



## Rachel Writes



I try to be open to surprise. As a Christian, I think this is an important attitude to cultivate. At the heart of our faith, after all, is the God of Surprises. This is the God who, to our utter shock, greets us in the garden outside the empty tomb on Easter Day. This is the God who, despite everything, says to us that we are worthy of love and forgiveness.

Nonetheless, if there is anyone out there who hasn't been surprised by what has overtaken the world in the past few months, I'd be stunned! (At the time of writing) The rapidity with which the conditions under which we live have changed has left us all with our assumptions and expectations thrown over. While I'm sure we shall return to a new kind of normal in due course, right now, we are living through the strangest times in living memory.

I'm really proud of the way in which our fellowship has met this crisis. I can't thank our Warden team and Andrew, our stipendiary curate, enough. Fr. Alan has also been an absolute rock. However, what's been most impressive is the way we've all sought to pull together. At St Nick's I would expect nothing less, but it is a testimony to the love that holds between us. For, as the Bible says, where there is love, there God is. Love can be treated as an abstract. That's all very well, but as the current crisis shows us, abstract things are not necessarily the most helpful. What helps us be grounded is embodied love. That is, love shown through action – through keeping in touch with one another, through prayer and connection. I know no one can always get this right, but I've had so many conversations in the past few weeks that have encouraged me.

By the time you read this I hope we shall have found even more effective ways of linking up with one another. None of us know quite how long the coronavirus crisis is going to impact our lives. What I want us to begin to think about now is how we not only model good fellowship, but how we can look forward to celebrating with one another when we are back together, face-to-face.

As Christians, we are a people who are made for feasting. Yes, we shall celebrate with partying and laughter and, as the People of God, we shall renew our Baptismal vows, among other important things. However, I hope we shall also join together in more: a foretaste of the Feast in Heaven. Here's till we meet and do that again! *Rachel x*

## Curates Musings



How good are you at sitting still?

I am writing this reflection at home in early April, as the coronavirus pandemic approaches its anticipated peak. We are all in lockdown. One of the frustrations of this time of isolation is having so much empty time. Curiously – as someone accustomed to solitude and time spent on retreat – I have found this isolation much harder than anticipated. In particular it has been difficult to *sit still*. The instinct is to remain active; to keep the mind occupied. But with relatively few leisure opportunities available there are inevitably moments when I run out of ideas. Then the stillness impinges on me – and I start to squirm...

Why is sitting still so difficult? Well, it's difficult because it forces us to confront the reality of our 'alone-ness'. We spend much of our lives pretending that we are not alone. But the truth is that we are alone much of the time. Even if we are physically gathered with others, there are corners of our thoughts that other people cannot see. Sitting still with this private part of ourselves can be an unsettling experience; we may be forced to confront thoughts and feelings that we usually ignore.

Uncomfortable though it may be, however, sitting still is a vital discipline in the life of faith. It's an essential component of prayer. In prayer God longs to draw close to us – but for him to do this, we need to draw close to ourselves, too. Of course, God can 'break through' in even the busiest and most distracted of human lives... but stillness and silence can help us recognise God's presence most easily. Yet forcing ourselves to sit still and listen to God is a difficult task.

By the time you read this reflection the current period of social distancing and isolation will – God willing – be over. But regardless of whether we are still confined to our homes, we can all learn something from the discipline of sitting still. Letting go of restlessness and distraction is hard. But it's worth it, for when we finally learn to sit still and acknowledge the hidden parts of ourselves, we discover something truly astonishing: God is always there to meet us.

*Andrew*



## Time Away

As our time away from each other has crept on, I asked people a set of questions about their time in Isolation. What have you been doing and what gems have you discovered, what have you learnt, what do you miss and what piece of writing captures the moment or resonates with you?

### Alison Mills – Church Warden



I have been working, Mon to Fri and spending every day on telephone calls and hangouts, my working days have been far more intense than my normal pattern. I have been at home with Andy (husband), we have both been glued to our PC screens sat opposite to each other.

In terms of gems, I have watched a series called 'Greenleaf' on Netflix following a recommendation from Rachel, it about a family involved in a Memphis church, I enjoyed it but it may not be to everyone's taste. I've enjoyed watching programmes about home renovation, gardening and Masterchef, I am working my way slowly through a book called 'The Word of God: which is the bible written as a novel. I'm also re-reading a book written by Rowan Williams called 'Discipleship'.

Something new I have learnt would be the pleasure of keeping in touch with friends and family on a weekly basis via video connection.

I have enjoyed watching and listening to online worship lead by Rachel but also services from Manchester Cathedral. It has also meant that Andy and I have watched the Sunday morning services together. The services have been emotive and enjoyable and a good replacement for the church service, but I do look forward to when we return to worship in our wonderful building.

Seeing people face to face, going out doing everyday tasks including a weekly visit to church. Lastly, if I were to reflect upon this period, I would choose Psalm 121.

## Storm Janeway – Magazine Editor



It's been a testing time going solo and my first proper test of not having family to fall back onto. There have been days and days where I haven't spoken to a soul and recently 7 days with the exception of the woman in the supermarket who said hi; it's been a sobering experience. That said, out of every negative comes a positive and out of every situation, something is learnt, so that is how I am taking it. I have been working along with colleagues to keep banks open and our frontline colleagues safe. A lot of my colleagues have been furloughed which has been rather heart wrenching whilst also waiting to see if we are next.

My son has been in Liverpool since I fell ill just before lockdown commenced and I asked him to stay when lockdown kicked in which broke my heart but I would rather he was safe and the experience of living away from home for the first time is good for him. My job as mum will always be to keep him safe and ensure he flourishes even if does steal a part of my heart in the process. He is loving the experience living with his girlfriend in the city centre and I am beyond thrilled for him. I am also thrilled at the prospect of having an additional bedroom – what shall I do with it... I have always dreamt of having a library/den with walls full of my books with deep red walls and a dark wood floor, my favourite bureau in one corner and a chaise lounge in the other corner – ok I am getting carried away now... It will also teach him not to eat everything in the fridge and his girlfriend has already taught him that there is such a thing as mealtimes and not endless grazing. She can't believe how much he eats yet is so thin – he either has worms or tin legs – I would opt for the latter.

I've planned to have a workshop in my backyard for some time and I am starting to plan that out. I just have to decide what plants and trees I sacrifice for it. I want to renovate furniture as I adore old furniture and would really like to do that as a hobby and perhaps sell on my finished products – I figured if it looks awful I can just call it 'abstract'. My son supports the idea as it means all the tools I bought when I helped renovate my previous house would be banished to the workshop and not overflowing in the house. It also means the furniture I keep 'picking up' would also have a new home.

