The “Church” and the “Christian Faith” is becoming more and more irrelevant in our divided and unloving world…

Might well be a headline from any given newspaper or website you care to think of. And the oft quoted half jest to clergy is “well you only work Sundays”… Try telling that to many of my colleagues who rarely wonder “what shall I do with my day today?”…

This February we begin a “new journey” here at St Mary’s, the Alpha Course (see more information elsewhere), that we hope will help us begin to break the myths about the irrelevance of the Christian faith and not only we hope help individuals start to know more about the person of Christ but also how much God Loves us. And in our current “climate” that’s as important as it ever was…

Since the Brexit Referendum in June 2016, we have seen families, our nation and Parliament divided by different opinions over Europe.

*But at the heart of the Christian message is Jesus’ command to love our neighbour. This includes those with whom we agree and disagree: at home, in Europe and further afield.* (CofE Bishops, December 2018).

As some celebrate St Valentine’s Day this month, how can we conduct this debate in a loving way? The Apostle Peter reminds us: “Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor.” (1 Peter 2:17). Now that may need some “unpacking”…

Respect everyone: However much we may disagree with another person’s perspective, we should respect them. And this applies even if they don’t respect our views!

Love the church: Among the family of believers, there should be an even greater respect for each other! The way we treat each other not only reveals the depth of our love; it will also cause people to glorify God and want to be part of the family.
Fear God: We must demonstrate our allegiance to God by putting Him first and following His leading. Of course, this doesn’t stop Christians from having different opinions to each other!

Finally...

Honour those in authority: We are called to honour those who are in authority over us “for the Lord’s sake”. Even when we disagree with their decisions and actions, we should keep our respect and not speak ill of them. (there have been some very sad scenes outside Parliament recently!)

So the Apostle Peter is calling us to live with the freedom to make up our own mind—on Europe and many other issues—but ultimately taking care to listen to what others say. And that’s what we hope Alpha brings as well, a Faith in Christ that is as much about loving as it is to be loved!

Yours in Christ

Revd. Paul

ST MARY’S ALPHA COURSE 2019
INVITATION AND PROGRAMME

We are excited to offer an opportunity to those looking to find out more and ask questions about the Christian faith. You will see below some of the topics covered during the course, but don’t panic, although it’s a course, there is no test involved. As you can see our course will run for 10 consecutive weeks beginning with the Introduction Evening on Tuesday 12 February. Each evening will take place in the church itself and will begin with a time of sharing a meal together and moving on to a talk on the topic for the evening delivered by Revd Paul and Revd Jacky. There will then be time for questions and discussions in a separate group setting. Go on give it a try, if you are new to church, just curious to learn more, or even if you have been attending church for many years, this is a great opportunity to refresh those “faith buds”. If you would like to come along please complete the form attached and return it to Revd Paul or Revd Jacky as soon as possible.

This is also part of our/your preparation for our Confirmation Service, which is taking place here at St Mary’s on 2 June at 4:00 pm.

We really hope and pray that you can join us.
All evenings (Tuesdays) will start at 7:00 pm concluding at 9:30 pm. The “Away Day” (Saturday 30 March) will start at 9:30 am and conclude approximately 3:30 pm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>SESSION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 February</td>
<td>Introduction evening... Christianity – Boring, Untrue &amp; Irrelevant?</td>
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<td>Is Alpha for me?</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 February</td>
<td>1. Who is Jesus?</td>
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<td>26 February</td>
<td>2. Why did Jesus die?</td>
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<td>5 March</td>
<td>3. Why and how should I read the Bible?</td>
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<td>12 March</td>
<td>4. Why and how should I pray?</td>
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<td>19 March</td>
<td>5. Where does evil fit in to God’s world?</td>
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<td>26 March</td>
<td>6. Does God heal today?</td>
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<td>30 March</td>
<td>Away Day: The Holy Spirit</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 April</td>
<td>7. How can I be sure of my faith?</td>
</tr>
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<td>9 April</td>
<td>8. What about the Church?</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 April</td>
<td>9. How can I make the most of my life? / Why and how should we tell others?</td>
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**INVITATION RESPONSE FORM**

I would like to take part in the St Mary’s Alpha Course.

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<td>Special Dietary Requirements</td>
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The Women’s Fellowship, and the Church, lost a regular attendee in Sheila Squires, who died in Hospital here on 21 October. Sheila had been unwell for some months before her death. Her funeral was held on Monday 26 November at Southend Crematorium and conducted by her niece, Susi Artis, who is a Lay Minister in Southwell and Nottingham Diocese. We left the Chapel to the strains of “C’est si Bon” by Les Halles – a fitting piece for such a delightful lady - may Sheila Rest In Peace.

