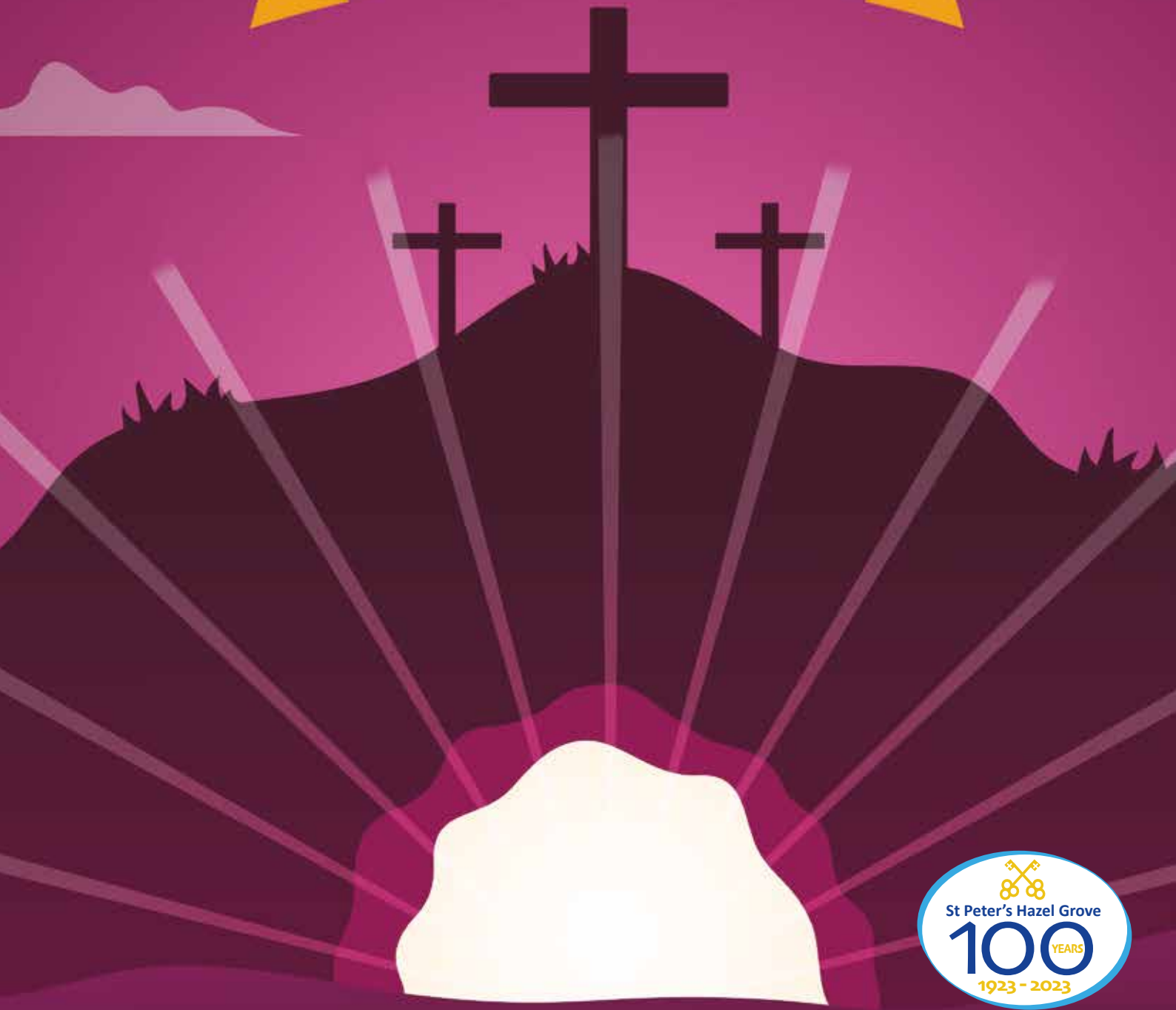


SHINE

He Is Risen



The Holy Father has issued a special call to us this year:

"I greatly desire that we devote 2024... to a great 'symphony' of prayer. Prayer, above all else, to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and to adore him."

Here is an opportunity to do that!

Join our parish week of accompanied prayer

A chance for a personal retreat in everyday life from Sunday 21 April to Saturday 27 April.

- **Monday to Friday you are given a daily piece of Scripture to pray with for 20-30 minutes at home.**
- **Each day you also meet up with a prayer companion to talk about how it went for you.**
- **The week starts with a group meeting on Sunday and closes with a group meeting on Saturday.**

**If you are reading this, the invitation to prayer is for YOU.
If you are interested phone Fr Peter on 0161 483 3476 or Mike O'Malley on 0161 483 8296 for more information, or sign up on the notice board in the porch at the back of church.**



FROM THE PARISH PRIEST

Welcome to this issue of Shine and thank you to all who have contributed articles and helped to produce it. It gives a flavour of the events in the parish, past and present as well as some of the interests of our family of parishioners. It is an important record of the state of the parish in this centenary year.

Although there was a 'Catholic presence' in Hazel Grove from the beginning of the 20th century, it was only in 1934 that a priest actually took up residence instead of commuting on Sunday mornings from Our Lady and the Apostles on Shaw Heath in Stockport. Since then, the parish has gone from strength to strength and we continue to build on the firm foundations of those who have gone before us.

Any centenary looks back on what has been achieved whilst at the same time we look forward to the next centenary and beyond, confident that those who come after us will continue to give witness to the 'Christ the son of the living God' as did our patron, St Peter. Enjoy the read and perhaps you may even be inspired to write an article for our next issue.

Fr Peter

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Where we are . . .

St Peter's Church and presbytery

16 Green Lane, Hazel Grove,
Stockport SK7 4EA
Tel 0161 483 3476

St Philip's Church

Half Moon Lane, Offerton,
Stockport SK2 5LB

Email: admin@stpetershazeltrove.org.uk

Fr Peter: petersharrocks@stpetershazeltrove.org.uk

Our joint website is www.stpeterscatholic.church

Shining a light on our parish communities

Cutting from the Stockport Express 1897

ST. PETER'S CHURCH, HAZEL GROVE.

The Roman Catholics of Hazel Grove and district are now rejoicing in the fact that they can at last worship under their own vine and fig-tree, as it were. Hitherto they have attended Ss. Philip and James's Church, Edgeley, a fact which in wintry weather especially was the cause of much inconvenience and discomfort. The Rev. Father Waterhouse, of Edgeley, some little time since purchased the old Primitive Methodist Chapel in Commercial-road, Hazel Grove, for the use of the Catholics of the district: it will in future be known as St. Peter's Church. The building, which will seat about 200, has been effectively decorated and furnished for worship. The consecration service took place on Monday morning. The newly-consecrated Bishop of Shrewsbury, a native of Stockport, officiated. There was a large congregation at the celebration of Mass. The Bishop, in the course of his address, said that building was to be set apart to be the house of God. It was one more building given back to the faith of their fathers. It was a step in the direction which must be uppermost in the mind of every true child of God, and everyone who laid claim to the title of Christian, that this great country might become once more what it once was, that they might all be united in one self-same faith and one self-same love of God.

The Revs. Father Waterhouse and Father O'Connor took part in the service, and the former appealed for liberal support to be given to the mission, which we understand is to be worked from Edgeley Church.

The sum of £625 was collected at the service; ticket money brings the total up to a very satisfactory amount.

There was some excellent music at the service. Part of Ss. Philip and James' choir was in attendance, led by Mr Chas. Pearson, and Mr F. Coxson was at the organ. The music rendered was:— "Ecce sacerdos," arranged by Mr Pearson; "Asperges," Richardson; "The Mass," Rev. Father Turner. Offertory piece, "Confirma Proceus," Crookall; and "Sortie" (being prayer for the Queen) Barnett.



After the soup and sandwich – there's still room for cakes!

St Peter's Helpers

St Peter's Helpers offer a range of social events throughout the year. Here's one day when they met in the parish centre for a 'Soup and Sandwich' day. Check the News/Events page on the website for their forthcoming programme so you could either join in or help. And turn to pages 24-26 for more news.



This is a photograph of Lorraine Parker (née Brewer) with her brother David and sister Christine, making her First Holy Communion in 1967. The photo was taken on the front lawn in front of the presbytery, prior to going into the parish centre for breakfast. The parish priest at that time was Fr Thomas Osbyrne.

A Smart thing to do

On Wednesday 27 December, Tim Smart and his granddaughter Francesca Jones took part in the Cafod Fun Run in Bollington. Francesca, who is 10 years old, had shown a keen interest in taking part for over a year. Grandad Tim, who is 81, wanted to join her but was under strict instructions to walk rather than run!

Between them they have raised a total of £1,322.14 plus Gift Aid, with generous sponsorship and donations from family, friends, parishioners from St Peter's Hazel Grove and St Alban's Macclesfield, and from Francesca's school St Alban's Primary in Macclesfield. Thank you to everyone who supported them.



Farewells and welcomes

Since our last issue, the following people known in our community have gone to their rest:

- Sheila Murphy
- Denis Fogarty
- Johanna Foley
- Philip Howarth
- Ralph Dickin
- Eddie Breslin
- Maura Burnett
- Christine Slater
- Alison Able
- Maura Clarke
- Kenneth Burgess
- Jack Morgan
- Mary Box
- Florence Bradshaw
- Derek Rhodes
- Margaret Grayson
- Sidney Bloomfield
- Pamela Brown
- Richard Gavillet
- Philomena Gavillet
- Jean Green
- Kirstie Bain
- James Adshead
- Barbara Caudwell
- and the following have been baptised:
- Hope Hampson
- Sebastian Godley –Farrar
- Chimereya Ukabiala
- Cora Drury
- Vinny Smith
- Max Stewardson
- Louis Newcombe
- Adam Drury
- Albie Jackson
- Barney Posta-Tonge



Deacon John and Jonathan set out



A model of the Temple as it was in the time of Jesus. Our base was next door



Inside the Centre for Biblical Formation where we stayed and studied

Our journey in Jerusalem

It had been our goal for several years, but Covid had got in the way, leading to cancellation, but in September 2023, John and I finally made it. To Jerusalem. A two week study course on John's Gospel, run by the Centre for Biblical Formation at the Notre Dame de Sion Convent, situated on the Via Dolorosa within the walls of the old city.

