

OCTOBER 2026

IN TOUCH

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Otley Parish
CHURCH

Key Information

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Revd. Aaron Kennedy

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CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

Sarah McCormack

CHURCH OFFICE

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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

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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



When The Wind Blows: A Church That Prays

Last month, I wrote about being ready for the movement of the Holy Spirit. I used the picture of a windmill: its sails standing ready, waiting to catch the wind whenever it blows. We cannot manufacture the wind, but we can make sure that we are ready when it comes.

I wonder whether prayer is one of the ways in which we make ourselves ready?

Recent events in our own community have brought this into sharp focus. A much-loved member of our church family has suffered a terrible accident and remains seriously unwell and unconscious. Many of us are carrying shock, sadness, fear and questions. We are praying for him, for his family and for all those who love him. We also have many others living with serious illness and acute chronic pain - some are on our prayer list, but others are just quietly soldiering on.

And perhaps, in the midst of such pain, there is a question that God is asking us - not a question about *why* tragedies and sickness happen, but a question about *how we will respond*.

I do not believe that God is the author of our brother's injury. Scripture does not teach us to look at tragedy and simply conclude that God has caused it because someone has done something wrong. Jesus himself challenges that way of thinking. There is mystery here, and we should be humble about what we do and do not know.

But God remains sovereign. And if we believe that, then even in circumstances we would never have chosen, we can ask: ***Lord, what are you calling us to do now?***

Perhaps the answer is: **Pray**.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God says: “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land”.

Those words were spoken in a particular historical context, and we should not simply lift them out of that context as a formula guaranteeing a particular outcome. But the principle remains deeply searching. When God’s people encounter need, we are called to humble ourselves, seek his face, turn towards him and pray.

So, perhaps this tragedy is an invitation for us as a church to become a praying church.

Not simply a church that believes in prayer. Not simply a church that occasionally includes prayer in its meetings. But a people who actually stop, seek God and cry out to him.

Let us pray boldly for healing. Let us pray for the doctors and nurses. Let us pray for strength and peace for his family. Let us pray when we know what to say, and when we have no words at all. Let us pray

with faith, while also leaving the outcome in the loving hands of God.

And let us allow prayer to change *us*. Let us humble ourselves. Let us examine our hearts. Let us put right what needs putting right. Let us forgive one another. Let us seek God’s face - not merely his gifts, but God himself.

Last month I wrote about the sails of the windmill standing ready for the wind of the Spirit.

Perhaps this is what readiness looks like: a church on its knees, seeking the face of God, ready for whatever the Holy Spirit may do.

So, let us pray. *And let us pray with hope.*

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

CELEBRATING



LAST YEAR we restarted Messy Church here at Otley Parish Church, and what a fantastic time we've had!

Messy Church is all about being Christ-centred, creative, hospitable, celebratory and accessible to all ages, and it has been a real joy to see these values come to life in our church family and wider community.

Sadly, we have decided as a team that we need to take a break from hosting Messy Church for now, but we wanted to take this opportunity to celebrate the success and thank everyone who has been involved.

We were delighted by the attendance at all our sessions, with many families joining us throughout the year and at some of our Easter events, welcoming well over 60 children and their grown-ups. Many other churches wouldn't even dream of those numbers! But it's absolutely not just a number game. One of the most encouraging things has been seeing families return again and again. Relationships have grown, familiar faces have become friends, and a genuine sense of community has begun to develop.

Our themed sessions have been brilliantly received, from Paddington Bear and Bluey to Coco, 'Guess How Much I Love You?' and 'Go Jettters'. Imaginative ideas which are accessible to children have helped us explore God's love and care in creative and memorable ways. We've loved seeing children and adults alike getting stuck into crafts, activities, games, prayer and conversation, all while exploring faith together. The hospitality aspect of Messy Church is vital, and people seem genuinely touched to be offered a cup of tea and a slice of cake in the midst of what can often be exhausting days for parents.

One of the greatest blessings has been the team that makes it all possible. Messy Church is a genuine all-age, all-church effort. It's been wonderful to work alongside such a wide range of volunteers, including people who may not be able to commit to regular children's work but are happy to help in other ways. Whether welcoming families, preparing and serving food, setting up tables, tidying away at the end, or helping with activities, every

contribution matters. It was so wonderful working together as a team and brought us so much joy! Katie and I have also been able to access support from the online diocesan 'Messy Church Learning Community', which has been really helpful and encouraging.

