

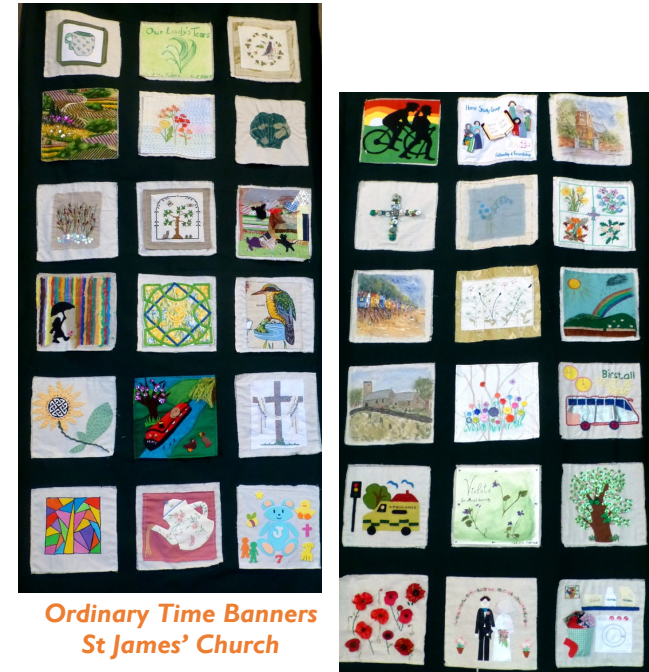
'KEEP IN TOUCH', Winter 2019

Copy by, but, if possible, before 1st November

All contributions welcome. Maximum preferred length: 500 words!

(If longer, the editor reserves the right to edit!!)

'Keep In Touch'



*Ordinary Time Banners
St James' Church*

KEEPING YOU 'IN TOUCH' IS

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YOU ARE WELCOME TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THEM

AUTUMN 2019

***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 John Borrajo, 8 Hallam Avenue Mr John Ward, 28 Walker Road Mrs Debbie Shephard, 41 Roman Road	2675381 2209289 2677600 2672630
Licensed Readers PTO	Mr Peter Chester, 12 Oakfield Avenue Mrs Lesley Walton, 16 The Crossways	2120236 2674995
Pastoral Assistants	Mrs Doreen Wilson, 13 Poplar Avenue Mrs Gill Pope, 26 Blenheim Road	2674680 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
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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.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Afternoon Teas

**at Birstall Methodist Coffee Shop, bi-monthly 2.30-4pm
5th October, 7th December 2019.**

If you, or someone close to you, is experiencing some loss of memory, or if you are feeling isolated or lonely, then come and join us. 'Down Memory Lane' is very informal. It begins at 2.30 - no worries if you are a bit early or late. You will be welcomed by one of our helpers who will invite you to sit down at one of the tables and when we think everyone has arrived, we have entertainment which always involves music and singing together. After about 15 minutes tea and home-made cakes are served. After tea, after more entertainment and more time to chat, it's time to go home at 4 pm. So, if you think you would like to join us, we would love to see you!

To find out more, contact Janet 0116 267 1471.

FROM THE REGISTERS

May—June 2019

Baptism		
30/6	Hattie Lloyd-Trewick	St James
Marriage		
26/5	David Ward & Natalia Liashko	St James
29/6	Christopher Holliland & Betsy-Jo Smith	St James
Funerals		
10/6	Jacqueline Doubleday	St James
11/6	Sandra Robinson	St James
19/6	Iris Calow	St James
26/6	Pamela Hanson	St James

REGULAR EVENTS AND GROUPS

Weekly

Thursday	7.30-9.00pm	Bell ringing practice (St James') <i>Contact Clive Mobbs 0116 2677156</i>
Saturday	10-12 noon	St James' Church open + Tea and coffee

Monthly

2nd Monday	7.30pm	Monday Group (Village Hall) <i>Contact Jane Scott 0116 2673761</i>
4th Monday	10.15am	Mothers' Union (St James') <i>Contact Helen Tarry 0116 2677493</i>
3rd Tuesday	10am -12.30	Old Nick's Coffee Shop <i>Wanlip Church and Community Centre</i>

Bi-monthly

1st Sunday	7.45pm	Men's Group (Royal British Legion) <i>Contact: The Rector, vincejupp@btinternet.com</i>
<i>Group agrees dates!</i>		St James' Striders approx. 8 miles <i>Contact Gill Pope 0116 2675086</i>

REGULAR SERVICES IN OUR CHURCHES

St James, Birstall Sundays

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

COINCIDENCE - OR WHAT?

