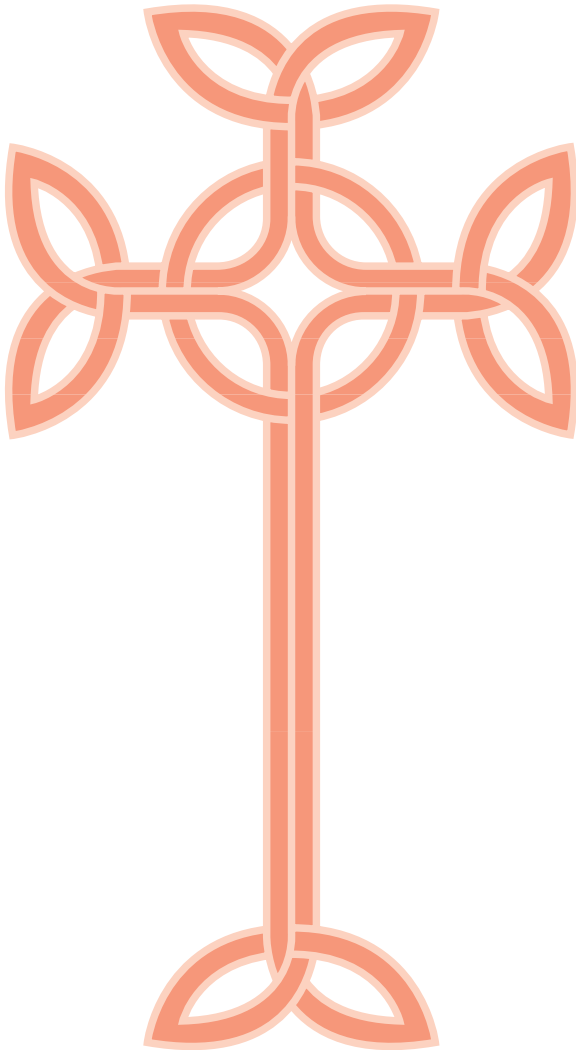


THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
OF THE PARISH OF  
HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING



St. Michael  
AND ALL ANGELS

JULY 2020

60P

SIGNSPOST

## THE PARISH CHURCH OF HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING

### MINISTRY TEAM

#### **Rector**

Rev'd John Barron,  
The Rectory, 5 Lingfield, Houghton-le-Spring,  
Tyne & Wear, DH5 5QA.  
Tel: (0191) 584 7657

We enjoy and benefit from the ministry of a number  
of retired clergy at St Michael's.

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Mrs. Ros Pickersgill (Reader)  
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Mrs. Rita Turnbull,  
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DH4 5DD.  
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#### **Officers of the Parochial Church Council**

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Tel: (0191) 584 2036

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8 Dixon Road, Houghton-le-Spring.  
Tel: (0191) 584 1455

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Tel: (0191) 584 1954

#### **Safeguarding**

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email: kevin.bond1511@googlemail.com  
Mrs. Kathleen Close (DBS Officer)  
38 Bradley Avenue, Houghton-le-Spring  
Tel: (0191) 584 0353

#### **Space4**

76 Newbottle Street  
Next to Houghton Library  
Twitter @space4  
Facebook houghtonspace4  
Tel: (0191) 512 0676  
Mrs. Christine Britcliffe (Co-ordinator)  
Tel: (0191) 512 0676

#### **Church Website**

Our website contains information on most aspects  
of church life.  
[www.stmichaels-hls.org.uk](http://www.stmichaels-hls.org.uk)

#### **The Friends of Houghton Parish Church Trust**

Chairman - Mr. Alex Scullion  
Contact: Mr. George Peebles, Membership  
Secretary on (0191) 584 1628 for information and  
application forms.

#### **Toddler Group**

Contact: Sheila Partridge  
Tel: (0191) 584 7308

### UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS

#### **Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers**

Contact: Sheila Wynne, Tel: (0191) 512 1331  
E-mail: sheila.m.wynne@gmail.com

#### **Beavers, Cubs and Scouts**

Contact: Steve Gibson, Tel: 07507 161366  
E-mail: 1sthoughton@durhamscouts.org.uk  
Website: [www.1sthoughtonscouts.org.uk](http://www.1sthoughtonscouts.org.uk)

**REGULAR SERVICES**

In these unprecedented and difficult times we are doing Church a little differently while the Church buildings are closed. To keep the spirit of Gilpin's ministry based on Faith, Generosity and Service going within our community we will be live streaming our service via our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/stmichaelslhs> at the following times each week;

Sunday	10am	Service of Holy Communion
Sunday	11am	Young Church
Sunday	11am	Service of the Word via conference call
Tuesday	7pm	Service of the Word with Reflection

**Contact Information**

Our website and facebook page contain details of how to join others online for prayer, worship, study, and community life. We will send regular updates via our church distribution list – please call us or email us if you know someone who would like to receive our email updates.

*Find us online at:*

website:  
[www.stmichaels-lhs.org.uk](http://www.stmichaels-lhs.org.uk)

facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelslhs>

You can contact us through our 'remote' church office on 0770 7043395 between 10am and 2pm on a Tuesday and Thursday or you can email us at [stmichaels.lhs@gmail.com](mailto:stmichaels.lhs@gmail.com). Please let us know if you would like us to be in touch with you by telephone. For urgent issues contact Rev'd John Barron on 0191 584 7657.

