

STOCKPORT PARISH CHURCH

St Mary's in the Marketplace

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 Stockport Parish Church – St Mary's

Service times at St Mary's

Sunday: 10:30am Holy Communion or Morning Prayer

Normally the first and third Sunday is Holy Communion with Morning on the second and fourth.

**Tuesday: 10.00am Holy Communion
12.15pm Lunchtime Service**

Wedding, Baptism, Funeral and other services by arrangement.

St Mary's and the Nave Café is open – Tuesday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday from 9.00am – 3.00pm

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Parish Magazine of



STOCKPORT PARISH CHURCH

[St Mary's in the Marketplace]

with St Andrew's, Hall Street.



Diary**May 2018**

Tuesday, 1 st May	Holy Communion Lunchtime Service	10.00am 12.15pm
NB: For Churchwardens and Sidespersons Archdeacons Visitation for Chadkirk, Mottram and Stockport – St Paul’s, Stalybridge		7.30pm
Friday, 4 th May	Worship Cafe with Tiviot Dale MC Prayer Event	10.45am 7.30pm
Sunday, 6 th May	Holy Communion Lawrie Adam Book Launch Zeal Church	10.30am 11.45-12.15 3.30pm
Tuesday, 8 th May	Holy Communion Lunchtime Service	10.00am 12.15pm
Friday, 11 th May	Worship Cafe with Tiviot Dale MC	10.45am
Sunday, 13 th May	Holy Communion Baptism Zeal Church	10.30am 12.00 noon 3.30pm
Tuesday, 15 th May	Holy Communion Lunchtime Service	10.00am 12.15pm
Wednesday, 16 th May	Prayer Breakfast (Kevin McKenna)	
Friday, 18 th May	Worship Cafe with Tiviot Dale MC	10.45am
Sunday, 20 th May	Morning Prayer Zeal Church	10.30am 3.30pm
Monday, 21 st May	Stockport Council “Drop In” Meeting	4.00 – 8.00pm
Tuesday, 22 nd May	Holy Communion Lunchtime Service	10.00am 12.15pm
Friday, 25 th May	Worship Cafe with Tiviot Dale MC	10.45am
Sunday, 27 th May	Holy Communion Baptism Zeal Church	10.30am 2.00pm 3.30pm
Tuesday, 29 th May	Holy Communion Lunchtime Service	10.00am 12.15pm

31st May: Mary, the Blessed Virgin, visits Elizabeth

Mary – the virgin mother of Jesus. For centuries the eastern and western churches have considered her pre-eminent among all the saints.

In the gospels, Mary makes her first appearance as a teenager. Nothing is known of her childhood, and what we do know of her is found mostly in Matthew 1 – 2 and in Luke 1 – 2. If you read both accounts, you’ll notice that Luke’s account seems to give the story from Mary’s standpoint, whereas Matthew concentrates more on Joseph’s side of things. In both accounts the virginal conception of Christ is clearly stated. Mary’s quiet devotion to God and her total acceptance of His will shine forth.

Her visit to Elizabeth, when both were pregnant, is a moving and poignant account of two humble, ordinary women, suddenly caught up in a great event that would shape world history. Their trusting faith in God and acceptance of His will, shine through.

After Jesus is born, Mary fades into the background, and makes few appearances: when the family visits Jerusalem and she loses her son on the way home; when she urges Him to help the wedding party in Cana with its wine problem; and when Jesus gives her into the keeping of the beloved disciple when He is dying on the cross. Mary’s last appearance is in Acts chapter one, just before Pentecost.

Mary obviously joined the early Church, but her role was never one of teaching and preaching, and indeed she remained so much in the background that nothing more about her is known for certain. Both Ephesus and Jerusalem have claimed to be the place of her death.

Mary, chosen to be the mother of Jesus Christ, one who is both God and Man, holds a unique place in the history of mankind. Down the centuries that have followed, the Church has paid special honour to Mary – and well

30th May: Joan of Arc – saving France from the English

How far would you go to respond to God's call on your life? When as the daughter of a peasant family in Champagne in 1426, 14 year-old Joan heard heavenly voices calling her to 'save France' from the English, she decided to obey the call, no matter what the consequences. Teenage girls who want to rescue their country from foreign troops were considered every bit as crazy back then as now. But Joan eventually came to the notice of the Dauphin (Later Charles VII) who decided to make use of her obvious ability to inspire people – in this case, the French, to fight. And so Joan, dressed in white armour, rode at the front of the French army when they relieved Orleans in April 1429. Her presence and belief in her divine calling to get rid of the English, did wonders for the morale of the troops, who loved her even more when she sustained a wound in the breast, and made little of it. A campaign in the Loire followed, and then in July the Dauphin was crowned at Rheims with Joan at his side, carrying her standard. More battles followed that winter, until Joan was captured and sold to the English. They attributed her success to witchcraft and spells, and imprisoned her at Rouen. She was brought before judges, where her spirited and shrewd defence were outstanding. But the judges declared her false and diabolical, and she was condemned to die as a heretic. She was burnt at the stake in the market-place at Rouen on 30 May 1431. Joan died as she had lived; with total faith in God and certainty that she was obeying His will for her life. She died with fortitude, looking at a cross and calling on the name of Jesus. Her ashes were thrown into the Seine. Joan's integrity and courage are what shine down the centuries. Here is a patron saint for you if you feel that God is calling you to do something extraordinary: something that is way, way beyond your comfort zone; but something that could right wrongs and make a difference in the world. Are you up for it?

