

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." As we begin this season of Lent, these words invite us to pause and consider how we might intentionally move closer to God. Lent offers us a sense of direction and purpose—an opportunity to walk with greater awareness of God's presence.

In our next Messy Church session, we will be exploring the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Daniel 3. Their journey has been anything but easy: taken from their homeland, carried off to Babylon, even given new names. Yet despite losing so much, their faith and loyalty to God remain unshaken. When faced with Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue and the threat of a superheated furnace, they refuse to bow.

Then comes an astonishing moment. As the king watches, he sees that the three men are no longer alone in the flames. A fourth figure appears beside them—someone he describes as looking like "a son of the gods." In the furnace, at the very point of greatest danger, God is with them.

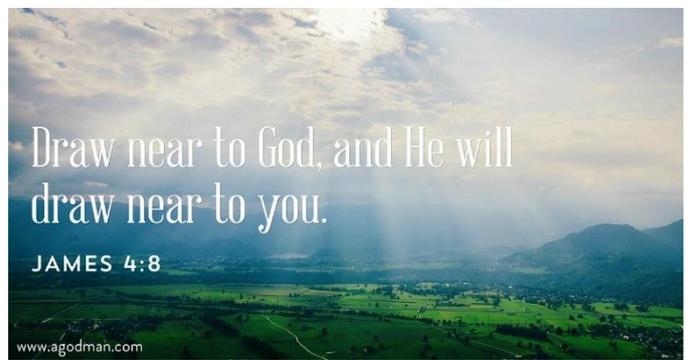
Ever since our Messy Church planning meeting, I haven't been able to get the Liverpool anthem *You'll Never Walk Alone* out of my head. It speaks so deeply to our human longing for companionship in life's storms. On the pitch, eleven players are strengthened and uplifted by the voices of thousands. The supporters cannot step onto the field, yet their presence surrounds and encourages the team. The players know they are not alone.

As Christians, we are promised something even greater. Every one of us will face times of difficulty—moments that leave us overwhelmed or uncertain. Even with the encouragement of friends and family, we may still feel we are walking a lonely path.

But we are not. Alongside the support of others, we also have the presence of Jesus—Emmanuel, God with us. He is not like a supporter cheering from the stands. He steps onto the pitch with us. He walks the path beside us. He stands in the furnace. Remember his promise in his parting words: "I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Whatever life brings—joy or sorrow, storm or calm—we can hold tightly to that promise. With Jesus in our hearts, we will never walk alone. And so, we walk on, we walk on.

*Rod*



## Please pray for...



Phil Turnock; Malcolm Grey-Smart; Sue Norman; John Corney; John Panter; Joe McPhee; Pam Clarke; John and Ray Reynolds.

We also pray for the families and friends of Margaret and Dennis Neville and Ronald Hand.

*Please let the Church Office know if you would like your name added or removed from this list. The list will be routinely reviewed every few months.*

## Children's Corner

As you know Carol Preston recently joined us as our part-time Children and Families' Worker, a sign that we recognise how important it is to invest in this work. We also want to make our Sunday services a consistently welcoming experience for families and our Children's Corner is an important part of that, where we provide a small activity and story for any children at the 10.30 services. Carol is here for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays each month, but we need a few more people willing to cover the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays. This is especially important as Ali and Rod Doulton will soon be moving away. Carol will prepare all the necessary material, so there's no need to worry about that. Please speak to Carol Preston or Catherine McBride for more information.

## Music Hall Sing-a-long

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2pm at the Parish Rooms. Bring friends, family and neighbours to this fun event! Leaflets to advertise this



afternoon are at the back of church. **Raffle prize** donations gratefully received and also volunteers to make cakes. Please contact Val Creasey if you can help.

## Draw Near – Lent Booklet



If you have taken one of the Lent booklets, but are yet to pay, please let Catherine have your £2 as soon as possible please. Many thanks. There are still a few of the children's booklets left.

## Services

Services are in St Mary's Church unless otherwise indicated.

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February**

**9.00am BCP Holy Communion**

**10.30am CW Morning Worship**

**Readings:** Ephesians 3. 14-21 Luke 11.1-13



**6.30pm IONA Communion**

**Reading: Jeremiah 18. 1-11**

The 10.30 service will also be on Zoom.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85337124930?pwd=NFdMTzRMR2JXbXRoSctVRS9PSkZXdz09>

Meeting ID: 853 3712 4930 Password: 867888

**Wednesday Morning Prayer 9.00am ZOOM**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89943278704?pwd=RytPQ3RmOG5yYlBpUWpoWWkxWGFEZz09>

Meeting ID: 899 4327 8704 Password: 730701

**Thursday Holy Communion 10.00am**

## Sunday Sermons

These are available on our website:

<https://www.stmarysmarketdrayton.org.uk/media>

## Bring and Share Lunches

If you would like to host a lunch, please sign up on the sheet in the Welcome area.

## Support for 'Open the Book' in Schools



'Open the Book' presents the Bible in a fun drama form, ideal for school assemblies.

We're putting together a team to go into the schools in our town. If you'd like to be

involved, please talk to Carol Preston to find out more.

## Girls Friendly Society(GFS)

GFS meets at the Parish Rooms each Thursday

during term time, now at the new time of 5.00pm – 6.45pm.



## Messy Church

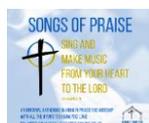
Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 3.30pm – 5.15pm  
in the Parish Rooms

## Songs of Praise

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 3.30pm**

All are welcome to Market Drayton Methodist Church for this informal

gathering. Coffee, tea and cakes are served as you sing your favourite hymns.



## Foodbank Items Needed



### Stock Items urgently required:

NO STOCK: **UHT milk (blue full fat).**

LOW STOCK: **tinned spaghetti; tinned fruit; Jam; tins of ham/chicken/luncheon meat; long-life fruit juice; male/female deodorant.**

Instant mash; sponge puddings/cakes; instant noodles; small jars of coffee; biscuits; anti-bacterial wipes/spray & bleach; toilet roll; shower gel; shampoo.

**We have plenty of:** Cereal; rice; baked beans; pasta.

The trolley at the back of church is now in use and donations are gratefully received.

## Games Café

The next Games café is on **Tuesday 24th February at 2.00pm** in the Parish Rooms. Come along and join an afternoon of fun with board games, coffee and good company! Bring your friends and find warmth and a welcome this Winter! Games Café continues to the end of March.

## Children's Society Box Holders

It's time to collect your boxes and cheques please. I will be returning to church on Sunday February 22<sup>nd</sup> to collect from church or I will call on you in the next few weeks. Thanking you all for your generosity in advance. Much love in Christ Elaine Mason

## Staying in Touch

Please either leave a message or send an email and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

**Church Administrator:** Helen Hughes

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**Website:** [www.stmarysmarketdrayton.org.uk](http://www.stmarysmarketdrayton.org.uk)

**Facebook:** @StMarysMarketDrayton

**Parish Rooms FB:** @TheParishRoomsMD

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**Vicar:** Revd Catherine McBride

**Phone:** 01630 656943

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Donations can be made by scanning the QR codes:



General fund



Organ fund



Security fund