If you'd like your child to be a part of Young Church 'closed' zoom meeting contact Clare our Young Church leader at [stmichaels.youngchurch@btinternet.com](mailto:stmichaels.youngchurch@btinternet.com) so she can let you know how to join in.

**'Dial-in' Church!**

Especially for people without internet access we hold a Service of the Word via a telephone conference. The way of accessing the service is to dial **0203 481 5240**, put in the meeting id **584 584 0191** followed by # and if prompted for a further id just enter #. (The cost is that of a standard call from your phone provider).

**Space4**

Our Space4 Community Project continues their services 'remotely' through their Facebook page; <https://www.facebook.com/HoughtonSpace4/> with lots going on throughout the week and at these set times:

Monday	2-3pm	Women's Group
Tuesday	11-12noon	'Crafty Chat'
Wednesday	12:30-1:30pm	Parents Group 'Kiddy Chat'
Thursday	11-12noon	Men's Hour
Friday	2-3pm	'Eat your Cake and Chat'
Saturday	3-4pm	'Saturday Chat'

Our Foodbank is continuing on a Tuesday and Friday, supporting people who are socially isolated as well as those struggling with food poverty. Please message the Space4 Facebook page if you need a food parcel.

**ABOUT SIGNPOST**

Sign-Post is the magazine of the Parish Church of St. Michael & All Angels Houghton-le-Spring. In addition to providing information about the life of the church, it also aims to reflect the interests of the broader community and to provide a source of local news and a forum in which matters of common concern can be raised. The Editors welcome comments and suggestions, and invite contributions. Items to be included in Sign-Post should be submitted to the Editors by 10th of the month (end of 1st week of the month for memorials) to ensure inclusion in the next issue. It should be noted, however, that the Editors cannot guarantee to publish material and wish to point out that items included do not necessarily reflect their views nor those of the Parochial Church Council. Editors: Malcolm Foster, Tel: (0191) 584 2486. Distribution: Joan Bond, Tel: (0191) 584 1031.

Circulation: 300 copies per month.

# Rector's Letter

As we begin to see some lifting of restrictions of lockdown and consider the implications of rapidly changing guidance on the way we operate as church, life seems to have become even more hectic! In amongst the busy-ness I have a very important role to play for us in our church – that of 'Spiritual Leader'. (That might sound obvious but it's sometimes a fact that can be lost in all the busy-ness!) By 'Spiritual Leader' primarily I think at this stage I'm talking about helping us as community to focus on God. When I arrived in the parish a little over a year ago, I would often begin church meetings asking two questions– these are the same two questions that I want to ask us right now.



First of all I want to ask 'where are we now' – not where we've been in the past or where we might like to be in the future but an honest assessment of where we are in the present. This is an important theological question – quite simply because the present is where we can encounter God! Once we have a view of where we are – that leads to the second question – 'what's God up to?' We might find this a trickier question to answer. BUT if we know a bit about God through our reading about Jesus in the Bible or if we spend time with God in prayer or if we talk through what we understand of God with other Christians that can help.

So then, where ARE we now? This has been a dramatic time and we've been obliged to change how we are as church in some quite dramatic ways. We are running on-line services on Facebook and Zoom and telephone conference. That includes choirs and ministers using technology to contribute to worship, sometimes 10 different people collaborating to do that. We've set up telephone cascades and prayer ministry and new ways of doing bereavement care and producing and distributing our magazine. We've moved and set up and are operating a foodbank supporting 60-80 people each week who don't have enough to eat. Our Space4 community project runs on-line events and films and support groups to help people's well-being. We've set up administration and church decision making and financial management using technology.

I hear good feedback about what we're doing as church – knowing also that we don't always get it right! Feedback from the community about how desperate people have been and how we have literally been life-saving to some; I hear how well cared for people are feeling and how much they appreciate opportunities to be together after being separated so long. In all of this I can see God's Spirit at work perhaps prompting us to think about how we care for each other and how we care for our wider community. I also find myself wondering at the moment what God might be prompting us to consider in some emerging issues people in our communities are facing: divisions and racism, people facing unemployment, and challenges for mental well-being following months of lockdown.

My first two questions lead me to a third question – 'where is God calling us to'. In the weeks and months ahead my aim will be to bring us the Spiritual Leadership to seek together to answer these questions knowing that God is faithful and will equip us for the callings he make to us as his church in this time and this place!

With my continued prayers and very best wishes.

## A Prayer for Lockdown

*Creator God,  
You have put within us  
A spirit of adventure  
To move us beyond the immediate,  
And to  
See in the ordinary things  
Your extraordinary presence of love.*

*Propelled by your spirit,  
may each day become an adventure  
of contacts, tasks  
and responsibilities.*

*And when we feel grey and lifeless  
May you remind us  
That each day holds  
its own gifts,  
new truths,  
restored vision,  
inner healing,  
and the possibility  
to forgive old wounds.*

## FROM THE REGISTERS

### Funerals

1 June	Eleanor Finnigan Houghton-le-Spring	Aged 90
2 June	Frank Brown Houghton-le-Spring	Aged 84
16 June	Sheila Wheatley Owens Houghton-Le-Spring	Aged 90
26 June	Ian Fulton Houghton-le-Spring	Aged 37

## DONATIONS TO GENERAL FUNDS

In memory of Allan Smurthwaite.  
Remembering a Dear Husband  
and Father.

