

# CROSSKEYS



The magazine for the Catholic Parish of St Peter and the Winchester Martyrs

## 'You will be my witnesses'

Father Mark Hogan explains the importance of the Holy Spirit

I have recently had the blessing of leading a parish pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in which we visited many of the sites associated with Our Lord's life, death and Resurrection.

Included in those sites was the Mount of Olives, where the Ascension took place and where Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

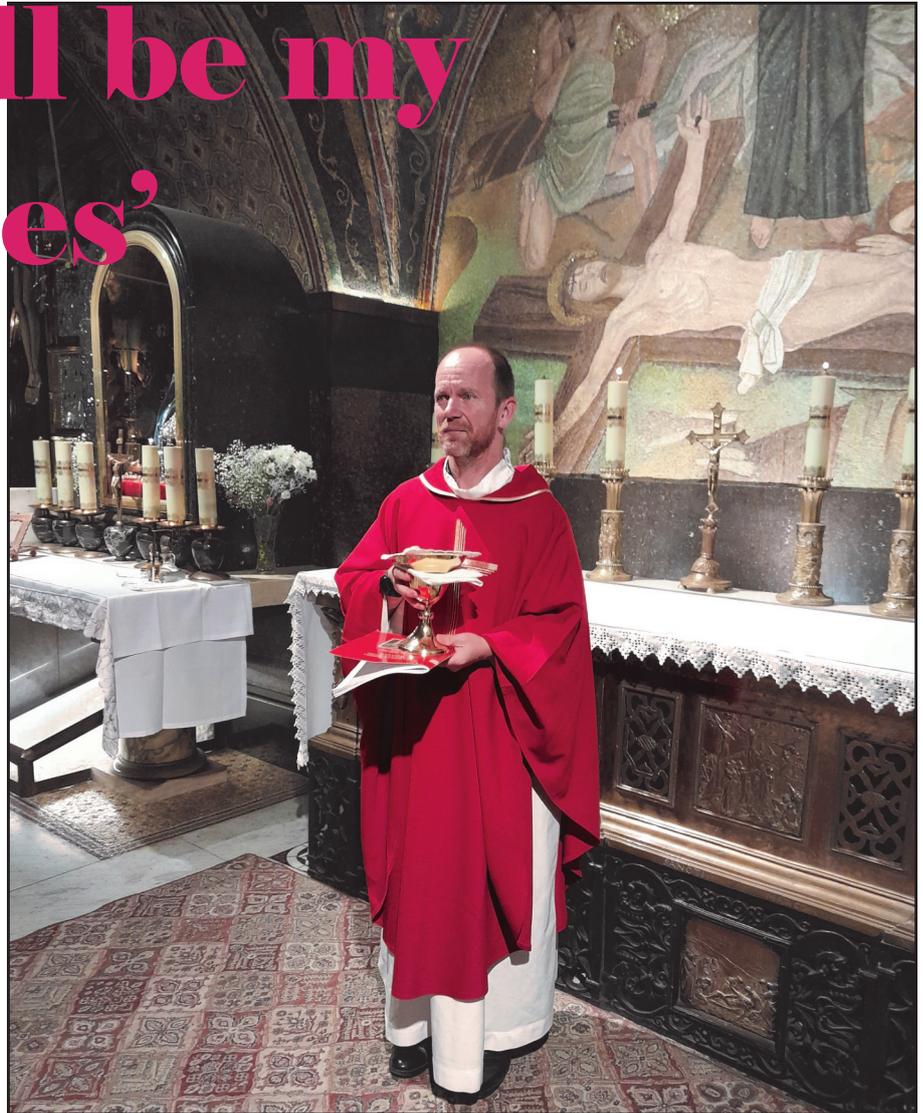
The Greek word for 'witnesses' is *μάρτυρες* (martyres). Jesus is saying, "you will be my martyrs...to the end of the earth". Alongside Blessed Roger Dicconson, Blessed John Slade, Blessed Ralph Milner, Blessed Laurence Humphreys and Blessed James Bird, we are called to be the Winchester martyrs. We have been chosen for this time to be witness to the beautiful Gospel of Jesus Christ in this parish, **HERE IN THIS PLACE.**

That is what our own parish mission is all about:

*bringing people closer to Jesus Christ in hope and joy*

How can we bear witness to Jesus? How can we bring

**Wishing all our readers a joyful Christmas and a new year full of hope**



*Fr Mark Hogan celebrates Mass at the Chapel of the Crucifixion during the parish pilgrimage to the Holy Land. For a full report see page 4.*

people closer to him and allow others to bring us to his feet?

Only by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Bishop Philip wants us all to engage in a diocesan Year of Prayer to the Holy Spirit. Imagine the amazing difference it would make, he says, if everyone lived life relying on the Holy Spirit.

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# A year of prayer to the Holy Spirit

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It is a work of Divine Providence, I believe, that in our own parish we too had been reflecting independently on our need to have a Year of Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

We belong to a global network of parishes called 'Divine Renovation'. This global movement of parish renewal seeks to support parishes by helping them develop three key areas: evangelisation, leadership, and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

To evangelise, that is to share the joy of the Gospel, to witness to our faith in deed and word, to bring people closer to Jesus, "will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit". (Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 75) The Holy Spirit is essential.

Pope Paul VI adds that: *"It is the Holy Spirit who, today just as at the beginning of the Church, acts in every evangelizer who allows himself to be possessed and led by Him. The Holy Spirit places on his lips the words which he could not find by himself, and at the same time the Holy Spirit predisposes the soul of the hearer to be open and receptive to the Good News and to the kingdom being proclaimed."*

We cannot speak of Jesus, nor bring others to him, without the help of the Holy Spirit. Nor can we hope that others will be open and receptive to the Gospel if the Holy Spirit is not already working in their lives. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us

## Animals in the Bible

God placed the care of all animals, fish and birds into human hands (Genesis 1:26–28, Psalms 8:6–8). There are nearly 100 different living things mentioned in the Bible and at the bottom of each page there are the names and references to some of those referred to most often.

and to help them.

