

**February 2021**  
**THE DIARY OF ST MARY**  
**DROYLSDEN**

*A welcoming all-age community growing and sharing  
God's love*



**Associate Ministers**

**Reverend Nancy Alexander                      371 9667**

**Reverend Sue Ball                                      682 1439**

**Church Wardens**

**Pat Catterall    370 0039**

**Beth Cutler    285 1472**

*"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be  
constant in prayer"*

*ROMANS 12:12*

**The Church building is currently closed.**

## **Services – February 2021**

**Services during February can be found on YouTube on Wednesdays at 6pm and Sundays at 1pm (alternating between the orange and yellow orders of Morning Worship services).**

**If you listen online and are having trouble with the sound, please try listening with earphones.**

**(Google YouTube then search St Mary's Droylsden)**

**Any changes and updates will be announced on the website and where possible Facebook**

### **COME AND SEE**

How many times have you picked up the Bible and read a piece of scripture, or heard a scripture reading and you have gone "Wow, that is speaking to me"? It happens more than you would expect doesn't it?

That's what happened to me last month, when I read John 1:43-end which was the Gospel reading for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany. We hear about two friends who have an unexpected encounter with Jesus and initially react in very different ways. Together, Philip and Nathanael help each other to understand who Jesus is and they begin a journey that will redefine who they are.

Nathanael is surprised that Jesus knows not only his name, but much about him too. Of course, Jesus knows each of us as individuals but sometimes, like Nathanael, we can wonder 'Why would God be interested in me?' Some of us will be, like Philip, keen to follow straight away. Some of us will be more like Nathanael – full of questions and concerns. This story shows that wherever we are, Jesus finds us and knows us. It is sometimes hard to appreciate that Jesus knows what worries us, all of us, but he does, this reading reminds us.

I read this passage from John early in the week in preparation for the Sunday service, at the time the TV was showing the figures for the pandemic and took you to one of the NHS hospitals struggling to cope with the amount of people succumbing to COVID and needing to be hospitalised.

It struck me, with what is going on around us at the moment, we all have our own wants and needs. Concerns, if not for ourselves but for our loved ones. Like so many I have been

praying for a vaccine, and then when they arrived, praying that my Mum who is 87 will have hers soon. My prayers, and the prayers of so many, were answered as I write this, she has finally had her jab.

Vaccines are like the 'Good News' which Philip wanted Nathanael to hear and receive. Yet Nathanael was cynical about Jesus (John 3.46): 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'. But Philip persisted: 'Come and see'. In other words, 'Find out for yourself' or 'Check the facts.' The new Covid-19 vaccines are literally life-saving for millions; yet millions of other people are against the vaccines – including the leader of Brazil. John Henry Newman once wrote: 'We can believe what we choose. We are answerable for what we choose to believe.' His words could have been written for us today. Apart from suffering from their willed ignorance, how can people be convinced to accept what is actually for their benefit – spiritually as well as physically.

After so many have prayed for an end to this pandemic, are we now turning away from the solution that is being given us. Whether that is by flouting the lockdown rules, and risk passing on the virus, or denying the vaccine. Are we really looking and listening out for Jesus in all that is happening?

When I am in the hospital or see pictures on the news of the NHS staff and carers doing all they can to save and comfort the sick, and care for the elderly. I am reminded that we are His hands and feet. Jesus works through us, He not only inspires us, but gives us strength to do His will even if we do not recognise Him at work within us. He has given the scientists the knowledge to find these cures, He has endowed the Doctors and Nurses with the skills to heal and care. It was planned and willed even before they were born. And I believe He is there in the mix of every situation. When I see NHS staff emotionally and physically drained, it saddens me that there are too few of them to manage this pandemic. This is not a political statement, but it shows how the human spirit will push itself, often to the very limit of endurance for others.

January is for many a hard month, it's a long month, its often dark and dismal, and although this year was slightly different, it is more so after the Christmas and New Year celebrations. It is hard to see the hope of the good things to come, with Spring seemingly so far away. Even with the vaccine, we are warned that there will be many more becoming ill over the next few weeks, but with the lockdown helping we should see a downward turn in the figures. Hope is on the horizon!

God doesn't always answer our prayers in the way that we want, we often interpret this as, He is not listening or He has said "No". This reading from John reminds us, He knows all about us, He knows what is in our heart, even before we know our needs, He does! Faith is trusting God even when you don't understand His plan. Sometimes when things are falling apart they may actually be falling into place.

Come and see, Philip said. See for yourself today, follow Jesus, look for him, look for his hand at work in our lives and those around us, and at the same time help others who have not yet heard the Good News to do so.

