

July & August 2026

St Mary's Monthly Message



A Note From Steve



Steve Benoy
Team Rector

It has been said that the one thing that stays the same is that things change.
Some things have a sense of slow inevitability: a new Prime Minister?
Some things take us by surprise: a new England cricket captain?
Some things require us to live differently: the recent heatwave(s)?

Jesus Christ is the same: yesterday, today, forever. (Hebrews 13:8)

So that's OK, then? Well, it's true that the mercy, salvation, new life, faithfulness, love, grace and truth found in Jesus Christ never changes. But it is also the case that, time and again in the Bible, God declares:

"See I am doing a new thing!" (eg Isaiah 42:9)

This summer is such a time as this. This summer we have said farewell to our curate Andrew Walmsley and we bless him on his way to ministry in Tamworth. We have so benefitted from his outward looking, community minded and pastoral ministry, teaching us how to follow Jesus, connecting with ease across all generations, rolling his sleeves up and setting us an example in discipleship. Later this month we say farewell to Tony Bundock, retiring (again!) after more than a dozen years of faithful ministry at Lacey Green. He's not moving so far away - across the county border to Chinnor.

This summer is my first Lighthouse. I am looking forward to it immensely. Thank you to everyone from across Risborough and especially many from this church who make this event happen. I have lost count how many people in the community have spoken to me with admiration and appreciation about Lighthouse, often adults full of stories about when they themselves went as children. May the same Jesus Christ meet the children this summer, and may He also do a new thing in their lives.

In June, the PCC had an awayday at the Baptist church in Princes Risborough to reflect on our vision, values and priorities as a church. We're taking time to consider different aspects of church life across our meetings this year. As we hear from people involved in different aspects of church life, we'll be thinking about what is important to stay the same, as well as discerning what the new things that the Lord has might be. We'll share that journey with you, and aim to be able to restate our agreed vision, values and priorities early next year.

One change the PCC has made this year is to create a Finance team and a Fabric team, chaired by our wardens Neil (Finance) and Heather (Fabric). These exist to assist the PCC and those working regularly in these areas of church life to see the 'big picture' of all that is going on and to help us plan and prioritise. This is so important in times of change.

One year ago, the church had not long said farewell to our previous Rector David, then to another curate Sue Hughes, and was preparing to interview first Lesley Tate for the role of Children & Families Minister, and then me for the post of Rector. I wonder if that feels just like yesterday, or a very long time ago? Thank you for how you have navigated this change faithfully. I am so encouraged to be in a church which is both open to the Lord's "new thing" and also clear that everything we do is to help others know the same Jesus Christ who we love.

In the words of Paul to the Philippians 1:3-9:

"I thank my God every time I remember you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel".

Farewell to our Curate Andrew

Andrew please tell us a little about your clergy training and how you followed the call to come to us here as our Curate at St Mary's in 2023.

The training over the last five years (three as part of my Curacy), came about because of my call to ordination back in 2018. My ordination training took place at St Mellitus College London, and my context was Buckingham Parish Church, Buckingham. That has meant that the last five years have really been all about 'training' and preparing yourself: first for ordination; and second preparing for incumbency after curacy.

This has been a very positive experience, with lots of support from various people, including Revd Grant Bayliss at the Diocese and then Revd David Williams, Revd Tony Bundock and in the last part Revd Steve. My call to St Mary's was more about - where would be a good place to serve out my curacy? The offer to meet David resulted in our agreement that St Mary's would be a good place. Which it has been!

A key focus for you over the last 3 years has been Discipleship - encouraging us to live out our daily lives for Christ. What does discipleship mean for you?

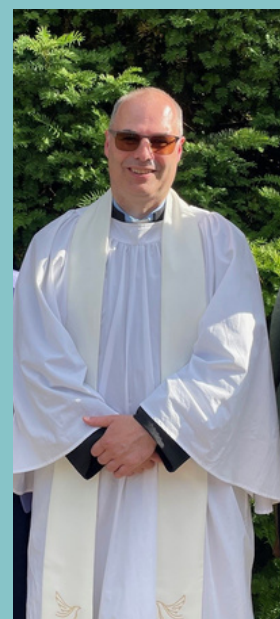
My understanding of discipleship has changed over the last few years as I have continued to read, study scripture, and reflect on what this actually means. This has led to a change of focus.

For many people discipleship tends to be the focus on how they can grow and change to be Christlike. But this way of thinking about discipleship can often become too small and too narrow. The focus mainly is on themselves. Then we do other 'churchy' things like mission.

