

# IN TOUCH

DEC 2024 / JAN 2025 £1



**Otley Parish**  
CHURCH



**O****TLEY PARISH CHURCH** is the oldest building in Otley. It's at the heart of our town and, for over 1,000 years, people have been gathering here for worship, with significant family as well as community events.

We are a gathering place for pilgrims on a journey of discovery, kindling hope as we go, and helping one another to be more fully alive to the wonders, the joys and the sorrows of life. We'd love you to share the journey with us.

We want to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to Christ and in service to our local community.

Join us in worshipping our God together on Sundays and in daily life; be with us as we study and discern how to use the Bible in the 21st century; also learn with us what it is to be disciples in the 21st century following Jesus, and help us, with other churches in the town, to bring good news to Otley and far beyond.

**“There is a place for everyone,  
with CHRIST  
at the centre of it all”**

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# Dear Friends Letter



Can you remember your first *experience* of God? (If you haven't had one yet, only seek and you will find!) My first experience of God was in my bedroom at 14 years old, praying desperately for help. I was unhappy, and so it seemed was my whole family. There was no pressure valve, no distraction, nothing to numb the pain. So, I prayed myself to sleep every night that week. And God heard my prayer! Suddenly, as tears streamed down my face, my room, and my heart, were flooded with God's healing peace,

light and love. It brought me to life and put in me a desire for God that I cannot forget. I need more experiences of God in my life!

Yes, even though I have the Holy Spirit living in me, there is a further need for the *manifest presence* of God. I get distracted, tired, and begin to die spiritually, and the answer is always to go back to the source of my life, Jesus.

Psalm 34 tells us to 'taste and see that the Lord is good' – to *experience* him – and that we are 'blessed when we take refuge in him'. Isaiah says that 'they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.' But God is not only interested in knowing us individually; collectively, we are the body of Christ, so of course we must be *full* of Christ!

Perhaps *the great theme* of the Bible is God's desire to be *Emmanuel*, God-with-us. From his strolls in Eden's cool evenings with Adam and

Eve, to his presence dwelling palpably in the Ark of the Covenant, and later Solomon's Temple; to the incarnation of God's son, and his pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon all believers, birthing the church: God's desire is to *be with us*. Yes, in that fundamental sense in which we simply wouldn't exist as the church without the Holy Spirit, but also in the *manifest* sense. The *palpable* sense of God's presence. This is what happens in a *revival* – we are revived, re-energised.

Charles Finney warns us that, '*If the presence of God is in the church, the church will draw the world in. If the presence of God is not in the church, the world will draw the church out.*' In other words, if our chief purpose ceases to be hosting the manifest presence of God, we will lose our impact on the world around us. And in fact, that impact is reversed. The world is desperately in need of a church that fulfils its God-given purpose to bring the light of the Gospel to bear on it. So, we must not fail in this.

Psalms 34 continues: 'Fear the Lord, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing.' This is not the fear of a dangerous, volatile tyrant, but a deep respect for and desire to please our loving, self-sacrificing God. When we do fear God we will be revived.

But, like you and I, God only comes where he's wanted. So, how can we show God that he is wanted – in our personal lives, our family lives, our collective life? Well, God has told us:

*"...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."* 2 Chronicles 7:14

God's desire is to be with us, to manifest his presence to us, to heal our land. Let us do all we can to make him welcome.



A vibrant Christmas tree stands as the centerpiece, adorned with a variety of colorful ornaments including red, blue, green, and gold spheres, along with white snowflake decorations and gold stars. A golden tinsel garland spirals around the tree. The top is crowned with a large, bright yellow star. The background is a deep blue night sky filled with soft, glowing bokeh lights and a gentle snowfall. Snow-covered evergreen trees are visible in the distance, adding to the wintry atmosphere.