WF Christmas Lunch and Party took place on 3 December. A happy occasion, albeit with a somewhat smaller attendance than in previous years. Again our usual Pass The Parcel (well packed by Joyce Canfield) was a riotous success, and we have to thank Revd Paul, our President, for coming to our rescue for the Christmas Carols as musician John Smith, and his Mum, Pat, were both unwell and unable to attend this year.

Suzanne Mattingley
We have become used in many cases to use “Satnavs” and mobile phones to help us navigate the world around us. During the coming season of Lent we plan to use the Gospel of John to help us “Journey through Lent” you might say “Map our way through”. Our themes follow…

- Jesus goes to a wedding – 14 March 7:30 pm
- Jesus meets a woman at a well – 21 March 7:30 pm
- Jesus reveals his identity – 28 March 7:30 pm
- Jesus stands before Pilate – 4 April 7:30 pm
- Jesus meets Mary in a garden – 11 April 7:30 pm

We hope you can join us as we explore with the help of scripture, art, poetry and music, on Thursdays after Ash Wednesday.

News from St Mary’s School

Our new Reception cohort are now settled into school life. Some of the things they enjoy about school are playing with the bikes and cars, playdough, drawing, playing with friends and lunch! We have also had a new canopy fitted; this is to enable our children to continue their outdoor learning in all weathers. There are several ways in which the canopy will enhance our outdoor learning environment. As there is little natural shade in our playground the canopy will provide a space for the children which will keep them safe and cool when it is extremely hot. It will also allow the children to use the outdoor environment during wet and rainy weather, giving them the space to engage in activities under a shelter. As a permanent fixture, the canopy will be a safe and dry area which is always readily available for children in all weathers. Resources which would usually have to be cleared away each evening would be able to be stored under the sail and give the children easier access to more continuous provision throughout the week. Finally, the children
will be able to engage in more independent and adult led activities as the canopy will be an area which provides an enhanced free flow environment and gives the children easy access to the outdoors throughout the year.

Reception children are all going to have a trip to the Forum library over the next couple of weeks; this experience will hopefully encourage them to join our library service so they develop a love of reading for pleasure as well as learning. The visit aims to help the children to feel welcome in the library and to learn a little bit about what they can find and do there. In Year 1 Religious Education our topic is Incarnation, and the children are focusing on Christmas. They have been on a walk to Southend town centre to explore what Christmas is, what it means to Christians and the signs in the community which inform us that it is coming. This was an enjoyable walk for all and the children will be doing follow up work on this over the next few weeks.

*St Mary’s Prittlewell Primary School, East Street site.*
Christmas flowers are always a joy to plan and arrange. The season of Advent is a special time when we prepare for the birth of the Christ Child, and our lovely church waits quietly with no flowers other than flowers on the memorial steps should anyone request flowers in memory of a loved one.

This year, we again kept to a simple theme with lots of greenery. For special occasions Paul is happy for the lectern to be decorated. This tradition started with the arrangement for Bible Sunday, and has continued for Remembrance Sunday and now Christmas, and doubtless will be again for Easter.

You may have also noticed that the archway over the main doorway had a garland of silk flowers and greenery. Again, we were encouraged by Paul to try this, and Richard (J) and Pat climbed the ladders, assisted by Penny Stone, (who handed up flowers) to achieve this arrangement.

The pedestals, and windows around the church, were arranged by Jenny, Penny, Christina, Sally, Dorothy, Richard (A), Lydia, and Pat (aided by Richard (J)). Margaret Silk was responsible for the pulpit, which always looks so impressive.

The flower team are grateful for the generous donations of money and greenery that the congregation give us, and are always happy to arrange
flowers for special occasions, be they to remember a loved one or to celebrate a special occasion in one’s life (there is a form to fill in on the photograph table). These flowers are usually arranged on the memorial steps.

Donations for Easter, Christmas, etc. are all put together and the church is decorated with everyone in mind.

Thank you everyone, our beautiful church can only continue to have lovely flowers with your help, encouragement and, of course, donations.

**Patricia Johnson**
Flower Co-Ordinator.

Flowers were given on 15 January 2019 by George Wiseman, Christine Eighteen and Nigel Wiseman and their families in loving memory of Molly Wiseman who left this world on 15 January 2014.

