

St Mary's News

February 2024



Includes

Our Journey of Faith
Parking at St Mary's
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World Day of Prayer

... and much more!

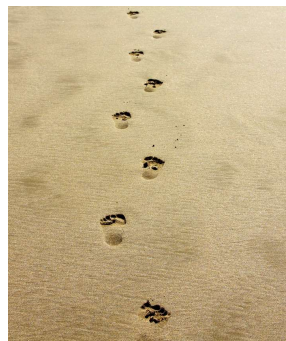
Our Journey of Faith

We often talk about life as being a journey. Closely associated with life as a journey is our journey of faith. We might argue that the faith journey begins at baptism or at a moment of conversion, but I am certain that God will have his hand on lives from the moment we are born if not before. In Psalm 139 the psalmist praising God declares; “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.” (*Psalm 139:13*) We see other references in the bible that suggest we have been known and loved by God from the beginning of time. God, who holds each one of us in the palm of his hand (*Isaiah 49:16*), is with us our entire life. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (*Jeremiah 29:11*)



We might assume that there is a correlation between the life journey and the spiritual journey, that somehow the two are intertwined. Whilst this is certainly the case, it doesn't always seem that way. When things are going really well in life, we can be so absorbed with what is going on our attention turns away from God. Equally when things become difficult or dangerous it is often a catalyst for turning back to God. That said, when tragedy or disappointment occurs, we can become disillusioned or angry and turn away from God. I think there is much to be said about the *Footprints* poem where the person coming to the end of life's journey sees the two sets of footprints, theirs and God's. On closer examination the

person notices that at the most difficult moments in life there is only one set of footprints and complains to God, "why at the most difficult moments in life did you abandon me?" to which God replies, "My dear child I did not abandon you, in fact I carried you and that is why there is only one set of footprints."



In the bible we read of many different faith journeys, but two that stand out are those of St Peter and St Paul. St Peter could be described as someone who wears his heart on his sleeve. He is often impulsive, and this can land him in trouble. There are some incredible moments: mountain top experiences and walking on water; as well as the highs there are the lows: being caught up in violent storms, denying Jesus three times when he is arrested and so on. St Paul trained as a Pharisee, and as an expert in the Law probably thought he was on the right track, zealous for God. That is until he encounters the Risen Lord on the Road to Damascus and his life is completely turned around. As a champion for the Gospel, we read of his missionary journeys where there are many successes, but on the other hand there are times where Paul has to endure great hardship. He is arrested on several occasions and beaten or imprisoned. He is blown off course and shipwrecked. Undeterred both Peter and Paul remain faithful, and together with other apostles and disciples are instrumental in establishing the Early Church and the Gospel to go out into the world.

Life events can often blow us off course and this can be dramatic, or it can simply creep up on us. I think it is fair to say that when our spiritual life is out of kilter with everything else than this can lead to a sense of unease and dissatisfaction. As St Augustine would say in prayer, "My heart is restless until it rests in Thee." I believe Lent

offers an opportunity to spend time in prayer and reflection not only to prepare for Easter but to give ourselves a spiritual MOT. It is an invitation to reflect on our spiritual lives and consider what is needed for us to walk more closely with God in our day to day lives.



Lent does not have to be a dour time of strict discipline and abstinence, giving up chocolate or alcohol. It can be a positive time of renewal, or realigning ourselves with God and, if necessary, pressing the reset button, all of which can lead to a healthier, more positive lifestyle. Please

do come along to C.A.K.E. (Come And Know Everything) on Wednesday 7th February where we will be hearing from John Fieldsend and his journey as a child escaping from Nazi occupied Europe on the Kindertransport. That evening will also be an opportunity to find out what our Connect Groups are doing for Lent and indeed you might want to try out one of the groups as a way of observing Lent this year. We will also be running a Sunday evening service during Lent which is in addition to our Sunday morning worship. In the evening we will have the opportunity to hear from different members of our St. Mary's church family about their journeys of faith. Hopefully it will be of interest and inspire us as we seek to journey more closely with God.

