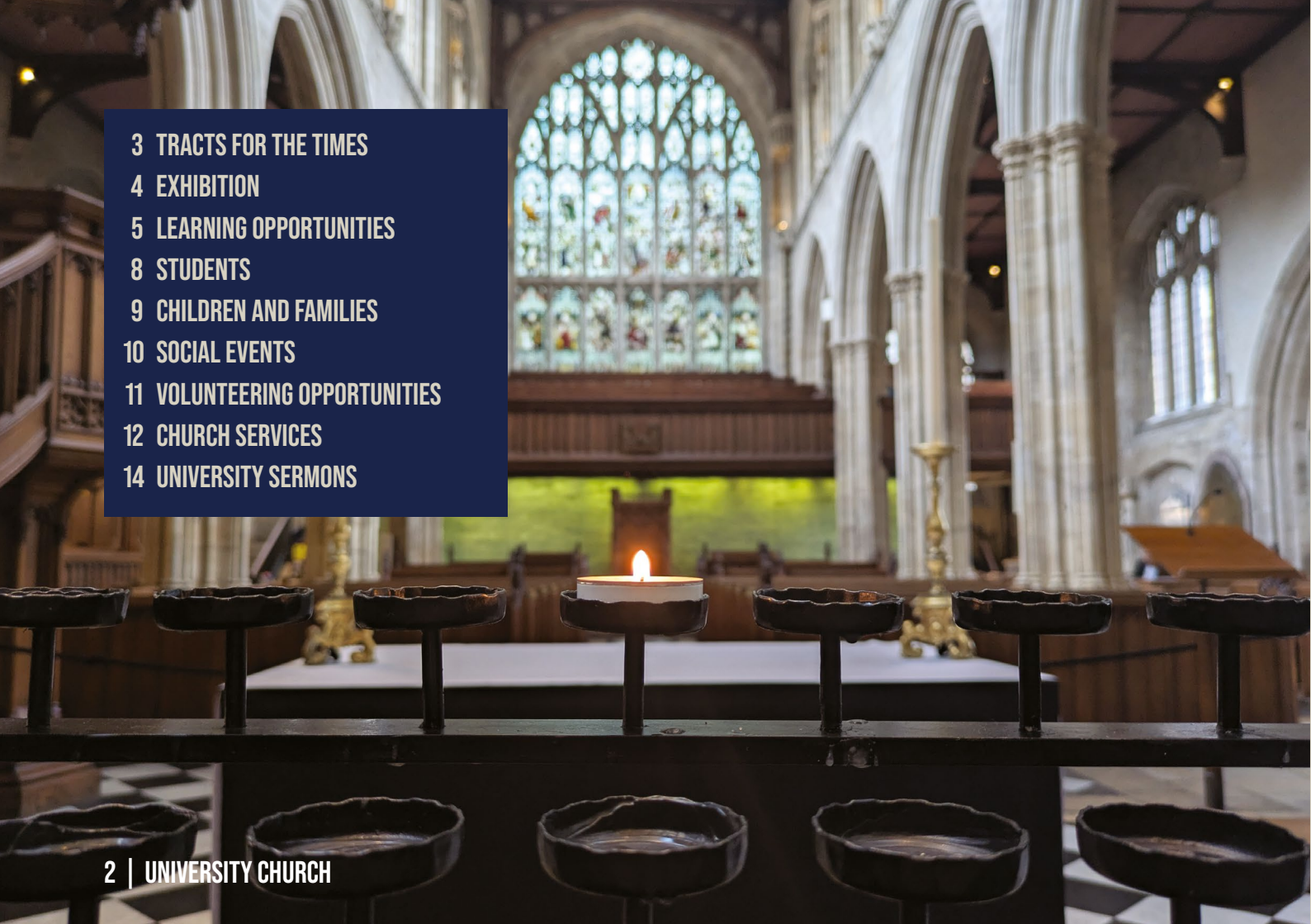


A photograph of the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford, taken from a low angle looking up at the spire. The church is made of light-colored stone and features large Gothic windows. To the left, a tree is decorated with warm white lights. In the foreground, a street with a red traffic light and a person in a high-visibility vest is visible. The sky is a clear blue with a few wispy clouds.

