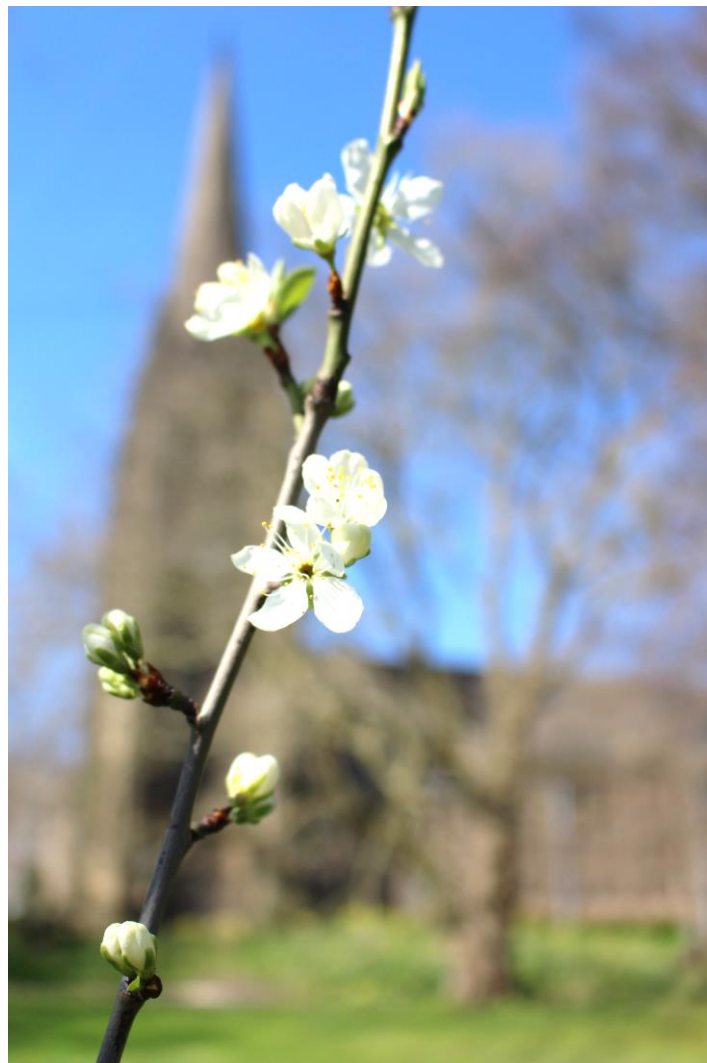


MARK'S MESSENGER



*The Parish Magazine of
St Mark's Church, Broomhill and Broomhall, Sheffield*

Autumn 2023 *Donations welcomed and can be made via the app below*



1963 – 2023 and onwards...



The theme for our Diamond anniversary year is 'inside—out' as we celebrate the last 60 years and look forward to the next 60 years. Revd Michael Adie's vision in 1963 was that people would come to St Mark's to be enriched but then join in with activities within the community. Our ethos continues to be that people come into St Mark's to be nurtured and resourced to go out into the community and wider world to share their gifts and skills which are many and varied. All are valued here and given the opportunity to explore their God-given talents so they can be utilised inside or outside of the church.

We start by looking back. The modern building of St Mark's church in which we worship today was opened in September 1963 and characterised a new ethos of open-mindedness and community spirit which continues to this day. The first 50 years are documented in our book *A History of St Mark's* which was edited by David Price and is still on sale in the church. Over the last ten years we have witnessed and been part of many changes.

- Consecration of the first woman Bishop in the Church of England
- Installation of solar panels on our roof and achieving the gold eco award
- Installation of the first female vicar of St Mark's - Sue
- Becoming part of a Mission Area with St John's Ranmoor and St Mary's Walkley.

- Licensing of 2 readers, 1 Children's worker and 5 people accepted for ordination training
- Started hosting Open Communion services
- Purchased a house to rent to Roundabout to help its work of ending youth homelessness
- Installed a new sound system, AV equipment, and launched a new website.
- Online worship via Zoom

Our sixtieth anniversary offers the opportunity to celebrate the role St Mark's has played in the community and in our lives and to consider how we want to invest in the next sixty years.

The building is a starting point, because it's the focal point in which we gather, and for some is the place where they encounter God as God breaks into their lives. Through worship, concerts and events, baptisms, weddings and funerals, school visits and people just popping in during the week, we help people see that church is relevant every day of our life. Noticeboards advertising community events, children and family's activities, environmental concerns, LGBTQIA+, home and international issues reflect our commitment to an inclusive vision of the kingdom of God.

A post-it note left in church one day read:

"I am not looking for God but if I were, I think I could find him here"

Our vision is to practise a living, thinking, loving, faith. Living faith which is inclusive, vibrant & engaged. Thinking faith which engages with scripture, tradition, reason & experience. Loving faith which serves our communities by following Jesus.

To achieve this, we encourage church members to play an active role both within the church and the local community, whether that be amongst family and friends, in their workplaces, or with groups or charities. What is written in this edition is a snapshot of the ways in which St Mark's is joining God's mission of transforming work in the wider world.

It celebrates St Mark's expression of and commitment to:

- Worship – page 5
- Children and families – page 9
- Music – page 11
- Inclusivity – page 15
- International Relationships – page 19
- Eco Church – page 25

- Study and learning – page 31
- Community Action – page 34.

It's not all hard work. We've also had fun as we've gathered for social events and fundraising.

- Swimathon and dancing
- Cheese and wine tasting and meals
- Concerts and plays
- Auction of promises

The fund-raising element of the year is to enable us to reduce our carbon footprint and work towards being carbon neutral by 2030 by investing in the building through installing secondary glazing and updating our heating system. Another strand of the fundraising is to make the church more visible beyond the congregation by investing in our website and social media profile. We hope that the combination of looking inwards and outwards will make St Mark's a space that is even more welcoming and accessible for congregation and community use and help us manage the church in a sustainable way. To date, we have raised over £4,000 and there are more events planned. You could invite friends along to share in the fun.

Ten years ago, Sue challenged us with these words:

'As we look back may we be drawn towards becoming a fuller part of the future life of this faith-filled community of St Mark's discovering what it means to be church in contemporary society.'

They remain as valid today as they were ten years ago. We still have things to learn and we look forward to listening to your thoughts and ideas and exploring ways in which we can make St Mark's a place where all connected to it have the opportunity to encounter and share the Spirit of God

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people

And kindle in us the fire of your love.

Shan

This edition was edited by Shan Rush and Mike Hunt, proof-read and typeset by Dez Martin and finally formatted by Margot Fox before being printed and distributed by Zoë Varcoe.

The next (Christmas) Edition will be edited by Frances Gray.

WORSHIP AT ST MARK'S CHURCH



It is probably the case that St Mark's caters for a number of different – if not competing – styles of worship within its regular patterns of services. To appreciate the variety may require an acknowledgement of the theology within the church. In all cases, however, the Eucharist remains a central offering in the three regular timeslots.

The 8.00am communion is regularly attended by a small but loyal cohort. The traditional, beautiful BCP language, while potentially jarring for those with more of a progressive persuasion, provides poetry and rigour. There is always a 5-minute homily, and prayers and intercessions are voiced for all those whose names have been written on the prayer cards outside the Lady Chapel by visitors to the church during the week. It is a service providing familiarity and reverence. It lasts about 40 minutes.

