

August 2026 Edition 126

"I will be with you always, to the end of the age" Matthew 28: 20

You Are Not Alone: Finding Hope in Times of Loneliness

Loneliness is one of the greatest challenges facing our society today. It can affect anyone, regardless of age or circumstance. Some experience loneliness after the death of a loved one. Others find themselves feeling isolated through illness, retirement, growing older, changes in family life, or simply because they have no one with whom they can talk openly. It is possible to be surrounded by people and still feel completely alone. Loneliness is not simply about being by yourself; it is the feeling that no one truly understands, notices, or listens to you.

The Christian faith reminds us that we were created for relationship – with God and with one another. Jesus spent much of his ministry listening to people, welcoming those who felt excluded, and offering hope to those who were burdened by life. The Bible assures us, "**God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble**" (Psalm 46:1). Even in our loneliest moments, God is with us. Yet very often, God reaches out to us through the kindness, compassion, and presence of other people.

Sometimes what we need most is not someone to solve our problems but someone who will simply listen. Being heard without judgement can bring comfort, reduce anxiety, and help us find a way forward. Sharing our worries, fears, disappointments, or even our joys, with another person reminds us that we do not have to carry life's burdens alone.



At **St Mary's Church, Cuddington**, we believe that listening is an important part of Christian care. Every **Sunday after our 9.30am service**, we have **trained individual listeners** who are available to meet with anyone who would like someone to talk to. Whether you are facing

bereavement, illness, family concerns, loneliness, anxiety, questions about faith, or simply need someone to listen, our listeners are there for you. They will listen with care and compassion, pray with you if you wish, and everything you share will be treated with the utmost **confidence and respect**.

You do not need to be a regular member of the church, and you do not need to have a particular problem before speaking with someone. Sometimes people simply appreciate having a quiet conversation after the service or someone to pray with them. There is no pressure and no judgement—only a warm welcome and a listening ear.

In today's busy world, many people have plenty of online connections but very few opportunities for genuine conversation. At St Mary's, we want to be a place where people feel safe, valued, and heard. We believe that listening is an expression of God's love and that every person deserves to know they are not alone.

If you have been carrying a burden, feeling isolated, or simply need someone to talk to, we warmly invite you to join us on a Sunday. Stay after the service, speak to one of our listeners, and allow us the privilege of listening, praying, and supporting you. Sometimes the first step towards hope begins with a conversation. At **St Mary's Church**, there is always someone ready to listen, someone willing to pray, and a community that cares. You are never alone, and you will always be welcome.

Prayer Requests at St Mary's

We pray regularly for people who are sick and those who have died. Each Sunday the intercessors generally name anyone on the list on the lectern at the back of church, and every morning, at Morning Prayer, we pray through all the names in the green book in the side chapel.

Feel free to add names to either list as feels appropriate to you.

These lists will tend to grow and so we would appreciate it if you could take names off again once the need has passed.

Half-Yearly Church Finances

I don't know about you but the older I get the faster time seems to go by! We have just past the halfway mark in the year and I thought I should update you on how we are doing financially as a church.

Just as a reminder, we have a number of funds at St Mary's and they are grouped as General Fund, Designated Funds, Restricted Funds and Endowment Funds. The Endowment Funds comprise investments held to provide income for their attached Restricted Fund. Restricted Funds can only be used to pay for things for which the fund was established. For instance, the Leverton Endowment Fund feeds the Leverton Restricted Fund, and this money can only be used to maintain the Leverton Room, the purpose for which it was set up.

Designated Funds are established by the PCC to put money aside for specific purposes, such as the church heating project. Should the funds not be needed for the designated purpose the PCC can release them back to the General Fund.

The General Fund is the main fund of the church where day to day income and expenditure is recorded and through which the "business" of the church is carried out.

The table below shows the monthly income and expenditure for the first six months of 2026 for the General Fund.

	January	February	March	April	May	June	Total
Income	9,305	8,463	8,642	10,715	8,889	11,315	57,329
Expenditure	14,686	10,153	11,169	12,110	12,451	11,222	71,791
Surplus	-5,381	-1,690	-2,527	-1,395	-3,562	93	-14,462
Budget	-2,971	-4,794	-2,195	-3,688	-418	-2,602	-16,668

You will see that we expected and therefor budgeted for a deficit in 2026. The full year budgeted deficit is £11,744 and the current deficit is expected to reduce to the budgeted level by year end as a result of higher expected receipts from such things as a gift day and increases in planned giving in the second half of the year.

73% of our income came from regular giving and associated gift aid in the six months. 18% was from the hire of the two halls and 5% from fundraising activities.

Of our expenditure, 70% is for Parish Share. This covers a number of costs including the salary, pension and housing costs of providing a vicar, training costs for clergy, services provided by the Diocese and a contribution to the central Church. 11% of expenditure is the cost of running and maintaining the halls, 8% for running and maintaining the church building and grounds, and 4% for running the parish office.

The reason, in the short term, that we can continue running a deficit is that we have accumulated reserves over previous years. These have mainly come about through the receipt of legacies, future receipt of which are not predictable nor guaranteed. **We must therefore work towards at least a break-even position as soon as possible.**

If you would like to continue to keep up to date with our financial position, each month the latest accounts, together with the minutes of the latest PCC meeting, can be found in a green folder at the back of the church beside the choir vestry.

August Services and Events

Sunday 2	08.00	Holy Communion (Common Prayer)
	09.30	Sung Communion
Monday 3	19.30	Knit & Natter Group in the Leverton Room
Wednesday 5	10.30	Knit & Natter Group in the Leverton Room
Sunday 9	08.00	Holy Communion (Common Prayer)
	09.30	Sung Communion
Sunday 16	09.30	Sung Communion
Thursday 20	14.30	Afternoon Club in the Cuddington Hall
Sunday 23	09.30	Sung Communion
Sunday 30	09.30	Sung Communion
Weds 2 Sept	10.30	Knit & Natter Group in the Leverton Room
Friday 4 Sept	10.00	Toddlers' Term Begins
Saturday 5 Sept	09.00	Men's Breakfast at Horton Golf Park
Sunday 6 Sept	08.00	Holy Communion (Common Prayer)
	09.30	Sung Communion

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