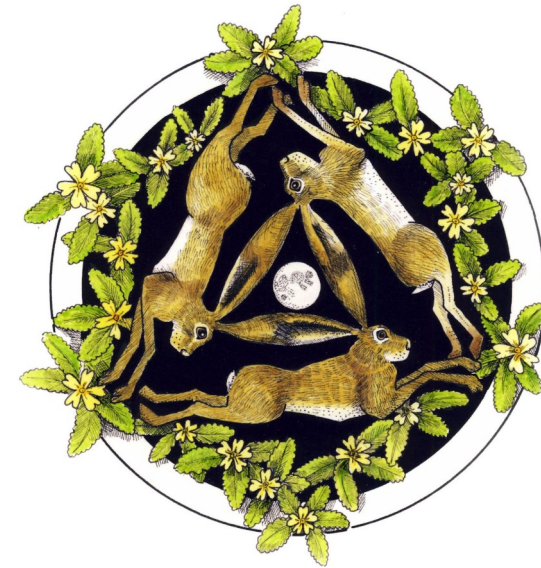


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SPRING 2018

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

THE PARISH OF BIRSTALL AND WANLIP

Rector	Revd Vince Jupp, 251 Birstall Road LE4 4DJ <i>email: vincejupp@btinternet.com</i>	2674517 07840 855030
Hon Asst. Priests	Revd Sheila Skidmore, 15 School Lane Revd Kerry Emmett, 1 Chamberlains Field Canon Anne Horton, 8b Copeland Road Revd Robin Martin, 22 Sycamore Road Revd Michael Webb, 31 Bramley Road	2673318 3194736 2677942 2671651 07813144645
Churchwardens	Mr Tony Bloxam, 17 Sandgate Avenue Mr Andy Proud, 97A Wanlip Lane Mr John Ward, 28 Walker Road Mrs Debbie Shephard, 41 Roman Road	2675381 07889 807087 2677600 2672630
Licensed Readers	Mr Peter Chester, 12 Oakfield Avenue Mrs Lesley Walton, 16 The Crossways Mrs Tricia Emmett, 1 Chamberlains Field	2120236 2674995 3194736
Pastoral Assistants	Mrs Doreen Wilson, 13 Poplar Avenue Miss Sandra Robinson, 7 Lambourne Road Mrs Gill Pope, 26 Blenheim Road	2674680 2677238 2675086
Safeguarding Coordinator	Mrs Annette Marshall <i>annette.marshall8@gmail.com</i>	
Sunday School	Mrs Rose Parrott <i>rose.parrott@btinternet.com</i>	07811662235
Church Office	Mrs Sheryl Jupp, Church Office, Church Hill <i>email: stjames.birstall@btconnect.com</i>	2671797
Treasurer	Mrs Nicki Wills, Church Office, Church Hill <i>email: stjames.birstall@btconnect.com</i>	2671797
Tower Captain	Mr Clive Mobbs, 30 Wanlip Avenue <i>Practice night—Thursday at 7.30pm</i>	2677156
Wanlip Church Hall Bookings	Mr John Ward, 28 Walker Road	2677600
Nearer Group	Peter and Gill Chester <i>pete.chester@ntlworld.com</i>	2120236
Editor of Keep in Touch	Canon Anne Horton, 8b Copeland Road <i>rahorton@outlook.com</i>	2677942
Editorial Team	Revd Vince Jupp, Mrs Lesley Walton <i>lp.walton@ntlworld.com</i>	

THREE HARES

The spring-like roundel image on the front cover is yet another piece of symbolism which can be seen in many churches, at home and abroad.

In England most examples are in Devon, mainly on roof bosses, as in this image from Widecombe Church. Three hares racing round in an endless circle. Each has two ears, yet there are only three ears in total as each ear is shared by two hares. It's a powerful image, puzzling yet satisfying.



The origins are uncertain, like the reasons why it appears in such diverse locations. From ancient times, the hare has been seen as symbolic of new life, reminding us of spring. Hence the link with Easter. But, when the three hare image occurs in churches, it's often seen as symbolising the Holy Trinity. (Three hares.) But it's not solely a Christian image.

The earliest known occurrences are in Buddhist cave temples in China, c.600 AD. One theory is that the motif was transported from China across Asia, and as far as south west England, by merchants travelling the silk road. But then, as most church images of the three hares occur in England and Germany, it may be that the image occurred independently.