I can't believe it was a coincidence that in three successive services at St James' Church in May, we heard sermons relating to aspects of our Christian vocation and calling. I preached on May 19th, Vince on May 26th, and, on May 30th, Canon Lee Francis-Dequani at our deanery Ascension Day service. I chatted with Canon Lee after that service, and we asked each other how many people, now in ordained and lay ministries, were in ministry because of our encouragement. We agreed: *Not as many as there should be!* Hence the articles in our magazine today.

God has taken to himself two members of our Birstall and Wanlip ministry team this year: Bert Tegg and Sandra Robinson. Both of them inspirational, and both much missed. **I believe that, somewhere in our congregations, or on the way to joining us, there are people whom God is calling now to lay or ordained ministries. Could that be you? Or is there someone you've noticed, and have wondered whether God is calling them?**

In case you missed these sermons, I asked Lee and Vince if we might print their sermons in our magazine. I also asked two of our lay ministers, Noreen and Gill, to write about their experiences of vocation and calling. I urge you to keep your hearts and prayers open to anyone in our congregations whom God might be calling into ministry, and share that perception with them. **For those of us already in ministry, it was something somebody said to us that helped us to realise and to respond to God's calling.**

You may be that somebody God is calling, either to serve, or to encourage somebody else to respond to God's calling of them. But we can all of us start by saying the following prayer every day. It relates to each and every one of us. And **God really does answer prayer.**

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that, in their vocation and ministry, each may serve you in holiness and truth, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Canon Anne

RECTOR'S REFLECTIONS

One Calling or Many?



If asked 'Tell me about your calling', I would have to respond with 'How long have you got?' Unlike a chap at college who woke up in the middle of the night and saw Jesus sitting on the bottom of his bed, I had no flash-bang event; instead it was more like a growing awakening, a series of thoughts, feelings and mini-revelations over years. So gradual was it that if asked to say when was the first sense of calling, I would have a job answering.

I guess the point of a 'calling' might be described as the time when many nudges and feelings and thoughts come together to give you that a-ha moment, or someone says 'that sounds like a calling'.

This happened for me when I was at St Andrew's, Aylestone, as a member of the church. I was attending all the services on Sunday, got involved in various committees and on special occasions even climbed the tower to raise the Saltire. My involvement in church life, listening to the sermons, making new friends and getting involved in some outreach spoke to me deeply about what was important in life. At the time, I was working all hours for an engineering company to climb the ladder of life and to be a part of the worldly pursuit of possessions, only to realise that none of this really mattered.

Change is often catalysed when dissatisfaction arises. Not only was it clear that the world of 'having' didn't appeal and the worldly drive brought no satisfaction, it also identified a void within me, a God-shaped hole that only God can fill. Around that time a sermon on the calling of the first disciples really spoke to me and I imagined being asked to drop my nets and follow Him. How would I respond, I wondered?



Prayer Walk

As you follow the path, breathe in the peace that only Jesus can give you ... put down any heavy burdens for a while and rest in Him ... You are safe and being guided by the Good Shepherd.

At each stopping place, pause, read a verse from the psalm, and talk to Jesus, listening to his promptings in your heart. Welcome his goodness and mercy, the graces and blessings that restore your soul and give you comfort.

When you reach the end, stop for a while, and return along the same path, gratefully and prayerfully.

When you complete the return journey, sit, or stand quietly in the peace of Christ. You might like to underline a few words in the psalm, or write down a phrase or two, to help you remember this time of prayer.

Closing Prayer

Ever-loving God, may I always be filled with your Spirit, may I sing psalms and hymns and make melodies to you in my heart, giving glory and praise to you for everything, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Canon Anne

(based on a labyrinth prayer walk leaflet from Sheldon Spirituality Centre)

PRAYER WALK ROUND YOUR GARDEN WITH PSALM 23

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, I am always in your presence. In you I live, and move, and have my being. May I always be open to hearing and responding to your word, and give you glory in everything I do. Amen.

Introduction

The psalms have been part of the prayer life of the pilgrim people of God for 3000 years. Countless numbers of people have sung and prayed these verses in times of sorrow, joy, hope and concern. Psalm 23 is a psalm of love and trust in the Lord our God, who leads us, stays with us in tough times, ensures that we have all we need, and blesses us every day of our lives.

Prayer Walking round Your Garden

Plan a route around your garden, marking appropriate 'stopping places' for reflection on a verse from the psalm. In a larger garden, you might have five stopping places; in smaller gardens fewer.

Pause for Reflection

Take a few moments to read the psalm and welcome the peace and joy of being loved by God.

PSALM 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me;

your rod and your staff - they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

One evening, I found myself pacing up and down outside the incumbent's vicarage for a while, before plucking up the courage to ring his doorbell. On hearing my reason for dropping by, he said, 'I've been expecting you'.

