

Weeding and growing

I recently read: 'any effort at gardening, even a haphazard, stop-go one ... is an effort to drag to earth the colours and the importances of heaven' (Sebastian Barry: *The Secret Scripture*). At this time of year our thoughts turn to our gardens.

Well, I have wrestled with the wisteria, reduced the roses radically and renewed my acquaintance with the dump. Now comes the enjoyable time of planning, planting and creativity coupled with back ache and many cups of tea. Spring is well established and the summer ahead with all its delights.

I found myself pondering on the similarities of gardening and the spiritual life – whatever you personally mean by spiritual.

We have been through the season of Lent: a time of self-examination when many people 'give something up'. I tend to a slightly different view in that I try to declutter my mind but nevertheless make Lent a discipline. I attended one of the many home groups which St Mary's runs. These are not for people with an amazing knowledge of the Bible but for ordinary people who enjoy each others' company and want to talk about faith and its possibilities.

As Lent progressed through Mothering Sunday to Easter I attempted to do a bit of spiritual weeding and dumping: something from which everyone can benefit. I considered what is really important in my life, what is holding me back and so on. Only when I have done a bit of weeding – physical and spiritual – can the ground be ready to be fruitful and creative again.

We are now approaching the growing season both in the garden and in the church. The hangings in the church and the vestments worn by the clergy will turn to green – appropriate for a time of getting down to basics and growing our faith.

It would be wonderful to see you at St Mary's if you have time after keeping your gardens in order, to have the opportunity to help you discover what is important to you, and maybe to learn together. Let's use this 'growing season' so that when the high feast of Christmas comes round again we may see it through different, uncluttered eyes.

Don't let 'stuff' hold you back!

Rev Jane Peters

Special Events and Services

Sunday 17th April

6.30pm Friends of St Mary's Choral Evensong
Responses: Smith
Canticles: Brewer in E flat
Anthem: Evening Hymn - Balfour Gardner

Sunday 1 May

10.30am Family Eucharist

Join with us to
welcome
our friends from
Douai



Blooming lovely!

Scout Community Week, the modern day 'Bob-a-Job Week', took place last Autumn.

Mowgli Cubs planted over 30 daffodil bulbs in fibre pots in readiness for the church garden. Later these were transplanted into the garden between the Choir room & the Friends' room.

Now at last they are blooming and provide a glimpse of Spring, and a smile, to passers-by. Pictured above are some of our Cubs who attended Church Parade on Mothering Sunday – how very appropriate!



From the Registers

At Rest

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

Linda Agar 14 Mar aged 73

Patricia Harris 15 Mar aged 83



Remembering

Joan Sugden

We were sorry to hear of the recent death of Joan Sugden, widow of Canon Neville Sugden. While it is nearly 50 years since they left the Vicarage, longstanding members of St Mary's may remember them.

Joan grew up in the West of Ireland. She met her husband in Rochester during World War Two when she was in the WRNS. They moved to Harrogate in 1947 after their marriage when Neville was curate at Christ Church, High Harrogate. After an incumbency at St Paul's Chatham they came to St Mary's Shortlands in 1954 with the commission from Bishop Chavasse, Neville's former master at St Peter's College Oxford, to complete the rebuilding of St Mary's.

They returned to Harrogate in 1966 when Canon Sugden was appointed vicar of St Peter's. On retirement they moved to Park Chase, near Christ Church. After the deaths of Neville in 1995 and their second son Peter in 2004 Joan moved to a clergy retirement home in Kibworth Beauchamp in 2007.

Joan had four children, eight grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

Joan was a committee member of the Yorkshire branch of the Association of Wrens, the secretary for the local Clergy Widows support network, and a member of the National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies, (having launched one of the first wave of church flower festivals in England when in Shortlands). A keen and knowledgeable gardener, she was always delighted to open her home and garden for fetes and hospitality. She served as Vice President of the Friends of St Mary's. She never forgot her Irish roots, and was constantly on the lookout for those who had left the Emerald Isle, to share stories, and remember the joy of dancing to the music of the celtic fiddle.

We had heard from their son Canon Dr Chris Sugden that Joan had been interested to read in SPAN of the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the church last November.

