

A photograph of a tall, Gothic-style church tower with a pointed spire, set against a clear blue sky. The tower is made of light-colored stone and features intricate carvings and a clock face. Green trees and bushes are visible in the foreground, partially obscuring the base of the tower.

UNIVERSITY CHURCH

WHAT'S ON

LONG VACATION 2026

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PILGRIMS ON THE WAY

Christianity is often described as ‘a religion’ and yet the idea of ‘religion’, which is manifest in discreet forms, like Christianity, Islam and Judaism – a genus to different species - is a peculiarly modern idea, which emerged towards the end of the sixteenth century. ‘Religion’ is an abstraction and like many abstractions, it is notoriously difficult to define.

The first Christians would have been perplexed by the idea of ‘religion’, and intriguingly, they were once persecuted for being ‘atheists’ – for refusing to believe in the Gods of the Greek and Roman pantheons. They believed in one God, and the life of prayer was cultivated in order to distinguish between the one God, who is the source of all life and wonder, and the false Gods or idols that sometimes captivate the human heart.

For the first Christians, Christianity was a form of philosophy, not in the abstract sense that we understand that term, but in the ancient sense of ‘a way of life’. In the Book of Acts, it is described as ‘the Way’ (Acts 9.2, 19.9, 19.23, 22.4, 24.14, 24.22). ‘The Way’ incorporated not simply a set of beliefs but also a set of practices and virtues. They drew on the inspiration of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish teacher, who was crucified during the Passover Festival by the Roman authorities. They believed that he was the Christ, the Messiah, the one anointed to bring salvation to God’s people. Jesus taught his followers to look forward to the future and see that God’s reign of love and justice was at hand. Nothing had prepared them for the brutality of the cross. And yet as they listened to the witness of disciples who claimed that God had raised Jesus from the dead, they began to see in the life of Christ a pattern of self-giving love,

which gave them the hope and the confidence to believe that goodness is stronger than evil, that love is stronger than hate. Christians are people who treasure this memory and hope.

The first Christians also drew on the ancient scriptures of the Jewish faith (Genesis 1.26-28) to say that in the face of Jesus Christ, we see the image of God (2 Corinthians 4.6). From this, they drew a number of conclusions about the dignity of being human – regardless of class, status, race or gender.

Everyone was welcome to join their assembly or *ekklesia*. The first Christians were distinguished by their commitment to adopt orphans, to pay for the redemption of slaves, to care for the sick, to feed the hungry, to welcome the stranger, and to defend the vulnerable and the marginalised. These convictions about the dignity of being human are things we may take for granted, but they were not universally shared by people in the Roman world. However ambiguous the subsequent Christian history may have been, Christian teaching provides the foundations for some of our deepest convictions and hopes. This ‘Way’ offers each of us a pattern of human flourishing.



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

Sunday evenings in July and August | 5.30pm and 6.30pm | University Church | £25 per person

Beat the queue! Rather than queuing for a tower visit during the day, you can book an advance ticket to enjoy after-hours access to the tower, and view the dreaming spires of Oxford from a unique vantage point, the dreamiest spire of them all! The tour also includes 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 that 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. Tickets available at the Visitor Desk on weekends.

ORIGINS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD TOUR

Various Dates
Bodleian Library and
University Church
4.00pm - 5.30pm
£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 include a captivating choral performance and conclude with drinks. Places are limited, so please book online.



CONTEMPLATING CREATION

Thursday 10 September
10.30am - 12noon | Ashmolean

What does it mean to consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (Matthew 6)? What can the story of Creation teach us about our own creativity and creatureliness? Led by Revd Canon Dr William Lamb and Katherine Wodehouse, this workshop in the Ashmolean will explore the relationship between theological and ecological experience using prints and drawings in the Western Art Department. Please book early to avoid disappointment. For more information, email admin@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk



Study of an Ash Trunk
Albert Joseph Moore
(1841–1893)
© Ashmolean Museum

ZURBARÁN AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY

Tuesday 11 August | 2.00pm - 3.30pm | National Gallery, London

Join us on this exciting trip to the National Gallery in London as we explore the works of the Spanish painter Francisco de Zurbarán (1598 – 1664). One of the most prominent names in the world of Baroque art, Zurbarán is renowned for his moving depictions of religious figures and saints. In this exhibition, we will explore his career through a series of major works from galleries across Europe and the US. To register your interest, email admin@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk. Cost: £20 per person. Spaces limited.