Stay Safe and May God Bless you

Rev Nancy <><

## Readings for February

We know that some people like to follow the bible readings in their own bibles so here is a list of the readings for February:

7th February: Colossians 1: 15-20 and John 1: 1-14

14th February: 2 Corinthians 4: 3-6 and Mark 9: 2-9

17th February: Ash Wednesday 2 Corinthians 5: 20b - 6: 10 and Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21 or John 8: 1-11

21st February: 1 Peter 3: 18-end and Mark 1: 9-15

28th February: Romans 4: 13-end and Mark 8: 31-end

## Finished At Last

There was no fanfare, no firework display. In fact, I didn't even notice until a few hours later when I was updating my spreadsheet.

But on the afternoon of Friday 15th Jan, I finally walked the last miles of my challenge. It has taken me a while longer than I had hoped, but nevertheless I have clocked up 285 miles over the past few months. It's surprising how far your daily walk can take you whilst still obeying the instruction to stay local.

The final parish to reply was the benefice of Faversham. Rev Simon Rowlands asked us to pray for Dan, their community and mission priest as he tries to reach out to those at risk of becoming involved in county lines gangs.

I have enjoyed getting in touch with the various parishes along the way. It was a surprise to me that so many were in vacancy like us. What was not such a surprise was the fact that the majority asked for prayers as they were struggling with the lockdown. As has been said many times recently, we are not all in the same boat, but we are all in the same storm. Please continue to pray for the mission of God's Church throughout the world

With people donating in so many different ways, I kind of lost track of exactly how much money was raised. There was £220 from JustGiving and at least £130 via direct contributions. Thank you to all those who supported me financially and with your encouragement. A new final amount of £430 was announced after the diary was printed – this amendment will be in the online February Diary only.

I'll keep walking and if anyone has any suggestions as to where I should aim for next, let me know.

Stay safe and hopefully we will be together again before too long.

Rev Sue

## Lent Course

In previous years, we have held a Lent Course in church to prepare ourselves spiritually for Easter. This year, for obvious reasons, we are unable to get together in person. However, the Church of England has prepared a resource called Live Lent, God's Story, Our Story. Their website describes it this way:

"From Ash Wednesday (17 February) to Easter Sunday (4 April), there will be six reflections for each week, written by Stephen Hance, the Church of England's National Lead for Evangelism and Witness. Each reflection will include a short passage from the Bible, a brief exploration of the reading, and a prayer. Additionally, each week will have a unifying theme and an action to be taken during the week."

You can take part through signing up to receive a daily email, downloading an app for your smartphone or tablet device or by using a physical booklet. If you would like a booklet, just let one of the team know and we'll deliver it to you.

Both the book and the accompanying daily reflections encourage all Christians to think about their calling, how to share their faith and reflect on the difference Christ makes in our lives.

"We witness to God's story and the impact this has made to our story so that others might also find their story taking on new meaning in the light of God's love. While the current restrictions on daily life necessitated by the pandemic present significant challenges, the suffering and isolation many continue to face make the need for us to share God's love with our communities greater than ever. Rather than just being a Lenten discipline, this year's #LiveLent is a joyful invitation to make witness a normal part of the Christian life, the natural overflow of a life lived in devotion to Christ." (<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/livelent-2021-church-resources-gods-story-our-story>)

## Statistics

We have all heard the phrase 'Lies, damned lies, and statistics' and probably more so over the past year than ever before.

Daily we have received the numbers of Covid 19 positive tests, the number of deaths, the rate of infection, the latest Tier announcements and less frequently the numbers recovered from the virus. But do the numbers tell the whole story?

Behind every number is a person, a family, a community, either grieving for a loved one, or rejoicing in a recovery and therefore numbers can never reflect the true impact. No one is ever just a number-a statistic.

This January, as in past years, I have completed the Church of England, Manchester Diocese 'Statistics for Mission' return. As you can imagine the numbers for St Mary's were very different from 2019. And that got me thinking. How do you reflect the impact of Covid on our church family and community by inputting numbers?

We were able to baptise 3 children in the early part of the year but how many families have been blessed by the birth of a child that we have not been able to welcome into our church family? I am sure most of us will know of a child born under lockdown and the heartache at not being able to have a cuddle or support the family in a practical way. A Zoom cuddle just isn't the same.

We haven't had any weddings in the past year. We know 2 were planned but with the restrictions placed on couples with numbers and reception venues closing, these could not go ahead. We pray that we will be able to join with them in celebrating their exchange of vows before God when we are able to.

There cannot be any of us who have not been impacted by the death of a family member or friend. Of our 16 funerals, many were known to us and their memory remains in our hearts. How difficult it is if we are not able to be with loved ones when they need us most, when mourners in church or the crematorium are restricted by numbers. How difficult for the clergy when they cannot offer their usual pastoral support by visiting and meeting the families face to face.

