

'KEEP IN TOUCH', Spring 2021

Copy by, but, if possible, before 1st February 2021

All contributions welcome. Maximum preferred length: 500 words!

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

'Keep In Touch'



I'm 10 this year! James Bear

KEEPING YOU 'IN TOUCH' IS

Name

Address

Tel. No.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THEM

WINTER 2020

**CHURCH & VILLAGE
BIRSTALL & WANLIP**

THE PARISH OF BIRSTALL AND WANLIP

No Rector pro tem	Please ring 0750 198810 to speak to a church warden while the parish is in interregnum	
Hon Asst. Priests	Revd Sheila Skidmore, 15 School Lane	2673318
	Revd Kerry Emmett, 1 Chamberlains Field	3194736
	Canon Anne Horton, 8b Copeland Road	2677942
	Revd Robin Martin, 22 Sycamore Road	07971632268
	Revd Michael Webb, 31 Bramley Road	07813144645
Churchwardens	Mr Tony Bloxam, 17 Sandgate Avenue	2675381
	Mr John Borrajo, 8 Hallam Avenue	2209289
	Mr John Ward, 28 Walker Road	2677600
	Mrs Debbie Shephard, 41 Roman Road	2672630
Licensed Readers PTO	Mr Peter Chester, 12 Oakfield Avenue	2120236
	Mrs Lesley Walton, 16 The Crossways	2674995
Pastoral Assistants	Mrs Doreen Wilson, 13 Poplar Avenue	2674680
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	<i>email: stjames.birstall@btconnect.com</i>	
Tower Captain	Mr Clive Mobbs, 30 Wanlip Avenue	2677156
	<i>Practice night—Thursday at 7pm</i>	
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.

MESSAGE FROM SHERYL

Following the Prime Minister's announcement of a 2nd lockdown and that there cannot be any public worship happening in our churches through November, though they may at certain times be open for private prayer, I am still planning on being in the Church Office on Tuesday and Friday mornings. The weekly Information sheets will carry on being sent out electronically. If you are not already receiving them, but would like to, email stjames.birstall@btconnect.com, or sheryljupp@hotmail.co.uk, or contact a churchwarden. You can also access them on the church website (www.birstall.org). Paper copies can be picked up in church, or from the little wooden box attached to St James' Church Notice Board.

We will be hand delivering the Winter edition of the 'Keep in Touch' magazine as we did the Autumn edition.

Love, Sheryl

CORONAVIRUS AND PUBLIC WORSHIP

During November's 'lockdown', all public worship was cancelled, but both our churches were open for private prayer: **St James: Wednesdays and Sundays 10-11 am; Our Lady & S Nicholas: Wednesday & Sundays 3-4 pm.** Hopefully after the lockdown we may be able to hold Sunday services at each of our churches: **9.30 am Holy Communion, Birstall; 6.00pm Evensong, Wanlip.** For details of **Christmas services**, see the weekly sheets via the church website, birstall.org When in church, face masks must be worn, seating is reduced in order to maintain safe distancing, and there is no singing. Neither church is open at any other time. Please continue to pray for each other.

*God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.
In their loneliness, be their consolation;
in their anxiety, be their hope; in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen*

MONDAY GROUP CHARITY

In the Autumn edition of 'Keep In Touch' magazine we said that the charity for Birstall St. James' Monday group was Macmillan Nurses Leicestershire. This was incorrect. We have raised £115.00 which has been forwarded to this charity. We are now raising funds for the charity, Dementia UK Admiral Nurses Leicestershire. We are knitting scarves and making aprons. Please accept our apologies over the mix-up. **Brenda Todd, Joan Folland.**

A Carer's Prayer

*Let me be kind when tiredness overwhelms
my weary brain and turns my legs to lead;
let me brave when truths must be conveyed,
confronting the past and all things left unsaid;
let me fight on for you when various rules
make nonsense of your rights and reinforce your fears;
grant me the stamina to speak and treat with fools,
remaining calm when biting back the tears.
Help me to know somehow that life goes on
beyond this time of stress and sleepless nights;
help me to smile and love you in the midst
of endless pointless and exhausting fights.
And when the caring ends, help me to be
kind, in my guilt and weariness, to me.*

by Heather Smith

FROM THE REGISTERS

September - November 2020

Funerals

9 September Patricia Charles Birstall Cemetery

Rev. Tim Day took the funeral service for Patricia, who died in a care home in Lincolnshire. In the past Patricia had lived on Greengate Lane and she was married in St James' Church. Some of you may have known her.

HELLO TO ALL MY FRIENDS



I am now 10 years old.
My birthday is on the 30th September. Every year I have had a party at the church with all the families and my friends. Sadly not this year.

I am looking forward to when we can get together to celebrate all the exciting things we have been doing to learn about God. Maybe the children made Cynthia's cakes for tea with candles? (I love chocolate and licking the spoon!) Sweeties and chocolates are lovely treats. At Easter all our families had Easter eggs in knitted chicks and, for my birthday, we all enjoyed Celebration Chocolates. In the Summer we made a Christingle using an orange, with jelly babies to help us think about the different families in the world. The candle is lit to show that Jesus is with us all.

