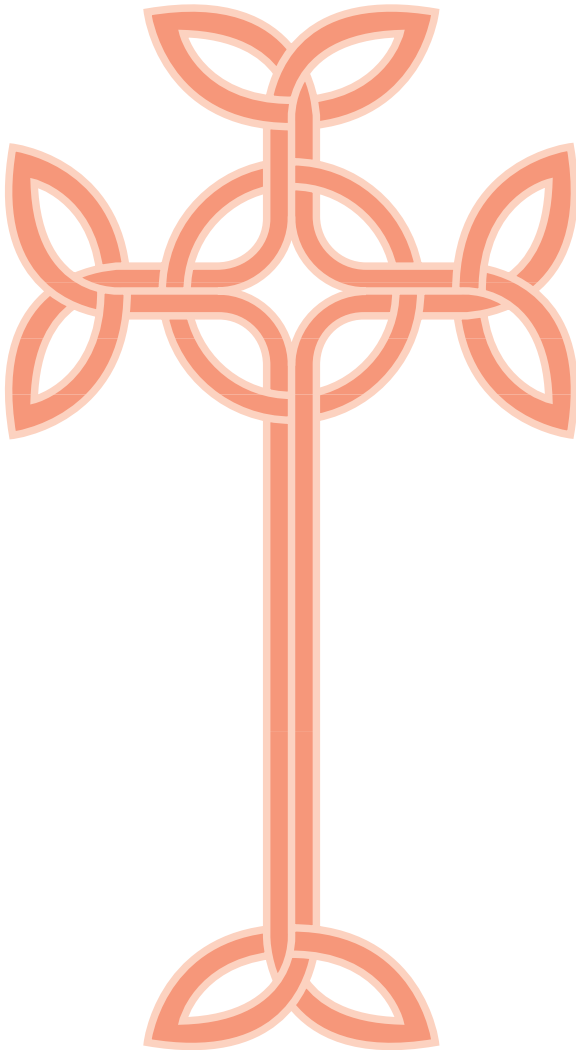


THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
OF THE PARISH OF  
HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING



St. Michael  
AND ALL ANGELS

AUGUST 2020

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## 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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#### **Assistant Church Warden**

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#### **Officers of the Parochial Church Council**

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Tel: (0191) 584 2036

Mr. Alastair Bradley (Treasurer)  
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Tel: (0191) 584 1455

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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

I wonder what we think God's kingdom, sometimes described as the kingdom of heaven in the Bible, is like? If you were to define the kingdom of heaven – how would you describe it? What is your version of heaven? If you're a golfer – perhaps it's a place where you always get holes-in-one? If you're a baker, perhaps it's a place where you always have the perfect rise on your cakes? If you're a football fan – perhaps your team always win? But,



but if that's your version of heaven, of God's Kingdom what would that mean for the fans of the team you beat? Perhaps your vision of heaven is a place where lots of little cherub angels play harp music all the time – but what about if you don't like harp music? So how do we describe the kingdom of heaven?

In the Bible, Jesus would often use parables to describe the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is like.... and then he'd tell a parable to help explain. These parables are not just nice stories that Jesus tells us that help us understand his points better. They can sometimes serve as illustrations but they're not very simple at all. The logic behind parables is often bizarre – perhaps because the kingdom of God is sometimes strange and it defies conventional wisdom. Take for example, the well-known parable of the mustard seed – the smallest of seeds that grows into the greatest of trees where birds shelter in its branches. We're so used to such stories that we can domesticate them – but if we stop and think about this it might not be as easy to understand as it first seems. To begin with, mustard plants aren't anything like trees – they're a bit more like dandelions, they're small and they grow all over the place. And what about the birds that Jesus describes – are they going to temporarily take shelter in the branches of the tree, are will they build nests there and produce little birds: could that end up feeling invasive or challenging to us. If we had a bird's nest in our homes – what would that be like for us – it might lead to unexpected or unintended consequences for us. And yet Jesus tells us this is what God's kingdom is like.

God's kingdom is very difficult to pin down and it can be an elusive thing. God's kingdom – which we might consider as being what things are like when God is in control is sometimes a difficult thing to rationalise. In these last months, during the pandemic, in these recent days of slowly moving out of lockdown – days that still hold huge challenges for people – I think I can see little glimpses of God's kingdom. Sometimes that's in the surprising action that someone might take to care for another, sometimes that's in the great resilience that people show despite the difficulties of their circumstances, sometimes it's in small and unspectacular ways that might have unforeseen circumstances but I just sense of something of God's kingdom in the stories people share with me.

My encouragement for these times and the times ahead is that we're watchful for glimpses of God's kingdom that we might just find God's kingdom, the kingdom of heaven in some surprising places.

With my continued prayers and very best wishes.

## Fake telephone calls

How many times have you answered the telephone to an odd sounding voice telling you that your account has been frozen or you will be liable for a bill, sometimes claiming to be from Microsoft or Amazon, or BT? Then the voice instructs you to press option 1!

Since Coronavirus it has been estimated that these fake calls and the like have defrauded the population out of £3.4 BILLION. Also it is not just telephone calls but also fake emails.

These people are thieves and rogues trying to steal our money.

Some telephones have a button to press if you receive a fake call you can block that number, but there will be always other numbers trying their luck.

They people target us seniors, knowing that we feel everyone is honest and not thinking badly of people who contact us.

Sadly this is a multi-million pound business. At present most of the calls come from the Asian continent, but there are others.

Unfortunately if you do fall for one of these fake calls and respond, whether they succeed in getting money from you, your number will be kept and used again or sold on to others.

So the advice is, **do not respond!**

If the person claims to be from your bank, hang up and try to ring the bank to check after waiting about 20 minutes to make sure they are not on the line. Most banks have a fraud hotline to ring to check these things out. This number should be on your bank statement.

