

'KEEP IN TOUCH', Summer 2022

Copy by, but, if possible, before 1st May 2022

All contributions welcome. Maximum preferred length: 500 words!

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



Saint Winefride



Snowdrops in Wanlip Churchyard

KEEPING YOU 'IN TOUCH' IS

Name

Address

Tel. No.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THEM

'Keep In Touch'

SPRING 2022

***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.

From the Church Office

Hi. I hope you are all keeping well. I am working in the Church Office on Tuesdays and Fridays between 9am and 1pm. If you have a notice you would like to put in our weekly Information Sheet please email stjames.birstall@btconnect.com, and/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.

I will continue to send the sheets out digitally, but if you no longer wish to receive them, would you let me know please. Thanks.

**Take care,
Love Sheryl**

From the Parish Registers

Baptisms

Thomas Routh, 12 December 2021, St James' Church.

**'Let the children come to me and don't stop them,
for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'**

Funerals

2021

Kathleen Allen, d.12 Nov 2021, funeral 13 Dec. St James, L'boro Crem
Hilda Joyce Daley, d.19 Nov 2021, funeral 15 Dec. St James, Gilroes
Brian Medhurst, d.25 Nov 2021, funeral 17 Dec. Wanlip, Gilroes
Mark Marks, d.30 Nov 2021, funeral 20 Dec., Wanlip, Birstall Cem.

2022

Eric Orton, d.28 Dec.2021, funeral 27 Jan 2022, Wanlip, L'boro Crem
Lynn Mason, d.24 Dec.2021, funeral 28 Jan 2022, Wanlip, L'boro Crem
Derek Cockrell, d.9 Jan.2022, funeral 14 Feb 2022, St James, Lboro Crem

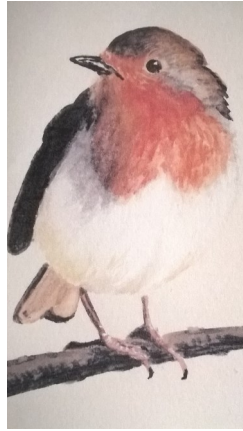
**Rest Eternal grant unto them, O Lord,
And let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen**

ROBIN

Robin sang sweetly when the days were bright
'Thanks, thanks for summer' he sang with all his might.
Robin sang sweetly in the autumn days
'There are fruits for everyone, let us all give praise.'

In the cold and wintry weather,
still hear his song.
'Somebody must sing' said Robin
'or winter will seem long.'

When the Spring came back again
he sang 'I told you so!'
'Keep on singing through the winter, it will always go.'



Anon

Submitted by Chris Greaves, inspired by a Christmas card sent her by a friend.

SPRING HAS ARRIVED



Tulips are shouting from borders,
blossom froths on the tree,
bluebells swing in the flower beds.

Old folk are sitting in doorways,
children run in the park,
lovers stroll in the sunshine.

Grass is growing like crazy,
trees take over the sky,
today, as if by magic,

Spring has arrived!

June Crebbin

ASH WEDNESDAY

March 2nd 2022



Jesus, you place on my forehead
the sign of your saving Cross:

**'Turn from sin
and be faithful to the Gospel.'**

How can I turn from sin
unless I turn to you?

You speak, you raise your hand,
you touch my mind and call my name,
'Turn to the Lord your God again.'

These days of your favour
leave a blessing as you pass
on me and all your people.

Turn to us, Lord God,
and we shall turn to you.

Amen.

RECTOR'S REFLECTIONS



It's been a long, hard winter, hasn't it? In fact, it feels like it's been winter for two years – a bit like Narnia! I feel like I've done funeral after funeral – both here, and in my last parishes. And mainly for people I knew or have begun to get to know. And everyone I know seems to have experienced the same. Several deaths or illnesses or other difficulties. We're all feeling exhausted from Covid, with its restrictions and drawbacks, and the world is not a happy place for other reasons too. Thankfully, spring is springing. As I write, I've felt the heat of the sun despite the cold wind, the snowdrops are poking up out of the ground, and I know the daffodils and crocuses are on their way. I know, because it happens every year, without fail.