Canon Dr Sugden wrote:

'I well remember the services at the Parish Hall by the station where many jumble sales were held to help towards the £55,000 target. There was a 'silver mile' formed by taking a silver painted yard long piece of wood with a slit down the middle for coins, which was then laid end on end from the village hall, up Shortlands Road then up the slope to Kingswood Road.'

Pictured left to right - Judith West with Jan Boam and Sue Harrison



Dementia Awareness Workshop

In February, 27 parishioners gathered in church to listen to a presentation given by Judith West, a Dementia Awareness Champion with many years of experience of working with Alzheimer's and Dementia Support Services in Gravesend.

Judith explained what dementia is and how it affects people. Alzheimer's is the most commonly known and numerous form of dementia although there are over one hundred different diseases which can cause dementia.

She described the Alzheimer's Society's campaign to appoint one million 'Dementia Friends'. A Dementia Friend, having learnt a little more about what it is like to live with Dementia, then turns that understanding into action.

Simply visiting and listening to someone with the condition or their carer can be of enormous benefit.

Judith talked about some of the resources that are available, including Dementia Support Cafes in Beckenham, Bromley and Chislehurst and many information materials to aid those with dementia and their carers.

Sue Harrison, from St Mary's, briefly explained that the Rochester Diocese had received a grant to explore the potential for 'Anna Chaplains' to meet the needs of people with dementia and their families. An Anna Chaplain is someone who will listen, who works with people of strong, little or no faith, promoting their spiritual welfare. Many different kinds of people are involved in pastoral visiting, taking a service in a care home and offering a listening ear. As part of this work, churches are being encouraged to consider how they can become more proactive in supporting those with dementia in their community: the workshop was part of St Mary's initiative to consider this.

If you would like more information about anything to do with this project at St Mary's please contact Kay Coleman or Sue Harrison on 0208 460 5682 or office@stmaryshortlands.plus.com. More information on Anna Chaplaincy can be found at www.thegiftofyears.org.uk

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Come along to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in church on Sunday 24th April after the 10.30am service to find out more about what has happened at St. Mary's over the last year - and our plans for the next year.

Papers for the meeting will be published on the website at least a week in advance: www.stmaryshortlands.gov.uk

For the love of creation

Our natural world is never far from our thoughts. We depend upon it for our very existence - the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the water we drink. It is a source of beauty and delight for us all. But the environment is under threat. Farmers overseas are struggling to grow crops as weather patterns change, and here in the UK flooding is affecting more and more homes. With so much going wrong it can seem overwhelming.

Recently at St Mary's we held an informal service to think and pray about our natural world. We watched a video featuring Jeremy Irons and Maxine Peake, read poems and passages from the Bible on God's love for creation, and discussed the issues in small groups. Our music group led us in a number of worship songs - including Julie Gold's well known 'From a Distance'. As part of the service we planted seeds as a symbol of our commitment to care for God's world.

'In love with your earth, may we study its wonders, accept its fragility, care for its wounds, nurture seeds of a holy future.'

Tim Aldred

Parish Picnic & Barbecue

Sunday, 12 June

in the church grounds following the 10.30am Family and Parade Service

Come and Celebrate the 90th Birthday of the Queen

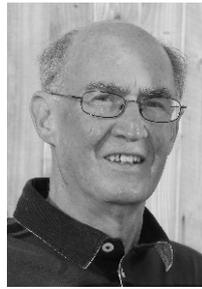
Bring your own picnic -
barbecue food and refreshments available to buy
Bouncy castle and games for all the family

Come and join the fun!



My Day Job

After graduating, I moved into a Christian community house in Rochdale. I initially worked in chemical textile research. My job challenged my faith when I proved that it was more economical for the company to throw away its pollution than to recycle it. I decided that if, as a Christian, I couldn't make a difference in industry I would try working with people instead.



I ran an adventure playground that we started close to the community house, before moving to London to another adventure playground and another Christian community house. Eventually I applied to work overseas through the Religious Society of Friends, the Quakers. After training at their residential college in Birmingham I taught Physics and Mathematics in rural Kenya for two years, followed by Community and Community Relations work in Middlesbrough.

