



**In God alone my soul quietly rests,
for my hope comes from Him. Ps 62:5**

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Contents

Contact Details	Page 2
Contents page	Page 3
Letter from the Clergy	Page 4-6
Service information	Page 6
Christmas Services	Page 7
Eco Church Focus December	Page 8
The Light of the World article	Page 9
Choir and Messy adverts	Page 10
Nativity Service advert	Page 11
The Heart of Christmas article	Page 12
Preparations article	Page 13
Prayers	Page 14-15
Eco Church Focus January	Page 16-17
Bethany / Noah's Ark info	Page 18
Youth Group info	Page 19
Spiritual Disciplines article	Page 20
Burns Night article	Page 21
World Day of Prayer advert	Page 22
Big Ben article	Page 23
Poet's Corner	Page 24-25
Adverts	Page 25-27
Clergy & Magazine info	Back Cover

Letter from Rev Allison:

A New Me and A New You. .

Thank you everyone for all the extra tasks that you did while I was away from you and for your very warm welcome back into Parish life. It was a great privilege to be on Sabbatical but it was a bit busier than I'd expected.

I had a lot of assignments to do for my course "Leading Ecclesiastical Change", more than I was initially told!! However, it was wonderful to go to Norway and meet colleagues there and to have some stay with us in November before heading to London to have some more teaching with colleagues from Norway and from Southwark Diocese.



Stepping out of day-to-day parish life gave me the opportunity to do some reading and spend a lot more quiet time with God. I had a week on Holy Island which is great for a day trip but even better to stay on when the causeway is closed: I really felt calm and at peace. It really is such a special place where you can feel the years of Christian presence on the island and the prayers that have been said over centuries.

While on Holy Island I was reading a book called **'Becoming Who You Are'**. **By James Martin, SJ.** It's a small book but oh my goodness it is amazing. The back of the book summarises what it is all about:

"For me to be a saint means to be myself" writes the Trappist monk Thomas Merton. But what does it mean to be oneself? In the profound meditation on Merton's notion of the 'true self'. James Martin helps readers to understand who they are, in the process, to discover their vocations in life. Using insights from the lives of the saints and contemporary spiritual masters, Martin shows how the quest to know oneself is, ultimately, the quest to know God.

If I had read this while I was going about my day-to-day life in Parish ministry, I would have put the book down and not looked at it again. It would have made me feel inadequate – comparing my-

self to Merton and other people who are considered saints would not have done my wellbeing any good. While there are many wonderful parts to being a parish priest, it is a role that comes with heavy burdens of expectations and responsibilities and this often leads me to become very self-critical.

But being on Sabbatical I felt that I needed to challenge myself to read it – when I did so I found that it was not a challenge at all; in fact it was life giving and life affirming. It was so reassuring to hear that two of the people in the book - Merton and Henri Nouwen - were flawed human beings like the rest of us. Despite their flaws they were loved by God – ‘loved sinners’ in fact – and were very holy men.

Another thing that I found that I had in common with Merton and Nouwen is that they were self-critical, but they used their self-criticism in a positive way. They reflected on their failings and considered how to address them in order to become their ‘true selves’ or ‘God’s beloved.’ Holiness consists of discovering the true-self and the person we are before God, accepting that person and becoming a saint in the process. That’s not to say we stay in our sin but, by reflecting and evaluating, we can change and become the people God created us to be.

So as I begin a new year my prayer is that I become who I am and you become who you are – this is an ongoing process of life that will not be completed until we meet Jesus face to face. But I truly believe as the book says “Everyone’s true self is a unique creation of God and the way to sanctity is to become the unique self that God wishes us to be.” Please believe that we are all ‘loved sinners’ and all unique creations – God longs for us to become our wonderful true selves.

Ephesians 2:10 says

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We are God’s poem, his work of art, His masterpiece.
God calls us to to live out our uniqueness, that he has created and shaped. His plans not ours.

Rev Allison Harding

From the Registers:

Funerals:

Oliver James John Carver Age 23yrs (Died 30/11/23)

Karen Connelly Age 59yrs (Died 13/12/23)

Janet Bell 73yrs (Died 13/12/23)

Elizabeth Jane Toothill Age 93yrs (Died 25/12/23)

Sunday Service Information

9.30am St Michael's

11am St Mary's

6pm (4th Sunday) St Mary's

Thursday 10am The Parish Hall

Morning Prayer Service

*The following information can be
applied every month:*

1st Sunday: Communion

2nd Sunday: All Age Family Communion

3rd Sunday: Communion

4th Sunday: Morning Praise (am) & Contemporary
Worship (pm)

5th Sunday: JOINT SERVICE 10am

Baptisms:

Hannah Dawson, baptised at
St Mary's, 03/12/23



Noah and Cody Bell,
baptised at St Michael's,
10/12/23

Communion before Confirmation:

Elodie and Florence Dawson,
at St Mary's, 03/12/23.