God has set these things in place, I believe, to give us hope in the dark times. We know spring will come and summer will follow. The days will last for longer and the nights will be shorter. At the same time as all the deaths, we have heard of new life – new babies being born to children and grandchildren of our church and community, new babies being baptised in our churches, and new friends as groups start up again.

I'm writing this on Candlemas – the day the church celebrates Jesus as the Light of the World, being presented in the Temple as a baby, forty days after his birth. It's the official end of Christmas, and, as a church, we begin to look towards Lent, and to Jesus' death and resurrection. Another example of sadness turning to joy, of death into life and of despair into hope. God has done this, with us his people, time and time again, throughout the Bible, through Jesus, and on into the church communities over the generations in every nation. Churches do go through times of quiet, struggle and loss, but they are always renewed, always resurrected and always grow again.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. WINEFRIDE PARISH LENT COURSE 2022

Our Lent course this year, **Following Christ in the Footsteps of the Saints**, has been prepared by *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland*. It is guided by the story of St. Winefride and by the 70 mile pilgrimage from Holywell in Wales to Shrewsbury, which will take place in April and May this year.

Our own five session course will be held at St James' Church, Birstall on Wednesday evenings at 7.30 pm, from March 9th until April 6th. Each session will begin with a biblical reading followed by discussion and reflection. Supported by additional material about St. Winefride and the pilgrimage, it's a really interesting course. It will also be the first opportunity in a long time for us all to do something together. If you would like to join in, please add your name to one of the 'sign up' sheets at the back of either church.

For more information ask Debbie Shephard or the Rector

ST. WINEFRIDE

Winefride was a faithful Christian and the daughter of a 7thC Welsh noble family. Her dedication and commitment to the Christian faith resulted in her violent death, by decapitation, when she tried to escape the insistent advances of Caradoc, an aristocrat, who threatened to sexually attack her if she did not agree to marry him. Winefride's uncle Beuno, who was praying nearby, picked up her head, replaced it on her body, and she lived. At the place where Winefride's head fell to the ground, now called Holywell, a well of pure water sprang from the earth.

Winefride continued to live a life of great holiness. She became the abbess of a nunnery at Gwytherin, North Wales. Her remains were taken from Gwytherin to Shrewsbury Abbey in 1137.

Winefride's story has many touchpoints with our modern world – sexual harassment and coercion, misuse of power, the place of faith and the right to follow Jesus, as well as the contemporary need for healing and hope.

A TOWER OF HOPE

The Hope Shoe Box Appeal 2021

What a record year! We sent 63 boxes from Birstall and Wanlip, thanks to generous donations from countless sources. We thought 50 boxes would be the most we could manage, but gifts came pouring in.



Amazing Wendy from Queniborough gave us a car boot load of carrier bags full of wonderful gifts. When Sylvia and John arrived to collect yet more, she was upstairs making us beautiful lavender bags. What a star! Doreen, Sylvia and John spent 2½ days packing the boxes. They ended up with a really good production line going, fortified with coffee, biscuits and lunches.

If you click on the 'Link to Hope' website and watch the video on YouTube, you will see the boxes being distributed and the joy they generate. There is a wonderful clip of an old man with a very old horse, and an even older cart, trotting up a track to deliver boxes to remote dwellings (or shacks). It looks like something out of a medieval painting. 'Link to Hope' has also had a record year and they have sent their millionth box in their 30th year of distribution.

Please remember to save items throughout the year, as we are collecting already. One friend sorted out her jewellery and gave us a bag full. We do like to put extras in the boxes and it is amazing how much can be crammed into each box, especially with such an expert packer as Doreen! You can always put items in our church pigeonholes, or ring and we can collect, so think of us when you are sorting out.

Thanks again to you all who made this possible. How many will it be this year?

Sylvia Simes and Doreen Wilson

The church has continued for generations in Birstall and Wanlip and steeped in prayer. It's exciting both to look back and see what God has done in the past, and to look forward with anticipation to see what God is going to do next in our future. Not just in terms of numbers but, more importantly, in all our lives.

How will we grow in faith, understanding and love of God and each other? We look forward with hope. Hope is everything. May God bless us and give us hope, this Easter and always.

Amanda

THY KINGDOM COME 2022

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement inviting Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus.

