

'Keep In Touch'



WINTER 2023

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

THE PARISH OF BIRSTALL AND WANLIP

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

WHAT I CAN I GIVE HIM ...

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

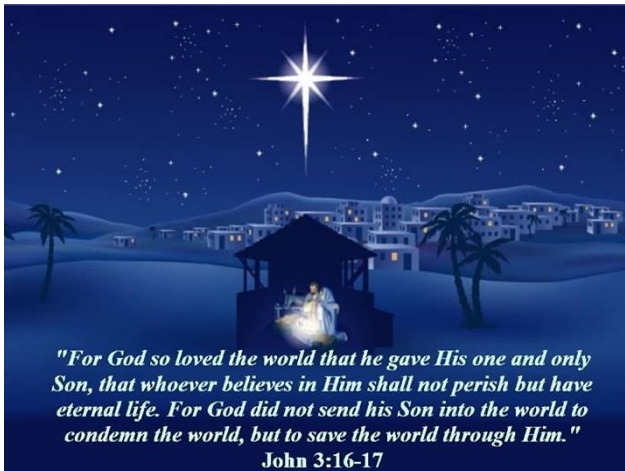
Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ

Angels and archangels may have gathered there
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But His Mother only, in Her maiden bliss
Worshipped the Beloved with a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

Christina Rosetti

GIVE MY HEART



"For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."

John 3:16-17

RECTOR'S REFLECTIONS



Here we are again in the winter months, with the darkness lasting longer and the daylight time shorter and shorter. I have to admit, that I find winter hard! I don't like the cold and I long for the hot sun.

But there are some lovely things about the winter. It's a time to slow down a bit, if you can, cosy up a bit more with big socks, and layers of clothing, ending in jumpers and hats and scarves (all those layers are a pain when you need the toilet though!).

And then as Christmas approaches, the lights begin to appear in windows and on house fronts and along streets with shops. And then the Christmas trees and decorations, all as we prepare for the coming of Jesus, which reminds me of something I accidentally did whilst still a curate... I'd discovered the tradition of not putting Jesus in his manger at home, until after midnight mass, so when I set up the crib on our dresser, I put Jesus in the games cupboard below. It was about March when I found him. Poor Jesus hadn't seen the light of day for months.

The image of light in the Bible brings us so much hope. At the beginning of creation, it is the first thing God makes – “Let there be light”.

It was the first thing that was needed, so that the beautiful creation could be seen as well as touched, heard, smelled, and tasted. But that perfect beauty did not last for long. From a short time after human beings entered creation, we've been making a mess and God has been cleaning up after us and encouraging us to do the same.

In John Chapter 1, always read at Christmas, and preferably (and you won't hear me say this often!) from the Authorised Version, we discover that Jesus is the Light of the World. Light shines in the

darkness and the darkness did not overcome it, we are told in verse 5. Try it! Go into a dark room. Light a candle – the darkness cannot put that candle out. (Disclaimer – be very careful and don't leave lit candles unattended!) Now cup your hands together so no light can get in – you are carrying darkness in your hands! Take it into a light room. Is the darkness able to overcome the light? Of course not.

We all need God's light in our lives, to help us see where we need to improve, to help us see what we can improve for others, and most importantly so we can know God better. He loves us and wants to carry us through the dark times – both physical and metaphorical.

Have a blessed and peaceful Christmas as together we seek to reach out to those who don't know the light Christ brings into the world.

Amanda

BC - AD

This was the moment when Before
turned into After, and the future's
uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing
happened. Only dull peace
sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans
could find nothing better to do
than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment
when a few farm workers and three
members of an obscure Persian sect
walked haphazard by starlight straight
into the kingdom of heaven.

U.A. Fanthorpe (1929-2009)

HARVEST FESTIVAL 2023

Every Autumn our churches celebrate Harvest Festival, and both our churches are always beautifully decorated by our teams of talented flower arrangers.

'Harvest Festival' is a long-standing tradition that celebrates a successful yield for farmers across the country. In Britain, thanks have been given for successful harvests since pagan times. The festival is traditionally held on the Sunday nearest the Harvest Moon, which is the full moon that occurs closest to the autumn equinox. The celebrations on this day usually include singing hymns, praying, and decorating churches with baskets of fruit and food in the festival also known as Harvest Home, Harvest Thanksgiving or Harvest Festival of Thanksgiving .

