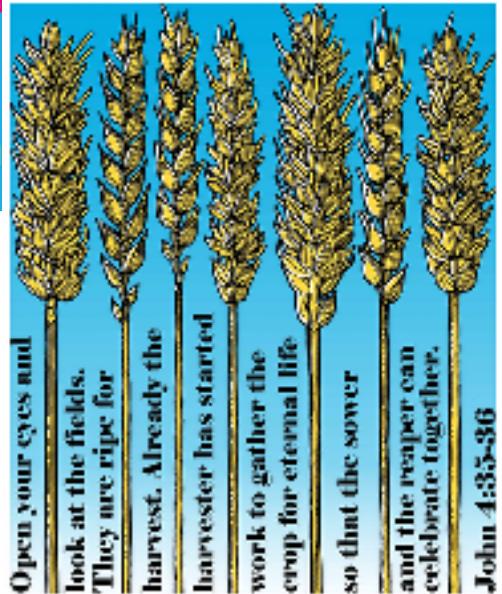
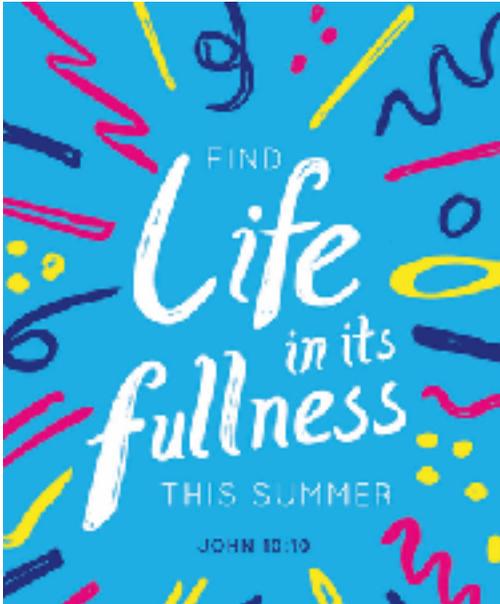


WITHAM UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



CHURCH MAGAZINE

JULY/AUGUST 2018

PASTORAL LETTER

Dear Friends,

We are well and truly into summer now, so why did my thoughts stray to snow storms this morning?! In the early hours I remembered the country scene in a glass ball that I was given as a child. When you shook the ball, you were rewarded with a thick snow storm which gradually subsided when the ball was set down.

Life for many of us is a bit like being in the snow storm as there is always a lot happening in our lives and in the lives of those around us. It isn't always easy to see the big picture and our vision is restricted, limited to what is right in front of us, the familiar. This is probably why I need periodic reminders that I'm looking down the wrong end of the telescope: at the detail rather than the big picture.

Recently I have received the same message in various forms from several different sources and not surprisingly, this makes me think that God is trying to get my attention to tell me something. However, equally importantly it also tells me that I need to act on what I hear which is often the challenging part. In this case the message is that I need to carve out more time to be still and reflect. Time when the mind is not buzzing with what has happened and what is happening next; time to make space in the mind to dream dreams and leave space for God's dreams.

In Isaiah we read that God's thoughts are nothing like ours, that his ways are nothing like ours - his ways are far beyond anything we could imagine and his ways and thoughts immeasurably higher than ours. (55 v 8-9) Yet God, in his infinite love does share some of his thoughts with us: he lets us see what he is doing in our lives, our community and our world and invites us to be part of it. Thoughts from God are in danger of getting lost in the

blizzard of thoughts that swirl around my mind even in quieter times, hence the need for still moments. Listening to God in the blizzard is not going to be nearly as effective as listening to God with a still heart and mind.

Alan Lightman wrote: 'by not giving ourselves the minutes - or hours - free of devices and distractions, we lose our ability to know who we are and what's important to us.' This is from an article I was reading (on the internet I confess) which warned that without time for reflection we are in danger of 'destroying our inner selves and our creative capacities.'