## Dealing with Loneliness and Isolation: FIVE TOP TIPS



**1. Pray – light a candle, if safe, and pray for hope, faith and strength to keep loving and caring for each other during this time of struggle.**



**2. Talk about how you feel.**

This may be difficult if you are self-isolating, but use the phone, internet and social media. If you need to contact a counsellor, this can be arranged by your GP, local agencies or privately. Samaritans are there 24 hours a day, every day, and it's free to call them on 116 123.



**3. Focus on the things that you can change, not on the things you can't.**



**4. Look after yourself – physically, emotionally, spiritually.**

Plan things that you enjoy at regular intervals during the day – a TV programme, a phone call, a book, a favourite dish, a game.



**5. Look after others – even if only in small ways, but do what you can:**  
a smile, a kind word, writing a letter or an email.

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## HOUGHTON RUGBY CLUB

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other functions Catering available if required

Contact **Kaye Louise Robson** (after 6.00pm)  
Mobile: 07791 223 910 email: klgrob7@aol.co.uk  
Club: 0191 584 1460

## Two Castles Housing Association



Two Castles Housing Association provides affordable homes for people over the age of 55. We have a range of sheltered accommodation across the North East including Ryhope, Shiney Row, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton-le-Spring and Sunderland offering a safe and secure environment to live whilst maintaining their independence. Our schemes offer:

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Fax: 0191 261 9692  
Email: [mailbox@twocastles.org.uk](mailto:mailbox@twocastles.org.uk)  
[www.twocastles.org.uk](http://www.twocastles.org.uk)

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# Food for thought

The Bible is full of references to food, from Genesis to Revelation and food is mentioned ninety times in the Gospels. So it's not only me that's obsessed with food. The only excitement in my life at the moment is the sound of the bin lorry arriving to remove all the food packaging rubbish on a Wednesday morning, and thinking about what I'm having for my dinner - in fact any meal. As I savour the last morsel of cereal at breakfast time visions of what I'm going to eat at my next meal swirl around in my head. As a consequence of this I've gained about five pounds in weight - I know, it's terrible, I'm gutted.

Part of my routine in the morning is to go to the bathroom and stand on my scales to get weighed. I can't believe what they are telling me. How many people weigh themselves twice or indeed three times to see if their weight changes? How many people move the scales around the bathroom to get the lightest reading? I do! I've never been so food focussed as I am now. Recently I've been doing a lot of baking, thinking that I'll give most of it away, but I do need to have a taste of what I've made don't I? Afraid so! Hence the extra five pounds.



Last month it was my birthday and I've never received so much chocolate in my life. My daughter sent me a hamper full of chocolate (what was she thinking?!). A friend gave me a basketful of chocolate, and a bouquet of flowers arrived accompanied by a huge box of chocolates which were sent from someone else. I tried hiding all this confectionery in various places around the house, but you know when you know that there tasty things to eat, you find them! So what's to be done? Oh I forgot to mention that my daughter sent me another gift and it wasn't chocolate. It was a "knit a donkey kit", brilliant I thought, because you can't really eat while you're trying to concentrate on your knitting. I'm going to start it tonight and see if the numbers on the scales start to move in the right direction.

As I write this article Marcus Rashford (a Manchester United football player) has persuaded the government to make a U turn on their policy on free school meals for children who need them during the summer holidays. What a remarkable young man and he says that he's not going to stop there. So while I've had an excess of food I'm aware that many people in the world aren't so lucky and are starving.

Jesus was a person who liked a party and usually one that involved eating and drinking but he probably did it in moderation. Mark Twain said "Everything in moderation, including moderation."

In John's Gospel we can read that Jesus said "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." So when we are missing communion services in church we can still be spiritually fed by online participation, prayer and reading the Bible - and this doesn't make us gain weight.

**Anne Clappison**



# William Wilberforce

**Social Reformer, 1759–1833**

*Written by Revd Judith Howes*

Since the killing of George Floyd in USA across the world there have been demonstrations to get the world to understand that 'Black lives matter' the same as every other life matters.

During one of the demonstrations in Bristol a statue of Edward Colston was torn down because it was recognised that he was a slave trader (among other British mariners) transporting African men, women and children in appalling conditions with many dying on the way to North and South American where they were used as slaves to work on cocoa and coffee plantations, mining gold and silver.

It seems with that in mind to remember someone who worked hard to get the slave trade abolished.

The 30th July is the day in the churches calendar that we remember William Wilberforce a social reformer, a member of parliament who in particular fought for the abolishment of slavery.

He was born in Hull in 1759, and educated at St John's College, Cambridge. In 1780 he was elected to Parliament, first for Hull, later for Yorkshire.

When he was in his mid-twenties he was converted to a living faith.

Initially he considered taking Holy Orders, but was persuaded by John Newton (the hymn writer who wrote *Amazing Grace* and a former slave ship captain) that he could do more good for the Christian cause in Parliament than in the pulpit.

In 1787 a Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was founded by Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson and a group of Quakers. Needing a Parliamentary spokesman, they approached Wilberforce who immediately saw this as an appropriate sphere of Christian service, commenting that 'God Almighty has set before me two great objects – the abolition of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.'

In 1791 he moved the first of a long series of annual abolition resolutions in the House of Commons. Not until 1806 did the Commons vote for the abolition of the slave trade.