An early harvest festival used to be celebrated at the beginning of the harvest season on 1st August and was called Lammas, meaning 'loaf Mass'. Farmers made bread loaves from the fresh wheat crop. These were given to the local church as the Communion bread during a special service thanking God for the harvest. Today, Harvest Festival focuses on charitable giving, specifically sharing food with those who do not have access to basic provisions. The festival has become integrated with Church of England traditions.

Until the 20th century, most farmers celebrated the end of the harvest with a big meal called the harvest supper, to which all who had helped in the harvest were invited. It was held after the last patch of corn or wheat standing in the fields was cut. Cutting it signified the end of the work of harvest and the beginning of the feast. There seems to have been a feeling that it was bad luck to be the person to cut the last stand of corn. The farmer and his workers would race against the harvesters on other farms to be first to complete the harvest, shouting to announce they had finished.

Corn dolls were also traditionally made for Harvest Festival using the last sheath of harvest.

Canon Anne

HARVEST FESTIVAL 2023



WANLIP CHURCH

TO A SNOWDROP

Lone Flower, hemmed in with snows, and white as they,
but hardier far; once more I see thee bend thy forehead,
as if fearful to offend, like an unbidden guest.

Though day by day, storms, sallying from the mountain-tops,
waylay the rising sun, and on the plains descend;

Yet art thou welcome, welcome as a friend,
whose zeal outruns his promise!

Blue-eyed May shall soon behold this border thickly set
with bright jonquils, their odours lavishing on the soft west-
wind and his frolic peers;

Nor will I then thy modest grace forget, chaste snowdrop,
venturous harbinger of Spring,
And pensive monitor of fleeting years!

William Wordsworth



Snowdrops in Birstall Churchyard

THE MEANING OF THE SNOWFLAKE

Every new snowflake comes to the earth
as a picture of our Saviour's birth,
because they are sent from up above
and remind us of God's care and love.
Each one is so intricate and small
because Christ sees the details of us all,
and just as two are never the same
He knows and calls us each by name.
Snowflakes gently cover the world in white
and hide what's unlovely from our sight,
showing us how He covers our sin
and gives us His grace when we come to Him.
So may every snowflake bring Christ to mind
and in every bit of white may you find
a reason to celebrate anew
and a reminder of His love for you.

Holley Gerth

Submitted by Rosie Rollings

WINTER

snow-bringer
finger-freezer
icicle-maker
frost-sprinkler
wind-guster
earth-chiller
sky-darkener
a Christmas-giver

June Crebbin

THE WOODS THAT SUMMER LOVED



The woods that summer loved are grey and bare;
The sombre trees stretch up their arms on high,
In mute appeal, against the leaden sky;
A flurry faint of snow is in the air.

All day the clouds have hung in heavy fold
Above the valley, where grey shadows steal;
And I, who sit and watch them, seem to feel
A touch of sadness as the day grows old.

But o'er my fancy comes a tender face,
A dream of curls that float like sunlight golden--
A subtle fragrance, filling all the place,
The whisper of a story that is olden--

Till breaks the sun through dull December skies,
And all the world is springtime in the deep blue of her eyes.

George J. Dance Stuart Livingston (1865-1923)

Canadian poet and novelist

Submitted by Chris Greaves

ADVENT WREATH SONG

Take this light, let it shine: call of God, love divine,
summons old Abram's line,
hope for all the nations, gift of God's salvation.

*Shine, O candles, shine, burn with love divine,
to the night, comes the light of the Father's glory.*

Take this flame, let it burn:
prophets called: 'From sin turn, come to God, evil spurn:
God will love and pardon, bear away your burden.'

Take this wick, let it glow
for the one come to show way of God, Christ to know:
baptise in the river, new life to deliver.

Take this spark, let it blaze,
Mary's called: girl amazed, now says 'yes, God be praised'.
In the womb of woman, God's Word now is human.

Take this fire, let it flame,
God is born in our frame, sinless child tastes our shame,
sin's might he is breaking; new the world is making.