Another vital component of our individual spiritual journey is the journey we share together as a church. You may be aware that we are embarking on a new Mission Action Plan which will help us in navigating the direction of travel as we journey with God over the coming years. It is an opportunity to refocus our vision and sense of purpose as a town centre church and will determine our priorities as we seek to flourish. Over the coming weeks and

months, you will be invited to have your say on this matter and fully participate in our shared journey.

The Revd Tony Rindl



Parochial Church Council

The following report summarises some of the matters considered at the Council's meeting of 22nd January 2024.

Finance: The revised draft Budget for 2024 confirmed that St Mary's is heading for an estimated deficit of around £30,000 by the end of this year. Anthony Wilson, Joint Treasurer, advised the Council that if measures were not taken and deficits continued at that rate, our reserves of £120,000 would run out by 2026. However, the Council approved the budget on the basis that the new joint treasurers were developing a plan for long term sustainability. This included the sale of Brightwell Road and investing the capital, which was expected to produce at least £10,000 income this year; and increasing income from the hire of church rooms. Measures to reduce expenditure, such as closing the church after Christmas for the winter months to cut heating costs (and using the Church Centre for services) could not be ruled out in the longer term.

It is expected that the 2022 accounts will be presented to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in May, together with the 2023 accounts.

Christmas 2023: Correspondence had been received from two members of the congregation about the Christmas services. The writers were concerned about the low attendance and the timing, content and publicity for the services. They put forward a number of suggestions which were welcomed by the Council. It agreed that these and other significant services such as Easter needed to be planned earlier and that more consideration should be given to publicity.

There had been a good response to the Council's appeal for donations to buy Christmas flowers with £160 having been received towards the total bill of £200.

Health & Safety: A major review is underway beginning with the kitchen, including the handling of the food; training the stewards in their fire warden responsibilities and ensuring notices about fire assembly points are consistent.

Climate Emergency: An update was given on developments since the Climate Change Sunday last September on what had been done to (i) increase congregational engagement by way of encouraging lifestyle changes and (ii) to increase community engagement, primarily through the *Green Heart of Watford* initiative, where St Mary's is working with *Friends of the Earth* and other local partners to see what might be done to 'green' our church grounds, including the installation of a pond and wildflower areas. The aim is to discuss the initiative with Watford Councillors in the near future.

The Climate Change group will meet in February to develop a plan for submission to the Council about achieving ECO Gold.

Policies: The Council reviewed its policies on Video Conferencing (e.g. Zoom) and Equal Opportunities.

Mission Action Plan (MAP): The Council agreed seven draft objectives suggested by the MAP Working Group under the '3P' headings of Participation, Projection and Partnership. Before these are finalised and adopted, the Council will seek feedback at a church lunch after the morning service on 21st April. Details of the objectives and the lunch will be announced in due course.

Holy Communion: The Vicar reported that attendance at the 9.00am Holy Communion service was down to one or two people, if any. He had therefore ceased providing this service on a temporary basis and was thinking through how to provide Holy Communion at some other services. One possibility is to offer it at 5.30pm on Sundays as an experiment during Lent. The noticeboards by the North and West doors will be updated.

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: ttekcos@aol.com).

Marcus Jones
PCC Secretary

Parking at St Mary's



Ah...the joys of being a Town Centre church....so let's be frank, parking is a nightmare.

But on the plus side we are right where the action is; people regularly walk by and drop in for a moment of quiet or just to see inside our magnificent building. Other churches envy this "footfall". But on the downside, we have very limited free parking

for our congregation which causes frustration, inconvenience, or worse, parking fines.

So, parking remains a real issue at St Mary's. We have just **FIVE** available parking spaces which is not enough. During the week these need to be available for the staff, those renting our premises or for those doing work in the church.

So here is **request number one**: if anyone in the congregation needs to use the car park for church business (eg dropping something off or picking something up, or you are volunteering inside) could you please let the office, Liz or the Church Wardens know so that we can give you a permit to park. If there are no free spaces, even with the permit, I am afraid you will have to use the multistorey car park.

