

St Mary's, Watford

St Mary's News

May 2024



Includes

Going back to my Roots

A Walking Seminar on Climate Change

Safeguarding

... and much more

Going Back to My Roots

As my time in Watford draws to a close, I thought I would share with you a little bit more about where I am moving to. In many ways I am going 'home' to Birmingham. It is the city where I grew up and lived as a young adult before I trained for ordination. I will be living in Marston Green, which is to the east of the city and very near the airport. In many ways I would liken Marston Green to somewhere like Abbots Langley. Abbots Langley is on the edge of Watford but remains inside the M25 and yet retains a village feel. Similarly, Marston Green is on the edge of Birmingham, still within the M42/M6 network but also has a village feel.



Whilst there will be much for Cath and me to explore, I am led to believe it has a very good butchers, renowned for its bacon butties, and it also boasts two excellent Indian restaurants. There are various tennis, cricket and football clubs, as you might expect, and

behind the vicarage is a bowling green. I can't help feeling I have reached the age where I could legitimately take up bowls.

As well as being Vicar of Marston Green I am going to be Area Dean of Yardley and Solihull. Those of you who know Birmingham will appreciate the deanery covers a large geographical area, stretching from inner city Birmingham right out to Solihull and leafy Warwickshire. The total population of the deanery is over 275,000 and there are 28 churches and 24 parishes. There are in fact only six deaneries covering the whole diocese and with just two bishops and two archdeacons the role of the Area Dean is

considered quite a senior position within the diocese. I am under no illusion that it will be a demanding job.



Why move? I have a lot of friends in Watford and as a church we have made strong inroads into the community, especially since the completion of the refurbishment of the church in 2019. Add to that Cath, still has to finish her curacy - it is not a terribly convenient time to be moving. In truth, I had in mind that I would move a couple of years after the completion of the refurbishment. In other words, once we had moved back into the church and seen the potential for our new facilities it would be time to leave, and a new person come in a take things to a new level. I am sure if it hadn't been for the pandemic that would have been the case.

Towards the end of last year, I began to feel a sense of God nudging and feeling a little unsettled and this led me to look at one or two jobs. One of these was in Birmingham, where I was shortlisted. Although the interview went well, I didn't get the job. However, I must have made an impression because in the feedback they said they didn't discern a calling to that particular job, but they did discern a calling back to Birmingham and invited me to consider applying for the job which I have now accepted.

If I am honest, I was a little hesitant at the time. I had looked briefly and dismissed it as being too complicated and too demanding. However, with the bishop and interview panel giving me this feedback, I felt I should at least have another look. I did, and so did Cath. At first Cath was more enthusiastic than I was as she could see the job fitted my experience to date and where I am most gifted. For me it was a slower process, but the more I read into the job

description and the parish profile the more interested I became. I started to recognise connections with earlier parts of my life. I was mindful that I was actually born in Marston Green (Marston Green Maternity hospital was at one time the largest maternity hospital in the country. It no longer exists, and housing has been built on its site.) I also was aware that for the first four years of my life we lived in Yardley. Other connections include Bordesley Green (within the deanery) is the location of the first company I worked for after graduating. I was also involved in various civil engineering projects in Solihull and other parts of the deanery. I am sure more connections will materialise. I recently discovered the deanery administrator is the wife of the present vicar of the church I attended as a child and young adult.

Whilst it might be described as going home, I think it is more accurate to describe it as going back to my roots. After all, it is a different part of Birmingham to where I spent my formative years. However, it is the city whose culture and traditions I know well.

The Revd Tony Rindl



Can You Help?

- *Donate food*
- *Give financially (see the DONATE page on their website - watfordfoodbank.co.uk)*
- *Volunteer*
- *Hold a fundraising event*

every gift you give helps transform lives

Parochial Church Council

The following report summarises some of the matters considered at the Council's meeting of 29th April.

Vicar's last Council meeting: It was observed that this was the Vicar's last Council meeting at St Mary's. The Biblical picture that came to mind when reflecting on his eleven years with us was the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4.30-32) that became the largest plant in the garden. It spoke of the growth of God's kingdom in Watford under the Vicar's leadership: our diverse congregation, the influence we have in the town, the work with our partners, and our emphasis on social justice. And there were many precious personal memories that people would long remember, such as the trips to Krakow, Auschwitz and the Holy Land. We were thankful to God that the Vicar had left such a solid legacy that could be further built on.