It is a long walk around Birstall for a bear with little legs. I do get carried in the back pack when I'm tired. It is great to see our families when we deliver our activity packs. I am able to wave. Some families live too far away, so I help carry the parcels to the Post Office. I am not very good with sticky tape.

PSSST. I can let you into a secret... We are getting together the Advent calendars and Bible study cards, with the various sweeties. I must remember not to eat them all at once, and say thank you to God each day. Christmas is not long off and, as a very good bear, who keeps good secrets, I can't tell you anything yet, but it will be special. I am sure of that. .. So I had best sign off for now. See you soon.

Lots of love,

JAMES BEAR
XXXXXXXXXXXX

P.S. See you at church!

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES MINISTRY

JANUARY 2020 TO DATE

Due to the Coronavirus shut down and limitations to the life of the Church, we have been unable to hold any normal Sunday School sessions since March 2020. Our ministry to our families has focussed on emails, printed materials and distanced visits. Thanks to the support and encouragement of the Diocesan Youth and Family Ministry Zoom Meetings, we began a new pattern of interaction, to maintain families on the Christian journey.

We have delivered Easter Eggs in Knitted Chicks, the new James Bear Newsletter, Activity Sheets on different themes, with all the necessary stationery and craft items, and a regular supply of sweets and chocolates related to the Bible task or story.

During the good weather earlier in the year, the Children's Team were able to meet in a socially distanced and planned way, to keep check of our own well-being and changing circumstances, to plan the activity sheets and to keep up with the pastoral care of families. This has included advising them of the Food Bank, other help and church information. Two team members deliver the bags to the families, providing a door-step conversation possibility, thus enabling us to show our presence and to reassure them that God still loves them. Where families live out of area, the activities have been posted. Doreen Wilson, our parish Pastoral Assistant and Sunday School Parent supporter, has maintained telephone visits and this has enabled key relationships to continue. We are looking to see what we might do that is related to Advent and Christmas celebrations. Remembrance Sunday and All Souls have been marked.

Rose will continue leading children and family ministry until the new Rector arrives, when new plans can be considered. The Team will continue to communicate and meet, according to needs and to government rules. Debbie Sheppard is our Liaison Person and Father Michael continues to provide spiritual mentoring and guidance as needed.

Rose Parrott (Children and Families Ministry)

but I am questioning my capacity and energy to give the role the ongoing commitment it deserves. Besides I mustn't be greedy, it will be time to give someone else the privilege of serving God's church in this unique capacity. Don't be shy, pray about it, come and be a Deputy Warden now, it's not too late, it would give you a gentle introduction into the position, and it doesn't have to be for 21 years!

Tony Bloxam

How the Light Comes *A Blessing for Christmas Day*

I cannot tell you how the light comes.
What I know is that it is more ancient than imagining.
That it travels across an astounding expanse to reach us.
That it loves searching out what is hidden,
what is lost, what is forgotten, or in peril, or in pain.

That it has a fondness for the body,
for finding its way toward flesh,
for tracing the edges of form,
for shining forth through the eye, the hand, the heart.

I cannot tell you how the light comes,
but that it does.
That it will.

That it works its way
into the deepest dark that enfolds you,
though it may seem long ages in coming
or arrive in a shape you did not foresee.

And so may we this day turn ourselves toward it.
May we lift our faces to let it find us.
May we bend our bodies to follow the arc it makes.
May we open and open more and open still
to the blessed light
that comes.

Jan Richardson

NEXT PLEASE!

Having declared, after re-election as Churchwarden for Birstall at the Annual Parish Meeting, that this would be my last time, I thought that I would share something of my experience, and maybe encourage others to think about taking on the role. When it was first suggested that I should agree to be nominated, I thought, 'What me? Be a Churchwarden? I don't know anything about it!' What was I going to do? What did God want me to do? Sometimes it's right to think about what may seem impossible, and let God be the decider. And so I did let God take charge, and in 1994 I was elected as Churchwarden for Birstall.

I entered into unknown territory with considerable trepidation, no idea what was expected of me, didn't even understand the language half the time. I was supposed to look after the 'Terrier', but never had a dog in my life (turned out to be an inventory). But no need to worry, I was part of a supportive team, and soon found out that lack of knowledge of rules and regulations was not a problem, it was something that would come gradually – but I have to say never completely. But it didn't matter, there were always others to ask, and others to share with; I was beginning to grow into the role. I now find it exciting, fulfilling, fun, creative, and, yes, challenging, sometimes frustrating, and I still get puzzled over some of the unfamiliar terminology, but it's never dull and never uninteresting. It brings understanding of all the 'what, where, when and why' questions, or most of them! It is a privilege to contribute to the running of the Parish, making future plans together, overcoming problems, taking risks, supporting fresh initiatives, always seeking to determine God's will for His church and His people.

I will have completed a total of 21 years, 7 years from 1994, then a short break and a further 14 years up to 2021. I have benefitted from the role, I have tackled things that I never previously thought remotely possible, and I am grateful for the encouragement I still receive, helping my journey with Christ. I am not singing my 'Swan Song' just yet, and it will be with a degree of reluctance when I do,

I ENJOY, I REMEMBER, I LOVE

A FEW WORDS FROM THE REST OF THE TEAM

Cynthia: I enjoyed sharing Bible stories, and activities round the table.

