

DECEMBER 2025 / JANUARY 2026

IN TOUCH



Otley Parish
CHURCH

Key Information

VICAR

Revd. Aaron Kennedy
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CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

Sarah McCormack

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OFFICE HOURS

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(hours may vary occasionally)

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EMAIL

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CHURCH WEBSITE

www.otleyparishchurch.org
*see our website for details of Church services
and a link to our streamed services on YouTube*

FACEBOOK: @otleyparishchurch

X (TWITTER): @otleyallsaints

CHURCH BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS

Account name: Parochial Church Council of Otley
Account No: 10088811 **Sort code:** 20-37-13

Gift Aid: *if you are a tax payer, please consider signing a Gift Aid declaration which is available on the Church website or from the Treasurer, Tony Pike.*

IN TOUCH

CONTENTS

November 2025

- 03** Dear Friends
- 05** Christmas is Coming
- 09** Creation Care
- 10** My Favourite Bible Verse
- 11** In the Hot Seat
- 13** What's Your Favourite Hymn?
- 15** Family News
- 20** Refugee Community Kitchen
- 22** Blue Plaque Unveiling
- 24** Prayer Ideas for Everyday Christians
- 28** Fear... Lies... Despair... Triumph!

Our Vision

Otley Parish Church
is:

***“A Place
for Everyone,
with Christ
at the Centre”***

Our vision as a church
is to see the healing,
grace and salvation of
God come to the town
of Otley and beyond!
We believe that with
Christ at the centre of
our personal, family
and church life, we will
see his Kingdom come
in the world around us.

All are welcome!

Otley Parish Church

Kirkgate • Otley • West Yorkshire • LS21 3HW

Vicar:

Reverend Aaron Kennedy

Registered Charity Number 1153498

DEAR FRIENDS

Letter from Aaron



ADVENT: Waiting that Makes Room for Christ.



Advent is a season shaped by waiting. Not the anxious waiting we feel in a long queue or the distracted waiting we do while scrolling our phones, but a holy kind of waiting. Advent invites us not merely to remember the birth of Christ, but to allow the Holy Spirit to conceive again the life of Jesus within us. It is the season where the Church listens for the quiet movements of the Holy Spirit, who longs to form Christ in us.

We often think of Advent as looking back to the manger and ahead to Jesus' return. But there is a third Advent in the Christian life: the coming of Christ now, into our ordinary days, decisions, desires, and relationships. This coming of Christ requires a certain quality of waiting – an attentive, surrendered, receptive waiting. It is the waiting of someone who knows that God is good, that his will is trustworthy, and that the life he wants to give us is far richer than anything we could construct for ourselves.

But if we're honest, many things get in the way of this. We cling tightly to our own will, our own agenda for how life should go. We fear handing over control. We doubt God's kindness or suspect that his will might diminish us rather than free us. Like Adam and Eve reaching again for the fruit, we keep certain areas of our lives under our own management: "This part, Lord, but not that part". We say with our lips, "Your kingdom come, your will be done", yet inside we hope God won't ask too much or rearrange the things we cherish.

Advent gently exposes this. It invites us to notice the ways we resist God, the ways we grasp instead of trust. But Advent doesn't shame us. It simply holds up before us in a different way – a way embodied by Mary.

Mary is the model of Advent waiting. Her "yes" to God was not passive resignation but courageous surrender. She laid

down her own hopes and dreams for her life, entrusting herself wholly to God's will. "Let it be to me according to your word" is not a sentimental line – it is a declaration of self-giving obedience that opened the door for the life of Jesus to be conceived in her. The miracle was God's doing, but her surrender made room for it. Her waiting was not empty; it was spacious, trusting, receptive.

It is easy for us, centuries later, to read her story knowing how it all turned out – angels, shepherds, magi, the global impact of Christ's birth across thousands of years. But Mary knew none of this. She could not foresee the scope of what God would do through her willingness. She simply trusted that God was good, that his purposes were wise, and that surrendering her will, would lead not to loss but to life.

This is the invitation of Advent for us. When we give way to God's good and trustworthy will, when we let go of our compulsive self-management, we become fertile soil in which Christ can grow. The Holy Spirit yearns to bring forth Jesus' character, compassion, and power within us – to let his life take

over ours, not in domination but in liberation. This is the paradox of the Christian life: true freedom comes not from asserting our will but from surrendering it. As Jesus fills us, we become more ourselves, more alive, more rooted in love.

