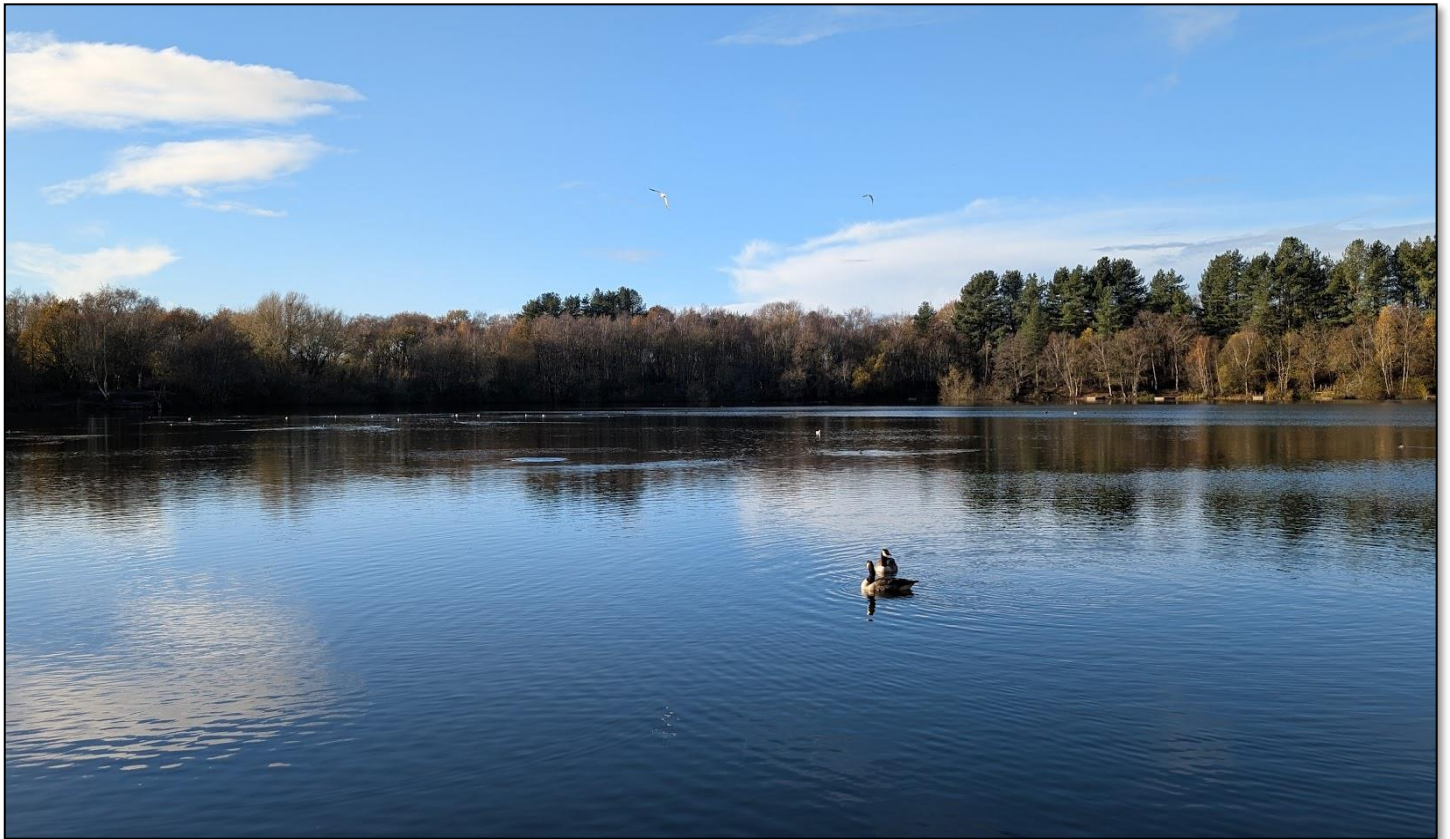


# St Mary's Parish Church Whitegate



## NEWS FOR JANUARY 2026



## Our cover photo

Taken on 2<sup>nd</sup> December at the former sand quarry, now the Warrington Anglers' pool at the top of Nova Scotia. Writing now on 18<sup>th</sup> December, it's hard to think of a bright sunny day since then. There seems to have been nothing but relentless rain, some very heavy and some just drizzle and damp, but as we look forward to 2026, we can have confidence that there will be bright days ahead. Nothing lasts forever, not even the rain here in the north-west. And we are lucky to live in an area like ours, with so many lovely spots to explore just on our doorstep.

