



THE PARISH OF BELTINGHAM WITH HENSHAW

Parish Newsletter February 2022

Our new Vicar

Following the advertisement and interview process, Bishop Mark issued the following announcement:

The Rt Reverend Mark Wroe, Bishop of Berwick and Acting Bishop of Newcastle, is pleased to announce that the Rev'd Stephen Wright, at present Priest in Charge of the Quidenham Group of Parishes, South Norfolk, in the Diocese of Norwich, has been appointed Priest in Charge of Haltwhistle and Greenhead and Assistant Curate of Beltingham and Henshaw.

Final arrangements for his licensing and installation are still to be arranged but it is expected that this will be in March 2022. Please keep Stephen and his wife Jo in your prayers as they prepare to begin their ministry among us in these parishes.

Stephen says: 'We are looking forward to moving to the 'centre of Britain' and the opportunities that can come from the joining of the parishes of Haltwhistle and Greenhead with Beltingham with Henshaw. Northumberland is a beautiful county and we've already seen the warmth of the people and we hope to be active contributors to all the good that is happening in the Diocese of Newcastle.'

Stephen's Installation

We now know that Stephen's installation will take place on 31 March at 7.30 pm. The Churchwardens of Greenhead, Haltwhistle and Beltingham with Henshaw are due to meet soon with the new Area Dean, Rev. Martin Naylor, to discuss the details of the installation. More information will be included in our next newsletter.

A message from Stephen

Haltwhistle sometime soon: Steve is taking up the role of parish priest for Haltwhistle, Greenhead, Beltingham and Henshaw. They have been used to warmer climes as they spent 22 years abroad in Nigeria, Kuwait and Dubai where they raised their three children, but they have been in south Norfolk for the last 7 years. Jo has been working as an English language teacher for asylum seekers in Norwich. They saw that the average rainfall in Haltwhistle is roughly 40% more than their present place and so have sent us a picture to show they are prepared!



Introducing Steve and Jo Wright, who are moving to our Parish

February Services

Sunday 6 February at 10.30 am at All Hallows', Henshaw

Eucharist with Rev Michael Jackson

Sunday 13 February at 10.30 am at All Hallows', Henshaw

Eucharist with Rev Jan Vandenberg

Sunday 20 February at 10.30 am at All Hallows', Henshaw

Eucharist with Rev Elaine Ryder

Sunday 27 February at All Hallows', Henshaw

Eucharist with Rev Gill Alexander

Sunday 6 March at All Hallows', Henshaw

Eucharist with Rev K Teasdale

From the Register:

Baptism: On 28 November 2021 at St Cuthbert's, Beltingham, Evelyn Lily Oliver

Baptism: On 5 December 2021 at All Hallows', Henshaw, Eric Davidson and Oliver Sparrow

Wedding blessing: On 8 January 2022 at St Cuthbert's, Beltingham, Stephen and Lyndsey Helyer

Crib Service for Henshaw Primary School – Carol Adams

'Do you think it would be possible to invite the school into church this Christmas?

A question that stopped me in my tracks. Yes, we had managed a Mothering Sunday service, Harvest, All Saints, All Souls' services, and ideas for our Carol Service, but for 86 children from 5 years to 11 years old was rather a large age range and a daunting prospect, like climbing a mountain. We consider ourselves to be an inviting, welcoming church, friendly, sincere, open for all ages - yet I wished there was someone else to lead this service.

The little grey cells worked overtime, from my experience of numerous Christmas's, in what was then a first school, I found the last week of term was a time of parties, rising excitement, Santa Claus. The Nativity plays had been watched by proud parents, carols sung, poems written, the story of the birth of Jesus told, drawn, written about in the weeks leading up to the excitement of the last week. How were we going to get the message across that God's Son was being born for us, in an interesting way that would hold their attention when they had already heard it.

Eventually I weakly committed myself and agreed that we should invite the Primary school to a service on Wednesday of the last week of term. They were delighted. It had been so long since they had been in church but there would be no parents, there wasn't enough room for social distancing. They enthusiastically asked if they could do anything for the service. We decided with them which carols they would learn and invited them to make angels of all sizes and shapes, from a variety of materials, which they certainly did, presenting us with angels from three inches to three and a half feet tall. We were overwhelmed and delighted, displaying every one of them around the church.

Now it was time to decide how to tackle this wonderful story and engage the children. I decided on a play about animals visiting the stable and changed it from a play to a story where the children would make the animal sounds. The seeds were sown and Michael Mouse began his adventure to the stable at Bethlehem, being shunned by bossy animals on the way, because he had no present for the baby. The children listened intently to the story so that they didn't miss their cue and the cacophony of sound was fun as they baa-ed, moo-ed, clucked, tu-wit, tu-wood etc. and importantly stopped on the agreed signal.