So perhaps this Advent, as we light candles and sing familiar carols, we might pray Mary's prayer again. We might sit in a quiet moment and ask the Spirit to make room in us for Christ's life to be conceived anew. We might risk trusting that God's will – however different from our own – is always for our flourishing.

And we might discover, once again, that Advent waiting is not about doing nothing. It is about opening everything.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron', with a stylized, elongated 'A' and a cursive 'aron'.

AARON KENNEDY - Vicar of Otley Parish Church

AN ADVENT PRAYER



**Heavenly Father,
as we prepare for Christmas, help us to
find time in our busy lives for quiet and
thought and prayer, that we may reflect
upon the wonder of your love and allow the
story of the Saviour's birth to penetrate our
hearts and minds.**

**So may our joy be deeper, our worship
more real, and our lives worthier of all that
you have done for us through the coming
of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Let us come together in prayer.

Amen

OTLEY PARISH CHURCH

Christmas **TREE FESTIVAL**

December 10th - 13th

Wednesday 12 noon-5pm

Thursday 10am-5pm

Friday 10am-5pm

Saturday 10am-5pm

**Musical performances
throughout each day**

**Christmas Tree
Carol Service**

Sunday 14th at 4pm

**Tea and coffee with mince
pies will be available from
Thursday to Saturday
and after the Carol Service**

Admission FREE daily

**Charity donations will be
very much appreciated**

Friday Concert 7pm

with the

**Chippendale Singers
& Westgate School**

Adults £5 • Children Free



Christmas

Otley Parish Church Services



SUNDAY 14 DECEMBER

10.30am ALL-AGE NATIVITY SERVICE*

4.00pm CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL CAROL SERVICE*

(followed by refreshments)

SUNDAY 21 DECEMBER

10.30am SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION*

(followed by refreshments)

4.00pm SERVICE OF READINGS AND CAROLS*

(followed by refreshments)

CHRISTMAS EVE 24 DECEMBER

12 noon CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

4.00pm CHRISTINGLE SERVICE*

(maximum seating at each service - 450)

11.30pm MIDNIGHT SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

CHRISTMAS DAY 25 DECEMBER

10.30am ALL-AGE CHRISTMAS DAY CELEBRATION
WITH HOLY COMMUNION*

SUNDAY 28 DECEMBER

10.30am SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION*

(followed by refreshments)

** Live streamed services: when services are streamed, they are available to be watched at home anytime from the actual start.*

The live stream link is:

www.youtube.com/@OtleyParishChurch

CHRISTINGLE

at Otley Parish Church



CHRISTMAS EVE

Wednesday 24th December

12 noon & 4pm

*Carols, candles, and a wonderful atmosphere
to celebrate the start of Christmas,
putting Christ at the centre*

There will be an opportunity to donate to
THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

**Christingle is for children
and adults of all ages**

- *Please note that for both Health and Safety considerations
the attendance at both services will be limited to 450*

Creation Care

A monthly column for us to share environmental and sustainability ideas

The Carbon Net Zero Group is aware that Christmas is almost certainly the hardest time of the year to reduce waste and protect the environment, but maybe we can aim for as-low-waste-as-possible Christmas? Here are some ideas:

Non-physical presents such as –

- magazine subscriptions
- a voucher for a meal to a local restaurant
- a voucher for a tea/coffee and cake *with* the person you give it to
- cinema membership
- gifts of time or experiences
- a virtual gift via a charity to aid their practical work, e.g. medical supplies, an olive tree, two goats!

These are all good ways to reduce waste.

We can be more proactive in asking to receive non-physical presents which goes a long way towards reducing waste and not ending up with unwanted gifts.

Sustainably-produced presents – locally produced foods and drinks, especially those that come in sustainable or recyclable packaging are a great way to support local businesses and reduce waste. Bamboo and fairly traded socks, clothing or other gifts can hopefully fit all budgets. Or, for the more adventurous among you, perhaps even make your own presents?

Anyone who has gone round with the rubbish bag after present opening knows how much waste wrapping gets generated! Here are some tips to reduce waste going to landfill:

- use materials that have been used before and can be used again
- if you do want to use wrapping paper, if possible, buy recycled paper and avoid any shiny or glittery paper as this can't be recycled

The Carbon Trust states that a real Christmas tree has a significantly lower carbon footprint than an artificial one. You can visit the [British Christmas Tree Growers Association](#) to find out about buying organic, FSC-certified, or locally grown Christmas trees.

