

IN TOUCH

DECEMBER 2023 / JANUARY 2024
£1 or donation



Otley Parish
CHURCH





Otley Parish Church

Who are we?

Otley 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, helping one another to be more fully alive to the wonders, joys and 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 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 21st century disciples 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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Letter from Aaron Kennedy, Vicar at Otley Parish Church

Dear Friends...

Here's a question. What do you call me? Most people, when they are not calling me by my name refer to me as *the vicar*. Many people in my position are called *the minister*, or *the pastor* (which is what rector also means).

A pastor is a person with a call (or vocation), and the necessary gifts and training, to care for the spiritual needs of others. *Pastor* is from the Latin for shepherd, and so pastors take after the role of Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, while they themselves remain sheep in his flock.

Whatever the name used, there is very often a similar set of

assumptions or expectations held about the role that person is meant to fulfil; some of those expectations are appropriate, and some less so. One that needs looking at is most strongly implied by the titles *minister* and *pastor*, which is that he or she is the one who does the ministering and pastoring.

We talk about mission creep today, and this is a very good example because while it may be a very venerable and ancient tradition that the vicar is the sole provider of pastoral care, worship leading, etc, in a parish, it is not a biblical one. We read in Ephesians 4:11-13 that God has given the spiritual gifts mentioned

“to equip *the saints* for the work of ministry”.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds (pastors) and teachers exist not to do all the ministry, but to equip the saints (that’s you, the baptised people of God) for the work of ministry.

Thankfully, we are blessed with Jackie, our licenced lay minister, and Martin our LLM-in-training, who along with a raft of other people share in various ministries in church, so we’re quite far from the idea that the vicar is *the minister*.

But we can’t stop there. The vocation to care, given to us by Jesus, is not limited even to a small group of those with the gifting. It is a call to us all. Please read John 13:34-35 for a recap on the new commandment Jesus gave all his disciples – *to love one another*.

Our recently formed *Pastoral Care Core Group* are seeking to bring clarity to this area of our life, and to improve the quality of pastoral care we can offer. I am most grateful to Jackie for taking the lead in developing this new structure for pastoral care that involves fostering the caring ministries of all, within three distinct areas – or concentric

circles, as we see it – the *all*, the *some*, and the *few*.

- The *all* reflects the fact that we are called to love one another as Christ has loved us
- The *some* reflects the reality that God has called and equipped certain people with the ministry of pastoral care
- And the *few* reflects the fact that some are licensed by the bishop and/or bring particular skills and experience in this area

It is our hope that this new structure will help us to continue to grow in our care for one another, including the newer folks, and the guests among us, so that no-one falls through the cracks. And we also hope that in the coming months those who are the *few* – the small group tasked with co-ordinating and overseeing the formal pastoral care of all of us – will be identifiable and visible pastoral carers; people we can all approach when we feel we need some support.

For your information, the *few* are: Kevin Keefe, Glynis Milner, Jackie Hird, Alison Cairns, Eileen Barr, and Aaron Kennedy.

To all the saints at Otley Parish Church, every blessing as you undertake the work of ministry God has called you to!

Christmas is coming at Otley Parish Church



Some Christmas Bible Verses





LUKE 2:10

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

MATTHEW 1:21

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because 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 to 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!”



OTLEY PARISH CHURCH CHRISTMAS TREE

FESTIVAL  
sparkles again



DECEMBER 2023

inside Otley Parish Church

Wednesday 6th	12pm to 5pm
Thursday 7th	10am to 5pm
Friday 8th	10am to 5pm
Saturday 9th	10am to 5pm

Musical performances throughout each day
A café serving tea and coffee with mince pies
will be available from Thursday to Saturday

Christmas Tree Carol Service

followed by refreshments

Sunday 10th 4pm

ADMISSION FREE EACH DAY

- charity donations will be very much appreciated •

CHRISTINGLE

at Otley Parish Church



Christmas Eve
Sunday 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:

www.otleyparishchurch.org/christingle2023

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

Christmas

OTLEY PARISH CHURCH SERVICES



SUNDAY 10th DECEMBER

4.00 pm CHRISTMAS TREE CAROL SERVICE*

(followed by refreshments)