As the Government says "Stay Alert", your money should stay in your bank account not in the hands of thieves.

Try not to worry about this, just keep your wits about you and you will be fine.

*Alastair Bradley, Treasurer*

## FROM THE REGISTERS

### Funerals

16 July Jean Lowden  
Houghton-le-Spring

Aged 76

## THE WOUNDED HEALER

Some of you may know that I love the music of Beethoven. I often burst into applause all on my own at the end of one of his symphonies or concertos.

For the last two weeks I have watched a TV series about the man as well as his music where I have learned a great deal that I didn't know: as a small boy he was bullied by his father into relentless piano practice, yet he still maintained a passionate joy in his art; his emotions ran deep but he often found it very difficult to relate to people and kept falling in love with unattainable women; he began to lose his hearing in his twenties, a situation which led him almost to the point of total despair until he vowed to carry on and create the new, wild sounds that came from within.



At one time he had a piano pupil whose three-year-old son died. Longing to console her, he went to her family home, without a word sat down at her piano and played for over an hour, improvising the music as he went. When he finished playing he rose, put his hand on her shoulder and left.

I don't think I need words either to explain the power of the wounded healer.

*Ros Pickersgill*

# Space4 News

## God Working Amongst Us

Caught up in the nuts and bolts of keeping in touch with our vulnerable service users and engaging new people in the community and the almost social work side of overseeing the foodbank distribution it is sometimes easy to lose sight of God amidst the mayhem. I find myself dealing with wonderful helpful employees of the City Council who are trying to meet the practical needs of people city wide, the amazingly talented workers from Shiney Advice and Resource Centre who have helped to untangle many a complicated financial issue for people we refer and various others from secular organisations. We do some fantastic work together and this crisis has reinforced the network and the value of joined up thinking. I also suspect it has further improved the reputation of ours and other Church communities for knowing what our local community needs and delivering it.

Many of the people I encounter through this work might not profess to having a faith or see any place for God in what we are doing but that doesn't mean that God isn't there working right with them and through them. As I stand back and review those moments when I can really see God's hand in what just happened, I have to give thanks.

Examples of this would be the time when funds were desperately low for food purchasing and one of our congregation popped an envelope with £100 pounds through the Keping letter box or passing a dear lady's house on my daily exercise when she gave me an envelope with money in, again just at the moment of most need. There are many more examples of this individual financial giving as well as regular giving that helps keep things going and then there are the people moments. Whilst we mainly deliver our food parcels there are still those who call up during our food bank hours. I am often humbled by their humility as they tell their story and ask for help, who am I to judge their need? I often feel in those moments that God has placed both of us in the right place at the right time.

A very recent example, and the prompt for this article came when I was given an unused mobile phone one day, the lady concerned saying 'this might come in useful for one of your Space4 people.' And then the very next day one of our regulars called up for some help with food, he was very distressed because his dog had died a couple of days before and his mobile phone was broken. I was able to solve the mobile phone issue, he was so surprised and grateful. When I messaged the donor to tell her she said "BY THE HAND OF GOD THAT I WAS DIRECTED TO GIVE IT TO YOU...HAVE TOLD BOTH GIRLS AND THANK YOU FOR TELLING ME IT HAS CHEERED ME AND WE MUST NEVER DOUBT THAT GOD IS STILL ACTIVE AMONGST US."

I thank her for that reminder and give thanks for all those moments that somehow never cease to amaze me.

**Christine Britcliffe**

# Bells Fish Shops

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**0191 370 9999**

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NE38 8FB

**0191 417 8687**

Unit 23 Retail World,  
Team Valley, Gateshead,  
NE11 0BD

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



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Email: [mailbox@castlesandcoasts.co.uk](mailto:mailbox@castlesandcoasts.co.uk)

Website: [www.castlesandcoasts.co.uk](http://www.castlesandcoasts.co.uk)



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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](mailto:klgrob7@aol.co.uk)  
Club: 0191 584 1460



## 5th August: Oswald – faith, courage and humility

Many Christians have dreamed of doing something spectacular for God, which would be remembered for centuries afterwards. Oswald, who lived from 605 to 642AD, was in a position to do so.

He was a King, whose father, Aethelfrith, was a great warrior who laid the foundations of the great kingdom of Northumbria. But Aethelfrith was killed by a rival, and Oswald was only twelve years old when he was driven into exile with his elder sister and two younger brothers. For their own safety, all were taken to Irish territory in the West of Scotland.

The three brothers were educated by the Christian monks on Iona. Meanwhile, warfare raged in Northumbria, and in due course the time came for Oswald to make a difficult decision. Should he remain in safety, or return to claim his kingdom? In 632 his older brother led an expedition there to sue for peace, but instead he was put to the sword. It was a time of broken dreams and bitter grief for the young Oswald, who must have spent many hours in prayer before he decided to risk his life by following his brother south.

In his famous book, *The Ecclesiastical History of England*, Bede tells us that Oswald prepared to meet his enemies Cadwallon and Penda in battle on a December night at a place which is now called Heavenfield. His small army was likely to be outnumbered and victory seemed impossible. But that night, Oswald had a vision of St Columba, the founder of Iona. Columba prophesied that Oswald would be king, and reminded him of God's words to Joshua at the river Jordan, "Be strong, and of good courage.....for you will be the leader of these people as they occupy this land."

Before battle commenced, Oswald made a rough cross from two young trees and held it upright until soldiers were able to fill in the hole around it. Then he led his army in a prayer that God would bring victory and deliverance to his people. He also promised that if they survived, he would send for missionaries from Iona to bring the Christian faith to Northumbria.

Oswald's subsequent victory has become part of the region's folklore, commemorated by the name of that battlefield and the more permanent cross which now stands at Heavenfield. Many leaders would have regarded such a triumph as the high point of their career, advanced to the royal palace and quickly forgotten their promise to God. But Oswald remained faithful, and in due course St Aidan arrived in the new kingdom and made Lindisfarne the centre of his ministry.