I've watched so much tv in the past 7 weeks and I guess the best of the best would have to be Crip Camp, Ladies in Black, Lady Bird, Leisure Seeker, The Half of It and Circus of Books oh and Ozark. I am currently reading two books because I couldn't decide on one or the other – Shame-Less by Nadia Boltz-Weber who I have recently discovered and Barefoot Disciple by Stephen Cherry. I've also been enjoying our own services and daily prayer but taken part in midnight zoom services with my Aussie congregation to weekly and daily services from a congregation in Stockton.

This is the longest time in 21 years I have been away from my son and I am getting used to it but miss him desperately. I love solitude but that is different to isolation; it's taught me a lot not just about myself, perhaps too much, but also about others. My biggest nemesis has been the lack of contact and coping with that; Human contact - To hug someone, to kiss someone's cheek or simply to gaze into someone's eyes and speak to them without words. It's hard and I know I am not the only one feeling this and a real challenge for many going solo. I also desperately miss St Nicks and the people. My animals, all 5 of them, are thrilled as we have reconnected greatly and sometimes their

attention is a little too intense, so I retreat to the bedroom for some peace from my four-legged shadows. As this is now turning into the-life-of-storm, I shall conclude this, for now.

There is so much to reflect upon during this period and I guess the words that have been with me for some time would be those that continue to inspire me and fill me with love hope and light.: Luke 11: 33-36.

### **Jayne Ozanne – The Ozanne Foundation**



I am alone in Oxford, having decided not to travel to Guernsey to be with my mother and sister before all the transport links back to the island were all cut. Having made the decision to stay, I have been focusing on supporting my local communities of which I am a part as much as I can, particularly with help to get online and/or with Zoom.

I haven't really had much time to watch TV but I do run a Zoom Book Club where we have been discussing Nadia Boltz-Weber's most recent book, Shameless. It is truly excellent and one that we've found is worth reading slowly together over a series of weeks so as to ensure we get the most out of it.

I've discovered that it's important to cook nice things for myself. Given I live alone, I used to only cook quite basic meals for myself as it seemed pointless doing otherwise. But, during the lockdown I think it's important for us to ensure we try and pamper ourselves a bit if we can.

I've been heavily involved in getting our very elderly parish onto Zoom and then hosting our various services online. I would suggest that a picture says a thousand words, and that sometimes it's good to use pictures to illustrate things if you can.

The two things I miss most are hugs and laughing with someone. And finally, it would be Psalm 23:4:

"Yea thought I walk through the valley of the shadow of death..." Sometimes when things are tough, we want to curl up and hide, go to a safe place and stay there. That's what my cats do instinctively. However, in this verse we're told we need to "walk through" and not stand still... we have to keep moving forwards, knowing God walks with us.

### **Rev Bruce Boase – Anglican Cannon & Indigenous Rights Advocate AU.**



Technically we are not in a lockdown situation. The State government has closed the borders and we are on movement restrictions. Only when necessary, only to work and home, meds, food etc. Keep the distancing as set down, 2 metres. If showing symptoms wear a mask. Stay at home! Especially those in the high-risk categories. I am a bit more fortunate. I

have the space between the Rectory, the church of St. John's (and occasionally St. James) and the office to move around in. I also do the essential running around. Hunting and gathering.

We are not yet showing any symptoms of cabin fever. Looking at a long time to come though. As far as discovered gems, well I have started to collate my library that you can see. There is a library that you cannot see in storage. Will get to that before I die. One of my main interests are the histories of the locales that we have been involved around Queensland. I have discovered that I have collected quite a few and they will be a whole section by themselves. We do watch a lot of tele. Me my movies and Patti her Westerns and Home Style shows.

The new for me has been the technology and how I have learned. Gave me a good kick in the bum to get out of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century into the 21<sup>st</sup>.

We have been using Zoom. People like the way we can interact. Involvement is not restricted to me just running the service. We use a service called Praise, Prayer and Proclamation. Still working on things like music. We are trying something with PowerPoint and Zoom this Sunday. Of course, there is not any way around the fact that you are there and the rest are in front of their computers and devices. This has an effect on the personal I feel. One thing that has been good is that my children have been coming online. Easy see. One morning my daughter was still in bed, with morning coffee. Ah Sunday.

The two things that I am missing most are, The Eucharist and the actual physical contact, the hand shaking and hugging. I have decided not to do the Eucharist online. It just does not say for me that this body and blood of Christ that we ought to be sharing is the same as that which I may have blessed before me. I am still thinking about that and debating with myself and others. I am also yet to explore the whole Spiritual Communion thing as written about by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The reflections that I have about this time are influence a bit by the way people have been reacting. In the main people have worship of God at heart. They want to gather. There is a need to gather. Worship is one way to be able to do that. That is not to say that we run an exclusive little club, no, it is saying that people do need that outward expression of their love for God. They also need the reassurance of God's love for them. Corporate prayer is also important. One of my lovely ladies said when she found out that we had closed the churches and she could not come to Wednesday church for a while, "Gee won't it be a good party when we all come back." Another is recording everything because she sees the history of moment. Her recollections will become primary documents in years to come.

The hope that we have is tremendous. I do believe that People have come closer to God through Christ. That kind of hope is always there but now perhaps it is heightened.

## Andrew Bennison - Curate



I live alone so lockdown has been largely spent in solitude, although I am fortunate to be able to leave the house for shopping and daily exercise. I am still engaged in pastoral ministry, but this has necessarily taken a radically different shape. Like others I have been getting to grips with meetings over Zoom!

I have enjoyed having more time to read novels. I am currently reading a novel called *What Belongs to You* which is a fascinating depiction of human relationships and desire. On the television I have been catching up with the BBC drama 'Noughts and Crosses' and – for more light-hearted entertainment – the American comedy series 'Brooklyn Nine-Nine'. I have also made time for some spiritual and theological reading, including a book by the Roman Catholic author Timothy Radcliffe called *Alive in God* and a recently published book on priesthood by the new Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell.

I am not a very good cook so have set aside time to try new recipes and expand my culinary repertoire – so far with mixed success!