Doug Chaplin

CISTERCIAN SPIRITUALITY

OUR VOWS

When I was in my late teens and early 20s I thought religious orders like the Trappists took a vow of silence, and only spoke when they had to. Why did I think that? I'd visited Mount St. Bernard's Abbey a few times, and while those working in the shop had to speak they kept it to a minimum, and outside the shop when I saw brothers meet they didn't speak to each other but they bowed their heads to each other. As I got more knowledgeable, I discovered that no order took a vow of silence.

A set of three vows that most people know something about are chastity, poverty, and obedience. These are called the Evangelical Counsels, so called because Jesus lived and therefore recommended or counselled them in the four accounts of the Gospel ('evangelium' in Latin). Neither are these the vows we take.

As part of the Benedictine family we take the Benedictine vows. In chapter 58 of his Rule, Saint Benedict states that the novice monk who wishes to profess vows should 'In the oratory, in the presence of all .. promise stability, conversion of his life and obedience'. These vows are far older than the Evangelical vows, since St. Benedict wrote his rule around 530 AD, possibly over a period of time. So what do they mean, and how are they interpreted for a member of the Anglican Order of Cistercians?

Stability

In the wider Benedictine family this vow is about remaining in the monastery where they make their profession. Since we don't have a religious house we interpret it slightly differently. For our order we interpret it as, stability of the heart. In chapter 4 of his Rule Benedict talks about tools of the spiritual craft and finishes in v78 by saying 'The workshop where we are to toil faithfully is the enclosure of the monastery and stability in the community.' So we interpret it in terms of our community or Order.

We also vow stability of the heart towards our Brothers and the 'Cistercian charism, as expressed in the reformed tradition of Cîteaux.'

i.e. the Trappist or Order of Cistercians of the Strict Order.

Conversatio – Conversion of Life

This is a vow by daily steps to try to transform ourselves into the likeness of Christ through the monastically inspired life. In the 'school of love'. (*Rule of St. Benedict prologue v45*)

This is achieved through our daily offices, lectio divina, which includes meditation, and contemplation.

Obedience We vow to be obedient to our Rule, our Charter and our Customary, which are the documents that form the basis of our order. We also vow to be obedient to the directives of our Prior as our Father in God.

Our vows take two forms. Usually we are novices for three years, after which we make our Simple Vows. These last for a year and then they are renewed each year. This is our last chance to walk away from the Order.

After three years of making Simple Vows we can make our Solemn Vows. These are our life long vows, or maybe, like the Priesthood our eternal vows. These are only made once, and once made we are committed to the Order for good.

Michael / Aidan

A PRAYER FOR CHURCH GROWTH

Generous Father, thank you that you are our protector and provider. You have said that when we call on you in prayer, you will listen to us. Hear our prayer for the growth of your church. May we see people respond to you in repentance and faith and be added to your church. We may work and labour, but it is you who gives growth. You are the Sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords. You alone have immortality and dwell in unapproachable light. To you be honour and eternal dominion. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

NEWS FROM SAINT THERESA'S CHURCH BIRSTALL & THE SACRED HEART, ROTHLEY

On Friday 29th September we held an induction service to welcome our new priest Father Jenson Paul. This was a lovely occasion with our Vicar General Father Eddie Jarosz leading the service. It was very well attended by his brethren, by representatives from other local churches and many parishioners.

On Thursday October 5th we celebrated our patron saint's feast day, St Theresa's. This again was attended by other Rosmini priests, and representatives from St James and the Methodist Church along with many parishioners. On this occasion we gave statues of Saint Theresa to members of our two churches who have gone over and above with their help during the year. Also every lady receives a red rose on the night. On Wednesday October 11th we held another Fashion Show, which was a great fun evening. And on Friday October 27th we held a 'bits and bobs' night, when people had to guess the item being shown and what it was used for.

On Friday November 3rd we held our Remembrance Mass, to which anyone for whom we have held a funeral service is invited, along with their family members, to call those people back to mind. This service is open to all who have lost loved ones to come and light a candle.

On Friday November 17th we held our Murder Mystery night, with a fish and chip supper. A local Whetstone group came along and acted out a murder.

Our Christmas Bazaar this year will be on Saturday December 9th. Everyone is welcome. Stalls will include a raffle, tombola, cake stall and Christmas stall, to name but a few. Our Christmas Concert is on Sunday December 17th from 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm. And we will be holding a Readings and Carols service on Tuesday December 19th at 7pm Everyone is welcome to both.

