

Parish Magazine May 2026



We are the Anglican Parishes of St Stephen's Elton and Kirklees Valley, which is comprised of All Saints Brandlesholme and St James Woolfold. We exist to worship God in the Anglican tradition, to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to serve our neighbour in thought, word, and deed. We are warm, welcoming, and friendly communities in the Liberal Catholic to central tradition of the Church of England. We are proud to be the spiritual home of people of a variety of backgrounds and ages, and we love to welcome newcomers to our services and community events. We also host a variety of non Church-based activities in our buildings, and are always keen to support and welcome new community initiatives and activities.

Our **Sunday Services:**

All Saints 11am

St James 11am

St Stephens 9am

We share a single Vicar, Rev. Sam Eccleston, who can be contacted on brseclestonop@gmail.com. We are also served by a team of very generous and able Clergy, Readers, and ALMs, to whom we are greatly indebted.

Suggested

Donation: 50p

Vicar's Letter

In this month's magazine you will find an article about one of the Curate's more eccentric interests, news from the Diocese, a sign-up form for the service for the Ordination of Priests at the cathedral, Fr Derek's continued reflections on Ruth and much more. Every month there are thanks due to those who work so hard to contribute to the life of our churches. Of particular note are Ellise and Jane for their pastoral work, Tony and Lynne for their work on the APCMs, the flower teams of All Saints and St Stephen's for the magnificent flowers over Easter,



Why is Being Good So Difficult?

When the Harry Potter novels were released, they received a lot of pushback, particularly from American Evangelical Christians, on account of their supposed advocacy of magic and witchcraft. Frankly, I have very little time for this kind of argument—the books are fictional, they no more 'advocate' witchcraft than Star Wars advocates 'the force'; in both cases, supernatural powers are a plot device that allows the author to create an alternative universe which can be inhabited, compellingly, by the reader, and to raise questions about how the world would work if certain people had access to massively disproportionate amounts of power. This question, while explored in a fictional way, does not depict a fictional reality; certain people in the real world do in fact have massively disproportionate amounts of power!

A more valid criticism was advanced by the late English Conservative Philosopher Sir Roger Scruton. He argued that one of the reasons that the Potter series provide such a powerful form of escapism is because of the way the books simplify moral reality. One might initially object to this characterisation on the basis that the whole plot of the Potter novels revolves around morality— themes such as discrimination and exclusion, friendship and loyalty, bravery and perseverance, the centrality of love. While this is of course true, this is not what Scruton had in mind. His criticism was not that the novels were amoral, but rather that they construe these moral issues according to a simplistic set of dichotomies between good and bad, right and wrong, friend and foe. For example, most of the characters are clearly either good guys or bad guys, few are conflicted or compromised. The moral issues at stake are rarely nuanced; there is a clear right and wrong and the right path is both apparent at all times and un-failingly pursued by the protagonists— Harry and his friends. The bad guys are bad seemingly bad for its own sake— they are just evil, there is very little sense in which their beliefs are rendered comprehensible by biography or circumstance. The distinction between good and bad guys is so pronounced that it actually has a physical expression; the good guys are conventionally respectable in terms of appearance, whereas quite a number of the bad guys are either in some way 'exotic' or have some obvious disfigurement or other physical

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eccentricity. Similarly, the 'good guys' are largely fairly middle class, whereas the 'bad guys' are an alliance of aristocrats and the criminal underclass: people easy to dislike.

Now, this kind of simplification has a pedagogic purpose; for children, it can help to clarify moral intuitions and foster commitment to goodness. However, what it doesn't do, and this is Scruton's point, is outline how often it is the case that the good, the right, and the true are either not that easy to identify or are in some sense complicated by circumstances or tied up with outcomes or preconditions that are less than desirable.



Take many current political issues. Many of us would decry the violence occurring in the Israel/Palestine conflict— this much is easy. Most people would agree with words like 'disproportionate' or 'indiscriminate' being used, but it is much harder to define what would constitute an appropriate level of force, or how a conflict could be prosecuted in a way that limits violence in the circumstances that pertain in Gaza.

Thinking of a fair solution to the conflict as a whole is even harder. It is easy to make the case that Israel is an occupying force whose title to the land they inhabit is illegitimate; the modern state is a product of recent migration from Europe that local people did not consent to. However, given that much of the Jewish migration to the Holy Land in the mid 20th century was permitted by the political authority of the time, such an argument depends upon an account of sovereignty which could be described as 'nativist'; the idea that the native people of a country have the right to exclude immigrants irrespective of what their rulers decide. This is obviously controversial. Alternatively, it could be based on a rejection of the legitimacy of the government in question, which was arguably a colonialist enterprise imposed from outside. If either of these conclusions is accepted, all acts of self-defence by Israel are merely further acts of colonial violence - Israel has no right of self-defence. Most people don't find this a realistic conclusion. The broader problem with this argument about legitimate sovereignty though, is that it applies to almost every Government of the region in its history, all the way back to, and arguably including the ancient Israelite state itself. Many contemporary Palestinians trace their ancestry, both culturally and literally, to medieval invaders. Indeed, what we have hit on here is what might be called the paradox of legitimate sovereignty— there are very few, if any, states in the world not founded in an arguably illegitimate and unfair way (usually violently) ; England was formed by conquering/migrating Anglo-Saxons, who displaced the Britons, who had themselves done the same to earlier peoples; the United States by Europeans gradually dispossessing Native Americans, the borders of modern China are determined by historic Han Chinese conquests of neighbouring groups, in Japan, the ancestors of the Japanese conquered and replaced the original inhabitants of the Islands— the Ainu. This isn't only true of modern industrialised nations— it is just as true for tribal peoples in African and the Americas; the Aztecs conquered by the Spanish were themselves imperialists; this is why smaller tribes supported the Spanish.