Just as being in a blizzard is disorientating, so too is being propelled by activities which send us in all directions at breakneck speed preventing us from seeing what is happening to us and being fully aware of our surroundings. This has been recognised as a common problem hence the relatively new phenomenon of Mindfulness which is, essentially, getting in touch and keeping in touch, with your inner self. Most of us simply continue indefinitely on autopilot until we cannot cope or something happens to bring us back to the reality of living life intentionally, i.e. making the most of every moment rather than finding that we have lost control of our lives.

Living life in all its fullness as Jesus intends us to (John 10 v 10) is not about living a life that is absolutely choc a bloc full of activity, it is about a life that has fulfilled purpose, a life which brings God glory and brings us satisfaction. Not self satisfaction but a sense of being part of God's plans.

As we enter a new phase of the life of the fellowship in September when Mark Ambrose joins us, may we all make time and space to discern, listen to and act on God's voice.

Wishing you every blessing over the holiday period,
Lorna

The Miracle of Forgiveness -Yvonne Egbuna

As a young teen and many years after, I struggled with the meaning of the word 'forgiveness'. I would listen to horrible stories of what people did to each other and then in the next breath, I would hear them say "as a Christian, you just have to forgive and forget" and my young mind could not fathom how one could forgive such atrocities, much less forget.

Growing up in a Christian environment meant that the word 'forgiveness' got bandied about and in my own opinion, sometimes a bit too carelessly. The most quoted bible verse was Matthew 18:22 where Jesus was talking with his disciples and Peter asked him "how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me?" Jesus answered him saying seventy times seven. The more I read that verse, the more confused I got. That was until I attended the Restored Lives workshop that ended on Friday, 25th May 2018. One of the topics we covered during the 6-week workshop was on forgiveness. It was good to hear another Christian talk about how he thought forgiveness is one of the most misunderstood concepts of all time.

I used to wonder - was it true forgiveness if someone you had forgiven in the past wronged you again and again and made you angry all over again? After listening to the speaker tell his forgiveness story, my view on the concept changed completely. He spoke about forgiveness as being a miracle, similar to the miracle of salvation. One that occurred not by human will or effort but by the combined power of the Holy Spirit and a willing human accomplice. I started to understand how forgiveness is not something you do for someone who has wronged you. It is an experience you have as a result of a divine encounter with the Holy Spirit, in spite of someone offending you. His story demonstrated to me how humanly impossible it is to forgive - only God has the power to forgive sin, just like only He has the power to save.

What is possible however is to pray to God to give you his gift of forgiveness and to perform the amazing miracle of forgiveness in our hearts towards those who have wronged us. This made a lot of sense to me and I finally grasped why Jesus gave Peter that answer. The numbers - seventy times seven symbolise boundlessness. Almost as if to say: “don’t bother trying, it’s not something you can ever achieve by your own power.” I finally got it! This made me want to find out more. So I searched further, studying the Bible and praying for a revelation of the meaning of the word forgiveness.

‘Aphiemi’ is the Greek word translated into English as ‘to forgive’ as used in the new testament and carries a wide range of meanings including to remit a debt, to leave something or someone alone, to send away, to separate from. It’s interesting to note that further down in Mathew 18, after Peter asks the question on forgiveness, Jesus uses the parable of the unmerciful servant to explain his answer. Jesus lays out a step-by-step procedure for dealing with a brother or sister who offends you. He said first try to deal with it directly with the brother/sister. If that doesn’t work, get two or three witnesses to go with you to sort it out. If that doesn’t work, take it to the church. If the offending brother/sister still carries on, then we are to treat them like we would pagans or tax collectors.

Let us bring this into context. In those days it was shameful to be seen with pagans or tax collectors. This makes perfect sense if you consider the meaning of forgiveness to be a ‘separating from’. In other words, if someone offends you, after you have exhausted all possible options to make peace with this person, Jesus says the best way to go is to forgive (or let it go). Letting go is a demonstration of forgiveness and involves a form of separation from the issue.

It is therefore unwise to hold on to the issue, the hurt and pain. But remember only God can help us forgive/let go/leave someone or something alone. If we say we have truly yielded to the miracle of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit of God has helped us to forgive, but continue to hurt from a past

offence, it means we are still emotionally invested and attached to the source of our hurt and have not truly separated.

