

'Keep In Touch'



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SUMMER 2017

CHURCH & VILLAGE BIRSTALL & WANLIP

THE PARISH OF BIRSTALL AND WANLIP

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Licensed	Mr Peter Chester
Readers:	Mrs Lesley Walton Mrs Tricia Emmett
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St James' Young People's Group

receiving their Certificates on 30th April 2017
having completed the *Welcome to the Lord's Table* Course



Welcome to the Lord's Table is a course for children and young people aged 7/8 upwards. It explores what the Holy Communion Service is all about and is open to any young person who is interested. Children should be able to read at a basic level and take part, as the course includes prayers, activities, discussions, bible teaching as well as attending the Sunday Holy Communion Service. There's no pressure to make any decision about 'Belief' until participants are ready. This year's group said the course was **definitely fun!** The Church will run the course again in the Autumn, providing we have a core group of 'students' (about 6 is good).

If you are interested, or would appreciate further information, please email the Church Office and a Leader from the Team will contact you. stjames.birstall@btconnect.com

Alternatively, come to a 10 am Sunday service and have a chat with one of the clergy or a member of the leadership team during the hospitality time after the service.

REGULAR EVENTS AND GROUPS

Weekly

Thursday	7.30-9.00pm	Bell ringing practice (St. James) <i>Contact Clive Mobbs</i>
Saturday	10-12 noon	St James Church open <i>Tea and coffee available</i>

Monthly

2nd Monday	7.30pm	Monday Group (Day Centre) <i>Contact Jane Scott</i>
4th Monday	10.15am	Mothers' Union (St. James) <i>Contact Helen Tarry or Betty Howard</i>
2nd Tuesday	10.30am	Contemplative Prayer (76 Sibson Road) <i>Contact Noreen Talbot</i>
3rd Tuesday	10-12 noon	Old Nick's Coffee Shop <i>Wanlip Church and Community Centre</i>
Two Fridays p. month	7.30pm	Gospel Choir (St. James) <i>Contact Sharon March</i>
1st Sunday <i>Bi-monthly</i>	7.45pm	Men's Group (Royal British Legion) <i>Contact Bert Tegg</i>
Monday Morning <i>Monthly</i>		St James' Wanderers (approx. 4 miles) <i>Contact Lesley Walton</i>
<i>Bi-monthly</i>		St James' Striders (approx. 8 miles) <i>Contact Gill Pope</i>

EDITORIAL THE COLOUR BLUE

Blue is the first colour I remember! It has always been my favourite colour. But I chose **blue** for the cover colour of the Summer issue of 'Keep in Touch' simply because it's a summery colour! The policy of the editorial team is that we don't have 'themes' for our new magazine. Rather we encourage people to write on what they will! As I write this, I'm wondering what ideas and themes our contributors will run with this summer! There are so many possibilities. As you see, I have gone with **blue**. And my **blue**-sky thinking about **blue** has led me to reflect on its spiritual meaning.

Did you know that our varying personalities lead us to pray in different ways? Some years ago, I remember going on a clergy-training event when we were asked to take a Myers Briggs personality test. I think it was to broaden our understanding of our own and other peoples' ways of praying. I've found over the years that I hover between INTJ and ISTJ. It was the former when I was a diocesan officer with responsibility for our Reader and lay ministry training programmes, and the latter when I became a parish priest! Now I've retired, I seem to have slipped back into INTJ! (I = introvert; N = intuitive; S = sensory; T = thinking; J = judging).

Why tell you this? Because a preferred way of praying for INTJ people is, according to Bruce Duncan's book *Pray Your Way* (DLT 1993), **blue** prayer. And **blue** prayer, in the T sense, is 'willed, unemotional and disciplined.' Knowing that helps me understand why I relate to God in the way I do. But it should also encourage me to explore alternative ways of praying which can deepen and broaden my love of and my awareness of God. Going on various quiet days and retreats helps to broaden as well as encourage my prayer life. Being part of a prayer group does too. And I know there are prayer groups in the life of the churches in Birstall and Wanlip which are open to anyone who wants to learn more about prayer. Why not explore linking up with one of these as part of your continuing journey of faith?

Anne Horton

Many thanks to all our contributors. Copy date for next issue = 1 August. All contributions welcome. Please aim for maximum length of 500 words each article!

Resurrection People

Rising to Life Anew



During the Lent course, I was particularly challenged about my Christian witness. 'How authentic has it been over the years?'

When the most threatening experiences I have faced are disinterested and dismissive looks and maybe a feeling of not being welcome, it feels a little untested. As I begin writing this letter, I have been praying for the Coptic Christians in Egypt, a minority faith group still mourning the deaths of loved ones to the explosive anger of ISIS at this year's Palm Sunday Service. I cannot imagine what it must have been like for them.