All the contributors to the Monthly NEWS send very best wishes to every reader for bright spells and sunny periods in life in 2026 – in fact a very



### A verse for JANUARY

Romans Ch 8: v 31

*"If God is for us, who can be against us?"*

Each New Year brings a mixed bag of emotions and memories, joy and sadness, relief and hope. 2025 was probably not a vintage year, but can we reasonably hope for a better outcome for the year ahead? Will the wars in Ukraine, Gaza, and many parts of Africa grind on, will our economy recover, will the promised NHS improvements materialise? The list is endless and in human terms the questions are unanswerable.

As Christians we are sustained by the hope of glory, which is underwritten by the steadfastness of God's love for us, irrespective of our current circumstances. Good things will happen in 2026 but there will be challenges too, in our own lives, as a Church (both local and national), as a nation and world-wide. We know that many are against us, but it is because of our firm conviction that God is for us that we know that ultimately he will prevail. We don't know when this will happen but it will be in God's timing, not ours.

John R.W. Stott summed this up: "our confidence is not in our love for Him, which is frail, fickle and faltering, but in his love for us, which is steadfast, faithful and persevering".

JRC

## January Diary

<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Epiphany</b> Morning Prayer	St Mary's
<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsides	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>7<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee – <i>see page 8.</i> Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	10.30 am 2.00 pm 6.30 pm?	First Thursday Café – <i>see page 8.</i> Fabric & Churchyard Committee meeting Choir Dinner	The Mews The Mews The Plough Beauty Bank
<b>11<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Baptism of Christ</b> Holy Communion	St Mary's
<b>13<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm 7.30 pm	Bible Study at Commonsides St Mary's PCC meeting	L.B. Methodist Chapel The Mews
<b>14<sup>th</sup></b>	9.00 am 10.00 am 12.00 noon	Men's Breakfast – <i>see page 8.</i> Crafty Coffee – <i>see page 8.</i> Holy Communion (BCP)	Tarporley G'dn Centre The Mews St Mary's
<b>15<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Mission & Giving meeting	Marton Sands House
<b>16<sup>th</sup></b>	6.00 pm	Burns' Night Supper & traditional entertainment – <i>see page 8.</i>	The Mews
<b>18<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Plough Sunday</b> Plough Service	St Mary's
<b>19<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Mews Management Committee meeting	The Mews
<b>20<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsides	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>21<sup>st</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee – <i>see page 8.</i> Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
<b>22<sup>nd</sup></b>	12.30 pm	Mothers' Union post-Christmas Lunch Members N.B.: Lunch is on the Thursday	Bluebell Café, Barrowmore Estate
<b>25<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Conversion of St Paul</b> Holy Communion	St Mary's
<b>27<sup>th</sup></b>	2.00 pm	Bible Study at Commonsides	L.B. Methodist Chapel
<b>28<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00 am 12.00 noon	Crafty Coffee – <i>see page 8.</i> Holy Communion (BCP)	The Mews St Mary's
<b>FEB 4<sup>th</sup></b>	9.30 am	<b>Candlemas</b> Family Service	St Mary's

## Raising funds for St Mary's

[www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)

Don't forget that St Mary's Church Whitegate is registered with easyfundraising. If you sign up, then each time you buy online, from many different shops and businesses, St Mary's will receive a small donation AT NO COST TO YOU! Sign up to support us at <https://tinyurl.com/mubythrp> or scan this QR code.



## January 2026 - a letter from the Vicar

The first thing to say is a huge thank you to those who worked so hard preparing our churches for the celebration of Christmas. There is always so much done behind the scenes to make our churches ready so let us begin this new year with thankfulness. The gifts and skills given so generously make our churches signs of welcome and hope.

The second thing to say is that I read that human beings share 60% of their DNA with bananas. So, a New Year resolution you might want to consider. When you deal with silly people this year bear that in mind. It's not their fault, they are mostly banana.