EQUALLY OXFORD: COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE

Tuesday 8 September at the University
Church, and 14 July, 13 October at
Littlemore Church | 6.30pm - 8.00pm

Faced with rising inequality, and compelled by the hopeful vision of Mary's Magnificat, St Mary and St Nicholas, Littlemore and the University Church have been working together with friends from across the city to bring about meaningful change. If you would like to be part of a small community seeking to make a big difference in the city through prayer and practical action, join us for our next meal and meeting as we seek to explore what it means to be more 'Equally Oxford'. Email: hannah.cartwright@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk



WHISKEY AND WOOD

Sunday 13 July | 3.30pm - 6.00pm | Nave

Join us for this very special evensong, celebrating the life and legacy of the Irish composer Charles Wood (1866 – 1926), followed by a “Whiskey and Wood” talk given by Rob Howarth, Director of Music at the University Church, with music from the University Church Choral Scholars.

Charles Wood’s influence over sacred music throughout the 20th and 21st centuries is undeniable. A forefather of the English Musical Renaissance, his legacy has most notably been carried on through his most famous students, the composers Herbert Howells, and Ralph Vaughan Williams. On the 19th July, the University Church will celebrate Wood’s contribution to church music with a special evensong, featuring works such as *The Teams are Waiting in the Field*, and *Never Weather-beaten Sail*. Following the service there will be a talk exploring a range of Wood’s music, discussing the genius of his harmonic invention, and how his interest in older poets and musical styles bled into one of his most prolific areas of influence, the Christmas Carol. Suitable refreshments to be served...

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EQUALLY OXFORD EXHIBITION

**September - December | All Day
Adam de Brome Chapel**

Equally Oxford is a group of individuals from local churches committed to tackling injustice in Oxford through prayer and practical action. The name of the group comes from our desire to combat the perception that the “real” Oxford is the central town and its colleges, parks and gardens. We want to say that doesn’t matter where in the city you are... we’re all *Equally Oxford!*

Equally Oxford is pleased to announce an exhibition showcasing the work of non-profit projects in Littlemore. From mental health support groups to slow cooker classes for parents, the exhibition celebrates the impact of these initiatives while also raising awareness of the challenges that remain. Through the words of volunteers and service users, the exhibit offers insight into grassroots efforts to build a more equal city. This is a fantastic opportunity to learn more about local inequalities and discover ways to get involved—whether through volunteering, donations, or simply becoming more informed.

The exhibition will be on display from the 8th September, with a celebration reception at 6:30pm on the 29 September at the University Church. All are welcome.

OPEN DOORS WEEKEND AND RIDE AND STRIDE

Saturday 12 September 10.00am - 5.00pm
Sunday 13 September, 12.00pm - 5.00pm
University Church

On the weekend of 12th - 13th September, the University Church is delighted to be participating in two exciting local events: Oxford Historic Churches Trust's *Ride and Stride*, and the Oxford Preservation Trust's *Open Doors Weekend*. Over the weekend, we have a host of exciting free events for all ages, including tours of the University Church and Holywell Cemetery, the launch of our Equally Oxford Exhibition celebrating local community Groups, and a children's activity exploring the Open Doors theme of 'Everyday Histories: Exploring daily working life through the ages'. We will finish the weekend with Evensong at the nearby St Cross Church, including a sermon by historian the Reverend Canon Professor William Whyte.



*St Cross Church,
on St Cross Road*

VOLUNTEERING AT THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH

Here at the University Church, we're privileged to be supported by so many wonderful volunteers, who give their time and talents in so many ways.

From 2026, we're excited to announce that our new Visitor Experience Officer, Eleanor Minney, will be taking responsibility of our volunteer team:

"Following three years working in the Church Shop, part of my role now will be supporting the volunteer team and hopefully helping you to grow, thrive, and continue to enjoy what you do best in the University Church. If there is anything I can do to support you in your volunteering, or if you are interested in becoming a volunteer with us, please contact me on visit@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk or find me in the church on Saturdays, Sundays, or Mondays. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you!"

VOLUNTEER SOCIAL MEET-UPS

Sunday 28 June and Sunday 25 October
4.30pm - 6.30pm | Old Library

All volunteers, as well as anyone interested in becoming a volunteer, are invited to our Volunteer Social meet-up. Gathering in the Old Library after Evensong, these socials will be a brilliant place to meet other volunteers, and learn more about the wide range of volunteer roles we have at the University Church. Register your interest by messaging: visit@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk



COME AND SING '80S AND '90S SCHOOL ASSEMBLY FAVOURITES

Tuesday 21 July | 2.00-3.00pm | University Church

Whether you attended a British primary school in the 1970s-90s and hold a deep nostalgia for the school assembly hymns of your childhood, or whether this is an entirely new experience for you, come and join us around the piano for an inclusive, all-age singalong. We will be making a joyful noise together! For all ages from 0-105, children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian at all times.

DROP-IN ARTS AND CRAFT ACTIVITIES

Wednesday 5, 12, & 19 August
10.00am-11.30am | Chancel

Come and visit the chancel any time from 10.00am - 11.30am on Wednesday 5, 12, and 19 August for a drop-in arts and craft activity. Ideal for children ages 3-11 with a parent or carer.