Wilberforce and his influential evangelical friends (known as the ‘Saints’ or the ‘Clapham Sect’ from their place of residence) were involved in promoting a wide variety of causes including the abolition of the state lottery and the opening up of India to Christian missionaries. Wilberforce supported Catholic emancipation and was involved in the foundation of many societies both to aid the spread of the gospel (Church Missionary Society, Religious Tract Society, British and Foreign Bible Society) and also the ‘reformation of manners’ – attempts to improve the moral tone of English society. These have come under criticism for attacking and abolishing many of the pleasures of the poor yet leaving the rich and influential free to amuse themselves as they pleased.

Though slave trade abolition had come into force in 1807, slavery remained legal in the British Empire and Wilberforce continued to campaign for an end to it, even after ill health forced his retirement from Parliament in 1825.

The bill for the abolition of all slavery in British territories passed its crucial vote only three days before his death in July 1833. A year later 800,000 slaves, chiefly in the West Indies, were set free, initially being required to work as ‘apprentices’ for four years for their former masters until they received total freedom in 1838.



Today then we remember William Wilberforce and his fight for abolishing the Slave Trade.

Today we also see marches and campaigns to fight against the injustices that the BAME people have to endure.

During the time of William Wilberforce there were sugar boycotts, signed petitions, even a march on the prime minister's office. The fight to abolish the slave trade is now regarded as the first public pressure campaign.

It's also interesting that a symbol for the Black lives matter' is going down on one knee.

At the time of William Wilberforce the potter Josiah Wedgwood created a brooch depicting an enslaved man on bended knee. At the bottom of the brooch was the inscription: “Am I not a man and a brother?” Incredible to think that actually still applies today.



# BIRDSONG

When I retired (almost 10 years ago) one of the first things I intended to do was to learn to identify the songs of different birds. I love birdsong as much as any music. However, my progress with identification of birdsong has been slow! People tell me their good intentions on retirement (learn a new language, clear out the garage etc.) often peter out after a while so I think I'm in good company.

What I have done though is simply to listen to the birds. I do have a favourite - the blackbird. The blackbird's song is one of the few I can recognise! And it always fills me with delight. Having got up to hear the dawn chorus a few times this year, I can confirm that the blackbird is very often the first on the scene too.

It's hard to describe the beauty we find in things, I think. It's hard to explain why we like particular kinds of music too. I love the music of Beethoven, his driving rhythms and vibrant melodies. I hope this poem says a bit about what I feel about them both.

## BLACKBIRD

*Beautiful boaster  
Ruler of rooftop and  
treetop  
You rise early  
To belt out your boisterous  
bounty  
Bursting to blow bubbles  
of song  
Beethoven of the  
bird-world.*

*Before the sun is seen  
Over the edge of the dark  
You sing  
You know the song of the  
earth and of the morning  
Better than we do  
Like him, you hear it when  
it is silent*

*And in the evening dusk  
I wait  
You are still singing  
I will not go in until you  
have finished.  
Just as I cannot cut off  
His symphony before the  
final chord*

*Ros Pickersgill*

## New Archbishop of York to be confirmed

Bishop Stephen Geoffrey Cottrell will be confirmed as the 98th Archbishop of York this month.

The service, at 11am on Thursday 9th July, will be broadcast entirely via video conference due to the Coronavirus restrictions.

Bishop Stephen Cottrell says: "I am looking forward to beginning my ministry as the 98th Archbishop of York. This isn't quite how I imagined it would begin. It is certainly the first time an Archbishop's election will have been confirmed via video conference. But we're all having to re-imagine how we live our lives and how we inhabit the world.

"These are difficult times. My hope is that through this service the love of God that is given us in Jesus Christ will shine out, perhaps even to those who while never attending a service in York Minster, might have a look online. Following in the footsteps of my many predecessors, I look forward to serving our nation and bringing the love and peace of Christ to our world, especially here in the north."

The service will be available on the Church of England website. Arrangements for Bishop Stephen's enthronement service will be announced later in the year.

# ST MICHAEL'S LADIES CYCLING GROUP

Since lockdown over 3 months ago many of us have taken up something to do in our enforced free time. As I said in the last month's Signpost I have taken up cycling. Soon after I got the bike, Margaret who is a seasoned cyclist, offered to cycle with me. I bought the bike over to Rainton Meadows and we cycled around there for about an hour. The next week in conversation over zoom Carol said she would like to join us so we met at her house and cycled a different route around Rainton Meadows. We organised another outing the following week and on Wednesday 17th June after over an hours cycling we decided to make Wednesday a regular day to meet and at that moment the St Michael's ladies cycling group was formed!



## The founder members!

If any ladies would like to join us with their bike you would be most welcome. You do not need to be proficient – all standards from beginners to professional are welcome.

We will meet on **Wednesday's at 10.00am** (unless pouring with rain!). Initially if you would like to join us please phone 07794297235 so we can arrange where to meet up.

It's fun and good exercise and although at moment we are socially distancing in the future we hope we can stop for refreshments and a chat! (Although social distancing doesn't stop us catching up with news from each other when we stop for a rest!)

**Judith Howes**

# In Praise of Sewing on Patches

I started mending clothes at a really low point in my life. I had a lot more time than money, and when clothes wore out, I had very little confidence or energy to go out and replace them. So I started mending them, in an effort to delay the need to shop! Life got better, from that point, but I carried on mending because I had fallen completely in love with it!

I love the problem solving required to mend something. Each mend requires a different combination of skills and approaches and materials. I enjoy the satisfaction of finding a good solution to a tricky problem.

I love the creativity of combining colours, fabrics and stitches to mend something in a way that is eye-catching and beautiful, not just functional and hidden.