Janet: I remember the searching questions the children asked that we couldn't answer. Also we were so proud of how they explained to the congregation what they had learned.

Rita: I love the enthusiasm they have to learn new things. And how last year they made a wonderful arrangement for the Wanlip Flower Festival. Plus table decorations. And we all remember 'the cakes'!

CHOCOLATE CRUNCH CAKES RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

Take: 50 gm marg; 2 tbsp. drinking chocolate; 1 spoon Golden Syrup; 65 gm cornflakes or rice krispies or bran flakes.

METHOD

Place 15 paper cases on a baking sheet.

Melt the margarine in a saucepan over a gentle heat, add the drinking chocolate and golden syrup and mix well.

Remove saucepan from the heat, gently stir in your chosen breakfast cereal, making sure it is all coated with the chocolate mixture.

Use two spoonfuls to share the mixture between the paper cases.

Leave to set in a cool place.

**SHARE, EAT,
ENJOY!**



AN INVISIBLE CONGREGATION

I now know what it must be like to be a TV presenter - facing a camera and not being able to see the viewers at home!

During the first lockdown caused by the coronavirus, and for some time afterwards, we were unable to meet in church, and we were also unable to stream the service from St James'. John Ward did manage after some while to Zoom Wanlip Evening Prayer which was much appreciated. Later we got used to a new normal in both churches with one service in each church per Sunday, but with masks, social distancing and no singing. And then came Lockdown 2. What were we going to do? At just that time, the Revd. Rosie Homer joined us from Billesdon for eight weeks. She had streamed services before and so we planned to put the Remembrance Sunday service on Facebook. Forty eight hours later we filmed the service on Rosie's mobile phone. I presided and Rosie preached. It was really strange. Leading the service but not seeing the congregation, not knowing if anyone would watch and making sure that we were in range of the camera. It was even stranger than having a masked, socially distanced congregation in church! Andy played some music on the organ. John Borrajo read the first reading and Josephine Burgess led the intercessions. At the end, there was a short Remembrance section, naming those to be remembered and observing the two minutes' silence. A final blessing and dismissal and it was all over. The service register recorded a Sunday service recorded on Thursday.

Did anybody watch? By Sunday afternoon, there had been 1k hits. Were you one of them as St James made history? Somebody asked if I was calling this article 'Kerry on the Telly'- but I refrained! Wanlip is back to Zooming evening services. How long we shall need to Zoom or Facebook is unclear. Some people claim that these services make 'church going' more convenient, but I look forward to seeing the congregation, sharing the peace, singing hymns and worship songs, socialising after the service- and all without masks and social distancing.

Kerry Emmett

In the interest of continuity during these testing times, Tony Bloxam and John Borrajo agreed to stand for another year as Churchwardens for St. James the Great, and John Ward and I have agreed to stand for another year for Our Lady & St. Nicholas. All four of us were elected on an unanimous vote.

The APCM is a meeting for church members only. Whilst parishioners may attend the meeting, only people on the church electoral roll may take part in discussions and vote. There are reports on the fabric of the churches, our health and safety and safe guarding policies and, of course, the election of members on to the PCC.

This year we required four new PCC members for three years and one for two years. Mrs Cynthia Coltman and Mrs Lynn Van Ristell were elected for three years. And Mrs Gill Chester agreed to serve for two years.

We are entitled to send three representatives to the Deanery Synod. There were only two proposals - Mrs Rose Parrott and Mrs Corrine Aldis. Both were elected unanimously.

Each of our churches benefit from two deputy churchwardens, a role which is vital to the day to day running of the churches. Mrs Elaine Moyers and Mrs Doreen Wilson were elected for Wanlip and Mrs Mary Bruce was elected for Birstall, which means we still have a vacancy. This can be filled at anytime by co-option.

Following the APCM there was a very short PCC meeting to confirm officers.

These are as follows: Vice Chair - Debbie Shephard;
Treasurer - Nicky Wills, Secretary - Lynn Van Ristelle,
Finance & Standing Committee representatives - Andy White and Doreen Willson

Debbie Shephard

At one time, the Rector's Warden was appointed by the Rector and the Peoples' Warden was elected by the people!! Canon Anne

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

The Birstall and Wanlip Annual Parish Meeting (APM) and its Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) normally take place in April. Even with recent changes to the Church of England's Church Representation Rules, the meetings should have been held by the end of June. Needless to say, 2020 has been different! Because of the circumstances, we were given until the end of October to fulfil these particular legal obligations.

The object of the meetings is to elect various members to be churchwardens, deputy churchwardens, PCC representatives and Deanery Synod representatives. It is also the opportunity to update members of the congregation with what has been going on in the church since the previous APM and APCM, which would include a report from the Rector.

As we are in 'vacancy' I have, therefore, in my capacity as Vice Chairperson to the PCC, prepared a report on behalf of the Churchwardens in lieu of the Rector's report, also published in this edition of 'Keep in Touch' (pp. 22-23). We would normally also approve the accounts to be submitted to the Charity Commission, but we were able to do this via email at the end of March.