Finally, remember the reason for the season. Practising generosity and hospitality is a great way to show Christ's love at Christmas. And then in the New Year carry on caring for God's earth.

My Favourite Bible Verse

Geoff Park



***For by one sacrifice,
he has made perfect forever
those who are being made holy.***

Hebrews 10:14 (NIV)

This feature should probably be entitled, 'My Favourite Bible Verse This Week'!

I have chosen this verse from Hebrews because recently I have been struck again by the grace of God. I experience and live in that grace every day, only because Jesus died for me and rose to set me free from my sin and restore me into relationship with God the Father. Not only that, but that one sacrifice was such that God now sees me as perfect – that not only are my past sins forgiven, but also those I have yet to commit! That is grace. And yet, I am still “being made holy” – that is, in this world I strive (falteringly) towards that perfection bestowed upon me. But that neither increases nor decreases God’s perfect love for me, which is unchanging. This is a truth I want to embrace.



IN THE HOT SEAT

Hello Lindsay, and thank you so much for joining us here “In the Hot Seat”. Many of us know you by sight but may not really know much about you, so it will be lovely to read more about you now.

When were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born in Otley in 1982 and have lived here ever since.

Where did you go to school?

I have enjoyed a local education, starting at Westgate Infants, then All Saints Junior on North Parade (as they were called then) and onto Prince Henrys Grammar.

Did you go to College or University? If so, where?

Continuing with the local theme I attended Park Lane college and Leeds Trinity University.

What is your occupation and where do you work?

Currently I run a private psychotherapy practice in Otley

and am project lead for Pathways Counselling Leeds, a team of Christian counsellors offering affordable counselling for Leeds residents.

Do you have any brothers and sisters?

Yes, one of each.

How many children and grandchildren do you have?

Myself and Mr Bailey (Trevor) have a blended family, collectively boasting 8 children, one of whom is with the Lord. Not to mention currently 3 grandchildren!

When did you become a Christian?

Oh, that's a long story. In short at age 8/9 and then ran away from

Him, for Him only to find me again in 2009. Turns out you can't outrun the creator of the universe or the creator of yourself!

Did you worship anywhere before coming to Otley Parish Church? How long have you been coming here?

I was brought up in the Methodist church in Otley. In my 20s I powerfully encountered the Lord in a church in Bradford. He has been slowly and patiently bringing me back home to Otley, via churches in Burley-in-Wharfedale, Guiseley and Yeadon. I haven't been at OPC that long.

Do you have a favourite verse of Scripture?

I couldn't possibly choose a favourite, so many have held me at different times. At the moment the Lord is talking to me a lot through scriptures about obedience, gates, water and the importance of His presence:

Joshua 1, Nehemiah 3 & 4, Psalms 24, 100, 119 & 139, Isaiah 41 & 62, Jeremiah 29, Ezekiel 47, Acts 5:29, Luke 6, John 5:19-23, 8:28-30, 12:49-50, Hebrews 13, James 4, Revelation 5 & 22).

Do you have a favourite Christian hymn or song?

Another tough one! I love worship songs that highlight the personhood of the Trinity, His nature, authority, and sacrifice. Songs that stir gratitude, joy, and

reverence, helping me reflect and celebrate in His presence

What kind of music do you like – anything in particular?

I appreciate all types of music; I love a good bop to old school 90s dance. I have recently found Christian dance/house music, which is a gift to my soul!

Is there somewhere you would like to go on holiday where you've not been before, regardless of expense?

I would really like to go on a tour of Israel.

Books you have enjoyed reading – Christian or general? Any special reason?

John Bevere - "Bait of Satan", Michael Heiser - "The Unseen Realm", Eric Gilmour - "Mary of Bethany" and A.W Tozer - "The Pursuit of God". These books among others have helped me and continue to help me.

Do you have a hobby or an enjoyable way of relaxing?

Contrary to popular believe I'm an introvert. Relaxing for me looks like time on my own or with close family and friends who have become family.

What is your favourite meal?

Other than the feast He sets before us, I do love a good steak with the classic veggies!

Which one word best describes your life right now?

Expectant.

What's Your Favourite Hymn?



