

Parish News

St Mary's, Woodkirk

January/February 2021



Lots going on this month—we begin a New Year in the hope that things will be better and in the hope of Emmanuel—God is with Us!

Sunday 3rd January is Epiphany Sunday.

Wednesday 17th February is Ash Wednesday.

This Month..

Christian Witness in our Community, Ready to Share, It's all about the Groom, Church Mouse Tales, Little Things Mean a Lot

www.stmarywoodkirk.org

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Contributions for the Weekly News Sheet
by Thursday evening please.

Elected Members of the Parochial Church Council:

Gary Mortimer, Neal Pinder-Packard, Dawn Tattersfield, Laura Mortimer,
Barbara Tate, Gail Townsend, Sandra Gledhill, Pernoe Liburd, Jason Hawkins,
Heather Hawkins, David Townsend.

If you enjoy the magazine— a donation of 60p really helps to keep it going!

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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: www.stmarywoodkirk.org

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

**Breathe. Let go. And remind
yourself that this very moment is the
only one you know you have for
sure”**

Oprah Winfrey

Vicar's Letter

Firstly, I would like to wish you a Happy New Year that is filled with the peace and blessings of Christ.

2021 has arrived and I am sure the majority of people are glad to see the back of 2020.

For some it will have been devastating with the loss of loved ones to Covid in the most cruel way, initially without a loved one even being present, then of course the limited funeral arrangements that were in place which meant limited numbers, very short services, and very little time to say goodbye to our loved ones. This also impacted on those who had lost loved ones to other illnesses – they too struggled with the new funeral arrangements.

Throughout it all Clergy and Funeral Directors worked together for the good of so many families to give their loved ones the very best service they could within such time limiting constraints.

We will know people who have been ill and recovered but left with ongoing symptoms. We will know people who have been furloughed and struggled on 80% salaries. We will know people who have lost their jobs and who can't pay their mortgage or put food on the table for their children. We will know small businesses that have had to close because the struggle to survive was too great, the debts piling up leaving no other option but to close for good.

People have struggled with the long initial lockdown period and the ongoing restrictions placed on all of us under the tier systems and for those who are clinically vulnerable who have chosen to stay at home in order to keep themselves safe doesn't make the loneliness any easier. We and I have experienced strong emotions of frustration, anger, sadness, the seemingly futility of it all.

We have had to look very much closer to home to see any blessings in 2020 but they were there – in a spring morning, or a summer's day, or the smile of your child, or for a kindness given. They were there every time the NHS Staff saved a life. They were there in every tear that was shed.

In 2021 we have a new beginning, with renewed hope for humanity and its struggle against the Covid pandemic with the arrival of the Pfizer and Oxford vaccines which will soon be administered to as many people as possible. We are promised that things will look different by April and that may be so but things won't be different if we don't play our part and do what is necessary for ourselves and for our neighbours.

Masks will not suddenly disappear, space will remain physically distanced and hand sanitiser will continue to be an investible commodity as its use is essential.

As Christians we believe that Jesus Christ is the hope for all of humankind and as we have just journeyed through Advent, the Advent Wreath reminds us of the hope, peace, joy and love that Jesus Christ offers to each and every one of us.

Where do we find God on earth? Where do we find God in the midst of us?

Often He is to be found in the midst of the pain and suffering, in the quiet of a sunset, in the tears of brokenness, in the stillness of the moment, and in those around us who tend us, hold us, and walk with us. He can be found in the stranger who was there for just that moment of time but who met our need perfectly. The truth is that there is no real hope, peace, joy or love without Christ, therefore, I would like to begin this year with a prayer which we can ponder not just this week or month but for a lifetime. It is a prayer of approach to God.

Almighty God

We approach you and worship you as

The Omnipresent

Omniscient

Omnipotent God

And yet as we draw near you this Christmas season

We cannot help but be provoked by something

Out of kilter, amiss and askew

Instead of a throne in heaven

We are aware of a manger of straw

Instead of robed religious dignitaries

We are aware of cattle, sheep and shepherds

Straight from the fields

Instead of theology graduates in gowns

We are aware of mystical eastern star gazers.

And even more bizarre and disturbing

We are aware of the people of God

Who should know better

Who know enough to search the Holy Scriptures

To find the truth of such events

Using their knowledge

Not to approach you in worship

But to flood the streets of David's city

With the blood of innocent children and babies

And sending the long awaited and yearned for Messiah

Fleeing his life to Egypt as a refugee

God as we approach you this Christmas

We approach a God who emptied himself

Who gave up his safety and comfort

Who made himself nothing

And left himself vulnerable

God as we approach such wonder

Such a mystery

Such an upside down view of the world

Force us to ask ourselves

Why

Give us a snippet of history's greatest refrain

The greatest news to be sung to humanity

That God loved us and demonstrated his love for us in this
That while we were still sinners
He was born and lived and died for us
So God as we approach you tonight
We are acutely aware of a God who gave up everything
For us
And if we listen closely we can hear you whisper to us
From the straw of the manger
From the refugee road to Egypt
From the seashore of no reputation
From the mountain of the sermon
From the journey to Calvary
From a cross of wood
Follow me... follow me... follow me...
As the Father sent me so I am sending you
You are the light of the world
The salt of the earth
God as we approach you this Christmas
Give us the courage, the bravery
To follow you...
To give our lives
To be servants of others...
To carry each other...
God we thank you for the wonder of the poetry and art and transforming power of
Christmas
That inspired these readings and carols and thoughts...
Make these words flesh in us...
In this baby name
AMEN!