On 15 February 2019 June Pilgrim, Janice Paff and Robert Pilgrim and their families give flowers in loving memory of Stan Pilgrim who left this world on 15 February 2017.
On Saturday 1 December St Mary’s Church hosted a special service with prayers, carols and time for reflection with the lighting of a candle. The service was held by Havens Hospices.

The charity, which includes Fair Havens Hospice for adults, Little Havens Hospice for children and The J’s Hospice for young adults, holds an annual Light up a Life appeal giving everyone the chance to dedicate a light in memory of someone close to them who has died. Christmas trees displayed at the charity’s two hospices - Little Havens and Fair Havens are decorated with lights throughout December with each light representing the life of someone who has died and they also hold services like the one that was held at St Mary’s.

Sharon Davies who arranges Light up a Life at Havens Hospices, said, “Christmas can be an incredibly difficult time for anyone who has had someone close to them die, whether it is a friend or family member. Light up a Life is a really nice way to remember that special person to you at Christmas time.

“You don’t need to have experienced hospice care to dedicate a light. Anyone can join in and on behalf of everyone here at Havens Hospices I would like to thank St Mary’s for once again allowing us to hold one of our services at their church. It is always moving, but lovely to see members of the local community coming together to remember loved ones while ‘Making every day count’ for everyone we care for this Christmas; so, thank you to St Mary’s and to everyone who has dedicated a light or joined us at the service”

Amy Churchill
Press Officer
OUR NEXT FILM NIGHT AT

St Mary’s Church – East Street.

Saturday 23 February at 6:30 pm

Please join us for a FREE showing of

The film will be shown in church followed by refreshments and a short discussion and time of reflection.

We look forward to sharing it with you...

www.stmarysprittlewell.co.uk
On 2 December, we had our children’s Christmas activity afternoon. Thirty children joined us to watch the animated film “The STAR”, which tells the story of Christmas from the perspective of Bo the donkey as he travels with Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The film was watched in three instalments, which were split by challenges, games and crafts. The children enjoyed stacking nuts, hanging Christmas cards, decorating gingerbread men, making their own hanging star decoration and nativity stained glass windows. The afternoon was a fantastic opportunity to share the story of the first Christmas and share in some Christmas fun. Thank you to our wonderful team who made this event possible by giving up their Sunday afternoon to help.

Lois Blakey

Christmas Concert For HARP

Happy New Year to you all and thanks again for allowing the concert to take place at St Mary’s church £1689.52, what an amazing amount to raise, it was a beautiful event and I hope it continues each year.

Thanks for your help too over the evening!
I also wanted to mention thank you for all the gifts I collected before Christmas, some items were used in our services over the Christmas period for our service user’s children with the surplus going to the shop, so again thanks!!.

Lisa Walton
Community & Individual Fundraising Officer HARP Head Office

Advent and Elf Hunt

For the last three weeks of school before the Christmas break, we opened the church for Advent and Elf Hunt activities. As we counted down to Christmas using our giant advent calendar, we were able to share the story of the very first Christmas. The children also had the opportunity to hunt around the church for an elf who would find a new hiding place each day. Other activities were made available for those coming into the church; these included our colour–in advent calendar, activity sheets, making their own tree hanging decoration and Nativity stained glass window. After a slow start our number of visitors increased and by the end of the three weeks we had had over sixty children come into the church. This would not have been possible without our fantastic team of volunteers who gave up their time to meet and greet the children and their families.

Lois Blakey
This Christmas marked the 50th anniversary of the Christingle service. To get the celebrations underway, the children were able to participate beforehand and make their own Christingle in the church hall. This was followed by games in the main church before the service.

This format proved to be very popular with a definite increase in the number of families that attended and we managed to raise £264.85 for The Children’s Society.

A special thanks to our group of volunteers, who helped to ensure the event ran smoothly, making it a fun afternoon for all.

Stephanie Stanley
Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

In our home, preparations for Christmas begin in earnest after the traditional service of Nine Lessons and Carols. This service was held on the 16 December 2018 at St Mary’s, in a period of relative calm before the busyness of the festival. What a wonderful opportunity to hear God’s plan for the birth of our Saviour, to enjoy the traditional carols sung by the choir and to join with the well-loved hymns. The service was well supported by regular worshippers and visitors of all ages with plenty of ‘audience participation’ and the opportunity to enjoy a mince pie and glass of mulled wine with old and new friends. Thanks go to all who participated, and especially to Melanie and the choir who performed so well and led us in this uplifting and joyful time of worship and prayer.

