

MARK'S MESSENGER



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

Jan/Feb 2024 *Donations welcomed and can be made via the app below*



God separating light from darkness, attributed to Emanuele Lampardo C16th-C17th
— Galleria Regionale of mediaeval art in Palazzo Belloma, Syracuse
Photo Michael Miller



HOW TO EAT BREAD: LENT, 2024

Many discussions and disputes within the Church are related to how the Bible is read and how it is interpreted. This is not new; at various key moments in the Church's history, ways of reading the Bible and determinations of meaning have led to divisions or change. The Canons of the Church of England state that

*'the doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures' (Canon A.5)
and 'professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures' (Canon C.15).*

Whilst the Church of England states that Old and New Testaments together contain all things necessary for salvation, this definition allows for quite some variance in methods and meaning across the different traditions which make up the C of E. If we looked at the Anglican churches within a 2-mile radius of St Mark's alone, we would find marked differences in how the Bible is read, used, and interpreted.

If you have been following the recent discussion on blessing same sex marriages, you will have seen how differing interpretation of scripture have formed part of the debate. But beyond specific debates, how we use our sacred texts is important to many areas of church life.

The Bible is a collection of literary texts which have been passed down to us and which were agreed by the Church to be the sacred scriptures of the Church. The Bible is a library of books created over a millennium and a half, containing sagas, origin stories, poetry, and letters to early believers.



Some books recount historical events, some offer interpretations. These writings are a human response to God and the creation of believing communities. Because of the Bible's central witness to Jesus, they act as a touchstone and benchmark for the Church.

When we read the Bible we become actively involved in the process of reading and the way we read the Bible will inevitably be affected by who we are, by what our personal and social circumstances are, and to a certain extent by what we already believe. How we connect and respond to the texts affects our faith and our church community.

How do you feel about the Bible?

Do you read the Bible?

Are there some parts you love to read, and other parts you avoid?

Lent Groups this year will be looking at different and nourishing ways to read the Bible using resources from Miranda Threlfall-Holmes' book *How to Eat Bread*. Before Lent begins, and as a special introduction, Miranda will be coming to St Mark's to lead a seminar on **5 February at 7.30pm**.



With Miranda Threlfall-Holmes

7.30pm 5th Feb 2024
St Mark's Sheffield

HOW TO EAT BREAD

Lent Groups from St Mark's, St Mary's and St Aidan's will be meeting once a week on five consecutive weeks between 14th Feb – 24 Mar. They will be meeting online or in person, on various days/times. More information about the seminar and the Lent Groups is available on the website and you can sign up for a group at church or through the office.

Miranda's book is an engaging and helpful resource for those wanting to explore the Bible more. We hope you will enjoy both the seminar with Miranda and the opportunity for fellowship and study through one of the Lent Groups.

Beth Keith

BROOMHALL CENTRE: REPORT FOR ST MARK'S



Jillian Creasy

The Broomhall Centre is a community hall rented out to individuals and groups. The uses range from private parties to services for the community. The latter include once-off fundraisers and regular charitable activities such as the S6 Foodbank, a free lunch run by Foodcycle and the Girl's group run by St Mark's church. User groups also contribute religious, political and cultural/health activities. And of course, private parties are also part of community life, bringing friends and family together.

Over the last year or so, however, the emphasis has shifted and the Board of Trustees is now running more activities itself: the Homework Club continues (supported by the University of Sheffield for another year); the Women's Health activities have expanded (now three sessions a week); we have piggy-backed a Welcome Space (one of the City Council's official 'Warm Spaces') onto the Wednesday Lunch Club; we run a Cinema Club on Sunday evenings; and – our latest and biggest project – we have become a 'Cadent Centre for Warmth', offering welfare advice services. I have written a few lines about the projects which may be of most interest to St Mark's.

Women's Health sessions

The main session is on Tuesday mornings, with up to twenty women at a time (over forty on the books), doing sewing, knitting, crochet and other crafts. We employ Rosie Chitty as an Activities Facilitator who creates a welcoming environment and spots those in need of help and those who can give it. The key to success is recognising everyone's contribution and bringing on new volunteers from the pool of users. Doing practical activities overcomes language and cultural barriers (there is a wide range of ethnicities and backgrounds). We also run an English conversation club and a women-only Zumba session on Friday mornings. The main cost of the Women's Health sessions (about £1 000 a month) is Rosie's salary and rent for the hall.

Foodcycle lunch and Welcome Space

Foodcycle is a national charity which uses end-of-line food from supermarkets supplemented by locally grown fruit and vegetables from Regather to cook a free meal. They rely on volunteer cooks and host and welcome all-comers (up to 30 people every Wednesday). The Broomhall Centre then keeps the hall open for anyone who wants to stay for warmth, a chat, to watch TV. This session is also supported by Rosie and volunteers (specifically from the Sheffield Community Makers project). It costs us about £250 a month to run.

S6 Foodbank

This is a city-wide charity which runs a session in Broomhall Centre on Monday mornings. They provide food parcels, advice and signposting to up to 25 attendees a week. They are officially a 'user group' who pay us rent, but we see them as partners and frequently refer new clients to them.