Michael arrived at the stable and it just so happened there was a hole in the wall so he climbed up to it and plonked his bottom into the hole which in turn stopped the draught blowing onto the baby. Mary and Joseph were so pleased they gave him a wink. He could watch the animals arriving, as well as the shepherds and three Kings until at last the wind stopped blowing and there were no more visitors. He returned home and saw Owl who had been told by the other animals that Michael did not have a gift or see the baby. The story ended with Michael telling Owl that he had seen baby Jesus and his was a special gift. He gave himself for as long as the cold wind blew.

All that was left for Anne and I to do was thank everyone for their efforts, making the angels, joining in with the story and to wish them a Merry Christmas. Yes, they did know the song, every verse and chorus which they stood and sang with gusto at the top of their voices, then left with big smiles on their faces. We were also smiling pleased that we had invited the young people to church to celebrate together the joy of Christmas. Most unexpectedly I had a telephone call from school on the last day of term asking if I would go and collect some 'thank you' cards from both staff and children, they had enjoyed the Crib Service so much.

Some thoughts about hymns – Hilda Rowlands

One of the strangest aspects of the pandemic is having to sing hymns while wearing a mask. As you breathe and sing you seem to build up a little pool of hot air inside your mask – very odd!

I was brought up in the Methodist Church tradition. It is always said that "Methodism was born in song" and this was certainly true for my family. My mother and my grandmother both had beautiful, strong soprano voices. The Church choir was a very important part of their lives. When I was about twelve, my friend and I were allowed to join the choir. We sat in the front row and if we dared to whisper to each other, my grandmother would poke us firmly in the back! Choir members were expected to be in church fifteen minutes before the service began. We had to mark each of the hymns carefully so that no one was fumbling to find the hymn number as the organ was playing the introduction. To this day, I always have the next hymn found in good time. The choir sang all the hymns in four part harmony. We always seemed to have an excellent tenor line; they could soar effortlessly into the high notes. We would sing an introit and an anthem at every evening service and at Easter there would be cantata or a sacred concert. We had to breathe in the correct place – never in the middle of a phrase! At an early age I learnt how to control my breathing to sing through a long and complicated Charles Wesley line.

During the summer period, the choir didn't meet to practice so instead a rota of members was arranged to sing solos or duets at the services. I have fond memories of singing duets with my lovely mother. It's quite special when you sing with a family member because the voices blend together so well. There must have been a great deal of talent in that choir with many soloists willing to step forward. My father wasn't a singer, but he was renowned for his ability to whistle! (You rarely hear anyone whistling nowadays) He would whistle hymn tunes from very early in the morning while he was getting ready to go to work – this used to irritate my brother and me a great deal when we were trying to have an extra half hour in bed.

When I left home to go to college in Leeds, I decided to go to the local Methodist Church in Headingley. I set off with a friend, the church was in one of the smartest area of Leeds, no one welcomed us and the hymn singing was rather polite and halfhearted. I don't think they were keen on students joining their community, which was a pity because we had a lot to offer. I'm afraid we didn't go back.

When we moved to Bardon Mill, I decided to try Henshaw Church because there wasn't a Methodist Church in the village. It was Philippa and Nigel Collingwood who invited me along. One of the first people I talked to was Mel Storey – so of course we talked about hymns! I always read the little inscription in the front of the hymnbook which says something like "in memory of Mel Storey, he loved to sing". What a fitting tribute.

I still love singing hymns, we are lucky at Henshaw to have a first-class organist in Nigel Clayburn to play most weeks for us, it adds such a lot to the hymn singing. I'm optimistic that one day we'll be able to ditch the masks and "let rip with gusto" into the wonderful hymns such as "Great is thy faithfulness". Someday we'll receive an email from John Galbraith asking if we're available to sing with the church choir but in the meantime, I'll sing into my mask and make the most of a somewhat restricted singing opportunity!

Haltwhistle choir

And thinking about hymns and singing, we have a request from Janet Lord, who leads the choir at Holy Cross, Haltwhistle, who says: "I am looking at music for us to sing at Stephen's Licensing Service on 31 March. If you know of anyone who would like to join the Benefice Choir for this occasion (and future events), please can you let me have

their names and contact details.” Janet’s email is haltyparishmag11@yahoo.com if you would like to contact her direct.