ACROSS: 1, Overwhelmed. 9, Valleys. 10, Strap. 11, Top. 13, Reel. 16, To do. 17, Incite. 18, Load. 20, West. 21, Notice. 22, Wash. 23, Thin. 25, Ash. 28, Noah's. 29, Ever not. 30, Onesiphorus.

DOWN: 2, Value. 3, Reed. 4, Host. 5, Lisp. 6, Ear lobe. 7, Overflowing. 8, Opportunity. 12, Obtain. 14, Lid. 15, A cross. 19, Abstain. 20, Wet. 24, Hindu. 25, Asks. 26, Help. 27, Hero.

May Day

There has never been a Christian content to May Day, but nevertheless there is the well-known 6am service on the top of Magdalen Tower at Oxford where a choir sings in the dawn of May Day. Large crowds gather in the High Street and on Magdalen Bridge below to listen, before dispersing for other activities such as Morris Dancing. Well it is doubtful there will be any dancing at St Mary's to welcome the new month, all we perhaps have in common is having a tower containing a peal of ten bells hung for English change ringing.

What we do have is the **Archdeacons Visitation for the Stockport Deanery** (along with Chadkirk and Mottram) on the evening of the 1st May. **The service to be held at St Paul's, Stalybridge at 7.30pm.** For those attending, the church is on Huddersfield Road, Stalybridge – post code for the sat nav: SK15 2PT. Our host and Priest-in-Charge being the Rev Emma Handley.

May brings Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity: *Ascension Day celebrates Jesus's ascension to heaven after he was resurrected on Easter Day. At Pentecost, we remember the gift of the Holy Spirit to the first disciples, a powerful experience, when along with wind and fire, 'all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:4). The Holy Spirit being the third part of the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*



"Thy Kingdom Come" a global prayer movement which the Archbishop of Canterbury is inviting people around the world to join. He is calling on Christians to pray that people might know Jesus Christ during a focused time between Ascension and Pentecost from **10th - 20th May 2018**. The Archbishop's invitation is simply - asking people to pray in whatever way they want, with whoever they want and wherever they can, that others might know Jesus Christ.



Maritime Christian Ministries Hats and Chest Warmers

Thank you for the many hats and warmers that have been handed to Ann for the Maritime Christian Ministries, these are most appreciated.

Please keep knitting for this worthy cause.

For more information about the charity log-on to the internet at : www.mcmuk.com. For any help or information from St Mary's please talk to Ann West.



26th May: Augustine of Canterbury - apostle to the English

Augustine, a 6th century Italian prior, holds a unique place in British history. He became the 'apostle to the English' – although it was with great reluctance. In 596 Augustine was chosen by Pope Gregory to head a mission of monks whom he wanted to send to evangelise the Anglo-Saxons. Augustine was not a bold man, and by the time he and his band of priests reached Gaul, they wished to turn back. But Gregory would not hear of it – and bolstered their confidence by sending some more priests out to them, and by consecrating Augustine bishop. Finally, the party, now 40 in number, landed at Ebbsfleet, Kent in 597. It would be fascinating to have a detailed description of that first meeting between Bishop Augustine and Ethelbert, powerful King of Kent. Whatever Augustine said, it must have been effective, for Ethelbert granted the 40 priests permission to stay in a house in Canterbury. He even allowed them to preach to his people, while he himself considered their message of Christianity. His wife, Bertha, was a Christian princess from Paris, but she does not seem to have played any role in the conversion of Kent. By 601 Ethelbert and many of his people had been baptised Christians. The mission to the English was well underway. More clergy, some books, a few relics and several altar vessels arrived from Rome. At Gregory's wise urging, Augustine decided to consolidate the mission in one small area, rather than try and reach all of Kent. So Augustine stayed in Canterbury, where he built the cathedral and founded a school. He left only temporarily to establish a see in London. Also at Gregory's wise urging, Augustine did not destroy the pagan temples of the people of Kent, but only the idols in them. In this way, innocent familiar rites were taken over and used for the celebration of the Christian feasts. Meanwhile, before his death in 604, Augustine helped Ethelbert to draft the earliest Anglo-Saxon written laws to survive – and so influenced British law for centuries to come.