Messy Church is sometimes viewed as an outreach activity, but its value cannot be measured simply by whether people later attend a traditional Sunday service. Messy Church *is* church. It provides a place where people can encounter God's love, build relationships, explore faith and belong to a community in a way that works for them. That is something worth celebrating in its own right.

Of course, putting on Messy Church has been hard work. Planning, preparation, set-up, hospitality, activities and clearing away all require a committed team. If in the new year we are in a position to restart Messy Church, we'd love more people to get involved. You don't need to lead children's activities. Practical help before and after sessions is just as important and hugely appreciated.

If you'd like to find out more about past sessions or would like to discuss the future of Messy Church here at the parish church, please speak to either Katie Mayers or me - Katherine Pettinger katherinepettinger@gmail.com.

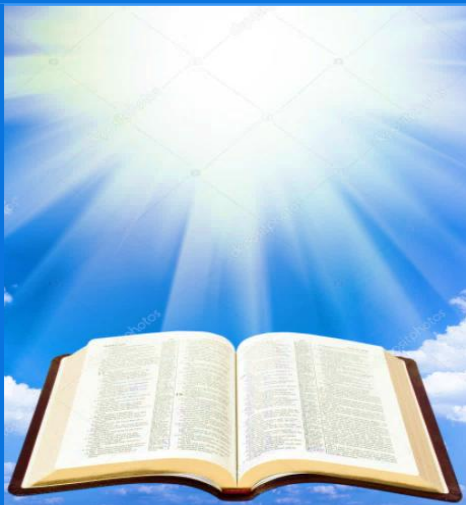
*The **Messy Church**® name and logo are registered trademarks of Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), a charity (233280) and company limited by guarantee (301324), registered in England and Wales.*



Some of the craft and fun things that happen here

My Favourite Bible Verse

Jean Boddy



“God, investigate my life; get all the facts firsthand. I’m an open book to you; even from a distance, you know what I’m thinking.”

Psalm 139:1-2 (The Message)

I love these verses as they give me the knowledge that God knows me through and through and still loves me enough to care for me despite all my weaknesses and uncertainties. He can see through any pretence. Sometimes in this world we have to put on an act but before God we don't have to. He knows me and he loves me despite my human weaknesses.

Sometimes, the future looks very uncertain, but I know that God prepares the way ahead which reduces the fear of the unknown. I know, too, that God will be with me and will uphold me in whatever trials are to come.

The version of this passage, in fact most of this psalm in the Message talks of God's reassuring presence and I find that immensely comforting.

Some Reflections On

The Book of James

DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS in our morning services, we looked at the book of James for a few weeks. Following the preaching of Simon Robinson on Sunday 2nd August about listening to promote peace, it made me think of a visit I made in June this year to the Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo, Norway.



Nobel Peace Centre, Oslo, Norway

The main point of the book of James is that authentic Christian faith must be proven by action, meaning true belief always results in a changed life, good deeds and practical obedience to Jesus. The letter focuses on how to live out a mature faith day by day.

James 1:19 says, *"My dear brothers, take note of this. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."*

After Simon preached about listening, I would like to share with you the following which was on the wall in one of the many galleries in the Nobel Peace Centre. It says about listening.

Are You Listening?

1. Listen to what is being said. Do not let your own thoughts and prejudices interfere with your ability to listen
2. Do not give advice unless it is requested
3. Do not interrupt. Let the other person finish speaking
4. Do not take over the conversation by drawing parallels to your own experience. Allow the other person their time; you will get yours
5. Be empathetic and show understanding for the other person's situation. Try to understand the other person without becoming upset yourself
6. Do not presume to know other people's opinions

I don't know about you, but I fall down on a few of the above points in terms of my listening skills.

My visit to the Nobel Peace Centre was profoundly a moving experience and reading the life stories of many of the prize winners was humbling. If you have the opportunity to go and visit do it's certainly well worthwhile. The points about listening reinforce the learning from reading and studying James last summer.