I love that mending things is so good for the environment. Let's opt out of fast fashion and clothes that are short lived and disposable. Let's learn skills to make our clothes last. Each mend feels like a tiny act of rebellion. I am not just a consumer, I am a skilled craftswoman. I will mend, not just throw things away and spend money to replace them.

But most of all I fell in love with mending because it gives me hope. It returns me to God.

I look at my own life and see brokenness and wounds (especially true at the point when I first started mending). I look at the world around me, and it's easy to despair at the deep inequalities and pain in many places. But then I pick up a torn pair of jeans, or a shirt that has worn thin and I patiently start to mend. Each stitch reminds me that mending is possible. That broken things and people and situations can be restored. That in even the most frayed and battered situations, healing can happen.

Mending gives me hope that God can mend me. And that together we can mend one another and our community.

Mending takes time, and patience and creativity. Sometimes it is slow and skilled work. Sometimes you need to take something apart before you can even start to mend it. Mending makes you love something more, because you decided it was worth investing time and attention in. Mending is a way in which we can be like God, who delights to restore our souls.

So go and find a needle and thread and sew a cheerful patch on something that needs it!

***Revd Claire Cullingworth***

*(If you're interested to see some of the mending projects I've done, you can search on Facebook or Instagram for @ragbagmending and you should find some photos!)*

# A Reminder from Oscar Romero...

*A church that doesn't provoke a crisis,  
 A Gospel that doesn't unsettle.  
 A word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin.  
 A word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society around it,  
 What Gospel is that?*

*Very nice pious considerations that don't bother anyone,  
 That's the way many would like preaching to be.*

*Yet does such a Gospel light the world we live in?  
 the gospel of Christ is courageous;  
 it is the 'Good News'  
 of him who came to transform  
 and take away the world's sins.*



Oscar Romero was a bishop in El Salvador in the 1970's amidst violence between extreme right wing government and the poor who were attempting to stand for their rights. Romero protested to the government about the murders of three people by the army in his diocese.

Romero became Archbishop of San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador. Some rich people were happy because they thought he would stop priests from helping the poor to stand up for their basic rights. But a few weeks later, his friend Fr Rutilio Grande was shot and killed, along with two companions. The following Sunday, Romero allowed only one Mass in the whole diocese - at the Cathedral - where he spoke out against the murders.

Romero ordered the army to stop killing people: "In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day, I beg you, I implore you, I order you, in the name of God, stop the repression!" The next day, a shot killed Romero as he said Mass.

A UN report later found that Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, had ordered Romero's death. Thousands came to the funeral. The army fired into the crowd. 30 people died and hundreds were injured. The civil war in El Salvador continued until 1992.

On 15 March, the new president of El Salvador announced that his government would be inspired by Romero and the "option for the poor"

May 2015, Oscar Romero was beatified (made a saint) by Pope Francis.

At this time of outrage experienced by our BAME communities, we should reflect on what the Gospels say to us and on how we must respond.

***Rev'd Margaret Lee***

## O B I T U A R Y

**Ian Fulton**

9th November 1982 – 2nd June 2020

Ian was born in Thorpe Maternity Hospital, the 2nd son of David and Elizabeth Fulton. He was a premature baby and spent most of the first 2 weeks of his life in an incubator before returning home to the family home in Seaton. A very different character to his elder brother, Ian was not a tactile person, even into later life, he shunned the physical contact of others which may well have stemmed from the 2 weeks he spent lacking in the intimacy of his parents' touch whilst in the hospital.



From an early age Ian was very independent; he had been used to walking down to the local school with his mam and elder brother, so when it was his turn to start school he insisted from the first day that he be left at the school gate, after 3 days he was adamant that Liz left him at the corner and he would walk along to the lollipop lady who would see him across the road and into the playground. One day he spotted Liz watching round the corner to make sure he got there safely and told her in no uncertain terms she wasn't to peep around the corner any more.

Ian's approach to education was different, at nursery school he was referred to a speech therapist who told us Ian had a good vocabulary and could speak perfectly well, but didn't see why he should speak, just because someone else wanted him to. This attitude also applied to his reading, he would bring a book home to read to his parents (the Yellow Pirate we remember it well) and he could read it easily.

The following day at school he would pretend he couldn't read it and bring it home again to practice. This happened that often he could remember the words without referring to the book, but still refused to read it for his teacher. His attitude was that if he read it, he's be given another one and that would be

even more work for him. In later life Ian devoured books, but only on subjects that interested him.

Ian was a Beaver Scout, then joined Cubs, Scouts and finally Venture Scouts. He earned the Chief Scout's award and travelled to the international Scout camp in Kandersteg in the Swiss Alps in 2000. He also worked as an assistant Scout leader in Seaham. During his time in Scouts, Ian made a lot of friends, many of whom were still dear to him in later life. Ian also worked as a Youth leader at the After Dark group, YSunday, Andy Slater's Saturday morning sports group and was an active member of the Young Executives Cycling club in St Michaels.

Ian's formal academic career finished in 2000 when he got a job as a graphic artist working at a sign making company in Washington where he again, made friends for life. Finding that job lacking mental stimulation he joined the tax office in Sunderland before taking up a position as a heat treatment engineer in Peterlee. Ian was born to be an engineer. From an early age he was fascinated by mechanical things and machines, he was never happier than helping me work on the car. While he was still at school, I was more than happy for him to change the brakes on one side of the car when I was working on the other in the assurance it would be right. He had a natural feel for tools and metal, his skill and knowledge were a valuable asset to his company that they acknowledge they will miss.

