

# St Mary's News

December 2022 / January 2023



## *Includes ....*

Spiritual Disciplines for the New Year

A Safe Church for Everyone

Climate and Creation

*... and much more!*

## Spiritual Disciplines for the New Year



It is quite astonishing to think that only a handful of people witnessed what is perhaps one of the most amazing events in human history and one that literally billions of people celebrate every year. Apart from Mary and Joseph, a few shepherds, the wise men, perhaps the inn keeper and maybe one or

two of Joseph's relatives no one else would have been present at the birth of Jesus. Again, the Christian faith is based on the testimony of a small number of people who knew the adult Jesus and were inspired by his teaching and amazed by the miracles he performed and were present at his death and encountered the risen Christ. They were convinced that this Jesus, born in a stable in Bethlehem was none other than the long-expected Messiah, the Christ, but furthermore he was the Son of God. It is an extraordinary claim that God has come to earth, the incarnation, the wonder of Christmas, and yet billions believe this to be true.

Despite there being no room in the 'inn' and Bethlehem heaving with visitors, who were required to be there because of the census, very few people witnessed the birth of our Saviour. Perhaps they were too preoccupied, busy fulfilling their duties or meeting up with other relatives returning to their hometown. I am not sure much has changed in the past two thousand years and we can all fall into the trap of being over busy getting ready for Christmas. So much so we lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas. We need a Carol Service or Midnight Communion or some other Christmas service to focus our minds on just what the Christ Child means to us, bringing us hope, peace, joy, and love.

Truth be told it is not just Christmas where we can be too busy or too preoccupied to recognise the God who is in our midst and calls us to follow him. As soon as Christmas is over it will be the New Year. For many of us that will be a time when we make resolutions that help us to live happier and healthier lives. We might decide to diet or take up more exercise. We might decide this is the year to move house or start a new job. It maybe to undertake some home improvements. It may be to travel more or visit friends. Indeed, the list of positive actions is endless, but how many of them involve drawing closer to God.

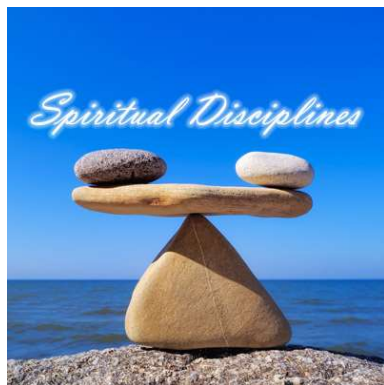
There are many spiritual disciplines that can help us and here are a few that we might want to consider alongside some of those other New Year's resolutions:

### **Quiet Time**

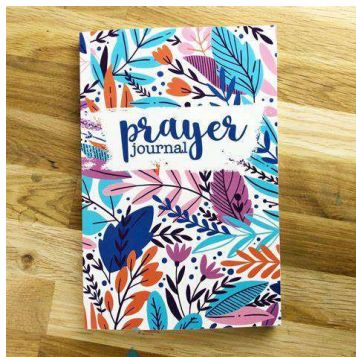
Many of us grew up encouraged to have our quiet time with God and it remains a good thing to do. To take time out of our busy lives to spend with God. Perhaps we might follow some bible study notes or simply work our way through a book of the Bible, spending time quietly reflecting and listening to what God might be saying through that passage.

### **Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer**

The Anglican Church has set prayers and reading throughout each day of the year. They can be said with others in church, or they can be said privately at home or even on the train to work. On the Church of England website, you can download an app and you can listen to someone leading Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer service whilst following the words on your screen. I think it is important to have a rhythm to the day, and I think to pray each day in this manner is important. By praying prayers that many others are



praying all around the world there is a sense of being carried along by the prayers of others, which is especially important on those days when we don't feel that enthusiastic and we worry whether our heart is in it. Our brothers and sisters in different parts of the world will help us out. There are some wonderful, shortened versions of Morning and Evening Prayer that can be used on days when you might be a little rushed.



### **Keep a Journal or Prayer Diary**

Again, this can take many different forms. It might be simply to record the main events of the day and especially those moments where God seems to be active. It may be a prayer diary recording prayer requests and making note of answered prayer. It may be an extension of your quiet time and recording the thoughts and insights you have.

