

SHINE

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**For more information please contact
mckay7897@hotmail.com**

All are welcome!



FROM THE PARISH PRIEST

Our last issue of Shine appeared during 'Lockdown 1' and I don't suppose many would have anticipated that we would be preparing the next issue during 'Lockdown 2'! The 'virus' continues to make its presence felt and it affects every aspect of our lives, family, social, shopping, work, spiritual, recreation – you name it and the virus has left its mark. It was a great disappointment that the government made us close our doors to public worship, because we had worked so hard in making our churches as safe as possible for people to attend Mass. I know that many of you had not ventured to church but were watching on the livestream. Nevertheless, many were coming and I hope that the recent closure will not put people off from resuming attendance at Mass now that we have been given the go ahead. Having said that, for most of our congregation it looks like attendance at Christmas Mass will be via the livestream because of the ongoing restriction on numbers attending.

At the same time, it has not all been negative. In some ways our community has grown stronger and drawn closer together through our use of technology and some willing helpers and volunteers. Our virtual coffee mornings each Sunday have seen people chatting to those they have never had the chance to speak with before; St Peter's Helpers has gone from strength to strength adapting to the changing circumstances as the months go by; we have had all sorts of visiting choirs at our Sunday Masses! We are having various meetings via Zoom and the added bonus of those is the 'mute' button!! More importantly, the team of St Peter's Helpers have done sterling work in supporting the more vulnerable in our community.

Some of us were able to get to Lourdes at the end of July even though there was no official diocesan pilgrimage. It was a different experience this year but still enjoyable and you can read about it on page 22.

Thanks to all those who have contributed articles here and to those who have put it all together. Enjoy the reading and have a good Christmas staying safe and well and, as Boris says, be jolly careful!

Fr Peter

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

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Shining a light on our parish communities



Choir in lockdown

Eileen Rigg explains what's been going on behind the scenes.

As choir practices and singing at Mass have not been possible during lockdown, some of the more musically and technically confident members of the adult choir have been recording music for use at Mass since early summer, in the splendid isolation of our own homes!

Chris, our wonderful accompanist and organist, has proved to be a technical genius as well, and has prepared and edited our individual recorded efforts (some of us are recording two or three parts) and made us sound really good!!

For Mass every week we have supplied the psalm and alleluia and one anthem or motet, as well as singing the Gathering Mass and preparing Missa Emmanuel for Advent. In addition, we have been working on the Carol Service and Christmastide Masses.

It is a shame that not all members of the choir have been able to take part, and very sad that we have not been able to do anything with the junior choir. We will, however, hopefully come through this and both choirs will be able to resume work before too long. After all, the junior choir has been going for 38 years and the adults for 32, so we are not going to let a virus stop us!



Just some of the friends and family joining in

Fifty glorious years

Mary and Hugh Osborne's golden surprise

It was our golden wedding anniversary in June. We had planned a small celebration for just our local friends and immediate family. Both our wider families live further away and we didn't expect them to travel and have to pay for flights, hotels etc. Then COVID-19 happened and all celebrations were cancelled. We were obviously upset about our small party not happening. However, what really made us sad was that we wouldn't be able to have a blessing and renew our vows like we did on our 25th wedding anniversary.

Unknown to Hugh and me our children Gary, Colin and Caroline decided to sort that out. They contacted Fr Peter and asked him to hold a Zoom meeting for us. They only informed us of this a couple of days before the event and Fr Peter then called and discussed what would happen and left us with an order of service.

We were obviously delighted and really looked forward to the blessing. On the day, we gathered in our lounge with a laptop and television at the ready. Fr Peter appeared and then Colin said, "Sorry, some people are trying to join in." In amazement we watched as our TV screen filled up with numerous



boxes and we started to recognise our friends and relatives from so many places. They joined us for the service from Aberdeen, Armagh, Ballater, Bath, Belfast, Billericay, Chisworth, Dobcross, Dronfield, Dublin, Offerton, Oldham and last but not least New Zealand.

In total, 51 people zoomed and gave us the best anniversary – far beyond anything we could have hoped for. Our thanks to our three children and most of all to Fr Peter and St Peter's. This was a service we will never forget.

Bereavement Group

Throughout the pandemic the Bereavement Group has been meeting via Zoom. We have had some lovely afternoon sessions with lots of chat and laughter as well as prayer and reflection. We have also started an evening Zoom for those more recently bereaved, which is more prayerful and reflective. We light a candle for our loved ones and pray for them and each other.

We are really looking forward to being back together in the parish centre and church, but who knows when that will be, so for the time being we will 'keep zooming'.

If you would like to know more or join either or both of our sessions please get in touch with Helen 07854 928072 helenlyons1957@hotmail.co.uk or Rachel 07724 749217 rachelemckay@icloud.com.



Lots of chatting and laughter

Covid-19

A poem by
Jennifer Hutchinson

Whatever is this terrible disease
That's brought the whole world to its knees?
Is it transmitted through one's breath?
Whatever it is, it's brought many to death.

You must keep your distance wherever you are
In Sainsbury's, Asda, Aldi or Spar.
Cycling, walking, we're told is allowed
But only on your own, not in a crowd.

Social gatherings have just gone to pot –
Church, sports, dancing, theatre – the lot.
Working from home with children in tow
Is hard for most parents, I'm sure stress will show.

Watching TV to get an update
Hoping there's an improvement in the 'R' rate.
We're grateful to carers and all NHS staff.
When will it end – when can we laugh?

When it is over, please God up above
Help us to continue with neighbourly love.

Farewells and welcomes

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

Bernard Dominic Jude Powell
Baby Harry Luddington
Pamela Elizabeth Autherson
Maureen Mary Kennerk
Alexander Murphy
Juan Duarte Matos
Francis Boote
Christopher John Glynn
Honora Brammall
Zeger Clement Theodoor Beyens
Stella Marie Brennan
Bernard Elsdon
John Francis Marsh
Gerard Edward Lohan
May Horbury
Bertha Hill
Thomas Anthony Culshaw
Michael Holland (Mike)
Cecilia Galway
Joseph Thomas Mulvey
Judith Murphy
Neil Hammond
David Yates
Millie Hayes
Kay Coleman
Dorothy McPartland
Damian Byrne
Helen Meikle
Ian Hall
Hannah Casey
Harry Knox
Myles McGuire

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

James Whalley
Harry Torkington
Frederick Leigh
Elodie Downey
Martha Priest
Gabriel Schofield
Matilda Young
Harley Wilson
Daisy Spence
Jack Stewardson
Lennon Dempsey

Joy unbounded for Esther and Sean

Monday 3 August was a very special day for our parishioner **Esther Banda** – it was her wedding day. Fortunately, 30 people could gather at St Catherine's church in Didsbury, the home parish of her Irish fiancé, Sean McAndrew and see them get married.

It was a wedding like no other. Sean, his best man and family and friends were sitting suitably distanced in the church as the organist played a lovely variety of music. Suddenly the most joyous sounds came from outside the church as Esther, her bridesmaids, her sisters and nieces arrived and began the traditional African elating – lively, joyful, uplifting sounds that generate a smile on the faces of everyone who hears them. And that's exactly what happened inside the church on three occasions before little children dropping petals from baskets made their way up the aisle in advance of the very radiant bride and her brother-in-law who was giving her away.

The parish priest, Fr John officiated, Sean and Esther made their vows in very clear voices and went off to sign the register while the organist played some Irish music! Then Mr and Mrs McAndrew made their way back down the aisle to the traditional Wedding March by Mendelssohn – and more elating. Everyone gathered outside the church to enjoy some savoury and sweet snacks and a piece of wedding cake, which had had to be cut before the wedding.

The bridal party went off to the local park to have some more photographs taken. The sunshine was glorious, the joy among



everyone was palpable – it could all have so easily have had to be postponed. The simplicity of the occasion was truly beautiful.

Esther and Sean have the most wonderful memories of their wedding day. "We were so very blessed that day. We were quite overwhelmed by the support, good wishes and prayers of so many people, especially from St Peter's who helped to give us such a beautiful start to our married life. We thank God that everything happened as it did and we look forward to seeing you all again soon."



The end of summer

Sue Ripley shows some of her recent photos.

I took a number of photos at the end of summer, mostly in Stockport as I discovered new places on my regular walk or run around local parks.

I did go to the seaside in Norfolk, where the tide actually comes in... so different from St Anne's or Southport!

I was quite amused and pleased with my sunrise sea photo which got the reflection of the sun on the sea and then onto the beach huts.

I have also taken far too many photos of trees and autumn leaves, but we are lucky to have these areas to visit in these challenging times. They remind us of the wonder and beauty that is there for us.



St Peter's School

This year has proved to be emotionally challenging for children and adults especially our 2019-2020 leavers. The children showed tremendous maturity and resilience as they responded to the expectations of the current situation. Their energy and joy in their work and play was inspirational! We recognised that we had to have different end of term celebrations to enable our Y6s to have lots of happy, lasting memories of their happy years at St Peter's.

On Friday 17 July the children had a wonderful socially distanced special assembly in the hall. We were unable to invite parents on site but they had the opportunity to follow the assembly virtually. Special presentations were made during the assembly including a lovely gift arranged by our fantastic PTA.

Usually the Y6 children spend a week in Whitby; we knew they were disappointed about missing the Whitby week. So, with a little imagination we pretended that we were in Whitby enjoying our 'chip shop lunch' outside on the field in the wonderful sunshine.

The Y6s wanted to have one last fun day to raise valuable funds for the charities selected by them. On Monday 20 July it was 'pyjama and crazy hair' day – everyone participated including the adults! During the afternoon of the next day the Y6 participated in a range of sporting activities with a twist on the field with the traditional ice lolly reward for participation. On their final day, the whole school followed a live stream of Mass from St Peter's church celebrating our Y6 leavers.

To mark the Year of Holiness, Bishop Mark announced that Shrewsbury diocese was holding an arts competition for primary schools. The children had to think about the following two questions:

- What do we mean by the term 'holiness'?
- How can we live a life of holiness?

The children were invited to produce a piece of work expressing their understanding of holiness in words or pictures. It could have been a



The COVID situation has not stopped the children learning and having lots of fun. At home and in school the children celebrated Easter by making Easter cards, baskets, bonnets and crispy chocolate Easter nests, yummy!!



picture, a poem, a piece of writing, a song etc. Four of our Year 5 children received certificates celebrating their wonderful 'holiness' work. Isaac, Lola, Mariet and Logan created a variety of artwork, including favourite Bible quotes decorated with watercolours and drawings or paintings of Bible phrases from Gospel stories. Well done children!

"Holiness doesn't mean doing extraordinary things, but doing ordinary things with love and faith." Pope Francis

This Autumn term the school had a wonderful opportunity to be involved in something that made a real difference for the better for other people in our parish community. We know that during lockdown it has been very hard for many of them, as many are still housebound, very isolated and worried. The children made cards to offer support to those in our parish who are currently being helped by the St Peter's Helpers team. The children had to think of those in our community who may be housebound, isolated, ill or elderly parishioners. It was an opportunity to let such people know that others are thinking about them just to cheer them up. The children produced some wonderful pictures for the front of the cards and messages of comfort and joy. Some of our parishioners have had the opportunity to respond to the cards. One lady wrote to school, she was so delighted with the card she received. She said it really cheered her up as she lives on her own.

During October St Peter's children have been learning about Harvest and how we can support The Wellspring. They

have learnt to think of others who are homeless or less fortunate than ourselves locally. Every Friday during October there was box at the gates to collect donations and also parents could make an online donation. As always our school community was very generous. The Wellspring collected plenty of bags full of food as well the donation of £273.50. Thank you!

Y4 children were set an assignment which was to write a letter to the parish to remind them how Jesus wants us to live and grow His Church. Here is an example of one of the superb letters!

Dear St Peter's parish community

I am writing to tell you about how we should follow in Jesus' footsteps and how we can build the best church we possibly can.

I think that, as Christians, we should live our lives as Jesus taught us. This means we should look after each other, be helpful and kind and be respectful and loving towards everybody we should meet. We should also be supportive to others, especially in these confusing times.

Please help us build the church God wants; a church full of peace. A church full of kindness. A church full of hope. A church full of joy. A church full of love.

*Yours faithfully
X*

Carmel O'Malley sets the scene for our next article
which has been written by **Chinnar Najib**.

Chinnar was once a Kurdish/Iraqi refugee who is now settled in our community with her husband and three boys. Before arriving in the UK her husband Amang was (and is) an artist and Chinnar was a language teacher. She was an incredible help to us in communicating with our multiple visitors when we opened our refugee store some time back; she worked with us on our Friendship and Diversity concert and has since remained an active friend of our parish.

