

'Keep In Touch'



KEEPING YOU IN TOUCH IS

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SPRING 2017

***CHURCH & VILLAGE
BIRSTALL & WANLIP***

THE PARISH OF BIRSTALL AND WANLIP

Clergy:	Rector: Rev'd Vince Jupp, 251 Birstall Road <i>email: vincejupp@btinternet.com</i>	2674517 <i>Mob: 07840 855030</i>
	Curate: Rev'd Anne Crosby, 9 Beaumont Leys Lane <i>email: anne@crosbytextiles.co.uk</i>	07946 178087
Hon Assistant	Rev'd Sheila Skidmore, 15 School Lane	2673318
Priests:	Rev'd Kerry Emmett, 1 Chamberlains Field	3194736
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Licensed	Mr Peter Chester, 12 Oakfield Avenue	2120236
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Pastoral	Mrs Doreen Wilson, 13 Poplar Avenue	2674680
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Tower Captain:	Mr Clive Mobbs, 30 Wanlip Avenue <i>Practice night—Thursday at 7.30pm</i>	2677156
Wanlip Church	Mr John Ward, 28 Walker Road	2677600
Hall Bookings		
Editor of	Canon Anne Horton, 8b Copeland Road <i>email: rahorton@outlook.com</i>	2677942
Keep in Touch		

REGULAR SERVICES

St James the Great, Birstall

Sunday

8 am	Holy Communion (said)
10 am	All Together Service (1st Sunday)
10 am	Parish Communion (other Sundays)
10 am	Sunday School

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday

9 am	Morning Prayer
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Thursday

9.30 am	Holy Communion
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Our Lady and St Nicholas, Wanlip

Sunday

6 pm	Holy Communion (1st Sunday)
6 pm	Evensong (Book of Common Prayer) (2, 3, 4th Sundays)
6 pm	Alternative Service of the Word (5th Sunday)

St James' Church is open every Saturday morning, 10 till 12 noon.

Please take the opportunity to come in, look around, or sit quietly in church, and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea.

REGULAR EVENTS AND GROUPS

Weekly

Monday 1.15pm Tiny Tots (St James)
(Term Time) Contact: Marion Tegg 0116 2673817

Thursday 7.30-9.00pm Bell ringing practice (St James)
Contact Clive Mobbs 0116 2677156

Saturday 10-12 noon St James Church open
Tea and coffee available

Monthly

2nd Monday 7.30pm Monday Group (Day Centre)
Contact: Jane Scott 0116 2673761

4th Monday 10.15am Mothers' Union (St James)
Contact Helen Tarry 0116 2677493
or Betty Howard 0116 2207405

2nd Tuesday 10.30am Contemplative Prayer (76 Sibson Rd)
Contact Noreen Talbot 0116 2672756

3rd Tuesday 10-12 noon Old Nick's Coffee Shop
At Wanlip Church and Community Centre

1st & 3rd Friday 7.30pm Gospel Choir (St James)
Contact Sharon March 0116 2103591

1st Sunday 7.45pm Men's Group (Royal British Legion)
Bi-monthly Contact Bert Tegg 0116 2673817

Monday Morning St James Wanderers (approx. 4 miles)
Monthly Contact Lesley Walton 0116 2674995

Bi-monthly St James Striders (approx. 8 miles)
Contact Gill Pope 0116 2675086

'KEEP IN TOUCH'

A new title for a new look magazine from and for the church communities in Birstall and Wanlip. We've called it **'Keep in Touch'** because we believe it's important that in our churches we should **keep in touch**, with each other, with fellow church members, with all who are linked with our parish churches, and with everyone who lives and works in our two villages. Regular congregation members are able to pick up copies in church, but we gratefully rely on a team of church members who take magazines to those not able to pick up a copy for themselves, to others who have asked to 'keep in touch' with the church, and to newly moved-in neighbours.

'Keeping in Touch' is always two way. So please, if you have seen a copy of this magazine, and would like to **keep in touch** with us, do let us know. There is a list of 'contacts' on page 2 of this magazine. And if you would like to write a little something for **'Keep In Touch'**, please do. Have a word with one or other of the editorial team, or pop something in an envelope (attention: 'Editor of 'Keep In Touch') and leave it in the church office, in the box at the back of Church, or email me at rahorton@outlook.com
Let's keep on helping each other to **'keep in touch'**. It really does matter!