### **Quiet Days, Retreats, Pilgrimages**

These can take many forms. You may take a silent retreat or a guided retreat. It maybe the retreat includes various activities such as crafts or photography or some other artform. It is really important to take time out from our usual daily routine. Simply to take time to be with God. I have a friend who takes himself off to the Lake District or to Wales with a backpack and simply gets out into the mountains and wild camps, just to be one with creation and our Creator.

### **Fasting and being Frugal and other Forms of Abstinence**

Fasting is not for everyone, especially if you have an underlying health condition, but if done in the right conditions it can be fruitful bringing clarity to mind especially if we are looking for guidance. In these days of climate change and general concerns for our

environment eating more frugally and eating less meat is not only good for our planet but can be a healthy option for us.

### **Volunteering and other Acts of Service**

Simply adopting a servant heart may help train us away from negative traits such as arrogance or resentment and in volunteering we may be drawn into a greater awareness of God's activity within our community.

### **Homegroups, Bible Study and Fellowship**

We can certainly learn from one another, and we can encourage one another as we study the scriptures together and share our thoughts and pray together. Please do consider joining one of our Connect Groups and don't hesitate to ask me or Marcus Jones, our Connect Group Co-ordinator, if you need more information about our Connect Groups.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of spiritual disciplines but using disciplines will deepen our relationship with God and help us grow in Christ-likeness. Different ones will be appropriate at different times and for different people but can help us with our daily walk with God. These are simply tools to assist us and help us to know God more clearly in our lives and see the wonder of the God who is in our midst. The Lord of the years who has kept and guided us.

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

*The Revd Tony Rindl*



## Report of Parochial Church Council

The following report summarises some of the matters considered at the Council's meeting of 21st November.

*Safeguarding:* St Mary's Safeguarding Officer, Lesley Gray, is in the process of reviewing and updating safeguarding policy and practices. Due to the significant progress she had made, the Council were able to approve a number of new and updated policies.



*Finance:* It had not been possible to advance the financial improvements and restructuring discussed at the October meeting as far as the Council had hoped. The Council therefore agreed that a special meeting of the Finance Committee needed to be convened urgently to consider how best to improve its financial reporting and to restructure its finances. The Council also agreed unanimously to write to the Archdeacon to ask for financial expertise and assistance from the Diocese, incorporating any useful pointers from the meeting about where that assistance might be required.

*Hardship Fund:* No hard figures were available, but it was estimated that as much as £1,500 had been donated so far. The first requests for help have been received.

*Buildings:* On several occasions a small leak has occurred in the roof of the Church Centre over the partition between the lounge and Pre-School areas. This is being investigated.

*Pre-School:* Watford Council will be approached to see what action might be taken to deal with the risk of children climbing over the

low fence in the garden area, given that that there are conservation restrictions.

*Christmas:* The congregation will be invited at Sunday services to provide for flowers for the Christmas period.

*Note:* A donation can be made by placing it in an envelope marked 'Christmas flowers' and placing it in the offertory collection, handing it in to Peter Dean, Tilly Elliot or Caroline Jones, or handing it in or posting it to the Church Office.

The candle holders which have been put up between the pillars for many years for Christmas services are in a state of disrepair. Candles will be placed on window ledges instead.

*Together in love and faith:* Earlier this year the Church of England completed its biggest ever consultation on sexuality and might soon change its stance on gay marriage. The Council noted that Steve Croft, the Bishop of Oxford, has written a booklet *Together in Love and Faith: Personal Reflections and Next Steps for the Church* which sets out the reasons why he has changed mind on the issue, examines whether the relevant scriptures support gay marriage and explains possible next steps for the Church of England. It can be purchased for £2.50 from <https://store.oxford.anglican.org/product/together-in-love-and-faith>.

Once approved, full Minutes are normally available on the St Mary's website: <https://www.stmaryswatford.org/pcc>

If you wish to send correspondence to the PCC please send it to the PCC Secretary, Marcus Jones (email: [ttekc@aoi.com](mailto:ttekc@aoi.com)).