Now it was time for Oswald to reveal a quality less frequently associated with kings, but even more vital to the spread of God's work. That quality was humility. As the sponsor and protector of Aidan, he could easily have imposed his own agenda on this new mission. Such a test came early, when Aidan declined Oswald's offer of resources at court in Bamburgh Castle, and chose the remoter location of Lindisfarne.

Not only did Oswald accept the monk's decision gracefully; he continued to spend many uncomfortable weeks on the road acting as Aidan's interpreter. His willingness to lay aside his kingly privileges and play second fiddle to a spiritual leader ensured that the Gospel spread quickly through the new kingdom and transformed many lives.



# First Thoughts

Before August 2019 I had been to Houghton twice. Once was to drop off a friend who was going to Open Table and I did not stay as I was meeting somebody else. The other time I was trying to find a takeaway on the way back from Durham to Sunderland. Again, this did not tell me much about the town. So when I received a letter suggesting Houghton as my curacy parish I knew nothing about the place.

Compared to most jobs you get quite a bit of information before you decide whether you are going to accept a curacy post or not. I spent a couple of hours speaking to the Rector and I came to the parish one Sunday in August. Everyone was enthusiastic, although I still was not sure how to pronounce 'Houghton' (I still might not be saying it right so do correct me!). Perhaps even more encouraging was the reaction of people outside of the parish. Houghton is well known and every time I mentioned that I was thinking about coming here, people who know about the parish got excited for me. So, still not knowing much about the place, by the end of August I had decided to accept the curacy.



And what have I discovered so far? I have two main observations. Firstly, none of my friends starting curacies had a similar welcome service as we had on the fifth of July. I have been very grateful for the generosity shown to me over the past few weeks, including cards, the welcome service and the time that people have given (and are giving) to have a phone conversation or cup of tea with me. Secondly, it feels like my friends after a week or so had got to grips with what is going on in their church. There is so much good stuff going off at St. Michael's and Space 4 and so many connected organisations, that I feel as though I have barely scratched the surface. I do hope to understand the web of activities that go off and I am excited to see the various groups and places when lockdown is sufficiently released.

At the time of writing, I have only had two weeks in my role but it has been a good two weeks. Admittedly, it is not how any of us anticipated it, but I am very thankful that the Bishop suggested Houghton even if I didn't (and still don't) know much about it. I look forward to meeting more of you and learning about this parish over the next three and a bit years.

*John, the Curate*

# MUSIC DURING LOCKDOWN

Over the last few months services at St Michael and All Angels have been delivered by the clergy using the various mediums that have now become the new normal. But how has music been part of these services? It started when, with the imminent threat of lockdown, 4 choir members met up on the evening of 22nd March (lockdown minus one) and while observing strict social distancing, managed to record half a dozen pieces of music a capella (thanks to Francis for conducting) in order that John could use it over the Easter period. It was quite sad saying goodbye that night, not knowing when we would be able to sing together again or what lay ahead for us all. However, what we hadn't banked on was John, George and Nikki's vision, determination and resolve to make sure that music continued at St Michaels. Music is not only a huge part of life at St Michaels, but it is well documented that it is so important for people's well being, not only for those taking part but also for those listening as well. So how has this been achieved whilst we have all been in lockdown?

Following on from those initial recordings, choir members were asked if they would be willing to download a free app, called Bandlab, onto their electronic devices Ipad, phone etc. For those who are not technically minded, Bandlab is a cloud platform where musicians can create music, collaborate and engage with each other. For those who are definitely not technically minded this is electronic wizardry. Detailed instructions were emailed out and you were asked to 'join the band' and then wait for your application to be accepted.

This was a bit daunting, however what we were then being asked to do was quite scary - we would be individually recording ourselves singing and then the recordings would be sent to Nikki who would blend them together and then forward to John to use in the services. As there were some initial difficulties, Nikki arranged to hold workshops

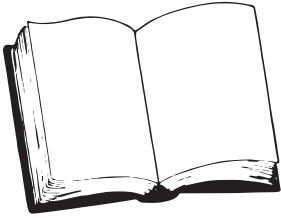
over Zoom, she even offered to stand at the end of someone's driveway to help explain the process. Zoom has also been used for choir meetings so that we can not only catch up with each other but can discuss problems, ideas and how we organise ourselves going forward.

Many, many weeks later and we have a good routine going – Nikki needs individual recordings by 12 noon on a Friday so that she can weave her magic and have the full combined tracks ready for Sunday. On the same Friday she makes sure that the accompaniments are ready for people to start looking at, rehearsing and recording the next pieces. The accompaniments have already been prepared and recorded onto Bandlab by George on organ or piano with Nikki adding the soprano line in order that we can get a sense of the timing of the piece. We also receive an email from George with the music, words and instructions as to which verses are in unison or harmony and whether there are any solos. When you open the relevant piece on Bandlab you see a list of names, you select your own line and then record your part. To do this you need to find a quiet place (not easy in some households!), then plug a set of headphones into your device e.g. phone, press record and sing your part whilst listening to the accompaniment – however you also need to see the music and words which means having to have another device such as a laptop open in front of you. Nobody likes hearing their own voice, but the beauty of Bandlab is that you can listen to your recording, delete it and start again! You do eventually have to have the courage of your convictions and press SAVE. With Nikki's patience and enthusiasm we have grown more confident, however please don't underestimate the amount of work that is being done by Nikki, George and John to make all of this happen.

