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# SPIRE & TOWER

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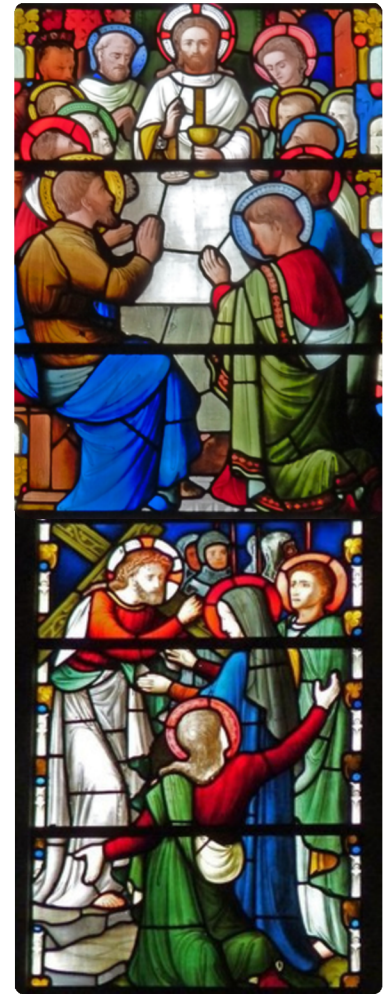


THE MAGAZINE OF ST ANDREW'S & ST MARK'S CHURCH SURBITON

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## Editorial

The summer months can seem quiet in church, as London empties to the four corners of the world. Fortunately, SASM turns out to be a hive of activity behind the scenes. From choir trips to eco events and building works to baptisms, our parishioners have certainly been keeping busy, even if not all in the same place at the same time. It's reassuring to know that the life of the church goes on - and that there's so much more to our community than any of us see as individuals. Perhaps Robert the vicar sees it all from the vicarage, except as I type he's somewhere in Serbia, so possibly not. God does see it all though - our comings and our goings - and has been protecting us all throughout our summers. Hopefully that means I get to see you all again back in church come autumn.

If you want to write something for the Advent issue, get it to me by 1<sup>st</sup> November: that's [gcr.melia@gmail.com](mailto:gcr.melia@gmail.com)

Happy reading!  
*Greg Melia*

# View from the Vicarage

September is the ninth month of the year and holds little Christian significance but nonetheless it retains its hold as a yearly beginning, through its link to the start of the school year. Up and down the country, and no less in Surbiton, children will be starting school for the first time, moving to new schools, or simply moving up a year; parents are getting used to new routines; meanwhile, the child-free among us are surfing the net and looking at last-minute deals into Europe which are 60% cheaper than they were a month ago.

Locally, the last Saturday in September marks the Surbiton Festival. The footfall from this is huge: around 20,000 people come through Surbiton in a four hour period, and a number will visit St Andrew's often for the first time. Yet I am never sure, as a church, that we engage with the festival as well as we could do.



In a way, there is a dilemma about where to situate yourself as the vicar, which expresses a dilemma for the church. One route would be to get onto the high street; hire out a stall for the relevant fee, and hand out leaflets advertising church services and information about the Gospel; the other route is to stay in church and welcome people who one hopes have found their way in. Of course, ideally, one would do both, but then that requires a volunteer commitment that isn't always forthcoming.

For a long time, the main impulse of the Church of England has been to move from the latter position to the former; getting 'out there' is better, because even a shallow engagement is better than none and so many walk on by without darkening our doors. And that certainly has its place.

But in the last year, something seems to be changing. Over the course of three months, we will be baptising six young adults who we haven't 'sought'; they have simply found the church open on a Sunday morning and found that it has spoken to them, that it offers something they were looking for. And it turns out, the best form of evangelism for them, was the church simply being here, and being present, ready for those who search. On a national level, this trend has been called 'the quiet revival'. The title of the author Lamorna Ash's recent book, 'Don't forget, we're here for ever', captures something of the essence of this.

