



CROSSWAYS

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR ST PAUL'S AND WHITWORTH

God's bigger story of love

By Revd Lee Earl

I CANNOT believe I've been a curate for more than two years and am now stepping into my third year at St Paul's and Whitworth. It really has flown by - though I suspect that's a combination of being busier and getting older!

During that time I've been honoured to conduct many different kinds of services from funerals to baptisms, and recently, my first two weddings. And to be honest, it has been one of my greatest joys to help couples understand the power and beauty of marriage, and to stand with them as they step into this covenant of love publicly, in the presence of God, their family, and friends.

As I was preparing to lead my most recent wedding service, I was

struck again by the cosmic symbolism of marriage - how it connects so deeply with God's bigger story of love and faithfulness, which is something we've been exploring in our All Together services.

In a sense, marriage represents the bookends of God's bigger story of love. For at the beginning of scripture we read that God creates man and woman to be in relationship with Him and with one another, set within the sublime beauty of the world He made. When God brings Adam and Eve together, there isn't a wedding service in the way we think of one today - but it is still a marriage. God unites them, blesses them, and gives them the gift of mutual love, companionship, and shared purpose within the



Photograph courtesy of Unsplash

paradise of Eden. And every time we attend a wedding, we echo that first God ordained union of man and woman. It's a powerful thing!

But as the biblical story goes, human beings were tempted to turn their love inward - away from God and away from one another - and this left our world beautiful, but broken. We still feel the effects of that brokenness in countless painful ways today: through sorrow, injustice, and death. As scripture says, we -

along with all creation - groan and long for the world to be healed and made new once more.

Yet the wonder of the Christian story is that God did not leave His world in its brokenness. Like a bridegroom pursuing his beloved, God pursued His people with a love that refuses to let go. We see this throughout the Old Testament: God setting apart a people for His own possession, rescuing them from Egypt, leading them through the wilderness,

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PARISH

CHURCH

SERVICES

ST PAUL'S CHURCH

Sundays: 10.30am Holy Communion ('All Together' non-communion on first Sunday)
(live-streamed at www.facebook.com/stpaulsspennymoor)

Wednesdays: 9.30am Holy Communion

Fridays: 10am Play Church (term-time only)

WHITWORTH CHURCH

Sundays: 9am Holy Communion

CLERGY

VICAR

Revd Canon Matthew Tarling
01388 327603
vicar@stpaulsspennymoor.co.uk

CURATE

Revd Lee Earl
lee@stpaulsspennymoor.co.uk

CHURCHWARDENS

St Paul's Church

Christopher Luke : 07796 137901
Samuel Thumaty : 07388 591093

Whitworth Church

Kath Hall: 07762 354967

CROSSWAYS EDITOR

Christopher Luke
christopher@stpaulsspennymoor.co.uk

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Newsletter Secretary:
Pauline Storey 816153

St Paul's Centre Bookings : 813404

God's bigger story of love

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and - despite their rebellion - making a way for Jew and Gentile alike to be reconciled to His eternal love through Jesus the Messiah.

In Jesus Christ, God steps into the sorrow of the world as the One who bears its weight and begins its healing. On the cross we see the lengths God goes to redeem His creation; and in his resurrection we see that even death cannot overcome

His love. As the Song of Songs, centuries before, alludes to: "Many waters cannot quench love."

This is why marriage becomes such a powerful symbol. Every wedding - including the two I've had the joy of leading recently - is a small echo of God's greater story. It points back to the beauty of Eden, but it also points forward to the hope of the New Creation, when God and His people will

be united as bridegroom and bride, and all things are made new. The wedding to which all of creation is moving towards.

Standing with a couple as they make their vows is a reminder that love, commitment, and faithfulness are not just human ideals - they are reflections of God's own character revealed through His bigger story of love and faithfulness. Their promise to walk together through every season becomes a signpost of the greater prom-

ise God has made to us and to this world: that one day He will fully restore, renew, and redeem.

As I step into my third year of curacy, I'm grateful for moments like these that draw us back to the bigger story of God's love of which we are a part - the story of a love stronger than our sin, stronger than death, and which will one day restore all that is broken once and for all.

Amen

A tribute to Gill Clayton

By Revd Canon Matt Tarling

ON 12th August we said goodbye with sadness to Gill Clayton. Gill was a member of the church family at St Paul's for a long time since settling in Spennymoor. She was a well-loved teacher at Rosa Street school and she and Mike brought their children up in the town. The children - Victoria and Steven - joined the Sunday school here and Gill was quickly recruited to the choir by the late Joe Prest.

Gill sang in the choir following the lead of a succession of organists and musical directors. She was also a key part of the flower arranging team. Gill had a keen

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Gill (pictured far left) with members of the St Paul's flower arranging team at Easter 2026

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Marking 25 years as editor

By Christopher Luke

IT feels somewhat strange to be writing an article about myself, but as I mark 25 years as editor of Crossways, I thought I'd take the opportunity to reflect on the past quarter of a century.

