

4th SUNDAY BEFORE LENT NEWSLETTER

9th – 15th February 2025

'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.'
(Galatians 6.9)

Friends, moving from the season of Epiphany towards Lent, we are invited to see how Jesus comes to us as he came to his first disciples. Jesus invites us to trust what he asks of us even when it does not seem sensible from our human understanding. **Jesus invites us to be 'fishers of men',** in other words **to invite and attract people to know Jesus, and to our church family.** We may be rather disheartened as 'fishers of men' looking around during Sunday services. But be encouraged. Here is what we do as a church family, which you may not associate with following Jesus as 'fishers of men'.

In Winston, everyone is welcome to the **3rd Mondays Tea and Chat** coordinated by St Andrew's member Val (01325 730811).

In Staindrop, St Mary's Church has a new monthly Coffee Morning 10-11.30am every 2nd Friday at The Scarth Hall Bistro. All welcome! (contact@stmarysstaindrop.org.uk).



In Gainford, Wendy of St Mary's Church coordinates Warm and Welcome, a community multiagency initiative, **every Friday 10am – 12noon** in the Village Hall. All welcome. Contact Churchwarden Geoff Taylor (01325 730379).

In Ingleton, we're preparing for our **Lent Lunch with a difference on Thursday 13th March 12.30-2pm** and our **Spring Fair on Saturday 29th March** with a Tombola stall featuring gifts for Mums, both in the Village Hall, ahead of Mothering Sunday. Yes, again everyone is welcome!

These occasions are all opportunities to share God's love with anyone who comes including those who may not know Jesus. If we believe in the eternal value of knowing Jesus, that living with God makes a real difference to lives in this world, then let us ask God's help for courage to invite others to our church events and even to join us in church.

Churches Together in Gainford supports a worthy cause every Lent. This year Woodhouse House Close Community Club will speak about their work at our **AGM on Tuesday 18th February 10am at St Osmund's Centre.**



We give thanks for faithful parishioners who serve God, small and great, throughout the life of our churches. We shall be interring the ashes of the late **Brian and Renee Blackburn** who served in St Mary's, Gainford for many years **on Sunday 16th February at 12.30pm.** Their children **Tim and Karen** would be glad for anyone who knew **Brian and Renee** to attend the short Committal service.

Thursday 13th February 6.30pm YOUTH SAINTS in Gainford St Mary's

HAPPY ST VALENTINE'S



This Sunday's Services

9.15	Staindrop St Mary	Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop
9.30	Winston St Andrew	Rev'd Moji Jaiyesimi
10.45	Gainford St Mary	Rev'd Moji Jaiyesimi
11.00	Ingleton St John	Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop

Raise us up, O God, that we may live in your presence. Amen

Rev'd Canon Eileen Harrop

NOTICES

Please pray for families recently bereaved and give thanks for the life of

† The Late Mrs Kathleen Hutchinson, whose funeral at Ingleton St John the Evangelist Church will take place on Friday 21st February 2025 at 12.45 followed at 2pm by the Service of Committal at Darlington Crematorium

FROM OUR PARISHES

† STAINDROP ST MARY

We are a large church with a long legacy of heritage and faith in a special community. You may be aware of our growing team of volunteers helping to maintain, repair, and restore St Mary's Church. **A big 'Thank You' to former churchwarden and PCC member Alastair Fells and our volunteers in our much needed Works Sub-group.**

We need to refresh and replenish our PCC. The role of the PCC is to oversee the present life and future of the church as a place of worship and to assist the Priest in Charge in ministry and mission. It may choose to meet 6 times a year, and between one and 2 hours each time. Tasks are shared with many others. This is not a big undertaking, yet a service to God that blesses the people of Staindrop. Take a look at Jesus' story in Matthew 21:1-14. Are we the unresponsive invited guests? Might God be directing us to people outside the church to serve on our PCC? By exceptional agreement of our Bishop, this would be permitted. But is this what we are called to do?

† WINSTON ST ANDREW

Our PCC meets at 6.30pm in the Village Hall Supper Room on Monday 10th February 2025.

† INGLETON ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Our school's Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Inspection takes place on Wednesday 12th February. We have an excellent Academy Council (Governing body) and together with the children, school staff, and church, we are working towards an excellent inspection outcome. Please pray for them!

We are excited at the actively close relationship with our school. Our Missioner and Ordinand Claire have developed a programme to engage parents in what we are doing with our children and the church. To enable us to sustain these mission initiatives, we need to raise funds. Our PCC has many ideas for social events and entertainment.

Do you know someone who would love to help plan and organise social events or who enjoys all things admin? Church attendance not essential. Do encourage them to get in touch.

† GAINFORD ST MARY

Our **Messy Church** Team meets on Saturday 15th February to discern God's direction for young families in our community. We give thanks that God has resourced us for our 7 to 11 year olds **Youth Saints** ministry, and our **Open The Book** team continues to be a great blessing to our schools. Please pray for Sheila and Sarah our co-leads; Sue our OTB coordinator; and our volunteers as they serve God and the church.

Our PCC has a lively and varied social programme that also brings funds for our church upkeep and mission. Come along and invite others to our next event **'Mor Ukes'** in **Gainford Village Hall on Saturday 1st March** and enjoy the scrumptious hearty Pie and Peas supper too.

