

# MARK'S MESSENGER



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

**Advent 2022** *Donations welcomed and can be made via the app below*

In the silence of a midwinter dusk,  
there is a sound so faint that  
for all you can tell it may be only  
the sound of the silence itself.  
You hold your breath to listen.  
You are aware  
of the beating of your heart.

The extraordinary thing  
that is about to happen  
is matched only by the extraordinary  
moment just before it happens.  
Advent is the name of that moment.

Frederick Buechner

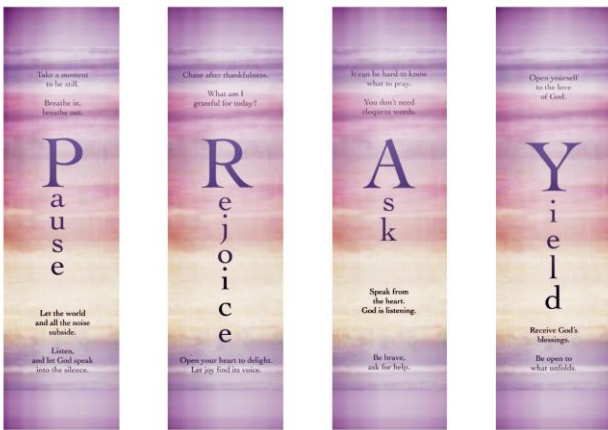


**We wait in anticipation**  
(Image courtesy of Shan Rush)



## THIS ADVENT, LET US PRAY

It seems very strange to be celebrating the Church's New Year as we approach the depths of winter. I rather like the reminder, though, that before birth there is a season of gestation. Bulbs and seeds need the darkness of the soil to prepare for bringing forth new life and we, too, need time to prepare ourselves for change. Prayer can be a significant part of such preparation so this year we have decided to focus on prayer over the four weeks of Advent.



*Banners designed by Beth Keith*

The four themes of Advent will be represented visually on the four main pillars of church:

Prayer can feel remote or difficult to do but one way of beginning is to pause. We don't have to come to a complete standstill. We don't need to commit to a 30-day silent retreat before we begin to pray. Sometimes it is enough simply to recognise the desire to pray and lean into that. We might think we are in the wrong place to pray but take the risk!

A wise person once taught me that either God is everywhere (yes, even here) or God is nowhere. If God is everywhere then it's all right to lean into God anywhere, even in what we might feel to be the wrong places and at the wrong time. This is how I discovered that when I am swimming, I can also be praying.

When we pause, we might want to fill the space with words, with demands, with apologies but if we can resist the desire to do anything except be in the presence of God then we begin to experience what it means to pause. We might be in church and we might find that we can pause during the service and go a bit deeper. But we might be in the supermarket or on the bus (less easy while driving the car!) and want to momentarily step back from the activity around us and recognise that God is with us, and pause. We might just take three or four deep breaths, in and out, as we acknowledge God's presence and power.

Strangely that can sometimes be enough to lead us towards a feeling of joy. Bearing in mind that joy is not the same as happiness, that joy can emerge in the midst of chaos and pain, as we pause to acknowledge God's presence that alone might release in us a sense of gratitude and praise. We are not alone and we are understood. This weight of responsibility we are carrying is shared. The fear that threatens to overwhelm us does not need to be hidden from God. The chaos of our minds or our lives is not being

judged – we are not being judged. God is with us and we can rejoice at that even if the problems continue, the pain does not cease and the world is still terrifying.

And this is when we might be free enough to know how to ask. When we begin by asking, we are usually coming from a place of anxiety but, more importantly, we may not have opened ourselves up to the creative possibilities which might be offered to us in prayer.

Clearly there are times when our prayers are urgent and we ask for God's help because we are in crisis but we still have to be open to receiving a surprising response, even simply, I am with you. But if we have managed to pause, enter into God's presence and rejoice that even here it really is possible to pray, to lean into God, then what we ask for might be more realistic. Of course, we can pray for world peace but we may need to attend to a particular relationship. We can pray that this winter does not lead people to despair and we might have to consider what we find particularly desperate and how we can start to change that. We might ask God to intervene but we have to be ready to offer our hands and hearts.

Isn't this what it means to yield? Our prayers are rarely 'answered' in the way that a telephone call is or a request for a repeat prescription. So often it feels as though God is too busy listening to someone else or that, maybe we said something wrong... Yielding to God means opening ourselves up to the possibility that God has been (and is) fully present as we lean in to prayer but that what we imagine might happen next may not be what happens next.

Taking a moment to pause, to rejoice in God's presence, to risk opening ourselves up to what we need to ask for and then letting go of the outcome, this is part of the dynamic of prayer.

It isn't instant gratification; it might not lead to the results we are hoping for but it might change the way that we approach the most difficult challenges we face. It might help us discover the beauty and joy which is right in front of us. It might help us to recognise that there really are some things where we need to ask for God's strength or insight – we simply can't do this on our own. And when we learn how to yield, when we accept that God is committed to this relationship of trust, then we start to discover that shoots of new life break through the darkest, coldest ground.

So, as we face a winter of discontent may we continue to be people of good news, people who believe in the kingdom of God where each person's value is celebrated, each person's potential is nurtured and each person's skill required. May we not just believe this abstractly but lean into the possibility that we have a part to play in making it more real.

***Sue Hammersley, Vicar.***

Welcome to our Advent edition of the Messenger which looks back over some of the activities we have been involved in over the last couple of months and looks forward to the season of Christmas and into the New Year.

In this edition you will find reflections on or details about:

- Our Advent theme PRAY by Sue
- what the Girls Group have been doing
- Morning Prayer by Janet Morley
- Our Christmas Services at St Mark's
- Write for Rights – An Amnesty International Campaign
- Sunday lunches
- Remembrance Day for the Children and Families
- A Fitting Tribute by Rob Wilks
- The Charities Home and International Donations are promoting over Christmas
- The Apostles Creed
- Pontius Pilate by Robin Story
- How Michael Miller became involved in volunteering on the waterways
- Cooper's- The Story of Sheffield Book Review

And much more....

Thank you for all your contributions.

#### Correction to attribution of photo's in the last edition.

In the article entitled 'Conversations about Death', we inadvertently credited Rosie Richards with having taken the photos whereas they were in fact taken by Jane Padget on a very memorable trip to London during the period of mourning for the late Queen Elizabeth. Please accept our apologies Jane, and thank you for the photos.

This edition was edited by Shan with the support of Dez, Margot and Zoë.

The next edition of The Messenger will be produced by The Environment Group and will come out in late January / early February.