She will be ready to step forward again when our refugee family arrives. Chinnar

has also done a lot of voluntary work in the community as an interpreter and advisor, including with the Citizen's Advice Bureau. She is still, after all these years, hoping for useful employment where she can make use of her extensive talents and help to support her family finances!

As we prepare for, and await the arrival of our refugee family into our community, we asked Chinnar if she would share her thoughts and experiences of her own unique refugee journey. Below is her response accompanied by Amang's unique work.



Stunning artwork by Amang Mardokhy

snow and walked for hours shivering till we reached the border lines and passed behind the checkpoints. We were walking for twelve hours every night and hiding in the bushes during the day. Days and nights were just the same; we only had to survive and keep walking forward with very little food and water, just enough to survive, a piece of butter and bread. We couldn't carry much, we had to walk and most of the time just run because the smuggler was saying, "If we don't go fast, we will either get frozen or seen by the locals who'll report us to the police, and of course, we'll eventually be deported back Home..."

Back Home where we gave all we've had to him, our only saviour! Heartless War-makers! Firewood logs we've been turned into to enlighten their wars! Silly Borders! Damn the person who first created borders on earth! But I'm not on Earth! Am I? Like birds, I'm wandering about in the sky...

Stop your nonsense, touch the ground and feel it! It's Earth. Don't you see, you can't fly! Shout out loud and see if anyone could hear you! No! OK, just close your eyes and take a big deep breath, my dear broken soul... Now open your eyes and look around you, don't you see! You're alive and you are safe..

Safe Home... What a nightmare! Thank God I'm awake and this was all a dream... Twenty years since I've left home now and I'm seeing the same vision again and again...

"Heading back home the same way I came; crossing borders on feet, exhausted and hungry, but this time, I'm the one who's leading, I'm the smuggler and leading the crowd – and back to my small town, where I first left from... We're all running in horror: mothers and fathers carrying their younger children on their backs, shouting for their lost ones, children are cold and hungry, crying and begging to stop... Everyone's running, no one dares to look back, we just keep running..."

This morning, I woke up with the same nightmare, and breathlessly forced myself to raise my head. I called my husband: "Wake up. Let's go back home. Please let's go back home." He was half awake and replied in a soft voice: "Calm down, love!" He got up and continued, "But look, this is our home now. We can't go back you know; we have a life here, we've built it together, we'll make sure it'll be safe and secure for our kids. We can make it better together, with patience and love." "Yes, of course, we do, and we can." I answered back, and sank into my nightmare again remembering what I'd seen...

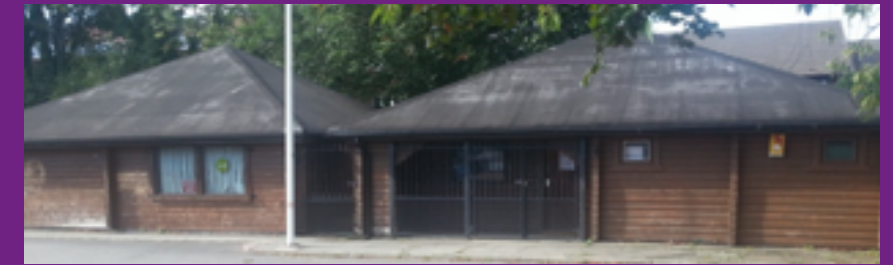


Safe home

Oh no, I don't want to live as a refugee! Why would I and who would want to? Imagine yourself falling down from a high mountain or a tower! If you're lucky, you might survive by a miracle, but just when you hit the bare land, you would surely be disabled and scarred for the rest of your life... Not to forget the worst part, the feelings after the fall, which would leave you drained, lost and shaky, as if you're living the fall again and again every single day for the rest of your life.

Where am I? Who am I? Where am I from? Who captured me? I am no one. From nowhere. Don't know. Don't ask me... Well then, "Run... don't look back, don't look

around, just run, run for your life... That's the only good thing you could do." "I swear by my honour; it'll be only a couple of hours walking on feet just behind the checkpoints. Don't worry, I have arranged for a car to pick you up from there. You see, I've thought about everything, you need not worry, just trust me and follow me... Trust me." That's what Mr Honoured Smuggler said to us. So, we had no choice and no time to think, but to believe him and follow him... follow him to where? We went thousands of miles on feet, not six hours! Starting from the first border; we'd crossed minefields, we climbed high mountains covered in



2nd Hazel Grove Scout hut

Carry on Scouting at home



Samantha Panjeta is the very enthusiastic Scout Leader for St Peter's Group. Just look at some of the really exciting things they've been up to.

2020 has been a year when we have all had to adapt to doing things differently, mostly online, and that includes rising to the challenge of bringing Scouting from the great outdoors to indoors.

When lockdown was first introduced in March this year, the 2nd Hazel Grove Scout Group locked up the scout hut in St Peter's car park and suspended all our activities, hoping that we would all be back together again after Easter. When that didn't happen, we moved online, starting with weekly games including 'Beat the Pro' with Orlan Jackman. We wrote our names in socks, tried our baking skills making a variety of mug cakes as well as armpit fudge and as a group, took part in a #CampAtHome Guinness world record challenge.

This term, the Scouts have been back doing normal badge work.

We have completed our photography badge, including two very enjoyable Zoom sessions with a professional photographer from Reading. We are currently working on our hobbies badge; so far, we have met a Girl Guide from St Albans who showed us how to make paracord woggles, we've learnt how to make origami stars, foxes and swans. We're trying our hand at knitting squares and will be attempting pioneering – CrazyRussianHacker style by building a circle out of Pringles. (Check it out on Google!)

With any luck, we will be out and about again soon. If you are between 5 and 14 and are interested in joining us, log onto our website at www.2ndhazeltrove.co.uk for more information, complete the online form or ring Samantha on 07748 308 514.



Scouts completing their photography badge



Chris Chesham gives a moving account of tracing her family member.



Chris with Davina McCall during filming

The background

I've always known that I was adopted. So, there was never any great trauma, no great revealing of "the truth" during the teenage years, I always just knew. Sensible parents. There was always a quiet curiosity about my birth family, but no great need to know. And then in the 1980s and 90s came a few television programmes highlighting the lives of women who had been forced to give up their babies during the 1950s and 60s. These women were often distraught, always damaged and always grieving for the children they had lost. This started me thinking. I didn't want to think that there was anyone out there grieving for me. I was perfectly OK and didn't need grieving for. But the seed of curiosity had been sown.

I first registered with the Office for National Statistics. There is a two part index on which adopted people and anyone looking for them can register. If the ONS finds a match, they let the adopted person (not the searcher) know. Unfortunately, there was no match. At least I had made the effort, I told myself. There is nothing more that I can do.

Of course, I couldn't leave it there. A little bit of research allowed me to find out that I could apply to social services for my original birth certificate. It was the work of moments, but when a social worker contacted me, she warned me that it was possible that the only information that I would get, would be my mother's name. An appointment was made and I had to go to meet a social worker. She gave me my original birth certificate. Now I had a name for my birth mother. The situation was as I had been warned it may be – the birth certificate said 'father unknown'. The social worker explained that there was no adoption file for me. She concluded that I may have been adopted privately. Apparently this was rare by the time I was born, but it still happened. I checked the electoral register for the address my mother had given, but, unsurprisingly, she was no longer there. And that was it – I had no idea what to do next.

It was some years later that a colleague told me that her mother had been adopted and had taken on an investigator, who had found her birth family. She was delighted to have discovered several



Chris alongside Owen the cameraman

sisters. I was intrigued and didn't hesitate to contact the investigator. It wasn't long before she emailed me with the sad news that my mother had died in 1990. However, in the same email, she told me that I had a sister. This was exciting news. The next time I tried to contact the investigator, I found out that she had retired and destroyed all her files. Back to square one, or so it felt.

Feeling somewhat dispirited, I then did nothing for a few years. However, the curiosity took over again and I contacted the coroner's office and got a copy of his report into my mother's death. And who should have been a witness, but my sister. I had a name to go on! Imagine how frustrating it was when I was not able to trace her. She had a perfectly normal name, which isn't really helpful when you're trying to trace someone. It felt as though I had hit a brick wall.

Then in 2011 a new programme came on the television, Long Lost Family. People were shown their adoption files (lucky people to have one) and they were being reunited with their families. Naturally, I wept at every episode. The stories were so emotional and I felt that I could truly empathise.

It was at some point during series two that

I decided to take a chance and find out more about the programme and how to get them to help with searching. I received an email to say that they would be back in touch. After that – nothing. So I sulked and watched the next series feeling just a little bit envious of the people who had been reunited with their birth families.

Those of you who know me, will know that I am quite a determined person, so some two years later, I applied to the programme again, not really expecting to hear from them. Imagine my surprise when I got a phone call from a researcher named Freddy. I could hardly believe it when he said, "We would like to launch your search."

We spoke on the phone for about an hour and a half. Freddy explained that the production company liked to conduct searches on behalf of a few people and then do a little bit of background filming so that they had footage 'in the can' in case the searches proved fruitful. Before that could happen, I had to sign some documents and have an interview on Skype with a psychologist.

The documents were interminable, but I just about understood that they would pay me one penny and that I had pretty much signed my life away. The interview

on Skype was nothing too intense, I just had to persuade the chap that I understood that the searchers may not find anyone or if they did, that the person may not want to be in touch with me. All perfectly reasonable, really. I had experienced failure to be able to trace someone for so long that I would not be any worse off if the production company's researchers couldn't find anyone either – just disappointed. I told Roy all about it and he said that he was sure they had found someone for me, but I explained what Freddy had told me about doing background filming with a few people "just in case". Roy remained unconvinced.

Having cleared all the hurdles and provided the production company with loads of documents and photos, we were ready. It was all so exciting. There was to be filming on three consecutive days. It was just before Christmas and they asked me not to put up any Christmas decorations because they wanted to film in my house on two days. But first, they wanted to film me in Liverpool, which was where my story had begun. I travelled over by train the evening before and met Freddy in a hotel. We had a chat and I had the opportunity to ask questions, but having no idea what would be involved, I couldn't think of anything to ask.

The filming starts

Naturally, I couldn’t sleep, I was far too excited, so I got up early and met Freddy and the rest of the crew for breakfast. As well as Freddy, there was a producer and a cameraman and a sound man. They explained that we would have to film some things a few times as they wanted to film from several different angles, but only had one camera. I became very familiar with the words “do it again” as they moved the camera to get the angles they wanted. However, it didn’t matter as I was enjoying the whole process so much that I didn’t mind walking along the same piece of pavement half a dozen times. We filmed at the Pier Head and then went on the famous ferry across the Mersey. It was very windy and I nearly lost my hat. I was getting used to taking direction, “Chris, look over towards the city. Chris, look thoughtful. Smile!”

After lunch, we went to St George’s Hall where the coroner’s court used to be. I was filmed going into the building and going into the court room, which was a most awe-inspiring room. The producer handed me a copy of my late mother’s inquest report and asked me to read sections from it. I thought I had done reasonably well, but she kept asking me more and more questions and in the end, I couldn’t help but shed a few tears. Eventually, the producer decided that she had as much footage as she wanted for the day and I was allowed to travel back home by train.

The following morning, I met the film crew in Edgeley at Holywood Park because they wanted to film me walking Suzy (you will all remember Suzy the Westie dog!) with the viaduct in the background. Now, Suzy is an enthusiastic walker, but she started to get fed up of having to walk along the same piece of grass time and again. It was at this point that the film crew was very grateful for the fact that Roy had come along as well because he was able to stand behind the cameraman and wave to Suzy so that she would trot along the same area looking interested.

Next stop was my house. I used to think that I had a reasonably sized sitting room, but it soon seemed to shrink when the four-person crew came in along with the



massive camera and huge silver ‘umbrella’ that was used for directing the light. The cameraman kept issuing requests like, “I need something green over there” or “I want something tall over there”. It didn’t matter about the specifics of the items because, he explained, the background would be blurred, he just needed the impressions of certain colours and shapes. It was clear that everything was being directed very artistically. At one point, the cameraman went outside to film me through the window. The shot was rejected in the end, because it turned out that Suzy had jumped onto the window ledge and they hadn’t wanted her in that piece of film.

The worst part about it was being interviewed by the producer. She explained that she wouldn’t be seen in the final cut, but I could look at her when I answered her questions, but not at the camera. I tried my best to hold it together, but under the constant questions, I cried again. Now I understood why all the searchers kept crying in the programmes I had watched. The producer kept the questions coming until they got the emotion that they wanted to capture on film.