Like others I am immensely grateful to Ollie and Rachel for leading our online worship with such care and dedication. I have also enjoyed seeing what other churches are doing and 'dropping in' on their worship to gain ideas and inspiration! I am missing corporate worship very much however, including exercising my liturgical role as a deacon. The Eucharist is at the centre of my faith and spirituality and I long to share in it again.

What am I missing? In addition to the Eucharist – probably barista-brewed coffee (!) and the company of friends and family.

*'My yoke is easy and my burden is light'* (Matthew 11.30). At a time when I am feeling pretty 'useless' I have thought a lot about these words. They remind me that at the heart of Christian faith and vocation is simply rejoicing in the presence and promise of God. Jesus' yoke is easy - we can rest and depend on him.

## Rachel Mann – Rector



Well, lockdown has been very strange, not least because I've not been permitted to go into Church to lead worship. At the most important time in the Church's year, that has been especially strange. I have continued to work, both as a parish priest, Area Dean and as someone with diocesan and national responsibilities. I've just had to learn to work in a very different way, using old 'tech' (letters, for example) and the new.

I've really enjoyed working my way through the Marvel Cinematic Universe on Disney+. Tiger King on Netflix is eye-popping distracting entertainment too. Not sure I've taken anything up new. I've done less sewing than I anticipated, though I managed to do a little in the week after Easter Sunday.

As you will be aware, I've been taking the lead in leading worship. It both plays into my

comfort zone - I'm quite happy speaking to a camera! - and has been very strange. I can't wait to get back to worshipping together in our building again, though I suspect we shall continue to stream some elements of worship in the future. What do I miss? Going on holiday and going to the cinema. Finally, if I were to reflect upon this period, I would say that I do love Psalm 121.



I think we all feel the same about the last few weeks that it has been a surreal time. We went from our normal everyday activities to a once a day exercise session. At the foodbank we had to adapt our procedures to protect both our volunteers and the people coming for food parcels in accordance with Trussell Trust Guidelines.

Understandably our older volunteers reluctantly decided to heed the Government warnings and stop coming. Fortunately, we have still managed to staff both our centres and because we are regarded as Key Workers both churches were allowed to open so we could continue to run the foodbank.

This means that people coming for food parcels have to wait outside the hall. Complying with the 2 metres distance between them. Fortunately, the weather has been really good so far!!

Consequently, there are no refreshments or conversation with people coming to the centre. This seems very strange and the feeling that we are only doing half our duties. In the hall we have all the food that goes into the food parcel spread out on different tables in the order that they appear on the sheet we use to put together the parcel containing the three days nutritionally balanced meals. The objective being that the volunteers can put the parcels together whilst observing the social distancing.

They have masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and aprons that we normally wear. The volunteers can wear all or just wash their hands frequently.

Demand has increased but so have donations. The Burnage Community have been overwhelmingly generous as always and we have had extra donations from Tesco and Morrisons. We are very grateful to the people who donated lots of Easter eggs and so we were able to give each member of the family one. Plus, one kind person insisted that each volunteer also received an Easter egg for all their dedication, they were very moved that someone had thought and appreciated their efforts

If people have been self-isolating, we have had to deliver their food parcels. Our difficulty is if volunteers have done this in the past, two volunteers would go in the van or their car. Nowadays they are not allowed to travel in the same vehicle.

Burnage is part of the local authority's Manchester Food Response Team each Tuesday. We accept referrals for 30 people from them, these parcels are later collected and delivered by men from British Gas who have been furloughed. They take them to the people who have the virus or who are self-isolating

We could not support all these people and families in crisis without the wonderful back up from St Nicholas and St Bernard's churches allowing us to use their premises with the continued support of our church family and our wonderful volunteers.

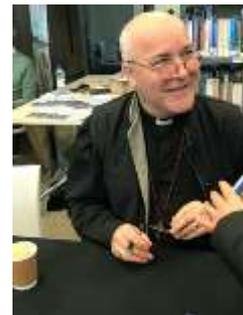
**Margaret Witty**

**Contact: Telephone:** 07796 448 205 **Email:** [info@burnage.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@burnage.foodbank.org.uk)

<b>Burnage Foodbank (Burnage Lane)</b> St Bernard's Church Burnage Lane, Manchester M19 1D	<b>Burnage Foodbank (Kingsway)</b> St Nicholas Parish Hall, St Nicholas Church 408 Kingsway , Manchester M19 1PL
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## **Extract from- You Are My Air**

Deciding to visit Bloxham Festival was easily one of the best decisions I have made since returning to Christ less than a year ago. That in itself is another story and certainly for another time and the seeds on that path extend to the other side of the world. I was rocked by the words and moved by the emotion in people's voices. I found many inspiring and some sent me to a place of consideration and reflection. Stephen Cottrell was the reason I ended up going, yet others filled my day with sparks of imagination and much food for thought. Stephens presentation on his experience of the Camino Trail was simply a follow up on the lent series I did in December and was a comedic yet deeply thoughtful presentation. Unbeknown to me at the time this would send me on a fresh journey that I couldn't explain.



Stephen's words resonated with me as I drove home that night and took me back to the Lent sessions in December where we studied a movie 'The Way'. The story of a father whose son died at the start of the Camino Trail. The movie takes you on the journey of a man grappling with grief acceptance and resolve.



The lent sessions were in fact the turning point for me finally accepting the raw and revolting grief swirling like a cyclonic force in my head and soul having lost my parents. In retrospect, it felt like this was part of my journey of healing, although I didn't realise this at the time. It wasn't necessarily about discovering a movie, but more so about discovering what the axis of my life needs to be, not grief, but Christ.

I laid in bed that night questioning so much with my priest's words from the lent sessions poking my side; what is a pilgrimage and how would you define it? Over the months I have often thought of these questions. Is it in perhaps the person who defines what a pilgrimage is and is it in fact defined without walls, without limits without a start and a finish? Or, must it have a start and finish line to be a pilgrimage? I fell asleep with that thought.

Waking early the next day, my thoughts returned to those of the night before and I instantly decided I was going to go on a journey, of sorts. Not sure why but I simply had to; For whatever reason it didn't feel like a choice or something I could negotiate my way out of. I decided to spend my first Lent exploring the words of others, the practices of others and the spiritual homes of others. This is very me, a journey without schedule or definition as my belly was filled with a raging fire that I had to let burn and take its course. I instantly thought to call Dad and tell him of my latest adventure and with phone in hand I realised I couldn't. It's deeply frustrating that I still think like this a year later and things like this are still automatic. I occasionally send an email to my parent's email address just because I can. The experience of closing down their phone number was simply traumatic and so final. The number I have known a good part of my life no longer exists and have not yet found the courage to do that with their email address. I will, and I know I have to, just not yet. I still have to deal with the arrival of their possessions which are currently on a ship somewhere between here and Australia.