Finance: The Council approved the financial accounts for 2022. The accounts for 2023 are being prepared and are expected to be completed in time for the APCM on 19th May.

The financial situation was holding up primarily due to the receipt of legacies, without which expenditure would have exceeded income. However, the decision of an organisation to cease renting space in the Church Centre would significantly reduce rental income. Some £4,000 expenditure would also shortly be needed on repairs to emergency lighting, floodlighting and fire alarms. This would use up the total yearly budget set aside for building repairs. The Council therefore agreed to seek out organisations that might help in funding these repairs.

Buildings: The repainting of the clock faces on the tower had again been postponed and is now expected to begin on 23rd May.

Annual Report 2023: The Council approved the draft Annual Report for 2023.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting: Two people had so far been nominated for the two posts of churchwarden. No nominations had yet been received for the vacant Council places.

'Away' Morning: The Council agreed to set aside the morning of 7th September as a time of listening to God.

Sunday School: There is a need for helpers to support the two age groups. This does not require any preparation and PCC members were encouraged to assist.

Next meeting: The next meeting of the Council will be held on 24th June.

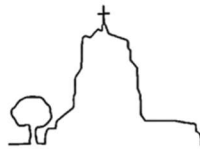
Once approved, full Minutes are normally available on the St Mary's website: <https://www.stmaryswatford.org/pcc>

If you wish to send correspondence to the PCC please send it to the PCC Secretary, Marcus Jones (email: ttekcoss@aol.com).

Marcus Jones
PCC Secretary

Coffee Morning

Every Thursday during term time, in the Hayden Chapel between 10.00am and 12.00noon. Come for a free cuppa and a chat – and there's always a jigsaw to finish!



St Mary's, Watford

Notice of a

**MEETING TO ELECT
THE CHURCHWARDENS**

and the

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL
CHURCH MEETING**

(to elect members of the PCC,

*to consider the Report and Accounts for 2023 and
other matters of parochial or general Church interest)*

on Sunday 19th May 2024

at 12.00noon in church

Step by Step: A Walking Seminar on Climate Change along the Grand Union Canal

It is one of those emails you must receive all the time as a vicar – a fundraiser – “surely your kind and generous Christians could spare some cash for a good cause?”. But this one from Polly Eaton was different, for me at least, and this is why.

Polly attends one of the few churches in our area that have got to Ecochurch Gold; she is at the High Street Baptist Church in Tring. She wrote to Tony to raise money and awareness for her sponsored walk in aid of A Rocha, the organisation behind Ecochurch. Ecochurch supports churches all over the UK, including St Mary’s, to help us tackle the climate emergency and look after God’s creation.

Last September St Mary’s celebrated reaching both Bronze and Silver Ecochurch. Encouraged by this success we decided to “Go for Gold”.



Polly, hubby Julian, friend Shaun and Chip the dog!

And so I quickly realised that Polly’s walk down the canal to Uxbridge was a truly “golden” (sorry) opportunity to learn from a church that had made that big step...and I was not wrong. So, I walked with Polly from Kings Langley to Croxley Common and just wanted to share what I learnt.

The Tring Baptist green journey started over 20 years ago which made me feel slightly smug that we got to silver in just 2 years. But my ego was gently and thoroughly deflated as Polly humbly described what they had done. I began to realise the depth and breadth of their achievements.

Here is a taster from their website
(<https://tringbaptistchurch.co.uk/eco-church/>):

"We do not see creation care as simply an add-on to the usual 'business' of being church."

"As an Eco Church, we have committed to undertaking an annual lifestyle audit to review our personal approach to creation care."

"Each year we complete High Street's carbon footprint calculation...[and] following our calculations we make a corresponding donation to Climate Stewards....[so] we achieve an effective level of 'net zero' carbon emissions."

"In May 2017, High Street Baptist Church became the first Baptist church around the world to make a public commitment to divest from fossil fuels!"

"We host the open meetings held by Tring in Transition, which helps the community take the first steps from a wasteful, oil- and car-dependent consumer society to a safer, more responsible and happier one."

"We are supporting the 'Make Tring a bee town' campaign launched by Tring's Justice & Peace Group."

This is a church that is not just committed to God's creation but is also playing its full part in the whole town's transition to Net Zero and nature. And this is so embedded in their church community that they don't need a climate team anymore – everyone just does it.

I dream that for St Mary's and for Watford.