What started in 2016 as an invitation from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Church of England is now an international and ecumenical call to prayer. Since its start in 2016 God has grown *Thy Kingdom Come* from a dream or possibility into a movement. Christians from 172 countries have taken part in praying 'Come Holy Spirit', so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ.

During the eleven days of *Thy Kingdom Come*, it is hoped that everyone who takes part will

1. Deepen their own relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. Pray for five friends or family to come to faith in Jesus.
3. Pray for the empowerment of the Spirit that we would be effective in our witness.

This year the eleven days run from 26th May to 5th June (Ascension Day to Pentecost). We are still deciding how we mark these eleven days in our parish. Watch out for further details nearer the time, mark the dates in your diary and seriously consider taking part. We need more Christian converts, and you could help the numbers of Christians grow in our parish and beyond.

Kerry Emmett

CRIES FOR A LOST HOMELAND

REFLECTIONS ON JESUS' SAYINGS FROM THE CROSS

Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford

MY LENT READING 2022

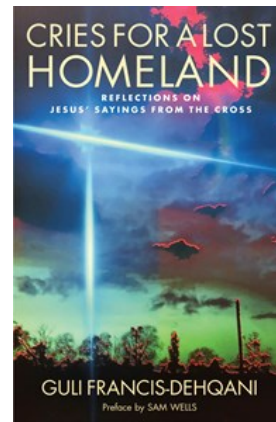
I like to read a devotional book each Lent. This year I have chosen Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani's recent book **Cries for a Lost Homeland: Reflections on Jesus' Seven Sayings from the Cross**.

Bishop Guli is the Bishop of Chelmsford. Previously, she was Bishop of Loughborough in our own diocese of Leicester. Her husband, Canon Lee Francis-Dehqani, was, until recently, Rector of Syston and linked parishes in the Fosse Team.

Bishop Guli was born in Isfahan, Iran. Her family were part of Iran's tiny Anglican Church which had been established by 19th century missionaries. Her father, Hassan Dehqani-Tafti, was a Muslim convert, and in 1961, became the first native Persian bishop of Iran and also the first indigenous Persian bishop.

In 1979, when the Islamic Revolution swept across Iran, church properties were raided, confiscated or closed down. During this time Bishop Hassan was briefly imprisoned. He also survived an attack on his life, during which his wife was injured. Soon after, whilst Bishop Hassan was out of the country for meetings, Guli's 24 year-old brother, Bahram, a university teacher in Tehran, was murdered. No one was ever brought to justice and the family were advised to leave Iran.

Guli was then only 14.



Until 2019 the Sisters lived and worked at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, where they were a tremendous gift to the faculty, the students and the surrounding community. They have since moved to Chiswick.

Recently the Sisters in England launched 'The Clewer Initiative', a massive international effort to fight human-trafficking. www.theclewerinitiative.org

The Sisters also support many organizations, such as One25 and the Medaille Trust, which rescue and empower women.

THREE MONKS ON AN ISLAND

A Parable by Leo Tolstoy

Three Russian monks lived on a faraway island. Nobody ever went there, but one day their bishop decided to make a pastoral visit. When he arrived, he discovered that the monks didn't even know the Lord's Prayer. So he spent all his time and energy teaching them the 'Our Father' and then left, satisfied with his pastoral work. But when his ship had left the island and was back on the open sea, he suddenly noticed the three hermits walking on the water. In fact they were running after the ship.

When they reached it, they cried 'Dear Father, we have forgotten the prayer you taught us.' The bishop, overwhelmed by what he was seeing and hearing, said 'But then, dear brothers, but how do you pray?'

They answered 'Well, we just say 'Dear God, there are three of us, and there are three of you, have mercy on us.'

The bishop, awe-struck by their sanctity and simplicity, said 'Go back to your land and be at peace.'

*from Spiritual Direction
by Henri J.M. Nouwen*

AN ENGLISH SAINT FOR THE SEASON

Harriet Monsell CSJB



Mother Harriet Monsell CSJB, founded the Community of St John the Baptist, on the 26th March 1883. The sisters cared for orphans, ran schools and hospitals, and opened mission houses in parishes.

Of Irish parentage, Harriet Monsell (née O'Brien) was born in 1811. After the death of her clergyman husband, she went to work in a penitentiary at Clewer near Windsor.