And here is **request number two**: double parking blocks people in so please do not park unless you are in one of the **five** spaces. Our tenants, Mike and Marie, who live in the flat have often been unable to get on with their day-to-day lives because their car has been blocked in. And while we know that many people not connected to the church also use our car park it is difficult to enforce when we do not know who is parking there. We do know that some members of our congregation have parked there and been asked to move because they do not have a permit.

On a Sunday there have also been constraints. Luckily the council has re-zoned the parking along George Street, and there is now free parking on a Sunday only, along Church Street which, as the name suggests, is the road by St Mary's. So, here is **request number three**: please use these spaces on Church Street if you can, rather than parking on the church forecourt, unless you have a physical need which means you cannot walk far. Such folk should be able to

park on the church forecourt on a Sunday morning if at all possible, or on the blue badge area opposite. If you are one of those people, please let the church wardens know and they will try and reserve you a space. I am sure you agree that if we can we should leave the parking closest to the church for those in most need.

In terms of non-St Mary's folk trying to get on to the forecourt, or those blocking an entrance, there is a phone number (01923 278890) at the council to call so that a parking attendant can be sent around to ticket the offender. It might be worth taking a photo of the offending car including the number plate. Further information on this service is below.

Many thanks for reading this. Do get in touch if you have any questions, need further information or have some other suggestions!!!

*Eileen Roby,
Churchwarden
07479846544*

eileenroby@stmaryswatford.org

When to contact parking enforcement:

You should contact us if a vehicle's wheel (whole width of the wheel, not just the edge) is across where your dropped kerb starts, and you have not given the motorist permission to park across your dropped kerb.

A parking officer will assess the situation and take action if needed.

You will need to be present to give a signature to confirm you did not give permission for the person to park.

01923 278890

Hours: 8.00am to 9.30pm (everyday)

Outside these hours you can contact the police non-emergency line by phoning 101.

Operation Christmas Market 2024!

At the time of writing this article it is already 38 days since Christmas 2023 and so only 328 days until Christmas 2024. Yes, you do get one extra day as this is a leap year!

A small group of us have already met to start planning what we hope will be a fun St. Mary's market with attractions and activities for all ages.



Date: Saturday 14th December
Time: 2.00 - 4.00pm
Place: Church and church lounge

We are particularly keen to have stalls with affordable gifts so there will be one stall where all the items are priced at only £1. I wonder if you could root out a few items that you would be prepared to donate for this stall – maybe unwanted gifts from past years that are still good as new, gathering dust and taking up valuable space? We will also need items for a tombola. This could be your opportunity to have an early Spring rummage and clear some space. You can bring items to be stored in church NOW! Give them to our Facilities Manager, Liz Allan or to me, Gill Muggeridge or Helen Hunter to pass on to her.

If being creative is your thing, why not practise your knitting and crochet skills by making some Christmas decorations which we can sell. Liz has several patterns available and will happily print some for anyone who would like them.

Apart from the stalls and activities going on in the church we will be serving refreshments in the lounge to include hot and cold drinks and individually wrapped snacks.

I know some of us are still getting over last Christmas but the sooner we start gathering bits and pieces the less panic there will be next December.

*Thankyou from
Alison Saunders, Liz, Gill and Helen*



Thursday Concerts



St Mary's, Watford

15th February	Edward Leung	pianist
22nd February	Charis & Jack	pianist & violinist
29th February	Russell Thompson	pianist
7th March	Oksana Hermanchuk	Ukrainian pianist
14th March	Nina Cook	soprano
21st March	Neil Crossland	pianist

Please look out for details of each concert - they offer very different programmes of music

Memories of our Time in the Church Centre

I have no idea why I suddenly wanted to put this into the magazine.

My memories of this time are not perfect, so I apologise for any differences to your own memories. Not many people from the time in



the centre are still in the congregation. Some have moved on and many have gone home to the Lord.

