

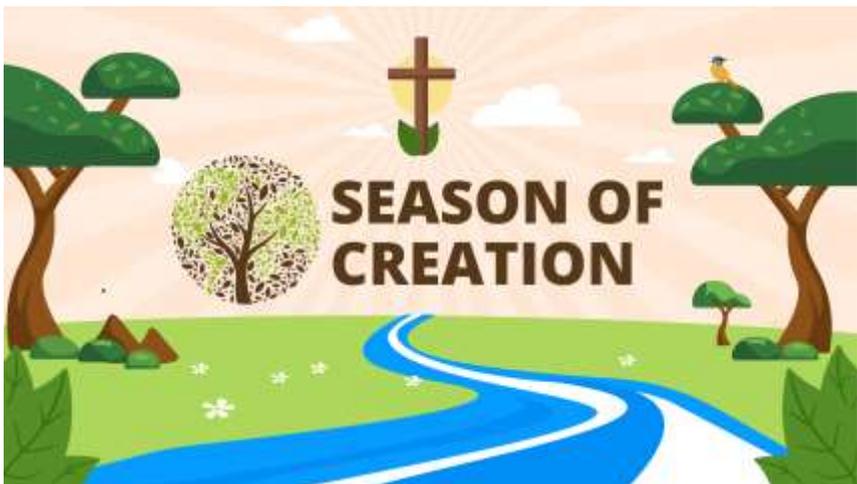
*I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:19)*

Is it still the case that as soon as the schools have broken up for the summer, the shops put up their “back to school” banners? I remember as a child that I found this terribly disheartening. I was determined to enjoy every moment of my summer holiday without thinking about the return to school.

Of course that was never the case for all children – some looked forward with longing to the beginning of a new term. And I wonder whether, after 18 months

of disrupted education, children will be keen to return this September, hoping for a more consistent year.

I have certainly been beginning to look ahead and consider “what next” at St. Mary’s. You may remember from a previous edition that we will be marking “Creationtide” during September, as part of the *EcoChurch* initiative. This will be an opportunity for our worship to focus on God as creator, and our responsibilities as stewards of God’s creation.



## **The Prayer Course**

In the Autumn, I will be leading “The Prayer Course”. This is an eight week course designed to help us as individuals and a community to deepen our prayer life. The eight sessions are as follows:

Why Pray?

Adoration

Petition

Intercession

Unanswered Prayer

Contemplation

Listening

Spiritual Warfare

The course is based on Pete Greig’s book *How to Pray*, and was originally a part of the 24-7 prayer initiative. Each session includes a video, discussion questions and practical prayer activities. Sessions will last around an hour.

This will be offered on Zoom on this occasion. The material lends itself to this format, since the sessions are accompanied by videos which can easily be played on screen. There also continues to be some uncertainty about whether any restrictions will need to be re-introduced, so this will mean we can go ahead regardless.

## **Living in Love and Faith**

Some of you may also have heard of Living in Love and Faith (LLF), which has been discussed by both Diocesan and Deanery Synod. Teaching and learning materials have been produced, and the purpose of the resources is to enable the Church of England churches across the country to participate in a process of learning and praying together as part of discerning a way forward in relation to matters of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

Issues of gender and sexuality are intrinsic to our human experience; our sense of identity; our lives and the loving relationships that shape and sustain them. We also know that the life and mission of our Church – and of the worldwide Anglican Communion – are affected by the deep, and sometimes painful, disagreements among us which have been debated and discussed on many occasions over the years.

The Church wants to understand what it means to follow Christ in love and faith given the questions

about human identity and the variety of patterns of relationship emerging in our society, including marriage, civil partnership, cohabitation, celibacy and friendship. The LLF resources explore these matters by studying what the Bible, theology, history and the social and biological sciences have to say, and by telling the real-life stories of followers of Christ with diverse experiences and convictions.

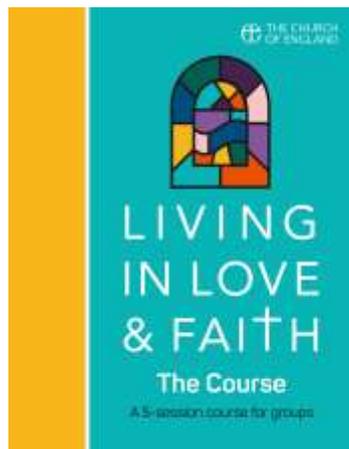
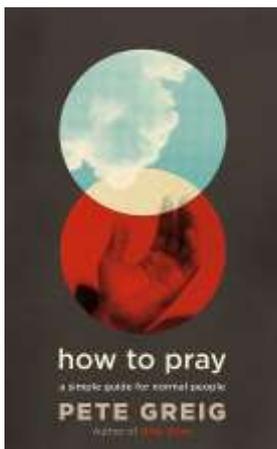
The hope is for people in Church of England churches across the country to use the LLF resources to study and pray together. This church-wide learning together, listening to one another, and listening to God is part of discerning a way forward for the

Church of England in relation to matters of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

You can find out more on the Church of England website here [Living in Love and Faith | The Church of England](#) and there is a dedicated learning hub. There is a five week course which I hope to run later in the year. If you are interested, please do let me know.

### **And finally**

Last week we were blessed by those wonderful words of Jesus, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” I do hope that you will have the opportunity to rest over the summer period, as well as enjoying the company of family and friends.





## August Services and Events

As usual, August should be a quiet month when the PCC and children's and other groups take a break.

Since the end of the Covid legal restrictions there has been no restriction on numbers attending church services and so it is no longer necessary to let Theresa know if you are planning on attending.

For the foreseeable future Sunday services will continue to be available on Zoom and Morning Prayer will continue only on Zoom.

<b>Sunday 1</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Holy Communion with hymns</b>
<b>Sunday 8</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Holy Communion with hymns</b>
<b>Sunday 15</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Holy Communion with hymns</b>
<b>Sunday 22</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Holy Communion with hymns</b>
<b>Sunday 29</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Holy Communion with hymns</b>

**Morning Prayer is said every weekday morning at 9am**  
**Everyone is very welcome — Use Zoom Code 909 037 180**