Eventually we finished for the day and I was told that I would have a later start tomorrow because the crew were going to go out to get some background shots of Stockport.



Day three of filming

The following morning I received a phone call asking me to meet the crew at Reddish Vale Country Park because they wanted to film Suzy and me with the viaduct in the background. I tried to explain that it was a different viaduct, but they were adamant. So, we met up in Reddish and Suzy and I walked along the same path a few times with Roy again standing behind the camera waving to Suzy. Being December, it was quite cold and we were all pleased to be able to go back to my place for a lunch of sandwiches and hot drinks.

Once we had all eaten, the producer said that it was all quite crowded in my house and she asked Roy to go home and take Suzy with him. He agreed to go, but he managed to whisper to me “I told you they had found someone for you”. I whispered back, “no they haven’t; I will believe that they have if I see Davina McCall.” Roy and Suzy left and I had to answer some more questions for the producer. She eventually called for a break and she said that she had received a message that Davina was in the area and she wanted to call in while she was nearby just to see how it was all going.

During the break, I ran upstairs and phoned Roy to tell him that Davina was coming. He said, “Do you believe me now? They have found someone for you.” But I refused to believe him. I said that I didn’t want to get my hopes up and that Davina just happened to be in the area. After all, Media City isn’t far from Stockport so it was perfectly reasonable that she maybe there.

I felt really excited as we waited for Davina to arrive. It wasn’t long before I saw her walking along the pavement outside my house. I felt quite star struck. Davina knocked on my door and I let her in. We didn’t get any further than the hall before the familiar cry of “do it again” came from the cameraman. I lost count of the number of times we did it. While

we were filming at the front door, another cameraman arrived. Apparently he just happened to be in the area too. I made a cup of tea for Davina – it felt so strange and other worldly to have a celebrity in my kitchen – and we were joined by the producer and Freddy, who had been with us constantly. They wanted me to go and sit at my dining table opposite Davina. One cameraman was behind me and another one was behind her. I was utterly bewildered and even now, I can’t remember what they told me about why we were filming in this way. It was slightly unreal having one camera almost resting on my shoulder and another one almost in my face. Davina started to talk about my search, but when she said “your sister has been found”, my gasp was genuine. That gasp made it onto the trailer for that season of “Long Lost Family”.

There then followed the usual routine of showing me a picture and handing me a letter. My sister, Pamela, had two children, she told me in her letter, and five grandchildren. I was amazed and delighted. As an adopted person, I had long felt it most odd that I had never knowingly seen a person to whom I was actually related. I can’t begin to describe what it felt like to see a picture of someone who looked a bit like me. Someone to whom I was actually related by blood. I was told on camera that Pamela wanted to meet me. When the filming stopped, I was told that because it was nearly Christmas, we needed to wait until the New Year before Pamela and I could meet in person. Oh, and in the meantime, I wasn’t to tell anyone other than Roy that my sister had been found. As you can imagine, I spent the next few weeks on pins waiting to meet my sister.

At last the day of the meeting

I hadn’t been allowed to go to Liverpool the night before and stay over; I had to get the train very early in the morning. Not that it had mattered to get up early as I hadn’t slept the night before; it was all far too thrilling. Naturally, I arrived at Liverpool Lime Street far too early, so I went and drank coffee until the crew arrived. The director decided that she wanted to film me getting off the train, so I had to go onto a convenient platform and get on a train, wait for the doors to close, then open them and then get off again. Of course, I had to “do it again”. At one attempt, a crew member came with



me so that he could tell me to get off once the cameraman was ready. We stood near the door of the train and the crew member had his phone set to speaker, so that when the cameraman shouted “and – action” everyone on the train heard and turned to look at us. I hope my laughter came over as just a big smile.

Eventually, Davina arrived at the station and we were filmed walking along the station approach. There were loads of interruptions as people recognised her and wanted to say hello and get selfies with her. She was very patient with everyone, but the director would come and shoo the person away so that we could carry on filming.

From Lime Street, we went to the Albert Dock area, where Davina and I did some more walking around. She asked me what my hopes were for a future relationship with Pamela and what my hopes and thoughts were about what had happened to Pamela in the past. I said that I hoped that Pamela had been brought up by and lived with our mother and that I hoped that we could enjoy a sisterly relationship in the future.

In terms of the filming itself, at one point the cameraman wore a harness and another member of the crew pulled the cameraman along as he walked backwards so that Davina and I could walk towards the camera. Again, people kept coming over to Davina. I don’t know how she gets on in her day to day life. An ordinary shopping trip must take ages. We even met another camera crew.



They were doing Vox Pops for the local television news and they asked if they could film Davina. The director saw them off.

Eventually, the director decided that she had enough film so it was time to stop for lunch. During the break, I was told that I would be meeting my sister in the Hilton Hotel. It was a matter of yards away from the Albert Dock and my excitement was growing.

We were eventually allowed to go to the hotel. The director went in and chatted with the reception staff and the manager. Everything had already been arranged, but they just wanted to confirm the final details. I had to wait outside with Davina. I could see a wide staircase inside and I was told that my sister was upstairs. How they managed to restrain me from just making a break for it and tearing up the stairs, I don’t know. In time, I was allowed to go into the hotel to be filmed saying goodbye to Davina – about half a dozen times.

Then they filmed me walking up the stairs, but only half way. I knew that my sister was upstairs, but they wanted me to walk up the stairs again and again while they filmed from different angles. I was in a ferment of agitation. It was too much and I ended up crying on Freddy’s shoulder. I felt that it was very cruel to stop me from going up the stairs.

In the end, the cameraman went upstairs to film me going up the final flight and another camera was set up to film my first meeting with my sister. This was to be the only time I had knowingly met someone to whom I was actually related. And so, I climbed the stairs to an open room. In the middle, a table was set up with cups of tea.

And sitting at the table, but standing as I approached, there she was, my sister, my Pamela.



Time on a Sunday together



Mia gives an introduction to TOAST

Hello! I am Mia. I go to St Peter's school.

I was going to make my First Forgiveness and First Holy Communion last year but because of Coronavirus we couldn't which was sad, but we are preparing now, so hopefully soon.

At the beginning of lockdown I joined the children's Sunday group on Zoom. I didn't really know anybody on it but I have joined every Sunday and I really enjoy it. It is so fun to do. We have music and hymns and we share prayers and talk about what we are grateful for.

We have a puppet called Kieran! He visits someone's house each week and they use him to act the Gospel to the other people on the Zoom call. Oh and I can't forget Penguin Bob! Penguin Bob does a video clip each week about something. He might talk about being kind and respectful. We also do Terry's Teaser and Reuben's Riddle which are so much fun!

On one of our calls we were asked to think of a name for the group! I had an idea. I came up with TOAST group because it stands for Time On A Sunday Together. I was so shocked when the name of the group was revealed and it was TOAST... everyone in the group now calls themselves Toasties!

Thank you to Terry and Teresa for making it a special time!

Mia Witter, age 9

Read all about it!

A recent project where some of our young **TOASTIES** talked to some older people in the parish and beyond.



All about Liz

I was lucky enough to talk to Liz on 29 November. She is quite an extraordinary lady. She was one of six children.

In 1945 (when she made her First Holy Communion which took place in Belfast) you couldn't eat or drink from the night before. She wore a knee-length dress and a beautiful veil. The thing she remembers the most was having a lovely breakfast after Mass.

Liz also told me about Christmas. When she was young, she went to her grandparents' house. She also remembers decorating the house with paper chains and eating a duck or a goose.

Her main hobby is reading. When she was 10 she read 'Anne of Green Gables' by Lucy Maud Montgomery which she loved.

I really enjoyed talking to Liz and learning from her.

Naomi Fitton, age 9



All about Grandma and Auntie Sam

My Grandma made her First Holy Communion on 16 May 1953 when she was nine. She says that it was a very exciting day for her because there were so many children making their First Holy Communion on the same day. All the children sat together, girls on the left side of the aisle and boys on the right side.

They sang two hymns: 'O Bread of Heaven' and 'Soul of My Saviour' and had a big party breakfast afterwards in the school dining room.

My Auntie Sam made her First Holy Communion when she was seven, on 26 August 1979 in Mbabane, Swaziland. She was one of 3 children that made their First Holy Communion after going to catechism lessons. They had a very hot and sunny day but didn't have a large parish party and went to have brunch at a hotel in Ezulwini Valley instead. It was an 'all you could eat' buffet. As children they got to start with dessert first and could swim in the hotel pool afterwards.

Both my Grandma and my Auntie Sam wore white dresses with a veil. My Grandma only had three days' notice to make the dress and veil for Auntie Sam.

My First Holy Communion was different because I had to go to lessons with my Mom on a Sunday after church and our class was split into different groups. I made my First Holy Communion on 8 May 2018. Father Peter did do a wonderful buffet party for us all in the parish centre afterwards, which we could invite our family to. I had all my family with me for my First Holy Communion, and my Mom bought my dress from John Lewis, it was a lovely dress. I remember receiving the host for the first time, I was scared I wouldn't like it, but I did.

Rebecca Hourihan, age 11



All about Fr Peter

How old were you when you made your First Holy Communion?
7 years old at Our Lady's church at Shaw Heath.

What do you remember about the Holy Communion day?
It was early in the morning at 830am Mass. We did it as a class, there were about 90 children doing it at the same time! We then went to the parish hall for butties and glasses of orange juice.

What did you wear on the day?
White shirt, red tie I think, or a school tie.

What was your first job?
In a bookies one summer :) William Hill as a summer job. I really enjoyed it. I became a priest quite young.

What do you do to relax?
Watching football on TV and quiz shows like The Chase, Tipping Point.

What sports do you like?
Rugby, cricket - I really enjoy the test matches.

What football team do you support?
Stockport County.

Can you tell me about your mission to Kenya?
I spent five years there. My sister worked for BA so I got a cheap flight :) It was beautiful countryside where I was. It was lovely. I was in charge of the parish there and I had to learn the tribal language which was very difficult! I had really good times there and visited other parts of Kenya. I went on safaris and saw amazing animals!

What was Christmas like when you were little?
We were very lucky. We spent it with my family and my aunts and uncles. We were spoilt rotten! They used to come on Christmas Eve and we had a party then. We went to my Grandma's on Christmas Day to have lunch. We still have big Christmasses now. Last year there were 24 of us. We had to have lunch in the parish centre.

Did you have a Christmas tree?
We did, we only put it up on Christmas Eve.

Do you remember a favourite present?
A guitar when I was 6. It used to annoy my Dad when I played it.

My parents love G&Ts. What is your favourite tipple?
Stockport Gin - my nephew makes it! G&T, red wine, Guinness - anything really!!

Zac Cabrejas, age 8



TOAST

Time on a Sunday together



All about Barbara

Hi, my name is Noah. I was lucky enough to interview Barbara, over the telephone this evening (25 November). Here are some of the questions and answers. I hope you enjoy reading.

How old were you when you made your First Holy Communion?

27 years old and had my Confirmation at 30.

What do you remember about the day?

It was a sunny Saturday; it was only me and the priest. Barbara said she wore ordinary day clothes, not a white dress as it mostly known for children having their First Holy Communion these days. It took place at Our Lady's church in Edgeley.

What was Christmas like when you were a child?

Simple, it was war time when I was around 8 years old. My family weren't religious, so we didn't have a Christmas tree.

Did you write to Father Christmas and if so, what did you ask for?

Never wrote to Father Christmas and never asked for anything. I was happy with what I got. It was war time and things were very hard. I remember hanging pillowcases at the end of my bed, rather than stockings... pillowcases are bigger, haha !!

Did you work and what did you do?

Yes, I was an Art teacher.

Did you have any hobbies?

Listening to music, learned to play the piano, hiking, bird watching, reading, art. Overall my favourite is art.

Did you have any pets growing up?

No, I was allergic to most animals, I had asthma.

Favourite song growing up?

We had gramophones then, and I listened to a lot of Wagner opera.

Favourite food?

None. There wasn't a lot of food around. I ate what I was given and had to eat it, even if I didn't like it.

Barbara is an only child and so am I and so is my mum actually. Speaking to Barbara makes me realise how lucky I am and how hard it must have been growing up in war time. I love having my pets (I have a new puppy who is full of joy, two cats, and fishes) and my favourite foods are sausages, hash browns or mash, sweetcorn and gravy, as well our butter chicken curry and rice.

I haven't asked Father Christmas for a lot this year, but I hope many other children around the whole world get something nice they deserve... I feel blessed with my family.