If you're interested in following the three hare church trail yourself, there are two relatively near to us: in Long Crendon and Long Melford. The small stained-glass medieval roundel showing the three hares (*bottom left*) is located above the north door of Holy Trinity Church in Long Melford, Suffolk. The second image is on a medieval tile in Long Crendon church, Bucks, just below the altar step. For more hares, see internet sites.



Why not go on a three hare hunt yourself?

I think I might!

Anne



I-SPY SEASONAL SYMBOLS

Answers! W=Wanlip; B=Birstall

- 1W Eagle lectern, St John the Evangelist
- 2W Reredos behind altar, IHS, 1st 3 letters of Greek name Jesus, IHΣΟΥΣ
- 3W Corner of large brass in chancel, Winged Ox, St Luke the Evangelist
- 4W Kneeler, 3 fish pattern, the Holy Trinity
- 5W Tombstone in NE Church yard, St Catherine, Martyr
- 6W Fleur de Lys, tapestry around vestry, the Holy Trinity, and B V Mary
- 7W St Nicholas window, W end, his symbol represents 3 purses of gold

- 1B Dove, memorial old church, Holy Spirit
- 2B Scallop, E window old church, St James the Great
- 3B Pelican, tile E wall, old church, Body and Blood of Christ
- 4B Peacock, S window old church, Immortality, eternal life *
- 5B The Virgin Mary, canopy over main altar, Mary, Queen of Heaven
- 6B The Trinity, candle formation, its continuous line expressing eternity, and the interweaving representing indivisibility.
- 7B Agnus Dei, S window old church, Jesus, the Lamb of God

* In this context, the peacock is the symbol identifying the window as the work of stained glass artist Theodora Salusbury (1875-1956). Her parents lived in Birstall.

TRAVEL TALK

Why not become an armchair traveller
for an evening?
Sue Ablett will be presenting another of her
illustrated talks.

Japan – Land of the Rising Sun

Friday March 2nd at 7.30pm
Wanlip Community Hall,
Church Road, Wanlip LE7 4PJ
Tickets £4 including refreshments
from Beryl McHugh Tel: 2674913
or pay on the door

I-SPY SYMBOLS

Can you identify these images from both our churches?

Where are they? What/who do they symbolise? More p.5

1 W



2W



3W



4W



2B

1B



3B



4B



THE GLORY OF THE LORD

Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity
St James, Birstall; Our Lady & St Nicholas, Wanlip

Date	Festival	Venue / Church	Time	
11 March	MOTHERING SUNDAY	HC St James EP Wanlip	10 am 6 pm	
25 March	PALM SUNDAY	HC St J, EP Wanlip	10am, 6 pm	
26-28 March	Holy Week meditations	t.b.a. St J	7.30 pm	
29 March	MAUNDY THURSDAY	HC St James	7.30 pm	
30 March	GOOD FRIDAY	Walk of Witness, Ecumenical Last Hour St James	10 am 2 pm	
1 April	EASTER DAY	Vigil, HC All Together HC Evensong	Wanlip St James Wanlip	6 am, 7 am 10 am 6 pm
9 April	ANNUNCIATION	HC Wanlip	patronal 7.30 pm	
10 May	ASCENSION DAY	HC St James Deanery Service t.b.a.	9.30 am 7.30 pm	
20 May	PENTECOST	HC St James, EP Wanlip	10 am, 6 pm	
27 May	TRINITY SUNDAY	HC St J, EP Wanlip	10 am, 6 pm	



DO YOU KNOW YOUR BIBLE?

Can you find names of 25 books from the Bible in the passage below without the aid of your Bible?

This is a most remarkable puzzle.

Someone found it in the seat pocket on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping himself occupied for hours. One man from Illinois worked on it while fishing from his john boat. Roy Clark studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Vicks mentioned it in her column once. One woman judges the job to be so involving that she brews a cup of tea to calm her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot ... that's a fact. Some people will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. The truth is, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or a scholar to see some of them at the worst. Something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have. Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation may help. Books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. And punctuation or spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete. Remember, there are 25 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph.

The Editor found this puzzle in the pages of a 2016 copy of the Thurcaston and Cropston church magazine and shares with permission.