In 2024, there will be a Christian Unity service on Thursday January.

At 12 noon on Tuesday 23rd January we will be holding a frugal lunch with a guest speaker from Christian Aid. All are welcome.

Daphne Stephenson, Parish Administrator.

SHOE BOX APPEAL 2023



This year, we have sent 82 boxes – a wonderful achievement. Our thanks go to everyone who donated goods, money and donations towards carriage. Our year actually starts as soon as the boxes go, as we are collecting, purchasing and making all year round. The knitting and crocheting are continuous and we are always looking out for bargains. Doreen finds mugs in charity shops every time she goes shopping and Sylvia has found some valuable sources of wholesale offers on the internet. This has made a huge difference, as donations of money can go much further. The closure of Wilko, though sad, meant that their sale was a source of cut price bargains for us, but this won't happen again.

Towards the end of October, Sylvia and John bring collected goods down from their roof space and with Doreen then pack the boxes over three days. The three of us have developed a production line over the years that works very well.

When we know, we will tell you where the boxes went and the total number Link to Hope sent. After Christmas, we are usually sent pictures, too, and it is so heart-warming to see these very poor people receiving their boxes. Again, our sincere thanks to members of the churches, relations and friends near and far. This year, your generosity has enabled us again to send a record-breaking number.

Sylvia Simes and Doreen Wilson

TRENCH CANDLES FOR UKRAINE



Last February an appeal was raised for the collection of old and unused candles so that Trench Candles could be made to send to the soldiers on Ukraine's front line against the invading Russian forces. A huge thank you to all those from Birstall and Wanlip who have responded with several loads of candles. These have been collected, together with donations from others, and taken to St Mary's Church in Arnold near Nottingham. So far, over 150kg of candles have been delivered from St Mary's to the Ukrainian Centre in Nottingham – enough for well over 1000 candles. Teams of volunteers at the Centre create the candles by rolling corrugated cardboard into old baked bean tins, placing a splint into the middle, and melting the candle wax to fill the tin. This means that every few weeks, hundreds of candles are being sent by lorry to Ukraine. Very many thanks to all those who have been collecting their unburnt candle bits for this cause. We all pray that this most unusual way to spread the Light of Christ to those in need of His love and care will not have to continue for too much longer. But meanwhile, if you have any old candle bits, please continue to place them in the box by the votive candle stand at St James. Your ongoing gifts of candles are so very welcomed and so very much appreciated by the Ukrainians. Thank you.

Josephine Burgess

RECYCLING FOR CHARITY

DID YOU KNOW

300 million inkjet cartridges are sold in Europe per year

Only 15% of all inkjets sold are re-manufactured

45 million cartridges end up in landfill in the UK

Cartridges can take up to 1000 years to decompose

The lifespan of ink cartridges can be optimised by reusing and recycling them as many times as possible

Recycling plastic takes 88% less energy than making plastic from raw materials. A recycled product can be back on the shelves again within a single month

Recycling creates 6 times more jobs than landfilling and 36 times more than incinerating.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

St James Church, Birstall is registered with Recycle4Charity. We collect ink jet cartridges which are sent to Recycle4Charity when there is a full box .In return they give money back to our Church. The last box sent raised £36. For each HP301 Original we receive £1, for HP301 Remanufactured 25p. Not all cartridges have a value but they are disposed of responsibly by Recycle4Charity.

There is a box at the back of St James and one at Wanlip for your donations (if you can't locate please ask). Please make use of them to dispose of your used cartridges.

Every little helps church funds. Every little helps to save the environment.

Gill Pope

A HOUSE SOAKED IN LOVE AND PRAYER

Pleshey and Evelyn Underhill

Evelyn Underhill was a prolific writer and spiritual guide who lived from 1875 to 1941. She is best known for her work as a retreat leader at Pleshey Retreat House in England.

She conducted her first retreat at Pleshey in 1924 and is considered one of the most distinguished conductors of that time.