Steven Cottrell mentioned that his pilgrimage started from home when he closed his front door so I decided I would start my illicit journey, which I refused to label, a little closer to home and it would begin at St Chads in Manchester.

Walking into St Chads the last person I expected to see at the pulpit preparing a sermon was my own priest. Unbeknown to me, it was the swap over week between churches. I already felt incredibly guilty for not attending my home church, so my soul ran to the back of the church and I wasn't far behind it.

The sermon for me was about how we perceive and the difference in what we all see. In essence, we respond and or react differently when presented with the same picture. This has been the story of my life, but I have grown to accept that I see and feel in a different way to others; perhaps we all do but it's less overt in others. I think it's fair to say that it perfectly demonstrates how we

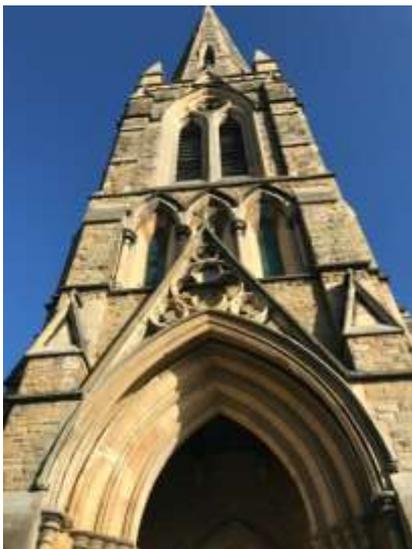


all receive a sermon or indeed any message - that being as individuals and not with herd mentality. St Chads is such a gorgeous yet overtly dark church and I look forward to returning when the sun is out so I can fully appreciate the delicate windows, the woodwork and beautiful internals.

My prayers in the days after included a plea for some direction as to my next destination and it was to be Sheffield. I continued to pray as this was not the answer I wanted, and it came back to me day by day so finally gave in and accepted it. It was my old hometown and somewhere I had not returned to since I sold my first house some years ago. It was a heart-breaking day as it was the place my son grew up and the longest place I have lived since being in the UK. It was also my safe haven. I decided on St Johns in Ranmoor as the area was a turning point in my life and St Johns was the first church to come up on google so that was next venue. In the days preceding my trip, I had such internal conflict and felt like I was having an internalised argument with myself. Or was it that I was actually trying to have a debate with God over the decision to go – I think we all know who the winner was always going to be.. Sheffield is a place with such deep memories, and I wanted to leave them there, yet I knew I had to go.

I set off early and the drive across Snake Pass was simply glorious. The sun so bright, the first day of the 'windows down' in the car season. The warmth of the sun biting at my pores and I think I was hoping for a sneaky tan. The weather was such a gift given the week had been desperately grey. The beauty of the Snake as it criss-crossed with the stomach churning turns and the lush smell of the bush (woods). For a moment it felt like I returned to driving through Germany as the bush was heaving in deep breathes towards the car. As the canopy closed in on me, the sun vanished and the chill snapped a little like an angry terrapin wanting some food. Then without warning, the world would explode into life as I came back into the light of a ravishing morning. I caught sight of my reflection in the mirror for a moment, a grin on my face which I wasn't aware of and my cheeks pink, my eyes looked happy when they looked back at me. It was heartening seeing smiling eyes again.

I saw the spire before I saw the church and it really is an impressive building. With its own private road, I parked up and tucked into my almost cold coffee and stone-cold pastry. My nerves started kicking in as this was actually my worst nightmare. A place I don't know where I know no one. My most venerable points were oozing beyond control. A prayer was in order. Often our biggest enemy is our self and I knew that. Sometimes our biggest challenge isn't others believing in us but us believing in our self. My courage was soon restored after a quick prayer and I was ready to rock and roll.



It was a lovely service with a small group of children no taller than the pews singing for their lives. You can't help but smile when kids sing, can you. It was a family service, so no eucharist which crushed me a little, ok it crushed me a lot. I was missing my home church, but I had to do this, I still wasn't sure why. There were churchy 'break out' sessions which I must admit I'm not a huge fan of.

However, it wasn't really an option, so I went for the prayer writing session in a quiet corner. The sun was now radiating through the windows and bouncing off the stonework with creeping shadows that belonged in clouds while you lay in a field watching the sky. I started and could barely stop as my mind opened and it was only when I looked up and everyone had vanished, that I realised I had perhaps got a bit carried away. It was however a valuable exercise and rather revealing to where I was at, spiritually and personally.



The prayers started out in drivel like centric mode and slowly blossomed outwards, embracing the need of others and not myself. This was a small win for me as I had become conscious of the intensity of trying to come to terms with, accept and move on from what felt like a lifetime of dealing with grief. I was tired of it but had no idea how to escape it. I had never got to the stage of counselling and went somewhere else in my mind. It was only when I returned to Christ that prayer helped me open up the utter loss that had fractured me. Fractures I was to learn are just that, fractures, they heal. I've started to realise that without the variance of prayer I have incorporated into my day, well, I would never be where I am today.

I was introduced to Ignatian Prayer last year and it was ground-breaking for me as it suited my mind. It also revealed a new approach to prayer and the endless possibilities it can give you. It was certainly the point in my spiritual journey when I discovered and indeed developed a relationship, a true relationship with my father. I initially thought that the relationship would be defined and set in stone but quickly discovered that this relationship is ever-growing and develops the further you go.

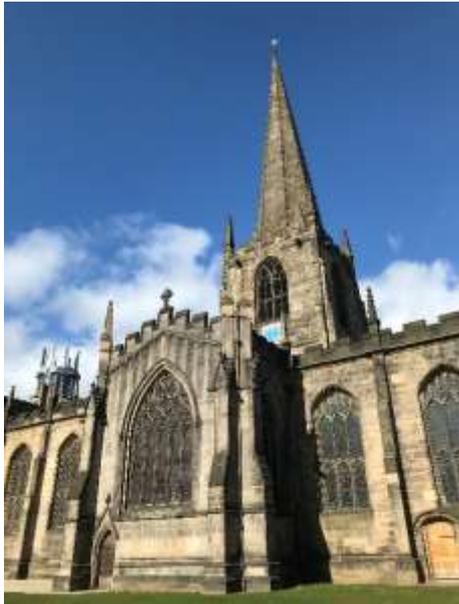


It felt like the definition of a swimming hole my mum use to take me to. Aboriginal legend says that the pool has no bottom and runs through the mountain and on forever. Well that's what I was told so took that as gospel. It was frightening yet exhilarating jumping in knowing there was no bottom, no end. For me, that really is becoming what the structure or building of this relationship with Christ is like. It's never ending and will continue to grow provided I contribute and work on it – you can't have a relationship by yourself – you need another.