The 10.00am Eucharist is the main service, and largest attended. Communicants number around 100-120 each week. There is a choir, led by a musical director, provision for children, and the format is as followed in Anglican churches: Preparation, the Word, the Intercessions, the Sacrament, the Dismissal.

There are 4 hymns – opening, gradual, offertory and final. These are carefully chosen to reflect the seasons and the church calendar. There is a mixture of old favourites, new favourites, some from Celtic and Northumbrian traditions. Some

are written by past and present members of the congregation. It's extremely unlikely that you will hear anything by Graham Kendrick or Stuart Townend.

Liturgy is common worship-based, though with additions from other sources, including past and present members of the congregation. The format of the liturgy changes with the church seasons and is regularly reviewed.

The language and liturgy and the prayers are carefully considered. Whilst we are a 'liberal' or 'progressive' church – whatever people take that to mean – and mindful of how language might be perceived to be biased, any adjustments (e.g. referring to God as 'she') are considered only where it might add to the experience of the worshippers, and never to make a personal or petty-minded point.

What is refreshing is that members of the congregation are free to challenge anything that does not sit right with them – that freedom is certainly exercised, as any member of the clergy or laity responsible for leading services will testify, and the clergy are fabulous at hearing people out. Surveys have been taken in recent years over the congregation's favourite (or otherwise) hymns, and there is usually some feedback sought after the Lenten and Advent seasons.

The 7pm evening service is approximately 45 minutes and utilises a variety of expressions of worship which offer contemplative and reflective space. The first Sunday of the month is a Eucharist. The second Sunday offers a discussion at 6pm followed by a compline-like evening prayer at 7pm. The third Sunday evening service is a Taizé service, attended by many from other churches. The fourth Sunday has a themed content. When there is a fifth Sunday, the focus is on Healing and Wholeness, and offers the opportunity to be prayed for and to be anointed. The variety offered at night service may be part of the attraction.

This author was particularly drawn to St Mark's in the first place by the provision of a non-threatening opportunity to experience silence and wait for God's presence in an evening service.

Whilst the quality of the music is excellent, creatively and sensitively planned by the Director of Music, worship is not taken to be a performance. It is about getting closer to God, and going out and serving the community, rather than focusing on ourselves and how we measure up as Christians.

There are some occasions during the year – Carols by Candlelight, Palm Sunday – where the choir is boosted by additional voices to add to the feeling of celebration.

It is hoped that the inclusive nature of St Mark's is perceived as being held lightly in the background as a 'given', rather than trumpeted as being the driving force

behind all that we do. Whilst we would hope that no one should feel unwelcome at any of our weekly services, the Open Communion, which is held once a month at 4pm on a Sunday, specifically provides an opportunity for those who might feel unwelcome at a regular Eucharist elsewhere to attend church.

It is worth noting that people in St Mark's can disagree fundamentally on quite big issues. For example, the church is committed towards striving for inclusivity and caring for the environment. This does not mean that 100% of the congregation is 100% behind all the policy ideas. One of the healthiest things about St Mark's is that we can disagree about big and small issues and still regard each other as sisters and brothers pursuing a desire to know God more clearly. In effect, this means there is scope for diversity of opinion and theology – and hopefully all feel safe in voicing their thoughts. This is the case regarding worship. There is a slow evolving of worship, holding on to and preserving what is good, whilst seeking to refresh as a need is noted.

Jonathan Williamson

Editor's note:

Whilst most people now attend worship within the building, the pandemic offered an unexpected blessing as it encouraged us to re-evaluate how we could connect with one another whilst we were unable to access the building. When gathering in the building restarted, we wondered if there would still be a demand for online worship. There is, and St Mark's continues to make good use of Zoom to livestream the Sunday morning Eucharist and this hybrid format of physical and online gathering is now well established. We decided to stay entirely online for the weekday Eucharist on a Thursday at midday. Using a Celtic liturgy, a Priest presides and the readings and responses are shared by the gathered congregation, widening participation.



We also gather online for the Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer. This format enables our Mission area to worship together at Morning Prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays, utilising the Church of England Common Worship Liturgy in the book, via the App or on the Church of England website. In the evenings we screenshare the Northumbrian Community evening prayer and invite everyone to participate.

Shan

ST MARK'S DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY

Service



Celebrating
60 years of
St Mark's

Broomfield Road, Sheffield, S10 2SE

10am | 8 October 2023

Join us in gratitude as we celebrate the role St Mark's has played in the community and in our lives over the last 60 years.



www.stmarkssheffield.com

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT ST MARK'S

The presence and contribution of Children and Young people within the life of the church has increased significantly in recent years and supporting and nurturing their faith continues to be a priority. They are integral to our churches, but we need to make sure there are no obstacles preventing them from getting involved.

It's cause for celebration that at St Mark's children and young people are present, engaging in activities and worship and are flourishing individually and in terms of numbers. Some families have started coming here so that their children grow up in a church where all are visible, affirmed and valued, knowing that the Christian faith will continue to be part of what supports them, whatever their identity, and they won't have to suffer discrimination, pain of rejection from their church.

At the APCM, Anna spoke on behalf of the Chyps committee which works with Hannah Jones, our Children's and Families worker to plan and oversee provision for children and young people within the St Mark's community. Anna said:

'The obvious thing to bring your attention to is the numbers. Over the last year or so we have seen a growth in the



number of children and young people attending St Mark's. This includes several young families choosing to make St Mark's their church home, as well as a number of new babies being born! In total, we have between 40 and 50 under 18s who attend regularly, and 25 families with children registered. To put this in perspective, based on the electoral roll numbers plus a bit more, under 18s make up about a 6th of the congregation. I encourage the PCC, other groups and the congregation to hold this in mind during discussions and planning.

'I can't say for sure what we are getting right, but I think the warm welcome and acceptance of children and their parents "to come and be part of a faith community as they are" is a big part of it.

‘We have enjoyed developing our provision as we recover from the pandemic. It’s been a joy to be able to be able to support the children to reintegrate into their church community and we’ve been able to build on things we did by necessity for 2 years, particularly outdoor worship. This takes place once a month and we make the most of the wonderful space on the green which has recently been serendipitously added to with a set of tree stump stools. Provision on the other weeks is through creche, Godly Play, Lions, family music sessions and occasional afternoon special events. Whatever they are doing, the children and families return to church so they are part of the celebration of the Eucharist.

‘The majority of the under 18s are currently primary school age, but the joy and challenge of children is they grow up. We are constantly reviewing our provision with the hope of not just meeting the needs of the children in our congregation, but actively providing opportunities to support their spiritual and social growth – something which feels particularly important during adolescence as children start to question the world around them and find their own identities. As a team, we would love to develop this work more, and over the next couple of years, we will really need to if we are to retain these children who have the ability to transform both the Church and the world.

‘We also have a challenge to continue to meet the needs of children and their parents, in terms of the sheer numbers of people. We are currently unable to extend our provision or do anything extra because we do not have the helpers. The majority of our helpers are parents themselves, and we are already stretched, partly for time, but also because we are lacking in energy. I think it’s fair to say that the pandemic was exhausting for parents of young children and even a small opportunity for peace and reflection during a service feels like a gift. So today, if anyone is thinking “I could do that”, we would love to hear from you.’