CHILDREN'S TRAIL

Opening hours throughout the Summer Holidays

Pick up a children's trail worksheet from the High Street entrance to the church and discover the key features of an Anglican church. Show your completed worksheet to the shop staff in exchange for a prize.

SUMMER PICNIC

Sunday 2 August | 12.00pm - 2.00pm

All children and their families are welcome to join us for this family summertime picnic following the 10:30am service. For more information, email: sorrel.shamel-wood@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk



SUNDAYS AT THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH

Every Sunday | 10.30am - 11.30am | Newman Room

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.

SAPLINGS

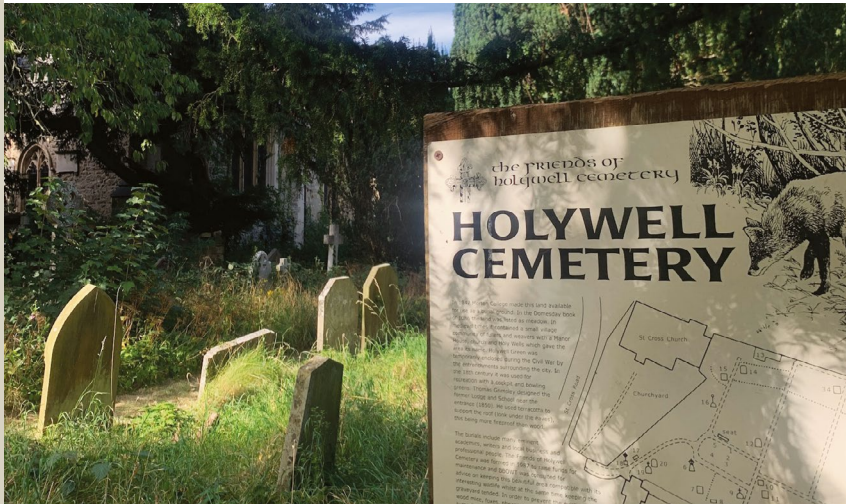
First and Third Sundays of the Month | 21 June, 5, 19 July,
6, 20 September | 10.30am - 11.15am | Old Library

Saplings is our inclusive, child-centred offering of Christian education, taking place during the first 45 minutes of the 10:30am Eucharist service. It includes Godly Play, Lego Church and other child-focused approaches to spirituality, Bible study and beliefs, and is ideal for children aged 3-10 years old and their grown-ups.

GARDENING DAYS

Second Saturday of the month | 11 July and 12 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.



CONCERTS

FREE LUNCHTIME RECITALS

Thursday Lunchtimes | 1.00pm - 1.45pm
University Church

If you are in Oxford during the lunch hour this summer, 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. Feel free to bring your sandwiches.

For details about all concerts during the long vacation please visit our website.

SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH

- 21 JUNE THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**
 8.30am Holy Eucharist
 10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Hannah Cartwright
 3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 28 JUNE THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**
 8.30am Holy Eucharist
 10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Alan Ramsey
 3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 29 JUNE THE FEAST OF ST PETER**
 12.15pm Eucharist at St Peter in the East
- 5 JULY THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**
 8.30am Holy Eucharist
 10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb
 3.30pm German Lutheran Service
- 12 JULY THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**
 8.30am Holy Eucharist
 10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb
 3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 19 JULY THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**
 8.30am Holy Eucharist
 10.30am Choral Eucharist with visiting choir
Preacher: The Revd Lee Chantler
 3.30pm Choral Evensong followed by Whiskey and Wood
- 26 JULY THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**
 8.30am Holy Eucharist
 10.30am Sung Eucharist with Holy Baptism
Preacher: The Revd Liam Cartwright
 3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 2 AUGUST THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**
 8.30am Holy Eucharist
 10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: Revd Dr Laura Biron-Scott
 3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 9 AUGUST THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**
 8.30am Holy Eucharist
 10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr Alwyn Pettersen
 3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 16 AUGUST THE FEAST OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**
 8.30am Holy Eucharist
 10.30am Choral Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Dr Melanie Marshall
 3.30pm Solemn Evensong
- 23 AUGUST THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**
 8.30am Holy Eucharist
 10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Dr Judith Maltby
 3.30pm Choral Evensong

30 AUGUST THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Hannah Cartwright
3.30pm Choral Evensong

6 SEPTEMBER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Naomi Gardom
3.30pm German Lutheran Service

13 SEPTEMBER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb
5.00pm Choral Evensong at St Cross Church

20 SEPTEMBER THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: Revd Canon Dr Peter Groves
3.30pm Choral Evensong

27 SEPTEMBER THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Sorrel Shamel-Wood
3.30pm Choral Evensong

DAILY SERVICES

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
The Revd Naomi Gardom is currently on maternity leave.

Children, Families & Schools Chaplain
The Revd Sorrel Shamel-Wood
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Director of Music | Robert Howarth
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Find out more about the University Church on our website www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

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