Editorial Team: The Revd Vince Jupp, Canon Anne Horton, Lesley Walton

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'

'Let's start at the very **beginning** - a very good place to start.'
Is this the **beginning** of the end; or the end of the **beginning**?'

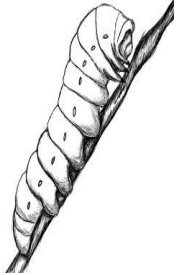
I have never thought, until now, what a very crucial and amazing word 'beginning' is in our language. From the first sentence of the Bible to many popular songs, it nearly always marks the start of something with a feeling of great optimism and hope. It is quietly exciting; the beginning of life, beginning a new job; new school; new relationship.
Beginning: always hopeful!

So here we are now, in our churches of St. James, Birstall and Our Lady and St Nicholas, Wanlip, embarking on a new beginning for our church magazine - a whole new look.

So - Let's start at the very **beginning**, a very good place to start!!

Leigh Reid

BEGINNINGS



Begin, begun, began
 Starting again, explore
 New ways, new places, new.
 So we begin to probe,
 To open, to make changes.

But beginning brings fear
 Uncertainty, unrest,
 What if? What then? Who? When?
 Beginning; unnerving;
 So many doubts, unknown
 Outcomes, should we begin
 At all? Just now, at last?

The status quo feels safe:
 The devil we know
 No longer alarms us.
 But beginning is dark
 Unknown, it frightens us.



Step out, speak up, begin.
 Shake off the carapace
 That hold us in its grip
 Let go, let's go, begin.
 Beginnings, destiny.

LAH

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES

Wed. 1st March	Ash Wednesday Service	9:30am	Wanlip
	Ash Wednesday Service	7:30pm	St James
Mon. 10th April	Holy Week Meditation	7:30pm	St James
Tues. 11th April	Holy Week Meditation	7:30pm	St James
Wed. 12th April	Holy Week Meditation	7:30pm	St James
Thurs 13th April	Maundy Thursday Service	7:30pm	St James
Fri. 14th April	Good Friday		
	Walk of Witness	St James	10am start
	The Last Hour	St James	2pm
Sunday 16th April	Easter Day		
	Easter Vigil	Wanlip	6am
	Holy Communion	Wanlip	7am
	Family Communion	St James	10am
	Evensong	Wanlip	6pm



PARISH SOCIAL DIARY 2017

Social and Special Events

MARCH

Friday 31st 7.30 pm Travel Talk, Sue Ablett, Wanlip Community Hall
Around the World in 80 Days

APRIL

Wed. 26th, 10.30 am Guided walk 'Leicester's Fascinating City Centre'
with Colin Crosby, £3, meet Cathedral grounds, by
Richard III statue

MAY

Sun. 7th, 1 pm Parish Lunch, Beedles Lake Golf Club, East Goscote
Friday 19th Coach outing to Bosworth Battlefield Centre
Date tbc *Spring Concert by Cossington Voices, St James Church*

JUNE

June 26th – 30th Parish Holiday to Warners Holme Lacy, Hereford
Saturday, date t.b.c. *Coach Outing to Peterborough and Choral Evensong*

AUGUST

Sat. 12th, performance 1.30 pm 'Hobson's Choice', Tolethorpe Hall theatre

SEPTEMBER

Wed. 6th Coach outing to Oakham and Rutland Water

OCTOBER

Friday 13th, 7 pm Film Night at St James Church, *film title t.b.a.*

NOVEMBER

Sunday 19th, 2.30 pm Quiz Afternoon and Cream Tea, Birstall Village Hall

Interested in any of the above?

Further information contact Sandra Robinson 0116 2677238

NEW BEGINNINGS

Without regular new beginnings we can never move on from who we are meant to be. Creation is wonderful, constantly changing, evolving, transforming, never the same as it started. All creation: the earth, the flora, the fauna, even humans that do not adapt, gradually become extinct. Societies too develop, start again if they are to survive. How do we measure up?

Benedictines have amongst their principles the need for 'constant conversion'. One single conversion to any ideal leaves us stuck in that new position: obsolete, out-of-date, irrelevant. Like the whole of creation we have to keep moving on; growing, opening up, learning and developing.

Some of us have followed slavishly our parents and teachers into becoming their particular kind of people. Others have stopped to think; have chosen for themselves, opted for individuality, or carved a new path through life. It's never too late to question what you do, how you relate to people, to find a new life, to explore new hobbies, interests, sports, music, skills or activities. How many of our beliefs have become prejudices? "I've never done that", "I've always done it that way!" or "That's boring, I'll never go there".

