

Parish News

St Mary's Church, Woodkirk

January/February 2026



**As the clock strikes midnight
and we welcome 2026, may
your heart be filled with hope
and your spirit with optimism.**

**Worship Online at:
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Welcome!

Enjoy reading this Parish magazine and, if you wish to know more about Church Groups, please get in touch with the Movers and Shakers - their names are on the inside front & inside back covers. Service times are on the back page. You'd be most welcome to join us. May God bless you and all whom you love.

Parish News by Post

This magazine can be delivered monthly by sending a minimum donation of £18 a year to cover magazine costs including post and packaging to: Margaret Longden, 64 Woodkirk Gardens, Dewsbury WF12 7JA. Call Margaret on 01924 473064. It's a brilliant gift for friends or family living near or far. Cheque's to Woodkirk PCC please.

Web site & Twitter

Further news and pictures of what is happening at St Mary's can be found on our web site located at: www.stmarywoodkirk.org

Copies of the magazine can be downloaded from the web site from the middle of the month of publication.

We are on Twitter: twitter.com/stmarywoodkirk

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Vicar's Letter

As we turn the page of the calendar and step into January 2026, I find myself wanting to begin not with a grand pronouncement, but with a simple word: thank you. Thank you for being here, for being part of this church, and for carrying one another through another year of ordinary days and extraordinary moments. January has a quieter feel about it. The decorations are packed away, the diary looks suddenly bare, and the nights still draw in early. It is a month that invites us to breathe, to take stock, and to listen again for God's gentle voice.

The Church calendar reminds us that this season is Epiphany – a time of revealing. We remember the Magi, travelling far from home, guided by a star they barely understood, trusting that it would lead them somewhere meaningful. I've always loved that part of the story. They don't have all the answers; they simply take the next step. In many ways, that feels like a good image for us as a church at the start of a new year. We don't know everything that 2026 will hold, but we do know that God goes ahead of us, inviting us to keep moving, keep noticing, and keep trusting.

January is also the month of resolutions, though I suspect many of us approach them with a healthy dose of scepticism these days. Gym memberships are bought with enthusiasm and used with varying degrees of commitment. Diets begin with noble intentions and end with the discovery of leftover chocolates. Perhaps instead of grand resolutions, this year we might think in terms of gentle intentions – small, prayerful choices that shape our days. What would it look like to intend to be a little kinder, a little more patient, a little more open to God's presence in the everyday?

One of the great gifts of church life is that we don't walk this path alone. When I look back over the past year, what stands out most clearly is not programmes or projects, but people. It is the quiet faithfulness of those who make the tea, unlock the doors, pray through the week, sing when they're not sure they can, and sit

alongside others in times of grief and joy. Church is not something we attend; it is something we are, together. And in a world that can sometimes feel fragmented and hurried, that sense of belonging is more precious than ever.

I'm often asked what my hopes are for our church in the year ahead. My answer is usually quite simple: that we continue to be a place where people can be honest. Honest about their doubts as well as their faith, their weariness as well as their hope. The Church of England, at its best, has always been a broad and generous home, a place where questions are welcomed and no one is expected to have it all worked out. If you come to church feeling strong, there is space for you. If you come feeling unsure or tired, there is space for you too.

January can be a difficult month for many people. The excitement of Christmas has faded, the weather can feel relentless, and worries that were pushed aside in December often return with a vengeance. If this is a hard time for you, please know that you are not alone, and that this church is here for you. Sometimes faith is not about feeling uplifted, but about showing up and letting others hold hope on our behalf. That, too, is holy work.

As we look ahead, there are plenty of opportunities to deepen our life together. Some will be familiar – Sunday worship, midweek gatherings, times of prayer and fellowship. Others may be new, or may take time to grow. I encourage you to be curious. Try something you haven't tried before. Come along to a service or group that feels slightly outside your comfort zone. You may discover a new way of encountering God, or simply meet someone whose story enriches your own.

One of my particular prayers for this year is that we continue to be attentive to our local community. The church building stands at the

heart of the parish, but the church itself is scattered throughout the week – in homes, workplaces, schools, and shops. Each of us carries something of God’s love into those spaces, often without realising it. A kind word, a listening ear, an act of generosity: these are small epiphanies, moments when God’s light breaks into ordinary life.

I am also mindful that the wider world feels uncertain in many ways. News headlines can be overwhelming, and it is easy to feel powerless in the face of global challenges. The Christian story does not ask us to ignore these realities, but it does invite us to see them through the lens of hope. Not a naive optimism, but a deep trust that God is at work even when the path ahead is unclear. Prayer, action, and compassion are never wasted, even when their impact feels small.

So as we begin this new year together, my invitation is a gentle one. Stay. Stay curious about God. Stay connected to one another. Stay open to being surprised. The star that guided the Magi did not shine forever in the same way; it moved, and they moved with it. May we, too, be willing to follow where God leads us in 2026, step by step, trusting that the journey itself is part of the gift.

Thank you for being the church, in all your imperfect, faithful, wonderful humanity. It is a joy and a privilege to walk this road with you. May this January be a time of quiet renewal, and may the year ahead be filled with glimpses of God’s light, often in the most unexpected places.

Wishing you a peaceful and Christ filled New Year.

Blessings

Sharon

Wonderful worship created by our local Schools

December is a busy but lovely time of year when we get to appreciate the meaning of Christmas and the Christmas story as told through the eyes and teachers at our three local primary academy schools Westerton, Blackgates and Hilltop.

It always begins with Blackgates whose Key Stage 2 children came to church and performed in front of a very full church of parents, carers, aunties, uncles, grandmas and grandads, brothers and sisters etc..

