

A low-angle photograph of a tall, light-colored stone church tower with a pointed roof and Gothic architectural details. In the foreground, a raspberry branch with bright green leaves and clusters of small pink flowers and red berries is positioned on the right side. The background is a clear, bright blue sky.

UNIVERSITY CHURCH

WHAT'S ON

LONG VACATION 2025



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CHORAL EVENSONG: THE CHURCH'S BANQUET

THE REVD CANON DR WILLIAM LAMB

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,
 God's breath in man returning to his birth,
 The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
 The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth
 Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r,
 Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
 The six-days world transposing in an hour,
 A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;
 Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
 Exalted manna, gladness of the best,
 Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
 The milky way, the bird of Paradise,
 Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
 The land of spices; something understood.

George Herbert (1593-1633)

George Herbert, the great poet and Anglican priest of the early seventeenth century, was the parish priest in Bemerton just outside Salisbury. He would often walk to Salisbury Cathedral in the evening for Choral Evensong, which he described as his 'heaven on earth'. It is hinted at in his celebrated sonnet on Prayer, where he speaks of 'sounding heav'n and earth'.

When Archbishop Thomas Cranmer devised the service of Evening Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer, he combined the ancient monastic offices of Vespers and Compline to create a frame for prayer and reflection, which has stood the test of time. The service consists almost entirely of passages of scripture, from the versicles and responses at the beginning, to the psalms, to the readings from the Old Testament and the New Testament, to the singing of the canticles, the Magnificat (the Song of Mary) and the Nunc Dimittis (the Song of Simeon).

In the course of the summer, we will welcome many visitors to the University Church, where they will be able to attend Choral Evensong at 3.30pm on a Sunday afternoon. This elegant service provides a space and a frame as well as cues for us to discover 'the church's banquet', 'something understood'.

If you are visiting Oxford in the course of the summer months, you can be assured of a very warm welcome at the University Church. Come and find out more about the unique history of this ancient church, and look out for one of these tours over the summer.

THE DREAMING SPIRES TOUR

Various Dates | University Church
6.00pm and 6.30pm | £25 per person

Book an advance ticket to enjoy after-hours access to the church tower, and view the dreaming spires of Oxford from a unique vantage point, the dreamiest spire of them all!

Dating from 1280, the tower of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin is the oldest building in Radcliffe Square. You will explore its medieval architecture, including its gargoyles and stone carvings. You will hear the chimes of the ancient bells and see the workings of the 18th century clock. You will also enjoy exclusive access to the Old Library. Built in 1320, the Old Library is the original library of the University of Oxford. In the Old Library, you will be offered a glass of fizz (non-alcoholic option available), and you will enjoy some of the finest views of the Radcliffe Camera and Radcliffe Square.

PLEASE NOTE: Access to the tower is only via a 127-step medieval turret staircase. Persons with heart conditions or pre-existing medical conditions, mobility difficulties or any condition where the effort of climbing is considered hazardous should refrain from attempting this climb. You are required to exercise due care and attention during your visit and to move around the University Church at all times with proper regard for your safety.



Tickets are £25 per person. You have to be 18 years old or above to book this tour. To book a place, please use the QR Code.

ORIGINS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD TOUR

Various Dates | Bodleian Library and University Church
5.00pm - 6.30pm | £40 per person

Explore the fascinating history of the University of Oxford on this exclusive evening tour of the Bodleian Library and the University Church.

Step inside the University of Oxford's central library and learn how it grew from a single book collection into one of the world's largest and most respected library systems. You'll enjoy after-hours access to the beautiful Duke Humfrey's Library, the Bodleian's oldest library room. The tour then proceeds to the University Church of St Mary the Virgin. Here you'll trace the roots of Oxford's University, from its early days to its development into a world-renowned institution. Walk through this historic church and discover the key moments that shaped the University's story. Your tour will conclude with drinks and a captivating choral performance.



Tickets cost £40 for this exclusive tour. In order to book a place, please use the QR Code.

THE VIRGIN AND CHILD

Friday 8 August | University Church
6.00pm - 7.30pm

The painting behind the high altar in the University Church, is one of a number of versions by Simon Vouet and his studio of a celebrated composition painted c.1639–1640. In this session, the Revd Canon Dr Will Lamb, with colleagues from the Ashmolean Museum, will offer a presentation on this altarpiece and draw out its theological and artistic significance. The session will close with the beautiful office of Compline or Night Prayer.



Tickets cost
 £10.00.
 Please book
 early to avoid
 disappointment.

SUNDAY FORUM**Sunday lunchtimes**

Look out for the Sunday forum following the main Sunday morning service at St Mary's. A range of speakers will be invited to focus our minds on issues of community, justice, and the common good. All are very welcome. For lift access please speak to a steward.

**INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING:
 A CONVERSATION WITH THE DIOCESAN
 HEAD OF SAFEGUARDING**

Sunday 7 September | Old Library
12noon - 1.00pm

The Church of England's poor record of responding to concerns about safeguarding has been very much in the news in the course of the last twelve months. In response, the Parochial Church Council has affirmed its commitment to ensuring that safeguarding is conducted with transparency, accountability, and independence. It recognises the importance of addressing historical safeguarding failures with a survivor-centred approach, ensuring their voices shape future decisions. In this session, Dr Louise Whitehead, the Head of Safeguarding in the Diocese of Oxford, will speak about the developments which have taken place to improve safeguarding within the Diocese and outline the work which still needs to happen in order to advance safeguarding reforms nationally.



SPECIAL EVENTS

PIMMS AND PALESTRINA

Sunday 13th July | Nave | 3.30pm - 5.00pm

Join us for a special festal choral evensong, followed by a 'Pimms and Palestrina' talk given by Rob Howarth, Director of Music at the University Church, with music from the University Church Choral Scholars.

This year we are celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the birth of Palestrina, and the Choir have been singing a mixture of his lesser-known Mass settings, alongside a great number of his motets. In this talk we will explore the legacy of Palestrina's work, focussing on the work of his students, and how music ultimately moved from the Renaissance to the Baroque. Alongside his legacy we will look at how Palestrina was a master of both polyphony and homophony, and how he used music to support the text and emotion, and how that would move the passions of his congregations. We will illustrate this with a few live musical examples. There is no charge for this event but there will be the opportunity to make a donation in support of the Christian Aid Burkina Faso Project.



ANNUAL INTERFAITH FRIENDSHIP WALK

Thursday 26 June | Various locations 6.00pm - 8.00pm

Join us for a walk through the city centre with people of many faiths. We will begin our journey from the synagogue in North Oxford via St Giles Church and then on to the University Church in Radcliffe Square before ending our journey at the Central Mosque in East Oxford. This is a great community celebration and everyone is very welcome to join us.

OPEN DOORS WEEKEND

Friday 12 September | University Church | 9.30am - 11.00am

Saturday 13 September | University Church | 10.00am - 11.30am

THOMAS CRANMOUSE

Step into the University Church during the Friday or Saturday morning of Open Doors Weekend for a special child-friendly, interactive exploration trail! Can you solve the clues and help Thomas Cranmouse find his hat? Where do you think it is hiding? This is a self-guided activity ideal for children aged 5-12, who must be accompanied by a parent or carer.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

CHILDREN AT ST MARY'S

We are delighted to have children worshipping with us at St Mary's at the 10.30am service. A selection of toys and books are available in the Newman Room (behind the glass brick wall) next door to the baby changing facilities.

DROP-IN ARTS ACTIVITIES

Monday 28th July - Wednesday 30th July & Monday 4th August - Wednesday 6th August | Chancel | 10.00am-11:30am

Come and visit the chancel any time from 10:00-11:30 on Monday 28th-Wednesday 30th July and Monday 4th-Wednesday 6th August. Each day there will be a different craft activity inspired by the beauty and history all around us at the University Church of St Mary the Virgin. Explore the church building in more depth and have a go at your own artistic creations. Aimed at ages 5-12, suggested donation: £5.00.



GODLY PLAY

**Sunday 6th July, 3rd August, 7th September
10.30am - 11.15am | 10ld Library**

Godly Play takes place monthly in the Old Library on the first Sunday of the month during the first 45 minutes of the 10:30 Sung Eucharist. It is particularly suitable for children aged 3-8 years old and their families.

SAPLINGS

Sunday 17th August | Old Library | 10.30am - 11.15am

Saplings is a new children's group launching August 2025. It will take place on the third Sunday of the month in the Old Library.

TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC

**Sunday 10th August
12.30 - 2:30pm
University Parks**

Bring a picnic blanket, some lunch and your favourite teddy as we venture into the University Parks together. Meet near the Banbury Road entrance. Please keep an eye out for weather-related updates. Ideal for ages: 0-6





SECOND COFFEE

Sundays | 12noon - 1.00pm
Weston Library Cafe

We are always delighted to welcome students and young people at the University Church. Our Second Coffee group offers a chance to catch up and compare notes weekly with an outing for coffee or drinks after the congregational gathering that follows the 10.30 service on Sundays. We also offer a range of activities, including organised dinners, with or without a discussion, movie evenings, walks and picnics, Saturday breakfasts, a book club and visits to museums or galleries. We are always open to suggestions for discussion, study or fun. To join us, meet in the De Brome Chapel after the 10:30 service.