I hope to stay in touch with Barbara and one day meet in church. Merry Christmas everyone and I hope to see you all next year.

Noah Morgan, age 9

All about Dr Patrick

How old were you when you had your First Holy Communion?

I was 7 years old; it was the year 1978.

What do you remember about that day?

It was a sunny day. Patrick remembers he was excited, happy and nervous. He was nervous because he was not sure when to sit or stand during the Mass.

What did you wear?

White shirt and grey shorts. By the way, Patrick jokingly added that he doesn't fit in to that shirt and trousers anymore.

Where was it?

St Anne's church.

What was Christmas like when you were young?

Christmas used to be waking up to a thick and heavy snowfall.

Did you have a Christmas tree?

Yes, Patrick did have a Christmas tree.

Do you remember a favourite present?

What was it?

Yes, I do remember. It was a puppy dog gifted to my father who gave it to me. The puppy was silly but friendly.

Did you work? What did you do?

Patrick is a General Practitioner. He rather calls himself a family doctor.

Do you have hobbies?

Yes, running is my hobby.

Did you play sports? Which one?

I used to be a runner. I still run to keep myself fit.

Did you dance or sing?

I used to do Irish dancing. My three sisters were good at Irish dancing. Patrick remembers that he was the only boy in the class who could do Irish dancing.

What is your experience with COVID-19 and how has faith helped you?

Patrick is grateful to many patients who keep checking if he is OK. Patients belonging to different religions have been praying for him.

Shawn Joel, age 10

All about Pat

What was Christmas like when you were a child?

"It was a long, long time ago, so it's difficult to remember. Christmas was very different to now. It was much quieter. We didn't have mobile phones, iPads or laptops. I woke up on Christmas morning feeling a pillowcase at the end of my bed. I got really nice presents. One year, my younger brother and I got a theatre with little figures and we made up a play. I also remember getting a miniature toy grand piano to play tunes on. I always got a doll that my mum made clothes for."

Pat remembers that she loved getting new dolls and putting them in a pram. Lydia told Pat about her Our Generation doll called Amya and all of her beautiful clothes, car and hairstyling chair.

What else was in the pillowcase?

"I remember pens and tins of toffee. But there was a war on for some of my childhood, so we couldn't always get certain things. The pillowcase was full!"

What time did you get up to see if Santa had come?

Quite early, about 7am Pat thought, but she didn't wake in the middle of the night to see if he had come. Lydia tells Pat that she's sure she hears Santa's voice, when he comes, but Pat thinks he is usually very quiet.

What decorations did you put up?

"We had a Christmas tree but not a real one when we were small. We made a lot of paper chains. There weren't as many of the glittery, fancy things that they have in the shops now."

What will you do for Christmas this year?

Pat is in a bubble with her daughter who lives in Edinburgh. She has four daughters. She can't see the two who live abroad at the moment, but her daughter who lives in Scotland will pick her up and take her to Edinburgh for Christmas. Lydia and Pat were pleased to have a little chat about Edinburgh because Lydia had been there in August. Pat also talked about her 27-year old only grandson, and she is clearly very proud of him. Lydia tells Pat that she is certain that Father Christmas will come this year, but that he will be wearing a mask and a visor.

Lydia Garratt, age 6

All about Alma

Where did you grow up?

"In the city, near Belle Vue."

What was Christmas like during the war?

"There weren't a lot of presents. We had to have the curtains drawn, and if there was even a chink of light, the air raid warden would knock on the door". Alma remembers having rabbit stew to eat. Lucy wasn't so keen on this idea, as she has two pet rabbits called Meadow and Lavender. They didn't have many sweets then, because sweet shops were closed and sweets were rationed.

Were you evacuated?

Alma wasn't evacuated because her mum didn't want her to go. Many of her friends were evacuated though to Macclesfield and Oswaldthwaite. School was very different because many of the teachers had gone away to fight in the war. Alma only went to school for half an hour in the morning to copy down some work into her book to complete at home. The next day they returned that book and copied more work to do at home. Alma had to carry a gas mask with her everywhere in a little brown box that she wore over her shoulder. Luckily, she never had to use it. Alma remembers little boxes to put babies in who were too small to wear gas masks.

Did you ever go to an air raid shelter?

Alma often went to a brick air raid shelter that the council had built behind her house. It was full of water so they always got wet feet. They knew that they had to go to the shelter when the air raid siren went. The sound of the siren went up and down, but the all-clear sound was different as it was one continuous sound. Alma says that she could tell which were German planes and which were English Spitfires by the sound. Alma remembers watching them in the sky and she wasn't frightened. Eventually they gave up going to the air raid shelter and sat under the table at home instead. Alma remembers that one of her aunts who lived in Old Trafford had her house flattened by a bomb; the aunt and her husband had gone out for the evening and when they came home, their house was gone. They had to wait for ages to find out if their four teenage children were OK. Luckily they all came back safely from the air raid shelter.

Alma's Dad was a sergeant major and arms instructor. He taught Alma how to shoot. Lucy was very impressed to hear Alma's story of how, much to the disbelief of her friends, she shot a hole right through a bottle of Squezy washing up liquid.

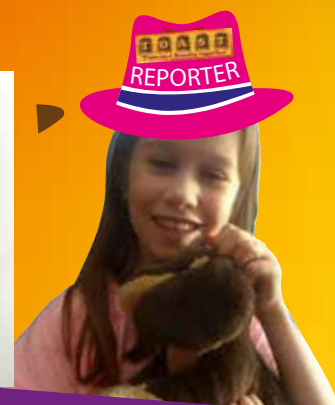
Lucy told Alma about all about the war memorabilia that belonged to her great grandfather including the Bible that he carried with him. Alma told Lucy that she is 91 now and she still has the Bible that her mum gave her on her 12th birthday. It says 'to Alma from mum on your 12th birthday', a precious gift indeed!

Lucy Garratt, age 9

TOAST

Time on a Sunday together

Libby's drawing of Barbara



All about Barbara

First things first... Barbara likes Christmas including sprouts. Christmas was different when Barbara was a young girl. She made her own decorations like paper chains and did not get many presents. She liked drawing and so do I! She also did embroidery but I haven't ever done this. Barbara and I both like animals and we decided if we had a girl dog we would call it Daisy. Apparently her family quite likes dogs. Barbara has a very big family including great grandchildren. I was surprised that she is 80. I really enjoyed my chat with her.

Libby Fairhall, age 8

All about Peter

Peter was born at his home in Hadfield in Glossop and was the eldest of three brothers. Peter lives with his beautiful cat Midge. When Peter was younger, he enjoyed going to school and enjoyed most lessons although was never really fond of geography.

Peter was very good at school and managed to avoid the cane, which many children had. His best friend was called Tony and he stayed good friends with Tony all through his life until a few years ago when he sadly passed away. Peter had his First Holy Communion when he was 6 or 7 and he remembers the day really well; he was dressed in a satin blue suit with shorts.

Peter loved playing football and cricket when he was younger and was on the school teams. His favourite Christmas

present was a football when he was younger. Peter is a fan of Manchester United. When Peter was younger, his dream job was to become a priest just like his two uncles but, as he got older he changed his mind and went to work at the income tax office, then went into sales and then eventually ended up being a managing director of a company dealing in chemist products.

Peter's favourite season of the year is spring going into summer when everything comes alive and becomes warmer. Peter enjoys reading more now than when he was younger and enjoys books by author John Grisham. He first went on holiday when he was 7 or 8 to Blackpool and enjoyed going on the train. At Christmas time Peter's family stayed at home for a lovely Christmas dinner and then on to see some family nearby and enjoyed some singing.

Hannah Machin, age 9

All about Margaret

On 22 November Reuben had the pleasure of speaking to a very lovely and delightful lady called Margaret to learn about what it was like growing up when she was a child, what she remembers from when she received the Blessed Sacrament on her First Holy Communion, and what Christmas was like when she was growing up. Margaret remembers her First Holy Communion vividly, and just how special that day was for her, even though it took place 72 years ago!

Where did you grow up?

"I had quite a different childhood compared to some. When I was young my Mummy wasn't very well, so I spent part of my childhood growing up in an orphanage out in the country. The orphanage was run by nuns and there were around 300 children at the orphanage at the time. Some of children had lost both their parents during World War II, but I was quite lucky that my Daddy and Mummy were still able to visit me, especially when they could visit and see me take Communion." Margaret has some very special, fond memories of being at the orphanage, especially of when she made her First Holy Communion.

How old were you Margaret when you made your First Holy Communion?

"I remember it like it was yesterday, I was only 6 years old and it was on a Thursday."

What do you remember about that day?

"Well, it was a Thursday, First Holy Communion always took place on Holy Thursday, and I made mine and received the Blessed Sacrament on Thursday 14 April 1949."

Wow, that's nearly 72 years ago!!!

"From midnight the night before you weren't allowed to have anything to eat until after the Holy Communion Mass. It was a long time for a child to go without having anything to eat, but

this was tradition in the Catholic faith at the time. It was done as a mark of respect and in preparation for receiving the Blessed Sacrament. Some children were even known to have fainted! When I made my Holy Communion, I remember being quite disappointed by the taste when receiving the host – as a child, I remember having thoughts that it would be mint flavoured, but it wasn't!

After Mass we had a special breakfast – it was a special breakfast of bacon and eggs, instead of the usual porridge.

After the special breakfast on Holy Thursday, we quickly moved on to prepare the Easter celebrations, celebrating the importance of Good Friday and Easter. Easter for us started at 12noon on the dot on the Saturday. It was the Saturday when we could have sweets or chocolate or whatever we had given up for Lent. We didn't have to wait until Easter Sunday - Lent ended on the Saturday for us and we very much looked forward to 12 noon on that day!

I also learnt a hymn to sing at my First Holy Communion; 'Jesus Thou art coming', and even though I was only 6 years old at the time of learning it, I still remember the words now. It's a hymn that means a lot to me, just like church and the Catholic faith remains special and important to me.

On the Saturday after our First Holy Communion the Sisters loaded us on a coach. The orphanage was in the countryside. We lived not too far from a little village, but the coach took us into a town, not the village. The Sisters gave us two shillings each (about 10p) and we could spend this in town. Have you heard of a shop called Woolworths? I bet your Mum knows the shop I'm talking about. Well, Woolworths was quite a big store, it had glass counters that were filled with compartments. We could buy anything we wanted with our two shillings. I bought myself a little notebook and pencil with my money. After shopping, the Sisters took us to a park, it had swings and a slide and we spent the whole afternoon there. We didn't receive any gifts or presents for

our First Holy Communion, but we were given a little extra pocket money, two shillings instead of the weekly two pennies, and we had a lovely, fun afternoon playing in the park. The Sisters helped make the occasion very special for us all.

What did you wear for your First Holy Communion?

On the day of receiving the Blessed Sacrament, the Sisters brought out about 30 dresses. They were old, well looked after and well laundered dresses, they may even have been donated dresses. The dresses came out especially for Holy Communion. We would each find a dress that fitted us and then that would be our dress for the day – it was like being Queen for the day in our lovely dresses! At the end of the day, the Sisters collected the dresses, laundered them, and then put them away ready for the following year. They were very well looked after, beautiful dresses. The orphanage was thankful of donations, especially due to there being very little money around, as it was only a few years after the end of World War II."

What was it like at Christmas when you were a child?

On Christmas Day in the orphanage we'd all go to the school hall. The Sisters would take us, about 300 of us. I remember we had Christmas dinner – it was nice. We each had a cracker and we'd all sing Christmas carols together. The Sisters put a tremendous amount of effort into making the day very special for all of us children. During the celebrations, the headmistress and deputy headmistress would sit in the middle of the hall and call us to come down to them one by one to receive our gift. We also got a brown bag and inside would be an orange and a bag of sweets. It probably doesn't seem like much compared to now, but when I was young you didn't get presents like you do now. The gifts were simple and made us happy.

Margaret, did you have a Christmas tree?

Oh, there would be a big Christmas tree – we didn't decorate

it, it was decorated by the Sisters. As the orphanage was in the countryside, there were loads of trees and the Sisters would cut one down to decorate for Christmas. I also remember that there was a big crib, it would always be in the chapel at Christmas time. It was big, lovely, but just very big!

Did you play sports as a child?

We didn't play many sports as children, it was mainly rounders, or the boys played football. We did learn how to swim though. We would go swimming once a week – it was important that we learnt how to swim.

Margaret do you like to sing or dance?

I love singing. I used to be in a choir in the convent. You couldn't just join the choir, you had to be asked, and I remember being quite young when I was asked to sing in the choir. I remember the Reverend Mother being very old when I was in the choir and going to the chapel to learn to sing the Mass of the Dead.