*Marcus Jones*



# Lessons and Carols for Christmas

St Mary's Church  
Watford

Sunday 18th December



6.30pm





## A Safe Church for EVERYONE

Last month I took on the role of Parish Safeguarding Officer for St Mary's Church and I am looking forward to supporting the church in this way. I really hope we have met by now, but if not, then please do come and introduce yourself. My husband, Antony and I, joined the church last November with our two children and it very quickly felt like home. We love being part of the family of St Mary's and I hope that this role will allow me to make sure all feel safe and included in our church.



I am a Secondary School Science Teacher, with responsibility for Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education; I am the Safeguarding Governor at St Nicholas' School, Elstree and I have served on the Safeguarding Team at Soul Survivor Summer Festivals. I look forward to using my experience to serve the church. When I am not working, I enjoy baking, crafting, singing and going on walks, exploring new places with the children. We love meeting new people and making new friends; you are always welcome around our table, if you would like to get to know us better.

The role of a Parish Safeguarding Officer is "to offer a key link between the diocese and parish concerning safeguarding matters". This includes having an overview of all activities which involve children or vulnerable adults and ensuring that safeguarding policies are implemented, ensuring church is inclusive, reporting any matter of concern. Alongside this, of course, comes a whole host of training and paperwork. As we draw together a list of church activities, you may find that I contact you over the coming months, if you lead one of them. I do this to come alongside you in support and to ensure you are equipped to carry out your role. If you work with children or vulnerable adults, you will likely hear from me regarding DBS checks, references and

training; while I know all of these things put a stretch on your time, I ask that we work together to ensure that we are meeting the requirements to make our church a safe place for everyone.

I will put occasional updates in the St Mary's News for you, to keep you informed on safeguarding matters and the Safeguarding section of our website will be updated with our reviewed policy; you will see new posters appearing around church. While, I may be the Parish Safeguarding Officer, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, it is important that we both safeguard ourselves when working with those who are vulnerable and safeguard others by raising concerns. No matter is too small, so please, if you do have any concerns, for yourself or someone else in church, pass it on to me; early support is by far the best solution to any matter and there are plenty of avenues of support available which I can sign post you to. Traditionally, when we think of safeguarding, we think of it under its old title of 'child protection', but it is now so much more than making sure children are free from abuse, it is making sure that all are able to thrive in our church environment, children, young people and adults. An adult may be vulnerable due to their physical or mental health, a learning disability, or a current situation they find themselves in, for example Domestic Abuse or Exploitation. That means that Safeguarding could apply to any member of our congregation or visitor to our church at any point.

I leave you with Proverbs 31:8, this is the CEV version of the verse "Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable". I look forward to working with you all to ensure a safe church for EVERYONE.

I can be contacted using the below details:

[stmaryssafeguarding10@gmail.com](mailto:stmaryssafeguarding10@gmail.com)

07986 408995

**Lesley Gray**



St Mary's, Watford



Christmas Midnight Service  
Saturday 24th December  
11.30pm

# Holy Land Trip

(part 1)



A trip to the Holy Land must be on the bucket list of most practicing Christians. Last month a group of us achieved that wish with a 10-day tour of Israel and Palestine, with a

visit to the fabled ruins of Petra in Jordan included. Being a pilgrimage, the focus was on visits to sites with a biblical significance and included gospel readings and three Communion services in special locations, presided over by Revd Tony Rindl.

Our holiday began with a minibus ride from Watford to Heathrow. We were 21 in all and some of us knew each other from past church activities, so we were a warm and friendly group throughout. We flew by El Al, so at check-in we had to answer a few simple questions from security personnel, and happily not a grilling with a spotlight in one's face! The flight to Tel Aviv took about five hours. We were met by Ami Galili, our Israeli guide who would be with us for the whole trip.

Israel is two hours ahead of UK time, so despite our late arrival at the hotel, dinner was awaiting us. The trip was on a half-board basis, so buffet dinners and breakfasts were always provided. Our first stop the next morning was the old Roman city of Caesarea. This was an important location for the early Christian community.

Our guide Ami was very well versed in early Christian history. Sitting in the old Roman amphitheatre, with a magnificent view of the sea, he impressed on us that the first Christians were basically Jews, steeped in Jewish tradition and with a Jewish mindset.