This is now the third of fourth year they have been coming into church and you can really see the confidence difference in the children as they each speak their lines and sing their songs. There is always that special moment when the lights go out and we sing Away in a Manger together.

Old hands Westerton who have had a Concert since before I became Vicar did a stirring job of entertaining their loved ones. There were strings and brass and clarinets and violins, with solos and duets etc. Over the last several years this Service has changed and I think for the better as now the children take responsibility for all the readings and story telling.

Finally, on the last day of term Year 3 at Hilltop lead their Christmas Service, which the whole school attend. The children enjoy walking to church and walking home. It is something very different from their usual routine. The children of Year 3 certainly did themselves proud in their creation of the manger scene and in their speaking and singing.

None of this could happen without the dedication of the teachers at all the schools or indeed the parents who supported those events. Thank you for your kind donations, some for the East Window, and some for the Children's Society. Can't wait until next year!!

Christmas Eve Christingle Services

What a wonderful team gathered together on 23rd December to help make the Christingles for our Christmas Eve services.

Well, once again I was delighted with the volunteers who came along on the 23rd December to help make the 300 Christingles we needed for our two services on Christmas Eve.

We had some experienced makers as well as some new ones too. We started around 2pm and were finished by around 3.30pm which was great. We went through 2 huge 3kg bags of haribo as well as opening an additional tub, and towards the end, we were grateful for Reverend Sharon hotfooting it to ASDA as we had run out of dried fruit! But in the end, 255 Christingles were made.

My very grateful thanks to all my amazing helpers and to those who were able to 'marshal the troops' as sadly I'd lost my voice and was trying my best (however ineffectually) to not talk!



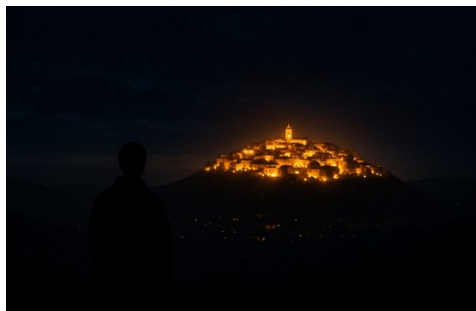
Christmas Eve Services

Then on the following day we had our wonderful Christmas Eve services at 3pm and 5pm.

We welcomed many familiar faces and lots of families, children young and not so young, all gathered together armed with their Christingles. Both services were well attended, and we gave out over 200 Christingles. The magic of the Christmas story settled over everyone as we slowly told the story and built our wonderful crib scene. A really lovely time together on this most Holy night.

A picture of our lovely Christingle Services on Christmas Eve when the lights were switched off to sing Silent Night.





Shining Where It's Darkest

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.” — **Matthew 5:14**

I think these words, spoken by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount, are not just descriptive—they are declarative. If you are in Christ, *you are* the light of the world. Not *you might be*, or *try to be*, but *you are*. As believers, we reflect the light of Christ in a world covered by moral and spiritual darkness.

I hope you agree with me that the world desperately needs light—truth, grace, and righteousness. And God, in His sovereign plan, has chosen to shine through His people. Just as cities in ancient Israel were built on elevated land for visibility and defence, so the life of the believer is to be visible, public, and radiant.

This verse reminds us that genuine faith cannot remain hidden. A life transformed by Christ will stand out. It will shine with integrity, love, courage, and truth in the workplace, the home, the church, and the community.

I hope you are shining the light of Christ in the spaces where you live and serve? Or are you tempted to dim your witness out of fear or compromise? Let our life be a testimony of God’s transforming power. The world doesn’t need more shadows—it needs your light.

Pray

Lord, let our lives shine brightly with the truth and love of Jesus.

Help us live boldly and publicly for You, unashamed of the gospel.

Use our light to draw others to salvation and glorify Your name.

Amen

Gail

WOODKIRK WALKERS

With limited daylight hours and gloomy wet days, not to mention busy personal and Church schedules, it was agreed the most sensible thing to do was give ourselves a rest during December so no walk was arranged.

However, plans are already in hand (or should that be afoot? 🐾) for boots to once again be on the ground in 2026. So here are a couple of dates for your diaries.

Saturday 31st January: Dawn will be leading a walk in the Middleton area of South Leeds.

Saturday 28th February: Rosie will be leading a walk that includes RSPB St.Aidans, near Swillington, Leeds.

Details about meeting points, routes, terrain, and walk length etc will be included in the regular weekly Church Notice/Pew sheets at least a couple of weeks in advance of the actual walk dates, so keep an eye on them for more information if you'd like to join us.

Rosie



Hi everyone

Whilst I have written separately about my brilliant Christingle making team and the wonderful services on Christmas Eve, I hadn't been able to provide a total amount raised so far from all your fundraising efforts.

I am now delighted to tell you that thanks to generous donations from Brownies and Rainbows, Church Members and friends, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, local masonic lodge and collections taken at school concerts as well as the collections at the Christingle Services you have raised an amazing;

£807.64

There may be a bit more to add to this fabulous total as I think some Beavers, Cubs and Scouts may still have their candle collection boxes, but I wanted to let you know how brilliant this amount is. This will be sent to the Children's Society where it will help with their vital work amongst young people.

The work they do includes;

Fighting for hope by deeply understanding the needs of young people and by supporting them through their most serious life challenges, working with those who have suffered years of abuse, who have run away from home or are struggling with mental health issues. Looking out for young carers and those who are at risk of being groomed by criminal groups.

