

Seek



February 2023

The Church and Parish of St Mark Cambridge

www.stmarksnewnham.org

A Letter from Bethan, our Curate



A single solitary snowdrop is blooming in our little garden (as I write in mid-January!). We planted lots of bulbs in the autumn and though a fair few shoots have emerged so far we only have one brave, early flower.

Snowdrops have long been seen as a sign of the changing of the seasons and a sure sign that spring is on its way. Due to being among the first flowers to bloom they have become a symbol of hope. Often, we need reminding to take a moment to look to the positive and hope in the darkness of the winter before spring.



Winter starts with the initial harshness of dark evenings, cold, wet weather and bare trees. Now we are among the steadily lighter days, with buds on trees and shoots pushing up

through the ground. The natural world is full of anticipation. It feels like nature is a tightly coiled spring ready to launch into the fullness of bloom in spring and summer.

Snowdrops have another name: Candlemas Bells, as they were often used to decorate the church for Candlemas, which we celebrate this year on the 29th January. Candlemas is when we remember the story of Jesus presented in the temple in Luke 2:22-38. As was Jewish tradition, Jesus was taken to the temple by his parents Mary and Joseph. Luke's Gospel tells of two people they met there, Simeon and Anna.

I imagine Anna as a slightly eccentric elderly lady who brought light to the room. Anna had every right to be miserable, to be an Eeyore, because she had lived a tough life. She was a widow, on the edge of society. But instead of being miserable she passed her time in worship and cried out praise and in excitement to everyone in the temple. Much like the little snowdrop in my garden bringing joy and

beauty to an empty bed, Anna brought hope and joy in the darkness.

Simeon in contrast takes the baby Jesus into his arms and speaks wonderful words of poetry:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace:

according to thy word.

For mine eyes have seen:
thy salvation.

Which thou hast prepared:

before the face of all people;

To be a light to lighten the Gentiles:

and to be the glory of thy people Israel.

If you have never heard this beautiful poem, the Nunc Dimittis, sung, I highly recommend you head straight to YouTube and listen.

The fulfilment Simeon feels in having met Christ is the completion of his aspirations, a satisfaction and sense of peace we so often seek. He points to the role that Jesus will take in being "a light to the nations". The role as saviour of the world. Jesus went on to die for the sins of all people and rise again on Easter morning that each one of us may know the sense of fulfilment Simeon knew that day, that each one of us may know the love of God for us, that God sent God's Son into the world as a tiny, fragile baby.

February is the month when we move onwards from the stories of Christmas, Epiphany and the Magi, and Candlemas. We look towards the second half of the Gospel, to Lent and Easter, Jesus' adult ministry. Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent falls on the 22nd February this year. Often Lent is seen as a dark time of loss and sacrifice, of giving things up. This year I encourage you to look for the snowdrops, for the light, and for the hope.

We will see new life around us in the next few months, let it be inspiring. From what look like empty beds emerges a riot of colourful bulbs, snowdrops, bluebells, daffodils and more. Springtime and Lent feel to me like a good time for new intentions to go with the new life we see in the world around us. Perhaps this Lent you might resolve to see and celebrate the hope and to become hope for others, from a solitary snowdrop to kindness to a stranger. How will the hope and love of God be present for you this Lent?

Bethan

Church Teams

As many of you know, over the past few years there has been a number of PCC Committees focusing on different areas of the life of our church. As part of Rachel's post sabbatical reflection, all of these committees are being reviewed, some will remain almost the same as they have been, some will, or have already, stopped and some new ones will be formed. They will take the form of teams, implying active ministry, rather than committees.

Please speak to Rachel to find out more but over the next months, there will be an opportunity after coffee to hear a bit more about each team - to hear about the purpose and aim of the team, the membership and their plans, to ask questions and, for some, have a chance to join in!

We had the opportunity to hear from the **Eco Church Team** in January. We look forward to hearing from more of the teams in the near future.