Just after his vision in Joppa with the sheet containing various animals (*Acts 10:9-16*), Peter had been invited to Caesarea by the righteous Roman centurion Cornelius, who was ready to embrace Christianity. But first, Peter had to convince the Jewish Christians that God made no distinction between Jew and gentile. While he spoke, the Holy Ghost descended on them all, and the Jews were astonished that the uncircumcised and unclean had also been touched. (*Acts 10:44-45*) So it was in Caesarea that gentiles had first been accepted into Christianity, surely a vital factor in its growth.

Ami had also been an archaeologist and had been involved with the excavation of the magnificent hippodrome there, which had been buried under sand and lost for centuries after the city was destroyed by a tsunami in A.D. 115. Now restored, we could almost imagine the chariot races taking place there.

A short drive took us to Mount Carmel, notable as the site where Elijah confronted the false prophets of the pagan god Baal and had them slaughtered after calling down fire from heaven. (*Kings 18:19-40*) Baal was worshipped by none other than the infamous Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, who had spread idolatry and pagan worship throughout Israel. A marble statue of the prophet with raised sword, testifies to his fierceness as an adversary!

From the terrace of the Carmelite church built at the site, we had a stunning view of the fertile Jezreel Valley and Mount Bilboa in the distance where Israel's first king, Saul, committed suicide by falling on his sword after a defeat by the Philistines. (*1 Samuel 31:1-4*)

Throughout the tour, we visited numerous biblical sites and one wondered how their locations could possibly be known. It

seems that this is due clever interpretation of archaeological evidence, on top of the diligence of early Christians in recording these places with churches, often rebuilt by the Crusaders and later Christian institutions.

The Mount of the Beatitudes, where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5-7*) seemed like just another barren hillside, but the current church and monastery are built near the site of a fourth century ruin believed to have marked the location, which also ties in geographically with gospel descriptions.

In Capernaum, where Jesus preached and cured the sick, we visited the Tabgha Church in the vicinity of the site of the feeding of the 5000 with five loaves and two fishes. (*John 6:1-13*) The church also marks where Jesus appeared to his disciples for the third time after his crucifixion. It is built around a large rock on which Jesus is believed to have cooked breakfast for them. (*John 21:1-13*)

From a small stony beach next to the church, we had the chance to paddle in the Sea of Galilee, which is really a lake, but large enough to get quite turbulent sometimes. We discovered this later that afternoon when we got on our boat, one of many that took tourists for short voyages. Imagine our thrill that we were actually going on the very waters where Jesus helped the apostles fish and calmed the storm!

The weather had been fine but as we waited to embark a dark cloud had gathered above us and huge raindrops began to pound us. Strangely, the sky was clear all around the horizon and by the time we had boarded the arc of a rainbow appeared in the distance.

The boat had a canopy so, undaunted, Revd Tony began our on-board communion service as we pulled out. Then it started to bucket down and he had to shout to make himself heard above the downpour. With open sides to the boat, it became quite damp, but taking Holy Communion on the Sea of Galilee seemed like a great privilege.

As we began to sing at the tops of our voices “Be still for the presence of the Lord...” the rain started to abate. When we got to “Be still for the glory of the Lord is shining all around...” the sun emerged and blazed down on us. It was then we noticed that the rainbow had



reformed so near that one arm touched the water not 50 feet away from the boat. We were all quite moved.

Later, when asked if we had spotted the pot of gold, Margaret expressed all our sentiment very well. The rainbow was a sign of God’s blessing, and WE were the pot of gold. It was a truly amazing experience!

*Brian Macfarland*

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## Climate and Creation

### The St. Mary’s Climate Emergency Group

We recognize God’s creative power and the role of Jesus who will bring about the reconciliation and restoration of **all creation** through His death and resurrection.

We encourage the following actions, if you are able to carry them out:

- As far as possible, travel **using public transport, bicycle or on foot rather than using a car.**
- Reduce your amount of waste material by **reusing, recycling and reducing the amount of material used.**
- Buy food which is produced **locally** (ie UK), **organic, animal friendly** (eg free-range), **Fairtrade certified** and **in-season.**
- **Invest savings and bank** with organisations which have a commitment to ethical values.



