

UNITED BENEFICE OF

ST. MARY'S ST. MARK'S  
SLAUGHAM STAPLEFIELD COMMON

*Serving the communities of Handcross, Pease Pottage, Slaugham, Staplefield & Warninglid*



*July 2023*

## Church Services in July

Weekly services are taking place at our churches, and everyone is welcome.

Our current plans are as follows but they are subject to change. Please look out for email communication, and keep an eye on our social media pages, website, YouTube channel and weekly notice sheet.

2 <sup>nd</sup>	9am	St Mark's	Common Worship Communion
	10.45am	St Mary's	All-age Worship
4 <sup>th</sup>	7.45pm	All Saints	Prayer Gathering
9 <sup>th</sup>	9am	St Mark's	Morning Prayer
	10.45am	St Mary's	Communion
	6.30pm	All Saints	Informal Worship
16 <sup>th</sup>	9am	St Mark's	Common Worship Communion
	10.45am	St Mary's	Informal Praise
23 <sup>rd</sup>	9am	St Mark's	Common Worship Communion
	10.45am	St Mary's	Morning Worship
	5.30pm	All Saints	Meal & Worship
30 <sup>th</sup>	9am	St Mark's	Common Worship Communion
	10.45am	St Mary's	Café Church

**Everyone is welcome**

*All Saints: Horsham Road, Handcross, RH17 6DF*

*St Mark's: Brantridge Lane, Staplefield, RH17 6EJ*

*St Mary's: Staplefield Road, Slaugham, RH17 6AG*

The St Mary's services are put onto YouTube and we hope they will be a blessing to those who still cannot attend in person. They can be found here:

[https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCBQ0W4r1m39ixogQWR3TxoA?fbclid=IwAR2vLqbms97lq9StSwn8qvgX\\_vTF11-tg0LV7z80cVFC8BZE034WNbNHhc4](https://m.youtube.com/channel/UCBQ0W4r1m39ixogQWR3TxoA?fbclid=IwAR2vLqbms97lq9StSwn8qvgX_vTF11-tg0LV7z80cVFC8BZE034WNbNHhc4)

Or search for: United Benefice of St Mary's and St Mark's.

You can subscribe to the sermons as a podcast too. All links are on the website at <https://www.stmarysparish.org.uk/podcasts/>.

### **Our verses for 2023: Romans 12:9-13**

*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.*

# Church

I love church!

I wonder when the last time was that you heard someone say that? If ever?

But for me, it is true. I do love church.

I know that the church is not perfect, far from it, and I know there is no such thing as a perfect church. There is a famous saying that goes 'if you think you have found the perfect church then you have already ruined it by walking in'. What that means is that as soon as people are involved, church ceases to be perfect, but that doesn't mean it can't be good.

I am very aware that the perception of church for many people is far from positive. Our history lessons show a difficult past, the media makes us very aware of the division and cover up, and even hurt, caused by 'the church' over many years, but none of this means that the church can't be and isn't good.

At its best, the church can be, and should be, a good place to be, doing good things for its surrounding communities. When it is authentic, church is full of people who have a genuine love for God, who are seeking to grow in their understanding of their faith, and to live together well.

In the Bible, the church is described using a number of different analogies. It is described as a flock, a body of many parts, a community, a temple, a family, the bride of Christ, and a gathering of people. Each of these only go part of the way to describe what was ultimately given to us as a gift from Jesus – a place where people can get to know Him better, with others who are seeking to do the same.

But the reality is that's not always what we see. I recently saw a letter from another church leader which was essentially telling people off for not attending church, and this upset me hugely because it seemed to somewhat miss the point. The biggest

challenge for the church is that when one or more churches do things in a way that is not good, the church as a whole can be tarnished with that same brush; but I believe that there are churches that are still doing good and that are good at their core – ordinary places of worship, with people who are genuine and kind (although not perfect). One of the most surprising discoveries for me as a teenager was that not all churches are the same. I had assumed when I found my local church to be boring, that all churches were going to be like that – it took me a long time to discover that this wasn't the case.

There can be so many things that prevent us from attending our local church – here are just a few of the reasons I have come across (and some that even kept me away when I was younger).