So, open up, try something new, learn a skill you've always avoided, list what you've never tried or experienced. Step out of your comfort zone and start exploring new beginnings.

Noreen Talbot

AT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW DAY

I found this prayer in Hungarton parish church. Someone had found it in a church she was visiting and brought it back to share in her church. They'd printed copies for their visitors to take home and use. I took one and now use it every day.

Dear Lord,
this new day will come only once.
Before it has gone,
help me to do all the good I can,
so that today will not be wasted,
and I will remember it with happiness.

Living Authentically -

- a Lenten Love story



One of life's truisms is that if we look outward and think about the lot of others in the world, empathise with them and pray for them, wishing it were better for them, a few things happen. We become more grateful for our lives, we become more aware of what's important and we are moved to do something for those less fortunate for whom we are praying. In simple terms the more we look out, pray and act on our prayer, the more we are living authentically, lovingly and eternally.

We Christians are called to love others as we would love ourselves and this means to take note of the plight of our brothers and sisters across the world and do what we can to express that love. You do not have to look very far to see just how many people in the world are suffering in so many different ways. From the war-torn and ravaged streets of Syrian cities to orphaned children sleeping rough every night of their young lives among the rubbish of New Delhi, millions of people do not know where their next meal is coming from, or whether the water their children are drinking, without choice, is poisoning them with every sip.

The plight of the peoples of our shared world is brought into sharp focus on our televisions as different charities endeavour to capture our attention with their 30 second slots for on-going global issues. Charities like 'Save the Children' or 'Sightsavers' or 'WaterAid' or dozens of others offer a very focussed expression of love for those in need. How can we respond to so many calls on our resources? Well, maybe a start would be to pray and see how God is speaking to you about specific charities and then do your bit to make a difference.

One of my personally supported charities for some years is 'SALT of the Earth' This is an organisation that has, since 1988, raised £3.5 million to fund a variety of community-led rural development projects. <http://www.salt-of-the-earth.org.uk/> Through their partners in Tamil Nadu, India, where the benefits of India's economic growth have not reached the rural poor, SALT are working to improve the lives of the most deprived families, currently living on an average of £250 per year.

Church Services

March 2017 - June 2017

MARCH

Wednesday 1st	7.30 pm	Ash Wednesday Service	St James
Sunday 5th	10 am	'All Together' Service	St James
Sunday 26th	10 am	Mothering Sunday Service	St James

APRIL

Sunday 2nd	10 am	'All Together' Service	St James
Sunday 9th	10 am	Palm Sunday Service	St James
Sunday 16th	6 am, 7am	Easter Vigil, Easter Communion	Wanlip
Sunday 16th	10 am	Easter Day Service	St James
Sunday 30th	6 pm	5th Sunday Special	Wanlip

MAY

Sunday 7th	10 am	'All Together' Service	St James
Sunday 14th	10 am	Deanery Confirmation Service	St James
Thursday 25th	7.30 pm	Deanery Ascension Day Service	

JUNE

Sunday 4th	10 am	Pentecost Service	St James
Sunday 11th	10 am	Trinity Sunday	St James

For list of contacts, see page 2

For all church services at Our Lady & St Nicholas, Wanlip see page 15

Details of regular services in both parish churches can be found on page 27

For further information please see church information sheets and website www.birstall.org

FROM THE REGISTERS

November 2016 - February 2017

BAPTISMS

2016

27th November Esmee Clifford St James

2017

8th January Paloma-Quinn Matthews St James

29th January Harmony-May Adcock St James

MARRIAGES

2016

17th December Michael Biddles & Aimee Griffin St James

FUNERALS

2016

11th November Brenda Reynolds St James

18th November Marion Roe L'boro Crematorium

14th December Denis Downes St James

19th December Shelagh Noble St James

2017

5th January Eric Johnson St James

31st January Sylvia Hollis St James

16th February Audrey Boden St James

24th February Alan Verso St James

Summer Issue of 'In Touch'

This should be published by June 1st. Please send copy for this issue to the editor, rahorton@outlook.com by May 7th. Thank you very much indeed.

Opinions expressed in 'Keep in Touch' do not necessarily reflect the views of St James, Birstall and Our Lady and St Nicholas, Wanlip

SALT's vision is of a world where communities have access to opportunity, dignity, equality and sustainable livelihoods. It supports health interventions, women's empowerment, environmental preservation and educational advancement.