Regular articles on Climate and Creation will give more information and tips to carry out the actions above.

### **Living Well:**

The “St. Mary’s Climate Emergency Group” has been established to explore ways in which care for our planet can be grafted into the three Ps of the Mission Action Plan (Parish, Profile, and Partnership).

Unsurprisingly, the beauty of Creation and our place in the wider Creation is seen most vividly in the opening chapters of Genesis.

*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.*

*(Genesis Chapter 1 v.31)*

*God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”*

*(Genesis Chapter 1 v 28)*

The word “subdue” does not reflect the original sense of the verse and it has indeed been misused to support exploitation of natural



resources. In verse 28 God calls humankind to take responsibility for the Earth – not as autocratic dictators but with the same attitude that was to be modelled by Jesus - as a servant king ruling with love and compassion and walking closely alongside Creation of which we are a part (not apart!).

A distinct Christian response to the climate crisis involves not only recognition of our responsibility as outlined in Genesis but also action as individuals and organisations. While we can be discouraged by the immensity of the climate change problem it is still possible for each of us to take small steps for Creation care. Our witness as Christians on the issue of sustainable lifestyles can be an encouragement and a means to connect with other people in our families and communities. In an increasingly materialistic and individualistic society, visible application of the principles of justice, mercy and walking humbly with God is very powerful.

Our hope as the Climate Group is to be advocates for positive action within the framework of the new Mission Action Plan. One of our aims is to provide means for each of us in the St. Mary's family to reflect on ways in which we can take small steps to “walk with a lighter touch” on our planet. (That may indeed involve walking rather than driving when possible!)

The title of this article is “Living Well” – a greener lifestyle can have positive impacts beyond Creation care. For example, if we move to a less meat-based diet, eat less processed and more locally sourced food we can save money as well as reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Another beneficial result can be on our general health; a simpler diet and more physical activity such as walking or cycling can work wonders!



The Climate Group is in its early stage at the moment – if you would like to be involved or have any comments, please contact Andy Roby. If you would like to read around the topic here is some suggested reading:

- “Sleepers Wake – Getting serious about climate change” by Rt. Rev. Nicholas Holtam, the former Bishop of Salisbury (This is the Archbishop of York’s Advent book for 2022.).
- “Saying Yes to Life” by Ruth Valerio (This was Archbishop Justin Welby’s Lent Book in 2020. There is a review in the “Reflections and Articles” section of the St Mary’s website.)
- Ruth Valerio’s website: [Ruth Valerio - On Christian Faith, Poverty and Environmental Issues](#)
- How Bad Are Bananas? by Mike Berners Lee (This examines the carbon footprint of almost everything imaginable! See the review in the February 2022 edition of St. Mary’s News.)

The Church of England website

[www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change](http://www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change)

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## Kath’s Letter



“It ain’t easy being green” said Kermit the Frog, although he made light of it eventually. It ain’t easy being diagnosed with mental illness either, at the age of 22 as I was.

I was born in 13 Cardiff Road, and I was Mr and Mrs Sparrow’s third child. My brother who was the eldest,

Jimmy, was starved of oxygen at birth and lived until he was 11 years and was kept in Cell Barnes Hospital. My sister Margaret became a successful teacher, and I followed in her professional footsteps but found it all too much and had a nervous breakdown, as it was called, after 2 or 3 years.

Margaret and I attended Watford Fields School and then the Girls' Grammar School and then Brighton Teacher Training College. She was roughly five years older than I. It was the maths teaching that I was hopeless at and have never been any good with figures. I am still not sure of my numbers, and I never passed a maths exam until I had nearly retired and got a numeracy qualification at Watford College. I have promptly forgotten all of it.

I got into college on the strength of having passed Biology 'O' Level which was the science type subject which had to be one of your qualifications at that time to be accepted there. The college was right on Brighton Front, and we trained for just two years then, which was as long as my parents could afford to keep me anyway. My tuition was free, and I had a book allowance too. My parents were means tested.