Jennie Goddard

Crib Service

This year for our crib service attendees were invited to dress up as their favourite character from the Nativity. As families arrived we had some spare crowns, dishcloths and tinsel for anyone who needed a last minute Wise Man, shepherd or angel. Throughout the service the story of the very first Christmas was retold, whilst also singing some Christmas carols. Everyone was encouraged to join in with the story, standing when their character was mentioned, groaning at the bad news and celebrating the good news. The service was well attended and a timely reminder of what the good news that Jesus was “the king promised by God long ago, the king who will show us God’s love and bring us closer to Him.”

Lois Blakey
Crib Service

The Choir

Toy Service

Photos pages 13 to 17, and 28, Paul Mackay
Farewell, Tiny Tim

To all of you who remember our disabled cat Tiny Tim, I am sorry to say that on 14 January we had him put to sleep after he was taken very ill over the past month. Many of you remember Tim as a member of Christian Explorers and of the congregation attending weekday services and on Sundays. He was given an amazing opportunity in which he played the baby Jesus in the Sunday schools nativity at the toy service on Christmas eve. In 2013 he had a special thanks giving service in church where we celebrated him making it to 2 years of age. We celebrated his birthday every year as vets told us he wouldn’t see a year old so for him to make every year was an incredible achievement. In August 2018 he reached his senior year which for cats is 7 and we are so proud that he made it to this age.

For many years he would attend the service of remembrance to lay the animal wreath in memory of all the animals killed in human conflict. He would also join us on our fundraising events for Cats’ Protection and come with us on information talks with the uniformed groups of 1st Prittlewell. Pictured is Tim with the Brownie group where he helped them to earn their “friends to the animals” badge and was also
presented with one himself. He was an avid reader of the Parish Magazine; his favourite article was back in 2013 when he was featured in the Christian Explorer section to celebrate his second birthday and his first visit to the Sunday school. We are hoping to hold a fundraiser for Cats Protection in the memory of Tim and hope that those of you who knew him will join us in celebrating his life.

Jess Stone

Photos supplied

Dear Parishioners

My first recollection of St Mary’s Prittlewell was in the years 1942/43 as a Cub with the 1st Prittlewell. The Reverend Ireland was the then Scout Master.

My wife and I were married at St Mary’s in May 1954. As the cricket season was in full swing, Canon Gowing was not available! We were pleased to have the Reverend Pett to complete the ceremonies.
After a number of years our family was complete, with three lovely children, who all attended St Mary’s School, under the headships of Mr Richardson and Mr Lockwood.

As a family we were all confirmed at the time of Reverend Samuel Erskine, under instruction from Reverend Arthur and Joy Ridley.

I had the honour to be elected sidesman, also assisting with the Youth Club in the Guild Hall. Shirley was a member of the Mothers’ Union and Young Wives Group.

As a family we moved to Devon in 1971, to the town of Crediton, birth place of St Boniface.

I had the privilege to be churchwarden at All Saints’ Church, East Budleigh, the family church of Sir Walter Raleigh.

Our very dear friend June Goodsell has over so many years, sent us St Mary’s Church magazine, to keep us all in touch with our mother church.

We are all so pleased to hear and see that St Mary’s is on an upward trend and becoming once again a vibrant and welcoming church.

God Bless you all

Shirley and Edward Searle
(letter first received April 2018)

Dear Revd Paul

My father Edward John Searle wrote to you a while back. I would like to say that my father passed peacefully on New Years Eve age 86. His wishes were to be mentioned in your St Mary’s magazine.

Kind regards

Linda Parkhouse nee’ Searle.
Rev Biseke Balikenga is our Timothy Partner in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

He is the national youth co–ordinator working for the CMS in Burundi his home town in eastern DRC. There is a small Centre which provides clean water to the 20,000 families who have been displaced by fighting between military government forces and foreign–backed armed groups. A UN force has been stationed there to intercede between the two sides. Villagers have been killed and villages burned to the ground so there are more displaced people in the Centre and petrol stations and shops have closed.

In response Biseke and his Anglican colleagues are providing training and counselling especially for traumatised women and children. Women had to walk 7-10 kilometres to get water before it was available in the Centre and on their walk they were raped, beaten and robbed. The aim is lift the status of women, give them dignity and create a centre of peace. Tailoring training has been set up for women. 300 have been trained and 400 are waiting to start.

It is a difficult situation for pregnant women. Some are underweight and need blood transfusions but the local hospital does not provide them and there are no funds to transport patients to other hospitals.

There are a lot of children joining the church and more youth workers are being trained.

Ituri province where Biseke lives is next to the Ebola outbreak. There are vaccines and drugs ready in case it spreads.