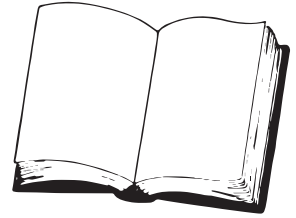
Just as we were getting a bit more comfortable with the couple of hymns each week, John threw us a curve ball – would we consider putting together a full Choral Evensong. Now for those not familiar with Choral Evensong – the clue is in the title – there is a lot of music, an Introit, Psalm, the Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis, Responses, Anthem and of course the hymns, many of these having quite tricky timing. Being up for a challenge (at the end of the day there is always the delete button) we said yes and since the middle of June we have been recording all the music needed which has been no mean feat. So hopefully in August, all being well, there will be a Choral Evensong available to listen and take part in. Although churches are allowed to open again albeit under strict guidelines, at the time of writing singing unfortunately is not allowed. I think I can speak for all the choir members that we are proud to have been able to continue making the music that we hope brings comfort and joy to you and although we don't know how long we will have to continue doing this in such a different way, you can be sure that 'we'll be back' where we belong, sitting in the choir pews singing live to you all.

*J Snaith*



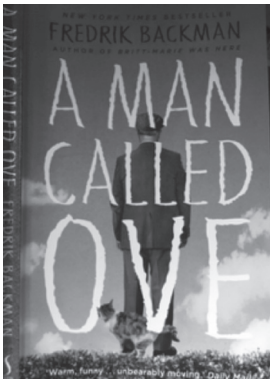


# BOOK CLUB



Post Lent we have continued the Lent groups in the form of a book club, exploring best sellers and getting together on the internet via zoom or WhatsApp on the phone to discuss aspects of the novel and what relevance it has for us in our church life.

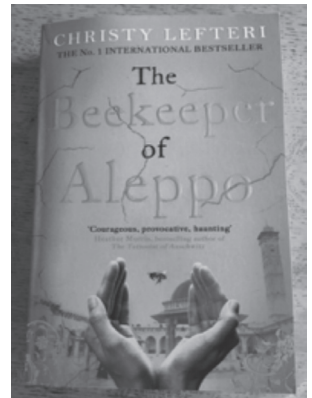
As you know we began with Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine, and as you would expect, she certainly wasn't. Eleanor taught us much about how we all have a tendency to prejudge people and jump to conclusions, she made us think about our priorities in life and the way we treat others. It was a good read, even though a few of the group were apprehensive about it to begin with, all agreed they had thoroughly enjoyed it.



Our second novel is 'A Man Called Ove' by Richard Backman. It is the story of the grumpiest old man you could ever imagine. He is the total of all the grumpy old men I have ever met, all rolled into one..... but I haven't got to the end yet, I know I will grow to love him.

Why don't you join in. Currently there are 14 members in the book club, and we hope you will join us. I am delighted to be reading novels again, I haven't made time for reading novels in years and am rediscovering how they are far more entertaining and satisfying than TV or screens.

Our next book is 'the Beekeeper of Aleppo', by Christi Lefteri, based on a true story of a refugee family from Aleppo, Syria. Nuri is a beekeeper, his wife, Afra, an artist. They live a simple life, rich in family and friends, in the beautiful Syrian city of Aleppo - until the unthinkable happens. When all they care for is destroyed by war, they are forced to escape. Moving, powerful and compassionate, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* is a testament to the triumph of the human spirit. It is a novel of international significance, courageous, provocative, haunting, it will open your eyes.



**Margaret Lee**

# A Prayer for Lockdown

Many of our congregation have lived in lockdown conditions for nearly 5 months now, either because they are vulnerable themselves or because they shield a loved one, or maybe because they live on their own and have no family contacts. There must be times when they feel low, alone and seemingly forgotten, times when it is hard to pull oneself upwards again. At such times, maybe this short prayer will help...

*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.*

We have in operation a network of ten telephone callers which include clergy and lay people who regularly contact our congregation. If you think you have never received a call from us and are feeling overlooked and forgotten please contact Margaret Lee 077577927048. We are regularly calling 160+ numbers. It may be we have missed you because you are not on our electoral role, or perhaps you did not realise the call you received from a church person is indeed a call from the church. If you are uncertain, please ask them or contact myself and we will gladly add you to our list.

*Margaret Lee*

## Support your local charity shops

Are you feeling the financial squeeze just now, but still enjoy shopping? Why not visit some of your local charity shops?

Never have charity shops needed you so much. Coronavirus has meant a huge drop in donations, and many charities face huge financial shortfalls.

The good news is that charity shops are well worth visiting this summer. Vast amounts of clothes and household items were donated following the lockdown this Spring. Grounded at home, people decided to declutter and clear-out!

The result is that, as a spokeswoman for Oxfam says: "People can expect to find some really great treasures to buy."

It should be very safe to shop, for as Julie Byard of Cancer Research UK, explains, the charity shops put all donated items into isolation before putting them on the shelves. She adds: "We're grateful for all donations and to everyone who volunteers and shops with us."

# A SPECIAL PLACE 3

## *Secrets Of The Chancel*

I want to point out a few general things about the chancel. Firstly the floor, the tiles date back to Victorian times but unfortunately a fair few are damaged. They would have been hand made and decorated and were installed in the re-ordering of the Church by the Honourable Rector John Grey around 1869. The architect for this re-ordering was John Dobson of Newcastle. This was when a lot of the bones were left strewn under the wooden pew bases.

If you look at the Chancel from the body of the Church [the Nave], it can be seen that it is not in the centre but slightly to the west when facing east. Why? This is a common phenomena found in medieval Churches, it is because Jesus' head on the cross was believed to have lain that way.

The main thing you will notice is that it rises up in progressive steps, this copies the way the temple in Jerusalem was designed. In Church the bottom level was for the congregation, the second level for the Choir, the third level for the Priests and Deacons and the final top level was for the Rector [or in the Temple the High Priest]. It can be seen from this that it was very hierarchical, the higher up you are the more important you are, something that we would never subscribe to these days [or would we?]. This is one of the reasons all the Nave is flat and the altar is at the same level as the congregation as we are all equal in the sight of God.