What I love about SALT is how each and every project is considered and worked out to ensure that those receiving the support are empowered to help themselves: helping communities to become self-sufficient and in turn to empower others through shared knowledge, skills and resources.

This year the United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG) Lent Course, *Living an Authentic Life* is about just such empowering projects. Living authentically helps others to live fully, as well as authentically, which in turn helps others and so on ... I decided it would be good to look at this Lent Course for our study this year.

It offers stories about successful development projects and helps us focus how we might live authentic lives. The gifts to us will be manifold. We will be encouraged by the work of USPG to love others through these projects, recognising how this speaks to us, calls us and frees our thinking. We shall discern how we too can make a real difference by regularly supporting such charities financially. I feel good about USPG as I do about SALT, because I feel good about people growing, being freed from poverty and becoming in turn similarly supportive of others.

SO DO COME ALONG TO OUR LENT COURSE.

Session One will be on Monday 6th March at 7:30pm (St. James) and also on Thursday 9th March at 2:30pm (Barbara Rhodes' house, 3 Woodgate Drive). Subsequent afternoon sessions will be on Wednesdays, same time, same place. All evening sessions will be on Mondays.

We shall send USPG a donation of £150 for the course booklets. If you would like to give around £4 or more for your work-book on the night, then we shall send the extra money along to USPG too. USPG does great work, and their work gifts us just as much as it gifts those receiving their work directly. This will be a good way to begin our Lenten discipline, as we look outside of ourselves, our worries and our concerns, and engage with the plight of others in great need. I look forward to seeing you there.

Have a blessed Lent.

Vince

Curates study trip to Tanzania



I travelled to Tanzania in January, with nine other curates and two leaders, to learn about how the Dioceses of Kilimanjaro and Kiteto engage with mission, education and health.

I discovered a beautiful country suffering from drought, and a people who joyfully worship with dancing, drumming, singing and blowing whistles. I met and learnt from a people who have extremely generous hearts.

This is set in a context of abject poverty for most of the people. Poverty made all the harder as the lesser rains failed in October. Crops have not grown and cattle are seen dead at the roadside. The ground is very compact with dust blowing across the top surface, and temperatures ranging from 26°C to 36°C. As we visited schools and churches, and even while walking through the streets, we were asked to pray for rain. The people are desperate that the rains, due about now, should come in abundance.

Prayer is in everything these people do. We did not set out on a journey without praying first. On arrival we prayed. And so for these people asking for prayer for rain was completely natural.

KEPT IN A PASTORAL ASSISTANT'S PRAYER BOOK

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think that I am following your
will does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire
in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything
apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this,
you will lead me by the right road
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always
though I may seem lost
and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and
you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

A prayer of Thomas Merton, from 'Thoughts in Solitude'. Submitted by Sandra Robinson

RETREATS AT LAUNDE ABBEY

MARCH — MAY 2017

Exploring Spiritual Experience, Marianne Rankin, March 24th-26th

Signs of Hope: An Eco Weekend, Keven Durrant, April 7th-9th

Holy Week Retreat: Journey to the Cross, April 10th-13th

Taizé Easter Retreat, Cathy Davies, Emily Walker, April 18th-20th

In this Moment: Exploring Mindfulness, Mark Godson, May 8th-11th

More information/booking www.laundeabbey.org.uk/events 01572 717254

Spring is in the Air

Even when the weather is unpredictable as it has been this February, there are signs of coming Spring. The odd queen bumble bee is abroad on warmer days, snowdrops are blooming in the churchyards at Birstall and Wanlip, and the first crocuses flowering in the bed by Birstall church door. By March or April, celandines, primroses, cowslips, dog violets, bluebells and lady's smock will be in bloom too. All these can be found in Birstall churchyard and maybe in Wanlip too. Apart from the pleasure they give us they are vital for wildlife as their nectar provides essential food for bees and other insects as they emerge from hibernation, especially the wild bees which have short tongues and need accessible sources of food. Sadly, some of these flowers are no longer common, apart from places like reserves and churchyards and this is one cause of the worrying decline of our native bees. Our ancient churchyards are precious places, because the grassland has never been treated with herbicides or insecticide, unlike most agricultural land.

If you have a garden or even just a container or window-box, you can make a difference for our wildlife. Plant some bulbs or flowers that flower early and you will have the pleasure of the flowers and help the bees at the same time. These are some nectar-rich plants which are easy to grow; single flowered polyanthus, primroses, species tulips, hellebores, Christmas rose and lungwort (*pulmonaria*), as well as winter/spring flowering pansies, violas, violets, snowdrops, winter aconite, grape hyacinth and crocus, especially early flowering species e.g. 'Blue Pearl' and 'Snow Bunting.