If you have articles on an environmental theme, please send them via  
shan@stmarkssheffield.co.uk or

Margaret Ainger ([Margaret.ainger3@gmail.com](mailto:Margaret.ainger3@gmail.com))

by 14 January, 2023.

This will be followed by the Annual Report in April which Zoë will be collating.

## GIRLS' GROUP

On Sunday 13 November, some of our Girls' Group gathered to talk about prayer. They made pretzels, an activity designed to open up a conversation about communicating with God. Allegedly a monk invented pretzels by shaping scraps of leftover bread dough to resemble the folding of arms crossed over the chest in prayer. They also decorated jars.

**Lynne Pocock**

Photos: *Maria Oliver*



Ana and Frankie offered their thoughts on the day:

'We decorated jam jars and made them into Thankfulness Jars. During advent we are going to try and write down something we are thankful for each day and save these notes in our jar to remind us of things we are grateful for. Thanks for a lovely afternoon.' **Ana**

'I really enjoyed making pretzels and thank-you jars; it was really fun.' **Frankie**

## **‘O LORD, OPEN OUR LIPS.’**

Deep in the small print section of our regular Friday email, there lies an invitation to join the clergy in saying Morning and Evening prayer on weekdays. Not many people know that this continuous thread of daily worship is an absolutely vital part of the life of St Mark’s.

The clergy have to attend regularly (it’s one of their jobs!), but we laity are free to dip in and out at will. Some have attended for a while, at times when we really needed to be ‘carried’ by the ongoing prayer of the church. Others come on a regular day each week, or turn up as much as our timetable allows.

Based on the ancient monastic tradition of prayer and praise through the days and the weeks (not just on Sundays), we celebrate key saint’s and holy days, say the set psalms, hear readings from scripture, recite some of the inspiring canticles found in Isaiah and Luke, pray silently for the world, and end with the Lord’s Prayer. In the evenings, a Celtic service is used, but each weekday at 9 am, we say the contemporary Morning Prayer set by the Church of England (conveniently laid out each day in their app). So to join this service is to dip our toes into the wider Church throughout time and across the world.

It’s a good way to start the day, making sure that some of the very first words we utter after sleep are in the praise of God. Of course, we can also pray alone, maybe even using this service by ourselves. But hearing ourselves speak out loud to each other makes a real difference, I find.

And though there is the discipline of turning up, it doesn’t take a lot of our day. 20 minutes or so and we are wishing each other a good day and signing off. It’s not a social occasion or a meeting for business, and no one has to prepare ahead or dream up creative new ways to worship. We do the set service, just selecting from any options and appointing readers and off we go. Anyone who chooses not to speak out loud is free just to be there. And one of the happier legacies of Covid lockdowns is that these services are always on Zoom, instead of in the chapel as they used to be. So people who don’t live near St Mark’s, or even in Sheffield, are free to tune in.

Why do I like going to Morning Prayer?

Well, there’s a good deal of the poetry of the Hebrew scriptures in this liturgy, which makes it very rich. And we hear the narrative parts in much more detail than we do on Sundays, including stories that never turn up in the Sunday cycle.

These are often stories we heard as children (in a bowdlerised version), and it is instructive to hear the whole biblical tale – which is often funny, or moving,



or gory, or sometimes frighteningly relevant to today's politics. Written to be read out loud, scripture comes alive when we do this together, and the 'word of the Lord' can stick in the mind over the course of the day.

And the psalms are of course astonishing. They come with sentiments that we don't always approve of: desire for revenge as well as joy, yearning, sadness, despair, anger and stubborn hope in God. But allowing the full range of human emotions into the context of praise is strangely liberating. And the most familiar psalms become real companions over our lifetime, through times of difficulty and ecstasy alike. I also find it helpful to reflect that the psalms and the prophets were of course 'scripture' for Jesus; this is the tradition that soaked his soul – and echoes are found in much that he taught and in the way the gospel stories about him are told.

This habit of immersing ourselves in our tradition exposes us to all its familiarity and all its strangeness to our contemporary culture. We can be fed both by the connections and the contrasts. So why not use this Advent to try out this way of praying, if you haven't done it before?

### **Daily Offices**

You are warmly invited to join clergy and congregational members for prayers Monday- Friday, except on Bank Holidays. You are welcome either to listen or to participate in the liturgy.

#### **Morning Prayer at 9am**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86511848626>

Zoom ID: 865 1184 8626

#### **Evening Prayer at 5pm**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81554213727>

Zoom ID: 815 5421 3727

If the Zoom link doesn't open up (very occasionally clergy are unavailable) you may find the resources below helpful. In the morning we use Common Worship Morning Prayer (Contemporary) which you can find [here](#) or you can download the (free) Daily Prayer app from [here](#). In the evening we usually follow the Northumbrian Community's Daily Prayer which we screenshare, but you can also find [here](#).

***Janet Morley***

# Christmas at St Mark's

*We are proud to be an open and inclusive church  
We look forward to seeing you*

**Christingle service**  
27 November, 4pm

A service of light for all ages  
Refreshments from 3pm

**Carol service**  
18 December, 6pm  
& on Zoom

Traditional and contemporary carols  
and readings for the whole community  
With mulled wine & mince pies

**Nativity service**  
24 December, 4pm  
*on the Green*

All ages gather outside to retell the  
Christmas story  
Refreshments from 3.30pm

**Midnight Mass**  
24 December, 11.30pm  
& on Zoom

Carols and Communion celebrating  
the birth of Jesus

**Christmas Day**  
8am & on Zoom  
10am & on Zoom

Book of Common Prayer Communion  
Festive Communion service  
With refreshments

**New Year's Day**  
1 January, 10am  
& on Zoom  
7pm

Communion service

A quiet Communion starting the new  
year.

[www.stmarkssheffield.co.uk](http://www.stmarkssheffield.co.uk)



## WRITE FOR RIGHTS GREETING CARDS CAMPAIGN, 2022



Each year, members of St Mark's congregation join hundreds of thousands of Amnesty supporters around the world by taking part in their annual Write for Rights campaign. This year, your letters will demonstrate support for 10 people and organisations enduring human rights abuses.

### **YOUR WORDS ARE POWERFUL!**

Download the campaign booklet to get full details of the cases [here](#).

For those with no Internet access, copies of the booklets will be available via the International Committee who will be at the back of Church selling Christmas cards on 27 November and 4 December and on 11 December, the day nearest to Human Rights Day.

In a world where the opinions of people are often repressed, protecting human rights, land, and the environment becomes more and more dangerous. The world needs more people to turn their outrage into action, to invite their friends and family to participate, to get involved, and demand equality and justice from their governments. When you've sent your card, you could pass the booklet on to a friend or neighbour outside the St Mark's Community.