Gainford Village Hall
Saturday 1st March

50s 60s 70s

Music from
Mor-Ukes

Pie and Pea Supper and Bar
Doors open 7pm
Tickets £12 from Sue on 01325 730379
£100 for Parkinson's UK.
Other proceeds to St Mary's Church



† **GATHER is funding a new After-School Club for 'Big Questions' in Staindrop Academy!**

Gather Church Missioner Sarah Fells and Lead Sheila Jones have been invited to start an after-school club at Staindrop Academy on Thursday afternoons. This is **open to year 7 pupils** to start with, some of whom have had previous links from our churches' sponsored primary after-school clubs in Gainford, Ingleton, and Staindrop. **During the hour, they would chat about 'Big Questions' of life and faith**, over drinks and snacks followed by fun activities. Do you know any year 7's at Staindrop Academy? Pray for them and encourage them to come along. **Pray for a good response, to be open to God in the hearts, transforming lives of these young people.** For more information contact Sarah Fells or Sheila Jones smarys@gainfordwinston.church and info@gatherchurchteesdale.com

COLLECT for 4th before Lent

Merciful Lord,
absolve your people from their offences,
that through your bountiful goodness
we may all be delivered from the chains of
those sins
which by our frailty we have committed;
grant this, heavenly Father,
for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and
Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Post-Communion Prayer

Lord God,
whose blessed Son our Saviour
gave his back to the smiters
and did not hide his face from shame:
give us grace to endure the sufferings of this
present time
with sure confidence in the glory that shall be
revealed;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

I Corinthians 15:1-11

¹ Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, ² through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

³ For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴ and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

The Gospel according to Luke (5:1-11)

¹ Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' ⁵ Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' ⁶ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. ⁷ So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' ⁹ For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' ¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 9th February 2025

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland has designated 9th February 2025 as Racial Justice Sunday this year. They have also produced resources comprising prayers and information that can be viewed and downloaded from their website: <https://ctbi.org.uk/resources/racial-justice-sunday-9-february-2025/>

And as the Diocese of Durham UKME Advisor as well as the national Vice Chair of the Anglican Minority Ethnic Network (AMEN), here is the video **reflection recorded by AMEN for Racial Justice Sunday**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fF-UeFMkaCg>

Here is a Reflective Homily from a Zimbabwean colleague in the Diocese of Chichester not specially about race or justice, but she offers an interesting take on God's perspective of responsibility.

A Reflective Homily from Revd Canon Martha Mutikani 7th February 2025

Stewardship: Praying for Wisdom to Manage Increased Responsibility

Scripture Readings:

- I Chronicles 4:10 – “Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, ‘Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.’ And God granted his request.”
- John 13:21-30 – The moment when Jesus identifies Judas as His betrayer at the Last Supper.

Introduction: Be Careful What You Pray For!

Have you ever asked God for something and then thought, Wait...what have I done? Maybe you prayed for patience, and suddenly, you're stuck in traffic behind the slowest driver in the world. Or you asked God to help you grow in faith, and suddenly, life feels like an obstacle course!

Jabez prayed for an increase—more territory, more responsibility, more influence—and God said, Alright, here you go! But Jabez was smart—he didn't just ask for more, he asked for God's hand to guide him. Because, let's be honest, more blessings usually mean more stressings!

I. The Prayer of Jabez: “Lord, Increase My Territory (But Keep an Eye on Me!)”

Jabez prayed for three things:

- Blessing – A holy “Yes, please!” to God's abundance.
- Enlarged Territory – A bigger impact, but also bigger responsibilities.
- God's Hand and Protection – Because managing more can get messy!

Imagine someone suddenly handing you the keys to a massive business or a huge church. You'd probably panic! (Where's the handbook? Do I get an assistant? Will there be snacks?) That's why Jabez added, "Lord, don't just give me more—stay close so I don't mess it up!"

2. Judas: The Man Who Mismanaged His Blessing

Now, let's contrast Jabez with Judas. Judas had a leadership role—he was literally the treasurer of Jesus' ministry. But instead of stewarding his responsibility wisely, he started skimming a little off the top. (Just a little... no one will notice!).

Then, in John 13, we see the ultimate moment of bad stewardship. Jesus, at the Last Supper, says, "One of you will betray me." Everyone starts whispering and looking around—probably thinking, "Hope it's not me!" Meanwhile, Judas is sitting there awkwardly, clutching his money bag, thinking, "Uh-oh, I think He knows!"

Jesus gives Judas a piece of bread, basically saying, "Go do what you've planned." And Judas... leaves. Into the night. Into history as the worst steward ever.

What's the lesson here? Stewardship isn't just about handling money—it's about handling responsibility well. Some people pray for a bigger role but forget to pray for the wisdom to manage it.

3. Stewardship Requires Prayer (and Maybe a Sense of Humour!)

If we want God to enlarge our territory, we need to pray like Jabez and avoid the mistakes of Judas.

- Pray for wisdom – Because increased responsibility without wisdom is like getting a new car without learning how to drive.
- Stay humble – Remember, stewardship is about serving, not controlling.
- Ask for help – Even Moses needed a team! No one succeeds alone (except maybe the guy who figured out how to turn water into coffee).

Conclusion: A Faithful Steward's Prayer

Jabez prayed, and God blessed him. Judas mismanaged what he had and lost everything. If you're asking God to "enlarge your territory," make sure you also ask Him to enlarge your wisdom!

So, let's pray:

"Lord, bless me indeed—but don't let me turn into a stressed-out mess! Give me wisdom to handle what You give me, grace when I stumble, and a sense of humor when things don't go as planned. And Lord... if you must give me more responsibility, at least let there be good coffee along the way. Amen!"