FROM THE REGISTERS

November 2017—January 2018

Funerals

09/11	Jennifer (Marise) Butt	St James/L'boro Crem.
10/11	Margaret Briers	L'boro Crematorium
06/12	Dorothy Manser	St James/L'boro Crem.
04/01	Christina Newcombe	St James/Gilroes
22/01	Leonard Cross	St James/Gilroes

REGULAR EVENTS AND GROUPS

Weekly

- 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

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
- 1st Wed. 10.30am **Contemplative Prayer** 76 Sibson Road
Contact Noreen Talbot 0116 2672756
- 3rd Tuesday 10 am- 12.30 **Old Nick's Coffee Shop**
Wanlip Church and Community Centre
- Monday Morning *monthly* **St James Wanderers** approx. 4 miles
Contact Lesley Walton 0116 2674995

Bi-monthly

- 1st Sunday 7.45pm **Men's Group (Royal British Legion)**
Contact Bert Tegg 0116 2673817
- Group agrees dates!* **St James Striders** approx. 8 miles
Contact Gill Pope 0116 2675086

REGULAR SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

St James, Birstall, Sunday

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

Weekdays

- Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday** 9 am Morning Prayer

Thurs. 9.30 am Holy Communion

Our Lady & St Nicholas, Wanlip Sundays, 6 pm

1st Sunday

Holy Communion

2nd, 3rd, 4th Sundays

Prayer Book Evensong

5th Sunday

Alternative Service of the Word

MORE SYMBOLS TO SPOT

ANSWERS p. 26

5B



5W



6B



6W



7B



7W



The views and opinions of the authors who have submitted articles to 'Keep in Touch' belong to them alone and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the wider church.

RECTOR'S RAMBLINGS

Its Spring again, let's sing again...

When I think of Spring, I think of bright blue skies and lovely colours coming back into the once damp grey world of Winter with new shoots and new opportunities for personal growth aplenty.



Spring brings with it a new energy to stretch ourselves after the hunkering down of the dark days and nights and to smile anew at the freshness of the air and the warmth of the sun on our faces.

In Church we ready ourselves to celebrate the new life we have in the Risen Jesus at Easter with bold colours of white and yellow and gold, each heralding God's glory.

And, just as the daffodils rise from their wintry grave to stretch skyward in glorious triumph over the cold hard ground, so too Christ rises from the cold hard tomb in glorious triumph over death, bringing great promise for the future. At Springtime I am reminded of Christ's success over death, renewing my faith and stirring my heart in adoration.

Already I have been thinking of what to do in 2018 that will bring new energy, excitement and engagement with the church and the community in order to glorify God through our mission work, as we look to God anew each day in prayer for spiritual inspiration.

I think, as part of embracing the new, we have to triumph over the old, and Lent is always a good time to do this. It provides a season when we can purposefully review, reflect and maybe even repent of, some of our thoughts, words and actions of 2017, and so move forward into 2018 refreshed, and with God's blessing.

Our seasons in nature and in our church liturgy provide us with a lovely rhythm for our movement throughout the year, embedding it with timely markers to process, to let go of the old and to embrace the new.

MY PASTORAL PLACEMENT

During Autumn 2017 I was given a month's placement in the benefice of Birstall and Wanlip. Its purpose was two-fold: to give my vicar, the Revd Alison Booker, a second opinion as to my suitability for ordination training and to give me the experience of being in a parish other than my own.

There's clearly a lot going on in Birstall and Wanlip. I was struck by the warmth from this friendly group of Christians. The experience I had with Vince was great, letting me loose and doing stuff which I had never done before. A highlight was the 'one thing' sermon I gave at a 10 a.m. service at St James'.

I was impressed by your two churches. Both are well-maintained and well-supported. I attended some pastoral events and various 'behind the scenes' aspects of parish work, all of which was really helpful. I have good memories of saying Morning Prayer with Lesley and Bert. I saw some of the huge amount of hard work that goes on behind the scenes. I was particularly struck at how much unseen work Vince does, often preparing work for others to do at the front, and with evening meetings already booked in for most of the month.

All in all I found it an enjoyable and fulfilling time. I am now on my way to a Bishops' Advisory Panel where a decision will be taken as to my suitability for ordination training.

Many thanks for welcoming me, and for all your help.

Paul Emberton

WANLIP FAYRES

The magnificent sum of £1060.35 was raised at the Christmas Fayre.

The proceeds will be split between the Church and the Hall.

A huge thank you to all contributors and supporters.