**Christmas**

**is**

**coming**

**to**

**Otley**

**Parish**

**Church**

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” *(Luke 2:10-12)*

# AN ADVENT PRAYER



**Heavenly Father,  
as we prepare for Christmas, help us to  
find time in our busy lives for quiet and  
thought and prayer, that we may reflect  
upon the wonder of your love and allow the  
story of the Saviour's birth to penetrate our  
hearts and minds.**

**So may our joy be deeper, our worship  
more real, and our lives worthier of all that  
you have done for us through the coming  
of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Let us come together in prayer.**

**Amen**



# **Happy Christmas and best wishes for the Near Year!**

Many of you will be thanking God this year as we experience a lovely joyful Christmas, delighting in the company and entertainment of our family and friends. But during this wonderful season let's also remember those who are lonely or suffering, and pray for them.

Whether they live down the street from us in Otley, right next door or half-way round the world, let's pray that they will hear about Jesus and know his presence. Let's pray for them to be invited to attend our church here in Otley or elsewhere in the world, perhaps to a carol service, and to receive a warm welcome and gospel hope there.





**OTLEY PARISH CHURCH**

*Christmas*  
**TREE FESTIVAL**

**December 4th - 7th**

**Wednesday 12 noon-5pm**

**Thursday 10am-5pm**

**Friday 10am-5pm**

**Saturday 10am-5pm**

**Musical performances  
throughout each day**

**Christmas Tree  
Carol Service**

**Sunday 8th at 4pm**

**Tea and coffee with mince  
pies will be available from  
Thursday to Saturday  
and after the Carol Service**

**Admission FREE daily**

**Charity donations will be  
very much appreciated**

**Friday Concert 7pm**

*with the*

**Chippendale Singers  
& Westgate School**

**Adults £5 Children Free**

# Christmas

## Otley Parish Church Services



### **SUNDAY 8 DECEMBER**

10.30am SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION\*

4.00pm CHRISTMAS TREE CAROL SERVICE\*

*(followed by refreshments)*

### **SUNDAY 15 DECEMBER**

10.30am ALL-AGE ADVENT SERVICE\*

*(followed by refreshments)*

4.00pm SERVICE OF READINGS AND CAROLS\*

*(followed by refreshments)*

### **SUNDAY 22 DECEMBER**

10.30am SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION\*

### **CHRISTMAS EVE 24 DECEMBER**

12 noon CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

4.00pm CHRISTINGLE SERVICE\*

*(maximum seating at each service - 450)*

11.30pm MIDNIGHT COMMUNION

### **CHRISTMAS DAY 25 DECEMBER**

8.30am SHORT SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

10.30am ALL-AGE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION\*

### **SUNDAY 29 DECEMBER**

10.30am ALL-AGE SERVICE OF THE WORD\*

*\* Live streamed services: when services are streamed, they are available to be watched at home anytime from the actual start.*

*The live stream link is:*

**[www.youtube.com/@OtleyParishChurch](https://www.youtube.com/@OtleyParishChurch)**

# CHRISTINGLE

*at Otley Parish Church*



**Christmas Eve**  
**Tuesday 24th December**  
**12 noon & 4pm**

Carols, candles, and a wonderful atmosphere  
to celebrate the start of Christmas,  
putting Christ at the centre.

There will be an opportunity to donate to  
The Children's Society  
or use this link to donate online:

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/christingle/otley-parish-church-2>

**Christingle is for children  
and adults of all ages**

*Please note that for Health & Safety considerations  
the attendance at each service will be limited to 450*

# Christmas Bible Verses to reflect on







### **LUKE 2:10**

And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people”.