I had a try at learning to play the violin. I wasn't very good at it and I remember trying to follow and keep up with the girls that could play really well. I even took part in a concert – we played Handel's 'Largo', but it was a disaster. It was that bad that the Sisters brought the curtains down on us!

From Reuben: "It was an absolute pleasure talking to Margaret and learning about her childhood. Lots of very memorable moments, very different to how we do things now. We even got talking about hobbies, how she played games with stones when she was growing up and how she has a collection of stones from visiting different places all around the world. I've loved chatting with Margaret and would love to hear more about her adventures."

Thank you Margaret, and God bless.

Reuben Farrel, age 9



All about Monica

On Sunday 22 November we spoke with a lovely lady called Monica who is 85 and from Hazel Grove. We learned there wasn't much technology when she was growing up. She had to go to the shops every day. We asked did she like school and she said no, as her teacher was mean! Her best school memory was when her mean teacher gave her class some of her sweets for her to practise receiving Holy Communion (sweets were rationed so it was rare you got some) ...proving that there's kindness in everyone! We also asked her, "what was your favourite Christmas gift?" She said it was a doll. At her First Holy Communion someone brought jelly (which was special because it was rationed). They had it to celebrate the joyous occasion.

When she was younger, she had to help out by doing shopping and tidying her room - which I do for my Mum. I guess some things never change! I really enjoyed the experience with Monica.

Issac and Ethan Knowles, age 11 and 8



All about Marie

Today, Abi and I met a caring woman called Marie. We found out that she had nine children, which meant she had no time for hobbies. Growing up, Marie had a dog called Paddy. He was named Paddy because it was a very popular name in Ireland where she was born. Her favourite dessert was apple pie and custard (mine too!). Marie worked in the hospital where they did the first heart transplant... she proudly remembered that after the transplant the patient spread the word to say "don't be scared" to the others in line. She gave up the role as a nurse at 59 because she hurt her back lifting a patient. Marie misses her days as a nurse. She now says she sleeps too much as she is 98 (wow!) and will be 99 on February 2. Abi and I had guessed her age was 88, as she had an amazing memory and seemed energetic when talking to us.

Marie has a very strong feeling about church and it makes her feel at home. At her communion all the boys wore suits and she wore a beautiful dress with black patent shoes. Marie was 7 when she made her First Holy Communion in Ireland. She chose a nice confirmation name of Bernadette. Marie remembers a lovely family time at home during the Christmas period. Her family didn't have a Christmas tree but she got an apple, an orange and some sweets in her stocking.

She recalls if you were naughty at school you had to pick cabbages outside in the cabbage field. Marie picked the cabbages once for talking in class... Abi and I agreed she must've been a good girl. We think we would have been out there much more! Marie now has an impressive 17 grandchildren, 9 great grandchildren and 1 great-great grandchild... she definitely deserves those nap times!

Her advice to those in lockdown is to take one day at a time and she recalled the prayer/hymn: "One day at a time, sweet Jesus, that's all I'm asking of you. Just give me the strength to do every day what I have to do."

Marie is an inspiring person!

Gabriel and Abi Knowles, age 11 and 6

All about Margaret

Margaret very kindly agreed to be interviewed by Joseph. Little did we know but our lives were already very closely related. Margaret was born in 1938 and grew up in Levenshulme. Her family attended St Mary's church. Her mother Eileen Onions was a close friend of Joseph's Great Grandmother Eileen Connolly. Joseph was amazed to discover that when Margaret was a little girl she knew his Grandfather and his brother and sister.

Margaret made her First Holy Communion during the war years. In the weeks leading up to her Communion day she remembers her class of 30 children being taken from the school to the neighbouring church by her headmistress each day to practise. She came from a big family and the church and the Poor Clare Convent were a big part of her family's life. During all the bombing Levenshulme wasn't hit. The people in the parish said it was because of all the prayers of the Poor Clare nuns.

On the morning of Her First Holy Communion she remembered feeling nervous as all the children knelt at the altar rails and the priest placed the Blessed Sacrament on their tongue. Margaret remembers that when she was a child, people weren't allowed to touch the Eucharist. She remembered a great parish party in the scout hut after Mass where all her friends and family attended.

Margaret has happy memories of Christmas and of the beautiful crib at the side of the altar and of how full and happy the parish was. She remembered two kind priests Father Brennan and Father Bryant. When Joseph asked if Margaret had a wish for the New Year, she told him that her wish would be that all the people of the world work together for peace.

Joseph Connolly, age 8



Church has been different lately. I am missing the formal aspects of prayer during the Mass and the rhythm this gives to my week. I have my copy of Magnificat on hand for the daily readings, but it feels disjointed somehow without other people being involved. So, my experience of God and my prayers to God have changed during lockdown.

I have seen God more in nature and in the experience of being in His creation on holiday in Scotland and out walking my dog, Shadow. It is easy for me to sense His presence here. My way of using these thoughts and experiences and turning them into prayer has been through journaling. I have kept a prayer journal for some time, using it to write down my prayers and my thoughts and revisiting them later to see what has happened and reflect. It deepens my relationship with God. I can find answers to questions I have and remind myself about times when I have felt God's presence. It also reminds me of the times when I have struggled and needed help. The good news is that I have not invented this, it is a Catholic tradition. The classic, St Augustine's Confessions, is one long prayer journal repeatedly talking to God in nearly every paragraph.

Journaling makes me slow down and take time to think. I can look at a scripture reading, a painting or a view from a room and think about it in the presence of God. Spending this time gives me space to listen as well as talk. It then becomes a way of expressing myself to God without always using words. Handy when

Journaling

Joe O'Brien offers a creative way for her prayer life that may just work for you.

words do not come easily. How does one put into words the beauty and majesty of the sunset over Loch Katrine, looking down the valley in between the mountains, listening to the sound of the birds with the best dog in the world at your side? Images can speak to us in a very deep and spiritual way. Journaling with words is great, but I can also journal with colour, pictures cut out of magazines that touch me or with doodles and little drawings.

With more time during lockdown, I have turned this into something a little more creative. I love art but I am in no way an artist. I have no skill and not a lot of imagination either. I cannot look at paints or pens and just know what to do with them. So, I started small. I have found watercolour pencils and a water brush and just swoosh it onto the paper. I have little stickers, and something called 'washi tape' which is sticky tape with patterns on. It can take me five minutes to create a page in my journal or it can take a week, thinking about the scripture, image or prayer and then putting it down on paper. It is quite freeing, and it has been amazing spending that time focused more easily on my God. It occupies my hands so that my mind can be still and focused. It works for me!

So how to do it? Start with a page. A small exercise book is great. Maybe some pens, pencils or pictures and a glue stick. Talk with God about the pictures and what they mean to you. Ask God to spend time with you exploring this as you create your page. Add any words that connect them together or a theme that jumps out at you. Use a word, maybe "Jesus" and doodle around it in random patterns and colours. What thoughts come to mind as you are doing this? You can jot them down as you go along or see what the idea is that you are left with at the end. Write this down. This whole process, drawing, painting, sticking, writing, is your prayer.

The desire is not to produce great art, but to simply spend time with God. And this really is very personal, putting out how you think and feel about God on a page. If you find it useful, you can find lots of ideas and resources online to lead you into journaling in different ways. There is no one way and no correct way.

The good thing is that it is more time spent with God. And chaps, do not think journaling is not for you... (think St Augustine!) but I do understand that you may not have the same thing about stickers!

Lourdes 2020

*James Walker
takes us on the
young people's
alternative
pilgrimage.*



Waiting for the flight home



A photo opportunity in Zac Efron's 'chair'



Group photo on our last evening in Lourdes

Back in January I remember sitting down with the other group leaders, Una and Mary, and discussing how we would travel to Lourdes in the summer. Having organised our own travel the year before, and I having travelled on my own to Lourdes before, we had some ideas of the different travel routes available, but, knowing we were taking a group of people, everything is always that bit more difficult. Would we fly to Bordeaux or Toulouse? Could we coach down to Stansted and fly directly to Lourdes as we had done the previous year? Is crossing Paris for connecting trains in a 2-hour window with 30 people and luggage in tow a good idea? That one was an easy no!

We made the decision on Manchester to Bordeaux and booked our flights for 30 people despite the fact that the return flight meant a 4am departure from Lourdes!

Then Coronavirus took over and in April we received the disappointing but understandable news from Fr David Long, Diocesan Pilgrimage Director, that there would be no diocesan pilgrimage this year, but that we would be able to join in with a virtual pilgrimage from home. The following Sunday when I went to church to be 'techie' I mentioned to Fr Peter about the cancellation of the pilgrimage but how the group had booked flights and that they weren't refundable. We had some brief discussion about what to do, would the airline refund the flights, could we try to carry the bookings over to next year, and then the talk became "we could just go as a parish group..."

Later in the year, 'lockdown' was over and there was talk from the government about 'travel corridors' and 'air bridges' allowing people to holiday in

certain countries without having to quarantine. Then at the end of June the government removed the quarantine requirement for people visiting France and our pilgrimage was back on! We confirmed with our hotel that they were open and able to accommodate us and began planning for what we were going to do while out there.

Our travel arrangements went smoothly, with masks and hand sanitiser a-plenty, and on Wednesday 29 July we arrived in Lourdes. Later the same afternoon Fr Peter and his brother arrived, having travelled by road. He said it was so he could bring back Lourdes water, but the water he did take back was a funny colour! Although it was a much different pilgrimage as there was no work and no assisted pilgrims, we still planned a full itinerary of activities, fortunately without

the 7am start we're used to! Each day we came together as a group for Mass and each evening we gathered on the prairie opposite the grotto to look back at the day we'd been able to spend together, and give thanks for the opportunity to visit Lourdes. There was also time for reflection, to maybe to visit the grotto, or take a moment by the river, to think of and pray for those who weren't able to join us on pilgrimage and were at home feeling isolated by the restrictions. We particularly remembered the intentions of parishioners who had asked us to pray for them.

We were also able to do all the things you never really get time to do during the pilgrimage week, including to ride on "le petit train" and a visit up the Pic du Jer for some spectacular views of the Pyrenees. There was a walking tour of the town to see the places

where St Bernadette lived, a visit to Bartres (a local village where St Bernadette lived with her aunt until she was around 13 years old) and a day out to Gavarnie, a picturesque mountain village high up in the Pyrenees almost on the border with Spain. We also had our usual day at the lake.

One personal highlight of the week was a private talk given to us by Dr Alessandro de Franciscis, the head of the Medical Bureau in Lourdes, who reviews all cases of people who believe they were healed. He gave an excellent talk about his work, the work of the Lourdes Medical Bureau and the process for any healing which is believed to be miraculous.

He talked about the process of being declared miraculous, and the difference between being 'healed' (in a medical sense) and being

'cured' (in a religious sense) and how it is a misconception that he is the declarer of miracles. He only confirms that the person is healed in a way that is 'unexplained' on the basis of current medical knowledge. It is the responsibility of the person's diocesan bishop to declare the miracle.

Dr Alessandro was recently featured in a Netflix show called 'Down to Earth with Zac Efron', Series 1 Episode 2 - 'France', a recommended watch if you are interested in Lourdes. But some of the girls in our group were more interested in that he had met with Zac Efron and even wanted to have their photo taken in the chair that Zac had sat in!

It is hoped that the diocesan pilgrimage will to be able to return in 2021 and, if so, I look forward to seeing you there!



Off the rails

Most people of my generation will remember the three wheeled Scammell and its stable mate the Karrier Bantam of British Railways, pottering around our towns and city streets delivering express parcels and sundries. The reality, however, is more complex and diverse.

The dawn of 1948 saw the railways nationalised. British Railways became proud owners of 15,000 road vehicles, 20,000 horses together with all the horse drawn lorries and drays. Paradoxically, this made British Railways the biggest road haulage firm in the world.

Due to government legislation, the railway had to convoy every type of freight. Not only could it not refuse, it had to publish all its tariffs so it could be undercut by private hauliers. This meant a huge and varied road fleet, which had to be capable of transporting anything from tobacco

Mike Farrell has been busy creating something really special.

products, shoes and newspapers, to bulk liquids and powders, horses and livestock.

Most railway stations dealt in some way with freight. The smaller stations with small parcels etc and the larger terminals with express parcels and smaller items. There were however, stations dedicated to freight. These were called rail heads, and Manchester had four: Oldham Road (the largest), Ancoats, Ardwick Green and Liverpool Road, now the Museum of Science and Industry.