Support@BroomhallCentre.com

This is the name and email address of our new project. Cadent Gas (who passport us money from Ofgen) funds us to provide an advice service. We contract with Citizen's Advice for two welfare advice sessions a week and we employ two support workers, Abdi Ahmed and Kate Hobbs, as outreach and first-line support workers. Support@BHC links with all our other projects, enhancing our partnership working and allowing us to offer more help to our users. It has shifted us further along the line from 'Community Hall' to 'Community Centre'.

***Jillian Creasy,
Chair of Board of Trustees***

APPRECIATIONS OF SUE



Shan Rush: These are just some of the words I'd use to describe Sue having worked alongside her for the last 13 and a bit years:

- S - Supportive
- U - Unique
- E - Encouraging
- H - Humorous
- A - Altruistic
- M - Meticulous
- M - Mischievous
- E - Empathic
- R - Respected
- S - Spirited
- L - Loved
- E - Enlightened
- Y - Young at heart

David Willington: It's been a great pleasure to work with Sue for the past 5 years. I'd not led music in a church since my university days 25 years ago, but with her support and encouragement I've found getting back into it to be a wonderful experience.

Martin Godley: When it came to celebrating the church building's 60th anniversary, there was some surprise that the first event would be a swimming gala. Why a swimming gala? No-one could remember the congregation ever having one before! At the event there was a slim, smartly-costumed participant with goggles and a swimming cap, who kept going longer than most... But no one recognised her. When she emerged it turned out to be our Sue Hammersley! She proudly boasted that she'd been going for a regular swim several times a week for months. Then I realised who suggested the swimming gala idea!

John Schofield: It's been a delight to work with Sue on many conferences and courses; she has a wonderfully fertile mind which sometimes came up with many more ideas than we could fit in!



Sue at the jazz concert in July, 2022 Photo by Philip Booth

Michael Bayley: I think Sue has a genius for what I would call pastoral intuition. She knows just what to say when she knows that you're saddled with a problem. I also like her irreverence. She has a sharp eye for pomposity and a sharp needle to prick it with.

Eve Saunders: Many words spring to mind in attempting to honour Sue and her work as Vicar of St Mark's: warmth, humility, humanity, humour, courage, generosity of spirit and inclusive love stand out. A seminal moment in her ministry was, for me, her courage in becoming the public voice of opposition to the proposed appointment of a bishop who did not accept the validity of women priests. The warmth of God's love reflected in Sue's smiling eyes as she offers the communion wafer, is always a moment of pure grace for me. Lest this should all sound too "churchy", Sue's portrayal, in the recent Lionstale production, of a really fed-up, bad tempered bumble bee, will live on in my memory for a long time!

David Price: The first was an article she wrote in the Messenger in May/June 2018 in which she said that we should 'embrace rather than reject our vulnerabilities.' The second was a comment she made during the pandemic: she said that she was in some personal turmoil about the nature of the Eucharist when it took place on Zoom rather than face to face. Both illustrate Sue's humility, thoughtfulness and sensitivity to the feelings of others.

Michael Miller: Every vicar gives their own personal contribution to the congregation at St Mark's but what I have appreciated especially from Sue is the enhanced overt warmth and love expressed within the congregation that she has fostered, and how this spills outwards into the community.

Maria Oliver: From our first visit we have been made to feel so welcome and part of the community of St Mark's. There is no doubt that Sue has been a huge part of that, and we will always be grateful to her for helping us to find a home here.

Linda Kirk: One recent Harvest-tide, Sue spoke with her characteristic mixture of honesty and hope, aware of the world's damaged abundance: God's bounty (in the form of vicarage apples) decked the church. We should help ourselves to bags-full, but should be aware most were windfalls and wouldn't keep well. Like us, really.

Dilys Noble (with love): There is too much to distil into a few words of appreciation of your ministry at St Mark's, so I will just focus on what has meant so very much for me. Firstly your support of *Phaseworldwide* by allowing me to fundraise for and promote the Charity through St Mark's. That has been hugely important to me. Secondly your crazy belief that I should be a church warden! Thank you for all you do and do so well and will no doubt continue to do in whatever you choose to do in future.

Briony Tayler: Sue's time at St Mark's has been characterised by a sense of fun, by wisdom, tact, caring, a passion for justice and by constant encouragement of individuals and groups to grow and to inspire others. She will be a hard act to follow, as I doubt we will be looking for a change of direction.

Hannah Jones: I value Sue's capacity for playfulness and enjoyment of life as well as her ability to use small moments of connection to let people know they are seen and valued. I first experienced this as a new member of the congregation, attending the church weekend with my three-year-old despite knowing very few people. I saw the joy and laughter when she stepped barefoot into the paint to complete the welcome banner, currently hanging in the children's corner! Joy that has been embraced often, with smoothie-making bicycles, swimming parties at King Edwards, playful outdoor/indoor worship with giant bubbles, sand-pits, fire-pits and candles, marmalade and Paddington Bear as well as the occasional slice of cake!

I'm sure these will resonate amongst the congregation, and each of us will have our own to add.