Services at St Mark's Church, Newnham in February

Communion (BCP) at 8.00 am every Sunday

Sunday Services

5th February at 9.30 am	Communion
12th February at 9.30 am	Morning Worship with Junior Church
19th February at 9.30 am	Communion with Junior Church
26th February at 9.30 am	Communion with Junior Church

Ash Wednesday

22nd February at 7.30 pm	Ash Wednesday Service
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Mondays

27th February (and all Mondays during Lent) at **5.00 pm** Evening Prayer

Tuesdays

Weekly Communion (BCP) at **11.00 am** followed by refreshments

7th February from **3.30 pm to 5.30 pm** Messy Church

Regular Groups

Monday Bible Study

10:00am, alternate weeks – contact: Sue Wagner, 01223 563435

Tuesday and Thursday Home Groups

7:30 pm, weekly – contact: Andrew Watts, aa.watts@hotmail.co.uk or Mike Thompson, michaelangelot99@gmail.com

Prayer Meeting

11.00 am every Friday at 10 Stukeley Close – contact: Anne Howie, 01223 356140

Choir

The choir normally sings on the first three Sundays of the month at our 9:30 am service. Rehearsals are 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm on the first and third Fridays of the month and from 9:00 am on Sundays.

MAC : Charity of the Month



"The team have helped me survive a terrible period in my life; without their support I would not have been able to go on. Thanks with all my heart"

Client quote November 2022

These are the words of one of our clients from this year whose world had fallen apart. We could not mend their broken heart but we have lifted their burden of debt and given them hope. Each of our clients is unique but they all share experiences of fear, shame, hopelessness and despair as their debts become unmanageable.

Cambridge Money Advice Centre, or MAC as we often refer to ourselves, began from the desire of a group of local Christians who wanted to show God's love in a practical way by offering free regulated debt advice. Since opening in 2005 there is no doubt that the need has continued to grow even more. Our goal is as it says in our logo, to break the hold of debt.

We are all hearing more and more about the cost of living crisis. There is no doubt in our minds that even more people are going to need our help in the next few years. The average person in the UK has just under £4000 of unsecured debts. Our clients have three to four times that, as their debts mount up when they can no longer pay towards them due to one or more catastrophic events in their lives, such as the loss of a job, the breakdown of a relationship, bereavement or health issues.

We are able to sit down with the people we help and, over a series of meetings, we gather information about their debts, their situation and their income and expenditure. Each meeting has two debt advisers present, either at our office in Barnwell or via Zoom. Our first meeting is usually the most impactful for our clients as they are able to, perhaps for the first time, tell someone about their situation and see that there might just be some hope. We begin with the urgent issues, such as bailiffs or eviction threats and then unpack the remainder with them step by step.

One of the most powerful things we can do initially for our clients is to make contact with their creditors and request time to sort things out. Many

companies are attempting to make contact daily. We step into the situation and act as a go between. Imagine the stress of daily calls, texts and emails when you know you cannot pay that company, or perhaps several sets of companies doing this.

Our goal is to get people debt free, and in a stable financial situation. For some people this may take many years but on that journey we are also doing all we can to reduce their stress and worry as their situations change. For some people an insolvency is the best option – a way to gain a fresh start; for others, a repayment plan for their debts over a period of years, is agreed with the creditors based on a carefully calculated budget. Occasionally there will be other solutions such as requesting a write off of debts or even contesting them. Which solution is appropriate depends on the circumstances of the client and this is why all our advisers receive thorough FCA approved training. We guide, recommend and support our clients toward the best solution for them, helping them to put it in place and ensuring they understand what the implications are.

In 2022 we have been thrilled to welcome four new advisers into training. They have all undergone their initial formal training and are now beginning to learn the intricacies of debt advice with our fully trained advisers. Like so many skills, they now have the basic principles and will be building on this over this year. Another vital part of our team is the volunteer trustees. Being a trustee of a small but very passionate charity like MAC is a valuable experience – we are looking to add to the team. We are especially seeking someone with either fundraising or social media experience who shares our passion for changing peoples' lives. Do get in touch and we can tell you more.

Our clients come from all walks of life. All we ask of them is that it is only personal debt and that they engage fully with the process. We celebrate with them as they find success and sometimes cry alongside them too. We consider every improvement we are able to make for our clients to

be a success. As they begin to regain control in one area of their lives they also become more confident in others. We wish you could see the changes in their faces from that first nervous meeting to the reaching of a solution: bowed down and broken, to heads up and smiling, hopeful and ready to face the next challenge.

