

Issue 9, December 2019

SHINE



The Alpha Marriage Course

The marriage course is a series of seven sessions designed to help any married couple strengthen their relationship.



Who is it for?

The Marriage Course is for couples who are in a married relationship and seeking to strengthen their relationship. Some couples take the course to invest in their relationship, others need more urgent help. Either way, the course offers a lifetime of practical ideas and tools to help keep your relationship strong.

The Marriage Course is based on Christian principles but designed for all couples with or without a church background.

What can we expect?

On The Marriage Course, you are seated at your own table for two. Each session consists of a candlelit dinner, a practical talk and a time for private discussion between you and your partner.

Background music ensures that you can chat in complete privacy. You never share anything about your relationship with anyone other than your partner.

The course is to be held at 7pm on Thursdays, starting on 23 January 2020, in the main hall of the Parish Centre.

**To register please contact David Small:
davida.small@hotmail.co.uk or ring 07707 007749**



FROM THE PARISH PRIEST

Welcome to another issue of Shine. As always it gives a picture of some of the happenings that have been going on in our two parishes or that parishioners have been involved in over the past few months as well as various interests that occupy our time.

An important project over the next 12 months will be the initiative of the bishops of England and Wales to focus our attention on the Scriptures. Entitled 'The God who speaks' this programme seeks to encourage us in our reading and understanding of the Bible. The Bishop's Conference website, www.cbcew.org has lots of information and aids to help us through the year and to place the Scriptures at the centre of our lives. It is an important part in the ongoing renewal of the life of our parish communities.

A few weeks ago I accompanied some of our young people on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and you will be able to read an account of those few days in the steps of the Master. In May some of us are going to the Passion Play in Oberammergau. This occurs every ten years and there are still places available on this trip. I thought that if I didn't go now, I might not be around in 10 years' time! We also have our annual pilgrimage to Lourdes at the end of July to look forward to.

Most importantly the daily life of our parishes continues to grow and develop. You will see from these pages there is a lot going on and the Gospel is being preached – and we only use words when we have to! Enjoy the read and then perhaps you might want to write about something for our next issue due around Easter.

Fr Peter

*News from the parish communities of
St Peter's, Hazel Grove and
St Philip's, Offerton.*

Contents

4

Our dancing nurses
Farewells and welcomes

5

Fr Peter asks what is at the core

6

Bishop Brian retrospective

7

Spotlight on our flower arrangers



8-9

Advent Adventure Day

10

Network for a Better World

11

Joe's thoughts on prayer

12-13

Update on our refugee project

14-16

Faith, family, fortitude

17

In the peace and stillness

18-19

Footsteps in 2020



20-21

A wonderful day out

22-23

Our young people in the Holy Land

24

Relaxez-vous!

25

Alpha course in 2020

26-27

Mary's corner

28-30

Book reviews for 2019

31

Christmas funnies

Where we are . . .

St Peter's Church and presbytery

16 Green Lane, Hazel Grove,
Stockport SK7 4EA

Tel 0161 483 3476

St Philip's Church

Half Moon Lane, Offerton,
Stockport SK2 5LB

Email: admin@stpetershazeltgrove.org.uk

Fr Peter: petersharrocks@stpetershazeltgrove.org.uk

Our joint website is www.stpeterscatholic.church

Success for dancing nurses

Our Kerala ladies recently took part in a Bible themed dance competition and won 1st prize for the North West region. These girls are all nurses at Stepping Hill hospital where they have all been working for two years now. They all met here at St Peter's.

Despite all having young children and busy jobs, they have still found time to practise their dancing. The dance for this latest competition took two to three months' practice and was organised by Roshni. The name of the dance is Margam Kali, which tells a Bible story through dance.



The dancers are: Ancy Babu, Bency Gopuran Baby, Blessy Paul, Divya Sybin, Gifty Sara Alex, Littin Kurian and Roshni Jose

Farewells and welcomes

Since our Easter issue the following parishioners have gone to their rest:

Gilbert Ireland
Vera Hogan
Maria Hunt
Veronica Longden
Eileen McKay
Thomas Davies
Mary Brown
Betty Miskell
Bishop Brian Noble
David Hurley
Theresa Andrews
Philip Glennon
Margaret Waldron
Agnes McGuire



We have welcomed the following people into the church through baptism:

Stanley Browne
Noah Caldwell
Jasper Smallman
Alexander Kaplewski
Isabella Gozdz
Evie Mason
Matilda Dearman
Isabelle Fairman
Erik Scully
Sebastian Bakare
Ethan Duncan
Amelia Duncan

What is at the core?

By Father Peter

Visitors to our churches frequently remark on the buzz around the place. There is a sense of welcome and a sense of belonging and this is true; neither is it an accident, nor has it just happened.

For some time now we have been reflecting on our vision for the parishes. How do we define what is at the core of all that we do? It's important for us to be able to articulate and explain what we're about and keep that central to all that we do. What is the main thing that we need to keep at the heart of all that goes on at St Peter's and St Philip's?

What I'd like you to reflect on this Christmas time is this vision/mission statement for our parishes. I believe that this is basically what we must be about:

Bringing people to Jesus: bringing Jesus to people

Our parishes exist to draw people into an encounter with Jesus Christ and nurture that relationship with him. We base our activity on the Scriptures and on the traditions of the Catholic Church. Once we've encountered Jesus we're called to take that love out to others.

The world and culture around us has changed dramatically over the last 50 years. We now live in one of the most secularised cultures in the western world.

You have only to look around at the preparations for Christmas and see how there is virtually no reference to the Christ Child. Believers are constantly being marginalised and the ways of passing on the faith that worked in the past no longer function as fruitfully in our time. Pope Francis says in *Evangelii Gaudium*, "we must review and renew our parishes ... to bring them closer to the people."

I believe that an important part of the renewal of our parishes is that everyone must have a sense of belonging and in fact this is the first step to renewal. So, for example, in our preparation for the sacraments parents should be part of the community and belong before they seek the sacraments for their children; this is why we ask that they show some commitment to Sunday Mass before we proceed with the preparation. It is a similar case for Baptism and, later on, Confirmation.

The sacraments make sense once we've reached that point of realising that this is where we want to be, where we belong, something that we want to be part of, something we want to have in our lives, something we want to journey deeper with. The sacraments then take their

place as the food for our journey as we step out and live out our Baptismal calling to make this love that we have encountered known to the world.

The establishment of small groups and parish events that focus on relationship and community building are crucial in creating a sense of belonging – an entry point where people can step in and experience what's going on, and choose to be part of it. We are doing this in St Peter's with Curry Nights for the men, the bereavement support group, Pints and Praises for 18-30 year olds as well as groups that already exist. We need to do something similar in St Philip's. Whatever stage we're at on our journey, we're all invited to respond to this encounter with God's love and become disciples who will step out and bring God's love to others – not because Father tells us to, but because we want to.

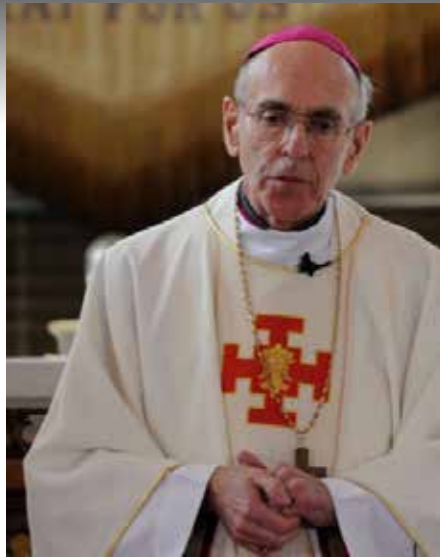
Sometimes we need to push against culture. No-one likes change. But we have to believe that the church has something vital to offer our world which gives meaning and purpose to the lives of all. It's in our own hearts that we truly encounter God and ourselves and become fully human and fully alive.

So let me ask you these two questions . . .

"Christ belongs to you. Do you belong to Christ?"
and

"Will you journey with us?"

Watch this space!



Teacher, pastor, friend

Fr Peter writes about Bishop Brian Noble, the 10th Bishop of Shrewsbury 1995-2010, who died on 21 October 2019

When Canon Brian Noble of the diocese of Lancaster was appointed bishop of Shrewsbury in 1995 very few in our diocese had heard of him. We soon realised that we had a gem. He succeeded Bishop Joseph Gray and certainly had a different style of ministry. I first met him when Bishop Gray brought him to Chester to look at St Werburgh's church. They were doing a whistle stop tour looking for a venue for his Episcopal ordination which eventually took place in St Anthony's, Woodhouse Park, Wythenshawe.

Most of my dealings with him were in connection with the annual diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. He, by his own admission, was not a devotee of Lourdes but apart from the year he was ill he didn't miss a pilgrimage because he realised what an important part of diocesan life it had become – and because he could get to meet a good cross section of the diocese and especially young people. Sometime I had to push him forward at events, whispering in his ear, "It's not for you, it's for the diocese". On the occasion of his Golden Jubilee of Ordination to the priesthood I arranged for him to preside at the Sunday international Mass.

He claimed some reluctance about doing it but afterwards spent the rest of the pilgrimage thanking me for arranging it. I remember saying to him that it was a bit like being Pope for the morning and he agreed with a mischievous smile and twinkle in his eye. On another occasion we found ourselves on the steps of the Rosary Basilica at the end of the torchlight procession and I said to him, "This does nothing for me". His reply was "Thank God I am not the only one feeling that way!"

He saw one of his chief roles was to be a teacher of the faith and one of the ways he fulfilled this was in his talks during Lent which he did for a few years. He used the halls of our high schools and they were usually filled because he had something to say. We also remember his homilies particularly at the Chrism Mass where he explained what we were doing and why.

Within a few years of becoming our bishop he developed cancer and, after a course of chemotherapy, underwent surgery. He said in a matter of fact way that if the surgery lasted around seven hours it would be good but less than three meant we would be looking for a new bishop. Fortunately, he took the longer option and made a good recovery and up until shortly before his death, was still doing Confirmations, giving retreats and talks and some supply work on the Wirral.