“ROCK OF AGES”

Verse 1

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in Thee;
let the water and the blood
from Thy riven side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure,
cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Verse 3

Nothing in my hand I bring,
simply to Thy cross I cling;
naked, come to Thee for dress,
helpless, look to Thee for grace;
foul, I to the fountain fly;
wash me, Saviour, or I die.

Verse 2

Not the labour of my hands
can fulfil Thy law's demands;
could my zeal no respite know,
could my tears for ever flow,
all for sin could not atone:
Thou must save and Thou alone.

Verse 4

While I draw this fleeting breath,
when my eyes shall close in death,
when I soar through tracts unknown,
see Thee on Thy judgement throne:
Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

Author: Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-78)

Lesley Noble

tells us why this is her favourite hymn

I found it very difficult to choose just one favourite hymn out of so many! But decided to go with this one '**Rock of Ages**' because when I first heard the words, they didn't make sense to me.

It was at my dad's funeral in 1991 and, at that time I didn't know God or Jesus, and had no idea how relevant and personal these words would become for me years later. How profound! How significant. Since coming to faith, learning, growing and coming to know Jesus as my personal saviour, I love these words: '*Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee*'. What a blessing, knowing now, that he is my rock, protector, my shelter and my saviour, and by the shedding of his blood and water I have been forgiven, he has cleansed me from all my sins and drawn me to himself.

*'Not the labours of my hands,
can fulfil thy laws demands' –*

anything good I may have done, in the past, or the present mean nothing in God's eyes; I come before him with nothing, but tears of gratitude. His grace is sufficient, He's taken away my filthy rags of sinfulness, and replaced them with complete forgiveness, washed me clean, and makes me complete in his presence. He is my inner strength, and *'while I draw this fleeting breath, when mine eyes shall close in death, see thee on thy judgement throne, thou must save and thou alone'*. Many years before I even knew Jesus, he knew me even then.

***Eternal God, Rock of Ages,
cleft for me, let me hide
myself in thee.***



FAMILY NEWS

AT OTLEY PARISH CHURCH



CONGRATULATIONS CONNIE!

Connie Pettinger, daughter of Tom and Katherine, celebrated her 6th birthday on 11th October. She was born in 2019.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY GRACE!

**Grace Elizabeth was born on
27th November 2024 at Harrogate Hospital.
She is the daughter of Jo and Michael Evans.**



HAPPY BIRTHDAY REID!

Reid Haddow was born in Bridlington way back on
23 November 1945.

He is seen here with his great-granddaughter, Mabel.



BAPTISM OF OLIVER DALTON

Oliver was baptised on Sunday 2nd November at Otley Parish Church. He is seen here with his mum, Victoria, and dad, Mark, and brothers George (left) and Edward (right). Oliver is 2 years old – born at Leeds General Infirmary on 15th September 2023.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARY!

Mary Pike celebrated her 65th birthday on 20th October 2025.
She was born in Selsdon, Surrey, in 1960.

CALAIS TEN YEARS ON

Barry and Glynis Milner regularly visit Calais to support the refugees

“My people shall dwell in a peaceful habitation” (Isaiah 32:18)

N OCTOBER THIS YEAR we went to Calais with generous donations of clothes, warm blankets, sleeping bags, tents, hygiene kits and children's toys from our Church family and friends – thank you!

We have been many times since 2012 to the Refugee Community Kitchen (RCK) where meals for up to 600 people are prepared and cooked each day. This time we went with a lovely group of people who volunteer, serving the



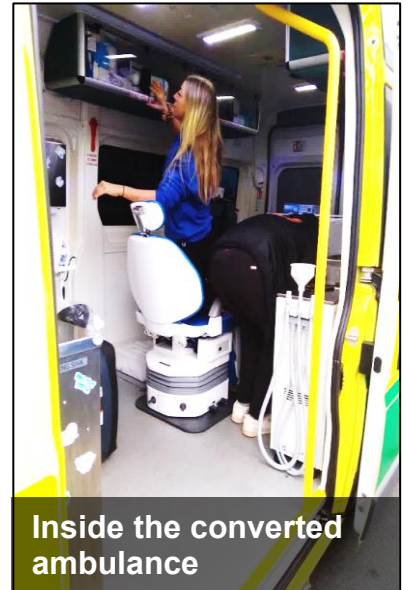
Ambulance converted into a mobile dental surgery

needs of homeless people in Leeds on Friday evenings. We were joined by two dentists from London, one who had purchased an ambulance which he had converted into a very impressive mobile dental surgery. Over the three days they were able to treat 46 patients with examinations, fillings and extractions. It was emotional much of the time

and seeing people being so well cared for in such extreme conditions was certainly high on the emotional scale.