UNIVERSITY CHURCH

WHAT'S ON

MICHAELMAS TERM 2026



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FAITH AND RESILIENCE

THE REVD HANNAH CARTWRIGHT

There is a fabled MI5 maxim that 'the UK is only four meals from anarchy'. This points to a lack of inbuilt resilience in national infrastructure which, if compromised, it is believed would swiftly lead to significant anti-social behaviour by the general populace. Yet a decade of research from King's College London suggests that this is not the whole picture, noting that:

'...not only are people resilient to disaster, but they are likely to demonstrate altruism in the face of disaster ... altruism, rather than panic or mass criminality, can be expected and promoted.' In other words, social cohesion, built on neighbourliness and self-sacrifice for the common good, are far more likely outcomes than a full-scale 'Lord of the Flies' style scenario when society is put under pressure.

There is no doubt that the scarcity mind-set hits early, as we saw during the Covid-19 pandemic when shelves were stripped of toilet paper and pasta within hours of the first lockdown being announced. But this initial panic gives way, within not-too-long, to a perceptible sense of 'togetherness' as community begins to rebuild itself around the obstacle, and seek ways to establish and navigate a new kind of normal.

I saw this for myself during the pandemic when working in the parish of Littlemore, with whom we have strong links (see more about the 'Equally Oxford' exhibition on page 4). With high rates of poverty and social isolation, the school and church (founded by St John Henry Newman whilst he was Vicar of this parish) already had the real human connections when crisis hit, that many local services

lacked. And this picture was replicated across the country as faith-based organisations had the personal and institutional relationships with residents, charities, and service-providers, which meant that they were able to spring into action; reaching the most vulnerable and quickly building trust as well as providing critical support.

It turns out that the church has been resilience planning for millennia, but we just call it fellowship, loving our neighbours, and following the example of Christ in showing compassion to others and sharing our resources. The life of faith is one big-enough to acknowledge the reality of suffering, whilst also not collapsing into despair. Christian hope is more than community spirit, it is the lived-out commitment to loving God and to loving our neighbour. Not only does our faith give impetus to social action in times of need, but its quiet community-building on Gospel principles in times of plenty, make us ready to share the abundance of treasures stored up in ways that neither plague, nor moth, nor any other crisis can destroy.

(www.kcl.ac.uk/news/spotlight/understanding-behaviour-during-crises)



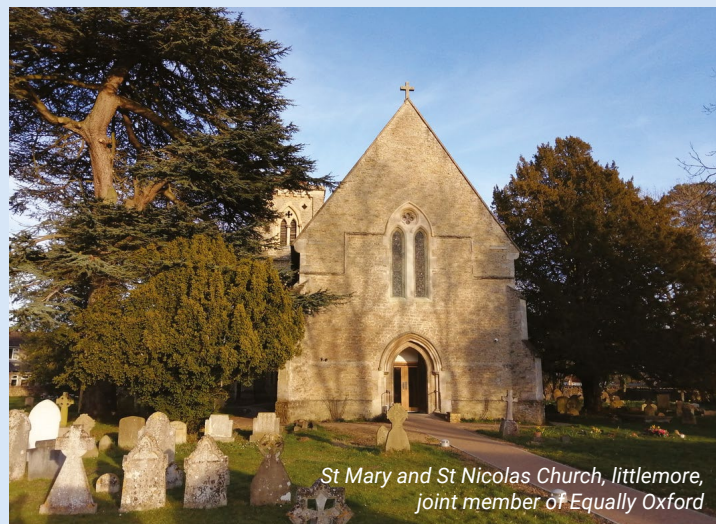
EQUALLY OXFORD EXHIBITION

Saturday 12 September - Friday 18 December 2025
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 only 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 is open daily and free of charge.



St Mary and St Nicolas Church, Littlemore,
joint member of Equally Oxford

EQUALLY OXFORD CELEBRATION EVENING

Tuesday 29 September | De Brome Chapel | 6.30pm - 7.30pm

All are warmly invited to this special drinks reception celebrating the work of Equally Oxford and their first exhibition. At this evening, the exhibition will be exclusively on display, and there will be an opportunity to learn more about Equally Oxford, as well as the projects they work with in Littlemore. To register for a place, email admin@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk.

REGULAR EVENTS

APOCALYPSE: READING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Tuesdays during University Term
Old Library | 12.45pm - 1.30pm

G. K. Chesterton famously said, 'Though St John saw many strange monsters in his visions, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators'. The Book of Revelation has been described as the Bible's 'prime visionary text' and a charter for "the Principle of Hope". But its legacy is ambiguous. It can challenge injustice, offering a radical and subversive perspective on situations of oppression and evil. It can also appear to collude with violence, terror and oppression. How do we learn to read this book with sensitivity and imagination? How do we read this strange book as Christian scripture?