Birstall and Wanlip is a pretty safe place to be a Christian, but we still have challenges to face if we want to grow. I was excited during April this year with the culmination of the 'Welcome to the Lord's Table' course when the young people received Communion with the church family. I had the same feelings during the Confirmation Service in May when we welcomed new members into the family through Baptism and they began their journey of faith. Their fledgling faith has already been challenged and threatened. As they began their studies, they were inevitably quizzed and teased by relatives. They will need encouraging and supporting as they continue to work out for themselves what they believe and how they might deal with the challenges of others. It's not easy being a Christian, even in benign Birstall, but I hold to the idea that nothing is so useful to beginners as insults. *If they can bear them they are like trees watered every day.* (All quotations from SP Iredale, *The Interior Mountain 2000*, Abingdon Press, p.75)

As I thought of the Coptic Christians in Egypt and the deserts Saints of old, I re-read a favourite book within which *Amma Syncretica* is quoted as having said, *In the beginning there are a great many battles and a good deal of suffering for those who are advancing towards God, and afterwards, ineffable joy. It is like those who wish to light a fire; at first they are choked by the smoke and cry, and by this means obtain what they seek.... So, we must kindle the divine fire in ourselves through tears and hard work.* I thought of this imagery again when lighting the Easter fire at Wanlip on Easter Sunday morning this year.

In the beginning all striders were church members but over the years others have joined us and we have been pleased to welcome them. There are at the moment about 15 people on the list, but the group walking can be as small as 4.

I am the named contact but it is very much a group venture. All I do is decide on a date, after making sure that at least a couple of people can make it. Then it is open to anyone to lead and choose the route, hopefully with a tea shop somewhere along the way. We meet at St James, never knowing how many will come and sort out cars, taking as few as possible.

Rarely are the walks pre-walked, so it's off with an Ordnance Survey map, sometimes some written instructions and packed lunches, hoping for the best! We sometimes have to get together to decide the right direction: walking *by committee*. We joke that unless we find ourselves in a field without an exit or misread the map and take a wrong turning, it's not a proper walk. We are never lost but are not always sure exactly where we are! As Rose will testify, these mistakes can add quite a bit to the mileage.

Conditions are no bar to walking, (except perhaps heavy rain at 9 am on the day of the walk!) When the sun shines, the fields abound with wild flowers, the lambs are around, or the trees show their wonderful autumn colours, there is nothing better than being out in the countryside.

However, we've faced rain, snow, hail, mud, and having to wade ankle deep through streams.

Sometimes the terrain is hard going with ploughed fields, head-high vegetation, dodgy stiles, unfriendly cows or too friendly

horses, no way-marking and even Leicestershire has some steep hills.

I know this might not be everyone's choice of spending a day. But what do we get out of it? Well, whatever the difficulties, we will have spent a wonderful day in the countryside delighting in the wonders and diversities of God's creation, enjoying the companionship of our fellow walkers, and, at the end of the day, with a sense of achievement as we make our weary way back home.



WANDERING AND STRIDING

The Wanderers

What could be better than a stroll through the English/Leicestershire countryside on a beautiful sunny (well, usually) morning. This is what the members of the St James' Wanderers group feel once a month on a Monday morning. Expertly led by Lesley (a fount of all knowledge on the flora and fauna of the countryside – not to mention the birds!) and Sandra, who sorts out the transport and pub for us, the walks are usually about 3-4 miles and quite easy, with not too many stiles.

If that all sounds a bit too idyllic, I have to say that it often is, we never fail to comment on how fortunate we have been with the weather, often just reaching the comfort of the pub (oh! did I not mention that the walk is always followed by a delicious pub lunch) in time to see the rain start to fall. There are usually about a dozen of us 'happy wanderers', the group having started in 2008, with many of the original group still going strong. Why not think about joining us?

Cicely Plumb
A Happy Wanderer

St James' Striders

About 2009 the then rector of St James, Revd James Shakespeare, with a few members of the church, took on the challenge of walking the Leicestershire Round. At the time I was still working but was able to join them on a couple of the walks. When I retired I wanted the challenge of walking further than the 5 miles which the Birstall Walking Group do. So I approached the people who had gone on the Round to see if they would like to resurrect the group. They were more than happy to do so and in about 2011 the St James' Striders in its present form was started.

Since then we have walked all corners of Leicestershire and ventured into Rutland, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and I am sure, at some time, over the border into Warwickshire. The walks are from 7 miles upwards, the longest probably being about 12 miles. There are no rules (or at least not until I was presented with a Risk Assessment form recently!) Anyone can come providing they can walk the distance and at a reasonable pace.

I remember my last Rector telling me that he was at his most vulnerable when he was dealing with his life-threatening illness. It was then that he felt closest to God and was able to live most fully. I wouldn't wish life-threatening illnesses or threats of violence from ISIS on anyone, but I do wonder how we might step out and take more risks for the gospel in our own way; how we might respond to challenges and, in feeling the fear and doing it anyway, grow in faith.