***Robin Story***

***'A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes – and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside, is not a bad picture of Advent.'***

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God is in the Manger*

#### Dates to remember:

- Write for Rights 2022 runs until 31 December.
- 16 days of Activism against Gender-based Violence run from 25 November to 10 December.
- International Human Rights Defenders' Day is 9 December.
- International Human Rights Day is 10 December.

## IRANIAN SUNDAY LUNCH

On 30 October, our Sunday lunch was hosted by our Iranian friends. It was a lovely meal and a great way to get to know them better and to learn more about their homeland and the challenges being faced there. Below the photo you will find an account of recent events in Iran and how you can support our Iranian friends.

On 16 September 2022, a fresh wave of unrest ignited in Iran. It was sparked by the morality police arresting a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman, Mahsa Amini, for wearing her hijab 'improperly'. Her brother helplessly watched Mahsa be put in a police van with violent and disproportionate use of force and taken away. A few hours after her arrest, her bruised and lifeless body was transferred to hospital. She was pronounced dead on 16



Photo: Shan Rush

September, just 3 days after her arrest. The authorities have denied any wrongdoing. The outcry over Mahsa's death has swept the country and the world. Women and girls from all generations are at the forefront of protests seeking justice and accountability while displaying their bravery by removing and burning their veils on the streets on Iran.

Similar to the past 43 years, the Iranian regime continues to vilify the protestors and suppress demonstrations using live ammunitions, mass arrests and fatal beatings. They have historically shut down internet and media around the time of people uprising to silence freedom of expression. They repeatedly target and arrest journalists and activists including the female journalist who first informed the world of Mahsa's story. According to the Human Rights Activists News Agency and United Nations, more than 12,000 protesters have been arrested and at least 250 people have been killed since Mahsa's death. This number includes teenagers and children as young as 11. Many suffered the same fate as Mahsa. Several of those detained, have been taken to unknown locations, violently attacked and in some cases raped and killed. Iranian women have been treated as second class citizens for years. From mandatory hijab laws to child brides as young as 10, to needing permission from husbands to leave the country and even being banned from stadiums are all products of the clerical regime's policies.

But it's not just women who are repressed in Iran. The regime has always failed to recognise and include diverse sexual identities and gender expressions. Recently, two LGBTQ+ activists were charged as enemies of God, an offence which under Iran's interpretation of sharia law incurs the death penalty. Ethnic and religious minority communities have too faced historic grievances in Iran. They have always been denied the right to identity, language and expression. On 28 October, authorities surrounded a key Sunni Mosque in Zahedan attacking people who were protesting with tear-gas and gunfire, leading to the death of a 12-year-old boy.

Despite this continuous brutality, the brave people of Iran continue to be present on the streets, universities and even school yards fighting for their most basic human rights. What began as demonstrations against the mandatory hijab has transformed to revolution of civil society. Iranians don't want a reform within the Islamic regime. They want to break free from it once and for all. Iranians have been yearning for this freedom the past 4 decades.

BUT – The issue with the Iranian regime goes far beyond country borders. The Islamic regime feeds off of the unrest in the region. Tehran exercises varying degrees of control in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Tehran's military support has already made its deadly mark on the Ukraine war.

There are steps YOU can take to help to show your support for the people in Iran who are calling for Zan, Zendegi, Azadi : **'Woman, Life, Freedom'**

- 1) Contact your MPs and demand that they speak out about the human rights violations in Iran. Urge UK officials to establish an international independent, impartial and effective investigative mechanism into the deaths and arbitrary detention of civilians, including the death of Mahsa Amini.
- 2) Help amplify the voices of those who are protesting. Use your platforms – whether in person or online – to shed light on Iran's situation and help keep this issue alive.
- 3) Join demonstrations in Sheffield or across the country. Help show people inside Iran that they are heard and supported in the UK. Help show the recognition of this revolution.
- 4) Look up Amnesty International's Campaigns for human rights in Iran to be respected and call for an end to the bloodshed:  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/search/iran/>

We extend our solidarity to the people of Iran and to friends and their families affected by recent devastating events. We are deeply saddened by the escalating violence. Our thoughts and prayers are with them and we support their right to peaceful protest and freedom of expression.

***Shan***



## REMEMBRANCE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



On Remembrance Sunday this year, the children and families gathered on the green and thought about why, what and who we remember each year, and broadened it out to think about anyone who is affected by conflict. We also found out about the meaning of different coloured poppies (new learning for me as well as some of the other adults around). White poppies for peace, Black poppies to remember BAME people who have served and died in war, Purple poppies – for animals, etc. We then used objects we found around the green along with origami poppies, ribbons and labels to create this remembrance branch which was then placed on the altar in the chapel and remained there for the Night Service.

***Hannah***



Photos: *H. Jones*



## A FITTING TRIBUTE

John Hague, Nigel Cook, Patricia Mary Scott, Pete Hancock, Hal Tom, Sheamus Johnson, Ian Andrew Robb, Stephen Draycott, Martin Myall, Richard Keegan, Jeremy Sucker, David Fagan, Eric Bewley, Steven Farnell, ... James, Manu, Mattewaga, Edward Woodworth, Linda Ann Brun, ... Nellie Lovell, Barry G, ... Jimmy' Rugg, Moraene 'Mo' R, ... Wallace (Bill) Dan, ... Joseph Summerson, George T Allison, ... Harry Roberts, Alan R, ... Charlotte Kay Wilks, Brian L E Seymour, ... Max Macey, Harry Betty, ... Lie Stock, John Bruno, Brian Henry Pic, ... Louis Angood, Anne S, ... rley Martin, Imtiaz Aur Parveen Ansari, Brian John Spargo, ... John Love, George Burgess, Sheila Holl, ... Ed, Beekie Bruce, ... Bill, ... rtis, Jean Coley, Ursula Hazard, ... Helen Stacey de Espinosa, ... Aida, ... do' De Souza Lourenco, ... Elizabeth Maits, Robin Row, ... Ian Hartley, ... Group Capt, ... Peter Long, Brijendra Bahadur, Douglas, ... William Barry Wright, ... Georgia, ... Hartley Webb, Bruce I, ... at Collett, ...



For some people the idea of Christmas is bittersweet. For parents who have lost a child, Christmas can be one of the saddest and most anxiety producing holidays. Instead of joy, they feel anguish for what might have been, along with a sense of emptiness.

Many people will shy away from bringing up the name of a lost baby or child. But to parents longing to show some proof of existence for that child, not talking about them at joyous times of the year can be as painful.

At the beginning of October this year, Rob and Christine Wilks spent a weekend in Norfolk with their son, Stuart, and his wife, Sarah, who during the last eight years have lost not one but two children at birth. The first baby was named Charlotte and the second Tom.

