Parish News

St Mary's Church, Woodkirk



Worship Online at: Facebook.com/stmarywoodkirk

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Welcome!

Enjoy reading this Parish magazine and, if you wish to know more about Church Groups, please get in touch with the Movers and Shakers - their names are on the inside front & inside back covers.

Service times are on the back page. You'd be most welcome to join us. May God bless you and all whom you love.

Parish News by Post

This magazine can be delivered monthly by sending a minimum donation of £12 a year to cover magazine costs including post and packaging to: Margaret Longden, 64 Woodkirk Gardens, Dewsbury WF12 7JA. Call Margaret on 01924 473064. It's a brilliant gift for friends or family living near or far. Cheque's to Woodkirk PCC please.

Web site & Twitter

Further news and pictures of what is happening at St Mary's can be found on our web site located at: <u>www.stmarywoodkirk.org</u>

Copies of the magazine can be downloaded from the web site from the middle of the month of publication.

We are on Twitter: twitter.com/stmarywoodkirk

Wheelchair Access

A wheelchair is available to help people move easily between the church and Dewsbury Road. Just ask.

Be grateful to God every year you live.

He who breaks a resolution is a weakling: He who makes one is a fool

Vicar's Letter

Happy New Year to one and all! It always surprises me that so much fuss is made as we transfer from one year to the next. People place much hope on the beginnings of something new. They will wipe the slate clean and start again. We will be better, we will be different. We will be stronger, we will be healthier. Unfortunately, so much pressure is placed on ourselves that very quickly we realise that there is no quick fix to our dreams and desires.

The 1st January (or more realistically the 2nd January) is the day that we will change for good. But this isn't necessarily so. To bring about change we have to do many things—it is more than making a statement, or making a decision to change. It is creating an environment with new habits. So how do we even begin to start?

We start with an incredibly small habit.

When most people struggle to build new habits, they say something like, "I just need more motivation." Or, "I wish I had as much willpower as you do."

This is the wrong approach. Research shows that willpower is like a muscle. It gets fatigued as you use it throughout the day. Another way to think of this is that your motivation ebbs and flows. It rises and falls.

We can solve this problem by picking a new habit that is easy enough that you don't need motivation to do it. Rather than starting with 50 pushups per day, start with 5 pushups per day. Rather than trying to meditate for 10 minutes per day, start by meditating for one minute per day. Make it easy enough that you can get it done without motivation.

Increase your habit in very small ways.

One percent improvements add up surprisingly fast. So do one percent declines.

Rather than trying to do something amazing from the beginning, start

Small and gradually improve. Along the way, your willpower and motivation will increase, which will make it easier to stick to your habit for good.

As you build up, break habits into chunks.

If you continue adding one percent each day, then you'll find yourself increasing very quickly within two or three months. It is important to keep each habit reasonable, so that you can maintain momentum and make the behaviour as easy as possible to accomplish.

Building up to 20 minutes of meditation? Split it into two segments of 10 minutes at first.

Trying to do 50 pushups per day? Five sets of 10 might be much easier as you make your way there.

When you slip, get back on track quickly.

Top performers make mistakes, commit errors, and get off track just like everyone else. The difference is that they get back on track as quickly as possible.

Research has shown that missing your habit once, no matter when it occurs, has no measurable impact on your long-term progress. Rather than trying to be perfect, abandon your all-or-nothing mentality.

You shouldn't expect to fail, but you should plan for failure. Take some time to consider what will prevent your habit from happening. What are some things that are likely to get in your way? What are some daily emergencies that are likely to pull you off course? How can you plan to work around these issues? Or, at least, how you can bounce back quickly from them and get back on track?

You just need to be consistent not perfect. Focus on building the identity of someone who never misses a habit twice.

Be patient. Stick to a pace you can sustain.

Learning to be patient is perhaps the most critical skill of all. You can make incredible progress if you are consistent and patient.

If you are adding weight in the gym, you should probably go slower PTO

Than you think. If you are adding daily sales calls to your business strategy, you should probably start with fewer than you expect to handle. Patience is everything. Do things you can sustain.

New habits should feel easy, especially in the beginning. If you stay consistent and continue increasing your habit it will get hard enough, fast enough. It always does!

As I write this and read it back another question occurs to me—why is change so difficult?

Most of us are creatures of habit and the routines that we establish for ourselves provide a sense of comfort and security. Even if the outcome of the routine is not positive, we tend to find solace in something that is familiar. Change requires us to break out of these comfortable patterns and enter new territory.

There are many disadvantages to trying to change too many variables at once. It could break your focus. Moreover, when you link two or more changes together, a failure in one may make you abandon the other, especially in the beginning. Imagine, for example, that you decide to lose weight. So what do you do? The most popular response: Diet and exercise. However, changing the way you eat and adding exercise to your daily routine are two different things, even though they are linked to the same goal. Targeting them simultaneously increases the probability of setbacks in both. On the day that you skip exercise, you may also find yourself indulging in your favourite ice-cream.

