Day	Date	We pray especially for...
Thursday	*23rd*	...all who work in the criminal justice system in the UK, which faces many challenges.
Friday	*24th*	...all working in the energy sector (on- or off-shore).
Saturday	*25th*	...all organising and taking part in community and social events in our villages.
Sunday	***26th***	...our services today at Mundham and Woodton, that all who attend may be sustained; ...the Revd Austin Uzoigewe, his wife Annette and their children, as we welcome them this afternoon at Austin's licensing service in Hempnall Church to become Priest in Charge of both benefices; and all attending that service, from the local area and beyond.
Monday	*27th*	...those we know who are experiencing physical or mental ill health and those who provide care and support.
Tuesday	*28th*	...the homeless and all suffering from want, neglect or abuse in our society.
Wednesday	*29th*	...those across the world who are marginalised or oppressed.
Thursday	*30th*	...all who need us to pray with or for them, for whatever reason.

Throughout, we pray for those in special need at this time, remembering:

Martin, Ian, Emma, Helen, Michael, Ann

Bedingham/Woodton: Sheila, Hilary, Anne, Bruce, Richard, Susan, Marco, David

Fritton/Morningthorpe: Jason, Carol

Hempnall: Lesley and family, Sophia

Topcroft: Candy, Penny

Long Term Care...

Bedingham/Woodton: Dennis, Shirley, Jacob, Sally

Fritton/Morningthorpe: *Beryl*

Hempnall: *Colin*

Mundham/Seething: *Margaret, Nancy*

Recently Died and Upcoming Funerals...

Paul Tholen, Ron Gower, Beryl Parsons, Irene Lincoln

(Compiled by and for the Brooke Benefice and the Hempnall Group of Parishes)

Images: 'Draw near' logo from Church of England resources for Eastertide; picture from Pixabay website.
Poem: 'The Trees' (1967) - published in Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1993) - widely available online, eg: The Trees - Poetry Archive [accessed 24.3.26].

The Brooke Benefice and The Hempnall Group

Thoughts and Prayers April 2026

The month ahead ...

The six-week period of Eastertide in the Christian calendar is – understandably, given the Resurrection which it celebrates – a time of joy and hope and light. Coinciding in the northern hemisphere with springtime, it lends itself to the imagery of buds and blossoms, this being the season when, in the words of the poet Philip Larkin:

> '*The trees are coming into leaf*
> *Like something almost being said; [...]*
> *Last year is dead, they seem to say,*
> *Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.'*
> – Philip Larkin – '*The Trees'* (1967)

But this April, as sadly too often in the decade so far, the joy and hope and positive vibe of Eastertide is tempered - on this occasion by the war raging in and around Iran – just as it was in 2020 and 2021 with fears and trepidation about Covid and the pandemic. It can seem insensitive or naïve to be exuding joy in the face of a world crisis.

Yet our faith and our church urge us not to despair. We may feel powerless and helpless but we can pray – for wisdom for leaders, for de-escalation, for negotiation, for the protection of the vulnerable, both those in the arena of conflict and those impacted by the knock-on effects on the world economy. Within our direct spheres of influence, we can safeguard each other, looking out for those who are especially anxious or experiencing hardship, either materially or spiritually, being good neighbours...acting out our faith even more, not less, in times of communal concern.

In April this year, knowing already that this it will not be a cloud-free spring but a troubled, troubling time, we need resilience and fortitude and a determination – often, it seems against the odds – not to be afraid. That was the exhortation given repeatedly by Jesus prior to his death and after his resurrection (*John 14:27; Matthew 28:10)* and it is one we need to heed.

[continued on next page]

Over the weeks of Eastertide, we may be helped by our Lectionary readings. Every year, when hearing at this time of the Acts of the Apostles (concentrating this year on Peter), it never fails to strike me how 'on the edge' they were in their travels and endeavours, their daily lives full of uncertainty and often of danger. How did they cope? The answer must lie in that very commitment and faith that led them to embark on their work in the first place, even though it must often have been tested by the difficulties and hostility they encountered.