### **MATTHEW 1:21**

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

### **ISAIAH 9:6**

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given... and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

### **LUKE 2:11**

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

### **LUKE 2:14**

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”





## **LIGHT SHINING IN SURROUNDING DARKNESS**

**THE DARKNESS is silent as the hours slip away.**

**My thoughts are insistent, listen to me now!**

**But where is sleep, energising and renewing?**

**Something I crave to lighten the day.**

**In the quietness I wonder what tomorrow will bring  
for those I love and the world that is ours.**

**Beyond my horizons is suffering, I know.**

**A fight for survival, a longing for peace.**

**The light shines in darkness, it's hard to believe  
When many are empty in body and soul.**

**But the promise is there for all who'll keep faith.**

**Emmanuel, God with us this Christmas time.**

**© Eileen Barr**

**Emmanuel, God with us**

# IN THE **HOT** SEAT

*with*  
**Carolyn Waters**



**We know that you are newly returned to Otley Parish Church, Carolyn, and many of us will know you by sight but not really know much about you. Will you please answer a few questions that will help us all to get to know you a little better? *Thank you!***

## **When were you born and where did you grow up?**

I was born in 1952 here in Otley in what used to be the Wharfedale Union Workhouse on Newall Carr Road, which became the maternity ward at what is now Wharfedale Hospital.

## **Where did you go to school?**

My first school was Newall Infants School, then the National School (now Cross Green Community Centre), and finally Prince Henry's Grammar School.

## **Did you go to college or university? If so, where?**

I went to Harrogate Tech College to learn shorthand and typing and other office skills. And then later, in preparation for ordination, I went to St. John's College, Nottingham, to study theology where I got my BA degree.

### **When did you become a Christian?**

I would say from when I was baptised at just a few weeks old. God was very real and personal to me even as a young child, and once I was confirmed I started going to the 8am Communion Service most weeks. From the age of 8 I believed that God was calling me to be a missionary and at the age of 18 I started training as a nurse to facilitate that. As my faith gradually developed the possibility of ministry being here in England crystalized, leading me to be ordained in 2000. My faith is still developing, and I continue to rejoice as I see His mercy is new every morning, and His faithful love never ends.

### **When and where did you meet your husband?**

When I was about 18, I met Stephen in Otley at the Church Youth Club in Burras Lane. This has now been converted into town houses which are adjacent to Vicarage Gardens.

**What was your occupation, and where did you work?** I've had quite a few. My first job was at the TSB bank here in Manor Square. Then I went to train as a nurse at Leeds General Infirmary, but left when I got married. I then worked in a bakery shop, as a school cleaner, and then for many years as a home help. When we left Otley, I worked as a carer for people living in the community with mental health issues, and had several other part-time jobs until eventually I was ordained. I have worked in various parishes from an urban priority area in the Bristol Diocese, to a very different kind of parish in Stopham & Fittleworth in the Chichester Diocese. Now, I'm pleased to have Permission to Officiate in the Leeds Diocese.

### **Do you have any brothers and sisters?**

I have an older brother, David, and some of you may know my younger sister, Pam, here at OPC.

### **How many children do you have – and their names?**

Our first child, Mikila, very sadly died when still a baby. Our other children are Rebecca and Tim who are in their 50s. They both live in the same high rise block of flats in Kirkstall, Leeds.

### **After being born in Otley, where else have you lived?**

Yes, I was born in Otley and lived here for about 30 years until Stephen went to Theological College in Chichester in about 1982. We then lived



in various parishes. I retired early with ill health when we were living in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. We continued living there for some while before moving back to West Yorkshire in Bramhope, just 4 miles from Otley.

### **Did you worship anywhere before coming to Otley Parish Church?**

Before going straight home after my birth my mum brought me here where she was churched. I came regularly as a child and through my teenage years. I was married here in 1971. Except for a short interlude when I was expecting Mikila, Stephen and I continued here until he went to college. Since then, we have lived and worshipped in various parishes until I retired about 15 years ago. Now we worship at St Giles in Bramhope, as well as at OPC.

### **Do you have a favourite verse(s) of Scripture?**

I have so many, that it's difficult to choose just one. But this passage has been significant for me many times in my life. It's Lamentations 3:21-33.

### **Do you have a favourite Christian hymn or song?**

Lots! "Just a closer walk with thee" and "O Jesus I have promised to serve thee to the end".

### **Do you like classical music? Do you have a favourite piece(s)?**

Ketelbèy's "In a Monastery Garden", Pachelbel's "Canon in D Major", Borodin's "Polovtsian Dances".