Here, under the guidance of the local vicar, the Revd T T Carter, she was professed as a Religious in 1852 and became the first Superior of the Community of St John the Baptist. Under her care, the community grew rapidly, undertaking a range of social work in a variety of locations, with foundations in India and America by the 1880s. The sisters cared for orphans, ran schools and hospitals, and opened mission houses in parishes. In 1875 Mother Harriet retired as Superior through ill-health, moving to a small hermitage in Folkestone, where she died on Easter Day 1883.

Text reproduced from 'Exciting Holiness' by permission of Brother Tristram SSF

The CSJB Sisters in England lived in Clewer, Windsor, from the mid-1850s until they relocated to Oxfordshire in 2001. In 2012 they moved to the campus of Ripon Theological College in Cuddesdon, where they provided for a new, architecturally-lauded Chapel as well as the Harriet Monsell House.

Picture reproduced by kind permission of the Mother Superior of the Community of St John the Baptist, Begbroke, Oxon.



The family eventually settled in England, with refugee status. During this time, in the 1980s, I had the privilege, with others, of meeting Bishop Hassan and his wife in Norfolk. He was very much a hero in the Church of England at the time. And it was a great privilege for us to meet with them.

In her book, Bishop Guli offers memorable and perceptive reflections on Jesus' seven final sayings from the cross. She opens up, from a Middle Eastern perspective, fresh and arresting insights for Western readers, drawing on the riches of Persian culture as well as on her own dramatic experience of the loss of her homeland.

'Cries for a Lost Homeland' is not a long book and it is very accessible to the general reader. Deliberately published as a book for Lent reading, it offers inspirational material, not just for the individual reader, but also for parish Lent Study Groups.

I recommend it highly. You can access it on Kindle, as well as in book form.

Canon Anne

'These pages are her song'

The Revd. Dr Samuel Wells writes of 'Cries for a Lost Homeland'

Here you will find Christ's story inscribed on Bishop Guli's own flesh, and her story inhabited by Christ's flesh.

Here you will see her questioning mind and humble heart and searching soul.

Here, though you might be meeting Guli for the first time, you will meet Christ as if for the first time, and will want to spend more time with both of them.

For the key to understanding Guli is that you can't tell her story without retelling Christ's story.

These pages show you what it means to take up your cross and walk close to Christ.

Dr Samuel Wells is Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields, London

I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU

World Day of Prayer 2022

Service: Friday 4th March 2022, 2 pm St Theresa's RC Church
Front Street, Birstall;

Lunch: 12.15 pm; Presentation: 1.15 pm



Before the service there will be a simple lunch of soup and cake (*donations welcome*) to which all are welcome. The service has been prepared by the women of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its theme, *I Know The Plans I Have For You*, is based on Jeremiah 29:11, and emphasises hope and trust in God. The theme was chosen and the material written in 2018, before anyone had ever heard of COVID-19 and the struggles it has triggered, but it is especially relevant now as we move forward.

The artwork above, created by Angie Fox, using a combination of embroidery, appliqué and metalwork, depicts freedom, represented as an open door to a pathway across an endless open vista; justice, represented by broken chains; God's peace and forgiveness, represented by the dove of peace and a peace lily breaking through the pavement. Women in England, Wales and Northern Ireland need the prayers of countries around the world as too many suffer from poverty, fear, isolation, domestic abuse and ill health. We shall hear the story of three women and of how God's plans worked out for them.

The money donated during the service will be used to provide grants to Christian charities worldwide. Further information about the WDP organisation and theme can be found at www.wwdp.org.co.uk. We will be working under government and church guidelines at the time so it may be necessary to change arrangements at the last minute.

Gill Pope

Hassen, 45, is the man who brings the library to Mahadiya. He is one of 33 community volunteers who were trained by *Save the Children* as facilitators to help children learn to read.

We teach the basics of facilitation skills, how to organise and run community-based mobile reading camps.

Save the Children has provided more than 39,000 supplementary reading books to the 33 villages. Hassen spends anywhere between 15-25 days with the library, moving around villages. He loads the books, a tent, plastic sheet and mats, into two boxes on one camel. A second camel and herder accompanies him as a backup.



The library stays for two and a half days at each site. After each round, there is a three-day break for the camels, herders and librarians, so that the camels can be released to go and feed. They are also examined by the herder for any signs of illness.