We always hold the APM just before the APCM and it normally lasts about 10 minutes. Its sole purpose is to elect the Churchwardens. The whole of the parish is invited to this meeting and anyone on the parish electoral roll is able to vote on who should or should not be Churchwarden. This obviously dates back to times when the church had a much greater function in the running of a community than it appears to have these days. To this day we still have the Rector's Churchwarden and the Peoples' Churchwarden. Please don't ask me which is which in our churches today!

MAKE ROOM IN YOUR HEART

The final reading of the Nine Lessons and Carols is John 1.1-14. The last verse of this has been resonating for me this year, as we approach Advent and Christmas. *'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'*

I am lucky to be 'dwelling' with you on placement for this short time, during which we celebrate the wonder of Christmas: God becoming human, so that we may fully encounter and find a relationship with God, in the person of Jesus Christ, who draws us back to himself.

This is always a special time of year for me. For a number of years I struggled to find a personal meaning in the Christian faith, but I found through being able to reflect, think, pray and be still in open Churches – particularly around Christmas time – I was able to draw closer to something wonderful and sacred. From that sense of 'encounter', not only growth in my personal faith, but also a sense of calling to ministry came.

With the challenges of COVID this year, we are invited to experience Christmas anew. Our celebrations this year may take a gentler form of simply receiving the greatest gift we could receive – God's unconditional love and saving grace to us, born as the Christ Child. Whatever services we may or may not be able to offer, we can go back to the basics of Christmas.

In this season of wonder, comfort and joy, just dwell with the God who came to dwell among us, as one of us, wherever we are. Drop into church (if you can) when we are open. Make some time to read or listen closely to the words of familiar Christmas carols. Read once again the Gospel narratives of Jesus' birth.

Dwell with those words. Make 'room at the inn' in your heart so as to welcome the Christ Child, and perhaps you may experience his presence with you in a new way this Christmas.

Rosie Homer

LINK TO HOPE

SHOEBOX APPEAL 2020

Stairway to Happiness

We were not expecting to send many boxes this year, but, to our amazement and delight, we had 52 boxes. Thanks to many generous contributions and donations, we exceeded all our expectations.

Due to social distancing, Sylvia, assisted by her husband, had to pack and wrap the boxes, but Doreen was continually arriving with more provisions, and the mild autumn weather enabled us to have coffee and a chat in the garden or, on occasion, in the greenhouse.

Sylvia and Rose raided their fabric stores and Doreen's friend, Jessie, made over 50 beautiful bags. Then a surprise gift of two enormous bags of goodies arrived from Queniborough and the contributions kept piling in.

Doreen and Sylvia became quite expert at twisting the arms of friends and relations!



It was so heart-warming to see how people responded to this year's appeal, and we know that the boxes will bring comfort and joy in especially difficult times across the world.

Thank you all once again and please keep saving things; we are always happy to collect.

The photograph shows the Simes' staircase completely filled with the 52 shoeboxes.

Doreen Wilson, Sylvia Simes

One normal thing that happened in 2019 was our annual Summer Fayre which raised £2600, half of which was shared between two charities; MIND, and our Local Food Hub. The 2020 fayre was, sadly, a Covid casualty.

The management of the Parish since last December has rested with the churchwardens, and we have tried to hold things together, both through a series of Zoom meetings and also socially distanced physical meetings, including some with the retired clergy we are so fortunate to have with us.

There was a complete shutdown of the church in March, followed by a period in June when we were allowed to open for private prayer. During this time the church was fully prepared to ensure that all government guide-lines were in place. There followed another short shut down, with an eventual opening for services being allowed from August 9th 2020, but with a rearranged service pattern, just the one service each Sunday at St James' at a new time of 9.30 am. (Likewise an evening service at Wanlip.) The seating preparations made for private prayer remained good for the services, and congregations of about 40 attended these services of Holy Communion at St James' with all appropriate safeguarding applied.

A massive thank you to all our retired clergy who have been so helpful in conducting our services, and in providing pastoral care and guidance. There has also been a huge effort to try and maintain contact with the church membership throughout the current difficulties, particularly those who are alone and those without internet access. Our thanks to all who have assisted in this vital pastoral work. Progress towards appointing a new rector has stalled for now, but we have done all we can in the current situation, and have already completed most of the process up to advertising the vacancy.

There are so many unsung heroes within our church fellowship, and we extend our gratitude to each and every one of you. God bless you all.

John Borrajo & Tony Bloxam

CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT

Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2020 for ST JAMES THE GREAT, BIRSTALL

It is our responsibility as churchwardens to report on the condition of church ornaments, fittings and fabric, and, subject to some ongoing fabric work, we are able to confirm that, everything is in good order and that all items in the terrier (church inventory) are accounted for.

As we are all aware, this has been and continues to be a very unusual year in many respects, including getting some of the routine checks and testing done. All the annual checks and tests were completed in 2019, and most of the checks for 2020 have now been completed, though some have necessarily been delayed because of the restraints imposed by Covid19.

With respect to the fabric of the church, work was carried out in March 2020 to deal with the persistent roof leak at the back of the new church, but there remains further work to be done, which at the time of writing is awaiting a start date from the contractor.

