**THE UPDATE #278 (17 August 2025) for the Forest of Galtres Benefice*.***

**Ninth Sunday after Trinity 2025**

 *Welcome to this week’s update. There is a video reflection from the Archdeacon of Cleveland. There is a written reflection from me. We continue to pray for the Holy Land as well as Ukraine, prayers below. The monthly What’s On for August which is attached as a separate PDF page.*

**From me:** This week I wish to flag up some events that are happening in the life of your Benefice. Firstly, there is the pop-up café in Farlington. Secondly, the Quiet Day at Marton, this is a day to allow ourselves to be in God’s presence – a day to ‘be’ and hopefully blessed and nourished having spent quality time with God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Thirdly, there is the **Churches Together Service for Creationtide**, this is an opportunity for us all to gather as ***one church family*** and I encourage you to invite your friends and neighbours and particularly those who perhaps worship elsewhere in other denominations – all are welcome! (*All details for these events are below*.)

Blessings
Steve.

**Saturday 30th August - from 10am-2.30pm
'A Celtic Quiet Day: Resting in God'.**

This is a free day focusing on rest and connection with God using reflections and resources from the Celtic Christian tradition. Please bring your own picnic lunch: drinks will be provided, and we do have a loo! Come for the whole day (refreshments from 9.30am) or any part of the day. Booking is not essential but would be very helpful - please email martonintheforest@gmail.com so we can confirm arrangements and the structure of the day.

**The Churches Together Creationtide Service Sunday 31st August,
St Mary’s, Marton at 4pm – All are welcome!**

**The Ven Dr Amanda Bloor,** **Archdeacon of Cleveland, reflects on Luke 12.49-56 for the Ninth Sunday after Trinity.
Ctrl & click here** à[**https://vimeo.com/1109076657**](https://vimeo.com/1109076657)

***Coming to church this week* 10.00am Holy Communion at Stillington**

**17 August 10.00am Morning Worship at Sutton**

 **6.00pm Celtic Worship at Marton**

***Coming to church next week* 10.00am Morning Worship at Stillington**

**24 August 10.00am Morning Worship at Sheriff**

**Bartholomew 10.30pm BCP Holy Communion at Farlington**

**Dates for your diary:**August Bank Holiday Weekend 23rd-25th – pop-up café at Farlington.
Benefice Quiet Day at Marton Saturday 30th August.
Sunday 31st August, Churches Together Creationtide Service at Marton 4pm

**Reflection on Luke 12.49-56 for the 9th Sunday after Trinity 2025**

This week’s Gospel reading is not one of the ‘easy’ ones. Jesus says: *“I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!”* He speaks of division rather than peace, of households split against themselves. It’s not the gentle, comforting image of Jesus many of us hold. It’s challenging, and, if we’re honest, a little disturbing.

But that challenge is the point. Jesus is not here offering vague encouragement or soft assurances; he is naming a reality that his followers must face. The life he calls us to is not neutral, and the kingdom of God is not a polite addition to our routines. It is a burning, transforming reality that cannot leave things as they are.

The “fire” Jesus speaks of is not random destruction but the purifying, refining fire of God’s presence. In Scripture, fire is often a symbol of God’s holiness – think of Moses and the burning bush, or the tongues of flame at Pentecost. Fire transforms; it burns away what is false and leaves what is true. Jesus longs for this transformation to take hold in the world, even though he knows it will be costly.

The mention of “division” is equally sobering. Jesus is not encouraging conflict for its own sake, but warning that his message will inevitably create division because it forces a choice. If we take his teaching seriously – about forgiveness, justice, generosity, truth – it will sometimes put us at odds with the values and priorities of the world, and even with those closest to us. Faithfulness to Christ may lead to tension, misunderstanding, or even rejection.

And yet, there is encouragement here. First, the urgency in Jesus’ voice reminds us that our faith matters deeply. It is not an afterthought. It is the fire at the centre of life. Second, Jesus’ honesty about the cost of discipleship means that when we do face opposition or struggle because of our faith, we are not caught off guard; we are walking a path he walked before us. Finally, the refining fire is not just something God does to the world, it is something God does *in us*. The Spirit works in our hearts, burning away selfishness, fear, and bitterness, and kindling love, courage, and hope.

This is a hard reading because it refuses to let us settle for a shallow, comfortable version of the Gospel. But that’s exactly why we need it. If we feel unsettled, we’re in good company, the disciples were unsettled too. The question for us is: will we let the discomfort draw us closer to Jesus, trusting that his fire is for our good?

So let’s read these words with open hearts. Let’s not shrink back from the refining work God is doing. And let’s remember: the One who brings the fire is also the One who loves us without measure and walks with us through every flame. Amen.

Revd. Steve

***A Prayer for the Holy Land:***

**O God of all justice and peace
we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma
of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land.
Be with those who need you in these days of suffering;
we pray for people of all faiths – Jews, Muslims and Christians and for all people of the land.
While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace,
we also call for you to bring justice and equity to the peoples.
Guide us into your kingdom
where all people are treated with dignity and honour as your children
for, to all of us, you are our Heavenly Father.
In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.**

***A Prayer for Ukraine:***

**God of all peoples and nations,**

**Who created all things alive and breathing,**

**United and whole,**

**Show us the way of peace that is your overwhelming presence.**

**We hold before you the peoples of Ukraine and Russia,**

**Every child and every adult.**

**We long for the time**

**When weapons of war are beaten into ploughshares**

**When nations no longer lift up sword against nation.**

**We cry out to you for peace;**

**Protect those who only desire and deserve to live in security and safety**

**Comfort those who fear for their lives and the lives of their loved ones**

**Be with those who are bereaved.**

**Change the hearts of those set on violence and aggression**

**And fill leaders with the wisdom that leads to peace.**

**Kindle again in us a love of our neighbour,**

**And a passion for justice to prevail**

**and a renewed recognition that we all play a part in peace.**

**Creator of all hear our prayer**

**And bring us peace. Make us whole. Amen.**