Lesley Walton

Visiting Launde Abbey

Launde Abbey, East Norton, Leics. is the Retreat and Conference Centre for the Dioceses of Leicester and Peterborough. You may have been there for a retreat, quiet day or conference, but Launde also puts on a number of social events, open to all. Launde wants to welcome people to experience what it has to offer. If you are walking or visiting the area by car you can enjoy a snack, afternoon tea or buffet lunch at the Abbey.

Advance booking is only needed for buffet lunches. 01572 717254

And so we prayed. Everywhere we went we prayed. We visited lots of far flung villages in the bush, travelling along dirt roads and through dried river beds. In one village, one of the curates was praying, giving thanks for the rain already received and asking for more. There was a loud clap of thunder. The congregation responded with a very loud AMEN followed by humongous applause.

A little rain arrived. When the rains come, even for a little while, the difference can be smelt and heard.

One night it rained very hard, but on getting up it was not possible to see that it had rained. The ground had apparently absorbed it all. But no, on re-entering our accommodation I began paddling. So mopping began. Eight large buckets later and the living area was dry. Another room was still under water. Here the carpet had to be taken up and possessions dried.

An answer to prayer.

This rain, although nowhere near enough, changed the countryside. The land went from being arid to showing signs of new life. Now there was a little green: shoots emerging on the roadsides for cattle, goats and donkeys to graze. And there were insects. The food chain was beginning to emerge as the insects appeared. Breeding of species was underway.

Since returning to England I have been in contact with people I met in Tanzania. They are still waiting for the rains to fully arrive. They have planted their crops in faith, as they await the rains, praying that they will grow and that their animals will not continue to die through lack of nourishment.

I continue to pray for the rains and I invite you to join me in that prayer. Pray that these people may rejoice and give thanks to God when the large rains arrive.

Anne

WELCOME TO BIRSTALL, FATHER JOHN

Fr John Bland has recently been appointed to St Theresa's Church and we look forward to getting to know him. The editorial team asked him to tell us something about himself, and this is what he said.

I came to the St Theresa and Sacred Heart parish as a semi-retired assistant priest. It is the first time in my life where I have very few responsibilities and do not have to worry about administration. A very enjoyable situation. I have been made very welcome by the local community. The people of Birstall I find are very friendly. I was delighted to see that the local churches work together in some areas. I have been to services and social events at both the Methodist and Anglican Churches. I consider ecumenism to be a very important part of the church today.

In my parish in New Zealand (I was there for nearly forty years) I had a large Iraqi community. They talked about Christians and Moslems. Before the fall of Saddam they got on well together. It was interesting that our Iraqis always talked of Christians not Catholics. The churches, Orthodox, Catholic and other denominations, worked together as a minority in a Moslem country. Today in our community, when so many are non-church going and not believing in God, we Christians need to be seen as a united group bringing the Kingdom of God to the community. Two events which I thought were great was the walking down Sibson Road with the Cross at the end of Holy Week and the Christmas party in the Village Hall open to everyone. I know all the churches have many events open to everyone, which is wonderful.

This year is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, a time when the church broke up in a big way. It was alas a time of violence in all directions. On the other hand, much good came of it. Two things in particular: the translation of the Bible into the vernacular and the greater involvement of the laity.

May this be a year in which the Churches come together in a greater way. This can only happen when ecumenism is supported by the people and is encouraged by the clergy.

Fr John Bland
St Theresa's Church

Do have a word with the Rector or Curate if you might be one of those singers or contact me, Beryl McHugh, on 2674913. Duties are not onerous and practices are held half an hour before each service.

Beryl McHugh



St James Community Gospel Choir

We're a group of people who love singing... that's about it, really!
Here's some more information...

We don't have auditions... because we're not professionals, and performing isn't our thing, although we do invite the public along to some events and we're sometimes invited to sing for weddings.

We don't really do 'complicated'... we're more about letting stress go, relaxing, laughing, and belting out a few numbers at the tops of our voices!!

We don't all go to church... so we're not a church choir.

We don't only sing 'gospel'... because we all get to choose what we sing... like songs from musicals, Disney, as well as more traditional things.

We don't have 'members'... we just turn up when we can!

We meet in St James' Church, Church Hill, Birstall on Fridays at 7:30pm.