We provide all our client support freely but running our Centre requires financial support. We employ our Centre Manager on a part time basis to keep things running smoothly. She has been described as the spoke at the centre of the wheel of our organisation. We also need to pay a small rent for our office space and require various insurances. We pay an annual membership to Community Money Advice (CMA) which oversees around 160 debt advice centres in the UK. CMA provides much of our necessary training and also support and guidance, alongside a bespoke software system, to help us keep on top of the paperwork. Then there are the more mundane costs such as internet, mobile phone and postage and additional training costs and other memberships.

We run a very tight ship. God has always provided sufficient for our needs. We do apply to one or two funding bodies each year but the remainder will come from local churches and individual giving. Please prayerfully consider what you might be able to give. We also hugely value your prayer support.

This work began in prayer and continues to need it as we stand with our clients and support one another.

We want to thank St Mark's again for your on-going support. We hope to be able to share a little more with you in an upcoming service. Perhaps to tell you a few of the ups and downs of working in debt advice, but in the meantime if you have any questions or would like to get involved do get in touch with us either by email on info@cambridgemoneyadvicecentre.org.uk or leave us a message on 01223 727455. Or perhaps you need our help – if so do get in touch, we always work in confidence.

A final quote from our recent confidential 2022 survey of clients

"I honestly don't believe the help I have received from Cambridge Money Advice Centre could have been bettered. Through some very dark days, its staff and volunteers have consistently provided me with excellent guidance, always delivered with kindness, good humour and humanity."

Thank you.

Fiona Charge (Centre Manager MAC).

Charity proposed by Shev Roser

<https://www.cambridgemoneyadvicecentre.org.uk/>

COMMUNITY LUNCH



POSTPONED

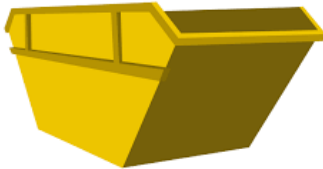
The next Community Lunch will be held
on Sunday 19th February at 12.30 pm in the large hall
Please sign up on the list in the narthex as usual
Menu : fish pie followed by chocolate mousse
The cost will be £5 and you will be able to pay cash or by card
All welcome

NorWEG : December's Charity of the Month

The amount raised, including Gift Aid, was £432. Very many thanks to all those who contributed so generously.

Litter Bugs or Litter Angels?

You may have read about the 16-year-old school boy nicknamed 'SuperDan' who has cleared more than 18 tons of rubbish left by fly-tippers near Merthyr Tydfil where he lives. He started to clear the rubbish only to find that a fresh lot was dumped the next day. He refused to get down-hearted even when he found 130 used tyres! (I would have given up long before that!)



Evidently, he asked the local council to provide him with a skip but they refused so he made an appeal for skips on the internet through social media and had massive support.

Someone even gave him some 'hidden cameras' to set up. You will be pleased to hear that the problem has been solved since these were installed...no more fly-tipping on his road!

What brought this story to mind was an article in the Cambridge Independent entitled 'Fly-tip fears as waste sites no longer able to take sofas and chairs.' It seems that such items will no longer be accepted at Cambridgeshire County Council-owned household waste and recycling centres from the 1st January due to a change in legislation. Unbelievable isn't it? Residents are advised to use re-use schemes or retailer take-back schemes. All well and good but it's back to putting the onus on the consumer again and so much for net zero!

Under the legislation Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) found in fire retardants used on furniture such as sofas can no longer be put in landfill so what do we do with them? The Environment Agency requires the offending items to be incinerated, however a confirmed list of incinerators able to receive POPs has not yet been supplied to councils. In the meanwhile, if we need to get rid of our broken old sofas we're advised to find a 'private' waste carrier. If that's not inviting criminals to exploit the situation by charging people to take away their old furniture and then dumping it on farmland I don't

know what is? Perhaps a massive bonfire on Lammas Land to make a point? Not that I really recommend that of course!