Thank you: to all the people who support our children – people who run groups, who help with one-off events, and everyone who demonstrates how much they value our children, whether that’s by smiling at our children and saying hello, chatting to parents or providing the all-important biscuits at the end of the service!

Anna Ryder

MUSIC AT ST MARK'S



Music features in a variety of contexts at St Mark's, but perhaps most prominently in the 10.00am Sunday Parish Eucharist, where we generally have four congregational hymns, led by the choir and accompanied by the versatile Cousans organ. The choir will also regularly sing an introit at the start of the service and an anthem during communion, both of which will reflect the theme of that day's service in some way. Depending on the season the congregation might also sing short Gospel, Peace, intercession and communion chants, as well as straightforward settings of the Gloria, Sanctus and Benedictus. On occasions instruments other than the organ, such as piano, violin, viola or cello, will play some role in the worship, and at major festivals there might be a brass group, or a small string orchestra, or another type of ensemble. The service normally concludes with a short piece – a *voluntary* – on the organ, or played by other instruments.

Currently, the hymns are chosen by a committee made up of one of the clergy, the Director of Music, David Willington, the Children's and Families' Worker Hannah Jones, and a handful of members of the congregation who have some expertise as musicians. The committee is mindful of what the theme of each service might be, but also strives to choose hymns whose text reflects the liberal theological values of St Mark's and various other sensitivities. So, we tend to avoid hymns such as *Onward Christian Soldiers* because of somewhat triumphalist overtones, and attention is paid to ensuring that texts are gender inclusive, and so on. This will sometimes mean altering words or

phrases: for example, in *All My Hope On God Is Founded* we often replace 'He' and 'His' (when referring to God) with 'She' and 'Her'; and in *Amazing Grace* we substitute 'I was bound but now am free', for 'I was blind but now I see'.

Traditional Anglican hymns form the core of what we sing during the Parish Eucharist, but the committee also includes some more contemporary songs and music from around the world. There are two main reasons for doing so: firstly, it allows for more variety within a service, and, secondly, it instils freshness into the repertoire and we avoid the temptation to just keep singing the same old cycle of well-known hymns. Care is also taken to include music and texts by female writers and writers of different nationalities (Anglican music has frequently been dominated by white British males), and to have some songs which children and teenagers will recognise and enjoy.

The results of a recently published music survey at St Mark's reveal that most members of the congregation appreciate this overall approach, but the committee is certainly not going to become complacent about that and is already addressing various suggestions made by those who participated.

We have recently included much more music notation in the order of service PowerPoint slides projected on the screen, especially for new hymns, and there has been positive feedback about this. Singing is viewed as being centrally important when we meet together: most people really like singing all the hymns and other settings, and some have remarked that they particularly value having a Taizé chant during communion, as it helps them to remain focused.

The Director of Music has oversight of all matters pertaining to music at St Mark's, and this role is considered so central to all that we do that the holder of the post is remunerated on a part-time basis and included as a member of the Ministry Team.

David has been our Director of Music for five years. His basic policy is very simple: everyone and anyone is welcome to take part in music making if they wish to do so, perhaps by singing in the choir, or by playing an instrument, or in some other way. During coffee time after Sunday morning services David can usually be found chatting with members of the congregation, enthusiastically encouraging them to get involved, and getting feedback about the music they have just experienced. David is an accomplished singer and violinist/violist as well as being a fine organist, pianist and choir trainer (and he has

superb administrative skills) meaning he can confidently turn his hand to any genre or style, thus enhancing the musical life of the church.

The choir plays a leading part in most of the music for Sunday morning services, and also on other occasions, including the Christmas Carol and Ash Wednesday services. It benefits from having many singers who have been members for thirty or forty years or more, but David has been successful in recruiting a steady influx of new singers, something which is vital to maintaining the breadth of what we can offer.

Members of the choir take their role very seriously. They love singing and want to ensure that all the music is polished to the highest possible standard. This means that they practise and prepare as if for a 'performance', while realising that the actual aim is to provide music which enriches and enhances the theme of a service and supports the congregation in the context of worship.

Alongside the adult choir, David and Hannah have been steadily working with children to enable them to make their own contribution to music at St Mark's, with the hope that some of them will want to join the main choir in due course.

There are other services in which some sort of music can be featured, not least the Night Service, all age services on the green, weddings and funerals. But not all music is centred on worship.

People at St Mark's also delight in attending cultural events, such as the many concerts which are staged in our building by church members or by outside groups. In addition, David has instituted occasional short coffee concerts immediately after the Parish Eucharist, featuring young local instrumentalists and their teachers, often when they have been invited in to augment the church's regular musicians in the preceding service. By doing this, and in various other outreach activities, including *Come and Sing* events, we are indicating to the wider community that the church is here, and that all are welcome to join in.

Andrew Sanderson

ST MARK'S CHURCH BROOMHILL PRESENT
a new play

LIONSTALE

the story of a church



Join us for a community play with refreshments and fundraising to protect and insulate our stained glass & windows, towards a zero-carbon future.

St Mark's Church, Broomfield Road, S10 2SE

SATURDAY 7 OCTOBER, 7 pm

FREE ENTRY WITH RETIRING COLLECTION

ALL WELCOME

INCLUSIVITY AT ST MARK'S



St Mark's is viewed internally amongst its congregation and from those looking externally both from a faith background and the community as an 'inclusive' church. It is an element of great pride to the church community and, because of this key fact, it attracts worshippers from all backgrounds who have often felt ostracised from faith and the church. Inclusivity is often one of the first words used when new members attend either as an attraction to visiting or a

reason for continuing to attend and contribute to church life at St Marks.

Many churches claim to be inclusive but how has St Mark's moved from purely claiming and aspiring to embodying inclusivity? This could be because of the physical appearance of St Mark's and its community; a progressive Ministry



Leadership team, banners outside the church proclaiming inclusivity, a mixed community of genders, sexualities and races and a library overflowing with literature relating to issues of inclusivity in the church. But, in fact, it is way more than this.

Inclusivity at St Mark's is enveloped into everything that the church is and does. Services regularly address the complex issues of inclusivity that the Church of

England faces, including female ordination and same-sex marriage, and are a beacon of light to all within and outside the church who are struggling with the incongruity of their faith and how it fits within their life when they have previously been told they are not welcome by virtue of factors that define them but which they did not choose e.g. sexuality, gender and race. Frequently during preaching, the phrase 'you are welcome' is uttered and this is not just in the church but also within the Christian faith.



But inclusivity does not just involve the Church leaders. The values and beliefs instilled throughout the congregation means the welcome is extended like an ecclesiastical hug from all angles. Diversity is embraced and enriches the church experience for all. Applauding what makes us different actually brings an intimacy that is unrivalled, recognising issues that have divided the Church of England for generations but not being defined by them.

All are welcome at all services at all times, but St Mark's recognises that communal worship is not easy for those who have felt or been made to feel unwelcome elsewhere. Virtual attendance, freedom to participate or observe, open communion

Sheffield (a small, intimate monthly service for all, centred at St Mark's) and specific services which promote inclusivity, e.g. 'Queer Carols', allow for all to be truly welcome in whatever capacity they feel able.