It's Liverpool Road where my story really starts. My Grandfather Arthur Boulton (Gramps), apart from being my hero, was a railway man for 51 years; a



Great Western Railway man and proud of it. He worked most of his time at Liverpool Road.

It was a very different world back in the 1950s, a time when health and safety meant carrying a hankie, polishing your shoes and watching where you were going. It seems unbelievable now, but he took me with him on his rounds from being a very small boy, something that would be impossible today!

He started work as a Nipper, on horse and lorries and eventually moved onto motor vehicles before the war. I did many thousands of miles with him in various types of vans and lorries.



This gave me a love for these vehicles, which has stayed with me all my life, and has merged quite nicely with my other passion of scratch building models.

I have, over the years, built quite a few railway vehicles but my latest is a 1/24 scale Karrier Bantam. It took me over 15 months to build and is the largest I have created to date. Any bigger and I risk being thrown out of the house and banished to the garage.

It's made from brass, aluminium, stainless steel and various types of plastic. Originally, I was only going to make the tractor unit but I ended up making a standard 15 foot British

Railways trailer with BD container. I'm really glad I made the trailer and load – it completes the model perfectly. The downside is the size.

The unit and trailer are over 18 inches long, it's 7 inches high and 4 inches wide. All this means it will not fit into any of my display cabinets. At the moment, it resides on the sideboard; I'll keep you posted on how long Rita puts up with it being there!

As for British Railways and its cartage business, it's a sad story. The sundries plan of 1962 backed up by the Beeching report a year later, meant a reduction in railway goods depots from over 1,000 to just 250. The depots that were left

were to be larger, more capable and modern.

As one of the smaller depots, Liverpool Road was on borrowed time and finally closed in the early seventies. Eventually British Railways withdrew from the carriage of sundries all together and a lot of railway vehicles passed into the hands of the National Freight Corporation in the late 60s. Express passenger parcels vehicles lasted a little longer but by 1981 they too had disappeared into history.

Displayed here is my latest Karrier Bantam and some images that show you the process I use to build my models. I hope you enjoy them.



In Issue 8 of Shine (September 2019) there was a description of our pilgrimage visits to churches in Bristol. That same year, in September, Peter and I began a very different journey. Usually, I planned our holiday journeys and looked forward to doing this almost as much as the holiday itself. This time, there was no forward planning. We often think of our life as a journey and we say we are a pilgrim people, but then we have to acknowledge that the Lord is the leader of the pilgrimage.

Peter had set out that September to go for his osteopathic treatment and a few minutes later I was phoned by a shopkeeper to say that he had fallen and an ambulance had been called and would I come. What a shock! That was just the beginning. Many people know all this so I won't give all the details. However, he was conscious and being cared for by a passing GP and by his osteopath, who was on his way to the practice where Peter was to be his first patient. Later, Rachel McKay happened to be passing... That weekend he was quite ill and it turned out he had a broken cervical vertebra and a bad head wound plus various bruises.

There ensued many weeks in Stepping Hill Hospital where Peter's head wound and his neck were gradually healing, although he suffered from delirium and various infections. He was often restless and he managed to work out how to remove the neck collar, which seemed to be more often off than on! During this time many members of the parish were of immense help by visiting Peter even before or after their shift, if they worked

A very different journey

Carmel Dwerryhouse updates us on her and Peter's recent journey.

there, or by giving me a lift to see him. He was often not very lucid and had little sense of time or memory of people, but now and again he was aware of his condition and wondered if the end of his life was near. It was very helpful that one of the chaplains brought him Holy Communion each week and he fully engaged with that, joining in the prayer. The chaplains also visit The Meadows.

After many weeks I was told he was physically fit enough to leave hospital and go to The Meadows, a sort of convalescent place in Offerton, but there was no vacancy at that time. So the weeks went by. At last, I think at the end of November or the beginning of December, he was transferred. Once there, he had his own room and spent his days in the day room with other patients. By now he had learned to feed himself, so that was progress, too. He had lost weight and looked quite old. The remarkable thing was that as his neck healed, it more or less regained its normal position and was not bent forward.

During those weeks at the beginning of this year I still had a lot of support from parishioners who drove me and it was good for Peter to see different people, though he used to tire very quickly and very soon would say, "Well, thank you for

coming. Can I go back now?" Sometimes he would be telling us long stories of things he must have dreamt about, or even insisting that he had to go to a meeting. He often said it was time to go to Mass and was quite insistent that we go at once.

Sometime in March we were invited to a meeting where we were told how Peter's needs had been assessed, covering everything, both physical and mental. His abilities were graded high, medium or low. On average, his needs were assessed as high, so that he would continue to need full nursing care 24/7. In cases like this, the NHS continues to fund the person, unless a further assessment shows otherwise.

Then we had the lockdown and visits were cancelled. During this time I think Peter began to forget the people he wasn't seeing regularly. Around Easter I was told he had contracted the virus but without symptoms and would have to stay in his room. This must have been difficult for him as he would have been without the stimulus and bustle of the day room, but at the end of the week I was told there had been a change and they would like to talk to me. It seemed he was at a critical moment and could go either way and what were my wishes if the worst happened. I said that I would like our priest to come and Fr Peter went there and anointed him.

After that he was so peaceful, but still weak. It is wonderful how powerful this sacrament is and I know how important it is to receive it if one is old or weak or ill. But also even if one is younger and quite fit, it's important to receive it before undergoing surgery involving a general anaesthetic, because although normally safe, sometimes things can go wrong.

Peter recovered in a week and was able to go back in the day room. We were still allowed to visit him, until someone realised and then we had to see him only through the window!

By this time we had reached the summer, though it wasn't much of a summer for many people, as we know. Peter's social worker was helping us to find a suitable care/nursing home, but many places didn't have the required facilities or they had no vacancies. We just had to wait. Eventually, we heard that there was availability in Woodlands in Poynton and it turns out that it is really only minutes away from here by car and really suitable. So in August, Peter was transferred and settled in. I think, at first, he didn't realise he was in a different place, as he once said he was still at The Meadows. So far, I haven't been inside, but have glimpsed his room from outside. The only visits, up to now, have been in the doorway: Peter inside and Rachel and I a couple of metres away in the sunshine, (sometimes!). I don't think Peter knows fully why we can't get

closer or come inside. After asking, Rachel was able to bring Peter Communion several times. Normally, one of the ministers comes from St Paul's in Poynton.

Woodlands seems to be a very well run place, with several types of unit, depending on the different types of care needed by the residents. The staff work in one unit and do not move from one to another, so that minimises any risk of infection. They are tested each week and residents are tested monthly. Laundry is done separately for each unit (less chance of losing things!). A short time after Peter moved in I received a very nice letter from the chaplain who works there several days a week. She is from the C of E and is available for anyone of any faith or none and she holds a weekly service for those who would like to attend. She said in her letter that she had met Peter and that they had something in common, as her husband is a church organist! Last week I had a phone call from the music therapist, who is keen to get Peter playing the organ again. That would be very beneficial, it seems. They have asked me if I would let them use the photo of him playing (top right) in their promotional material.

Overall, it was worth waiting til there was a vacancy at Woodlands, as it seems an answer to prayer. There is a monthly newsletter for relatives telling them about various activities residents have enjoyed

and we are kept up to date with how the management of MHA are trying to reopen for visits, whilst still keeping as safe as possible.

This year has been a journey, but it has been about Peter. My journey has been a change from being 'a lady of leisure' to learning to be a householder! I had lived in a rented place before we married and that was easy: pay the rent and get on with your life! Now, if something needs to be done I have to organise it, be it practical or financial. It just seems as if something goes wrong or needs attention every few days... I have help for shopping (thank you St Peter's Helpers!), cleaning and laundry and I can do some things online; I have simplified a number of things, but my energy is diminishing.

It takes a little mental adjustment to acknowledge that one is actually old and can no longer do various things. But this happens all through life, as one gets used to being an adult and having certain responsibilities. I just would like to say that it's probably better if each spouse knows how to do all the jobs, even if they are divided between the couple! Some people are better at certain things and that's ok!

Now Peter and I can only go forward each day in the presence of the Lord, without whom we cannot exist. May He be praised for all the blessings He has given us so far!

“Bless me Father for I have sinned...”
The words slip off the tongue,
whispering through the lattice
towards the silent figure motionless
in the darkness beyond.

Today, confession does not rank very highly among the sacraments with our average Catholic. Gone are the days when the priest sat for hours in the box listening to the sins of the faithful. The time spent by the priest in absolving penitents is reduced to perhaps an hour or 30 minutes per week now – but it wasn’t always like that!

When I was a lad growing up in Ireland, ‘going to confession’ was a very serious event indeed – an event that, to our young minds, occurred all too frequently. Saturday night was wash night. Having been cleansed in the bath first we were sent down to the church by our mother for another cleansing, or ‘shriving’ which was a more exact description in that day.

The church was usually in semi darkness, especially in the winter months, with the Blessed Sacrament light glimmering red on the sanctuary and another small light over the confessional box indicating that the priest was ‘in residence’. The box itself was a rather terrifying object to us youngsters. It was like an extra-wide coffin standing on its end with two wooden doors that would remind a nervous young lad of coffin lids constantly opening and shutting, opening and shutting! In the middle of the structure was another door behind which sat the priest on a chair usually with a cushion – a necessary comfort since he spent so many hours each week in there. We discovered this indulgence when poking round when the church was empty. No CCTV cameras to spy on us then!

The usual suspects would be lined up in two pews, each pew in line with one of the coffin doors, edging slowly along the shiny seats, polished by generations of rear ends sliding nearer and nearer to the darkness of the box. Consciences were carefully examined and the sins discreetly selected, so there were often some omissions. Selective amnesia was the order of the night! Never mind that you agonised afterwards as to whether you had been entirely honest. Somehow you convinced yourself that you had, and any residue of guilt gradually ebbed

“Bless me Father for I have sinned...”

Mike O’Malley reminisces about his boyhood experiences.



away... completely gone by the time you all arrived boisterously back home!

As we boys edged up to our teenage years, we chose our confessor very carefully as some of the priests could be rough on a trembling penitent who was only there under duress. Let down by the absence of the priest of your choice, there was no way out – you had to accept the close scrutiny of whoever was available. Ducking out of confession because one’s preferred confessor was absent was not an option, for whatever about fudging the odd misdemeanour to the priest you could not go home and tell your mother you had been to confession when you patently had not. After all, as the Penny Catechism said, and we knew off by heart: ‘No lie can be lawful or innocent and no motive however good can excuse a lie because a lie is always sinful and bad in itself.’

Confession for me was always an agony as I had a stammer. Getting that first word out was an absolute ordeal: ‘B..B.. Bl...Ble..’ was all wind and no word! A kindly confessor was a blessing, but this wasn’t always the case. The more impatient the priest became waiting for the pearls of sin, the more agitated and heated this penitent grew. Somehow the Spirit eventually came to my aid; the burden was imparted, absolution and penance given and escape and blessed

relief as the shutter on my side shot across and the dreaded inquisitor turned his attention to the boding trembler on his other side, leaving me kneeling in the silence and darkness. Exiting the box wasn’t always straightforward in that darkness as hyperanxiety made it twice as hard to find the door no matter how desperate I was to escape; and who on the other side might have overheard the awful sins just uttered in the priest’s ear?

It was a great relief for us when a new Parish Priest came to our church. Father S was an academic from a seminary some distance away. His chief interest was history. He was small of stature, large of girth with the gift of the gab, even in the box. But everything changed with his advent. Confession became almost a joy. You didn’t tell him your sins, he told you them! All that was required of the penitent was to murmur agreement. A typical confession went something like this:

Priest: It’s been a week since your last confession. It has, it has.

Penitent: Yes, Father.

Priest: You told lies. You did, you did.

Y y yes Fff..

Priest: You had bad thoughts. You had, you had.

The list droned on and the passive penitent acquiesced to all, whether committed or not! I’m not sure if this could be construed as a ‘good’ confession or not, but I never allowed that to bother me. This blessed state of affairs continued for a number of happy years. Then everything changed, utterly changed when our beloved confessor went to his Maker. The whole parish mourned his passing. None more so than we serious sinners! Life was never the same after that. Nor indeed was confession.

If you seek to take up a new hobby during this difficult time, perhaps I could suggest researching your family history – you will not be disappointed.

We all know something about our parents and probably our grandparents, but how much do we know about our great-grandparents – who they were, where they lived, what they did for a living and who they married? What I always find really fascinating is what was happening then in the world around them.