The image of the great barrier reef came to mind during the last session of the Lent Course. The coral living on the outside of the reef, facing the open sea and beaten by huge crashing waves, is said to be strong, vibrant and tough, but the coral on the inside of the reef, set in calmer waters, is flaccid, dull and weak. I wonder how we might live our faith out in ways that enable us, both as individual Christians and also as a parish, to be strong, vibrant and tough for the challenges of the immediate future. The imagery of the great barrier reef suggests we need to be out in the unpredictable, challenging and, at times, stormy seas of this world if we want to strengthen our faith.

Mark the Ascetic, another 3rd century Desert Saint, said *Faith consists not only of being baptised in Christ, but in fulfilling his commandments. Holy Baptism is perfect and offers us perfection, but does not perfect a person who fails to fulfil the commandments.* What might this mean for us? Who knows! It is for you and God to discuss. Maybe it is enough to stay faithful, quietly serving and persistently prayerful, despite others' inertia, apathy and negativity. That's challenging enough. Or, maybe for you, it means something a little more exciting, uplifting and stimulating; something that will take you out of your comfort zones, give you some anxiety, but ultimately will lead you to growth: in skills, in confidence, and in faith in a God who loves you dearly and wants you to be all that He created you to be. Isn't this what the Christian life is about?

I have loved travelling for ten weeks with the Baptism and Confirmation group, being alongside their enquiring minds, hearing about their challenges, their frustrations and, ultimately, their excitement at grasping some of the truths to be found in Jesus Christ. I wish I had the time and resources to run these enquirers' groups back to back in order to create 'anytime access' but then maybe that's my challenge for the years to come: priorities!

What's yours? Whatever it is, I pray that you have a great summer.

Blessings, Vince

The Day we met the Queen Maundy Thursday Reflections

Sandra's story

It all started back in February when a plain white envelope with a 2nd class stamp popped through my letterbox. Nothing unusual in that! I tore it open, completely missing the crest on the back. I read the letter in complete shock, then moved into excitement, followed by an anxiety that I don't really like crowds and finally what a great honour to have been nominated to receive the Maundy money from the Queen at the Cathedral in the year of her ninety first birthday.



Over the next few weeks two more letters arrived containing further instructions, this time franked from Buckingham Palace on the front, and my anticipation and excitement overcame my anxiety. In March all the recipients and our companions were invited to the Cathedral for a lecture about the history of the Royal Maundy and the Ceremony. It was given by the Rt Revd Dr John Inge, Lord High Almoner and Bishop of Worcester. This helped to put us at ease on the actual day. It also gave us the opportunity to meet the other recipients and to ask any of our questions.

The day finally arrived, a very early start. We needed to be at the King Power Stadium by 8.45am for registration and a security check. By 10.30am all the recipients and their companions had been 'bussed' into the Cathedral where we waited in anticipation. Although I didn't have one of the best views, there was still plenty to see in the next half hour as the various processions entered through the South, West and North doors. The Children and Gentlemen of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal and The Queen's Body Guard of the Yeomen of the Guard were positioned very close to where I was seated. That was a real bonus.

The distribution of the Maundy Gifts was in two halves, with a Bible reading in between. I was in the second half and my first impression as the Queen approached was how small she was and how remarkable for

If you pause for a moment in the churchyard, listen to the birds. You may see a green woodpecker foraging for ants amongst the graves or see a great spotted woodpecker in one of the trees. A sharp 'chik' call gives it away. Blackcaps nest in the bushes. They have a beautiful song, richer than a blackbird's, full of fluty notes. They are about robin size, grey-brown in colour with a black cap, chestnut brown in the female. If you have good hearing you may be able to hear the song of the goldcrest, Britain's smallest bird. Its song is high pitched and silvery. There seem to be a good number near the Church Hill gate and in the yews at the bottom of the churchyard. They inhabit and breed in conifers, often hovering as they pick insects off leaves.

The lime trees in the churchyard shed a lot of twigs and branches on the one really windy day we had in March. Now in full leaf, they will soon be host to the caterpillars that eat their leaves. The most spectacular of these is the lime hawk moth caterpillar. It is large, bright green with yellow diagonal stripes on its sides and a horn at the tail end. The moth, which is pink and green, flies late in the evening. Soon the sweet-scented lime flowers will open. Sometimes large numbers of dead or dying bumblebees can be found under lime trees. There has been a lot of research into the reason why; the current evidence points to the behaviour of bumblebees, and not toxic nectar. For some reason, bumblebees keep feeding upon the flowers, even when nectar runs low. So on hot days, and close to the end of the flowering period, the bumblebees keep feeding, run out of energy, and die. Honeybees, however, seem to realise that there is no nectar left, and will feed upon other flowers instead – smart honeybees!

The summer flowers in the churchyard include burnet saxifrage, a delicate member of the cow parsley family, Cuckoo Pint (or Lords and Ladies, a more respectable name; cuckoo pint is very rude!) and harebell, one of the rarest flowers in Leicestershire. I discovered it by chance at the bottom of the churchyard when the local authority missed one of its mowings. It is now protected from being mowed out.