After my first nervous breakdown I worked for a florist, a stamp dealer and other things, and then I trained to be a Dental Nurse with the school service at The Avenue. I transferred to the Peace Memorial and enjoyed that job the most of all of them, working with the dental surgeons, but only in a subordinate role.

I met my husband John at the 20-40 club which met after St. Mary's service on Sundays. I came up from St. James Watford Field as we had no meeting for younger members of the church there. It was John Downwards time as Vicar although I do vaguely remember the previous Vicar who wore a biretta for some fun sometimes.

John and I were married at St. James Watford Fields in September 1964 and had 25 years together until his death. I was often ill and sent to Napsbury and John had to cope. We had Heather but my illness prevented me from having any more children.

We came to St. Mary's after St. James closed and Heather was about two years old. We have stayed there ever since. I have met some wonderful people during my times of hospitalisation and in

St. Mary's congregation. I have had some wonderful nurses and district nurses and occupational therapists. All these people have been a great blessing in my life.

I am mainly blessed as well by my lovely daughter whom everyone loves. I do hope folk will rally round and not let her be lonely. John's family have been very supportive too and Heather was cared for by her aunt at one time. My mother also cared for Heather as did my sister as did Nicklaus Wehren the curate at St. James Watford Fields.

They say it is not where you start but where you finish. I have had to take domestic type jobs latterly, working as a school maid at Watford Girls' Grammar School under Miss Rhodes and Mrs Hyde so that I could have the school holidays to be with Heather. I began there in the kitchen, but it was too much for me with the anti-psychotic drugs I was on at the time. I put too much salt on the crisps the first day. They made their own in those halcyon days. When the council withdrew their funding for me at the school, I went to see the disablement officer at the Job Centre, and I was offered an interview to be a cleaner at the hospital. I jumped at it as the mortgage still needed paying. I began in the path. labs and then began working as an 'extra', all a good experience.

I have had so many clergymen give me a reference when I begged one from them. We have had good clergy at St. Mary's and what gifts one hasn't had another one has and so it rings the changes.

Thank you for coming  
Hope you enjoy the service  
See you in Heaven  
Love Kath

*A letter written by Kath Barrett and read at her funeral on 21<sup>st</sup> November; submitted with permission from her daughter, Heather.*

# Family Christmas Service



Sunday 25th December  
10.30am



## Services

The Church is usually open each week

Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3.00pm  
and on Saturday between 12.00noon and 2.00pm

### Sunday

9.00am Holy Communion (said) in church  
*on 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday only each month;*

10.30am Morning Service in church and via Zoom  
*every Sunday;*

5.30pm Encounter in church  
*on 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of month only*  
(preceded at 5.00pm with refreshments)

### Wednesday

12.30pm Holy Communion in church

*(for Zoom links please contact Church Office)*

### Thought for the Week

on our website and on Facebook - based on a bible verse or passage,  
it is a short reflection by one of the leadership team  
for you to think about during the week.

It can be downloaded and listened to whenever and wherever.

Please keep up to date with what is on offer  
via our Facebook page  
or the website [www.stmaryswatford.org](http://www.stmaryswatford.org)

# Who's Who at St Mary's

## Vicar

The Revd Tony Rindl  
01923 225189 / 07792 505480  
[tony.rindl@gmail.com](mailto:tony.rindl@gmail.com)

## Churchwarden

Peter Dean  
07876 154387  
[peter.dean@stmaryswatford.org](mailto:peter.dean@stmaryswatford.org)

## Facilities Manager

[stmarysfacilitiesmanager@gmail.com](mailto:stmarysfacilitiesmanager@gmail.com)

## Church Office

[office@stmaryswatford.org](mailto:office@stmaryswatford.org)  
St Mary's Church, Church Street,  
Watford WD18 0EG  
01923 225189

[www.stmaryswatford.org](http://www.stmaryswatford.org)

# Watford Memorial Service

Sunday 11th December  
2.00pm

St Mary's Church  
Church Street | Watford

*(nearest parking | Church Car Park)*

St Mary's Church working together  
with the Chaplaincy Team  
at Watford General Hospital -  
a time for our town to pay tribute to friends,  
families and loved ones who have passed away



West Hertfordshire Hospitals **NHS**  
NHS Trust