When I began researching my own family history in 1989 I found the answer to just some of these questions but soon realised there was much more to uncover. I travelled the country visiting libraries, Record Offices and even the areas in which my ancestors had lived. With the advent of the Internet much more can now be found almost at the click of a button, though probably not quite such good fun.

I will not bore you with details of ALL my findings (well, we family historians can be quite boring!) but I will tell you just a little of what I have found. My maiden name of LEADBEATER would surely bring forth some interesting facts and there cannot be many others with that name – how wrong I was! In the early 1800s HUGH LEADBETTER (already a change of spelling – there were to be several more) married Caroline and lived near Macclesfield. Hugh was a Husbandman so I wonder what made the young couple move from Cheshire into Derbyshire. How did they travel? Perhaps Hugh ‘drove’ some cattle for sale for they were worth more ‘on the hoof’. Or did they journey along the rough country roads by pony and trap piled up with their few belongings? Or even caught the London Royal Mail Coach from the Macclesfield Arms and travelled “with a guard all the way” (that would cost them extra!) via Leek, alighting some hours later at the Green Man, St John Street in Ashbourne.

Ashbourne was a very busy market town and Hugh found employment in the boot and shoe trade. There were numerous regiments stationed nearby guarding French prisoners sent there during the Napoleonic War. There would be plenty of work in the Army Boot and Shoe Yard. In 1818 a son JOHN, my great-great-

Climbing my family tree

Jean Smith offers encouragement to start digging...



Annie – a proud mother with here sons Jim, William, Frank and Herbert



Alston Lane Chapel, 1765

grandfather, was born. He in turn later moved back to Cheshire, became a stonemason and his firm helped build the fine church of St Philip’s in Alderley Edge.

Moving briskly on to the SMITH family – a name I took at my marriage in 1962. With a popular name like Smith it was with some surprise that I found the family in the Records for Ribchester way back to the late 18th century. JEREMIAH SMITH was baptised in 1800 at nearby Alston Lane Chapel which was known as a “Barn Church”. The building was set well back from the main road so that it was as inconspicuous as possible and in appearance was nothing more than a farmstead up a quiet country lane. Up the steps outside the building, which led to the chapel itself, Jeremiah’s parents carried their baby son to be baptised by a Missionary Priest, Father Edmondson. Jeremiah became a weaver, married

Alice and had eight children. They moved to Blackburn when the Industrial Revolution began where there was much work to be found. He worked in a local mill until his death in 1869.

On now through the Smith family to Herbert born in Blackburn in 1894. A tough little man who, together with his three brothers, fought right through the First World War and came back safely, except for Billy who caught the dreaded Influenza in the pandemic of 1918-19 – cited then as the most devastating epidemic in recorded history. He sadly died just 13 days before the end of the War. Herbert came home to Blackburn, married Beatrice Nutter and had a son Bernard whom I married in 1962. Herbert led an active life and was still working until his death in 1968.

I hope I have whetted your appetite to start a little research of your own – but just a moment. I must quickly switch on my computer again – surely the Nutter family, with a possible connection to Alice Nutter of the Lancashire Witches fame, will bring forth great treasures.

Must dash – have fun!



Mary's corner

Why not sit down somewhere quiet, give yourself a little space to relax your body and your mind. And when all is calm, let Mary Hardiman take you on her journey with the Wise Men from the Christmas story in the Scriptures.

Matthew 2: 1-12

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some Wise Men came to Jerusalem from the East. "Where is the Infant King of the Jews?" they asked. "We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this he was perturbed and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. "At Bethlehem in Judaea", they told him. "For this is what the prophet wrote: And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah you are by no means least among the leaders of Judah, for out of you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date

on which the star had appeared and sent them on to Bethlehem. "Go and find out all about the child," he said, "and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage." Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

Anybody who has watched a school nativity play will know that something invariably goes wrong. Children may miss their lines, trip up, pick their noses or lift their costumes, revealing their underwear to the captive audience. I recently read a story in which a child, playing the part of Jesus himself, accepted the gifts the Wise Men brought and said in a nice loud voice, "How come I only got three gifts and none of them are toys?"

More on that later.

At the start of this narrative, we see a group of Wise Men coming from the East to find the infant Jesus. The dictionary definition of wisdom is 'the quality of having experience, knowledge, and good judgement'.

Have you ever wondered why these men are referred to as 'wise'? There is an air of mystery surrounding this group. They were learned men for sure; the name Magi comes from the old Persian word Magupati, an esteemed group of astrologers or scientists who studied the movement of the stars and who would have known about the prophecies of a special Jewish saviour.

These men had seen a new and unusual star, a star that was enough to take them from the safety of their homes, from the comfort of their loved ones, from their work and from their standing in the community to come looking for a baby, the Infant King of the Jews. Do we ever stop to think about the immense risk these men took? To travel such a long way, not knowing how long it would take, to place themselves at the mercy of bandits and thieves, to risk a perilous sea crossing and to outwit the cunning of the King for a God they had never seen must have taken a gargantuan amount of courage and faith. All they had to go on was a simple star. I wonder if those waving them off thought they

were wise. We can often feel that there is little logic in faith; the social theorist Stuart Chase once famously said, 'For those who believe, no explanation is necessary; for those who don't believe, no explanation is possible.'

There must have been something in these wise and learned men that compelled them to make that journey. For them learning was not enough; they had to come and see for themselves and it's the same for us now. We can know ABOUT Jesus, but do we know Jesus? We cannot know him simply by reading about him. To know Christ better we have to allow his word to make its home in us, to ask what his message means for me, here and now, to spend time in silence with him, to follow his example of gentleness and humility, to ask and receive his forgiveness when we get it wrong; in other words we cannot know Christ until we are in relationship with him.

I believe that every encounter with Christ involves a journey. People come to faith in so many different ways throughout their lives and this beautiful God of ours is forever calling us to journey into a deeper encounter with his living son. Again and again, God invites each of us to reconnect with Jesus, to find him anew, to see him in the manger and on the cross and to know that he is the answer to our deepest longing.

King Herod, we read, was perturbed at the words of the Wise Men as they inquire after the location of the Infant King of the Jews. What has happened to Herod to cause such fear? And why did he summon the travellers to see him privately? Why not make his intentions public?

We know that Herod had no intention of worshipping this king; he wanted only to do away with him, to maintain his status as ruler. Little did he know what kind of King Jesus would be!

The wise men



What I also find fascinating is the response of the scribes in this account. They were the ones who could tell Herod what the ancient scriptures had said about the Messiah. Did they accompany the Wise Men? It would appear not!

I think it is helpful here to use the analogy of football for faith; if someone were to say, "I love football, I absolutely love it" you would expect that person to watch a match or follow their team or want to go and support. Therefore, if you really love God you will want to delve deeper and follow him more closely; you would want to think and talk about Him more. You would certainly want to go and see the Messiah He has sent to redeem you. Not so these scribes. They chose to remain behind, content with knowing about the Christ but desiring no intimacy with him. A missed opportunity for sure!

As the Wise Men leave the court of the King, maybe a little afraid or bewildered at what they had seen and heard, there was the star ahead of them, prominent and brilliant in the night sky, a clear and unambiguous symbol of God's protection, love, guidance and reassurance. We are told that the sight of the star filled them with delight. Why wouldn't it?

Delight is such an exquisite word. Remember that these were serious, learned, elderly and scholarly men. It can be hard to delight people who are so accomplished, who have seen, heard and read it all. But their hearts were open. And when our hearts are open to God, He will come in.

Saint Matthew tells us that going into the house, they saw the child there with his mother and that they fell to their knees and paid him homage. Imagine this scene for a moment; a young mother and her newborn baby, welcoming a group of old, wise and weary travellers. What does the beauty and simplicity of this scene say to you? To me it speaks volumes of love, of faith, trust and compassion, of generosity, of courage and of grace. I love to imagine Mary offering her baby to each of these wise men to hold in their own arms and to gaze upon with affection and gratitude. What a perfect end to a long and arduous journey.

And what of the word 'homage'? These rich men did not know what they would find beneath the star. They stumble across a little family, a very young unmarried mother in a stable with her baby in the straw. Do they turn round and say, 'no, this can't be right'? Do they pack up their costly gifts and save them for someone grander? They do not. Instead they fall to their knees, lost in wonder and praise. What a beautiful example of openness to the endless possibilities of God.

I believe too that this has so much to tell us about judgment and the way we look at others. If we were told that the long-awaited Messiah had just been born, the last place we would expect to find him is in a cow shed, in the arms of an unmarried teenage mother. How many of us would have fallen to our knees in wonder and praise? And yet, crazy as it may seem, here was the manifestation of God's plan for our salvation. Thank God that His ways are not our ways!

Opening their treasures, they offered him gold, frankincense and myrrh. Such strange gifts for a baby, but deeply symbolic.

Gold for a King, an acknowledgement of who Jesus is, a ruler whose sovereignty is not of this world because Christ's kingdom is not one of greed and power, but one of justice, peace and love.

Frankincense, incense associated with worship, indicating that one day every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2: 10-11) Myrrh, a perfume used to anoint the dead, a symbol of Christ's death and victory over the grave.

Yet, I believe too that there was another treasure offered to the Infant King and that was the treasure of their open hearts. Because ultimately what else does Jesus want of us? He wants only our hearts so that he can love in us and through us.

At the end of this story we hear that the Wise Men were warned not to go back to Herod and returned to their own country a different way. Again, this line is profoundly symbolic. Herod represented greed, jealousy and hatred. These feelings are not of God and they are not what he offers; God wants only what is good for His creation. Don't go to Herod means don't go to bitterness, anger, envy or avarice. The second meaning is that once we have encountered Jesus, we have to 'go back to our country', meaning that we have to carry on with our lives, but we can do that in a different way and along a different path to the one that got us there.

This Christmas can we journey with the Magi? Can we follow with trust the star of faith, even when it's difficult and we're not sure of the outcome? Can we see in the Infant King of the Jews the endless and outrageous possibilities that God offers? Can we listen to the call of God, inviting us to a deeper intimacy with his Beloved Son? Can we leave judgement behind? Can we bring the treasure of our hearts to the manger and offer it to the newborn King? Can we take the child Jesus into our arms and gaze on him in wonder and delight? And can we journey anew towards his kingdom with hope and confidence that love will conquer?

I hope so. Happy Christmas!



When my Catholic Girl Scout troop folded, I joined the nearest troop: in a synagogue. Needless to say, I was alone in that. There I met my lifelong friend, Esther. Although she also lived in Manhattan, her family had a house about thirty miles upstate. They would go there most weekends and summers, and her parents eventually retired there.

The first weekend I went up, I took the bus with Sharon, also in our troop, who immediately offered me half of her ham sandwich. I explained that I was a Catholic and couldn't eat meat on a Friday. I then asked when she could eat ham. "Anytime I like," came the reply. She then said that since it would be the Sabbath, dinner would be chicken. No problem, I would eat everything else. As soon as we arrived, Sharon announced that I wouldn't eat chicken. Mrs Goodman asked why and when I explained, she said, "Religion I understand. If it were a fad, you would eat." Then, to my very great embarrassment, the table was stripped and a fresh tablecloth, napkins, dishes and cutlery were put out. Instead, we had Saturday's cold dinner, gefilte fish. I hated it, but, of course, 'enjoyed' it! So, every time I visited, we had it – for me. I learned that weekend just how a strict Orthodox house is kept. For a start, meat and dairy are kept strictly separate by colour – for them, red and blue: pots and pans, washing up bowls, dish cloths, tea towels, shelves in the fridge.

That evening, I saw programmed lights for the first time, sunset to sunrise. No lights could be switched on, no telephone, radio, TV. (This was long before computers, which are now, of course forbidden.) Later, Mrs Goodman began to wish repeatedly that she could have a cup of tea. Eventually, Esther said, to no one in particular, that her mother couldn't

Just a thought

Eileen Wilcock looks back at her childhood in Manhattan and her lifelong Jewish friend.

ask her manservant or her maidservant, her ox or her ass to do any work on the sabbath. However, if there happened to be anyone who wasn't Jewish... so we all had tea!

Of course, no driving on the Sabbath, no buses (cf "manservant," etc above). Also, money couldn't be touched, so in the synagogue, pledges were given in multiples of eighteen: Hebrew letters are used for numbers. One and eight in Hebrew spell the word Chai, meaning life. It is used as a toast, a greeting, etc. Since one can't walk more than a mile, the synagogue couldn't be more than a mile away. Once there, the men would be downstairs, the women upstairs. The church was a mile away, but not only did I attend, but I could bring back fresh rolls or pastries.