The benefits of forgiveness as cited in Restored Lives (Castenskiold, 2013) include:

- * Stops us from being tied to the past
- * Gives us new life, freedom and hope for the future
- * Breaks the chains that keep us emotionally bound

It is important to note that forgiveness is not:

- * Condoning wrong behaviour
- * Denying justice
- * Demanding an apology
- * Pretending the issue does not matter
- * Demanding the person to change
- * Not having appropriate boundaries in place
- * Opening up ourselves to being hurt again

In summary, forgiveness is not something that just happens and this is why people find there are some wounds that time does not heal. Could we perhaps reconsider our motives for telling people to forgive and forget? Asking people to do something that is humanly impossible to do is fostering more pain and hurt on them. As Christians, perhaps what we could be doing more of is praying for those people who are going through pain and hurt, praying for them to experience the miracle of forgiveness and encouraging them to ask God for this gift because it is indeed a real gift.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said “To forgive is not just to help others. It’s the best form of self-interest.” The best form of revenge is forgiveness

and the truest test of forgiveness is when you can look back and talk about events in the past without feelings of anger or hate. This is when you have truly let go.

LOOK OUT FOR THE PRAYER BOARD IN MEETING POINT!!

PLEASE USE IT TO

- ❖ Write your own prayer and put it up on the board
- ❖ Take a prayer from the board and pray for that person or circumstance for at least a week

THE PRAYER BOARD IS OURS TO MAKE GOOD USE OF AND HIGHLIGHTS HOW WE EACH NEED AND VALUE PRAYER IN OUR LIVES.

ABUNDANT LIFE - Wale Bada

Series: Life according to Jesus –Part II

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, I have come that they may have life and have it to the full”- Jesus Christ.

There are so many world views out there promising us a better life, well of course the grass is always greener on the other side but have you ever heard about the Sermon on the Mount? It's a direct revelation from God, coming from the mouth of the incarnate word Himself. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is calling us to never lust or hate, turn the other cheek when attacked, act with God-centred motives, not worry about the future, and never judge others: all of these are impossible to achieve without God's grace. This shows us our desperate need for Christ's saving work in our lives. The purpose of the Sermon on the Mount was not to make us feel guilty but to:

- Show us a picture of life in the Kingdom of God
- Shows us how to live properly
- Reveal to us some of the benefit of our commitment to God

I would like to draw your attention to probably the most popular chapter of the Sermon on the Mount which is known as “THE BEATITUDES” also described as the recipe for happiness:

Matthew 5:3-10

- 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.
- 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

- ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The Beatitudes are not telling us how to become a Christian, but they are the perfect description of what a true Christian looks like. Jesus is inviting us to measure ourselves using the Beatitudes as a tool for discerning our spiritual condition. The first three Beatitudes reveal our intrinsic needs which can be regarded as a foundation for a Godly life. It also reminds us that we do not have what it takes to live for God.

Let us look at the first Beatitude, in Matthew 5:3 Jesus said “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. Some people thought Jesus was speaking about financial poverty, that he was advocating being poor so that riches and possession do not come between us and God. I believe Jesus is asking us to declare Spiritual Bankruptcy which means that we must recognise the utter worthlessness of our own spiritual currency and the inability of our own works to save us and no matter our status in life, we must recognise our spiritual poverty before we can come to God in faith to receive the salvation he offers.

Prophet Isaiah who in his time was probably one of the best Prophets recognised his spiritual poverty when he experienced the presence of God he said: ‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’ (Isaiah 6:5) It is interesting to see that if we asked God to show us his greatness he will probably show us how small we are because he never changes, he is the same yesterday, today and forever. We are the biggest hindrance to what God wants to do in our lives and in our midst and not the devil. Floyd McClung one of the Founders of Youth with a Mission said: “As we get closer to God our spiritual condition becomes clearer to us”.

Happiness in life may be found in friends, self-confidence, exercise, diet, rest, and sunlight but these are temporary as they come and go and will not produce an abundant life that gives us prosperity and peace that is beyond all understanding. I would like to leave you with the word of John Calvin who said: “As long as our gaze is fixed on this world, we will have no problem with our self-image, we flatter ourselves until for one second we lift our gaze into heaven and contemplate what kind of being God is then we realise immediately our spiritual condition”.