OUR ANNIVERSARY YEAR

The final event, attended and noisily enjoyed by 40 people, was the Pudding Night on 12th January. £330 was raised for the windows fund thanks to the hard work of the cooks and helpers.



Pudding night by John Hillman



Pudding night by Michael Miller



Photo by Michael Miller

OUR SECONDARY DOUBLE-GLAZING PANELS

David Tayler has been instrumental in researching and working towards the installation of the secondary double glazing along the lowest row of windows (for starters!). To aid in this he has used an infrared camera to see the temperature differences. Colder areas are blue, warmer red or yellow. Viewed from inside the windows are colder (blue) than the walls, but from outside they are warmer (yellow) than the walls because their insulation value, and hence heat loss, is poorer than the walls.

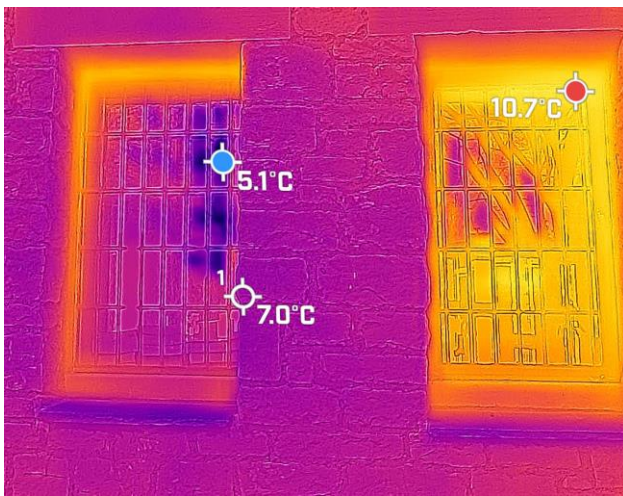


Fig 1



Fig 2

Fig 1. Taken from outside in March 2022 this shows the reduced heat loss from the window with the trial panel as compared with that on the right.

Fig 2. Taken from inside, this shows the reduced heat loss from the trial window as compared with the others. A $3\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}\text{C}$ difference may not sound much but when applied to all the windows it represents a significant gain, reducing the heating needed (and lower emissions!) and increasing comfort.

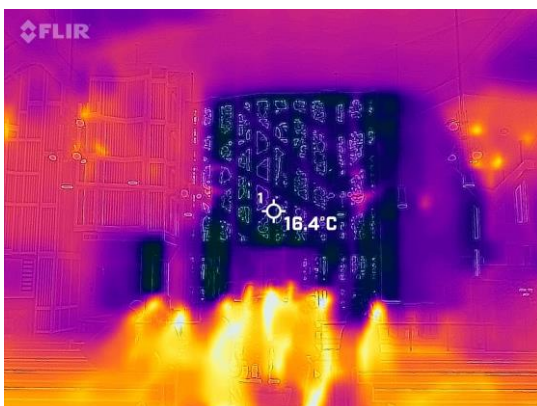


Fig 3

Fig 3. Showing Cold East Window and warm people

Editor's note: *Not everyone in the congregation will know that Manuch had to escape from Iran in fear for his life in 1997. He feels strongly about oppression and injustice and longs for the return of democracy in his home country. As I write, South Africa has taken Israel to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, alleging genocide.*

GENOCIDE OR WHAT? DEMOCRACY CANNOT ACCEPT IT AT ALL!



Sue at the Town Hall Palestine Peace Camp

First of all I need to say I have no affiliation with or support for Hamas due to its connections with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and their involvement in suppressing 'Women Life Freedom' in Iran. I strongly advocate discontinuing the financial aid sent by Iran to the Hamas group.

To start, let's see what the latest reliable statistics are, provided on 27 Dec by Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, an independent source. They state the death toll of Israel's gory genocide of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip has climbed to approximately 30,000 victims. As of Tuesday 26 December, 29,124 Palestinians had been killed, the human rights organisation said. The majority of those killed in the Israeli air and artillery attacks on the Gaza Strip were civilians, including

11,422 children, 5,822 women, 481 health personnel, and 101 journalists. Meanwhile, 56,122 Palestinians have been injured, with hundreds of them being critically wounded, said Euro-Med Monitor. This number includes thousands of victims who are still trapped under the rubble of buildings, while hundreds more remain uncounted.

Euro-Med Monitor estimates also indicate that there are more than 1.9 million displaced people in the Gaza Strip who remain without a safe shelter amid inhumane conditions. According to the rights group, 65,600 housing units have been completely destroyed by the ongoing Israeli attacks, while 177,200 others have been partially damaged.

Israel has also continued to cause massive destruction and severe damage to vital infrastructure facilities in the Gaza Strip, targeting 305 schools, 1,541 industrial facilities, and 135 health facilities, (including 23 hospitals, 56 clinics and 55 ambulances), 183 mosques and 3 churches, in addition to 165 press offices.

Please note that all essential structures of a society, such as homes, clinics, hospitals, clean water, and schools, are non-existent; the time required to go to the toilet is approximately 9 hours.