This prayer is not just for Christmas, nor is the Christmas Story just for Christmas Day, the baby grows up, becomes the man Jesus, who lives amongst us, as one of us, and suffered the insults of the Jews and the Roman Soldiers, and the final humiliation and suffering of death on a cross. At the same time Jesus was fully divine, the Son of God, the perfect person without sin, who knew His journey, who knew why His Father has sent Him and for what purpose, to redeem humankind, to offer each and everyone of us a new way of living and being, a new relationship with God that if we entered into would change our lives completely. Psalm 23 contains two promises for Christians that God will walk with us in the suffering, but sometimes the suffering is so great we cannot feel God's presence but He is there carrying us, and He will lead us out in sunshine through the valley of the shadow of death. God's presence in our lives does not negate suffering, nor illness, nor worry but it does help us to navigate the waters, to have hope and to have peace but most of all we have the love of Christ in our hearts from the Holy Spirit. God Bless.

Sharon

Christian Witness in the Community.

This year was a very challenging year and not knowing if St Mary's would be open for worship it left me with a huge problem of how can we be witnesses in our Community at this time of year and in the difficult situation we find ourselves with Covid19. The Clergy came together and the Diocese kindly produced for us the Light in the Darkness logo above. I made a simple (ha, ha) request to Dave Townsend asking if he could build a stable so that we could place a banner with the logo inside with a simple manger inside. Thankfully Dave ran with this idea and what he built was both magnificent and a true witness to those who are in our community.



Now if that was not sufficient we thought about all those people who in the last two years have come to visit our Christmas Tree Festival and the popularity of the Prayer Tree that we introduced and so again with Dave's help we placed two trees at the entrance of the church with the following results. A huge thank you to all those who placed baubles on the trees in memory of their loved ones. We have prayed for them and for you. I cannot thank Dave enough for making it all of this possible.

Sharon

Moses Works Smarter

There is a story in the Bible about a very gifted and competent leader who was not working smart. And with some basic adjustments, took his game to a whole new level. That leader was Moses, and the story is found in Exodus 18.

In Exodus 18 the people of Israel had now been liberated from the tyranny of Egypt and were headed to the Promised Land. Moses had been separated from his wife and boys, so his father-in-law, Jethro, brought them home. The following day Jethro went to work with Moses. It must have been “Take Your Father-In-Law to Work” day in Israel.

The Bible says that Moses took his seat and from morning until evening settled all the disputes and served as the only judge for more than two million people. Think of all the wasted time spent waiting in line to get a few minutes with Moses.

Any dispute that could not be settled was brought to him, no matter how small or big. When Jethro watched this for a day, he said, “What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?” That is a nice way of saying, “Have you lost your mind?”

Listen to Moses’ response: “Because the people come to me to seek God’s will.” Translation: “That’s just how we roll here. There are a lot of needs, and people come to me looking for help. I just stay at it and work until everyone gets an answer.” Sometimes we are so accustomed to doing things one way that we cannot see how broken our thinking is.

What was painfully obvious to Jethro was oblivious to Moses. This was not about heart or sincerity or that he was an incompetent leader. But maybe he just was not working smart.

Jethro’s assessment was “What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out.”

Moses was the bottleneck of a system that was broken and creating dysfunction. It was wasting time and energy and wearing everyone out.

I love that Moses listened to his father-in-law. He was teachable. He did not bow up or become defensive. And he did not pull rank or remind Jethro that he was the anointed leader of Israel.

The system Jethro proposed was three-pronged: Pray. Teach. Delegate. Moses was to pray and take the people's needs before God. He was to teach the people so they would know God's laws and be able to settle most disputes themselves. And he was to find faithful men and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundred, fifties, and tens.

I think Moses had 4 issues that were keeping him stuck, exhausted, and ineffective. He had a...

1. Priority issue (he was not doing the thing that was most important to his role, which was interceding for the people)
2. Training issue (instead of making every decision, he needed to train the people so they could make most decisions for themselves)
3. System issue (Moses WAS the system)
4. Delegation issue (He needed to find faithful men and delegate. Jethro encouraged him to appoint leaders over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens)

Moses needed to learn how to better manage himself, his work, and others.

We often mistake activity for productivity. Maybe we need to repeatedly ask ourselves "Are the activities, programs and tasks we are working on really helping us move toward the accomplishment of our mission?"

Looking at Moses life we see that his priorities were to listen to his peoples' problems and take them to God. We should learn from Moses and know that we also can take our problems and concerns to God, even though we do not always get the answers we would like but as time moves on we realise the answers we have been given were the best outcome.

God knows us better than we know ourselves.

Gail.

Advent Wreath (Covid Style) 2020

It's been a very difficult year for everyone, but for some sadly more than others it is a year we will never forget!

Some of you may know I have several health issues which sadly have placed me under the 'extremely vulnerable' category (I do not class myself in this way at all!) but, like many others it is where I've been since March.

Shielding does not affect the brain!(?!?!)

One of the hardest things for me personally was not being able to do the flowers in church, (not much you may think) but, this time in church each week gives me, quite selfishly, my own one to one with God. It is a feeling which cannot be explained but from the moment I step into church it's just me and Him and it is so precious to me.

