



Outlook

The magazine of St Mark's Church, Longwood February 2022

From Fr Simon: Spiritual but not religious?

There is quite a common phrase, I hear it a lot. "Fr Simon, I don't come to church, because I'm Spiritual - not religious."

For many people being spiritual seems to mean a pure connection with God. And being religious seems to mean all the messiness which comes with church: committees, commitment, hymns you may (or may not) like, sermons (too long, too short), collection, other people, and so on.

So, can you escape all the things of "religion" and become purely "spiritual"?

In my mind, to be spiritual is to find your place: to find where you belong. My ultimate belonging is with God. But I also find I belong with all the other people who belong with God. This is part of our baptism: we are baptised into one family, because we all belong to one "heavenly father".

There is a danger that if a person were to have a "pure spirituality" which is kept personal, then that spirituality would be very limited. It would be focussed purely on themselves and God. In my mind spirituality is also about the world, nature, creation, creativity, love, belonging, diversity, unity. Spirituality isn't about putting blinkers on us. Instead, as Jesus did, spirituality should open our eyes so that we can see even wider.

So, what about religion: don't all the meetings and money, disagreements and disturbances of church actually get in the way? Well, let me answer that in 2 parts. First, the meetings and people, the differences and dedications of church are often a joy. We meet people we would not otherwise meet.

Church is a wondrous place where people across many generations get to know each other. The commitment of coming each week (or whenever you come) can be a trial, but it is also a gift, where you leave filled with grace, with hope and with companionship.

Second, I realise church is not always perfect. Other people can be difficult (and I know I can be difficult too). Meetings are not always focussed. Church takes a lot of time, a lot of effort, commitment. We don't always agree with what people say or preach. But that is because we are human. And God takes our human nature – with all our mistakes and weaknesses, and somehow, together, we are shaped into one body, one family who are loved beyond measure.

I find it hard to be spiritual without being religious – because spirituality is all about God and the world and people all around us.

I find it hard to be religious without being spiritual – because our religion focusses on God and we seek to be “in-tune” with God’s mind, which includes loving, living and learning with others

Church is an amazing place, where all are welcome and even our weaknesses are transformed into strength.

So, if you haven't already, why don't you come along?
You will be most welcome.

God Bless

Fr Simon

A **joke** from Ian:

How do you make gold soup?

A. Put 24 carrots in it!

NOTICES

Our **services** are on Sundays at 11am.

Sunday 13th February is our **Family Service**, a more interactive service with live band, suitable for people of all ages.

Our **gardening team** meet most Wednesdays 2-4pm. We bring our own drinks and someone usually shares a cake. We're a friendly bunch and are pleased to see you if you drop by.

Derek Walmsley is coming to preach on Sunday 6th February. If you've been wondering how God might be calling you, then this is the service for you.

This **bulb** might look the same as our old ones, but it is LED - so it's better for the environment and cheaper to run.

We have 20 more bulbs we need to change at a cost of £13 each.

Can you sponsor a bulb to help us?

There's a list up at church.

Contact Fr Simon on

revscrook@gmail.com for more details



The **By and Buy Shop** desperately needs new volunteers. This is a wonderful community charity shop which provides a hub and contact point for local people, sells affordable clothing and goods, and gives out grants to local good causes and charities. Without new people volunteering this valuable place may have to close.

LOOKING AHEAD

We have some interesting and exciting events in the pipeline, including:

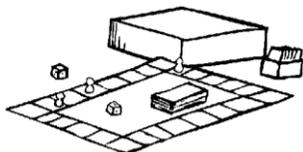
Outing to **Wakefield**, including visit to the cathedral on Saturday 19th March

Pet Service Sunday 20th March 3pm

Queen's Jubilee **street party** Sunday 5th June from 12pm

Heritage Open Day, stalls, activities and tower abseil Saturday 17th September

On Friday 1st April (no joke) we start our monthly **family games evening** in the Parish Centre. We'll start at 6pm with a drink and snacks. There will be a selection of games to play (and some experts to remind us of the rules). We expect to finish by 7.30pm. All Welcome.



There's no puzzle this month. But if you'd like to make a puzzle for next month, or if you've got any other magazine contributions, please send them to revscrook@gmail.com