So, Inclusivity at St Mark's is all of this and more. Proactively approaching, embracing, and valuing diversity to create an environment where all can thrive in the shared love of Jesus and his teachings that we love him and each other, is encapsulated in all that occurs. May we continue to be a beacon of hope for the many.

Boyd Morgan

MARRIAGE AT ST MARK'S



The first wedding at the new St Mark's, October 5th 1963.
The couple are Margaret Whittington and Derek Colman.
Photo supplied by Sue Newman who was a bridesmaid.

Let me take you back to 1963. At this time, in law, marriage was between a man and a woman and was for life. The nature of family and family life has changed considerably since then with attitudes towards marriage, divorce, family life and human sexuality all having a part to play in this. Divorce due to marital breakdown was recognised in the 1969 Divorce Reform Act. It took until 2002 for the Church of England to acknowledge that some marriages sadly do fail and to permit a divorced person to remarry in church during the lifetime of a former spouse. Same-sex marriage was granted to gay and lesbian couples on 29th March 2014 following The Marriage (Same-sex Couples) Act 2013. The Act preserves the Canon law of the Church of England, which states that marriage is between opposite sex couples only.

To reflect modern day society and to give couples more choice over how and where they wed, the law and the position of the Church of England needs to change. St Mark's is bound by the Canon law which causes deep pain and offence to a significant number of people within our congregation, as it discriminates against same-sex couples in the Church by preventing them from being married in their parish church. We would like all married or engaged

couples to have the same opportunities, no matter what their gender, sex or sexual orientation.

At General Synod this year, the Rt Revd Sarah Mullally said the Church of England has ‘acknowledged the urgent necessity for pastoral change in welcoming and celebrating the Christian virtues of faithfulness, mutual love and lifelong commitment of so many same-sex couples in our churches and wider society.’ This reflects what St Mark’s has been saying for at least thirteen years and we look forward to it becoming reality more widely rather than just being spoken about. Sadly, the totally irreconcilable views of different traditions within the Church of England, not just on sexuality, but also on theology mean that the commitment to bringing Pastoral Guidelines back to the Synod held in July this year, which would finally enable the Prayers of Blessings to be used, has been delayed.

In the meantime, we welcome enquiries from same-sex couples who would like their commitment blessed and affirmed, possibly following a civil partnership or marriage at a registry office, or in a church of another denomination.



The latest wedding at St Mark’s, July 8th 2023.
The couple are Eleanor (Ellie) Harthill and Frank Meakin.
Photo supplied by Ellie.

Shan Rush

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AT ST MARK'S

St Mark's community embraces a wide diversity of nationalities and ethnicities and reflects a concern for our neighbours both at home and overseas. Such concern, borne of an awareness of the privileges associated with western lifestyles, is also informed by the experiences of those members of the congregation who have lived and worked in developing countries. There is widespread support for Sheffield's 'City of Sanctuary' as well as for local charities such as the South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group. We have a generous congregation and ring-fence 10% of our income for charitable work both at home and abroad. The big question is where to spend this in an environment of so much global need and despoilation? In choosing our charities we follow the ethos of St Mark's in celebrating human diversity, campaigning for and upholding justice, and discovering the sacred in life. At the same time, we are also aware of the need for sustainable development and good governance.

Generally, we partner with organisations where we have some personal connection as a church and receive first-hand feedback. Our policy is to avoid bigger multinational charities where donations are swallowed up into no doubt good and necessary work but where there is little personal knowledge of outcomes. We share the money available equally between 10 charities.

We have several asylum seekers in the congregation including some from Iran. They best of all understand persecution of the Christian faith and the plight of would-be asylum seekers. With their knowledge and help we have supported Care4Calais and The Omid Foundation.



Member of St Mark's delivering goods and cheque to Care for Calais

Omid Foundation

Through the experiences and knowledge of our Iranian community we know that there is a need to help disadvantaged young Iranian women who are often marginalised, abused and denied the education required to reach their potential.

The Omid Foundation is an online organization that strengthens the social, emotional, health, gender, & educational competencies of marginalized young women, aged 15-25 in the Persian-speaking world. It provides them with opportunities to experience a full range of life options through self-empowerment, therapeutic intervention, and education, so that they can overcome the traumas of their past and rebuild their lives.

Care4Calais raises money and goods to support ‘illegal’ migrants trapped on the shores of the Channel at Calais. They arrive without documents or possessions and often face weeks of waiting before risking their lives in flimsy boats to cross the Channel. Donations of warm clothes, tents and toiletries are taken in lorries to Calais and money donated is spent on buying day to day food and mobile phones so necessary to keep the migrants in touch with their anxious families back home.

Abura Literacy School

This is a small charity co-founded by a member of St Mark’s who spent time volunteering in Ghana and recognised the desperate need for basic education among poor families required more than just books. Food and transport are provided as well as school uniforms for leavers going on to secondary school. Girls find it difficult to stay in school once they reach puberty, so there is sanitary provision for girls. The charity also helps fund teacher training.

Reach Bwindi

REACH Bwindi is a small charity supporting Bwindi Community Hospital (BCH), a church of Uganda hospital in southwest Uganda. The charity was set up by previous UK volunteer doctors who saw a need for ongoing support. A member of St Mark’s spent two years working at the hospital and is a trustee of the charity. REACH Bwindi largely supports staff salaries at the hospital therefore preventing loss of skill and experience: essential in this very remote, rural area. Retaining trusted staff enables them to stay part of the local community and to offer high-quality care for which BCH is known.

SuCCol foundation (Support for Children in Colombia)

This organisation was founded over 20 years ago by members of St. Mark’s church including the director of the Zuá Foundation who was studying for a PhD in Sheffield. SuCCol supports the Zuá Foundation financially with an annual donation. The objectives of the Foundation and SuCCol are to support children and young people who, due to domestic violence, family homelessness or poverty, are very likely to be linked to gangs, to use harmful substances, to be involved in teenage pregnancies, to abandon formal education and to end up living on the street. It provides holistic education from primary through to higher education and throughout a student’s education promotes the expectation for older students to help with the younger ones imbuing a sense of community and self-empowerment.

Phaseworldwide.org

Phaseworldwide’s journey started in 2005. Since then, with its partners in Nepal, it has changed many thousands of lives through improving health, education and livelihood opportunities in the remote middle hills of Nepal. Phase provides support

by way of Assistant Nurse Midwives (ANMs) in post all year round in government health posts where the remoteness deters government workers from staying. It provides reliable supplies of medication to the health posts, health education to mothers' groups; schools, both to staff and children; female volunteer government health workers; traditional healers and village elders. Phase focuses on improving the lives of women and girls through working to prevent child marriage; the custom of Chaupaddi, where women and girls are banished to animal shelters often outside the village, during menstruation and child birth; to help girls to complete their school education by the provision of suitable toilets, sanitary materials and by sex education for boys and girls, a subject not on the government's education curriculum.

Phase agricultural projects providing simple animal husbandry, weather resistant seeds, and poly tunnels. This provides year round improved diets and fresh vegetables in a harsh climate, improving not only health but providing a source of income .