Church of England; Environment Blog

(...extract taken from)

"Small differences over time have made a huge difference - meaning we can love nature, love people and express our love for God."

A busy city church has saved thousands of pounds on its energy bills thanks to making a number of small changes to reduce its carbon footprint and help care for God's creation. Over the last year, Priest in Charge Revd Sera Rumble and a team of passionate volunteers at St Deny's Church, on the edge of the inner city of Southampton, have made subtle changes to reduce the church's energy consumption and as a result have saved an estimated £5,000 off their annual £20,000 utilities bill.

The changes have included switching halogen lightbulbs for LED lighting; replacing kettles for triple-insulated urns; insulating pipes throughout the building; monitoring electricity use through smart meters, buying heated pads for office chairs and installing automatic timers for lights and electric heaters.

Revd Sera explains how they got started: "A lot of us are passionate about the environment and we do care. We had to take out a new electricity tariff and our electricity rates were going to go up huge, so it was an environmental and a financial push. We're the victims of our own success in a way. It's the fact we're serving our community and using our building which has pushed up our energy use. There's so many reasons as a church as to why we are tackling our energy use and doing our bit to reduce our carbon.

"Loving the local people, loving the planet, loving the people in this world who are struggling with conflict, loving our community and to be able to afford to do this and keep doing it. All of these reasons build on the church's mission – we're not just doing this because we are 'greenies' (although we

probably are!) - but this is part of loving the world out there and loving the world around here.”

The church’s mission to reduce its carbon footprint supports the Church of England’s ambitious national Net Zero by 2030 programme, which aims to reduce carbon emissions from the energy used in its churches, schools, cathedrals, houses and other buildings, saving money by improving the energy efficiency of buildings, and switching to more renewable energy sources.

St Deny’s Church has been identified as one of 600 churches across England with the highest energy use and will have access to a fully funded Net Zero Carbon Programme energy audit and a small grant to help fund additional green projects. The church now plans to look at its heating system, insulation and switching to a greener tariff as it continues its journey to be Net Zero Carbon



"Churches march on their cups of tea. A really tangible and simple change you can make as a church is to replace kettles and old urns with triple insulating urns – they will save you energy and money, whilst keeping your staple drinks hotter for longer!"

New Year Resolutions

Last year (2023) 30 million people in the UK made New Year resolutions, with health (28%), money (27%), family (24%) and self-improvement (21%) topping the charts for the most common resolutions. However, surveys suggest that most people lasted seven weeks before giving them up and 21% only lasted for a month before giving up.

What resolutions can we make that will last beyond January? At the start of a new year, let's remember Paul's words: *'I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings'* (Philippians 3:10). Like Paul, our resolution should be to know Christ deeper in this coming year.

'But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.' (Phil 3:13,14). Paul sees following Christ like an athlete running a race in the stadium. As any good runner, we mustn't look back. We cannot live on past successes, get bogged down by past sins and failures, or be bitter over past wrongs we've done, or had done to us!

An athlete strains every muscle to win the race. Like Paul, let's be single-minded in making Jesus our focus during the coming year in everything we do. What practical steps are needed if we are to go deeper in our prayer life and Bible reading? How can we more effectively see Christ working in our workplace and career, or family and children?

In the film *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell says: *'I believe God made me for a purpose, but He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.'* In this New Year, let's find our pleasure in the pursuit of knowing Christ better!

Choir Dates 2024

10 February

24 February

9 March

23 March

**HEALTH &
WELL BEING**

St Mary's Church Throckley,
10am

Prayers for February

A prayer for the new year:

Lord,

We stand on the threshold of a new year. Some of us are excited, some of us are fearful. We don't know what 2024 will bring, but we know that there will be ups and downs, joy and sadness mixed in with the months.

As we step into this new year, help us to keep our eyes fixed on you; to know for certain that, whatever happens, you will be in it with us, not watching from the sidelines, but right in the middle of it with us.

Help us to put our trust in what Jesus did on the cross, maybe for the first time, maybe as a New Year re-commitment, so that we will *know* that nothing can separate us from you.

Let the storm rage, let the sun shine – we are safe!

In the name of the risen, living Lord Jesus.

Amen.

A prayer for wisdom:

O Lord God of time and eternity, who makes us creatures of time, that when time is over, we may attain Your blessed eternity. With time, Your gift, give us also wisdom to redeem the time, so our day of grace is not lost, for our Lord Jesus' sake.

A prayer for blessing:

Bless to me, O God, my body and my soul;
Bless to me, O God, belief, condition whole;
Bless to me, O God, my heart, my speaking too,<
And bless to me, O God, the things my hands do;
And, O God of virtues, thine own way be blest,
Till at the close of day I lie down to rest.