POETRY GROUP

Wednesdays during University Term
Old Library | 5.00 pm – 6.30pm
14 & 21 October, 4 & 18 November

Poetry Group is open to anyone interested in exploring and/or writing poetry, and is hosted by Tess Blenkinsop. Join us in the Old Library as we explore the poetry of a number of writers, and encourage the creativity of one another.

MICHAELMAS TERM 2026

LIGHT ON DARKNESS: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE LITURGY



One of the great characteristics of Anglican worship is its liturgical worship, drawing on *The Book of Common Prayer* and *Common Worship*. This term, we welcome Dr Cosima Gillhammer, the author of 'Light on Darkness: The Untold Story of the Liturgy', to help us think about the way in which ritual and music shape our experience and understanding of the world.

O Radiant Dawn: Seeing Advent through the Liturgy
Thursday 22 October | Old Library | 7.30pm - 9.00pm

What does Advent really mean? To understand this season of waiting and expectation, we need to return to its ancient liturgy. Exploring the extraordinary texts and rituals of Advent, this talk reveals a world of prophecy, longing, darkness and approaching light, and traces the influence of this liturgy through music, art, and literature, from William Byrd to J.R.R. Tolkien.

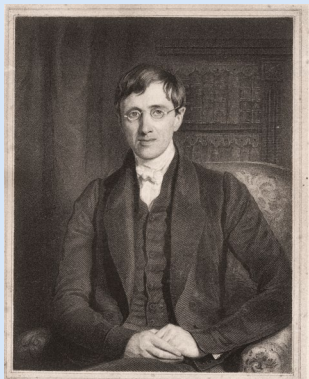
God with Us: Seeing Christmas through the Liturgy
Thursday 29 October | Old Library | 7.30pm - 9.00pm

Christmas is so familiar that its richness and deeper meanings can easily become obscured. This talk focuses on the liturgy at the heart of the feast, exploring how its texts and rituals illuminate the mystery of the Nativity – and how this medieval liturgical tradition has shaped centuries of Western art, music, literature, and culture.

ST JOHN HENRY NEWMAN: DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Thursday 19 November | 3.00pm - 5.00pm
Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities

Join us for a lecture by the Rt Revd Monsignor Roderick Strange to mark the declaration of St John Henry Newman as a Doctor of the Universal Church. Newman was Vicar of St Mary's from 1828-1843. Professor Irene Tracey, the Vice-Chancellor, will host the lecture, which will be followed by a number of contributions from The Rt Hon Lord Patten of Barnes, KG, CH, PC, Former Chancellor of the University of Oxford, The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford, and Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe OP, Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford.



Tickets are available from the Schwarzman Centre website.

SUNDAY FORUM

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.

PEOPLE'S EMERGENCY BRIEFING

Sunday 4 October | Old Library | 12noon - 1.00pm

St Mary's Green Team will be hosting a special Sunday forum for a showing of 'The People's Emergency Briefing' with a discussion on the climate crisis to consider how we, as individuals and as a community, can respond.

SAFE FAMILIES

Sunday 22 November | Old Library | 12noon - 1.00pm

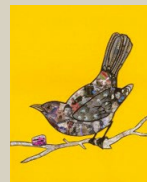
Across the UK, too many families face challenges in isolation. Too many children and young people experience uncertainty, instability or the loss of a safe place to call home. Imogen Onwuka from the charity Safe Families will share with us how they are working towards a different future: one where families are supported before they reach crisis, children experience lasting belonging, and communities step forward to offer hope, help and connection.

SPECIAL EVENTS

WHEN THE BLACKBIRD SINGS

23 September - 11 October
Promenade Production
Times as advertised

We are delighted to support the Schwarzman Centre in collaboration with Creation Theatre as they tell the story of Paulette, who was born in Jamaica, crossed an ocean to expand her horizons and now, in 1966, is determined to change the world. This Promenade Production begins in Blackbird Leys and as the audience travel by bus through the city, you will enjoy a glorious odyssey through the city of Oxford. You will meet remarkable pioneers, passionate changemakers, a patron saint and fellow humans simply trying to survive.



Artwork by
Bry Leighton

Tickets are available from the Schwarzman Centre website.