The service ended and I sat quietly whilst reflecting on the architecture, a true passion of mine, and was transfixed by the quietening shadows dancing across the stonework once again. The service celebrated St David's day with the Rev stoically making a, well an attempt at the Welsh language. He gave it a good go but feedback was fast and furious from the stalls. I wish they had just clapped or something to that affect as I'm an advocate of celebrating people just giving

something a go. Sometimes we as people want to help correct more than we want to celebrate which I often feel is a shame. The effort is often more important than the outcome.

My silence was broken by a friendly retired reverend who invited me for coffee – so they passed my coffee test. It was a nice end to a lovely service. It was heartening to be able to talk to someone about a place I knew, to share memories that resonated with another. I miss the familiarity of something, anything.

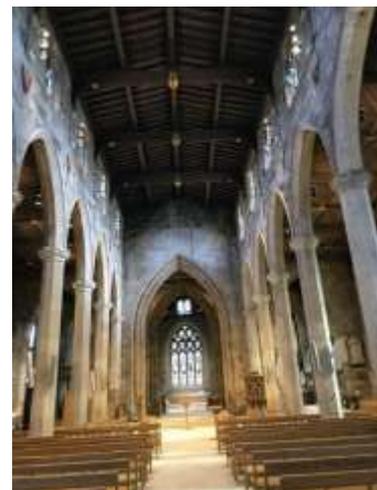


My life has changed so much in recent years, a newish city, a new job, a son who has moved from teen to man, being single, parent-less and a very new Christian experience without an iota of an idea unto what I am doing and in a new sparkling congregation who has embraced me beyond measure.

My next stop was Sheffield Cathedral. As soon as I hit the city my stomach tightened and memories of so many years leapt in front of me as I drove down the once cobbled roads. Reaching the cathedral, unbelievable, it's Sunday, it's midday and there was no parking anywhere, so I got creative and found a space in the grounds. I was to be Bishop for the period of my visit... Don't judge me..

I picked up my Pilgrim Passport in the shop which I learnt of whilst watching general Synod and did a whistle stop tour. It was not what I expected of a Cathedral and was incredibly sparse. Everything blended into sandstone tones and I found it a little underwhelming. I feel perhaps that my expectations pummelled the actual experience.

Returning to my car, the plan was to return home but for whatever reason I felt I had to return to my old home village and see people and see my old house. Sitting in this church car park I didn't know what else to do but pray about it and reflect for a few minutes. I really didn't want to, but I knew I had to. Funny how things turn out when at the outset you don't want to do it. It was wonderful spending the afternoon with people I had not seen in a few years and it felt like I had closed a door that had been open for some time. The emotion of the day had a eureka moment and tears tumbled as I drove out of the village towards the M1. I finally said goodbye and I never knew I hadn't.



I had no idea where I was going the following Sunday until Wednesday night when Paul a wonderful new friend mentioned his former pastor who I had met the previous October at an inclusion conference. Later that night a decision on the next journey hit me in the chops,



Worcester Cathedral. I wasn't aware where Worcester was but that's ok, thank the lord for Sat Navs.

However, before I trek off to Worcester, I have a date with an Orchestra at Manchester Cathedral to listen to delicious music- Vivaldi Four Seasons. I have dreamt of hearing Vivaldi live for years but never had a friend who liked classical music so have never been willing to go solo. With grown confidence, I decided I was to do it and it was also the first time I felt my mum with me since she passed. I know she would have loved it and I felt no fear in going alone which was a huge step for me. I don't think I was alone though, it felt like my mum was next to me through the whole performance. I have her to thank for introducing me to the beautiful things in life; music and words. It was a sensational performance and I got the

chance to explore the cathedral and of course got my pilgrim passport sticker. It was such a treat and seeing the internals for the first time were like letting the ocean wash over your hand as the waves come in and out. Each wave being a corner of the building, you turn and a new experience awaits you but you felt the experience inside you. I felt like my soul was bouncing around inside with happiness; it was another line in the sand for reclaiming my life.

An early start was needed the next day and the sun had returned for a lovely peaceful drive with virtually empty roads. I chose a calm, loving and romantic playlist to get me there. That in turn took me back to the night before with Vivaldi bouncing around my head and my thoughts of someone special. Someone I was missing terribly with her quirky coolness, gorgeous smile and divine eyes that grabbed me from across a room. I digress...



Covid was slowly overtaking the news and was starting to bubble to the surface but normal life was continuing, for now.. I managed to find a space next to the cathedral as I was there early, and it gave me the chance to have a bit of an explore. My chest felt like the air was sucked out of and refilled two-fold. It was a breath-taking first glance as I came through the doors. Not knowing where to look I clocked the choir and goose bumps attacked every part of my body as they practiced. I had never seen anything like it in person; what a privilege.

Taking a seat in the pews at the front was the right choice in retrospect with the Covid capers about to take over life as we knew it. There were only about 40 people seated and then the service started and glad I opted for the front as it meant prime viewing and a clean chalice, but I didn't realise this when I sat down. I have never experienced such a service with the choir and music, it was beyond magic. It was only when we all sung that this extraordinary noise grabbed me and shook it like possessed black Friday shopper

after a 42 inch tv. I turned to the noise and discovered hundreds of people sitting behind me, beyond pews I could actually see.

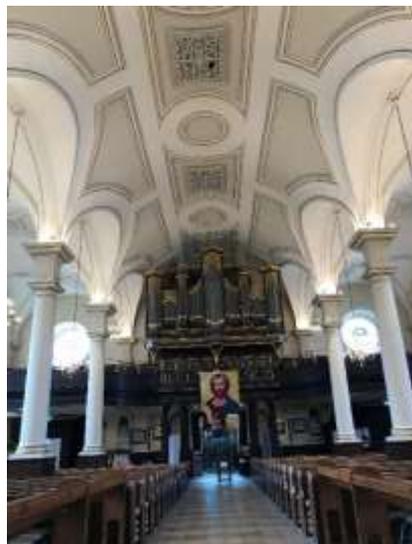


I had never been to such a service and I had to control the choking sensation in my throat that was trying to force tears out. Stephen, originally from Manchester presided over the service and his words from the sermon stay with me. You don't have to understand to believe. Those words rolled around in my head as I finished my visit and decided to head to Derby Cathedral. I had my service under my belt and had my sought-after pilgrim passport stamp.