We arrived at the convent in the evening and were almost immediately ushered up three floors and out onto the roof terrace to savour the view over old Jerusalem. Right in front of us (so close it seemed we could reach out and touch it) was the beautiful and iconic Dome of the Rock. Golden and gleaming. And the twinkling rooftop skyline, looking a picture postcard under the dark sky.

We had arrived several days before the course started, to try and acclimatise and get our bearings. We started with our base, the convent. An enormous, rambling 19th century

building which has been home to the Sisters of Sion for over a century. The Sisters are a remarkable bunch, filled with energy and enthusiasm, filled with the love and compassion of God. Both the convent and the site on which it stands are of historical importance. And this was our home for almost three weeks. We were joined by sixteen others, from all



Enacting the Epilogue (Chapter 21) by the Sea of Galilee

around the world; a disparate group, united by the desire to go deeper into the enigmatic and mystical John's Gospel. One of the delights of the course was the way this group of strangers bonded so quickly and lived out the love, joy and abundance of life which are so prominent in John's Gospel. Our guide and leader was the excellent Dr Luke McNamara, an

Jonathan Goodfellow shares his very moving experience of a study course in the Holy Land with Deacon John McKay.

Irish Benedictine monk. The Gospel is a sophisticated and highly literary work. It is a theological statement of belief, a love letter to Jesus, addressed to us, the readers. Read it, and then read it again. You will find yourself drawn in. You will find yourself amazed, challenged, and changed. 17 out of the 21 chapters in the Gospel are based in or around Jerusalem and so Jerusalem was the place to start our visits.

Our first visit was to the pool of Bethesda (Chapter 5) which was a very short walk from the convent. We then visited Temple Mount, the site of the Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock. It is a very beautiful and tranquil space, with a vast paved esplanade as well as

tree-lined gardens and walkways. It is a unique space that is regarded as touched by the presence of God by all three of the world's monotheistic religions. It is where heaven meets earth. We also visited the site of the old city of King David, and the pool of Siloam (Chapter 9).

The next day we got up early, before the heat of the day, and walked out across the Kidron Valley and up the steep Mount of Olives to a lovely Benedictine monastery. At the foot of the mountain is Gethsemane with its peaceful garden of ancient olives and the gorgeous Church of All Nations. Protruding through the floor of the nave is a large rock, where tradition holds that Jesus knelt to pray the night before his arrest.

Our first full day excursion away from Jerusalem, was to Qumran, the Dead Sea, and Ein Gedi national park.

It was a very hot day, and sun cream, a hat and a constant supply of bottled water were essential, especially for the northern Europeans in the group, who were positively wilting in the heat. Qumran is where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, hidden in caves up in the Judean desert. We subsequently visited the scrolls on display at the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem. On our first Sunday we celebrated Mass together in the Crucifixion Chapel within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the site of both the crucifixion and the resurrection.

At the start of the second week, we departed for our overnight stay in Galilee. We stopped initially in Nazareth, the boyhood home of Jesus, and where the Annunciation took place. We visited two churches, each claiming to mark the site of the Annunciation, before travelling on to Cana where two of the seven signs of Jesus took place – the changing of water into wine and the healing of the royal official's son. At the Wedding Church we were shown



After the Mass at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

The Rock of Calvary at 8am, so really quiet

two enormous water jars said to be of the age and type referenced in the gospel. They are huge... there would have been sufficient wine to have kept the wedding guests drunk for several weeks.

Next we visited Capernaum, the home town of St Peter and where Jesus established a base. A modern church has been constructed over the site of what is held to be Peter's house; a glass floor allows visitors to look down on the excavations. Outside, across the enclosure, is a life-size statue of St Peter. He looks heroic and handsome, holding a staff in one hand and the keys of the kingdom of heaven in the other.

Our last visit of the day was to Tabgha and The Primacy of

Peter, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. This marks the happenings within Chapter 21 where the post-resurrection Jesus leads the frustrated disciples to a large catch of fish, feeds them breakfast and reinstates Peter as the leader of the disciples.

The following morning we returned to the lake for a boat trip, across the waters where Jesus walked (Chapter 6), before visiting Magdala where Mary Magdalene lived and the Yardenit Baptismal site on the River Jordan.

It was then back to Jerusalem where we were invited to attend the Sukkot service at a reformed synagogue, stop for lunch and chat before our last visit to Ein Karem, the birthplace

of John the Baptist and the site of the Visitation.

And then, suddenly, it was all over. So much had happened to all of us: we had seen so much, learned so much and prayed so much. We had been deeply touched by the experience and our lives had been changed.

It was time to think about how we were going to share it all with our communities back home. And so we flew home, joyful, inspired and knowing the trip had been blessed and very special.

And 48 hours later Hamas invaded Israel from Gaza.

Some of our group remained in Israel, unable to get out. Those of us who were safely home were worried about our friends and the Sisters at the convent. We received daily texts and photos telling us what was happening in Jerusalem.

"The warning sirens going off, the rush to the shelters. The disbelief, the shock. The fear, the terror.

The normally crowded streets are deserted.

There is panic and confusion.

We heard exchanges of gunfire close by. A man was shot dead.

It is quiet now.

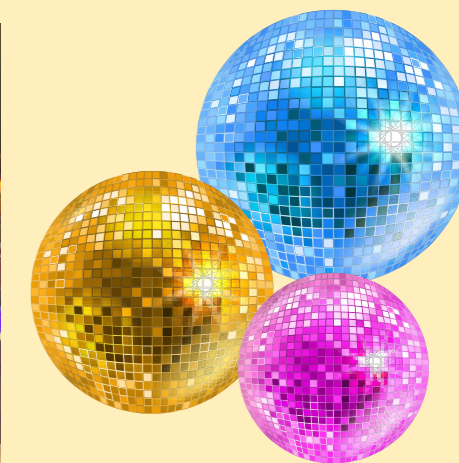
It is eerie.

It is very scary.

Please pray for us. All of us. Jews and Palestinians. We are all God's children."



The Church of All Nations beside Gethsemane



LAMBS Disco Group

We have had an exciting year and have been trying to do some different activities. These include picture bingo, different crafts making cards and doing a small flower display which everyone was pleased with and took home, and karaoke which went down well.

We had a great Christmas party with a visit from Father Christmas, presents, food, fun, love and laughter. Rachel and John came and led the music and singing.

All this is possible due to our committed volunteers who give

up time every month to make this possible. And we have been fortunate to have had the help of other groups within our parish community.

The TOAST group advised us on downloading music from the internet to an iPad, on the choice of speakers and teaching us about Bluetooth.

Others who helped us by designing and printing our new poster which is located on the church notice board. St Peter's Helpers and Clare Allen designed our new website, bringing

us into the 21st century. Check us out: <https://sites.google.com/view/lambsdisco>.

Everyone in the parish community who help by providing refreshments each month. And the members of the parish who donate via our monthly teas and coffees slot in the parish centre after 10am Mass on a Sunday.

It just shows what can be achieved by all working together, sharing our gifts and talents – and with lots of help from the Lord. Do get in touch if you want to know more: lambdisco@gmail.com.



Following Fr Tony Myers' recommendation when he visited the parish some time back, I went on a St Mark binge. By this I mean I read his gospel in two sittings. Then I listened to David Suchet reading the whole Gospel through without a break. It was magnificent. His reading plunges the reader straight into the middle of the crush and pressure that was the daily life of Jesus and his apostles. One is swept along in the crowd, feeling the excitement and the heat of bodies pushing in for a front place so as to better hear the profound words spoken by Jesus and watch in utter amazement the unbelievable things he did.

I can only say I would most heartily recommend listening to this incredibly moving experience if you have not done it already. The recording is readily available on the internet if you log into David Suchet: St Mark's Gospel.

I used to be an RE teacher in my other life and for years I taught the GCSE RE syllabus to class after class year on year. Part of the course was a study of Mark's Gospel. I honestly don't know if I was on another planet when I was doing it, because this time reading the Gospel through completely, I felt it was utterly new to me.

The first thing that leapt out to me was the big bold opening statement that was completely uncompromising: The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ the Son of God! - a statement Mark immediately backs up, first by the words of John the Baptist and then by God the Father Himself. Mark's writing is very much that of a zippy journalist writing for the local news rather than that of a venerable Evangelist. He launches us into a life lived at an incredible pace, that of a man in a desperate hurry, forever on the go, straining to deliver a message of love and compassion and forgiveness to any and everyone who was willing to listen and believe.

There are numerous miracles and teachings and constant confrontations. There is overwhelming love set against bitterness and hatred and then there follows the sickening and horrific end to it all when death comes in the form of a grotesque



Carmel O'Malley shares this reflection which she wrote for one of the fortnightly meetings of the Mothers' Prayers group.