Pro-Palestinian demonstration outside Sheffield Town Hall

Israel is stepping up its apparently genocidal war on Gazan civilians in an effort to intensify its enforced displacement policy, which is in violation of international laws, Euro-Med Monitor warned. What I fear, and have no doubt about, is the resultant emergence of highly radical Islamic extremist networks in the Middle East, Europe, and America. Personally, I believe we will witness future terrorist and suicidal movements in the Middle East, Europe, and America. If democratic governments

and societies do not consider prevention, we will face very dangerous incidents. It's important to clarify that by prevention I don't mean military or police readiness.

In my opinion, in all schools and universities, children and adolescents should be taught that any meaningful change must be made possible through dialogue, discussion, and debate, not through guns or military coercion.

Manuchehr M.

THE KURDISH WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN IRAN: CATALYST FOR DEMOCRACY

The Kurdish Women's Movement in Iran has emerged as a dynamic force supporting democracy, human rights, and gender equality, playing a fundamental role in Iran's political and cultural transformation. Rooted in the rich history of the Kurdish people, this movement symbolizes resilience and commitment to democratic ideals.

Kurdish women in Iran face numerous challenges, from gender-based discrimination to cultural restrictions. Despite these obstacles, they actively engage in political and cultural spheres, promoting women's participation in political decision-making processes and advocating for democratic principles.

This movement has led to significant changes in oppressive structures, promoting democratic values. Kurdish women in Iran, involved in political activities ranging from grassroots initiatives to leadership roles, contribute to increasing women's roles in political processes.

The Kurdish Women's Movement in Iran has international ramifications, demonstrating solidarity with global women's movements. By challenging gender discrimination and promoting democratic principles, it strives to create a diverse and democratic society in Iran. This movement plays a crucial role in Iran's political and cultural developments, contributing to a more inclusive and democratic future for the country.

Shilan Ghavami

Shilan writes, I was born in Sanandaj, Kurdistan. I got involved in St Marks church as my husband has been a member of St Marks congregation for several years.

EDITOR'S NOTE RE 'RENEWAL'

I invited several members of the congregation, including some new voices, to write about any aspect of 'Renewal' and have received a wide variety which I'm sure you will enjoy reading. As ever, I'm impressed by the level of talent amongst our members.

Michael Miller

RENEWING A SENSE OF RESPECT FOR FACTS

We live at a time when, for an increasing number of people, views have become more important than news (hence, the rise of TalkRadio and TalkTV). Whereas news often relies on factual underpinning, views often do not. Indeed, in a 'post-modern' age, views are often disparaging of the need for facts as a basis for making claims to truth, preferring a more subjective, relativist approach to explanation and meaning. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, conspiracy theories abound on the Internet. These offer explanations for events that often bear little relation to the factual record (such as those expounded by anti-vaxxers) and play an increasingly significant role in national politics – particularly in the USA – (think of the 'stolen election' advocates).

Television and radio presenters offer revisionist interpretations of history that sometimes appear to be disconnected from the historical evidence. Climate change deniers offer explanations of global warming (assuming that they believe that it is occurring), which run counter to the growing body of scientific, factually based evidence that it is human induced. More generally, expertise is increasingly being sidelined by some politicians and pundits in favour of a more populist appeal. Is it any wonder that George Orwell's writings on 'Newspeak' in his novel, *1984* – that is, a purposefully ambiguous language with restricted grammar and limited vocabulary used by spin doctors 'to diminish the range of thought' – have been adduced by some media analysts as being akin to the new way of presenting politics on hard right-wing TV stations in the USA such as Fox News, and in the UK, GB News, in what has been described by some as 'living in an increasingly 'post-truth' age'?

So, how should Christians respond to this new 'post-truth' reality? In an age when it is becoming increasingly fashionable to be dismissive of the need for claims to truth to be factually based, I am of the view that Christians should take the opposite approach when arguing a case of need for advances in economic and social justice, as just one area of Christian discipleship. This can be difficult for Christians who have been trained in the field of theology, as it is a subject that rightly seeks to go

beyond factual evidence when exploring aspects of faith belief that cannot be reduced to empirically based reasoning. However, when Christians choose to enter into debates in the public square on issues relating to economic and social justice, for example, it hardly needs pointing out that they are not always going to be speaking to the converted. As such, I would argue that they need to be able to apply the same level of empirically-based rigour in support of their arguments as that of any other research based discipline, if they are to have a realistic chance of prevailing in an increasingly 'post-truth' political and media-driven environment.

Joe Forde

RENEWAL: LOVE ONE ANOTHER

"I give you a new command: love one another; as I have loved you."
(John, 13:34)

When Jesus was captured, tortured and nailed to the cross he wasn't just renewing our relationship with God. In his book, *Never a Stranger*, Brother Emile of Taizé tells us, "For early Christians, Christ came to establish a new communion with God but also to inaugurate a new relationship with our neighbours. And to recreate the unity of the human family. For they perceived sin not only as a break with God, but also a break with our neighbour." This was the vision of God's Kingdom on Earth to which Jesus gave his life. It was a revolutionary act of love so total and complete that it transformed the world.