The young people often have complicated lives. Their experiences are always different, but young people all have one thing in common, hope. Hope for a happier home life. Hope of getting a job, of getting away from the people who exploit or hurt them. The Children's Society find their hope and start there, working with them little by little, giving them whatever they need and empowering them to make decisions for the future they want.

They work with young people for as long as it takes and across all different aspects of their life but even when hope is hanging by a thread the Children's Society help them find it again.

The money you have all so kindly donated will help the Children's Society with this vital work, so thank you again for your generosity.

Dawn



Shepherds

As I sit here at the start of that strange 'no man's land' they now call 'twixtmas' the period between Christmas Day and New Year's Day I reflect that this Christmas I seem to have been thinking about the shepherds a lot.

I wrote about them in relation to an advent quiet day I had attended, talking about their journey, both physical and metaphorically speaking and sharing some images which I had found quite mesmerising.

Then at the Christmas Day Holy Communion, Rev Sharon again spoke of the Shepherds and it reminded me of a thought I'd had; WHAT IF...?

What if the shepherds had not gone to see what the angels told them about?

And even if they did;

What if they had then returned to their flocks and said nothing more about it?

The thing is, shepherds were on the edge of society. Their working life was out of doors, leading their sheep every day to pasture, thinking about going to somewhere the sheep could get a drink. A thing I learned was that sheep don't like running water like streams etc as the noise can spook them. Palestine was a desert country, the shepherd may have to lead them quite a distance, then after eating and drinking (a bit like us really!) the sheep need to rest, also it's the hottest part of the day, so the shepherd has to find shelter/shade where his sheep feel safe enough to lie down and rest, before the shepherd returns them to the fold, be that a barn, an enclosure of stones or a cave for the night. Shepherds might gather together with their flocks so they could share the night watch and get a bit of sleep whilst someone else stayed awake.

Thus it was, on that first Christmas Eve, when the shepherds on the hillside received the angel's message. There was no big parade, no police outriders, no trumpet fanfare

The shepherds were probably fairly smelly, not well educated, they weren't religious or political, nor wealthy or influential, yet these were the people God chose to be the first witnesses of the birth of Jesus.

It also tells us something about the kind of God we worship, he doesn't begin with the powerful or impressive, but with ordinary people on an ordinary night, in an ordinary place, but the shepherds experience is anything but ordinary. There they were probably gathered around a small fire sharing their sheep tales from the day, perhaps any worries about the health of their sheep or news about wolves or the weather.

Suddenly a bright light, an angel with a message, his light would be bright enough in that dark environment, but then he was joined by a 'multitude' of angels. Such bright light, no wonder the shepherds were terrified.

BUT...

The shepherds don't run away.

They listen to the message, the glorious song of the angels, and when the angels leave and the hillside is once again returned to gloom, the shepherds immediately set off to see this event that the angels have told them about. It would have been easier to wait until the morning, but no, they 'went quickly'. They weren't content just to hear about the saviour being born, they were compelled to see God's promise of redemption in the birth of Jesus, for themselves. This wasn't a passive curiosity, but a joy filled pursuit, they wanted to experience God's presence personally, to be filled with the hope and joy of Jesus.

So then what...?

Just return to the hillside and watch over their flocks? NO! something compels these shepherds to not keep the experience they had shared to themselves, but to share it.

These shepherds became the first evangelists, sharing the news of the visit of the angels and the fact that they had gone straight to Bethlehem and seen the Christ child. I thought about this as Rev Sharon spoke a bit more about the shepherds.

Thinking about the life of the shepherds, yes they did spend time alone but also, they travelled, they would meet fellow travellers, they would meet people at oases, they would share news and gossip. Suddenly they had the most important news to share. The shepherds heard the gospel, came to Christ, they saw, they believed and then proclaimed that good news to 'all the people' – not the rich or the powerful or the influential, they relayed that message to ordinary folks wherever they went.

The shepherds exemplify what faithfulness to God can bring: presence, promises, and purpose.

For them, it wasn't about fame or fortune, something they could use for their own benefit. They didn't sell the story to become wealthy; they just responded to the good news. They went to visit the Messiah, experienced the comfort of His presence, and believed the promise that one day He would save the world. Then, they embraced a new purpose that took this good news to others, that they might also share in the experience.

This progression reflects really, the journey of faith for all of us. We hear the Gospel for the first time and respond with humility and obedience, saying "yes" to God. As we follow Him, we experience the transformative presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, growing in the assurance of His power to save. That assurance then compels us

to share what we've experienced, just as the shepherds "spread the word concerning what had been told them" (Luke 2:17).

Hearing the Gospel leads to a response of faith, and that faith leads to sharing. We don't need titles, platforms, or recognition to take part in this mission, and we shouldn't doubt God's ability to use people like us. All it requires is a heart transformed by the Gospel and a willingness to proclaim this truth to a world in need.

Be like the shepherds – no not smelly and living outdoors in all weathers! But filled with joy share your stories of the love of God in the birth of the Christ child.

Jesus is for life, not just for Christmas.

Love Dawn





The Three Wise Men

It's beginning to feel like Christmas around here! The Church is full of Christmas activities, and homes are starting to be decorated with Tinsel and lights.

Children waking up Christmas morning and running to the tree, shaking gifts, holding flashlights up to gifts from the other side like your own personal x-ray machine, 'accidentally' tearing a gift open and then re-taping it before the grown ups wake up.

GIFTS made it magical! It seems superficial but it's ok, we were kids! Christmas is all about gifts from a Biblical perspective, not Xboxes and iPads but the whole idea of getting something special that you did nothing to earn is written all over Christmas!