The world is full of natural wonders, even in the most unlikely settings. We just need to keep our ears and eyes open to find them in the smallest garden, and in the world around us.

Lesley Walton

We decided that, in contrast to the existing carefully crafted ones St James has, ours would only be intended to last for a few years at most, then be replaced by fresh ones.

We set to work, solving the problems, such as how to attach materials to the background, by trial and error. We produced our first amateurish efforts, using paper and foil on the fabric background in the course of a few weeks. Only one of the group had any experience of making a banner but amazingly we found that each member's skills complemented the others. Since then our skills have vastly improved.

We have made several more banners, to mark the *Two Rivers Mission Partnership launch*

Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost.

And, by the time you read this, we should have started on two banners for *Ordinary Time*, the majority of the Church Year.



For these we have invited any member of the congregation who would like to contribute, to create a square to be part of the overall design.

If you are interested in joining our small group, do get in touch with us.

Lesley Walton

SUMMER IS - A - CUMEN - IN, LOUDLY SING CU-CU

Summer in St James' churchyard

By the time this issue reaches you, early summer will be here. The warm spell of weather in April transformed our gardens and the churchyard in the space of a few days. The combination of mild weather, lack of wind, rain or frost has meant that blossom on hedges and trees has been so beautiful and long-lasting; trees are now in full leaf and the migrant birds as well as our native ones are in full song defending their breeding territories. Sadly cuckoos are unlikely to be heard. They are now very uncommon.

a person of ninety one. She smiled at me, and I held out my hands to receive the purses and did a little curtsy, then the Queen moved on to my neighbour. A photograph was taken, marking a moment I shall cherish for a long time.

Tony's story.

'You've got a letter from the Queen', joked my wife, Doreen, noticing the Royal Crest on the envelope as she picked up the post. Smiling I opened it; gradually my expression of indifference changed to one of disbelief. 'It's from the Queen', I gasped, 'well actually from the Royal Almonry Office at Buckingham Palace.' That was the start of a truly amazing experience. I'd been invited to Leicester Cathedral to receive Maundy gifts from Her Majesty, on Maundy Thursday, with Doreen as my companion.



Why me? How does Buckingham Palace know anything about me? How did I feel? Surprised, delighted, bemused, unworthy, but extremely grateful for the rare honour of being invited. A meeting the following day with our Rector, Vince, revealed that he had been asked by the Bishop of Leicester to nominate a lady and a man, over 70 years old, to receive Maundy Money, and that I was the lucky man.

We had excellent seats in the Cathedral, next to the aisle by which the Queen entered and departed, and with a good view of the centre aisle to the high altar. The atmosphere was 'electric'. A fantastic service followed, with trumpet fanfares, organ music, and enthusiastic singing bolstered by the combined choirs of the Cathedral and the Chapel Royal. The distribution of the Maundy gifts took place in two parts, and I received in the first distribution. Her Majesty never stopped smiling, and looked as if she was enjoying it as much as I was. As she handed me the two leather purses containing the Maundy coins, her lips were moving, but I couldn't hear what she said above the sound of the organ. I thanked her and she moved on. I now have a treasure of Maundy coins which I shall keep as a reminder of a very happy day shared with 181 other recipients, and which I have the privilege of holding on behalf of the Parish of Birstall and Wanlip.

The Maundy Money Gift in 2017 for two stalwart Christians of St James Church, Birstall

Tony Bloxam and Sandra Robinson are those two well-selected names, both stalwart and long-serving members of our Parish Church, St James. Chosen by our vibrant Vicar Vince; who had no hesitation acknowledging their input to church life, applauding their dedication. Tony a churchwarden, efficient, calm, he's been for many a year, and caring for church fabric as faults and issues they appear. Sandra arranges social events; with quiet skill she's 'on the ball'. A varied programme for each year; she merits the thanks of all.

Long-held Maundy ceremony from early Middle Ages dates. Monarchs, nobles, priests, washing feet of poor, so history states. In memory of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples; he did meet on Thursday before Good Friday crucified: humble but noble his feet.

In mediaeval England, Kings washed the feet of many, their numbers matching monarch's age, taking place each Easter week. They were given clothing, food and money. In fact when Elizabeth the 1st came to reign, some other did that washing act before she herself undertook. When James the 2nd was crowned king, he carried out that holy precedent, that established undertaking, the last monarch that rite to do. He died in sixteen eighty-eight. Then washing of feet was done by others, representing sovereigns great. After seventeen fifty-four it ceased, just money then was given, specially minted silver coins no less, for those who'd staunchly striven.

So we arrived in April, two thousand and seventeen. To Leicester Cathedral, the thirteenth day, came Her Majesty, the Queen. Elizabeth the Second, sixty-five years throned; gracious, wise and wonderful she's been. To twice ninety-one she gave Maundy Money, in rich and royal scene. Large congregation gathered to take part in history thus seen.