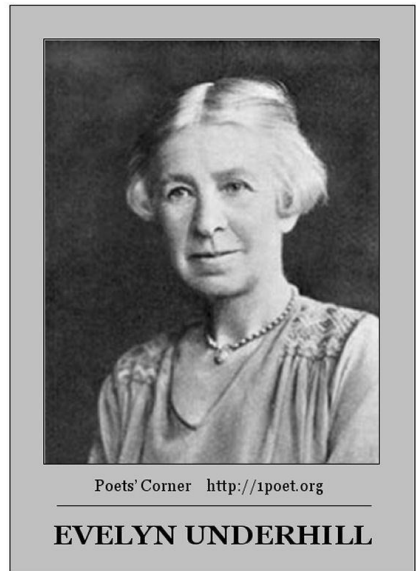
Her first experience of a conducted retreat at Pleshey in 1922 transformed her attitude toward church and vocation, and began the process of clarifying her own calling.

Pleshey Retreat House is located in the village of Pleshey in Essex, England. The house was originally built in the 14th century by Eleanor de Bohun and Thomas Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, and became a royal residence.

In 1394, Thomas caused a College of Canons to be built with a chapel dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Pleshey acquired its first Retreat House.

The house was later purchased by the congregation of the Servants of Christ in 1906 and converted into a convent. Today, the house is still used as a retreat centre.

“God is always coming to you in the Sacrament of the Present Moment. Meet and receive Him there with gratitude in that sacrament.”



CANDLEMAS

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST

Forty days after Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph went to the temple in Jerusalem for a ritual presentation of their baby to God, as required by Jewish Law.

We read about this in Luke 2: 22-40.

They met a man called Simeon, who described Jesus as 'a light for all the people of the world'.

They also met an elderly prophetess, Anna, who thanked God for Jesus.

Anna recognised Jesus, as key to God's plan of salvation for all people.

The Christian festival, celebrating these events, formerly known as 'The Presentation of Christ', is also called Candlemas. Because, on this day, in times long before electricity, people would bring candles to church to be blessed, in recognition of Jesus as the light of the world.

On Candlemas night many people place lit candles in their windows at home.

'Thank you, O God, that you said: 'Let there be light', and the world was no longer in darkness.

Thank you for the gift of your Son, who brings light into our lives.
Amen.

We pray:

Lord, light up the path for me wherever I may go. That I may know your presence, and be grateful for your love.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

MIRACLES DO HAPPEN

For some people having a cataract removed during eye surgery is a miracle. For me the real miracle was that the blackness (blindness) disappeared after my heartfelt prayers.

‘Winter is coming’. There is no doubt about that. After the clock changes, darker afternoons are on the way. The countdown to Christmas has started and we are heading towards the time of lighting candles, as we await to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ once more. Christmas is my most favourite time of the year, because I enjoy the festive period, memories of hustle and bustle at home in preparation for Christmas, celebrating my birthday, getting together with friends and family and the prospect of a few presents.

For me the biggest present, apart from the gift of my life, my family, my education and not having had to live through a war or a storm flood, was when my sight was saved. It all came a bit of a shock. All was well on Monday morning (18.1.16). Black worm like shapes appeared in my right eye in the afternoon. It was as if someone was scribbling out my sight. I started to lose my sight come bedtime. It was like looking through a glass filled with black ink, bubbling from the bottom, higher and higher. What to do? I sat for a while saying heartfelt prayers. Please Lord don’t let me lose my sight. The thought of not being able to see the faces of my loved ones again was too painful to bear. After a while I noticed that the blackness (blindness) was not getting worse and thought perhaps a good nights sleep and some more heartfelt prayers would do my eyes some good.

In the morning the blackness had gone. The worm like shapes were still there and staff at the Eye Clinic of the LRI (Leicester Royal Infirmary) asked me to come in straight away. ‘Was the blackness (blindness) still there?’ was their first question. I still needed laser treatment for a perforated and detached retina on the same day and surgery on my left eye the following day. Unbeknown to me, I had a cataract which needed removing, I needed a new lense and also had a partially detached retina which needed repairing.

I am ashamed to say that it was only when I sat in the waiting room of the LRI Eye Clinic waiting for my treatment, that I remembered the documentary I had seen many years ago about the amazing Flying Eye Hospital ORBIS, which flies missions around the globe to fight avoidable blindness. It is also a state of the art teaching hospital. ORBIS operates with the help of donations/some government subsidies and many volunteers, from the volunteer pilot, anaesthetist to surgeons and nurses, who compliment employed staff. How lucky was I that my prayers had been heard and that I did not have to walk through the African heat for example for hours, in the hope for the Flying Eye Hospital to arrive.