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If, on the other hand, the conquest of land justifies its occupation, then it is hard to argue against Israeli title to the land., which again, doesn't seem right. Wherever one lands on the issues above (and I am not suggesting a specific conclusion), it is hard, without performing serious moral gymnastics, for anyone, no matter how opposed to Israel, to endorse the actions and policies of Hamas. Given the fact that they are clearly a proxy for the Iranian regime and that their actions are dictated from Tehran, a powerful argument can be made that they are not in fact a government at all, but rather represent a form of state capture by a foreign power. But given that Hamas was both democratically elected and is in functional control of the region, how could a solution to the conflict not involve their co-operation? And given that they won't co-operate, what is the solution? Similarly, military action against Iran has been fairly criticised for having no specific and realistic objective, and it seems highly likely, as it stands, that regime change will not be accomplished. Iraq and Afghanistan loom large in memory here. However, it is hard to entirely dismiss the support U.S. policy has received from the Iranian diaspora; the mass demonstrations in favour of the airstrikes, and the compelling case made by Iranians that the depravity of the regime is such that it mandates international action to remove the current government. How we square what *ought* to happen with what is *likely* to happen is a very difficult moral question, to which there is no uncontroversial answer, but it is upon this question that different attitudes to the strikes on Iran hinge.



In the same way there is no straightforward answer to the conflicting rights claims of feminists and trans-rights advocates that will leave everyone feeling that their needs and dignity has been appropriately respected. The issue is further complicated by the fact that each camp prioritises something different (sex vs gender identity) and by the fact that whatever outcome is reached, it has to take into account not just the claims of the sincere, but also the potential for any rule-set to be abused by the disingenuous.

What all of these issues have in common, besides their complexity, is that they are so serious that compromise seems more like a concession or a defeat. This is perhaps why so much of the debate on these issues has become so aggressively polarised; the logical deadlock so unnerves us that it is psychologically easier to retreat into a more cartoonish reality in which we are the good guys and everything we do and think is right, and our opposition are simply evil, there is no understanding them, and no point in talking to them. And indeed, perhaps in some cases this is actually just how things are; some moral disagreements are just a matter of good vs evil. Everyone must agree that it is a moral necessity to be able to identify, and stand up to, evil— we can all think of examples where we intuitively feel that evil had to be fought rather than compromised with. If we think this, though, we must be prepared to embrace constant moral conflict, because there is a rather porous line dividing evil from something more human.

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What is interesting about the Bible is how, despite being a collection of different texts written over a period of more than a thousand years, a common theme is the steadfast refusal to depict moral reality in a simplistic way. Part of the historic problem with Biblical interpretation has been precisely the refusal to recognise the morally compromised nature of Biblical figures; the attempt to rehabilitate or explain away behaviour that is *supposed to be seen as problematic*. The patriarchs are all morally compromised men. Their wives, while having a harder time of it in many cases on account of their sex, are nevertheless not tragic heroines but flawed and complex people; they are not made into saints on account of their suffering. The Kings are largely useless, and even the greatest of them, David and Solomon, are profoundly troubling characters; their inability to resist temptation leads to the breakup of the country. In the Bible, while the hatred of foreign conquerors is taken seriously, those same conquering people are humanised in the Book of Jonah, and their kings are, on occasion called 'messiah' by the prophets. The law, while highly prized and praised, fails to make Israel holy. The disciples themselves are failures before they become successes, and even then they disagree and get things wrong. All of this somewhat gives the lie to the oft-repeated notion that the Bible is a rule book for living; it is more like a catalogue of human error. Even this, though, should not be exaggerated— much of the error is not a product of malice or the deliberate attempt to cause harm, it is rather the result of fear, weakness, lack of foresight, misplaced compassion, misguided attempts to do good. In other words, it is failure we can sympathise with— it is human failure.



The only person, in fact, who is presented as being consistently right is Jesus. Now, you might say, *there's* the bit that counts as a rule book for living— we ought to be more like Christ. And surely, in a sense, we must. But the whole point of Christ's life was that it was not compatible with the operation of political and religious power; his life, necessarily, would be one of self-sacrifice. It is hard to see, if you transpose a Christlike set of behaviours into the modern contexts we have discussed, any other outcome nowadays. The problem with this, of course, is that most of us want to live— to have families, to have a future to look forward to, to belong to a community and contribute to a culture, and this all depends on politics and power. For those of us with dependents, self-sacrifice might actually be selfish: this is one of the strongest justifications for clerical celibacy— it frees people to be truly self-sacrificial. Wanting to survive and thrive, of course, is what all of these conflicts are about, it is why they are so intractable; people are not willing, understandably, to give up their happiness or the safety of their family for other people who they see as enemies. While Christ's self-sacrifice is of course moral (even super-moral) it is hard to see this as the basis of normal ethical behaviour; after all, what is the substance the Biblical critique of the powerful if it is not a claim that people shouldn't have to sacrifice everything they value? If morality is simply self-sacrifice, surely those who create the need for self-sacrifice ought to be congratulated rather than condemned?

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Perplexing, isn't it? You could be forgiven for thinking we have come nowhere; we started with moral perplexity, and while we have perhaps found a moral example to imitate, we have just recognised the impossibility of doing so! We might be disappointed by this, but I think this is the point the Bible is making—the situation is precisely that salvation does not come through human morality, important as morality is. The only salvation that is available is given by the grace of God and involves the complete transformation of reality. The world as it is cannot be saved. And given that we can only be saved by God, and not by our own agency, from the injustice of human political reality, it is perhaps uniquely appropriate that it is precisely through the *unjust death of God* in human form and at human hands that this salvation is offered. Perhaps this is the ultimate reason why so many of our debates about justice have become so fraught— we are expecting morality to do something it can't do— to save us from the circumstances that make it necessary in the first place.



It is only when we appreciate this that we can fully understand and accept both the sheer grace and the unqualified necessity of the Gospel. For those of us who are over invested in our own potential, the Gospel message will seem unduly negative, unnecessarily bloody, and unduly violent. In reality, though, this conclusion only makes sense in the world of Harry Potter, where everything is simple, the good always prevail, and evil can be finally defeated by a plucky bunch of teenagers. The real world offers no such hope, but prompts us to place our hope elsewhere.