Richard Tony Perry, Graham Parker, ... Beth Biedowski, Anthony Ed, ... Bush MBE, Arthur Park, ... Hugo Holton, Sheila D, ... Mckeon, Ian Simpson, Giuseppe, ... James 'on' Graham, Michael Benny Snell, ... Martin, ... James Smith, Thomas Wilks, Barbara C, ... Alan Cox, Derek J, ... Jorquera, Christopher J Spivey, ... Derek Westley, John A, ... Ian Burns (Ian), Gordon 'Don' McLeod, ... Ian Miller, Margaret, ... Scheele, Ruth Mackrell, Leslie Davi, ... Perkins, Jean Pic, ... David Barrett, Mollie Riseman, ... John Fowler, Bill Ansell, ... Grindlay, John Pinegar, ... Arsen Kerr, Christine Anne, ... Danny Doubl, ... Ian Walter Smith, Ian James Hobbs, Jane, ... Francis Frank McKeenan, Mary Eileen, ... John Hunter, Gordon Alan Willard, ... Douglas, ... Derek John, ... Douglas Simpson, ...



Rob writes, 'Our visit to Norfolk was particularly poignant as we were able to view a lifeboat named in memory of the late HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, bearing two plaques in memory of our grandchildren. These have been mounted on the boat, in return for a donation towards the building and installation of the new lifeboat to be stationed at Wells-next-the-Sea on the Norfolk coastline. Others wishing to remember a loved one have also made a donation towards the cost of the boat as part of the 'launch a memory' scheme. What better way could there be of helping the R.N.L.I. save lives than coming up

with such a way of raising money?'

Rob Wilks/Shan

## COULD YOU HELP?

### PCC SECRETARY

We are seeking a volunteer who is passionate about St Mark's to support Sue and the PCC in an administrative role at least until the next APCM in April 2023. This role is key to the smooth running of the church and its affairs. The main gift you need is to organise yourself and others. You do not have to be a member of PCC to fulfil this role. Key responsibilities of the role include:

- Sending and receiving correspondence on behalf of the PCC.
- Prompting group leaders and members of PCC for reports so they are available to be distributed and therefore read in advance of the meeting.
- Assisting the chair or vice chair in the production of the agenda.
- Circulating dates of meeting, agenda and reports to PCC members at least a week before the meeting.
- To attend a monthly meeting lasting 2 hours to take accurate notes including a record of those present and a summary of discussions and decisions made from which you will be able to prepare the minutes.
- Typing up minutes including a list of actions to be completed and who has responsibility for implementation which are then sent to the chair of the meeting for comment and agreement before being sent to the PCC.
- Uploading documents to the google drive.

**If you can help, or know someone you could fulfil this role, please talk to Sue, James or Dilys. Thank you.**

### SUNDAY LUNCHES

Following the success of the Parish weekend and October and November Sunday lunches, we hope to offer space for people to gather and share food on a monthly basis.

**11 December** – Bring your own picnic lunch and gather to chat with others for an hour or so – facilitated by Shan.

**8 January** – Dez and Jennie Martin are hosting lunch to raise funds and awareness for the work being done by SUCCOL, a charity supported by the International Committee. For more information about SUCCOL, see Dez's article that follows.

**5 February** – Bring your own lunch and gather to chat with others.

**5 March** – Could you offer to work with others to prepare a simple lunch such as soup and bread or jacket potatoes and fillings and raise money for the church or one of the charities we support via home or International Donations?

**23 April** – Bring and share lunch after the APCM.

Please contact Shan or Briony if you can host one of these dates as even when it's "bring your own", someone needs to facilitate the space. Thank you.

## **CHOIR**

We are looking for new people to join the choir and sing on a regular basis. Choir rehearsals are held on a Thursday evening and Sunday morning starting at 9am. Chat to David Willington, our director of music, if you are interested in finding out more.

## **FLOWER ARRANGING**

Every week fresh flowers are arranged in church by a small team of volunteers. Our numbers are dwindling, and we would love some new people to join us. We will give you full instruction hints and tips in how to arrange flowers. You would only need to take a turn a few times in the year. If you are interested in helping, please contact me, Mary Jane Ryder, or catch me after the morning service. I sing in the choir and would love to hear from you. *Mary-Jane Ryder*



## **DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY – 60 years of St Mark's in 2023**

### **Our History**

St Mark's Church, Broomhill, is distinctive both for its outstanding modern architecture and for its thoughtful, liberal approach to questions of faith. It was founded in 1859 as an Iron Church to serve the expanding Sheffield suburb of Broomhill. In 1871, this was replaced by a fine stone neo-Gothic building designed by W H Crossland. St Mark's became a large, active and well-known church.

In December 1940, the Church was struck by an incendiary bomb. Only the tower and spire survived. For 23 years, services were held in the Church Hall. Eventually, the distinguished architect, George Pace, designed a new St Mark's which was consecrated in September 1963. Since then, the church has progressed in many ways.

### **60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

To mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the current building, we are planning a year of celebrations over 2023 which will enable us to reflect on the past and offer encouragement and build momentum so we can look forward to the future where everyone feels that they are included and belong.

Our hope is that everyone will contribute and participate in some way and that this will be fun, enable us to share stories of people who influenced the way our culture and

community is shaped today, fuel the passion each of us has for our own ministry and what the church can accomplish and how it can inform our vision for the future.

### How can I get involved?

We are looking for groups of people to run an event so we can hold one activity each month which will encourage local people to come along and support the church both through their presence and hopefully financially in this special year so that we can ensure the physical building remains fit for purpose and our ministry within the local community, city, country and world can continue.

Watch out for activities and events as they are advertised and join in where you can. We rely on teams of volunteers to implement ideas that you or others come up with.

### What's already been suggested?

- Cheese and wine
- A recipe Book
- Community Plays
- Heritage open Days
- Shared meals
- Garden Party
- Come & Sing
- Concerts

### What's already started or definite?

- Save the afternoon of 29 January for a **sponsored swim and party**.
- At least 28 people are involved in a project to stitch **'The 6 Days of Creation' tapestries**.

If you can help with anything linked to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, please contact [office@stmarkssheffield.co.uk](mailto:office@stmarkssheffield.co.uk) .



6 days of Creation Tapestries



## BEN'S CENTRE



Ben's Centre was established by a retired police officer, Ian (Ben) Sherman, over 25 years ago. He saw the complexity of problems facing the homeless on the streets of Sheffield and was moved to find a place of sanctuary where they could find support as well as hot, healthy food, washing facilities, fresh clothing etc. Today, clients may be homeless or inadequately housed, have problems with drug and alcohol or maybe brain injured\* – needing a place of peace

for respite from their chaotic lives. Unlike some other Day Centres, Ben's welcomes clients who are not fully 'clean' or 'dry' but have ongoing drug and alcohol issues.