We didn't always agree on things in the diocese. I can remember a Deans' meeting where I disagreed on the way parishes were to be closed. He listened and we stayed friends. He liked white wine and we always brought some back from Lourdes on the pilgrimage train. When Philip Egan was appointed to Portsmouth just before our pilgrimage, I sent him a message asking, 'Are your Episcopal brothers ringing you to see what the new man in Portsmouth is like and do you want some wine from Lourdes?' The simple reply came back, 'Yes to both!' This year we didn't have a train so he had to wait until I came back from holiday. The wine was delivered to him a few days before he departed this world but I hope he had a taste of it before he died. It was good wine.



Flower arrangers at St Peter's

A small, dedicated and committed group of ladies arrange flowers in church throughout the year. Most are not professional flower arrangers but we are a very friendly, happy group who offer one another support, encouragement and advice. Arranging flowers in church gives the arranger the opportunity of expressing their faith and is in itself an act of worship. It is also very therapeutic and relaxing.

The flower arrangers, via a rota system, ensure that there are flowers every week, except during the penitential seasons of Lent and Advent when the church is bare of decoration. We work as individual teams throughout the year although when there is a special occasion such as Christmas

Week after week we all admire the beautiful displays of flowers in our church. Now Colette Christie takes us behind the scenes to learn more.

and Easter, the cry goes out for 'all hands on deck' and the church bursts to life with colour and vibrancy as it is filled with flowers again.

There is a certain amount of flexibility as to when the flowers are arranged, as most people have to slot it in with their other commitments, childcare, family or work, but in general they are done either on Fridays or Saturday mornings.

Special arrangements

We are very pleased to create an arrangement in memory of a loved one or to celebrate an anniversary or other important event. We are happy to be consulted by brides planning their weddings at St Peter's and to discuss ways in which we can assist in co-ordinating their floral decorations with the regular church flowers. We are very willing to share our considerable experience, gained by trial and error, of which colours and styles work best where. Similarly, we are always willing to discuss funeral flower arrangements.

Why not come and join us? We would love to welcome anyone (and we are not sexist!) who feels that they would like to join the flower arranging teams and take their turn on the rota. You do not have to be an expert – just be keen to learn and to share in this very rewarding ministry.

As well as enjoying getting together as teams to arrange the flowers in church we like to socialise and we have planned meals out in the past and this year visited Southport Flower Show which was a great hit with all.



If you're interested in joining our teams or would like to discuss a special floral arrangement, please contact Colette on 07714 470 854

Follow the star!

St Peter's Advent Day where over fifty children enjoyed a day filled with fun, songs and drama!



Thumbs up for the Advent Adventure Day!

Time to dress up



Our family went to a Nativity fun day on Saturday morning. We did painting and blew bubbles while some of us waved flags. I liked the drama because we performed in church and told the story of Jesus Christ's birth. I was a shepherd!

We were put in groups with other children. There was kings, sheep, angels, innkeeper, wise men and stars. I made new friends. I loved the day.

Isaac Knowles, age 10



Setting up for the big day

As a parent of younger children, the Christmas spirit can sometimes get lost in the commercial aspects of the season, but taking time out to witness the children of the parish pull together as a community to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas was a truly magical experience.

The children enjoyed all types of activities including arts and crafts, singing, drama and a personal favourite: 'Q & A's with Mary and Joseph!'

My youngest son asked if he could attend every week, whilst my daughter has been singing hymn lullabies to her baby dolls ever since!

Sincere thank you's to the organisers and teams for the day. The event was well planned with the utmost safety, consideration and love for the children, who in return delivered bucketloads of cuteness on the altar as they engaged with each other in singing, acting and presenting about the birth of Our Lord to their very proud friends and family!

A very special day in preparation for a very special time of the year.

Claire Knowles



Drama about the Advent story



Some quiet time in the prayer room

I really enjoyed the Advent day! It was really fun and friendly! My leader Amy was really caring, friendly, helpful and lots more! (All of the leaders were really caring, friendly and helpful!) And we CANNOT forget Teresa and Terry!

My favourite activities were probably "Follow the Star" and the "Drama"! In the drama I was Angel Gabriel.

We went to church and performed our dramas and sang songs for our families. (Amy who was my leader is AMAZING at singing!)

I am DEFINITELY going to the next Holy Communion day!

Thank you so much for all your help and for making the day a really special and amazing day!

Faith Locke, age 8



Our great helpers in the kitchen



Getting stuck into a bit of painting

Our aim is to create sustainable ways to reach out to support the very poor in an area where few of the big charities and agencies go. Most of the original committee were returned volunteers from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia with over fifty years’ collective experience.

Network for a Better World (N4BW) is a very small charity and was formed in 2012 by returned lay missionaries with many years’ experience, mainly in East Africa, and we are currently focusing all our efforts on a single area of Malawi called Sitima.

This decade has presented many challenges to Malawi. When N4BW started to invest there in 2012, it was listed as the sixteenth poorest country in the world. The flooding of 2015 caused considerable

Sitima covers a large area with poor roads and infrastructure. It is a totally rural area apart from a single tobacco factory. Fr Owen has eight churches within the area he has responsibility for, and he has one other priest to assist him. Each church has a Small Christian Community (SCC) which sends three representatives once a month to Sitima itself to discuss their concerns, way forward and share community experiences.

Each community depends on the land for their livelihood and each family has only a small area of land to provide food. Many live below the poverty line.

N4BW assisted the Sitima community in both 2016 and 2017 by contributing to the purchase of maize to provide some interim relief to those suffering from the famine, especially women, students and

some income, enjoyment and a better way of life! Further training has been given in our meeting room on female hygiene kits, enabling girls to attend school full time.

N4BW has also provided trees, training in schools, renovated classroom furniture, built latrines and is looking to open a dispensary (similar to a pharmacy) in the Sitima parish itself, that will also generate footfall to enable successful marketing of the cash crops grown in the nearby plots.

The parish communities are fully involved with each project and the villagers themselves have responded in various ways. Many have attended training sessions, they have helped in the renovation of school furniture and repairs of village homes, including many roofs damaged or destroyed by cyclones Idai and Kenneth in April 2019 and helped with the recovery after flooding from the heavy rains that came with the cyclones.

The villagers have also welcomed being involved in netball and football teams, in the villages as well as in the schools, and overall school results have improved. In 2019, the Sitima school results are reported to be the highest in the diocese.

N4BW is involved in the one very isolated and poor parish of Sitima. Other communities in the wider district of the diocese have noticed and asked, “what is happening in Sitima?”

Visitors have come to see what is happening and to ascertain how this could be replicated elsewhere. This has included primary education officials, a secondary headteacher association, horticultural advisors and others interested in how solar power has been harnessed and applied to the projects listed above.

N4BW has concentrated on one community, working through Fr Owen, the De Montford priest. Any contributions gathered as a result of our fundraising efforts are distributed to the wider parish. Over ninety pence out of every pound goes to the people, to help them have a slightly better life and continue to improve their living conditions.

N4BW were extremely grateful for all our donations – and for the promises of ongoing prayers.

Network for a **Better World (N4BW)**

*We recently had an appeal in our parishes to help the small charity, **N4BW**, in their work in Malawi. Here’s some more of their background and operation.*

damage, destroying both potential food crops and the seeds that needed to be planted the following year. However, the floods were followed by two years of drought – not only in Malawi but affecting all the Rift Valley areas of East Africa down to the northern parts of South Africa. After this period of drought, Malawi was then listed as the eighth poorest country in the world. In the recent trip made by Prince Harry and his wife, Megan, the prince referred to Malawi as the fourth poorest country in the world. By any measure, this is a desperately poor country that needs as much aid, on the ground, as possible and major long-term investment. It is not a country blessed with natural resources and the people depend on the land to survive.

We were put in touch with Fr Owen O’Donnell, a De Montford Father, in Sitima in the Diocese of Zomba, within the Archdiocese of Blantyre in the southern area of Malawi. Fr Owen has worked in Malawi for 30 years.

children. The only area we were able to secure food and grain from was Zambia – at considerable cost both for the food supplies and transport.

N4BW examined how else food could be obtained outside the four month growing season. We secured a grant for a solar power/irrigation project. We liaised with Zomba Diocese and Fr Owen for some land and installed a solar-powered system/drill to enable water to be pumped to the agricultural plots. Throughout the dry season, workshops and training were provided to women farmers on how to grow the crops and how to market them. (Men often leave their homes during the dry season to secure work elsewhere and most of the work on the land is therefore carried out by women.) These women farmers are now earning surplus income, which has had a major impact on the financial status of those families. N4BW has also supplied hundreds of solar-powered light and phone chargers which has also provided



Help me to say “yes”

During the season of Advent we are looking forward to the gift that God gave us, the best gift that anyone gave in all of time: our Lord Jesus Christ. This story starts with a young woman who stepped out in faith and said “yes”. She was, of course, Mary, the Mother of Jesus (Luke 1:28-38). Saying “yes” completely changed her life. She was blessed with conception, married a man of great faith and went on a life’s journey that she could never have envisioned for herself. It was a life full of love and wonder (think of the wedding at Cana, John 2: 1-11) but also one of hurt and great pain at times. Saying “yes” to God does not mean that everything will be roses and rainbows. It does mean that your life will be focused on love and be purposeful and adventurous in following His plan.

What does it mean to say “yes” to God?

Saying “yes” to God means that we are willing to accept His gift of Jesus,

Joe O’Brien offers more helpful pointers for our prayer life.

to listen to Him and follow His lead in what we should do and where we should go in our life. Praying this prayer can be powerful and open new possibilities that we never considered – in faith and in life.

This can be a difficult prayer to offer. Where will it take you? How can you consent to an unseen plan? It is hard; this “yes” will lead to many other “yesses”. But God would never ask you to be someone you are not nor to do things that were not right. He is there waiting for you to ask Him in, to lead you in your true purpose in life.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus encountered the risen Christ in a deep way, leading them from despair over His death to faith in His resurrection (Luke 24: 13-35). By saying “yes” to the gift of Jesus, we can also walk with Him into a deeper

faith and be used by Him to love and help others in the same way. God knows the direction His road for your life should take. Are you willing to travel it?

In praying this prayer from Peter E Sabella, a Christian Palestinian working as a guide in the Holy Land, we can ask to spend our lives with Jesus on our own personal road to Emmaus, walking with Him and listening to what he has to say to our very self.