Stuart Jones 1966-2026

Unfortunately, the monthly recipe page will no longer be a feature of the magazine due to the unexpected and untimely death of the Stuart Jones, a regular member of the congregation of St Stephen's Elton. He will be greatly missed by his many friends in the congregation. Information about any memorial service or other act of remembrance will be shared when it becomes available. Rest in Peace Stuart.



Faith Online

There is a lot of fantastic Christian content online; it comes from Christians of different denominations, traditions, and languages, and encompasses everything from Bible Study and Theology to Christian music, architecture, and art. Every month I will aim to share some of it with you.

History Alice guides us round the shrine of **St Edward the Confessor** here: [link](#)

The Christian Mysticism Podcast discuss the life and legacy of 'controversial mystic' **Thomas Merton** here: [link](#)

The Bible Project discuss prayer here: [link](#)



Neuroscientist and Philosopher **Iain**

McGilchrist explains why we need religion here: [link](#)

Archbishop Sarah Mullaly offers a Holy Week reflection here: [link](#)

Bishop Graham Tomlin discusses polymath and theologian **Blaise Pascal** here: [link](#)

Professor Linda Woodhead discusses the future of the church here: [link](#)

A monk of **Mucknell Abbey** explain how they make frankincense here: [link](#)

Manchester's Last Bricks explores a hidden secret at the parish church of **St Michael Ashton Under Lyne** here: [link](#)



Tom Holland and **Jonathan Sumption** discuss whether politics is becoming more religious here: [link](#)

Astronaut **Victor Glover** gives an Easter message from space here: [link](#)

The Gesualdo Six perform a favourite Easter hymn here: [link](#)

Justin Brierley discusses continued controversy over the **Quiet Revival** report here: [link](#)

CHURCH TIMES

...as does **Andrew Brown** in the **Church Times** here: [link](#)

Rory Sutherland explains how he would 'sell' Christianity here: [link](#)

A Cosmologist and a Theologian debate whether quantum weirdness points to God here: [link](#)

Study Group is typically recorded in an audio file as are sermons -if you have missed a session/service and wish to listen please contact the Vicar.

WHAT ON EARTH DID ELLISE DO NOW?!

Well, hello followers of my quirkie life! Let me introduce you to the nerdy side of myself and some of my kids and this year one of my grandkids.

Every year in April me and some of my kids dress up and go to the anime and gaming Comic-Con, now I can imagine some of your faces like what on earth is she on about, buckle down because this is my nerd side!

Comic-con is a convention where a load of nerdy people dresses up as their favourite character from a YouTube channel, anime cartoon or gaming character. We all meet in Manchester and buy a load of shockingly expensive merchandise, play video games and compete, watch our favourite anime programs and listen to panels from our fav youtuber channels with also a meet and greet by the voices of said characters.

Now I am a huge Pokémon fan only the original series but my kids love a deeper anime where they are all subbed because they are Japanese! I have no time for subs so I only watch the translated stuff, but we are hardcore fans of the con.

Last year I met a lot of characters from films, and YouTube channels but my favourite pic from last year was a man dressed as Jesus and as I spotted him he walks over and demands a photo i was dressed as sailor Jupiter from a series called Sailor Moon.

This year I decided to go one step further I did dress as Sailor Jupiter but I changed halfway through the day into a character from the Jurassic world games....

Don't I look awesome as a dinosaur?! In this picture is Dakota dressed as techno blade, who was a famous youtuber but sadly passed away, Khaleesi dressed as Atsushi from BSD and then my grand-daughter Lexie is Toga from MHA.

We go every year and we spend quality time just having our best nerd life, dressed up and spending way too much money on merchandise, this year it was even bigger and even better with more stalls, more voice actors and better gaming station, we are already looking for new costumes next year, and if anyone out there is a little nerdy and wants to come be weird with us do let me know, we are thinking of Pokémon for next year so embrace your inner Pikachu and nerd out !! For my over 18's there is a glow in the dark after party – I'm yet to attend as mine are not yet old enough but we are just waiting for our party to begin.—Ellise



News From All Saint's

Ladies Club

Our speaker this month was Captain Cor van der Woude from the Bury branch of the Salvation Army, originally from the Netherlands.

What an inspirational speaker! He said more words in the 45 minutes of his presentation than I have ever heard - he did warn us that he was a passionate speaker and his presentation got faster and faster as he went on! He had done a great amount of research into our church and our church buildings, linking the dates of the old All Saints church with the beginnings of the Salvation Army movement to only a few years apart.

Captain Cor and his wife are both serving Salvation Army Captains in Bury, and he talked about the work they do, the community they serve and how they run a variety of community support groups for the people in their area.

Our next meeting is on 11th May, we have another guest speaker Kate Slingsby, a local speaker who is coming to talk about the history of the old mills in Ramsbottom. All welcome

Monday Walking - 7th April - which was actually on a Tuesday!

A group of 8 walkers met at the Clarence Lido for a walk around Chesham Woods on a lovely sunny day. Disappointments with the Jubilee Centre cafe being closed for the refreshment stop were soon resolved with a detour across Walmersley Road to Falshaws. Our next walk is again on a Tuesday because of another Bank Holiday - Tuesday 5th May meet 10am at church for a walk down to Burrs and around country park finishing at Jersey Girls or Lampost Cafe

Prayer Group

Our Prayer Group continues to meet at All Saints on (usually) the fourth Thursday of the month at 10am. Our prayer theme for April was about recognition - how and why Jesus was often not recognised after the Resurrection and how we need to open our eyes to see Him.





RAMSBOTTOM CONCERT ORCHESTRA & ANDANTINO SINGERS

AN EVENING OF MUSICAL RHAPSODIES

Thursday 21st May 2026, at 7-30pm.