A unique aspect to Phaseworldwide's work is the opportunity for GPs from UK to take part in the GP mentoring scheme where experienced GPs can spend a couple of weeks mentoring the ANMs in the health posts, teaching and advising in the clinics. An unforgettable experience that I have repeated 12 times and would encourage any GP reading this to get involved with and return to UK with a renewed enthusiasm for our much-maligned NHS.

Practical Action

This is an innovative international development group, working with communities to develop ingenious and lasting locally-owned solutions for agriculture; water and waste management; climate resistance and clean energy ideas that work so people in poverty can change their world. We have chosen this charity partly because their work has been seen in some of the villages in Nepal where Phaseworldwide works, both roadbuilding, increasing ease of access to villages, and fitting of chimneys in

the houses. Many villages still cook on wood fires in windowless houses creating a smoke-filled living environment and epidemic proportions of chronic obstructive lung disease. The provision of small solar panels for houses enables children to complete homework and women to provide an income through knitting. Small is beautiful. But on a larger scale, PA has developed schemes for improving the sewage disposal in large cities, landslide resilience and in-country production of pesticides and fertilisers.

Global Justice Now

This a democratic social justice organisation working as part of a global movement to challenge the powerful and create a more just and equal world. Global Justice now mobilise people in UK for change, and to act in solidarity with those fighting for injustice, particularly in the global south. It teaches young people in UK about inequality and encourages them to get involved with campaigns for justice. St Mark's members have felt that education of our youth is important embedding a sense of justice and the need for campaigning.

GJN takes on issues in Trade, Climate Action, Aid and Big Pharma. It lobbies lawmakers, corporations and politicians to change their views that work against those less able to fight the inequalities of our world. Big Pharm ignores diseases that will not make them huge profit, consequently millions of people suffer from preventable illnesses each year. Many Pharma companies hold patents preventing countries from making cheaply their own life-saving drugs and vaccines such as Covid vaccines.

Christian Aid is an exception to our small is beautiful policy but it still works at all levels with strong small UK hubs that update donors with events, reporting from field workers, providing fundraising support as well as working thorough international churches.

Christian Aid has a 10% share of the money ring fenced from St Mark's income but we also strive to raise further funds in other ways. We donate the money raised from some church collections, church meals and sales of produce and preserves.

This year during Christian Aid week 2023, St Mark's raised £567.07 from deliver-only envelopes (£339.12 gift-aided), £225.05 from Church collections and £60.00 from childrens' cake sale. St Mark's own e-envelope raised £450.00.

USPG (United Society Partners in the Gospel) is an Anglican mission agency that works with churches worldwide. USPG has 3 strategic aims; Rethinking Mission, Energising Church and Championing Justice. It brings people together from different parts of the global church in mutually enriching conversations and profound encounters, to deepen faith in Jesus Christ.

Dilys Noble

GOOD NEWS FROM THE ZUÁ FOUNDATION IN COLOMBIA



Members of the Zuá Foundation Bee-keeping Project receive their award at the 'Apifest' World Bee Day event.

St Mark's was rightly proud of its achievement when it received the Gold Eco Church Award a few months ago, but it is also good to hear of similar successes achieved by other organisations that we support. For the last 20 years we have been making donations through SuCCol (Support for Children in Colombia) to the Zuá Foundation which helps disadvantaged children in Bogotá. Zuá now has two centres in the city itself and also a rural centre, *Los Senderos*, some 40 miles outside Bogotá, which has been used as a hostel where young people from poor areas of the city can experience life in the countryside. For the last six years or so *Los Senderos* has also been receiving young refugees from El Cauca, a war-torn area in southwestern Colombia. These students have few financial resources, so Zuá has been supporting them financially on pre-university and university courses and in return they give up time to work on agricultural projects at the centre.

One of these projects has been bee-keeping and *Los Senderos* now has two apiaries and 14 beehives. The original aims of the project were to protect the species of bees they have in the hives, to increase the pollination of other crops

and to produce small quantities of honey for sale. With the involvement of the students from El Cauca and particularly one boy whose father has kept bees, the project has been a great success, not only with regard to its original aims but also in terms of the beneficial social and educational effects it has had on the young people involved.



Students working with the bees.

And the good news is that, on World Bee Day on 20th May 2023, the Zuá Foundation was awarded first prize for the social and environmental impact of its bee-keeping project at *Los Senderos*. I'm sure you'll all be happy to join me in saying *¡Felicitaciones!* to everyone involved in the project.

Beehives on St Mark's Green??

Dez Martin

N.B: There are some excellent resources about World Bee Day for younger members of the congregation at: <https://www.twinkl.ie/event/world-bee-day-2024> .

THE PATH TO GOLD ECO CHURCH

The church's responsibility for the environment is a broad and complex issue that involves theology, ethics, ecology, and social justice. There are many different perspectives and opinions on this topic and, over the last ten years, St Mark's has sought to address the concerns raised by members of the congregation by seeking recognition as an 'Eco congregation'.

Within the Diocese, there are now 61 eco churches registered on the scheme, and of those 15 have achieved the bronze award, 8 the silver award and we were delighted to be the first church to receive the Gold Eco church award in this, our Diamond Anniversary year. The 36th church to be awarded out of thousands of churches now signed up to the scheme. We received the plaque from Bishop Pete at the Eco-Diocese celebration at the Cathedral on Sept 9th and it is now on permanent display in the church.



Presentation of Gold Eco Award

It has been a long journey and we have learned much along the way. Our commitment to this programme did not come out of nowhere – it came from the

dedication of a small group of individuals who prophetically understood, before most of the rest of us did, that issues of climate change and the threats to biodiversity were the greatest challenge of our age and that we, as Christians, have a duty and an obligation to recognise our calling to value and protect God's beautiful planet, our home.



Margot and John with banner

From this calling came a number of initiatives which included measuring home energy use and finding ways to be more efficient, campaigning for action at a national scale to reduce carbon use, recognising that there is no social justice without climate justice, and setting up Hope for the Future, a national charity that

brings together constituents with their elected representatives to work together on climate change. It is a core part of our faith to do this work, as outlined in the Five Marks of Mission (1996):

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. **To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.**

Many churches were slow to adopt creation care as core to their activities, so A Rocha, a Christian environmental charity, set up the Eco Church programme in 2016:

'In the UK, the vision through Eco Church is to create a vast network of churches across England and Wales as local centres of creation care in the community – shining beacons of hope for a brighter environmental future.

'The scheme is now run in partnership with Christian Aid, The Church of England, The Methodist Church, Tearfund, The United Reformed Church and Allchurches Trust Limited.'

The Church of England Environment Programme has adopted Eco church as part of its wider commitment to Net Zero and creation care generally.

St Mark's has been following the programme since these early days, across five key areas of church life: worship and teaching, building management, land management, community and global engagement, and lifestyle.



On the Green

It has widened our horizons and given us a menu of activities to choose from and resources to support us. More people have become involved, with the Environment Group keeping a focus on moving us on to greater impact. To progress through Bronze to Silver and then Gold, you need the backing and sign up from the whole church community, and this has been transformative. We now think about the environment in the liturgies we use, the prayers we say, the sermons, the refreshments we serve, how we heat the buildings, what we ask of those who rent our rooms and, of course, the choices we ourselves make in our lives. Our children delight us with their passion for the natural world and enjoyment in

being outdoors, whatever the weather. We hope that people have felt supported and encouraged by the programme, a counterbalance to constant crisis in the headlines.