There were only so many times I felt I could say thank you to the staff at the LRI Eye Clinic, before thinking what could I do to help others with sight problems and raise awareness of ORBIS. I am not a wealthy person, but the answer was simple.

I now had practically perfect eyesight and no longer needed to buy glasses and contact lenses. I therefore pledged to give ORBIS this amount saved each year. Finding a cheaper hairdresser and having fewer haircuts, not having my nails done, meant I could give that little bit extra. ORBIS brings light into peoples' lives and a chance to see, learn and work.

I also did not need a guide dog so have sponsored the guide dog training of Lexi, Una, Zac, Fifi, Ginger, Sprout and Comet to date. The holy Madonna herself gave me a nudge when it came to the 'what could I do?' question, but that is another story.

Christa Freer



KEEPING IN TOUCH

It is good to keep in touch with friends and family, yet so easy to lose touch. I am very fortunate to have many good friends, and I thank God for them every day. Some of my friends live nearby, and some live miles away. But even if we cannot meet very frequently, we keep in touch by telephone or cards.

A lot of my friends have known me for years, and we have shared happy times and sad times. Some of you will remember my friend Beryl McHugh, who moved to Maxwell Lodge in Market Harborough to be near to her youngest son and daughter in law. Beryl was an active member of St James' and Wanlip Church. We sang in the church choir together, and organised, produced and took part in many concerts, Passion Plays and Musicals. Beryl has an outstanding voice, which I know some of you will remember.

As I am unable to drive, I rely on my lovely family and friends to take me to places. Two of my dear friends, Joan and Raymond, suggested a visit to Beryl, together with our friend Brenda. On a lovely sunny day Raymond drove us through beautiful countryside to the delightful town of Market Harborough. As I have visited Beryl several times, I knew she would be waiting outside the apartments to meet us.

Raymond kindly took a photograph of us which I thought you might like to see. A lovely day was had by all, we even sat in the sunshine on Beryl's balcony. Friendship is a gift to treasure.

As the special time of Advent and Christmas approach, I am looking forward to sending, despite the postal costs, and looking forward to receiving, messages from loved ones far and near to keep in touch. One of my friends, with whom I worked, is no longer here but I think of her often.

She sent me this poem on a Christmas card several years ago. I love it. Praying God's blessings for a peaceful and happy Christmas for us all.

Jane Scott

I WISH I COULD HAVE BEEN THERE

I wish I could have been there
On that first Christmas night,
To hear the angels singing
And to see the new star's light.

To find Mary watching Jesus
With a mother's tender care.
To look upon his radiant face
with God's love shining there.

To worship in the stable
A Lord born common man,
Who cam to earth to save us
According to God's plan.

I wish I could have been there
to celebrate his birth.
But I can feel his love today
And his Spirit here on earth.

Amanda Bradley



OLD FRIENDS

ONE THING TO LIFT OUR SPIRITS

One thing to lift our spirits at the end of November is the Children in Need appeal on TV. It has been characterized by generosity, enthusiasm, a sense of fun plus a great variety of fund-raising ideas.

People, young and old strive to provide a better quality of life for disadvantaged children all over the country. Such as a Mayor doing a sponsored abseil from the Town Hall tower; famous sportsmen offering a morning's especial tuition, choirs singing to raise monies.

Such a variety of talents is given to help others in many ways. Perhaps on these events our role is to be supportive. In any way of our choice. I'm sure well all know someone for whom our time is priceless.

Chris Greaves

MEMORIES - GROWING UP IN BIRSTALL

I have been following a very interesting group on Facebook entitled 'Memories of Birstall'. This got me thinking about my own particular memories of growing up in the village.

One lasting memory was walking to Riverside Infants School, and being particularly fascinated with the Milk Bar where bikers used to meet (this is where Bargain Booze now stands) there were always loads of motorbikes in front of it.. I also recall a grocery shop which was probably somewhere near to where Nationwide Building Society now stands - the floor was wooden and quite noisy when walked on. I remember too Taylors Sweet Shop (now the Dentists), which also sold bikes and games in the side room. I was a frequent visitor. There was also a ladies hairdressers near to the roundabout on Sibson Road with purple curtains, Victoria's I think it was called - as a child walking home from school, I recall being a little nervous of the owner and her dogs.