I remember the Bishop leading us in a conga line into the centre, and urging us all to gather in so that we could hear the centre being blessed as our new place of worship. A time filled with excitement, but also trepidation of things to come.

The first few weeks were a time of getting used to the new way of doing things. For me, being one of the stewards responsible for getting the service sheets and hymn books out onto the seats, it sort of made life easier. People took a while to settle in, but eventually everyone found their place. It was lovely to get better acquainted with people who in church sat before the cross-aisle, or on the other side of the church. The more physically compact seating of the congregation, meant people were able to chat to others that they may not have known well before the move. Because of this the church family became closer in caring and love for one another.

It was a delight to have families with little ones just sitting on the floor. I remember Simon and Claire trying to keep little Charlie from raiding the biscuits. He was just tall enough to reach the plates if they were near the edge of the counter. I suppose having the rattle of cups, and the smell of coffee, was not really conducive

to worship. However, it was a blessing to know that these were available after the service.

The Wednesday Communion kept going throughout. Ray, Christine, Gill Muggeridge and I were responsible for getting things ready. Gill did the drinks and Ray would put the chairs out. I set up the Communion table and put out the bible. Christine and I would take it in turns to do the wine or read. This worked very well. We had quite a few who came along in those days. The doors were always left unlocked during the service, and sometimes people would come in and join us.

We had some great services in the centre. One service still sticks with me. I can't remember the subject, but I do remember Marcus handing out glass pebbles. I still have that glass pebble in a coat pocket, and every time I wear that coat, I hold the glass pebble. As I hold it, I remember with fondness the warm and happy times in the centre and it brings a smile to my face.

Stevie Trudgill

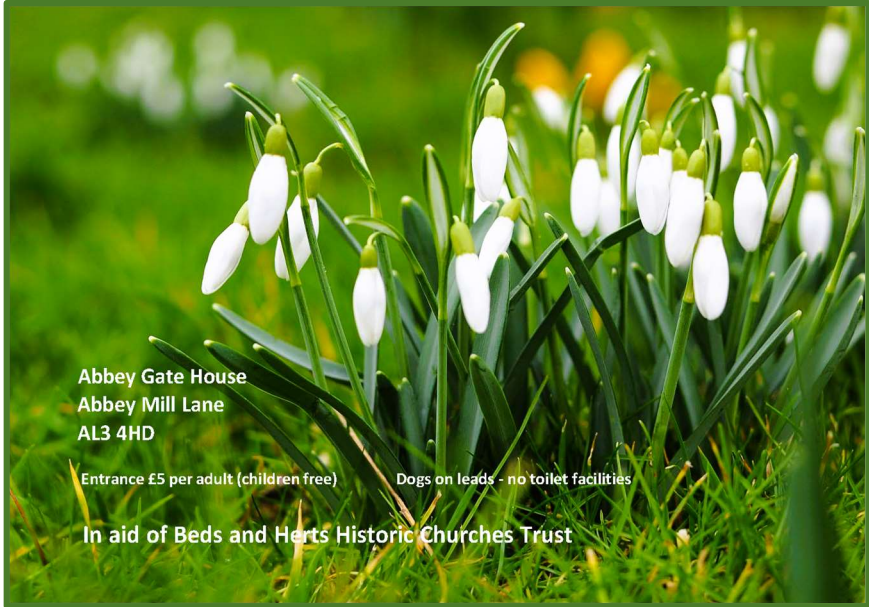
Go Green(er) for Lent



The weeks leading up to Easter are a great time to start or give something up that benefits nature and helps address climate change. Is there a change you can make to better care for creation and improve our lives and the lives of others through healthy, eco-friendly and sustainable living?

For more practical ways to enjoy, nurture and defend nature, sign up to A Rocha UK's Wild Christian email at: arochoa.org.uk/wild-christian

Bishop of St Albans Open Garden



The Bishop of St Albans will be opening his garden on four Sundays in February and March for people to come and look at the display of snowdrops. Those who came to visit last summer will know that the garden is delightful, it also has an appeal to visitors in the spring as the snowdrops herald the end of winter.