Items of work other than the routine checks and tests included:

- Replacing the drainage pump for the kitchen
- Altar drape cleaned
- Weather cock painted
- All the locks replaced
- Bells maintenance
- Lopping of overhanging branches above office area

The year on which we are now reporting has become much extended with this annual meeting coming so late. We have had to manage unprecedented situations, massively complicated by the loss of our rector in December 2019.

FLOWERS IN CHURCH

Flowers and plants have been used to decorate churches in Europe for over a thousand years, but not always with fresh flowers. At first stonemasons and carpenters depicted flowers in stone or wood carvings. Later, church artists incorporated flowers in paintings, frescoes or murals, and, later still, in stained glass windows. Mostly these artists would portray them as they were referred to in the Bible, or as symbols, such as the lily for the Virgin Mary and a clover leaf for the Trinity.

Just as we want our own houses to look their best, we feel the same in God's house. We use flowers and foliage to achieve this, but they are not essential to worship and should not detract from the conduct of the service, as we come together to hear God's Word and sing His praise.

In both our parish churches there is usually a pedestal arrangement near the altar. On special occasions we include more arrangements around the church, of various shapes and sizes.

At marriage ceremonies, for example, you often see an arrangement beside the font, on window sills and pew ends. At our Harvest Festival service there are more informal displays of flowers, often incorporating fruit and vegetables.

There are two periods during the church year when we refrain from using floral decorations - during the penitential seasons of Lent (before Easter) and Advent (before Christmas Day).

The fourth Sunday of Lent, traditionally known as Mothering Sunday, is the one exception to the 'no flowers in Lent' policy. On that day, posies of flowers are presented by our Sunday school young children to mothers, grandmothers and great grandmothers at the end of our service.



On Easter Sunday, to celebrate Christ's Resurrection, we decorate the large wooden cross behind the altar at St James' Church with white lilies (usually Madonna lilies). At Our Lady and St Nicholas Church, Wanlip, we erect a large wooden cross to the side of the altar, and decorate it with lilies. Other arrangements throughout both churches are usually more lilies, plus white and yellow flowers. Many churches also have an Easter garden surrounded by similar coloured flowers.

During the services on the four Sundays of Advent we place an evergreen wreath (mainly of holly and ivy) near the altar or pulpit, containing four candles, signifying Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, which are lit one by one each week. (Traditionally, on the third Sunday in Advent, the candle is pink.)



On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, we light a central large white candle symbolizing Jesus, the light of the world.

Also displayed at Christmas is a decorated tree, denoting eternity and everlasting life.



At Epiphany, some churches use yellow, purple and white flowers for the Magi's gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

To quote Pastor Paul F. Boche

In decorating our churches with flowers and greenery, we want the florists' arts to take their rightful places among the 'voices' that 'speak' or 'sing!' the Gospels' praise to those with 'ears to hear' and 'eyes to see'.

Rita Richards

In July, however, we were told that we could begin opening for services. We met with our retired clergy. All were keen to help us get back into church. We had our first services on the 9th August. Since then we have had a regular 9:30 a.m. Holy Communion service at St. James and a 6.00 p.m. said Evensong at Wanlip. And then the second lockdown intervened!

Nearer, with the help of Phil Ward, have created a labyrinth in the church garden which is lovely. Individuals, including families and children, can use it for contemplation and reflection. It is already inspiring members of the church to use it in different ways. The good thing about it, of course, is that it comes 'Covid' ready!! In so far as being outside, it is easy to control social distancing.

We are learning how to do things differently day by day, and, bit by bit we are finding new and creative ways to do things.

Recently we have had two pieces of good and encouraging news. The first was that the Revd. Rosie Homer, a curate from Billesdon, would be joining us for an eight week placement. It is both an excellent opportunity for Rosie in her training, but equally so for us, as she will bring an injection of fresh blood, possibly even giving our over-worked retired clergy a bit of a rest.

The most encouraging piece of news, however, is that the process to find a new Rector, inevitably put on hold during the pandemic, is at last about to restart. This may well take us many months but at least we know that things are at last moving forward.

God bless you all.

Debbie Shephard

A Prayer

Lord God, you call your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown; give us faith to go forward with good courage, knowing only that your hand is leading us, and your love supporting us; to the glory of your name. Amen.

ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING

Extracts from Vice Chair's Report

An annual report should cover the last 12 months, so it was a bit of a shock, when I sat down to write this, to realise that I had to cover 18 months! It was rather like looking back into a different life-time, a parallel universe even!

Eighteen months ago we were blissfully unaware that Vince was to be moved on! Our main concern, as ever, was the growth of the church and finding new ways to reach out to our parish. Vince's last services were on Advent Sunday, a poignant time for us all.

From the beginning of the interregnum, our retired clergy have been wonderful, supporting all aspects of the church's work, so that we have been able to continue church life almost seamlessly since Vince left us. We were doing so well! Then the dark clouds of Covid started to come over the horizon and March 23rd stopped everything. The realization of all the implications of 'lockdown' took some time for us to get our heads around. We divided up the responsibility for who would be responsible for ensuring that everyone had at least one contact and continued to add to our emailing circulation list.

