

“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Psalm 90 v 12

A New Year as Gift, Calling, and Letting Go

As one year closes and another begins, we pause to give thanks to God for all that has been entrusted to us. The past year has brought moments of joy, learning, and community, as well as seasons of challenge, loss, and quiet struggle. In all of it, God’s faithfulness has remained our anchor. Scripture reminds us, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Gratitude does not deny the difficulties we have faced; rather, it acknowledges that God has sustained us through them. As we look back, we do so with thankful hearts - aware that every breath, relationship, opportunity, and lesson has been a gift of grace.



At St Mary’s, our gratitude is reflected in the vibrant life of our community. Over the past year, we have celebrated the laughter of children at our Toddler group, the warmth of fellowship in our Knit & Natter gatherings, and the joy of friendly competition at our table tennis sessions. Our house Bible study groups and Thursday evening gatherings have nurtured spiritual growth, while walking groups have allowed us to share God’s creation and build relationships beyond our church walls. Each of these activities, though varied in form, embodies our mission: to invite, welcome, and sustain all who seek community, connection, and God’s love.

As we reflect on the past year, there is also an invitation to let go. Letting go does not mean forgetting or dismissing moments of difficulty, disappointment, or hurt; rather, it is a faithful practice of releasing what holds us back from fully embracing God's new beginnings. It is about entrusting to God the fears, regrets, and burdens we carry, so that they do not dictate the year ahead. Paul captures this movement beautifully: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Letting go is not erasing the past but re-situating it in God's redeeming future, allowing God's grace to shape our present and our next steps.

To let go is also to allow ourselves to be fully present for what lies ahead. It is the courage to release memories shaped by guilt, resentment, or unresolved hurt, and to imagine - sometimes for the first time - the possibility of forgiving ourselves, forgiving others, and entrusting even the most painful chapters of our lives to God's mercy. Letting go invites freedom: freedom to love more openly, to participate more fully in community life, and to embrace the gifts and opportunities God places before us each day. It is a gentle, ongoing practice that brings both peace and hope.

The turning of the year also invites honest reflection. It asks us not only what we have received from God, but how we have responded. Have we been faithful with what was entrusted to us - our time, our relationships, our gifts, and our responsibilities? Have we been trustworthy stewards of God's love in our families, workplaces, neighbourhoods, and within our church community? The Bible gently calls us to this self-examination: "It is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy" (1 Corinthians 4:2). This is not a call to guilt, but an invitation to renewal - to realign our lives with God's purposes and to grow in faithfulness, integrity, and love.

As we step into the New Year, we do so with hope. In Christ, every new beginning is more than a change of date; it is a reminder of God's renewing power. The year ahead is not yet written, but it rests in God's hands. We look forward to it with hope for life in its fullness, the dignity of every human person, and a shared world where compassion, justice, and peace may flourish.

The approaching Chinese New Year 2026 - welcoming the Year of the Fire Horse, beginning February 17, 2026, and ending February 5, 2027 - reminds us of energy, passion, transformation, and ambition. In this season, we are invited to embrace renewal with courage, to let go of what constrains us, and to step boldly into the work God has for us, both individually and as a community.

At St Mary's, our hope is expressed through intentional action: continuing to invite neighbours and newcomers, creating spaces where everyone feels genuinely welcomed, and nurturing sustainable practices in all we do. Whether through the gentle conversations at Knit & Natter, the shared prayers of house Bible study groups, the energetic games of table tennis, or the care shown in walking groups and Toddler sessions, we embody God's love in tangible ways. Letting go allows us to embrace these gifts more fully, unburdened by past regrets or fears, and to celebrate the joy of community as it unfolds in new ways. Letting go also frees us to live with courage and purpose, trusting that God is still at work shaping our story.

As we enter this New Year, we can echo the timeless words of the hymn *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*:

*"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home."*

May 2026 find us walking humbly with God, loving generously, and living with courage. Let us continue to embrace the gifts entrusted to us, celebrate the joy of community, release what no longer serves us, and serve as faithful stewards of God's grace. Please remember that you are a gift of God to your family, your church, your community and to this world. With hearts open to God's calling, may we lead lives of welcome, nurture, and sustainability - trusting that the One who has brought us this far will guide us forward with wisdom, courage, and peace.

January Services and Events

Thursday 1	11.00	New Year's Day Walk
Saturday 3	09.00	Men's Breakfast at Horton Golf Park
Sunday 4	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion
Monday 5	19.30	<i>Knit & Natter</i> Group in the Leverton Room
Wednesday 7	10.30	<i>Knit & Natter</i> Group in the Leverton Room
Thursday 8	14.30	Afternoon Club in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 11	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Sung Communion with Baptism Celebration
Saturday 17	10.00	Women's Group in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 18	09.30	Sung Communion and Children's Groups
Wednesday 21	20.00	PCC meeting in the Cuddington Hall
Saturday 24	1-5pm	PCC Awayday at Headley
Sunday 25	09.30	Sung Communion

Morning Prayer is said in church every weekday morning at 9am

Everyone is very welcome

***A HAPPY NEW YEAR
to one & all***