



# *The Grapevine*

*Photo © Fabrice Abalain*

## *Welcome to February's Grapevine*

I'm sure many of us were amazed at how quickly the snow blanketed us recently, briefly graced us with its presence, then disappeared overnight. We did all the usual British things, rushing to buy salt to spread on the paths, buying snow-friendly boots... still, they'll all come in handy next year! And wasn't it beautiful while it lasted.

## *All Saints Vendée*

### *Contact details:*

Chaplain & President:

Revd Hazel Door  
Home phone: 05 49 87 71 45  
e-mail: Rev.hazel@wanadoo.fr

Vicarage:

27 rue de Malvoisine,  
85110 St Vincent Sterlanges:  
Vicarage Phone: 02 51 31 23 71

Churchwarden:

Chris Milton: Phone : 02 51 51 77 38  
e-mail: chrisannmilts@hotmail.com

Churchwarden and Lay Vice-Chairman:

Margaret Kent: Phone: 05 49 72 27 72  
e-mail: maguyjelley@gmail.com

Lay Minister:

John Matthews: Phone: 05 49 75 29 71  
e-mail: [matthewsj@wanadoo.fr](mailto:matthewsj@wanadoo.fr)

Chaplaincy Safeguarding Officer :

Anne Condie: Phone: 05 49 16 27 72  
e-mail: [ASVsafeguarding@gmail.com](mailto:ASVsafeguarding@gmail.com)

Website:

[www.allsaintsvendee.fr](http://www.allsaintsvendee.fr)



No need to remind anyone that February is associated with St. Valentine (see Hazel's 4-Thought below), but it might also be worth mentioning the symbol of Vendée, with its double heart, originally designed to represent the double loyalty of Vendéen(ne)s to God and to the King.

# 4-thought

*Rev Hazel*

Apart from the obvious Saint, I wondered which special folk are commemorated in February??

- 1 [Brigid of Kildare](#), [Abbess of Kildare](#), c.525
- 3 [Anskar](#), [Archbishop of Bremen](#), [Missionary in Denmark](#) and [Sweden](#), 865
- 4 [Gilbert of Sempringham](#), Founder of the [Gilbertine Order](#), 1189
- 6 [The Martyrs of Japan](#), 1597
- 10 [Scholastica](#), sister of [Benedict](#), [Abbess of Plombariola](#), c.543
- 14 [Cyril and Methodius](#), Missionaries to the [Slavs](#), 869 and 885
- 14 [Valentine](#), [Martyr at Rome](#), c.269
- 15 [Sigfrid](#), [Bishop](#), Apostle of Sweden, 1045
- 15 [Thomas Bray](#), [Priest](#), Founder of the [SPCK](#) and the [SPG](#), 1730
- 17 [Janani Luwum](#), [Archbishop of Uganda](#), Martyr, 1977
- 23 [Polycarp](#), Bishop of [Smyrna](#), Martyr, c.155
- 27 [George Herbert](#), Priest, Poet, 1633

Well I did wonder..... the wonderful Wikipedia, has further information if you are curious.

Then I realised how little I knew or remembered about Saint Valentine.

Apparently he was a priest, and may have been the Bishop of [Terni](#), an important town of [Umbria](#), in central [Italy](#). While under house arrest of Judge Asterius, and discussing his faith with him, Valentinus (the Latin version of his name) was discussing the validity of [Jesus](#). The judge put Valentinus to the test and brought to him the judge's adopted blind daughter. If Valentinus succeeded in restoring the girl's sight, Asterius would do whatever he asked. Valentinus, praying to God, [laid his hands](#) on her eyes and the child's vision was restored.

Immediately humbled, the judge asked Valentinus what he should do. Valentinus replied that all of the [idols](#) around the judge's house should be broken, and that the judge should fast for three days and then undergo the Christian sacrament of [baptism](#). The judge obeyed and, as a result of his fasting and prayer, freed all the [Christian](#) inmates under his authority. The judge, his family, and his forty-four member [household](#) of adult family members and servants were baptised.

Valentinus was later arrested again for continuing to [evangelise](#). He was sent to the prefect of Rome, then to the emperor [Claudius Gothicus](#) (Claudius II) himself. Claudius took a liking to him until Valentinus tried to convince Claudius to [embrace Christianity](#). Claudius refused and condemned Valentinus to death, commanding that Valentinus

either renounce his faith or he would be beaten with clubs and beheaded. Valentinus refused and was executed outside the [Flaminian Gate](#) on February 14, 269. An embellishment to this account states that before his execution, Saint Valentine wrote a note to Asterius's daughter signed "from your Valentine", which is said to have "inspired today's romantic missives".

I realise that the commemorations we have today are entirely a commercial exercise, but knowing the background is comforting; Valentine's faith and trust in Jesus is humbling.