That was the first affirmation of what was a fledgling understanding that this might be a calling. But, of course, as you have gathered by now, it was probably only the latest part of a calling process that had been going on for quite some time.

I believe God calls us all in different ways, has called us all from our mother's womb and continues to call us throughout this mortal life and beyond.

When I look back and think about all the conversations, the open doors and God-incidents, I can see that my journey to ordination had begun long before that vicarage conversation. In fact, it takes me right back to Sunday School in a village hall 45 years ago - a time of fun and play and of feeling welcomed and loved. It came together much later when all the strands clearly pointed me in one direction.

Far from Damascus Road it is! But it was clearly consistent, persistent and pointless to resist. After a further 4-year guided discernment process, including foundation courses and selection panels, I eventually got the chance to discover my real response to the call to follow. The 20th Century version of 'dropping my nets'.

I dropped my career, my mortgage, my company car, and any plans to climb the corporate ladder and I went off to theological college with nothing, except Sheryl, three children and a new sense of purpose.

So, don't ignore the little nudges, the friendly affirmations, even the feelings of dissatisfaction, it is most likely God, trying to get you to listen.

But listening is only half of it... then you must respond.

Blessings

Vince

GOD CALLING!

PICK UP THE PHONE

I had known God since I was very small. As my father was the centre of my life, I thought that God the Father must be wonderful. When, at eight years old, I heard the story of the boy Samuel being called by God, I was excited. If God could call a little boy, then He could also call me, a small girl.

When I was 19, I went to church on the day after I got back from college. At the end of the service, I gathered up my Bible and (combined) Book of Common Prayer/Hymns Ancient and Modern. (We had to take our own service books to church in those days!) I put my gloves on to leave, BUT a sentence appeared in my mind's eye. I didn't think it, voices didn't say it, it was just written there in my mind. 'Go to the Lady Chapel and pray!'

I assumed it was God's idea! 'No, God', I said, 'You've got it wrong. What could I do? Girls can only be missionaries, and I'm hopeless at learning languages. Anyway, I would be terrified going to strange places. You hear dreadful stories of missionaries being murdered – in Africa, in China, in the Pacific. No, Lord, I can't do that.'

But God was patient and persistent. God got me, a geographer and geologist, to teach R.E. and to join the Institute of Christian Education. God also got me to teach Sunday School, run eight Sunday School classes and lead a church youth group. God works insidiously! And then, during an interregnum at my High Wycombe church, the Standing Committee called on me and asked me to train as a Reader.

Three days later, the existing Reader called to tell me that she was the church's Reader, and if I wanted to train, I would have to move to another church! 'Church politics!' I thought, and ignored that call. Our new, legally trained priest was dictatorial. The whole youth club rebelled and left the church, the four newly trained leaders meant to take over from me also left.

RASSELAS MORJAN

commemorating the 180th anniversary of his death August 25th 1839

Sacred
To The Memory Of Rasselas Morjan
Who Was Born In Macadi
In the Confines Of Abyssinia
And Died At Wanlip Hall
August 25th 1839
In The 19th Year Of His Age
Rescued From a State Of Slavery
In This Life
And Enabled By God's Grace
To Become A Member Of His Church.
He Rests Here In The Hope
Of A Greater Deliverance Hereafter.
This Stone Is Raised
In Remembrance Of His Blameless Life
By One Whom He Loved

The Black Boy of Wanlip

Thirty years ago, an uncanny experience was reported by motorist Cliff Lewis. He was driving through Wanlip one foggy night in November 1989. Visibility was poor, so he was driving slowly and carefully. Suddenly he was aware of a young black lad in the road in front of him. He braked rapidly and got out of the car, fearing that he had hit the boy, but no one was there. After looking about him, he got back in his car and drove home, still somewhat disturbed. He returned to Wanlip the next day to ask if anyone had been reported hurt. No one had. When he described the boy, however, he was advised to check the tombstones in Wanlip churchyard. He did so, and found the grave of Rasselas Morjan.

Story told by David Bell, in 'Leicestershire & Rutland Ghosts & Legends'

WANLIP BEES

If you were in Wanlip a few weeks ago you would have seen an amazing sight. A colony of bees had swarmed, following the queen bee, and attached themselves to the leg of one of the benches by the Hall.

Unbelievably, they were totally unconcerned by the onlookers. They were eventually captured and rehoused. A good result.



Bees are needed for most foods we eat, either directly - pollinating, or indirectly - food for animals, which we then eat. Unfortunately we are seeing a decline in colonies.

We need to protect these special creatures and not kill them off.