SUNDAY 17th DECEMBER

4.00 pm A SERVICE OF READINGS AND CAROLS*

(followed by refreshments)

CHRISTMAS EVE 24th DECEMBER

8.30 am HOLY COMMUNION

(N.B. No 10.30am service today)

12 noon CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

4.00 pm CHRISTINGLE SERVICE*

11.30 pm MIDNIGHT COMMUNION

CHRISTMAS DAY 25th DECEMBER

10.30 am ALL-AGE SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION*

* Service streaming: when services are streamed, they are available to be watched at home anytime from the scheduled start. You will find the online link at: www.otleyparishchurch.org



10 Tips for a Greener Christmas

THE CARBON NET ZERO GROUP here at Otley Parish Church is aware that many of us wonder how we can be better at caring for God's creation by making eco-friendly and sustainable choices at Christmas. Some of the ideas below are taken from *A. Rocha UK*.^[1] This is a Christian charity working to protect and restore the natural world. They are committed to equipping Christians and churches in the UK to care for the environment. You may wish to pray, reflect and consider using one or two of their suggestions or as many as you like. Then it may be that the change is for life and not just for Christmas.

Did you know that in the UK, 6 to 8 million real Christmas trees go to landfill every year? With a free *Christmas Tree Rental Scheme*^[2] you

can enjoy a real tree knowing that it will be replanted later. Or you can visit the *British Christmas Tree Growers Association*^[3] to find out about buying an organic, FSC-certified, or locally grown Christmas tree. In Leeds you can recycle your real Christmas tree by taking it to Council recycling centres to be composted.

Wreaths can also be taken to Council recycling centres, but plastic or glittery parts must first be removed. Alternatively, put the plant parts in your brown bin ready for collection in March next year.

Re-use cards and wrapping. Help reduce the huge number of trees that go into making Christmas tags by re-using old Christmas cards. Recycle the section that carries the

greeting, being careful to avoid glitter, cut out the picture and use that as a tag. Recycled brown paper has a much lower ecological footprint than Christmas wrapping paper, as glitter cannot be recycled. To test if your wrapping paper is recyclable, you can do the 'scrunch' test. If it springs back, it isn't recyclable. Always remove any sticky tape before recycling.

Create homemade gifts such as baked goods, maybe, or buy gifts from a charity shop – you'll be amazed at what can be found there. You could buy an attractive glass vase and fill it with chocolates or flowers. Kilner jars, and other glass jars filled with small items also make attractive gifts.



Dim the lights but not the joy! LED Christmas lights help to save energy and money. You could make your table festive with some candles – scented ones perhaps. Use eco-friendly candles made from beeswax, soy, or other vegetable alternatives. Avoid paraffin-based candles. Empty

jars with some ribbon make beautiful DIY candleholders.

And for those of you lucky enough to be flying off somewhere over Christmas, there is a carbon offsetting scheme, recommended by the Diocese; *Climate Stewards*.^[4]

[1] [A Rocha UK](#)

[2] [Christmas Tree Rental Scheme](#)

[3] [British Christmas Tree Growers Association](#)

[4] [Climate Stewards](#)

In the Hot Seat



with

**Colin
Hopkinson**

When were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born in 1957 and spent my childhood in West Molesey in Surrey until I was 14, and then as a family we moved to nearby Claygate.

Where did you go to school?

My junior school was East Molesey Boys (C of E). My secondary school was Esher Grammar which became a 6th Form College while I was there.

Did you go to College or University? If so, where?

I studied Law at Leicester University and then went to Guildford Law College. Later I went to Ridley Hall Theological College and did theology at Cambridge University.

When did you become a Christian?

I became a Christian in my mid-teens through the youth group at Holy Trinity Church, Claygate.