When you are ready, sit comfortably and spend a little time in silence, in the presence of your God. Think of Him gazing at you. He loves you and delights in spending this time with you. Now offer Him this prayer, slowly, savouring each word. Then be prepared for what lies ahead in your relationship with Him. Look for opportunities to say “yes”.

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am foolish and slow of heart

Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

In spite of my carrying your name for a long time,

I have taken your presence in my life for granted.

I have allowed my priorities to overshadow my real purpose

Of being a true witness to you.

Grant me the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Fill me with the zeal of the apostles

And inflame my heart, as your words did to the two disciples

On the road to Emmaus,

So that I become, like them, a faithful ambassador

To your glorious resurrection.

From today, my life is yours.

I pledge my humble abilities to your service and resolve never to be indifferent to you again.

I abandon my life to you.

Lead my way, O Lord, lead my way. Amen.

Peter E Sabella 2015

Project Update

**TARGET
£15,000**

£14,000

£12,000

£10,000

£8,000

£6,000

£4,000

£2,000

£1,000

**WE HAVE ALREADY
RAISED ALMOST £4,000**

This project was introduced in Issue 8 of Shine and has rapidly gathered pace in recent weeks, thanks to the now established core team of volunteers.

According to UN figures, there are over 25 million refugees in the world today. Pope Francis has set us the challenge of not abandoning our neighbours and he has asked us to 'express the Gospel in concrete terms and take in a family of refugees'. The joint parishes of St Peter's and St Philip's have responded to this call. We have set up a core team of volunteers who have taken up key roles in project management, finance, education, fundraising, health, housing, benefits and welfare and communications. The group is currently meeting every fortnight as we try to establish what needs to be done.

Our first priority is to fund raise £9,000 – we cannot send off the application form until we can prove to the Home Office and our Lead Sponsors, Caritas Shrewsbury, that we have sufficient funding. Many of you will have noticed that we have actually set ourselves a

target of £15,000, as we want to make sure that we can afford to offer our family as much support as possible.

Initially, the money raised will be used to secure a property for our refugee family. We are hoping to house the family in our local community so we will be looking for a private rental property nearby.

We will need to be very careful in our timings with this, as if we rent too soon, a significant chunk of the money raised will be spent on rent before they even arrive. Yet, on the other hand, we will need access to a property with enough time to decorate and furnish it, so that the family will have a comfortable home to come to.

In addition to housing, we will also incur costs to pay for translators and ESOL teachers as we will be committing to provide them with support in learning to speak English.

Even though the family will be entitled to benefits, their Universal Credit application cannot be made until they arrive and it could be six weeks before they receive their first payment. The money we raise will be used to support them in those first weeks as well as to top up their income should there be any shortfall due to the Benefit Cap and high property rents in our area.

We are committing to support the family for up to two years – the idea is that with our help and assistance and the use of our social capital in the local community, they will be able to live independently, with children in school and, depending on their circumstances, Mum and Dad in work. Match Funding is one way you may be able to help us – many companies offer employees the chance to boost their fundraising efforts



The core team at work

by 'matching' the money they raise. It really is money for nothing. Banks, building societies, insurance companies, supermarkets, utilities providers and car manufacturers have all been involved. If you would be happy to support the Refugee Sponsorship Scheme, please check with your employer and then contact Alison McGarr. You'll find her details below.

Once we have started to raise sufficient funds, our next priority is to begin the application process. After Christmas, the group will be attending training offered by Reset, which is the charity funded by the Home Office to support community groups on their journey towards welcoming refugees into their local areas.

The application form, when completed, will be over 100 pages in length, with detailed questions related to the accommodation, arrival in the UK (including a question about what groceries we will provide the family with), initial expenses, information about the local area, biometric residence

permits, school registration, ESOL, social welfare income, GP registration, interpretation services, access to employment, digital services and community activities.

There is a lot of work to do but we have a great team of very committed volunteers – our Project Manager is bringing all of her work-based skills to our meetings; she makes sure that we get things done in an efficient and timely way. We also have some very knowledgeable and talented professionals working with us and they are bringing a wealth of experience to the project. The younger people on the team have also shown incredible energy and commitment and it is lovely to see them taking up positions of responsibility and putting their faith into action in a really meaningful way.

If you would like to join us please do come along to our meetings – for dates and times, please ring **Alison McGarr on 07792 107152 or Email: ajmcgarr68@outlook.com**

We also have two fantastic parishes who are already doing so much to support this project and so on behalf of the Community Sponsorship team thank you for all your kind and generous support! We have already raised almost £2,500.

As we enjoy the Christmas festivities please consider that there is a family somewhere preparing for another night in a refugee camp, having lost everything. They don't know us and we don't know them, but next Christmas, with God's help, they will be here with us, with a home and a community to support them in building a new life.

Please look out over the coming months for our fundraising initiatives, some of which include:

- Race Night in February
- Sponsored walk for families at Easter
- Sponsored 10k run in May
- Barbecue and Parish Evening in June
- Come Dine with Us event in September
- A joint Fashion Show with St Vincent's and St Ambrose parishes

“ I learned a lot from Matt Busby and Alf Ramsey but everything I ever achieved in football I owe to one man and one man only, **Jimmy Murphy**, – he got to my guts, **he was simply sensational**. ”

Sir Bobby Charlton

Tuesday 21 January marks the anniversary of the death of Emiliano Sala. The footballer was tragically killed when his plane crashed into the sea as he was travelling to Cardiff to sign for the Welsh club. He was 28.

Cardiff's manager Neil Warnock said, "This has been the worst week of my life. I have met this young man several times and I was looking forward to working with him. Tragic". How would Neil have felt in the shoes of Jimmy Murphy in February 1958? Jimmy was Assistant Manager to Matt Busby at Manchester United. The two had worked in partnership for 12 years, building a youthful entertaining team, winning the last two Division 1 titles with points to spare. Jimmy was in charge of reserve and youth team development and was known as 'the starmaker', 'the genius behind the Busby babes'.

Having won the FA Youth cup for five consecutive seasons, Matt's team was full of young players who had

Faith, family, fortitude

We learn here of the strong faith that made footballing legend Jimmy Murphy told by his son Jimmy Murphy

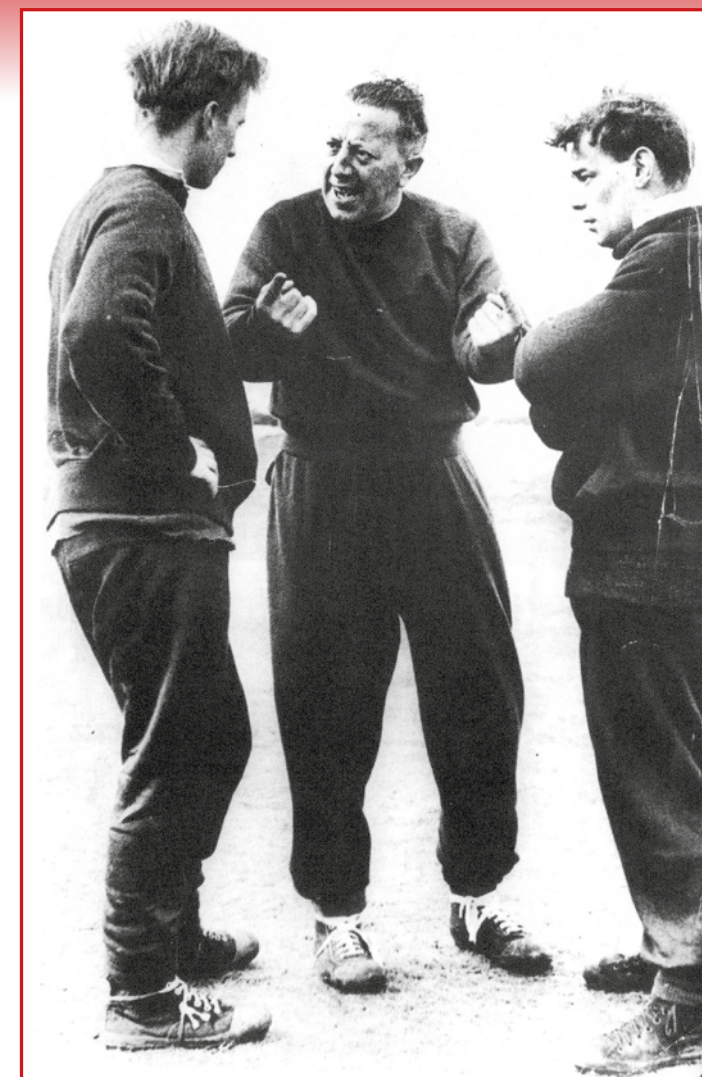
been passed through Jimmy's talented hands. Matt is often quoted as admitting "I could have sat in my office for years as the talent being provided seemed endless".

Jimmy was in Cardiff on 5 February 1958 as his Welsh team qualified for the World Cup finals in June. He had not, therefore, travelled with the club to Belgrade. He received the news of the plane crash when he arrived

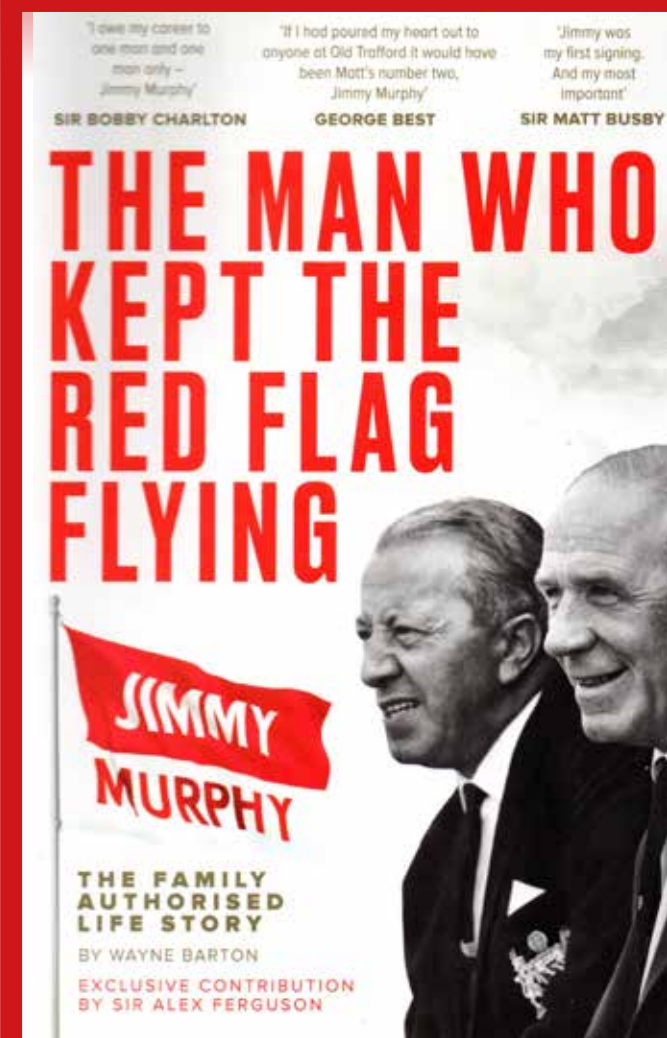
back at Old Trafford the following day. Devastated and stunned he was on one of the first flights to Munich with relatives of the dead and injured survivors.