Here are the next few dates:

March 3rd, 10th, 31st, April 7th, May 5th and 12th.

Why not come and join us? Just turn up!!

Sharon March

Singing in Church

From the very earliest days of Christianity, people have wanted to 'sing to the Lord'.

Many ancient places of worship, such as cathedrals, still possess manuscript copies of chants and anthems sung by monks in the Middle Ages and even earlier.

Today when community singing is relatively rare, the television programme *Songs of Praise* continues very popular. Perhaps because it reminds us of our childhood, when school assemblies included a hymn, and church-going was more the norm than it is today?

In our two churches, St. James at Birstall and Our Lady and St. Nicholas at Wanlip, singing hymns and songs is an integral part of our services. There are 587 of these listed in *Hymns Old and New*, which does mean that not everyone's favourites can appear every week!

In fact, hymns and songs in both churches are chosen by different people each month, and it is not just a question of selecting your own favourites. Whoever is asked to choose the music for the month is asked to look at the readings for the individual Sundays, and then to check that they have not chosen an item which was sung in the previous week! Of course whoever makes the choices can never manage to please everyone, since some people prefer traditional hymns and others enjoy lively modern songs. We really do try to use both styles of music since the purpose of all of them is to give praise and honour to God.

We do not have a permanent organist at either church at present, so we are very lucky to have the services of a talented free-lance organist Paul Wilcox who plays at Wanlip at 6pm every Sunday evening. Paul also shares duties at the 10am service at Birstall with our own equally gifted Sharon March who plays the piano.

There is nothing more uplifting than to hear all the congregation joining in wholeheartedly with our, relatively small, choirs at each church and we would love to be able to recruit more singers to lead the worship.

OUR MISSION PARTNERSHIP BIDS FAREWELL

to the Revd Jackie Bullen, Asst. Curate to the Fosse Team

On Saturday April 1st, Jackie is to be installed and instituted as Vicar of Longthorpe St Botolph, in the diocese of Peterborough.

We thank God for her ministry within our mission partnership and we hold her and Neil in our prayers at this time of a new beginning for them.

We also continue to pray for the Fosse Team, currently in interregnum: Barkby, East Goscote, Queniborough, Rearsby, Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake, Syston, Thrusington and Thurmaston.



THY KINGDOM COME 2017

From 25th May to 4th June, the days between Ascension and Pentecost, the churches in Birstall and Wanlip will be participating in the national 'Thy Kingdom Come' event. The aim of this ecumenical and international wave of prayer is

- to join with the whole family of God the Father
- to pray for the empowering of God the Holy Spirit
- that we may be effective witnesses to God the Son Jesus Christ.

In Birstall and Wanlip, all four churches will be taking part under the banner of *Churches Together*. We will be joining with thousands around the world, praying that our friends, neighbours, colleagues and workmates will come to know Jesus Christ. Jesus reminds us that 'with people, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible.' (*Matthew 19:26*).

There will be prayer each day at St Theresa's from 1.00 pm - 1.30 pm and at Birstall Methodist Church from 7.00 pm - 7.30 pm. Other events are in the planning stage. Please book the dates in your diary and watch out for further details. Find out more on the *Thy Kingdom Come* website. <https://ctbi.org.uk/thy-kingdom-come-2017/>

Kerry Emmett (Parish Co-ordinator for 'Thy Kingdom Come')

DONKEYS, CATS, BIRDS AND ANIMALS OF THE BIBLE

What we get up to in St James' Sunday School!

As we followed the Sheep Trail for the Nativity, and behaved like Sheep in the Sunday School, we thought what a good idea it would be to carry on the animal theme for 2017. A purchase earlier in the year of a Donkey Suit for the children to stand in, to go with a Donkey head and some masks: and then a chance conversation with a friend, who had a copy of David Kossoff's book *The Three Donkeys* (1972), set our theme.

There are three donkeys in Heaven having a chat to one another. Each discovers they have seen the Lord at different points in their lives. The first donkey took Mary to Bethlehem, he was in the Stable when Jesus was born and saw all the visitors. Then he was told to go on another long journey to Egypt to get away from Nasty Herod. The second donkey saw Jesus as a young boy going to the Temple to teach the grown-ups and then riding into Jerusalem. The third donkey witnessed the Crucifixion and the wonder of the Empty Tomb, and was now in Heaven with Jesus. We thought that this was quite remarkable for an animal considered to be a 'Beast of Burden'!