If you would like to join the Annual Magazine Prayer Rota, or ev

y by Helen Dawson

Prayers for February:

Lord,

In this coldest and shortest of months, this month when traditionally thoughts turn to love and the promise of Spring, help us to be thankful and steadfast and to see Your bigger picture in what is sometimes a frightening world, a world where love between nations seems to be in short supply and the future uncertain.

We pray for all those whose lives are in turmoil through a lack of love and justice. Help us to remember the great love You have for Your world and Your people, so great that You sent Jesus to show us how to live, how to love and how to overcome the troubles of the world.

Thank you that Your love is stronger than the forces of evil, stronger than death. Help us to put our trust in Jesus, to keep our focus on Him, knowing He will never leave us or forsake us. Thank you that His love is stronger than the forces of evil, stronger than death.

In his name,
Amen.

Lord,

Here we are in February – month of cold days, winter days, but days that promise hope and signs of Spring. Snowdrops and lengthening light; echoes of the hope and light that Jesus brought to Simeon and Anna all those years ago in the Temple.

Thank you, Lord, that you always bring light, you always bring hope and peace and joy when we put our trust in Jesus, our Saviour. Jesus, Lord of all our days and seasons. In His name we thank you, as we look to His Light.

Amen.

en just do a one off prayer, please get in touch with Helen Dawson.

What's the Big Idea? *An Introduction to the Books of the Bible: Genesis*

As the title suggests, Genesis is primarily about beginnings. In chapters 1-11, it records the creation of the heavens and the earth and human beings; marriage and family; sin's effect on society and the world. The following chapters record God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and their families. In this story of the Patriarchs we see God establishing a people called to bless the world, as He blesses them.

The book of Genesis is key to understanding the whole Bible. It is supremely about relationships; the relationships between God and the created order, God and human beings, and between human beings themselves. Fundamentally man has been created in the image of God, so that he can relate to God in a personal way: *'God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them'* (1:27). However, Genesis plots how this relationship was broken by sin, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, resulting in the fall of human beings and the created order. By creating people with free will, God risked the possibility that they might reject Him. This is inherent in His love for human beings.

In Genesis, God enters into covenants with the world (the rainbow following the flood) and with Abraham and his descendants (circumcision), pledging His love and faithfulness to them and calling them to respond to Him in faith. It reminds us that God is fundamental to living. Without a sense of the centrality of God's place in our lives, we can never get our lives right.

Canon Paul Hardingham

Reflecting Faith: God's Acre

I thought we'd spend a few months at the start of this New Year considering the outside of a church building, and the gardens around it. For many churches this will include a churchyard, though not necessarily. If your church does stand in a churchyard, then it may be what is known as a 'closed' one, meaning that burials and interments no longer take place other than within an existing family grave. An 'open' churchyard is one where burials and interments are still able to take place.

The maintenance for open churchyards is the responsibility of the church, whilst once closed (which, for Church of England churches, has to be agreed by Parliament) the maintenance is passed to the local or parish civil council. These days, with the many financial cutbacks, Councils often try to refuse to take on a churchyard. But as it is a statutory obligation, they have no choice, and many will simply reduce the number of grass-cutting sessions to fit their slimmed budget. Churchyards have not always looked as they do today, with memorial stones of varying shapes and sizes. Originally, they were simply left grassed and in towns this became one of the few green areas. People were buried there without any permanent marker being placed, nor any other official record of placement kept. The thinking was that their life here on earth had ended and the person was now with God in heaven. Only those people in 'God's kingdom' would be allowed to be buried in the consecrated grounds, so anyone who had taken their own life, or unbaptised babies, would not be allowed.

Church buildings are usually built facing east - the place of the rising sun - and the people's entrance is on the south wall. This gives access to the churchyard from the south, and in European countries that means your first experience of entering the churchyard and the building is on its sunny side. It was common practise to bury to the south of the church, as this was the lighter and warmer side. The richer and more influential folk would request to go as near to the altar - the Holy of Holies - as possible; even if that was outside the building itself. Over the course of time folk wanted - and richer folk could afford - a marker for where their loved one lay. This idea of having a permanent marker reflected the attitudes at the time, of visiting the place of rest specifically marked. Not just to know where to visit and even bring a picnic for the family on a good weather day, especially in working busy town areas; but also, to recognise the importance of their loved one's life.

Revd Dr Jo White

Bethany - Welcome



BETHANY

We meet on the third Wednesday of the month in St Mary's, Throckley at 1pm.

We will be observing some restrictions owing to the continuing Covid situation. As previously we will have a time of worship, an activity or quiz and there will be a cuppa with light refreshments.