The recent elections had to be delayed because equipment needed had been destroyed in a fire. The election has now taken place and there are hopes for a better government.

As you can see Biseke has several difficult situations to deal with and he asks for our prayers for his people.

Celia Tyler
Thank you

Sally and Paul would like to thank you for all the love and kindness shown to them on their sad loss.

Brian was a long–standing member of St Mary’s and spent many hours (when he was well) doing work in both the church and the halls.

Special thanks to Revd Jacky, the Choir and Melanie for making the service so special. It was beautiful and we felt a fitting send–off for Brian.

Sally Ellingford

Make A Change

Should I give money or food to people begging on our streets?

It is a question I wrestle with nearly every time I walk around Southend; on my last walk up the high street I was approached three times by different people asking if I could spare some change.

With so many people begging it is easy to think that nothing is being done for these people but in Southend that is far from the truth.

A joint campaign called “Make a Change” was launched in Southend in November last year with the aim to “help people to live a life off the street, not on it”.

It is a partnership between Southend on Sea Borough Council, Southend BID, Essex Police and Streetlink. Make a Change works closely with local homelessness charities Harp, Do–it and Storehouse.
The campaign has two key aims:

1) To encourage people to consider donating to local homelessness charities instead of giving change to street beggars

2) To encourage people to alert Streetlink to any rough sleepers—this sends a notification to the council who will send outreach staff to engage with them.

Not everyone begging on our streets is homeless, but many of them are vulnerable and need to be supported with their complex health and or addiction issue. Giving money may well support a drug or alcohol addiction, which can cause serious health issues and premature death.

The majority of rough sleepers in Southend the Make a Change organisation is aware of and have had contact with but if you are concerned about someone you can refer them to [www.Streetlink.org.uk](http://www.Streetlink.org.uk). Upon receiving a referral, local authority officers will visit the person and support them to access accommodation and physical/mental health, drug and alcohol support if appropriate.

You can also encourage rough sleepers to self-refer to Streetlink or to approach HARP’s Bradbury Day Centre on 103–107 York Road, Southend on Sea, SS1 2DL.

I would urge you to read further about Making a Change at [www.southendchange.co.uk](http://www.southendchange.co.uk). There you will not only find out more about the issues of begging and rough sleeping and what is being done to tackle them but more importantly information on how you can give practical and effective help.

Rvd Jacky
Holy Week and Easter Services 2019 at St Mary’s

Palm Sunday 14 April
8:00 am BCP Holy Communion
9:30 am CW Sung Holy Communion
6:30 pm Sung Evensong

Monday 15 April
8:30 am Morning prayer
1:00 pm Stations of the Cross
8:00 pm Compline (a short service of prayer to bring the day to a close)

Tuesday 16 April
8:30 am Morning prayer
9:30 pm Compline

Wednesday 17 April
8:30 am Morning prayer
10:30 am Holy Communion (said service)
8:00 pm Compline

Maundy Thursday 18 April
8:30 am Morning prayer
7:00 pm Maundy Thursday Supper (St Mary’s Hall)
9:00 pm - Midnight - Vigil in Church

Good Friday 19 April
9:30 am until 12:00 pm Devotional Service “At the Foot of the Cross”
(Followed by Hot Cross Buns and refreshments in St Mary’s Hall)

Easter Day 21 April
5:45 am Sunrise Service with Breakfast till 8:00 am
From 8:30 onwards join us for Bacon Rolls (inc. veg option) and Bucks Fizz!
8:00 am BCP Holy Communion
9:30 am CW Holy Communion
N.B. there will be no evening service
Services at St Mary’s

Sundays

8:00 am Holy Communion
(Book of Common Prayer)
9:30 pm Holy Communion
(Second Sunday All Age/Parade Service)
6:30 pm Evening Service
(Second and fourth Sundays Sung Evensong)

Monday to Thursday

8:30 am Morning Prayer

Wednesday

10:30 am Holy Communion
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**Magazine deadlines**

- **Sunday 17 March 2019** for April/May 2019 edition
- **Sunday 12 May 2019** for June/July 2019 edition
- **Sunday 14 July 2019** for August/September 2019 edition
- **Sunday 15 September 2019** for October/November 2019 edition
- **Sunday 12 January 2020** for February/March 2020 edition
- **Sunday 15 March 2020** for April/May 2020 edition

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and St Mary’s Weekly News Sheet by email

→ please send your email address to
prittlewellparishmag@vfemail.net
St Mary’s School
Christingle Service

Remembrance Day Lunch

Kevin and Katie-Jane Pike
married 1 December