We now look forward to our **MAY FAYRE**

Saturday May 19th, 2-4 pm

Julie Ward

Since they arrived Colin and Audrey have been sending regular updates about their work, and some of the situations they have come across. Clearly there is too much to describe here but I've tried to draw out some highlights:



- As a result of lobbying by LSESD, and others, the government agreed to provide some state provision for children with special educational needs – up to then provision was only in private schools.
- 'The Muslims killed my pregnant wife and my mother, and my brother was injured' (Lebanese pastor). There was civil war in Lebanon between 1975 – 1990 and Syrian occupation until 2005. But the Gibson's describe how, despite this, the church has responded to the refugee crisis, bringing aid and support, actively trying to help the refugees, whatever their faith.
- Visiting camps for Iraqi and Syrian refugees.
- Learning and accepting different views, getting a better understanding of Muslim/Christian views and relationships.
- Individual stories, such as the 'great progress' by 'C', a child with a medical history of frequent surgery, heart problems, seizures and even a coma, another child who struggled with anxiety and several phobias following hospitalization and who showed signs of cognitive, behaviour and psychomotor problems. The programme of work, supported by LSESD, is making a huge difference to so many!

There's more, but not enough space! But, we have the chance to hear more of Colin and Audrey's work and experiences. They will be with us on Wed. 18th April, at 19:30, at St James' Church.

It would be good if as many people as possible came to meet Colin and Audrey, and to hear of their life and experiences in Lebanon.

Peter Chester

Spring just happens to bring with it a bright, cheery and uplifting message of growth and of life in all its fullness, riven with promise from the creator of the world. I love all seasons, but perhaps this one is my favourite. Each delicate flower head is a reminder of God's creative love, each person is someone with whom to share God's redeeming love, and each moment bursts with potential to feel God's love and to see him at work in my life.

Spring has sprung. May you all feel it in your steps as you move closer to Christ each and every day. Enjoy!

Vince



THY KINGDOM COME 2018.

For the third year running, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York are calling us to prayer in the period from Ascension Day to Pentecost (10th-20th May).

St James and Wanlip took part in this prayer initiative in 2016 with a series of short prayer services. In 2017 this was extended to other churches in *Churches Together* with services every day at the Methodist Church and at St Theresa's.

At the heart of the ten days is a desire for more people to come to faith in Jesus. In the DVD to introduce this year's event, Archbishop Justin tells the story of a man with a very troubled life and no Christian faith whose life was transformed through the prayers of a number of people over a number of years. He came to faith and is now in Christian ministry.

Who would you love to see share your Christian faith? A friend? A neighbour? A family member? A work colleague? Start praying for them now, and get involved in *Thy Kingdom Come 2018*.

Kerry

BOOKS WE'RE READING THIS LENT

Vince

With our Lent course on 'Prayer' in mind, I'm reading **'Say it to God'** by **Luigi Gioia**, hopeful of discovering new ways to talk to God. Also reading **Sister Wendy Beckett's 'The Art of Lent'** - a painting a day from Ash Wednesday to Lent. Reflections on the spirituality found in 40 great works of art – hopefully enabling me to see God speaking through our creativity.

Anne

Ian Adams' new book of words and images: **Breathing Deep: life in the Spirit of Easter**. 40 'invitations' to see the world in the power of Jesus' resurrection. And I've sent my young great-nieces **Wild Lent**. 40 ideas for getting close and personal with creation and sharing God's creation with others. It looks great! (Author Rachel Summers is Susan Sayers' daughter.)

Lesley

Stephen Cottrell's Christ in the Wilderness. *SPCK 2013*.

The famous artist Stanley Spencer's compelling sequence of paintings, **Christ in the Wilderness**, gives us insights into Jesus' vocation and an understanding of his ministry. Stephen Cottrell looks at five of these paintings, and invites us, by reflecting deeply on their detail, to refine our own discipleship and so learn more of what it means for each of us to follow Christ.

Stephen

Jesus of Nazareth - Holy Week by **Joseph RATZINGER** (*Pope Benedict XVI*.) This book challenges both believers and unbelievers to decide who Jesus of Nazareth is and what he means for them. Benedict maintains that all the evidence brings us face-to-face with the challenge of Jesus, a real man who taught and acted in ways that were tantamount to claims of divine authority.

Noreen

The Art of Lent: a painting a day from Ash Wednesday to Easter, by **Sister Wendy Beckett**. The first four days concern repentance, forgiveness, humility and purification, all essential for a personal approach to self-assessment and moving forward. Weekly themes are: Silence, Contemplation, Peace, Joy, Confidence and Love. Artists include Breugel to Roger Wagner and come from Europe, Japan and America. Deep insights and challenging thoughts.

What are the pros and cons? Lots of pros. Here are just a few: meeting people from all over the world; fascinating conversations ranging from Norman church architecture to modern art in historic buildings; and, best of all, being told 'I've never been in a church before, I've been too frightened. Is there a service I can come to?'