Eight players would die, two others were badly injured and never played again, five others were in the Munich hospital. Three members of staff lost their lives as did many journalists. Of the eight players who lost their lives only Roger Byrne was as old as Sala at 28! The others were mostly young men under the age of 25... Duncan Edwards and Eddie Colman were just 21. All the players except Tommy Taylor had passed through Jimmy's hands in the reserves and junior teams. Jimmy had worked with most of them from the age of 16.

On returning from his first trip to Munich Jimmy attended the Board Meeting at Old Trafford. The club wanted to withdraw from the League and 'start afresh' in season 1958/59; to carry on at the moment was impossible. Jimmy was insistent that they carried on; the 'missing players' would have wished them to do just that. Jimmy was the man who knew the



Jimmy Murphy coaching Bobby Charlton (left) and Ernie Taylor in late February 1958



characters, strengths and firmness of mind of the players who had survived and the back-up players at the club. Prophetic words from Jimmy resonate today: "We will show the world this club will not be bowed by tragedy... How we are in the future will be founded on how we behave today."

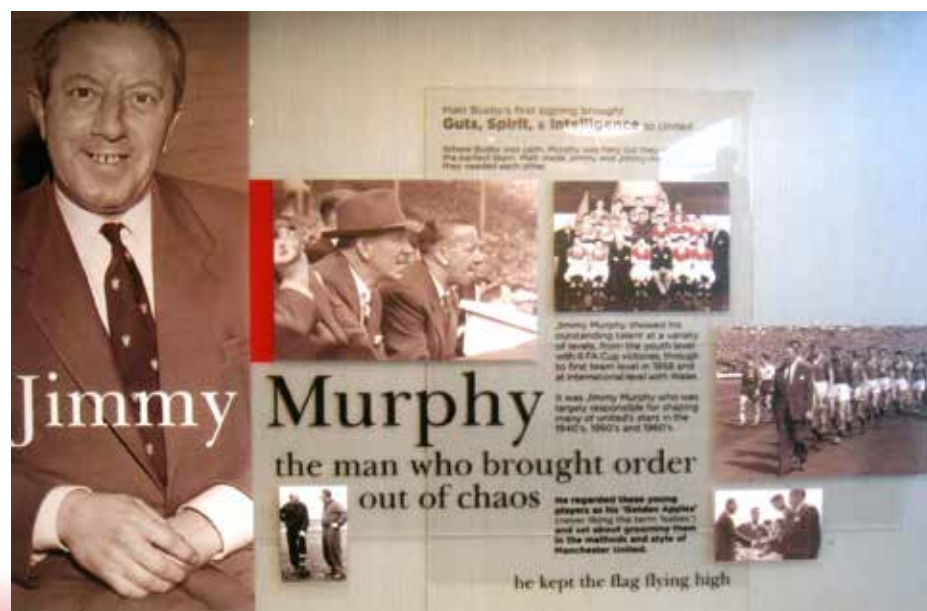
The 'ghost team' would spend the weeks at Blackpool to avoid the furore of the press and public back in Manchester. Jimmy was planning for an FA Cup match v Sheffield Wednesday on 19 February. History shows their success in that game and they proceeded through to the 1958 FA Cup Final. Jimmy proudly led his makeshift team out onto the pitch to be introduced to the Duke of Edinburgh. The team lost to a very experienced Bolton Wanderers but Jimmy had given the club the momentum they needed. Remarkably the following season Manchester United would finish as

runners-up. Jimmy had promised Matt another FA Youth cup winning team and it duly arrived in 1964 with a victory v Manchester City. Rimmer, Fitzpatrick, Aston, Sadler and Best would proceed to the first team and be in the squad who lifted the European cup in 1968. Nine of the team they played on that memorable night were 'Jimmy's boys'. Manchester City youth coaches Dave Ewing and Johnny Hart would describe Jimmy as "the beating heart of Man U".

People forget that at the time of Munich and its aftermath Jimmy also had his burden of speaking with bereaved families and attending funerals, sometimes having to choose which funeral to attend: Dublin, Manchester, Yorkshire etc. Bert Whalley had been Jimmy's Assistant and for over ten years had spent six days a week with Jimmy. He died in 'Jimmy's seat' next to Matt on that

fateful flight. Staff members Walter Crickmar and Tom Curry were seen by Jimmy most days since he joined United in 1946. Some of the dead journalists were friends: George Fellows helped Jimmy with his weekly newspaper column, Frank Swift, an opponent from playing days (Manchester City v West Bromwich Albion). The altar boys for the Catholic funerals included Phil Murphy (17) and Nobby Stiles (15).

Jimmy was a tough Welshman from a mining family in South Wales. His father and five brothers all worked in the collieries. He joined West Bromwich Albion at 17 and his career was over at 28 as World War 2 broke out. He joined the Royal Artillery in January 1941 and was posted to North Africa in June 1942 serving in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia before returning home via Sicily, Italy etc to West



Section in the Manchester United museum dedicated to Jimmy Murphy

Continued next page



Jimmy Murphy's family at the opening of the training centre, Carrington named after their father

Bromwich. He had been an 'absent father' for nearly four years.

Jimmy would quickly 'disappear' again as he moved to Manchester United in early summer 1946. His family of wife Winnie and five children would join him in autumn 1948. His sixth child Anne would be born in December 1949 with Matt Busby as her godfather. The family was complete with two girls and four boys; Whalley Range was the family home.

Jimmy had a strong Catholic faith like his father William. The family were regulars at English Martyrs church, Whalley Range, near St Bede's College. He would move to Poynton in the late 1970s and was a regular at St Paul's.

The older members of St Peter's parish would often see Jimmy at St Peter's as he was on his way to Sunday lunch at his sons: John (Wigan), Nick (Chadderton), Phil (Disley) and Jim (Hazel Grove). After Mass he enjoyed a

ciggie with Fred Ford and Steve, the Scot. He died in November 1989 and is buried with Winnie in St George's, Poynton.

Jimmy's strong belief and faith carried him through the dark days after Munich. "He was on his own but not alone" as his faith helped him persevere. Extremely loyal, he turned down the managers' jobs at Arsenal and Juventus as well as a coaching job with the Brazilian Federation. He loved his job.

He retired when Matt retired but always visited the club. Matt would write, "When all seemed lost, Jimmy took over the reins and kept the club going. It was an achievement which will be enshrined for ever in the annals of Manchester United. Jimmy's superhuman efforts were typical of the man – the true professional."

A bad week for Neil Warnock. A life changing tragedy for Jimmy Murphy and Manchester United. Some of the later tributes to Jimmy include a blue plaque sited at the family home in Pentre, South Wales, the Jimmy Murphy Centre was opened at the training ground in Carrington in Nov 2013 and the last five winners of the Jimmy Murphy Young Player of the Year trophy are all in the first team squad: Tuanzabe, Rashford, Gomes, Chong and Greenwood.



Jimmy Murphy (son) next to a bronze of his father in the Manchester United museum

In the garden of Gethsemane before his crucifixion, Jesus asked his apostles, "Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?" Spending one hour with Jesus thus became a tradition in the church. Pope John Paul II asked us to be generous with our time spent in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Jesus himself gives us a permanent invitation: "Come to me all you who are weary and find life burdensome and I will refresh you. Cast all your anxieties upon the one who cares for you."

During the weekend of Friday 8 and Saturday 9 November adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was arranged at church for a 24-hour period from 12 noon on Friday until 12 noon on Saturday, followed by midday Mass. People were invited to attend for one hour although the option to come and go for longer or shorter times was also available.

Approaching the church at dusk on Friday I saw the cross outside, illuminated and decorated with poppies because it was also Remembrance weekend. It was a beautiful reminder of our faith before I entered the church. When I went in there were people sitting in the atmosphere of stillness and peace; all were there for the same reason as me: to spend some quiet time with Jesus.

I read the notes provided on each pew. Thank you for those – they were very helpful. These words from the notes stood out for me:

"Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10) and "Being with Christ does not mean isolating ourselves from others. Rather it is 'being with' in order to go out and encounter others" (Pope Francis).

As the notes suggested, I took time to put myself in the presence of Christ. I avoided rushing into prayer. I took time to read, give thanks, praise, say personal prayers and also just to sit. Most important to me was the experience of just sitting in the stillness of the church and feeling the presence of Christ.

Finally, the time came to sit and wait for his message to me, to listen and find out what he wants for me and

In the peace and stillness

Linda Cordes shares her experience of the 24 hours' Adoration we had in November.



from me. How many times have I neglected to do that? I have prayed and not spent time listening. We are told that prayer is a conversation with Jesus but how often do I let it become a two-way conversation? Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament reinforced in me all the aspects of worshipping Jesus and spending time with him.

At the end of the session I realised more words were coming into my

mind: "May the love of God, which passeth all understanding, be with you always" and Jesus' words, "My peace is my gift to you".