When and where did you meet your wife Christine?

Christine was also a member of the church youth group in Claygate, but she is four years younger than me, so initially of a different generation! We became an item when I was at theological college, and she returned from a year in Paris where she'd been as part of her university studies.

What was your occupation and where did you work?

I was ordained and we were married in 1984. I served in Chelmsford

Diocese throughout, with curacies in Chadwell St. Mary and Canvey Island, and incumbencies in Chelmer Village in Chelmsford, and Langdon Hills in Basildon.

Do you have brothers and sisters?

I have one brother, Rick. He lives in New Zealand and summers in France. Annoyingly, he still has all his hair!

How many children and grandchildren do you have?

We have two children and two grandchildren. David is married to Rachel, and they have two children, Lyra (6) and Immy (4). Sarah is married to Alex. and they live in Leeds Dock.

How long have you lived in Otley, and where did you come from?

We moved to Otley in response to a campaign by our daughter Sarah, for which we are very grateful! Research and moving all happened during COVID restrictions. Christine found Otley online and I fell in love with it on a flying visit to look at houses. Previously we lived in the parishes mentioned earlier.

Did you worship anywhere before coming to Otley Parish Church? How long have you been coming here?

We didn't really get much choice about where we worshipped! I had to listen to my own sermons (and so did Christine – poor thing!). Christine liked what she saw of OPC online before we moved, and we started attending shortly after we arrived in 2021.

In what ways are you involved within OPC?

Graham Buttanshaw retired shortly after we arrived so I applied for PTO (permission to officiate) a bit earlier than I had intended so that I could help during the interregnum. I now take a few services and assist with the laptop on some Sundays. Christine leads some Sunday Club sessions and helps at Little Rascals. We are also privileged to be members of a wonderful housegroup!

Do you have a favourite verse of Scripture? If so, what is it?

In response to this same question, I wrote a little piece for an earlier edition of In Touch on Philippians 4:6-7. Those verses about dealing with anxiety have stayed with me since I was a teenager but since retirement it feels like God has been yelling Proverbs 3:5-6 in my ear! "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and be not wise in your own sight. Acknowledge him in all your ways and he will make straight your paths."

Do you have a favourite Christian hymn or song?

Hymn: We had "I cannot tell" at our wedding and I like the way it recognises that both conviction and uncertainty are part of faith. It also has, of course, a great tune!! Song: "Blessed be your name" by Matt Redman is a powerful reminder to hold onto God in the bad times as well as the good.

Do you like classical music? Do you have a favourite piece?

How do you choose? I'll plump for depth and power of the Mozart Requiem.

What about modern songs or music - anything in particular?

I have acquired a taste for orchestral film scores by Hans Zimmer and the like. They fire my imagination.

Can you play a musical instrument?

Sadly not, although there were times when I was grateful that I couldn't be asked to lead services and play the organ at the same time as some of my colleagues did!

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

Much of it is so very lovely that we still feel like we are on an extended holiday! We love walking by the river near Grassington and max out our National Trust membership with visits to Fountains Abbey.

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

I'm cheating a bit, but I'd love to visit my brother in New Zealand. We did go once but were forced to return early due to a family bereavement.

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

Nothing ever beats "The Lord of the Rings"! Christian wise, "The Shack" was powerful and thought-provoking about suffering and the nature of God.

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

The bucket list hobbies I have taken up since retiring are modern board gaming and croquet. I shall also keep skiing for as long as I can!

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

I do like fajitas.

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

A good supply of real ale!

Anything else you'd like to tell us?

I'm wary of making everything sound too rosy. Life still has its challenges, but Christine and I do feel that it is God's grace that has brought us to Otley, and we are so grateful to be part of this community and church.

Which one word best describes your life right now?

Blessed.

Over the past 8 years we have seen 59 members of Otley Parish Church taking part "In the Hot Seat".

We would now love to see YOU "In the Hot Seat" too, so we can all get to know a little more about you.

Please have a word with our In Touch editor, Stephen Hey, if would like to.