There are some cons. Standing by a cold church door on a wet February when no one comes to visit; being berated because the Cathedral is closed for a service or an event when it should be open for visitors; being deafened by organ tuners!

There are challenges too! Try leading a tour of, say, eighteen foreigners when only one has a smattering of English! You suddenly realise that you need to speak slowly and choose your words carefully. Another challenge is maintaining the interest of visiting school parties whilst preventing them from upsetting other visitors, or damaging the monuments, the fabric, the furniture. You also have to be prepared for unexpected questions: 'Where do I get a bus to the railway station?', 'Which way do I walk to get to Bosworth Battlefield?'; 'Where's Cardinal Wolsey buried?'...

Fancy volunteering? Let me know and I'll put you in touch with the Volunteer Manager – she's always looking for more help.

John Ward

LIFE IN LEBANON

We have all read, and heard something, about Syrian refugees. A great number of refugees has fled to Lebanon, making one third of the population refugees and putting huge pressure on support services there. What is it like to live, and work, in such a situation? Colin and Audrey Gibson, Mission Partners with the Church Mission Society, know, as they have been working there since they arrived in December 2012.

They are working with the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD). Audrey, with many years experience in UK education, is working with children with special needs (special needs are not well recognised in Lebanon). Colin helps with fund-raising, site maintenance and health and safety issues.

In the dark, in bed, we can pray for those others who are awake: for those suffering or in distress; for people we know; for situations and places of need. Then we can return to the second Little Sleep.

Like others, I used to panic, worrying myself into being unable to get back to sleep. Then I tried getting up to get a hot drink and a biscuit, or read a little. Since I heard a lecture at our local university on the Circadian rhythm, I now just stay in bed and say my daily Franciscan 'Community Obedience' prayer. By the end, I fall asleep.

What will you do with your totally natural break?

Noreen Talbot

FANCY VOLUNTEERING?

At the end of 2014, I responded to a request for help in greeting visitors to the Cathedral during the three weeks preceding the re-interment of Richard III in March 2015. Should I have paid more attention to my father's words of wisdom (learnt I suspect by bitter experience during military service) 'Never, Never Volunteer!' Well, I did volunteer and, thirty-two months after King Richard's re-interment, I'm still there. Most weeks for half a day, I act as a Welcomer and Guide in Leicester Cathedral.



As welcomers, we work as part of a team, greeting people as they arrive, explaining the layout of the Cathedral and answering any questions they have. We try to ensure that visitor behaviour is in keeping with their surroundings, liaising with the duty Vergers to ensure their safety and security. As a Guide, I lead pre-booked tours of the Cathedral, either a general one hour tour, or a 30 minute Richard III themed tour. In addition, when there are no tours booked, we offer ad-hoc hour-long tours if anyone is interested.

TRADITIONAL BAKES AT EASTER

Simnel Cake

This cake dates back to the Tudor times or possibly earlier.

Simnel possibly refers to the Latin word *simila*, the fine wheaten flour which was used to bake cakes for Mothering or Refreshment Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Lent. By the eighteenth century, however, Simnel Cake had become an Easter treat, celebrating the end of forty days of Lenten fasting.

This fruitcake has a layer of marzipan baked into the middle. The top of the cake is usually decorated with a layer of marzipan, with eleven marzipan balls placed around the edge, representing the eleven faithful Apostles, excluding Judas who betrayed Jesus.



Easter or Lenten Biscuits

These are crisp, sugar-coated fruity biscuits., which, in the Middle Ages, were enjoyed by rich and poor alike.

For the rich, these small glazed biscuits helped make Shrove Tuesday the last day of rich eating before fasting began. For the poor, they were a rare treat.

There is a tradition, especially in Bristol and the West Country, that Easter Biscuits should be flavoured with oil of cassia, a cinnamon extract, possibly because it was believed that this oil was used to embalm Jesus.

Julie Ward

'PIONEER-PIONEERS' MOVE ON TO PIONEER AFRESH

Time certainly flies.

It seems only yesterday that Stephen and Sharon arrived in the parish to help us set up our missional community which soon took on the name of **NEARER**, expressing our desire to be nearer to God through our service to the people of Birstall and Wanlip.



With their 3-year contract complete - and with experience of developing a fresh expression through their work with us - Stephen has now been employed by the Diocesan Mission and Ministry Department to teach potential pioneers in our diocese, finding and sharing new and practical ways to equip them to do equally exciting things in their own parishes.