Going forward, we are asked to share what we have learned as a church community with others and continue to learn from each other the best ways to serve our communities. We must explore what it means to be 'beacons of hope' and we have the big challenge of becoming Net Zero still before us, both for our church, our homes, our city and our nation. The money generated through fundraising during our anniversary year is being put towards reducing our consumption of fossil fuels by installing double glazing in the main church.

Loving God,

You called your disciples to follow in your way:

As we journey, help us to walk lightly,

treasuring the world you have given us and cherishing each other.

Grant that our walk may be part of your plan to care for creation,

seeking climate justice and the coming of your Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

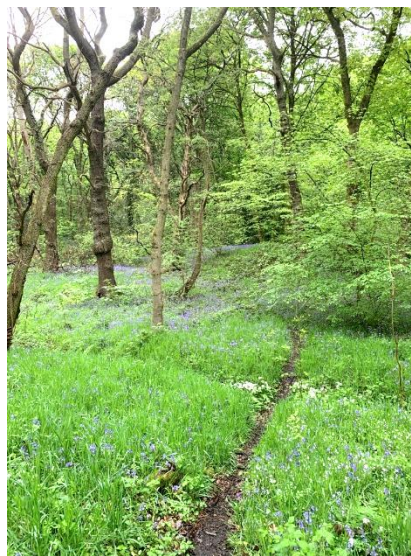
Amen

(Author unknown)

Margaret Ainger

One of the initiatives the environment Group instigated this year was a photographic competition. It attracted entries from both adults and children.

These are the 2 winning entries in the children's category by Samuel J and Olive R

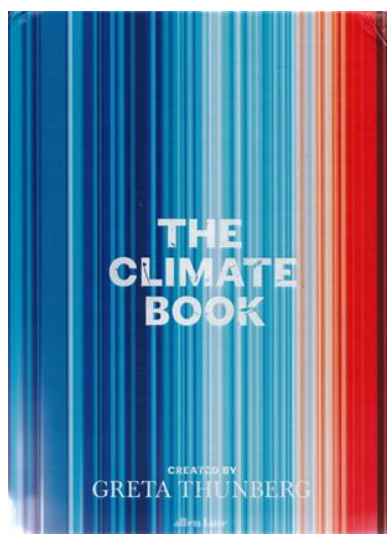


The winner in adult category by Michael M



BOOK REVIEW:

The Climate Book by Greta Thunberg*



This is an excellent compendium of short articles by many experts sharing information about a huge variety of aspects of global heating. There are five main parts each introduced by Greta, who now writes with greater maturity than in her 2019 *No One is Too Small to Make a Difference*. But she has lost none of her sharply pointed criticism of political inaction: ‘It gives me no pleasure whatsoever to keep calling out the bullshit of our so-called leaders.’; ‘Today our political leaders are allowed to say one thing and do the exact opposite. They can claim to be climate leaders while they rapidly expand their nation’s fossil

fuel infrastructure. They can say that we are in a climate emergency as they open up new coal mines, new oil fields and new pipelines. It has not only become socially accepted for our leaders to lie, it is more or less what we expect them to do.’

The book starts with two parts on climate and on planet change then moves on to its Effects On Us, What We’ve Done About It, and ending with What We Must Do Now. Even as someone who has been studying climate change and trying to cut their emissions for several decades, I learnt some new information; the book includes many illustrative diagrams and graphs to make it easily understood. There are many statements to ponder:

- “Industry disinformation, misdirection and lobbying were abetted by the wishful thinking of people who accepted industry arguments about natural gas as a ‘bridge fuel’, resisted acknowledging industry malfeasance and insisted on the power of ‘corporate engagement’.”
- “How can we talk about an existential human crisis created by inequality, the exploitation of workers and nature, land theft, genocide and over-consumption without any mention of morality?”
- “Air pollution from fossil fuels is already responsible for nearly 10 million premature deaths around the world every year.”
- “The decision to consider burning biomass as renewable was made long before the time frame set out in the Paris Agreement began. This loophole allows you to create lots of very carbon intensive

energy – burning wood releases even more CO₂ per energy unit than burning coal.”

- “Harmful fossil fuel industries are still receiving subsidies of \$11 million every minute.”
- “One of the most important actions we can take to combat air pollution and the climate crisis is, simply put, to stop setting things on fire.”
- “The fact that 3 billion people use less energy, on an annual per capita basis, than a standard American refrigerator, gives you an idea of how far away from global equity and climate justice we currently are.”
- “By 2070, researchers have concluded, 19% of the planet – home to some 3 billion people – might be uninhabitable.”
- “Since the IPCC’s first report in 1990 we’ve dumped more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than throughout all of human history prior to 1990.”
- “In the autumn of 2021 the world’s biggest direct air carbon removal plant opened in Iceland, it will capture about three seconds’ worth of each year’s global CO₂ emissions.... Carbon capture and storage is a key part of the strategy to which we seem to have blindly entrusted the future living conditions for life on earth as we know it.”
- “The cost of doing nothing is staggering. Insurance company Swiss Re estimated the global economy could shrink by 18% if no climate mitigation action is taken, at a cost of as much as \$23 trillion annually by 2050.”
- “Global wildfires in 2021 created the equivalent of 6,450 megatonnes of carbon dioxide. That is 148% higher than the total fossil fuel emissions of the entire EU in 2020.”

And in her section on A Just Transition, Naomi Klein emphasizes that in order to achieve this we need a holistic approach that sees the interconnections between all these aspects, including also inequality, nationalism, energy ownership, and indigenous rights, and then we need to act appropriately.

So do read it if you can but as it’s almost like an encyclopedia it is best digested in small chunks. Meanwhile we must all continue doing what we can individually, but also use all the means we can to educate and persuade others of the urgent need for action, especially politicians and businesses.

Michael Miller

**The Climate Book*, publ. Allen Lane, 2022, 446 pages, Library Section K

STUDY AND LEARNING AT ST MARK'S

The Christian faith is one of relationship so to grow in faith means allowing ourselves to be open to deepening our relationship with God and with each other. This happens in many ways including Sunday or weekday worship, study and personal prayer. Being alongside others is also important. Helping on the Soup Run or with another social action project are important ways of learning what it means in practice to follow Jesus' teaching to love our neighbour.

Growing in faith is the work of a lifetime and we understand that everyone's faith journey is unique. We recognise that people come to church with a range of experiences, joys, sorrows, hopes and disappointments and we know we have much to learn from one another.

We aim to offer opportunities for exploring faith which allow plenty of space for questions and discussion. This extends to include our liturgies and music choices for worship. We prepare these with care, retaining the form of Anglican liturgy but also weaving in contemporary and creative expressions of prayer. Our Study and Learning Group is specifically tasked with supporting people to explore a living, thinking, loving faith by:

- addressing the learning needs of the whole range of life stages and faith journeys, through a diverse range of learning opportunities using the full variety of preferred learning styles
- increasingly opening ourselves to God and the work of God in us, and being able to question and discover for ourselves the significance of Jesus Christ
- accessing the riches of scripture, the Christian tradition, reason and experience and interrogating God-language
- being equipped to understand how faith and life interact both personally and in the wider community, and having the resources to act on this and to articulate and develop language for expressing our faith and the difference it makes
- exploring a sense of vocation in the widest sense.