What's Your Favourite Bible Verse?

**MY FAVOURITE BIBLE VERSE IS
REVELATION 3:20 (NIV), and it reads:**

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

The Pre-Raphaelite artist Holman Hunt, inspired by this verse, painted *The Light of the World*. During a recent Alpha session here at Otley Parish Church, we learnt about the symbolism of the image. Jesus is shown knocking at a door overgrown with weeds, awaiting a response. There is no handle on the door so it must be opened from the inside. It's up to us whether we do this and



let Jesus into our lives. Eating together is a sign of the friendship which Jesus promises to those who open the door of their lives to him. Isn't that a wonderful invitation, and surely impossible to resist!

– TRICIA MERRICK



Otley Parish Church

FAMILY

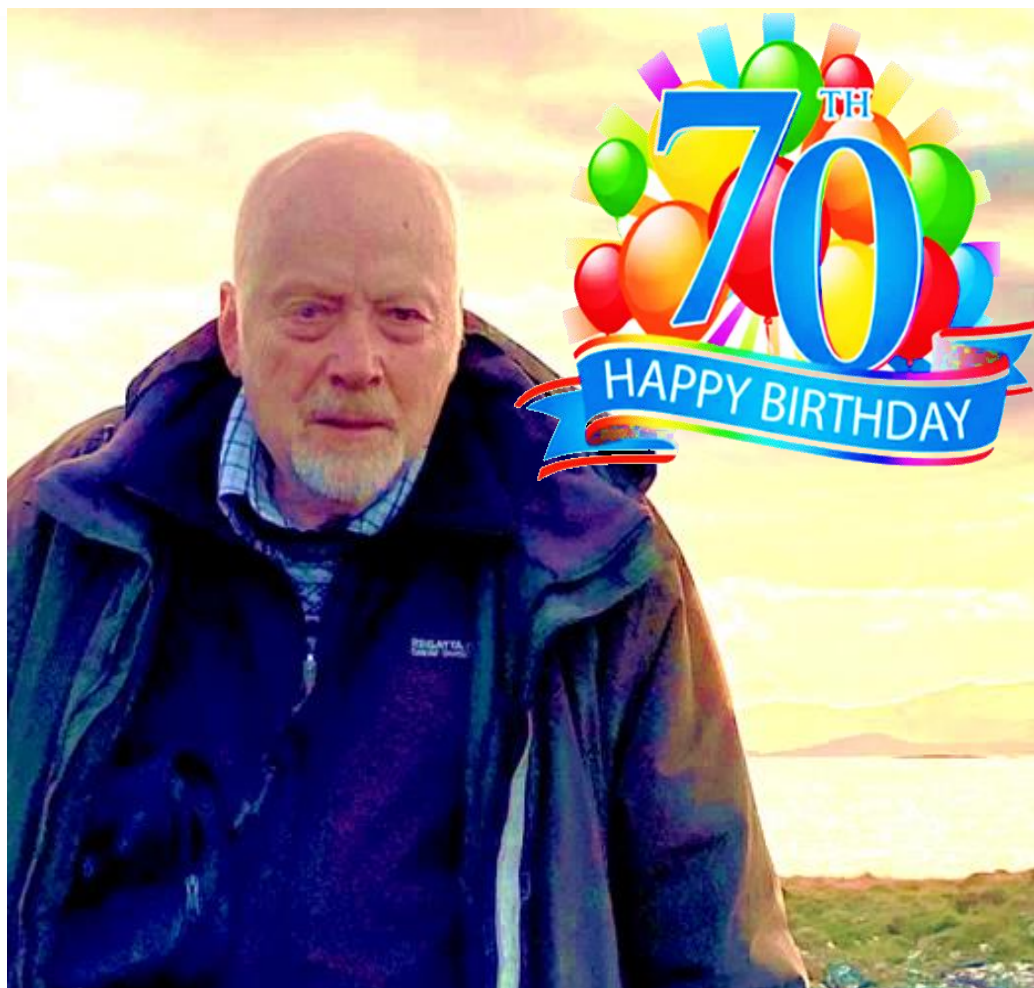
news

WEAR PINK DAY 2023



Wear Pink Day was held at Otley Parish Church Friday Café on 20th October and raised £105 for breast cancer research. This was amazing considering the weather! It was the day of Storm Babet which seriously affected Otley. Thank you everyone!