Our vision six years ago was to reach out to the people of Hallam Fields. With Stephen and Sharon's help, we have achieved this. Together we have created a sustainable missional community for the future, with a view to evolving it into a Fresh Expression of Church. **NEARER** will continue to develop with peer leadership and, through ongoing discernment, will discover the direction for its missional energies in the months and years to come. Thanks to Stephen's teaching and Sharon's support, and through the way they are as Christians, Stephen and Sharon have been instrumental in **NEARER**'s success. They leave us with tangible missional achievements on which to build, they have helped us to focus our objectives for the immediate future, and they leave us with the hope that **NEARER** will develop well. It's been a privilege to have them with us for the past three years. We are so glad that our diocesan authorities have recognised in them the necessary skills to help progress the diocesan 'fresh expressions' agenda for the wider church.

AND SO TO BED Sleeplessness, or Natural Order?

Do you worry about waking up in the middle of the night, wide awake and panicking? So many go off to their doctors expecting tablets or sleep clinics. What is going on?

We are the odd ones out! How our ancestors would have laughed at us. Why would we want to sleep all night? Do we worry more than they, or are we working too much, or too little? From the Middle Ages, at least up until Samuel Pepys' time, no one expected to sleep right through. *Having been exceedingly disturbed in the night with the barking of a dog of one of our neighbours, that I could not sleep for an hour or two, I slept late, and then in the morning took physic, and so staid within all day.* (Pepys diary, 15 January 1659)

Our body clocks, or circadian rhythms, have a daily pattern. That pattern having been disrupted by the invention of artificial light and heating, we have ignored the natural change from light to dark.



Our ancestors went to bed at dusk, and woke at dawn, but the circadian rhythm led to two separate sleep periods: the Great Sleep, deeply refreshing and healing; and the Little Sleep, which followed somewhere between 3 am and 5 am, after a time of wakefulness. The rich rose and used their *gardez-loo* and the peasants went outside to the garden. They might have a bite to eat and a drop to drink, and married couples might enjoy 'marital relations'. Then they would drop into the Little Sleep. We, however, work long hours, with the benefit of artificial light and technology. We wake ourselves before bed time with watching the news or challenging films, and wonder why our brains are not slowing down to sleep.

The Revd Philip Roderick has created a movement for Hidden Houses of Prayer, so that older people, who need shorter hours of sleep, can feel God's call to use the wakeful period as a 'powerhouse' of prayer and intercede for people in need.



I have (in my wisdom) now come to the conclusion that our lives, when you think about it, are very similar to a game played on an amusement arcade pin-ball machine! We start by having a strong spring shoot us into action - **BANG** - and off we rocket on our way to the top of the machine - shooting through our lives more or less (as we think) willy-nilly - going where we are driven - colliding with all obstacles and problems in our way in the best way we can and collecting the highest points we can for our records and satisfaction, making lights flash and bells ring and the numbers add up on our particular scoreboard.

As we career around, crashing into the bollards and rebounding off the sides, we might slow down a little, but still trying and succeeding in hitting our targets, still flashing and pinging, though the flashes and pings are becoming a little less frequent. Like the pin-ball, we can now sink lower down the game deck, but we can be helped to get back into action by the flippers, which work madly to flip us back to scoring. However, each time we sink down, we become slower, so we cannot hit as many targets, no matter how frantic the actions of the flippers.

Inevitably, the mad rush to score points is over, the flippers are useless and the ball runs slowly down to the bottom cushion and disappears into the machine channel. **BUT!** The pin-ball then reappears and, renewed and re-invigorated, is at the start again, ready to take on the challenge and promise of a new life - **BANG!**

Leigh Reid

Here in Birstall and Wanlip, we have learned a lot. We have gained confidence to be in the community – showing our love for the people through practical service – and are excited about where God will take us next. One thing we do know is, that with each effort, the community is seeing God at work and is drawing nearer to him. Through our efforts to listen well to God, we draw nearer ourselves, as we learn to love and serve his people.

We can therefore say 'fare well' to Stephen and Sharon with thanks. We shall watch with interest their efforts in the diocese as we continue to pursue our own mission with enthusiasm, energy and excitement, and grow in our understanding as to what God can do when we get involved and get going.

Pray for Stephen and Sharon as they begin the next stage of their Christian journey. May God bless them always.

Vince

NEARER - THREE YEARS ON

Three years ago, in 2015, *NEARER* began. It wasn't called *NEARER* then.

We had no clear idea of what we should do.

The brief was to try to form a 'Fresh Expression' of Church in Hallam Fields.

So, we have tried to see what God is doing and join in!

Members of *NEARER* seek to be '*Nearer to God, Nearer to the community and Nearer to each other*'.

