



BERWICK PARISH CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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'A Season for All Men.....and Women!'

Holy Week has arrived and we enter the most sacred season of the Church year, the central mystery and message of the Christian gospel: the cross and the empty tomb,

At the end of the week, we celebrate Good Friday. There is something jarring about 'celebrating' the gruesome execution of an innocent victim. And yet as the story reaches its climax, as Jesus dies, we are given this image: the curtain in the Temple that separates humanity from God is torn in two.

Here, at this foundational moment in our faith, is inclusion - the heart of the Easter story. Whatever we put in the way of us and God, Jesus dismantles, and in dismantling that, he dismantles everything we put in the way of us and each other.

If inclusion is at the heart of the gospel message then it is at the heart of what churches should be. It is at the heart of what Berwick Parish Church of Holy Trinity and St Mary is and wants to be. And that should cover everything we do: who we welcome, how we make our building accessible, how our liturgy and music allow our spirits to soar together, beyond the barriers we still erect today.

As a worshipping community, as a place of worship, as an historical building, as a place for the town to come together, we are on a journey, which all are welcome to join. I hope that in the pages that follow you can catch a glimpse of who we are and who we want to be and know that you are welcome to be part of it.

With my love and prayers, Fr Lee



Mystery and Illumination

Over the past months Holy Trinity has hosted a number of events for the town. Most recently, Berwick's newest bookshop, The Book Loft organised the launch of the latest DCI Ryan mystery, *Berwick*, by the highly successful Northumberland author, L.J. Ross, who was kept very busy autographing copies at the end of the evening.

Lumos, whose claim is to bring 'enchanted concert experiences paying homage to world famous artists...in...spectacular locations and churches across the UK', came to Berwick Parish Church on two occasions during the winter months, featuring the music of Coldplay and Fleetwood Mac.

Anyone wishing to use either the Church or the Parish Centre is, in the first instance, invited to contact the parish administrator at parishadmin@berwickparishchurch.co.uk



St. Mary's School - New SEND Unit



At the end of February the Bishop of Berwick, the Rt Revd Mark Roe pronounced a blessing as the ribbon was cut at the official opening of the new Tweed Special School building at St Mary's C of E Primary School. This is the first Church of England school in Northumberland to incorporate a custom-built Special Education Needs Unit within mainstream schooling – the facilities of the unit will provide the children with a safe and stimulating learning environment, allowing them to thrive and reach their full potential.

This very happy occasion, which ended with much appreciated tea and cake, was also attended by the Head, Mr Gary Hilton, Fr Lee Taylor and Chair of Governors, Mrs Joyce Guthrie.

Holy Trinity School - 300th Anniversary Churchyard Stone

Local stonemason Luke Batchelor of Northumbria Stone, chose Hazelden sandstone for the special 300th memorial plaque laid into the graveyard and unveiled by Holy Trinity School children on 26th February. Quarried locally, north of Alnwick, Luke explained that it is the hardest of all sandstones and is expected to last for the next 300 years, weathering like the existing churchyard memorials dating back to the 17th century. The children were fascinated and inspired by Luke's descriptions of his stonemason training and the skills of his craft and enjoyed the morning despite the wind and rain typical of Northumberland in February.



The stone was placed at the foot of the Jacqueline flowering cherry tree planted by Holy Trinity School pupils in November 2025. Both the tree and the plaque were funded by the generosity of St Hilda's Trust.

Rustic and Real!

HMP Northumberland's Oswin Project, founded by the Revd Fiona Sample MBE, supports offenders and ex-offenders, offering training, mentoring and skills to access work, as well as employment opportunities. A chance meeting between Fiona Sample and Anne Horne (licenced reader and eco champion) has led to a fruitful relationship, highly valued by the church.

Covering a wide range of schemes and activities the Oswin Project's enterprises include the Inside and Out Team run by the dynamic John Stubbins (featured). It is this skilled and hard working team which crafted the rustic benches for the northeast corner of the churchyard and the log cycle rack for the Parish Centre. Using wood salvaged from Storm Arwen, the highly appropriate, bespoke designs and beautiful carpentry are a great testament to John's skills and leadership and the hard work of his team.



Wildflower seeds were planted in the ground disturbed by sinking the benches securely, and haven't all been eaten as yet by the resident pheasant and other birds who love the churchyard. The benches now look as if they have always been there and are a fitting, comfortable place on which to rest and enjoy the tranquillity of the sacred and special place that is the churchyard.

A Festive Review

The Advent and Christmas seasons brought some wonderful music to Holy Trinity and St Mary's. The Royal Northern Sinfonia set the tone with an atmospheric candlelight concert and this was followed by a first visit from the professional choir from Edinburgh's Robin Chapel. This too was a candlelight concert of Christmas music from many eras and of many genres. Just eight singers delighted a full church who were twice invited to sing with them. To the surprise of many, on the second occasion the carol was 'While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night' – but sung to the Yorkshire folk tune 'On Ilkla Moor Baht 'at'. Except that the tune was originally a hymn tune, only later adopted by the people of Yorkshire!