All Saints Church, Hebburn Drive,

Bury BL8 1ED

West Side Story & The Sound of Music, excerpts, All that Jazz, Rhythm of Life, Peer Gynt Suite,
English Folk Song Suite, In a Monastery Garden, Bohemian Rhapsody, and many other favourites

Musical Director: ***Barry Sugden***

Orchestra Leader: ***Julie Proctor***

Price: £ 10.00

www.rcsco.org

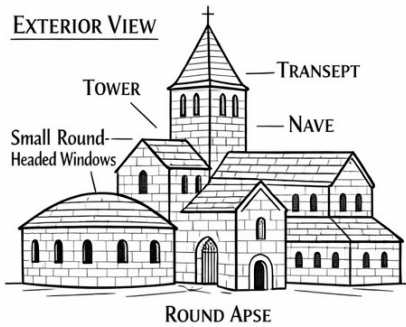
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Exploring Church Architecture

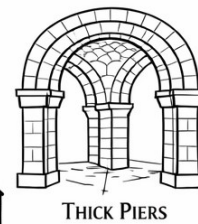
Church architecture is deeply familiar to most of us, and yet at the same time we lack the vocabulary to describe what we are seeing or classify the different styles of structure and decoration that describe the buildings we see. In a sense, this is quite odd, as many of our most cherished buildings, nationally and across the world, are churches, and yet we cannot talk to people about what we love about them. Over the next few weeks we will introduce some of the major styles of church architecture, so next time you go exploring, you might find yourself recognising a few things. This month, we look at Romanesque architecture.

ROMANESQUE CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

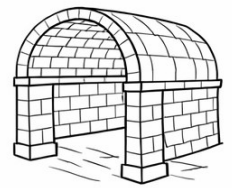
EXTERIOR VIEW



ROUND ARCHES

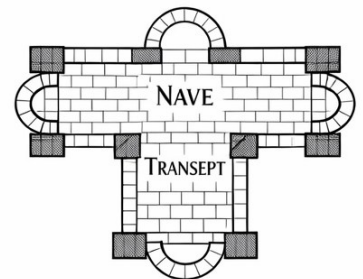
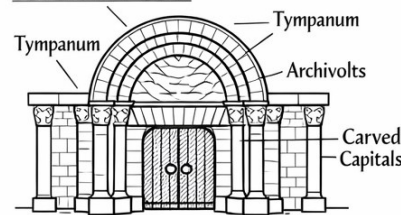


BARREL VAULT

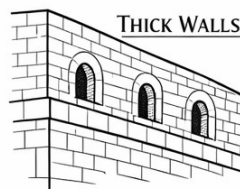


THICK PIERS

DECORATED PORTAL



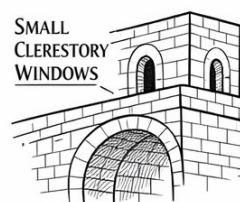
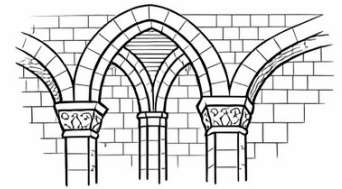
CRUCIFORM PLAN



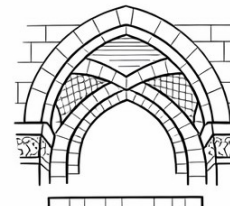
THICK WALLS



COLUMN & CAPITAL



SMALL CLERESTORY WINDOWS

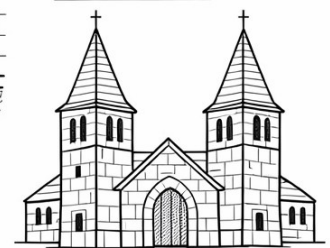


CUSHION CAPITAL



ENGAGED COLUMN

GROIN VAULT



TWIN TOWERS

ORIGINS OF THE ROMANESQUE STYLE

Emerging in Western Europe around the 10th century, the Romanesque style developed as builders sought to revive the monumental stone architecture of ancient Rome while adapting it to Christian worship. It arose from the fusion of classical Roman engineering—particularly the round arch and barrel vault—with local traditions of masonry and monastic design. As pilgrimage routes expanded and monastic orders flourished, the need for durable, fireproof churches led to the widespread use of stone vaulting and thick walls. The resulting aesthetic—solid, rhythmic, and fortress-like—embodied both spiritual permanence and the growing unity of medieval Christendom.

Fr Derek's Reflections

Fr Derek has decided to discontinue his much-loved series of online reflections, which were distributed to a mailing list including many of the members of our parishes, some of which have been featured in this magazine. He writes:

I have decided that after six years of writing reflections it is time to stop. My thanks to you all for your perseverance and encouragement. As some of you know these reflections started as a response to the first Covid19 lockdown when my then vicar Revd Simon Cook, asked if I would write something on a weekly basis. Thank you Simon it was good for me. For the majority of this period, I have been assisted by Lynne Williamson. Lynne was my proofreader but more than that there were times when she had to negotiate my particular and at times torturous style of writing. Thank you Lynne.

Changes in Microsoft Outlook have now made it more difficult to send out large mailings as I used to.

I will be deleting my Reflections contact list but if you are on my friends contacts, the Diocese in Europe Chaplaincies (Locum) contacts or Manchester Diocese contacts you may still receive communications from me from time to time.

Every blessing to you all and thank you for your friendship, via the internet over the years.

Fr Derek

Reader Ministry

Rev. Neil Whittaker shares this message:

Reader ministry is an exciting area of ministry and we currently have 14 people in Reader training at Emmanuel College.

We would love to continue to encourage a wide variety of people to offer themselves for this ministry. Those interested are very welcome to get in touch for a very informal chat with either Rachel or myself to help discern whether this is the right pathway for them.

The discernment process for Reader ministry has been streamlined in recent years. The process is quite thorough although not necessarily lengthy, so it is perfectly possible for someone to begin the discernment process now and then commence training this coming September, subject to recommendation from Bishop Matthew. The training at Emmanuel college is a real transformative experience and there is a lot of study support available - both from within Emmanuel College and from myself - which means that the course is



accessible to all people, regardless of their age or academic background. There is also a specialist Reader Emeritus training pathway tailored for those who wish to train as Readers who are aged 70 or above, and courses can be tailored generally to meet individual needs. The training is 2 years with the licensing happening at the end of the first year of study, and candidates are asked to take part in the ALM course in Worship and Liturgy prior to beginning at Emmanuel.