God even gave His Son, Jesus gifts at Christmas. Have you ever thought of that? It took a little while for Him to get them there but when they arrived, Mary and Joseph knew these gifts were special! We three Kings of Orient are, bearing gifts we travel afar! Great but there is little to NO evidence in the Bible that these guys were kings, we should stick with 'Wise Men' like the KJV indicates. Let's talk about their story, I bet there's a lot we might not know, the fact that our God and GIFTS go hand in hand!

First of all they carried 3 precious GIFTS, fit for a KING. You know, when you bring a KING a gift, you know it's going to be the BEST gift you can offer!

Matthew is the only biblical author that mentions this situation.

MATTHEW 2:1-12

In this story there is a lot going on! You've got prophecies, angelic beings leading people, an attempt to KILL the Son of God, God directly helping someone avoid death by tipping them off!.....I mean, the story of the wise men just may be a bigger deal than we ever thought!

Let's break it down!

WHO WERE THEY?

We, in the west have come to know them as Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. Yes they actually have names! I know, this is so exciting! Give me a robe and a fireplace and we're in business!

Long story really short there as I said before there isn't any evidence they were actually kings but more likely they were astrologer, men who studied the stars.

It's highly likely that they came from The Babylonian Empire as they would have had plenty of access to Daniels teachings from the old testament , so they certainly would have known all of the prophecies about this Savior. Daniel foretold all of that. They would have been waiting, watching around this time for signs and wonders of His coming!

Well, they got it didn't they! a special "Star" they could follow! Not just any star, no this was obviously different to them, and they knew it when they saw it! This is what makes us think that they were astronomers, they knew the night sky well. This star was something special.

While we'll never know for sure how God chose to guide these men towards his precious Son...it's interesting how V2 in Matthew 2 the wise men say "we saw HIS STAR when it arose"...there are times, especially when speaking of angels that the word star is used, Job 38:7 and Rev 12:4&7... was it an angel that led the way! God certainly wanted to make this special!

Either way they end up in Jerusalem, after all, that's where you would go to find a King, right? Except Jesus wasn't there! These wise men must have been something special because Herod happily met with them. The problem is that Herod also didn't like these "King Makers" telling him they're here to see the King...and it's NOT Herod. Herod figures out these men are headed to this King's birthplace, Bethlehem and tells them they are to find Jesus and report back to Herod, so he can "come worship Him too".

Obviously, Herod's desire was to kill Jesus and stop all this talk of another King. He was so intent on it that God had to intervene and tell the wise men in a dream to go a different route home to survive! So, with the Star once again guiding them, they head out to find this King, to present him with GIFTS. Off the wise men go on their journey to Bethlehem. Now it's not to proper "Nativity Code" but they were late to the birth of Jesus. It is said up to 2 years late, whatever, it didn't matter. What matters is how puzzled they must have been. The Bible says they ended up at A HOUSE. Not a palace. Just a house, probably a row house along an alley, nothing special at all. Not on the outside but on the inside was something that would right every wrong humanity had ever committed.

And the wise men knew exactly WHO was on the other side of that door as they knocked. Scripture tells us they had EXCEEDING JOY in their hearts! Imagine what they felt when that door opened and there before them was God in human form! A child, A King, A Redeemer, A Lion and a Lamb. They fell down and worshipped this child. An act of reverence and submission.

I'm sure Mary and Joseph were astonished to see such high-ranking men worshiping their son, I bet they were crying and full of exceeding joy too.

They understood how important this moment was!

The wise men knelt down before The King...and gave Him 3 gifts...who's meaning go deeper than we could imagine.

GOLD – To represent purity and Kingship

FRANKINCENSE – To represent Jesus as the most high priest

And of course, MYRRH (the gift that bore the heaviest and hardest meaning to stomach, for Mary and Joseph) What did Myrrh represent? BITTERNESS AND PAIN...DEATH.

The tree that Myrrh comes from is nasty and ugly too, look at that thing. It looks like it's dying! To extract the Myrrh is brutal. They literally have to harshly wound the trees over and over by slashing them.

Myrrh. What did it mean when presented to baby Jesus? It signified His death, also a brutal one beaten and slashed. His life would end in pain, and this gift of Myrrh was understood. This wasn't the last time Jesus would be given Myrrh. 33 yrs later as He lay on the cross, dying for you and me...Jesus was once again offered wine mixed with Myrrh to help ease His pain. Perhaps Jesus gained strength in that moment, just knowing God had a perfect plan from the day He was born. Perhaps the room got sombre as that gift was given? Perhaps the gravity of Christmas hit them in that reverent moment. There sure was a lot of meaning behind that gift.

It feels good to give a gift doesn't it? When you work hard to plan it and pick it out just right...I don't know about you but as I get older, the wonder of Christmas isn't found in what I get, it's found in what I can give.

And so it is with our Heavenly Father. He loves to give to us. He gave His Son to save this world. That's more than we deserve. Imagine the smile on His face when we give back to Him!

Maybe the way to recapture the wonder of Christmas...is to capture its true meaning.

Give Jesus a gift that lasts. After all Myrrh has been found in Egyptian tombs and after 4,000 years it's just as strong smelling as it was the day it was locked up!

What gift will YOU bring before the King this Christmas? Only you can answer that. Just think about it over the Christmas tide. We all have a unique gift to give Him! He created you with certain Gifts, talents and blessings! What can we give back to the King? Not only at Christmas but though our time on this earth' Think about it.

Amen

Gail

From poultry (sorry Paltry) to Plenty

On the first Wednesday of December, our gospel reading was from Matthew 15: 29-37 which is the story of Jesus healing many people then blessing seven loaves and a few fish to feed thousands of men, women and children.