The main discovery that I have had over the last few years was that discipleship is much bigger and holds more than just personal growth. Now I see discipleship in five dimensions:

1. first there is the personal transformation we need to become more Christlike;
2. second, discipleship also encompasses community - how we live with others, and how we grow with others to help us come closer to God;
3. third, we are called as disciples to go out in mission and service, reaching others and serving others;
4. fourth, we are called to action - discipleship cannot be passive;
5. finally, we are called to develop a deeper understanding of God as Trinity - this is at the heart of what we need to develop as disciples and forms the centre from which all the other dimensions flow out from.

I believe that it is only when we engage with all five dimensions can we truly grow as disciples.



Andrew's Ordination day



Andrew presiding at Holy Communion



Andrew and family at his Ordination

Farewell to Andrew

Before you trained to become a Vicar, you spent over 20 years as a teacher.

How have you enjoyed connecting with the young people at St Mary's?

The call when I was 17 was to go and teach. Which meant the first part of my life was spent working with children and young people. Though I admit to being a bit resistant to get straight back into it during curacy (I'm not as young as I used to be) it has been good to work with our younger people.

Through messy church or Lighthouse it has been great to see many of the children grow up, and love being at 'church' events. And like it or not the 'My Lighthouse Song' will remain with me for ever!

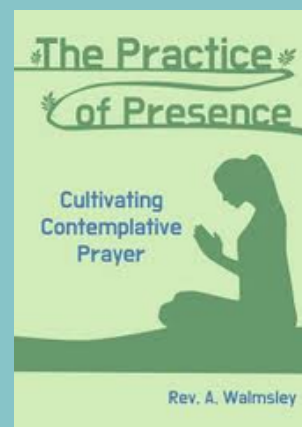
Whilst here you have set up your own company: Eternal Publishing. How did this come about and why is it important to you?

There have always been two things that I have loved doing: playing around with new software and all things IT to learn how to do something; developing my own resources to help teach. When I left teaching I wanted, in my own time, to do what I've always done. When an opportunity arose to help someone with setting up a book to be published I did what I've always done and seized the opportunity to learn. I find it easier to learn when I do something more real, and so creating resources for church, and then learning how to publish them seemed a natural step to take. In the end I've done a mixture of resource creation - writing my own resources and using some older out of print books to practice publishing. Eternal Publishing was just my tongue in cheek way of sticking a brand on things so that I know I've created them. But in the end it has given me a slightly different hobby, while at the same time reading and writing on topics that I can use to help others develop an understanding of a wide range of theological ideas and topics.

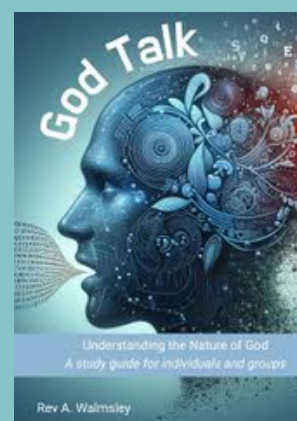
Please would you share some of the highlights of your time with us - what memories stand out?

There are lots of memories that stand out. Some of the early memories from a few years ago when I first arrived was learning that going out for coffee can be an important part of getting to know people in the community. Lighthouse will always stand out as it's one of those big events that is both demanding and exhausting, but rewarding seeing so many children singing praise songs each day. Even though many people find PCC a bit more boring compared to other aspects of church life, I've loved being part of the PCC taking part in the PCC away days and helping the church to develop it's vision. I have also learnt that sometimes you just have to be a fool at times, and I'll certainly remember the Christmas services here when I wore a Star costume, and 'orange' costume (for Christingle) and just looked silly.

But some of the most memorable things will be the simple things, such as the simple conversations after services with everyone, or having the privilege of leading so many different services. One thing that I won't miss... is putting those mats out every week!



eternalpublishing.com



*Andrew getting 'pied'
at Lighthouse 2025*

Farewell to Andrew

What have been the trickiest things to navigate?

Weddings and funerals. I've never been a wedding person, so having to learn how to do all the details of them, and help make sure they are great days for the couple was always going to be a challenge for me. Funerals are always tricky too, as you try to get the balance between the sombre and helping people deal with grief.

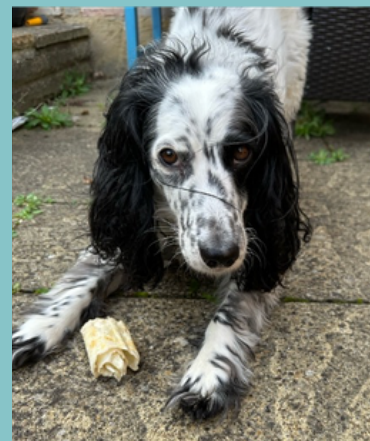
When not at work, what you have enjoyed doing in your leisure time?

I have carried on during my time here doing what I've always done for most of my life. I love playing certain computer games - Civilisation 7 is the current one, and love just doing things on the computer, hence the self publishing. I've also done a bit of Golf, though I seem to be getting worse rather than better.