To love like that is incomprehensible. It is a task of such proportion, in a world of such dysfunction, that it is easier to believe that we can replace this command with our own: to love with limitations. In a world of separation and suffering, to do what we conceive is our best, can easily be seen as good enough. The complexities of life do not always offer us an alternative. It is a sin that we often don't feel as if we have the capability to overcome. Our burdens overwhelm us.

It is in these moments, in Her infinite capacity to love and forgive, that God invites us, always, to be renewed. Especially when we have sinned. The profoundness of that renewal is that it picks us up from the floor and gives us the power to try again and to keep trying. And it is in that trying, that the possibility for us not only to renew our relationship with God but to renew our relationship with our neighbour can become manifest.

I wonder if there was a moment when Christ looked upon the cross and thought of a life in which he returned to his workshop, ate food with his family and was ignorant to the woes of the world. After all, it requires bravery to overcome such doubts and to take a step forward. It is a bravery that was destined for Christ but it is a bravery that Christ clearly believed we have the capacity for. "Love one another as I have loved you."

As we enter the new year, I pray that we can all be renewed, by the grace of God, to love as Christ loved. To be brave, to take that step forward and to keep trying.

Joe Morris

THE FELLING OF A TREE

In the summer of 2022, I made my first proper visit to Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland. I was staying with a friend and she took me for a walk to Sycamore Gap, the site where a lone sycamore tree had stood for well over a century. Although it is most famous for appearing in the film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, I had heard of the tree from reading a crime novel by LJ Ross entitled *Sycamore Gap* and I was excited to see it.

The location, right on the wall and surrounded by rugged, open countryside with barely another tree in sight, was dramatic and many people were taking selfies and photos. The tree itself stood proud in the landscape and it was so iconic that images of it appeared on cards, paintings and other merchandise in the nearby gift shop. It created a lasting impression on me, and the following Christmas my friend bought me a calendar with a photo of the tree on the front cover – I knew immediately where it was.

Fast forward to September, 2023 and the same tree hit the national headlines. Under cover of darkness someone had felled the sycamore at its base leaving an empty space on the skyline. It was unbelievable that anyone would think to do such a thing and be able to carry it out in the remote location at night. What was more surprising to me was my own shock, and the reaction of people from far and wide, to the cutting down of one single tree.

Although the physical remains, the trunk and branches, have been cut up and removed from the scene, over a century of growing and maturing, strength and symbolism have not been eradicated from human memory. Indeed, there seems to be greater interest in it than ever before. There

has been an outpouring of anger, grief and sadness almost like a bereavement, but people are also looking for signs that the tree will regrow.

Hopes are alive that the stump may sprout new shoots which in time could



grow into a full-sized tree, but experts say there is no certainty that this will be successful. Seeds have been collected in order to grow new seedlings and hopefully new life will be propagated. Only time will tell, and it could take another 200 years for a tree to reach the size of the one which was felled. It will not, however, take so long for any new tree to become imprinted in the hearts and minds of the nation. It will be famous from the start.

Kathryn Redfearn

RESOLUTION WITH REVOLUTIONS

Now that the old dead year has been dumped in the waste bin of time and is on its way to the recycling plant that turns it into history, we greet the new one with mixed feelings. Is it going to be just the same as usual? Will it be a terrible disappointment? Or an opportunity for something really new?

This optimism is exemplified by the urge of many to make New Year resolutions. But everyone knows that most of these self-promises will have vanished by the season of Lent with its own spiritual self-denying covenants to rein in the mortal flesh. However, such resolutions and promises, though earnestly made in good faith, prove to be flimsy. Something more lasting is needed.

If the answer is not despair, is the solution change or renewal? Change may be revolutionary but often means fiddling around with what one already has.

Confusingly renewal has at least two meanings. It implies continuation of an existing former state as in renewing one's passport or car insurance. This is often a passive action, for example: "To renew your insurance, you need do nothing."

The second meaning is to start from scratch, as in urban renewal where all the dysfunctional is cleared away to make a completely fresh start. Perhaps we're getting closer to a solution. This process is very similar to metanoia – a complete mind change from clearing away everything (repentance) to a personal transformation of the mind.

For those who follow in the steps of Jesus of Nazareth the message is essentially one of change of attitude to the life of others. We need to "walk in newness of life." (Romans 6.4). This exhortation intends to be permanent, not here today and gone tomorrow. How we walk this walk is clear from scripture, exemplary lives, and the experience of loving communities.

So, after welcoming the successful birth of the infant New Year, it's time to decide what to do with it. Remember, 2024 being a Leap Year, we've all got an extra day to fulfil our ambitions of renewal.