A QUICK LIGHT SUMMER DESSERT

RECIPE

This simple recipe using honey makes a quick light summer dessert. Mix Greek yogurt with honey and top with flaked almonds (could be toasted) and any fresh fruit.

It can be served with shortbread biscuits.

I leave the measurements up to you.

You could also use low fat yogurt! But I prefer a thicker mixture.

Enjoy.

Julie Ward

I moved to a town centre church, and, after six months, the Vicar invited me to the vicarage. 'You've been here six months. What are you going to do for us?' He did this to all newcomers! I lost my tongue. What could I do? 'What are we not doing that you could do? What have you noticed is missing?' I had no idea, so he told me to go and think about it for a month!

Four weeks later, a Reader and a Priest called on me at home, on the Vicar's behalf. 'What had I decided?' They asked me directly if I would train as a Reader, as they were short. (Having had six Readers before, they now only had three Priests and three Readers!)

I thought that God knew me so well! I would never have believed a little thought in my own head; God had to keep sending human intermediaries. I also thought my Vicar had a sense of irony, as he was my chief theological lecturer at a Lay Training Centre, at which, having by then retired from teaching, I felt I should learn more about the R.E. for which I never trained. (I had been teaching first infant, then junior and lastly Grammar School girls.) My Vicar also knew that I had nearly completed the nine courses needed to be a Reader, even though I had no intention of becoming one. I think God had a good laugh too!

And, by the way, St John's Church finally got its six Readers! It happened after the Warden of Readers (in Oxford Diocese) stood in during an interregnum. He preached on the need for the laity to hold the fort by training as Readers. Six people came forward.

So! When are YOU going to volunteer?



Noreen Talbot

MY PATH TO PASTORAL MINISTRY

Back in 2006 Leicester diocese ran a course entitled 'Certificate in Christian Discipleship'. I was still working and thought that this might be something different to do in my spare time to learn more about my faith. The course could be done for interest or as a way into lay ministry, which I had no desire to do. I enrolled on the course and found it hard work but very stimulating. I studied the Bible, theology and discipleship, and wrote a couple of optional essays. Most of the group already had a 'calling' to go on to Reader or Pastoral Assistant Ministry and there were talks about lay ministry during the course. Even after all of this I still had no thought of following that path. However, it seemed that God had other ideas.

I went to Launde with Sandra Robinson for a prayer. During a period of prayer, I realised that if I went on to the next year, which concentrated on lay ministry, when it finished it would be 2008 and I would be retiring and so would have time on my hands. I began to wonder what this might mean. I remember discussing during a meal whether this was a message from God or just my own thoughts. I was encouraged and advised to pray for further guidance and talk to others as a way of discernment. A seed had been planted.

Afterwards I had many conversations expressing my doubts about my ability and whether it was a 'real' calling. I did begin to feel that Pastoral Assistant ministry was the way I was being led. Sandra had been a Pastoral Assistant for some time and I talked to her a lot about what it entailed and my doubts. She was very encouraging. Marion Tegg was also very helpful.

Still not feeling totally confident, I decided to go ahead. I felt that if it was not the right thing for me to do the door would shut. I went to see Rev. James Shakespeare, our then Rector, and asked if he would write a letter of recommendation. He did. I attended the selection interview, apprehensive as I knew there could be a problem, a shut door. Having been a member of the Baptist church, I have been baptised, not confirmed. My baptism is extremely important to me.

BUT it is possible to have another dog, a different one, one with different likes and dislikes and different idiosyncrasies. Which is what we've done.

Oscar entered our lives on Saturday 6th July. He was just under eight weeks old.

We are now going through the delights of 'house training.' Gleeful shouts of 'Well done, Oscar' and 'What a clever boy, Oscar' can be heard resonating around Roman Road when Oscar does what comes naturally to him, but in the garden, instead of in the house!



We have vague, distant memories of what this stage was like with Sam. Probably just as well that our memories are no sharper, as comments from friends such as 'Oh, aren't you brave having a puppy!' may really start ringing out the alarm bells!

We have yet to go through the 'move everything chewable out of reach' and 'move anything breakable above tail wagging height'. But the joy Oscar is already bringing back into our lives will make the work and effort worth it.

To see Oscar's new world through his eyes is a true blessing and a joy. The smallest of insects to the largest of pigeons (of which there are many) are fascinating to him. The shadow, cast by a strap from a bag left on a chair, is a monster waiting to pounce and needs to be seen off!

This brave little soldier is helping us to see God's wonderful creation afresh.

Debbie Shephard

NEW LIFE NEW BEGINNINGS FRESH PERSPECTIVES

There is no doubt about it, these last ten months have been difficult, not to say stressful and sad. We lost my cousin Jean, to motor neurone disease, at the end of November. We'd grown up together as sisters. Then, in January, our dear Black Labrador, Sam, died, and the very same weekend our good and close friend Bert Tegg passed away, and, as everyone knows, at the beginning of May, Marion died too.