Three years on, we can see so many ways in which God has been, and is working in members of *NEARER*.

- We are seeing people move forward in their relationships with Jesus.
- Some people have spoken of their faith being revitalised, or awakened after years of being dormant.
- Others say that things are 'making sense' for the first time.



- Some are realising that following Jesus (discipleship) is a whole-life activity and are embracing that adventure.
- We are ALL taking prayer onto the streets in Hallam Fields.

NEARER has been involved in various community activities

- **Cedar Mews** – we are hosted by Cedar Mews (finding somewhere to meet on Hallam Fields had been difficult!) Some NEARER members offer hand massage visiting, we support events, and have recently begun joint evenings with residents.
- **In schools** – CAP (*Christians Against Poverty*) Kids Money courses have been run in Highcliffe and Riverside Primary schools. A CAP Students Money course is also planned for Cedars Academy. NEARER helped at Highcliffe Xmas Fayre and we gave practical support at the opening of Hallam Fields Primary School (where some NEARER members are governors).
- **In the community** - NEARER is involved in the Cedars Stakeholder meetings and has supported various community events, such as being invited to sing Carols at the Birstall Christmas Lights (one year with the Gospel Choir), running stalls at the Birstall Gala and offering free tea and coffee on the park some Sunday afternoons.
- More recently, NEARER has been involved with the **Birstall Support Hub** and in developing, with the Soar Valley Food Project, a food bank based in Rothley, a Food Parcel Collection Point in Birstall.

We have learned many things, including

- That everything takes a long, long, time.
- That growth happens in unexpected ways and at unexpected times.
- That the 'social' times are often the most significant in terms of discipleship and evangelism.
- That we have allies in the community who are building the Kingdom of God without knowing it – People of Peace.
- The vital importance of prayer.

BIRSTALL FOOD PARCEL COLLECTION POINT

Plans are in place to open a food parcel collection point in Birstall. The Soar Valley Community Food Project, based at Rothley Baptist Church, is to support a collection point at the Methodist Church Coffee Shop.



In order to operate this venture, over 20 volunteers have been recruited locally through publicity placed in the December 2017 edition of the Birstall Post. It is very encouraging that so many people have responded and are keen to help. Training will be provided and other aspects need to be organised so that the collection point can open from late March on a Tuesday morning each week. Until then food parcels can be delivered to people in Birstall by prior arrangement.

The collection point is a joint venture between the Anglican and Methodist churches in Birstall. For further information contact Gill Chester (07832299671) or Pete Molesdale (07984410618). The foodbank at Rothley Baptist Church (on Woodgate) is open each Monday between 11am and 1pm. Birstall Co-op Food Store have set up a shopping trolley for people to make donations of food.

Eileen and Peter Molesdale, Birstall Methodist Church

AFTERNOON TEAS 'DOWN MEMORY LANE'

at Birstall Methodist Coffee Shop

bi-monthly 2.30-4 pm

7th April, 2nd June, 4th August, 6th October, 8th December 2018

If you, or someone close to you, are experiencing some loss of memory, or are feeling isolated or lonely ... this is a time to get together for a drink, music, cakes (mainly homemade), usually a sing-a-long, sometimes some entertainment and always a chance to have a chat. If family members or friends would like to come with you, they will be very welcome. To find out more, please contact

Meg 0116 2672213, or Janet 0116 2671471

NEWS FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH

'LISTENING' MINISTRY, BISHOP STREET CHURCH

Some months ago, in our Birstall Methodist Church notices, I saw a request for volunteers for a 'listening' service at the Bishop Street Methodist Church, Leicester. I wanted to find out more. (I used to volunteer for the Samaritans, which I had found very worthwhile.) After a chat with Audrey Baker, the counsellor who was running the training for this ministry, I decided to offer myself for this ministry. I completed the training and am now a member of the listening team.

The 'listening' ministry started just before Christmas. A listener is available in the café area on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, from 1100 to 1230, for anyone who wants to talk about their problems or concerns. Often it is easier to talk to someone outside your own family or friendship group.

There is an obvious need for this service, and as word spreads, we will need to train more listeners. If you want to know more about volunteering for this ministry, or about being listened to, please speak to Fran Rhys, the minister at Bishop Street Methodist Church, fran.rhys@methodist.org.uk, or to me, Stephanie Houlden at Birstall Methodist Church, stephaniehoulden@icloud.com, (07731342087).