Josephine Burgess

A PRAYER

Dear Lord Jesus. Thank you so much for all the precious children in this world. We know they mean so much to you. We pray you would help us do all we can to protect them and to give them the start in life they deserve. Lord, we bring to you all the wonderful work being done to release children from poverty, and we pray that you will bless every pair of hands that works for you. Increase and bless their efforts. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

AN INTERESTING USE FOR A CAMEL!

The original story in 2020:

Like 26 million other children in Ethiopia, 13-year-old Mahadiya is out of school because of the coronavirus, but thanks to *Save the Children's* camel library, an initiative which first began in 2010, she is able to continue reading and learning at home.

In the Somali region of Ethiopia, camels are traditionally used to transport goods across the hot deserts. Through this programme, 21 camels, which can each carry up to 200 books at a time in wooden boxes strapped to their backs, reach over 22,000 children in 33 villages.



Follow up story in 2021:

In September 2021, the camel library went digital. Instead of carrying around paper books, *Save the Children* load story books onto tablets, which travel from village to village on a camel who also carries solar panels to charge them.

Mahadiya has been given a tablet that she uses to read storybooks from one of *Save the Children's* Digital Camel Libraries, as well as a book featuring her story '*Mahadiya and the Camel*'.

The project is ongoing and, after the successful pilot, all Camel Libraries are now being transformed to Digital Camel Libraries.

'I HOPE YOU DANCE'

My grandson, Bertie, recently moved to the sixth form. His form teacher for the previous four years sent him a lovely letter to encourage him on the next stage of his education, and enclosed a poem/song that speaks volumes.

A short extract from the letter I share with you. The poem/song you may or may not know.

'Keep being you, don't ever change. You are a lovely student and a positive and optimistic young man.
Enjoy your next adventure.
Best wishes, Miss Julia.'

I Hope You Dance

I hope you never lose your sense of wonder,
You get your fill to eat but always keep that hunger.
May you never take one single breath for granted.
God forbid love ever leave you empty-handed.

I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean.
Whenever one door closes, I hope one more opens.
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance,
I hope you dance, I hope you dance.

I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance.
Never settle for the path of least resistance.
Living might mean taking chances, but they're worth taking
Loving might be a mistake, but it's worth making.

Don't let some hell-bent heart leave you bitter,
When you come close to selling out, reconsider.
Give the heavens above more than just a passing glance.
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance,
I hope you dance, I hope you dance.

submitted by Charlotte Stephenson

GOD, ME AND ART

On Tuesday 18th January I decided, in my regular pounding the pavements of Birstall, to see how the snowdrops were coming on by walking through the churchyard of St James. As I headed towards the church door, I was accosted by two formidable ladies who said, 'You are coming to 'God, Me and Art' aren't you?' To which I replied 'No'. But they said 'Just come and see what we do.' And anyone who knows Canon Anne and Rita knows that there is not much chance of getting away! I agreed to stay for ten minutes. An hour and ten minutes later, however, I left, having been fascinated by Rita's collection of artefacts relating to 'Light', Tony's paintings, Anne's poem and Noreen's pastel drawing, all with the theme of 'Light'. Perhaps I shall go again. Next month's topic is 'Roots' so I immediately thought of square roots and fractals and reflected that I might not really be on the same wave length as these artistic folk, but you might be so why not give it a go.

Josephine Burgess

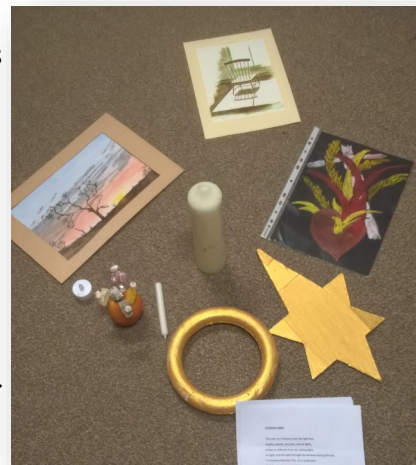
Tony's Paintings, all with the theme of 'Light'.

Sunrise

Around the world, every day, God paints a bright and glorious sunrise. As individuals we don't see one every day, but whenever I see one, in the cool of the morning, I feel blessed and filled with wonder at the beauty of God's world.