A few months ago, St Luke shared with us the episode in which Jesus visited his friends, Martha and Mary. Here's what Pope Francis had to say about this visit: *"[Mary, the sister of Martha] gives [the Word of Jesus] first place: she stops and listens. The rest will come after. This does not detract from the value of practical effort, but it must not precede, but rather flow from listening to the word of Jesus. It must be enlivened by his Spirit. Otherwise, it is reduced to fussing and fretting over many things, it is reduced to sterile activism."* (Pope Francis, Angelus address, 17 July 2022)

I don't think that I just speak for myself when I say that I have a tendency to run around, be very busy, do all I can and then, only then, ask the Holy Spirit to help me. But that's the wrong way round!

I need to begin with the Holy Spirit – and we all need to experience the Holy Spirit in our own lives, to be in touch with the Lord as he reveals and leads. Pope Francis has cautioned against the sin of activism, the disease of busyness. Let's use this Year of the Holy Spirit not to work harder but to focus on doing the most fruitful things, trusting that this fruitfulness stems from beginning in that place where God reveals His plans.

In a quotation that is often attributed to John Wesley, we hear that "if you can be a person on fire with the Holy Spirit, people will come from miles away to see you burn". If we want to increase the experience of the Holy Spirit in our parish, then those of us who are regular parishioners need to be living Spirit-led, Spirit-filled lives. If we want other people to experience the Holy Spirit, we need to be magnets ourselves, burning with the fire of the Holy Spirit within.

Furthermore, we need to cultivate 'Sacred Space'. What can we do creatively during the year ahead to offer

places for encounter with the Holy Spirit in a deeper way?

Pope St. John Paul II tells us that: *"It would be wrong to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer that is unable to fill their whole life. Especially in the face of the many trials to which today's world subjects faith, they would be not only mediocre Christians but 'Christians at risk'... It is therefore essential that education in prayer should become in some way a key-point of all pastoral planning... How helpful it would be if not only in religious communities but also in parishes more were done to ensure an all-pervading climate of prayer."*

My desire is that our parish will become a school of prayer. It's the difference between 'saying prayers' and when people fall in love. How wonderful would it be if this parish were a place where people can fall in love with Jesus through an encounter with the Holy Spirit; a place overflowing with opportunities to experience prayer; a place where we can help each other to cultivate a contemplative heart, to be restored, and renewed; a place where the Lord can reveal things through his Holy Spirit.

I see this year as an opportunity to learn with each other how to be explicit in our language in speaking about the Holy Spirit. How can we articulate the presence, the power of the Holy Spirit, and help our fellow parishioners to know they've already received the Holy Spirit and are temples of the Holy Spirit?

We begin our Year of the Holy Spirit this Advent. My hope is that the whole parish, through experiencing the Holy Spirit, will become more aware of the presence of the same Holy Spirit in our midst and that we will grow in the gifts and charisms of the Holy Spirit.

Wishing you a Spirit-filled New church Year and an in-spirational Christmas!

**Bear** – 1 Samuel 17:34–37, 2 Kings 2:24, Isaiah 11:7, Daniel 7:5, Revelation 13:2

# Reflections on the Queen's funeral

**Major General Tim Tyler**, who leads the music at Alresford, looks back on a long and emotional day

**I had the great privilege, as chair of the Royal Star & Garter charity, of representing it at the funeral service for our patron Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey.**

My wife and I walked to Westminster from Kensington. The roads were closed; there were police and security personnel to be seen but otherwise silence as if the world had stopped. As we got closer people emerged from everywhere, all going the same way; there was a sense of expectation. My wife headed for St James's Park and The Mall as I walked towards the inevitable security checks before entering the Abbey. I met old friends and made new acquaintances, all united in respect for Her Majesty and her extraordinary legacy.

The Abbey was filling up. I have been there before for ceremonial occasions but none like this. It was immediately clear that this sad but uplifting event was bringing together peoples and organisations from every corner of the world. The Queen and the Royal Family have a very strong relationship with the Armed Forces which I have enjoyed over the years but Queen Elizabeth had clearly had just as strong and invigorating relationships with everyone.

I was sitting next to two wonderful people: Brian Roberts, recently awarded the MBE for his work with Healing Hands Network which provides support to those who are suffering from the mental, physical and emotional after-effects of war, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and now to British military veterans; and Victoria Clayton of the Shire Horse Society which, of course, takes a special interest in the Household Cavalry drum horses. We were



sitting near holders of the Victoria Cross and George Cross and among representatives of all the orders of knighthood.

As the processions of dignitaries arrived: Heads of State, Prime Ministers, members of the Royal Household, religious leaders of many, many faiths and the Royal Family, I found myself thinking of the weight of history there today.

Five generations of my family have had Queen Elizabeth as our monarch. I could feel this concentration of history and could sense the presence of the Royal Star & Garter residents, most of whom have lived through the changes witnessed by Queen Elizabeth, our patron for 70 years, and who were watching the service on TVs in our homes in Solihull, Surbiton and High Wycombe.

Will there ever be an event like it again? How did one person manage to provide such a shining example over all those 70 years? What a challenge Queen Elizabeth offers us all and how do we respond? I wonder not how her successors will follow in her footsteps but what can we all do to support His Majesty The King and his Royal Family to continue her work as a unifying and inspiring

force for good in our world

The atmosphere changed from the moment the coffin was carried into the Abbey. The service was, of course quiet, contemplative and with a sense of sadness for an irreplaceable loss.