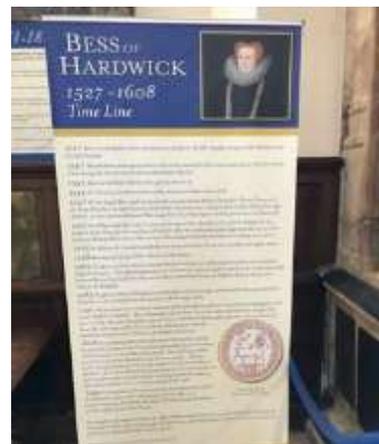
The entire journey was filled with that one sentence Stephen mentioned, you don't have to understand to believe. It often feels like people are talking in riddles in the church and I just have to pretend to understand so I don't feel and or look so green. I misunderstand more than I understand and that can be frustrating.

It didn't take too long to reach the next pit stop with my favourite playlist blasting out at sound level 30 – sometimes music just has to be played loud particularly when guitars and ACDC or Iron Maiden are involved.

Derby Cathedral is a ditsy cathedral. It isn't a Worcester style breath-taking experience because it's not meant to be. It was however elegant and modest, a quality I admire. I was handed a sticker for my pilgrim passport and a paddle; I literally mean a paddle with a map. I admit I ignored it as I am not really an instruction kind of gal but I pretend well.



I was so excited and warmed by the fact they displayed a memorial type thing for Elizabeth Hardwick. Such an inspirational woman of the time and now in fact. Hardwick Hall was the first place I drove to when I got my car a week after getting my driving licence. My son and I ventured out and ended up on the M1 – I didn't know I was on a motorway as I expected to go through



some sort of signage to tell me like the freeways in Australia. It was only when cars were flying by us that I realised at that precise moment that I had no idea what the speed limit was. So, on my first day on the road without an instructor, with my impressionable child, I stayed at speed with others on the motorway at around 80.. I clearly now know the rules and abide by them, in the main.

Yet again I prayed through the week for my next destination as I had no idea where to go.



I really wanted to go to Oxford but that was my choice not a direction, so I simply waited until I knew. On Thursday I was on twitter and read the daily prayer by someone whose prayers I read each day. I'm sure it was always there but I noticed the picture on his page for the first time, 'Follow the Star' . Ker-Ching- This was my next place. I googled the guy and found his church in Stockton on Tees – about 3 hours away.

I was seriously starting to miss my home church, the people the sermons, but fortunately was able to fill my boots via the mid-week service – I almost felt home sick. I just had to continue what I was doing as surely it would become evident why on earth, I was doing this bizarre thing. I couldn't explain to anyone why I was doing it and to be honest it felt like a bit of a midlife crisis kind of thing, but I knew there was a reason and I just had to trust in what I was doing. You don't have to understand to believe. Or, is that you don't

have to believe to understand.



I recognise I am on a journey so decided weeks ago to embrace my strangeness. I visited my usual petrol station for my coffee and decided on water too but nothing to eat this morning. The trip was filled with a beating sun radiating against my arms and burning my face at points during the drive. I did question why I don't get this in my back yard when I'm ready to welcome the sun. Perhaps a question that will never be answered. That aside, it felt like a long drive and a few playlists later I arrived after driving into two other churches first. The cluster of churches in the town centre was a funny one and I guess speaks historically of the area along with town planning. I wasn't sure what the rules were on parking so just took the place I wanted and figured I will tolerate the grief if I have taken someone's space.

Church parking space culture is a story in itself which is beyond my paygrade so I will leave that for someone else to document.

Walking in I knew Covid was at the top of their radar. I was asked to wash my hands as I entered but my rather full bladder was more of a concern and I promised to wash my hands in the loo. Coming back out, the choir room was plastered with photos of the choir from so many years back to present day. It was clearly a part of the fabric of the congregation and I somehow felt lucky to have seen it. I took a walk around and met some wonderful, welcoming people and of course ended up at the bookshelf at the back of the church. There were dozens of books, yet one grabbed my eye, Barefoot Disciple. How I noticed this small book amongst all the books – no idea. You know when you laugh on the



inside when you feel the irony of a situation and you try not to have a strange look on your face at the same time? Well the irony hit me. I was taking a photo of it as I planned to buy it when I got home when I was acutely aware there was someone standing next to me in the emptiness of the bookshelf space. It was Bill, the twitter man whose post led me to this congregation. I didn't think he would be there as he wasn't presiding, so it was a lovely surprise.

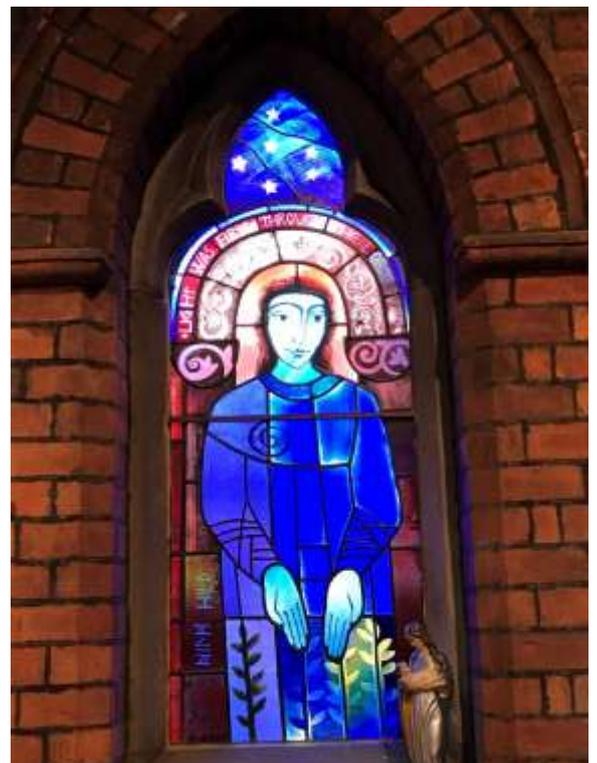
It was so good to be back in a congregation even if just for a few hours. The sermon was taken by a newbie who by day is also an undertaker. You couldn't help but keep your eyes on him as he sort of had this energy that kept your attention. I must admit I was mortified halfway through when I started having a coughing fit that came

out of nowhere. For the first time I had a bottle of water with me which absolutely saved me as all I could think was the congregation will lynch me and think I have Covid if I keep coughing. His sermon? It was about how we blossom and flourish in the company of those who love us and in the company of god. However, the crux of the sermon centred around how Jesus treated the woman at the well, how he accepted her and about our role as Christians. Our job is not only to take from the well to quench our thirst but to lead others to it. I believe I have heard this type of sermon before, but I heard something new this time, or perhaps it was that my ears were ready to hear it.