Chair in window

I painted this in 1994 and I no longer recall what motivated me to do it then. But, with the theme of 'Light' for the last meeting, I remembered this painting, and when I looked at it again the thought came that it was showing an empty chair bathed in God's glorious light, and so a chair representing a place that is available to everyone always.



Tony Bloxam

BREATHE THROUGH YOUR NOSE

A couple of days ago I saw an article in the Mail by Sarah Vine, a well-respected journalist. It was two whole pages of telling us how to breathe through our noses! Yes, well, breathing is pretty important, and not something you can easily opt out of or put off until next week - but I ask you, two whole pages? So, following (sort of) Sarah's wander through her grey cells, I thought I would throw my two pennorth into the ring! There has been a lot of correspondence lately complaining about unnecessary foul language in drama and some comedy programmes. People are switching off! For myself, if there is a programme that has interested me by way of the write-up, at the first foul word, I switch off. This has closed off a lot of TV for me, mostly dramas.

But there are other avenues of interest. For instance, did anyone else catch 'Britain's Outlaws: Highwaymen, Pirates and Rogues' on BBC4 with Dr Sam Willis? There were some extremely colourful characters in there, such as Blackbeard, the pirate who put lit tapers in his hair, which really made him look ferocious, Calico Jack, so called for his love of fine linen, and who also banned drink on his ship and made his fellow pirates go to bed early! Although he had no qualms about using a transgressor for target practice, strung up to the yardarm! Then there was the rogue Jack who escaped from every prison he was flung into, a regular Houdini! He became quite a favourite of the public, being young, nice looking and rather dashing. The only thing he could not escape was the noose, which got him in the end! Even at this distance of time, I really felt quite sorry for him. These days, he would probably get a suspended sentence (which is what he did get, really) (sorry about that, couldn't resist it). I have also found wonderful ballet, archaeology, jazz and history, as well as re-visiting 'Parkinson MASH' and 'Doc Martin' as well as travelling around the world with Michael Palin and the wonderful David Attenborough. So, the television companies can keep all those nasty, swearsy things. I shall keep on trawling through stations less travelled.

Leigh Reid

OUR WORK IN LOCAL SCHOOLS

The academic year started with church visits from Highcliffe and Riverside to celebrate the beginning of the school year. Originally this had been prepared on a voice-over Power Point, so that if the schools had not wanted to come to church there would have been some contribution from St James' for the beginning of the school year.

Harvest was celebrated in the Methodist Church with James contributing to a Harvest celebration from Riverside and Hallam Fields compiled by the schools. Pupils from Highcliffe and Riverside came to *Experience Christmas*, which is organised in a similar activity way to *Experiencing Easter*, which we had provided pre Covid. The Rector was hoping to lead this, as it was something she had done in her previous parish, but she went down with Covid, so it was left to a team of very willing volunteers. Christingle making took place in all three Primary schools, led by the Rector and James, aided by a couple of volunteers. Further Christmas activities took place at Hallam Fields, led by James and the Rector.

Plans for working with Cedars in the Spring Term are in the early stages but it has been decided to use Wanlip Church and Hall, as this is a new venture and much preparation will be needed.

A meeting on Teams has taken place with the three Primary Schools, James and Josephine. It was hoped that the Rector would be with us but unfortunately her daughter's illness prevented this. Dates are in place, but much work will be needed as we are not only welcoming pupils to the church buildings, but also providing PowerPoints with voice-overs for assemblies.

This amount of schoolwork would not be possible without a team of volunteers, a keen Methodist worker and an enthusiastic Rector. There is no doubt that a new Rector, a new syllabus and Covid have all provided new challenges, not forgetting the challenges of using technology. It all makes for exciting times.

Josephine Burgess

COME AND JOIN US!

Back in June 2016, our then curate, Rev'd Anne Crosby, started '**God, Me and Art**', and despite the inevitable intrusion of Covid19, it is still running on a bi-monthly basis and would benefit from more members. Perhaps 'Art' in the title may deter some people, but we do not expect everyone to be a painter or sketcher, for 'art' covers all aspects of life and embraces all talents. Current attendees bring pictures, objects, poetry, prose, photos, whatever the theme brings to mind!