24th May: John & Charles Wesley: Let's Sing a Hymn

by Canon David Winter

Later this month the Church calendar celebrates the lives of John and Charles Wesley. John's great gift to the Christian cause was the little matter of founding the world-wide movement known as Methodism. His brother Charles had an equally profound impact through his hymns. He actually wrote over 6000, most of which aren't sung nowadays, but among the ones we do still sing are all-time favourites – 'Love divine, all loves excelling', 'O for a thousand tongues to sing'. 'Jesu lover of my soul', 'Hark the herald angels sing' – and scores more. 40 years ago almost everybody knew quite a lot of hymns, but sadly that's no longer true. Traditional hymns aren't usually sung at school assemblies, not even in church schools, and while the audience for 'Songs of Praise' on BBC TV is substantial, most of those watching are over 50. With only about ten per cent of the population even irregular church-goers there is inevitably a lack of familiarity with hymns of any kind. Christmas carols are an exception, as is 'Jerusalem' and 'Amazing Grace', because they are frequently heard outside church. Singing hymns is a wonderful experience at its best – just ask a Welsh rugby crowd singing 'Bread of heaven'! It seems a pity to lose it. It's not a bad idea to take ten minutes and think what is your favourite hymn, and why – ancient or modern doesn't matter. Then try singing it in the bath or under the shower – a very purifying experience.

1st May: Philip, the apostle with common sense

Is there someone in church whom you respect for their spirituality and common sense combined – someone you feel easy about approaching to ask questions? That person's patron saint should be Philip.

Philip came from Bethsaida, and was a disciple of Jesus from early on. He knew how to lead others to Jesus – he brought Nathanael (or Bartholomew) to Him in a calm, kindly way. He knew how to do some financial forecasting: at the feeding of the 5,000 it was he who pointed out that without divine help, even 200 pennyworth of bread wasn't going to feed that crowd. He was the one whom the Greeks approached when they wanted to ask Jesus to show them the Father, but didn't quite have the nerve to approach Jesus directly. People had confidence in Philip's spirituality, common sense and kindness. Such a person is a gift to any church! In art, the Apostle Philip has been represented either with a cross, or with loaves of bread.

Church bells will still ring out

Planning policy is finally coming to the aid of church bells. No longer will people who move into areas with 'noisy' church bells be able to complain and have them shut down. As the Secretary of State for Housing, Sajid Javid, recently said, 'Churches have been part of British life in towns and villages for centuries. Their bells should not be silenced by new housing going up, which is why planning policy will be strengthened to ensure it will be up to developers building new properties nearby to identify and tackle noise problems.' And so it is that under the new guidance, it will be up to developers to soundproof the homes they build near churches with bells, music venues, and community and sports clubs. The Church of England has welcomed the decision, pointing out that bell-ringing has been part of Christian worship for more than 1000 years.

1st May: James the Less – quiet son of Alphaeus

One thing for sure: the apostles were not self-obsessed. In fact, many a church historian has wished that they had left us just a few more personal details about themselves in the New Testament. James the Less is an excellent example.

This is the name we give to James the son of Alphaeus, but – beyond that, who was he? Sometimes he is identified as the James whose mother stood by Christ on the cross. Sometimes he is thought to be the James who was ‘brother of the Lord’. Sometimes he is thought to be the James who saw the risen Christ. He has also, and often, been called the first bishop of Jerusalem. And finally, sometimes James the Less has been thought of as the author of the Epistle of James.

But – who knows? If none of these identifications are correct, we know practically nothing about James the Less. So perhaps on this day we can simply recall ‘all’ of the James’ above, and thank God for the mother who stood by the cross, the brother that supported Jesus, the apostle who saw his risen Lord and gave his life to proclaiming the truth, the first bishop of Jerusalem, and the author of the marvellous Epistle of James. Whether it was one James or several, they were all faithful to Jesus, and proclaimed Him as the Messiah. So perhaps that should make them James the More!

James the Less has been given an unusual iconographic emblem: a fuller’s club. Tradition has it that he was beaten to death with one, after being sentenced by the Sanhedrin in AD62. In England there are only 26 churches which are dedicated to James the Less.