Robin Story

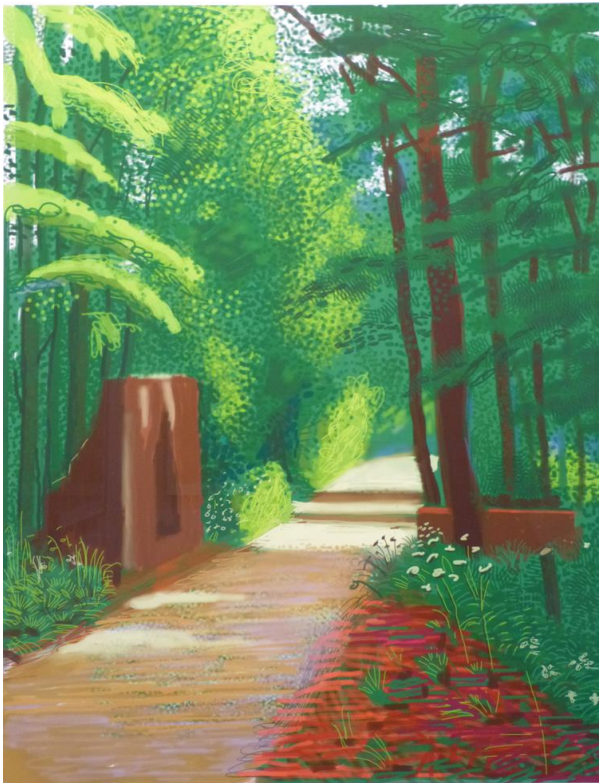
REFLECTIONS ON RENEWAL

At the beginning of a new year, and at a time of huge change for all of us here at St Mark's I was asked to write about what I feel about the term 'Renewal'. It has given me pause for thought – what do we mean by that word?

When I personally think of what renewal means, I see it as a re-gathering of energy and hopefulness and drive that gives impetus to us all as we journey onwards in our lives. The precious moment of renewal that arrives unbidden, that lifts our spirit, when we suddenly realise that we feel refreshed enough to continue going onwards into the future in hope and faith. There is a strength but also a lightness in our hearts.

However, before we reach the heady heights of renewal that we so long for, we need to pause.

Renewal will only be genuine when it is preceded by rest and reflection and the inner nurturing that replenishes our spirit. We may need to learn patience and sometimes to accept quietness and inactivity. By its very definition 'renewal' is a process that arrives after a previous period of activity and busyness has naturally come to its close. We can often see that in our own lives and particularly now we can see this as a reflection of the process that is beginning here at St Mark's church.



David Hockney's Arrival of Spring (Salt's Mill, Saltaire) *Photo Michael Miller*

Genuine renewal is a tender plant – a seed that tentatively puts out its roots in darkness with unseen activity that takes place out of sight. There may begin to be signs of tiny green shoots emerging on the surface, but they need to be gently cared for and nurtured. Renewal is a plant that cannot be 'forced' or it will be weak and it will fail. The process cannot be hurried no matter how much we wish it could be. Waiting for the plant to become stronger is as important as any activity we undertake. This is where we need to be patient – liminal moments, where no path is clear – are the hardest moments to live through.

When living through a period of transition, it is unsettling. We can feel as though we have used up all our energy, and we cannot see a way forwards. We are unsure of our

direction. At these times we are often forced to rest before we can go onwards. We may feel exhausted and realise that we can go no further as we are but then there is often a compulsion to continue to give of ourselves. A guilt that we feel if we don't keep pushing onwards to help others, to be useful, there is 'so much to do'. I think this is a common experience for those of us who care very deeply and feel the sadness of the world.



The Atlantic coast of Portugal – Photo Michael Miller

David Adams (author and previous vicar of Lindisfarne) in his book *Tides and Seasons* draws from the poetry and prayers of Celtic spirituality to relate the seasons of our hearts and our lives, the highs and lows of our experiences to the tides.

Incoming Tide. Full Tide. Ebb Tide. Low Tide. We cannot always be in a state of incoming or full tide as we cannot sustain that energy – the periods of our life when we experience ebb tide and low tide has to follow: 'The ebb and the flow. As it was, as it is, as it shall be... evermore. The ebb and the flow....'

Perhaps as we go forwards as a community this is what we need now. To reflect on our journey so far, both personally and as a church family, to pause during this season of low tide and wait for the incoming signs of genuine renewal.

Jane Keeling

RENEWAL BY EUPHONIUM



For me renewal is the euphonium (a tenor tuba). I learned how to play, joined a band played regularly with them, resigned, sold my instrument.

Finish. Or so I thought.

In my early forties, I learnt to play the recorder – probably because my children were learning. Then I tried the trumpet which was much harder.

I asked a music teacher how I could improve and his brutal reply was “stop playing”. He said I was too old to take up trumpet but should try a brass instrument with a wider mouthpiece and whatever instrument became available he would pass on to me.

It was a euphonium. I took it away along with a ‘how to play’ book, started practising and was so pleased with the sound that I worked on some music grades (picking up a music theory grade on the way) and successfully joined a brass quintet playing the bass line until it was disbanded when two members moved away. A friend suggested that I could join a local (ex-military) concert band and they welcomed me. I struggled with some of the repertoire and was always aware that I should play second parts. Fortunately they had a first-class player. I could play an appropriate bass line and spent many happy times playing at concerts and outdoor events.

Then because of domestic problems, I found it difficult to practise and to attend, so I resigned. Shortly afterwards Covid struck and the band stopped playing.

When they restarted in autumn 2022 with changes in meeting time, one of the members contacted me, ostensibly to ‘check out a euphonium he had come across’ and ultimately led me back into the band in mid-2023. They welcomed me back wholeheartedly and provided me with a ‘pad’ of music totally suitable for me. I bought a new instrument, am playing regularly at rehearsals and played in the band at a Remembrance Sunday event, with other events coming up in 2024.