Hazel

*Editor's note*

*Below are the Churchwardens' Notes for February and a letter from John and Marlene Thacker. Both of these look as if they were written on parchment – entirely my fault as they were paper documents which I photographed!*

*Many apologies. NJP*

## Churchwardens' Notes February 2026

I can't believe that Christmas and New Year have come and gone so quickly yet again. Wasn't it delightful to wake up to snow on Christmas morning? Much as it can be wonderful, it can be treacherous too, so let's hope that the couple of days in January when snow again fell are the last for the winter.

I may be far too optimistic, but I am sure that I can tell the days are already getting longer! Don't forget to look out for neighbours and friends in the cold, which can still be very precarious, especially for us oldies - and I class myself right in there!

On the topic of helping ourselves and others, I am reminded that the Church of England, among many other institutions, takes Safeguarding very seriously. As a church, here in the Vendée, we rarely have children regularly in our congregations. However, Safeguarding is not just about children's safety. As an aging population, we too are vulnerable. We need to be aware, often silly as it may seem, about giving out our personal details, believing all we read, being 'scammed', or even going to someone's house alone. To that end we have a Safeguarding Officer in our church, Anne Condie, who takes her role very seriously. Those of us on the Church Council take regular courses, usually by ZOOM, to keep us updated. There are several basic courses that can be beneficial to all of us within the Church. They are easily done on line and do not require anyone to do anything after completing them. They are simply there to make us aware of potential basic issues that may crop up in our daily lives, not to scare us, but to inform us. Do talk to Anne if you wish to know more.

Blessings from your Churchwardens  
Margaret and Chris

## Greetings from Marlene and John Thacker

Geoff and I received a lovely newsy Christmas card from Marlene and John Thacker in December. They are a couple who had a holiday home in Courlay, which they have since sold, but when they were in France, they attended Puy de Serre regularly. They always attended on occasions of fellowship when they could and sometimes read the lessons in church services. They still regularly receive and read the 'Grapevine' and I hope they won't mind me including an extract from their card to us.

*'Dear Maggie and Geoff,*

*Here's hoping you are both keeping well. We wish you a very happy, peaceful and joyous Christmas time and also to all those at Puy de Serre who remember us. Sadly, every time we read the Grapevine there are less and less familiar names, but we do hope and pray that you are flourishing and growing as a fellowship of believers.'*

*'This is our Church. It's in a village called Bitteswell and is within Lutterworth Town Council. It is like a 'traditional' village with a green where outdoor events are held in the summer. Apart from the Church there are two pubs and a C of E first school with which the Church is involved. There is a village hall which was recently updated and is now (though small) a new place for events and groups of which here are many and well run and organized by a committee of ladies.'*

We were so delighted to receive their news and of course wish them the same warm greetings from us and anyone who knew them. There will always be a warm welcome to them to come and stay with us. We thank them both so much for the Christian enhancement they made to our lives.

Margaret



Bitteswell Church (See Marlene and John Thacker's letter above)

# *Prayer List*

*Please remember in your prayers :*

**Bob** and Caroline

**Gini** and Martyn

**Roy**

**Hazel** and Martin

**Jo** and Brian

**Maureen**

**Millie-Jean** and her parents, Tim and Sharmila

**Nell** (Mair and John's daughter)

**Carole** and her sister **Linda**

**Carole** and Clive

**Sally** and David

*(If you would like a name to be added to the Prayer List, please contact David Pearson.  
Tel: 02 51 61 05 04 or Email: [davidpearson@orange.fr](mailto:davidpearson@orange.fr))*

# Les Restaurants du Cœur



*For most children the snow in January meant sliding on toboggans and building snowmen and a day off school !  
But not for all : for some it meant their parents having to choose between eating and heating, so the Resto du Cœur provides a lifeline for them.*



*Donations are crucial to Resto's work, so again a heartfelt thank you, everyone for your generosity !*

My thanks too for your generosity. Trudy

❄️ ❄️ ❄️ *Elucubrations*

Francis Bacon: "Human understanding," he wrote, "is like a false mirror which receives light irregularly, then distorts and discolours the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it."

**Prayer of Saint Richard of Chichester :**

**Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits thou hast given me,  
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.  
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,  
may I know thee more clearly,  
love thee more dearly,  
and follow thee more nearly, day by day.  
Amen.**



*'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'* Matthew 19:21.

*Illustration: Heinrich Hofmann, Christ and the Rich Young Ruler, 1889*

*The rueful truth of this observation by the 17th-century French aristocrat François, Duc de La Rochefoucauld: How comes it that our memories are good enough to retain even the minutest details of what has befallen us, but not to recollect how many times*

*we have recounted them to the same person?*

### *Some interesting announcements:*

The sermon this morning : »Jesus walks on the Water ». The sermon this evening : « Searching for Jesus ».