The two acres of garden is an oasis in central St Albans and only open to the public on selected Sundays in the spring and the summer.

Spring opening days are **Sundays 18th February, 25th February, 3rd March and 10th March**. Entrance is £5 per person (children free) and dogs on leads are welcome.

Footwear suitable for the time of year is advised.

World Day of Prayer



"I beg you, bear with one another in love"

World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation led by women which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns, and prayers. The preparation for the day is vast. An international committee is based in New York and there are national committees in each participating country. Regional conferences meet to consider the service and then local groups make their plans. Finally, at a church near you on Friday 1 March 2024 people will gather to celebrate the service, prepared this year by the women of Palestine.

In Watford the **preparatory Bible Study** will be held on **Friday 9th February at 2.00pm** (*please note the change of date*). It will be led by Dr Jean Stevenson at The Scroll Church, The Harebreaks (formerly North Watford Methodist). We shall be studying Ephesians 4: 1-6.
ALL ARE WELCOME

The **Service** itself will be held on **Friday 1st March 2.00pm**, also at The Scroll Church. The Service will be followed by tea.
ALL ARE WELCOME

Bear, in Love by *Stephanie Chagas-Bijl*

Lord,
When War and bloodshed rage,
You say 'bear with one another in love'.
When life is lost and tears flow endlessly,
You say 'bear with one another in love'.
When women and children live in fear,
You say 'bear with one another in love'.
When hatred's taken hold of the hearts of men,
You say 'bear with one another in love'.
When peace feels like a distant memory,
You say 'bear with one another in love'.
When reconciliation has become a dream,
You say 'bear with one another in love'.
Bear, in love.

*Further details from
Rosemary Clemas & Jackie Mee*



A snapshot of The Scroll Church, Watford

brought to you by Churches Together in Watford



You may know The Scroll Church as ‘the Church with the Blue Cross’, at the junction of The Harebreaks and St Albans Road. Until recently, North Watford Methodist Church used this building, which opened as a Methodist Church in 1928 with seating for 540 people and with room for 300 scholars in the Sunday school.

However, since 2015, when St Thomas URC Church closed its building in Langley Road, the congregations of the two churches have been worshipping together at the Harebreaks church. This was an informal arrangement at first, but we formally united as a Local Ecumenical Partnership in 2017.

This was with the understanding that, once the ‘new’ church building was built in Langley Road, the congregation would move there. Sadly, the building project has met many delays, and a move is still some time in the future.

For several years we have invited the surrounding population to the lighting of our Christmas tree in the Church grounds and in the Church Hall during the weekend of Advent Sunday. The Mayor usually attends and leads the countdown to the lights being illuminated. There is Carol singing outside the Church, and then refreshments and fellowship in the Church Hall.

Numbers vary, depending on the weather, but we usually see new people each year. Children particularly enjoy the countdown and the atmosphere, not to mention the refreshments which generally include chocolate!!!



Services

The Church is usually open each week
Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3.00pm
and on Saturday between 9.30am and 2.00pm

Sunday

10.30am Morning Service in church and via Zoom
every Sunday
5.30pm Encounter in church
on last Sunday of month only
(preceded at 5.00pm with refreshments)

Wednesday

12.30pm Holy Communion in church

(for Zoom links please contact the Church Office)

Thought for the Week

on our website - 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, Instagram
or the website www.stmaryswatford.org

Who's Who at St Mary's

Vicar

The Revd Tony Rindl
01923 225189 / 07792 505480
tony.rindl@gmail.com

Churchwardens

Peter Dean
07876 154387
peter.dean@stmaryswatford.org
Eileen Roby
07479 846544
eileen.robby@stmaryswatford.org

Facilities Manager

stmarysfacilitiesmanager@gmail.com

Church Office

office@stmaryswatford.org
St Mary's Church, Church Street,
Watford WD18 0EG
01923 225189

Parish Safeguarding Officer

Lesley Gray
stmaryssafeguarding10@gmail.com

www.stmaryswatford.org