Changing one habit involves other small-scale changes that you have to be aware of and prepared for. Let's go back to the weight loss example. You decide to change the way you eat. You have to choose a diet regime—consult a nutritionist, restrict calories, intermittent fasting, cleansing, keto, paleo, weight-watchers—there are thousand of choices. After you make your choice, you have to make other changes as well. For example, where you shop for groceries, what you buy, how you prepare it, how you serve it, when you eat it, and so on. Failing to pay attention to all these small-scale changes may thwart your efforts to change a habit. Another major reason that makes change difficult is that we are not ready and willing for change. We may be comfortable where we are and even scared to step into the unknown. As long as our current state provides us with comfort and security, making the change will be difficult. Talking about change and doing something about it are two different things.

Besides being too comfortable where we are, or being too scared to make a change, what makes change seem difficult is that we are not really convinced about how much better life will be after we make the change. Is all the effort worth it? How is my life going to be better? How are my relationships going to be better? The lack of clear benefit makes it hard to convince ourselves to put effort toward something whose appeal is not evident. We may not like our current state, but if there is no desired state to aspire to, change becomes redundant. Being unable to envision what life will be like after the transformation dampens our motivation.

It is also important that any change is specific rather than broad.

Changing the way you eat can be challenging. But at least it targets a specific, observable behaviour. You can look at your plate and determine if you made good choices consistent with your desire to change.

But the quality-of-life upgrade type of changes are broad and undefined. How do I change the way I think, how do I become a better person, how do I turn my life around? Unless we break them down into specific, measurable components, these kinds of changes are more likely to remain unaccomplished.

Another reason that makes change appear difficult is impatience. When we don't see results fast we will not be incentivised to continue the effort to change. And without effort, there is no result. Giving up too quickly is why many diets don't work, why many of us do not work out regularly, and why many people feel stuck in life. A solid, sustainable change is likely to follow many half-starts, many failed attempts, and many moments of frustration and disappointment. This is why resilience is so important. Prepare for slip-ups ahead of time, create contingencies to allow for failure, and remind PTO Yourself often that this is part of the process.

If you are looking to fail, try changing another person. Our ability to change someone else is extremely limited. When the focus is on changing how someone else feels, thinks, or acts, we may end up disappointed, frustrated, angry, and hurt. Despite our best intentions. most persuasive approaches, or our darkest our manipulations, a person will not change just because we said so. The only thing we can change is how we connect and relate to other people. This does not mean that we shouldn't offer help, guidance, But change itself is each person's or opinion when asked to. individual task and duty. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. So, if you are finding changing other people difficult, shift your focus to changing you.

Habits and change are important in our individual faith and it is hardly surprising the Church of England finds change difficult. The spectrum of belief that exists within its confines is almost insurmountable therefore making change nigh on impossible for fear of offending a set of beliefs.

Thankfully God sent his Son to be with us. The birth of Christ in its simplest form shows us the possibilities of hope in each day in a world that was as troubled then as it is now. In Christ's life, He demonstrates how to bring about new habits, through love and compassion for ourselves and for others—especially those less fortunate than ourselves. Finally in Christ's death we are given the ultimate gift of forgiveness which opens up the possibility of change not just once but as many times as is needed.

Christ goes beyond a set of beliefs—the Pharisees called these lawsthey are good but on their own they are insufficient. When laws and legalities get in the way of healing and compassion, they are insufficient, and when power and greed get in the way of hunger and thirst, they are insufficient, and when violence and oppression get in the way of abundant life, they are insufficient.

Christ came for each and every one of us and if you want to have a closer relationship with Jesus what small step could you take this New Year to grow closer to him? With love and best wishes Sharon

Big RSPB Garden Birdwatch 26th -28th January 2024

Well hello there.



It's that time of year again when I am looking for hardy souls who would be able and willing to spend an hour in the Churchyard at the end of January.

One of the simplest ways we can measure our environmental impact is by checking up on wildlife. Following our achieving an Eco Church Award, it is important that we keep measuring the impact our actions are making within the Churchyard and year on year we are seeing more and more birds.

In addition to the bird boxes which the Beavers and Cubs built, we of course added the amazing bug hotels made by the Rainbows and Brownies, so hopefully we will see more/different birds this time.

If you can spare an hour during daylight hours from Friday 26th to Sunday 28th January then please contact me <u>dawn@stmarywoodkirk.org</u> or telephone 07840 739239.

Don't worry if you don't know a crow from a chaffinch or a blue tit from a blackbird, I can provide a lovely coloured guide to help you.

If you want to take part but just in your own garden that would be good too, just get in touch and I can supply you with the guide and then I would be happy to submit your results online when I do the church one.

Thank you as always for your ongoing support.

Many thanks. Dawn

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

It seems fitting to be writing this on the longest night - December 21st – when the hours of darkness pervade our outlook. In response we often turn to the opening of John's Gospel which speak of Jesus as the life and light of all people which the darkness cannot overcome. However the Christmas Gospel this lectionary year is not from John but rather from Luke where we will hear the song of the Angels to the Shepherds who declare Glory to God to the highest and peace on earth to those on whom his favour rests.

In these dark and difficult times of conflict – in Sudan, Ukraine and the Holy Land - the announcement of the angels of the good news which will bring great joy – and peace - needs to be proclaimed afresh. Against the backdrop of the sound of gunfire, tank shells and conflict, the sound of the cry of a new born child rings out. New birth brings new life and new possibility. Groaning, longing and pain give way to the opportunity of hope.