The younger generation seem to sense in its permanence something greater than ephemeral trend, a reality at the heart of the universe and they are drawn to it. In this, I am fond of Philip Larkin's poem, 'Church Going', which describes a visit to a country church in 1954 and he wonders whether, in an ever more secular age, there will be anyone visiting church in the future. He surprises himself with his conclusion.

***"A serious house on serious earth it is,  
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,  
Are recognised, and robed as destinies.  
And that much never can be obsolete,  
Since someone will forever be surprising  
A hunger in himself to be more serious,  
And gravitating with it to this ground,  
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,  
If only that so many dead lie round."***

# Holy Heroes: Thomas the Apostle

Each issue we look at someone's 'Holy Hero': a historic Christian who has inspired one of our congregationers in a special way. In this edition, This time we look at 'Doubting' Thomas, who put his doubts aside to become a great evangelist. Who's your holy hero? Whether it's Duns Scotus or Don Carson, write in and tell us what they've taught you.

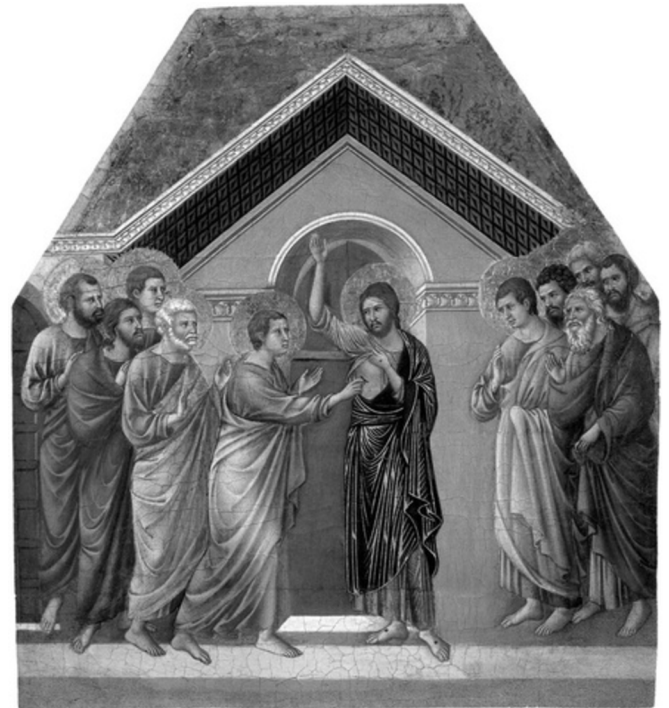
One of the unsung heroes of the New Testament, Thomas is mainly remembered as "Doubting Thomas" due to his initial scepticism about Jesus' resurrection. This overlooks the fact that he was the first disciple to volunteer for martyrdom (John 11:16) and wrote a fascinating version of the Gospel, rediscovered with the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945. Above all, he was a prolific evangelist.

St. Thomas is traditionally believed to have travelled to India, where he played a pivotal role in establishing Christianity. This journey is not only significant for its religious implications but also for its cultural and historical impact on the regions he visited. The Acts of Thomas, an apocryphal text, provides a narrative of his travels, though it blends historical facts with legend.

According to tradition, Thomas embarked on his missionary journey to India around 52 AD. He is said to have sailed to the Malabar Coast, in present-day Kerala. This region was a hub of trade and cultural exchange, so it was a strategic location for spreading new religious ideas. Thomas' arrival in India is commemorated by the ancient Christian community known as the "St. Thomas Christians" or "Nasranis," who trace their origins to his evangelistic efforts.

However, there is also credible evidence that Thomas travelled overland to India via Iraq, Persia and Afghanistan. Mosul, in north-west Iraq, formerly known as Nineveh, where Jonah preached, has a Christian community which claims to have been founded by Thomas. They celebrate his feast day on 3rd July. Furthermore, the "Ecclesiastical History", a fourth century chronicle of the early Church by Eusebius of Caesarea (b? – 339), states that Thomas and Bartholomew were assigned to evangelise the Parthian empire (which included large parts of modern Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan). This is consistent with the earlier "Account of India" by Bardaisan (154 AD to 222 AD), who ascertained that certain tribes in northwest India/Pakistan claimed to have been baptised by Thomas.