I would also like to share with you something else I saw on the wall at the Nobel Peace Centre. It made me think about our home nation and the many pressures upon our society. It's called:

Democracy and Autocracy

Today, democracies rarely die in a single moment. They erode gradually, from within. Around the world, elected leaders weaken courts, restrict the press, and turn mistrust into power.

Few countries are purely democratic or wholly autocratic. Most societies move along a fragile line between light and shadow. Protecting trust, truth, justice and freedom of opinion is crucial.

Tom Raper
Churchwarden



FAMILY NEWS

AT OTLEY PARISH CHURCH



Alison McCrory and her son Harry are daughter and grandson of our Church member Pauline Coultas. Harry was 18 years old on 23rd August 2026 and Alison 50 years old on 24th August 2026.



**GEORGE
OLIVER
JUKES**
was baptised
at Otley Parish Church
by Revd. Aaron Kennedy
on Sunday
6th September 2026.





Congratulations!!

Irene and Bryan Dexter celebrated their 66th Wedding Anniversary on Thursday 17th September 2026.

They were married at Otley Parish Church on 17th September 1960. Irene was born and brought up in Otley. Bryan was born in Manchester and moved to Otley in 1942 because of his father's work. Irene and Bryan met each other in the 1950s when they were members of Otley Parish Church Youth Fellowship. They started going out together in 1955.



CONGRATULATIONS ROY!

**Roy Morgan celebrated his
90th birthday on 31st July.**

**He was born in 1936
in the village of Garswood,
near St. Helens, Merseyside.**



**HAPPY
BIRTH
Day**

**DOUBLE
CELEBRATIONS!!**

Rosemarie and Jeff Utle
both celebrated their
birthdays while away on
holiday in Funchal, Madeira.

ROSEMARIE
was 76 on 16th August

JEFF
was 80 on 22nd August



DOMESTIC ABUSE

We Need to Talk about Domestic Abuse

THIS IS A TOPIC which many of us, as part of the wider church community, have found difficult to accept as even possibly being part of the experience of people within that community.

The scary statistic however, from a study of churches in Cumbria, found that 1 in 4 women in churches had experienced some form of domestic abuse. This was with more than half being at the hands of Christian perpetrators including partners/husbands and many of these men held in high positions in their church organisation.

Domestic abuse includes acts of physical and sexual violence and intimidation but also what we call now - coercive control - including financial and emotional abuse and isolating the woman from family and friends. Although we may wonder why women remain in these destructive relationships - the manipulation of the relationship involving a cycle of abuse or violence - followed by a period of regret and apology keep women hoping that things will get better. Especially if children are involved and the woman is financially reliant on her partner, it is often difficult for her to envisage the possibility of a life outside the relationship.

The great sadness is that of these women who were abused - only just over half sought the support of their church. Many were told - often by their vicar, minister or deacon, to try harder, to pray about it, that it must be something they had done, or worse - that the dominance of men in an intimate relationship is supported in the Bible!

Of course, men do suffer domestic abuse too at the hands of their partners but this is far less common. There is also significant abuse within same sex relationships.

We want Otley Parish Church to be a place where we can acknowledge that bad things do happen to people within our church family - that we can be a safe place for people to share their troubles - and that we can be a supportive church whether abuse is happening at that time or is something that was endured many years ago.

The C of E have designed many training programmes to support safeguarding within our congregations and one of these is about domestic abuse.

Everyone who has a volunteer role that involves children, young people or vulnerable adults is required to do this training. It can be done on line - and many of us have completed this. However, I know that it is often difficult for people to easily access these courses and domestic abuse is a challenging one.

So, there will be an opportunity on **Monday October 26th at 7pm** in our Parish Room to do this training as a group exercise. Everyone there will be accredited with having completed the course and whilst it is required training for many, it will be open to anyone who wants to be informed and to be part of our open, listening church.

If you want to talk about these or other concerns that you have for yourself or someone else, Aaron, or I can be contacted. Or maybe the first step is to share those concerns with someone else with whom you trust.

I look forward to seeing many of you on October 26th.

Jenny Liston
Parish Safeguarding Officer

A year on... What have I learned?



Stewart with his granddaughter Alice

It is just over a year since I left Otley to move to Didcot in Oxfordshire to be nearer my family. It has been a delight to get to know my grandchildren better, Alice 6 years and Olivia 2 years, and to share in their lives.