We linked up with Care4Calais on the afternoons we shared with refugees. Care4Calais gave us all a detailed briefing before we went to different locations around Calais, asking us to be friendly but not intrusive, to listen, to show kindness, to show respect for each person we met – to love our neighbour as ourselves. We were reminded of the words from the hymn on Remembrance Sunday – ‘of the love that asks no questions’ when meeting with the refugees.

For a few hours each day we hoped that each person who joined us would have respite from the daily hardships they endured. We were so



Inside the converted ambulance

aware of God's presence when groups of young men arrived looking sad and weary and transformed as they enjoyed playing football, showing their skills, laughing and having an amazing time. They were equally happy when we provided a large Bluetooth party speaker to enable them to dance to their music.

There was an opportunity for people to resurrect old rusty bicycles. We shall never forget an earnest young man who we helped to clean and oil a bike that started out looking as only fit for scrap. After an hour of hard work and perseverance we were rewarded by his wonderful wide smile and a 'high five' as he rode off on the bike.

Other activities included a craft table where people made friendship bracelets, tables set up for board games, including chess (one young man played two games concurrently!) and opportunities for a haircut. Hot drinks and snacks were served. Different clothing items were distributed each day; Care4Calais would only distribute when they had sufficient stock so that no one was turned away.

We always tend to feel that we are on a roller coaster ride when in Calais. As we watched young people dancing, we saw a man approaching with 4 children following him, ages ranging from 3 to 10 years. He carried a pop-up tent and blankets and one big bag, He was alone with his children, and we gave thanks that Care4Calais were there. We saw the children arrive both sad and worried, then change into the carefree little people they should be when they played ball and coloured in books whilst their father was helped.

We met and prayed with a young newly qualified doctor from Iran who was persecuted because he was a Christian. He left us holding his crucifix, smiling and saying he hoped to be in Britain soon.

Out of respect for privacy we don't take photographs of the people we meet. However, we have our memory snapshots instead, chopping vegetables to feed 600 people each day, remembering the children whose eyes have seen too much too soon and the young vibrant people who long to be given a chance to belong.

We see many mini miracles, the relieved smiles of those who have had dental treatment in a Calais carpark and remember their faces and waves as they left us. We thank God for the dentist's expertise and commitment and thank Him for His Holy Spirit at work.

As always, we come back from Calais thanking God for his loving, supporting presence.

We have no quick fix political answers, we only have hands to chop vegetables and feet to walk alongside people for a short time, remembering the many biblical migratory journeys, including that of the refugee baby Jesus and his family.

Blue Plaque Unveiling

Elizabeth Garnett 1839-1921

A remarkable social reformer born and raised in Otley



**Leeds Civic Trust unveiled its 205th blue plaque
in Church Lane on Friday 10th October 2025
in honour of Elizabeth Garnett**

Born on 23rd September 1839, Elizabeth Garnett grew up in Otley where her father, Revd Joshua Hart, was Vicar of Otley Parish Church from 1837. In 1849, he consecrated the Navvies Memorial in Otley Parish Church graveyard, a tribute to the men who died while building the Bramhope Tunnel. That moment had a lasting effect on Elizabeth, and it stayed with her into adulthood.

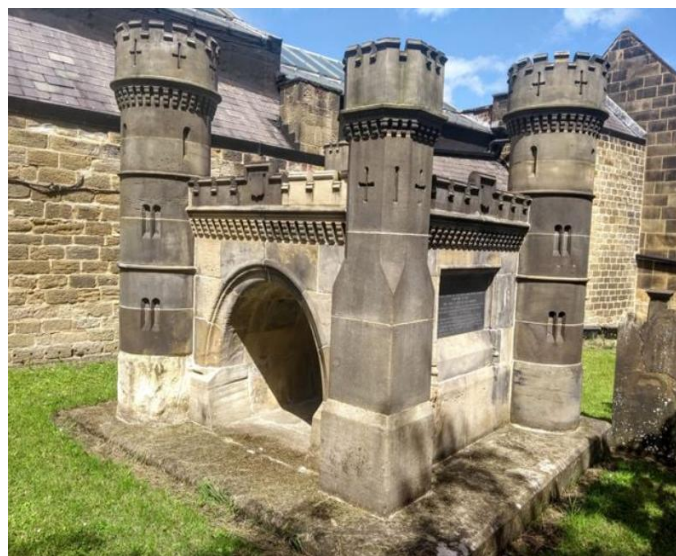
After suffering the early loss of her husband in 1862, Elizabeth found renewed purpose in a life of service. She immersed herself in navvy communities, setting up schools, improving health and sanitation, and promoting fairness and moral support.