True pride enjoyed by Tony and Sandra, honoured and standing tall. Their momentous experience treasured. Event so pleasing to recall.

Jex Woods

This can be a bit like show and tell, alternatively it may be more interactive as scripts are read. Each person talks about what they have learnt about themselves, God and their faith throughout the process of creating their offering.

The quality of the work is never critically assessed. People who are part of the group have said they appreciate getting to know other people, listening to and discussing the work of others, and that through the process of using their creative gifts, they have discovered that their faith is enriched.

The group meets on Wednesday afternoons in St James Church Office from 2pm until 4pm. The dates for the rest of this year are 21st June, 16th August, 11th October and 6th December. The group will agree the themes at subsequent meetings. If you are interested in coming along either have a conversation with Anne or simply turn up.

Revd. Anne Crosby

Banner Making for Beginners!



It all began some four years ago.

It was coming up to the season of Advent when we realised that St James had no banners to mark the season. So ... how about making some? We asked for volunteers via the information sheet and met to share ideas.

God, Me and Art

Art has both historically and contemporarily been an important medium for sharing something of God's love, the Christian story and the gifts God has given to individuals. This can be seen in stained glass windows, wall paintings, banners and sculptures. The return to celebrating Christian art began in 1943 when Revd. Walter Hussey commissioned Henry Moore to create a controversial sculpture of the Madonna and Child in St Matthew's Church, Northampton.

Art has always had the potential to be controversial. Certainly, whatever is created is not always going to be pleasing to, or suit the taste of, every person. However, art always has the potential to allow the creator and the viewer to explore the topic in alternative ways, often creating unexpected discoveries.

There are many people across Birstall and Wanlip who have creative gifts of art, painting, embroidery and textiles, photography, poetry, calligraphy, script writing and many others. Discovering this passion for the wider arts within Birstall and Wanlip led to the formation of **God, Me and Art**. The group is open to anyone who wishes to explore their faith in light of their creative gifts. Details are published on the weekly pew sheet.

Up to sixteen people have been meeting during the past year to discuss their many and varied creative explorations of a theme. These themes have ranged from healing, creation, love, to Advent and Resurrection.

Everybody creates a piece of art work between the meetings – hence the meetings are approximately every 2 months as this provides time to think, experiment, design and create a piece of work in the individual's chosen technique. As individuals, each person approaches the themes from their own perspective. The rich diversity of work that is created demonstrates how God is inspiring each one to have a unique approach to the theme. This enables a wide and varied discussion, with some similarities and many diverse approaches to the subject matter.

During the session, each person shares their piece of art with the group.

The Tower of St James the Great

Probably the most visible aspect of a church to those not involved, but a largely invisible one to members of the congregation because of familiarity, is the tower. A church tower is primarily a steeple, showing humanity's soaring hopes of reaching Heaven. Sometimes a tower is surmounted by a spire, which often has a beauty of its own. There can be other reasons for having a tower, one of the best known being to house the church bells. In some places, primarily in the North where border fights between those living in England and those in Scotland were rife, the tower could be a place of physical sanctuary.

It is most common for the church tower to be at the West end, in other words at the far end from the altar. In some cases, though, there is a central tower. Usually in larger churches, the central tower is part of the cruciform shape of the church, and has two transepts leading off at right angles to the nave. Our tower is at the West end.

At Birstall, there has been a church on the St. James the Great site since the Anglo-Saxon period, but the present church dates back in part to the 13th century. Sir Charles Gilbert Scott carried out modernisation work in the late 19th century, and it is his work that comprises what is now known as the Old Church.

The tower remains from that 13th century building. Modest in size, it makes an attractive picture when one enters from Church Lane. Most of the building is of the local ironstone, a beautiful mellow honey-coloured stone that seems to glow in the sunlight. Buildings of ironstone can be found in parts of Leicestershire, most of Northamptonshire and all of Rutland.

There is no spire at our church, but actually the tower was surmounted by a spire until 1823, when it was struck by lightning and so badly damaged that it had to be removed. It was a parapet spire, which sat behind the parapet, in other words the battlements which may still today be seen at the top of the tower.

The church bells, which create such a beloved sound across the village, are housed in the tower. It is a peal of eight bells. While in most churches the bell ringers are hidden from view in a ringing chamber on an upper floor, in our church they can be seen at work as one enters the church. As you arrive at church, don't ignore our splendid tower.

Colin Crosby

A Wanlip Conundrum

Whenever you look around an old building you often see something that puzzles you. As you look around Our Lady & St Nicholas there may well be several things that make you wonder why they are there. Here's a brief note about two that have puzzled me.

As you look up, you cannot fail to notice the coats of arms in the windows on the north wall. Whilst most of them relate to families connected with the church the two in the western-most window do not and are a bit of an enigma.