This is a separate story, although very similar to the feeding of the five thousand which is found in the previous chapter.

But the thing is, as familiar as the feeding of the five thousand story is to me, when I listened to this story it made me think about it in a different way...

Sharon spoke about how Jesus had been teaching and healing people for 3 days, feeding them spiritually but then says to his disciples, "... have compassion on these people..." they had had nothing to eat for three days! I begin to look for food after 3 hours!

But Jesus takes the seven loaves and small fish, gives thanks and breaks them, giving the food to the disciples to give to the people. All were fed and seven basketfuls were left over.

Jesus received a small amount and yet after giving thanks to God these meagre offerings became plenty.

Think about our 'loaves and fish' what do we bring to God? Do we fully bring our time, our talents, our commitment or, because of many different and surely perfectly reasonable reasons, do we only give a little?

Whilst God wants us to give ourselves truly to Him, he doesn't stint no matter how little we can share with him, he blesses us and provides everything we need with basketfuls left over.

God's great goodness supplies so much more than we need from the little of ourselves we give Him, but the important thing to remember is that we need to give God what we can, however large or small an offering that is.

We may not be able to give him as much as perhaps we used to because of the advancement of age, or perhaps family or work responsibilities, but whatever we can bring to the Lord we should do so, because in sharing our time, our talents our prayers, with God's blessing we will receive plenty and be able to share God's goodness with others.

Dawn x



Pastoral Care

Telephone Calls—We understand times are difficult—please know we are here if you need anything. Gail Townsend is our Pastoral Minister and she regularly telephones those who are unable to leave their homes at this time. If you would like Gail to give you a weekly call then please do not hesitate to contact her on 07792 975814.

Baptisms—If you wish to make an enquiry or book a Baptism please contact Barbara Tate on 07792 211095 in the first instance. Barbara will then arrange to visit you and book your Baptism into our Diary.

Funerals & Ashes - in the first instance please contact our Verger who co-ordinates these events.

Our Co-ordinator is Gail Townsend on 07792 975814 or email: gail@stmarywoodkirk.org.

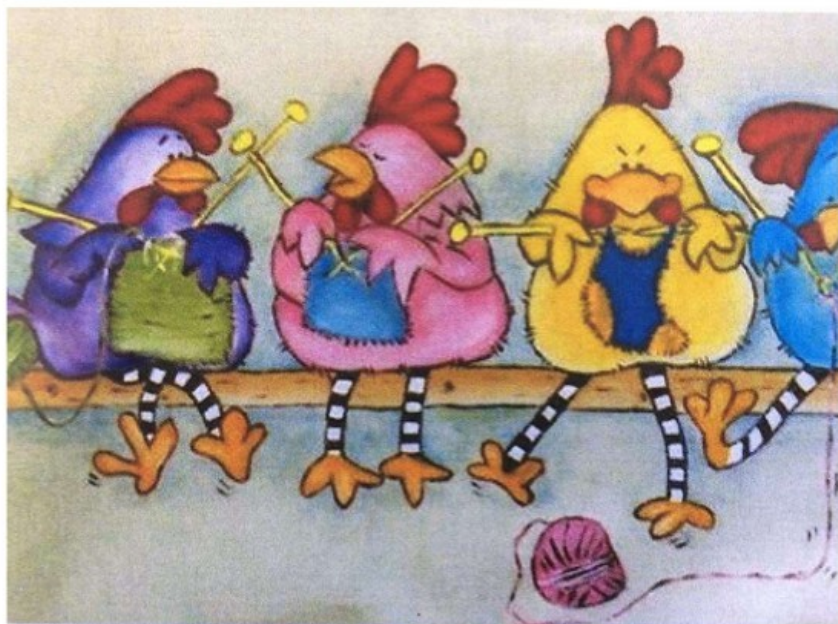
Weddings and Banns

In the first instance please contact our Vicar or Church Warden Gary Mortimer on 07740 760556 who co-ordinates these events.

Notice Sheets—If you would like to receive a copy of our weekly Notice Sheet via email—then please drop me an email giving me permission to add you to the list. My email address is vicar@stmarywoodkirk.org

Please note we are GDPR compliant and take great care of your private information.

St, Mary's, Woodkirk



Come along and join us for a

"Knit & Natter"

(or just a natter!)

Wednesday 1.00pm-3.00pm

St. Mary's Parish Centre

Contact: Dawn Tattersfield 07840739239

Big RSPB Garden Birdwatch **23rd -25th January 2026**

Hello everyone. We come again to one of our important environmental tasks. Each year we join in with the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch.



Our results have varied, some years we have seen lots of different birds, I think my best effort was the time I saw a woodpecker, I've not been lucky enough to see him again since sadly, but the weather plays an important part – not only in my and other volunteers willingness to sit out in the churchyard in it, to times when if it is windy, the birds stay at home.

These kind of surveys are important as part of our environmental journey as they are a benchmark to see how any environmental actions we have taken hopefully encourage more birds into the churchyard.

I'm wondering if anyone would be able to spare an hour during daylight hours from Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th January to come to the churchyard and undertake an hour of watching to see what feathered visitors we have.

If you can then please either speak to me in Church or you can contact me on 07840 739239 or email me at dawn@stmarywoodkirk.org.

Once again, you don't have to worry about your knowledge of garden birds as I can provide a lovely coloured guide to help you. If you are able to join in, it would be really helpful.