Christmas reminds us that Hope has a name. And that Hope endures, entering into suffering and transforming it so that suffering no longer has the final word. As we celebrate Christmas we take comfort also that the ongoing promise of Advent remains as even now we look forward to that day when Hope will return once more, fully realised, with the reign of the Prince of Peace.

So as we celebrate together I leave you with an excerpt from "the Cure of Troy" by Seamus Heaney which speaks of both suffering and longed for justice, alongside miracles and hope, and the birth-cry of new life.

May I take this opportunity to thank you all deeply for your tireless work in the service of the Gospel and to wish each of you a joyous, restful and peace-filled Christmas.

With every blessing + Arun

Excerpt From 'The Cure at Troy' by Seamus Heaney

Human beings suffer, They torture one another, They get hurt and get hard. No poem or play or song Can fully right a wrong Inflicted and endured

History says, don't hope On this side of the grave. But then, once in a lifetime The longed-for tidal wave Of justice can rise up, And hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change On the far side of revenge. Believe that further shore Is reachable from here. Believe in miracle And cures and healing wells.

Call miracle self-healing: The utter, self-revealing Double-take of feeling. If there's fire on the mountain Or lightning and storm And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing The outcry and the birth-cry of new life at its term.

Christmas Celebrations

Did manage to get to any of the festive services in church, or perhaps join us online?

After being poorly last Christmas and missing them all, it was lovely this year to be back amongst everything.

The first event was the start of the Advent reflections led by Rev Sharon, who after the first one was joined by Barbara who did the readings and joined in the singing. Each week a different hymn was chosen as the focus and it was lovely to stop amongst all the hubbub and preparations and enjoy these thought provoking but very enjoyable sessions.

We had a really busy weekend over the first weekend in December with our Christmas Fair and Christmas Tree festival, which despite poor weather were well attended, much enjoyed and which raised an amazing amount for church funds and ended with a lovely Family Carol Service on the Sunday.

The following Sunday morning we had our All Age Worship Nativity service where young (and not so young) people were invited to dress up as a nativity character as a number of folks led the telling of the story of Festive Fred and his Nativity adventures. In the afternoon was our Blue Christmas, a service for those, who for many different reasons, may find Christmas difficult, and whilst it was not hugely attended was very enjoyable and a comfort to those who did attend.

On the 17th December the afternoon service was Carols by Candlelight which is a telling of the Nine Lessons and Carols with all the church candles being lit, again another lovely service very much enjoyed by those in attendance.

On Saturday 23rd December I was delighted to be joined by lots of lovely volunteers as we constructed the 300 Christingles we needed

for the following day. A HUGE THANK YOU to those who came and did an amazing job.

Our two Christingle Services held at 3.00pm and 5.00pm on Christmas Eve were very well attended and very much enjoyed and at the second service, a lovely young man agreed to go up to the altar and help build the crib scene, he hadn't done it before but did an amazing job, so a huge thank you to him too.

Our Midnight Mass service with candles lit was really lovely with us sharing the first mass of Christmas a really special time.

I'm afraid I missed the Christmas morning service but if it was as good as those preceding it would have been very enjoyable.

Grateful thanks to Rev Sharon for pulling these services together and for all those who took part in any way, it is what makes Christmas at St Mary's such a lovely time.

Ho ho ho until December 2024!

Dawn xx





Come to me all who are weary...

A few weeks ago at a Wednesday service the Gospel reading was from Matthew 11, 28 to the end which includes the words above, and in her sermon, Rev Sharon elaborated on the passage telling us it showed that God was never far away, even in times of trouble.

Jesus invites us, 'Come to me all who are weary...' carrying heavy burdens, he reminds us we have a caring and tireless God and that we need to learn from Jesus, be gentle and humble in heart and we will find rest for our souls.

Sharon asked us, do we ever think about our yoke being easy or our burdens light? and yet we can find rest for our souls in the peace God gives us.

The burdens Jesus is referring to are the many laws that were in place, over 670 that the Scribes and Pharisees told people they had to adhere to, to receive the blessings God intends for His people. They were trying to catch people out, in their view people would never be good enough. Perfection, in their view, was the scrupulous following of all these rules and obligations.

We are lucky, Jesus liberates us from all that, although it doesn't mean we can do what we like, but our obligation is reduced to one, to Love God first and then love all our brothers and sisters unconditionally, something so difficult, but we try.

Jesus knows it's difficult for us, but if we love in that way, it frees us and helps us to be the kind of people God wants us to be, and one way we can do this is in the example we set to those who we meet. Are we friendly, welcoming, hospitable? These are ways we can share love.

So what about us taking Jesus' yoke and learning from Him?

Jesus doesn't say that if we go to Him there will be no more trouble of sorrow, there will be burdens we have to carry, but He will carry them with us.

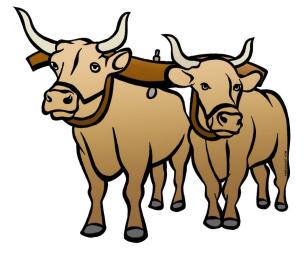
Someone has suggested that the yoke Jesus refers to is a double yoke, the one that would be on two Oxen. We are 'bound' to Jesus, he shares our burden. He never promises to take away our pain, but he helps us through it. A life without pain or failure, disappointment or challenge is no life. The challenges of life are necessary to help us grow and mature, and Jesus is there to help us carry them.