### **What about modern songs or music – anything in particular?**

"The Sound of Silence" by Simon and Garfunkel, and "Bridge Over Troubled Water" by Paul Simon.

### **Can you play a musical instrument?**

None properly, but I taught myself to play the flute for a while. I was invited to play in Nashville with a Frets Orchestra where I was learning to play a mandolin. Unfortunately, we moved parishes at that time, so I missed out on a trip to Tennessee. In all honesty, I wasn't very good! My favourite instrument is my bowed psaltery which has a beautiful haunting sound.

### **Do you have a favourite part of Yorkshire you like to visit?**

I love the Dales, especially Swaledale. As for towns and cities I've

always liked Harrogate, although I haven't been for quite a long time so don't know what it's like now.

**Is there somewhere you would like to go on holiday where you've not been before, regardless of cost?**

I don't really enjoy travelling these days but when I was younger, I would like to have seen the Pyramids in Egypt, and the State Hermitage Museum of art and culture in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

**A book you enjoyed reading – Christian or general? Any special reason?**

You are asking someone who has over 1,000 books on her Kindle, so not sure how to pick my most favourite. Maybe, St Teresa of Avila's "The Interior Castle". In fiction, the Starbridge series by Susan Howatch, which gives an interesting view of Anglicanism from the war onwards looking at events from the perspectives of different, connected people.

**Do you have a hobby or something you enjoy doing to relax?**

I like spinning and crochet (I have to use all that spun yarn somehow) and thread painting embroidery. Also, inkle weaving and I'm now learning bobbin lace and tatting, and I enjoy dabbling in pastel painting.

**What would be your favourite meal – 2 or even 3 courses?**

A proper Chinese banquet, e.g. Tung po mutton, fire prawns, beef in black bean sauce, lemon chicken, and fried seaweed and rice. I used to enjoy cooking Chinese meals, but that is beyond me now.

**If you were to spend a whole year on a desert island on your own, what luxury would you take with you?**

I would want my spinning wheel (and some oil to keep it going) and an endless supply of wool fibre to spin. If I could sneak it in my pocket, I'd appreciate my kindle but I'd have to rig up some sort of dynamo with my spinning wheel to keep it charged. I hope I can also have my Bible with me!

**Which one word best describes your life right now?**

Home!

# WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE BIBLE *Verse?*

**John 11:35 (NIV)**

***“Jesus wept.”***

I found “What is your favourite verse in the bible?” a difficult question, as different verses depending on circumstances. One that does stand out for me though is John 11 verse 35, *‘Jesus wept’*. Several weeks after my husband died, I broke down and wept. It was uncontrollable. I felt I would never stop. The pain and the loss were insurmountable. I felt totally lost. Those two words “Jesus wept” came to me. Jesus didn’t only understand my feelings He had experienced. The situation with Lazarus to me expresses Jesus’ humanity. He felt human emotions and really understood every aspect of my pain. I’m sure he knew he would revive Lazarus but at that moment he felt the pain of loss. I also feel it shows his great love as only deep love can reduce someone to that depth of grief.

**Pam Oliver**



# WEAR IT PINK 2024



**A huge thank you to everyone who came to the WEAR IT PINK FOR BREAST CANCER Café in the Parish Room on Friday 18th October. Vanessa and I raised an amazing £270 made up of proceedings from the café, donations from my friends in Steel Magnolias and donations from family and friends on my *Just Giving* page. It meant a lot to receive that support, particularly this year after my diagnosis and treatment, which, so far, is proving successful – Shirley Parker**





Tom Pettinger, the husband of Katherine and Dad of Phoebe and Connie, celebrated his 40th birthday on 15th November 2024. He was born in Sheffield way back in 1984