Thank you

First, a big thank you to all who contributed to our Christmas letter appeal, included with our Christmas card. As we are not able to undertake our normal round of fundraising activities at the moment, this has been a much appreciated fillip to our funds.

Second, an equally big thank you to all the visiting priests who have been helping us with services, including baptisms and funerals, during our vacancy. There have been many comments expressing appreciation for their input from our congregation, who have enjoyed the variety.

Mothers’ Union news

The February meeting on Wednesday 23rd at 2.30pm is going ahead as planned when Bev Redfern will speak about Volunteering with North of Tyne Mountain Rescue. All are welcome to come to the Shrove Tuesday 2 course lunch, on 1st March at 12 noon for 12.30, with menu choices and price to follow. Make A Mother’s Day coffee morning 26th March at Haydon Bridge Community Centre from 9.30am to 11.30am. Funds raised will go to MU projects. Various stalls, books, cakes, raffles and a new "unused goods" stall.

Our Garden – a poem by Keith Brunton

Way back in nineteen sixty six	But now they’ve grown and flown the nest
Our rockery was a pile of bricks,	The garden’s looking at its best.
The grass was tall and thick and brown,	I bought some hostas and a canna
The sorriest garden in Sidcup town.	Going cheap at Ruxley Manor,
We mowed the meadow, cleared the weeds	A box of bedding plants or two
And planted roses, bulbs and seeds	On special offer at B and Q.
And soon, my pride I hope you’ll pardon,	It’s taken over thirty years
It looked a bit more like a garden.	Of graft and toil and sweat and tears
The children got their fun and thrills	To make, right at the bitter end
From aiming balls at daffodils,	What Groundforce do in one weekend.

Highlights performances in Village Hall

On Friday 25 February at 4.15 pm, One Tenth Human are performing “Curious Investigators”, a delightfully surprising, highly visual show for 3 – 7 year olds and their grown-ups. Ring 344424 for tickets.

A Reflection from 19 December on Stopping- Anne Galbraith

During the very busy time before Christmas, at our Tuesday evening Advent services, we followed themes laid out for the Advent season by Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury. As the series goes on, the appropriate theme he

sets out for this period is Stopping. Well, here we are, slightly less than a week before Christmas Day and no doubt we all have a list – or even several lists – of jobs to do in the next few days. Family arriving, beds to make, cleaning and polishing to do, shopping and cooking, last cards to write, and so on and so on. So if I say to you that you need to stop, to pause, you might respond by saying “if only”.

The need to stop – to pause and rest from our labours – is built into our DNA. Our Scriptures tell us that even God took a day of rest after completing the creation, and that God commanded us to rest for *a full day each week* by keeping the Sabbath. Jesus himself modelled this kind of balance. His ministry was marked by periods of intense activity and interaction, followed by times of prayer and rest, often in deserted places.

How can we find and restore this healthy balance in our own lives? The need to do so was recognised for example by Albert Einstein - He who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead.

So, first, we must learn to stop – to stop rushing, to stop achieving, to stop doing – long enough to discover the *inner stillness* that would allow us to notice God’s presence and activity in our lives and in the world around us. We need to give ourselves permission to stop; to say, “That’s enough work for now.” That may mean that we need to stop doing what we’re doing and just go outside. We spend so much of our time in our homes or offices or cars that it is increasingly rare for many of us to be outside in nature. Can we learn to stop and simply enjoy the beauty of the natural world? What might we discover if we were to take time to notice and observe - a spider’s web, the colour of the autumn leaves, a soaring bird, a lovely cloud formation?

This balance between acknowledging the work that still needs to be done but enjoying the stillness and beauty of nature, is captured beautifully in a poem by Robert Frost:

Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening
By Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound’s the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

I really love the apparent simplicity of this poem. It seems so simple. I think the slow rhythm and rhyme serve the tone of the piece so well. The rider seems to enjoy a lovely rapport with his horse, appearing to know what the horse must be thinking – “my little horse must think it queer to stop without a farmhouse near”. And you would notice that he speaks of stopping on the darkest evening of the year – just about this time.

The work as a whole seems to explore the tension between the natural world and the busyness of our human world. The climax of the poem comes in the last stanza as the man's respite reaches its limit and he once again feels the obligation of the human world, "The woods are lovely dark and deep, but I have promises to keep."

I recognise that we all have commitments and obligations – promises to keep – but there is a message for us all here at this busy time – in all the hustle and bustle, take time to savour and enjoy small moments and experiences and recognise that there is a real human need to pause and rest – why else would we go to sleep every night? So let’s take a moment of rest now, and read Robert Frost’s poem again.