Many of you will remember that each October I stand at the front of church and 'count you'. This year I was asked to include on the return the number of people attending church 'in person'. Inputting these figures I reflected on what we had missed. No school assemblies, no Silver Service, no Messy Church.

And then the 'return' moved away from numbers and this is when the brightness of the year began to shine out.

What services did you offer during lockdown and October? For us it has been all year!

- We have YouTube services twice a week
- We directed people to radio and television services
- We let everyone know about the Daily Hope telephone line
- People could follow and join in Morning Prayer from our Yellow and Orange booklets at home
- We let people know about Manchester Cathedral services
- We updated Facebook with our services for the week

And then the box I had been waiting for:

Please use the comment box below if you would like to share anything, aside from services, you have been offering to your congregation;

And I was off.....

- Our wonderful church family had telephoned people to check on them, lend a listening ear, provide support and remind others that they care.
- Monthly diaries and prayer sheets had been produced and delivered (in line with Covid restrictions)
- Safe distanced walks, with a friend, were regularly on the agenda for many

- Three packs had been prepared and delivered to Silver Service members in lieu of their gatherings and how well they were received. 'It's lovely to know we are not forgotten'
- Videos were prepared and played at St Mary's school for their assemblies
- A study group prepared and shared reflections on bible passages and hymns on the days they would have met
- People stepped forward to help with the Foodbank
- Back to school packs and activities were prepared and sent to our Lighthouse children
- Christingle packs were prepared and delivered to families taking part in the Zoom service
- Messy Church packs were prepared and delivered to families taking part in the Zoom service. I can vouch that the event was as messy and noisy as it would have been in church!
- The church family and school were invited to decorate the wooden cross placed outside church, with nativity figures. This was displayed in the grounds all over the Christmas period.

For many of us, 2019 was a challenging year. We saw despair and yet amongst the dark days we saw the best of humanity. We experienced the love of God flowing out of family, friends, neighbours, the community. To all the leadership team, especially Sue and Nancy, we give our grateful thanks for their ministry to us all.

One statistic I am looking forward to, at some time in the spring, is the one when I have rolled up my sleeve for the vaccination and I become another number.

The next one will be, at some time in the summer, when the doors of St Mary's are flung open to welcome you all back to a service of thanksgiving and song, followed by a sumptuous lunch. And then I can start compiling my statistics for 2021!

However, there is no statistic which could encompass the depth, height, width or breadth of love shared by, and between us and each other. We, at St Mary's, will never be just a number.

Pat

**John 1:5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

**Mrs. Nurjehan Ali**

It was a great shock and with much sadness that we learned of the death of Mrs. Ali at the beginning of Christmas week.

From the moment the Ali's came to live next door to the garage on Droylsden Road Mrs. Ali became a friend to all who met her.

We at St. Mary's got to know her when she first brought her eldest child to our infant school, soon to be followed by her brothers and sisters.

Nurjehan was a popular mum in the school playground, chatting to the other mums, and they elected and supported her when she became a Parent Governor for a time.

Bringing the children to school her route took her through the churchyard and she soon became aware that the Women's Class had their weekly meeting each Wednesday afternoon followed by a cup of tea and biscuits. From then onwards each Christmas a large box of biscuits would be handed to Olive Self, the leader of the class, for "the ladies refreshments in the New Year" - a kind, generous and friendly lady.

She became an "honorary" member of the Mothers' Union because she saw in us a group of women with concerns, like her own, for marriage and family life. She was a deeply spiritual and prayerful lady.

2020 had not been a good year for Nurjehan, she was In hospital for a few weeks earlier in the year following a stroke and she was only just beginning to walk again in the house with the help of a zimmer frame. I spoke to her on the telephone just a week before she died and two things from that conversation remain with me. She told me she was so disappointed to be missing the Mothers' Union Christmas meal but she was so looking forward to seeing her family at Christmas because she hadn't seen them for months.

Our thoughts and prayers are with her husband Shaukat, and their children at this sad time.

May she rest in peace.

Jean Williamson



### **The theme for 2021 is "Rebuilding hope and confidence"**

Our 2020 theme of *Building hope and confidence* has been timely and pertinent, as we have reached out to those who are suffering in deep and unique ways because of the global pandemic.

We recognise that the effects of this pandemic will continue to be felt across the world throughout 2021. Therefore, it seems appropriate to develop our theme to encompass *Rebuilding hope and confidence*.

As people seek to come to terms with loss of all kinds, from bereavement to loss of livelihood, relationships, wellbeing and other challenges, our work of rebuilding hope and confidence will be vital.