Ian was brought up surrounded by Rock music, from 2 years old he would be in his baby seat in the car singing along with AC/DC, Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple. Liz and I bought him an electric guitar and small amp when he was about 18 and he never looked back. Entirely self-taught he had an amazing talent which saw him join a Heavy Metal Rock band that toured the world, released critically acclaimed albums and produced YouTube videos that received thousands of viewings. Ian starred as an actor in some of the videos, a skill that we first noticed during his performances in St Michael's as Jesus in the Easter Passion play and several of the annual musicals such as Galloping Gilpin and Talking Windows.

As a son, Ian was a loving, generous and loyal friend of whom we are all immensely proud and whose loss will forever leave a void in our lives.

*Dave & Liz Fulton*

## ELEANOR OLIPHANT IS COMPLETELY FINE

These are the questions the Eleanor Oliphant book club are discussing on WhatsApp and Zoom on Mondays. If you have already read the book, or are reading it now but do not wish to join the book club, then you may be interested in considering some of these as you read.

### A. Being different

1. To say Eleanor is different is an understatement. What were your first impressions of Eleanor?
2. How much are we influenced in our life decisions and behaviour by a need to conform?
3. What has been your attitude to people who are different? This may have changed as you have grown up, think back to school, to work, to social groups, to church.
4. How good are we as a church in accepting 'difference' Do we need to do better?
5. What is 'normal' anyway... do we all have a bit of 'difference' in us that we try to hide?
6. What does Eleanor teach us about how we should regard and treat others?

### B. Character?

1. Eleanor has become insular. Is there a difference between loneliness and being alone? Which is Eleanor?
2. Eleanor holds high expectations about others, particularly when it comes to customer service. Where does she get this from?
3. Eleanor is prone to speaking her mind. Is this a good thing?
4. How believable is the character of Eleanor?
5. Have you ever known anyone like Eleanor?
6. What do you make of Eleanor's sudden crush on Johnnie Lomond? Does this have positive as well as negative effects on Eleanor?



**C. Trauma**

1. It is clear from the beginning that Eleanor has suffered a resounding traumatic episode in her life but the fullness of the trauma is kept for the end of the book. What is it that stops Eleanor from moving on in her life?
2. Could it be true that Eleanor had never received any positive help from social workers or mental health services?

**D. Rescue**

1. Raymond enters into Eleanor's life while everyone else avoids her. Is Raymond also a bit of a misfit? Raymond effectively rescue's Eleanor in so many ways. What does Raymond teach us about the treatment of others.
2. What is interesting about the relationship between Raymond and Eleanor?

**E. Crisis**

1. When Johnnie Lomond fails to live up to expectations and Eleanor sees him for what he is, she reacts rather badly. Eleanor is definitely not absolutely fine. She then has to face up to reality through the work of an expert counsellor. This of course proves very painful. Have you ever suffered very difficult life experiences which you have had to face?
2. Without revealing the circumstances, what did you find most helpful through this time?
3. Does the revelation of Eleanor's past at the end of the book change the opinion you held of Eleanor at the beginning?
4. Again, what does this say to us with regard to how we relate to others, particularly with newcomers to church, particularly with Space4 clients?

**F. Revelation**

1. Eleanor has grown up traumatised and stuck in the process of grieving. This is a problem experienced by next of kin during this period of lockdown for Coronavirus. If you have had to deal with a significant loss in your life, how did you deal with it, and do you think you managed it well?
2. Do you think Eleanor is now completely fine?

# ‘Well I’m Not a Racist, but.....’

I expect all who read this article consider themselves to be anti-racist. We don’t go round name calling, refusing people admission or giving service to black people in any way. I like to think of myself and my friends as liberally minded and accepting to all peoples regardless of nationality, ethnicity or gender.

For most of our lives it probably hasn’t been in the forefront of our consciousness, living in Houghton-le-Spring and County Durham we are unlikely to experience a multiracial community. This I’m afraid is the heart of the problem. Because we are not in the midst of active racism on our doorstep we think it doesn’t happen. We are like these three monkeys, blind to the suffering and humiliation of others, or too helpless to intervene (as for example in the Windrush scandal).



Those who attend the Celtic Eucharist on a Sunday evening will be familiar with the line from the confession which says ‘For the hurt of the world, of which we are part, for the brokenness of society, to which we contribute, **Father forgive.**’ Without realising it, we are implicitly part of the hurt of the world and the brokenness of society.

We need to recognise that we have grown up in a society where racism is part of our historic culture.... Remember the Robinson’s marmalade? If you saved enough labels you got a ‘golliwog’ badge, no one thought there was anything wrong in this at the time. Also the TV shows...The ‘Black and White Minstrel Show’ and later ‘It Ain’t Half Hot Mum’ on reflection we cannot believe such shows were acceptable. We continue to live our lives unaware of the institutional privilege white European society bestows on us.

The current controversy over historic statues is that we are honouring people who may have done great things for Britain, but they amassed their wealth on the backs of slaves. Much of the Great in Britain in fact grew on slavery, the money from which built our big cities and established our industrial base in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

My awareness was awakened when on a training weekend with NEOC. We were focussing on Black Theology and in preparation we were asked to read a book by James Crone, an American black theologian. The reaction to the book from my peers was rather strong, the book accused every white person of being the archetypal white supremacist, each one responsible for the persecution of black people. Our group found the book very offensive, it was meant to be provocative. For the first time I realised what it felt like to be at the receiving end of racism and unless we can walk in the shoes of a black person we have no idea of the struggles and humiliation of their lives.