Easter came and went....without flowers.....my attention turned to Harvest (what plans I had!). Harvest came and went....without flowers. Remembrance...without flowers.....my attention turned to Advent....there WILL be an Advent Wreath!!!

No trips to raid Margaret's garden or Trevor and Barbara's.

I mistakenly thought Covid had robbed me of my precious one to one's, not so!

Thursday was such a lovely day, chilly but wonderful. As I started to gather my tools etc together...I realised...I wasn't alone, as I worked on the wreath I still felt all the love and peace and closeness I feel when I am doing flowers in church yet here on my patio there was no stained glass windows, candles etc, I had instead a beautiful blue sky, birds flying backwards and forwards to the feeder and more lovely foliage from my own garden than I realised I had...there is a poem which says:- The kiss of the sun for pardon. The song of the birds for mirth, one is nearer to God in a garden than anywhere else on earth....He reminded me wherever we are, however hard or difficult our lives seem to be, we are not alone...He is beside us every step of the way! I...I look forward to the day I can return to my selfish 'one to ones', and get back to dressing our beautiful church.

Wise?! DIY Piano Tuning?!



In the middle of 'Lockdown One', between teaching online, continuing with my MA in Education - nearly there folks (!) - and the countless tedious jobs that I have put off for many, many years. I ambitiously decided...Enough. Is ENOUGH!

My piano, whilst a gorgeous Yamaha B3 silent, was in desperate need of a tune. Imagine the sound of the Addams Family piano? Yes. That was a massive over-exaggeration. You get the picture though.

To clarify, if it wasn't for COVID-19, I would be calling on the skills of my local, friendly piano tuner. Piano tuning takes years of experience and years of training. It is extremely sophisticated and demanding (and very easy to go horribly wrong!). After this experience, I appreciate my local, friendly piano tuner even more. Adam? Why, why did I embark on this?



Anyway.

Where to start? I didn't want to break the bank so sourced a bargain 'Piano Tuning Kit' from Amazon. Also, thinking about Amazon, have you heard of Amazon Smile? They donate a very small amount of the product cost to good causes that you choose.

I used an app called Entropy which is an incredible and intuitive piece of software and calculates tuning specifically for your instrument. You can also use it on your

smartphone. These instructions are clear and explain the process. It's simple to understand.

When I felt as though I mustered the right kind of 'Piano Energy' - a mixture of patience, annoyance, bit of confidence and lots of stupidity. I took a deep breath remembering my Russian Piano Professor's famous words. "Jason, you must breathe! Breathe Jason!".

1. First, I moved Fudge. During 'Lockdown One' her obsession was our houseplants. Shredding them. Clawing them. Meowing incessantly at them. We no longer have any plants.



2. Just to be safe, I moved all plants and shreds that were lying around....



Fudge (somehow) got back in!

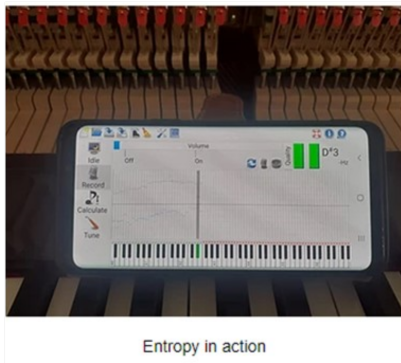


The inside of my Yamaha B3 Silent

3. I recorded each and every note into Entropy. With multiple strings, I recorded one of the strings, usually the one on the left for double strings and the string in the middle for three stringed. I used the piano tuning mutes to silence the strings I didn't need.

4. I then asked the app to calculate the appropriate tuning for the piano :)

5. Then the fun really began! I started manually tuning from around the centre of the keyboard. With multiple strings, I tuned just one of the strings (the same as the one sampled) and then aurally tuned the other strings



around. This is when things got tough. The sheer sensitivity of the strings was unbelievable. It really didn't take any effort at all to widely sharpen or flatten the notes. The sheer physicality of it was intense. I was exhausted after four notes (12 strings), deafened and honestly slightly grumpy!

The result of these four notes though was fantastic, I was really pleased with the outcome. I just didn't have anywhere near the stamina to complete the job. I think it's going to be a few notes a day. Hopefully, the COVID-19 restrictions won't last too much longer, and I can draft in an expert. I couldn't ever be an expert piano tuner - I don't currently have the muscle or the right kind of patience. Unusually, I started my post not recommending DIY piano tuning. I'm going to end my post by saying NEVER try it yourself! Saying this, I enjoyed the challenge - the challenge was just a little too much.

Jason (Organist)

Help available at the Numbers below...

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0808 800 5000
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National Domestic Abuse Helpline
0808 2000 247
(24hrs free)

Mind
0300 123 3393
(Mon-Fri 9-6)

Victim Support
0808 168 9111
(24hrs)

Cruse Bereavement
0800 808 1677
(Mon-Fri 9-5)

ChildLine
0800 1111
(24hrs)

Action on Elder Abuse
0808 808 8141
(Mon-Fri 9-5)

Respect - Men's Advice Line
0808 801 0327
(Mon-Fri 9-5or8pm)

Samaritans
116 123
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National Centre for Domestic Violence
0207 186 8270

Ready to share

I thought I would share with you my sermon for Christmas Day (sorry for those who heard it then but I have tweaked it slightly), but felt its message was a positive one for the start of the New Year.

Luke 2: 1-14

When I was growing up, we had a saying when we were getting ready for anything momentous which was “Well, if we’re not ready now we never will be!” and that definitely applies to today.