Although in need of a clean, and with colours faded by age, an inspection reveals the arms of the Plantagenet Royal House. The left hand arms are those of John of Gaunt, 1st Duke of Lancaster. The presence of his arms may be explained by the fact that Thomas Walshe, who together with his wife Kat'ine was responsible for building the current church at Wanlip, was a close confidant of the Duke, going on military campaigns with him and serving as his Steward at Leicester Castle. It has been suggested that their relationship was more that of friends, not just that of a Lord and his retainer. Is it possible that, because of this friendship, they shared the same master mason? The similarity of the windows at Kenilworth Castle, built at the behest of the Duke of Lancaster, and the north windows in Wanlip Church, built at the behest of Thomas Walshe, together with their unusual design, give credence to this suggestion. It is not impossible that Walshe might have wanted to mark his friendship with John of Gaunt by displaying his arms in Wanlip Church.

The right hand arms are more of an enigma. They are the arms of Thomas of Woodstock, 1st Duke of Gloucester, the Duke of Lancaster's youngest brother. John of Gaunt was the 3rd son of King Edward III and Philippa of Hainault, Thomas was their 14th and youngest. Why his arms are displayed in Wanlip is also unknown. Was he too a friend of Sir Thomas Walshe? Or was Walshe demonstrating his support for Thomas of Woodstock when he was in dispute with Richard II?

Cloisters

Listen - just listen ...
Can you hear
The whisper of low voices
The soft padding of feet on ancient stone?

Can you hear
The faint faraway chant of plainsong
Swelling to song
Melodious and strong?

Can you hear
The music?
The organ and trumpet
United and raised in joy and praise
or low in lamentation?

Can you hear?
Listen - just - listen ...

Leigh Reid

REGULAR SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

St James, Birstall Sunday Services

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

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,

Friday 9 am Morning Prayer
Thursday 9.30 am Holy Communion

Our Lady & St Nicholas, Wanlip Sunday Services, 6 pm

1st Sunday

Holy Communion

2nd 3rd 4th Sundays

Prayer Book Evensong

5th Sunday

Alternative Service of the Word

**St James' Church is open every Saturday morning, 10 till 12 noon.
Please come in, look around, or sit quietly in church
and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea.**

Obedience is also an essential part of following Christ. Our vows are made in the spirit of obedience to God's will, so that those who make them may proclaim his majesty, and respond generously to those in authority over them. We practice daily self-examination in order that we may perceive better the call of the Spirit and so understand what is lacking in our own response and impeding our discipleship. We make an annual report to their Superior, including a list of books read and written assignments submitted to the oblate chaplain. We are kept informed of events and happenings at the Mother House so as to strengthen the bond which unites us.

Andy Proud, Oblate CR

A Fresh Expression of Monasticism in our Diocese

Some months ago, Bishop Martyn advised the diocese that he hoped to found a fresh expression of monasticism in this diocese. Plans are moving forward, and we recently heard that the Revd Rachel Bennetts, vicar of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Farnborough, is to be the Prior to this new monastic community in Leicester. As Prior of this community (likely to be known as the Community of the Tree of Life), Rachel will lead on the recruitment of young adults, the formation of the community and all aspects of community life including prayer, study and service. She will work with the community's Chaplain (Revd Rosie Woodall) and Project Manager (Andrew Nutter), and will help develop links with churches around the diocese, including Launde Abbey.

Bishop Martyn spoke of Rachel's appointment as being 'hugely significant for the future life of the diocese. She will not only lead the community but also ensure that the young adults who form this community also become agents for change and renewal throughout the diocese, as they put prayer and service of others at the heart of all they do.' Rachel commented 'I am thrilled to be appointed as Prior for this new Community. It is going to be an exciting faith adventure for everyone involved with huge potential for transformation and the growing of young adults as committed followers of Jesus. I very much look forward to joining the team in Leicester and seeing how God shapes this exciting new vision into a reality over the coming months.' Rachel will take up her new appointment in June.

Or perhaps Walshe was simply stating his support and loyalty to the Plantagenets? We can only speculate.

What we do know is that not only does the Church contain the 14th C. memorial brass to Sir Thomas Walshe and his wife Kat'ine, it also has one window displaying the arms of John of Gaunt, one of the 14th Century's most influential and wealthy men, and another window displaying the arms of John of Gaunt's brother. Taken together, they reflect the comparative stability of England before the tumultuous events at the start of the 15th Century which resulted in 30 years of fighting during the Wars of the Roses which led to the death of the last Plantagenet King at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485.

John Ward

A Prayer for Visitors and Pilgrims to a Church or Holy Place

You are here, and so am I

You may be sitting here at the end of a long journey. You may be sitting here out of the rain, just by coincidence or perhaps for no reason at all. But you are here, and so am I. You may not quite know what to say or how to take it all in. Just sit and be and enjoy the silence. There may be things that you do not understand or haven't experienced before. But you are here, and so am I. You may feel something spiritual about this place. There seems to be space in here for the presence of God to exist. Perhaps the architecture or music or art or just the feel of the place makes you feel something, something different. Walk around, breathe deeply and enjoy your time here, there are no words you need to say or things you need to do. You are here, and so am I.