Modern day Readers specialise not just in preaching and leading services, but in many other forms of ministry and are a valuable asset to congregations. We have Readers who specialise in funeral ministry, pastoral care or in outward-facing evangelistic and missional projects, building bridges with the wider community, on top of preaching and leading worship. There are as many expressions of Reader ministry as there are Readers, and we would wish to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to consider this calling.

Those interested can contact Neil on: NeilWhitaker@manchester.anglican.org

An Appeal From Kirklees Valley Wildlife Rescue

Some info on the organisation:

Originally founded in the 1970s as the Greenmount Wild Bird Hospital, the wildlife rescue provided care for injured wild birds awaiting release. In 2019, the hospital was forced to close, leaving the site abandoned. But, in 2020 a new group of trustees came together with the idea of re-opening as a new, professional wildlife rehabilitation centre. Volunteers dedicated countless hours to transforming the facility, undertaking extensive renovations, rebuilding damaged areas including all aviaries and creating an inspiring new wildlife centre. Their tireless efforts turned the centre into a safe, welcoming, and fully equipped environment for sick, injured and orphaned wildlife. From refurbishing enclosures and improving veterinary spaces to enhancing visitor and volunteer areas, every detail was carefully considered to support

Can you help us to help the wildlife in our care?

Whilst doing your weekly shop, would you consider picking up an extra item or two to help us provide care for injured and orphaned wildlife when they need it most?

If you'd prefer to shop online, we've included Amazon links too.

CLEANING & HYGIENE:

- Washing powder
- Bleach
- Kitchen roll
- Astonish surface cleaner
- Cif stainless steel cleaner
- Antibacterial hand soap
- Ecover washing-up liquid
- Fairy Washing up liquid
- Sponge scourers
- Microfibre cloths
- Bottle brush
- Bin bags
- Marigold gloves

ANIMAL CARE & FIRST AID:

- Non-woven swabs
- Micropore tape
- Cotton wool pads
- Cotton buds
- Surgical gloves
- Metal tweezers
- Milton sterilising fluid
- Puppy pads

FOOD:

- Applaws chicken cat biscuits (adult & kitten)
- Butchers wet dog food
- Swan pellets [Swan pellets](#)
- Live mealworms [Mealworms](#)

AMAZON ITEMS:

- Hibiscrub - 500ml: [Hibiscrub](#)
- Vet Wrap:- all sizes [vet wrap](#)
- Safe4 Disinfectant 5L [Safe 4 5L](#)
- Safe4 Hand Foam : [Safe 4 Hand Foam](#)
- Blue roll [Blue roll 6 pack](#)
- Virkon [Virkon](#)

STATIONERY & OFFICE SUPPLIES:

- Pens
- Printer paper
- Blu Tack
- Tipp-Ex

OTHER USEFUL ITEMS:

- Old towels
- Newspapers

Kirklees Valley
wildlife rescue

both wildlife care and education. Thanks to their hard work, the centre was finally ready to welcome its first intake of patients in September 2024. Find out more at www.kirkleesvalleywildlife.org

Ellise's
First Eucharist

Sunday 28th June | 11am
St James' Church, Woolfold



Our Diocese Mourns the Loss of Kath Pollard

At the beginning of last night's event, Bishop Matthew shared the very sad news that Kath Pollard, Deanery Lay Chair of Bury and Rossendale, passed away at the weekend. He paid tribute to her dedication to her parish, deanery and the diocese, and prayed for Kath's family and friends at this difficult time.

Kath was a devoted servant of Bury Parish Church, generously giving her time through a number of roles in church life. A dedicated member of Bury Parish Choir, Kath contributed significantly to its life and found great joy in being part of the group. She was particularly passionate about creation care, faithfully serving as an Eco Champion, and supporting the role of church officers and lay leaders in Bury and Rossendale Deanery.

Kath will be greatly missed by all who knew and worked with her. We give thanks for her life and service, and our thoughts and prayers are with her family, friends, and church community at this time.

Archdeacon Rachel Mann pays tribute to Kath, saying:

“One of the joys of moving up to Bury in 2021 was meeting and then getting to know Kath Pollard. During my time as Area Dean of Bury and Rossendale, her wisdom, local knowledge and unfailing love for the Deanery as Lay Chair was a profound blessing. More than that I was thrilled to see her increasingly spread her wings as she became a passionate advocate for the Deanery's and the Diocese's Eco-Church goals.

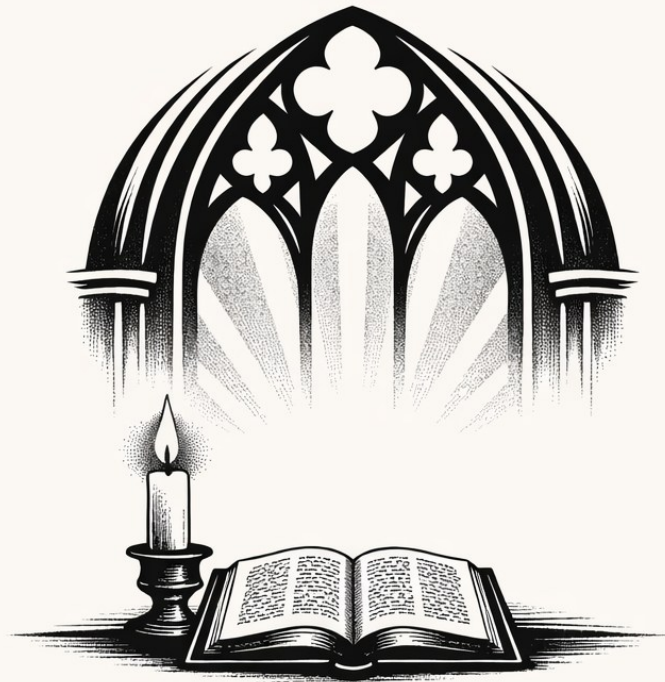
“We never lost touch once I moved role to be Archdeacon, and whenever we bumped into each other there was laughter and joy and a shared sense that God was up to exciting things in this diocese. Her passion for choral music and for the life of her local church, Bury Parish Church, was inspiring. This diocese has lost a great servant and I have lost a colleague who became a friend. May she rest in peace and rise in glory, and may God’s tender Spirit rest on her husband David, her children and grandchildren at this heart-breaking time.”