This was the place of the Queen's marriage and coronation and now the place for us all to say farewell. But the Archbishop of Canterbury reminded us that this was a moment for celebration of a remarkable life and the transition of Her Majesty into the heavenly estate to which Christians aspire.

For me the highlight of the service was the singing of the anthem composed for the service by Sir James MacMillan CBE based on St Paul's letter to the Romans in which, after a quiet opening, the choir erupted into a joyous and almost chaotic 'Alleluia'. If you didn't notice this you must listen again.

After the service I set off to find my wife in the packed St James's Park. It was crowded with people who wanted a photograph of the Order of Service. People clearly respected the

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**Camel – Genesis 24:10, Leviticus 11:4, Isaiah 30:6, and Matthew 3:4, 19:24, and 23:24**

solemnity of the occasion and they wanted to be a real part of it and not just spectators.

What a joy it was to be in my uniform again. I lost count of the number of people who thanked me for all the organisation of the period of mourning and the funeral – I explained that I had had no responsibility, but they just wanted to thank the Armed Forces who are held in such respect.

There were many soldiers from various units assisting with security and directing and advising the visitors, doing a fantastic job.

I stopped to chat to quite a few and that immediate empathy was obvious, independent of rank and age, just soldier to soldier.

These young men and women will, in time, be veterans and I am sure that Royal Star & Garter will be there to provide for any of them should they need our care.

Home now, after a long and emotional day, I would like to extend Royal Star & Garter's condolences to His Majesty The King and all the Royal Family. We have all had time privately to grieve for a Queen who we all treasured in our own way.

They have all lost their Queen, mother, grandmother and great grandmother and been in the spotlight for days, and they now need time to themselves.

I am sure we all look forward to their full presence again, in time, in the life of the country and more widely.

We will continue to provide our 'Care with courage' to our veterans, following the example set by Queen Elizabeth and with the continued love and commitment of our President, Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra.

# Living the fifth gospel

**Anna and Stefan Lipa** report on the parish pilgrimage to the Holy Land

**As our tour guide told us, Pope St Paul VI first described the Holy Land as the fifth gospel, meaning we can interpret the other four gospels more clearly and with more insight after seeing the land where Christ walked and worked.**

On our pilgrimage, we saw many biblical sites, accompanied by Bible readings to remind us of various scenes, carefully selected by our tour leader, Fr Mark.

We were indeed especially blessed that Fr Mark had also arranged to say Mass in several important places, each time assisted at the altar by our tour guide, Yaccoub Ghazzawi, who is a Christian working in the Church in Jerusalem, as well as one of the organists at the Holy Sepulchre!

Our first Mass was said at the Shepherds' Fields, just outside old Jerusalem on a stony hillside with caves where the shepherds guarded their sheep.

We started the tour of Jerusalem with a visit to a huge model of the city late in the second Temple period, that is just after the time of Christ when King Solomon's first Temple, destroyed by the Babylonians, had been rebuilt by Herod the Great.

Yaccoub's explanation of the history was necessarily complicated as he described many different layers of history, with many waves of invasion, destruction and rebuilding: 14 up to the current time.

A most interesting thing to see was the fact that there were two sets of city walls – this explained a confusing fact – we both knew that Christ had been taken outside the (ancient) city walls to Calvary, and yet the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which contains Calvary is firmly inside the later walls.

Neither of us had any idea of the ac-

tual topography of Jerusalem – it is a very hilly city, almost mountainous – when they call it Mount Zion or the Mount of Olives, they really mean it! The Palm Sunday route from the Mount of Olives to the Temple or the Via Dolorosa to Calvary demonstrate this amply – extremely hard work, and the latter where Christ had been tortured and was forced to carry his own cross.

One morning early, before the crowds were up and about, we visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Fr Mark celebrated Mass in the Chapel of the Crucifixion on the exact site of Calvary, a beautiful experience in the quiet church.

Later in the week, we queued with many others for some considerable time to see the Holy Sepulchre itself – it is hard to believe that one is actually at the site of Jesus' tomb, and that you can lay your hand on the stone itself.

An interesting visit in Jerusalem was to see the site of King David's Palace on a hill neighbouring the Temple Mount. The whole site is on a vertiginous plot descending to the Pool of Siloam, and includes the ancient tunnels and cisterns for water supply.

Although a busy centre of daily activity, Bethlehem was immensely moving – the Church of the Nativity a crush of pilgrims keen to see where Our Lord came into the world, and where he was laid in a manger.

Our trip to the wilderness was mind-blowing: the territory is truly harsh – mountainous in the extreme, dry, and rocky. To think of anyone even surviving one day in the area defies imagination.

The road where the Good Samaritan aided the traveller passes through this wilderness between Jericho and Jerusalem – it is easy to imagine how desperately the traveller would have

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# Group experiences thought-provoking parish pilgrimage to Holy Land



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needed aid.

The antiquity of the Holy Land is evident to see, with ancient ruins and archaeology all around, from Old Testament onwards. We even saw the biblical city of Dan visited by Abraham, a site that maybe we thought was lost to myth or the mists of time.

To see where Jesus lived and worked was a truly spiritual experience. For us, a most moving day was when we went for a boat trip on the Sea of Galilee; the captain turned off the engine and we appreciated the calm peacefulness.

We then went to the little beach where Christ appeared to Peter and other apostles, post-Resurrection, and had a breakfast barbecue ready and waiting! After paddling in the water and having our toes nibbled by the descendants of the fish that escaped Peter's nets, we then viewed the Mensa Christi, a solid rock where the

simple breakfast of bread and fish was eaten.

Nazareth is now a huge centre of population with epic traffic jams – another place where we nearly missed our time slot for Mass on account of traffic.