You’ve shopped, you’ve prepared, you may well have had to change your plans multiple times, and indeed, now THE day is here.

In the words of Noddy Holder “It’s CHRISTMAAAAAS”

Christmas has not been cancelled!

I must admit I got quite cross with news presenters when they were addressing questions to Government Leaders or spokespersons talking about the cancelling of Christmas, because how can you cancel the coming of Baby Jesus in the stable, the fear and wonder of the Shepherds or the wisdom and worship of the wise men.

The thing is, in the wider secular world of course, folk celebrate Christmas without Jesus, which I must admit, seems to me a bit like visiting the seven wonders of the world with your eyes shut!

It is sad for many of us who cannot meet, or have chosen not to meet with vulnerable family members today, I’m not saying it isn’t, but we still can, in fact we really must celebrate the birth of Jesus this year perhaps more so than in any other year.

Our gospel reading is THE telling of the Christmas story, the one beloved of nativity plays across the world and through many Christmas card designs.

I don’t know about you, but the nativity story never fails to delight and captivate me. I never tire of hearing about Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem, the lack of suitable accommodation, the acceptance of the offer of a stable and the baby wrapped in cloths and placed tenderly in the manger.

I must admit though, that I sometimes forget that the little baby in the stable is the son of God, His only son, who was sent to show God's love for us and to give us hope.

We need to remember that the God who sent Baby Jesus to that stable so long ago in Bethlehem is the same God who is here for us today.

The God who knows and remembers our dreams and hopes

After such a tough year as this one, we may feel that our dreams and hopes have all been lost, but if we think about it, amongst all the tragedy, the daily government briefings, the limitations to our daily lives, Kindness and Hope has shone through.

Who could forget Captain Tom, now Captain Sir Tom, walking laps of his garden, or young Tobias Weller who despite being unable to stand or walk unaided due to Cerebral Palsy, walked the equivalent of two marathons, and received an unsung hero award for his efforts and fundraising.

We clapped on our doorsteps for the NHS and keyworkers, every week saw news bulletins sharing where communities had come together to help each other. Love and kindness were all around and this gave us hope that we would weather the devastating situation we have found ourselves in.

The thing is, acts of kindness bring Hope, we have seen on the news about many acts of kindness, and I'm sure that there were immeasurably more that never made the news, but were acts of kindness, bringing hope to people everywhere nonetheless.

This year, because of the restrictions, we actually have a unique opportunity to celebrate our Christmas without the usual pressure to make it perfect.

Because let's face it, as lovely as our crib scene is, it wasn't perfect; a stable, animals. Animals aren't clean like it shows you on a Christmas Card.

We can't do what we normally do. We can't have a houseful of family or friends.

But we can share our Christmas day festivities with Jesus, Mary and Joseph. We can remember that simple setting, the humble stable, the baby wrapped in cloths and laid in a manger and the hope that he brings.

At Christmas, God sends Jesus to us, to remind us of his love, and to give us hope that whatever is happening he is with us. We must do what we can to share that hope with our families, our communities and across the world.

Emmanuel, God with us.

AMEN

Dawn

Pastoral Care

Telephone Calls—We understand times have been 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—We are still able to arrange Baptisms but with a limited number of people attending depending on tier levels—if you wish to make an enquiry or book a Baptism please contact Barbara Tate on 0113 253 1266.

Weddings, funerals, Ashes, or the reading of banns—in the first instance please contact our Verger who co-ordinates these events. Again there are limitations on numbers depending on tier levels. Our Co-ordinator is Gail Townsend on 0113 252 8710 or email: gail@stmarywoodkirk.org.

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. We are GDPR compliant—vicar@stmarywoodkirk.org.



In contemporary Western culture, the bride is the centrepiece of every wedding ceremony. She wears the long flowing dress, she enters to a “bridal march,” she parades down the centre aisle with the pomp and circumstance reserved for kings, queens, and people stand as she enters. It’s clearly all about the bride.

The lowly groom, on the other hand, is an afterthought. He is a filler, the warm-up act for the main attraction. Unlike the bride, he usually enters first. He wears a smart suit. And, for him, there is no grand march—he often enters to no music or very soft music.

The way we do weddings today is quite different from the weddings of the Bible, especially the relationship between Christ and his bride, the church.

The book of Revelation describes the mother of all wedding scenes. But here it is the groom who gets all the attention.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

Revelation 19:7

It is the wedding of the Lamb, not the wedding of the bride.

A couple of verses later, the apostle John writes, *blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb*. The spotlight is fixed firmly on the groom, Jesus.

When John the Baptist settles an argument about his position in relationship to Jesus, he uses wedding imagery to set the record straight. In no uncertain terms, he declares he is simply a friend of the groom, that Jesus is the centre of attention.

But he also makes an interesting statement about the bride.

The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. John 3:29

The bride belongs to the groom. That is not only a statement about ancient marriage ritual, but also a great picture of the relationship between the church and Jesus. This has huge implications for how we view the church in our generation and how we view our roles in it.

In the last thirty years within the church world, there has been a subtle shifting of the spotlight. Inadvertently, in many places, it has become all about the bride (the church) rather than the groom (Jesus). But, as John reminds us, the bride belongs to the bridegroom. Or to say it another way, the bride exists for the groom.

As Christians it is our job is to watch after the bride on behalf of the groom. We become like a spiritual wedding coordinator. The coordinator's job is to assist and serve the bride and groom, behind the scenes, in making their wedding day a meaningful event. There should never be anything blocking the bride's view of the Groom's glory.

