

This month's letter is from Local Ministry Assistant Dave Robinson

It's January, and it's my turn to write the leading letter in the J22 benefice magazine for February. I wonder what will happen between now and then? It would be good to make it relevant to everyone...

How do I feel now? I've just watched my team lose to the lowliest ever team in the FA cup, during which my EE TV box mercifully exploded and went blank. I've also got a dental appointment in a few days' time and I fear the worst. And I've got a whole pile of things that I should have done but haven't, quite, yet. Maybe I shouldn't share my experiences.

OK, try another tack. What special days happen in February? That would make it relevant, if I talked about those. Probably, a lot of people reading this would feel they could identify with them. So, I checked my diary and found three Big Days, St.Valentine's Day, Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday. Do these strike a chord with you?

St.Valentine is, of course the patron saint of girlfriends. As a teenager I would hope to receive the anonymous card from a gorgeous girl who thought I was desirable. Of course, I wasn't overwhelmed by the post on the 14th. I wouldn't have dared send a card myself. I expect you do much better, especially if you're married, when it only gets negative if you forget to buy a card for your wife.

St.Shrove was the patron saint of pancakes. His celebration was always a big day in our house, when we ate the surviving pancakes with caster sugar and lemon juice – yum! Surviving, that is, after being thrown into the air, past the leaping dog, avoiding the ceiling, and back into the frying pan. His day was always followed by Ash Wednesday. Well, it was in the calendar, but never at all in our house, because my parents weren't churchgoers.

People nowadays too seem to go for Valentine's and Pancake Day, but not Ash Wednesday. We all like the fun things, but life does throw us exploding football teams and root fillings and they need thinking about too. Ash Wednesday is the start of Lent, leading up to Good Friday and the crucifixion of Jesus. My minor sufferings at the top of this may not compare with the life-changing things that have dogged your life, but the season of Lent is a time when we can seek out Jesus, really God but really man too. In his sufferings he understood our hurts too and he wants us to bring them to him. He can really help us if we give him the chance to!

Dave Robinson