And it is starting to happen here, for example:

1. The Watford Great Big Green Week from 8th to 16th of June has hundreds of events registered including one at St Mary's (<https://greenwatford.uk/greenweek/>)
2. The 2024 Green Market on Sunday 9th June is so popular that it has become a Green Festival, with over 45 organisations presenting, performing, selling, encouraging, talking, forming friendships and partnerships, all the way up from the High Street from the Atria to The Parade. The Watford Green Christians group will be there (please join)!
3. Watford Borough Council are partnering up with us and other green groups to restore nature around St Mary's - our "Green Heart of Watford" initiative - and this is starting with a no-mow area in the churchyard.
4. The Watford Green Network (<https://greenwatford.uk>) has over 30 different organisations, including St Mary's, doing their bit for nature and the planet. All are looking for partnership and volunteers. Why not find one you like and contact them?



5. For the UK electorate climate change remains persistently in the top 3 election priorities, which means politicians that ignore it or backtrack will lose votes and may not remain in power.

Finally, the most amazing thing about my walk with Polly was that

at no point did I feel discouraged or overwhelmed – everything Polly said was positive and doable. Step-by-step small simple things, as acts of love and kindness, add up to the transformation in society God desires and that we need.



Yes, St Mary's is very different to Tring Baptists – we are in the middle of a big and busy town on the outskirts of London, not a leafy market town in the Chilterns. Yes, our congregation is very diverse and yes, we are probably not so well off. But we have the same God who says that **nothing is impossible**. His creation is crying out for help.

If any of this inspires, interests or challenges you, please talk to me or one of the many others in our Climate Action Group. There is lots to do and a lot more we can achieve when we work together and tackle the climate challenge step-by-step.

And if you want to donate to Ecochurch, do check out their fundraising page at <https://arocha.org.uk/get-involved/donate/> and visit their website, which is rich with something for everyone (<https://arocha.org.uk>).

Andy Roby
Climate Action Group Coordinator, St Marys
Andyrobby2001@yahoo.com | 07414 832983

ECO Tips – May

Say no to the mower.

Mowing your lawn less and letting parts grow long, saves you time and helps give nature a home.

If you want to make an even bigger impact on wildlife, wait to mow your lawn or a section of it until August to support even more animals.



Contribute to citizen science and get to know what (and who!) lives in your church's green space – sign up to take part in Churches Count on Nature (8th to 16th June 2024) at caringforgodsacre.org.uk/churches-count-on-nature-faqs/

Cut your carbon in the garden centre.

Who doesn't love a trip to the garden centre? Especially if it involves cake! Here are some reminders from Sarah Leedham, our Foxearth Meadows Reserve Manager, that will help you make better choices for the planet when you're buying plants:

1. Use peat-free compost.
2. Read the label. Was it grown in the British Isles or imported? Imported plants carry a greater risk of introducing pests and diseases.
3. What is the pot made of? Is it plastic or something biodegradable?
4. How long will it last? Is it worth buying annuals or could you fill your garden with perennials which last longer?

5. Is it good for insects? Choose plants with simple flowers - ones without lots of petals. They are more likely to attract bees and butterflies.

For more practical eco-tips, sign up to <https://arochoa.org.uk/wild-christian/>



in church at 12.30pm
with refreshments from 12.00noon

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 9th May | Wind in the Bellows
accordion and flute |
| 16th May | Friday Singers
a group from Abbots Langley |
| 23rd May | Purcell School
talented young pupils |
| 30th May | Tiger Jazz
jazz pianist |

Safeguarding: What it means in practice for St Mary's

'Safeguarding' refers to the processes and actions we take in St Mary's to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected from harm within the church setting. As well as being a statutory duty of the PCC, it is also mandatory under the Church of England's rules to prevent the historic abuse that took place in many national organisations, including religious organisations such as the Church of England itself. And, in any event, it should be every Christian leader's priority to do the utmost to make church a safe place for the vulnerable.

But that means there are practical implications for us in St Mary's. This article explains the hard work that's done behind the scenes by our unpaid volunteers, especially those who oversee the process.

First, we are required to appoint a *Parish Safeguarding Officer* (PSO) and are grateful to Lesley Gray who took up post in 2022. Her role is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable individuals within the parish community. This includes:

- acting as the link between St Alban's Diocese and St Mary's in safeguarding matters e.g. ensuring the flow of information to and from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.
- receiving and responding to any concerns about children or adults within St Mary's, along with the Vicar and
- advising and implementing safeguarding policies.

Lesley has spent considerable time over the last two years identifying risks, updating policies and advising the PCC about best practice.