Alternatively, you may like to call into the Bishop Street Church Café between 1100 and 1230 on a Tuesday or Wednesday. (The Café serves lovely coffee and cake, as well as sandwiches and light lunches!)

Stephanie Houlden, Birstall Methodist Church.

Bishop Street Methodist Church Café is open Monday - Friday 10-4, and from 10.30-3 on Saturdays.

Birstall Methodist Coffee Shop is open Monday- Saturday , 10-12 noon.

All are welcome

Our research has shown that:

- People come to NEARER through the parish (though this has reduced as time has gone on) and through personal invitation.
- Belonging to NEARER leads to personal growth, learning and new faith experiences.
- What people most appreciate about NEARER is community and the opportunity for spiritual growth.
- People have experienced God at work in NEARER as they grow in faith, in deepening relationships and in increasing mission.
- NEARER members' spiritual aspirations are for on-going spiritual growth and greater practice of the spiritual disciplines.

So what's next? – More of the same! We plan

- to continue to try to draw nearer to God, to the community and to each other,
- to continue to get to know God better and, to serve him, each other and the community as best we can.

As ever, we don't know what all that will mean in practice but it is great fun going with God and finding out!

If you want to know more feel free to contact Peter or Gill Chester on 0116 212 0236.

Peter Chester

Stephen March writes:

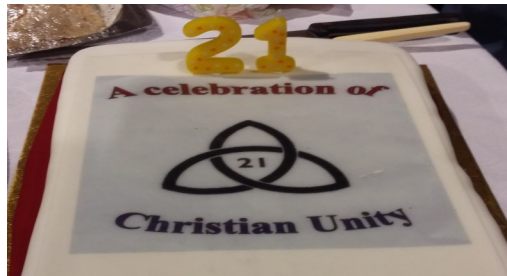
What is happening in NEARER? How is this project going? What has been achieved? If you want answers to any of these questions the following links will interest you.

An Executive Summary of the final Growth Fund report on the NEARER community is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/y7yd22a4>
The full Growth Fund reports for all three years are available here: <https://tinyurl.com/yb7wofa4> All the reports and other NEARER documents are available for anyone to access from a link on the NEARER page of the parish website. <http://www.birstall.org/community/nearer/>

Thank you for your support and prayers for the NEARER community over the past three years. God has answered your prayers in exciting ways!

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2018

This January, between the 18th and 25th, we marked the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We shared frugal lunches both at the Methodist Church and at St. Theresa's, along with lots of prayer and reflection. We also celebrated the 21st anniversary of the signing of the covenant between the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist churches in Birstall, which established *Churches Together in Birstall and Wanlip*.



Churches Together is the grass roots of Christian Unity. The wording of the Covenant we signed 21 years ago highlights that. We pledged

- to worship and pray together
- to look forward to full Eucharistic celebration.
- to co-operate in evangelism and mission.
- to work together to reach young people in our community, especially those who have no contact with church.
- to continue to co-operate in the Christian education of all our members
- never to do separately what we can reasonably do together, e.g. joint services, social and mission activities.

The prayer and reflection during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity also helps focus our minds on our fellow Christians around the world, with whom we are united in faith.

Here in Birstall and Wanlip we regularly combine our resources as we join together to show the love of Christ working in this place.

Messy Church is a good example, as is our 'Walk of Witness' on Good Friday. The 'Walk of Witness' is a powerful demonstration of our unity to the rest of the world. It touches many people as we process through the village singing and praying.

Our presence at the lighting of the Christmas lights in Birstall also brings a united Christian presence into village life, giving us the opportunity to show our faith and love for one another and for those around us. With each of these shared acts, we demonstrate to the wider world a living faith.

Our unity is not only demonstrated through these public acts but, as Vic Alsop (County Ecumenical Development Officer for Churches Together) said, during his address at this year's service to celebrate the signing of the covenant, it is also demonstrated in the smallest of activities that we share together, be that a coffee morning, a concert or joining together in Lent courses. All these things draw us closer together as Christian communities and in our worship.

There will be many more activities taking place during the year, so please look out for them in our notice sheets or in 'Keep in Touch'. And join in where and whenever possible. The next opportunity will be our **Walk of Witness on Good Friday, 30th March**. It starts at the traffic lights on Sibson Road/Loughborough Road at 10 am and finishes at St. Theresa's. At various points along the way, we stop for a prayer and a hymn. Walking along the busy street together displays a clear expression of our common faith, and is always well received by passers-by.

Oh, and the icing on the cake (so to speak)? The hot cross buns waiting for us at St. Theresa's. See you there!

Debbie Shephard

