

Sunday 25th January 2026
Conversion of St Paul



Wanstead Parish
St Mary with Christ Church

www.wansteadparish.org

Services today:

8am **Holy Communion BCP (CC)**
9.30am **Family Eucharist (CC)**
11am **Sung Eucharist (STM)**

Eucharist Readings & Hymns:

Psalm 67
Acts 9. 1-22
Matthew 19. 27-end

630 Father, Lord of all creation
42 Longing for light
692 Jesus, good above all other
494 I, the Lord of sea and sky

The Collect for the Week:

Almighty God, who caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world through the preaching of your servant Saint Paul: grant that we who celebrate his wonderful conversion may follow him in bearing witness to your truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Prayers:

Those who are in need of prayer: Kay Kingham, Molly Liok, Richard Coy, Janet Plastow, Andrew Bass, Liz Hickson, Jackie Wilkins

RIP: Wendy, Charles Rumsey

Year's Mind: Mary Israel (26th, 98); Sam Wilde (27th, 92)

Wanstead Prayer Diary: Laura Close, Ranelagh Gardens, Tarzy Wood, Memorial Green, Wanstead Place, Fitzgerald Road, Wanstead Church School, Church Path, Robins Pie and Mash, Enigma Hair and Beauty, The Times- Newsagent, Wanstead Place Surgery, Wanstead Children's Centre, Christ Church Green, Christ Church

NOTICES

RECRUITING BUDDIES AND MORE WELCOMERS AT 9.30: After our Welcome-themed service in October last year, we promised to set up a Buddy system to help support and welcome newcomers at our 9.30 service in Christ Church. We are now recruiting people willing to be buddies or to augment our welcomer team. If you might be interested, please look out for the leaflet giving more information about this (at the door and on the side near the welcome noticeboard) to learn more; and sign up on the sheet (also on the side near the welcome board). Signing up does not commit you to anything except to explore with us what the roles might look like. You can make a decision after that. If you want to discuss further, you can email me at ehorwell@hotmail.com or phone me on 077930 36805. If you want us to be the best welcome we can be, then I encourage you to sign up! Revd Liz 😊

THIS YEAR'S LENT COURSE: focuses on the Gospel of John. Our chosen book, '*Finding God in John*' (£10.99 SPCK) is written by David Ford, formerly Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge University. Don't worry though - it's not a complex religious textbook! Instead, Professor Ford has written an accessible book that helps us to explore who John says Jesus really was. **Sunday evenings, starting 22nd Feb for five sessions: 7.30pm-9pm in Christ Church Vestry** (you're welcome to bring along some wine or other refreshments!) **Thursday mornings, starting 19th Feb for five sessions: 11.45-1pm in Christ Church Vestry**

READ THE WHOLE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL through with us on **Shrove Tuesday evening** (pancakes will be provided!) **The Rectory, 6.30pm onwards, Tues 17th Feb.**

Sign-up sheets in both churches for both the Gospel reading and the Lent course.

PERGOLES STABAT MATER, GOOD FRIDAY 3RD APRIL, 12 NOON, ST MARY'S: We are inviting singers from our area to join the Parish Choir for this performance as part of our Good Friday Liturgy. There will be 4 rehearsals from 7-9pm at St Mary's on the following dates: Feb 19th, March 5th, March 19th & March 31st. (We ask people to commit to at least 3 rehearsals.) To sign up or for more details, please contact Alison Wells: wansteadparishchoir@gmail.com

WALSINGHAM PILGRIMAGE: The annual pilgrimage to Walsingham will take place on 17th-19th July 2026 and we have a limited number of places available to offer. The cost of the weekend is £209.78 per person on a full-board basis. A non-refundable deposit of £40 is payable when reserving a place and the final balance payment is due by the end of June. Please contact the Parish Office to book a place or for further details.

EXPLORING THE BASICS: If you are new to the church and would like to learn more about the faith, please speak to Fr Charles or contact him by email: chbrown1816@gmail.com

HOME AND HOSPITAL VISITS: Please let the Parish Office know if you would appreciate a visit by a member of the clergy, or if you know of someone who would. Mthr Anne can offer one-off visits for prayer and discussion (perhaps concerning a specific issue), in addition to on-going visits in the case of the elderly, sick and housebound.

SAFEGUARDING: For safeguarding concerns please contact Avril Carnelley on 07905 764343 or at wansteadparishsafeguarding@gmail.com. In an emergency, contact the relevant authority such as the Police.

A reflection on this week's readings:

From the readings for Sunday 25 January

Acts 9:3-9

[Saul] came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do... And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man ...And he was three days without sight.

AV (King James Bible)

[Saul] approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ... Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing ...And for three days he was without sight.