To say that this has been a steep learning curve is a major understatement. We get new Covid 19 guidelines from the diocese as well as from the government every week. We have learnt about 'Zoom' meetings and have got quite used to them, but they will never replace the real thing! Some of us have been able to join in 'virtually' with services from all over the diocese, and John Ward set up our own live 'Zoom' evening prayer service on Sunday evenings.

At the end of the initial lock down we were given permission to open the churches for private prayer. We followed official guidelines and we were finally able to step back into our churches. We had just established a routine with this when the second lockdown struck us.

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

Some of us have pleasant memories of singing this song with various actions, but it can be taken seriously too.

*On the first day of Christmas my true love sent to me
A partridge in a pear tree*

The one true God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ

*On the second day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Two turtle doves*

The Old and New Testament

*On the third day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Three French hens*

Faith, hope and charity

*On the fourth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Four calling birds*

The four gospels

*On the fifth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Five gold rings*

The first five books of the Old Testament

*On the sixth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Six geese a-laying*

Six days of creation

*On the seventh day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Seven swans a-swimming*

Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit

*On the eighth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Eight maids a-milking*

Eight Beatitudes

*On the ninth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Nine ladies dancing*

Nine Fruits of the Spirit

*On the tenth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Ten lords a-leaping*

Ten Commandments

*On the eleventh day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Eleven pipers piping*

Faithful disciples

*On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Twelve drummers drumming*

Twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed

Josephine Burgess

PEACE PERFECT PEACE

The Gift of Christ Our Lord

I wonder where you find peace? Perhaps it is in remembering scenes from holidays.



One of the most peaceful places I have visited is Lastingham. To sit on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors surrounded by sheep and view the church is one of the most peaceful scenes I know.

Lastingham is the place where a monastery was founded AD 654, by **St Cedd**, Bishop of the East Saxons, ten years before the Synod of Whitby. There's been a parish church there since at least 1228. **St Mary's Church** is famous for its unique apsidal **crypt**. The crypt was built possibly on or near the vicinity of an earlier 7th century structure, and is thought to be part of the huge Benedictine Abbey planned by Stephen of Whitby in 1078.



Evidence of this proposed abbey can be seen throughout the church structure. But sadly it was never completed, as Stephen abandoned the project, went to York and built St Mary's Abbey there instead.

Josephine Burgess

To keep the record straight one, the photo of the crypt was taken by a friend of mine and the others were taken by me.



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&



OAT COBS

8oz oats (jumbo oats work very well), $\frac{3}{4}$ pint milk, 1½ teaspoons fast action yeast
2 oz melted margarine, 1 tsp salt, 8 ozs plus strong bread flour

METHOD

- 1) Soak oats in bowl with milk for at least 2 hours.
- 2) Add yeast to one side, salt to the other, melted margarine and enough flour to make a smooth dough
- 3) Knead well either by hand or in a mixer with dough attachment.
- 4) Leave to rise covered for about an hour.
- 5) Knock back by kneading
- 6) Shape into 16 cobs and cut across the tops with a sharp knife or kitchen scissors.
- 7) Prove on a greased baking tray until doubled in size.
- 8) Brush gently with cream, milk or egg wash if you want.
- 9) Bake in a hot oven 420 degrees, gas 7 for about 15 - 20 minutes

Julie Ward

AUTUMN COLOURS, WINTER JOYS

In these trying and uncertain times, how uplifting the autumn colours are. Every day we see changes, the reds and yellows glowing in the sun. Crunching through the fallen leaves feels just like a child having fun. The ending of the garden flowers is fading away. Sorting out the ends of fruit and vegetables brings me to ways of using them up.

As a slight deviation from total baking this time, I have been using a glut of tomatoes and red peppers to make a delicious **Roasted Red Pepper and Tomato Soup**, served with homemade **Oat Cobs**. Well worth the effort, and it makes a substantial lunch.

SOUP

approximate quantities

2lbs tomatoes halved, 2 red peppers halved and deseeded
1 onion quartered, 1 small chilli (optional), 2 crushed cloves garlic,
1 tblsp olive oil, salt and pepper, 2 celery stalks chopped, 1 medium carrot in batons, 1/2 cup tomato paste, 2 cups vegetable or chicken stock, 2 tsps sugar, 1 tsp Italian seasoning (optional)

METHOD

- 1) Preheat oven to 350 degrees, gas 4
- 2) Place all vegetables and garlic in a roasting tin, coat with oil, salt and pepper.
- 3) Roast for about 45 minutes until tender.
- 4) Scrape vegetables into a slow cooker or large pan adding remaining ingredients and stir well.
- 5) Cook low 6 hours, high 3 hours or until thick and tasty in a pan.

You may need to add more liquid. Cool slightly.

- 6) Blend/ liquidise until smooth. Reheat and serve.

JOURNEYING TO A SACRED PLACE

Journeying

To a sacred place,
a place in Heaven.

How many risks can I face?
What are my strengths? faith?
Hopes?
my hardships to leaven.

Travel in holiness,
prayerful and true,
searching the wilderness,
over the roughest
desolation pass through.