### A new beginning....

On the day I wrote this the reading for Morning Prayer included Jesus' words, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."

Jesus does not just give good advice, he makes it clear that how we treat others is at the heart of God's will. There is something here I want to reflect on as we begin a new year.

I wrote in an article last year of the books I bought with the gift of book tokens so kindly given when I celebrated my 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination. One of those books was *The Moneyless Man* by Mark Boyle. Mark set out to live a year having no money at all. When people heard what he was planning to do they assumed he was going to live self-sufficiently, growing his own food, generating electricity with solar panels, getting around by bicycle.

What he discovered was that living without money meant it was impossible for him to be self-sufficient. He realised his dependence on others, and their dependence on him. For example, he needed somewhere to live, a lady donated a caravan. He needed somewhere to put his caravan, a local farm allowed him to work for them enabling him to grow food and pitch his caravan. He rode his bike but had several punctures, so many that he ran out of puncture repair patches. Another lady, whose company made puncture proof tyres, gave him some. He wrote articles for magazines and newspapers so she received some good publicity. When his laptop broke someone repaired it by trading some produce.

Mark discovered that he needed other people, but also that they needed him. It was rarely just trade, 'I give you something, you do me a favour.' What he found was that when he lived doing things for other people with no thought of payment or favour returned, other people did things for him, also with nothing needed in return. The person giving and the person receiving were



not always linked. He concluded that when we start living generously, different kinds of community connections emerge. It generates a state of mind which makes us kinder to others and more aware of our need of them.

Mark wasn't a religious chap but he recognised that religion has words for this kind of living. Christians, he said, called it 'reaping what you sow.' Buddhists call it 'karma'. Common sense calls it, 'what goes around comes around.'

It made me think of that conversation between the rich young man seeking happiness, to whom Jesus said, "You lack only one thing, go sell all you have, give to the poor, and follow me."

Our first instinct is to hear that as a difficult command, letting go of all that we have. But Mark's book made me see it a bit differently. Was Jesus pointing the rich young man to precisely what Mark had discovered, that we are not self-sufficient, but rather inherently dependent on others? Was that the point Jesus was trying to enable the wealthy young man to see?

When Jesus reminds us that how we treat others is at the heart of the law and the prophets, he is emphasising the reality that our world works best when we give and receive thankfully, when we look for God's image in the stranger rather than seeing them as a threat, when we learn to let go of the myth that we can live without need of others.

As January begins we are still within Christmas, our Crib will remain in church until Candlemas when a teenage mother and her husband take their child to the temple in thankfulness. God who creates the universe lets go of everything to rely on others. God comes amongst us as a child, entirely not self-sufficient, entirely dependent on the kindness of others.

We move from Christmas to Candlemas, a last look at the Crib, the first glimpse of the Cross. In both God chooses to live depending on others. Beyond the Cross Jesus leaves the Church in the hands of fishermen and fools. It is a different way of living.

**Paul.**

## NEWS FROM ST MARY'S

### □ Pastures new for Margaret

The Revd Margaret Byrne, who has been with us as Curate since July 2023, has recently been appointed Vicar of the Benefice of Alvanley & Manley, Norley, Crowton and Kingsley. She will be much missed when she leaves us but we wish her a fruitful and happy ministry there. Margaret will be licensed to her new post on 12th May at 7.00pm. The venue is yet to be confirmed but please note the date in your diary. With annual leave and time to move Margaret's last Sunday with us will be on 12th April. More details to follow.



❑ **Weekly Reading Sheets:** [www.stmaryswhitegate.org/](http://www.stmaryswhitegate.org/)

Readings and prayers for services in January are on the website. If you don't see the sheets straight away on the home page, click on the Blog button, top right.

❑ **RNIB Stamp Collection**

Don't forget to bring stamps to church by the end of January. Cut them with a half inch border all round and put in two envelopes, 1 for British and another for Foreign. Thank you.

❑ **Funeral of Evelyn Pritchard**

We were saddened to learn recently of the death of Evelyn Pritchard, formerly of Hartford, who with her partner, George Billington, worshipped at St Mary's for many years. They were both active in supporting all parish events. Evelyn's funeral will be here, at St Mary's at 11.30 am on 5<sup>th</sup> January and the family would be very pleased to see Evelyn's friends there. There will be no gathering here after the service, for the family will be travelling on to Burtonwood, where Evelyn will be laid to rest in her family grave.