We viewed Mary's Spring and Well and House, one of which according to different traditions, was the site of the



Annunciation.

More peaceful and more spiritual, was our earlier trip to Ein Karem – the

scene of the birth of St John the Baptist, and where Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth.

Evident all around was the political turmoil that Israel is still enduring.

Things do not seem to have changed since Roman times and before, when the war lords of the Old Testament smote each other with monotonous regularity: Dan was an example where the people who had built it were living peacefully until they received a 'friendly' visit from the tribe of Dan who liked what they saw, and after accepting the hospitality of Micah and the locals, then killed them all, and moved in.

Seeing all this, as well as renewing our baptismal vows in the River Jordan, seeing St Peter's House in Capernaum where Jesus spent a great deal of time, along with a float in the Dead Sea, made for a thoroughly enjoyable and thought-provoking pilgrimage (not a holiday, Fr Mark!)

**Donkey** – Numbers 22:21, Isaiah 1:3 and 30:6, John 12:14

# Coming soon — the Night Church

Allegra Matunda previews a new parish initiative starting in the new year

Here in the parish, we host our Night of Light event just before Christmas. We invite passers-by to come into the church to light a candle and spend some time in quiet and reflection before the crib.

“Come to the One who knows you best”

Night of Light is firmly based on the Nightfever initiative which was started in Cologne in 2005. Its aim is to help those far away from the church encounter God and experience His love and mercy.

In the new year, we hope to start ‘Night Church’ which will run once a month. Night Church is similar to Night of Light and again, has its roots in Nightfever.

In the rush and busyness of life, Night Church is an opportunity for people to come into the church ‘to breathe’. And often, we see people do that as they step into the church: deep, long breaths... for something is happening. That something is really someone: Jesus, who is at work loving, blessing, healing, renewing.

‘Night Church is about creating space for grace to happen’

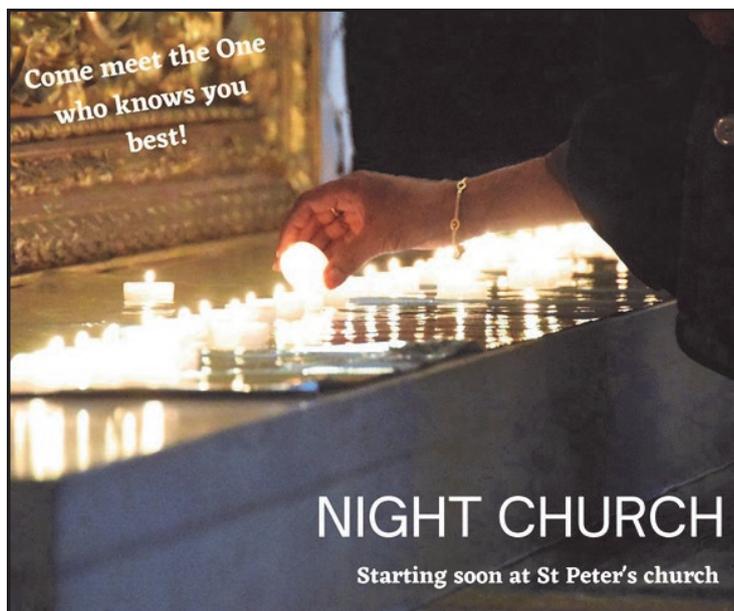
The format of Night Church includes Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, candlelight ambience and soft, gentle live music while a team of people go out onto the streets and invite anyone passing by to come into the church to light a candle and, for a moment, be still.

Music during Night Church will vary according to the worship leaders that evening. But, whatever the style, the songs invite us into prayer and a deeper encounter with God. The intercession team in the church is there to pray for those conversations out on the streets and for those who step through the doors.

From previous experience, we see many people come off the streets and walk into the church on their own when they have heard the music and sit for a long time listening, watching, feeling...

‘We cannot encounter God and remain unchanged however subtle the encounter, and Night Church does exactly that’

The street outreach team invites people to come into the church to light a candle and for a moment, allow God in the stillness to touch them. Many have questions about the church, the service, God. Some share what has been going on in their lives, giving us the opportunity to pray for them or direct them to one of the priests for a chat or for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



The team’s role in this evangelistic outreach is minimal. We are often reminded of the gospels with the meagre offering of two fish and five loaves which Jesus used to feed the five thousand (cf. Mt 14: 13-21, Mk 6:30-44, Jn 6:1-14).

Small in our hands is so much more in God’s hands. We provide the music and the ambience, pluck up the courage to go out onto the streets, but God is the one who touches hearts, who heals, who renews, who converts. What people experience is the love and mercy of our God who knows them through and through as well as the stillness, peace and quiet which seems so counter-cultural in a society that is constantly buzzing and on the move.

In this Year of the Holy Spirit, we will pray to the Father that he will send upon us and our guests the Holy Spirit that He might lead us to Jesus... This is a very simple and easy way to get involved in bringing people closer to Christ [into the church] and help them experience God in incredible ways!

Night Church will start in the new year and run once a month for two to three hours per night (dates and times to be confirmed). If you would like to get involved with Night Church, contact Allegra [allegra@stpeterswinchester.org.uk](mailto:allegra@stpeterswinchester.org.uk)

“Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3:15)

One follow-up to Alpha is a prayer course, led by Allegra. For us all, prayer can be challenge. How or why do we pray? Through these sessions, we will explore different forms of prayer, and have the opportunity to practise that way of praying, helping us grow deeper in faith as we encounter God through prayer. These five sessions will be held in the Pastoral Centre (time and dates tbc). Interested in joining? Contact Allegra [allegra@stpeterswinchester.org.uk](mailto:allegra@stpeterswinchester.org.uk)

**Dove – Genesis 8:8, 2 Kings 6:25, Matthew 3:16 and 10:16**

# Children spread road safety message

Head teacher **Louise Buxton** reports on the latest school initiative

## St Peter's School Junior Road Safety Officers (JRSOs) are on a mission.

Their objective is increased road safety awareness for their fellow pupils, the school and the local community. The JRSOs are a group of eight pupils from Years 5 and 6 who are engaged in promoting road safety issues within the school and the local community.

