

A short month that's long on saints and singers

Well, we're into February already. I'm not sure what happened to January - that has obviously just flown by, never to be seen again. And now we are into the month of Valentine's Day and, this year at any rate, the beginning of Lent.

Valentine's Day on 14 February is a confusing day in terms of saints in the Church. I have a book entitled 'Saints on Earth: A biographical companion for Common Worship' (a catchy title). It starts off by saying, "The commemoration and celebration of Valentine has nothing to do with lovers, doves or Roman courting rituals." Saint Valentine may be a conflation of two, or even three, Valentines who were martyred - killed for their Christian faith. It goes on to say, "There has been much speculation and misunderstanding surrounding these martyrs."

Somehow, we have moved from Christian martyrs in the 3rd and 7th centuries, to a custom of sending cards, flowers, chocolates and other gifts to loved ones. If Christian martyrs weren't enough to put a dampener on the romantic notion of Valentine's Day, it has also become a day that is hugely commercial. But, yes, I will still be giving Helen another Valentine's Day card, although, just to add another unromantic layer, in our household at least, 14 February is also the day of the Calcutta Cup (Scotland v England) in the Six Nations this year.

This year Lent starts on 18 February. Due to the closure of the nave of St George's Church, our Ash Wednesday service will take place at St Nicholas Church in Sandhurst (7.30pm.) I hope you will be able to join us for this reflective service - and, of course, the day before is Shrove Tuesday, with lovely pancakes to eat.

The other church event we have this month is combining two things that I enjoy: beer and singing! We have a 'Beer and Hymns' event at The Bull on Sunday 8 February, from 5pm. Come along, choose and sing some of your favourite hymns. (We'll have the old Come and Praise hymn book from school assembly days for many of you).

So, whether February brings a romantic day for you, or means Six Nations rugby, or beer and hymns, or pancakes, or the start of Lent, may it be a good month that doesn't fly by too quickly.

Finally, just a reminder regarding the Restore-Renew-Rejoice Project: the 8am services will continue every Sunday in the chancel of St George's, as will the monthly evening prayer service. The 10am services will take place in the hall of Benenden Primary School.

Revd David Commander, Rector and Area Dean