I'm not going to dwell on these things. We all, without exception, have times in our lives when unhappiness prevails and we wonder if we will feel joy again. What's more, with the exception of Sam, we were on the periphery of the grief these events created. Whilst I felt, and still do, the intense loss of my cousin, her family's loss is considerably greater than mine, and the grief felt by Bert and Marion's family, having to deal with the losing their two parents so close together, is immeasurable. We continue to pray for them all.

I am, however, going to have a little word about Sam. I'm sure many of you will empathize when I say having a dog is a way of life.

The unconditional love a dog gives cannot be compared to anything else. Once the 'joys' of puppyhood are done, and harmony and understanding reigns, there is nothing quite like the understanding between dog and owner.

When that pet dies, the whole household routine changes and there is an emptiness which is difficult to describe. As with people, dogs cannot be replaced, they stay with us in our hearts and minds just as people do.



However, the diocesan authorities had come across this before. The Bishop requested that I enter membership of the Church of England, which I did, at a service at St James. I had completed the first year CCD course satisfactorily, having completed the required couple of essays. I applied for and was accepted for the first year of Pastoral Assistant Training. The doors had stayed open. God had been leading me, or perhaps pushing me, through them.

There followed another year of study, but most of that was learning more about the role of a PA. I was commissioned in October 2008.

If you are interested in exploring your faith further, just out of interest, as I did, or as investigating a vocation, details of the current study course *Journey in Faith*, which is very different to the one I did, can be found on the Leicester diocesan website at www.leicester.anglican.org/growing-in-ministry/training-and-development/journey-in-faith-course/. You never know where it might take you!

Gill Pope

FROM AN EARLY AGE

'What's that building there?' I asked my grandparents as they took me on my tricycle to the local park not long after my parents and I had moved to our brand new council house. I was just four. 'That's a church' they replied. 'Can we go on Sunday?' I asked and we did. And I've never stopped going!

By the age of six I was giving out the service books at Evensong. By the age of eight I had joined the choir. When I was ten I started playing the piano for Sunday School and within a year I was playing for Family Services.

In my teens I started playing for Evensong and leading choir practices. About this time a lady in the congregation suggested that I should go forward for ordination. My immediate response was negative as I wouldn't want to conduct funerals!

FROM AN EARLY AGE *continued*

By the sixth form I was leading the Christian group at school. My headmaster knew that ordination was a possibility and he suggested that I should go on a course for sixth formers taking place at Oxford for those thinking about ordination. This made me more certain that this was what God wanted for me. My grandfather was my great encourager at every stage. I owe so much to him.

I went to St John's College, Durham to study biblical studies, church history and Greek. At the end of my first year, I went to a selection conference for the ministry and was accepted on condition that I did something else between university and theological college. So I trained as a teacher and taught for two years in West London. Then it was off to St John's College, Nottingham for two years. I was ordained deacon in 1973 and priest a year later.

I served curacies at Christ Church, Chilwell in Nottingham, where I met Tricia, and in Wembley. I was Vicar at Hanworth near Hampton Court for ten years. Then we moved to Leicestershire where I was Rector of Ravenstone and Vicar of Swannington for over 15 years and finally Vicar of Mountsorrel for more than 8 years. We've now been in Birstall for over 6 years.

I've always enjoyed ministry and I still do. A group of primary school children once asked me if I would choose ordination if I were starting my life again. I gave them an emphatic 'Yes'. And I would. It's where God wanted me and I believe he still does. I'm not finished yet!

Kerry Emmett

**WE ALL HAVE A VOCATION.
WE BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS PLACED US IN THIS
LIFE TO FILL A SPECIAL NEED THAT NO ONE ELSE
CAN ACCOMPLISH.**

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

In its leaflet, the Trust says that the Leicester City Council share their concerns that St Peter's is the only historic former Parish Church in Leicester that has not yet found a new lease of life. It is fantastic that at least something is happening.

Belgrave Hall gardens, next to the Church, are open every Wednesday and on the first full weekend of every month, from 11am until 4.30pm. You may like to go and have a look.

I believe, however, that is not all that the Lord wants. On Christmas Eve, St Peter's Belgrave became a blaze of bright white light. I believe that I am very clearly being told by the Lord to get things ready to put his message into Belgrave Church even though it is shut. The Lord is writing the story. I am having great fun sorting things out!



Belgrave St Peter's Church

On my last visit to St Peter's Church I noticed a very big difference. The minute I walked through the gate I could feel the Holy Ground beneath my feet.

Please pray with me.