Our constant challenge as Christians in the church is to get ourselves out of the way so that the bride will be awestruck by his incomparable majesty of her groom. It is helpful for us to remind ourselves regularly that the church is not "ours." We are just the stewards. The bride belongs to the bridegroom. We hold it in a sacred trust to steward on behalf of the groom, who has asked us to look after his bride until he comes for her.

In our church today Jesus should be the most famous person. He should get the most airtime, he should be the most talked about, and he should clearly be centre stage. He is the head of the church. and with his leadership we must do our best to spread his fame.

Scriptures: John 3:29, Revelation 19:7, Song of Songs 8:1-4

Gail

Reflections for Advent 2020.

It was lovely as part of our Advent preparation to be able to share in weekly reflections with Rev Sharon. If you did join in online on the four Wednesdays of Advent, you will know what I mean. If you didn't, I'm sorry, I cannot begin to do justice to these reflections, however, I do hope to share with you some of what was shared. Week one saw us thinking about the theme of Hope, reflecting on the hope experienced through the prophets. There was a timely reminder that whilst God may not prevent disasters, he will never fail to see us through them. Sharon shared with us the lovely story of the little robin and how he got his red breast through caring for Mary and baby Jesus by fanning the flames of the small fire. In week two our theme was Peace. However, whilst peace in the terms of lack of conflict was part of this, we also acknowledged the worry and anxiety felt by people, and conflict and stress in relationships as lack of peace. Sharon then talked about Shalom, meaning complete or whole and a person's wellbeing. Jesus came to bring Shalom, he came to restore our broken world to wholeness. The reflection also focussed on the song of Mary, also known as the Magnificat and we were challenged to think of who we were in Mary's song, the blessed humble or the scattered proud, the hungry fed with good things or the rich sent away empty, and recognising that we probably see bits of both sides in ourselves. As followers of Jesus we are called to create Shalom and carry it with us into the world. Sharon also told the story of a King who offered a prize for the finest painting depicting peace, and whilst many excellent artists provided magnificent paintings of beautiful tranquil scenes, the one the King chose was of a stormy mountain scene, but if you looked closely, in a tiny crack in the mountain a small bush had grown, and in that bush amongst all the storminess, a little bird had made her nest and was snuggled inside, at peace. The message being that peace is not about being where there is no noise or trouble, but trusting that God is in the midst of it all bringing wholeness to things that are broken. In week three we looked at Joy. The prayer of approach I felt was so appropriate (hopefully if Sharon has space, is included at the end of this article) it spoke about looking for pockets of Joy amongst the sadness, and encouraging us to share those day to day wonders we come across, amongst many other things. Sharon spoke about how Biblical Joy is choosing to respond to external circumstances with inner contentment and satisfaction ,

because we know that God will use these experiences to accomplish His work in and through our lives. Meaning that we can choose to respond with Joy. However, it is God and God alone that can produce true Joy and He does that naturally through His spirits living in those who put their trust in Him. Christian Joy is not something we try and conjure up, it happens when we get our lives in balance and obtain true perspective. Then Sharon shared another story with us. The story of a cobbler who was renowned for his Joy but who lost it due to a change in his fortunes. When he gave back the gift he returned to his former joyous state. A good story that illustrates that we find joy when we get our priorities right. We then listened to a piece of music played by our own Brian Gledhill, it was one of my favourite pieces, Starry starry night (Vincent) by Don Maclean and given time to reflect. Sharon talked about how we might rejoice and experience joy in the crazy world of 2020 and reminded us that joy, peace, grace and consolation can, and do, come in moments of quiet and thoughtfulness and that maybe this strange year is beckoning us to quieten down, do less, be more prayerful, to take intentional time, time to count our blessings and give thanks for the fundamental things. Our final advent reflection was on the theme of love, and what better illustration is there, but the Christmas story. Sharon spoke of four aspects of love in the Christmas story, that of Joseph for Mary, the love of Mary for Jesus, God's love for sinners and the love we have for each other. There was also a wonderful prayer, I have included a bit of it here;

"... as we approach you this Christmas we approach a God who emptied himself, who gave up his safety and comfort, who made himself nothing and left himself vulnerable

Force us to ask ourselves Why

Give us a snippet of history's greatest refrain, the greatest news to be sung to humanity that God loved us and demonstrated his love for us in this.

That while we were still sinners He was born and lived and died for us...we are acutely aware of a God who gave up everything for us and if we listen closely we can hear you whisper to us

From the straw of the manger

From the refugee road to Egypt

From the seashore of no reputation
From the mountain of the sermon
From the journey to Calvary
From a cross of wood
Follow me... follow me... follow me...
As the Father sent me so I am sending you
You are the light of the world
The salt of the earth
God as we approach you this Christmas
Give us the courage, the bravery
To follow you...
To give our lives
To be servants of others...
To carry each other...
The reflection ended ...God showed His love for us, how will we show our love to others this Christmas.

And whilst Silent Night played, Rev Sharon led us to the crib scene, to reflect on the wonder and love of Jesus, the child in the manger. One summarising article does not do justice to what were four really lovely and fitting advent reflections, but I hope, if you did miss them, that they give you a flavour of what Sharon shared with us. Thank you Sharon for leading our advent reflections and making them so meaningful.