When it was Mrs Wilson's turn to do the flower arrangements, she always kept the vicar's hay fever in mind



Inspiration In Your Inbox!

Each morning the United Reformed Church sends out a reading, short reflection and prayer to around 2,500 people. The reflections are written by a variety of people from different places and perspectives across the Church.

You can sign up to receive them by going to

devotions.urc.org.uk

(and you can read previous Devotions there too)

If you'd like to receive the devotions as a booklet in PDF format – so you can print them off for yourself or for members of your church who'd like them but don't have access to the Internet please email Andy Braunston via dailydevotions@urc.org.uk and request this.

An Older Friend's Testimony

Blessed are they who understand
My faltering step and trembling hand,
Blessed are they who know today
My ears can't catch just what they say;
Blessed are they who seem to know
That my eyes are dim and my wits a bit slow;
Blessed are they who look away
When coffee was spilled at the table today.

Blessed are they who with cheerful smile
Stopped to chat for a little while.
Blessed are they who never say
"You've told me that story twice today".
Blessed are they who know the ways
To bring back memories of yesterdays.
Blessed are they who make it known
I'm loved, respected and not alone.
Blessed are they who ease the days,
As I journey Home, in loving ways.
Blessed are they who know I'm at loss
Without the story of Calvery's cross.

G.A. Eldridge

WITHAM COMMUNITY DAY CHURCHES TOGETHER STAND



FELLOWSHIP AFLOAT CHARITABLE TRUST

The chosen Charity for WURC fundraising for July-December 2018 is Fellowship Afloat Charitable Trust. (FACT).

FACT is a Christian Outdoor Activity Centre in Tollesbury. It's residential base is an ex Trinity House Lightship moored on the half tide Marsh. The ship floats on each tide but can be easily accessed along a path.

FACT was started 52 years ago from a church youth group but has grown over the years. Now about 1700+ children and young people from schools, church youth groups special needs groups and many more, visit each year for activities, fun and most importantly to hear the message of God's love. Some of our own young people have stayed on board and can testify to the great time they had.

All the staff are Christians and are dedicated to spreading God's love and the opportunities are enormous with many children coming who have never heard of Jesus. The lightship can accommodate 36 guests plus accommodation for the staff but there is a need to expand the guest accommodation to 48 as the demand is increasing. A five year renovation/expansion is underway, working through the winter periods so the ship can still function during the summers. Any money raised by WURC will go towards this project.

We will be arranging fundraising events throughout the six month period but would first like to tell everyone about FACT. On July 8th we will give a short presentation after the morning service, as we drink our tea or coffee, for anyone interested in seeing more of what goes on there.

One important event already booked is a concert by David Pickthall and his BIG BAND on September 8th. He is well known around East Anglia for his charity concerts and it will be an evening to not miss. Please put it into your diary.

Keith and Gerry Moscrop.





You might already know something about FACT, but for all those who do not, or who would like an update there will be a short presentation in the sanctuary on 8th July after the service, to let you know about FACT.

UNSUNG HEROES

Audrey Kennedy

I would like to nominate Audrey who has done a lot for the church in the past and continues to do so in the present. Currently she is the Church Secretary and everyone is aware of her valued contribution to the service each Sunday morning and the minutes of the Church Meetings. In recent times she has also been a Pastoral Elder and continues to organise refreshments for special events in the church and also helps on Meeting Point. Additionally, she is involved in the CYO fund raising efforts, with Billy, for the first half of 2018. She is a kind and thoughtful person.

Mary Goodwin

Peter Howard

Pete works tirelessly in the background. He is the 'go to' person when help is urgently needed in Meeting Point where he can be seen serving teas and coffees several times a week and is passionate about the outreach it provides.

We tend to turn up to events expecting everything to be ready without any thought that somebody has to set up the tables and chairs, etc. and clear away afterwards. Pete willingly turns up to give a hand.

He is involved with the Special Needs Disco, setting up before anyone else arrives and then is behind the counter serving.

He encourages others to learn to play the guitar and also runs a singing group, and can be seen most Sundays playing in the band.