It was not easy to leave Otley especially OPC and the lovely supportive friends I have there. OPC is a very special church and is hard to find another like it. Rosemary and I spent many happy years in Otley and they can't be replicated. So that is the first thing I have learnt!

I am slowly getting to know people and continue my calling as a minister of the Gospel. I preach on average about twice a month and have just been accepted as a Vocations Advisor for the Diocese of Oxford. I hope through it I can continue to encourage people to grow in their faith and maybe help them to discern what Jesus is calling them to.

As some of you know I love walking. Oxfordshire is very different to Yorkshire. It is flat and there are no dry-stone walls; mostly hedges and ditches. Some of the hedges are very ancient with magnificent Oaks and Chestnuts. I am discovering some favourite walks but there is much more to explore as Didcot is in the 'Vale of the White Horse', with interesting ancient towns and villages. So, the second thing I have learnt is that there is beauty wherever you live if you are willing to look for it. 'For the Lord God made them all!'

The main thing I have had to re-learn is trust! As we go on in the Christian life and learn more and more to trust our Heavenly Father, it can feel like we are building up a bank balance of trust, a bit like a 'Rainy Day' bank account, but when the next challenge comes along, we have to learn to trust all over again! God hasn't changed in his love for us, just the new situation.

A scripture which you will probably know which keeps recurring in my life and probably in your life too is Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV):

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will direct your paths.

I hope to go on re-learning this lesson as I approach my 80th birthday and beyond, but one thing I will never forget is the love and friendship I found at Otley Parish Church. It was lovely to see you all last month at the *Local to Global Fuddle*, and at the Sunday Harvest Celebration Service.

The Lord bless each and every one of you.

Stewart x

CARBON NET ZERO



Heritage, Community and Climate A sustainable Future for Otley Parish Church

Going forward in faith

This is an update from Otley Parish Church CNZ group on what has been happening since our last In Touch article.

We have prepared a grant funding submission for an increased budget of nearly £3 million which we hope will be approved by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The submission has been delayed from May this year until November due to the complexities of managing such a project.

On the positive side, the delay gives us more time to fundraise and prepare, so that we can hit the ground running, if we are successful. We are grateful to all those who have contributed to the Roof Fund and attended or organised events, such as Otley Sings. The total raised from the outset is £90,020: £84,250 in donations with Gift Aid, £2,710 from fundraising events and £3,060 of bank interest.

Part of the CNZ mandate is to increase awareness of the presence and heritage of the Church in Otley, and this is fundamental to us winning funding from the NLHF. Heritage Walks are one way of us doing this, to help people discover the wonderful heritage of Otley and especially the oldest building in town - our Church! These are free events, open to all and include refreshments provided by Maggie, for walkers and those attending the Tour of the Church afterwards. If you have further suggestions as to how we may develop our heritage, please feel free to talk to any member of the group: Allan / Ken / Norman / Tom / Tony / Trevor / Tricia.

Sadly, Martin is no longer part of our group. One of his roles was to organise eco-friendly cleaning materials and recycling. We would welcome any new volunteers who would like to join CNZ or help in a different way - all skills are needed and everyone (Church member or not) is welcome.

PATIENCE

with God and Each Other

James 5:7-12 / Matthew 16:21- end

Paul Ayres

Venerable Paul Ayres, Archdeacon of Leeds, was the preacher at our church on Sunday 30th August 2026. Here is his sermon.



Be patient, says James. Six times in these few verses he uses the words *patience* or *endurance* (*perseverance*). *Be patient... the farmer waits patiently... be patient... take as an example of patience the prophets... we bless those who endure... you've heard of the endurance of Job...*

So first, **patience with God**, second **patience with each other**, and the third something that undergirds them both.

Being patient with God (and with each other) is part of accepting the reality that we are creatures not the Creator, and we are not in control of the future. He gives these two examples: the farmer, which is a generalisation, and the prophets, who are specific individuals. I don't know much about farming, but I've been watching Clarkson's Farm. Now, whatever you think about Jeremy Clarkson (and who doesn't?) he has shown townies like me a lot of the reality of farming where you are subject to forces beyond your

control: essentially the weather, and the market. In 2023 the weather was too wet at harvest time; in 2024 it was too wet to plant; and in 2025 it was too dry for things to grow. And then the market determined whether what he could grow would actually pay.