Keith Wilson



CONGRATULATIONS! Keith was 70 years old on 17th October 2023. His main birthday celebration was a trip with his wife Rachel to the Sound of Jura which is a strait in Argyll and Bute in Scotland. While walking on a ridge there they saw a golden eagle just 20 feet away. They watched it fly around for about 10 minutes. Superb!



CHRIS DENING

**Born in Bradford
on 25 October 1978**



**Chris Dening
with partner Amie Smith**

National Book Awards



Violet, Sarah McCormack's 7-year-old daughter, was invited to the National Book Awards Presentation in October, along with 5 other pupils from her class at Ashfield School in Otley. The children were individually recorded reading an excerpt from one of the shortlisted books in the Key Stage 1 category in July at Leeds Central Library. During the presentation Violet's recording was played for all Leeds schools to hear. She read beautifully from the book, *I am Nefertiti*, and her whole family are immensely proud of her. Violet was really excited to meet each of the authors and illustrators during the event. She had a lovely chat with Annemarie Anang, the author of *I am Nefertiti*, who signed Violet's personal copy and congratulated her on her reading.



Revd Stewart Hartley

It Shouldn't Happen To A Vicar (But It Did)!

A Christmas Special

This is the twenty seventh in a series of interesting articles by

Stewart Hartley,

**now retired and a member of
Otley Parish Church.**

“Who’s the turkey then?”

Rosemary and I were on our way to Covent Garden to see the spectacular Christmas Tree there when we passed the M&S store. In the window was a notice, ‘Turkeys Half Price!’ As we always invited a good number of people for Christmas dinner, I was excited by the bargain! Rosemary was not so sure. She said, “It’s still a few days from Christmas, where will we keep it? The fridge is too small!” “No problem”, I confidently replied, “The garage is cold, it will be fine there”.

Very early on Christmas Day

morning I carried the turkey from the garage to the kitchen and set about opening the bag. A sickening smell invaded the kitchen, and the turkey was covered in patches of green. As I realised that we could not serve it to our guests, panic set in. What was I going to do? Christmas morning church service time was rapidly approaching!

Flinging a coat on I set off at the run to the local big Tesco on the Old Kent Road (a cheap favourite on the Monopoly Board). It was closed! Of course - not allowed to

open on Christmas day! Then, I remembered the Turkish grocer at the other end of the parish. I ran again and with relief saw its lights full on!

“Have you got a turkey?” I asked, in-between getting my breath back. “No turkey”, was the prompt reply. Then I spotted a man behind the counter whom I always avoided, in a dirty overall. The butchery! As I approached the counter the baleful eye of a sheep’s head stared at me. The look said it all, “you wally!” Then in the corner of the counter I spotted two of the tiniest chickens I have ever seen. I had no other option but to buy them!

When I arrived home and unwrapped them, we both laughed till our sides hurt. When in the oven they went on a timer, and then we hurried off to church.

On our return, taking these chickens out of the oven, we saw that they were even smaller when cooked! So instead of bearing the ‘turkey’ to the table in true Dickensian style, we thought it safer to plate up in the kitchen. Every scrap of those two birds was stripped off and used.

Sitting on various chairs, stools, and boxes we all enjoyed lunch. As the meal ended, one of the elderly ladies with us declared, “That was the tastiest turkey I can ever remember eating!”

So, as you enjoy your Christmas this year I say with Tiny Tim, “God bless us one and all!”

Stewart Hartley

Postscript: As I told this story after Christmas several people said to me, “You should have told me because I have a spare turkey in the freezer”. What was I supposed to say to that?