## **Mothers' Union News**

We have received Christmas cards and greetings from our friends in other Mothers' Union branches. The first arrived from Queensland, Australia sent by Pauline Gibbons. She wrote a long letter telling how the Covid virus has affected them. They haven't struggled as much as we have and have managed some MU meetings, mainly in people's homes. Their Church Services have allowed more people to attend than we have but for important ones like Christmas Day, they had to book in and so many wanted to attend that they had two services. I had quite a shock when she apologised for sending a printed letter as she has trouble writing now as she is over 90 years old. I would never have guessed!

The second letter that arrived was from Margaret Greer, the MU contact before Pauline. She had moved to a sheltered village near her daughter, Keri. Some years ago, she and Keri visited England and Violet, Hilary and I met them for a day in York. We've stayed in touch ever since and she sends best wishes for 2021 to our members.

I also received love and greetings to all of us from Edith Dobson, our contact at St Mary's Church in Nunthorp. They are in a similar situation to ours but not for as long as we've been. Another card came from Jean Kershaw, a St Mary's Eccles. I met their group at the first Manchester Whit Walks I attended quite a few years ago now when they kindly let me join their group as I was our only representative. As nobody in their group had a camera, I took some photographs in Albert Square and sent them to Jean, we've been pen pals ever since.

Sadly, this year nobody but me will be able to see the cards so I thought I'd give you a run down of all our friends and pass on their greetings and best wishes.

Jill

## **'The Rainbow of Hope!'**

Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue, and never had those well known words seemed quite so tried and true!

The year of 2020, is a year we won't forget, with loss and sorrow felt worldwide, life seemed so bleak and yet so many tales of sacrifice that lifted life above the heartbreak, loss and suffering and spread, the strength of Love! So with the old year left behind, a brand new year now starts. Let's keep that rainbow in our thoughts and hold it in our hearts.

Written by Vivienne Brown  
Submitted by Ann Holland.

## **Which Way to Go**

Working parents want kids to go back to school because school closures directly impacts them.

Teachers don't want schools to open because covid spreading round their school directly impacts them.

NHS staff want a full lockdown because sick covid patients directly impacts them.

Business owners want to carry on as normal because lockdown directly impacts them.

People with physical health problems want everyone to stay socially distant because catching covid could kill them.

People with mental health problems want people to spend time with because isolation could kill them.

Some can't wait for a vaccine because they believe it will bring back some normality.

Some are terrified of a vaccine because they believe it could harm them.

We are all going through this but none of us are going through the same thing. Some face crippling financial challenges, others face heart break. We don't all have to agree with what is best because what's best for us won't be best for everyone. We don't have to understand what others are going through. But we do need to stick together and keep loving each other no matter our differences. We need to be mindful when some things go the way we want it to, it could be terrible news to another person. We need to be kind.

Author unknown

Submitted by John Sporne

# Community Page



The Droylsden & District foodbank is here to help. For information on where to go for a foodbank voucher, please phone:

07473 452813

Your call will be treated with respect and in strict confidence.



As the lockdown continues, Ann Holland thought this might be a good thing to share with the whole community. She heard an article on the radio by Esther Ranson about The Silver Line which is encouraging people to re-establish contact with people you've perhaps grown up with, old school friends, distant family members or people you met when you first started work and reminisce about times gone by.

It's surprising how many have phoned The Silver Line talking about childhood memories. Ann thought it could be an idea that perhaps could be taken up by our older and younger members of our community.

## **Answers to January's Quiz**

1. Hogmanay 2. Tuesday 3. Denmark 4. Czechoslovakia 5. The Millennium Bug 6. Fred West 7. (Fulgencio) Batista 8. The Rose Bowl 9. The Panama Canal 10. Times Square 11. E. M. Forster 12. Robert Burns

We would like to thank everyone who has made a contribution to this month's diary, without **you** there wouldn't be one .....

If **you** would like to contribute something to the diary, please contact:

Christine

christine.withers12@talktalk.net

Facebook

Enter St Mary's church on your FB page search bar and you will see our Facebook page

**St Mary's Church Website is**

**[www.stmarydroylsden.co.uk](http://www.stmarydroylsden.co.uk)**

**Church Flowers and Bookstall - Details from Church**

**Mothers Union - Details from Church**

**Tots Time (pre-school) - Diane Heywood/Margaret McCracken**

**Lighthouse - Bubbles (3-5yrs), Splash (5-8yrs) 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays in Church Room**

**St Mary's Church of England Nursery and Primary School**

**Head Teacher, Miss K Hampson - 370 3948**

**250th Manchester Scout Group**

**Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers - 07973739041**

**5th Droylsden Brownie Guides - 339 0016**

**Rainbow Pack - 301 4251**

**St John's Band - 285 3583**