# OUR CHURCHYARD WORK PARTY



## Survivors of the pruning party!

Many thanks to our superb team of volunteers for their great work at our Churchyard pruning day (Saturday 16 November). In keeping with modern thinking, almost 50% of the dozen plus volunteers were female, and the Vicar's young family represented the upcoming generation. Everyone worked well and we surpassed all our objectives for the day. Three large storm broken branches were soon cut into manageable pieces to build wildlife habitat piles in the north-west corner. There, a massive and high bramble thicket was trimmed into a manageable patch, revealing several young holly trees. At the other end ivy was carefully trimmed and removed from graves thus showing their lettering. Elsewhere, late flowering ivy was left for the many bees feeding in the fortuitous sunshine. Many leaves were blown, raked and gathered from the paths and verges to make them safe. The leaf patrol pile previously the size of Pen-y-ghent was increased to that of Snowden (although no one could quite remember the proper Welsh name, even though Keith is old Welsh for Man of the Forest.)

We enjoyed tea, coffee, biscuits and mince pies at 11 o'clock which speeded us on to conclude at 12 o'clock. A great day's work was done in just half a day. Many thanks again to our brilliant team of volunteers.

**Keith Wilson**



# My Devotional Thoughts

**Georgina Dodd**

**Psalm 37:1-8**



## WISDOM OVER WORRY

*This is one of my favourite psalms as it is about realigning your focus towards God rather than the world, and being in balance with Him.*

### **Trust**

God wants us to put Him first and not compare ourselves to others.

### **Dwell**

He will provide for us physically, emotionally and spiritually.



## **Delight**

Take pleasure in his rich provision and blessings.

## **Commit**

Lift up everything to God and He will act.

## **Rest and be patient**

Turn down the speed and volume of our lives and tune into God, experiencing His peace and wait patiently for Him to work in your life.

*Lord Jesus, you are a faithful good God who has plans for each one of us. Help us to stay focussed on you especially when it is challenging so that we can have a deeper relationship with you and experience life in its fullness. Amen.*



## ● **OUR CHURCH ADVENT STUDY SERIES** ●

You are invited to join us on a 25 day devotional journey, getting a fresh perspective on the Christmas story and being inspired to follow our Down to Earth Jesus in our daily lives. There are daily readings available from 1st December via an email or the YouVersion app. Each Sunday we will explore 4 different themes, then reflect on them in our house groups. You can access the daily readings by signing up at [licc.org.uk/downtoearth](http://licc.org.uk/downtoearth) and then clicking on 'Email Journey'.

# O Little Town of Bethlehem



**Phillip Brooks attended a midnight service at the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem in 1865 and later wrote 'O Little Town of Bethlehem'**

**If 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' feels like a vivid picture of Christ's birthplace, that's probably because the author, Phillip Brooks, had been there.**

Brooks was an Episcopal priest, abolitionist, teacher of preachers, who witnessed to Helen Keller (American author) and became an ecumenically popular Bishop of Massachusetts.

On Christmas Eve 1865 he went to a midnight service at the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem. Here's what he said about it: 'I remember standing in the old church in Bethlehem, close to the spot where Jesus was born, when the whole church was ringing hour after hour with splendid hymns of praise to God, how again and again it seemed as if I could hear voices I knew well, telling each other of the wonderful night of the Saviour's birth.'

In that pre-electric age, the streets would indeed have been 'dark', and the stillness would have been much deeper than today. Brooks took this powerful sensory experience and peopled it with the characters of the Christmas story.



Here is Christ born of Mary (Matthew 1:16) and the angels keeping their watch of wondering love (Luke 2:13-14).

The carol is also full of theology, not in a heavy-handed statement of doctrine, but in a preacher's interpretation of what the doctrine really means in the life of the believer. 'How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given; so God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.'

There is a deep feeling and poetic vision in these verses, arising from a profound engagement with the events they describe. The theme which runs through them is that Christmas is not just a single historical event: it is God breaking in to the world, which happens not just when his Son is incarnate, but when his will is done.

A verse which is not generally found in hymnbooks today runs:

Where children pure and happy  
Pray to the blessèd Child,  
Where misery cries out to thee,  
Son of the mother mild;  
Where charity stands watching  
And faith holds wide the door,  
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks,  
And Christmas comes once more.