The killing of George Floyd has had global significance. It was a single incident but one which exposed the reality of systemic racism in society, ours as well as that of the USA. We need to recognise the structural disadvantage of multiracial communities which entraps their residents in a web of disadvantage which goes much deeper than material poverty, it undermines self-esteem and the relationships. It breeds contempt and anarchy. It needs reform.

We should listen to their stories. Imagine entering a job interview and being greeted by 'Oh, I didn't know you were black'. Listen to young blacks who have given up driving because they were stopped so many times by the police. This is everyday life when you are black.

It is also easy for us to deny any personal responsibility but we are compliant by our silence. In the words of Dr Martin Luther King 'he who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it' and 'the ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people' This reminds me of the epitaph written on the gravestone of German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemoller:

*They came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist.*

*Then they came for the Jews and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.*

*Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Trade Unionist.*

*Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.*

*Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.'*

Niemoller led a group of German clergymen opposed to Hitler, he was arrested in 1937 and imprisoned in Dachau. He survived and was released in 1945 by the Allies.

We are who we are, we cannot change our background, but we can choose who we listen to, who we care about and who we speak up for.

**Rev'd Margaret Lee**



# A SPECIAL PLACE 2

## *Secrets of the Chancel – Saints and Beasts*

The Chancel or High Altar area of the Church is one of the oldest parts of the Church. The organ is Grade II listed and thus recognised as important and unique. It was made by Harrison and Harrison of Durham and installed in 1932. There are large bellows that had to be pumped, presumably by choir boys, but now the



air is directed through the pipes by a large electric motor. There is a booklet explaining more about the organ at the back of Church.

The pews for the choir were installed by the then Rector, The Honourable Rector John Grey in 1869 and are dedicated to his family members. Why The Honourable? He was the son of Earl Grey who was at one time Prime Minister of Great Britain. There is a monument in Newcastle, yes the column known as Grey's Monument and he is more usually known for the tea named after him.

Above the doorway into the organ loft is a carving in the stone of two dragons fighting/entwined? These are a complete mystery. They were known locally as the Houghton Beasts. The first thing to say is that archaeologists and historians believe that they came from elsewhere and were brought to Houghton.

They are said to be at least 1,000 years old. Strictly speaking they are not really dragons but wyverns. Wyverns walk on large back legs with only small front legs {like a T Rex} and they also have wings. We don't know what they represent, thoughts are they are the army of God led by the Archangel Michael fighting with the devil/satan, as in the Book of Revelations, or the invading Norsemen (Vikings) in their dragon ships fighting the Northumbrian dragon. Lastly it was suggested to

me by a visiting archaeologist that they are not fighting but embracing, as in the Celtic Church spreading down from Ireland, Iona and Lindisfarne meeting with the Roman church coming North via Gaul and Canterbury and meeting around here.



At the Synod at Whitby one of the many things to be decided was the date of Easter, this being based on lunar cycles and if you count the “teeth” around the top you can work the date out. Wyverns don’t come from this area they are normally associated with the west of Britain, Wales and Cornwall areas.

The first window on the north wall after the door is a fine example of Norman architecture. The glass window showing St Michael slaying the dragon/Satan, is Victorian. If you look carefully at the last two windows you can see a faint red cross on the stonework. These were uncovered by an English Heritage Conservatoire and are consecration crosses.



When first built holy water was sprinkled on the windows and doors to keep evil out. More mention of finds by the Conservatoire, a lovely German lady, to follow later.

There can also be seen on the north wall a large wooden cupboard door, behind is an Aumbry which is used to store the reserved sacrament [that is consecrated bread and wine] which has been saved after blessing at holy communion services to take when visiting the housebound.

Also in the Aumbry is sacred oil, blessed by the Bishop of Durham at the Maundy Thursday Service, to be used at Baptisms and when administering the last rites. There is a red candle which is lit permanently to signify the presence of the Host.

*David Turnbull*



# Money matters!

You will be aware that due to the Coronavirus pandemic our Church Building has been closed since mid-March but we remain very much here for members of our Church congregation and wider Community. As you might imagine, the closure of our building means that many of our usual sources of income have disappeared. These include our church collections (money and envelopes we usually put on the collection plate); fees and collections from weddings, baptisms and funerals; as well as the fundraising we do that involves our coming together. At the same time as this, most of our financial commitments have not gone away.

Knowing this, can we ask, would like to support us, have you considered becoming a regular giver or if you are already a regular giver, changing the way you give, using one of the options below?

**The Parish Giving Scheme** was set up through Durham Diocese to help us best manage our regular donations to the Church through Direct Debit on which we can also receive Gift Aid where appropriate. If you wish to join this easy and convenient way please contact the **Parish Giving Scheme Team** – on **Tel: 0333 002 1271**, and one of their administrators will take you through the sign-up process.

They will need the following information, so please have it to hand.

- Your personal bank account details
- The name of Parish which is **HLS St Michael and All Angels, Houghton-le-Spring - Durham Diocese**
- The Parish Giving Scheme code for the Parish – **130613099**.

If you are currently a regular giver thank you for your ongoing support, your financial giving is hugely important to us, it is highly valued and gratefully received.

If you wish to make any changes to your existing donation, please ring **Tel: 0333 002 1260** or email **[info@parishgiving.org.uk](mailto:info@parishgiving.org.uk)**.