FACING THE TRUTH: ABUSE, HEALING AND REBUILDING TRUST IN THE CHURCH

Wednesday 21 October | 6.00pm - 8.00pm | Nave

In recent years, revelations of abuse and institutional failings have profoundly damaged public trust in the church and caused immense suffering to survivors. Many who have disclosed church-related abuse have spoken of experiences that have deepened, rather than eased, their pain. Confronting these truths is essential. Yet difficult questions remain. How can the church become a safer, more compassionate community for those who have been harmed? What does genuine repentance, justice and healing look like? And how can churches learn to respond to survivors in ways that restore dignity, hope and trust and restore integrity to the church itself?

These questions will be discussed by a panel of people with direct experience of church related abuse and from people with experience of supporting those who have experienced abuse. The panel will include the Revd Dr Beth Keith, Prof Helen King and Andrew Graystone with support from the Oxford Survivor Group.



To register for your place, please sign up on Eventbrite.

THE CASE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A CONTESTED WORLD

Friday 13 November | 6.00pm - 7.30pm | Old Library

The University Church is the place where the charity OXFAM was founded and many members of the congregation are actively involved in international development. In recent years, there has been a shocking reduction in government funding and support. Anneliese Dodds MP, a local MP and a former Secretary of State for International Development, will be in conversation with leading figures from OXFAM, Christian Aid, the Anglican Alliance and Caritas International. What can we do to support international development in the current climate?

STUDENTS

The University Church has been a spiritual home for the University of Oxford's students ever since its foundation. In addition to our regular services, the University Church hosts a range of student-specific groups and events.



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. To join us, meet in the De Brome Chapel after the 10:30 service.

BOARDGAMES AND PIZZA

18th October | 7.30-9.30pm | The Curatage

All are invited for a relaxed evening of games and food, including the ever-popular 'The Bible is Funny'. RSVP with any dietary requirements to naomi.gardom@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

REVELATION READALONG

**3rd November | 2.00-4.00pm
University Church**

To complement the term's Bible Study, we will be reading our way through the whole of the dramatic book of Revelation in the course of one afternoon. Drop in and out, or sign up for a reading slot – no experience necessary!

ASHMOLEAN NOW VISIT

**30th November | 2.00-3.00pm
Ashmolean Museum**

An exclusive guided tour of the contemporary Ashmolean NOW exhibition with works by Garry Fabian, conducted by Katherine Wodehouse. Spaces are limited – book yours by emailing admin@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



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.

We will be running an Advent group for older children later this term. Please email sorrel.shamel-wood@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk for more information.

SAPLINGS

First and Third Sundays of the Month | 4 & 18 October, 1 & 15 November, 6 & 20 December | 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.

HALF-TERM CRAFTS

Wednesday 28 October | 10:00 - 11:30am | Chancel

There will be some seasonally-themed drop-in craft activities in the chancel. Ideal for ages 3-11 with a grown-up.

SAINTS, SUPERHEROES AND ANGELS PARTY

Sunday 1 November | 12noon - 1pm | Old Library

Join us straight after church up in the Old Library for a children's party to celebrate All Saints Day. Lunch provided. Fancy-dress of any kind encouraged! Aged 0-12ish with a grown-up.

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS

Saturday 19 December | Chancel | 10am - 12noon

We are delighted that real stable animals will be visiting the churchyard again this year to help bring the nativity story to life. There will also be Christmas-themed crafts, activities, stories and songs in the chancel! Ideal for ages 3-11 with a grown-up.

SOCIAL EVENTS

PARISH LUNCH

Sunday 25 October | 12noon - 2.00pm
Old Library

Lunch will be served in the Old Library following the main Sunday morning service. Everyone is welcome.

COFFEE & DOUGHNUTS

Wednesdays during University Terms | 11.15am - 12.00noon
Adam de Brome Chapel

Come and join us for coffee and doughnuts, as well as company and conversation, in the De Brome Chapel from 11.15am. All are very welcome.



GARDENING DAYS

Saturday 10 October, 14 November, 12 December | 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.



DEATH CAFE

Saturday 31 October
1.00pm - 3.00pm | Old Library

Our termly Death Cafe meets in the Old Library. Come for a completely open discussion with no agenda, no expectations, and no right answers. You don't need to have been to one of our previous meetings to attend. Death Cafes have been running across the world since 2011, and their aim is 'to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives'.

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Every year, the University Church welcomes approximately half a million visitors from around the world through our doors. None of this would be possible without the support of our brilliant volunteers, who form a vital part of our ministry and welcome.