Cast off, waves take you
adrift on the tides.
Let Christ the pilgrim hold you
Safe in his guiding,
trust his sails, heaven decides.

Go in company,
share your risks and load;
pilgrims go in harmony,
walk the labyrinth.
Together, follow your road.



L.A.H.

Saint Cedd

Cedd, born in Northumbria in the late 6th century, joined the monastery of Lindisfarne. When King Penda of the Middle Angles became a Christian, Cedd was sent to preach the gospel in this new territory. Some time later, Cedd, by then an experienced missionary, was sent to Essex. After his consecration as Bishop for the East Saxons, he continued his work in Essex, building churches, two monasteries and ordaining deacons and priests. He founded his third monastery at Lastingham, where he died of a fever in AD 664, after attending the Synod of Whitby. His feast day falls on 26th October.

JOURNEYING

We have all been on a long journey: a lonely, distanced path through lockdown and isolation; masked travellers going nowhere. There has been loss, loneliness, despair, but we can praise the Lord, we are still alive, well, and longing to be off again. And we have found ourselves capable of making the most of it: reading, learning, creating things, helping other people – phoning, writing, fetching, carrying – so many ways.

Our Real Selves are emerging from the False Selves we created to give ourselves an acceptable public face. We have been recalling old memories, reliving past events, but now is the time to put the past to rest. It's over! Some of us have been dreaming of a rosy, golden dawn in the future. But that can be a disappointment, a rude awakening.

Wake up, it's now, we are living in this moment. We are all on a journey right now. Let's try to choose what we shall do now, discern a way to travel. Like school-children we need a structure:

Timetable – how shall we use each day of the week, the mornings, the afternoons?

Curriculum – what shall we learn, revise, improve? Sing? Craft? Exercise? Skills?

Playtime – how shall we keep fit, stay healthy? What will make us laugh today? How shall we play, explore, amuse ourselves?

Noreen Talbot

A Prayer for Guidance

Lord God, you call your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown;
give us faith to go forward with good courage,
not knowing whither we go, but only that your hand is leading us,
and that your love is supporting us;
to the glory of your name. **Amen.**

We still meet weekly, on Zoom on Wednesdays, alternating prayer and discussion – currently based on the St Martin's in the Fields course – 'Inspired to Follow' - using art works from the National Gallery.



A few of us were also involved in creating a labyrinth on the church 'lawn', very ably aided by Phil, who mows the lawn regularly. This was completed towards the end of September and is now there for all to use. There will be some suggestions as to how to use it available soon. We were planning a very short 'blessing', but lockdown intervened!

If you'd like to join in any of our Zoom events, do contact Pete and Gill Chester, 0116 2120236 for more information.

Gill and Pete Chester

A Reflective and Active Way into Prayer this Advent

Use a labyrinth walk, or a printed image as a way of demonstrating that it is worthwhile persevering & waiting.

If you have a labyrinth in the church put a light at its centre.

If using a printed version, put an image of a light at the centre.

By tracing the labyrinth - in body or just with a finger - we can see how we move in and out from the centre of prayer, and the labyrinth can help us keep hope, and keep persevering.

from Roots on the Web resources

REPORT FROM 'NEARER'

In January this year *Nearer* had started Soul Games, where we met monthly, played modern board games together and briefly discussed any issues that came out of the games. We had fun learning new games, playing old games, and much laughter! Then everything came to a full stop. We were also about to start Soul Space in the Hallam Fields Community Rooms, a time for people to take time out to meditate, to spend at least 30 minutes with God being quiet and reflecting but we never started – lockdown happened on the Monday of the week we were due to start. It's not really possible to do something like that in lockdown when you don't know who wants to be involved! So Soul Space will be starting when we're able to meet again safely – which hasn't yet happened.

However, *Nearer* did start a 'Shabbat' service with those we are in touch with, using Zoom video conferencing. So, on a Friday evening we log onto Zoom and, using a Celtic form of service from the Northumbria Community, we do Shabbat together. In Shabbat, we prepare ourselves for the Sabbath, the day of rest, we give to God our concerns and really leave them with Him, we pray for the people God brings to mind and we 'share' bread and wine as a reminder of all that God provides. If we were physically in the same place we would then eat a meal together, but we can't do that so, after catching up, we go our separate ways.

So far we have found this to be a good time of peace and of sensing God's presence together. We look forward to meeting properly again, and, hopefully, re-engaging with those we have met in Soul Games and those we were going to meet in Soul Space. Using Zoom again, we have also studied 'The Prayer Course' devised by the leaders of the 24-7 Prayer movement. Using video and discussion, the course consists of 8 sessions leading us through a whole toolbox of approaches to prayer. The course is based on Pete Greig's book 'How to Pray – a simple guide for normal people'. It's available in all formats: a physical book, an e-book and an audiobook.

TO BE A PILGRIM

I'm currently reading Hilaire Belloc's 1905 classic 'The Old Road,' in which he explores the history of England's old roads. In 1902 Belloc made a walking pilgrimage from central France across the Alps and down to Rome. Perhaps of greater interest to us is his exploration of the history of the old tracks in popular use in our own country, not least the 'old road' from Winchester to Canterbury, that we still call 'The Pilgrims Way'.