Evensong

A reminder that **St Stephen’s** holds a monthly service of **Choral Evensong**— a lovely way to wind down on Sunday evening with an ancient and distinctively Anglican form of worship: all welcome.

CHORAL EVENSONG

According to the Book of Common Prayer



Second Sunday of the Month

6pm

— O Lord, open thou our lips... —



Revd Georgina Stirling to Partner with St Thomas, Pimhole

The Revd Georgina Stirling, currently serving as curate at Nelson Street Church in Rochdale, will be moving to take up a new role at St Thomas, Pimhole, in Bury. Georgina will lead a planting team from Nelson Street as part of the renewal of mission and ministry at St Thomas, working closely and collaboratively with the congregation already worshipping there.

Led by the Revd Janie Cronin, Nelson Street opened in Rochdale town centre in the summer of 2021 as a Resource Church, with a specific calling to grow, develop, and send planting teams to support and revitalise other churches in our diocese. This collaboration with St Thomas marks an important next step in that vision.

Speaking about the move, Georgina said: "I am excited to become part of the church community at St Thomas' and to join in with what God is doing in the lives of those who worship, live and work in the local area. I'm really thankful for the opportunity to be part of the revitalisation of mission in Bury, and I can't wait to see people's lives transformed as they meet Jesus."

It is anticipated that Georgina will begin her ministry at St Thomas Pimhole in September, with a team joining her later in the year. Please join us in praying for Georgina, the congregation at St Thomas, and all who will be part of this season of growth and renewal.

FAITH, FRIENDS, FUN

St Stephen's Sunday School

All Welcome

Weekly during the main service

Speak to Leanne or the Vicar



0-5

Baby and Toddler Group

EVERY WEDNESDAY

9:30AM-11:30AM

ALL SAINTS CHURCH

HEBBURN DRIVE, BURY, BL8 1ED

ALL WELCOME

FREE TO ATTEND



BIBLE STUDY COURSE

THE GOSPEL OF

LUKE



ALL SAINTS CHURCH

WEDNESDAYS 1.30PM

JOIN US FOR A

COMMUNITY LITTER PICK!

AT ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

SATURDAY 23RD MAY

10AM

HELP US CLEAN UP
OUR COMMUNITY!

ALL AGES WELCOME!

GLOVES & BAGS PROVIDED



TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Poem of the Month

This month's poem is by Anglican priest, poet, Welsh nationalist and luddite R.S Thomas, pictured right. You can read more about Thomas here: [link](#)

Kneeling

*Moments of great calm,
Kneeling before an altar
Of wood in a stone church
In summer, waiting for the God
To speak; the air a staircase
For silence; the sun's light
Ringing me, as though I acted
A great rôle. And the audiences
Still; all that close throng
Of spirits waiting, as I,
For the message.*

Prompt me, God;

*But not yet. When I speak,
Though it be you who speak
Through me, something is lost.
The meaning is in the waiting.*



**25th Anniversary of
Ordination as a Priest**



Anne Edwards 25th Anniversary Eucharist

Those at All Saints no doubt remember with affection former Curate Revd. Canon Anne Edwards, who is approaching the 25th anniversary of her ordination to the Priesthood. To celebrate she will be presiding at a special Eucharist. The guest preacher will be Bishop Mark. All are welcome to attend, but please do RSVP for catering purposes.

You are invited to a Eucharist to celebrate the
25th Anniversary of Ordination as a Priest of
Rev Canon Anne Joan Edwards

Tuesday 30th June 2026 6:30pm

All Saints Church, Hebburn Drive,

Brandlesholme Bury BL8 1ED

Followed by refreshments

RSVP anne@sajm.net or 07891574690

A reflection on the Book of Ruth Chapter 3

Seeking Rest and Security

I suggest you read all of Ruth chapter 3, Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing-Floor

Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, 'My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing-floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing-floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do.' She said to her, 'All that you tell me I will do.' (Ruth 3:3-5)

Note The Hebrew word for security and rest are closely linked. Also the Hebrew word manowach is used to describe a home as a place of rest and security.

We would be forgiven about having read Ruth chapter 3 and thinking, 'hello! what's going on here? Did I actually read that? Well, yes you did read it. There is debate about what precisely was going on. I recall Rabbi Lionel Blue on 'Thought for the Day' in his usual self-effacing style saying 'when you get two Rabbi's in a room arguing a point you will get three opinions'. So, let's put the debate on one side and not get bogged down too much.

So, with this in mind and that the story of Ruth is one of facing adversity and working, or perhaps it should be walking, through it. Naomi's and Ruth's journey was to seek a new normal where they could find rest and security in a new home. In this chapter we read of Naomi's unselfish concern for Ruth's future. A future where she will be secure and become part of a new family. We should remember that in the culture of the day the parents had a key role to play in securing a husband for their daughter; Naomi carried out this role for Ruth.

What happened that evening seems to have been an evening of revelry at the end of a hard day's work bringing in the harvest. Boaz ends up sleeping with his workers.

Naomi explained to Ruth what she needed to do, she knew Boaz and was aware of the practice of kinsman-redeemer. The kinsman-redeemer had a defined role in Israel's family life, that included a responsibility to carry on the family name by marrying a childless widow if necessary. This was not a reckless course of action, certainly strange to say the least by today's standards but not reckless. Naomi did not put Ruth in harms way. Naomi and Ruth had a loving and trusting relationship. Boaz had acted in a gracious way to Ruth.