Thomas focused on engaging with local communities and their leaders. He is believed to have converted several prominent families and established seven churches along the Malabar Coast. These churches became centres of Christian worship and community life, fostering the growth of Christianity in the region. The legacy of these early Christian communities is evident in the rich liturgical traditions and cultural practices that continue to thrive among the St. Thomas Christians today.



Duccio di Buoninsenga: Jesus Rebuking Doubting Thomas

# Thomas the Apostle (cont.)

Thomas is also believed to have travelled to the eastern regions of India, including the Coromandel Coast in present-day Tamil Nadu. Here he is said to have continued his missionary activities, establishing new communities of believers. The city of Chennai (formerly Madras) is home to St. Thomas Mount, the traditional site of his martyrdom. According to tradition, Thomas was martyred in 72 AD, pierced by a spear while praying, and buried in Mylapore, Chennai. His tomb has become a place of pilgrimage for Christians from around the world.

Our understanding of the Gospel is based heavily on the teachings of St Paul, but Christianity thrived for centuries in Asia with very little influence from the western tradition, so is it time we paid more respect to another great apostle, whose voice has been suppressed for most of the last two thousand years?

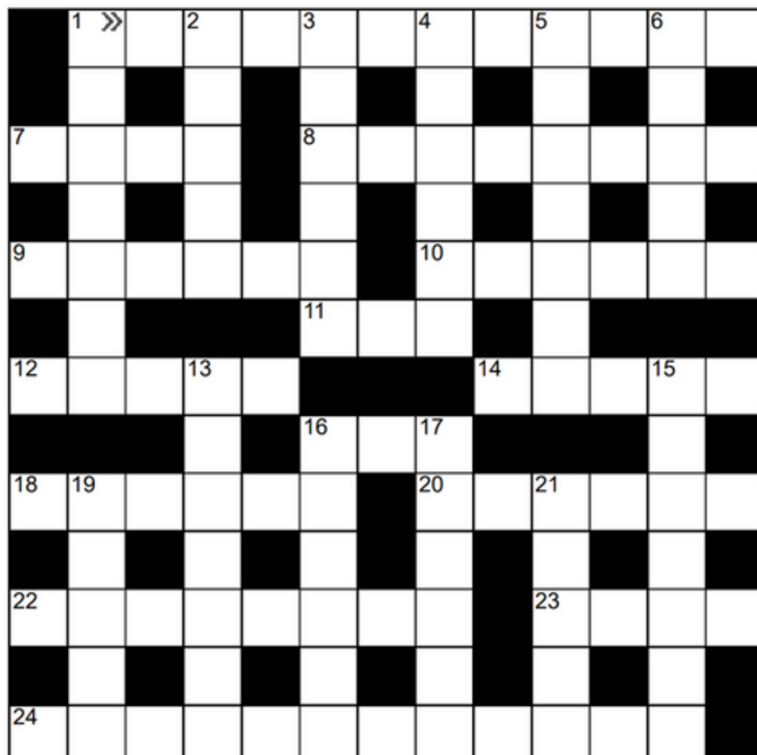
Simon Parker

## Crossword

As ever, use of a Bible is heartily encouraged!

### Across

- 1) Nine months before Christmas (12)
- 7) Positions of cherubim on mercy seat (4)
- 8) Made like Job; eats grass like an ox (8)
- 9) Turkish city, mentioned every week at SASM (6)



- 10) Michaelangelo's profession (6)
- 11) Romans 8 conjunction (3)
- 12) What you do with heavenly treasures (synonym) (5)
- 14) Daniel's liberator (5)
- 16) Before Abraham was ... (3)
- 18) Couldn't shift his ass (6)
- 20) Sheshach → Atbash → Babylon (Jer 25) (6)
- 22) E.g. Amalekites, Ishmaelites, Midianites (8)
- 23) Fell on Noah for 40 days (4)
- 24) Throwing out of church (12)