NEW 21st May Helena, Protector of the Holy Places

Helena should be the patron saint of all mothers who help their sons achieve great things. Helena was born at Drepanum in Bithynia about 250. Although only a stable-maid or innkeeper’s daughter, she caught the eye and affections of a Roman general, Constantius Chlorus, while he was stationed in Asia Minor on a military campaign. She bore him a son, Constantine, in about 272. But Constantius was ambitious, and when he became co-emperor (Caesar) in the West in 292, he abandoned Helena in order to marry the stepdaughter of his patron. Helena and her son were sent to live in the court of Diocletian at Nicomedia, where Constantine grew up as a member of the inner circle. Helena never remarried, and lived close to her son, who was devoted to her. Then, in 306, Constantius died, and Constantine became Augustus of the Roman Empire. He brought his beloved mother to live at the imperial court. When Constantine became the first Christian emperor of Rome, Helena also became a Christian. She was devout, dressing modestly, and giving generously to churches, the poor, and to prisoners. But soon Constantine had other plans for her: they agreed that she would help him locate the relics of Judeo-Christian tradition in Palestine. To aid her, Constantine gave her the title Augusta Imperatrix, and unlimited access to the imperial treasury. And so, from 326-28, even though she was very old, Helena explored the Holy Land on behalf of her son, the Emperor. She went to Bethlehem and founded the Church of the Nativity. She went to the Mount of Olives and founded the Church of Eleona. She went to Calvary, and tore down a temple built to Venus over the tomb of Jesus. Constantine then ordered the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Helena also seems to have also founded the chapel at St Catherine’s Monastery. Helena died in 330 in the Holy Land, with Constantine at her side. He brought her body back to Constantinople and buried her in the imperial vault in the Church of the Apostles. We owe to this special mother and son the preservation and honouring of the most famous sites of Christianity.

20th May Pentecost in Jerusalem

On that long ago first morning of Pentecost, Jerusalem was crowded with thousands of visitors, for it was one of the most popular feast-days in the Jewish calendar – the Feast of Firstfruits, looking forward to the wheat harvest.

In one small room of that great city, a small group of people who had followed Jesus were praying. There was nothing else for them to do: Jesus had died, He had risen, and He had ascended, promising to send them ‘a Comforter’. They were left alone, to wait at Jerusalem. And so they waited – on Him, and for Him. They were not disappointed: for that morning the Holy Spirit fell upon that small room, and transformed those believers into the Church, Christ’s body here on earth. Pentecost was not the first time that the Holy Spirit came to the world – throughout the Old Testament there are stories telling of how God had guided people and given them strength. But now His Spirit would use a new instrument: not just isolated prophets, but the Church, His body on earth.

Acts opens with the preaching of the gospel in Jerusalem, the centre of the Jewish nation. Within 30 years the Gospel had spread throughout the northern Mediterranean: Syria, Turkey, Greece, Malta... to the very heart of the Roman Empire: Rome. The Church was on the move – God was on the move! He was calling people from every nation to repent, turn to Jesus for forgiveness of their sins, and to follow Him.

2nd May: Athanasius – the theologian who gave us the Nicene Creed

Athanasius (296-373) was born into a prosperous family in Alexandria in Egypt, studied in the Christian school there and entered the ministry. He was twenty-nine years old when he accompanied Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, to the Church’s first ecumenical Council, at Nicaea in 325. Although Athanasius could not take part in the Council’s debates because he was a deacon and not a bishop, Alexander consulted him on the meaning of biblical texts and theological distinctions. With Emperor Constantine sitting as President, three hundred bishops argued about the Person of Christ. How is He the Son of God? Is He God or man or both together? Did He exist before He was born? If we worship Him does that mean we are worshipping two Gods? The young Athanasius saw that some bishops wanted to impose the teaching of Arius on the Church. Arius was a popular preacher in Alexandria who taught that Christ was not eternal but was a ‘Saviour’ created by the Father. Athanasius worked with his bishop, Alexander, in framing what became known as the Nicene Creed. Our Lord’s full divinity was safeguarded in the words, ‘eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father.’ When Bishop Alexander died in 328, Athanasius succeeded him as Bishop by popular demand. For the next 45 years Athanasius’ devotion, scholarship, and forceful leadership established the Nicene Creed in the Christian Church. His enemies, both in Church and state, conspired against him, and he was exiled five times from the See of Alexandria and spent a total of 17 years in flight and hiding. It was his uncompromising stand for Nicene theology that gave rise to the familiar saying, Athanasius contra mundum, ‘Athanasius against the world.’ Athanasius’ name will always be linked with the triumph of New Testament Christology over every form of reductionism. Of his many writings the most significant was his great study on the person and work of Christ; ‘On the Incarnation of the Word of God’, written before he was 30 years old. The whole Church of Christ is always in need of bishops, leaders and theologians in the mould of Athanasius.

6th May Rogation Sunday (Sunday before Ascension)

Rogation means an asking of God - for blessing on the seed and land for the year ahead. It is appropriate in any emergency, war, plague, drought or foul weather.

The practice began with the Romans, who invoked the help of the gods Terminus and Ambarvalia. In those days a crowd moved in procession around the cornfields, singing and dancing, sacrificing animals, and driving away Winter with sticks. They wanted to rid the cornfields of evil. About 465 the Western world was suffering from earthquake, storm and epidemic. So Mamertius, Bishop of Vienne, aware of the popular pagan custom, ordered that prayers should be said in the ruined or neglected fields on the days leading up to Ascension. With his decision, 'beating the bounds' became a Christian ceremonial.