Lesley Noble often walks and prays in the peace and tranquillity of the gardens at Parcevall Hall. This is the retreat house and conference centre of the Diocese of Leeds near Appletreewick in Wharfedale.

Prayer Walking is just what it sounds like – praying to God while walking around. Instead of closing our eyes and bowing our heads, we keep our eyes open to see both the beauty and the needs around us. We lift our hearts to praise God and bow our hearts to ask Him to humbly intervene with the various needs.

More of Lesley's prayer walk prayers will feature in future editions of In Touch.

Lesley's Prayer Walk Prayer – 6

Here is a place of testing and trust. I stand alone but I know you are with me. The wind makes the leaves rustle louder, the trees and the ferns are high, surrounding me. The world reveals fear of things unknown, but when faith stands against it, it melts into nothingness, and only you remain. May your will be done, O Lord.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

MARTIN HIRD

Be still, and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

The Presence And Reality Of Our God

In September this year I went on a pilgrimage, planning to walk up part of St Columba's way, from Tyndrum across the Scottish Highlands, onto Mull, along its south coast, then on to Iona. My fellow pilgrim and I planned to wild camp along the way, even hoping to sleep under the stars if the rain stopped. In preparation for this, my hope and expectation was that in the stillness of the

mountains and the coastal tracks I would meet God. I saw this journey as a way of being still, and meeting/knowing God in new ways. I took some inspiration from the Message translation of this verse – "Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God, above politics, above everything". Surely this would count as "stepping out of the traffic" and we would be able to

spend the whole day taking the “long, loving look”.

Those of you who have more experience of pilgrimage than me, will read this and you will be smiling wryly at my naivety. Yes, the mountain tracks, the coastal trail, the nights under the stars had no crying babies, no household chores, no emails, no TV – but in spite of this I was carrying most of my internal noise and clutter with me. There was no privileged access into knowing God in new, clearer ways. I was carrying all my doubts, questions and scepticism with me into the wilderness. Even without listening to news we knew that wars were raging,

people were starving, injustices were continuing.

The most valuable learning from this pilgrimage for me has been that God’s instruction to “Be still, and know that I am God” is given to us where we are now:

- with the news playing and wars raging
- when sitting with the struggling neighbour
- with our doubts whispering unanswerable questions in our ear

In these places we are to pause, take a breath and know the presence and reality of our God.

PRAYER

Dear God, meet with us where we are. Grant that we would have an experience like Jacob, who said: “Surely the Lord *is in this place*, and I was not aware of it... how awesome is this place... *this* is none other than the house of God... the gate of heaven” Genesis 28 16,17). Amen



SURPRISE IN HEAVEN

*I dreamed death came the
other night, and heaven's
gate swung wide.*

*With kindly grace an angel
came and ushered me inside,
and there to my astonishment
stood folks I'd known
on earth.*

*Some I'd judged and labelled
"unfit" and "of little worth".*

*Indignant words rose to my
lips but never were set free,
For every face showed stunned
surprise ~*

No one had expected me!

Anon

Keep in touch with... **IN TOUCH**

We would love you to keep in touch and tell us what you would like to see in YOUR monthly Church magazine.

Yes, it is yours!

Please send us your suggestions as to how we can make **In Touch** even better than it is already. And let us know if you would like to contribute something.

What about **"In the Hot Seat"**, or **"A Day in the Life of..."** or **"My Favourite Bible Verse"**?

Maybe you'd like to write a poem or a prayer or something in our new series about **"God's Wonderful Creation"**?

We would also love to hear your family news such as birthdays and anniversaries or anything interesting; also, to see some of your family photographs.

■ Whatever you would like to share with us please bear in mind that for it to be included in next month's **In Touch** we must hear from you as below:

Keep in Touch

We would love you to keep in touch and tell us what you'd like to see in *your* monthly 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

no later than

Sunday 14th January



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Registered Charity Number: 1153498

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

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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.

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Sustainability Group

Details awaited

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