Pondering on Mark's Gospel

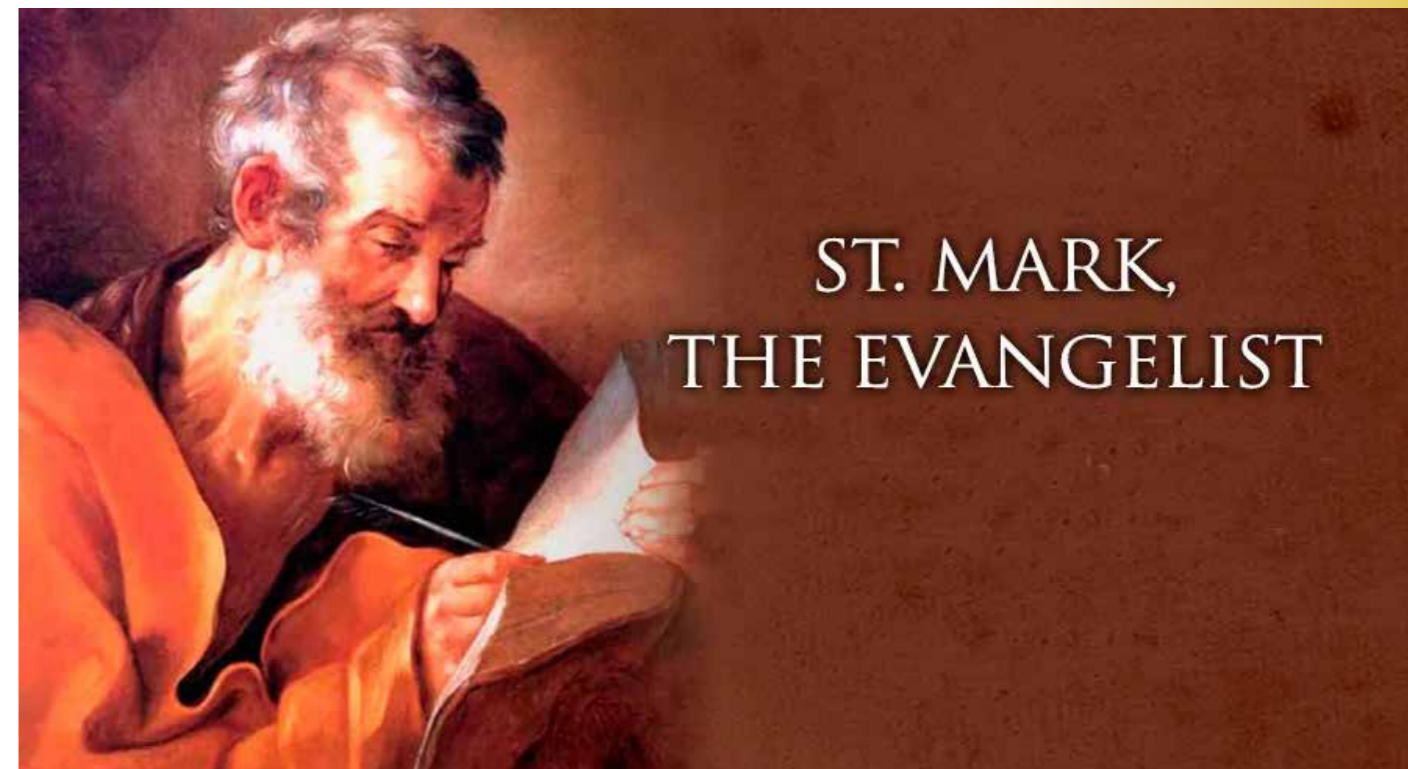
public hanging on Mount Calvary. The utter devastation felt by his followers seeps through the pages. But then comes the glorious closing with the empty tomb and the Angel messenger, followed by an upsurge of joy at Christ's resurrection and his appearance to many. (The last couple of paragraphs are believed to have been added later by someone who was not Mark.) The whole account of the life and death of Jesus are packed into just 16 chapters.

Despite the shortness of the Gospel, a number of things about this amazing life story clamour for our attention:

- The sheer authority of Jesus leaps from the pages. The religious authorities, scribes and pharisees hounded him unmercifully yet his putdowns of them illustrated his ready wit and bright intelligence and are a delight to encounter. The crowds were amazed at the authority shown in his words and actions, in the miracles and healings he performed, and in his command over evil spirits, wild nature and even death itself.
- The terrible exhaustion he must have suffered. Jesus was constantly

swamped by the overwhelming flow of humanity that dogged his every footstep. Even when he attempted to rest or eat a meal, they swarmed round him and gave him no respite. Even when he fell asleep in the boat with his head on a cushion, his disciples woke him up crying out for his help!

- The unremitting love and compassion that flowed from him to everyone that came to listen to him or seek his help. The demands on him were relentless; his outpouring of love and compassion was relentless too.
- The despicable behaviour of the religious authorities towards Jesus. At every turn he was surrounded and harassed by them or their minions as they strove always to challenge and denigrate and defame his every word and action.
- His utter reliance on his Father and his close and constant contact with him in prayer and in the working of his miracles.
- The theme that spoke particularly to me, however, was the drag and burden that his chosen 12 placed upon him by their slowness and



thickheadedness, their fears and their frequent inability to grasp what he was trying to teach them. Mark certainly seemed to have a downer on them as he records numerous occasions when they are reproached by Jesus for their lack of faith or their closed minds. There are the times when they do something completely foolish, like

- ❖ argue over who is the greatest, or
- ❖ scold adults for bringing children to Jesus after he had so recently said 'Let the children come to me for such is the Kingdom of Heaven.'
- ❖ Or two of them ask for the best seats in the Kingdom and the rest become very indignant.
- ❖ One incident that showed the disciples to be particularly dim-witted was after seeing how Jesus had fed 5,000 hungry people miraculously, the next time when he had 4,000 people and points out to the apostles that this crowd, after being with him for three days, is in need of food, they ask: Where could anyone get these people enough bread in a desert place?

- ❖ It is, however, at the most agonising part of Jesus' life that his chosen 12 most let him down. They fall asleep when he most needs their support; Judas betrays him, then they all run away when Jesus is arrested; then it is Peter's turn to let his master down spectacularly by denying he even knows him. What a shower!
- ❖ But there is wonderful consolation in this sorry saga. If this bunch of let-downs are wholeheartedly forgiven and then go on to spread Jesus' message throughout the world and give their lives for it, then we too know that despite all our faults and failings we also, with the Lord's help, can fulfil our role of being Christ's disciples in our time in the place we have been planted.

I hope this has whet your appetite to have a go at reading Mark's Gospel and see how it speaks to you.

If you'd like to know more about Mothers' Prayers, contact Teresa Thiele on 07778 848709.





A warm welcome to everyone



Fr Pat shares his experience of disability

Exploring Inclusion - an Open Day for everyone

We invited our parishioners, the local community and those from other churches and parishes to our first Inclusive Open Church event. We focused on being fully inclusive to those who struggle with a physical or hidden difficulty.

Our aim was to provide a welcoming, safe place for quiet thought, for reflective prayer but also the chance to listen to others, to engage in conversation and enjoy other people's experiences.

Over the last year of meeting together the (now re-named) Disability Inclusion Group became aware that not everyone is able to access our church services and parish social activities, as a result of a difficulty that they deal with every day. We wanted to change this, but would anyone come?

Wow! we were not disappointed... despite it being a cold afternoon in January. Many people expressed their pleasure at being able to visit church with their family members, friends or those 'cared for'. We received many positive comments as you can see on these pages, including "I really liked starting with welcoming and the explanation of each of the community events around."

We had Assistance dogs in church, we had people enjoying the space,

Maura Beesley shares the very positive experience of the first event organised by the recently formed Disability Inclusion Group in the parish.

visiting the sacristy and the altar, looking at the priest's vestments. It wasn't always quiet, but we all enjoyed being in church and having a cup of tea with others.

As a flip side to this, we also had opportunities for reflective prayer, sensory prayer, a Scripture reading, listening to other people's experiences and to hear and see amazing music from St Peter's Primary School choir, singing and signing Makaton, and from the Dee-Sign BSL Choir. (BSL is British Sign Language.)

Huge thanks go to Christine Wright and her Assistance dog Jessie, to Sam Bowden and to Fr Pat Munroe who each gave a very personal talk on the challenges that their physical and unseen difficulties present in being practising Christians. We were also so grateful to Gail Robinson who signed for us on the day.

The day helped clarify some of what is needed within the parish to be

more 'inclusive' but there is still much to do. Thank you to all who visited the church during the Inclusive Open Church event and to everyone who made it such an enjoyable and positive experience. If you'd like to know more or become involved in our group, please do contact me, Maura Beesley on inclusionstpeters@gmail.com.

- "Very inspiring"
- "Excellent speakers"
- "I loved the choir"
- "You could really feel the joy"
- "So refreshing and so welcome"

Latest News: Fr Pat Munroe will say a short, inclusive Mass on Sunday 28 April at 2.30pm. This will be a relaxed service with low level music and alternative seating where possible with a designated 'quiet area'. All are welcome.



Delightful singing by children from St Peter's primary school choir



Sam Bowden shares her experience as a mother



TOAST means Time On A Sunday Together. It's the name of our Children's Liturgy group, which meets on Sundays in the parish centre from 9:30am.

The families are warmly welcomed and 'real' toast is served along with hot drinks and juices. Occasionally we offer crumpets, hot dogs - or even blueberry pancakes on Mothers' Day.

Through clever technology via our big screen we can live-stream 10am Mass into TOAST.

TOAST has its own live music ministry; the children sing songs, sometimes with actions, they take part in quizzes related to the gospel of the day as well as some activities.

The Eucharist and blessings are received in line with the 10am Mass from church and once a month the TOAST group lead the music and liturgy in church for our family Mass.

We rely on a great team of volunteers to help with music, singing, technology, refreshments, leading and welcoming..

We usually set up the room about 8am and TOAST finishes around 11am.

We are also fortunate to have two young Duke of Edinburgh Award volunteers from our local high school.

It's great to see the children making new friends, catching up with old school friends and growing in confidence.

TOAST seems to be growing in numbers all the time. New families and helpers are always welcome.

Come and see what's going on at TOAST!



The Gospel



It's the TOAST

QUIZ

Barney and Issac

ACTIVITY TIME

with Nicola

Be still in the presence of the Lord



A lovely candle the children made for Mothers' Day



Guess what jobs these are!

Mothers' Day

Our morning began with a special breakfast for the Mums of pancakes with blueberry compote and fruit, all delivered beautifully by our helpers.

We had some special TOAST activities for Mothers' Day which began with a game of "Guess my job!".

We gave descriptions of different roles, eg a farmer, a teacher, a chef, etc and the children had to guess which job we were describing.

We then moved on to talk about all the different jobs Mums have to do and how although it is unpaid, being a Mum is one of the best jobs in the world and a very special blessing from God!!!

Then we took the children off (and gave the mums some peace and quiet!) to create a lovely Mothers' Day candle for all the Mums attending TOAST. We chose a candle to represent that Jesus is the light of the world and always journeys alongside us in our family lives.

We finished our special celebration of mothers by remembering our Holy Mother, Mary through the Makaton version of "Hail Mary" which we performed for the congregation.



TOAST music group getting the children singing with actions

Our dates for 2024

- 8 February
- 21 March
- 2 May
- 13 June
- 4 July
- 5 September
- 7 November

All events will be on a Thursday evening, starting at 7.30pm. There's no charge, plenty of free parking and good wheelchair access.

For full details send an Email to:
footsteps2020@mail.com

St Peter's parish centre
16 Green Lane, Hazel Grove,
Stockport SK7 4EA



James Gallogly

There are usually reminder cards for all our 2024 dates by the statue of St Peter in the church porch

Footsteps in 2024

It's hard to believe that we started Footsteps in 2018. Six years ago. In that time, we have been treated to a wide variety of speakers who come to share their insight, their humour, their journey in their Christian faith.