Many thanks
Dawn



BURNS NIGHT QUIZ

**With 2 Course
Meal**

Saturday 24th January

At 6.pm

**Woodkirk Parish
Centre**

Adults: £10.00

Kids Under 12: £6.00

Tickets From Brian Gledhill

Or Tel: 07980 373158





Heaven in a Manger

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.” — Luke 2:6-7

I think there is something profoundly humbling about these two verses. The eternal Son of God did not arrive in a palace, but in a place fit for livestock. The King of kings was not wrapped in royal garments, but in swaddling clothes. His first cradle was a feeding trough. And yet, this was the appointed way of heaven.

When we read Luke’s account it is not merely historical; it is theological. The humility of Christ’s birth reveals the heart of God. He did not come to impress the world, but to redeem it. He chose poverty over privilege, obscurity over honour, and hardship over comfort—all so He could fully identify with us in our humanity.

The manger was not a mistake. It was a message. It proclaimed that God is not afraid to meet us in the lowliest places. He draws near to the broken, the forgotten, the ordinary. In Christ, God stepped into our world in the most vulnerable way imaginable, so we would never doubt His willingness to be with us.

Let Christ’s humility shape our perspective today. Do not measure God’s love by our circumstances. Even in the “manger moments” of life, His presence is real. Serve humbly, live gratefully, and

remember: God is near.

Pray

Thank God for the humility of Christ's birth and His nearness to the lowly.

Ask the Lord to give us a heart that values service over status.

Pray for eyes to see His presence in the simple and overlooked places of our life.

Amen

Gail

Recipes for January and February

I've tried to gather recipes that are fairly easy, potentially use up leftovers or are reasonably healthy just in case you a) can't be bothered, b) want to try not to waste food or c) are trying to eat a bit healthier!!

Cauliflower Cheese

1 large cauliflower

1 large knob of butter

150ml cream or milk (or a mix of the two)

(You can use non-dairy milk too)

100g grated hard cheese

75g breadcrumbs

Salt and pepper

Cut the cauliflower into small florets. Place in a pan and cover with lightly salted water. Bring to the boil and simmer for about 5 minutes or until al dente. Drain well, toss with the butter, cream and plenty of salt and pepper. (Or warm up leftover cauliflower)

Combine the cheese and breadcrumbs and scatter generously over the top. Preheat the grill to medium high. Place the cauliflower



florets into a shallow ovenproof dish in which they fit in one layer. Place under the grill until golden brown and toasted. Serve straight away as an accompaniment. Remember to freeze any portions you don't eat this time to save them from going in the bin.

Here's the ultimate leftover recipe...

Minestrone soup

1 medium onion, finely chopped

(Use up what you have. Spring onions, leeks or shallots work well too.)

1 medium leek, trimmed, washed & finely chopped

2 stalks celery, trimmed & finely chopped

2 medium carrots, chopped - No need to peel, just give them a wash!

400g chopped tomatoes *(Add any fresh tomatoes that need using up)*

1 clove garlic, finely chopped

30g frozen peas *(Frozen or tinned varieties work perfectly in this recipe)*

30g dried pasta, small shapes

750ml water with **1** stock cube

3 tbsp vegetable oil

1 tsp of dried oregano *(or substitute any other dried or fresh herbs you have already - dried mixed herbs works just as well)*

1 tbsp tomato puree

Grated Parmesan or other hard cheese to serve

Measure 750ml of boiling water into the measuring jug. Crumble in the stock cube and stir with a wooden spoon until dissolved.

Heat the oil in the saucepan over a medium heat, then add the chopped onion, leek, celery and carrots, stirring well, and cook for 5 minutes to allow the vegetables to soften but not to brown. Stir in the chopped tomatoes and the garlic. Pour in the vegetable stock, then add the herbs and mix in the tomato paste and bring to the boil. Add the frozen peas, then pasta, and simmer (small bubble) for 10-15 minutes. While the soup is cooking, using the fine side of the grater, grate your Parmesan to use as a garnish. Test the soup to ensure that the pasta is cooked and add more stock if it's too thick. Ladle into soup bowls and sprinkle grated cheese over the top.



Healthy fish & chips with tartare sauce

450g potatoes - peeled and cut into chips
1 tbsp olive oil - plus a little extra for brushing
2 white fish fillets about 140g/5oz each
grated zest and juice 1 lemon
small handful of parsley leaves, chopped
1 tbsp capers chopped
2 heaped tbsp 0% Greek yogurt
Lemon wedge, to serve



Heat oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. Toss chips in oil. Spread over a baking sheet in an even layer, bake for 40 mins until browned and crisp. Put the fish in a shallow dish, brush lightly with oil, salt and pepper. Sprinkle with half the lemon juice, bake for 12-15 mins. After 10 mins sprinkle over a little parsley and lemon zest to finish cooking. Meanwhile, mix the capers, yogurt, remaining parsley and lemon juice together, set aside and season if you wish. To serve, divide the chips between plates, lift the fish onto the plates and serve with a spoonful of yogurt mix.

One-pot lentil chicken

11 tsp vegetable oil
2 rashers lean dry-cure back bacon - trimmed and chopped
2 large bone-in chicken thighs - skin removed
1 medium onion - thinly sliced
1 garlic clove - thinly sliced
2 tsp plain flour
2 tsp tomato purée
150ml dry white wine
200ml chicken stock
50g green lentils
½ tsp dried thyme
85g chestnut mushroom - halved if large.



Heat the oil in a non-stick wide, shallow pan, add bacon and fry briskly until lightly coloured, then lift on to a plate.

Add the chicken and fry on each side until lightly brown. Set aside with the bacon. Tip onion and garlic into the pan and cook for 5 minutes. Stir in the flour and tomato purée, then stir over a low heat for 2-3 minutes. Add the wine, stock, lentils and thyme. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in the mushrooms. Add the bacon and chicken, pushing them under the liquid. Cover and simmer for 20-25 minutes, or until lentils are tender and the chicken cooked. Season with salt and pepper.