Our resources

To support the above, we offer a range of resources and tools, designed to be accessible to all. These include:

LOGOS, an in-depth bible study group which meets once a month on Zoom. During 2023 we are exploring the Old Testament Prophets, beginning with Jeremiah and then looking at the minor prophets. The

LOGOS group spent the previous four years working through the Gospel of John. We look at the historical context, the language used and consider what the writer's words can mean for us today. This is an open discussion where people are encouraged to explore their own response to the text.

We offer conferences and seminars hosted virtually and online on topics such as the history of liberal theology and apophatic faith; these seminars are provided 'in house' or guests are invited to speak. We also support the development of learning material on specific topics or themes. One of our most recent projects is Faithful Living.

Faithful Living is a project in Christian ethics developed by the Study and Learning Group. We decided to set aside time to meet, to study Scripture, and reflect theologically on how as Christians we can lead faithful and holy lives, true to our values and beliefs, and which acknowledge the context we live in. The project asks the questions:

- how do we live faithful Christian lives?
- how do we grapple with scripture, church traditions, and our experiences?
- what does doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God, look like today?

Our aim is to develop resources for the church which help us to articulate our beliefs. We began with questions of sin, forgiveness, identity and sexual ethics. We hope in time to develop these resources further to cover a range of topics. For most of the Christian era, patriarchy and white male privilege has skewed the theology of the Church and shaped its ethics. We believe the Holy Spirit is liberating us from this, and see the challenge of feminist, queer and postcolonial theology and practice as a sign of this movement. Our changing understandings of human identity, race, sexuality, gender and disability are challenging the Church to revisit her beliefs and assumptions.

The witness of Scripture

We believe in a literary reading of the Bible. Our scriptures inform, challenge and inspire us. They tell the story of how the faith was understood and lived out. We take inspiration from the life of Jesus and the teaching of his followers.

We believe the scriptures are a collection of literary texts which have been passed down to us, and agreed by the Church to be the scriptures of the Church. We look to the Bible to understand our faith. We recognise that the books of the Bible are comprised of different literary settings; some books are written as origin myths, some poetry, some letters to believers, some recounting historical events.

We believe our task in reading the Bible, is to engage faithfully and robustly with the text, searching for meaning and understanding and allowing the words to speak to us.

To do this we have engaged in a practical process of theology; engaging robustly with our scriptures, and particularly the teachings of Jesus, alongside our experience of God's Spirit in our lives. We have drawn on resources from academic theology, and developments in science and other fields, alongside the teachings and traditions our has faith passed down to us.

Engaging in ethical questions is a communal activity of the Church, alive and changing, as we together explore what we know of God, and how that shapes and challenges us to live. In the teachings of Jesus, written up in the Gospels, and in the letters to the early Church, we read about God's overarching values of love, freedom and living life in all its fullness.

In Genesis we read about our identity as humans as being made in God's image. That we are creatures shaped and formed by a creative God. These values of life in fullness, creativity, freedom and love shape how we know God, how we discern God's work among us, how we try to live. Our values and ethics are worked out in relation to these values revealed in our scripture, in dialogue with others.

Amanda Pilkington

ST MARK'S – COMMUNITY ACTION

St Mark's has a long history of what is described as 'Community Action' – church-led projects to serve the local community. The nature of projects can vary widely and focus on issues such as bereavement, disability, exclusion, hunger, inequality, isolation, loneliness, poverty or rejection. Some projects continue throughout the year whilst others run for a season. Some occur out of recognising an immediate individual need, others are in response to the desire to transform unjust structures of society or to protect someone or something that is vulnerable.

It's important to recognise that we don't all have to be part of a specific project to be part of this work. Each person attending St Mark's is encouraged to practise a living, thinking, loving faith in their homes, amongst their neighbourhoods and within workplaces to which we are connected.

What follows are some examples of ways people attending St Mark's achieve this individually, with others from St Mark's or the as part of the wider Mission Area.

Community Action in time of Pandemic

As the call to 'stay home' was announced and the doors of churches were closed, the ministry of the church continued as people reached out to support the wellbeing of not only those within the congregation, but friends and neighbours on their own initiative. People ran errands, picked up prescriptions and dropped off groceries to those who became housebound. Rather than solely prioritising their own survival, many people reached out, attending to the needs of others by befriending them. As lockdown ended, some of these relationships ended as giver or recipient resumed other activities they had stopped. Some relationships have continued as the recipients' ill health or frailty means their capabilities have diminished and they are no longer able to return to their previous level of independence. Respecting the rights and dignity of each person we encounter, listening to what they need rather than what we think they need, and encouraging them to make choices and decisions are all part of the ethical values of caring for people.

Soup Run

The soup run has been operating for several years now and is a valuable link with the community in several ways. It was part of a group of churches, taking food to the city centre but we became an independent group in 2019 so that we could make our own decisions about when and where we operate. We are in contact with the Operation and Development Manager for Sheffield Community Safety Team. They update us about training opportunities and relevant support networks. In the past there have been five and six teams of people and there are currently three teams, one of which is made up of St Mark's members. We collect leftover bread and other food items from Rose's bakery on Saturday and keep enough food for the soup run. Any excess food is taken to the Roundabout Hostel off London Road and The

Salvation Army in the city centre. The excess brown bread is sold at church on Sunday mornings with the proceeds being invested back in the soup run to purchase fillings, coffee and hot chocolate etc. The teams go out on either Saturday or Sunday evenings with volunteers meeting at church to make sandwiches and hot drinks. The sandwich fillings are often made up of Rose's leftovers and if necessary supplemented by food bought by the team. The team then parks up in the city centre and walks round town, distributing food and drinks to people on the streets. Any leftovers on the night are left at the Salvation Army. Many of the people encountered have physical, emotional or financial problems which have led to them becoming homeless so signposting them to organisations or places where they can access support to overcome the barriers they have is part of the remit of the volunteer if the individual they encounter wants support. There is no requirement for them to engage with what can be offered and their choices are respected.

This continues to be an important way of church members coming together with other people to serve a need in Sheffield. Speaking as part of the St Mark's team, not only do we feel that we are connecting with the community beyond church, but we are also connecting with our own community. Friendships and links have been forged within the congregation. We would always be happy to welcome new volunteers so if you are interested in regular or occasional help please speak to Maria or James Oliver.

School Links

St Mark's is always keen to forge links with local schools. In the past this has happened with events such as the Broomhill Festival music concerts and garden party etc. Post Covid we have steadily started to reconnect with schools. Birkdale Pre-Prep School visited the lunch club in the summer term. They sang a selection of songs and showed their artwork. They also enjoyed a tour of the church. This was a hugely mutually beneficial event. A date is already in the diary for a similar visit before Christmas. Beth has also visited Birkdale to do an assembly and hopefully there will be further similar opportunities.