If you have not tried this way of being with Jesus, I can thoroughly recommend it to you. The opportunity to visit Adoration (or Exposition) of the Blessed Sacrament is available at St Peter's church each week on Saturdays from 11am, followed by Mass at 12 noon.



It has been lovely to see our parish centre so full of people from many parts of the North West on Footsteps nights – an average of around 100 to each event which we started in 2017.

Footsteps offers a series of presentations by different speakers – informal talks by people who have good spiritual insight, deep conviction – and a sense of humour. There's a joy and a feeling of homeliness as people come through the doors to share the evening together. Footsteps is informal, it's open house and it's where you can kick off your shoes and relax in a café-style setting.

Footsteps has always been a means of helping us as we journey in our Christian faith. We want to keep the doors of our parish open wide to be able to welcome as many as possible, from all denominations and our programme for 2020 is intended to have a very varied appeal.

Here's a closer look at what's coming up in the next three months.

Hopefully you'll feel tempted to come and join us, to relax and listen, to bring a friend or neighbour and enjoy the refreshments we offer.

Thursday 16 January at 7.30pm

We have a dynamic young Pastor from Stretford to kick off the year, Lloyd Gordon, who will unpick the Our Father for us in a very illuminating way.

Lloyd used to be a music producer for the likes of Tina Turner before he became a minister. While on tour, he had "an

Footsteps 2020 has something for everyone

encounter with the Lord" in a hotel room that changed his life forever. The Lord clearly told him to leave the industry and follow Him. Since then he has become a sought-after speaker and Musical Director who travels the world creating an extensive network of partnerships and alliances across denominational, cultural, geographical and racial lines. Lloyd serves as the Pastor of Restoration House Firswood, Manchester.

A magnet for young people

Lloyd is a particular inspiration to many young people so hopefully they will feel encouraged to come along. He is electric – and he is cool, if you can be both at the same time; we think he can! His talk is called "Discovering hidden promises" and will give us some great insight into the prayer we all know – the Our Father.

Tuesday 25 February at 8pm

This will be a welcome opportunity to hear Mary Hardiman from our parish share another experience she has had in recent months in Death Row, Louisiana. The parish centre was packed to hear her last May present "Finding God in unexpected places" when she described her actual meeting with her penfriend and long term prisoner Chuck Mamou. Mary has since been back to the prison in Texas, and this time was accompanied by the BBC. She was featured in September

in BBC1's programme Inside Out in a moving testimony of faith and friendship.

Now, Mary will share the impact on her of another Death Row prisoner, Jeremiah and his conversion to faith in "Ain't no man put them damn clouds in the sky". We learnt a lot from Chuck and it's looking like Jeremiah's faith journey will be both inspiring and enlightening. Mary's gift for unwrapping the Scriptures in a thought provoking way is once again shown in this issue on page 22 as she considers the story of the Nativity.

Thursday 26 March at 7.30pm

We're delighted to welcome back another of our own parishioners, James Gallogly. Planned to take place just before Holy Week, James will lead us in how we can approach the run up to Easter. A former headteacher and education professional and now a Chaplain at H M Prison Manchester, James will be sharing some of his own work experience and spiritual insight. Again, James spoke to record numbers in the parish centre in March 2019 and inspired us greatly. We can't wait to hear him again.

On the next page you'll see the programme for the whole of the year, so you can put the dates into your new 2020 diaries. This poster is also displayed in our two parishes. We hope to see you there. You'll be very welcome.

Footsteps

Footsteps is a series of presentations by invited speakers who can help us as we journey in our Christian faith.

Here's what we're planning for 2020.

Each event takes place in our large parish centre. There's no charge, plenty free parking and good wheelchair access.

Come and follow in the footsteps of these special people:

Thursday 16 January at 7.30pm

Pastor Lloyd Gordon unpicks the Our Father for us in "Discovering hidden promises"

Tuesday 25 February at 8pm

Mary Hardiman shares the story and impact on her of Jeremiah's conversion story on Death Row, Louisiana "Ain't no man put them damn clouds in the sky"

Thursday 26 March at 7.30pm

James Gallogly helps us on our Lenten journey

Tuesday 19 May at 8pm

Owen Le Blanc examines "The call to holiness". How do we grow towards it? How does it fit into the lives of ordinary Christians?

Tuesday 30 June at 8pm

Anthony Delaney suggests how we can make a difference to others in "From lost and alone to found and at home"

Thursday 24 September at 7.30pm

Mary Hardiman offers her insight into some of the scriptures

Tuesday 3 November at 8pm

Columban Missionaries explain more about "Sharing gospel joy"

All are welcome to come to each informal, friendly occasion to listen, chat, reflect on and drink in whatever spiritual and actual refreshment is on offer each night. Footsteps began in 2018.

We provide a café-style setting in our parish centre, serving light refreshments and nibbles along with a good sprinkling of humour.

*Be inspired, relax, be spiritually nudged! You'll be very welcome.
Come and follow our Footsteps.*

**St Peter's Parish Centre, Green Lane,
Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 4EA**



Lloyd Gordon



Mary Hardiman



James Gallogly



The Bereavement Support Group organised a day out in the summer for the group and other interested people. Peter Whittam was among them to share this wonderful experience, which he describes as “always interesting, sometimes eye-catching, sometimes sombre and sad”.



A wonderful day out

On Friday 30 August, 51 of us travelled by coach to the National Memorial Arboretum near Lichfield in Staffordshire. Helen Lyons got everything right: the coach was comfortable, the driver, Malcolm, was very good, the venue first-rate, the lunch excellent and plentiful and the weather couldn't have been better.

This arboretum is a part of the Royal British Legion and must be seen to be believed. It covers 150 acres of flat land and contains over 350 thought-provoking memorials with more added regularly to pay tribute to the very many people, service personnel and civilians who lost their lives in too many wars in which our country has been involved.

There's really no hope of seeing all the memorials in a single visit; it's so vast.

A 50 minute trip on the land train with the pre-recorded commentary is a good place to start, if only to whet the appetite for a visit to look more closely at the memorials that appealed to you on your train journey.

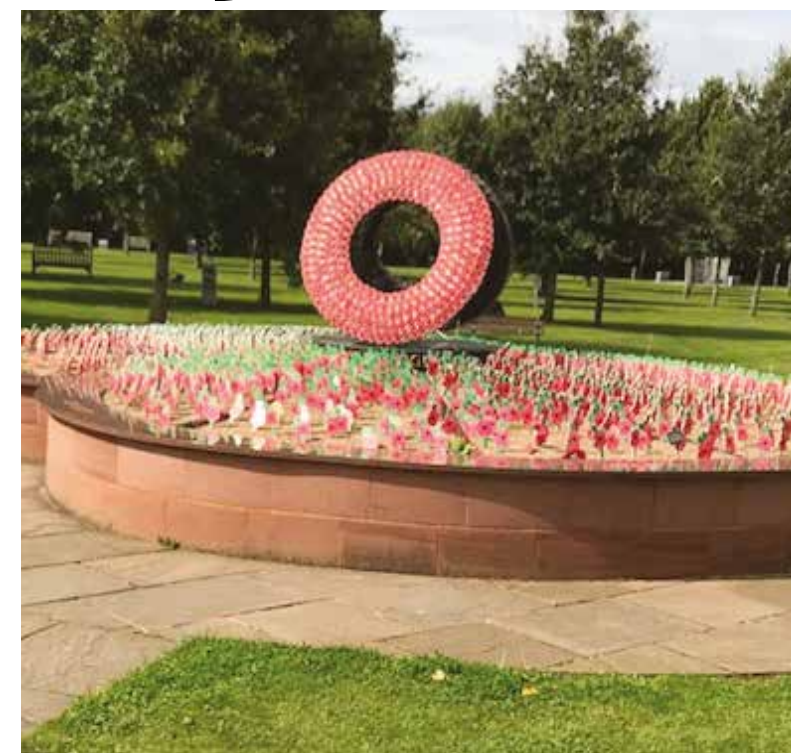
These few photographs don't do full justice to the memorials but may give a taste of what to expect.

If there is one that tells the saddest story, it is called 'Shot at Dawn' and is an 8'6" sculpture of Northumberland Fusilier, Private Herbert Burden, who at just 17 should not have been there at all. Like many other lads, he had joined up giving false information about his age because he wanted to help his country in World War I. The statue is flanked by 309 wooden stakes representing by name each of the servicemen who suffered the same

fate after their Court Martial. We found other moving memorials of a non-military sort, for example one for the fire brigade and one for the charity for stillborn babies and neonatal death, SANDS.

A number of buildings were impressive; they'd been opened on 21 October 2016. The very large, exceptionally well laid out Remembrance Centre incorporates a spacious reception area, a large restaurant (we dined separately in a room off the restaurant and enjoyed excellent waitress service), a gift shop and exhibition halls.

An extension houses a coffee shop and a simple but beautiful chapel for quiet remembrance by visitors. Scooters are available to hire – maybe it's an idea to reserve one in advance. You can find out more at www.thenma.org.uk.



Young people go to the Holy Land

Day 1

After arriving safely in Jerusalem the previous day, we had an early start to our pilgrimage. We travelled to Bethlehem in the West Bank (or Palestine depending on who you ask), and this meant we had to go through a security check. We passed through the imposing barrier with armed guards on either side, which was quite a striking moment; it made what we'd heard about the tensions between Israel and Palestine a harsh and sad reality. We visited Jesus' birthplace but were left devastated to find out he wasn't born in a stable but a cave... that's certainly ruined the Christmas cards! The Romans had built a basilica on top of it: the Church of the Nativity; it turned out this construction work would be a theme of the week. Another highlight was our visit to the Church of the Visitation, although it was rather unfortunately situated on top of a mountain. We were however rewarded for our climbing efforts when we got to the top with spectacular views of the surrounding area. That marked the end to our day and the return to the hotel in time for dinner.

In October, a group of young people from St Peter's joined the Shrewsbury diocese pilgrimage to Israel and had an amazing time. We explored lots of churches, sang our way round Galilee and most importantly, walked in the footsteps of Jesus. Here's a little day by day account of our trip from some of the group.