When we accept Jesus into our lives, we know we are never alone in our difficulties and sorrows and as a consequence this can enable us to help support others in their troubles.

As we start this New Year of 2024, my prayer for you is that you feel Jesus with you through any troubles that may come your way, and that your yoke may be easy, your burdens light, and that you may find rest for your soul.

Happy New Year with love

Dawn x



Christmas—Bishop Nick

Surprised by Joy This Advent, and in our imminent celebration of Christmas and Epiphany, both the world and the Church are invited to be surprised by joy. Surprised? Joy? In a world of darkening threats, horrific violence, economic crises and - despite nearly a century of "never again" - rising antisemitism at home? Have the Christian seasons been reduced simply to private fantasies that distract us from the real world? Well, no. The scandal of Christianity is not only its particularity – God comes among us as one of us, at a particular time and in a particular place – but also its defiance of "this is how the world is" normality. God opts into the mess of the world and does not exempt himself from it. God doesn't naively assume that the world will be transformed at the moment a baby is born in a small settlement in an obscure part of the Roman Empire; rather, in vulnerability and fear, Jesus is born into a world of military occupation, cheap lives, easy conflict and religious turmoil. Before the adult Jesus submits himself to all that this world can throw at him on a cross, he commands his friends to try something that sounds so weak and feeble: "Love one another as I have loved you." Advent gives us space to ask the hard question of ourselves (especially as we have a responsibility to lead and teach and preach): is the Jesus we await one who is formed in my image, or am I prepared to be surprised by one who radically transforms my understanding and experience of God's presence, love and mercy? For, if we are to understand the biblical narrative, we must be confronted by the unfolding story of God's people getting it wrong, mistaking their own identity and vocation in the world, repeatedly learning afresh who God is, how God is, and what it looks like for God's people to look something like this God they claim to worship and serve. You will have realized by now that I can only be surprised by joy (what John Bell calls "God surprising earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day") if I first confront the possibility that I still need to be conformed to the image of the invisible God (as Paul puts it). In other words, that I might also need to 'repent' - change my mind and the way I look for God, see God, think about God, and live with God and

one another in a contested world. Failure to be open to surprise means simply that Christmas will be an empty repetition of annual rituals that confirm us in our unquestioned assumptions. So, when I wish you a very happy Christmas, I do so conscious of the deep challenges in our world and our own society – in our church and our communities. And I will be joyful because "the light has come into the world, and the darkness has not overcome it". The darkness is real; the light of God has the final word.

How would we celebrate Christmas this year if we were in Ukraine or Russia? In Israel or Gaza? Or in Sudan? Please use your imagination to think about this. The war in Ukraine has significance for the future not only of Europe, but of global power – and the churches are bitterly divided between those loyal to a Russian narrative of faithfulness and those who will give their lives to resist the evil they see being perpetrated on account of that narrative. The evils of what Hamas did on 7 October and the massive retribution being inflicted on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank are not only unconscionable, but have led both to an enormous rise in antisemitism across the world, and, also, a cover for increasing islamophobia. We live in dangerous days. But, we are also in danger of missing other conflicts which will have consequences for the wider world for decades to come - such as Sudan. Sudan, riven by civil war led by two rival military factions (but broken down into much more fragmented power struggles along ethnic and tribal lines), has seen six million people so far displaced. Just as Palestinian Christians in Israel-Palestine easily get forgotten in the current 'binary' conflict, so Sudan's Christians fall off the radar of international concern. The genocide of several decades ago in Darfur has returned with a vengeance. The church in Khartoum has been dispersed – Archbishop Ezekiel led 42 people from the destroyed cathedral to exile in Port Sudan - with no material goods at all, just the clothes they stood up in. Two of his clergy who remained in Khartoum have been shot dead. The Diocese of Leeds is in daily contact with Archbishop Ezekiel and we are managing to get money out so his people can be fed – the Archbishop has now lost three stone in weight because of the shortage of food. Please pray for Sudan...

Listening to my playlist...

I was listening to my digital playlist recently on Spotify (other music platforms are available!) and although I was listening to my chosen pieces, occasionally spotify will switch to music it thinks you might like! Somewhat scarily, this generally does work, although not always! but on this particular day played a piece by a chap called Gerry Rafferty (who sang 'Baker Street') which is called 'Get it right next time' the last line of each verse ends with 'If you get it wrong, you'll get it right next time' and this got me thinking about forgiveness.

God forgives us when we get things wrong, like the song, if we get it wrong, we should get it right next time.

This then reminded me of the bible passage about how many times should I forgive my brother. This is in Matthews Gospel, Matthew 18 21-22 and it's dear Peter asking Jesus how many times he should forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times? I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times (or seventy times seven) replies Jesus.

Jesus then follows this with the parable of the unmerciful servant where he tells the story of the King who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. A man is brought before him who owes him a great debt and the man pleads with his master for more time to repay, but instead he cancels the debt.

But then the forgiven servant comes across a man who owes him a small debt and asks for settlement. The man asks for more time but the servant refuses and has him cast into jail until he can repay the debt.

The other servants were outraged and went to tell the master what had happened and so he calls in the forgiven man and says, shouldn't

you have shown mercy as I did to you, and in the end he is so angry that he has him put in prison until the debt is fully repaid.