Footsteps is decidedly aimed at people of all Christian denominations, so that we can truly celebrate what unites us, rather than anything that may divide us. And we regularly welcome people not just from Hazel Grove but from further afield like Glossop, New Mills, Marple, Poynton, Cheadle Hulme, Heald Green, Romiley, Altrincham, Timperley, Bolton, Oldham, Northwich and Manchester.

Our speakers come from various backgrounds, both lay and religious, men and women, young and more experienced. They all share their thoughts on an aspect of Christianity – and they all seem to share our sense of humour. Which is just as well, because Footsteps has always aimed to be relaxed, informal and with a good sprinkling of humour – not to mention the quality and variety of the nibbles that Linda and her team provide with the drinks. We work hard to transform the parish centre into a café-style venue – all adding to that feeling of relaxation and informality,

2024 got off to a great start in early February when James Gallogly came



to talk about some of his challenging work as the Managing Chaplain at Strangeways, otherwise known as HMP Manchester, under the title of 'Looking for light and faith inside prison.' 100 people came that night, despite the threat of a blizzard from the weather forecasters. You can hear what you missed if you weren't there on the night, by going to the bottom of the Gallery page on our parish website: <https://stpeterscatholic.church/gallery/>.



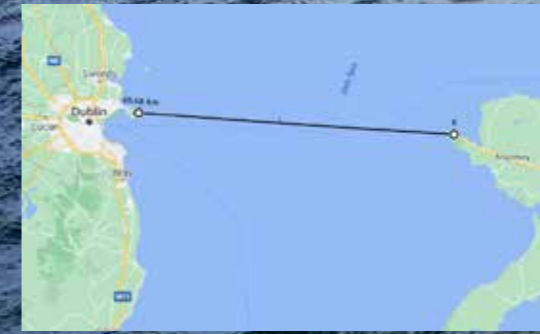
The Bishop of Stockport is on his way

And what a programme we have for you this year. Take a look at the dates – it's always a Thursday night, when the parish centre is available. You could write them up in your diary now, key them into your calendar, or commit them somehow to your memory. Then they won't clash with your holidays!

We have some familiar faces coming back in 2024 and some new ones. The familiar ones include Sr Helen Costigane from London, Anthony Delaney from the Ivy Church in Didsbury and our own Mary Hardiman all the way from Hazel Grove.

By the time this goes to print, we'll also have had the pleasure of welcoming Fr Chris Thomas from the Irenaeus Centre in Liverpool, on 21 March. Hopefully his talk will be recorded and posted on the website, when he looks at the Book of Jonah as a paradigm for, or an example of, how we respond to the voice of God in our lives and how sometimes it's the worst moments that are the growth times.

The new faces include Archie Cameron from Southport and, more big news, the Bishop of Stockport, Sam Corley. He's a really engaging, gifted speaker – and a bishop! He's coming to us in September. It's a joy to welcome everyone to Footsteps and we hope you'll come and join us.



James Joyce statue at his grave, Zurich



"The shortest way to Ireland is via Holyhead."

James Joyce, 1938.

Slow said the warning sign
As cars moved through twin towers
New since fire not long ago
On the majestic Pont Britannia
The uniformed captain was glimpsed
Sea gazing from his lofty column
High above the Menai Strait
Ignored by indifferent swirling rooks
Identity unknown by locals

Soon Holyhead, goodbye England, Croeso Ynys!
To Temple of the Arts in passing Llangefni
Native Kyffin Williams art is in effigy
At the doorway inviting inside if even in a hurry
To picture galleries, to museum of history events
To Cradle of the Celts, to short-lived revel Glyndwr
To Edward in long control from Beaumaris castle
Snowdonia backdrop mountain range
The coastal road and time for a Welsh cream tea

Bats starting-up across the face of the moon
Alert hares by a high cross in a field
Motionless fox washing cars on Route 55
A vision invaded by a familiar headstone
In the corner of a Zurich cemetery
Ankle-on-knee silver walking cane
Uplifted face, dazzled eyes in round zylo frames
Thoughts on Ireland's and Bloomsday Dublin.

"Have I ever left it?" A shrug in his day
Soon dissipated by ferry horn blast
Clearing Holyhead harbour for the Irish Sea
The Martella Tower eye sweeps Dublin Bay
A faster heart city lights coming-on
"Cead mile failte" in neon above the quayside
"The wild rover", of a fiddle, a bodhran
And purity of a penny whistle
Song in immigrant's heart staying on the side of hope.

Immigrant on a journey

A poem by Gerry Clarke



Pont Britannia over the Menai Strait



Beaumaris Castle, Isle of Anglesey

A poem by Mike O'Malley

Thick dark clouds	Golden leaves on the
Shroud the trees	Chestnut tree
A slanting sun illumines them	Red berries on the Rowan
Light and dark mingle	Death and resurrection.



The crowds gather on the Saturday morning



Fran, Dave and co lead us in singing

David Wells comes to Hazel Grove

Chris Glennon reviews his experience of our wonderful Lenten Parish Day with David Wells.

Two wonderful things happened to me recently. The first was that I was fortunate enough to listen to David Wells speak at the Lenten Parish Day at St Peter's. Not having heard David speak previously, I did a little research and realised I was going to be in for a treat. I was not disappointed.

David was born in Leicester and lives in Devon. He has a lovely wife and three wonderful children – his words. His first teaching job was in Toxteth, Liverpool; he visited Lourdes as a youngster and he enjoys a drink and watching Match of the Day. He prepared for a talk in the US with 50 hand-outs – 30,000 attended. He's one of the 'grammar police', understands Latin and Greek and is an expert on the church teachings and writings. I know this because he managed to explain everything simply and yet with authority – a sign of genius. Though, as his daughter constantly reminds him,



In conversation with David

"It's not about you Dave!". So, what did we learn?

We are good people, we work hard, and we do our best. God knows this – we are more harsh on ourselves than God is. But it's not about you.

Our role as a catholic is to bring joy. Not that irritating constant enthusiastic and cheerful joy but joy through the everyday little things.

Take ourselves less seriously. Focus on the little things. A smile here, an act of kindness there. Can we listen more? Is it important to have big stickers on our wheelie bins to show they are ours?

We are good people, we work hard, and we do our best. But it's not about you.

David frequently quoted Pope

Francis. "We are all born originals though most die as photocopies." We are unique, let's be ourselves and flourish. We have different talents and complement one another. Let's acknowledge and appreciate this. We carry emotional baggage – we worry, we get anxious and we fear. Let it go and trust the Lord. Be kind, be patient, be ourselves. We are all busy – but it's not a busyness competition. Slow down and enjoy life.

We are good people, we work hard, and we do our best. But it's not about you.

David spoke about the three virtues: Faith, Hope and Love. Faith gets us up in the morning. Love sustains us and feeds us. Hope brings us home. He also spoke about a further four virtues and all these virtues collectively had a complex name I can't remember. Some of you will know it, but it's not about you.

David spoke with warmth and kindness. He made us laugh – even Fr Peter. We cried; he spoke lovingly

about his mother's death, though most importantly her life and how she wanted him to remember her. And he also referenced Mother Teresa and her beautiful prayer "Anyway". To understand David's

talk, read that prayer. And the second wonderful thing? Through these words I was given the opportunity to reflect on an inspiring and uplifting day; I feel blessed – but it's not about me.



A cuppa and a chat before the day begins

Another opportunity
We recorded David's talks and he kindly left us the slides he used, so we're planning to repeat the day's content for the many who weren't able to be there in March. Even if you were among the 100+ in the audience, you may well like to hear his talks again. We're planning for Thursday 23 May at 7.30pm in the parish centre. Check the newsletter nearer the time.



Stockport's SVP Children's Camp in Wales

Did you know that the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Stockport started a Children's Camp 92 years ago, an initiative by a Mr Redmond from Cheadle and a Mr Burgon from Edgeley? The first SVP camp was at Scarborough, then in 1934 the camp moved to Rhyl and is still operating annually.

Their aim was "to provide a holiday in healthy surroundings for necessitous boys who otherwise would not have had a holiday." Besides providing a good holiday for boys in need, the SVP sought to benefit those "whose faith was in danger." In 1935, over 300 boys went on camp but there were some control problems – imagine the big boys and the smaller youngsters! In 1937, the camp was attended by 437 boys and 56 members of the Society.

The camp, the Frederic Ozanam Holiday Camp, named after the founder of the SVP, was later run jointly with the SVP in Birkenhead and Wallasey. Then those terrible war years stopped all such activities. After the war years both girls and boys went to the Children's Camp.

Over those 90 years, how many

Kevin McKenna looks back on over 90 years of history.

youngsters have really enjoyed a great holiday otherwise impossible, given their home circumstances? Apart from war years, and a few others, there have been 83 camps. How many can rival that record?

The camp is one of eight 'Vinnie Camps' run by the Society of St Vincent de Paul; annually about 2,000 children participate. Other camps include Liverpool, Leeds, the Wirral, Nottingham and Derby, Manchester and Brentwood. The aim of all Vinnie camps is "to provide within a Christian ethos, a safe enjoyable holiday experience for young people, which will offer opportunities for their personal, moral and spiritual wellbeing and growth". The word "Vinnie" refers to St Vincent de Paul, of course.

Camps are staffed by around 500 dedicated and caring volunteers offering a high ratio of adult to child supervision. Each camp offers a week of supervised activity, friendship and

fun to youngsters aged between nine and 14 years, many with family problems such as illness, bereavement or relationship breakdown.

At Plas Gwynant Outdoor Education Centre in Snowdonia, children learn from professionally qualified staff. Each child receives time and positive attention, perhaps more than ever before.

What about today?

Now called the Stockport and Hyde Camp, the SVP welcomes children from Stockport and Tameside areas. On average about 40 children attend, each specifically nominated by schools and social workers. Each child's social and medical needs are priority; great care is taken regarding safeguarding.

Activities include swimming, archery, climbing, football, arts and crafts and talent shows. Some of the fun can be life changing as many children try something they've never done before

A few quotes from participants:

"I love going to camp – it's my favourite holiday."

"It's awesome! I've been going for three years now and every year I've completely fallen more in love with it!"