### Down

- 1) Pour oil on head (7)
- 2) Gregory's hometown (5)
- 3) Son of Ham; Cushite (6)
- 4) Goddess sounds a bit like 'Easter' (6)
- 5) Paul's protégé (7)
- 6) Solemn or swearwords (5)
- 13) The seventh day (7)
- 15) Eternal (7)
- 16) Esther's execution method (6)
- 17) Foodstuff made from combining Psalm 25:7, Num 17:8, 1 Samuel 30:12
- 19) Held Moses' hand (5)
- 21) Former head of CoFE's favourite dog (5)

# In Moses' Steps

*A bike tour following Moses' route out of slavery from Egypt to Israel: was this a pilgrimage? A holiday? An accident? All of those things? Greg Melia goes for a ride.*



I'd already planned my holiday: I was going to Russia! I'd ride through the Caucasus mountains, crossing through Georgia into Armenia, the world's oldest Christian country. If I was lucky I might climb the shoulder of Mt. Elbrus, carrying my bike across a snowy pass nearly half the height of Everest on the Russo-Georgian border, to link two parts of my route. This was 2022, and world events soon intervened: the Ukraine war started and I was definitely not welcome in southern Russia. I needed a new route; a few map-strewn evenings later, 'Grexodus' was born.



*Cairo traffic left something to be desired*

The plan was set: fly into Cairo, cross the Suez Canal, ride south round the Sinai peninsula, climb Mount Sinai itself, cross the Gulf of Aqaba and ride up the Jordanian highlands, stopping for a visit to imitate Indiana Jones in the ancient city of Petra. I'd cross the West Bank at Jericho, and ride into Jerusalem for some rest, relaxation and religious tourism.

It was only when I looked up the Israelites' Old Testament geography that I realised I'd be following their exact route. This was hardly direct – effectively three sides of a circle round the Sinai peninsula – so why had the Israelites followed it in 1200 BC?

The depressing truth was that Moses and I had both picked this route for the exact same reason. In the present, North Sinai consists of badlands occupied by ISIS, Hamas *et al.* Three thousand years ago, North Sinai and the Gaza region consisted of badlands occupied by the warlike Edomites, traditional enemies of Israel (c.f. Malachi 1:2-4). Times don't change and people don't change either – war would not break out for another year after I passed that way, but the conflicts of the present have very deep roots indeed.

An oft-cited truism from people who visit the Middle East is that it gives you a reference point for the Bible stories you learned as a child, grounding them in reality. One parallel I hadn't expected to find with the Exodus was how hard it would be to leave Egypt. In this military dictatorship, anything strange or out of place was shut down; and a lone British cyclist was definitely strange. While Pharaoh didn't quite send his chariots after me, it took several hours to be allowed across the Suez Canal, until I was practically praying for the waters to part. Twenty miles into Sinai, the police started following me in vans - this I'd expected - but it then escalated until they stopped me riding at all, and I completed the trip in a series of police vans, or service buses with the police getting on every hour to check on me – until I became a fugitive celebrity with the local Egyptian passengers pointing out the soldiers to me and suggesting where it wouldn't be wise to get off the bus.



*Mount Sinai Summit*



*A shattered rear hub bearing: the closest I came to plague, starvation or any of Moses' other obstacles*

Eventually I was out and into Jordan – a different world – where my route was free, and nobody wanted to follow me around with guns. A day off for bike maintenance in the port of Aqaba - famously besieged by Laurence of Arabia - sitting forlornly on a hostel floor in the sweltering heat, hammering out my broken hub bearings while backpackers, scuba divers and the odd fellow cyclist walked past with a mixture of bemusement and sympathy. Then it was up, out of town to the highlands, where shepherd boys roamed the hills with their flocks in scenes unchanged since Jesus' time, and I could almost anticipate a wandering prophet coming over the horizon, save for the occasional Land Cruiser passing by to break the illusion.