### **The Great East Window – Christ in His Glory**

Starting at the top you need to look carefully, there is a lamb holding a flag with a cross on it. This is the symbol of the Church for the Lamb of God. Jesus, sacrificed for our sins. Below are the Heavenly Hosts, Angels, Cherubims, Seraphims, singing and playing instruments, worshipping God. In the centre the large serene figure of the Risen Christ flanked on his right by the Archangel Gabriel holding lilies and on his left by Archangel Michael with sword and armour. Underneath are earthly saints and worthy people, they all have halos except for one, he has a gold robe with a plan of the Church on his sleeve. It was always said to represent George Elliot who commissioned the window, although our previous Rector Sue informed me that it was common practice in old stained glass windows for the Architect/Designer of a large window to put himself in it, the significance of the absence of a halo was that he was still alive.

The top row are well known old Saints, mostly disciples, you can tell who they are by what they hold, e.g. Peter with the keys to the Kingdom etc. In the next row down are King Oswald, Cuthbert and others leading to Bernard Gilpin on the left of Jesus. Above and to the left of Gilpin peering around from a pillar is a young girl in red, this is thought to represent Elizabeth Elliot in whose memory the window is dedicated. Some interesting people along the bottom row are King Charles I beheaded by Parliament. In the bottom corner are two young girls known as the twins, their headstones can be seen in the Gilpin Transept. I will also mention the Altar when writing about the Gilpin Transept.



Now onto the south side of the Chancel. Next to the window is a brass plaque, the inscription reads “In affectionate memory of Elizabeth Elliot. The East Window of this Church is dedicated to Almighty God” by her parents George and Margaret Elliot of Houghton Hall in this Parish. Born 22nd May AD.MDCCCXLI. Died 29th September AD.MDCCCCLX1 [21 years old].

Elizabeth is buried in the Elliot vault in the old Houghton Cut Cemetery [St. Michael’s detached burial ground], along with her father, mother and brothers.

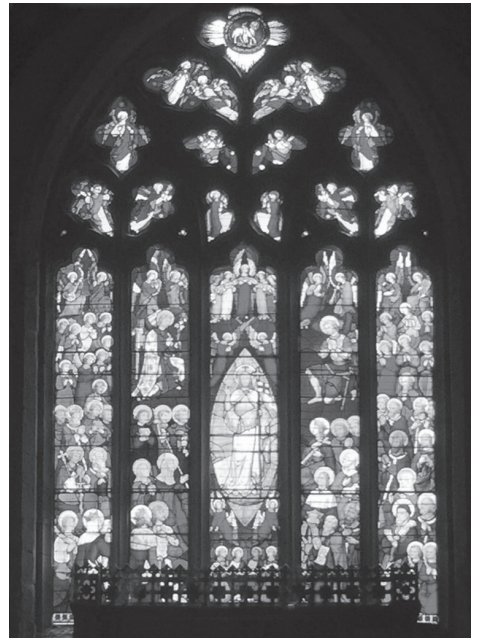
George Elliot is a fascinating character, it would take a full book to do him justice so i will try to summarise his life in achievements. His full title was Sir George Elliot, Baronet. M.P. for Durham Shire [Houghton]. Born Gateshead 1814, lived in Penshaw. His father was a Deputy in Whitelees Colliery. He started work in the Colliery aged 10. He saved up and bought himself an education ending up owning the Colliery and investing in more Collieries. Knighted in 1874 and made Baronet. He was M.P. for Houghton, provisional Grand Master of the Freemasons, and a friend of the Prime Minister Disraeli. He advised and was involved in the digging of the Suez Canal when he became a Financial Advisor to the KHEDIVE [ruler of Egypt for the Ottoman Empire].

He brought back from Egypt a mummy of an Egyptian Princess which he kept in Whitby [but thats another story], and also stones from the great pyramids at Giza. One can be seen in the wall of Penshaw Church, the other in West Rainton Church.

He moved to Wales and formed a company that ended up owning most of the Welsh mines and foundries, the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company also the Duffryn Steel and Coal Company. He sank a mine called the Elliot Pit at Brithdir in the Rhymney Valley. Malcolm and I visited it and the pub called the George, when our previous Rector, Sue was installed as Archdeacon of the Valleys [isn’t it strange how the world turns].

Some of his other achievements were: his company laid the first transatlantic telephone cable [using the SS Great Britain], he arranged for a replacement tong [clapper] for Big Ben to be made in Houghton, made a Knight/Baronet, presented with a medal by the King of Portugal, and built/paid for the steeple of West Rainton Church. He died 1893 leaving an Estate in Monmouth and large houses in the centre of London. In today’s money a multi-millionaire. Not bad for a young mining lad from Penshaw. He paid for his own education but his sons went to Eton. Ask me about him sometime and I will bore you for hours.

*David Turnbull*





# Pandemic ‘transforms the Church into Netflix’

The Covid-19 pandemic has “propelled the Church into the contemporary world,” says a new report from CPAS, an Anglican evangelical mission agency working with UK and Irish churches.

‘Everyone Welcome Online’ looks at the lockdown’s impact on churches and concludes, “Last month we were the Odeon, today we are Netflix.

“In the 1950s, the Odeon was okay, but then along came consumer choice, individualism and crowded complex lifestyles. Then came TV film channels, and now Netflix, Prime and others, where you can watch whatever you want, whenever you want, wherever you are on whatever you’ve got.”

The authors, Bob Jackson and George Fisher, say “The Government has shut our ‘Odeons’ down, so in response we have stumbled into ‘Homespun Netflix’ and it’s looking promising.

“Most churches going online have discovered that far more people are accessing their services than ever came to the building. What seemed initially to be a devastating blow to churches may actually generate growth.”