Don't let worry kill you off – let the Church help.

Miss Charlene Mason sang, « I shall not pass this way again », to the obvious pleasure of the audience.

# ASV Treasurer's Report



December 2025:

Income: 2,743.53 €

Expenditure: 812.49 €

We have a positive balance for the month: + 1,931.04 €

We end the year on a high - income was up (due to the magnificent Vouvant Service and the November Quiz) and expenditure down (although I still need to offer a donation to Vouvant for use of the church and organ).

The beginning of the tax year is always a good time to join the Planned Giving scheme - please contact me ([mcgregor@lalogette.com](mailto:mcgregor@lalogette.com)), and I will send you the details. Participating will give you about 66% off your French tax bill!

Iain McGregor  
(Treasurer)

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# *Les Vœux Œcuméniques*

*Fontenay-le-Comte, le 21 janvier*

The ecumenical greetings event held at Fontenay-le-Comte on the 21st January was well attended.

Speeches from each chaplaincy (aumonerie) were well received, meaningful and thought provoking.

The greetings commenced with a delightful singing group from the French-Polynesian island Tahiti ! who performed throughout the evening, after which we were able to mingle whilst savouring delicious food and drink around the buffet.





# *Ladies' Group Meeting*

*All welcome !*

Ladies meetings are normally held every 4th Thursday of the month. and at Debbie's Lench's house when possible.

For confirmation of dates / addresses  
please contact

[Jennywilkinson213@gmail.com](mailto:Jennywilkinson213@gmail.com)



Christmas Cards 🎄 made by the Vendée Ladies' Group

# *Dates for your Diary*

<b>January 2026</b>	
25th	<b>Sunday 11h Holy Communion at Foussais-Payré</b>
<b>February 2026</b>	
1st	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at La Chapelle-Palluau
8th	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at Puy-de-Serre
15th	
18th	ASH WEDNESDAY
22nd	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at Puy-de-Serre
<b>March 2026</b>	
1st	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at La Chapelle-Palluau
8th	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at Puy-de-Serre
15th	
22nd	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at Puy-de-Serre
29th	PALM SUNDAY
<b>April 2026</b>	
3rd	GOOD FRIDAY
5th	EASTER SUNDAY 11h Holy Communion at La Chapelle-Palluau
12th	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at Puy-de-Serre
19th	
26th	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at Puy-de-Serre
<b>May 2026</b>	
3rd	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at La Chapelle-Palluau

10th	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at Puy-de-Serre
14th	ASCENSION
17th	
24th	Sunday 11h Holy Communion at Puy-de-Serre : PENTECOST

**\*Ladies meetings** are normally held every 4th Thursday of the month, and at Debbie's Lench's house when possible.

For confirmation of dates/ times/ venues,  
please contact [Jennywilkinson213@gmail.com](mailto:Jennywilkinson213@gmail.com)

*ASV Service Rota  
February to May 2026 follows :*



# *Forward Planning*

**If the information shown here is inaccurate, out-of-date or incomplete, please could I be told of any changes in time for the next issue of Grapevine.**

**Many thanks**

<b>Responsibility</b> (Organiser)	Puy de Serre 11h Services
<b>Refreshments after the service</b> (Jenny Wilkinson at PdS)	Jenny W Trudy C
<b>Flower Rota</b> (Barbara Matthews)	Barbara M

# ASV LADIES' CIRCLE

## The Ladies' Circle Meeting and Sewing Group

Ladies meetings are normally held every 4th Thursday of the month. and at Debbie's Lench's house when possible.

## Women's Fellowship – Ladies' Group

For details and directions, please contact Jenny – email below. **Anyone willing to host these meetings in the future, please contact Jenny !**

The times and places for future meetings will be announced as soon as they can be arranged.

New members very welcome!

Contact [jennywilkinson213@gmail.com](mailto:jennywilkinson213@gmail.com)

# *Don't forget*

All previous sermons and talks can be accessed at:

[www.allsaintsvendee.fr](http://www.allsaintsvendee.fr)

I hope you have enjoyed this issue of the Grapevine!

Please also consult the  
website for any updates

## *And finally...*

Thank you, if you managed to get your contribution to Grapevine in to me by this week. I know we all have busy lives, and it is much appreciated that I don't (usually!) have to chase people for copy.

Having said that, there's always room for more, and if anyone would like to (for example) put together a couple of hundred words about their year, their summer, a happy family event or any other blessing, don't hesitate !

If there is anything which you'd like to be published in the **March 2026** issue, do make sure you submit it to me,

at [njp78@hotmail.com](mailto:njp78@hotmail.com)

*before February 15<sup>th</sup> 2026*

I look forward to all next month's offerings !

Nigel