Occasionally, Esther writes, "G-d bless" or "the L-rd bless.". It is forbidden to write the name of God.

Recently she asked about church services. I told her what St Peter's does. She said that in Georgia, seating is also allowed by size, but up to 25. Their synagogue holds up to 2,000, but only 25 are allowed now. She then said that since there is no Jewish pope, local rabbis meet for local affairs. They decided that life was more important than the Torah, so services and a later Torah study would be on Zoom. They were delighted, even more so when their daughter, who lives over a thousand miles away, joined the study group. Some of their friends are

horrified. What they were doing was forbidden and they are shocked at those who do join in.

When the rabbis said, "life is more important than the Torah" I thought of when Jesus said, "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." All four Gospels give instances of Jesus breaking the Sabbath: healing – the man born blind, the man with a withered hand, the man with a "dreaded skin disease" and so on. Another time, the disciples, while walking through a field of corn, plucked some grain and ate it because they were hungry.

When the Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots criticised Him, He reminded them of when David also broke the Sabbath. They all protested that they knew the correct way to honour God. They had forgotten what Jesus reminded everyone: the two most important laws, love God and love your neighbour.

Esther and her family made me realise that the Pharisees et al were not basically evil men. They were, however, very punctilious, convinced that the ways they had been taught were not only correct to the tiniest detail (eg tithing herbs) but that no exceptions could or should be made. This led them to extremes. Esther's modern day rabbis bent the rules, but did it in love in an extreme situation.

I wonder if I had been born and brought up in Jesus' time, would I have followed Him – without a Damascus experience.

Would you?



St Francis church in Chester

Tales of the unexpected

Carmel Dwerryhouse shares some strange memories in two short tales.

A strange story

The Capuchin Franciscan Friars were in charge of the parish of St Francis in Chester where I spent most of my childhood. It was their custom to move the Father Guardian, as the parish priest was called, every three years, so that no one should get too rooted in one place. Many of the other friars were also moved at the same time. Some didn't want to move, especially as they got older.

One such, Fr W was very much against moving. He was to go to a house the friars had in Lancashire, out in the country and miles from anywhere but he didn't want to go there. Eventually he was taken there by car one day. At that time hardly anyone had a car and the roads around the friary would have seen scant traffic. The house was at the end of a very long drive and by early evening, the light would be starting to fade, as the Chapter, held to arrange the appointments of the friars, was usually about September.

So whoever took Fr W to his new house returned to Chester. Job done.

Next to the church was the club which

was a friendly meeting place for the men of the parish; it had a bar and some of the friars also came in occasionally for a chat and perhaps a drink, which someone probably bought for them. Later in the evening of the day of Fr W's move, a few men were chatting as usual or playing billiards and the door opened. In came Fr W.

Surprise all round! How did he get here? He didn't seem to be able to tell anyone. He would have had no money. Unlikely to get a lift. Too far to walk! The mystery remained, but he was allowed to remain in Chester. Perhaps he was suffering from dementia which was rarely spoken of in those days.

May he rest in peace.

My father's experience

In my childhood, well before the new liturgies had been introduced after Vatican II, the Mass on Holy Thursday was in the morning and then, for 24 hours til the Good Friday service, there was adoration at the altar of repose. People came to pray when they wished and some groups organised their members to cover

the whole day in slots of an hour or half an hour. It was the custom for the men of the parish to cover the night hours, sometimes doing several hours each but with a rest in between, when they would go into the men's club without needing to go into the street and perhaps get a little sleep. Some of the friars too would spend time in adoration.

On this particular night, my father had been in the church praying and when his time was up, he was going through the church to return to the club when he noticed one of the friars praying. He took a second look and thought: who is that? (There were about six friars in the house usually and we all knew who was who).

So he just continued to the club, where he said to one or two of the men that he had seen this friar, but hadn't recognised him. "Oh", someone replied, "that would be Fr S". My father was curious. "Who was Fr S?", he asked. "Oh, you know" was the answer, "he was one of the very first priests to serve in the parish when it was founded in the 19th century. He's been dead for years." They had seen him before.

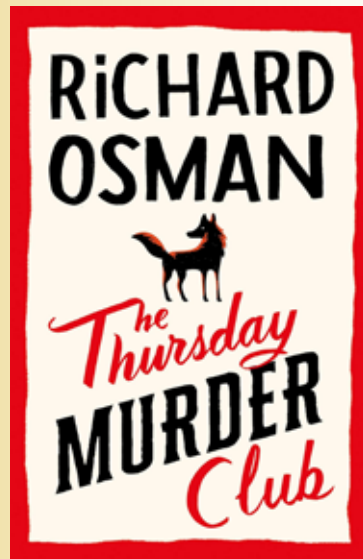
St Peter's Book Club

Although we have not been able to meet up in person since March, the book club has been busy reading this year. Many of us took the time to catch up with our own unread piles of books, but the following is the list of books advertised in the newsletters during 2020:

Villa Triste by Lucretia Grindle - **The Hunting Party** by Lucy Foley - **Silence** by Shisko Endo - **Where the Crawdads Sing** by Delia Owens - **The Private Joys of Nneena Maloney** by Okechukwu Nzelu - **Wolf Hall** by Hilary Mantel - **The Beekeeper of Aleppo** by Christy Letteri - **Tidelands** by Philippa Gregory - **Normal People** by Sally Rooney - **The Book Thief** by Markus Lefteri - **Mud Larking** by Lara Maikelm - **The Parisian** by Isabella Hammed - **Sapiens - A Brief History of Humankind** by Yuval Noah Harari - **The Woman in the Window** by A J Finn - **A Gentleman in Moscow** by Amor Towles - **The Cellist of Sarajevo** by Steven Galloway - **An Equal Music** by Vikram Seth - **Star of the Sea** by Joseph O'Connor - **Gilead** by Marilynne Robinson - **Girl Woman Other** by Bernardine Evaristo - **The Dutch House** by Ann Patchett - **The Thursday Murder Club** by Richard Osman - **Those who are Loved** by Victoria Hislop - **Somebody I Used to Know** by Wendy Mitchell - **The Secret Supper** by Javier Sierra and **My Grandmother Sends Her Regards** and **Apologies** by Frederik Backman.

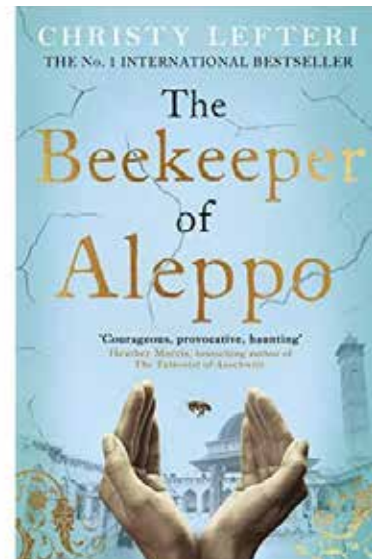
Two books which stood out this year focus on the devastation of war and the courage and dignity of the human spirit to survive in extreme circumstances.

Alison McGarr rounds up the book club year.



The Cellist of Sarajevo by Steven Galloway is a superb book. It is set during the Siege of Sarajevo in the 1900s and is based on a true story. The cellist is looking out of his window, watching a queue of people waiting to buy bread, when a shell lands and kills 22 people. He decides to go out and play Albinoni's Adagio once a day for 22 days - once a day for each of the victims. This is a tale of hope set against a backdrop of despair and if you haven't listened to the Adagio - please do. It has been recreated by a different composer from a fragment of the only existing score that was rescued from the firebombed Dresden Music Library. The haunting beauty of the piece reinforces the belief that out of death and destruction comes new life.

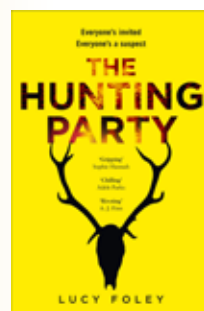
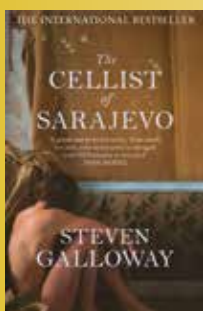
The Beekeeper of Aleppo by Christy Letteri is another harrowing tale which is beautifully written as it shines a



light on the refugee journey so many families are forced to take to seek safety in Europe. The beauty of Aleppo and the simplicity of a life working on the land resonates in stark contrast with the evil of war. Husband and wife, Nuri and Afra, endure a journey which takes them to hell and back and yet they cling to the hope of getting to Britain and the safety of being reunited with family. This is a humbling tale for those of us who take safety for granted.

The Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman is also a good whodunnit and it's an easy read! **Where the Crawdads Sing** by Delia Owens is also a lovely read - another whodunnit.

The Book Club is currently meeting via Zoom so if you are interested in joining us please contact Alison McGarr - ajmcgarr68@outlook.com or by telephone 07792 107152.



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@stpetershazelgrove.org.uk

Welcomers
Anne-Marie Bailey: 0161 456 2213
ambailey@cheerful.com

Creating social activity

Book club
Alison McGarr: 07792 107152
ajmcgarr68@outlook.com

Men's group
John McKay:
07715 362403

Parish newsletter
Monica Beckitt
admin@stpetershazelgrove.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@stpetershazelgrove.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
laurasmall@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
laurasmall@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

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

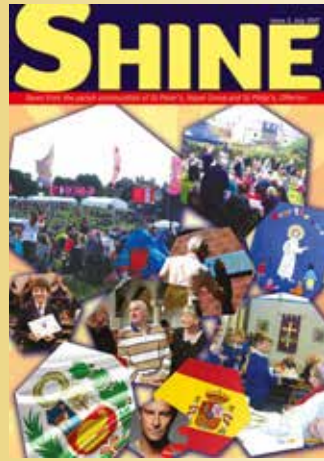
Aquinas 6th form college
0161 483 3237
Chaplain
Carmel.Scanlon@aquinas.ac.uk

St Peter's Helpers
stpetershelpers@gmail.com
0161 483 3476

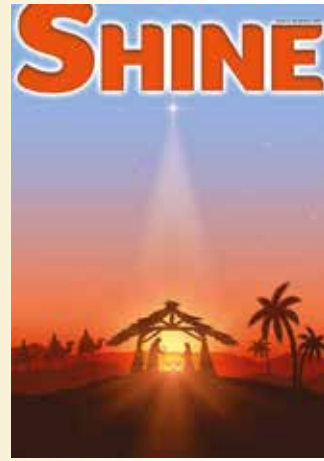
SVP: adult and youth
Lorraine Parker: 0161 456 5629
lorraineandbobparker@gmail.com



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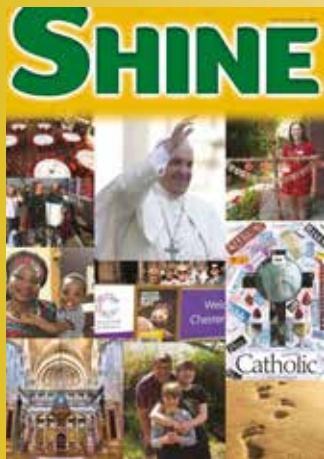


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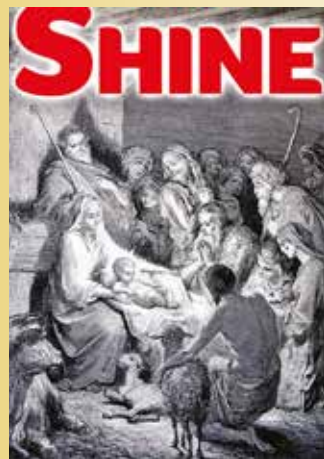


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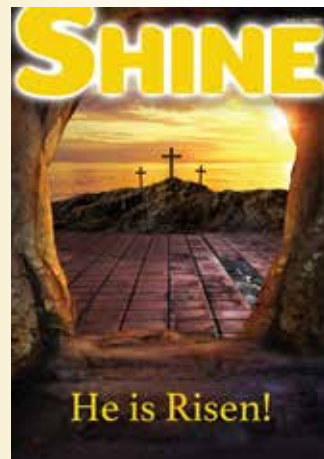
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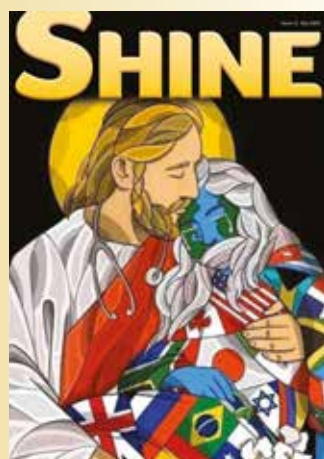
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