Bishop of Sheffield Pete Wilcox described the 26-page report as “An astonishingly thorough and perceptive overview of online church.”

The authors, who devised the popular ‘Everybody Welcome’ course published by Church House Publishing, include feedback from churches experiencing increased numbers of people logging in for online services, both live and recorded.

One church reported “We’ve had a huge number of hits, many more than the number of people in church on a Sunday, connecting with people who would not come to a regular service.”

The report analyses who is responding and detects groups ranging from friends and family of church members, to the housebound with links to the church, people linked by christenings, weddings or funerals, people who have moved away, occasional churchgoers and people who have found the church through a denominational or diocesan link.

The authors encourage churches to make contact with people who are ‘dropping in’ to the services, suggesting “Contact as many people as you can to say hello and how nice it was to see them connect with the church, and ask how they are and how the church can help them.”

People are finding it easier to access church online because they can join in the services without feeling concerned about ‘doing the wrong thing’ – like standing or sitting at the ‘wrong’ time – they don’t have to enter a strange building and meet new people and they can access the services at a time that suits them.

One church reported: “One previously non-churchgoer said that online she felt comfortable, fully part of the service and so more welcomed than if she had been in the building unsure of how to behave.”

The report’s authors are keen to hear from churches about their experiences during lockdown and ask people to contact them at [allarewelcome2020@gmail.com](mailto:allarewelcome2020@gmail.com)

The ‘Everyone Welcome Online’ report can be accessed free at: <https://www.cpas.org.uk/church-resources/understanding-christian-leadership/everyone-welcome-online/everybody-welcome-online/#.Xs-E7UBFxPY>

## New Banking Rules

On the 30th June new banking rules were introduced. I am only going to talk about the simple parts that are relevant to Church payments.

In a move to prevent fraud banks can stop payments to accounts where the name does not match the instructions. If a rogue manages to persuade you to transfer money into a copycat account, the bank will reject payment if the name does not agree with the name of the account. The new system is known as 'confirmation of payee' and has been slowly trickling in to banks across the country Banks standardly ask for an account number and sort code when making a transfer.

However, in the past, it has not been a legal requirement to ensure these names are checked.

The new extra security checks will mean customers can ask the bank to carry out a check of a name before money is transferred.

Recently some of you have made a payment to the Church bank account and have telephoned me to ask for the sort code and account number, BUT its name is "Parochial Church Council of Houghton-le-Spring". The Sort code 20-77-41 and the Account Number 70693839 if this is not correct the money will not go through.

This will protect you if the wrong numbers have been put in.

*Alastair Bradley, Treasurer*



## ST MICHAEL'S LADIES CYCLING CLUB...

### Progress Report

If ever there was a misnomer this must be it. For Cycling Club, read 'chatter group'. We meet now on Tuesday mornings, often starting from Carole Cunningham's house in Willow Road. Our itinerary so far has been local, Carole has taken us along all the back lanes and waggonways around Houghton, Fencehouses and Hetton. I've now been to places in the parish I never knew existed, and as we have become more experienced we have added the skill of finding a coffee shop for every ride. The cycling is almost a sideline, for example one Tuesday it took us two hours to travel seven miles but in that time we had put the world and the parish to rights and had enjoyed a coffee at Homer Hill farm shop (outside of course) Our numbers have soared to four with the addition of Carole's daughter Amy.

If you wish to join us, please contact Rev Judith Howes on 07794297235 to check time and meeting place. To be in possession of two wheels and a chain is an advantage.

**Margaret Lee**



# The Church and the legacy of slavery

The events of recent weeks have shone a spotlight on the history and legacy of the slave trade, prompting renewed reflection by many organisations in this country and across the world.

The Church of England's history in this regard is complex: marked both with pride in the role of William Wilberforce and others who led the long fight for the abolition of the slave trade and shame in the role of many other individuals, and the Church itself, in the trade in human beings.

The bicentenary of the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade 1807 celebrated in 2007 provided unprecedented opportunities to acknowledge the Church's complicity. In a debate in 2006, the General Synod of the Church of England voted to issue an apology for the church's role in sustaining the trade.

The then Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, told the debate that the Church ought to acknowledge its corporate and ancestral guilt.

He said:

"To speak here of repentance and apology is not words alone; it is part of our witness to the Gospel, to a world that needs to hear that the past must be faced and healed and cannot be ignored ... by doing so we are actually discharging our responsibility to preach good news, not simply to look backwards in awkwardness and embarrassment, but to speak of the freedom we are given to face ourselves, including the unacceptable regions of ... our history."

Speakers in the debate acknowledged that while the Church had played its part in justifying slavery, Anglicans including Wilberforce or John Newton, the former slave ship captain turned minister and composer of the hymn Amazing Grace, were powerfully motivated by their Christian faith. Wilberforce brought bills before Parliament for 20 successive years until legislation to abolish the trade was passed.

The Church is mindful that slavery still exists today in other forms. The Church alongside other organisations is actively working to educate and reduce instances of slavery. In May 2019 the National Church Institutions issued a Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

This statement document considers both historic and current forms of slavery. The Church works closely with the Clewer Initiative with the aim of removing instances of human trafficking.

Recent research has highlighted other links between the wider Church and the slave trade. An article in the Daily Telegraph on June 19, 2020 highlights how a number of

individual clergy received payments under 1833 Abolition of Slavery Act compensating them for slaves which they or their families 'owned'.

A spokesperson for the Church of England said:

"While we recognise the leading role clergy and active members of the Church of England played in securing the abolition of slavery, it is a source of shame that others within the Church actively perpetrated slavery and profited from it.

"In 2006 the General Synod of the Church of England issued an apology, acknowledging the part the Church itself played in historic cases of slavery.