Of course, it isn't enough just to have policies in place. They have to be implemented. So we're also grateful to Jenny Whittick for being prepared to take on the role of *Volunteer Safeguarding Administrator* for which she had to complete the necessary Diocesan training. Jenny has overhauled the arrangements she inherited to ensure that a fully effective system, supported by the PCC, is now in place.

This requires significant time and effort to maintain. Jenny identifies those volunteers whose roles put them in contact with children and vulnerable adults in St Mary's. She asks them to provide references, arranges a short interview, requests them to sign a Declaration Form, and checks with the Disclosure & Barring Service that they have no criminal record that could prevent them working with children and vulnerable adults.

Jenny also ensures that volunteers understand why they need to complete certain online training courses provided by the Diocese, and which courses are relevant to their situation. She then tracks each individual and follows them up to ensure they have completed their training and have evidenced that by producing their certificate. Nor is this ever a finished process. Volunteers come and go regularly, and the training is valid for just three years which means, for example, a person re-elected to PCC who has already completed training may have to re-do it subsequently.

Currently 29 members of St Mary's are safeguarding compliant, including PCC members, preachers, worship leaders, Sunday School leaders, Connect Group leaders and the Choir. As can be seen, there is always a need for further help with Safeguarding administration. If you are interested, please speak to Lesley Gray, Jenny Whittick or the Churchwardens.

Marcus Jones

Sermon Preached 24th April 2024 in St Luke's Church

New Hope's annual celebration service
which gave thanks for 34 years of God's provision to and through New Hope

New Hope



Many of you will know that in a couple of months I will be leaving Watford for pastures new. I will be going to Birmingham, and there is a sense of going home. Perhaps more accurately I am going back to my roots. I am not going back to the house where I lived for the majority of my childhood and as a young adult, but I am going back to the city where I grew up. A place where I am very familiar with its culture and traditions. These roots are really important if you wish to grow and flourish as a human being. These roots give you an identity and a purpose. They help you identify with the surrounding area. They enable you to build friendships and other relationships.

Last summer I met up with half a dozen old school friends and we quickly fell into very natural conversations even though we hadn't seen each other for forty years. Quite amazing, considering in all those years we had each lived very different lives, in different places, following different careers.

I think it is perhaps one example of how these roots are formed and how deep they run. We might say the roots are formed at home, at school, the workplace, community groups and for many of us at churches.

These roots give us our identity. So, I identify as being part of the Rindl family. I identify as an old boy of King Edwards Five Ways. Every time I eat a bar of Cadbury's chocolate I think of my childhood, and if the wind was blowing in a particular direction, I could smell the chocolate as I walked to school. I was very much involved in scouting as I grew up and even today 281st St David's is like a second family.

Perhaps the most important root, the most precious root, is my Christian faith. I am eternally grateful that my life is rooted in Jesus Christ, my Saviour. Our roots not only give us our identity, they also enable us to grow and to flourish.

Now of course we can be uprooted and replanted elsewhere, and providing the roots are healthy and carefully moved and replanted in good soil, or if you like a healthy environment, a welcoming community, then they can take root and we can once again grow and flourish. So, over the years I have been replanted in Nottingham, Leicester, East Lancashire and for the past 11 years in Watford. To flourish, those roots need to be planted in good soil. Thankfully I have always received a warm welcome and had good accommodation. I am sure that will be the case as I return to my

home city. I am sure the good people of Marston Green will give me a warm welcome and already there are dates in my diary.

I have been lucky; I had a warm loving safe environment where I grew up and with a strong sense of community. Others are not so fortunate. Damaged relationships, abuse, tragedy, mental illness, denied a safe place to call home - growing up with damaged roots. Others have been uprooted against their will, forced to leave the place they call home. Again, it might be domestic abuse, it might be related to debt, or alcohol or drug issues.

Increasingly we welcome those who seek asylum in this country. They have been displaced because of war and political unrest, economic hardship, natural disasters.

Our reading from Jeremiah (29: 4-14) is set within the story of the Israelites. The Jewish people had settled in the land of Canaan as children of the Covenant had been promised this land. But they had turned away from God and because of economic and political hardship had been forced to live in a strange land.

You can imagine how hard it must be to be forcibly uprooted, and you can imagine if your roots have been damaged, your own sense of personal identity lost. How hard it must be to live in exile. To be forced out of your home and to live in a strange hostile place.