Rogation-tide arrived in England early in the eighth century, and became a fixed and perennial asking for help of the Christian God. On Rogation-tide, a little party would set out to trace the boundaries of the parish. At the head marched the bishop or the priest, with a minor official bearing a Cross, and after them the people of the parish, with schoolboys and their master trailing along. Most of them held slender wands of willow.

At certain points along the route - at well-known landmarks like a bridge or stile or ancient tree, the Cross halted, the party gathered about the priest, and a litany or rogation is said, imploring God to send seasonable wealth, keep the corn and roots and boughs in good health, and bring them to an ample harvest. At one point beer and cheese would be waiting.

In the days when maps were neither common nor accurate, there was much to be said for 'beating the bounds' - still very common as late as the reign of Queen Victoria. Certainly parish boundaries rarely came into dispute, for everyone knew them. (Do you know yours today?)

20th May Day of Pentecost – Whit Sunday

Pentecost took place on the well-established Jewish festival of Firstfruits, which was observed at the beginning of the wheat harvest. It was exactly 50 days after the Passover, the time of Jesus' crucifixion. A feast day to celebrate the country's wheat harvest does not sound exactly world-changing, but that year, it became one of the most important days in world history. For Pentecost was the day that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit - the day the Church was born. Jesus had told His disciples that something big was going to happen, and that they were to wait for it in Jerusalem, instead of returning to Galilee. Jesus had plans for His disciples – but He knew they could not do the work themselves – they would need His help. And so they waited in Jerusalem, praying together with his other followers, for many days. And then on that fateful morning there was suddenly the sound as of a mighty rushing wind. Tongues of flame flickered on their heads, and they began to praise God in many tongues – to the astonishment of those who heard them. The curse of Babel (Genesis 11: 1- 9) was dramatically reversed that morning. That morning the Holy Spirit came to indwell the disciples and followers of Jesus: and the Church was born. The Christians were suddenly full of life and power, utterly different from their former fearful selves. The change in them was permanent. Peter gave the first ever sermon of the Christian Church that morning: proclaiming Jesus was the Messiah. His boldness in the face of possible death was in marked contrast to the man who had denied Jesus 50 days before. And 3,000 people responded, were converted, and were baptised. How's that for fast church growth!

Of course, Pentecost was not the first time the Holy Spirit had acted in this world. All through the Old Testament there are accounts of how God's Spirit guided people and strengthened them. But now, because of Christ's death and resurrection, He could INDWELL them. From now on, every Christian could have the confidence that Jesus was with them constantly, through the indwelling of his Holy Spirit.

19th May: Dunstan - the abbot who restored monastic life in England

Dunstan (909-988 AD) stands out as an example of what just one person can achieve when they follow the call of God on their life. Dunstan was born near Glastonbury, of a noble family with royal connections and church connections; his uncle was Archbishop of Canterbury. But in 935, at the age of 26, he was accused of 'studying the vain poems of the pagans' – and expelled from court. He nearly married, but instead made private monastic vows and was ordained a priest by Elphege, bishop of Winchester. Dunstan felt God's call on his life and responded. That decision was to shape English history. Not at first, however. For Dunstan began his priestly life by simply returning to Glastonbury and living as a hermit. He painted, embroidered and did metalwork. But when in 939 Edmund became king of Wessex, he recalled Dunstan and made him abbot of Glastonbury. The monastic life of the country was all but dead: the Danish invasions and the hostility of local magnates had seen to that. Dunstan set out to change all this, and went on to restore monastic life in England, under the Rule of St Benedict. Down the years, Dunstan saw kings come and go: Edmund, Edred, Edgar, Edward. Under King Edgar Dunstan was made bishop of Worcester in 957, bishop of London in 959, and Archbishop of Canterbury in 960. Thus was born a fruitful collaboration between King and Archbishop which was to reform the Church in England. Monastic orders began to thrive once more. After the Conquest, the days of Dunstan would be looked back on as the 'golden age'. Dunstan was zealous for the faith. He taught, prayed, fasted, repaired churches, acted as judge, inspired national laws of the land, made sure taxes were paid, and encouraged his monks in their manuscripts and prayers. He remained active right to the end of his life: he preached three times on Ascension Day 988, and died two days later, on 19 May, aged nearly 80. They wrote of him: he was without doubt "chief of all the saints who rest at Christ Church' (Canterbury). It has been well said that the 10th century gave shape to English history, and Dunstan gave shape to the 10th century.

8th May: Julian of Norwich – a voice from a distant cell

by Canon David Winter

Many years ago, studying English literature at university, I was intrigued to be introduced to the work of Julian of Norwich. She was writing at the end of the 14th century, when our modern English language was slowly emerging from its origins in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English.

Our lecturer was mainly concerned with her importance in the history of the language (she was the first woman, and the first significant writer, to write in English). But I was more intrigued by the ideas she was expressing. She was an anchoress – someone who had committed herself to a life of solitude, giving herself to prayer and fasting. St Julian's, Norwich was the church where she had her 'cell'.