Dawn

The prayer of approach from the third Advent reflection of Joy;

When the world expects sadness,
help us, Creator of Light, to look for pockets of joy.
When the world is overwhelmed by darkness,
give us eyes to see little delights.
When the world is caught up in sensationalism,
help us speak of the hidden wonders we've discovered,
holding them up for others to see.

The sacred stillness of the early morning,
a quiet moment in the sun,
small children laughing on scooters,
trees bursting into bloom and lillies opening at the corner shop.
These small joys reveal the truth of the world we live in.
No, there is not peace everywhere
and all pain has not been removed.
But there are still people returning home,
voices that pray,
moments of forgiveness,
signs of hope.

We don't have to wait until all is well
to celebrate the glimpses of your Kingdom at hand.
Let us not deny sadness,
but transform it into fertile soil for more joy.
Let us not deny the darkness,
but choose to live in the light.
Cynics seek darkness wherever they go,
but joy is the mark of the people of God.
Help us discipline ourselves to choose joy
for the reward is joy itself.

Help us renew our minds until they default to joy and not fear,
for there is so much to frighten us.

Help us believe that the Light can be trusted,
for there is so much darkness to mislead us.

Jesus, you are both the Man of Sorrows and the Man
of Complete Joy,
help us to hold both sorrow and joy in the ways you've shown us.

Help us to remain in your love
so that your joy may be in us
and our joy may be complete.

Amen.

Dawn

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](https://www.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.**

Lessons Learned (the hard way!).

Hi there,

I don't know about you, but I have fond memories of cartoons from when I was growing up, Tom and Jerry, where poor Tom always ended up in trouble, then Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd, Wiley Coyote and Roadrunner (meep meep!)

In particular I remembered how when any of the characters were knocked out or hit on the head (usually by a big rock, anvil or baseball bat!) they would be flat on the floor with stars circling around their heads. The thing was, I was doing some pre Christmas dashing (well it is me after all!) and walked into something BANG! Thankfully I was OK, and I didn't see stars, although when you walk into something solid it does cause you to realise how fast you are travelling. So I got to thinking about whether I could find any biblical reflection on topics related to walking into something and called on my trusty online Bible Gateway. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, nothing came up when I searched for walking into something (although you're not telling me that excited followers of Jesus caught up in the moment didn't occasionally walk into a palm tree – just sadly the Apostles and Paul omitted to record it tee hee!)

So I thought about the different aspects of my experience. It will perhaps come as no surprise when I looked up learning, in respect of my learning a lesson from walking into something, I found this in Proverbs (Good News translation) “Truth, wisdom, learning, and good sense—these are worth paying for, but too valuable for you to sell.” (Proverbs 23:23)

Perhaps if I'd used more good sense I wouldn't have walked into a hard immovable object!

I then looked up unconscious, thankfully I wasn't knocked unconscious, but I was curious about what the bible might say. I did find references to unconscious but it was more in the realms of 'unconscious thought' but then in Daniel 10 9-10 I discovered this; 'I heard his voice. At the sound of it I fainted, fell flat on the ground, face in the dirt....'

When I looked at the passage in context it was perhaps no surprise that Daniel had fainted, he'd been fasting for three weeks and then saw a vision of an angel! Then I looked up 'stunned' as that was so nearly what I was and in 'The Message' translation discovered it in the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:8.

If you don't know the story of Zacchaeus, he was a little man, but a despised one, in that he was a Tax Collector, and not always an honest one. But Zacchaeus had heard people talk about Jesus, and was curious and wanted to see him, so when he found out that Jesus was passing by, climbed a tree so that he had a better chance of seeing him. Verse 8 tells us that '... Zacchaeus just stood there, a little stunned...'

As well he might, because Jesus happened to look up into the tree and see Zacchaeus and the rest as they say is history! If you have a spare few minutes look up the story it starts at the beginning of chapter 19 of Luke and is a favourite story with children. Because of his encounter with Jesus, Zacchaeus became a reformed character.

There in the Message translation in Proverbs 21:5 it says; 'Careful planning puts you ahead in the long run; hurry and scurry puts you further behind.

Whoever thought that walking into a stationary object would trigger a memory of poor cartoon characters like Tom and Wiley Coyote laying flat out with a circle of stars above their heads would lead to a whistle stop tour of various books of the Bible!

I hope you've enjoyed this light hearted look at my lesson learned the hard way. Perhaps if I'd thought about Mickey Mouse and his friends I might have remembered to Donald...DUCK!!

Love and bruises

Dawn xx

A Few 'Lexi-puns'

Haunted French Pancakes give me the crepes.

This girl today said she recognised me from the Vegetarian Club, but I'd swear I've never met herbivore

I know a guy who's addicted to drinking brake fluid, but he says he can stop anytime.

When the smog lifts in Los Angeles UCLA.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

A will is a dead giveaway.

Police were summoned to a day care centre where a three-year old was resisting a rest.

A bicycle can't stand on its own, it's just two tired.

Did you hear about the fellow whose entire left side was cut off? He's alright now.

When she saw her first strands of grey hair she thought she'd dye.

Acupuncture is a jab well done. That's the point of it.

I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.

He had a photographic memory, but it was never fully developed.

When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.

When chemists die, they barium.

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.

I'm reading a book about anti-gravity. I just can't put it down

Those who get too big for their pants will be totally exposed in the end.

The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine last week is now fully recovered.