In the 1870s, she began working with the navvies, the labourers who built railways, canals and reservoirs across Britain. Their lives were tough. Moving from site to site they often lived in poor conditions with no proper housing, healthcare, or education for their children. They were also judged harshly by wider society.

In 1877, Elizabeth helped set up the Navvy Mission Society, an organisation that didn't just offer spiritual support, but practical support too. She opened schools for navvy children, arranged medical care, and spoke out about the need for better living and working conditions. She also wrote books and articles that shared the real stories of navvy life, helping to change public opinion.

Her work didn't just stay local. The society grew nationally and went on to influence other social reform movements. The Navvy Mission Society later became part of the Industrial Christian Fellowship, which still exists today.

Elizabeth Garnett passed away in 1921. Her legacy still lives on in the foundations of modern social work and community welfare.



The Navvies Memorial

An impressive monument in memory of those who died during construction of the Bramhope Tunnel. It is positioned in the small section of the churchyard on the north side of Church Lane. The unusual design is a replica of the crenellated north portal of the Bramhope Tunnel and is Grade II listed.

Revd. Joshua Hart

Vicar of Otley Parish Church, 1837-1865

Inducted at Otley Parish Church on 1st July 1837, this 39 year old Middlesex man, and his wife Hannah, took up residence in the Church Lane vicarage. Joshua was born in London on 28th February 1799. At the age of 37 on 2nd March 1836 he married Hannah Wailes at St John the Baptist Church in Knaresborough. The 1851 Census shows they had 7 children – Peter 22, Henry 13, Elizabeth 11, Joshua 9, Hannah 7, Henrietta 6, Gertrude 1. On Sunday 15th October 1865, intending to preach at both morning and evening services, Joshua rose at 6am but was ‘suddenly seized with apoplexy and expired at about half past twelve’. He was 66 years old. Joshua was buried at Otley Cemetery on Pool Road. His wife, Hannah, died 21 years later in Ripon at the age of 77 on 16th October 1886.

PRAYER IDEAS *for* **EVERYDAY CHRISTIANS**

John Simkins

Introduction

Church history shows us that there have been times when a sense of the need to pray has come upon the 'wider church' and the outcomes are well recorded. These have been the most effective when 'ordinary' Christians have taken up God's call: 'people movements'.

In recent years, again, there has been a strong emphasis on the need for the church to rediscover prayer.

Prayer is something for all Christians to be engaged in, and a normative part of their life.

My hope in writing this is to encourage every Christian to embrace prayer as a natural part of daily life; knowing 'God with us' and praying for others we connect with.

I first wrote this in 2013 in response to a request from a leaders' training programme in Devon to speak on prayer. We were about to move from Exeter to Yorkshire. For several years we had been involved in connecting with Christians in the city and helping to steer some united prayer. This is what shaped the substance of what follows, together with some editing after helpful comments from others.

John Simkins
Otley Parish Church

Prayer Ideas for Everyday Christians
is a book of eleven chapters
each of which will feature in future editions of In Touch



3. Understanding prayer as central to our faith?

This to encourage us, inwardly and openly, thoughtfully and vocally, to engage our privilege and right as Christians to both listen and speak to our God.

The God who speaks

Perhaps it is appropriate to think first about listening before talking! *To you, Lord, I call; you are my Rock, do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I shall be like those who go down to the pit. Hear my call for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands towards your Most Holy Place.*

[Psalm 28:1-2]

Interestingly, David likens deadness to empty silence. In contrast, the Bible consistently reveals God as one who communicates with us by various means. This is a study in itself, but my emphasis here is that our disposition toward God should be as listener-speaker. An aspect of our trust in him is as our teacher, encourager, guide and prophet. He will not permit us to miss his points of view if we are willingly receptive.

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

[John 16:12-13]

The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He awakens me morning by morning. He awakens my ear to hear as the learned.