Her masterpiece, Revelations of Divine Love, reveals a mystic of such depth and insight that today up and down Britain there are hundreds, possibly thousands, of 'Julian Groups' who meet regularly to study her writings and try to put them into practice.

She is honoured this month (8th) in the Lutheran and Anglican Churches, but although she is held in high regard by many Roman Catholics, her own Church has never felt able to recognise her as a 'saint'. This is probably because – over 600 years ago! – she spoke of God as embracing both male and female qualities. Revelations is an account of the visions she received in her tiny room, which thousands of pilgrims visit every year.

Her most famous saying, quoted by T S Eliot in one of his poems, is 'All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well' – words that have brought comfort and strength to many a soul in distress.

9th May: Pachomius - the patron saint of administrators

Have you ever worked for a disorganised organisation? You know the scene: your boss lives in a mild panic, your goals and deadlines keep being changed, your colleagues whisper darkly in corners, emails contradict each other, meetings lead to more confusion... and you go home each night with a headache. And so it is that Pachomius should be the patron saint of administrators everywhere. For back in the 4th century, without a computer or even a mobile he managed to run 11 separate monasteries like clockwork. Pachomius was born into a pagan family in Upper Egypt at the end of the third century, and as a youth conscripted into the army. On his release in 313 he became two things: a Christian and a hermit (probably craved some peace and quiet!). But Pachomius was no loner, and when other monks gradually sought him out, he did with them what he did best: he organised them. By 320 he had founded his first monastery. Pachomius seems to have had exceptional powers of administration, no doubt perfected by his years of disciplined army life. By the time of his death in 346, he presided over nine large monasteries for men and two for women. Each monastery was divided into houses, according to its craft, such as agriculture, tailoring or baking. Pachomius knew how to delegate: each house had its own leader. He knew how to keep in touch: he held team leaders' meetings twice a year. Pachomius knew about supply chains: food and drink never ran out. Pachomius knew about marketing: he found buyers for their produce in Alexandria. Pachomius knew about delivering a vision: a daily pattern of work and prayer and sleep was set in place to make sure that the monks and nuns could devote themselves to God for hours each day in prayer, and in memorising the Psalms and other Bible passages. Pachomius knew how to help people get things done. No wonder his Rule went on to influence that of Basil and Benedict. Certainly administration is listed by St Paul as a genuine gift of God, and prudence and clear forward planning are highly prized in the Proverbs.

Canon David Winter wonders whether he wants even more time ...

THE WAY I SEE IT: Telling the Time

I was having a little button problem with the ATM. A message appeared on the screen. 'Would you like more time?' I clicked the 'yes' button, eventually collected my cash, and spent the rest of the afternoon thinking about that profound question. Well, would I? As an elderly man, do I really want more time, or am I content to face the fact that time is the raw material of our lives and eventually it runs out?

We exist within a framework of time: days, weeks, months, years. We can't imagine life without it, and yet God, the Creator, is eternal, He simply and gloriously exists. That's his Name – 'I AM'. So if the end of time for us is to be with him, will we at last be free from its tyranny?

Most of my working life was dominated by time, so that seems a pleasant prospect. But in an unpredictable world our hearts break for those who lose a child or who die as we say 'prematurely'. Sometimes those of us of riper years feel a kind of guilt: why not us? Thankfully, age will not be an issue in heaven. God doesn't grow old. There will be no more dying, young or old. Like Him, we shall just sublimely be.

All of that, of course, is a matter of faith, and may seem irrelevant to those whose immediate concern is living in the here and now. But time simply ticks on, and one day that question may arise: Would you like more time? It's easy to answer when life is full of promise, or as yet unfulfilled goals. It's not quite so simple when early onset decrepitude threatens. For me, every hour of life is a gift of God, so it's still the 'yes' button until a wiser hand intervenes: 'your time is up'.

15th May: Matthias the Apostle – called by lots

Have you ever happened to be in the right place at the right time, with certain qualifications, and suddenly realise that God is singling you out for a special task? If so, Matthias is a good patron saint for you!

In Acts 1 (15 – 26) the apostles had a task to do: Judas had committed suicide, and a new apostle needed to be chosen. He had to have been a follower of Christ from the Baptism to the Ascension, and also a witness of the Resurrection in order to qualify. In the event, the choice fell to one of two: Joseph Barsabas and Matthias.

Lots were drawn, and Matthias was chosen. How confident he must have felt in his calling: what encouragement that would be when the going got rough in later years! Matthias is thought to have ministered in Cappadocia and even Ethiopia. His emblem is usually an axe or halberd, regarded as the instrument of his martyrdom. His supposed relics were translated from Jerusalem to Rome by the empress Helena.

Planned Giving...