Outreach workers bring hot drinks, food and support through a friendly chat to those who aren't ready to make it into the centre.

During lockdown, Ben's moved premises from North Church Street to a large house at the bottom of Wilkinson Street.

Earlier this year, Ben's set up an information hub and charity shop (Ben's Bazaar) on Rockingham Gate (off the Moor). The info hub is a drop-in point for vulnerable people, providing them with information on services in Sheffield that can help them. It is also a focus for the general public and other support services to have a conversation about organisations and charities that can help those with complex needs. One of the aims of the charity shop is to provide some work experience for clients who have built up a little more order in their lives and are ready for the next step.

Ben's Bazaar welcomes donations of second-hand clothes, toys, bric-à-brac, etc. The Wilkinson Street Centre also welcomes donations of clothing, shoes and sleeping bags to be handed out to clients. Especially welcome are new, unused socks and underwear as it is inappropriate to offer these items as second hand. At all times, the well-being and dignity of the clients is paramount.

***Jennie Martin***

\* 50% of the homeless have a brain injury. Some will have become homeless because a traumatic brain injury has changed their personality and led to problems at home. Some will have received a brain injury due to falls or perhaps have suffered violent incidents whilst living on the street!



## INTERNATIONAL DONATIONS: CHRISTMAS FOCUS

Each year the International Donation Group meet and discuss which charities we are going to support over the coming year. Christian Aid has been on the list for many years and we raise money for them throughout the year in various ways – Door to door collections in May, supporting the local hikes, carol singing in town and occasional emergency appeals.

Christian Aid exists to create a world where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty. Some of the ways they are working towards this are:

**Campaigning at COP 27**, calling for the creation of an international climate fund which will be paid for by polluters and governments. By creating this fund, the wealthy countries who historically done most to cause the crisis will support the poorer countries who are facing the gravest consequences. This will help tackle inequality and help people build a life free from poverty and injustice.

**East Africa Hunger Crisis Appeal** -After the worst drought in 40 years, millions of people across East Africa are facing the threat of famine due to failed harvests, livestock deaths and water shortages. The war in Ukraine has led to global food prices rocketing so East Africa is being hit by the impact of more than one crisis. By repairing wells, investing in water purification kits to disperse animal feed and medicine and cash support to families, Christian Aid is supporting over 300,000 people

**Christmas Appeal** – Supporting families in Malawi where hotter temperatures, drought and flooding have caused food shortages. Fyness, a 50 year-old mum of 5 from Mzimba district, Malawi, describes how her community celebrates at Christmas:

*'Here in our area, we host dances. The young people play football matches. And we celebrate by eating the food we have prepared. We cook chicken and rice. After eating my rice, I feel very happy and satisfied. I wish I could be eating rice every day.'*

But sadly, this Christmas, many families in Malawi will struggle even to have their staple food of maize porridge. Hunger has grown, due to the climate crisis, and Fyness knows what a Christmas with no food is like. 'In the past, I was lacking food. I struggled to find food,' she says.

**This Christmas, you could help mums like Fyness to lift their families out of hunger by making a donation to Christian Aid as we gather to celebrate Midnight Mass and services on Christmas Day.**

**Thank you.**

## REPORT FROM SuCCol and the ZUÁ FOUNDATION



Access course students ending the crops at Los Senderos

When I was asked to write an article explaining how the money was being used which St Mark's International Committee has for many years very generously donated to SuCCol (Support for Children in Colombia), I was very happy to oblige. In one sense the question is easily answered: it all goes to help the work of the Zuá Foundation, a charitable organisation set up by Moisés Pedraza, a former member of St Mark's, to support disadvantaged children in Bogotá.



Access course students studying at Los Senderos

In 2018, Jennie and I travelled to Bogotá to see for ourselves the tremendous work being done by Zuá, and it was very impressive. The Foundation was operating from a centre in Patio Bonito, a poor area of Bogotá, providing food, help with schoolwork, sporting and cultural activities and a safe space. There was also a rural centre, Los Senderos, an estate in the countryside some 40 miles from Bogotá, which had been gifted to Zuá and was being used to provide residential experience in the countryside for children from Patio Bonito. It was also providing accommodation for a group of young people on a university access course who were refugees from lawless, rebel-held areas in the south of the country. We could not fail to be impressed by the dedication of the

tutors and volunteers working for Zuá and the enthusiasm and gratitude of the young people they were helping.





Lunchtime at Patio Bonito

For over ten years now, the donations sent by St Mark's have been used to support young people from the Foundation who have now entered Higher Education, helping pay for tuition fees, travel, accommodation, text books, etc. In return, these students are obliged to give up time to work as tutors helping younger pupils and, at Los Senderos, tending the crops and looking after the animals. We were impressed, too, by the attitudes of these students and their realisation that they were acting as role models, not just for

younger students but for their communities as a whole.

We were also pleased to see how much succession planning was being undertaken. Moisés is now well into his 70s and very much the linchpin of the Foundation, so it is essential that there are competent people ready and willing to take over and it was good to see that this was in hand.



Children from Patio Bonito on a residential trip to Los Senderos



So what's been happening in the Foundation since we visited four and a half years ago? A glance through the newsletters that we've received from Zuá over the last 12 months reveals any number of projects. Here's a brief summary:

- The initiation of a project providing free eye care to Zuá's students.
- A drama project involving students from Zuá.
- An increase in the number of students gaining places at University, as well as the growing success of Zua's university access course.
- Development of the Foundation's programme of music education.
- The establishment of a second urban centre in Bosa (another very deprived area of Bogotá).
- Residential courses at Los Senderos for younger students from Bogotá and for students on University Access courses.
- A celebration of the commitment shown by the many women who help in the Foundation.
- Development of the scheme to provide all students (and some of their families) with free meals.
- Development of the scheme to prepare students from guerrilla controlled areas in Cauca (a region in the south of Colombia) for university entry.
- Recognition of the value of increased collaboration with students' families.



Lina María Ramírez (one of the university students sponsored by SuCCol) celebrates receiving her degree in Industrial Engineering

Re-reading these newsletters, I was struck by how many of the topics – the importance of ensuring that schoolchildren are healthy and well fed, the value of drama, music and the arts, equality of access to higher education – are areas which are being increasingly neglected in this country. The Zuá Foundation certainly seems to have found an offering which works well for the (often very disadvantaged) young people who attend their centres and which in many cases is life-changing. On behalf of Moisés and the Zua Foundation – many thanks to all the members of St Mark's who through their support have contributed to the success of this remarkable charity.