Pete's evening services are well attended and somehow manages to get several people each time to provide readings and talks.

Wordsearch

It is easy to understand the popularity of Mary Magdalene over the centuries: she is the patron saint of repentant sinners, and so represents all of us. We honour her on the 22nd of July.

Jesus drove seven demons from Mary, who came from near Tiberius in Galilee. Mary is thought to have been the woman who anointed Christ's feet in the house of Simon (Luke 7:37). She certainly followed Jesus to the bitter end – from Galilee to Jerusalem. Mary was present during the crucifixion, standing heart-broken at the foot of the cross. Her love for Jesus did not end there, for she went to the tomb to anoint his body on the Sunday morning.

Such faithful, humble devotion was richly repaid: she was the first person to whom the Risen Lord appeared on Easter Sunday morning. She thought He was the gardener at first.

Mary Magdalene's feast has been kept in the West since the 8th century. England has 187 ancient churches dedicated to her, as well as a College in both Oxford and Cambridge.

Mary	Sinners	Anointed	Tomb	Gardener
Magdalene	Seven	Feet	Anoint	Feast
Patron	Demons	Simon	Body	
Saint	Galilee	Crucifixion	Easter	
Repentant	Tiberius	Jerusalem	Appeared	

D R A T A R E S M S Y T E
S P E R E T S A E I D C D
E A E R T E R T L N O E T
V T E E S Y F O A N B J C
E R L Y I U I D S E R A S
N O I X I F I C U R C N T
E N L T E N S R R S U O E
L L A P P E A R E D M S A
A F G O C I O T J B N N S
D E T N I O N A N O I N T
G A R D E N E R M I P T A
A S C C R E P E N T A N T
M T A I E N D N O M I S I

SMILE LINES

A recent letter that appeared in The Independent newspaper: ‘Following the recent major flooding, I find myself out of pocket, due to what I am informed is an ”act of God.” To avoid future financial embarrassment, please could you recommend an atheist insurance company?’

If you can start the day without caffeine,
If you can always be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,
If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,
If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it,
If you can understand when your loved ones are too busy to give you any time,
If you can take criticism and blame without resentment ,
If you can conquer tension without medical help,
If you can relax without wine,
If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,
.....then you are probably the family dog.

As a sergeant in a parachute regiment, I took part in several night-time exercises. Once, I was seated next to a lieutenant fresh from jump school. He was quiet and looked a bit pale, so I struck up a conversation. “Scared, lieutenant?” I asked.

He replied, ‘No, just a bit apprehensive.’

I asked, ‘What’s the difference?’

He sheepishly replied, ‘That means I’m scared, but with a university education.’

During the minister’s sermon one Sunday, there was suddenly a loud whistle from one of the back pews. Jamie’s mother was horrified. She glared him into silence and, after church, asked, ‘Jamie, whatever made you do such a thing?’ Jamie explained: ‘I’ve been asking God to teach me to whistle for ages, and suddenly, He did!’

Diary Notes

July

Meeting Point	Monday to Saturday inclusive 9.30 am - 12.30 pm
Daytime Bible Study	Tuesdays 10.30 - 12.00
Tuesday Praise	Tuesdays 12.30 - 12.50
Small Talk	Wednesday morning 9.30 - 11 am Afternoons 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm During term time
Ladies' Group	Thursday 5th July 2.00 - 4.00 pm
Elder's Meeting	Tuesday, 10th July at 7.45 pm
Afternoon Tea	Monday, 18th July 3.00 - 4.00 pm
Child Contact	Saturday, 7th and 21st July 1.30 pm - 4.30 pm
Church Meeting	Tuesday 24th July at 7.45 pm
CYO Holiday Club	23rd to 27th July 8.30 am to 1.30 pm
Leadership B.B.	23rd - 27th July 1.30 pm - 3.30 pm

Diary Notes

August

Meeting Point	CLOSED opens again Tuesday, 28th August 9.30 am - 12.30 pm
Daytime Bible Study	Tuesdays 10.30 - 12.00
Tuesday Praise	Tuesdays 12.30 - 12.50
Small Talk	CLOSED starts again Wednesday 5th September Mornings 9.30 - 11 am Afternoons 1.00 - 2.30 pm
Elder's Meeting	Tuesday 14th August at 7.45 pm