Thank You

Those of you that attended the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, or have seen a copy of our Annual Accounts, will be aware just how tight our cash flow actually is. This is not however a request for more money (although we could do with it) it is a “thank you” to everyone who has contributed to our planned giving scheme(s) during the last year - and of course a special thank you to those of you who have increased your giving during recent weeks and months – this is most appreciated. So too, all “gift aid” giving, general cash receipts and donations received.

10th May Ascension Day - 40 days after Easter comes Ascension Day.

These are the 40 days during which the Risen Christ appeared again and again to His disciples, following His death and resurrection. (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; and John 20.) Jesus was seen by numerous of His disciples: on the road to Emmaus, by the Sea of Galilee, in houses, etc. He strengthened and encouraged His disciples, and at last opened their eyes to all that the Scriptures had promised about the Messiah. Jesus also told them that as the Father had sent Him, He was now going to send them - to all corners of the earth, as His witnesses. Surely the most tender, moving ‘farewell’ in history took place on Ascension Day. Luke records the story with great poignancy: “When Jesus had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands - and blessed them.” As Christmas began the story of Jesus’ life on earth, so Ascension Day completes it, with His return to His Father in heaven. Jesus’ last act on earth was to bless His disciples. He and they had a bond as close as could be: they had just lived through three tumultuous years of public ministry and miracles – persecution and death – and resurrection! Just as we part from our nearest and dearest by still looking at them with love and memories in our eyes, so exactly did Jesus: ‘While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven.’ (Luke 24:50-1) He was not forsaking them, but merely going on ahead to a kingdom which would also be theirs one day: ‘I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God...’ (John 20:17) The disciples were surely the most favoured folk in history. Imagine being one of the last few people on earth to be face to face with Jesus, and have Him look on you with love. No wonder then that Luke goes on: ‘they worshipped Him - and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.’ (Luke 24:52,53) No wonder they praised God! They knew they would see Jesus again one day! ‘I am going to prepare a place for you... I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.’ (John 14:2,3) In the meantime, Jesus had work for them to do: to take the Gospel to every nation on earth.

Godparents – a real role to play

To be asked to become a godparent is a real honour. Ideally, it should go on to become a lifelong commitment that turns into a deep and loving relationship between godparent and child. Sadly, too often it wanes into a duty to be met by Christmas presents and birthday cheques.

A godparent is a member of the family 'once removed', and in an ideal position to enjoy the company of the young person without any parental responsibility. Godparents can share their life experiences, hobbies and past-times with the youngster, and thus greatly enrich their childhood.

These days many godparents are chosen with the idea of guardianship in mind, in case anything ever happen to the parents. But the practise of appointing godparents goes back many hundreds of years.

Godparents were originally known as sponsors, from the Latin word *spondere*, meaning 'to promise'. In pagan times a sponsor had to be known to the bishop when a person was introduced into the church. Godparents have the job of speaking up for the child. They must themselves have been baptised, though not necessarily confirmed.

Canon Law advises that 'for every child there are no fewer than three godparents'

Often parents choose two people from the same sex as the baby, and one other male/female. They can be friends or even members of the family.

Diary of a Momentous Year: May 1918: Not just cannon-fodder

If, like me, you wonder how on earth people coped with the sheer horror of the carnage on the battlefields of the First World War, two pieces of writing suggest an answer. One, the poem 'For the Fallen', I wrote about last month. In this article I would like to consider the poem, subsequently an enormously popular hymn, 'O Valiant Hearts'.

It was written by John Stanhope Arkwright and published in a collection of his work in 1919. It seems to me to reflect tellingly the emotional response of a nation in deepest mourning for half a generation of young men. Its best known tune is by Charles Harris. It was my father's favourite hymn, sung every Remembrance Sunday.

But I can remember our new young vicar, fresh from service as an army chaplain in the nineteen-forties, explaining that we would not be singing it again. It confused, he explained, two entirely different things, the sacrifice of so many soldiers' lives in war with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The heart of the problem was verse 4, which directly compared the two acts of sacrifice. On the cross 'in the frailty of our human clay/ Christ our Redeemer passed the self-same way'. It is seldom sung now, but I noticed the tune was played by the military band at last Autumn's Festival of Remembrance.

I have rediscovered it while researching these articles. It is a beautiful hymn, full of passion, grief and hope. Whatever its theological naivety, it offered enormous comfort to a generation reeling from the ghastly slaughter of a war which brought bereavement to virtually every family in Britain. The hymn told them what they needed to hear, that their loved ones were not victims of a senseless conflict; their lives and deaths had meaning and a spiritual dignity. Perhaps once a year we should get it out and read it through their eyes.

Canon David Winter

STOCKPORT PRAYER BREAKFAST

Wednesday 16th MAY 2018

St Mary's in the Marketplace, Churchgate, Stockport, SK1 1YG

“All the believers were together and had everything in common.” Acts 2:44

**Praying for insight as we seek to share the Good News in Stockport
Light Breakfast at 7.40am; Programme - 8am to 9.00am**

Much has been said in the media about the increasing inequality of wealth and opportunity in Britain today – without a doubt, we are becoming a more unequal society.

