 11.00 am | Holy Communion   | All Saints' |
|   | 1.15 pm  | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |
| <b>Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup></b><br>Ash Wednesday | 12.00 pm | Holy Communion   | All Saints' |
|   | 7.30 pm  | Sung Eucharist*  | St Peter's  |
|   |          | Mass XI<br>Miserere mei <i>Purcell</i><br>Civitas sancti tui <i>Byrd</i>                             |             |
| <b>Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup></b>                   | 11.00 am | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |
| <b>Sunday 26<sup>th</sup></b>                     | 8.15 am  | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |
|   | 10.30 am | Sung Eucharist   | All Saints' |
|   | 10.45 am | Sung Eucharist*  | St Peter's  |
|   |          | Mass in four voices <i>Byrd</i><br>Hear my prayer <i>Purcell</i>                                     |             |
|   | 6.00 pm  | Compline*  | All Saints' |
| <b>Monday 27<sup>th</sup></b>                     | 1.15 pm  | Meditation   | St Peter's  |
| <b>Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup></b>                    | 11.00 am | Holy Communion   | All Saints' |
|   | 1.15 pm  | Holy Communion   | St Peter's  |

# MUSIC AT ST PETER'S NOTTINGHAM

*(next to Marks & Spencer)*

Concerts start at 11am  
and last just under an hour

Coffee and biscuits are served from 10.15am

## COFFEE BREAK CONCERTS

Admission by donation on the door, online at

[easydonate.org/StPMusic](https://easydonate.org/StPMusic)

or text **StPMusic** to **70331** to donate **£3**

(70970 for £5 • 70191 for £10)



### Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February

Quintessential  
*wind quintet*

### Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February

James Gaughan  
*baritone*



### Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February

Philip Sherratt

*organ*



### Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February

Trio Sonorit 

*in association with* **Illuminate**



[nottinghamchurches.org/concerts](https://nottinghamchurches.org/concerts)



## Regular Activities in our Churches

### All Saints'

- Coffee and Fellowship (part of the Places of Welcome network):  
Tuesdays from 11.30 am – 1.00 pm
- The Nottingham University Society of Change Ringers (Bell Ringers):  
Tuesdays in term time, 7.00 – 8.30 pm
- The Nottingham Enlightening Word Church (Chinese) meets in All Saints' Church on  
Sundays from 2.00 - 4.00 pm and on Friday evenings from 7.30 pm.

### St Peter's:

- The Thursday Communion service at 11.00 is followed by coffee and fellowship
- St Peter's Bell Ringers: Thursdays 7.00 – 9.00 pm

The Parish Overseas Committee meets every other month; the Caring for our Common Home working group also meets on a regular basis. Please contact the Rector if you would like to know more about these. Our churches also support the work of the Mount Zion foodbank at Bobbers Mill; collection boxes for gifts of food are available in the churches.

The Parish Office  
St Peter's Centre  
St Peter's Square  
Nottingham  
NG1 2NW

0115 9483658  
[office@nottinghamchurches.org](mailto:office@nottinghamchurches.org)  
[www.nottinghamchurches.org](http://www.nottinghamchurches.org)

Charity number: 1130298