"It has so many fantastic activities... and loads of competitions which we can win medals for. The helpers are really good and they are like having a big brother or sister to look after you."

"One of the best parts is meals! There are so many choices... and there are always seconds and sometimes thirds!"

– perhaps seeing a wheeling hawk, catching a fish or swimming in the sea.

Nationally, SVP Vinnie Camps have a wonderful heritage: for almost 100 years the Society has provided safe, inclusive and caring holidays for children from difficult circumstances and in need of a real, happy break.



CAN YOU HELP?

Funds are raised by local members of the SVP. Our traditional sponsored walk at Higher Poynton is in June – don't fret, all parishioners will be invited to support. The planned date is Sunday 23 June. Besides joining this sponsored walk, the organisers would really welcome volunteers to 'go on camp' to support the regular team and the staff of the Outdoor Education Centre. If you're interested in volunteering, please contact Tony on 0161 494 9981 or aoreilly12@hotmail.com.



Bereavement Group update

We have had another great few months at the Bereavement Group. We have had some amazing Reflection and Refreshment sessions, thanks to Margaret Mercer who delivers them so wonderfully. Also, we organised some services that give us a chance to remember our loved ones with candles, the Scriptures and prayer.

On the social side we had our annual Chippy Night, we've been entertained with music from the No Notes and John on his ukulele. There has been a quiz night, a film night and of course an Afternoon Tea event. Our trip last year was to Wedgwood; the weather was lovely and the tour amazing but the highlight was the scrumptious Afternoon Tea, served on their best china!

You are most welcome to join us no matter how recently or in the past you have been bereaved. We are a very friendly and welcoming group and have lots planned for the next few months.



A bereavement journey

A bereaved parishioner explains her own experience

My family and I found ourselves unexpectedly in a place where we didn't want to be. I am now a 'widow' and my adult children are facing a future without their beloved father.

There is a maelstrom of emotions assailing us all. I have been told that in this situation people fall in different categories eg 'people who fall apart' and 'people who keep going and do what has to be done'.

We are trying to be in the latter group, but it is difficult.

There are many challenges along the way, however there are also people who support you. I would like to thank everyone in the parish and elsewhere who supports bereaved people – Father Peter, Father Pat, Deacon John and Rachel, Terry Thiele, Helen Lyons, Julie Williams, the Bereavement Group and many others.

The Bereavement Group is very helpful. One topic was 'Coping with grief', which was an excellent insight into the path we all tread at some point. We find it helpful to be with others in the same situation and who understand how we feel. There are many things that need to be done when someone dies: organising the funeral, contacting different people and organisations as well as coping with daily life. You encounter helpful people and others who, through inexperience and lack of training, unwittingly make life difficult.

For example, a bank/building society will release funds to pay a funeral invoice, but I was told by an employee that funds wouldn't be released to pay for a funeral invoice. This was followed by a call the following day by the same

employee apologising and telling me to bring the invoice back into the branch and that the bill would be paid by head office.

Grief may result in an inability to remember names, events etc; staying focused and remaining on task is challenging. We are trying to make our way forward, but inevitably there are constant reminders since my husband has died. The normal calendar of events, Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, family birthdays and so on – normal joyous occasions are days to get through. Fortunately, we are a family that can support each other. We also have a school and church family who support us, even though my youngest left school quite a few years ago.

A new death re-opens the loss of the previous loved ones – my parents, which evokes many memories and increases the pain of loss. I find myself making mistakes, for example writing the wrong date on forms, as my mind is dwelling on past events whilst dealing with the present.

No-one's journey is the same. Please be patient with the bereaved; we appreciate your offers of help and support, however, we are all walking at different speeds, each one faces individual circumstances.

We are taking one step at a time. Sometimes we are overwhelmed, other times we can manage to do one small thing. We can feel vulnerable and uncertain at times. Talking to others is something we can do on some days and not on others. As a result of this, I will remain anonymous. I hope this article strikes a chord with some of you.



Delightful entertainment from the children at our Christmas party

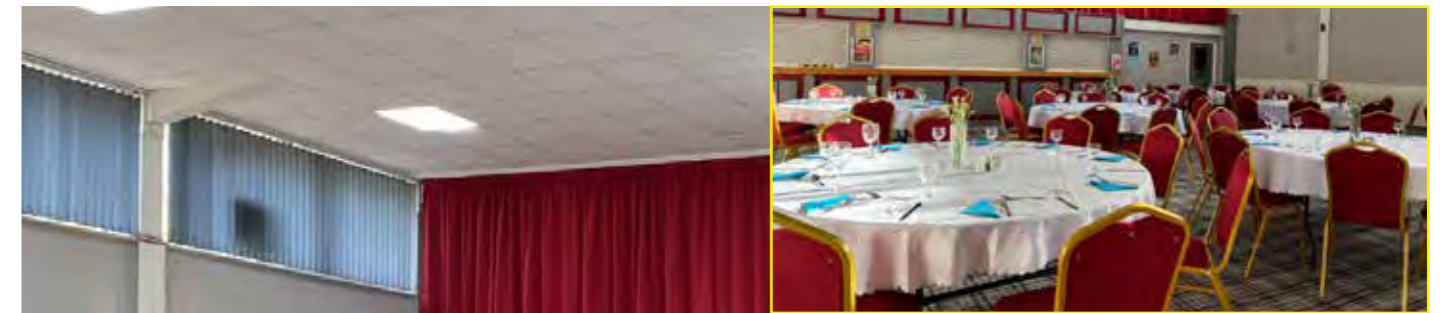
St Peter's Helpers - it's a team effort

St Peter's Helpers have had a busy time over recent months. We welcomed around 70 guests to our Christmas party who enjoyed a full Christmas lunch, served by amazing SPH volunteers including students from St James' school and Aquinas college. We were delighted to welcome St Simon's and Year 2 from St Peter's who sang so beautifully for our special guests.

Thanks also to the children of our three primary schools and SPY (St Peter's Youth) who make gifts and cards for our Christmas and Easter 'special deliveries'. Christmas parcels this time contained some crocus bulbs, carefully potted up by teams of children and staff at the schools. We hope they have flowered! Please do send in your

photos; the children love to see the fruits of their labours. Thanks to new and existing volunteers who came along to our 'Say hello social' in February and shared new or improved ideas for our activities. Our volunteer team continues to grow and we welcome new volunteers. Even if you can only dip in and out, please do get in touch and join us! <https://sites.google.com/view/st-peters-helpers/register-to-volunteer>

Look out for our regular activities in the parish newsletter or on our website. Upcoming dates are advertised in the newsletter, on the News/Events calendar on the parish website and on our own website <https://sites.google.com/view/st-peters-helpers/home>



The tables are set



After a delicious Christmas lunch, we're watching the children line up to sing



Another great social occasion

St Peter's Helpers

- it's a team effort

Our activities include

- Cuppa and Chat/Light Lunch and Chat - monthly
- Friendly telephone calls - regular
- Card making sessions (small group) - monthly
- Chai and Chat sessions welcoming migrant and refugee people - weekly
- Refugee clothing organisation - weekly and termly appeals
- Healing Mass with light lunch - twice yearly
- Special deliveries - Christmas and Easter
- Christmas party



Donations for our refugees



Cuppa and chat

Thank you, team!

Bakers - chatters - drivers - refreshments - food prep - servers - welcomers - telephone team - visitors - special event helpers - setting up tables - packers - deliverers - card makers - music and Mass - chai and chat team - refugee clothing support - crafts - sewing - English support - schools and colleges and of course, Fr Peter for all his support.

If you'd like to know more, get involved, or know someone who would like to be on our list for a little friendly support, get in touch: stpetershelpers@gmail.com or ring and leave a message in the parish office.



I am writing in my dining room and the sun is streaming in through the window as I look out into the garden. Spring is definitely in the air. The snowdrops have been up, the daffodils and the bluebells are getting ready and the first blossom is on the trees. Birds are building their nests and the bees are out and about. God's creation is renewing itself for another amazing year.

This is a place where I can easily find God. In the miracle of new births; the beauty of a rose; the sight of a rainbow and the breathtaking view from a Scottish mountain. I can see His hand in it all from the grand vistas to the minute detail of a flower. It reminds me too that I am a part of His creation, fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

If this resonates with you, perhaps you would like to take the time out for a walk to spend some time intentionally contemplating the natural world around you, your gift from God? This can be very simple or more ambitious depending upon what you normally do. A climb up a Scottish mountain for the view is not required!

This is how I practice an Awareness Walk. It is a suggestion and you can take this and use it in your garden, out for a walk in the park, sitting next to a houseplant or flowers, looking out of a window or even in your imagination if the weather or your health does not allow. Adapt it for yourself.

If you can, take yourself outside. Close your eyes for a moment and offer this time to God. Choose to be present with Him in creation. God is indeed everywhere and we can spend time

Joe O'Brien leads us on an Awareness Walk.

with Him in exploring His creation with all of our senses.

Begin by walking a little. Don't rush. Experience the sensation of placing your feet on the ground and moving through space. Enjoy the sensation of taking slow deep breaths of fresh air. Try to make this time about experiencing, not thinking. Then focus on your senses in turn... in any order.

LOOK

Look around you. Become aware of the sky, the clouds, the sunshine, the shadows. What colours are there in your surroundings? Can you see patterns and shapes in the clouds, the trees, the bushes, the flowers? Look downwards as well: at the grass, the path, the earth and your feet next to them. Is everything still or is there movement?

TOUCH

Feel the warmth from the sun, the cool breeze on your face and maybe the rain. What textures can you feel? Touch the grass, stones, bark, leaves or petals. Are they rough, smooth, sharp or soft? If you can, feel the grass and the earth, maybe water, under your bare feet. Feel connected to the earth.

LISTEN

Close your eyes and listen. What can you hear? Birds, animals, traffic, the wind, someone cutting the grass? What sounds are nearby and what sounds are further away? Then focus on what sounds you may be making.

Can you hear your breathing, your heartbeat?

SMELL

Is there any scent from flowers, trees, the grass, or even smoke, rubbish bins, traffic?

TASTE

Taste water, perhaps chew a piece of grass. If you have a snack, savour it in your mouth as you slowly chew it. If you have herbs, pick some and taste their flavours.