You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. The record of Scripture shows that God has always kept his promises – he just never tells us what his timeline is. That's true of the mighty works of God for Israel and for the world, and it's equally true at the micro level of our own lives.

The right response is patience and perseverance, endurance. *As an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets...* you can think of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Jeremiah, Daniel, and he mentions Job. They clung on to God's promises over time.

The bedrock of patient prayer is of course the Psalms (and if you're not already using the Psalms as the foundation of your daily prayer, definitely give it a try). What are the two big questions that the Psalmist asks most often? *Why? And How long? Why do the nations conspire...? Why Lord do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself? Why have you forsaken me? Why do you hide your face? How long, O Lord, how long? How long will you forget me, for ever? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts? How long will the wicked be jubilant? How long must your servant wait?* "Why?", because I don't understand what's going on; and "How long?" because I don't know how long I can stand it. But the Psalmist stays with God, commits the future to God, and perseveres in faithful prayer.

And it's not a design flaw in the universe that we don't know the answers to these questions. It's part of our life as mortal creatures in space and time. It's part of our cross-shaped discipleship, taking up our cross and following Jesus as he says in our Gospel reading.

And in daily life that translates into being *patient with each other. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged.* We had a trip to London recently, and some of our group didn't like the crowds, on the streets and in the gallery we visited. It's hard to make progress because of the sheer numbers, and because of the dawdlers. And I told myself, they are not just a crowd, each one is a unique individual, a precious child of God, who just NEEDS TO GET OUT OF MY WAY! No, just as we are not in control of God, we are not in control of each other.

Paul tells the Ephesians, *'be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love'*. And the Thessalonians, *'be patient with*

everyone'. Christian discipleship is not about everything and everyone falling into place to suit me, it's about patient endurance.

The mood of a lot of politics and social commentary is, if only the idiots would get out of the way we could sort everything out. And it depends on your point of view who the idiots are. And we can experience that in the Church. There are always conflicts on the macro or micro scale, and the temptation is to think, if only the idiots would get out of the way, we'd be OK. Often internal conflict is a sign of an organisation under external pressure. The external pressures on the Church in the West are obvious: decline in attendance and observance, and a public discourse which has for decades more or less excluded Christianity. It's sometimes easier to turn on each other than to face what seems inevitable and overwhelming. But the work of the Holy Spirit within is to produce patient endurance. Think of the fruit of the Spirit: it's not generally about warm feelings: *love, joy, peace*- yes – but *patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*.

So there's patience with God and patience with each other. Both of these are undergirded by a third thing, the most important: **God's patience with us**. One of my daughters teaches A-level Product Design. That sounds quite grand: when I was at school it was woodwork and metalwork. Then they added plastics, and it became 'resistant materials'. That's a great description of us human creatures. God has his designs, but he is working all the time with resistant materials.

But he is *patient* with us. That's part of the classic description of God in the Old Testament. When God appeared to Moses, Exodus 34:6, *he passed in front of [him], proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger**, abounding in love and faithfulness*. That phrase 'slow to anger' is translated in Greek μακροθυμία [*makrothymia*], which is our word for *patience*, or in the old version *long-suffering*. Psalm 103 *the Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love* – and in many other passages.

This is partly because God's view of time is different to ours. Space and time are created by God, and it's virtually impossible to imagine God's eternity outside time. God has interacted with this world in time in the story of Israel, and ultimately, he has entered space and time in the person of Jesus. But he remains eternal in himself. No analogy is perfect, otherwise it wouldn't be an analogy it would be the thing itself, but I sometimes imagine we must look to God like a comic strip cartoon, where he can see the whole story at once, but we are living within it.

God's patience means that he is holding back the final manifestation of his glory. This is the meaning of the Ascension of Christ. TF Torrance says, "Faith can only exist where there is a gap... between the present and the future... If Jesus had manifested his full divine glory on earth so that men and women were confronted face to face with the ultimate majesty of God, then they would have been damned on the spot; they would have been face to face with the final judgment. But... Jesus was giving people a chance to repent; he was holding them at arm's length away, so to speak, giving them time to repent, room for decision... Now the Ascension means that Jesus Christ has withdrawn himself from sight and history to allow the whole world time for repentance."