Father,

I came here, for whatever reason,

Not really looking for anything.

But here I found something.

The lighting of a candle, the beauty and the silence.

The feeling that I am surrounded by a presence, a love.

These ideas are new to me and I'm unsure how to feel,

Unsure of what I need to take from here, unsure of many things.

Help me to realise that this does not matter.

Just to know, that you are here and so am I.

I ask you to stay with me as I leave this place

And journey with me. Amen.

PARISH SOCIAL DIARY 2017

JUNE

Saturday 3rd 9.30 am Coach Outing to Peterborough Cathedral
(Further details from Gill 26 5086)

Wed. 14th 10.30 am 'Faith in Leicester' Guided Walk.
*with Colin Crosby. Looking at places of worship (mostly Christian)
in City Centre/Old Town, & other sites long demolished.
Meet: Richard III Statue, Leicester Cathedral.*

June 26–30th Parish Holiday, Warners Holme Lacy, Hereford

JULY

Saturday 1st 7.30 pm Songs for a Summer Evening,
Ratcliffe Chorale,
*St James Church, tickets £5 payable on door.
Refreshments*

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 from Sandra Robinson

My life as an Oblate of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield

The Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield, West Yorkshire was founded in 1892. The monks, all priests, live a corporate life within the monastic tradition. At the heart of their life is worship, which issues in many forms of engagement with the contemporary church and society. Among their wider family are priests and lay people who live an 'ordinary life' within their home and church communities, but have a special relationship with the Community as oblates, associates, companions and friends.

Mirfield oblates commit to a special and permanent offering of themselves to God in association with the Community. Those feeling God's call to being an oblate first make written application to the Superior. If accepted, they serve a year's probationary period, and live according to the oblates' rule. If, at the end of the year, the Community consider that the applicant is called by God to be an oblate, the probationer applies to the Community to be admitted. Admission as a oblate takes place within the Community Eucharist, and the oblate makes vows of poverty, chastity and obedience which are renewable every three years. We live out our calling in our normal home circumstances but we have a close association with the Community and are encouraged to visit and stay at Mirfield regularly. Our pattern of life includes the rhythms of daily office and Eucharist, prayer, times of stillness, penitence and study, and an annual retreat. Our vow of poverty is a response to the Lord's call to leave everything in order to follow him, living in complete dependence on God. Our rule includes self-denial on Fridays and in Lent and observing the Eucharistic fast. We are expected to give the Superior an annual account of our income and expenditure and give alms according to our means. Our vow of chastity includes celibacy. Through the consecration of celibacy, we seek to follow the Lamb with an undivided heart, looking with a single eye to God's glory, seeking his will in all things. Chastity is also an essential part of self-control.

‘Who am I?’ and ‘What am I here for?’

The course that our **NEARER** group is currently running has deep roots in the history of the Church. Their discussions relate to two of the most profound questions that Christians find themselves asking at different times of their lives. ‘Who am I?’ and ‘What am I here for?’

Through baptism, all Christians are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. This means following Jesus and serving him with all that we are and all that we do. We believe this is the way in which we become more fully the people God created us to be. The **NEARER** group’s *Seven Spaces of Monasticism* course will deepen members’ awareness of their own vocation and calling, whether that be in their everyday lives: at home, at work, by involvement in the community or in a specific role within the life of the church. It may even lead them to an awareness of God calling them to a specific ministry or way of life in the Church of England, such as a Deacon, Priest, Reader, Church Army officer, or as a monk or nun within a monastic community, or as someone linked to one of these communities, e.g. as an associate, companion, friend or oblate.

Monastic living within everyday life

While some Christians are called to live as a monk or a nun within traditional Religious Communities, with their particular ways of serving God – ministries of teaching, hospitality, nursing, community work, spiritual direction etc. - there is a renewed interest in linking peoples’ everyday living with the life of a traditional religious community. Many ordinary people feel called by God to become Associates, Oblates, Companions, members of Third Orders, each linked to a particular religious community through prayer and a rule of life.

Birstall churchwarden Andy Proud is an oblate of the Community of the Resurrection, in Mirfield, Yorkshire. He writes now for *Keep in Touch* about what it means for him to be a Mirfield oblate.

FROM THE REGISTERS

March– May 2017

Baptisms

12 th March	Dylan O’Kelly-Neeson	St James
28 th April	Jenson Clarke	Our Lady & St Nicholas

Baptism and Confirmation

14 th May	Penelope Ann Watson	St James
	Vanessa Suffolk	St James

Confirmation

14 th May	Colin John Crosby	St James
	Ellie Rose Coles	St James
	Emily Alex Morris	St James

Marriages

8 th April	Steve Waldrom and Hayley Jones	St James
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Funerals

14 th March	Margaret (Peggy) Downes	Gilroes
16 th March	Doreen Elkington	St James
19 th April	Pamela Hulme	Gilroes

Ratcliffe Chorale – Songs for a Summer Evening

A varied programme with something for everyone, from Karl Jenkins, Rogers and Hammerstein, John Rutter, Arthur Sullivan, Mozart, Verdi.