They are supported by the head-teacher, a parent volunteer and the local Road Safety Officer of Hampshire County Council (HCC) whose JRSO scheme promotes peer to peer education of road safety. The JRSOs meet at least one a month to think about ways in which they can help raise awareness and understanding of how important it is to take road safety seriously.

The group have already undertaken a two hour JRSO virtual training session given by HCC, presented a whole school assembly on road safety and arranged a poster competition. The assembly included information about the Green Cross Code and the need to take care crossing roads.

It also included a special prayer for those who keep us safe when travelling (traffic police, highway maintenance) and those who help us when things go wrong (paramedics and doctors) alongside asking that we all be considerate to our neighbours.

This half term the JRSOs planned a "Be bright, be seen" day with their new catch phrase "Be bright, be right". On this day the JRSOs encourage visibility when walking to school by being at the front of the school in high visibility clothing and handing out a small leaflet for parents and pupils. All St Peter's pupils were permitted to wear a brightly coloured piece of clothing with their



### The JRSOs of St Peter's School say:

"You can't wait until the accident happens" *Fleur*

"Spread the word" *Emily.*

"Older children and adults are more distracted by the use of phones/airpods" *James.*

"Be cautious when you are on the road" *Ed.*

"We need space to see between parked cars" *Jenny.*

"Don't run crossing the road" *Luca.*

"It is harder to stop" *Kyhan.*

'Be bright, be right' *Laura.*

uniform throughout the day to draw attention to this.

At St Peter's the pupils are committed to thinking of others and caring for each other. This is no less true outside the school building as it is inside.

The school community is concerned about the safety of the roads around the school particularly at the drop off and pick up times. The opportunity given to the JRSOs to educate their fellow pupils in road safety will hopefully lead to better attention to this issue within families throughout the school.

St Peter's school is proud of its

JRSOs who have already shown dedication and determination to follow their mission to its end goal of keeping their fellow pupils safe on the roads.

Hampshire County Council's Road Safety Team tell us that 185 children and young people were seriously injured or killed between the age of 0-15 years on Hampshire's roads in 2020 and are asking all schools to help save children's lives.

Visit school website:

<https://www.stpetershants.co.uk/>

Or check out our school Twitter:

<https://mobile.twitter.com/stpetershants>

# Celebrating 10 seasons of Alpha

Allegra Matunda rounds up the latest Alpha news

**By the time this edition of Cross-keys is published, we will be nearing the end of our 10th Alpha course in the parish!**

Alpha started here in the autumn of 2018 as a pilot season with leaders of ministries invited to take part. Since then, over 320 people have taken part. For some, Alpha has helped them discover who God is while for others, it has been a chance to reconnect or grow deeper in their spiritual life.

Strong bonds of friendships have been formed and for some, a new sense of belonging to a people! Many have found themselves wanting to give back; serving in different areas of ministry in the parish or even in leadership roles helping support and mentor others.

*Below are stories from past guests on the impact Alpha has had on their journey of life...*

## **'Don't waste another minute!'**

**If you had to write a letter to your younger self, what would it contain? Here, one person shares theirs...**



As a very busy working single mum of two small children, life was so hectic that I had no time for anything or anyone. If someone had at that stage told me about how good and loving and gracious God was and how He was there for me, I only had to ask, I don't think I would have reacted very well – the words would just have bounced off me and not registered at all. Fine to say those

words to someone else but not me, not in my circumstances.

So where was God? He was right there – I believe that He had his protective arms around me, but I felt on my own, in survival mode and trying to do it all without Him.

Hindsight is a beautiful thing. If only I could go back a few years and do some things differently... sometimes I wish I could. I can't go back in time, but I wrote my younger self a letter which goes like this:

*Dear Me,*

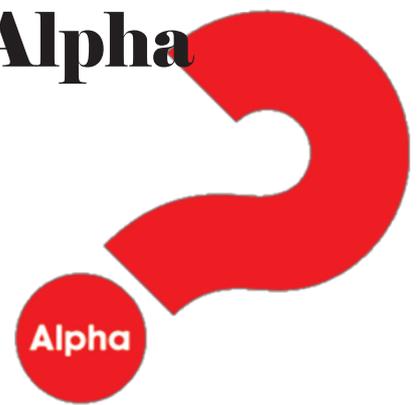
*I know life is crazy hard and you're doing your very best on your own to keep all the plates spinning – you're so busy keeping your head above water, you can't see God. You don't have any energy or space to even think about Him. You're so tired and stressed that it doesn't even occur to you to have a conversation with Him. And let's not even get started on all the doubts you have.*

*What I want to tell you is that you need to have a conversation with God, because it's going to be the most important one of your life. In that conversation, when you lay bare your needs before Him, your daily struggles, your broken dreams, when you ask for His mercy, His forgiveness and when you ask Him to come into your life because you have nowhere to turn, He will transform it far beyond your expectations. Spiritually, you will become a completely different person. A completely better person and a completely happier person.*

*Now, before you get too excited about God making you win the lottery, that won't happen, and problems won't simply vanish but what you will get is arguably better:*

*You will not feel alone;*

*You will not feel inadequate or unworthy;*



*You'll develop a patience and calm that will surprise you (and others!);*

*You'll have a peace in your heart that you can't explain;*

*You won't feel any despair about the worries and anxieties that plague you; in fact, feelings of worry and anxiety will fade into the background;*