So, 2 Peter 3:8 says, *'Do not forget this one thing, dear friends: with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like a day. The Lord is not alone in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance'*.

Incidentally, this is the link between the call to patience and the instruction not to swear. Swearing here doesn't mean bad language (that's also dealt with by Colossians 3:8 – *but now you must rid yourselves of... filthy language from your lips*). It's more about invoking the power of God to guarantee what we say is going to happen. It's saying, 'I will make the future reliable, even if God does not'. Think back to what James says earlier in 4:13, *Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow... instead you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that"*. Swearing is impatience made audible – the refusal of creaturely uncertainty.

We are called to be patient with God and with each other, because God is patient with us. And God's patience is the Cross of Christ spread across time. That's why it's called his Passion – the root of the word is the same as patience. *Be patient until the Lord's coming*. We persevere patiently with God and with each other, until his perfect time, in each of our lives and in the life of the world, God's patience with us all will come to fruition. His long-suffering love gives us our time in which we live, the grace in which we stand, and the future to which we will come.

Jo Briscoe

AS ONE DOOR CLOSES...

TWELVE YEARS AGO, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. After some invasive but successful treatment I started to re-evaluate life, as is often the case with big life events.

I had worked in my job as a nurse in a Christian GP practice in Bradford for a long time, and whilst I knew it was still where God wanted me to work, it wasn't my same 'forever' job. A seemingly chance conversation with a tutor from Bradford College led to me enrolling, in 2017, on a part-time HNC (Higher National Certificate) course in Constructed Textiles, focussing on knitting, which had been a lifelong hobby. Imagine my horror when I got there and was told the college no longer had a knitting tutor! I was given the option to embroider or weave. Not phased by the fact I had never done any weaving before, the tutors said, "No worries, we'll teach you". And they did!!



I went on to complete the HNC, had a year off for Covid, then started a Foundation Degree. At the end of this, students were encouraged to enter a competition for Yorkshire arts graduates at Sunny Bank Mills in Farsley. Rather reluctantly I entered and was one of forty selected for an exhibition. At the end of the exhibition, I was voted People's Choice. My prize was some studio space at the Mill for a few months.

This became a bit of a turning point, a validation of my skill as a weaver, and the opportunity to push and see where it would lead. It led to



further study... this time a BA in Textile Practice, again part time, enabling me to fit it in (or juggle) study, work, family life, but the allotment had to go!

I am delighted to say that this summer I graduated with a 2:1 BA (Hons) Textiles Practice. So far, my making has been art pieces for exhibition. I am part of a group exhibition at National Trust property Nunnington Hall (Sept-Dec) and have a solo exhibition at Gairloch Museum & Gallery next year for 3 months. Oh, and after 44 years working in the NHS, 36 of them in my current role, I am retiring in September to become a full time weaver.

My degree exhibition looked at indigo production, slavery associated with this historically and slavery in the textile industry today. Next time you buy clothing ask yourself do you want it or really need it? How many times will you wear it? Who made it and in what conditions were they forced to work?

We worship a creator God and we each represent that in different ways. It doesn't have to be words alone, which is a huge relief for me! I strongly believe this can be through things we make – maybe a cake, a meal... or even a piece of art.

How I Found **MY FAITH**

Margaret Turner

HOW did I find my faith? When our 'In Touch' editor asked me to consider writing this for the magazine, my first thought was, "Where do I start?". I've been involved in "church" right from my beginning. As a small child I attended a Church of England Convent school. Church and religion were all part of that experience. However, I would hesitate to say that at the age of 3 I had any firm belief, but the seed was planted.



When I moved to Australia at the age of 6, I can admit that any idea of God, Jesus etc. was really an inherent part of having faith. Wherever I lived I went to the local Sunday School which meant all varieties of Christian teaching and denominations. All I felt was that I wanted to help people. I look back now and realise that I didn't have a deep faith. Yes, I knew there was a God; I knew there was Jesus, but it wasn't until 1983 that my world crashed around me when I ended up in High Royds Hospital in Menston. For the next 13 years being in and out of hospital, I frantically tried to find what was missing from my life. I read my Bible daily, prayed regularly, still went to

church when I was well enough, was involved in a prayer group, children's work etc. In 1995 I felt the first stirrings of real faith. The Holy Spirit came into my life, and I did all I could to really feel that faith became a firm part of me.