Healthy gnocchi

Ingredients

1 tsp olive oil
1 red onion finely chopped
2 garlic cloves finely chopped
1 tbsp tomato purée
400g can white beans (we used butter beans)
400g can chopped tomatoes
100g frozen spinach
400g pack fresh gnocchi
2 tbsp reduced-fat crème fraîche
25g parmesan finely grated
small handful of fresh parsley to serve

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium-low heat and cook the onion for 8-10 mins until soft but not coloured. Stir in the garlic and cook for 1 min until fragrant.

Add the tomato purée and the beans, along with their liquid, then pour in the tomatoes. Bring to a simmer, season well, then stir in the spinach. Stir and cook for 2-3 mins until the spinach has loosened.

Add the gnocchi, cover and cook for another 2-3 mins, then uncover and stir in the crème fraîche. Simmer for another 5 mins, adding a splash of boiling water if needed, until the gnocchi is cooked through. Serve in bowls sprinkled with the parmesan, fresh parsley and a little black pepper to finish.



Easy Cheesecake

Ingredients

4 shortbread biscuits

300g tub soft cheese

zest and juice of 1 lime

3 tbsp icing sugar

½ a 380g pack of frozen mixed berries - plus a few extra to serve

Put the shortbread biscuits into a plastic bag and bash with a rolling pin until broken. Divide between two dessert glasses. Beat together the soft cheese with the zest of a lime and 2 tbsp icing sugar until smooth. Put this on top of each biscuit base and smooth out with the back of a spoon. Take the mixed frozen berries, defrost and blend half with 1 tbsp icing sugar and the juice of the lime. Pour this on top of each cheesecake and scatter with a few extra whole berries. Serve or put in the fridge for a few hours before serving.



Sticky sultana pudding

Ingredients

100g butter - plus extra for the basin

200g plain flour

1 tsp baking powder

85g light muscovado sugar

100g sultana

2 large eggs - lightly beaten

2 tbsp milk

golden syrup - and custard, to serve

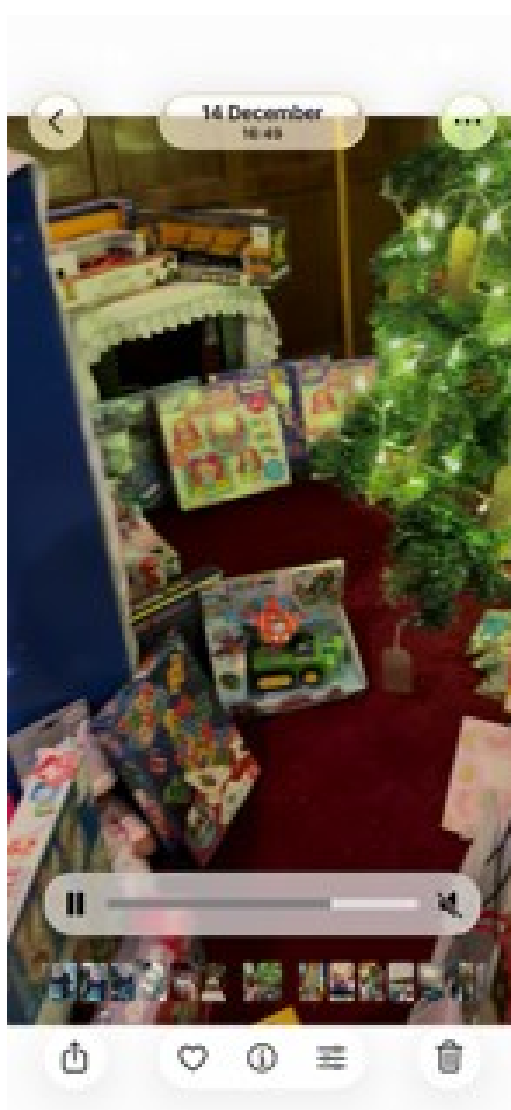
Butter a small microwave-proof pudding basin. In a separate bowl, rub the butter into the flour and baking powder, then stir in the sugar and sultanas. Gradually add the eggs and milk to make a wet cake mixture. Spoon into the basin and make a deep hollow in the centre with the back of the spoon. Cover the basin with cling film, pierce with the tip of a knife and microwave on High for 4½-5 mins until well risen and firm to the touch. Carefully turn the pud out onto a plate and spoon over a generous amount of syrup. Slice and serve with custard. Enjoy Dawn.



Toy Collections

In Church we appeal for new toys to be bought and we set aside two Sundays to collect the toys and place them around the altar. The final collection day this year was 14th December. In that Service,





the toys were blessed, as were the homes and families the toys went too. On 15th December these toys were delivered to the Leeds South & East foodbank where they will have been given out to local families before Christmas. Thank you to all those who were so generous in their giving and donations.

Alberts December Quiz.

1. How many Reindeer pull Santa's sleigh – not including Rudolph?
2. What is the name adopted by the new Pope?
3. What is the name of the architect whose 1831 painting of the inside of the church hangs on the church wall just beyond the middle arch?
4. Who did Doris Mary Ann Kappelhoff become?
5. In the film 'A Wonderful Life' what happens every time a bell rings?
6. Who was Bambi's best friend?
7. The poem 'If' (If you can keep your head, whilst those about you are losing theirs...etc) was written by which poet?
8. The youngest Bronte sister is?
9. What is author Michael Bond's most famous works?
10. York Minster is named after which Saint?
11. One end of an electrical battery (AA etc) is 'pointed' and the other end is flat. Which is the negative end and which the positive?
12. What is the middle colour of a rainbow?
13. When is the next leap year?
14. Which passenger ship sank on New Years Eve in 1972 when hit by a giant wave?
15. Which team did the England Women's team beat to win the 2025 Euro final?
16. Which number comes between 19 and 17 on a dartboard?
17. Which is furthest away from St. Marys Church – Madrid, Rome or Berlin?
18. What colour is Peter Rabbit's jacket?
19. Pop singer Adele's albums are all numerically titled. Which number did she give her first album?
20. What year was the first iPad released?