Jesus talks about the need for forgiveness a lot, and he does so because it is so difficult. It is easy to see the need in others but if you have been deeply and intentionally hurt by someone it is really really difficult to forgive them.

However, if we look closely at ourselves, do we recognise that we need to seek God's forgiveness? I know I do.

When I'm watching TV I can't help myself sometimes shout at something, or when I'm frustrated if someone does something stupid that could have caused me to have an accident, or that causes extra work for me etc.

We so easily see faults in others but don't always see our own, and it is at such times we need to be grateful that Jesus doesn't agree that we should only forgive seven times, as I'm sure I'd have used up my seven 'forgivenesses' years ago!

A final thought is that holding on to the hurt is a burden, it is a weight we end up carrying, I found this quote online;

"Forgive others, not because they deserve forgiveness, but because you deserve peace."

As we start afresh with another new year, may we remember Peters hopeful question to Jesus, 'should I forgive my brother seven times' and thank God that Jesus recommends 'seventy times seven'.

Dawn x



Trusting God When You're Trapped in Uncertainty

I hear myself saying quite often these days that we live in uncertain times. While I still believe this is true, I am starting to conclude that we all live uncertain lives. While God's truth and our eternal destiny in Christ are certain, many other factors in our lives are a bit unpredictable and unclear at times. It is the nature of the journey.

I suppose today as you read this you may face some measure of uncertainty. You may face major questions about your health, your job, your finances, your children, your grandchildren, your church or someone in your circle of friends. Clearly, we cannot avoid uncertainty in this life, but we can respond to it in a Christ-honouring and soul-profiting fashion.

Recently I read a profound interchange documented in a book by the renowned ethicist John Kavanaugh. He tells of a time in his life when he went to Calcutta to work for three months at "The House of the Dying." This experience was part of his heartfelt search for direction about his future. The first morning there, he met Mother Teresa. She asked, "And what can I do for you?" Kavanaugh asked her to pray for him.

"What do you want me to pray for?" she asked. He responded by explaining that he had come thousands of miles from the U.S. to find direction: "Pray that I have clarity."

She said firmly, "No, I will not do that." When asked why, she said, "Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of." Kavanaugh commented that she always seemed to have the clarity he longed for. She laughed and said, "I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God."

There is something in all of us that always wants clarity. Maybe It is part of our sinful ego and a common expression of our insecurities. Clarity can become an idol that replaces authentic trust in God. In many ways, we would rather understand the details of the road ahead than rest in deep intimacy with the God who has promised to direct our steps. He has never promised to show us a detailed 10-year plan. Clarity can actually become spiritually counterproductive as it short-changes trust, a life of faith and moment-by-moment dependence on God.

Scripture tells us, "Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us" (Psalm 62:8). Yes, we must pour out our hearts and all they contain—praise, gratitude, worry, fear, doubt and, yes, uncertainty. God is our in-the-moment refuge, but not always a divine GPS system, spouting the details of every turn we might encounter one year down the road. Thus, we must trust Him at ALL times. I think we should never assume a life of trust or take God's refuge for granted.

In the great "faith" chapter (Hebrews 11) we are reminded that trust is strongest when clarity is dim or non-existent. Noah built an ark while waiting for 120 years for an unprecedented rainfall. Sarah was told to trust God for a child in her old age with no clarity as to how such a thing could happen. Abraham went out, "not knowing where was going" and later planned to sacrifice his own son with no he clarity as to why he was called to do this or what the outcome might are extensive. The truth is unmistakable. Faith be. The stories flourishes we are trusting God at the deepest level with a when willingness to let go of our insistence for clarity. PTO

We often want to "chart the course," but the Bible tells us to walk in the Spirit. We insist on a strategic plan. Jesus says, "Follow me." We want all the answers. The Lord tells us to trust Him, because of what we know to be true about His character.

As we go through uncertain days—let us realise the gift we have been given. Faith, not certainty, is the single most important ingredient to a life pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:6).

Do you feel like you are in a fog today? Have you been there far too long? Does the present moment feel shaky while the future is unclear? Remember, He is God and He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek HIM (usually without clarity about the details). Looking back, we see His faithfulness and goodness, even if we did not perceive it at the time. He has not changed. You can trust Him now, even though His way seems ambiguous.

My heart is often helped by the words of the poem Footprints in the Sand. It tells me when you see only one set of footprints that is when he is carrying us. I know then that I can trust Him to be there when I am in need, or when my faith starts to waver. I pray our hearts will likewise search less for clarity and more for the character of God in the unpredictable seasons of our journey.

Gail



Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamed a dream. As I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it. "Lord, you said once I decided to follow you, You'd walk with me all the way. But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me." He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you Never, ever, during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints, It was then that I carried you."

Mary Stevenson, 1939.

Schools in Church for Christmas

Hi there

How lovely it was to have our wonderful Primary Academies holding concerts and assemblies in St Mary's at Christmas.

This year, Blackgates Primary Academy held two concerts, one for years 2, 3 and 4, then a second one for years 5 and 6.

Family and friends attended to support their youngsters, who you could tell, had practised their socks off to put on two lovely concerts with much joyful singing and some lovely readings by pupils.

We also held a bit of a Christingle session with the four stages of making a Christingle, with the children remembering what the different parts of the Christingle meant.