Day 2

We began our day at the Our Father Chapel. A beautiful chapel with lots and lots of versions of the Our Father. It was great for us young people to see how Jesus exists all over the world, not just in St Peter's. We then visited Dominus Flevit where Jesus cried over Jerusalem and the garden of Gethsemane. Next, we went to the Church of the Dormition where the Assumption happened and finished the day with Mass.

Day 3

Our day in Jerusalem began with us walking the Via Dolorosa – the Way of the Cross. We walked through the busy streets of Jerusalem, stopping to complete the stations, which was often quite a challenge as the markets in Jerusalem get very congested! After lunch, we visited the Ecce Homo Church, where Jesus was presented in front of Pontius Pilate and St Anne's Church, the birthplace of Mary. We



St Peter's statue at Capernaum

finished our time in Jerusalem by visiting the Holy Sepulchre, where Jesus was crucified and buried. Then we began our journey to Tiberius, where we would stay for the rest of the week. We arrived at Tiberius late afternoon and had time to settle in before eating dinner.

Day 4

Our first day in Tiberius began by going up Mount Tabor, and we were very grateful to be able to get a minibus up it! We spent the journey singing hymns, much to the dismay of our driver! From Tabor we made our way to Cana where the miracle of the wine took place during the wedding feast. We then went to Nazareth where we celebrated Mass in the Church of the Annunciation and saw the lovely mosaic of Our Lady of



St Peter's pilgrims

Walsingham. We then visited the home of the Holy Family before returning to our hotel in Tiberius for dinner.

Day 5

We started with Mass celebrated by Fr Peter at the Church of the Primacy, which is just footsteps away from the Sea of Galilee. During communion Lucy, Anna, Ellie and Ruth sang "More like you Lord", a classic junior choir song. We then went to visit the Church of the Multiplication, the place of the feeding of the five thousand. There was no fish or bread but we did enjoy an ice cream! After finding St Peter's fish at lunch, we went on a boat ride across the Sea of Galilee. We took in the wonderful scenery and to our surprise sang YMCA! Our last stop was the Mount of the



The view over Jerusalem

Beatitudes and then onto Magdala for Holy Hour and Confession. The perfect time to reflect on a very busy but meaningful day.

Day 6

We started with a visit to Haifa, which is a coastal city in the north of Israel. We had Mass in the Stella Maris Carmelite monastery on top of Mount Carmel, after which we tried to visit the Hanging Gardens of Haifa. They were sadly closed, but we had excellent views of the city and the Kishon Marina that sits in the brilliant blue of the Mediterranean. After lunch – which was falafel or shawarma with pitta, what a surprise – we travelled down the coast to Caesarea, a town built by Herod the Great with the largest deep-sea artificial harbour. We had a look around at the remains of the hippodrome and had a live display of the amphitheatre's acoustics by Lucy, Anna, Ellie and Ruth before paddling in the sea and having a much-appreciated ice cream. We then headed back for our last dinner at the hotel.

Day 7

After our final breakfast in Israel we set off to the River Jordan. It was an amazing experience to renew our Baptismal vows in the place where Jesus himself had his Baptism. After a paddle and obligatory photos for the parents, we went to the Mount of Temptation where a few of the group had a ride on a camel! We had Mass in Jericho at the Good Shepherd Church and afterwards had our last lunch of falafel. We then headed to the Dead Sea which was definitely an experience we'll never forget. It's very difficult to explain that you do just float! We then headed to the airport for our journey home and a long sleep!

We now take great joy in being able to think 'we've been there!' every time we hear somewhere like Jerusalem or Galilee during the readings at Mass! We all had the best time and are thankful for all your prayers.



Celebrating Mass at the Church of the Primacy by Galilee



Mosaic of Our Lady of Walsingham

Relaxez-vous

From the mouths of babes...

A Sunday school teacher said to her children, "We have been learning how powerful kings and queens were in Bible times. But, there is a Higher Power. Can anybody tell me what it is?"

One child shouted out, "Aces!"

The priest asked a little girl if she said her prayers every night. "Yes, Father" the girl said.

"And, do you always say them in the morning, too?" the priest asked.

"No Father," the girl replied. "I'm not scared in the daytime."

Little Michael and his family were having Sunday dinner at his grandmother's house. Everyone was seated around the table as the food was being served. When Michael received his plate, he started eating right away. "Michael, please wait until we say grace" said his mother.

"I don't need to," the boy replied.

"Of course, you do," his Mum insisted. "We always say a prayer before eating at our house."

"That's at our house," Michael explained. "But this is Grandma's house and she knows how to cook."



On the way out of Liverpool to head towards Manchester, word has it that there's a Catholic church that has a big wall surrounding it. The graffiti on the wall reads, 'Last Sacraments before the M62'.

Signs of the times

A sign in a shoe repair shop:

We will heel you. We will save your sole.
We will even dye for you.

a sign on a blinds and curtain van: "Blind man driving."

in a podiatrist's surgery: "Time wounds all heels."

on a septic tank truck: Yesterday's Meals on Wheels

at an optician's: "If you don't see what you're looking for, you've come to the right place."

on a plumber's van: "We repair what your husband fixed."

on another plumber's van: "Don't sleep with a drip. Call your plumber."

at a tyre dealer's: "Invite us to your next blowout."

in the front of a funeral director's: "Drive carefully. We'll wait."

on an electrician's van: "Let us remove your shorts."

in a non-smoking area: "If we see smoke, we will assume you are on fire and will take appropriate action."

on a maternity room door: "Push. Push. Push."

at a car dealership: "The best way to get back on your feet? Miss a car payment."

outside an exhaust fitter: "No appointment necessary. We hear you coming."

in a vet's waiting room: "Will be back in 5 minutes. Sit! Stay!"

at the electric company: "We would be delighted if you send in your payment on time. However, if you don't, YOU will be de-lighted."

in a restaurant window: "Don't stand there and be hungry; come on in and get fed up."

Done with small talk?



#TryAlpha



Interested in exploring faith for the first time or journeying deeper? The next Adult Alpha will be on Thursday 30 April.

For more information contact Rachel 07724 749217.



Mary's corner

Time now just to take a break from the hustle and bustle, to sit down quietly, relax your body, settle your mind and let Mary Hardiman's reflection on this familiar Christmas reading from the Scriptures find a place in your heart.

The Christmas story



Luke 2: 8-20

'And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they saw the child, they repeated what they had been told about him, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told."

As you read this reflection I wonder if you ever think about your own nativity play at school. What was that like for you? Maybe you played the part of a shepherd out in the field or maybe your child or somebody you know did.

Hearing the Christmas story can do one of many things: it can soothe us or make us feel nostalgic. It can encourage us or strengthen our faith. It can excite us for the big day. Or it can be so familiar to us that we lose something of its worth.

Let's have a think about the impact and significance of this beautiful story in the gospel of Saint Luke which is so rich in symbolism and meaning.

Why has Saint Luke chosen to include the story of the shepherds? In those days, shepherds were poor and uneducated. I don't imagine that their personal or oral hygiene would have been top of the agenda, nor do I think that they would have been particularly eloquent or articulate. If you spend most of your life outdoors in all sorts of inclement weather taking care of sheep, you're probably not going to be wearing the latest fashions or keeping abreast of global politics; you're not going to visit the barber's shop every week for a close shave and haircut, nor I imagine are you going to make full use of the local bathing facilities.

Make no mistake about it, these shepherds were right on the margins of society. They were not the kind of men who would have been invited to any neighbourhood gatherings; their work handling sick or dead animals would have made them ritually unclean and very unpopular within the community. And yet it was to them that the angel appeared. Why?

Luke tells us that the shepherds were living in the fields nearby. For me this is deeply symbolic. Jesus, at his birth was placed in a manger and the shepherds were nearby. Without knowing it they were close to the Lord both geographically and spiritually, living a life of simplicity and humility, rejecting the trappings of wealth and status and relying wholly on the providence of God. These homeless men were open to the good news of Christ's birth. How revolutionary is this?

We also read that they were keeping watch over their flocks at night. Sheep as we know are incredibly vulnerable animals. And so again, the symbolism is rich because Jesus, the Good Shepherd, keeps watch over us in our moments of darkness and vulnerability.

'The glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.'

I invite you to read this sentence again and put the emphasis on the word 'them'. Now see what happens. The glory of the Lord shone around them, the shepherds. It didn't shine around anybody else! I don't hear it shining around the religious leaders or the government officials. See how God raises the lowly.

I love how the first words spoken by the angel come as a gentle command, 'do not be afraid'. Did you know that these words appear in the Bible 365 times, one for each day of the year? God does not want us to be afraid, just to trust because it's good news that the angel is bringing. Our saviour has come, our redeemer is here.