Answers on Page 42

Church of England Prayer for the New Year

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
whose years never fail
and whose mercies are new each returning day:
let the radiance of your Spirit renew our lives,
warming our hearts and giving light to our minds;
that we may pass the coming year
in joyful obedience and firm faith;
through him who is the beginning and the end,
your Son, Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

A Common Christian New Year Prayer

"Gracious Father,
thank you for the gift of this new year,
a fresh start filled with hope and new possibilities.
As we set our intentions,
we place our trust in your goodness and faithfulness.
Guide us in the year ahead,
shaping our hearts and aligning our steps with your purposes.
Stir us to be your hands and feet,
bringing light to a world in need.
Fill us with hope, strength,
and a closer walk with you,
that we may live for your glory.
Amen."

How do I join an on-line Service?

If you are not so familiar with the on-line world but you would like to join one of the services, here's some good news! It's easy!

Go to: facebook.com/stmarywoodkirk

Then select 'Videos' from the side bar.

To join a 'Live' service look for the right time on the Diary page. You can also view previous services from the same location.



Quiz Answers:

1. Eight. 2. Leo XIV 3. Robert Chantrell. 4. Doris Day
5. An Angel gets their wings. 6. Thumper. 7. Rudyard Kipling. 8. Ann.
9. Paddington Bear. 10. St. Peter 11. The pointed end is positive.
12. Green. (ROYGBIV). 13. 2028. 14. SS Poseidon. 15. Spain.
16. 3. 17. Rome. 18. Blue. 19. 19. 20. 2010.

FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS

BAPTISMS—

(none this month)



DEATHS



We give thanks for the lives of all those who have recently died within our Parish:

Jackie Hellawell
Sheila Firth
Brenda Roberts
Eileen Postill

WEDDINGS:

(none this month)

Wedding Blessing:

(none this month)





Lydgate Lodge is a welcoming and beautiful home offering residential and dementia care for older people.

It's a place where kindness defines care - where every action is guided by a genuine desire to support your well-being, offering not just assistance, but thoughtful compassion to help you live better every day.

Please get in touch to find out more about life at Lydgate Lodge and how we can help you to live your best life.



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All Inclusive



Nutritious Food



Person-Centred Care



Daily Activities



Couples Welcome

To find out more about Lydgate Lodge and to speak to our friendly team, contact us on:

01924 355 020

A Soothill Lane, Batley, West Yorkshire, WF17 6EZ

E lydgate.lodge@hc-one.co.uk **W** hc-one.co.uk



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Get in touch to discuss your needs and to book an appointment.

To Contact Shirley Tel : 07805 804 015

Parish Centre Rentals

We have space for Groups who may be interested in using the Parish Centre at various times of the week.

Nominal Cost is £75 for 3 hours.

Regular long term bookings negotiable.

Contact: Sally Shaw

01924 475048 for more information.

**Loving.
Living.
Learning.**



 **THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND**
Diocese of Leeds

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CHRISTINE BENNETT
RACHEL STONES

RESIDENCE
3 HOLLY COURT
TINGLEY

What's on

(please contact the leaders for further information)

ABC Group Adults, Babies and Children
Wednesday 9.30-11.00am (Term time)
Thursday 9.30-11.00am (Term time)
Contact: Charlotte 07972 217528

Line Dancing 1.00-3.30pm Tuesday
Contact Helena 07719946917

Knit and Natter—come and enjoy help with crafts or just chat
Wednesday 1.00-3.00pm.
Dawn Tattersfield 07840739239

Pilates **Wednesday 7.00– 8.00pm**
Contact Erin Blake

Young at Heart 1st & 3rd Thursdays 2:00pm
Sally Shaw 07963610708

Rainbows Thursday 5.30 - 6.30pm
Ruth Osenton-Brown 07805186479

Brownies Thursday 6.30 - 7.45pm
Hannah Tombling 01924 501892

Beavers Friday 5:00pm to 6:15 pm
Joanne Rutledge 07950 580877

Cubs Friday 6:30pm to 7:45 pm
Marianne Ingham 07778 542302

Scouts Friday 8:00 pm to 9:30 pm
Trevor Holdsworth 0113 253 0927

Explorer Scouts Friday 7:45 pm to 9:30 pm
Chris Ingham 07816 517838

Diary and Services this Month.

Sunday Services.

Each Sunday there will be a Holy Communion Service at 10.30am in Church as well as Online.

Weekday Services

Wednesdays 10am Holy Communion
in Church & On-line.

Special Services and Events:

Sun 4th January—Epiphany Sunday 10.30am
Sun 11th January—Baptism of Christ 10.30am

Sat 24th January—Burns Night Quiz 6.00pm
(Ticket only please see Poster on page 31)

Sun 1st February—Presentation of Christ
In the Temple 10.30am

Tues 17th February—Shrove Tuesday—
Pancakes in the Parish Hall—4.00pm to 6.00pm

Weds 18th February—Ash Wednesday—10.00am

Please see Page 42 for details of how to join a streamed
service