[Isaiah 50:4 NKJV]

We need to build space into our relationship with God for listening. We will not know *how to speak* unless we know how to *hear*. Training ourselves in our more solitary, meditative moments with the Bible to be hearers will increasingly mean we don't miss *the still small voice* [Elijah – 1 Kings 19:12] in the noisy environments of informational clatter as the day goes by.

Perhaps we should often pray '*speak, for your servant hears*', as did Samuel when *the Lord came and stood and called* him by name. [1 Samuel 3:10]

Maybe we talk too much! Maybe we've become dull in hearing. Maybe we need awakening – as did Samuel and as did 'the servant of the Lord' in Isaiah.

The grace of communication with God

Cultivate listening but remember that our God is the supremely good listener and ours is the privilege to speak to him.

Here is an **ABC**

ACCESS

*Justified through faith – we have gained **access** by faith into this grace in which we now stand.*

[Romans 5:1-2]

*Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ... **access** to the Father by one Spirit. [*

Ephesians 2:13-18]

*In Christ Jesus our Lord... we have boldness and **access** with confidence through faith in Him.*

[Ephesians 3:11-12 NKJV]

I recommend William Barclay's book 'New Testament Words' on the meaning of the Greek behind this word. He says: "Jesus is the person who introduces us into the royal presence of God. With him alone we can enter into that presence without fear, he is God's introducer".

A more literal translation of Romans 5:2 is 'by faith we have had our introduction into this grace'. This evokes memories of the story in Esther 5 as she is brought into the presence of the king and invited to speak.

Burclay also reminds us that in the Romans 5 passage, the introduction is not only to God but into *this grace in which we now stand*. In the colloquial Greek of the time, it was sometimes used of a storm-tossed boat being offered harbour / shelter.

It is important to remember that justification is not only retrospective but a doorway into the privileges of immediacy with God; the very present reality of God's grace and supply.

BBOLDNESS

See the NKJV Ephesians 3:11-12 reference above. The NIV uses the word *freedom* instead. The Greek word here is commonly used in the New Testament of situations where someone is 'given the floor' – freedom of speech; offered the opportunity to speak in an uninhibited way. Sometimes it implies that opportunity is taken rather than simply given. This is not cocksureness or arrogance.

*Having **boldness** to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.*
[Hebrews 10:19-22 NKJV]

Imagine being given the opportunity to speak to a person of importance and being dumbstruck! It is OK to communicate with him.

CONFIDENCE

The words boldness and confidence are translated variously and overlap but it is helpful to think of a third Greek word which is often translated by *confidence* and is the third word to appear in Ephesians 3:12.

*Such **confidence** we have through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.*
[2 Corinthians 3:4-5]

NKJV uses the word *trust* for confidence. This carries the slightly different emphasis of persuasion, assurance - trust expresses it nicely.

Trust is a BIG word. We live in a sceptical society and this can weaken our approach to prayer. To take a position within ourselves – sometimes against the odds – that God is trustworthy is essential. This does not mean that we expect press-button answers or simplistic rational outcomes to our prayers. It does mean the joy of living in an atmosphere which is indeed 'beyond us' in the double meaning those words imply.

Fear...
Lies...
Despair...

TRIUMPH!

by LESLEY NOBLE



Introduction

I was born in 1949 and had a poor childhood filled mainly with fear, lies, loneliness and despair, which impacted my life in a negative way for the first forty years. Then, between 1991 and 1993 my healing process began.

I feel the need to tell my story with the hope that anyone reading it may be encouraged if they ever thought things would never get better for them in their own lives.

I found it very therapeutic when starting to write this book. One of the main wonderful things is that, in the end, I know that for all my past I've not only been forgiven, but I have also learned to forgive.

A STORY TO BE TOLD... TO ENCOURAGE... ALL IS WELL



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More Fear, More Anxiety

BY THIS TIME I was able to buy good clothes, and this helped my self-esteem. It was good to be able to work two jobs, sometimes three, as I took on a Sunday regular shift at a coffee bar in Leeds centre. Things were going well for quite a while with Tony and I, and we went out regularly after work, mainly to pubs and clubs. He wanted a new car, and I helped to pay for it. Then one day after work, I went home and my mam had a few neighbours sitting round the table with the Ouija board. I was never interested in that, nor any other weird fortune telling rubbish, but she said, “come and try it - it’s okay, its harmless, come and join us!” and like a fool, I did. Finger on the glass! Ask it a question she said, so I asked am I going to marry Tony? And it went to No! Ask it something else she said, so I asked, am I going to have children? And it spelled out “baby boy, dead”. I was shocked, and stopped right there! But my mind was reeling. I believed this thing and I couldn’t get it out of my mind. I remember being on the bus and praying in my mind to a God I didn’t know, that I would never get pregnant. This foolish act affected me negatively for years.