I got some batteries that were given out free of charge. Trevor Sykes

Albert's January Quiz

1. In 1965 what was the first Christmas song ever to be broadcast from space?
2. Which company released its first scale model kit in 1955? Was it a) Airfix, b) Revell or c) Scalextric?
3. Which country provides London's Trafalgar Square with a Christmas Tree?
4. In which country is it customary to put spiders webs on Christmas Trees? Was it a) Turkey, b) Ukraine, c) India?
5. Juan Peron was re-elected president of which country in 1951? Was it a) Argentina, b) Brazil, c) Chile?
6. Elvis Presley only ever had one Christmas number one. What was it called?
7. Where was Guy Fawkes from?
8. Which is the only band to have topped the Christmas chart twice with the same song?
9. Who won the FIFA World Cup in 1950? Was it a) Brazil, b) Uruguay c) France?
10. Which song was written and performed by Whitney Houston and was Number One for ten weeks?
11. Which type of crossings were officially introduced in 1951? Was it a) Level, b) zebra, c) pelican?
12. Numerically what is a score?
13. Numerically at what age to you get the key of the door?

If you write down the answers to questions 1-11 and the figures from 12 and 13, you will find a means of enjoying or wasting your time in "lock in". Hoping you will stay fit and we will soon get back to normality. Albert Shaw

(Answers on page 39)

.Church Mouse Tales

It was the day after the day after Christmas as well as I can remember, when – without warning I might add - my friend Hubert, the black canon, suddenly made an announcement.

‘Tomorrow is an important day!’ he declared.

‘Important?’ I enquired, ‘how so?’

‘We must wait for tomorrow to find out what tomorrow brings.’ he explained without explaining.

‘er – until what time tomorrow must we wait to find out what will be brought?’ I asked curiously.

‘Tomorrow in the morning!’ he swept an arm out as if that explained what had not been explained.

‘...in the morning...?’ I repeated, somewhat perplexed.

‘No – wait’, he held up his hand, ‘– better make it half-past.’ And with that he turned and was gone.

It seemed a long time before morning came around on the day after the day after the day after Christmas, but I sought out the enigmatic monk as soon after breakfast as was polite.

‘You’re late!’ he declared as soon as he saw me.

‘Good morning to you O dark robed one.’ I replied somewhat cheekily I admit.

‘It’s a fine morning don’t you think? Crisp and fresh and full of life!’ He went on oblivious.

‘Er – yes I suppose...but what is it that is important on this crisp fresh day after the day after the day after Christmas?’ I asked.

‘It’s also the day before the day before the day before New Year’s Day I do believe,’ he smiled, ‘and it’s a great day just to ‘be’ don’t you think?’

‘Don’t you mean the day before the day before the day before the day before.....’

Do I? ... anyway we should – in between all the other celebrations at this time of year – celebrate the day. Enjoy the moment. Live in the wonder of life. Feel the sun. Breathe the air. Be happy!

‘It’s your birthday isn’t it?’

Hubert’s indulgent smile gave the answer.

Misha



Little things mean a lot

Extract from a book of thoughts:

“He looked like he lived a rough life. I knew he wasn’t having a good day and had argued with his boss before climbing into his cab.

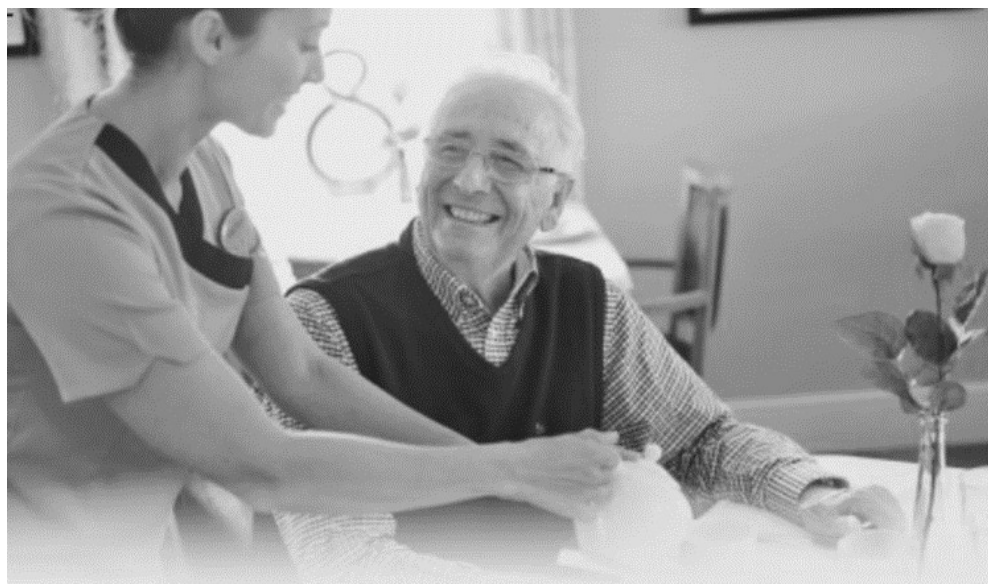
I was standing beside a five year old lad whose eyes widened with awe and admiration when he saw a giant gravel laden dump truck drive by. The man looked out and tooted his horn, which made the lad’s day.

Bless his heart, I thought, no matter how difficult his path through life had been, he still remembered what it was like to an innocent little boy”.

Maybe we can relate this to the COVID situation, a wave of the hand, a smile and eye contact and even a few words of encouragement (from a distance) can mean so much. We must guard against losing our humanity and becoming like robots.