The Robin Chapel Choir

Music was, of course, at the heart of the candlelit service of Nine Lessons and Carols, held this year on the Sunday before Christmas rather than on Christmas Eve. The Choir was in terrific voice, singing a wide range of pieces – from the 18th to the 21st centuries - from Bach's 'Jauchzet Gott' to Rachmaninov's Hymn to Mary, 'Bogoroditse Devo', performed in Russian, and John Rutter's 'Star Carol'.

Hobkirk's Choice

Each Newsletter Holy Trinity's Director of Music will write on a favourite piece.

I am currently working on a wonderful anthem by Parry. It starts with a flowing, reassuring section that talks about friends meeting again "beyond the sphere of grief". The next section introduces a note of tension and the music speeds up as it describes the sphere of "Time and sin and fate's control", which melts away beautifully with the words "serene in changeless prime". The final section is the most remarkable. It starts with a bold, unison statement, "That creed I fain would keep". This is where following Parry's instructions to the letter is so important. He instructs us to go back to the original pace, making that statement really quite slow. After that, he repeats the phrase, "Eternal be the sleep, if not to waken so" - it becomes obvious, with Parry's harmony, that "Eternal sleep" is not a good thing at all, cut off from God's love and warmth.



Sir Hubert Parry

The very last statement, "If not waken so" is like a door opening into heavenly paradise. Parry demands that it be even slower (quite a challenge, as the phrase steadily rises to a high, held note for the sopranos). However the effort is well worth it.

Musical Dates for your Diary

15th April:

American organist, Sean Maxwell, of the monastery of Sao Bento da Vitoria, Porto will give the first recital of this season. (*Organ recitals are on the third Wednesday of each month from April to September*)

18th April:

Handel's Messiah, pt 2&3 - Berwick Arts Choir

22nd April:

The return of Max Mostovetski, the brilliant young pianist from Leipzig, who thrilled his audience last May with a virtuoso performance.

25th April:

Coffee Concert - Veronica Gilbert and Ray Howell with Rene Telfer

The 39 Steps?

Perhaps there are not thirty-nine rungs to the churchwarden's ladder, but it is quite a climb to the top where David Mason is photographing the tell-tales fixed to the east wall of the chancel.

When Holy Trinity was built there was no chancel – the shape of this Cromwellian church was little more than a rectangle with the pulpit being the focal point at the east end. In the middle of the 19th century the church was extended to include a chancel with a high altar as the focal point of worship.

There has in the past been some evidence of movement in this newer wall. It is inspected regularly by the church architect and even more frequently (once every three months) by the churchwardens. Fortunately the building seems stable at the moment and in recent times has not given cause for concern.



Celebrating Holy Week & Easter at Holy Trinity

Sunday 29th March – Palm Sunday
8.30am - Holy Communion
10.00am - The Liturgy of Palm Sunday
6.00pm - Choral Evensong

Monday 30th March, Tuesday 31st March & Wednesday 1st April
6.30pm - Eucharist
7.00pm - Supper in the Parish Centre
8.00pm - Compline

Thursday 2nd April – Maundy Thursday
7.30pm - The Liturgy of Maundy Thursday, (with reception of oils and washing of feet)
9.00pm - The Watch

Friday 3rd April - Good Friday
10.40am - Churches Together Walk of Witness
12.00pm - Easter Garden event for children
2.00pm - The Liturgy of Good Friday

Sunday 5th April – Easter Day
5.00am - Easter Vigil
8.30am - Eucharist (BCP)
10.00am - The Eucharist of Easter Day followed by Easter Egg Hunt for children
6.00pm - Festal Choral Evensong

A Window for St Peter

The window in south-east end of the main body of the church is dedicated to Thomas Thorp, vicar of Holy Trinity for twenty years until his death in 1767. He was also one of seven Trustees of the Charity School on Ravensdowne, named in 1763 in the will of the school's founder, James Bolton.

Victorian, like the majority of the stained glass in the church, the window is both a memorial and a story book. The three ovals in the central panel trace the growth of the church from the calling of the first disciples to its spread beyond Jerusalem following Christ's resurrection. It gives Peter a central role; first called, together with his brother Andrew, to leave his fishing nets and follow Jesus. Peter is subsequently handed 'the keys to the kingdom', as Jesus declares him the rock on which the church will be built.

Peter, distinguishable by the red and green garments he has worn in all three ovals, appears finally anointing a group of new disciples. It is unclear who they are. Possibly 'men of good standing' selected to support the work of the early church; or are they the household of the Roman centurion, Cornelius, baptised by Peter who had realised that the gospel must be proclaimed beyond the Jewish community? Whoever it is, the significance of this moment in the life of the church is recognised by the descending dove denoting the presence of the Holy Spirit at work throughout the church.