*You'll sleep better and more soundly than you ever have;*

*You'll laugh much more and shout much less;*

*You'll find that you want to pray every single day – in praise, in worship, in thanksgiving, for big things and little things, for others – yes, even your enemies and those who irritate you beyond belief – the first tool in your toolkit for dealing with anything, good or bad, will be prayer – it will feel like getting on the phone with your best friend – God Almighty, creator of the universe – but unlike friends, He will never let you down. As more and more of your prayers are answered, you will be blown away, you will want to love Him and trust Him more and more.*

*When you hear about this course called Alpha, you may find that you pluck up courage and go. You'll be welcomed and loved and later, when you look back, you'll be so grateful for it. Then, when it ends, it will be the most natural thing in the world to want to join a small group [Acorn group], meeting regularly for fellowship and support and encouragement – there will be people just like you,*

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**Fish – Exodus 7:18, Jonah 1:17, Matthew 14:17 and 17:27, Luke 24:42, John 21:9**

# Course was a spiritual awakening

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*going through all the ups and downs of life, but as a friendship group it will be unique - rooted in Christ, everyone together will help you grow your faith, and in that loving setting, you'll feel like you belong, and it will bring you joy in your heart.*

*Don't waste another minute.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Me.*

## Hitting the RESET button!

Here Lisa describes how Alpha has been a real



'spiritual awakening' in her life.

I can honestly say that attending Al-

pha has been my spiritual reawakening – my post pandemic recalibration. During times of uncertainty: life's instability, political incompetence, managing difficult, personal situations and now the cost-of-living crisis, we all have a 24/7 Samaritan out there to turn to.

Our heavenly Father is someone who always listens and never gives up on us. No appointments needed, no form filling or email confirmation. No standing on ceremony, trying to impress or being opaque. We can just be ourselves.

When life messes with our performance levels we need to press that factory default setting! Having the opportunity to recalibrate my own self through Alpha was life-changing, powerful stuff. In a safe, warm, non-judgmental environment, I found love, kindness and spiritual guidance, plus a delicious warm supper to share with my new friends. Experiencing feelings of togetherness; being part of

a like-minded family, has produced the most beautiful friendships.

I am not alone in this journey as my faith evolves into something far deeper and meaningful. There is a realness and hope to it all.

Finally, I understand the meaning of 'Singing from the same hymn sheet'! I may be a bit out of tune but with friends by my side and a renewed closer, loving relationship with God, I will continue singing until my heart explodes.

Alpha runs on a culture of invitation, *friends bringing friends* to a conversation about faith, life, and God which is authentic and unforced.

**Who could you invite?** The next Alpha course begins on Monday, 20 February 2023. For more information or to register, please visit [www.catholicwinchester.org.uk](http://www.catholicwinchester.org.uk) or email [alpha@stpetesrwinchester.org.uk](mailto:alpha@stpetesrwinchester.org.uk)

## Come Holy Spirit and the power of the Sacraments!

Sandra shares a breakthrough moment for her at the Holy Spirit away day and experiencing the power of the Sacraments!

I first heard about the Alpha course one Sunday at Mass and decided to join in. I didn't know what to expect but I enjoyed it very much; I got to know a lot of people on the course and even started to recognise some faces at Mass.

I then decided to do another Alpha as the first one had left me wanting more – that more I wanted was a deeper relationship with Jesus. As I went through the second series, I began to feel my relationship with Him getting stronger.

Then my mother passed away in January 2022 which, you can imagine, was very upsetting for all the family. Two weeks before she died, she had asked me to do something for her which I just couldn't do. After she passed away, I realised I was still angry with her and still held that situation against her. In my grief, there



were many times I wanted to cry but the tears wouldn't come, or I would just hold them back – this was starting to wear me down!

On the Alpha Holy Spirit away day, at one stage, we started to pray for the Holy Spirit to come and heal us. I held out my hands, saying the words 'Come Holy Spirit', still trying to hold back the tears. The next thing I knew I was crying uncontrollably, the tears kept coming until I had no more. When I regained my composure, I felt as though the weight of the world had been lifted from my shoulders!

Three to four months later, I discovered I had bowel cancer. My first thought was to my husband and how he would react to this news. But I can honestly say that I have felt the presence of the Holy Spirit with me the whole time; I had no fear at all.

Fr Mark anointed me with the oil of the sick a day before going into hospital for my operation. I remember feeling so special and in that moment of prayer, I felt loved like never before and I never once doubted that God would heal me. Two weeks after the operation, the surgeon gave me the news that all the tests were clear and there was no sign of cancer. But this didn't come as a surprise; somehow, I already knew...

**Fox – Judges 15:4, Nehemiah 4:3, Matthew 8:20, Luke 13:32**

# Milner had clear idea of the design

Parish archivist **John Thornhill** examines the history of the Milner Hall

**This Christmas sees the 230th anniversary of the first legally built Roman Catholic church in Winchester since the 16th century.**

It still stands as Milner Hall, long stripped of its former glory. In its day, people locally would not have seen anything like it other than on the Continent.

The Catholic Relief Act 1791 legalised Catholic chapels, but without steeples or bells, and “no such place of assembly should be locked or barred during a meeting”. Obviously there was still a fear that Catholics might be plotting sedition!

John Milner, the parish priest, took the opportunity to build a new chapel, replacing the inadequate one already on the site (built illegally in around 1740).