Not only renewal of a vital music activity but friendship as well.

Arthur Button

RENEWAL THROUGH REMOVAL

Moving house enforces renewal, particularly if not having moved for several years. Not only will you discover 'lost' items whilst clearing items and choosing what to discard, but it shakes you out of old habits. Moving is, according to research, very stressful – there is so much uncertainty and so much to organise, let alone the physical exertion – but as you resettle it gives many opportunities. There are choices on décor, decisions on fittings and their arrangement, and perhaps some new furniture (all very expensive!).

But looked at positively, although the loss of the familiar can feel like a bereavement, there are opportunities to explore a new area, meet new people, learn new ways, change your habits. These can be refreshing and stimulating; certainly the move Pauline and I made in 2020 (10 days before the Covid lockdown) from a 3-storey town house to an apartment, helped by a careful choice of location (including being easier to get to St Mark's!) has worked out very successfully despite a few minor compromises. We have explored Fulwood, discovered paths along and across the Porter valley, used new shops and met local people. But we have also kept in touch with several of our previous neighbours, and of course we did not have to cope with the much more unsettling move to a new city, as we had when coming to Sheffield from Leicester in 1979. That, we soon discovered, was a great benefit, 'East West, Sheffield's best!'

Michael Miller

ELECTRIC DELIVERY vs POSTAGE

Did you know that for the cost of posting a second class letter, 75p, you can buy enough off-peak electricity (at 8½p per kWh) to drive 25 miles in an electric car? This makes it well worth delivering greetings cards yourself instead of posting them. Do you remember the good old pre-privatisation days when postage cost much less than the card?

Michael Miller

WURLITZER ORGAN

Exciting news just in! Because so many 1930's cinemas have closed, several bargain value Wurlitzer organs have become available. St Mark's is planning to acquire and install one to give extra 'zing' to the services as it rises, lights flashing, from beneath the floor with David Willington at the keyboard. He hopes to take delivery on 1st April.



BOOK REVIEW:

Angels: A very short introduction by David Albert Jones*



This is one of the series of some 300 very short introduction volumes ranging from the American presidency through literary theory to witchcraft, some of which we already have in the library. It is illustrated (117 illustrations) and has a very detailed index with subjects ranging from the ecstasy of Saint Theresa to Zoroastrianism.

There are eight chapters dealing with a brief history of angels: how they are pictured, what is the definition, are they ministering spirits, are they part of the heavenly host, have they fallen and how do you wrestle with them.

In his preface the author makes no bones about reality and he reviews his chapters from the standpoint of their historical references and the comments of thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, concentrating on what a purely spiritual creature would be like. In a whole chapter devoted to what is an angel, he bravely deals with the questions of when angels were created and what are they made of. For anyone lacking a belief in the supernatural this is an extraordinary if irrelevant account.

In his chapter on divine messengers he remarks that there is massive cultural reluctance to take angels seriously but he emphasises that many individuals who were aware that he was writing a book on angels reported to him their own encounters with angels. These individuals, many of whom were Christian, were not distinguishable from the population in general. They were unremarkable individuals who had had a remarkable experience.

He claims in his final chapter that angels can help to illuminate aspects of human existence but points out that they have often been carriers of counter-cultural messages and he suggests that they reinforce and mask prejudices amongst which, very importantly, is that we are alone in an empty universe.

As he states in his preface he does not attempt to prove or disprove the existence of angels and he is content to leave the reader to find out how people have sought to make sense of their belief in angels – often not very successfully.

This is an intelligent well-researched account and well worth a read whatever your views of angels. These may be disturbed in either direction as a result.

Charles Stirling

**Angels: A very short introduction*, David Albert Jones, Director of the Anscombe Bioethics Centre in Oxford. Published by OUP 2011, library section E.

ANN LEWIN — IN HER OWN WORDS

I've always written. My school report said I was good at English, and I got a degree in English and Theological Studies so I was used to writing essays and marshalling ideas.

There's always been a debate about whether what I've written, especially in *Watching for the Kingfisher* is poetry or prose. A lot of people say poetry has to rhyme. If you mention poetry they switch off straight away, though it's probably not true of the modern generations. But certainly for people of my generation, poetry in school was so dull. It was full of big names like Milton and Byron and Wordsworth, and I'm not one of these. I don't call it poetry. I've never called myself a poet and I don't want to be labelled a poet because most of what I write isn't in that genre. I say it's what you make it really.

***Watching for the Kingfisher* is atypical.** Much more typical is *Seasons of Grace*. It's a collection of things that I've written to engage people throughout the Christian year. After I left teaching I led retreats and quiet days, devising liturgy for those occasions. So there are suggestions about how to lead a quiet day. And then I wrote something called *Love is the Meaning* which is [about] Julian of Norwich and one is called *Come Emmanuel: Approaching Advent, Living with Christmas*. And that is about the antiphons and various other things about Christmas and beyond.