Then on the Thursday evening it was the turn of Westerton Primary Academy with the young people again showing how much they'd practiced by playing and singing beautifully a selection of carols and Christmas songs.

Then the year 3 /4 choir sang two lovely songs, and as always when the schools sing, they introduce new songs. On this occasion, a song by Monica Scott called Prince of Peace which was really beautiful and with the lights dimmed was so very atmospheric and moving.

Our last school in church was the whole of Hill Top Primary Academy who walked up to school on their last day of term, accompanied by staff, parents and helpers.

The service was led by the very able Year 5 pupils and they did really really well with plenty of parents coming to watch and be wonderfully entertained.

The school had been beset with lots of absence due to colds and flu but the children and staff were amazing and told the Nativity Story beautifully.

As always, the children led so well, ably assisted by staff and helpers, and a great big thanks to the adults who had obviously practised with the children over many weeks to provide a really lovely service.

We had missed the children being in church for Harvest due to the weather and so it was especially lovely to see them at Christmas.

With very grateful thanks to all the staff and pupils, family and friends for their lovely concerts in school this Christmas, it was wonderful to see and hear you, and we look forward to your future festive concerts in 2024.

With thanks Dawn

I can't emphasise enough how happy we are to have a good working relationship with all our schools and it is always a pleasure to have them come to St Mary's to hold their Services. This is only possible because of the goodwill of the Principals, Staff and Parents so I would like to offer my thanks to them.

It is also important to say that we have always received a very warm welcome into each school for assemblies and this is a particular area of ministry that both Dawn and I really enjoy. The warmth with which the children engage is heart warming and they thoroughly enjoy singing the action songs.

Thanks to all.

Sharon

Pastoral Care

Telephone Calls—We understand times are difficult—please know we are here if you need anything. Gail Townsend is our Pastoral Minister and she regularly telephones those who are unable to leave their homes at this time. If you would like Gail to give you a weekly call then please do not hesitate to contact her on 0113 252 8710.

Baptisms—If you wish to make an enquiry or book a Baptism please contact Barbara Tate on 07792 211095 in the first instance. Barbara will then arrange to visit you and book your Baptism into our Diary.

Funerals & Ashes - in the first instance please contact our Verger who co-ordinates these events.

Our Co-ordinator is Gail Townsend on 07792 975814 or email: gail@stmarywoodkirk.org.

Weddings and Banns

In the first instance please contact our Vicar or Church Warden Gary Mortimer on 07740 760556 who co-ordinates these events.

Notice Sheets—If you would like to receive a copy of our weekly Notice Sheet via email—then please drop me an email giving me permission to add you to the list. My email address is vicar@stmarywoodkirk.org

Please note we are GDPR compliant and take great care of your private information.

Help available at the Numbers below...



Church Mouse Tales

'This year I thought I would do something different.' I declared to my friend Hubert, the Black Canon.

'Different?' he asked, raising one bushy eyebrow.

'Yes – you know it's New Year's Eve and normally we make new year's resolutions...'

'We do – we try to make better of ourselves for the new year...', he agreed.

'That's right!' I went on, 'but usually we don't succeed. The resolutions last but a moment in time and fall to dust before the Sun has managed to stay awake for a whole afternoon.'

'So.....?' asked Hubert.

'I've decided to make resolutions I know I can keep!'

'You are?' Hubert raised the other eyebrow to the same height as the first, forming a surprised look on his face which was quite surprising in itself.

'Yes, yes!' I went on excitedly. 'For a start I am going to eat more cheese...'

Both eyebrows came down, but not into a frown – more of a quizzical look.

'....and use more straw to make my nest....'

Hubert didn't speak but I could see his mind working.

'...and bask in the sun when it shines and enjoy every ray for as long as I can....'

Hubert smiled.

'....and skip down the aisle like I was 3 months old....' I continued with enthusiasm.

'...and make sure all my friends know how much I appreciate them ...'

'They sound like good resolutions to me', nodded Hubert.

'Yes', I agreed, 'especially the cheese one....' Misha.





Congratulations to Rev Mark Watson

Rev Mark has been Priest at St Michael's Church, East Ardsley for the past two years. His initial appointment was for 3 years as an Interim Minister.

As an Interim Minister, Rev Mark would have been given specific and measurable tasks to carry out at St Michael's as agreed with the Bishop. This is not an easy task. There is not the usual time to get to know people and take things at a slower pace. A more direct approach is required.

Rev Mark has managed to do this with sensitivity, diplomacy, faithfully underpinning all these changes with sound biblical principles. He has become a valued friend and colleague and we both enjoy covering services at our respective churches.

Working with the PCC at St Michael's Rev Mark has continued to support and encourage those around him.

It is with great pleasure that I can confirm Rev Mark will be installed as the new Incumbent at St Michael's on 14th January at 10.00am. They are very blessed with this appointment and I wish Rev Mark and all at St Michael's a wonderful day.

Heavenly Father,

We come to You today with a humble heart and open arms, asking that You may grant Rev Mark strength to carry out his divine purpose and the courage to stand firm in his faith. We pray that Rev Mark will be a wise and gentle shepherd, ready to serve with joy, to build St Michael's up in faith, and to lead St Michael's by example in loving obedience to your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen



On behalf of all of us who work at Leeds South & East Foodbank, we would like to thank you for your support over this past year. Our work could not continue without your regular support.