Another lesson in biblical geography loomed. Across the Israeli frontier, through Palestinian-controlled Jericho (no checkpoint, but a sign at the border telling Israeli citizens that it was against their own law for them to enter) ... and up the vertical equivalent of Ben Nevis to reach Jerusalem. Of course Jesus needed a donkey by the time he entered the city on Palm Sunday, he must have been exhausted! No wonder John the Baptist could run an insurgent religious movement down by the Jordan either: the temple authorities must have been loath to come down to check up on him, with that massive hill to climb to get home.



*Masada: site of the Jews' last stand in AD70.*

A week of relaxation followed: I was joined by my girlfriend Ruth and we spent the week visiting the seaside metropolis of Tel Aviv, being preached at by all manner of religious oddities in Jerusalem and visiting the usual

round of archaeological sites, from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to Hezekiah's Tunnel to the Wailing Wall. For centuries people had crossed Europe to come here, to tread where their saviour had trod. Unlike my predecessors I wasn't coming to seek an indulgence, to have my sins forgiven or my wounds healed, but my faith still informed my journey: by recreating Moses' steps I was participating in a story – one that reached back to the origins of the Bible, found its fulcrum on a hill outside Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, and continues forward to the present day. From learning about the Israelites in Sunday school, I was now travelling alongside them, overcoming the desert and the Egyptian army to reach our goal. I hadn't planned it, but the trip had acquired a spiritual significance – my holiday had turned out to be a pilgrimage after all.



*Jerusalem Old City*

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## Eco Event: How to save energy in your home

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On 17 June, Kingston Council, represented by our own Terezie Wickenden, and Crew Energy, represented by Toby Costin, gave a presentation on how to save energy, money and carbon in your home. Terezie pointed out that 37% of all emissions come from homes. Kingston Council has committed to reaching net 0 by 2038 and is offering half price energy audits to encourage residents to reduce their emissions.

Toby suggested a huge number of ways to save energy in your home. He pointed out that doing so will increase the value of your property as well as saving you money and making you more comfortable. He began with a list of inexpensive, old-fashioned techniques: Drawing curtains over doors and windows on wintry nights can drop your heating costs by 14%. Replacing old brushes on sash windows can save you up to 12%. A door snake draft stopper, or a chimney balloon can cut costs by 10%. And these savings will add up.

New technology also offers some inexpensive methods to save energy. Smart thermostats and smart radiators make it possible to heat only the rooms you use when you use them. Adding Hydromx to the water in your pipes makes your heating system 37% more efficient. Solar panel prices have dropped a lot in the last two years and battery technology has improved.

Heat pumps by themselves are not too expensive, but the changes needed to make them work effectively in your older home may be. However, carbon fibre heating, which uses infra red light to heat objects rather than the air, can heat a room at 1/3 the cost of electric heat in 2/3 of the time needed.

Various organisations now offer grants, and banks are now offering energy-saving mortgages.

For more information, go to <https://tinyurl.com/44n5z9sw>

*Katherine Reed*

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## Spire & Tower

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Spire & Tower is the parish magazine of St Andrew's & St Mark's Church Surbiton. It comes out four times a year: Lent, Summer, Harvest and Advent, in March, June, September and December.

Missed an edition? You can download back issues of the magazine at <https://bit.ly/44AsGWT>

If you want to write anything, the copy deadline for the next issue is November 1<sup>st</sup>. Please email the editor at [gcr.melia@gmail.com](mailto:gcr.melia@gmail.com)

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# Choir Visit to Windsor Castle

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*Each year the choir travel to sing in some of the greatest cathedrals in England. This summer they had a very special opportunity: to sing in St George's Chapel Windsor where monarchs from King Henry VIII to Queen Elizabeth II lie buried.*

The sun shone on our adventures in Windsor. Although the town was busy celebrating the Late May Bank Holiday, we were undeterred by the crowds. Armed with cassocks in blue, red and black, the combined forces of St Andrews & St Marks, St Matthews and St James Church Choirs mounted their assault on Castle Hill and stormed the battlements of Windsor Castle after lunch. We successfully breached the main gate – no armed knights, just a couple of policemen checking us in – and penetrated to the inner courtyard. Once in, we rehearsed our tactics in a stately hall next to the most beautiful view in the Kingdom.