If you are interested in learning more about volunteering please contact Eleanor Minney, the Visitor Experience Officer: visit@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

There are a diverse range of roles volunteers can get involved with at the University Church: Gardening, Hospitality, Floristry, Stewarding, Guiding, and Worship.

Full training is given and we do our very best to ensure volunteering is inclusive, supported, safe, and enjoyable.



VOLUNTEER SOCIAL MEET-UPS

Sunday 25th October | Old Library | 4.30 - 6.30pm

All volunteers, as well as anyone interested in becoming a volunteer, are invited to the next Volunteer Social meet-up. Gathering in the Old Library after Evensong, these quarterly socials are a place to meet other volunteers, and learn about different volunteer roles we have at the University Church. Register your interest by emailing: visit@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

CONCERTS

LUNCHTIME RECITALS

Thursdays | 1.00pm - 1.45pm

If you are free during the lunch hour, come and join us at the University Church for our lunchtime concerts. The programme includes chamber music, organ recitals, and the occasional jazz concert. Full details for each recital are on the website. You can also sign up to be notified of any changes via the website or by emailing events@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk

For details, and information about other concerts, please visit our website: www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk



SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH 2026

SUNDAY SERVICES

- 4 OCTOBER

THE FEAST OF ST FRANCIS (HARVEST FESTIVAL)
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Naomi Gardom
3.30pm German Lutheran Service
- 8 OCTOBER

LATIN COMMUNION
8.00am Latin Communion
Celebrant: The Revd Dr Melanie Marshall
- 11 OCTOBER

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb
3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 18 OCTOBER

THE FEAST OF ST LUKE
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist with University Sermon
Preacher: Professor Peter Sarris
3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 25 OCTOBER

DEDICATION FESTIVAL
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Richard Jenkins
3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 1 NOVEMBER

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist with Holy Baptism

- 8 NOVEMBER

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist (Requiem)
Preacher: The Revd Hannah Cartwright
3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 15 NOVEMBER

THE SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist with University Sermon
Preacher: Sir Robert Chote
3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 22 NOVEMBER

THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb
3.30pm Choral Evensong
- 29 NOVEMBER

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Leanne Roberts
6.00pm Advent Carol Service
- 6 DECEMBER

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb
6.00pm Graduate Colleges Carol Service (ticketed)
Preacher: The Lord Rees of Easton OBE

Preacher: The Revd Alan Ramsay
3.30pm German Lutheran Service

- 13 DECEMBER

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Hannah Cartwright
6.00pm OHM Carol Service
- 20 DECEMBER

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Naomi Gardom
6.00pm Carols by Candlelight
- 24 DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS EVE
4.30pm Crib Service for Children and Families
11.30pm Midnight Mass
Preacher: The Revd Hannah Cartwright
- 25 DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS DAY
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Choral Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb
- 27 DECEMBER

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Canon Dr Alwyn Pettersen
- 3 JANUARY

THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY
8.30am Holy Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist
Preacher: The Revd Dr John Findon

WEEKDAY SERVICES
9.00am Morning Prayer
12.15pm Holy Eucharist



UNIVERSITY SERMONS

The practice of delivering University Sermons dates back to the earliest days of the University of Oxford. Each year men and women from many different traditions are invited by the Vice-Chancellor to deliver sermons 'before the University'. The University's motto from Psalm 27, Dominus illuminatio mea (The Lord is my light), captures something of its purpose: the illumination of the mind in the context of prayer. Today, these sermons occur at the University Church and in College Chapels across the University. They provide an opportunity to hear thinkers from a range of disciplines and perspectives, drawing together the life of learning, spiritual discovery, and the quest for truth.

THURSDAY 8 OCTOBER LATIN COMMUNION AT THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH AT 8.00AM

Celebrant: The Revd Dr Melanie Marshall

TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER COURT SERMON AT THE CATHEDRAL AT 6.00PM

Preacher: The Revd Dr Nicholas Austin SJ, Master, Campion Hall

SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER UNIVERSITY SERMON AT THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH AT 10.30AM

Preacher: Professor Peter Sarris, Professor of Late Antique, Medieval and Byzantine Studies, University of Cambridge

SUNDAY 1 NOVEMBER RAMSDEN SERMON AT WORCESTER COLLEGE AT 6.00PM

Preacher: The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle KCVO MBE, Dean of Westminster

SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER UNIVERSITY SERMON AT THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH AT 10.30AM

