

## The End of an Era in the Parish Office



I will always remember the first time that I met Janet, the Parish Administrator here at St Mary's, who retires at the end of January. It was the day of my interview for this role. Those of you who have experience of the interview process in the Church of England will know that this was a challenging time for everyone involved. Over the course of two days, candidates are subjected to a series of meetings and interviews, including supper with members of the parish on the first evening, affectionately called "death by quiche." Janet was one of the first people that I met on my interview, and she had been tasked with explaining the nature of her role.

For a number of reasons, I warmed to her immediately. The first and most obvious reason is that there was plenty of laughter in the Parish Office. The work got done without anyone taking themselves too seriously. The second reason is that I could really feel Janet's empathy for my situation. She wanted to make things as comfortable as possible because she knew how uncomfortable everyone was likely to be feeling. I felt a real sense of solidarity.

Since that first meeting, I have, of course, got to know Janet better, and there continue to be many things that I love about her. We connected early on because we both share a passion for theology. Janet has undertaken many courses over the years, and is always worth listening to on the subject. It has been so refreshing to have a place to discuss the content of sermons, not to mention favourite theological books.

Janet also has one or two opinions. Politically, she has described herself to me as a Christian Socialist and there is little doubt that Janet is on the side of the poor, the outcast, those whose voices are not heard. Qualities that might sound just a little familiar to those of us who try to follow Jesus.

On a personal level, I have to say that Janet has offered the most incredible support and encouragement to me in my ministry here. She will joke about the number of Vicars that she has seen off, but she is exceptionally loyal. The office has always been a sanctuary for me where I know that I can say anything without fear of judgement.

It is almost unthinkable to consider St Mary's without Janet as Parish Administrator – it's a role that she has undertaken for over thirty years, and it has undoubtedly evolved a great deal in that time. Hard though it is for us all, this is a time of new beginnings. If anyone deserves a bit of rest, it's Janet, and I know that new and exciting things lie ahead. I know that the whole community will join me in wishing Janet all the best. This isn't goodbye, as Janet continues to be a part of the congregation, but it is a big thank you – for all that she has done over the years, and for all that she is.

Rev Theresa Ricketts

## Lent 2023 at St Mary's

### Introduction

This year's Lent course is an opportunity to revisit how our faith impacts our lives. We begin by considering how faith frees us to live fully in the present moment; we then explore the Bible, and what it is that we can learn from the example of Jesus. We go on to wrestle with challenging subjects like how we are to live, and suffering. At the heart of the course

is a belief that God chooses to be with us in our human lives because God loves us – and this shapes all that we are called to be and do.

The course will be divided into four sessions, taking place on Monday evenings (from 27<sup>th</sup> February) on Zoom and Wednesday mornings (from 1<sup>st</sup> March) in person in the Cuddington Hall. Everyone is welcome.

### **Session 1a – Meaning**

What does it mean to be human, poised between the past that we cannot change and sometimes oppresses us, and the future that we cannot imagine and sometimes terrifies us? This session explores the ways in which Christianity might be seen as liberation from the prison of the past and the fear of the future. It sees Christianity as faith about the past; hope about the future; and love in the present.

### **Session 1b – The Bible**

This session offers an overview of the Bible as a five act play. The emphasis is on learning to find our own place within God's story, recognising that the church is in Act Four of a story that didn't finish in the first century.

### **Session 2 – Jesus**

Jesus spent time with an accountable community (the disciples); the poor; and in often heated dialogue with the authorities. He was killed because of the threat he posed to the religious and political status quo. In our discipleship we are called to spend time with those with whom Jesus spent time and we will explore what that might look like for us.

### **Session 3 – Mission and Cross**

This session outlines the notions of working for others, working with them, being with them and being for them. It contends that Jesus spent 90% of his time among us "being with" – 30 years. Being with is fundamental to how God relates to us, to how we relate to God and one another eternally, and to how we should relate to one another today. The cross is seen as the ultimate demonstration of with – Christ being with us even to the point of jeopardising the integrity of the Trinity.

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## **Session 4 – Prayer and Suffering**

This session considers ways in which each of us is rich and poor, and how we might communicate with one another about these things. It explores the vexed question of prayer for someone in distress or trouble, suggesting that some forms of prayer can transform every aspect of life

## **February Services and Events**

<b>Saturday 4</b>	<b>08.30</b>	<b>Men's Group Breakfast at Horton Golf Park</b>
<b>Sunday 5</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Sung Communion and Children's Groups</b>
<b>Monday 6</b>	<b>19.30</b>	<b>Knit &amp; Natter Group in the Leverton Room</b>
<b>Saturday 11</b>	<b>19.30</b>	<b>Jazz Evening in the Cuddington Hall</b>
<b>Sunday 12</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Sung Communion</b>
	<b>18.00</b>	<b>Evensong</b>
<b>Wednesday 15</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>No PCC Meeting this month</b>
<b>Thursday 16</b>	<b>14.30</b>	<b>Afternoon Club in the Cuddington Hall</b>
<b>Saturday 18</b>	<b>10.30</b>	<b>Women's Group in the Cuddington Hall</b>
<b>Sunday 19</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Sung Communion and Children's Groups</b>
<b>Wednesday 22</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion with Imposition of Ashes</b>
<i>Ash Wednesday</i>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>Sung Communion with Imposition of Ashes</b>
<b>Sunday 26</b>	<b>08.00</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b>
	<b>09.30</b>	<b>Sung Communion</b>
<b>Monday 27</b>	<b>19.30</b>	<b>Lent Course Session 1 on Zoom</b>

**Morning Prayer is said in church every weekday morning at 9am**

**Everyone is very welcome**