Julie

THE LORD'S SWAN STORY



Since I last wrote in Spring 2019, I have had the pleasure of talking with Bishop Martyn when he came to St James' Church on 12th May. I thought he was a really nice person. I have also got in touch with Archdeacon Richard and have asked them to speak to each other about Kizzy the Lord's Swan and Belgrave Church. Hopefully they have been in prayer to the Lord about it.



I read in a leaflet that a new charity called the Belgrave Heritage Trust has been created. (It grew out of the Friends of St Peter's.)

53rd Leicester (Birstall) Scout Group Presents

Scouts
Birstall

The Last Night of the PROMS

Saturday 5th October 2019

7.30pm
(Doors open 7pm)

St James Church, Church Hill, Birstall, LE4 4DN

With the Bilton Silver (Rugby) Band

Tickets £10,
available in advance or on the door.

FOR TICKETS Tel 0116 2674031,
Mob 07842 336 745, Email terencesamuel@hotmail.co.uk

SHINE, JESUS, SHINE!

The new vicar at a city centre church was delighted when he received an anonymous gift. When he told the church council about it, he proposed it should be used to buy a new chandelier for the body of the church.

However, it was put to a vote, and the vicar was disappointed when his proposal was narrowly defeated.

The vicar noted that the church council secretary had voted against the proposal and when the meeting was over, he asked the secretary why he had not supported it.

The secretary said he had three reasons: 'First, I have to write the minutes of the meeting and I can't spell the word; second, there is sure to be an argument over who should play it; and finally, if we are going to spend money in the Church, what we really need is some good lighting.'

JOB DESCRIPTION

A passenger jet was flying through a severe thunderstorm. As the passengers were being bounced around by the turbulence, a young woman turned to a minister sitting next to her and, with a nervous laugh, asked,
'Reverend, you're a man of God,
can't you do something about this storm?'

To which he replied, 'Sorry ma'am, I'm in sales, not management.'

Both taken from *Grove Jokes and Quotes* e-mails,
and used with permission

At the same time as the studies, we have had monthly 'socials' to just get together, have fun and share.

These are important times for us and for people who might want to just come and find out a bit more about who and what we are, without it being too threatening.

NEARER TO OUR COMMUNITY

All the above builds us up and equips us to be God's people. But we don't want to be just doing this and looking inwards all the time. Where are we engaged with people outside of church, in the community? Members of NEARER often help at community events, such as the duck race and the Birstall Gala. And the Birstall Food Hub came about through contacts we made through our community contacts. In addition we also try to support those who are employed, by praying and listening to their situations.

However, as ever, it is all too easy to be so busy with all the 'stuff,' and not have time to be where people might be; to be asking people to come to us and not be where people may actually be. So, because we know there has been a surge in interest in board games with Games Cafés popping up, and because some of us like board games, we are exploring whether this might be something we might do to engage with people in a new way. The idea is to play games but also to use some of the games to explore what spirituality might bring to some aspect of everyday life. We think the title will be 'Soul Games' and we think we would simply play games and then have 10/15 minutes exploring something together with whoever comes. We've no idea if it will work, whether anyone will come but we're going to give it a go! We are currently exploring possible venues...

So, that's where NEARER is currently.

If you want to know more do feel free to contact us on 0116 212 0236.

Peter Chester

NEARER

NEARER seeks to be:

Nearer to God

Nearer to each other

Nearer to the Community



How?

NEARER TO GOD

Members of NEARER commit themselves to, firstly, spending time with God by themselves each day. This is a time to be quiet before God, to listen and to talk with God. Over the last year we have also introduced 'Encounter' where, once a month we meet together to 'Encounter' God in worship together. The idea is that we meet God in different ways and so our worship has taken various forms, including meditation, silence, singing (including Taizé chants), various liturgies and reflecting on readings and videos.

In addition, we meet monthly to pray together. During these times we pray for our world, our country, our village and ourselves. Praying together also brings us closer together.

NEARER TO EACH OTHER

NEARER meets weekly and we have undertaken various forms of learning together. This helps us to draw nearer to each other and to God. These regular meetings have included:

- Looking at 'The Ninefold Path', which proved to be an interesting and challenging way of looking at the Beatitudes
- Using works of art to look at the Bible
- Following a course based on the TV series 'Broken'

Over the next period we are continuing to look at the pictures and also to embark on a Church Army course 'Faith Pictures' which says it is 'a fresh way to talk about things that matter'.