In 1997 I was peeling the potatoes for tea when I felt God call me to investigate ways to become an ordained minister. I was accepted for training. However, life is never that simple, is it? Due to family circumstances, I could not take up my place. I was bitterly disappointed. However, God was asking me to be patient – not my strongest talent! In 1997 I did a theology degree, and after that I did a Christian Counselling course followed by a master's degree in theology, focussing on pastoral care.

My faith grew and was enhanced by working for five years for a wonderful Baptist church until retirement. My faith has grown and in 2024 I embarked on a Lay Pastoral Minister's Course with the Leeds Diocese Training Unit, finishing in 2026. I now know that God, who must have despaired many a time with my impatience, has placed me where I can truly feel my faith is rock solid.

This is where I belong now, doing what God has called me to do. It's taken 80 years though to get to this point of knowing what God had in store for me all the time. The journey continues...!

How Did You Find **YOUR FAITH?**

In recent months we've read how several people found their faith – Kate Hobson, Trevor Bailey, Megan Rose, and now Margaret Turner.

It would be lovely to hear how and when you found your faith.

We would love you to tell us, so please contact our In Touch editor, Stephen Hey, and he will give you a few simple guidelines such as maximum number of words and a deadline date for the relevant In Touch edition. Either see him in church on a Sunday or send him an email:

editor@otleyparishchurch.org



What's Your Favourite Hymn?



“What Gift of Grace is Jesus, My Redeemer”

What gift of grace is Jesus, my redeemer;
there is no more for heaven now to give.

He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom,
my steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace.

*To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus,
for my life is wholly bound to his.*

*O, how strange and divine, I can sing: all is mine!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.*

2. The night is dark but I am not forsaken,
for by my side the Saviour he will stay;
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing,
for in my need his power is displayed.

*To this I hold: my Shepherd will defend me;
through the deepest valley he will lead.*

*O, the night has been won and I shall overcome!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.*

3. No fate I dread: I know I am forgiven,
the future sure, the price it has been paid;
for Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
and he was raised to overthrow the grave.

*To this I hold, my sin has been defeated!
Jesus now and ever is my plea;*

*O, the chains are released; I can sing: I am free!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me.*

4. With every breath I long to follow Jesus,
for he has said that he will bring me home;
and day by day I know he will renew me
until I stand with joy before the throne.

*To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus,
all the glory evermore to him;*

*when the grace is complete, still my lips shall repeat:
‘Yet not I, but through Christ in me!’*

ELEANOR BOWMAN

tells us why this is her favourite hymn

If I'm being honest, I don't actually have a favourite. There are too many wonderful hymns out there and so many that I love for different reasons: gorgeous melodies, beautiful harmonies, particularly poignant lyrics, and some that just mean something incredible in the moment. So, somewhat reluctantly, I am choosing *What Gift of Grace Is Jesus My Redeemer*, also known as *Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me*.

Explaining what this hymn means to me is daunting. I'm not very good with words and find it hard to express what is essentially an emotional reaction. For me, matters of faith and belief have always been much more about a feeling than something I can neatly put into words. But where words fail, music and song have a way of expressing things for me and, thankfully, I find they often express what I cannot say myself.

And that is why this hymn is one of my favourites. There is something about it that speaks to me every time I sing it. It is full of beautiful themes: hope, forgiveness, freedom and joy, but most of all, it offers reassurance that God is there even when life is difficult. **"The night is dark but I am not forsaken"** is such a simple line,

but one that I find incredibly reassuring. There have been many times when I have struggled to see God's purpose or love, and times when I have actively rejected it. But the truth I always come back to is that *I am not forsaken*. It is in those dark times when I am held more closely, even if I don't feel it at the time.

When I first heard this hymn, it was the line, **"Yet not I, but through Christ in me"** which seemed to leap off the page. Such a simple expression, yet it seemed to put into words how I interpret my faith better than I ever could. We are not alone; whatever we face, Christ is alongside us and within us. There is something reassuring in the idea that I don't have to rely entirely on my own strength, particularly when that strength is in short supply.