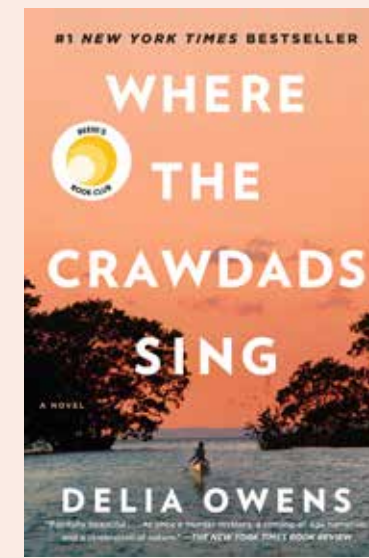
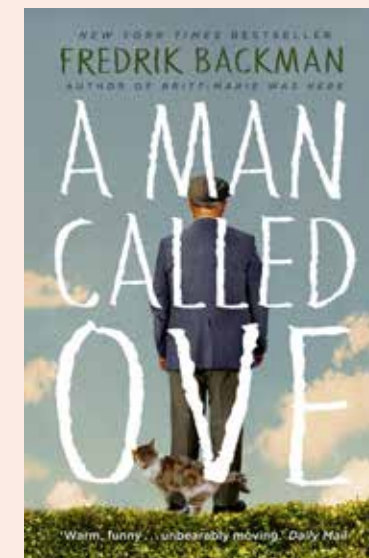
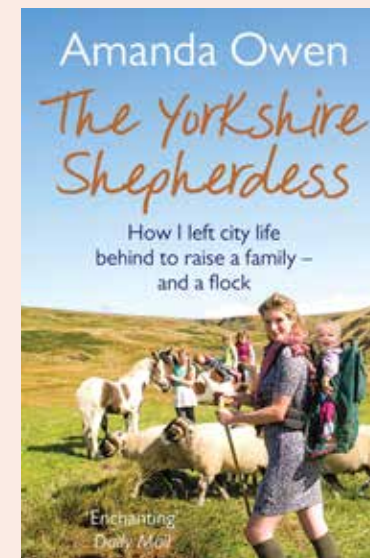
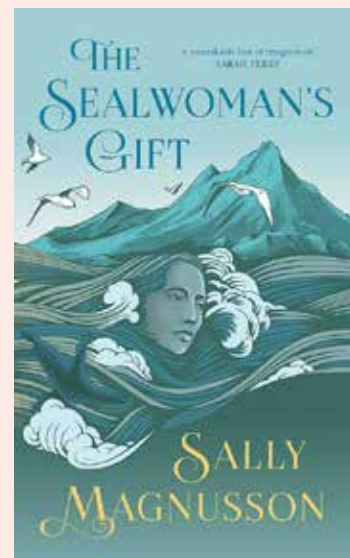
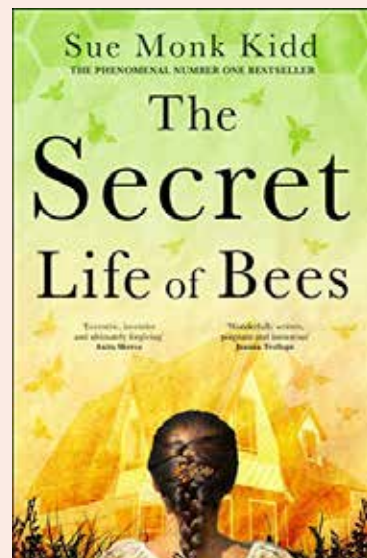
What I also love is the way the angel communicates who and where Jesus is and how they will know him. In the town of David is a baby, wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger; he is Christ the Lord. There is nothing complicated about this message. God keeps it all so simple. For me it's also as much about what isn't said; the angel does not tell the shepherds to go, he simply tells them where they can find Christ, if that's what they want to do. Who and where is Jesus for you? How do you know him?

And so off they went and when the shepherds returned to the fields after finding Jesus they were transformed. We read that they went back glorifying and praising God for what they had heard and seen. They'd heard the good news of Christ and seen him face to face. The shepherds were the first to hear the news of Jesus' birth and the first to respond. God chose the outcasts, those whom society had rejected, those who were disliked and mistrusted to share His message of salvation. God turns everything on its head.

And so this same message is for all of us. It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter where you live or what your job is. It doesn't matter how popular, how intelligent or even how clean you are; God invites you to meet his son this Christmas.

God's love is totally inclusive. Nobody is outside the circle of God's love. This is what Jesus came to tell us, that the love of our Heavenly Father is infinite, His love is all-embracing, His love is never changing, His love is immeasurable, His love is unbounded, His love is freely given. And that love is for you and for me. Like Mary, take some time this Christmas treasuring that love and pondering it in your heart.

Happy Christmas



A journey of discovery

Alison McGarr looks back on a busy first year of St Peter's Book Club

Barack Obama has said, 'Reading is important. If you know how to read, the whole world opens up to you.' For those of who us joined the newly formed Book Club in November 2018, the whole world really has opened up to us. What a wonderful journey of discovery we have been on!

We began with the First World War and went on a journey from rural Australia via exotic Egypt to the trenches in Normandy, when we read Thomas Keneally's epic novel *The Daughters of Mars*. We witnessed the Great War through the lens of two sisters who volunteer as nurses and were taken on a journey which was both a geographical and an emotional rollercoaster.

By January 2019, we had moved up to rural Scotland and a small shed in Dalmally, Argyll as we learnt about the journey taken by Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow in his autobiographical account of how the charity Mary's Meals was established. *The Shed That Fed A Million Children* describes his journey to deliver aid to war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, then on to building homes for Romanian children dying of Aids, before journeying to Malawi where he meets a 14-year old boy who dreamt of

having enough food and the opportunity to go to school. This dream became the model for Mary's Meals and, as the title of the book suggests, has since gone on to feed over a million children. As one member of the Book Club said, "I am loving Mary's Meals; I feel inspired to give up my job – and not just so I can be a lady that lunches (although that would be nice too!)."

February saw us move onto *Mad Blood Stirring* by Simon Mayo. This novel is based on a true story about American sailors who were captured by the British during the Anglo-American war of 1812-1815 and held as prisoners of war at Dartmoor Prison. The events leading up to the Dartmoor Massacre of 6 April 1815, are graphically explained whilst the reader is enthralled by a sub-plot which sees the segregated all male African-American sailors rehearse for an unlikely production of Romeo and Juliet.

By March, we had decided to offer the group a choice of two books and so *Fleeing ISIS Finding Jesus* by Charles Morris and Craig Borlase and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini saw the Book Club journey to the Middle East. The former, follows Charles Morris as he travels to Jordan and Iraq and witnesses

many Muslims, living with ISIS and Islamic extremism, turn to faith in Jesus. The latter, covers a thirty-year period in the history of Afghanistan – from the Soviet invasion, the rise of the Taliban and the rebuilding of Afghanistan after the Taliban reign. It is the story of two poor, uneducated women who have to endure the hardships of life but who try to live normal and peaceful lives.

We journeyed back to 1920's Australia in April when we read *The Light Between Oceans* by M L Stedman. This is a really beautiful story which sweeps you away to an isolated island off the coast of Australia. A First World War veteran, who returns home to Australia and takes up a career as a lighthouse keeper on a tiny island called Janus Rock, marries and takes his new wife to this remote spot to build a life and a family. However, fate takes a terrible turn and they make a decision with life-altering consequences... Meanwhile others in the group had been swept off to Nazi Germany in 1939, when they read *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. A young girl is fostered into a family that hides a Jew in the basement and the relationships that unfold create a story filled with youthful curiosity, tenacity and daring. This book is

actually marketed as a young adult novel and would make a good present for a teenager.

In May, on the recommendation of fellow parishioner, Mary Hardiman, we were blown into the life of Walter McMillian, a black man wrongfully accused of murder and sentenced to death in Alabama in the late 1980s. Bryan Stevenson's *Just Mercy*, is an autobiographical account of his career as a lawyer representing the marginalised victims of the American criminal justice system. We also accompanied another man on a journey, when we read *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce. When Harold receives a letter from an ex-colleague, he sets out with the intention of posting a letter back to his old friend but instead embarks on a 600-mile walk from Devon to Berwick-upon-Tweed. This is a beautiful, bittersweet, poignant story with a twist – well worth reading.

The 2018 Man Booker Prize winner, *Milkman* by Anna Burns was one of our chosen books in June. The story is written in the first person by middle sister, an 18-year-old woman, who lives surrounded by the conflict in Northern Ireland. The characters and the country of the novel are unnamed but the context locates the action in 1970s Belfast – a time of political and social violence. Many in the group struggled with this book as they did with our second book choice in June, *Becoming* by Michelle Obama, with many

finding this autobiographical journey from Chicago to the White House much harder work than expected.

In July, we agreed not to meet in August as many of us were going to be away and so we decided to 'mop up' many of the books that had been suggested along the way but for whatever reason hadn't made it onto our monthly reading list:

***The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd**

Set in 1964 South Carolina, this powerfully, evocative book tells the story of Lily Owens and her black stand-in-mother, Rosaleen, who escape the violence and racial division of small-town America to be taken in by three black bee-keeping sisters. Lily's journey is rooted in painful secrets and betrayals but is ultimately a tale of wisdom, love and spirituality.

***The Seal Woman's Gift* by Sally Magnusson**

Set in 1627, this beautifully written book, based on real events, tells the story of Asta, her family and neighbours who are abducted from Iceland by pirates and sold into slavery. The descriptions of the harsh Icelandic coast and the warmth of Algiers, together with the theme of traditional tales brings the story of loss and survival to life.

***The Yorkshire Shepherdess* by Amanda Owen**

A real-life account of the life of Amanda Owen, a shepherdess who has featured

in The Dales on ITV. This autobiography gives a great insight into the highs and lows of working on a remote farm in the Yorkshire Dales.

***The Man Called by Ove* by Frederik Backman**

Set in Sweden, it is the tale of a grumpy old man with resolute principles and stringent routines who plans to commit suicide, but finds himself being drawn into the lives of an unruly, energetic young family who move in next door. A bittersweet story that takes place after the death of his wife and shows how healing can take place, in the unlikely of ways.

***Where The Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens**

Set in a lonely marsh along the North Carolina coast, this story is about Kya who was a young girl when her mother walked away. Soon, all her siblings followed suit, leaving Kya alone with her often absent, drunk, and abusive father. This is a story of resilience, survival, hope, love, loss, loneliness, desperation, prejudice, determination and strength.

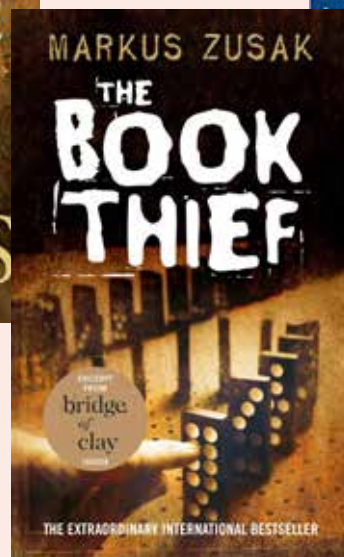
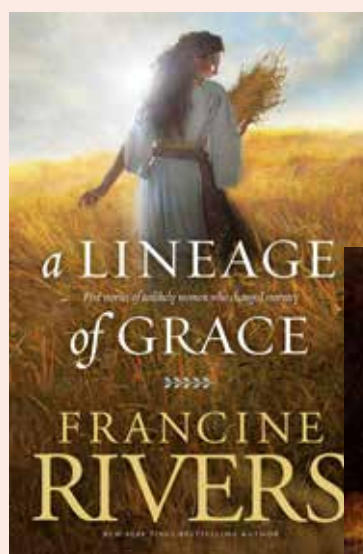
***A Lineage of Grace* by Francine Rivers**

Francine Rivers has told the story of five biblical women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary. The stories of each of these women in the lineage of Christ have been fleshed out to presume their feelings, hopes and fears. This is an exquisitely written series of five novellas



which brings to life the stories of the women of the Old Testament. After a long summer break, the group came back together and picked up a beautifully written account of one man's life. ***When All Is Said*** by Anne Griffin is set in a hotel bar, in a small Irish town. The main character, Maurice, sits alone raising a glass to each of the five people who have most closely shaped his life. Maurice's character is revealed slowly and in detail, through a description of his relationship with each of these five people. Griffin carefully balances good personality traits with bad, to portray a character of real humanity and warmth. We also journeyed back to the Second World War, but this time from the perspective of the young Jewish men who managed to flee from Nazi Germany to a new life in America. ***The Ritchie Boys*** by Bruce Henderson tells the story of many German-speaking immigrants who fled persecution only to join the US special intelligence forces so they could be used for interrogation on the front lines.