**Dez Martin**

## THE APOSTLES' CREED

Before I get started I must emphasise that I am not a theologian. The following represents a selection of just a few thoughts based on my personal experience.

There must be quite a few of us at St Mark's who were brought up going to Matins on Sundays, following the service from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. I imagine some of us could still recite the Apostles' Creed from memory. We are fortunate that we now have a much more richly varied and contemporary liturgy at St Mark's, but in recent weeks I have found myself musing on why we tend to avoid the more traditional texts in the 10.00 am service, and I also remembered the small controversy that arose some years ago when a visiting preacher insisted that we say the creed. I think Ian Wallis was Vicar at the time.

Here is the 1662 version of the Apostles' Creed in full. I have highlighted some words and phrases. Those in blue raise questions in my mind, and those in red present me with major difficulties:

*I believe in God **the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth**: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the **Virgin Mary**, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried: **He descended into hell**; The third day he rose again from the dead; **He ascended into heaven**, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholick Church; **The Communion of Saints**; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the **body**, **And the Life everlasting**. Amen.*

### The Father Almighty

No real problems here, but I would be equally happy to replace the phrase with *The Father Everlasting*, or to use the words *Mother*, *Spirit* or even *Love* instead of *Father*.

### Maker of heaven and earth

I am very happy to retain this phrase, but recognise that it is merely shorthand for an awesome creation process which lasted aeons and is still ongoing.

### Virgin

The doctrine of the virgin birth has its roots in Isaiah 7v14: *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* (Authorised Version) *Almah* is the original Hebrew word here translated as *virgin*, but it is better translated as *young woman*. Furthermore, the context of the passage suggests that the situation being discussed relates to Isaiah's own time, and does not prophesy the coming of a future Messiah.

So, I am happy just to say: 'Born of Mary,' and I think it's important to include Mary in any version of the creed in order to recognise and celebrate her selfless openness to God. In my mind Mary also represents women in general, and mothers in particular, and should be honoured as such.

### **He descended into hell**

I don't know of any verses in the four canonical Gospels which suggest Jesus descended into hell after his crucifixion, although there are passages elsewhere in the New Testament, such as in 1 Peter 3v19 and 1 Peter 4v6, which allude to this. I find it impossible to believe that Jesus physically went to hell and proclaimed salvation to all the lost souls there, an idea which is known as *The Harrowing of Hell*. It seems to me that this must have been conceived by early Christians to fill some sort of intellectual gap in their understanding. It would take too long to discuss this doctrine here, or indeed the whole concept of hell itself, or the different nuances of meaning inherent in various Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible which have been translated as *hell*.

### **He ascended into heaven**

While all four Gospel accounts of the resurrection contain several significant similarities, those of the ascension do not, and two don't even refer to an ascension as such even happening at all. Additionally, it is unclear exactly where Jesus delivers his final words to his disciples. Luke puts it in Bethany, just to the east of Jerusalem. However, both Matthew and John state that it is Galilee, or the Sea of Tiberias, (the same place), way to the north. Mark doesn't give any clear indication, but does mention Galilee a few verses earlier.

I can't believe that there was any type of physical ascension, with Jesus magically rising into the sky. I think we need to look towards something more mysterious and transcendental.

### **The Communion of Saints ... The Life everlasting**

I'm not at all sure what I believe in here. I would *like* to believe that we are all gathered safely into God's presence when we die, and that we somehow meet up with all our loved ones, as well as with everyone else who has gone before us, but no one actually knows anything for certain about this. I do believe that we all have a unique individual identity, which might be described as a *soul* or *spirit*, and it is difficult to imagine that this would be suddenly and permanently obliterated at death.

But there is a question about those who have suffered personality change through brain damage or dementia, and what version of their identity might survive. There is an intriguing passage towards the end of *The Silver Chair*, one of the *Narnia* books, in which the old King Caspian dies but whom Aslan then restores to life as a younger man in what is clearly a representation of heaven. I sometimes wonder if the process

would sort of work in reverse for children who tragically die in infancy, and that they might be resurrected as the fully mature people they would have become. But this is really all just speculation.

While writing this it has struck me that I could also discuss a number of other existing phrases at length, or suggest including new ideas – such as a reference to Jesus’s radical inclusive, healing ministry – but that’s probably enough for one go. And I haven’t even drawn any comparison between this version of the creed and that which is found in the text for the 1662 Communion Service. In conclusion, I think it’s important for me to keep on thinking about exactly what I believe, and why.

*Andrew Sanderson*

## LENT 23



I know it’s not even Christmas yet, but come December 25<sup>th</sup> there will only be 8 weeks till the first Sunday in Lent, so now’s the time to tell you about next year’s Lent course.

Our course is called **ACT NOW!** Together with friends from St Mary’s, St John’s and the Manor Parish, we’ll be looking at five episodes from the Acts of the Apostles as a way to engage more deeply with scripture, looking at the church in those very early years and asking what this can say to us today. Each week in these contemporary encounters with Acts we shall be asking how God shaped, shapes and will shape life of God’s people. These defining moments are: shaped by the Spirit, shaped by living together, shaped by inclusion, shaped by opposition and shaped by overcoming difference.

Each week there will be a passage to study together, just a few areas for discussion, and some other resources to help us engage in a variety of ways with the main idea for the session. As last year. there will be details about times and venues (both face to face and online), and how to sign up for a group on the St Mark’s website during January. We hope that many of you will want to join a group both to enjoy the materials which we’ve prepared and to get to know some other people better.

*John Schofield*



## **THREE BIBLICAL BADDIES:**

### **3) PONTIUS PILATE**

Of our three bad characters Pontius Pilate is by far the best documented, particularly by the Romano-Jewish historian, Josephus. In addition an artefact found in 1961 proved his existence beyond doubt. King Herod the Great comes next in evidence whereas Judas Iscariot has no corroboration external to the Gospels to prove that he ever existed.

We do not know Pilate's date of birth, but he died in 39 AD, cause unknown. In 26 AD Emperor Tiberius appointed Pontius Pilate prefect of the Roman provinces of Judaea, Samaria and Idumæa. Pilate served as the prefect of Judaea from 26 to 36 AD. As Prefect he was granted the power of a supreme judge, which meant that he had the sole authority to order a criminal's execution. Other duties included such mundane tasks as tax collection and managing construction projects. But, perhaps his supreme responsibility was that of maintaining law and order in these troublesome and rebellious provinces. What he couldn't negotiate he is said to have accomplished through brute force. This was Pilate's reputation repeatedly confirmed by Josephus.