Talking of Lammas Land, I was walking across it recently and met up with a couple who were collecting litter with those 'grabber' things...not sure what the proper name for them is but I'll call it a 'litter-picker-upper'. I stopped to chat and commended them for their 'green' action but they said, "Not at all. It's good exercise!" What nice people and what an example they are to the rest of us. I joined in a local 'litter-pickup' in Newnham many years back and a young man trying to impress



the rest of his group said, "What are you doing that for? It's the Council's job!" My friend (a retired hospital matron/sister) gave him a piece of her mind in no uncertain terms. He looked very crest-fallen by the time she had finished with him. We hope he'll think twice about dropping litter next time!

And thus it comes back to each individual doesn't it? My husband has suggested that we could become 'Litter-Angels' and try to pick up at least one piece of litter each day during lent this year. What a good idea! So, if you see me walking down to Ben's fish van on a Saturday morning brandishing my 'litter-picker-upper' you'll know what I'm doing. You are welcome to come and join me of course!

In the meantime, let's all think about how we could minimise the things that we send to land-fill and reuse or repurpose them instead and if not, then perhaps they could be recycled in some way. Check the Cambridge Council website for suggestions.

By the way, 'litter-picker-uppers' are great for picking up those items you accidentally drop and which promptly roll under the sofa!

Best wishes

Rosemary Ley

Lent Services

Ash Wednesday, 22nd February

An Ash Wednesday Service at St Mark's at 7.30 pm

Every Monday during Lent

Evening Prayer at St Mark's at 5.00 pm

Secondly, thank you to those who are continuing

This year's schedule is shown on the facing page. Please make sure that you let your hosts know in good time if you are planning to join them.

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Paradise Fen

All those who love and appreciate Paradise Fen were greatly relieved when on the 11th January in a crowded Council Chamber the Planning Committee decided to go against the advice of its officers and refuse the application by Queens College to build more student accommodation adjacent to the Paradise Local Nature Reserve. This successful outcome is tribute to the vigorous campaigning on the part of the Friends of Paradise Nature Reserve.

Alan Jones

June Dathan

We are sad to record the death of June Dathan before Christmas. A long term resident of Newnham, June will be much missed.

The Seek Editorial Committee extends its sympathy to all her family.

The March Issue of SEEK

All contributions are welcome. Please send them by Wednesday 15th February to Jane Plows at janemp@virginmedia.com (350120) or contact any member of the committee.



Jane Bower (spoken word)

**Arts at St Mark's
presents**

Transformations

**A concert on
February 10th February
at 7.30pm**

Andrew Black (piano)

No stranger to St Mark's, Jane brings us another thoughtful and entertaining show, this time on the theme of Transformations. Recent performances here were 'Daddy's Diaries' - her father's experiences in the Second World War - and a poignant dramatisation of the Canaanite Woman at the Radius New Play Festival in October. With Andrew, Jane now offers comic and profound insights into changing worlds and attitudes.

Retiring collection for St Mark's and Cambridge Philharmonic

From the Registers

Funerals

23rd January

June Dathan

24th January

Ann Watson

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February Prayers with a Lenten Theme

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

From the Book of Common Prayer, to be said every day throughout Lent

Forgive those things we have done
which have caused you sadness,
and those things we should have done
that would have brought you joy.

In both we have failed
ourselves,
and you.

Bring us back to that place
where our journey began,
when we said that we would follow
the way that you first trod.

Lead us to the Cross
and meet us there.

www.faithsandworship.com

Forgive us Lord for our apathy,
for our lack of courage to speak out.
Forgive us when we walk past and don't offer help.
Forgive us when we get it wrong.

From the Methodist Church website

Chosen by Jane Plows

Cambridge City Foodbank

Where You Can Donate this Month in Newnham and Grantchester

St Mark's Church – Drop it off in the Narthex on Sunday 5th February or at 1 Millington Road or 19 Kings Road on Thursday 9th February 9am – 4pm (also the Grantchester Reading Room 9am – 3pm).

Gough Way – Every Tuesday morning 11am - 1pm at the Gough Way island with the postbox (contact sarah.smalley@ntlworld.com for further details)