I felt like my boots were filled for the week and the service ended with some wonderful conversations with locals from the choir and an even longer conversation with Bill and his wife. Bill let me take some of the books as I didn't realise, they were there to take but I was a little hesitant - he was sure so I was happy to bag them. So, in the end I walked away with Barefoot Disciple and one he recommended after our chat, Journeying Out.

I was absolutely buzzing when I left and was off to Skipton Cathedral. The drive again was divine with the sun burning on my forehead as I took the back roads which cut through the evergreen countryside. It reminded me of Derbyshire with its farmhouses and dry-stone walls cutting up the land.

I hit Skipton and plush houses lined the perfectly tarmacked road as I wound my way into the town. It was picture postcard and was dominated by the cathedral at the top of the main strip of the township. Cobbles defined the car spaces, 100-year-old stone roundabouts, controlled traffic and ditsy shops lined the main strip. Fortunately, I was able to find a space quickly and made my way to the cathedral. I was shocked by how cold I felt when I



got out of the car and it felt like the wind was nipping my nape and ears as I walked up to the building. The traditional building had a glass auto door which welcomed me as I approached it and I walked in and it felt cosy. The pews were sensational with small doors at each ending with plates I suspect once held a family name. The stone floor echoed



each step I made as I was alone in the building and I was a glad as I was starting to feel a little strange but ignored it. Doing my usual thing I took a lot of photos and simply took the spirit of the building in. I hadn't been there long, and it was getting really warm and I started feeling quite ill. After a rest in the pews I realised I was starting to feel worse. I was starting to feel really ill and I assumed it was because I hadn't eaten but something wasn't right.

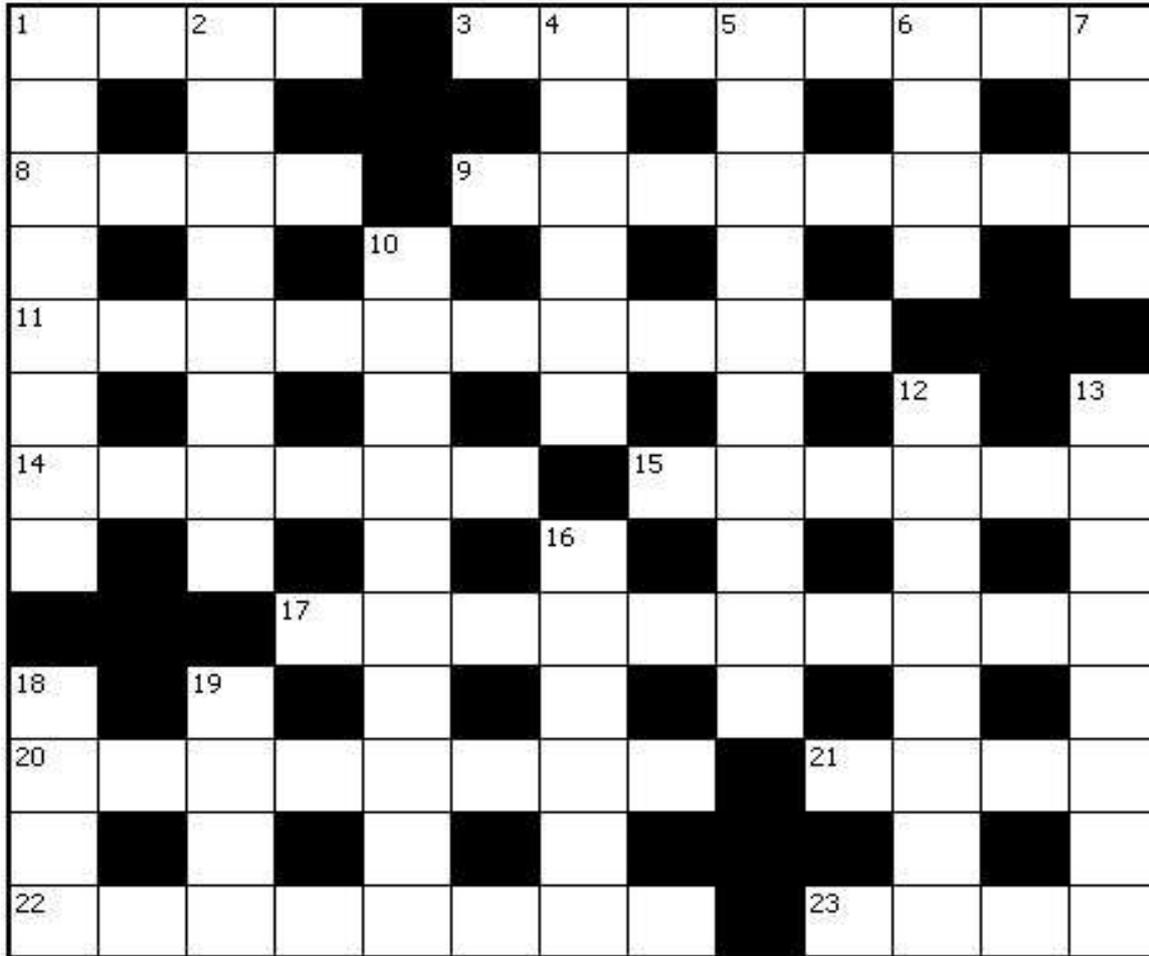
I had to concede defeat and decided to head home. By the time I got back to the car the cough had returned and my body was starting to feel like it was on fire, my insides felt like they were on fire. I simply

had to get home as I was alone and some distance away. The journey home was spent with the window down on the motorway and driving slowly as the faster I went the worse I felt. It's a journey I would rather forget. Getting home was such a relief and I went straight to bed. 14 hours later I woke and felt dreadful but still needed to log on for work. I spent the next week bed-bound and further weeks recovering. A month later I am reflecting on my journey to date and it's not finished.