So it is surprising that the Gospel accounts of Jesus' trial show Pilate as indecisive and easily influenced. He had to balance the overriding interests of the Roman Empire and pressure from the Sanhedrin Jewish council, who clearly wanted Jesus executed. Matthew adds the story of Pilate's wife's dream that persuaded him to 'wash his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves".' This doesn't sound like the ruthless Pilate. Nevertheless he finally convicted Jesus of the grounds of treason when he had declared himself King of the Jews despite asserting 'my Kingdom is not of this world.'

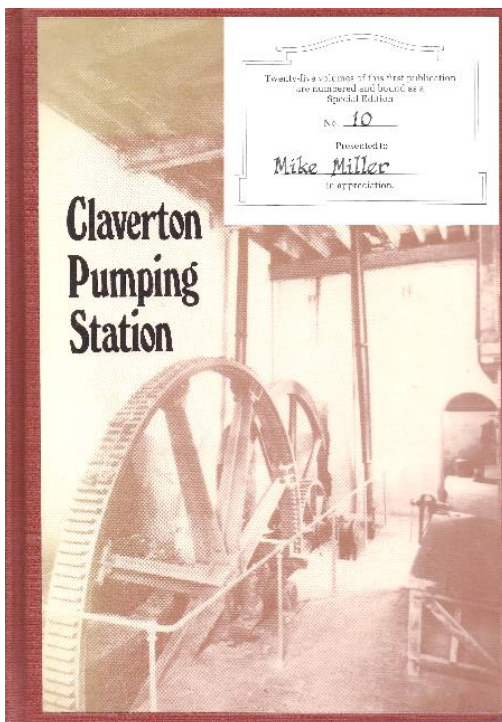
The sentence was death, which only Pilate had the authority to pronounce. The method of execution for rebels was public humiliation by being nailed naked to a wooden cross in a public place where everyone could learn the lesson for rebelling against Roman rule.

Of the two Pilates which is the more plausible? If it is the harsh, cruel Roman Governor, why did the Gospel writers paint quite a different picture of him as an indecisive official? Was it because they wanted to put the blame for Jesus' death on the Sanhedrin and the Jewish mob?

***Robin Story***

## MICHAEL MILLER – A CANAL VOLUNTEER

Seeing me now as an octogenarian you may find it hard to imagine that 50 years ago would have seen me spending weekends shovelling mud out of derelict lock chambers. I first found out about England's canals when I had recently graduated and married Pauline. This led to us having a canal cruising holiday on the Trent and Mersey and Shropshire Union canals in 1969. I started reading about canal history, a fascinating story, and exploring both usable and derelict ones.



Claverton Pumping Station book  
with dedication

Living in Bristol from 1971, I joined the volunteer working parties struggling to restore the Kennet and Avon canal through Bath. The 57 mile route linking the Thames at Reading with the Avon in Bath was completed in 1810 and was moderately successful until railway competition led to its slow decline into dereliction, with the last through navigation being made in 1951. A voluntary body, the Kennet and Avon Canal Association, fought off official abandonment, becoming the Kennet and Avon Canal Trust in 1962 to restore the canal as a through navigation and public amenity.

The working parties were hard work but great fun with camaraderie between a huge mix of office workers, skilled tradesmen, engineers, teachers and more, and a local householder used to bring us tea and cakes. Removal of the often 2 metre deep mud revealed the usual mix of tyres, shopping trolleys and bicycles but also turned up a rusty revolver and a safe, and on another section near Devizes I found earthenware ginger beer bottles, a snuff tin and an 1832 coin. Month by month it was very satisfying to see sections gradually restored, including landscaping the surroundings. Eventually came the exciting day in 1977 when the Bath locks were reopened, and even more so in August 1990 when Queen Elizabeth II formally reopened the entire canal; in 2013 the Trust was presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

Meanwhile, then working as an occupational psychologist with the Department of Employment, I was one of the prizewinners in the South West Region in 1972 under the terms of the Civil Service Further Education Prize Fund for my work



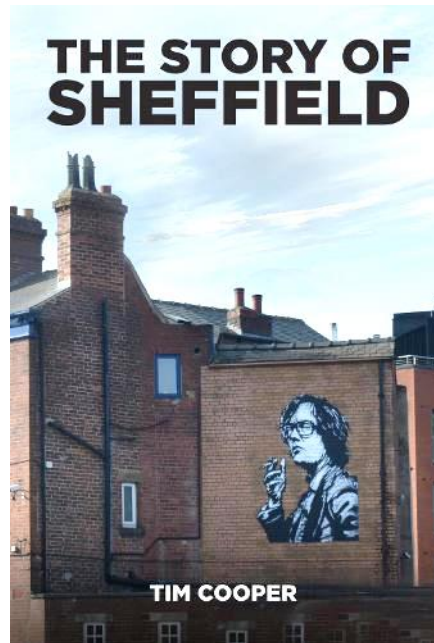
Michael with other Claverton volunteers 1978

in connection with canal restoration. As such I was invited to write about it for their 1973-74 South Western Region *Live & Learn* magazine, my first published article! Encouraged by this I then sold freelance articles to publications including *The Lady*, *Country Life*, *The Field*, *Waterways World*, and *Engineering*. Having moved to Leicester to work in the University Careers Service, I continued to help the canal restoration by hand writing begging letters to engineering companies for funds to restore the unique waterwheel powered Claverton Pumping Station, which pumped water from the River Avon into the canal. It reopened in 1976 and is well worth a visit to see the hypnotic rhythm of its beams rocking and to hear the 77,000 gallons an hour of water being swooshed up. In 1984, it was awarded one of their first Engineering Heritage Hallmarks by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers and is now a Grade 1 Listed Building. Later, using my extensive collection of waterway slides, I was able to run WEA evening classes on canal history and architecture. So get involved in volunteering and you never know what it will lead to.

Nowadays I still support canal restoration through my membership of the Shropshire Union Canal Society which is, after 50 years of endeavour, very near to completing restoration of the Montgomery Canal – closed in 1936 – from its junction with the Langollen Canal at Frankton junction to Welshpool, and eventually its original terminus at Newtown. Little did I realise when walking derelict canals in the 1970s that so many would now be being restored thanks to the enthusiasm and determination of volunteers. I also support the People's Mosquito, a charity gradually rebuilding a WW2 Mosquito aircraft, the 'wooden wonder', but that's a different strand from my past!

**Michael Miller**

## A NEW GENERAL HISTORY OF SHEFFIELD



In 2021, History Press published a new general history of Sheffield – *The Story of Sheffield* by Tim Cooper. I am aware of four previous general histories. The first and most famous was by Joseph Hunter, a Unitarian Minister and meticulous archivist who rose to become Deputy Keeper of Public Records. His massive but lucid history updated in 1869 by the Revd Gatty weighs 5 kilograms. In 1948 Mary Walton, an Anglican librarian, produced a more user friendly and anecdotal work. In 1978, J Edward Vickers, produced a survey, full of useful facts but weak on analysis. In 1998, the late David Hey, Professor at Sheffield University, produced a readable and well-illustrated general history.