Preacher: Sir Robert Chote, President, Trinity College

SUNDAY 22 NOVEMBER UNIVERSITY SERMON ON THE SIN OF PRIDE AT EXETER COLLEGE AT 6.00PM

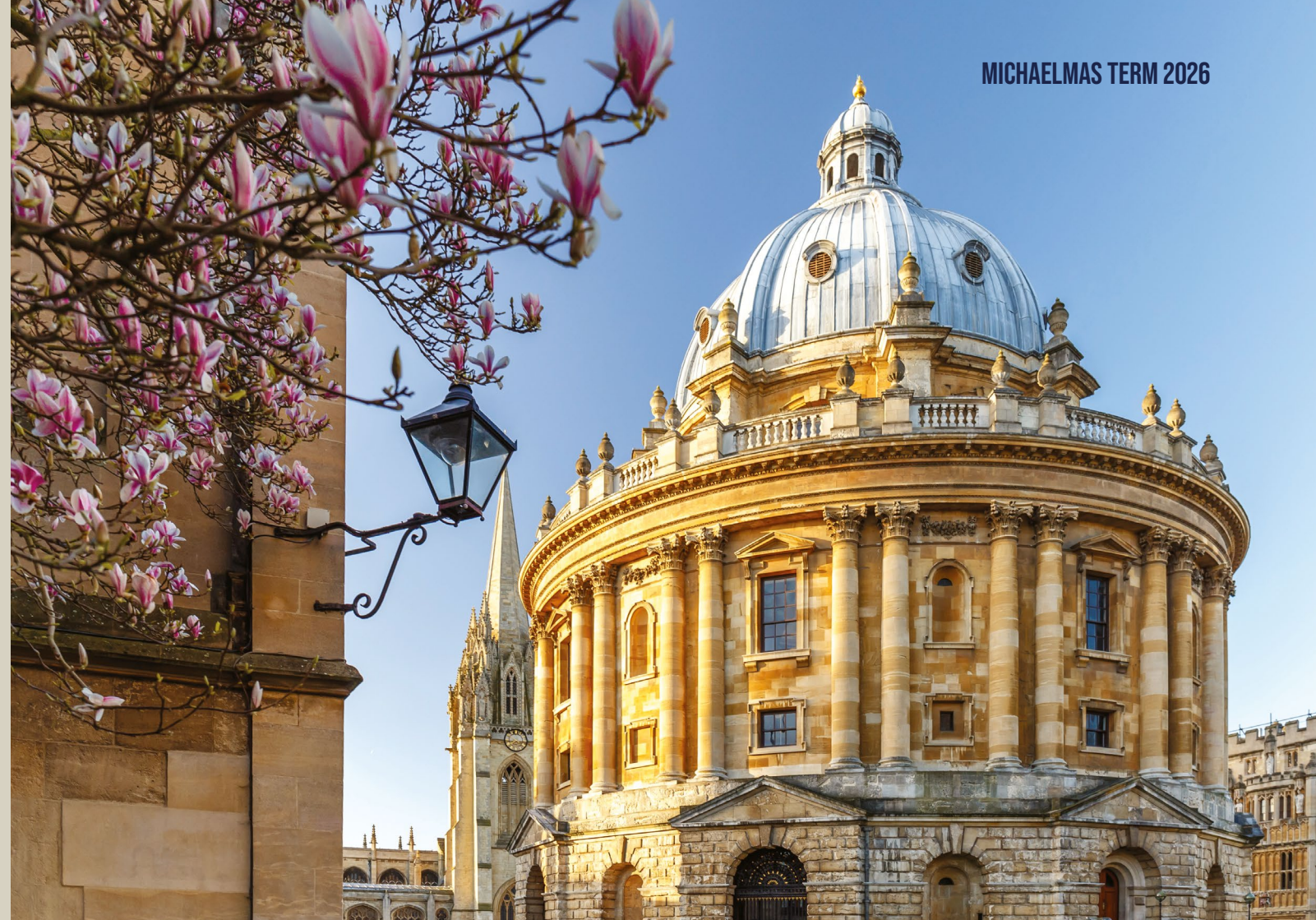
Preacher: Professor Beth Breeze OBE, Principal, Harris Manchester College

SUNDAY 29 NOVEMBER UNIVERSITY SERMON (ADVENT SUNDAY) AT THE CATHEDRAL AT 9.35AM

Preacher: The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Lord Chartres GCV, former Bishop of London



MICHAELMAS TERM 2026



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

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

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