Then if one thing has drawn you to it, spend some time gazing at it, holding it if you can. Become aware of it from different directions and look more closely at its detail. God has created this for you out of His love for you. It is special. He made it at the beginning of time and saw that it was very good (Genesis Chapter 1). He also planned your existence at the beginning of time (Psalm 139:16). Allow yourself to know this and know that you are loved – unconditionally, mercifully, just as you are, right here and right now. Nothing that you can say or do will ever change that. You are loved.

At the end of the walk I close my eyes briefly and give thanks to God for this time I have spent in creation with Him. I hope that you may find this approach to prayer useful. I have also found that it is a good way to pray alongside children as I lead them through the senses. If you have children or grandchildren, try it and see how you find it. Have fun! Shalom.

Saint Peter's Youth (SPY) group is more than just a social gathering!

Lucy Gabrielsen opens the door on a SPY night!

There is an abundance of parables within the Bible where community and eating go hand in hand and SPY is no exception.

In a recent survey we conducted to ensure that we tailor activities to our SPY members, it was no surprise that the food served is a true winner amongst the group – food and the fun, which includes often energetic, active ice breakers!!

Our purpose

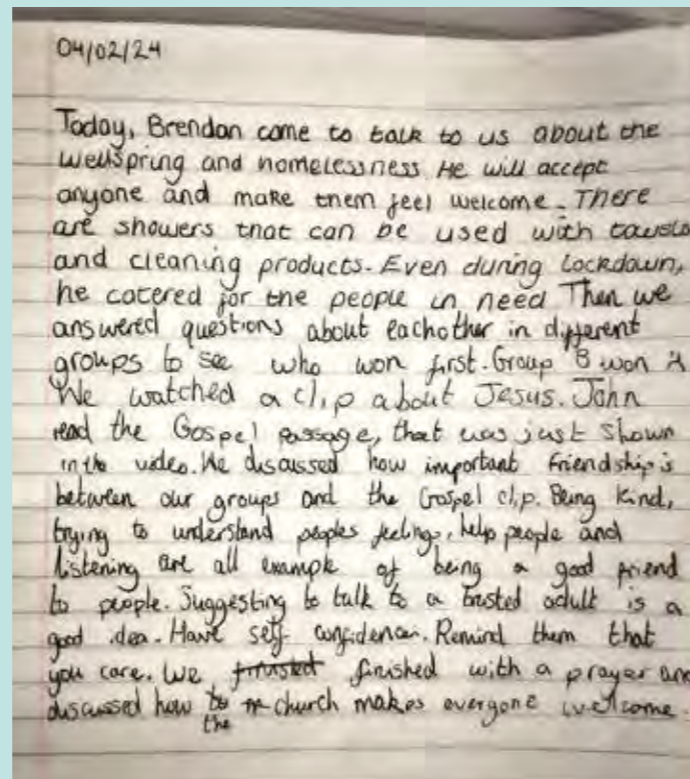
What was surprising is the passion with which our young people want SPY to be more than just for themselves to have fun or enjoy a social gathering. We want SPY to be a place to meet with the purpose of helping our local community.

Our current group of around 18 young people expressed a resounding, positive desire to help and support local causes, with their first choice as The Wellspring in Stockport. With the support of their parents our members really got into the meaning of the forthcoming Advent season and in November were active in collecting clothing and toiletries which we sent to The Wellspring.

This was followed up with a representative from The Wellspring being invited to speak to us during our January meeting.

In 2024 we started a journal of our meetings. Our members take turns in recording what we do during meetings. You can see our February journal above.

This was not our first guest speaker to premier at SPY! In December, the Youth Mission Team visited us and created a highly interactive session that included a Christmas Kahoot. In the festive mood, our catering team delighted with a food theme of party food, that included additional treats.



A page from our journal



Michael from the Youth Mission Team bringing the meaning of Advent to SPY



The results of our collection ready to send to The Wellspring in Stockport



Guest speaker from The Wellspring



Breaking the ice at the start of each gathering

Back to what it is all about

SPY, St Peter's Youth group, is not exclusively for those wanting to take the sacrament of confirmation; it is open to all our youth from year 7 onwards. Each session includes food, usually pizza and hotdogs or both(!), active icebreakers and focuses on the gospel of the week. As an active participant in our youth club Deacon John is pivotal in assisting with interpretation and discussions at this point. At some meetings we may look forward to an upcoming gospel so that we can actively participate in Mass with an enactment and doing the bidding prayers. You might have noticed this during the World Youth Day!

Coming soon

With the confirmation season nearing, we are looking forward to starting the Youth Alpha in the next sessions and an exciting result of our survey was the unanimous desire for a field trip that we are currently in the process of organising.

Our next meeting

We will meet again on Sunday 28 April at 7pm in the parish centre. If you are a young person in the parish or know of any in our parish who would like to join us, please bring them along.

Future SPY dates until our summer break:

(24th March, Palm Sunday, youth participation at 6pm Mass).

28th April

19th May

23rd June

QUICK FACTS

- SPY** St Peter's Youth
- When?** The first Sunday of the month. After 6pm Mass until approximately 8:45pm.
- Where?** The Meeting Room in the parish centre
- Who?** All our youth from year 7 upwards
- Run by parish member volunteers.**



Mary's corner

At our recent service to celebrate marriage and family life, Mary Hardiman, speaker and author, offered this reflection.

The Wedding at Cana



On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

John 2:1-12

as a solemn and serious person, but I don't think he was always like that. I love to imagine him having fun, drinking, laughing, singing and dancing in the utter fullness and freedom of his humanity.

Marriage is a sign of sacred union between two people who love one another. Couples who are not married or weren't married in church still discover this sacred union which is essentially an opportunity to grow together in compassion, understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and love. A Catholic relative of ours married a Methodist and went on to have a wonderful, rich and prayerful life with their two daughters. Sadly his father could not accept this union and I find that profoundly sad because I think that God blesses love, no matter what church you attend or don't attend.

We also know that throughout the bible, both God and Jesus are seen as the bridegroom and we the church as the bride; think about this – that God wants to hold, love and cherish you for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health until death and beyond.

In the middle of this feast, there comes a crisis like the sandwich fiasco I mentioned at the start. They run out of wine. Middle Eastern hospitality was such a big deal that to run out of wine would signal a devastating humiliation for the couple and their families – one that would last for the whole of their lives.

In this instance, it is Mary, the mother of Jesus who notices; Mary, ever watchful, ever thoughtful, always on the side of the poor, is the one who sees and brings the problem to her son with four simple words, 'they have no wine'.

What a beautiful example of simple prayer! Unlike so many of us, Mary puts no time limits or stipulations on the intervention of her son. She simply names the problem, trusting in the bond of family love the two of them have and the care and compassion she knows he has in abundance.

I have worked with adults in recovery from addiction to alcohol and I know that for some, wine can create more problems than it solves. But biblically speaking, wine is a rich symbol of joy, abundance and divine favour. It is my belief that here John is pointing us to a deeper truth. So often in our relationships and family lives, we can feel the absence of joy, abundance and divine favour. Life can be hard. Working to provide food, clothing, shelter and warmth for our families can be tough; coming to church can feel joyless and devoid of interest. Caring for a sick relative can feel relentless; even love itself can seem hard at times. Maybe the words of Mary, 'they have no wine' represent each of us in our deepest need for the healing and transformative touch of Jesus Christ. Aren't we all seeking this miracle? Aren't we all thirsting for something more?

Jesus' response to Mary seems rather rude and harsh. 'Woman' he says, 'why come to me? My hour has not yet come.'

At the end of his gospel just before his arrest, John has Jesus cry out, 'now has the hour come for the Son of Man to be glorified.' And as Mary waits at the foot of the cross, standing by her son right to the end, we hear Jesus call her 'woman'. John is being very clever here. To us, the word 'woman' sounds rude but in those days it was a mark of profound respect and by using this word, he is conveying a message for the whole of humanity, whatever your age, race, gender or identity; Jesus speaks to you intimately, personally and with deep reverence and love, inviting you to trust that his hour of glory will come in your life.

You may be thinking what does this mean for me right here and now? Well, let's have a look at what the mother of Jesus does with this response of her son. She doesn't lose her temper or go off in a huff. No, she simply tells the servants to 'do whatever he tells you'. These are the last recorded words of Mary in the bible; do whatever he tells you. Again, here is a message for us, to do what Jesus tells you to do, no matter how outrageous or bizarre it may seem. It is an invitation to trust in the redemptive and healing love of Jesus Christ, so that he can work miracles in our lives. It is a call to believe that no matter how dark and difficult things may seem in our families and relationships, no matter what embarrassment or humiliation we face, God is at work whether or not we recognise it. Can we imitate Mary's patience and complete trust in her son?

John then has Jesus tell the servants to fill these six huge stone jars full of water. I love this bit! At no point do we hear the servants say to him, 'who do you think you are? Why should we take orders from you?' No, they simply do as he tells them. I am certain that filling water jars without the advantage of a running tap and hosepipe must have been a boring and time-consuming activity. Again, this is deeply symbolic. Jesus needed the faith, trust and hard work of those humble and ordinary servants. We cannot perform a miracle; all we can do is to keep filling up the water jars, even when it feels boring and time-consuming and let God do the rest.

See, how can we ever know the impact of our yes, of our love for one another? How can we ever know what God is doing with the service we offer him? I don't believe that we can ever truly appreciate the ripple effect of our lasting footprint of goodness in our families, relationships and the wider community. Just as these servants carried out the will of the master in silent obedience in order for him to 'show his glory', so too can we play our part in the glorious unfolding of God's love, simply by filling the jars.

We are told that these water jars were for the Jewish rites of purification. It seems to me that Jesus cared less about the washing of cups, bowls, hands and elbows and more about people. And so I guess that symbolically he uses these jars to replace love of the law with his law of love. Saving this poor couple and their families from ruin and shame mattered

more than outer cleanliness. Maybe the challenge is this: are you more concerned with outer appearances or with the heart? What matters most to you? Is there something you feel needs the transforming love of Christ to set you free? Only you will know the answer to that.

At the end of the narrative and at Jesus' request, these servants take a cup of water to the master of the feast who immediately recognises a wine of quality.