I then moved to London and worked for 27 years for the Church Mission Society (CMS), selecting personnel and developing and running mission programmes and training courses. I was privileged to hear about the faith journey of, literally, thousands of Christians. In my latter years I was involved in training interviewers in Nigeria, Kenya, Singapore and Korea as well as in Britain and Ireland. I also had the privilege of travelling to China, India, Pakistan and North Africa, and of taking groups of young people for short visits to be hosted by Anglicans in Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Hong Kong.

When CMS relocated to Oxford in 2007 we decided that as a family we didn't want to move so I took redundancy and worked half-time for the Anglican Communion Office as 'Project Officer – Mission and Theological Education'. I also continued some training of interviewers and had a couple of books published. Since retiring in 2014 I have continued with some voluntary work for the Anglican Communion, including administering the Anglican Inter Faith Network, and helping to create theological resources.

Stuart Buchanan

Mission of the month

LYMPHOMA ASSOCIATION

Lymphoma affects around 14,000 people each year. It is the UK's fifth most common cancer (after breast, lung, colon and prostate cancers), and is the most common blood cancer. Around 100,000 people are living with lymphoma. It is most prevalent in people over the age of 55 but is also the most frequently diagnosed cancer among younger people.



The Lymphoma Association was founded by patients in 1986 and is the only UK charity dedicated to providing accurate medical information and support to people affected by lymphatic cancer including families, friends and carers.

It provides support in a variety of ways, including a Freephone helpline, free patient information (booklets and leaflets), a buddy scheme with telephone links to other people with similar experiences, local support groups, regional patient conferences and a website featuring forums as well as a quarterly magazine. Training and support is also provided for GPs and nurses.

As well as supporting patients directly, the Lymphoma Association represents the views of patients and carers to policy makers, regulatory bodies and others. There is a particular focus on access to treatments, early diagnosis and awareness, survivorship and improving patient experience.

For more information see the display at the back of church or www.lymphomas.org.uk

Saint of the Month

St George - 23rd April

St George was probably born in Cappadocia, Eastern Turkey in 270 AD. Like his parents he was a Christian. At the age of seventeen he joined the Roman army and soon became renowned for his bravery. He served under the pagan Emperor Diocletian but never forgot his Christian faith.

When Diocletian started persecuting Christians, St. George pleaded with him to spare their lives. However, St. George's pleas fell on deaf ears and it is thought that Diocletian tried to make St. George deny his faith in Christ, by torturing him. St George showed incredible courage and faith and was finally beheaded near Lydda in Palestine on 23rd April, 303.

In the well-known legend, St George may be slaying the dragon which represents Satan, while the maiden is the Empress Alexandra, Diocletian's wife, who converted to Christianity after St George's execution – or it may be just the fairy story we know and love. The story was first brought back to England by the Crusaders in the eleventh century.

St George is the patron saint of about 20 countries including England, Ethiopia, Greece and Portugal. He is also the patron saint of scouts, soldiers and farmers and helps those suffering from leprosy, plague and syphilis.

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- 08.00 Holy Communion
- 10.30 Family Communion, except when notified. During term time there are separate groups in the Church Hall for children aged 0-18.
- 18.30 Choral Evensong (3rd Sunday in the month)

Every Monday

- 17.00 Evening Prayers

Every Wednesday

- 10.00 Holy Communion

Further information about all services can be obtained from the Parish Office.

PARISH DIRECTORY

Vicar	Rev. M. Finch	8464 8065
(Sat - Thu)	revfinch@btinternet.com	
Associate Vicar	Rev. R. Finch	8464 8065
Associate Vicar	Rev. J. Peters	07531 617302/ (Sun, Mon, Wed)
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	Mrs. P. White	8460 9357
Friends of St. Mary's		
	Miss J. Rambridge	8650 0947

For admissions to Beavers, Cubs & Scouts please contact email: 7bromleyadmissions@gmail.com

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Cubs (Mon)	Mrs. P. Braithwaite	8460 4152
Cubs (Tues)	Mr. J. Griffiths	07954 437658
Beavers	Mrs H. Ashford	07979 504079

For admissions to Rainbows, Brownies & Guides please tel: 08001695901 or go to www.girlguiding.org.uk/interested

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Brownies (Wed.)	Mrs. R. Kateswaran	8249 0984
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