Alternatively if you would prefer to become a regular giver through a Bank Standing Order please contact – **Alastair Bradley, PCC Church Treasurer – 0191 584 1455** or email: **[HoughtonTreasurer@aol.com](mailto:HoughtonTreasurer@aol.com)**.

Please could I ask you consider your response to this request prayerfully.

Thank you for your support



Our new Curate John D'Silva will be joining us on 5th July having now completed his training for ministry at Westcott House in Cambridge.

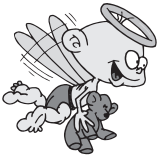
John will be sworn in in a special zoom event in the week ahead of his coming to us as Curate on the 5th. Please remember him in prayer as he moves to the North East and ahead of his licencing.



### **Planning for a limited reopening of churches**

At time of publication, permission has been given to churches to hold funerals with small numbers of people and to open for personal prayer. Our priority has been to look at how we operate within the guidelines to open in a safe way for funerals. We hope also to be able to open in a limited way for private prayer at pre-arranged times. This is all a slow process and we expect that we will be keeping our existing ways of doing services and caring for each other over the coming weeks.





# Michael's Angels




1 Kings 17

## God Provides Bread


Read the picture story to learn how God helped a poor widow. Then use the numbered pictures to fill in the crossword puzzle. You can read about it in 1 Kings 17:7-16.


The widow was gathering  <sup>9</sup> for a  <sup>1</sup>. Elijah asked her,

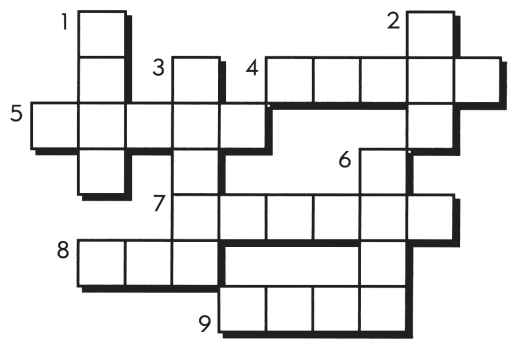
"Would you bring me a little  <sup>3</sup> in a  <sup>8</sup> ? Please bring me

a piece of  <sup>5</sup> too." "I have only a  <sup>6</sup>-ful of  <sup>4</sup> in a

 <sup>2</sup>," said the widow.  <sup>7</sup> said, "Don't worry. That  <sup>2</sup>

of  <sup>4</sup> will never become empty

and your  <sup>2</sup> of oil will never run dry."





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## Orchard at the heart of the community

# MEMORIALS

We hope this system will help us to meet requests for memorials more efficiently. Should you wish for a loved one to be remembered on their anniversary in the weekly prayers read during the Sunday services, please complete the slip opposite.

Cut out the slip and place it in the intercessions box at least one week prior to the Sunday for remembrance. If you are unable to get to church, please post the slip to the Church Administrator: Mrs Philippa Elsey, Parish Church of St Michael and All Angels, The Broadway, Houghton-le-Spring.

## MEMORIAL REQUEST

Name of person to be remembered:

.....

Request made by:

.....

.....

.....

Date for memorial:

Sunday, .....

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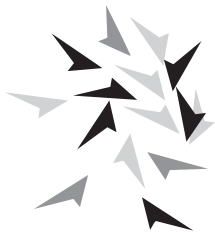
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## Rotary



Club of Houghton-le-Spring

# Bible readings for July

This list of bible readings is to accompany your Daily Prayer worship, the Sunday Eucharist and Tuesday evening Service of the Word.

<b>JULY</b>			
Wednesday	1	MATT 8. 28-end	
Thursday	2	MATT 9.1-8	
Friday	3	JOHN 20.24-29	Thomas
Saturday	4	MATT 9.14-17	
Sunday	5	MATT 11.16-19,25-END	
Monday	6	MATT 9. 18-26	
Tuesday	7	MATT 11.16-19,25-END	
Wednesday	8	MATT 10. 1-7	
Thursday	9	MATT 10. 7-15	
Friday	10	MATT 10.16-23	
Saturday	11	MATT 10. 24-33	
Sunday	12	MATT 13.1-9,13-23	
Monday	13	MATT 10.34-11.1	
Tuesday	14	MATT 13.1-9,13-23	
Wednesday	15	MATT 11. 25-27	
Thursday	16	MATT 11. 28-END	
Friday	17	MATT 12. 1-8	
Saturday	18	MATT 12. 14-21	
Sunday	19	MATT 13. 24-30,36-43	
Monday	20	MATT 12 38-42	
Tuesday	21	MATT 13. 24-30,36-43	
Wednesday	22	JOHN 20. 1-2,11-18	Mary Magdalene
Thursday	23	MATT 13. 10-17	
Friday	24	MATT 13. 18-23	
Saturday	25	MATT 20. 20-28	James the Apostle
Sunday	26	MATT 13. 31-33, 44-52	
Monday	27	MATT 13. 31-35	
Tuesday	28	MATT 13. 31-33, 44-52	
Wednesday	29	JOHN 12. 1-8	
Thursday	30	MATT 13. 47-53	William Wilberforce
Friday	31	MATT 13. 54-END	
<b>AUGUST</b>			
Saturday	1	MATT 14.1-12	
Sunday	2	MATT 14. 13-21	
Monday	3	MATT 14. 22-END	
Tuesday	4	MATT 14. 13-21	