We are not a stuffy or judgmental group. We enjoy a couple of hours together reflecting on a chosen theme. Perhaps you may think that sounds 'stuffy'? It's not! We have an interesting and amusing time together chatting about any contributions that have been offered.

We don't even expect everyone to bring a contribution! We welcome anyone who comes along just to see what we do. Just as our last meeting was due to start, a hapless church member who was nearby was taken 'prisoner' and persuaded to join us, 'Just ten minutes, I've got things I must do', she said. She remained with us for the entire meeting, however, and joined happily in all our chat. Of course 'God' is also in the title and we like to consider how God has influenced our thoughts within the chosen theme.

So, whether you draw, paint, write poetry, love drama, music or any other art form, or none of these things, just come along. You may be surprised, but you won't be disappointed.

Currently we meet on Tuesday afternoons and **our next meeting is on Tuesday March 15th at 2.00 pm in the Church Office**, but this is under review and may change. We will keep you informed. The theme will be '**Roots**'. Whenever we meet, however, we very much look forward to welcoming you.

For further details contact **Tony Bloxam, 07929 787876**

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 2022

21 February – 6 March



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT is a show of solidarity with those on the frontline of the climate crisis. The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, more commonly referred to as COP26, was the 26th United Nations Climate Change conference, held at the SEC Centre in Glasgow from 31 October to 13 November 2021. It didn't deliver all the changes needed nor did it secure finance directly to support farmers and workers on the frontline, but the Fairtrade Foundation believes that there is hope, if we all act together.

Fairtrade Fortnight is an opportunity for individuals, communities, and businesses around the country to stand with farmers in low-income countries who are impacted daily by climate change. Together, by keeping the pressure on government and businesses, we can all ensure farmers benefit from fairer prices, fairer trading practices and from the resources needed for tackling the climate emergency.

The climate crisis is the biggest threat to the livelihoods of millions of small-scale farmers and agricultural workers in low-income countries worldwide. Without a fairer income, farmers are unable to invest in the types of mitigation and adaptation techniques needed to protect the environment and their businesses. This represents a vicious cycle of poverty in which steps towards environmental protection and decarbonisation are likely to be beyond the reach of those who aren't even able to earn a living income because the price they receive for their produce is far too low.

It is then moved to stand by the font, and is lit at every baptism and confirmation service. At baptisms, a lit baptismal candle is given to every newly baptised person, whether child or adult.



At Easter, church banners picture sunrise or sunbeams. Pentecostal images include flames and a dove, representing the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples.

Halos are golden rings of light which identify angels, Jesus, Mary and the saints in pictures, icons and stained glass windows.

Rita Richards



Pentecost 2022 falls on the 5th June

**God, who as at this time
taught the hearts of your faithful people
by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit:
grant us by the same Spirit
to have a right judgement in all things
and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort;
through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

LIGHT THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

Spring is the king of all seasons and provides a calm, peaceful and relaxed feeling to people of all ages. In Church life we have seasons too and celebrate each one in a variety of ways. But each has Jesus Christ the King at its centre: 'Jesus, the Light of the World'. This is why 'light' in various forms is an integral part of our church services and depicted in a variety of ways.

Candles on the altar remind us that Jesus is always present. Advent wreath candles are lit each Sunday during Advent with the central white candle lit on Christmas Day and all are kept lit in our services through to Candlemas, February 2nd. The star on top of the Christmas tree reminds us of the star that appeared in the sky, seen by the shepherds and the wise men, and guiding them to the stable in Bethlehem.

Christingle services, which can take place any time through Advent up to Candlemas, also symbolise light. A Christingle is an orange decorated with a candle, red ribbon, fruit and sweets. The orange represents the world, the red ribbon the blood of Christ, the fruit God's creation, and the lit candle representing Jesus, the Light of the World.

The feast of Candlemas falls on 2nd February. It celebrates Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus in the Temple. The story tells of the aged Simeon, who was in the Temple that day, recognising the baby Jesus as the promised Messiah. We repeat his words at Evensong whenever we sing or say the Nunc Dimittis. *'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people. A light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of thy people Israel.'* Candlemas is the liturgical ending of Christmastide. Churches celebrate it with lit candles all around the building. (At one time all church candles were blessed at this service before use.)