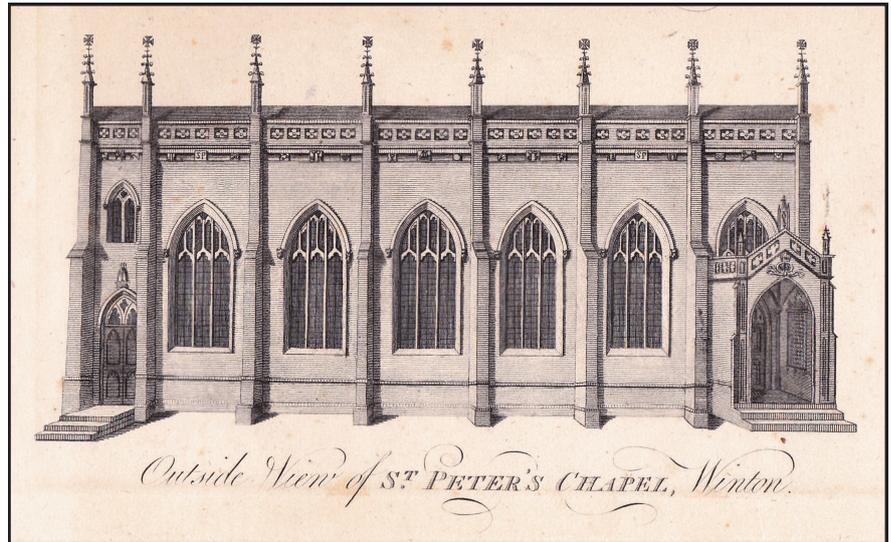
Milner had very clear ideas of what he wanted. Not for him was the then Nonconformist fashion for square brick-built chapels. The only true ecclesiastical style was Medieval Gothic.

Today, with its crenelation, Milner Hall is often described as ‘Strawberry Hill Gothic’ after the 18th century house in Twickenham.

However, as can be seen in the engraving made when the chapel was finished, this is to be ignorant of its original design. (The present ‘battlements’ were installed during a refurbishment in 1875.)

Fortunately, Milner left a detailed description – “a light Gothic building, coated with stucco resembling stone, with mullioned windows [and] a parapet with open quatrefoils and crocketed pinnacles, terminating in gilt crosses”.

On each side of the windows busts of kings, queens and bishops were carved, which can still be seen.



Inside, decoration covered every space. Along the wall opposite the windows were large religious scenes. Above the altar was a huge wall painting of The Transfiguration, based on a work by Raphael. The altar front carried a scene of The Deposition painted to look like carved stone.

There were pictures of saints, angels, bishops and Wessex kings and queens everywhere, including the windows, and many Biblical inscriptions. All were painted by William and James Cave, members of a local Catholic family of notable painters.

Furnishings were equally striking. The wooden gilded tabernacle, modelled on the west front of York Cathedral, was made by Mr Benjamin Underhill for seven guineas.

High above the altar, a painting of a dove on glass lit from behind, produced “a surprising and pleasing effect”. Two large candle-stands were modelled on Winchester’s city cross. The priest’s chair was inspired by the coronation throne in Westminster Abbey.

All the construction work was carried out by local artisans; men who had never done anything like this before!

For Thomas Steel, making an altar was a something new. Thomas, a cantor in Winchester Cathedral, often

discussed religion with Milner and eventually expressed a wish to become a Catholic. Milner declared that he was “more than half-way already”.

Building work, which took only 10 months, started on 26 March 1792. The chapel was opened by Bishop Douglass on 5 December, the Feast of St Birinus. The final cost was over £1,000.

William Meader (who was to bequeath The White House to the parish in 1803) gave £750, Milner £250 and donations provided the rest.

The chapel, being free of debt, was consecrated on opening and dedicated to Our Lady and SS Peter, Swithun and Birinus (although Milner always referred to it as St Peter’s). Relics of SS Pius and Constantius, martyrs, and of SS Severa and Victoria, virgins and martyrs were enclosed in the altar. These are now in St Peter’s altar. Milner’s chapel became the first Roman Catholic church in the country to be consecrated since the Reformation.

It was to serve the Catholics of the area for the next 133 years. When Canon John Henry King arrived in February 1923, he found the “walls were running with damp, the air was befouled by leaking gas and the vest-

Continued on page 11

ments were damp and clammy”. (Gas lighting had been installed in 1875.)

Like Milner before him, he was determined to build a new church and, with the support of the bishop, opened the present St Peter’s in 1926. The old chapel was largely abandoned until 1954 when Canon Mullarkey repaired it as a church hall, complete with a stage with curtains. The new seats included some reputedly from the closed ‘New Cinema’ (nicknamed the Black Shed) in Park Avenue.

This was not to last, for the hall was later let as a workshop and store to Hancock’s, the electrical store on Jewry Street.

Once again, the building was rescued; this time by Canon France, who in 1987 restored the interior as close as possible to Milner’s time but without the decoration!

Twice the hall has once again fulfilled its original function. In the mid-1980s, when St Peter’s sanctuary was being reorganised, Mass was celebrated there. In 1989, the United Church in Jewry Street held services there during work on their church interior.

Fitting uses for what is still a consecrated building.

# Acorn groups bearing fruit

Acorn groups continue to meet every fortnight writes **Sarah Layzell**

**This season each group was looking in depth at a book of the Old Testament and discussing how the themes contained affect us and their relevance in our daily lives.**

The chosen books were Jonah, Ruth and Esther. Jonah: a story of obedience and trust and an Almighty God who saves. Esther: A story of heroic courage showing God working through an unlikely source to save his people, demonstrating the ultimate power and love of God. Ruth: which deals with fundamental issues of poverty, bereavement, racial tension and human rights, based around the central themes of trust, loyalty, kindness and faith.

At the end of term, we will be sharing some of our learning and discussing, at our joint celebration evening with our friends in Alpha.