Maybe you also have other memories of Birstall to share?

Lynn Van Ristell

THE OTHER: POETRY AND ITS POWER

I love poetry. I know it's not everyone's cup of tea but, for me, I think it came from being immersed in it at school in the 1950s and 60s when we had to learn poetry by heart in English lessons. Poetry has the ability to express thoughts and feelings which are difficult to capture in plain prose so I guess that is why I love religious poetry (which is, of course, what hymns are).

I have always been someone who is full of questions about faith. Perhaps that is the result of my primary school education being in an Orthodox Jewish School in downtown Liverpool. The Jews were never afraid to question God. One needs to be secure in faith to question the God in whom you believe. That is why I love the religious poetry of R S Thomas, a Welsh cleric who spent most of his ministry in the fairly remote parishes of Mid Wales. Some of his poetry is bleak. He was a fervent Welsh Nationalist and lamented the growing English influence on his country, but his religious poetry often puts into words experiences which I have found difficult to express, especially as I have tried to respond to the call wait on God in silence; to let God be in charge of the encounter (which, of course!)

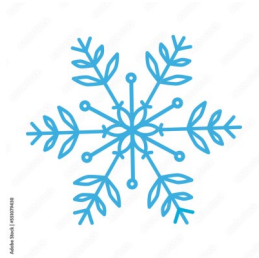
Thomas wrote one poem which I have particularly loved since I first discovered it. It is called 'The Other' and it has brought me great comfort, especially at times of stress, illness and sleeplessness. Its imagery draws on Thomas's surroundings on the Welsh coast. It may be that it will bring comfort to you too.

There are nights that are so still that I can hear the small owl calling
far off, and a fox barking miles away.
It is then that I lie in the lean hours awake listening
to the swell born somewhere in the Atlantic.

Rising and falling, rising and falling
wave on wave on the long shore.
by the village that is without light
and companionless.

And the thought comes
of that other being who is awake, too
letting our prayers break on him,
not like this for a few hours,
but for days, years, for eternity.

Lesley Walton



A PRAYER FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY

God of new beginnings
As we gather on the first Sunday of a new year,
blessing our worship, our church, our world and us.

shine your light into our lives,
your peace into our hearts,
your healing into our woundedness,
Your strength into our struggles.
Empower us with your Spirit,
that we may serve you afresh.

In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

Hi. I hope you are all keeping well. I am in the church office on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9am and 1pm. If you have a notice you would like putting in our weekly Information Sheet please email it to stjames.birstall@btconnect.com, or sheryljupp@hotmail.co.uk. (I would prefer to receive it twice than not at all!)

If you don't have access to the internet, please could you leave your notice on my desk or post it through the church letterbox which is at the bottom of the glass doors. If you are unable to get to church please contact Amanda or one of the Churchwardens. (Contact details on page 2)

If you would like to receive this magazine or our weekly information sheets digitally, please let me know. Thanks

I hope you have a wonderful Christmas.

Love Sheryl

FUNERALS

Died	Funeral		
28.08.23	27.09.23	David Ward	Birstall Cemetery
04.10.23	26.10.23	Geoff Heath	St James/L Crem.
02.10.23	31.10.23	Olive Allen	St James/L Crem.
27.09.23	06.11.23	Colin Clayton	St James/B Cemetery
28.10.23	21.11.23	Elsie Beswick	St James/L Crem.
27.10.23	27.11.23	Pauline Douthwaite	St James/L Crem.
10.11.23	07.12.32	Raymond Merry	St James/L Crem
18.11.23	11.12.23	Thomas Ward	Gilroes/Wanlip

**Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord.
And let light perpetual shine upon them.
Amen.**

‘KEEP IN TOUCH’, Spring 2024

Copy by, but, if possible, before 1st February 2024

All contributions welcome. Maximum preferred length: 500 words!

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

The editor wishes to say a big thank you to all who kindly contribute.



Beacon Hill in Winter

Peter Watson

KEEPING YOU ‘IN TOUCH’ IS

Name

Address

Tel. No.