Our support comes in many ways. We have regular gifts of food or money from many corporate sponsors. Did you know that we are outside Leeds United for every home match collecting either food or cash. From our Corporate Sponsors we are often invited to give presentations or attend functions. I'll tell you about a recent one. Our Operations Manager, Wendy, has been seen on TV and heard on the radio and is very good at putting our case, however she was ill when we were invited to KPMG pre Christmas function, so I had to sing for my supper, I'd like to share with you part of my speech.

Thank you so much to KPMG for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. I did attend last year, but didn't have to sing for my supper then. However, I'm always happy to get our name before as many people as possible. We are an independent Charity, but part of the Trussell Trust network.

Leeds South & East Foodbank opened its doors 10 years ago, I started volunteering then in a Methodist Church in Middleton. Our warehouse was an upstairs room in that church. Over the years we have grown, we have a 5000 sq ft warehouse and office and 11 Outlets throughout our area, We have 5 paid staff and between 120 and 150 volunteers. We are supported by many businesses in our area. Some send employees to work for a day in our warehouse. Others give money and some collect food from their employees. Some join us when we have collection days in Supermarkets or at Leeds United home games and some do all of the above.

As you can imagine, since Covid, the fuel crisis and the cost of living crisis, the need for our services is growing. In the period 1st September to 30th November we have fed 4388 people. We need 3 tonnes of food every week. Sadly our donations are only bringing in 1 tonne per week. You do the maths.

What used to be a rare occurrence is now the norm and we are buying food on a regular basis.

If you already support us, I want you to know how grateful we are, how we really can't manage without you. If you don't and would like to please give me your contact details and I will get someone to contact you.

Our aim is to work for a time when Foodbanks are no longer needed, when every family in the UK has enough to live a fulfilled life. Until that time we will continue to do our best to support our community.

Barbara Tate—Trustee

Contact details: 07792211095 and/or barbara@stmarywoodkirk.org



One Liners

I asked a supermarket employee where they kept the canned peaches. He said, "I'll see," and walked away. I asked another and he also said, "I'll see," and walked away. In the end I found them myself in Aisle C!

What do you call a women that sets fire to all her bills? Bernadette.

I told my physiotherapist that I broke my arm in two places. He told me to stop going to those places!

What do you call the wife of a hippie? A Mississippi!

I put our scale in the bathroom corner and that's where the little liar will stay until it apologises!

FEW women admit their age- VERY few men act theirs!

When I was a kid, I used to watch the Wizard of Oz and wonder how someone could talk if they didn't have a brain. Then I got Facebook!

As I watch this generation try and rewrite our history, one thing I am sure of..... It will be misspelled and have no punctuation!

Do you ever get up in the morning, look in the mirror and think, "That can't be accurate!". I want to be 14 again and ruin my life differently. I have new ideas!

Apparently RSVPing to a wedding invitation, "Maybe next time," isn't the correct response!

I just burned 1200 calories—I forgot the pizza in the oven!

Thanks for teaching me the meaning of Plethora—it means a lot! Trevor Sykes

St, Mary's, Woodkirk



Come along and join us for a

"Knit & Natter"

(or just a natter!) Wednesday 1.00pm-3.00pm

St. Mary's Parish Centre

Contact: Dawn Tattersfield 07840739239

The Vast Ocean Begins Just Outside Our Church: The Eucharist Mary Oliver

Something has happened To the bread And the wine.

They have been blessed. What now? The body leans forward

To receive the gift From the priest's hand, Then the chalice.

They are something else now From what they were Before this began.

> l want To see Jesus, Maybe in the clouds

Or on the shore, Just walking, Beautiful man

And clearly Someone else Besides.

On the hard days I ask myself If I ever will.

Also there are times My body whispers to me That I have.

ALBERTS QUIZ

- 1. Who was the first female Prime Minister of Great Britain?
- 2. Which team won the 2003 Formula One car racing championship?
- 3. What is the national capital city of Canada?
- 4. How many ribs are in a human body?
- 5. Who is the author of 'A Christmas Carol'?
- 6. Which continents form the New World?
- 7. What do the letters BFG stand for in Roald Dahl's famous children's books?
- 8. Which group released a hit song in 2007 called 'Ruby'?
- 9. On a clothing label, what is symbolized by a circle with a cross running through it?
- 10. Do camels store water in their humps?
- 11. What is the longest river in England, that runs through England only?
- 12. What is meant by the term 'on the rocks' on a drinks menu?
- 13. Who provides the voice-over for Maggie in the Simpsons?
- 14. How many bytes are there in a kilobyte?
- 15. Who payed Elliott's little sister Gertie in the film ET?
- 16. What is the largest island in the world?
- 17. What name is given to animals whose diets consist only of plants?
- 18. What type of food is stollen?
- 19. Which famous corporation uses the motto 'Just Do It'?
- 20. Which male artist broke a record in March 2017 with the achievement of 16 songs in the UK Top 20?