Not only has Jesus turned this water into a fabulous wine but he has provided an abundance of it – hundreds of litres! God loves abundantly and God gives richly and extravagantly. He is so generous with his time and gifts. He wants to give us and our families more life and joy in him. Everything we are and everything we have is a gift, given to us by a God who loves us unconditionally, no matter what. The abundance of wine was a sign that the hour of the Messiah had indeed come. This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee; he let his glory be seen and his disciples believed in him. He still lets his glory be seen – sometimes we just need to open our eyes!

At both Cana and the wedding I attended, it wasn't about perfection. It was about sharing, about families and friends coming together to mirror God's miraculous love. Today's celebration is about marriage and family life, in all its forms, and in all its ups and downs. It's about being open to love – and like Mary, trusting that all will be well; and of course there is no greater example of this than her vigil at the foot of the cross!

At the wedding feast of Cana we see first of all the spousal dimension of God's relationship with us – a symbol of both his love and the intimacy he desires with each of us. We see the potential for despair and hopelessness when the wine runs out.

However, despair and hopelessness did not have the final say. That belonged to the miraculous love of God the Father, through his son Jesus who let his glory be seen.

And so, can we, like Mary, notice and care for the poor? Can we bring our needs and those of others to her son Jesus? Can we follow her example of patience and trust? Can we obey her instructions to do whatever he tells us, no matter how strange it may seem?

When there is no wine (or sandwiches), can we, like the servants in the story, co-operate in his plan by silently and obediently filling our water jars so that Christ can work miracles in our everyday lives? Can we do this by praying together, loving one another especially when it's not easy and treating each other with respect?

And finally, can we, like the steward, taste the wine of God's joy, abundance, divine favour and love and pronounce it good?

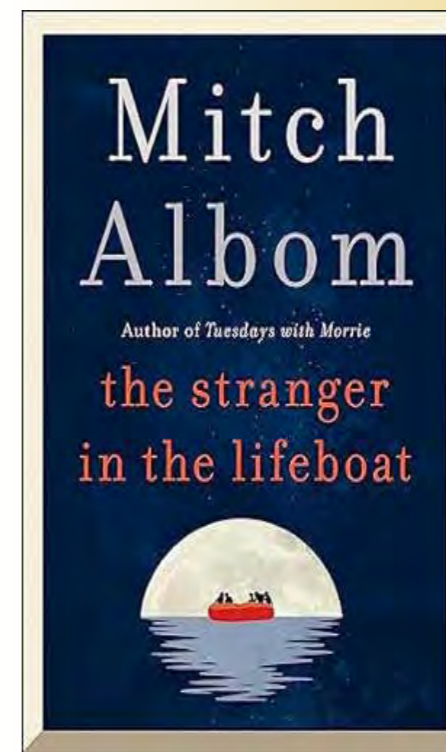
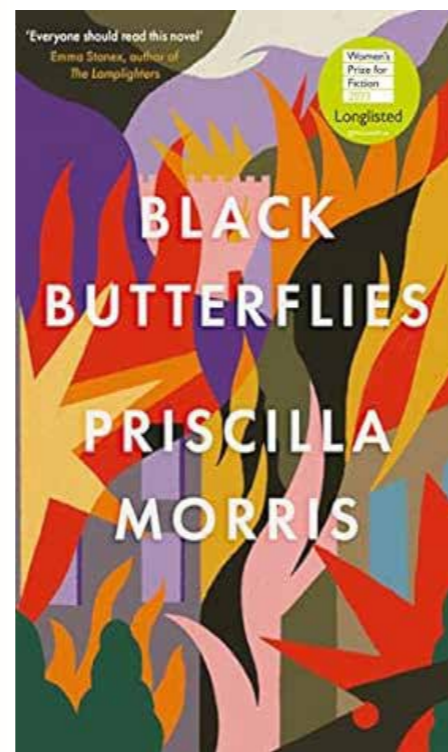
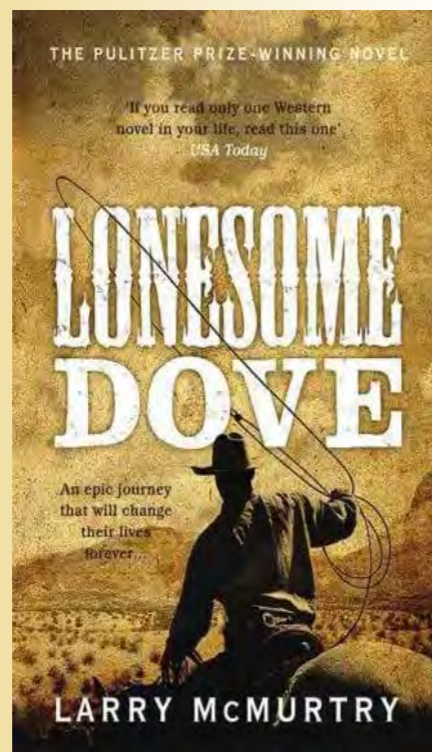
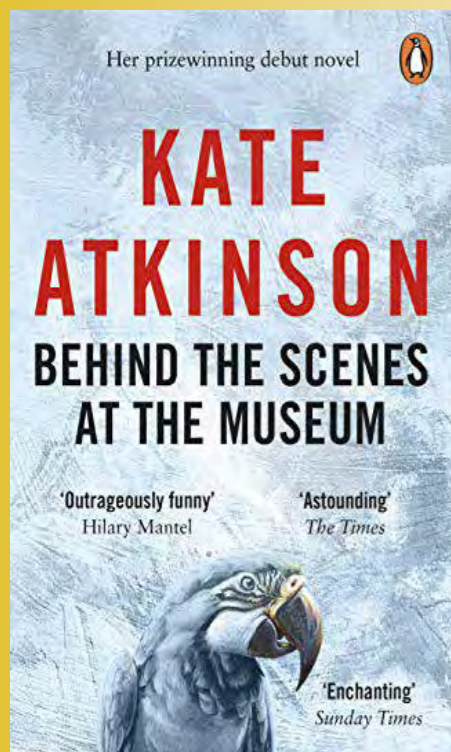
Amen.

A number of years ago I attended a wedding where the reception took place in the upstairs of a pub. There were 40 guests there and when the buffet arrived, it consisted of just 40 sandwiches, one for each guest. I have no idea how that situation was finally resolved because three of us sneaked out for a Chinese and came back when the hoo hah was all over. I have to say that despite that embarrassment, the party was excellent with much laughter, drinking and dancing.

Today's story comes from the gospel of John, which is one of hope and one in which disaster does not have the final say. The wedding feast of Cana directs us towards that reality. For me, the overriding message of this particular story is that, in the reality of our lives, God can and does work extravagant miracles through humble and ordinary people and in ways that we may not expect. In order to do this, he needs our co-operation and trust.

In Jesus' time, weddings went on for days; everyone went along and there was great joy and celebration.

I like the idea of Jesus at a wedding; we tend to see him



St Peter's Book Club

Behind the Scenes at the Museum by **Kate Atkinson** was the first book we recommended after the summer last year, although it was reviewed in Issue 15 of Shine, last September. Like New York, so good they named it twice, Behind the Scenes at the Museum is so good it deserves a second endorsement. Don't be put off by the title - the museum is York and in particular the lives of working-class families living in and around York from the 1800s to the 1990s. It is a tragicomedy which conveys the gritty reality of the working poor, particularly for women, whilst at the same time giving us the chance to glimpse northern humour as ordinary people make the most of what life throws at them.

Swap the frontier of working-class York for the wild west and a small frontier settlement near the Mexican border and you have our next book - **Lonesome Dove** by **Larry McMurtry**. A western that won the Pulitzer Prize in 1985, it is a journey with the Hat Creek Cattle Company as they drive their herd of stolen cattle across the Great Plains to Montana. The characters encountered in this epic (900 pages) show mankind at both its best and

Alison McGarr reviews the latest titles on the club's bookshelves.

worst – but love, friendship, loyalty and a good old-fashioned sense of duty prevail.

Fast forward 100 or so years, and another frontier, this time between warring Bosnian Serb Nationalists and Bosnian Muslims, the harrowing **Black Butterflies** by **Priscilla Morris** tells a story set in 1992 Sarajevo during the first year of the siege. An estimated 100,000 people were killed and over 2.2 million people were displaced

If you would like to join the book club, we meet up in a local restaurant every 3-4 months to discuss the books we have read. There is no pressure to read all the books, so please do look out for the notices in the newsletter and come and join us. Alternatively, if you enjoy reading and would like to recommend books for us to read and review, please contact Alison McGarr on 07792 107152.

during the conflict – but this story focuses on the day-to-day fight for survival of the civilians trapped inside the war-torn city.

The 'Black Butterflies' are the burning fragments of the books destroyed when the city library was destroyed in the shelling. This is a symbol which highlights that it is not just human life devastated by war, the cultural heritage of a people can be burnt away too.

This segues nicely to our next recommendation, **Everything is Everything** by **Clive Myrie**, which is an autobiographical account of BBC journalist and reporter, Clive Myrie's life as a British-born son of Windrush parents. Clive's story spans the history of modern-day Britain and the conflicts around the world that he has reported on. He reflects on the racism he has both experienced and witnessed and asks us to consider the culture and heritage of the migrant, must they assimilate or can they, should they hold onto their own cultural identity?

The Stranger in the Lifeboat by **Mitch Albom** tackles a different frontier, the boundary between belief and non-belief. A luxury yacht has sunk, nine survivors are stranded on a lifeboat when another man is pulled out of the water and he claims to be the Lord who can save them. The only problem is that all nine of the survivors are asked to believe in him. This book is very highly recommended as a thought-provoking, hoped-filled story of faith.

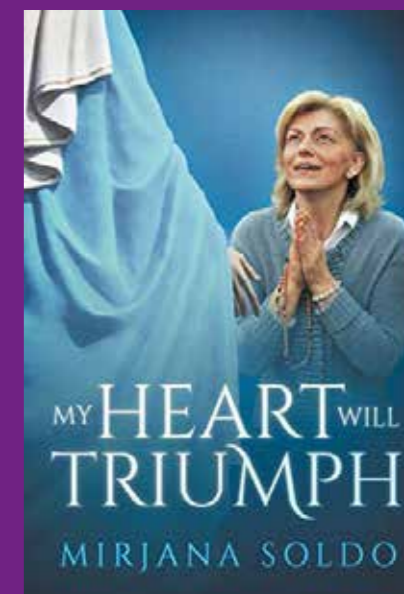
Our final two books for this issue of Shine are two thrillers. **Homecoming** by **Kate Morton** is set in Adelaide, shifting between Christmas Eve in 1959, when a family are discovered murdered and the modern day, when a young woman returns home to visit her elderly grandmother and begins to suspect that something is amiss. The whodunnit aside, this is a story that transports you to the Adelaide Hills and the landscape of southern Australia. The heat, the sounds and the panoramic views are so vividly described that by the end of the story the fictional town of Tambilla feels like home.