Cynthia, a Sunday School Teacher, can't resist a good book when she's out and about. She discovered two books by Nick Butterworth & Mike Inkpen, *The Cat's Tale* and *The Magpie's Tale*. The Cat described what he saw at the Wedding at Canaan. And the Magpie sat alongside Zaccheus in the Tree, waiting for Jesus to come along.

Our Sunday School has lots of interactive worship, songs and stories, so along came Thomas with his pet Cat 'Trevor' (must be clever as the song goes!) Trevor was suitably well behaved in his carry box, and like all good animals, has helped Thomas with his recovery from a serious illness. With a little bit of connivance via his Grandma, Mum and I, together with Trevor the Cat, were able to encourage Thomas back to Sunday School, after a break. I can't promise we can find a Magpie, but one never knows what might arrive! We are also looking for some Camels! Rumour has it they are making a come back next Christmas in the village. I hope they are in a good mood ...

For more information on the Sunday School and what else we provide for families go to <http://www.birstall.org/sundayschool/information.php> Don't forget to click on our video of James Bear showing all the children and their families having fun in the Summer.

Rose Parrott and the Team (Mobile: 07811662235)

"Yes" – Speaking to people in language they understand, sharing the message of God's love in ways and words that make sense, is something that the Church has always done. FxC are just multiplying the ways in which we can do that.

"No" – The radical new thing about FxC is that they do not simply 'feed' new contacts and converts into the traditional services of the parish, but instead they establish a new way of being church for the community they create. A community that will exist within the parish, that is an expression of the life of the parish, but which has its own identity and its own way of being Church.

... IS HAPPENING IN BIRSTALL AND WANLIP

NEARER is the result of two years of praying and of connecting with the community of Birstall & Wanlip, developing relationships, and looking to see where God is at work and joining Him.

Out of that process a missional community has grown up. About 20 people are now linked with this community. We meet each Wednesday at the Cedar Mews Care Home on Hallam Fields and we explore together what it means to follow Jesus and we look for ways to go deeper in our relationship with Him.

Once a month we have a Sunday afternoon session in which we try to help people to explore the parables of Jesus in a creative and participatory way. We regularly pray for our neighbours and community, we engage with our local community groups, and we support and encourage all those who are trying to make life better in Birstall & Wanlip, we believe that they are building the kingdom of God, even if they wouldn't necessarily express it in those terms themselves. And we wait to see where God will lead us next...

You can find out more about **NEARER** through the communication options below:

www.nearer.org
www.facebook.com/NearerGroup
info@nearer.org
0116 2103591
07910 766909
07889 488038

Stephen March

BETTY HOWARD - COMMUNITY CHAMPION

Congratulations to Betty Howard, who on the 26th January was honoured as a 'Community Champion' by Cedar Mews Care Home at their opening celebrations. Betty, who was honoured for a life-time of service to older people, was awarded a cheque for the charity of her choice. She was also privileged to cut the ribbon which officially 'opened' Cedar Mews.



SOMETHING NEW AND RATHER WONDERFUL ...

Something new and rather wonderful is happening in the Church of England. A movement called Fresh Expressions of Church (FxC) is transforming the Anglican landscape. Like all new things FxC provokes different reactions in different people. Some people think it's the best thing to happen since Jesus, others are wary of it, some people frankly disapprove, and some people are watching and waiting before they make their minds up.

So what is it?

Well at its heart, the movement is about trying to connect with people who don't attend traditional church; to share with them the love of God and the message of Jesus in a way they understand; to accompany them in a journey of becoming a disciple of Jesus and helping them to take their place in the mission of God.

You might say, "What's new about that? Hasn't the Church always done that?" The answer is both "Yes" and "No". "Yes" — Taking the message of Jesus to people who never come to church is something that the Church has always sought to do. FxC are just a way of sharpening that missional focus, of keeping it central.

OTHER BEASTS YOU MIGHT FIND IN OUR CHURCHES! if you keep your eyes open! -

Our Lady and St Nicholas Invaded



Observant members of the congregation at Our Lady and St Nicholas may have noticed over past weeks that their numbers were swelled by new, if somewhat strange, members. Were they the little creatures John Betjeman was talking about when he wrote *Diary of a Church Mouse*?

'..... For human beings only do
What their religion tells them to.
They read the Bible every day
And always, night and morning, pray,
And just like me, the good church mouse,
Worship each week in God's own house...'



Did you spot them?



The 'Beast of Birstall' is, however
always there!