What foundational building blocks from your time here will be you taking with you to Tamworth and what you are most looking forward to?

One of the great things about curacy is meeting people. It has been great to meet and work with lots of people over the last three years. That knowledge and experience of people will be taken with me as I move on. As will the experience of leading and preaching at a wide range of services. The interregnum certainly helped in that regard as I was pushed to do more, and take on a lead role at a number of events, especially the civic events that we had. I'll also take with me all the things I have learnt from Kathryn and Jenny on the admin side of running a parish.

What I'm most looking forward to... that's a hard one... but I suppose that I'm looking forward to being able to take what God is giving me (and the church) as a vision and working with others to set that vision in motion. A curate has in one sense training wheels on, like a bike for a young child, and I feel that recently I've been able to take mine off. Going to Tamworth makes me feel like going off on my own for the first time. Riding on streets I've never been on and seeing where the journey takes me. I'm sure I'll fall off every now and again and have to dust myself off, but what I've learnt over the last few years will certainly help deal with all those misadventures.



Andrew's dog Charlie



Tackling a challenge at the PCC Away Day



*Andrew, the Staff Team & Churchwardens:
Steve Benoy, Heather Hardy, Jenny King, Lesley Tate, Kathryn Trout and Neil Dyson*

What's happening this month?

Andrew's **Licensing service** at his new church, St George's, Glascote in Tamworth will be at **7.30pm on Wednesday 22nd July**. If you are planning to attend please let the office know. We have booked a mini-bus, so please reserve your place with us.

The **Lighthouse Quiz** hosted by St Mary's on 6th June raised a grand total of £1,700. 21 teams, many from our local churches, competed and the winning team included members from St Mary's. Congratulations! If you missed out on the quiz, you can purchase a Lighthouse Quiz sheet for £1 available in church.

Ladies Breakfast on Saturday 4th July: Carole Edwards will be sharing some of her experiences from when she walked the Camino last summer. The Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) is a vast network of ancient pilgrimage routes stretching across Europe, all converging at the shrine of the apostle St. James the Great in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in north western Spain.

Men's Breakfast on Saturday 11th : will be hosted by Neil Dyson at Holly Green Farm, Bledlow, HP27 9QG. The speakers will be from Kop Hill Climb, talking about their event and associated charity work. mensbreakfast@stmarysrisborough.org.uk

During **Princes Risborough Town Festival Week**, St Mary's is hosting three concerts. Monks Risborough Primary School at 12.30pm on Thursday 9th July and Princes Risborough Primary School at 12.30pm on Friday 10th July. The Princes Centre Choir, the Jingers, will be performing their summer favourites at 10am on Friday 10th July, with refreshments served from 9.30am onwards.

Tony Bundock, Team Vicar for St John's church Lacey Green is retiring this month and his last Sunday service at St John's will be on 26th July. St John's is holding a garden party on Saturday 25th from 3-5pm in the Vicarage Garden and all are welcome to attend - tickets £10/£5 on the door. A Celebratory Evensong will be held on Tuesday 30th July at 7.30pm followed by Prosecco on the church lawn.

St Mary's Charities Support

Do you know the charities we support at St Mary's? We have a very strong tradition of charitable giving and this is the time of year when we seek suggestions from our church family about which charities to consider supporting.

Each September the PCC votes to decide which charities to include in our grants for the following year. The nominations come from you, our church family and the charity with the highest number of votes will be supported for three years and up six other charities will receive a single grant.

Our website gives details of the types of charities we prioritise and how you can make a nomination. It also lists the charities we currently support. Perhaps your family or someone you know has benefitted from the help of a local charity or maybe you are impressed by the work of a particular charity. Please consider putting it forward for consideration. Kaye Lillycrop coordinates the charity support at St Mary's and would be very happy to speak to you if you would like more information.

Nominations need to be received by 23rd August either to the office or to: charities@stmarysrisborough.org.uk.



***Don't forget
You can make regular
or one-off donations
to St Mary's at the
Payaz Terminal***

GIVING ...

... keeps St Mary's going.
From services and AV
to lighting and courses,
we rely on

Regular Planned Giving.

Please support the Church.
To get started, please contact
the Giving Secretary:
Michael Hoey
01844 275192
mhoey@btinternet.com

***Sign up for our weekly
e-news by going to the
homepage on our
website. Receive all the
news from St Mary's
direct to your phone!***

Princes Risborough Lighthouse

Princes Risborough Lighthouse is running from July 27th to July 31st. All are welcome to attend the **Commissioning Service** which is held in the big top at **6pm on Sunday 26th July**. This is a great opportunity to meet the mainstage team and volunteers, to encourage and pray for them in the week ahead.

This year's Lighthouse theme is: **Community**

The memory verse from the bible which the children will learn by heart over the week is taken from Psalm 133 verse 1:

'How pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!'