Perhaps that is why this hymn sticks with me. It doesn't promise that life will always be easy or that faith will always feel straightforward. Instead, in its simplicity, it offers a quiet reassurance that, through all of it, Christ is there. And sometimes that is enough. I think that's what I love most about hymns: they are not about having all the answers. Sometimes they simply give me words to hold onto.



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

10. Encouraging prayer in congregations and beyond

All Generations

It has been common that when prayer events are arranged within or beyond a church congregation those attending are largely older people. This may be for a number of reasons. It could be that older people are more available. They also may have grown up with a tradition of prayer meetings. However, this is changing and there are encouraging signs from such as the 24-7 Prayer movement that, given the right setting and understanding, younger generations are rising to the need for prayer. This has led to fresh and innovative ways of doing things! Children can be included in praying and are often very responsive examples of simplicity. I believe a sensitive, 'whole of life' emphasis on prayer can also help the middle and busiest generations who are often the most hard-pressed.

How can I help others?

EXAMPLE

*Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. **You yourselves have not entered**, and you have hindered*

those who were entering. [Luke 11:52]

Set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. [1 Timothy 4:12]

We cannot convincingly teach others when we haven't enough inward conviction to practise what we teach. Theory alone can be a hindrance because words are not backed up with inward authenticity. But let us remember not to promote ourselves as *experts* but set an example of simplicity and humility.

PRIORITISE

This is a similar point. As someone dryly observed – 'no Christian is going to say that prayer is wrong!' But, for us to be congregationally convincing, there must be the sense of an idea being enthusiastically and corporately owned – given appropriate priority by those pastorally responsible. The results may not be immediate. With any teaching the principle of seed time and harvest applies; ideas and examples we sow now may take root and mature in a year or more – patience is necessary!

THINK BEYOND THE CHURCH WALL

Maybe we need to develop more innovative ways of encouraging prayer. Times of united, gathered prayer are beneficial, but, also, a sense of unity can be achieved with flexibility by building around people's daily lives – their timing, places and interests. See 'Equip for Everyday' below.

How may we cooperate with others outside our congregation in seeking what we should pray for? It is a healthy challenge to some of our doctrinal prejudices as we seek to find common ground!

Mission and prayer go hand-in-hand. Fruitfulness and prayerfulness are partners.

EQUIP FOR EVERYDAY

What follows does not exclude the possibility of sensibly programmed corporate prayer times.

Think where people spend their everyday lives and what time they might have. Find ways of encouraging them to pray silently, momentarily or jointly with others in the places they live, work, network

and are busy. This may need innovation, but examples could be:

- ❖ On one day a week, or everybody once a week, pray in 'our places' and for / 'our people'. A reminder card with an agreed written prayer can be carried, or a mobile phone alert set.
- ❖ There is currently a national movement where people set a phone alarm for midday, every day, to say the Lord's Prayer, whether in their heads or out loud, alone or with others.
- ❖ Postcode or neighbourhood prayer involves taking responsibility for our area. There is a national initiative for this too.

FINDING AND USING INFORMATION

- ❖ Prayer calendars, emails, social media.
- ❖ Information from local media.
- ❖ Subscribing to a prayer network.
- ❖ Church news.
- ❖ Taking news from the mainstream media prayerfully.

What is important is that each of us is informed and equipped in ways we find most appropriate. There are lots of ideas 'out there'.

I like the idea of 'Prayer-Taking': it joins the ideas of 'caretaker' and 'taking prayer' (out into the community). For example, a group of parents and others may agree to 'pray' and 'care' for a school.

GET OTHERS TO COME UP WITH THE IDEAS

Having done all this, it is important to leave room for original thinkers.

The 24-7 Prayer movement has encouraged widespread use of alternative ways of corporate praying. Prayer rooms can be set up as a drop-in place where people can spend a short or longer time. 'Prayer Spaces in Schools' provide an opportunity for young people to experience prayer, maybe for the first time.

Biblical Prayers

It would require lots more pages to cover this but it is easy to find examples of prayer throughout the Bible. Psalms have been traditionally used throughout church history. We may learn from Old Testament people of prayer such as Moses, Daniel and prophets. Take a look at Paul's prayers in his letters to see what and how he prays. Study Jesus at prayer from the Gospels – especially Luke's gospel.

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 October

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

editor@otleyparishchurch.org

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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