Can we at least aspire to be as bold and intrepid as they were, to overcome our fears, to cope with whatever is thrown in our way, to be fuelled as they must have been by their faith? Let us pray, this month especially, for that.

Liam Pilgrim

Sunday Readings	
5th April – Easter Day	*Psalm 118:1-2;14-24* *Acts 10:34-43* *John 20:1-18; or Matthew 28:1-10*
12th April – Easter 2	*Psalm 16* *Acts 2:14a,22-32* *John 20:19-31*
19th April – Easter 3	*Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17* *Acts 2:14a,36-41* *Luke 24:13-35*
26th April – Easter 4	*Psalm 23* *Acts 2:42-47* *John 10:1-10*

Day	***Date***	***We pray especially for...***
Wednesday	*1st*	...God's guidance and presence, asking for strength and wisdom to face collective and individual challenges we may encounter in the month ahead; ...those taking part in the Essex Leg of the Pilgrim Cross, pausing for church-provided refreshments at Hardwick Village Hall this morning during their annual Holy Week pilgrimage from Colchester to Walsingham; ...the experience of quietness in our Compline service this evening, at the end of our busy days.
Thursday	*2nd*	...our local communities and all who live and work in them; ...our worship together this evening, on this Maundy Thursday, at Topcroft as we prepare to commemorate the momentous events of Easter.
Friday	*3rd*	...on this Good Friday, our greater understanding of the significance of the death of Jesus on the Cross; ...our Pilgrimage today from Thwaite to Brooke and our worship with words and music this afternoon in Hempnall Church.

Day	***Date***	***We pray especially for...***
Saturday	*4th*	...our families, friends and all who are dear to us.
Sunday	***5th***	...the experience and sharing of Easter Day joy as we celebrate all that it means; ...our services of Holy Communion in Brooke and in Hempnall and acts of worship elsewhere in lighting the Easter candle; our celebration this afternoon with the Family Praise Team in Hempnall;...our recognition of the glory of God in all creation.
Monday	*6th*	...peace.
Tuesday	*7th*	...our two benefices and their parishes; the Revd Canon Susanna Gunner, the lay members of our Ministry Team and all those contributing to our ongoing worship and mission; the Revd Austin Uzoigwe, his wife Annette and their family as they prepare to join us later this month [see Sunday 26th April].
Wednesday	*8th*	...all involved in the governance, planning and co-ordination of our church activities, including Frances, as our administrator, and all serving on our various church councils.
Thursday	*9th*	...our church premises and all involved in looking after them; our Churchwardens and Designated Persons; our Fabric Officers and Building Administrators; our cleaners and those who tend our churchyards.
Friday	*10th*	...our environment, that we may take care of it.
Saturday	*11th*	...all who run businesses/offer services in our communities.
Sunday	***12th***	...the nourishment of all participating in our worship today in Brooke and Topcroft.
Monday	*13th*	...the current events of the world.
Tuesday	*14th*	...our children and young people and all who work with them in schools as they return today for the Summer Term.
Wednesday	*15th*	...our Home Communion Assistants and all whom they visit; all in our communities who are especially vulnerable; all who provide pastoral support in our parishes, in many different ways.
Thursday	*16th*	...the Depwade Deanery, of which we are part; our Rural Dean (the Revd Michael Windridge); our various neighbouring benefices.
Friday	*17th*	...those who need the services of local foodbanks and those who make donations to them.
Saturday	*18th*	...all who engage in sport locally and everyone who supports and encourages them.
Sunday	***19th***	...all worshipping together in our services this morning at Kirstead and Morningthorpe and on Zoom this evening;...all involved in the baptism at Bedingham today.
Monday	*20th*	...political leaders across the world whose decisions have a profound impact on all of us, that they may act wisely;...politicians and all involved in public administration in this country, at all levels, that they may exercise sound judgement.
Tuesday	*21st*	...those involved in agriculture and in all aspects of food production and distribution.
Wednesday	*22nd*	...all who work in health and social care and all who need he services they provide.