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BERWICK PARISH CHURCH NEWSLETTER

An Invitation

Ordinariness. Our modern world appears to be bored with the ordinary. We all seem to want to be reality TV stars, or celebrities, or have extraordinary experiences. Ordinary is dull. Which is problematic for the Church when most of the year is Ordinary Time. Now, not everyone likes this, Trinity Season is a much nicer expression.

But I quite like the idea that the ordinary business of the Church carries on. After all the celebrations and feasting of Christmas, Epiphany and Easter it could feel like an anti-climax. But it isn't. The ordinary business of the Church is to live out the truths of those seasons day by day in the world around us.

The ordinary business of Holy Trinity and St Mary's is to open our doors; to welcome people in; to allow anyone and everyone to explore our history, our heritage and our architecture; to host music events, literary events, historical talks; and all whilst getting on with the day to day rhythm of prayer, worship, sacrament and service.

Don't get me wrong we, love a party and a feast, we had a great time when the Bishop of Newcastle joined us for Trinity Sunday, and we love marking the Saints' Days during the year. But that doesn't mean the rest of the time isn't exciting. The opportunity to breathe in the atmosphere of a church steeped in prayer; to see something new in a familiar stained-glass window; to hear a piece of music in a different way; to encounter God on a normal Tuesday afternoon.

There's nothing dull in that ordinariness, so come, make a change and be ordinary with us.

With my love and prayers, Fr Lee



All things Bright and Beautiful

The first thing a visitor sees on entering Holy Trinity is the beautiful flower display in the entrance. People come to the Church for many reasons; to learn about its history, perhaps to pray or light a candle and write a prayer request. Sometimes they will sit and just be still with their own thoughts.

The sight and scent of the Church flowers form a backdrop to the many different feelings people bring with them and help bring that sense of peace which so many comment on in the Visitors' Book. The often stunning arrangements are the result of the loving care and expertise of the Flower Guild, and are in part paid for by donations made in memory of a loved one.

The Birds.....

On a cold windy morning in January, three hardy souls braved the elements in the churchyard to take part in the 2026 Big Garden Birdwatch. Results from around the country placed the goldfinch eighth although it was number one in the Holy Trinity count – with a charm of eight goldfinches descending. How appropriate for a churchyard as the goldfinch was thought to be associated with Good Friday.

Several Italian Renaissance artists depicted the Christ Child with a goldfinch, foretelling the Crucifixion. Meanwhile, in legend a goldfinch is supposed to have flown down as Christ was on his way to Golgotha. It plucked a thorn from Christ's crown to ease His suffering and a drop of blood fell on its head, giving it the characteristic red facial feathers. It was also seen as a symbol of the Resurrection and thought to offer protection from plague.



...and the Bees

A limited edition first batch of Holy Trinity Honey was harvested this Spring and distributed as gifts – the last jar being presented to Bishop Helen-Ann on Trinity Sunday. The hive has been in situ for four years and has recently been blessed by Fr Lee. A new apiarist has been found who is now nurturing the bees. Though production of honey has thus far been a little slow it is hoped that 2027 – the 375th Anniversary of the church – will see bumper sales.

Historically churches and monasteries have kept bees for wax - a valuable commodity for candles as 4kg of honey consumed by bees creates only 500g of wax. Holy Trinity introduced a bee colony as one element in its drive to increase biodiversity in the churchyard.



The Bishop of Berwick Blesses the Bounds

The Bishop of Berwick, the Rt Rev Mark Wroe, was kept busy on the Saturday of the May Bank Holiday weekend as dozens of riders and spectators gathered, his day began on the steps of the Guildhall blessing the annual Riding of the Bounds.

Fr Lee then took Bishop Mark to Holy Trinity Eco Group's Spring plant sale, a hugely successful event which raised in excess of £500 towards the next biodiversity project, the development of a wetland wildflower area in the south-east corner of the churchyard. Unusually for this Spring the sun shone, which undoubtedly encouraged folk to think about gardening. The range of plants for sale was impressive – from the mundane to the exotic – and as always the Parish Centre café sold delicious cakes and scones to go with tea and coffee.



A Feast of Good Music

The Summer Organ Recital Series started on an international footing, with the American organist Sean Maxwell, who is organist at a monastery in Oporto, and continued most recently as Holy Trinity's own Calum Langdon returned to great acclaim.

Berwick Arts Choir and the Leeds Male Voice Choir both delighted large audiences and the stunning Max Mostevetski made a very popular return to give us an evening recital with a programme that ranged from Bach to Gershwin.