A FAVOURITE PLACE

ROMSEY ABBEY, HAMPSHIRE

We have such an incredibly rich and wonderful Christian history in this country of ours, and this year, so far, I have been fortunate to have visited a few amazing places that are not only surviving, but thriving as a spiritual focus for their communities. Romsey Abbey has got to be the jewel in the Christian crown; a place of worship since c. 907 AD, re-founded in 967 as a Benedictine Abbey of nuns, who worked and prayed in Romsey for more than 500 years. It was saved from the monastic dissolution of Henry VIII by four 'guardians' who successfully petitioned the King.

There are, of course, many monuments in the Abbey to citizens of Romsey and the surrounding area, but I found the most poignant memorial to be a marble statue of a young sleeping child, a little girl, Alice Taylor. Her father was a doctor, but even his knowledge and skill couldn't save her.



Among the Abbey's other fascinating monuments is the tomb of Earl Mountbatten of Burma. It is plain but dignified, and is near to the pew used by him and still used by his family.

Romsey Abbey is not a museum but a vibrant thriving hub of modern worship and activity, and also an oasis of tranquillity and peace with the prayers of over one thousand years soaked into its very stone.

Leigh Reid

ST. JAMES' PARISH HOLIDAY 2019

After all the rain and cold of the past weeks, we were blessed to have sunshine and warmth for the whole of our time away. We set off in sunshine, with our lovely driver, Colin, who turned out to be an absolute treasure. How he got that big coach around some of the corners and the traffic was miraculous! It is always good to arrive somewhere and to know that there is a meal waiting, and the hotel catering staff did us proud, as did the rest of the staff, very helpful (and patient).

On the first day, we took in both Brooklands Museum and RHS Wisley Gardens, both of which I could have spent a couple of days looking round. We visited quite a few garden centres as well as Wisley, and by the time we headed back to Leicester, the boot of the coach was like a greenhouse with all the plants that had been bought. I hope they are all thriving in our gardens.

I know now how to fly an aeroplane! Sitting in the pilot's seat of the Sultan's aircraft, the guide, an ex-pilot, showed me how the controls worked. It's quite easy, really! I think I'll be a pilot when I grow up. We couldn't go on the Concorde, as it was being made ready for something special, but I walked under it, and I think it is still just a super aircraft, on a par with the Vulcan - it just has the WOW factor. The whole of Brooklands is amazing, so much to see, and next door to the headquarters of Mercedes, surrounded by beautiful, gleaming autos.

Onward and upward, as they say - to Windsor Castle, where the Queen was in residence (it being Ascot week). It was pretty hot now, and very crowded, but the ice-cream made from the milk of the Royal herd of Jersey cows was super. The state rooms are so impressive, and lined with portraits of past monarchs and members of the aristocracy, by Lely and Gainsborough among many others. I must admit to being more than a little star-struck, knowing I was in the same building as our Queen! Gosh!

There is much that is true and helpful in this perspective, especially as the Church grew and spread. With increasing distance from the events of Jesus' life on earth, belief in his ascension became a cornerstone for an expanded understanding of Jesus' new relationship to the earth he had left. But that's not really the major preoccupation of the Lucan-Acts accounts of the resurrection. No, they have a subtly different concern.

Immediately prior to Jesus' ascension, he tells his disciples to wait, and that power will be given to them. The waiting is the emotion which defines his earthly leave-taking of us. Jesus is no longer with us in the flesh, but he will leave us neither orphans or powerless. He will send us 'another comforter'. Ascension is the interim stage of the church's beginning. His followers live between promise and fulfilment. The disciples then, and we now, are called to live faithful and obedient lives, to witness from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth to the things we have met and continue to meet in our resurrected Lord. And we know that we will be given the resources to achieve these things.

But one note of caution. Jesus' ascension undoubtedly points forward to the pentecostal experience, when the Holy Spirit empowers us for the task with which he has left us. We need, however, to retain a wider final perspective. And so the absence of Jesus in this waiting time, encourages us both to await the power we need for faithful living and also Jesus' return at the consummation of all things. The Ascension asks us also to live in the hope of that which is to come. When we shall see Christ come, not as a child, nor even in resurrected form, but as judge of all. That is, for us, both an excitement and truly awe-ful. As we await the coming of the Spirit we need to remember that we will all be judged, judged on how we use the power imparted to us. That is an awesome responsibility, may we respond in humility.

*Lee Francis-Dehqani
Interim Rector, The Fosse Team*

LIVING IN HOPE

GOSCOTE DEANERY ASCENSION DAY SERMON

I have often thought that, together with Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day convinced me to become an Anglican. It began when I was a university student. I was exploring what it might mean to be a Christian in the 20th century and I fell in with a 'bad' crowd, the members of the University Anglican Society. They dragged me (somewhat weary from a late night) to early celebrations of Holy Communion on Ash Wednesday and on Ascension Day. I had known nothing like it before. From my intensely conservative and Biblicist background, I knew all about the Ascension from the Bible, but I had neither knowledge nor experience of it impinging on my worshipping life. Or on how I believed and practiced the faith. But there I was, in 1987, with a wonderful University Chaplain, a great influence, in the early morning, celebrating Ascension Day, as an event, not of the past, but an event which went some way to define us all as a community of believers.