I still don't understand the purpose of it but perhaps it's about spiritual and personal growth and exploring this in a less traditional method. A method that perhaps speaks to me. My personal retreat has been cancelled which has upset me greatly as I was so excited to spend a week in a cabin by myself and treat Lichfield Cathedral as my church for the week. It clearly wasn't meant to happen and will just have to happen later in the year. Like many others, my journey has simply been put on hold and I will be able to pick it up again. I know many like myself have had something cancelled, be that holidays, a wedding and so on. Things don't always turn out how you hope and after being ill, and some of the thoughts and night terrors I had, it no longer matters as I have my health and those I love, even if I can't see them in the flesh at the moment.



## Puzzles



### CLUES

#### Across

- 1 See 23 Across
- 3 Where the thief on the cross was told he would be, with Jesus (Luke 23:43) (8)
- 8 Invalid (4)
- 9 Blasphemed (Ezekiel 36:20) (8)
- 11 Adhering to the letter of the law rather than its spirit (Philippians 3:6) (10)
- 14 Shut (Ecclesiastes 12:4) (6)
- 15 'This is how it will be with anyone who — up things for himself but is not rich towards God' (Luke 12:21) (6)
- 17 Mary on Isis (anag.) (10)
- 20 Agreement (Hebrews 9:15) (8)
- 21 Native of, say, Bangkok (4)
- 22 Deaf fort (anag.) (5-3)
- 23 and 1 Across 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of — to work it and take — of it' (Genesis 2:15) (4,4)

#### Down

- 1 Struggle between opposing forces (Habakkuk 1:3) (8)

- 2 James defined this as 'looking after orphans and widows in their distress and keeping oneself from being polluted by the world' (James 1:27) (8)
- 4 'The one I kiss is the man; — him' (Matthew 26:48) (6)
- 5 'Be joyful in hope, patient in — , faithful in prayer' (Romans 12:12) (10)
- 6 St Columba's burial place (4)
- 7 Swirling current of water (4)
- 10 Loyalty (Isaiah 19:18) (10)
- 12 'God was pleased through the foolishness of what was — , to save those who believe' (1 Corinthians 1:21) (8)
- 13 Camp where the angel of the Lord slew 185,000 men one night (2 Kings 19:35) (8)
- 16 'There is still — — — Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet'(2 Samuel 9:3) (1,3,2)
- 18 David Livingstone was one (4)
- 19 Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (1,1,1,1)

**Sudoku**

2				6		8	4	1
	4	1			3			
			8				5	
		5	9			6	8	
	7		3	2	4		1	
	1	4			6	3		
	3				5			
			1			4	9	
1	9	6		7				2

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## A message from our Treasurer:

Thank you to all of you who have continued to offer financial support to our Church. It is truly amazing how our wonderful and generous congregation have rallied round to ensure we can continue to meet our commitments.

If you would like to donate to the church regularly, you can set up a standing order direct into our bank account. Forms are available on the website and here is a link to the form.

Follow us on our website & social media via <http://www.st-nicholas-church.org.uk>

<http://www.st-nicholas-church.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SNC-Regular-donation-form.pdf>

All you need to do is print then complete the form and return it to me to process.

Andrew Mills  
St Nicholas Church Treasurer  
c/o 2 Glenside Drive  
Wilmslow  
SK9 1EH

If you would prefer to send a contribution by cheque, please make the cheque payable to 'St.Nicholas PCC' and post it to me using the details shown above.

If you would prefer to simply make a one off or occasional payment into the church accounts, here are the bank account details for BACS:

Account details: NatWest Bank (Didsbury) Account

Name: St Nicholas Church PCC

Account number: 02047578

Sort code: 01-02-69

In order for use to claim Gift Aid, please ensure that any reference you use allows us to identify you. Please add a reference of your initials and postcode. E.g. AJM SK91EH

**Thank you, Andrew Mills,**

**Hon. Treasurer**

## PUZZLE ANSWERS

<b>Across</b> 1 Care 3 Paradise 8 Null 9 Profaned 11 Legalistic 14 Closed	15 Stores 17 Missionary 20 Covenant 21 Thai 22 Trade-off 23 Eden	<b>Down</b> 1 Conflict 2 Religion 4 Arrest 5 Affliction 6 Iona 7 Eddy	10 Allegiance 12 Preached 13 Assyrian 16 A son of 18 Scot 19 DVLA
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2	5	3	7	6	9	8	4	1
8	4	1	2	5	3	7	6	9
7	6	9	8	4	1	2	5	3
3	2	5	9	1	7	6	8	4
6	7	8	3	2	4	9	1	5
9	1	4	5	8	6	3	2	7
4	3	2	6	9	5	1	7	8
5	8	7	1	3	2	4	9	6
1	9	6	4	7	8	5	3	2

# The Parish Church of St Nicholas Burnage

<b>Sunday Services</b>	
8.30 am	Eucharist (BCP)
10.30 am	Family Service and Eucharist
<p>For Saints and other weekday Services, please see the Diary page inside the magazine.          Holy Baptism on 3rd Sunday of each month at 10.30 a.m.          Holy Communion is taken to the housebound by arrangement with the Minister.</p>	
<b>Minister</b>	Rev'd Canon Rachel Mann 0161 432 7009
<b>Curates</b>	Rev'd Andrew Bennison Rev'd Alan Simpson
<b>Churchwardens</b>	Mrs Alison Mills (07932071977) Ms Jane Cawley (07745 392 374)
<b>Assistant Wardens</b>	Mr Fred Murphy Mrs Grace Manley Ms Jill Lomas Mrs Julie Crossley Mrs Louise Hollingsworth
<b>Elected on PCC</b>	Mrs Lyn Rimmer, (electoral Roll Officer) Mrs Margaret Witty Mr Tony Witty Mrs Alison Cullen Ms Michaila Roberts Mrs Julie Bodgers Ms Nicola Naylor Mr Giles Elliott
<b>Organists</b>	Mr Oliver Mills (07786 337087) Ms Elizabeth Bray
<b>Hon. Treasurer</b>	Mr Andrew Mills (07802403991)
<b>Minutes Secretary</b>	Mrs Ann Ackerman
<b>Deanery Synod</b>	Mrs Grace Manley Mrs Christine Price Mrs Christine Price
<b>Magazine Editor</b>	Storm Janeway
<b>Magazine Distribution</b>	Mrs Brenda Maclese

[www.st-nicholas-church.org.uk](http://www.st-nicholas-church.org.uk)  
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