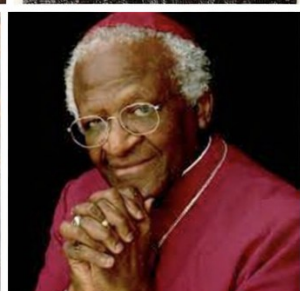
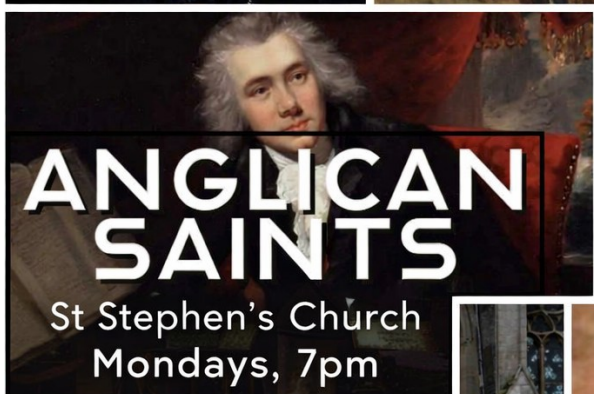
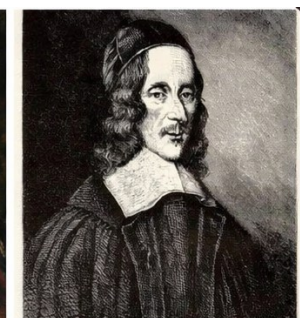
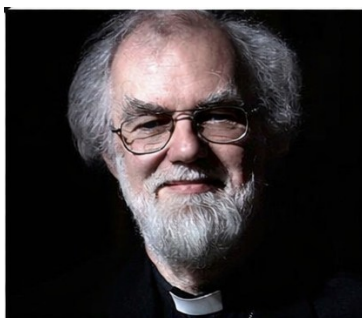


There was some negotiating required by Boaz with a closer relation to Naomi's family, that had to be done before Boaz and Ruth could marry. Naomi is managing the situation well, things are going in the right direction, perhaps she is getting to the end of this journey. This chapter is hovering on the verge of a happy ending, and more about the ending later. The early days of COVID in 2020 were hard times, we were all affected by it. It was a dark journey with uncertainties and perhaps there are still uncertainties ahead BUT all journeys have an end. One of my favourite songs from Rodger and Hammerstein's 1945 musical *Carousel* is 'You'll never walk alone'. The song is sung to Julie Jordan whose husband Billy Bigelow, dies after a failed attempted robbery. Let's pause for a moment, let the familiar tune of You'll Never Walk Alone resound in your mind and quietly sing it to yourself



When you walk through a storm hold your head up high
 And don't be afraid of the dark.
 At the end of a storm is a golden sky
 And the sweet silver song of a lark.
 Walk on through the wind,
 Walk on through the rain,
 Tho' your dreams be tossed and
 blown.
 Walk on, walk on with hope in your
 heart
 And you'll Never Walk Alone,
 You'll Never Walk Alone.

As I pressed the 'paste' option to insert the words of 'You'll never walk alone' into this piece. I was listening to Classicfm and Alexander Armstrong's Album of the Week Andrea Bocelli's *Believe* and what should he begin to sing but 'You'll never walk along'. A coincidence or as a Franciscan Frier I knew, Brother Angelo would have said it is a 'God incidence.' I'll leave that with you, a coincidence or a God incidence? Below are the words of the Stuart Townend's song 'In Christ alone my hope is found'. If you use YouTube, you can find a link to the song below. An alert the advertisements that appear in YouTube are random.



In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.



Prayerful thoughts to close this reflection.

May today there be peace within.
May you trust your highest power
that you are exactly where you are meant to be.
May you not forget the infinite possibilities that
are born of faith.
May you use those gifts that you have received,
and pass on the love that has been given to you.
May you be content knowing you are a child of
God.
Let this presence settle into your bones,
and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance.
It is there for each and every one of you.
Amen. [Teresa of Ávila](#)

Fr Derek
∞ ∞ ∞

 YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnXv2gAfPpE>

Come and Sing

with the Diocese of Manchester Choral Scholars

directed by Harry Mobbs

Music programme:
Haydn 'The Heavens are Telling'
Rutter 'A Gaelic Blessing'
Rutter 'For the Beauty of the Earth'
Greene 'Thou Visitest the Earth'
Demore 'Blessed Be'

St Ann's Church, Manchester City Centre

Saturday 9th May 2026: arrival 10:30am
Informal performance 1:00pm

Please contact Caroline Hewitt if you would like to sing:
Email: revd.caroline.hewitt@gmail.com
Fee: £12

Proceeds will go towards the Manchester Whit Walk fundraiser



The Art of Discipleship ✨

Join Bishop Matthew Porter for a series of four discipleship seminars exploring:

Giving • Journalling • Fasting • Reading



Giving | Thursday 30th April | 7:30–9:00pm

Oldham Parish Church

Book: tinyurl.com/29fp93uu



Journalling | Monday 18th May | 7:30–9:00pm

Church of the Resurrection, Beswick

Book: tinyurl.com/4wjuez95



Fasting | Wednesday 24th June | 7:30–9:00pm

St John's Pendlebury

Book: tinyurl.com/yc3arvax



Reading | Thursday 16th July | 7:30–9:00pm

St Peter's Halliwell

Book: tinyurl.com/3ph5ap7v

Doors open at 7:00pm. All are welcome!

John 13:34 'Love one another, as I have loved you'



St Stephen's
CE Primary School

School Places Available

To enquire about a place, or book a personal tour, please call 0161 764 1132
or email ststephens@thesycamoretrust.co.uk

Our school vision is about **celebrating the uniqueness of every individual, inspiring a life long love of learning and experiencing life in all its fullness.**



Sycamore Trust
Grow together. Learn forever



"St. Stephen's welcomes, nurtures and supports all children enabling them to flourish."

SIAMS Inspection, November 2023

To find out more about our school, please visit www.ststephensceprimary.co.uk or visit our social media page.



Equip 2026

EQUIP Weekend '26 is a three-day training and formation gathering for all those involved in children's, youth, and families ministry. Designed especially for ALM/GLP participants, the programme offers worship, shared reflection, practical input, and opportunities for conversation and learning. Across the weekend, participants will explore the world of the child, develop confidence in best practice, and reflect on how faith develops and takes shape across different ages.