Lunch Club

St. Mark's Lunch Club has been running for 31 years, meeting every Wednesday during school term times, in the Lounge at St Mark's Church. It is run entirely by 12 Volunteers, mainly from St Mark's Church. on a rotational basis. One team produces nutritious and delicious meals, while the other team welcomes Members to the Club and organises a range of activities for the Friendship Club which meets after the meal. Activities include puzzles, quizzes, making collages, watching YouTube clips of various topics, singing, listening to music, talks, making things, discussions, board games. Friendship Club provides an opportunity to find out something new and to have fun.

There are 20 members, and an average of 14 people attend. Transport is provided by Transport 17 and an average of 6 people come by minibus. One Member, a wheelchair user, is transported by Sheffield Community Transport. The meal costs £3, transport by minibus costs £2 and the contribution to the Friendship Club activities is £1.

The Lunch Club receives an annual Grant from Sheffield City Council. The Town Hall asks any enquirer wanting a referral to a Lunch Club to contact Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS) on 0114 253 6650 where a representative will act as mediator between the would-be member and one of our club helpers. Other new members are usually friends of people already in the club. They might also be members of the church congregation or introduced by the vicar, or (rarely) via a social worker. Contact information: Tel: 0114 286 4427; Email: lunchclub@vas.org.uk (Renate Smith, Secretary)

The Mission Area Dementia Core Group

This group started meeting in 2020 with the aim of improving the support we can offer those living with dementia, whether that be the affected person or a family or professional carer. Understanding of dementia and how people are affected remains poor and stigma attached with a diagnosis often causes people to withdraw from society, including attending church, and they become isolated. We wanted to make small changes that can have a big impact on helping to improve the lives, wellbeing and inclusivity of people living with dementia and their carers by raising the churches' awareness of dementia and what we are providing for people with dementia by working collaboratively rather than individually. So far, sessions based on the Dementia Friends Training have been offered, we have registered with Sheffield Dementia Action Alliance and committed to take action to do more for people affected by dementia. We have undertaken an environmental audit that identified changes we can make within our building and worship. Christmas and Easter cards are sent to people within our care homes and we have worked together to host an annual service with an afternoon tea.

All these initiatives are examples of the St Mark's congregation having a sense of social responsibility and compassion for those we meet, live and work alongside. They are founded on listening to and being aware of the needs of the people, appreciating people's rights and using the gifts and skills we have to share the love of God more widely.

James and Maria Oliver & Shan Rush

The Churches of St Mary's Walkley,
St John's Ranmoor and St Mark's Broomhill invite you to

Hymns for Harvest



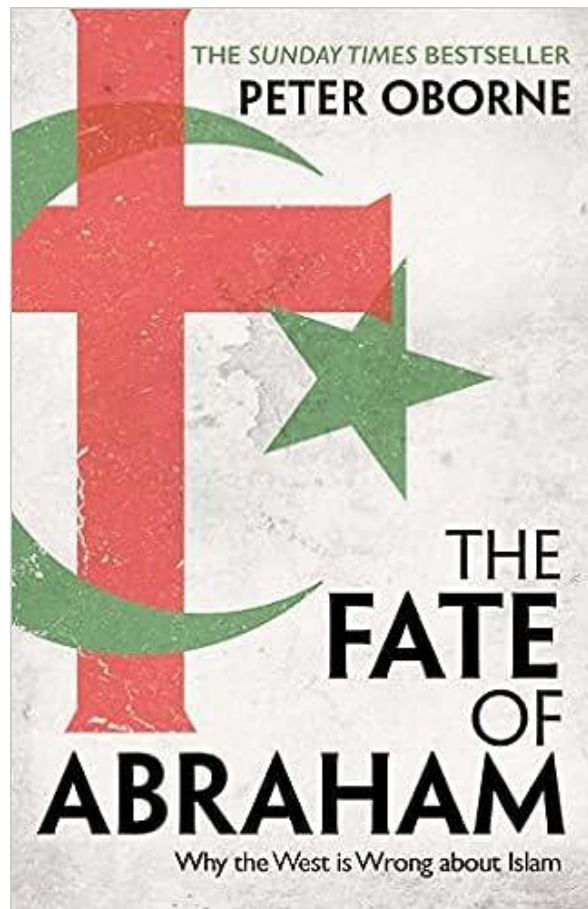
Sunday 1st October 2023 @ 3 pm
St Mark's Church, Broomhill

A dementia-friendly service of traditional hymns followed by afternoon tea, for anyone affected by memory loss or dementia, their family, friends and carers.

Retiring collection for Lost Chord - a Sheffield-based dementia singing charity lostchord.org.uk

Limited disabled parking available - to book email
office@stmarkssheffield.co.uk

WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE TO ISLAM?



9/11 was a huge shock, as were the July 2005 bombings in London. These events and others have contributed to a widespread suspicion in Western countries not just of 'Muslim extremists' but of ordinary Muslims as well. Peter Osborne, a journalist, has written a book 'The Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong about Islam' in which he argues that this hostility to Islam is far from new, but deeply embedded in our history. It has intensified in recent times and is unfair and dangerous.

Osborne comes from a patriotic army family and has worked for the Spectator and the Daily Telegraph – not an obvious background for a passionate defender of Muslims. It was his anger at British participation in the Iraq War which led him to take up this cause. He argues that prejudice against Muslims is 'the UK's last socially respectable form of bigotry.' He recalls the prediction made in 1993 by the famous American political scientist, Samuel Huntington, that the Cold War would be replaced by a 'clash of civilisations' – in particular an irreconcilable

struggle between Islam and the West. In Osborne's view, Western policy makers are foolishly and unnecessarily making this prediction come true.

Osborne does not seriously address the problems on the Muslim side of this 'clash' – such as the extraordinary violence of Al Qaeda and Islamic State and the oppressive regimes of the Ayatollahs in Iran and the Taliban in Afghanistan, though these are part of the overall problem. He sees these as a reaction to arrogant Western domination but, if so, surely they are the wrong reaction.

As regards the UK situation, his chapter on 'grooming gangs' does not in my view face up sufficiently to the uncomfortable revelations of the Jay Report. But I think that Osborne is in general making an important point – that the attitudes of Government and the media towards Muslims have become far too suspicious and negative. For example, the 'Trojan horse' affair concerning predominantly Muslim schools in Birmingham in 2014 was blown out of all proportion, ruining the careers of some well-motivated and moderate Muslim educationists and teachers.

It is easy to misinterpret Islam. I recall that in the Muslim Christian dialogues in Sheffield in the 1990s I was alarmed when an Egyptian student told me that he would like the 'Ummah' – the worldwide community of Islam – to become a state. At the time, I thought that this aspiration was dangerous and could lead to conflict with the West. But in retrospect I see it is as more of a theoretical ideal than a practical plan.

Media suspicion and negativity risk intensifying the 'parallel lives' problem identified by Ted Cattle in his report on the 2001 riots in Northern towns (mercifully not Sheffield). Modern communications and social media enable one to live mentally in a different world from many of one's fellow citizens.

The lesson for St Mark's is that we should keep up our contacts with Severn Road Mosque as in the past and be ready to join with them in joint meetings or even demonstrations where appropriate. Abdool Gooljar's willingness to come to St Mark's and talk with us is a great blessing. Equally, we should individually seek opportunities for getting to know Muslims better and learn about their rich cultural and religious background.

David Price

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