Wishing you a happier and healthy New Year.

Sally Shaw



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FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS

BAPTISMS—We welcome into our Church family:-

Isobel Sophia Embley



DEATHS



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

Queenie Wass, Enid Stevens, Brian Shaw, Freda Stabler, Alan Speak

WEDDINGS Please pray for Daniel and Charlotte as they prepare to marry at St Mary's Church on 16th January. They have had to postpone their wedding three times already and have decided to go ahead with only 14 guests. May they be blessed on their wedding day.



Can you help?

RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch 29-31st January 2021

You may be aware that last year as part of our work in Church, Churchyard and Community, we took part in the Big Birdwatch organised by the RSPB. Unfortunately I think all the birds had gone into hiding and we didn't see lots of birds, but we are hoping for better results this year. It would be fabulous if some of you who visit the churchyard regularly could do a birdwatch for us. All you need to do is spend an hour in the churchyard over the weekend of 29th to 31st January, and the wonderful thing is, you can take part as a family.

You can choose any hour between the 29th and 31st January (so whether you're an early bird or a night owl, you can still take part!) I'm thinking of being brave and perhaps doing a dusk one, simply because I was amazed when I went to Midnight Mass in church on Christmas Eve, to hear an Owl (might need a headlamp or torch for that one!) Then during that hour you count all the different birds that land in the area of the churchyard where you are.

If you are interested please get in touch with me either through email: dawn@stmarywoodkirk.org or call or text 07840739239 so that I can arrange to get you a record sheet and keep a note of the time you will be 'watching', and with more watchers we will hopefully be able to record more of our feathered friends who call the churchyard home (or find it a good place to eat or rest at least!).

We decided to undertake the RSPB birdwatch as part of our work on environmental issues. Surveying what wildlife visits or lives in the churchyard is a good way to measure how we are doing in environmental terms.

The bible mentions birds on many occasions, one of my favourites is found in Matthew Chapter 10 verse 29 – 31 which says;

29 For only a penny you can buy two sparrows, yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent. 30 As for you, even the hairs of your head have all been counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows!

We all matter to God, whether we are sparrows or the worthiest person around, Luke records it slightly differently in Chapter 12 verse 24 where he says

‘ Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!’

As God knows us down to the number of hairs on our heads, perhaps we can help Him by looking after the sparrows. Thank you in advance of your help.

Love and birdies

Dawn

Answers to Albert’s January Quiz

1. Jingle Bells,
2. Airfix,
3. Norway,
4. Ukraine,
5. Argentina,
6. Return to Sender,
7. York,
8. Queen (Bohemian Rhapsody,
9. Uruguay,
10. I will always love you,
11. zebra,
12. 20,
13. 21,

JANUARY QUIZ 2021

Albert Shaw

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Annual Fee for Advertising:

Quarter Page £35.00

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Full Page £110.00

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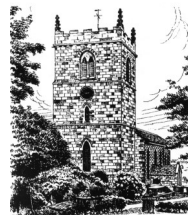
Parish Centre Rentals

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.**

**Contact: Sally Shaw
01924 475048 for more
information.**

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What's on (please check with the leader due to current tiers)

Playgroup Monday, Tuesday & Thursday

9:30am to 11.25am

Becky Schofield 07811 146958

ABC Group Adults, Babies and Children

Wednesday 9:15-11:00am (Term time)

Cheryl 07948271688

Stepping Stones Sunday Children's Group (3-12 years old)

4th Sunday of the Month

10:30am in Church

Rainbows Thursday 5.30 - 6.30pm

Ruth Osenton-Brown 01924 607393

Brownies Thursday 6.30 - 7.45pm

Hannah Tombling 01924 501892

Keep Fit Class Thursday 8:00pm (Over 60's)

Margaret Hampshire 01924 476721

Young at Heart 1st & 3rd Thursdays 2:00pm

Brenda Dixon 0113 253 4078

Beavers Friday 5:00pm to 6:15 pm

Joanne Rutledge 07950 580877

Cubs Friday 6:30pm to 7:45 pm

Marianne Ingham 07778 542302

Scouts Friday 8:00 pm to 9:30 pm

Trevor Holdsworth 0113 253 0927

Explorer Scouts Friday 7:45 pm to 9:30 pm

Chris Ingham 07816 517838

Diary and Services in January and February

Currently whilst in Tier 3—Church remains open for all Wednesday and Sunday Services and will be streamed via St Mary's Facebook Page.

Each Sunday there will be a Said Holy Communion Service at 10.30am

Each Wednesday there will be a Said Holy Communion Service at 10.00am.

Weekly Services that are Streamed only via St Mary's Facebook page.

Each Monday and Friday—Morning Prayer at 9.00am

Each Tuesday—Evening Prayer at 6.00pm

Each Thursday—Night Prayer (Compline) at 9.00pm

Special Services (In Church and Streamed)

Sunday 3rd January—Epiphany 10.30am

Sunday 10th January—Baptism of Christ 10.30am

**Sunday 31st January—Presentation of Christ in the Temple
(Candlemass)**

Wednesday 17th February—Ash Wednesday 10.00am/7.00pm

1st Monday of the Month there will be a Church Wardens Meeting at 8.00pm via zoom.

2nd Monday of the Month there will be a PCC Meeting at 8.00pm via zoom.

Please see Page 29 for details of how to join a streamed service