Max Mostevetski

Hobkirk's Choice

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

This time, I have chosen an early Georgian piece, "Lord, let me know mine end", by Maurice Greene. It may be heard on *Maurice Greene, Selected Anthems* by the choir of New College Oxford, directed by Edward Higginbottom.

Greene was born in 1696, the year after Purcell's death, and grew up surrounded by church music his father was a Chapel Royal Chaplain, whilst Greene was a chorister at St. Paul's Cathedral. He was most notable for starting the collection 'Cathedral Musik', which solidified the repertoire of English church music.

The text of the anthem is taken from verses of Psalm 39 and uses a walking bass (Basso continuo or basso ostinato) which possibly represents the day to day rhythm of life's journey. The choral parts are polyphonic (coming in one after another using similar melodies, like a round) very much influenced by Purcell. The individual voices are drawn together at the end of each section to form a strong cadence (rather like harmonic punctuation). The text rehearses our frailty and failings, as the voices constantly weave in and out, searching for answers until the statement of faith: "And now Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope is ev'n in thee". Greene makes the parts sing together homophonically (like a hymn) to deliver the strong message. The anthem gradually diminishes at the end as life slips away.



Maurice Greene
by Francis Hayman



A Memorial Window

In the south wall of the church is a window installed in 1859 by Alexander Kirkwood in memory of two infant children. Unusually, the central panel depicts Jesus in the house of Mary and Martha at Bethany. Martha is busy, carrying jars in preparation for a meal, while Mary sits at Jesus's feet – the inscription reminds us 'Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her'.

Dr Alexander Kirkwood, who lived in Ravensdowne, was Medical Officer of Health to Berwick Poor Law Board and was a notable campaigner for public health. Alexander's first child, a daughter born in February 1851, lived only a week. A further daughter, Mary, was baptised in Holy Trinity in July 1857 and died in April 1859 aged 21 months. This window, which also shows two angels each carrying a child, is a poignant tribute to Alexander and Mary's daughters.

Keeping a Roof Over Our Heads

The Church has not one roof, but six!

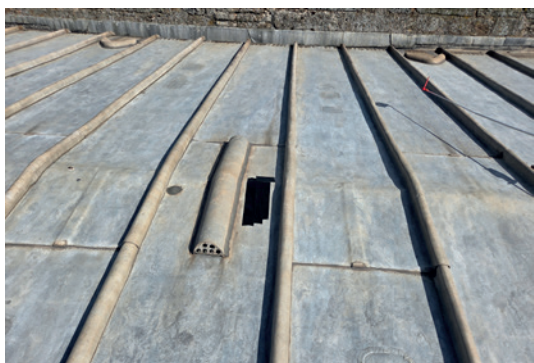
As well as the main nave and two side aisles, there are separate roofs over the vestry, the sanctuary, and the organ chamber.

The roof, of course, plays a vital role, not just in keeping the congregation dry, but in protecting the very fabric of the church. It's something we rarely think about - until something goes wrong. The good news is that four of our six roofs are in good condition - originally covered in lead, they were replaced in the 1990s with coated stainless steel after thefts became a problem. This modern material has a similar lifespan, is less attractive to thieves, and is lighter - an advantage that even allowed us to install solar panels on the south aisle roof.



However, two areas now urgently need attention. The main nave roof, still covered in lead and now nearly 100 years old, has been identified by our church architect as requiring replacement. In the past, delays in addressing roof issues led to hidden problems in the supporting beams, resulting in expensive repairs. We are determined not to let that happen again. The organ chamber roof also needs replacing. Currently covered in bituminous felt - a material with a relatively short lifespan - it is no longer fit for purpose.

The plan, is to replace both the roof over the nave, and that over the organ chamber with stainless steel. As part of this work, we also plan to install insulation to help reduce heat



loss and improve the church's energy efficiency.

Detail of the state of the roof

Scan this QR code to donate to our roof appeal.



Can You Help?

The total cost of this essential project is estimated at a significant six-figure sum. We are very encouraged that generous donors have already contributed £35,000 (with Gift Aid to be added) and Berwick Parish Church Trust has set aside £41,000. This is a wonderful start, but we still have a long way to go.

We are actively seeking external grants but we also invite your support. If you feel able to contribute, you can donate online at: <https://donate.myдона.com/berwick-parish-church>

For regular giving, please visit: <https://berwickparishchurch.co.uk/donate/>

If you would like to discuss making a larger donation, or are interested in leaving a gift in your will, please contact our Treasurer at treasurer@berwickparishchurch.co.uk or Berwick Parish Church Trust at bpct@berwickparishchurch.co.uk

Together, we can ensure that our historic and beautiful church remains a safe and welcoming place for generations to come.

Scan this QR code for more information about regular giving.