It was in the summer of 2001 when our former vicar, the Revd Canon Stuart Bain asked would I temporarily take on producing the parish newsletter whilst he took a three-month sabbatical from parish ministry. At the time, I was studying for a journalism degree at the University of Sunderland, so it seemed a natural fit and good experience, too.

It wasn't long after Stuart returned from sabbatical that it was announced by the Bishop of Durham that he was to

leave St Paul's and Whitworth parishes to become Archdeacon of Sunderland, and so, three months as editor turned into 25 years with this September edition marking that milestone.

Past and present clergy have contributed hundreds of articles to challenge, encourage and motivate us to receive God's word through scripture, and Crossways has reported on countless stories and events from our churches, celebrating and giving thanks for the great work God calls us to do in our communities.

In a digital age where many people consume news and information online, including about our churches, the role of a physical parish newsletter may seem obsolete



to some, and although the number of subscribers has inevitably reduced over the years, Crossways still remains a vital link to the people we serve in our parishes.

The production of Crossways is a team effort, and I would like to express my thanks as ever to Pauline Storey and Brenda Crooks for coordinating the monthly print run, and all the distributors who deliver the newsletter to people's homes, with some of the

team being involved with Crossways for far longer than I've been editor!

And on that point, I am very aware that 25 years volunteering as editor of this newsletter is just a fraction of the many more years that others have given in service to our parishes across many different roles, and I hope in some small part that I have helped contribute to what we are all being called by God to do here in Spennymoor and Whitworth.

A tribute to Gill Clayton

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eye for visual decoration and was often involved in events at the church that required her wisdom and artistry. She enjoyed these ministries and has been a blessing to the church in these and lots of other ways over the years. It was at Easter this year that she sadly had to conclude those roles.

Gill was a woman of faith and put her faith into practice both in the church and in the community. Even

while suffering the effects of cancer in the last few months of her life her concern was for the wellbeing of her family, friends and others above herself. Gill's Lord, Jesus, gives us the ultimate example of other-person centred concern.

It is in him that Gill trusted for her eternal wellbeing, a gift given by Jesus at the cost of his own life. It is Gill following his example of love that we're able to pay tribute to and for which we thank God. Gill died on 20th July and we commend her to the mercy of her Lord and ours, Jesus Christ.

CLEMS SPENNYMOOR 16 Clyde Tce Spennymoor 815451	ADVERTISE IN THIS SPACE FOR JUST £10 PER YEAR! Email us at: office@stpaulsspennymoor.co.uk	Derek Taylor and Son <i>Est. 1972 Corgi Reg.</i> Gas Services Tel. 814982	Wedding/Family Celebrations at the Town Hall in Spennymoor "for Ramside quality at Town Hall prices" 01388 815276 www.parishes.durham.gov.uk/spennymoor enquiries@spennymoortowncouncil.gov.uk
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FOR YOUR PRAYERS

For all pupils, students, teachers and staff returning for the new term.

For the people of Nepal following the devastating flooding and grieving families across the world.

For our churches' activities and outreach into the community as we move into autumn.



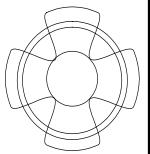
PRAYER FOR SEPTEMBER

Circle us Lord. Circle our family and friends with the love of the gospel. Keep them in peace and security.

Guard those of our loved ones who are vulnerable, strengthen those who are struggling; encourage those who are on the brink of something new. May the deep peace of the Prince of Peace keep them all. Amen.

Source: The Intercessions Handbook

Parish Registers



HOLY BAPTISM

St Paul's

2nd August	Evelyn Lawson
9th August	Joseph Bowry
9th August	Loui Bowry
9th August	Jake Thomas Hartley
23rd August	Ivarr Allen Fearn

HOLY MATRIMONY

Whitworth

1st August	Joseph Michael Gordon Williams and Charlotte Nicholson
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St Paul's

21st August	Aaron Curle and Laura Emmerson
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CHRISTIAN FUNERALS

St Paul's

12th August	Anne Bainbridge
12th August	Gill Clayton
20th August	Darren Ellis
24th August	John Barnes
27th August	Betty Wilson

LADIES AT ST PAUL'S

ALL WELCOME

WEDNESDAY
EVENINGS

7.30 - 9.30 PM

September 9th Quiz Night

Please come along to join in with our quiz night. Quizzes will be fun and suitable for all.

**Location: St Paul's Centre,
Cafe Area**

Contact: ladies@stpaulsspennymoor.co.uk



People's Emergency Briefing

Tudhoe, Spennymoor

BOOKING



Community film screening and Q&A with **PROFESSOR HAYLEY FOWLER** (Climate Change Impacts, Newcastle University.)

ST. CHARLES CHURCH DL16 6JY.
18 SEPTEMBER 2026, 6:30PM

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