❑ **St Mary's musicians out & about in December**

Advent and Christmas were very busy for our choir, organist and the DeciBells handbell group. Quite apart from all the regular services at St Mary's, Andrew Millinchip led carol singing from the piano at the Festive First Thursday Café, and played the organ at St Peter's for the Mothers' Union Advent Service. DeciBells rang carols at the switch on of Christmas lights in the village and led carol singing at Crossways in Lostock Gralam. The handbell group also joined Andrew and the choir in playing for the Christmas Concert at Vale Royal Abbey. Andrew had put together a glorious programme of music, both choral and instrumental, and those items, interspersed with readings and audience participation in carol singing, made for an enjoyable evening in the splendid Great Hall. Thanks go to Vale Royal Abbey Golf Club, to Monica Foster and to Andrew and Jane Millinchip for pulling everything together. It was an event much appreciated by all those present and resulted in a donation of £1,020 from the Golf Club to St Mary's Church.

Continuing their tour of the parish, the choir also sang carols at The Plough, Beauty Bank the following evening and, still in good voice, led singing at the Service of Nine Lessons & Carols on the Sunday before Christmas. They are now resting their vocal chords!



## Contacts

In this online edition of the NEWS, many contacts prefer us only to show their phone number. If you need to e-mail them, please call them first to ask for the address.

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<b>Curates</b> Rev Margaret Byrne 07368 375970 <a href="mailto:revmargaret1@hotmail.com">revmargaret1@hotmail.com</a> Rev Dr John Stopford 01606 558802 Rev Jane Millinchip 07891 981293	<b>Church Flowers</b> Pam Davies 01606 557833 <b>Children's Worker</b> Teresa Finney 01606 889311
<b>Safeguarding Officer</b> Anne Blayney 07815 713012 <a href="mailto:safeguardingwhitegate@outlook.com">safeguardingwhitegate@outlook.com</a>	<b>Mothers' Union</b> Eileen Lees 01606 786895
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<b>Musical Director</b> Andrew Millinchip 07821 810772	<b>Pastoral &amp; Fellowship Committee</b> Alan Newton 01829 760239
<b>Treasurers</b> Gary Chadwick 07590 999169 Sarah Campbell Woodward 01829 760438 <a href="mailto:treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com">treasurerwhitegatepcc@outlook.com</a>	<b>Social &amp; Fundraising Group</b> John Blayney 07964 844642

❑ **February NEWS:** Comments and contributions for the next edition of the Monthly NEWS are always welcome. Please send copy to [chrisball2022@outlook.com](mailto:chrisball2022@outlook.com) by 15<sup>th</sup> January.



## St Mary's Church Crafty Coffee Group

meets in  
The Mews, Church Green  
on Wednesdays  
from 10.00 am-12.00 noon

We do various crafts and always  
welcome new members, whether  
you come for crafting or for coffee!

It's a good time for fellowship along  
with tea/coffee/biscuits.

## FIRST THURSDAY CAFÉ

The Mews  
Church  
Green  
Whitegate  
CW8 2AY

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January

Come to The Mews, catch up with old  
friends & meet new ones. Chat over tea,  
coffee and delicious homemade cakes.



Everyone welcome!  
10.30 am to 12.00 noon

## Men's Breakfast

Once a month, at  
Tarporeley Garden Centre

Join us for a great value  
breakfast and chat in  
friendly company

9.00 am

Wednesday  
14<sup>th</sup> January

Sign up at St Mary's  
Whitegate or St Peter's  
Little Budworth,

or contact Alan Newton on  
01829 760239  
[acenewton513@gmail.com](mailto:acenewton513@gmail.com)



## Commemorating the poetry of Robbie Burns

- A meal with Haggis and traditional vegetables
- Includes Whisky and a Scottish dessert
- Poetry, bar, entertainment and fun
- Vegetarian alternative available
- Ticket release date 14<sup>th</sup> Dec. £17.00 (tickets limited)
- Tickets with payment only from John Blayney, Eva Neill 07921 657778, Carole Sweet 01606 883257
- Dress code: anything tartan!