We see this reflected in our own borough; the disparity between life experienced by a resident living in the centre of Stockport and someone living in the more affluent outer suburbs is well documented, and clear for all to see.

How are we to respond to this? Is this disparity also reflected across the churches of Stockport? Or, is the church an example to society of a different way of being?

Join us as we pray for Gods wisdom and grace to meet the challenges, and make the most of the opportunities that we have.

Kevin McKenna (0161 282 5523 or 07504 130749)

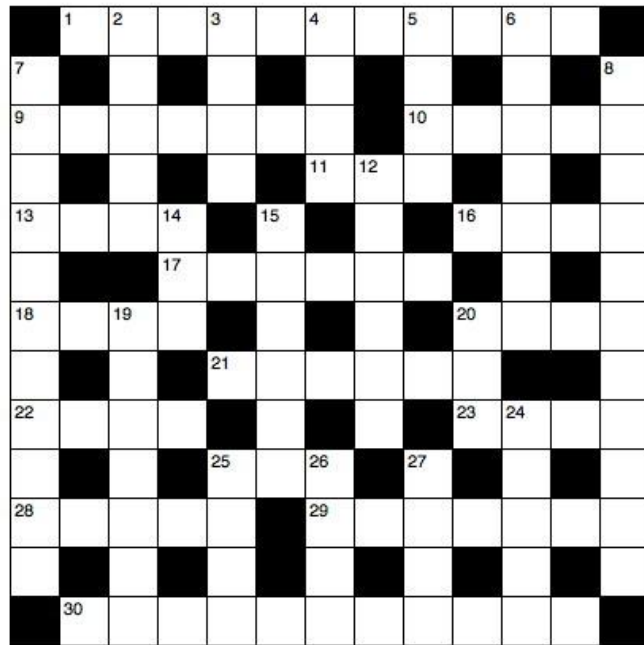
The invitation is open to all – so please pass on to friends and family

The suggested donation to cover costs is **£5.00 per payable in cash on the door**. For catering purposes we need to have definite numbers by Friday 11th May 2018.



Lawrie is launching his autobiography at St Mary's **Sunday 06 May 11.45-12.15**
Order a copy in advance by signing up on the list or emailing him at adamlawrie47@gmail.com
£14.99 (£4 less than Amazon)

crossword



Across

- 1 Overpowered (Deuteronomy 11:4) (11)
 9 'The — are mantled with corn' (Psalm 65:13) (7)
 10 'Each man—a sword to his side'(Exodus32:27)(5)
 11 On the death of Jesus the curtain in the temple was torn from— to bottom (Matthew 27:51) (3)
 13 Stagger(Isaiah 28:7)(4)
 16 'Anyone,then,who knows the good he ought— and doesn't do it, sins' (James 4:17) (2,2)
 17 Stir up or provoke(Acts13:50)(6)
 18 Burden(Luke11:46)(4)
 20 'As far as the east is from the—,so far has he removed our transgressions from us' (Psalm 103:12) (4)

- 21 Sign(Luke23:38)(6)
 22 'After that,Jesus poured water into a basin and began to—his disciples' feet' (John 13:5) (4)
 23 The nature of the seven ears of corn which swallowed up the good ears in Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:23) (4)
 25 Has(anag.)(3)
 28 'This is the account of Shem,Ham and Japheth,—sons' (Genesis 10:1) (5)
 29 'I will...make them drunk,so that they...sleep for—and— awake' (Jeremiah 51:39) (4,3)
 30 Paul said of him,'he often refreshes me and is not ashamed of my chains' (2 Timothy 1:16) (11)

Down

- 2 Worth (Matthew 13:46) (5)
 3 'A bruised — he will not break' (Matthew 12:20) (4)
 4 'Suddenly a great company of the heavenly — appeared with the angel' (Luke 2:13) (4)
 5 Slip (anag.) (4)
 6 'Take an awl and push it through his — — into the door, and he will become your servant for life' (Deuteronomy 15:17) (3,4)
 7 Bountiful (2 Corinthians 8:2) (11)
 8 'Therefore, as we have — , let us do good to all people' (Galatians 6:10) (11)
 12 Acquire(2Timothy2:10)(6)
 14 Container cover(Numbers19:15)(3)
 15 'He...became obedient to death,even death on— —!' (Philippians 2:8) (1,5)
 19 Refrain(1Peter2:11)(7)
 20 'She began to—his feet with her tears'(Luke7:38)(3)
 24 One who worships Brahma,Vishnu or Shiva(5)
 25 'Give to everyone who—you'(Luke6:30)(4)
 26 'I lift up my eyes to the hills;where does my—come from?' (Psalm 121:1) (4)
 27 One of those whom the Lord said would be taken from Jerusalem and Judah as judgment on them (Isaiah 3:2) (4)