Belloc wasn't the only person to write about the Pilgrim's Way. In 1895 a Victorian novelist, Julia Cartwright, published a book about her own explorations of the Way. It's an easier read than Belloc's book, and for her, like him, the journey's end was disappointing. She wrote of a new and critical spirit fast undermining the old beliefs. *'The days of pilgrimage were numbered. Only the broken pavement and the marks of the pilgrims' knees in the stone floor will be left to show future generations this spot, hallowed by the prayers and the worship of past ages. FINIS'*. Quite a challenging end that, but is it the last word? Over 100 years later, I would want to say 'No'! There are major changes in that area of Canterbury Cathedral but seekers are still inspired go on pilgrimage to the simple but holy place of Becket's martyrdom and to say their prayers.

That part of the Pilgrims' Way which passes through Kent was an important place for me when I was still living at home with my parents. We often visited and walked parts of it as a family. Fr Robin and his wife once walked it all the way. He wisely kept a journal and is kindly allowing us to reproduce excerpts (*overleaf*).

There was an article in the Church Times recently making the point that, while it's 'not all rucksack and hiking boots', the theme of life as a journey towards heaven 'offers an ongoing story into which all our ways of being pilgrims can be woven, as we seek renewal and refreshment of ourselves, and encourage others to do the same.' John Bunyan's words will always encourage us, 'We'll labour night and day to be a pilgrim.'

Canon Anne

OUR PILGRIM'S WAY WALK

Extracts from my Diary

In 1981 my wife Elaine, who sadly died five months before our planned 'retirement' to Birstall, bought a copy of 'The National Trust Book of Long Walks' by Adam Nicolson. This led to a planned walk the following year along the Kent section of the Pilgrims Way.

On 9th August 1982, kitted out with heavy rucksacks and walking boots, we made a strange sight for the bleary-eyed commuters of Kent as we travelled to our starting point. ... Otford. ... Just above the railway station we turned into a narrow road where a sign proclaimed that we were indeed on 'The Pilgrims Way'. .. From Otford we set out and soon found our natural paces. I normally walked more quickly than Elaine but our speed was also governed by Elaine's frequent stopping to examine various plants ... By the end of the walk she had made a note of 86 different wild flowers. Chaffinch and yellowhammers, amongst the many birds, bees and butterflies, were also jotted by Elaine in her notebook. For much of 'The Way' it was like another world, far from the 'madding crowd.' ... We met very few people ... Lunchtime found us conveniently near Wrotham. The parish church had been a pilgrim stop in centuries past ... We noted the open arches under the tower which enable the Palm Sunday procession to keep within the churchyard. ..

Setting off again. A good sign that we were on the right track was the recurrence of ancient yew trees. ... Another indication on 'The Way' was the recurrence of 'Travellers' Joy' ... some were so old that they had stems thicker than my arm. Our first day ended at Snodland. The pilgrims of old would have either ferried across the Medway at that point or travelled down into Maidstone overnight. Many would have sought the Carmelite Friary for hospitality.

On our second day ... moving along our planned route via Burham Court, near to the neolithic 'Kits Coty,' our next stop was at Boxley ... where we learned more of the history of 'the Way'... We continued past Detling, Thurnham and Harrietsham to our second night's stop at Charing.

On our third day we pressed on past Eastwell Park to Boughton Aluph. It was by then late mid-day, and before us stood the long, last stretch through King's Wood to Canterbury. We were already too late to attempt the last section of 'the Way', so we had a good look at Boughton Aluph church before catching a bus into Canterbury. We went to the Cathedral, said our prayers, and lit a candle at the site of the Martyrdom of St Thomas Becket, and then boarded another bus to Folkestone. We completed our walk the following year, but to complete the story I will relate it now.

We started at Boughton Aluph church: a gathering point for pilgrims before attempting the long trek through King's Wood. They would have gathered for companionship, but also safety, as the Wood was noted for its robbers. On the north side of the Church there is still the large porch where the pilgrims rested.

Walking into the quiet wood was slightly eerie. 'Travellers Joy' and the old Yew Trees proclaimed that we were on 'The Way' - as well as some modern signs now and again with the 'pilgrim shell' and the words 'Pilgrims Way'. It would have been difficult to follow the route without our Guide Book and OS maps. In the King's Wood I found a staff that had been cut. As we walked I whittled it down ... Used on many occasions since that time, I still have it with the words roughly cut: KINGS : WOOD : 1983. Soon we came to the village of Chilham, noted for its Castle. ... The route took us through hop fields and acres of apple orchards. We passed through Bigbury Camp and then on to Harbledown.

Soon the magnificent sight of Canterbury Cathedral came into view. ... Finally we arrived at the Cathedral and the site of the Shrine. We had started on the Pilgrims Way just as a walk, but as we journeyed it became more and more a real pilgrimage in our hearts. ... At the Cathedral many of the visitors showed no signs of devotion, even at the site of the Martyrdom ... We prayed for them, as well as for our loved ones and ourselves, through Our Lady and the Saint that made Canterbury a major point of pilgrimage throughout Europe.

Fr T. Robin Martin