"The Church of England is actively committed to combatting slavery in all its forms today, particularly through the work of the Clewer Initiative which works with our 42 dioceses to help support victims of modern slavery and identify the signs of exploitation in their communities."

Recent events have also prompted debate about statues, monuments or other commemorations to those linked to the slave trade in public places in the UK, including some historic churches.

## Watch out for this predator

If you like bees, then keep an eye out this summer for a dangerous invader from the Continent – the Asian hornet. A single Asian hornet can consume 50 honeybees in one day.

In recent years the Asian hornet has spread across Europe, devouring honeybees by the tens of thousands. They are most likely to be found in southern England after crossing the Channel from France, or in imported soil, plants and fruit.

An Asian hornet is mostly black, with thin yellow stripes, an orange face and yellow legs. Measuring 1.2 inches, it is slightly smaller than the European hornet, and is of about the same threat to humans. But they are deadly when it comes to honeybees. Asian hornets wait outside of honeybee hives and pounce on emerging workers, chopping them up alive and taking back the thorax to their own young.

If you think you have spotted an Asian hornet, report it through the 'Asian Hornet Watch' app:

**Asian Hornet Watch app for iPhone**

**Asian Hornet Watch app for android**

If you find a nest, don't try to remove it yourself – it can be dangerous and should only be done by experts.

More details at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asian-hornet-uk-sightings>

# All in the month of August

## It was:

250 years ago, on 22nd August 1770 that British explorer Captain James Cook discovered eastern Australia, named it New South Wales, and claimed it for Britain.

150 years ago, on 4th August 1870 that the British Red Cross Society was founded.

125 years ago, on 10th August 1895 that the Proms (Promenade Concerts) began in London.

100 years ago, on 21st August 1920 that Christopher Robin Milne was born. He was son of the author A. A. Milne, and he appeared as a character in his father's Winnie-the-Pooh stories. (Died 1996.)

90 years ago, from 16th to 23rd August 1930 that the first British Empire Games (now the Commonwealth Games) were held in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

80 years ago, on 13th August 1940 that the main phase of the Battle of Britain began. The German Luftwaffe launched raids on RAF airfields and radar installations. On 29th August Winston Churchill paid tribute to the Royal Air Force in a famous House of Commons speech, saying, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

75 years ago, on 6th August 1945 that the US Army Air Forces dropped an atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima, Japan. The centre of the city was totally destroyed, and 80,000 people were killed immediately. A further 60,000 died by the end of the year. It was the first city in history to be hit by a nuclear weapon.

Also 75 years ago, on 9th August 1945 that the US Army Air Forces dropped an atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki, Japan. 40,000 people died immediately and about 33,000 more by the end of the year. It was the second (and last) city to experience a nuclear attack.

70 years ago, on 15th August 1950 that Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, was born. She is the only daughter of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip.

60 years ago, on 8th August 1960 that the pop song Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polkadot Bikini by Brian Hyland became a worldwide hit. The record had been released in June.

40 years ago, on 14th August 1980 that Lech Walesa led a strike by shipyard workers in Gdansk, Poland, to protest against the dismissal of a trade union activist. On 30th August the striking workers won the right to establish independent trade unions. This led to the formation of the Solidarity movement.

30 years ago, from 2nd August 1990 to 28th February 1991 the Gulf War took place. On 2nd August Iraq invaded Kuwait. The United Nations Security Council then ordered a global trade embargo against Iraq. On 7th August the USA launched Operation Desert Shield, and then Operation Desert Storm, to prevent Iraq from invading Saudi Arabia. Coalition victory.

20 years ago, on 5th August 2000 that Sir Alec Guinness, British stage and film actor (The Bridge on the River Kwai, Lawrence of Arabia, Doctor Zhivago, A Passage to India, Star Wars, etc) died.

15 years ago, from 23rd to 31st August, Hurricane Katrina hit the Bahamas, Cuba and the southern US states. New Orleans was badly affected when the levee system failed, and 80% of the city was under water for weeks. Florida and Mississippi were also badly hit. More than 1,800 people died. It was the costliest natural disaster in US history.

10 years ago, on 5th August 2010 a cave-in at the San Jose copper and gold mine near Copiapo in northern Chile trapped 33 workers 700 metres underground. An international rescue operation was launched, and they were brought to the surface on 13th October after being trapped for 69 days. Around one billion people watched the rescue on TV.

# Eternity in the human heart

'He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.' (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

The 60s hit 'Turn! Turn! Turn!' by the Byrds is based on verses in this chapter: 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.' The different seasons of life are not random, for God is in control and His timing is perfect: 'He has made everything beautiful in its time.'

The verse goes on to say that God 'has also set eternity in the human heart.' This means that we all have an in-built sense that there's more to life than what we can see, as we search for meaning in life. However, we can fill our lives with other things: career, pleasure, shopping and relationships. While good in themselves, these things can never ultimately satisfy. It is only a relationship with God through Jesus that truly satisfies. How does this challenge us?

Firstly, we are to live for God in all that we do, knowing that it all counts for eternity. This includes helping others find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ for eternity.

Secondly, we accept that there is lots in the current 'season' where it's difficult to know what God is doing: 'no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.' However, we do know that everything has consequences for eternity.

Finally, how can we be more aware of eternity every day? Spending time with God in worship and prayer will bring us the true pleasure that belongs to eternity.

'You made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.'

*(St Augustine)*

## CAP still helping people out of debt

Christians Against Poverty (CAP) have been thanking their donors for helping "some wonderful things happen" despite the challenge of coronavirus.

"These beautiful moments were made possible by your support," says Paula Stringer, UK chief executive of CAP. "We've been able to make sure our clients don't go without essentials like food, fuel and staying in touch with loved ones. Our frontline workers have distributed 345 instances of emergency client support so far, and they will be able to continue providing this for many more.