This of course, is also the experience of many who come to New Hope seeking help. Sometimes it is possible to prevent homelessness with early intervention and I applaud the work of the Tenancy Support Team working with clients and liaising with landlords and financial institutions to try and keep the client in their own home. But of course, this isn't always possible and for others it has gone beyond that point before they seek help.

New Hope offers a range of support and help, from the immediate emergency night shelter to the drop-in at the Haven, to the intermediate hostels and New Hope homes. All the time offering practical help and support, and often with limited resources, and constrained by bureaucracy, and overwhelming need and demand.

But what New Hope, in partnership with others and in particular One YMCA and Watford Housing Department, is to offer compassion. To see beyond the need and see the human being, and the kindness and the care that is shown helps mend the root system. As the root system is repaired so the person begins to find new meaning and new purpose in their lives.

I said earlier that my Christian faith was a very important part of my own personal root system. I know that is also true for many who either work for New Hope or are keen supporters of the charity. Motivated in part because of their belief in a God of compassion. A God of love. Jesus being the visible image of the invisible God as St. Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians. Jesus taught his disciples many things, but most of all he demonstrated God's love was for everyone.

For everyone. Not just for the rich and powerful, for the privileged few. Not just for the religious and pious holier than thou, but for each and every human being. Especially those down on their luck, for the sick and the bereaved, for those held captive, the outcast, the sinner, those who messed up. Those who are tired of living and without hope.

Time and time again Jesus showed how much he loved them, how he loves you and me. I know it is easy for me to say this, and I know that when life is a real struggle it is not so easy to see this, and that is when we need true friends. Those who won't judge us, those

who are only interesting in helping us, those who value us and see our worth.

In exile, when the Israelites were at their lowest ebb, God spoke. God spoke through the Prophet Jeremiah those words: "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." In exile, when the people of God were suffering, and they were losing hope God spoke. He reminded them of his loving purposes. New Hope stands as living proof of God's love in action. New Hope is an amazing charity whose roots can be traced back to St Mary's through the work of Janet Hosier and Sheila Meaning, who saw the many people sleeping rough around St Mary's Church in the centre of Watford and felt moved to act.

I know from my own experience of being Vicar of St Mary's over the past eleven years, having had many conversations with a variety of people who have faced homelessness, how easy it is to lose hope. To lose hope if you face eviction. To lose hope if your closest relationships have broken down. To lose hope if you have lost your job or are in serious debt. To lose hope if you are sleeping rough, especially if it is cold and wet and there is no immediate possibility of room in the night shelter.

Simply, in showing kindness and compassion and offering practical help, even something as simple as offering soup and a sandwich, or a brief conversation and acknowledging your fellow human being, even if they are a bit dishevelled and dirty - it kindles new hope.

When Jesus and his disciples faced a hungry crowd in their thousands, that little bit of a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish, Jesus was able to take and use them in very special ways. Over

the years there have been many challenges, but there have also been countless blessings and remarkable answers to prayer.

Over the past thirty-four years, many helpers and volunteers have played their part. And so have many service users. Friendships have been formed. Through acts of kindness and compassion, hope has been restored. New roots have formed, and once more lives have begun to flourish.

The Revd Tony Rindl

Vacancy News

In future editions of St Mary's News, there will be an update by the Churchwardens about what is happening during the Vacancy – the time after Tony leaves, until the new Vicar arrives.

Not much can happen until Tony leaves, but please know that Eileen is in touch with the Archdeacon and Rural Dean and is currently working hard to arrange cover for all services between 10th June and Christmas (to start with!). This is especially important for the Communion services where a priest is required to lead the worship – we hope to see some old as well as some new faces with us. Many other services will be covered by members of our congregation who you will, of course, already recognise.

As you will see from the back page of this SMN, Tony's leaving will take place on 8th and 9th June. If you would like to be involved in donating towards the weekend, please put cheque/cash in an envelope marked 'for Tony's presentation' or for bank transfer use:
Sort Code: 20-74-09 Account No: 00725927

If an account name is required, this is: 'Parochial Church Council of St Marys Watford'; quoting 'Tony's presentation'.

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 Service
last Sunday of the month
(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

You are invited to a



for the Revd Tony Rindl

as he leaves St Mary's Church, Watford

When: Saturday 8th June 2024

Where: St Mary's Church

(just off Watford High Street)

Time: 12.30pm

also

His Final Service at St Mary's

On: Sunday 9th June 2024

Time: 10.30am

Sorry, NO PARKING ON SITE

- please use the town centre carparks

RSVP: eileen.robby@stmaryswatford.org

stating whether you will be attending
either or both