RSV

As [Saul] neared Damascus, a light from Heaven suddenly blazed around him, and he fell to the ground. Then he heard a voice speaking to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" "Who are you, Lord?" he asked. "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting," was the reply. "But now stand up and go into the city and there you will be told what you must do." ... Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing... He remained sightless for three days.

J B Phillips

When [Saul] got to the outskirts of Damascus, he was suddenly dazed by a blinding flash of light. As he fell to the ground, he heard a voice: "Saul, Saul, why are you out to get me?" He said, "Who are you, Master?" "I am Jesus, the One you're hunting down. I want you to get up and enter the city. In the city you'll be told what to do next." ... Saul, picking himself up off the ground, found himself stone-blind ... He continued blind for three days.

The Message

This episode is the dramatic heart of Acts; it's told here initially by Luke as a third-person narrative, but twice later (ch.22 and ch.26) Paul retells it himself, with minor but significant variations. On both occasions he's on trial and in mortal danger, so it becomes a key motif in his life. It's deeply embedded in our culture – there are several dramatic representations in art, e.g. by Caravaggio. Even people of no particular religious conviction will refer to a "road to Damascus moment" or "kicking against the pricks". (I've found no explanation for why this last phrase is included in the King James Bible but not in most later translations, even the normally quite conservative RSV.)

It's probably no coincidence that in the calendar of feasts in both Orthodox and Western churches the days marking the Adoration of the Magi (*Epiphany*), the baptism of Jesus and his recognition as the Son of God (*Theophany*) and Paul's Damascus vision (*Christophany*) come quite close together during January – the common element in the Greek terms refers to the idea of *revelation*, and these are all powerful and faith-strengthening moments to dwell on as we go forward from Christmas into the New Year.

Paul in his own writings doesn't tell the story in any great detail, but he does refer to his "seeing Christ" in connection with his change of heart (Gal 1:11-16); in 1 Cor 15:3-8 he assimilates it with Jesus' resurrection appearances, implicitly affirming his own status as an apostle, and in 2 Cor 12:1-7 he describes himself as having been taken up "into the third heaven".

Saul/Paul (the name change is not registered till ch.13) is struck blind after his experience; his sight is only restored when Ananias, one of the Damascus Christians facing persecution, has a vision from God which persuades him – after initial reluctance – to go and welcome Saul. Lord, may our eyes be opened not only by intense experiences of faith, but also by acts of everyday charity.

REGULAR WEEKLY EVENTS:

Tuesdays:	9am	Morning Prayer (CC)
	10.30am	Prayer Group (CC)
Wednesdays:	9am	Morning Prayer (CC)
	8pm	Compline (St M's)
Thursdays:	9.45am	Morning Prayer (CC)
	10.30am	Holy Communion, coffee and chat (CC)
Fridays:	9am	Morning Prayer (St M's)
	10.30am	Forget-Me-Nots Choir (St M's)
	7pm	The Bridge Youth Club (Parish Halls) <i>Term time only</i>
	7pm	Parish Choir Practice (CC Vestry)

Bereavement Cafe: For all who have lost a loved one. Meets in CC vestry, 10.30 - 11.30am on the **third Tuesday** of the month.

A Place: A group for spiritual wellbeing. We warmly welcome you to join us in the Vestry at Christ Church at 5.30pm on the **first Sunday** of each month.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Sunday 1st February – Candlemas

8am	Holy Communion BCP (CC)
9.30am	Sung Eucharist with Junior Church (CC & Halls)
9.45am	Nursery Church (Halls)
11am	Morning Prayer CW (STM)
5.30pm	A Place (CC Vestry)
6.30pm	Healing Service (CC)

PARISH OF WANSTEAD:

Rector: Revd James Gilder
jbgilder@hotmail.com / 07729 109638
(Day off: Mondays)

Assoc. Priest: Revd Charles Brown
(Works: Thurs, Fri, Sun)

Curate: Revd David Lappano

Assistant Priests:
Revd Olive Thursby (High Street Chaplain)
Revd Richard Wyber
Revd Chris Mackenna
Revd Anne Mackenna (Parish Deacon)
Revd Liz Horwell

Parish Office: 020 8530 8743
office@parishofwanstead.org
Tue-Thurs 9am-1pm

GIVING:

It costs £4,000 per week to keep our parish running. Please consider making a regular donation.

Online: www.parishgiving.org.uk/donors/find-your-parish/wanstead-london/

Phone: 0333 002 1260

Parish code: 080608162

Email: info@parishgiving.org.uk

Parish code: 080608162

Contact Jill Steggle for more details by email:
giving.wanstead@gmail.com