Today only the new Paschal (Easter) Candle is blessed each year, at the first Eucharist of Easter. It stands at the front at the church through Eastertide and is lit for every service.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR MOTHER

God's earth—a positive example of mothering

Earth Day is an annual event celebrated around the world on **April 22nd**. It demonstrates support for environmental protection. First celebrated in 1970, it now includes events in more than 193 countries. **Earth Day** seeks to highlight and promote efforts dedicated to the protection of the environment.



As we enter the 21st century, we face many environmental crises including global warming, deforestation, endangered wildlife, shortages of portable water and widespread pollution. These crises negatively affect our planet's resources, and pose a serious risk to our long-term lifestyles and health.

Today, **Earth Day** is celebrated by billions of people around the world and is observed in over 190 countries. Worldwide, **Earth Day** celebrations utilize educational programmes to inform people of ways in which they can help protect the environment and its natural resources.

A PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of all creation, forgive us when we lose perspective and our world shrinks to our size, not yours.

Forgive us and nourish our vision.

Forgive us when we look away from you when we feel empty and grasp what is not ours to take.

Forgive us and nourish our vision.

Forgive us when the choices we make are self-centred, and we are indifferent to the needs of the wider community and world.

Forgive us and nourish our vision.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

HELPING OUR COMMUNITY

The **Helping our Community** group was set up at the start of the pandemic. It all started from a post on social media asking if people would like to help their neighbours. The response was amazing and within two weeks we had every street covered in Birstall by a co-ordinator. We were very fortunate to have a local help from Shreekant Ravidera who printed, free of charge, a flyer for every house in Birstall. The flyer had the name of a contact on the street and the sort of things we could help with. Shopping, dog walking and collecting prescriptions. As things progressed, we identified the need for a prescription collection and delivery service. The local chemists were very supportive, as it decreased the footfall in the village. We collected and delivered daily. The local hospitals were short of scrubs and, after a large donation of fabric, we set about making scrubs, scrub caps and masks, making over 2000 items for our local hospitals. There was a shortage of face coverings, so the next project was to make enough to gift to the community.

With the number of sewing-related projects going on we decided to set up another group called Birstall NHS scrubs group. Again this group became very successful and we were amazed what talent we had locally. Many people were pleased to have something positive to do during lockdown. Lots of knitted and fabric items were made, and we began to donate to the NICU and to Rainbows. We had some talented quilters who made quilts for the local hospitals and the Rainbows Children's Hospice. Covid hearts were also made in pairs; one was placed in the hand of a person nearing the end of life and one given to the relative. These were also distributed in the community and to St James' Church. At the time visits were limited so these were a great comfort. Items were also sold locally and funds raised enabled Jades retreat, a local charity, to upgrade their caravan.

We have made food hampers not only for Christmas but for those in need throughout the year. We provided over 120 breakfast boxes for the homeless, 25 bags for women and children fleeing domestic violence. Christmas bags of treats included personal alarms.

We set up a 'payitforward' during Christmas 2020. As there were restrictions on visiting, many people faced being alone at Christmas. So, with the help of Ruth from the local café, we were able to offer a three course Christmas dinner menu. The community were very generous in paying for meals, which were then gifted to those identified in the community. The first year over one hundred meals were delivered on Christmas Eve. As we had funds left over during the year, we were able to gift afternoon teas, which were delivered in the community: one for a 60th Wedding Anniversary, and others to people who had faced challenges with health and loss.

We were supported by the local *Spotted* group who donated money for the gifts, and the local garden centre who allowed Father Christmas and his Elves to stay a while. Over three hundred excited children visited. We held a Bonfire party and a Christmas fair that raised funds which we have used locally: £500 to the special needs playgroup and equipment for the new youth groups. Pizza nights and selection boxes were purchased for local 'out of schools' groups as their fundraising had been hampered with the pandemic, and also for the Scouts, Brownies, Guides and youth groups 'faces art'. We also offered the #payitforward meals that were again well received.

As people get used to the 'new normal' the group will respond to whatever we can help with. Future fundraising will all be used in Birstall and Wanlip. Friendships made during this trying time will last a lifetime. None of this could have happened without the community working together. Can we help you?

Thank you.
Rosie Rollings