ALL ARE WELCOME - we look forward to seeing friends old and new.

There is no charge - voluntary donations to cover expenses can be given.

Please contact Margaret Ledger on 0191 2672953 for more info if required



Noah's Ark Playgroup

Wednesday 10-11.30am
(school term time only)

Newburn Parish Hall

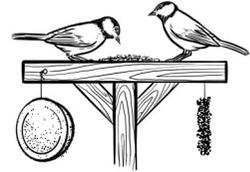
£1.50 per family,
Refreshments provided



Don't forget those nestboxes!

On 14th February our annual National Nestbox Week begins.

Now an established part of the ornithological calendar, it aims to encourage people to help out the birds in their gardens each Spring. Everyone is invited to put up more nestboxes in their local area, and a very helpful website gives full instructions on how to do this. More details at: <https://www.nestboxweek.com>



Food shortages are 'likely' this year

You might find some supermarket shelves empty in the coming months.

A combination of global conflicts, climate change and transportation issues are making it harder for food producers to get their products out of the field and onto your plate. And as at the end of last month (January), it got even more complicated, with the introduction of new checks on the goods coming from the EU into the UK.

Professor Chris Elliott of Queen's University Belfast is a food security expert. He explains: "It'll be about affordability but also availability, and the likelihood of empty shelves, particularly fresh produce shelves, in 2024 is alarmingly high."

Professor Elliott said: "We are virtually totally dependent on other countries for most of our fresh produce, our fruit and our vegetables. We were reasonably self-sufficient in dairy, we were reasonably self-sufficient in poultry and eggs. But that's also on the decline now, as a result of the collapse of some sectors of the food industry in the UK."

According to the gov.uk website, just under half of the actual food on our plates is produced within the UK.

THE WORLD DAY OF PRAYER (WDP)
1ST MARCH 2024

VENUE: WESTERHOPE METHODIST
CHURCH AT 13.30.

This service has been prepared by an ecumenical group of Christian women from Palestine, the land in which Jesus was born, ministered and died, where He rose again and where the Christian faith began and is rooted. The WDP is a great wave of prayer encircling the Globe, involving many countries and islands, to pray for the people of Palestine, The theme is taken from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians ch. 4 vv 1-3. "I beg you, bear with each other in love." A most challenging theme given the present situation. Their involvement with the WDP has allowed Palestinian women to interact with over 100 countries since 1950, strengthening the Middle East's presence and witness. They are searching and working for a deeper understanding among all people who share the land: Jew, Christian and Muslim, (all children of Abraham.) They are trusting and hoping in the humanity of one another. Please come along and participate in this event - you will not fail to be moved, and enabled to pray more meaningfully

A prayer by Thomas Merton, as mentioned in Allison's letter:

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that
desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right
road,

though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always though
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Thomas Merton

The Merton Prayer” from *Thoughts in Solitude* Copyright © 1956, 1958 by *The Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani*.

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Poet's Corner

The New Year

He comes he goes, his times are set,
The New Year now has shown his face.
For time is here and will not wait
For dwellers all in time and space.

We sojourn here on this fair earth,
Just for a time so quickly gone,
Our lives just like a vapour spent,
As we await another dawn.

There is a day God has ordained,
When we will reach a distant shore,
Eternity our new address
Where time will cease and be no more.

By Megan Carter

Why churchwardens love January

Hail to the Lord's anointed,
Both clergyman and lay!
But they're seldom disappointed
To get past Christmas Day!
The hectic Christmas season is
Of service constantly –
There can't be better reason
To welcome January!

The Curate and the Vicar
A busy schedule keep,
As they rush, ever quicker -
They don't get that much sleep.
And overworked Churchwardens
And their sides-persons team -
Sure don't get time for boredom,

And only seldom scream!

So, when the season's over,
The crib has been put by,
The drapes to green changed over,
They breathe a heartfelt sigh!
They laugh and smile with pleasure,
And sing a merry rhyme,
But short-lived is their leisure –
For soon comes Easter time!

By Nigel Beeton

To my Dear and Loving Husband

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare me with ye women if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold....

From a poem by Anne Bradstreet, 1612-72



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Please contact John Hewitt or Lisa Langford for further details on :
01912673728



Rev Allison Harding (Vicar)

Please contact Allison to arrange Baptism, Confirmation or Marriage. If you know of people who are ill or are in hospital please let us know.

The deadline for any inclusions for the magazine is

Two Sundays before the last Sunday of the month

Please either email or hand to Helen Dawson.
helenrdawson@yahoo.co.uk

If you have any questions or opinions about the magazine content and style, or would like to write an article please get in touch.

All feedback welcome.

If you know of anyone who would like to receive a magazine (only £5.00 per annum) please get in touch and we will add their name to the distribution list.