Cooper says that he experienced ‘love at first sight’ on coming to Sheffield. He is not uncritical. He writes: ‘To someone brought up in a city like Birmingham, Sheffield seemed somehow lacking in buildings, with more the look of a middle-sized provincial town than a great metropolis.’ But in compensation there is the natural landscape: ‘A city made up of distinct communities separated by hills, each with its own spectacular views of the whole or the rural uplands which surround it.’

The other thing which deeply impresses Cooper is Sheffield’s radical tradition, particularly among the working classes. He traces this radical tradition in the book. Is this in part due to Sheffield’s ‘borderland’ position – between the midlands and the north? Another explanation is the independence of the cutlers, who were not wage slaves but ran their own small businesses, took off Mondays (‘St Monday’) to drink in the numerous pubs and expressed outspoken views about politics – notably in Paradise Square. He gives less attention to the



middle classes, many of whom were also radical, often building on strong non-conformist roots.

He starts in the Ice Age and ends in 2019 with the change to the Council's decision-making system. There is a lot to cover and inevitably things have to be left out. For example, he does not mention Mary Queen of Scots' 15 years detention in Sheffield although this linked Sheffield with pivotal issues about the future of the monarchy. All the illustrations are excellent photographs taken by him – of buildings rather than people. The early section on archaeological history seemed masterful to me as were his concise explanations of the crucial technological changes which determined Sheffield's industrial role.

Having lived in Sheffield since 1980, I was particularly interested in his coverage of the last 50 years – a period of extraordinary change which he describes well. Cutlery and steel, which had made Sheffield a world centre of expertise and production, largely collapsed. 'The great leviathans of Sheffield's once-proud steel industry – Firth Brown, Hadfield's and Brown Bayley's – had all been flattened.' Was this inevitable? Cooper points to East Asian competition, yet is it not astonishing that a few countries in South East Asia (before the huge build-up of Chinese industry) could cause such havoc not only in Sheffield but in industrial centres right across Western Europe and the USA? One obvious question is whether Sheffield's industries could have been better managed.

There is also the role of Government. Could the Government have handled things better by stopping foreign dumping of cheap steel and by avoiding the disastrous monetary policies of the early 1980s? In discussion at a recent Off the Shelf session, Cooper referred to the Thatcher Government's lack of support for manufacturing industry as critical in the 1980s. He also stresses the human consequences of this disaster. Between 1970 and 2000, Sheffield lost more than 10% of its population. Among those who remained, there were high levels of unemployment.

He is also highly critical of the fact that, from the 1980s onwards, Sheffield, like other great British cities, lost much of its ability to determine its own destiny, as decision-making was centralised in Westminster and municipal funding was drastically cut. He thinks that Sheffield cannot attract as much investment as regional capitals like Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester. This is worrying for Sheffield's future. I recommend this book as well written and full of valuable insights. Cooper offers a refreshing new approach to Sheffield history for the 2020s.

**David Price**

## **Browse and borrow books from our library for Advent**

### **ST MARKS LIBRARY: EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED**

Come and enjoy the new Coffee and Browsing Corner in our library. It's free and a relaxing place to be! A place to sit and chat and drink your coffee, and enjoy the company of friends such as Richard Rohr, Marcus Borg, Bishop Spong, Mary Oliver, Janet Morley, Joe Forde and many others. **It is all there – waiting just for you!**

*Maureen Bownas*

#### ***Everything the Light Touches***

**Joyce Words**

**Donated**

**Category F**

This is your time. Growing up, words were used to break me, and to confine me to the smallest version of myself. People told me I wouldn't amount to anything, and I believed them. In my hardest moments, words also brought me back to life, made me feel heard, and appreciated. It was like a warm hug from the sun. Now, knowing that words have so much power, I wrote a book to give hope and healing, to express everything you can't see in yourself. You deserve this story.

Let each and every word saturate your heart in the way ink does on paper sheets. I see how hard you struggle to be great, to be happy, and to be loved. Hope you find your validation through the prose of truth. You deserve to know you are ***Everything the Light Touches***.

#### ***Preparing For Christmas: Daily Meditations For Advent***

**Richard Rohr**

**Category B £11.24**

Advent is a time to focus our expectation and anticipation on 'the adult Christ, the Cosmic Christ'. Rohr challenges us to empty ourselves, to lose ourselves, to surrender. *Preparing for Christmas* offers daily meditations, prayers, Scripture readings, and questions for reflection for each day of Advent.

Fr. Richard Rohr is a globally recognised ecumenical teacher bearing witness to the universal awakening within mystical and transformational traditions. A Franciscan priest of the New Mexico Province, founder of the Center for Action and contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, home of the Rohr Institute, his teaching is grounded in practices of contemplation and lived kenosis (self-emptying), expressing itself in radical compassion, particularly for the socially marginalized.

## Extracts from *Letter to Daniel* by Fergal Keane\*

“We had wanted you and waited for you, imagined you and dreamed about you and now that you are here no dream can do justice to you. Your coming has turned me upside down and inside out. So much that seemed essential to me has, in the past few days, taken on a different colour. Like many foreign correspondents I know, I have lived a life that, on occasion, has veered close to the edge: war zones, natural disasters, darkness in all its shapes and forms. In a world of insecurity and ambition and ego, it's easy to be drawn in, to take chances with our lives, to believe that what we do and what people say about us is reason enough to gamble with death. Now, looking at your sleeping face, inches away from me, listening to your occasional sigh and gurgle, I wonder how I could have ever thought glory and prizes and praise were sweeter than life.”



Northern General Hospital Chapel  
Christmas display. Photo: *Shan Rush*

“There is something more, a story from long ago that I will tell you face to face, father and son, when you are older. It's a very personal story but it's part of the picture. It has to do with the long lines of blood and family, about our lives and how we can get lost in them and, if we're lucky, find our way out again into the sunlight.”

“For now, Daniel, I must tell you that when you let out your first powerful cry in the delivery room of the Adventist Hospital and I became a father, I thought of your grandfather and, foolish though it may seem, hoped that in some way he could hear, across the infinity between the living and the dead, your proud statement of arrival. For if he could hear, he would recognize the distinct voice of family, the sound of hope and new beginnings that you and all your innocence and freshness have brought to the world.”

**\**Letter to Daniel* by Fergal Keane,**  
published by Penguin UK ,1997

**May hope, love, joy and peace be present in your lives this Advent and Christmas.**

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