Services JULY

Week	Time	Services
1st	10.30 12.30 6.30	Family Worship and Communion Ignite Evening Worship
8th	10.30 1.00 6.30	Family Worship Fellowship Lunch Evening Service
15th	10.30 6.30	Family Worship Evening Worship
22nd	10.30 6.30	Family Worship Evening Worship
29th	10.30 6.30	Family Worship Evening Worship

Tuesday Praise JULY

3rd	Lorna Bantock
10th	Will Abbott
17th	Sarah Wilson
24th	Christine Newmarch
31st	Lorna Bantock

Services August

Week	Time	Services
5th	10.30 6.30	All Age Worship and Communion Evening Worship
12th	10.30 6.30	All Age Worship Evening Service
19th	10.30 6.30	All Age Worship EveningWorship
26th	10.30 6.30	All Age Worship Evening Worship

Tuesday Praise August

7th	The Stinsons
14th	Richard Wearmouth
21st	Sally Lodge
28th	Adrian Diaper

Door Stewards

July

	Door 1	Door 2
1st	Mo Webber	Pauline Littlefield
8th	Andy Blackett	Eve Howes
15th	Alf Wilson	Joyce Clouting
22nd	Judy Fishwick	Janice Hawkes
29th	Kris Hills	Gerry Hills

August

	Door 1	Door 2
5th	Ann Haste	George Haste
12th	Janet de Bie	Will Watson
19th		
26th	Andrew Hunt	Laura Lamb

Minister	Revd	Lorna Bantock	571757
Youth Pastor	Mrs	Viv Sollis	500958
Pastoral Elders	Mrs	Gerry Moscrop	Kelvedon and Hatfield Peverel
	Mrs	Rose Reader	South
	Mr	Keith Moscrop	South
	Mrs	Maureen Barry	North
	Mr	Doug Sandles	East & Wickham Bishops
	Mr	Billy Kennedy	West
Property	Mr	David Wellings	
Centre Pastoral Team Co-ordinator	Mrs	Eve Murfitt	500958
Centre Director			
Centre Managers	Mrs	Rocio MacDonald	500958
	Mrs	Ana Martin	500958
Discipleship/Growth Outreach/Mission	Mrs Mr	Tracey Eageling Bob Stibbards	
Church Secretary	Mrs	Audrey Kennedy	500958
Church Treasurer	Mr	Ian Hardie	
Worship	Mr	Tunde Biyi	
Youth/Children	Mrs	Sarah Biyi	
Prayer Chain Co-ordinator	Mrs	Rosemary Stinson	516602
Magazine Editors		Jo & Bob Stibbards	

We are very grateful for your continued support and we would **welcome** new contributions from across the Fellowship.

Articles for September should be with us by
Wednesday, 17th August please.

By hand or in the magazine pigeon hole or by email
to jo.stibbards@talktalk.net

IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

TRINITY 3 BIG BAND CONCERT EVENT - 8th SEPTEMBER

Fellowship Afloat, WURC chosen charity for fundraising for July to December 2018, are pleased to have booked the David Pickthall Big Band for a concert to raise funds towards the Trinity 3 Project. This will be held at WURC on 8th September 2018 at 7pm. Tickets will be £10 for adults, £5 for children under 16 and £25 for a family.

The band is well known in East Anglia and performs for different charities four times a year. They come very highly rated and we are privileged to have them coming to play for this FACT fundraiser. Their website is www.davidpickthall.co.uk. - where you can hear some of their music. To find out more or to book your tickets please contact the WURC office on 01376 500958 or Keith and Gerry Moscrop.

CHURCH WEEKEND AWAY

FRIDAY, 24th MAY TO SUNDAY 26th MAY 2019

This is to be held at Belsey Bridge Conference Centre, Norfolk

"Jo and I were new to the church when we went to the Weekend Away in 2016, held at this venue: we were very apprehensive about going. However we were very glad that we did. It was very enjoyable and great to be with our church family outside of our normal environment.

If you have not booked already we would encourage you to think about coming along.