

This Week at St Mary's

Christmas 2022

GRACE UPON GRACE

On Christmas Day 2016, singer songwriter George Michael died. Stories began to emerge of his amazing generosity, TV Personality and author Richard Osman tweeted: *A woman on 'Deal or No Deal' told us she needed £15k for IVF treatment. George Michael secretly phoned the next day and gave her the 15k.* On another occasion he apparently witnessed a stranger in a café crying over her terrible debt, so he penned her a cheque for £25,000,

Some might describe those as acts of 'charity' but I think many might choose a different word. Wouldn't we call them 'acts of grace'? George Michael, who owed nothing to either of these people, gave them potentially life changing gifts. Generous and unmerited.

Grace is the word St John uses at the start of his Gospel, (biography) of Jesus Christ. He writes, 'He came and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' During the three years of being one of his disciples, John had seen first hand grace upon grace, Jesus fully giving himself to everyone he met, as no one else has done. Particularly, the lengths and depths of his grace are seen in his willingness to suffer to the extremes, whatever it took to redeem us. All so that we, without merit as we are, might know Emmanuel, 'God with us' and Jesus, 'God saves'. A life changing gift, grace upon grace.

Christmas gives opportunity for us to respond, accept the gift being handed to us. Speak to God, in your own words. Include the word Jesus somewhere. Expect God to reply. Keep on doing it.



LAST WEEK AT ST MARY'S

Saturday - Special children's gathering
Advent Meditation (Christmas Diaries by Nick Warburton)
Tuesday - Refugee Roots lunch

NEW YEAR SERVICES

Parish Communion	Sunday	1 Jan 10.45am
Said Evening Prayer	Lay led " "	1 Jan 6.30pm
Communion	Thursday	5 Jan 12.45pm

From Di Illsley - A huge thank you for my champagne farewell and for all your good wishes which will stay in my memory for a very long time. It is so appreciated. I am also astounded by the generous gift, and full of gratitude. It will all go into the garden and will feed me (and any welcome visitors!) for many years to come.

It has been a real privilege to work at St Mary's and to be embraced by her community, in the comforting knowledge of God's presence guiding and surprising us. It has been a challenging and demanding task, but measured with much joy and laughter.

I am thrilled to be passing you all on to Tess, knowing you will be in good hands, and I wish you all spectacular success in the coming years.

CHRISTMAS CLOSING - Please note the church and the office will be closed from Monday 26 Dec to Monday 2 Jan inclusive (except Sunday).

EXPLORING FAITH GROUP - please contact Tom if you would like to join in this group which will be starting in mid January.

ST MARY'S BOOK GROUP 11am 5 Jan (Miss Benson's Beetle by Rachel Joyce), 2 February (The Clock Winder by Anne Tyler). All welcome.

INSIGHT MEETING Wed 18 Jan 12-1.30 on **Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers**, with Rev'd Liam O'Boyle. At St Mary's, with light lunch - email lensimmonds@gmail.com for numbers.

MEADOWS FOODBANK needs UHT milk; pet food; items for Christmas - biscuits for cheese, nuts, mince pies, Christmas puddings and cakes, biscuit boxes, chocolates. Tues 5.30-7.15, Fri 10-12, Sat 11-1pm NG2 2JD

DONATIONS - Options for making a donation. **Online banking** (NatWest 56-00-61, St Mary's PCC a/c 00834602); cash or cheque in the donations chest; the card reader; via the **website**, or **standing order**, using **Gift Aid** if you are a UK tax-payer.

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