When one client could not get to the supermarket because her car needed repairs, she was astonished to find that her Debt Coach, Beth, had arranged for a delivery of groceries to her house. In return, she sent this message:

"I was so shocked and welling up. It was such an amazing thing to do. Your gift came at the right time, as I wouldn't have had enough to get that much food."

During lockdown, CAP has adjusted its service to offer phone appointments to clients, 479 of these so far.

"We've also seen a fabulous 494 people become debt free during lockdown! Despite the new challenges, we're seeing that there really is always hope," says Paula Stringer.

# Reopening of church buildings for public worship

Following the recent Government announcement that church buildings were able to reopen for public worship from 4th July, the Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, who leads the Church of England's Recovery Group, said that the months since lockdown began "have been an extraordinary time – the first period without public worship and the sacraments in England in more than 800 years."

She said also that there will have been "real joy" as people began "to come together again – if even at a physical distance – but I also know that many will be understandably cautious at this news.

"We will not be returning to normality overnight – this is the next step on a journey. We've been planning carefully, making detailed advice available for parishes to enable them to prepare to hold services when it is safe and practical to do so. It is important to say that the change in Government guidance is permissive, not prescriptive.

"I would particularly like to thank clergy and lay leaders for all they have done during the time our buildings have been closed."

Bishop Sarah warned that there will still be restrictions, "and we must all still do everything we can to limit the spread of the virus... The online services and dial-in worship offerings we have become used to will continue.

"This has been an incredibly difficult time for the whole country, especially for those who have been ill, who have suffered financial hardship, the loss of livelihoods and indeed, for many, those they love. We know that is not over and the Church has a task ahead to bring consolation and hope.

"Churches and cathedrals have risen to the recent challenges, finding new ways of meeting for worship, of serving our neighbours, and of reaching new people with the love of God. The challenge before us now is to take the next steps carefully and safely, without forgetting all that we've discovered about God and ourselves on the way."



# New Task Force to ensure action over racism in the Church of England

A new commission is to be set up to drive forward ‘bold changes’ to ensure racial equality in the Church of England, following a series of reports and recommendations, it was recently announced.

The House of Bishops voted to back the creation of the Archbishops’ Racism Action Commission. It will start work early next year, in order to implement ‘significant cultural and structural’ change within the Church of England on race. The commission would also monitor progress in implementing change.

Preparatory work ahead of the launch of the commission will be carried out by a Task Force, the House of Bishops said, as part of a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to tackling racism within the Church.

The bishops said they wanted to make clear that swift action was needed to ensure change after a series of reports on racial justice and equality in the Church of England, including recommendations on action to combat racism.

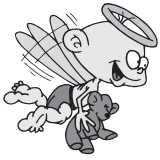
In spite of previous reports and apologies for racism within the Church of England, there has been “insufficient” progress towards racial justice, equality and inclusion, the bishops said.

“For the Church to be a credible voice in calling for change across the world, we must now ensure that apologies and lament are accompanied by swift actions leading to real change,” the bishops noted.

The announcement comes after the General Synod voted in February to apologise for racism experienced by black and minority ethnic people in the Church of England since the arrival of the Windrush Generation.

Speaking to the General Synod, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said there was “no doubt” that the Church of England was still “deeply institutionally racist”.

In a recent vote, the bishops of the Church of England also backed reiterating an apology issued in 2006 by the General Synod for the Church of England’s role in the slave trade.





# Michael's Angels



1 Kings 17



## Rescue Recipe










God sent Elijah to a widow who fed him during a terrible famine. To find the recipe for the widow's food, unscramble the letters in the matching jars. Read 1 Kings 17:7-16 to find out how Elijah helped the widow.










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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.

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Request made by:

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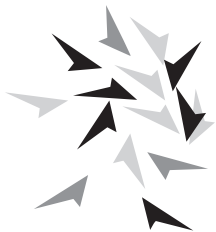
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*If you'd like to find out more about us, call Ashley Burland on 0191 528 0747*

## Rotary



Club of Houghton-le-Spring

# Bible readings for August

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

<b>AUGUST</b>			
Saturday	1	MATT 14.1-12	9.16-22
Sunday	<b>2</b>	MATT 14.13-21	
Monday	3	MATT 14.22-end	
Tuesday	4	MATT 14.13-21	
Wednesday	5	MATT 15.21-28	
Thursday	6	MATT 14.22-33	
Friday	7	MATT 16. 24-28	
Saturday	8	MATT 17.14-20	
Sunday	<b>9</b>	MATT 14.22-33	
Monday	10	MATT 17. 22-end	
Tuesday	11	MATT 14.22-33	
Wednesday	12	MATT 18. 15-20	
Thursday	13	MATT 15. 10-28	
Friday	14	MATT 19.3-12	
Saturday	15	LUKE 1. 46-55	BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
Sunday	<b>16</b>	MATT 15. 10-28	
Monday	17	MATT 19. 16-22	
Tuesday	18	MATT 15. 10-28	
Wednesday	19	MATT 20. 1-16	
Thursday	20	MATT 16. 13-20	
Friday	21	MATT 22.34-40	
Saturday	22	MATT 23.1-12	
Sunday	<b>23</b>	MATT 16. 13-20	
Monday	24	LUKE 22.24-30	BARTHOLOMEW
Tuesday	25	MATT 16. 13-20	
Wednesday	26	MATT 23.27-32	
Thursday	27	MATT 16. 21-end	
Friday	28	MATT 25. 1-13	AUGUSTINE
Saturday	29	MATT 25. 14-30	
Sunday	<b>30</b>	MATT 16. 21-end	
Monday	31	LUKE 4. 16-30	
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>			
Tuesday	1	MATT 16. 21-end	
Wednesday	2	LUKE 4. 38-end	
Thursday	3	MATT 16. 21-end	
Friday	4	LUKE 5.33-end	