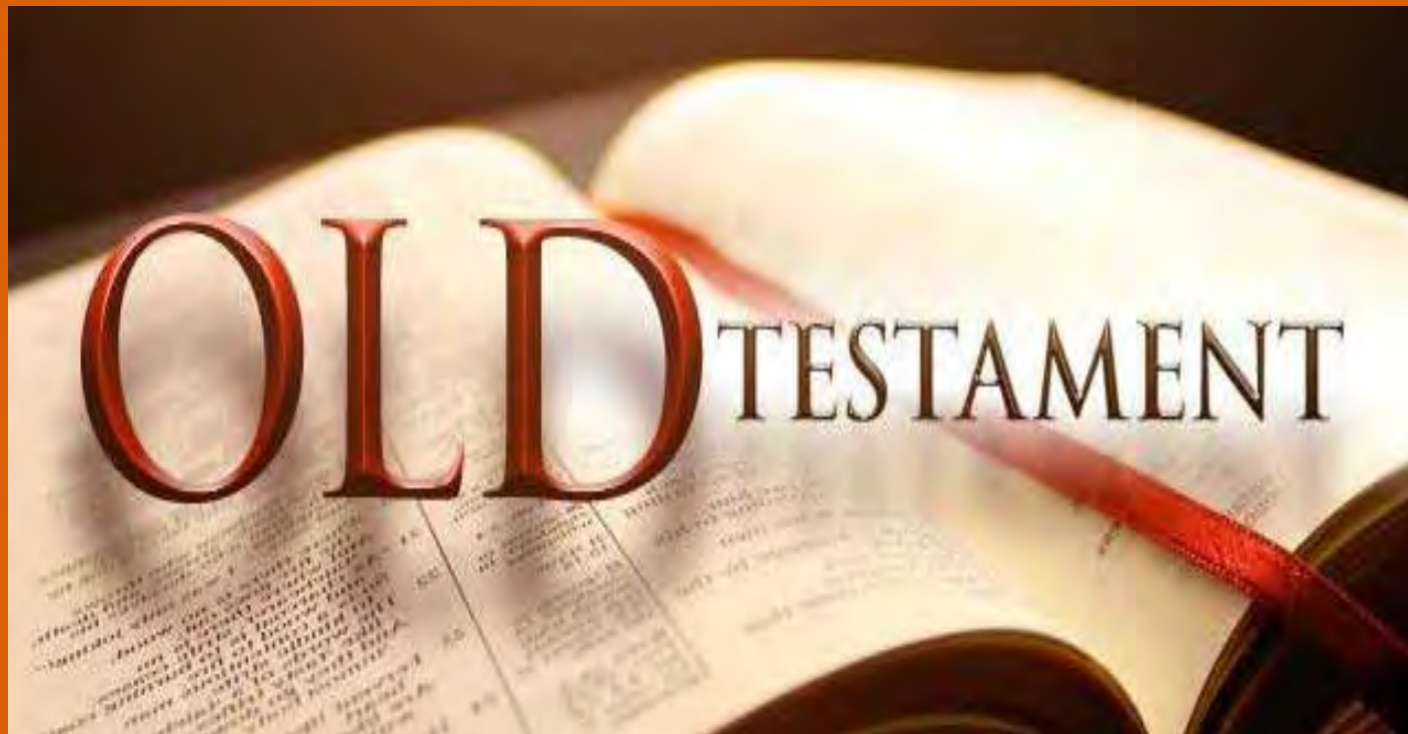
Don't Look Away by **Rachel Abbott** is a story about Nancy whose younger sister disappeared from their aunt's holiday home in Cornwall eleven years ago. Nancy returns to the house determined to discover what happened to her sister – a gripping thriller with lots of twists and turns along the way which will keep you guessing.

And **Hannah Saatchi** shares her thoughts on **My Heart Will Triumph** by **Mirjana Soldo**.

Having been to Medjugorje in April I was keen to read this book by one of the visionaries, **Mirjana Soldo**. As well as re-telling some of the appearances of Our Lady which started in 1981 when Mirjana was 16, the book also provides a fascinating, if disturbing, insight into the Communist regime that Mirjana grew up in.

I try not to take for granted the privilege of being able to attend Mass each week, but this was a stark reminder of how lucky we are to be able to worship freely. Mirjana and her fellow visionaries came under intense pressure from the authorities to renounce their faith and her refusal to do so had lasting consequences, such as the disruption of her education. Mirjana's message throughout the book is one of love: love for one another and how, through love of Our Lady, we can be led into a deeper relationship with God. Mirjana is humble in her re-telling of her story and makes it clear that despite her calling, God does not value her above the rest of us. Rather, we all have a part to play and are to carry the love of God to those around us. I felt uplifted after reading this book.





An Old Testament Journey ...in our parish!

If we are honest, most of us (Catholics) have a slender knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. (We call them the Old Testament but of course to our Jewish brothers and sisters, they are not 'Old'. They are the only testament.)

We treat them with reverence but pay lip service to them: "They are very important, but..." And the 'but' is that they are difficult to read. No. Very difficult. They are repetitious, full of arcane laws, stylistic awkwardness and exaggerated claims. And they don't seem very relevant to an age of instant digital communication, global pandemics, imminent climate disaster – and all the other woes of modern life!

And, of course, they have been ridiculed by scientists for presenting a childish, mythological picture of the world's origin at odds with a 'grown-up' evolutionary perspective.

But (and it is an important 'but') if they are really so trivial, why have generations of people from all nationalities, cultures, religions and genders found life-giving meaning in these awkward writings? Why have

David O'Neill gives us a bit of background to the fascinating talks he has been giving,

they claimed "This is the Word of God"? And very few of these people would fall into the category of bible thumping literalists.

God, I think, always likes to surprise us, to deal us the odd card from the bottom of the pack. So, I've long had the suspicion that wrapped up in the sticky sweet papers of patriarchy, mythology and legalism, it might be possible to hear the sound of God's voice. Shh. Listen... First, we must become hearers of the Word.

So, some of us want to find out if we can read them and make sense of them – and most importantly, we want to find out if they really have anything worthwhile to tell us about the mystery we call God. It is a journey. We don't know if we will find what we are seeking. If we set out with all the answers we are cheating – we have arrived before we have left. If we really want to hear the voice of God, we start with open

minds and hearts.

When we read or listen to the Scriptures, God does not expect us to shut off our thinking mind, not to recognise problems and issues. We are people of today and we will not understand their importance for today's world if we freeze off our thinking, questioning mind. Prayer is not a retreat from reality, but facing it. So, we have to find the right balance between praying – and studying, examining, questioning.

We have set out. Not quite from Ur of the Chaldees, but from the parish centre on most Thursday nights (at 7.30pm). If you would like to join us, wear sandals, carry a staff and bring plenty of water because deserts are thirsty places!!

David's series of talks has continued during Lent and more are currently planned for Thursday nights on 11 April, 18 April, 25 April.

Celebrating liturgy

Altar linen
Christine Slater: 07954 332651

Altar servers
Fr Peter

Church cleaners
Margaret King: 0161 483 4584

Eucharistic ministers
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Flower arrangers
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Lay-led liturgy
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Adult and junior choirs
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Folk group
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Readers
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Welcomers/stewarding
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0161 483 3476

Creating social activity

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ajmccgarr68@outlook.com

Men's group
John McKay:
07715 362403

Parish newsletter
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0161 483 3476

Parish noticeboards
juliewilliams10@gmail.com

Parish website
Anne-Marie Bailey:
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Special events
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mckay7897@hotmail.com

Theatre group
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Walking group
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Exploring faith

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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

Centering prayer
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Footsteps
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Guided prayer
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michaeldomalley@sky.com

Holy hour and prayer ministry
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lauramsmall@hotmail.com

LPA liaison
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juliewilliams10@gmail.com

Mothers' prayers
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Praise and worship
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lauramsmall@hotmail.com

Rosary groups: adult and children
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lauramsmall@hotmail.com

Scripture group
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TOAST (Time On A Sunday Together) Children's liturgy
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terrythiele@hotmail.co.uk

Little fishes
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anne.wroe@sky.com

Marriage and family life group
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SPY (St Peter's Youth) group
David Small: 01625 876 752

Outreaching in the community

Disability Inclusion group
Maura Beesley
inclusionstpeters@gmail.com

Hospital chaplaincy
Chaplaincy Office: 0161 419 5889

Hospital Chaplaincy (Emergency)
Hospital switchboard will bleep
0161 483 1010

Via St Peter's
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Jackie Mackay: 0161 483 6348

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
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Issue 2, July 2017



Issue 3, December 2017



Issue 4, April 2018



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Issue 6, December 2018



Issue 7, April 2019



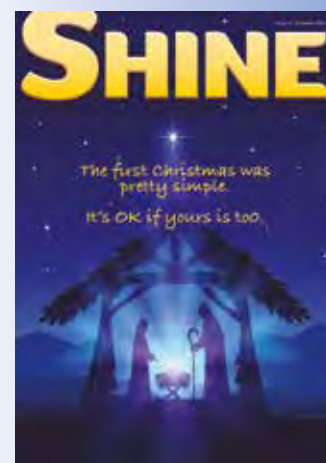
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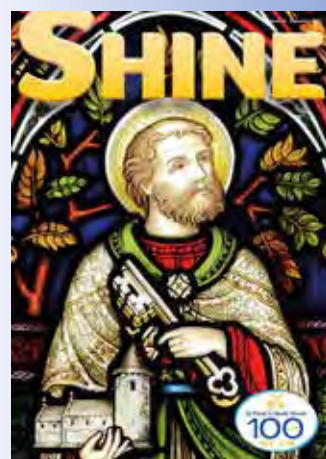
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Issue 13, July 2022



Issue 14, December 2022



Issue 15, September 2023



Issue 16, April 2024

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