January 2023 sees the beginning of a new theme: fruitfulness. Each term we will cover a different topic that deals with witnessing the fruits of our faith and being part of an Acorn group. We will begin with a short prayer course that guides us through the lead up to Lent. Following the success of the first prayer course by Pete Grieg, these five sessions go deeper, provoking honest conversation around the hardest and most personal questions we all ask about prayer.

Later in the year we will look at how we are all called to be disciples of Christ and how we can grow as such. Based around the Holy Spirit, this series of talks will take us into Pentecost. We will then turn our attention to how we have seen the fruits of God working in our lives in the past year as preparation for our Acorn Group retreat in June.

To learn more about Acorn Groups please email me at [acorn@stpeterswinchester.org.uk](mailto:acorn@stpeterswinchester.org.uk) and read the following story of one of our new members, Claire.

“I joined a Lenten group in March, studying the book ‘Seriously God?’ and contin-

ued thereafter as an Acorn group member. Initially, I was slightly disappointed to be in a group with so many ‘non-parishioners’! People from as far afield as Basingstoke, Selbourne, Romsey and Winchester. I wondered how this could possibly build community?

“What I had forgotten was that God always knows best and He always has a plan for us – He puts us where we need to be.

“Reading the challenging book, chapter by chapter weekly, no one could have prepared me for the depth of trust that quickly built between us. The theme of ‘Seriously God’ was how to ‘lean into God’, when times are tough and things are hard to fathom – to just ‘lean in’. And what we did as an Acorn group effectively was to lean on each other. Our closeness inspired us to create a WhatsApp group that allowed us to consistently, and at times continuously, pray for each other and for our loved ones. A request for strength to survive a challenge or a daunting day ahead was frequently answered with a rosary being offered up or words of comfort, praise and support given.

“Having joined this group in the second year of my long Covid recovery, I can neither explain nor quantify how often these prayers have lifted my spirits and reminded me that I am not alone, that my Acorn family have my back. There is an openness and intimacy in our group that has built some solid friendships. The wiser members of the group can always be counted on to provide much-needed reassurance.

“We have laughed, cried, experienced humility, taught each other how to pray. We are of many different nationalities. Some are new to the parish; others are new to Catholicism while others are returning to it. Somehow we have been put together and I am extremely thankful for this. Our discussions are always lively and honest. I have never felt anything but enriched after our online meetings. I wholeheartedly recommend joining Acorn and pray that you are as richly blessed in doing so as I have been.”

# Examining future of White House

**Mike Elks** reports on a study evaluating the White House and surrounds

**The White House has long been an important building in our parish, both through its use and in the way it is regarded by our parishioners, past and present. It is a Grade II listed building in a conservation area with a fascinating history.**

In the mid 17th century Roger Corham founded the Winchester Catholic parish when he moved to Peterhouse, where he was installed as the resident priest. Nearly 100 years later, the Mass room was too small for the growing congregation. The garden shed was converted into a chapel by two priests.

When in 1779 Revd John Milner arrived, he found a dilapidated building at the bottom of his garden which he rebuilt with his neighbour in The

White House, Mr William Meader. This date enables us to date the White House to approximately the mid 18th century.

In 1803, The White House was given to the Catholic Mission in Winchester. From that date it had a succession of 14 tenants. In June 1960, Mgr Sidney Mullarkey invited the Sisters of St Lucy Filippini to establish St Peter's convent there, including a preschool. In June 2017 the convent closed when the nuns moved to their Motherhouse in Medstead. Since then it has remained empty apart from a period of use as storage for the Winchester Basics Bank.

The parish has a responsibility for maintaining the building and needs to find a way forward to bring the building back into use. The condition is slowly deteriorating and some meas-



ures are being taken to manage deterioration of the fabric which means it continues to incur costs.

Options to use it on a temporary basis are not financially viable as a considerable amount of money would be needed to make the building safe and fit for habitation.

In May 2019, a consultation in the parish was undertaken to help determine preferred future options. From our parishioners' responses, a list was assessed by a small team who looked at their viability based on pastoral, security and financial issues and constraints.

To comply with diocesan procedures, a feasibility study is now being carried out by a professional team to identify affordable long-term options over 30 years, compare them and select a preferred use. This study will look at residential or charity possibilities, and associated with this, the use of Peterhouse might change.

The study will help the parish evaluate how to build a long-term vision for the whole area that includes The White House, Milner Hall, Peterhouse, 8/9 St Peter St, 10 St Peter St, and the enclosed garden area, which meets the needs of the parish and considers how the parish could make the best pastoral and financial use of the assets with which it has been endowed.

## Little Fishes Pre-School news

**September 2022 saw the beginning of the 23rd year of Little Fishes opening its doors for the first time.**

It is always a privilege to welcome our new children and their families each year, which for many is their first experience of early years education. As their pre-school journey begins we have our mission statement at the heart of all we do: Jesus said "Let the little children come to me"

At Little Fishes we aim to share God's love to the children and nurture a sense of kindness, love and respect, enabling them to flourish in life.

At Little Fishes we are blessed to be surrounded by the stunning grounds of St Peter's School. This term we have been on autumn walks, the children delighting in discovering conkers, colourful leaves and pinecones as we progressed. We came back to Little Fishes and created a beautiful autumn picture.

Being outdoors is a big part of our



daily routine, in the garden we are enjoying growing vegetables and flowers, creating a sense of well-being, building obstacle courses to develop our physical skills, exploring musical instruments and making sounds, sand and water play, riding bicycles, and building dens!

Throughout our day the children remember the words of our Little Fishes song reminding us to listen, share and speak kindly to each other in order to have a happy day. We are looking forward to enjoying many happy days ahead as we continue our learning journey together.

**CrossKeys** welcomes letters, stories and photographs  
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