*It will be boring and stuffy*

I'll be honest here: I have definitely been to services that are boring, but what is boring for people is a matter of opinion. But one thing I can say for sure is that Tuesday morning services at St Mark's are far from boring! Ask any of the children from the school and I hope they would agree – and these services are open to anyone.

*I don't believe in God*

Church thankfully isn't just for those who believe in God. The church and the services are open to anyone. Whether you want to find out more, ask questions, or even just meet other people, then you are welcome.

*I won't be welcome ("the church would burn down if I walked in")*

I am thankful every day that we don't have to be perfect to go to church – otherwise all our churches would be very empty. Anyone is welcome, regardless of your background, what you have or haven't done in your life. I hope very much that you would be welcomed by all.

### *They only want me for my money*

Whilst it is true that the church is a charity, and like all charities it needs support, this isn't the motive for invitation to church. It is our express desire that we as a church are here for the community, and not just the other way around. So, while donations are appreciated, they are not an expectation (despite what you may have heard from other churches).

### *They will bash me with a Bible*

Obviously, in a church service the Bible will be used – but not for any bashing!

All this is to say that we want you to know that the churches of St Mary's, St Mark's and All Saints are here for you. If you need a quiet space to pray during the week, St Mary's and St Mark's are open. If you need a place to be your true self, a place where you can find community, then you are welcome to join us for authentic worship, or even if you want a place that you can have fun on a Tuesday morning – we are here for you and we would love to see you. I can't promise that what you will find will be perfect – but I hope, trust and pray it will be good!

Grace and peace,

*Carl* (Rector of St Mary's and St Mark's)

#### St Mary's services

Sunday morning 10.45am

#### St Mark's services

Sunday morning 9:00am

Tuesday morning 8:45am (term time only)

#### All Saints services

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month 6.30pm

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month 5.30pm  
(including meal)

## Handcross Community Pantry and Café

The Pantry was set up and is run by the churches in our Parish: All Saints in Handcross, St Mary's in Slaugham and St Mark's in Staplefield. Pease Pottage, Woodgate and Warninglid are also in the parish. **We offer weekly provisions of food to those within the parishes who are in need of help and support.**

We invite anyone in need to get in touch via our rector Rev Carl Smith at [handcrossrectory@gmail.com](mailto:handcrossrectory@gmail.com) or on 01444 400221. You are very welcome to call in to **All Saints on a Saturday morning between 10 and 11.30am**. Stay for free tea, coffee and biscuits, and chat to someone on our friendly team.

You can donate non-perishable items at:

- Handcross Hardware & Craft in the High Street.
- The Victory Inn in Staplefield.
- All Saints Church on a Saturday morning.
- St Mary's in Slaugham.
- St Mark's in Staplefield.

Financial donations can also be made: cash, marked 'Pantry', to the hardware shop, or by BACS (sort code 40-24-33, account 81842242, account name Slaugham PCC, reference 'Pantry' or 'CP').

If you would like to be a donation point for collection, or need any other information, then please get in touch. For any Pantry questions, please contact Barbara Butfoy at [butfoybabs@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:butfoybabs@hotmail.co.uk) or on 07853 228605. Thank you.

### Come along to our events!

The Pantry will be at the **Handcross Fun Day on 1<sup>st</sup> July** (12pm to 4pm). Visit us and enjoy a cupcake!

There will be a **quiz night on 15th July**, 7.30pm for an 8pm start, at All Saints Church. Come as a team of up to six people.

On **12th August**, there will be a **bric-a-brac sale** from 2pm to 5pm at All Saints Church.

If you would like to know more about any of these events, or if you can help, please contact Barbara Butfoy ([butfoybabs@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:butfoybabs@hotmail.co.uk), 07853 228605).

### **Parish Magazine**

We are in the process of reviewing how we communicate to the wider community through the Parish Magazine. If you are passionate about editing or design and would be interested in being involved in future production and development of the magazine, please speak to Carl Smith or Fae Widdowson on 01444 400221.

### **CONTACT**

#### **Church Office:**

01444 400221, [slaughtam@btinternet.com](mailto:slaughtam@btinternet.com)

Office hours: Monday & Thursday 9am-12pm

#### **Rector, Rev'd Carl Smith:**

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