I started writing what appears in *Watching for the Kingfisher* at a time when my life was in turmoil. It was upheaved by various things which led to my retiring early from teaching. And it led me into looking after my mother who was going into dementia. And for about 35 years I was living alongside first my mother and then one of my brothers with dementia, and so *Watching for the Kingfisher* has reflections on that kind of experience. After that, I've very rarely written in that way, because I had other ways of expressing myself.

Writing Eucharistic prayers came about when I was working in the university. After I'd been teaching for 26 years, I got a job as a welfare advisor in the University of Southampton and I joined up with the chaplaincy. We used to meet for a time of worship on a Sunday evening which was a Eucharist, and all the Eucharistic prayers were so wordy. So I decided that I wanted to write Eucharistic prayers that fitted on one side of A5. That took me into interesting discussions with the head of the liturgical commission, who was very scathing. I got the very shirty answer that they didn't come up to the standards of what General Synod had recommended should be in a Eucharistic prayer. I wrote back, perhaps rather foolishly, and said I understand all that General Synod had said but I'm just suggesting there was an alternative way that meets the needs of people who are not quite so literate.

And he wrote back another rather scathing letter saying that you haven't kept what General Synod said and you haven't kept the words that Jesus said at the institution of Communion and you haven't got an epiclesis¹. So I thought, well 'Come to us living God', which is often a phrase in those Eucharistic prayers, is pretty well an epiclesis.

I used to say what you need on the liturgical commission is a poet. But [Bishop Michael Perham] said they use very esoteric language. I said that the important thing about poetry is that it uses imagery which sets people's imagination on fire. And that's really what I hope I do when I write something. You need some imagination to write good liturgy. And you need to find good imagery, maybe quite startling: like *Watching for the Kingfisher* – the last thing that people will expect is that you will liken that to prayer.

When I wrote that particular piece I was staying in a retreat house. We were on holiday rather than retreat, and one after another people came in saying 'Oh I've seen a kingfisher'. I didn't see the kingfisher at all during the ten days I was staying there and I thought 'That's not right. I'm the birdwatcher and these people aren't, so why haven't I seen one? One morning when I was out watching again in vain it suddenly came to me that prayer is like this: looking for God, and you may not find God, but the important thing is that you've been there and been prepared and sometimes, and that's the very important word, sometimes when you've almost ceased to expect it, a flash of brightness gives you encouragement.

I think [how we address God] is very difficult because the gendered language for God is going to hit hard whether [people are] male or female, because some people have had awful experiences of the father, and 'If that is what God is like, I'm not interested'. And it can be equally true of mothers. I remember one of the things that happened when I was working in the students' union was a chap from Iran who came to study in the university and he wanted to get his wife and his children to come and join him, and he said of his wife 'when he comes', and I thought 'Oh you haven't quite got the...' – and then I realised that in Farsi there are no gendered pronouns, so for him God would be God.

I don't start prayers with Father God or anything like that; I do sometimes use Lord because I think that explains our relationship with God in a different way: we are his subjects as well as his family and his children. The trouble is it gets a bit repetitive if you keep on saying God. If I'm leading intercessions, for example, I like to use different descriptions. I'll talk about Creator God, or God of Wholeness, God of love, & try not to bore people with repetitions of the word God.

¹An epiclesis is a specific prayer to the Holy Spirit to bless the bread and wine and/or the people who will receive Communion

I don't regard writing as a discipline because I'm not defined by my writing. What inspires me to write is the inspiration that suddenly comes, like the kingfisher. I don't sit down at 9 o'clock in the morning and think I've got to write 600 words by coffee time. What I prefer doing is writing something and then letting it rest. And very often when I was writing in that 'poetic' form I would carry an idea in my head for quite a long time before I actually committed it to writing. I would write by hand and then when I typed it I regarded that as 'it'. And so sometimes in *Watching for the Kingfisher* you'll find two things with the same title or with the same theme.

I always say to people is that silence is not something to be afraid of because the silence is filled with God, and God loves you. Just be still and let that sink in. You can stay in silence for five minutes and that does the trick, or you can stay in silence for five hours and you may not have reached the still centre. It's about depth really, going down into the depths of yourself and recognising that you're deeply loved.

I think most people's problem is they've got no self-awareness, no self-confidence because most people will say, 'Oh I'm not good enough'. And God never says you're not good enough, God says you are good enough, and I will transform you if you will let me.

Transformation is an important word in my vocabulary. And the other thing I try to do is to get people off the idea that sin is the most important thing about us. Because it's not. Julian of Norwich has been a very big influence in my life and my thinking. She says sin is the worst thing that can happen to you but nothing will stop God loving you. Guilt doesn't do anything for you, it just takes attention away from God and onto yourself. And the important thing is to take responsibility for the things that you are responsible for. There's that lovely bit of doggerel written by a nun, I think:

Once in a saintly passion I cried in deepest grief,
O Lord my heart is black with sin, of sinners I am chief.
Then stooped my guardian angel and whispered from behind
Vanity, vanity; you're nothing of the kind.

Getting people to laugh is a very important thing. I think that what we can't see in reading scripture is that we can't see the expression on somebody's face and I think some of the things Jesus says, there must have been a twinkle in his eye. There must have been some laughter as well. We persist in taking things out of context.

Ann was in conversation with John Schofield

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