The programme includes worship, themed teaching sessions, short talks on play, wonder, and identity, and a range of practical workshops exploring creative communication, mixed-age engagement, and building stronger connections with parents and clergy.

There will be opportunities to look at what we currently offer in our ministry settings, consider how to strengthen faith at home, and take part in a guided session on planning for children's and youth work. Sunday includes time to explore relationships and resources, followed by a practical prayer session offering ideas suitable for early years, children, and young people.

The weekend concludes with worship, commissioning, and an outline of next steps for ongoing development.

Refreshments are provided throughout the weekend, with lunch included on Saturday.

Tickets available:

- Full Weekend
- Friday & Saturday
- Saturday

Tickets available here: [link](#)



**SEE.
BUILD.
GROW.**

EQUIP Weekend
St Johns House // 8-10th MAY 2026



Parish Information

Pastoral Teams

Visiting those who are infirm and providing home communion. If you would like to receive home communion, or join the team please contact the Vicar or:

All Saints

Mark Cresswell

Lynne Williamson

St James

Ann Redding

St Stephens

Rev. Ellise O'Hara

Study Group



Regular Events/Groups

Mon: Community Café Brandlesholme Community Ctr. 11am-1pm, **Ladies Club** 2nd Mon of Month 2.00pm St Francis House

Wed: St Stephen's (Centenary Room) **Midweekers** 1.30pm weekly, **Mothers' Union** 1st Weds of the Month 7.00pm, **Games evening** 7.30 pm 2nd Weds of the month, **Prayer meeting** 7pm 4th Weds of the month.

Thurs: Prayer Group 4th Thurs of month All Saints Church 10am **Arts and Crafts** Group weekly 2pm St Francis House

Children's Activities and Uniformed Organisations

St Stephen's Junior Church: every Sunday **Toddler Group:** Wednesdays 9.30 All Saints

Beavers: Mon 5.45 **Cubs/Scouts:** Mon 6:45 St Stephen's School **Rainbows:** Wednesdays 5.45pm St Stephen's School

Thursdays 4.30 St James' Centre **Brownies:** Wednesdays 6.45pm St Stephen's School

Drama Group: Thursdays 7pm at St Stephen's Church

May Rota

03.05.26		Pres	Preach	Deacon	Colour	White	
	AS	11 S. Eccleston			Readings	Acts 7:55-end John 14:1-14	
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara			
	SJ	11 E. O'Hara	E. O'Hara				
10.05.26	AS	11 Joint with SJ			Colour	White	
	SS	9 S. Ec- 6 J. Walk	E. O'Hara S. Eccleston		Readings	Acts 17:22-31 John 14:15-21	
	SJ	11 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Evensong		
14.05.26	SJ	7 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Colour	Gold/White	Ascension Day
					Readings	Acts 1:1-11 Luke 24:44-end	
17.05.26	AS	11 J. Partridge			Colour	White	
	SS	9 S. Ec-	E. O'Hara	E. O'Hara	Readings	Acts 1:6-14	
	SJ	11 S. Ec-	F. Nuttall	E. O'Hara			
24.05.26	AS	11 E. O'Hara			Colour	Red	Pentecost
	SS	9 S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara	Readings	Acts 2:1-21 John 20:19-23	
	SJ	11 S. Ec-	E. O'Hara		Baptism		
31.05.26	AS	11 S. Eccleston			Colour	Gold or	Trinity
	SS	9 S. Eccleston			Readings	Isaiah 40:12-17, 27-end Matt 28:16-end	
	SJ	11 E. O'Hara	S. Stonestreet				

June Rota

07.06.26		Pres	Preach	Deacon	Colour	Green
	AS	11S. Eccleston			Readings	Genesis 12:1-9 Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26
	SS	9S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara		
	SJ	11E. O'Hara	E. O'Hara			
14.06.25	AS	11D. Akker			Colour	Green
					Readings	Genesis 18:1-15, 21-17
	SS	S. Ec- 9cleston	E. O'Hara			Matthew 9:35-10:8
		S. Ec- 6cleston	S. Eccleston		Evensong	
	SJ	11S. Eccleston		E. O'Hara		Baptism
21.06.26	AS	11J. Partridge			Colour	Green
					Readings	Genesis 21:8-21
	SS	S. Ec- 9cleston	E. O'Hara	E. O'Hara		Matt 10:24-39
	SJ	S. Ec- 11cleston	F. Nuttall	E. O'Hara		
28.06.26	AS	11Joint Service SJ			Colour	Green
					Readings	Genesis 22:1-14 Matt 10:40-end
	SS	9S. Eccleston				
	SJ	11E. O'Hara		First Eucharist		

Contact Details

Vicar: Fr. S. Eccleston O.P. brseclestonop@gmail.com 07851121800

All Saints' Contacts:

Warden: Sue Stonestreet 07763 147598

Art and Craft Group: Joyce Abraham 0161 764 2247

Bible Study: The Vicar

Pastoral Visiting: Mark Cresswell 07521087791 Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

Choir: Stuart McArthur 07821 287018

Prayer Group: Joyce Abraham 0161 764 2247 Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

St Francis' Ladies Club: Lynne Williamson 07722 624847

Room Hire at All Saints/St Francis: allsaints.kirkleesvalley@gmail.com 07368 460378

Website: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16034/

www.allsaintsandstjames.com

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

St James' Contacts:

Mothers' Union Ann Redding 0781 112 9355

Room hire at St James' Centre Ann Redding 0781 112 9355

Website: www.achurchnearyou.com/church/16046/

www.allsaintsandstjames.com

St Stephen's Contacts:

Warden: Carol Heyes 07354902873

Email: ststephenelton@gmail.com

News sheet/rotas: Tony Parsons tony.parsons67@gmail.com

Room Hire: Keith Hughes hughes_k4@sky.com

Website www.ststephenelton.com

<https://www.facebook.com/people/St-Stephens-Church-Elton/61575109828589/>