In our wonderful journey of discovery, we then went communist... We read three books in fairly quick succession which were absolutely fascinating just because they were so revealing about three



different communist cultures. ***The Star of the North*** by D B John is a thriller set in North and South Korea. It is 1999 when a Korean American teenager is kidnapped from a beach in South Korea and taken to North Korea. Twelve years later, her twin, Jenna, is certain her sister is still alive and wants desperately to find answers. Intertwined with this is the story about the peasant woman living in North Korea and the high-ranking North Korean official who may be related to a traitor of the state. This book provides real insight into the secretive Korean state.

Death Notice by Zhou Haohui is the first of a trilogy and is a Chinese police crime thriller with a brilliant and clever plot. A sadistic vigilante killer returns after an 18-year hiatus. In the distant past, the aptly-named Eumenides (Greek goddess of retribution) killed a high-ranking corrupt policeman and two police cadets. Now, another senior police officer is murdered and Eumenides identifies his intended victims with death notices.

The Spy and The Traitor by Ben McIntyre is a true story which is a superb and riveting book about one of our most notable living spies. Oleg Gordievsky was a Russian KGB officer who became an agent for MI6 in England and over the course of the Cold War was able to feed England important information that may have led not only to our world being safe from nuclear disaster but perhaps also to

the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This is an absolutely thrilling story that enthralled the reader and opens up the hidden world of espionage.

The year wouldn't have been complete without a return to the Second World War, but this time told through the lens of the women of the French Resistance. The idea for ***The Nightingale*** by Kristin Hannah originally came from research about a Resistance heroine, 19-year-old Belgian Andree de Jongh, who established the Comet Escape Line, a secret network of people who helped Allied servicemen escape over the Pyrenees to Spain. The story is all encompassing, depicting not only the war, the holocaust, the suffering and starvation, the death, the concentration camps, the emotional, physical and mental toll on people but also the unrelenting will of the people in the Resistance.

So that's it – a journey of discovery that really has opened up the world to us. If you would like to join us, we meet on the third Tuesday of every month at 7.30pm in the Members' Lounge in the parish centre. Our next meeting is on 21 January 2020. Please do come along if you can – but if you are unable to come, please check the newsletter to find out what we are reading. In 2020, we are going to put a copy of the books we read at the back of church so feel free to borrow them.

Christmas funnies

Ho Ho Ho!

**How do snowmen get around?
They ride an icicle!**

*What do snowmen have for breakfast?
Snowflakes!*

What does Santa do when his elves misbehave? He gives them the sack!

*What did Santa say to the smoker?
Please don't smoke, it's bad for my elf!*

What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations? Tinsilitis!

*What's the most popular Christmas wine?
'But I don't like Brussels sprouts!'*

What's green, covered in tinsel and goes ribbet ribbet? A mistle-toad!

Which famous playwright was terrified of Christmas? Noël Coward!

**What carol is heard in the desert?
'O camel ye faithful!'**

How many letters are in the Christmas alphabet? Only 25, there's no L!

What do reindeer hang on their Christmas trees? Horn-aments!

*Why are Christmas trees so bad at sewing?
They always drop their needles!*

How will Christmas dinner be different after Brexit? No Brussels!

*How does Christmas Day end?
With the letter Y!*

What happened to the turkey at Christmas? It got gobbled!

What do snowmen eat for lunch? Icebergers!

**When is a boat just like snow?
When it's adrift!**

Who delivers presents to cats? Santa Paws!

**Why did the turkey cross the road?
Because it was the chicken's day off!**

What do you get if you cross Santa with a detective? Santa Clues!

**What goes Ho Ho Whoosh, Ho Ho Whoosh?
Santa going through a revolving door!**

What is Santa's favourite place to deliver presents? Idaho-ho-ho!

What do you call buying a piano for the holidays? Christmas Chopin!

*What's a child's favourite king at Christmas?
A stoc-king!*

Merry Christmas

Here's a list of the parish groups and activities at St Peter's

Celebrating liturgy

Altar linen

Pat Tomlinson: 0161 456 7627

Altar servers

Fr Peter

Church cleaners

Margaret King: 0161 483 4584

Eucharistic ministers

Housebound

Maureen Horton: 0161 483 1590

mary.horton@ntlworld.com

Church

Tony Martin: 0161 483 7720

tony.martin@ntlworld.com

Flower arrangers

Colette Christie: 0161 427 4982

colette.christie4982@hotmail.co.uk

Lay-led liturgy

Rachel McKay: 0161 487 1659

mckay7897@hotmail.com

Adult and junior choirs

Eileen Rigg: 01625 872948

emrigg@hotmail.co.uk

Folk group

Steph Leyden: 0161 456 6285

stephleyden@icloud.com

Piety stall

Denise Noon: 0161 483 0217

Readers

Monica Beckitt:

admin@stpetersshazelgrove.org.uk

Welcomers

Anne-Marie Bailey: 0161 456 2213

ambailey@cheerful.com

Creating social activity

Book club

Alison McGarr: 07792 107152

ajmcgarr68@outlook.com

Mens' group

John McKay:

07715 362403

Parish newsletter

Monica Beckitt

admin@stpetersshazelgrove.org.uk

Parish noticeboards

Outside - Julie Williams:

juliewilliams10@gmail.com

Inside - Barbara Goodier

Parish website

Anne-Marie Bailey: ambailey@cheerful.com

Special events

Helen Lyons: 07854 928072

helenlyons1957@hotmail.co.uk

Tea and Coffees, after Mass

Sandra Coleing: 0161 419 9083

Theatre group

Tony Martin: 0161 483 7720

tony.martin@ntlworld.com

Walking group

Tony Martin: 0161 483 7720

tony.martin@ntlworld.com

Exploring faith

Alpha

Rachel McKay: 0161 487 1659

mckay7897@hotmail.com

Baptism programme

Anne-Marie Gallogly

Karen Haines - justasec55@hotmail.com

Confirmation programme

Fr Peter

petersharrocks@stpetersshazelgrove.org.uk

First sacraments preparation

Teresa Thiele: 07778 848709

terrythiele@hotmail.co.uk

Marriage preparation

Fr Peter

RCIA - Enquirers group

Tony Martin 0161 483 7720

tony.martin@ntlworld.com

Vocations

Fr Peter

*Names and contact details
are correct at the time the
magazine went to print, but
are subject to change.*

Sharing faith

CaFE

Rachel McKay: 0161 487 1659

mckay7897@hotmail.com

Centering prayer

Mike O'Malley: 0161 483 8296

michaeldomalley@sky.com

Churches Together activities

Maureen/Phil Horton: 0161 483 1590

pjhorton@virginmedia.com

Footsteps

Anne-Marie Bailey: 0161 456 2213

ambailey@cheerful.com

Guided prayer

Mike O'Malley: 0161 483 8296

michaeldomalley@sky.com

Holy hour and prayer ministry

Laura Small: 01625 876 752

lauramsmall@hotmail.com

Lending library

Ann Bonner: 0161 456 6152

anntbar46@yahoo.com

LPA liaison

Julie Williams: 0161 285 0244

juliewilliams10@gmail.com

Mothers' prayers

Teresa Thiele: 07778 848709

terrythiele@hotmail.co.uk

Praise and worship

John McKay: 0161 487 1659

mckay7897@hotmail.com

Rosary groups: adult and children

Laura Small: 01625 876 752

lauramsmall@hotmail.com

Scripture group

Mike O'Malley: 0161 483 8296

michaeldomalley@sky.com

Supporting families and youth

Bereavement support

Helen Lyons: 07854 928072

Childrens' liturgy

Janice Ormerod: 0161 449 5840

Explorers

Joe O'Brien: 07976 423 203

joe_obrien@ntlworld.com

Little fishes

Anne Wroe: 07763 387001

anne.wroe@sky.com

Marriage and family life group

David Small: 01625 876 752

SPY group

David Small: 01625 876 752

Outreaching in the community

Hospital chaplaincy

Chaplaincy Office: 0161 419 5889

Hospital Chaplaincy (Emergency)

Hospital switchboard will bleep

0161 483 1010

Via St Peter's

0161 483 3476

petersharrocks@stpeterhazelgrove.org.uk

Justice and peace

Carmel O'Malley: 0161 483 8296

LAMBS

Jackie Mackay: 0161 483 6348

Kath Coll: 0161 456 0881

kathcoll@btinternet.com

Lenten lunches

Helen Lyons: 07854 928072

Jackie Mackay: 0161 483 6348

Lourdes group

Mary Conway-Kelly: 07809 748805

Luncheon club

Margaret Hulme: 07775 162694

Missio

Margaret King: 0161 483 4584

Fiona Preece: 0161 456 4319

Schools chaplaincy

St Peter's

Fr P Sharrocks: 0161 483 2431

0161 483 3476

St Simon's

Fr P Sharrocks: 0161 483 9696

0161 483 3476

St James' High School - Via School

0161 482 6900

office@stjamesche.org.uk

Harrytown High School - Via School

0161 430 5277

office@harrytown.stockport.sch.uk

Aquinas 6th form college

0161 483 3237

Chaplain

Carmel.Scanlon@aquinas.ac.uk

SVP: adult and youth

Lorraine Parker: 0161 456 5629

lorraineandbobparker@gmail.com