From there we processed into St George's Chapel itself for a final run-through before evensong. The Chapel of the College of St George, to use its full title, is set within Windsor Castle and occupies about a quarter of the whole Castle. Around it within the inside walls of the Castle are half-timbered houses, accommodation for vergers and



other staff – almost a small village within the walls, just like a real medieval castle. The Chapel is a Royal Peculiar and is the Chapel of the Knights of the Garter. This year, it celebrates its 550th anniversary, being founded by Edward IV in 1475 (who rebuilt the earlier chapel that Edward III had built). It is a large, grand building as you would expect of such a historical chapel where the Royal Family are buried, but despite this, the choir section of the Chapel feels quite intimate.

Simon Harvey had been the advance party as he had had to rehearse on the chapel organ at 8:30am, ahead of the tourists. As we proceeded in, the vergers were ushering the tourists out so that we could practice. After a quick lesson on how to process in and out of the chapel pews and a final run through the music, it was time for the service. Aably conducted by Jason Edge and expertly accompanied by Simon, we opened with the 17th Century Ayleward Responses. Then moving into the 20th Century, we sang a beautiful Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis by Herbert Howells from his Collegium Regale, with an eloquent tenor solo from Joseph Al-Khalili in our choir.

Last but not least we moved into the 21st Century with a modern and very tuneful anthem Call of Wisdom by Will Todd. Will Todd's piece was first sung at the late Queen's Diamond Jubilee, so it was a fitting piece for the Chapel where she has been laid to rest. We had sung this service at St Matthews recently so that we were well rehearsed. With a choir of around 40 voices, we felt very confident and made (we hope) a good sound. Certainly our congregation, which included several members of our own churches, seemed to appreciate us. After the service, the clergy even invited us back.

All too soon it was time for us to relinquish our brief occupation of this amazing castle and descend the hill to catch our transport home.

*Katrina Lidbetter*



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## Used Stamps Needed for USPG

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In both churches there are boxes for stamps Thank you to those who have regularly saved and contributed stamps already and helped raise funds for USPG. USPG is an Anglican missionary agency <https://uspg.org.uk/> that has been around since 1701 and is supported by our Parish.

Stamps need to have a minimum of a finger's width (about 1cm) of paper all the way around. Most money is raised from modern stamps - the one with security tabs – but older and foreign stamps are accepted.

So get cutting and saving more!

I regularly empty and sort the box contents and send off huge envelopes of your contributions.

Thanks  
*Celia O'Neill*

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# My Favourite Bible Verse

*Each issue we'll hear from a church member on their favourite Bible verse. What's yours? Write in and let us know.*

We often turn to scripture for healing amid pain, and happily find it, only to discover that also wrapped into its balms is also something slightly sharper.

That is why I draw so much from the final passage of Matthew 6. In the Gideon Bible I received as a schoolboy, it is titled Do Not Worry, but many will recognise it as The Lilies of the Field, from the middle of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, an intense and rewarding set of teachings about love, faith and empathy.

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Every word of this passage is freighted with meaning. The story of human worry about material items - basic essentials like "what you will eat or drink" - shifts into a comparison with "the birds of the air" who are fed daily by God, and then into one with wealthy King Solomon who was not dressed as supremely as even one of the lilies. It is a description that pulls you up short, reminding one of the temptation for care-worn humans to lapse into self-obsession.

When we look back over the last few years then few, if any, of us will have been untouched by troubles, whether they relate to the pandemic, finances, health or our loved ones. It is only natural to worry. And for many in other parts of the world, the physical threat faced has been agonising and inescapable.

Amid this, the Gospels can provide us with some of the tools to help us get through crises.

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own," Jesus said in verse 34.

Jesus' final sentence blends reassurance with a reminder that, while life is frequently troubled, there are no better guides than faith, love and a little determination.