You may be more familiar with these lines from the third verse: 'No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him, still, the dear Christ enters in.' And here's part of the final verse, a prayer that really brings us into the story: 'Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.' There is a profound truth here, that Christ comes into the world, not only at Bethlehem 2,000 years ago but through us, his disciples, wherever we are.

Come  
Worship  
With Us

## Otley Parish Church Services in January

Each 10.30am service is live streamed to YouTube:

[www.youtube.com/@otleyparishchurch](http://www.youtube.com/@otleyparishchurch)

<b>Sunday 5th</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Service of the Word with Baptism</b> Sunday Club (KS1, KS2 and pre-schoolers)
<b>Sunday 12th</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Sunday Worship with Holy Communion</b> Sunday Club (KS1, KS2 and pre-schoolers) OPC Youth Group (school years 6-13)
<b>Sunday 19th</b>	<b>8.30am</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b> This monthly service of Holy Communion is based on Common Worship, with a short talk and no hymns
	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Service of the Word</b> Sunday Club (KS1, KS2 and pre-schoolers)
<b>Sunday 26th</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Sunday Worship with Holy Communion</b> Sunday Club (KS1, KS2 and pre-schoolers) OPC Youth Group (school years 6-13)

## Our Midweek Services in January

<b>Every Tuesday</b>	<b>11.00am</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b> A short service with no hymns
<b>Monday to Thursday except in school holidays</b>	<b>4.30pm</b>	<b>Evening Prayer</b> There will be a variety of approaches to prayer; also, a reflection on a Bible passage, and time for silence and to pray for others

**ARE  
YOU  
NEW  
HERE**



If you are fairly new to Otley Parish Church, you are indeed very welcome here!

If you'd like to get connected, involved, or find out more about us, please pick up a *Welcome to Otley Parish Church* card which you'll find on the table at the back of the church.

Please fill in the details and return it to us, or put it into the red wall safe on the back wall.

We will use your contact information to help you find a way to connect into the life of our church. We do take care to ensure that your data is kept secure.

## *Please Keep in Touch*

We would love you to keep in touch and tell us what you'd like to see in *your* monthly **IN TOUCH** Church magazine. If you've got something you would like to share with us in the February edition of **IN TOUCH**, please send it to our editor, [stephenhey01@gmail.com](mailto:stephenhey01@gmail.com)

**NO LATER THAN**

**Saturday 18th January**



# Otley Parish CHURCH

**Kirkgate ● Otley ● West Yorkshire ● LS21 3HW**  
**Vicar: Revd. Aaron Kennedy**

***Registered Charity Number: 1153498***

## **CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR**

**Sarah McCormack**

## **CHURCH OFFICE**

**“The Chestnuts”, Burras Lane, Otley LS21 3HS**

## **OFFICE HOURS**

**Tuesday - Thursday, 9.30am - 3.00pm**

## **TELEPHONE**

**01943 465927**

## **EMAIL**

**[info@otleyparishchurch.org](mailto:info@otleyparishchurch.org)**

## **CHURCH WEBSITE**

**[www.otleyparishchurch.org](http://www.otleyparishchurch.org)**

*see our website for details of Church services  
and a link to our streamed services on YouTube*

**FACEBOOK: [@otleyparishchurch](https://www.facebook.com/otleyparishchurch)**

**X (TWITTER): [@otleyallsaints](https://twitter.com/otleyallsaints)**

## **CHURCH BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS**

**Account name:** Parochial Church Council of Otley

**Sort code:** 20-37-13    **Account No:** 10088811

**Gift Aid:** if you are a tax payer, please consider signing a Gift Aid declaration, available on the Church website or from the Treasurer, Tony Pike.

# KEY CHURCH CONTACTS

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*Vacant: hoping for someone to step-in and offer their support*

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# Otley Parish CHURCH

## **OTLEY PARISH CHURCH**

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**Vicar: Reverend Aaron Kennedy**

***Registered Charity Number 1153498***