I applied to be a bus conductress, and walked straight into it. It was so easy to change jobs back then, and it was much better pay and there were loads of opportunities for working overtime, so that suited me financially. I wore my uniform almost permanently. Working overtime and doing split shifts became normal, as did using bad language - almost everyone working there swore.

After almost two years the relationship between Tony and I was beginning to change. He had a sarcastic streak that began to upset me, and an aggressive manner if he drank too much. Alongside this it was obvious that his car was mainly for his benefit as he used it for work, and to tinker

under the bonnet, usually on Saturdays, so we never had a drive out anywhere. Eventually, things came to a head on two occasions that made me realize this relationship was too one-sided. My job called for me to work very early or very late shifts, and obviously when the last bus came in, I used to have to walk home.

One late shift, after midnight, on my two mile walk from the depot, I was almost home, and sensed a car opposite the dual carriageway with at least two men in it. They drove up to a turning point in my direction, then turned around and drove towards me, went past, then turned back again at the roundabout, and again at the turning point, so I would have had to walk past the car to reach home. They turned the engine off and just sat there. I felt really nervous. Fortunately, one of the houses on my right as I approached the car had a light on upstairs, so as casually as possible, I opened the gate and walked purposefully up the path to the side door as if living there. But I stood trembling in fear of them walking up after me, even though I was standing out of sight in the dark doorway waiting for what was a very long time, before I heard the car start up and drive away. Then cautiously I looked out to the road. Thankfully, all was clear, so I ran as fast as possible and on reaching the house could hardly breathe and had to sit on the step until I had calmed down. Then I wondered why Tony, all of this time, never offered to pick me up from work. He lived near the depot, and I was still at Cross Gates. Taking me home would have been a ten-minute journey for him, and would have ensured my safety.

A second incident was on Boxing Day evening. We went to a pub in Leeds centre and as it was getting very late, I suggested that we went home. A row followed and I became upset because he wanted to stay, so I left and fully expected him to follow me in the car. But he didn't. There were no buses as it was a bank holiday, so he let me walk home, alone, heartbroken all the way. When he turned up the next day, I ended our relationship, in spite of him pleading how sorry he was. I was eighteen, and had had enough.

● **Chapter 6 of “Fear... Lies... Despair... Triumph!” will be published in the February 2026 edition of *In Touch*.**

Keep in touch with...

IN TOUCH

We would love you to keep in touch and tell us what you would like to see in YOUR monthly Church magazine.

Yes, it is yours!

Please do let us know if you have any suggestions as to how we can make **IN TOUCH** even better than it is already. And let us know if you would like to contribute something.

What about contributing to our popular series of **In the Hot Seat** or **My Favourite Bible Verse** or **An Event that Changed My Life** or **My Devotional Thoughts** or **My Favourite Hymn** or **How I Found My Faith**?

Maybe you'd like to write a poem or a prayer or...

We would also love to hear your family news such as birthdays and anniversaries, or anything interesting; also, to see some of your family photographs.

■ Whatever you would like to share with us please bear in mind that for it to be included in the next edition of **IN TOUCH** we must hear from you no later than:

Saturday

10 January

Please send your articles, thoughts or suggestions to our Editor:

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WHO ARE WE?

OTLEY PARISH CHURCH – the oldest building in Otley – is at the heart of our town and, for over 1,000 years, people have been gathering here for worship and significant family and community events. *“There is a place for everyone, with Christ at the centre of it all.”*

We are a gathering place for pilgrims on a journey of discovery, kindling hope as we go, helping one another to be more fully alive to the wonders, joys and sorrows of life. We'd love you to share the journey with us.

We want to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to Christ and in service to our local community.

Join us in worshipping God together on Sundays and in daily life; be with us as we study and discern how to use the Bible in the 21st century; learn with us what it is to be 21st century disciples following Jesus and help us, with the other churches in the town, to bring good news to Otley and far beyond.



Otley Parish
CHURCH