GARDENING DAYS

**Saturday 12 July,
 9 August, 13 September**
10.00am - 12.30pm
Holywell Cemetery

Holywell Cemetery is one of Oxford's best kept secrets – a haven of tranquillity and reflection in a city where space and stillness are increasingly at a premium. On the second Saturday of the month, a group of volunteers help to maintain this space. We gather at 10.00am with gloves and suitable clothing and work to enhance this space. Afterwards there is an opportunity for a pub lunch. Please email admin@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk to let us know that you plan to join us.



FREE LUNCHTIME RECITALS

Thursday Lunchtimes | 1.00pm - 1.45pm
University Church

If you are in Oxford during the lunch hour, come and join us in the cool of St Mary's for our lunchtime concerts. The programme includes chamber music, organ recitals, and the occasional jazz concert.

For details about other concerts during Trinity Term, please visit our website: www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk



LONG VACATION 2025

CONCERTS

SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH

SUNDAY SERVICES

22 JUNE	THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am	Holy Eucharist
10.30am	Sung Eucharist <i>Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr Judith Maltby</i>
5.00pm	Choral Evensong (Oxford Festival of the Arts)
29 JUNE	THE FEAST OF ST PETER
8.30am	Holy Eucharist
10.30am	Choral Eucharist <i>Preacher: Dr Sarah Mortimer</i>
6.00pm	Choral Evensong (at St Peter-in-the-East)
6 JULY	THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am	Holy Eucharist
10.30am	Choral Eucharist <i>Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb</i>
3.30pm	German Lutheran Service
13 JULY	THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am	Holy Eucharist
10.30am	Sung Eucharist <i>Preacher: The Revd Hannah Cartwright</i>
3.30pm	Choral Evensong (Pimms & Palestrina)

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20 JULY	THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am	Holy Eucharist
10.30am	Sung Eucharist <i>Preacher: The Revd Dr Jane Baun</i>
3.30pm	Choral Evensong
27 JULY	THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am	Holy Eucharist
10.30am	Sung Eucharist <i>Preacher: The Revd Canon Bruce Kinsey</i>
3.30pm	Choral Evensong
3 AUGUST	THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am	Holy Eucharist
10.30am	Sung Eucharist <i>Preacher: The Revd Dr Stephanie Burette</i>
3.30pm	Choral Evensong
10 AUGUST	THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am	Holy Eucharist
10.30am	Sung Eucharist <i>Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb</i>
3.30pm	Choral Evensong

17 AUGUST THE PATRONAL FESTIVAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist
Preacher: The Rt Revd Martin Seeley
3.30pm Choral Evensong

24 AUGUST THE FEAST OF ST BARTHOLOMEW

8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Naomi Gardom
3.30pm Choral Evensong

31 AUGUST THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Hannah Cartwright
3.30pm Choral Evensong

7 SEPTEMBER THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb
3.30pm German Lutheran Service

14 SEPTEMBER HOLY CROSS DAY

8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: Dr Cathy Ross
5.00pm Choral Evensong (at St Cross Church)
Preacher: The Revd Dr Laura Biron-Scott

21 SEPTEMBER THE FEAST OF ST MATTHEW

8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Dr Erica Longfellow
3.30pm Choral Evensong

28 SEPTEMBER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb
3.30pm Choral Evensong

WEEKDAY SERVICES: MONDAY - FRIDAY

9.00am Morning Prayer
12.15pm Holy Eucharist



ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH

The University Church of St Mary the Virgin is a vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive church within the Church of England. Standing in the centre of Oxford, St Mary's is the spiritual heart of the oldest university in Britain. With dignified liturgy and beautiful music, we strive to be a community of intelligent and faithful Christian witness, unafraid to engage with the modern world.

Vicar | The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb
vicar@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Associate Vicar | The Revd Hannah Cartwright
hannah.cartwright@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Associate Priest | The Revd Alan Ramsey
alan.ramsey@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Assistant Curate | The Revd Naomi Gardom
naomi.gardom@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Children, Families & Schools Chaplain
The Revd Sorrel Shamel-Wood
sorrel.shamel-wood@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Reader | Dr Sarah Mortimer
reader@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Director of Music | Robert Howarth
robert.howarth@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Administrator | Jenny Shearan
admin@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Events Officer | Sarah Ockwell
events@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Operations Manager | Patrick Croom
patrick.croom@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Communications & Volunteers
Ana-Maria Niculcea
ana-maria.niculcea@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

Safeguarding Officer | Judith Pettersen
judith_pettersen@hotmail.co.uk

Find out more about the University Church on our website www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, HIGH STREET, OXFORD. OX1 4BJ
01865 279110 | WWW.UNIVERSITYCHURCH.OX.AC.UK

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