Each day the children will be learning 'what is community and what does that mean in my life?' The teaching will be illustrated by stories from the bible:

- Monday - Community - The Feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14: 13-18)
- Tuesday - Care - The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13: 31-32)
- Wednesday - Generosity - The Widow's Offering ((Mark 12: 41-44)
- Thursday - Patience - The Shepherd's waiting to see the baby Jesus (Luke 2: 8-20)
- Friday - Joy - The Lost Sheep (Luke 15: 1-7)

We would love to have more volunteers in the following areas:

- cafe leader and team members
- craft team
- car park attendants (morning & afternoon)
- lamplighters/lighthouse keepers particularly for 8/9 & 10+ years age groups

Sign up online via the Princes Risborough Lighthouse website at:

(<https://app.signmeup.org.uk/lighthouse-princes-risborough/43>)

When you sign up you can read a brief summary about each role.

Contact us via princesrisborough@lighthousecentral.org or 07518 407128

Donations of cakes, biscuits and traybakes are welcome at the on-site cafe - please deliver to Lighthouse and remember to label your cake tin and provide a list of ingredients to warn those with allergies.

Prayer Points:

- For provision to come together for the week, both for volunteers signing up and financially. *Prices have greatly increased this year for the likes of insurance, fuel, equipment etc.*
- For parents and children to be connected with churches and God.
- For relationships to build between church leaders/members and others in the community on site, that each church would be highlighted.

Lighthouse is only the start, we want people to know God and explore that through faith and church in the year ahead.



Copies of this newsletter are available in Church for you to collect and pass on to friends and neighbours. They are also on the website.

Dates for your Diary

Lunch Club: Wednesday 1 July & 5 August, 10am-3.30pm in St Mary's Church

Ladies Breakfast: Saturday 4th July, 9am in the Church Hall

Men's Breakfast: Saturday 11th July, 8.45am at Holly Green Farm, Bledow

Maker & Fixer: Sun 12 July, 3pm in the Old Dairy, Culverton Farm.

Bereavement Drop-in Group: in the Chapter House, 3pm on Monday 13 July & 10 August

Tea for All in the Chapter House at 2.30pm on Sunday 26 July

Morning Prayers at The Yurt: Mon & Fri mornings, 7.30am to 8am, Church Farm, Saunderton, HP27 9NJ

Yurt Gathering: Wednesday evenings, 7.30pm - see Carole Edwards for more info

Play Cafe: Tuesdays from 9.30am to 11am in church. Last session before the holidays is 14th July and it reopens for the Autumn on Tuesday 8th September.

Youth Group: Sundays during term time from 6.30pm to 7.45pm in the Chapter House. There is no session on 5th July, but there will be a social on the evening of 12th July and day at the farm on 2nd Aug. For more details: yp@stmarysrisborough.org.uk.

Ride & Stride: Saturday 12 September raising money for Bucks Historic Churches

Services at St Mary's and St Peter's

Sundays

Holy Communion at 8am (*said*)

Parish Communion at 9.30 on Sundays in church and live streamed to your home. See the St Mary's website for the link to our YouTube channel.

Live@St Mary's all age service at 11.15 in church.

Kid's Church will be running throughout July & August. Children are welcome to join them for activities in the Parish Hall during this service - contact childrenandfamilies@stmarysrisborough.org.uk.

St Peter's Evensong with shortened HC on Sunday 19 July & 6 Aug at 6pm

Mid week Holy Communion at St Mary's: Wednesdays at 10.30 followed by coffee.

The Youth Group will be leading 11.15am worship on **Sunday 5 July**.

For your Prayers

A prayer of Blessing for Andrew

Heavenly Father,

we come to You with hearts full of gratitude for our Curate, Andrew.

Thank you for the 3 years of service, wisdom, and leadership he has poured into our congregation.

We thank you for the ways he has guided us, shared our joys and sorrows, and pointed us closer to Christ.

As he leaves St Mary's to answer Your call to a new season, we ask that You hold Andrew securely in Your hands.

Bless him, his family - sons Jack & Thomas - and his future ministry.

May he go in peace, knowing the deep love and gratitude of our whole church.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

We uphold in prayer: All those bereaved and those known to us suffering ill health, treatment for on-going health problems, mental health challenges or facing operations.

We give thanks: for the wedding of Chris McGough and Louise Morgan.

We pray for God's blessing: on Tony Bundock as he retires from St John's, Lacey Green



Join our weekly prayer meeting on Zoom every Wednesday at 9am – Zoom invite available from the Parish Office .

We encourage everyone to pray for one another. Ask the Parish Office if you would like to receive details of prayer requests, or go to the prayer page on the website.

Contact the Parish Office
parishoffice@stmarysrisborough.org.uk

Tel: 01844 273300