*Peter Edwards*

## CROSSWORD ANSWERS

**Across:** 1) Annunciation 7) Ends 8) Behemoth 9) Nicaea 10) Artist 11) Nor 12) Stash 14) Cyrus 16) IAM  
18) Balaam 20) Unicode 22) Rain 24) Anathemizing

**Down:** 1) Anoint 2) Nyssa 3) Nubian 4) Ishtar 5) Timothy 6) Oaths 13) Shabbat 15) Undying 16) Impale  
17) Muesli 19) Aaron 21) Corgi

*'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

*'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.*

**Matthew 6: 25-34**

## St Andrew's East Window



After 150 years of service, the east window in St Andrews is being repaired. You can see the scaffolding up in church at the moment; it will come down when the repair is over, and we will have a fully working and much safer window. In the interim you can see pictures of some of the repaired panels around the magazine - and the scaffolding certainly gives Robert a good view!

Fun fact: churches traditionally face east, towards the rising sun, as we anticipate Jesus' return.

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# Why do the altar frontals change colour?

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*Have you ever wondered why the altar coverings frequently change colour? Fear not Andrew Horn gives a handy guide.*

You may notice that some Sundays the altars and clergy vestments look different but may not have thought much about why this happens. Since I started changing the frontals at St Mark's a couple of years ago, I have become much more attuned to the pattern and the lectionary, which gives us guidance, sits permanently on my desk.

The first point to make is that we could have any colour we wanted. C of E "rules" state "appropriate liturgical colours are suggested, they are not mandatory and traditional or local use may be followed".

At St Mark's we have four main sets: white, purple, red and green. White is the colour for the festal periods: from Christmas Day through to the Presentation and from Easter Day to Pentecost Eve. It also appears for Trinity Sunday and a few major feast days. The other main seasonal colour is purple, which is the colour for Advent and from Ash Wednesday until the day before Palm Sunday. Red is used on the feast of Pentecost and for the feasts of those saints venerated as martyrs. Green is for ordinary time when "no other provision is made". Broadly this is from the day after the Presentation until Shrove Tuesday, and from the day after Pentecost until All Saints' Eve.

We do have one anomaly at St Mark's: our beautiful bright red set made in the parish in 1961 features prominent doves, which is great for Pentecost but less appropriate for Palm Sunday and Holy Week. So, we usually have no altar frontal on Palm Sunday and a plain white set with embroidered nails in the Lady Chapel for the Monday to Wednesday communions in holy week (not pictured). We do have dark red vestments for Palm Sunday.

St Mark's differs from St Andrew's and most churches, in that we have a dossal (from the French *dos* meaning back). This is the lovely orange and gold curtain that hangs behind the main altar. We use this with white and green altar frontals. We have a sackcloth dossal that is put up with the purple and red frontals, and we use neither from Maundy Thursday to Easter Eve. Changing the dossal is time consuming, so if it is a saint's day when we are switching from white or green, we just rotate the dossal to show the plain back.

To change the two altar frontals and lay out the vestments takes about an hour, and you can add another 15 minutes to rotate the dossal or 30 minutes if it is a full dossal change. That does mean we only do it for Sundays and Thursdays when there is communion at St Mark's. If you come to morning prayer on a saint's day, I'm afraid you will just have the prevailing colour.

As I write, we are in a period of green for 7-8 weeks, depending whether or not Robert celebrates Holy Cross on 14th Sept. In the seven weeks before this there were 6 changes, hence the lectionary remained close to hand!



# Your Handy Guide to Liturgical Colours



**Top Left:** White (Christmas, Easter)

**Top Right:** Purple (Advent, Lent)

**Lower Left:** Red (Pentecost)

**Lower Right:** Green (Ordinary Time)

**Below Left:** The St Mark's side altar

**Below Right:** Dossal, (altar back-hanging)

**Previous Page:** Altar stripped (Good Friday)





*Mount Sinai Summit, Egypt. Mount Catherine in background*

## SERVICES

9:15 Family Service St Mark's  
11:00 Choral Eucharist St Andrew's  
6PM Evening Service St mark's

For more info see [surbitonchurch.org.uk](http://surbitonchurch.org.uk)