I had been brought up well, and taught well the things of the Christian faith. I knew all the stories and the Reformed theological interpretation of them. What I hadn't experienced was how the stories might influence me as an individual, even less the Church as a community. But in that University Chapel, in those early mornings, I first experienced what it meant to live the Christian story through the medium and progress of the Christian year, and particularly Jesus' resurrection and ascension. For me this has been a fruitful experience and has allowed for an authentic expression of Christian believing.

Richard Dawkins and his atheistic fundamentalist friends ridicule our belief, reducing Jesus' ascension to some sort of 'cosmic elevator'. To some extent the Church is partly to blame for that. We have often concentrated on the Ascension as a feast of the glorification of Jesus. His resurrected life would no longer be limited to those who saw him physically in those forty days, for God has highly exalted him.

We have such amazing treasures in 'our' castles and palaces, which we also found in Hampton Court. No wonder Henry VIII was jealous of his Cardinal Wolsey, building such an ego-boosting palace on the banks of the Thames - it really is breath-taking. The famous grapevine is over 300 years old now - it was only 250 years old when I last saw it.

Windsor was packed with folk, and we stopped in the High Street to watch a demonstration by the Morris dancers, both men and women, which was really good. The sun shone; the band played; soldiers marched; tourists were armed with a forest of cameras. However, it came as quite a relief to leave the crowds behind, get on the boat and sail away down that lovely river to Runnymede. Have you noticed that as soon as people get on boats they start waving? They wave at people on other boats who always wave back, wave at people on the tow-path, at the lock-gates, or on bridges, or in gardens, everywhere. It is all very friendly, so perhaps we should wave more in our daily lives.

It always amazes me how much water there is around London. On my 'bucket list' is a wish to swim once more in the Thames (upstream somewhere, obviously, where it is not crowded with boats). I couldn't do that, but the next best thing is to be on a boat on top of it, and we had the 'Queen of the Thames' at Windsor, to take us away from the crowds and noise and mix with the swans and water birds on our way to Runnymede. We passed through two huge locks, in company with other boats, which is quite an experience. Perhaps I'll be a lock-keeper in between being a pilot - it looks like fun, and you get to live in some lovely cottage by the lock gates.

All the places we visited and passed by are so much part of our heritage and history - the absolute pride of Britain and the root of England. It was a lovely holiday, and the sun was still shining when we came back to Birstall - via a garden centre, of course.

Leigh Reid

EXTRA-ORDINARY BANNERS

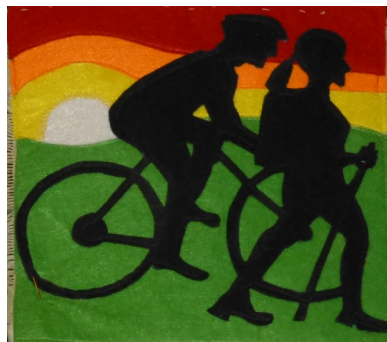
For some time I have been a member of a small group who have designed and made seasonal banners to brighten up St James' Church. We began last year to discuss new banners to mark 'Ordinary Time' (green), as we had none.

The idea originally came from a website called *Pinterest*, on which I saw 'inchies': beautifully embroidered, decorated one inch squares. From this the inspiration grew, and I came up with the idea of '9 inchies': individual 9 inch squares to form new banners, and to invite members of our congregation to contribute. No pressure applied, honestly.



Now we can see what a super artistic congregation you are. You all came up with some great ideas. I think the finished banners reflect different talents and great imagination. See *front cover*. Thank you to all who made a square. Let's hope we all enjoy looking at them for a long time.

Sarah Mumford



FROM OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CHURCH

We enjoyed being creative to produce our station of joy – Jesus on the seashore - so were pleased to be asked to contribute a panel to go on the new banners.

We selected as our central image the Sunday school mascot of James Bear, now aged 7, and surrounded him with items to represent what being part of this group means to us. A cross, a star and our friends, also animals, to represent God's wider creation.



We then chose items to make a personal banner to take home to remind us of our time together in church with each other and God.

During the past year in our time together we have studied the events in Jesus' life from the annunciation to the ascension and we created a picture or drawing to reflect on our learning. These were put on a time line which Vince decided to hang on the altar!

Janet Waters

As part of our bible study each week we try to encourage our young people to be creative in interpreting what they are learning – ideas always welcome!