Saturday July 1st at 7.30pm
St James the Great, Church Hill, Birstall
Tickets £5, payable on the door

Refreshments at the interval

NEARER and the Seven Spaces of Monasticism.

Every monastery has seven spaces of which all contribute to the life of the monastery – Cell, Chapel, Chapter, Cloister, Refectory, Library (Scriptorium), and Garden. Each of these spaces supports a function which is vital to the successful life of the monastery.

Over the coming months **NEARER** is doing a series of sessions where we explore these seven spaces of monasticism. You might well ask why?! Is **NEARER** about to become a monastic order? Will we all be wearing robes and going around barefoot? Let me reassure you that **NEARER** has no such pretensions! So why look at the seven spaces of monasticism? George Lings from the Church Army published a booklet recently in which he showed that these seven functions are actually vital for every Christian group and community. (*George Lings, Seven Sacred Spaces, pub. Church Army, 2015*) The diocese of Llandaff have helpfully produced a course with video clips and a booklet (all available for free download) that help church groups explore how well these seven functions are being expressed in their personal and corporate life.

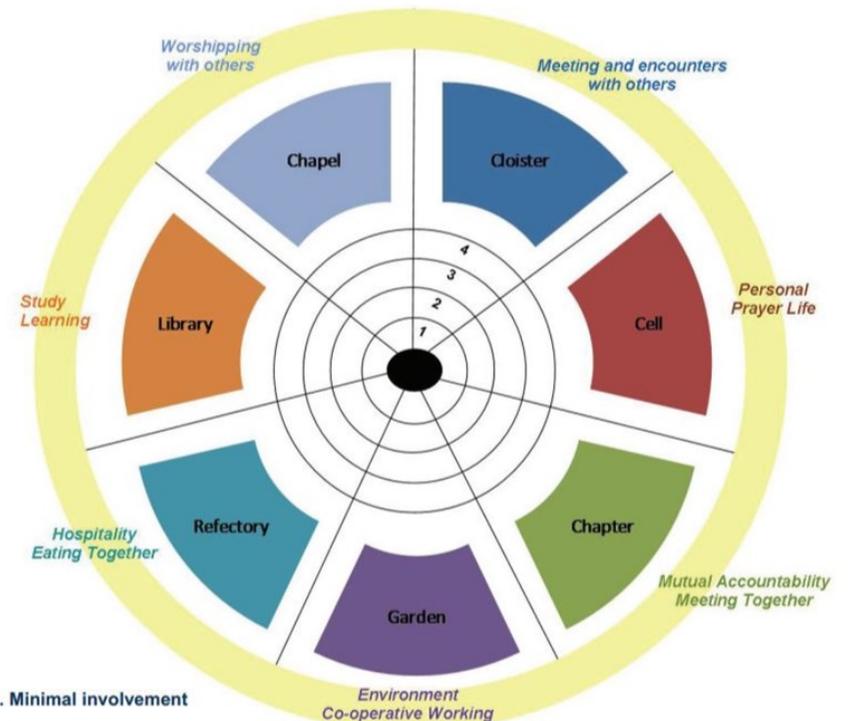
<http://llandaff.churchinwales.org.uk/mission/7ss>

The seven functions, supported by the seven spaces, are shown in the adjacent diagram. You will notice that there is a space in the centre where you can score how well you are doing in each 'space'.

At present we do rather well at **Refectory!** However, this is for the serious reason that in order to create community you have to spend time together – there is no other way. So, in the early stages of our journey to community, **NEARER** has spent a lot of time eating and drinking together. It is interesting to remember that one of the criticisms of Jesus was that He spent a lot of time eating with people; *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners'. (Luke 7:34).*

Another 'space' in which **NEARER** is growing is in **Chapter** – we have regular Vision Days in which the whole community gathers to think, talk, pray and discuss where we are and where God might be leading us.

We are also developing in the 'space' of **Scriptorium**. Each **NEARER** member is encouraged to be growing and learning about their faith, and we encourage times when learning is shared with the whole community.



1. Minimal involvement
2. Exploring this area
3. Getting involved
4. Highly engaged



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Our most recent challenge has been in the 'space' of **Cell**. How are we each developing our intimacy with God? In which ways are we personally engaging with God's revelation in the Bible, how are we letting that engagement transform our ways of living, thinking and acting?

We are just at the start of this journey but it is already proving to be challenging, rich and helpful.

I would commend this course to other groups – why not start your own group with some friends – maybe even some who aren't church-goers? **NEARER** would be happy to help and support any other groups who would be interested in doing this. God bless.

Stephen March