And no, it's not a black panther on the loose!

You'll find it in the foyer of St James' Church, in a niche under the window, to the right of the main door as you come into the building.

And this Beast is an old Beast! It's thought to date from between 900 and 1000 AD. But it's moved, at least twice.



In the 19th century, when the church was restored, Birstall's Beast stood at the base of a pillar in the chancel of the old church. We don't, however, know where it was sited in the original Saxon church. The sculpture has weathered, so it may well have been outside the original Saxon church, part of the external decoration of what is now the chancel of the old church. (To see other examples of Saxon decorative carving locally, visit the church of St Mary & St Hardulph at Breedon on the Hill. They too have moved their Saxon carvings inside the building. (www.leicestershirechurches.co.uk/breedon-on-the-hill-st-mary-st-hardulph/))

It is quite difficult to make out the features of Birstall's beast because of poor lighting. It is an animal with a long slender body and legs with a long tail which curls over its back. The huge face looks to me like a grinning cat, although other people think it has a human face. Do have a look at it.

Lesley Walton, Kate Mobbs

WANLIP REFLECTIONS

As I write up our reflections on Christmas at Wanlip, the churchyard is, once again, a white, sparkling glow of snowdrops. We really could compete with Launde Abbey on the snow drop front. So, if you get the opportunity to pop down and enjoy them before they fade, it would be well worth the visit.



You could, of course, enjoy them looking out of the Hall windows as you enjoy a cup of tea and a slice of cake at Old Nick's Coffee Shop on the 21st March (the third Tuesday of **every** month.)

I digress. The Christmas period at Our Lady and St. Nicholas was a warm, welcoming and joyful time. Our Advent season of celebrations started with our Patronal Service on the 4th December (St. Nicholas is actually the 6th.)

The church was at its most atmospheric later in the month for our 'Lessons and Carols' service on the 18th and for the 'Around the Tree' service on the 19th, with ALL the candles lit. We then celebrated Christmas Day with a beautiful sunlit service on Christmas morning. All the services were very well attended, and we enjoyed serving refreshments after many of them.

The 'Watchnight Service' on New Year's Eve becomes increasingly popular. We start at 11:30 p.m., seeing the Old Year out and welcoming the New Year in. (After the service, there are, of course, nibbles as well as something suitable to drink to toast the New Year in!)

Christmas didn't end there, or at Epiphany. At Wanlip, we keep our Tree and Nativity displays up until Candlemas, which we celebrated this year on 29th January at a special '5th Sunday' service. It was a celebration of our Lord's Presentation at the Temple and a reflection on Baptism. The service was led by Lesley Walton and Sandra Robinson.

The Church is now back in Ordinary Time, and we are looking forward to Easter. Listed below are the dates of services over the next few months, including the all important Easter dates. Let me draw your attention to the special treat awaiting those who venture down to Wanlip early on Easter morning. We gather at 6 a.m. for the Easter Vigil which is followed at 7 a.m. by the Easter Eucharist. This is followed by a mini-breakfast of tea, coffee and bacon/sausage cobs in the hall. Please note: attendance at the 6 o'clock vigil is not compulsory! But it would be useful to know how many cobs, rashers of bacon and sausages to buy, so a breakfast signing-up list will be at the back of church during Lent and available at Old Nicks Coffee Shop.

One last, but very important, Wanlip date to highlight is our May 'Fayre.' It's on the 20th May, from 14:00 - 16:00 hours

Church Services at Our Lady and St Nicholas

March:

1st	Ash Wednesday- imposition of Ashes	09:30 Eucharist
5th	1st Sunday in Lent	18:00 Eucharist
12th	2nd Sunday of Lent	18:00 Evensong
19th	3rd Sunday of Lent	18:00 Evensong
26th	4th of Lent - Mothering Sunday	18:00. Evensong

April:

2nd	Passion Sunday	18:00 BCP Eucharist
9th	Palm Sunday	18:00 Evensong
16th	Easter Sunday	06.00 Easter Vigil and 07:00 Eucharist 18:00 Evensong
23rd	2nd Sunday of Easter	18:00 Evensong
30th	3rd Sunday of Easter	18:00 5th Sunday Service

May:

7th	4th Sunday of Easter	18:00 Eucharist
14th	5th Sunday of Easter	18:00 Evensong
21st	6th Sunday of Easter	18:00 Evensong
28th	Sunday after Ascension Day (7th Sunday of Easter)	18:00 Evensong