Answers on Page 41 (no peeping)

Drinking from My Saucer

I've never made a fortune and it's probably too late now. But I don't worry about that much, I'm happy anyhow. And as I go along life's way, I'm reaping better than I sowed. I'm drinking from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed. I don't have a lot of riches, and sometimes the going's tough. But I've got loved ones around me, and that makes me rich enough. I thank God for his blessings, and the mercies He's bestowed. I'm drinking from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed. I remember times when things went wrong, my faith wore somewhat thin. But all at once the dark clouds broke. and the sun peeped through again. So God, help me not to gripe about the tough rows that I've hoed. I'm drinking from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed. If God gives me strength and courage, when the way grows steep and rough. I'll not ask for other blessings, I'm already blessed enough. And may I never be too busy, to help others bear their loads. Then I'll keep drinking from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed.

John Paul Moore

How do I join an on-line Service?

If you are not so familiar with the on-line world but you would like to join one of the services, here's some good news! It's easy!

Go to: facebook.com/stmarywoodkirk Then select 'Videos' from the side bar. To join a 'Live' service look for the right time on the Diary page. You can also view previous services from the same location.



QUIZ ANSWERS:

Margaret Thatcher 2. Ferrari 3. Ottawa 4. Twenty-four(24).
Humans have 12 pairs of ribs/24 ribs in total. 5. Charles Dickens.
North America and South America. 7. Big Friendly Giant.
The Kaiser Chiefs. 9. Do not dry clean. 10. No, they consist of fat.
The Thames. 12. It is served with ice. 13. Elizabeth Taylor.
1024. 15. Drew Barrymore. 16. Greenland. 17. Herbivores.
German fruit bread (cake). 19. Nike. 20. Ed Sheeran.

Thank you Albert!



Son of Resident at Lydgate Lodge

(carehome.co.uk review

Lydgate Lodge a great place to live

Lydgate Lodge makes a real difference to the lives of our residents, offering 24 hour residential and dementia care in luxurious surroundings and with an inclusive fee package.

Lydgate Lodge's caring and highly trained staff cherish our residents, assisting them to remain independent and ensuring they enjoy an active lifestyle.

A home is more than just bricks and mortar - it is a place you feel safe, well cared for and relaxed.

Passing by? Pop in for a cuppa ...

Lydgate Lodge Care Home

Soothill Lane, Batley, West Yorkshire, WF17 6EZ lydgate.lodge@idealcarehomes.co.uk 01924 355 020 ideal carehomes

FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS

BAPTISMS-

None this month



DEATHS



We give thanks for the lives of all those who have died within our Parish:

Stuart Dronsfield Suzanne Tame Brian Suttle-Burton

WEDDINGS FROM LAST MONTH:

None this month





Did you know?

We place our Parish Magazine on our website each month therefore YOUR Advert reaches many more people.

To advertise in St Mary's Parish Magazine Contact: The Editor (see page 2) Annual Fee for Advertising:

> Quarter Page £35.00 Half Page £70.00 Full Page £110.00



Parish Centre Rentals

We have space for Groups who may be interested in using the Parish Centre at various times of the week.

Nominal Cost is £60 for

3 hours. Regular long term bookings negotiable.

Contact: Sally Shaw

01924 475048 for more

information.

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An independent family business, the 5th generation of the Marshall family who were established in 1891. The family pride themselves on their caring and understanding of the bereaved and offer a complete funeral service including a pre-paid funeral 'plan'.

CONSULTANTS

CHRISTINE BENNETT RACHEL STONES

RESIDENCE 3 HOLLY COURT TINGLEY What's on (please contact the leaders for further information)

ABC Group Adults, Babies and Children Wednesday 9:30-11:00am (Term time) Nikki Esberger 07932026419 Thursday 9.30-11.00am (Term time) Charlotte 07972217528 Line Dancing 1.00-3.30pm Tuesday Contact Helena 07719946917 Knit and Natter—come and enjoy help with crafts or just chat Wednesday 1.00-3.00pm. Dawn Tattersfield 07840739239 Wednesday 7.00-8.00pm Pilates Contact Erin Blake Young at Heart 1st & 3rd Thursdays 2:00pm Sally Shaw 07963610708 Thursday 5.30 - 6.30pm Rainbows Ruth Osenton-Brown 01924 607393 Thursday 6.30 - 7.45pm Brownies Hannah Tombling 01924 501892 Friday 5:00pm to 6:15 pm Beavers Joanne Rutledge 07950 580877 Friday 6:30pm to 7:45 pm Cubs Marianne Ingham 07778 542302 Friday 8:00 pm to 9:30 pm Scouts Trevor Holdsworth 0113 253 0927 **Explorer Scouts** Friday 7:45 pm to 9:30 pm Chris Ingham 07816 517838

Diary and Services this Month Sunday Services.

Each Sunday there will be a Holy Communion Service at 10.30am in Church as well as Online.

Weekday Services

Mondays 9am	Morning Prayer	On Line
Tuesdays 6pm	Evening Prayer	On Line
Wednesdays 10am	Holy Communion in Church & On-	line
Thursdays 9pm	Night Prayer	On Line
Fridays 9am	Morning Prayer	On Line

<u>Special Services in Jan & Feb:</u>

Sunday 7th Jan—Epiphany 10.30am Sunday 14th Jan—All Age Worship 10.30 Sunday 11th Feb—All Age Worship 10.30 Wednesday 14th Feb—Ash Wednesday 10.00am and 7.00pm

<u>Please see Page 41 for details of how to join a</u> <u>streamed service</u>