

Presentation of
Christ

1st & 2nd Sundays
before Lent

1st Sunday of Lent

The Benefice of Upper Wensleydale 'Church in the Home'

February 2026



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From the Vicarage



I have just had a 'Pop-Up' appear on my laptop screen informing me that there are only 332 'sleeps' until Christmas! Have you started your shopping yet? Since writing this article there are even less so we'd better get focussed.

It hardly seems possible that we're already stepping into February (is this an age thing Dave?) but the daffodils are in the shops, the snowdrops are bursting through and the starting pistol for Lambing is loaded and the trigger squeezed.

It was a wonderfully joyful Christmastide across the Benefice with so many different events taking place within our communities both outside and inside. We have included a brief snapshot of some of the events in this newsletter. I am so very grateful to everyone who was involved in making Christmas happen in the way that it did, creating the opportunity for many Christ centred conversations and encounters on the street and in our buildings. A conservative estimate would put the attendance figure at over a thousand. Praise God.

But now we move into a different season with the celebration of Candlemas, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent.

Traditionally it is a time of discipline, prayer and study after the feasting of the Christmas season but this need not be seen as 40 days of self-inflicted misery. Perhaps we can give Lent a fresh look and follow the Jesus model from his time in the wilderness. I encourage us all to use these days to set aside some 'purposeful designated' time to draw close to God in prayer, to seek His will and to hear His voice within the noise and activity of our busy lives. It might be pulling over on a journey for a few minutes, seeking a secluded corner in a lunch break or settling into a favoured armchair for a time of stillness and prayer. I believe that it's less important to think of what you'll *do* in that time than it is to show God that he's important enough in your life for you to *want* to give Him that time. You've often heard me encourage you to 'Have a Coffee with the Lord' ... maybe this Lent is where give it a go.

There are so many wonderful scriptures associated with our turning to the Lord in prayer: perhaps these two will suffice as we begin our Lenten walk together. '*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you*' ^{Jms.4:8} is a reminder that when we make the decision to orientate ourselves to God He is always there and waiting. '*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you.*' ^{Jer.29:13f} God is not hiding from us is a truth I often use in Baptism and Funeral services. God recognises a sincere pursuit. Honesty and vulnerability lead to the reality of His presence. Our Ash Wednesday service this year will be held in Hardraw at 6:30. It's a powerful reminder of where we stand before God and our need of His presence and power in our lives. If you've never experienced this service before, perhaps this is the year?

"Lord, may my small sacrifices open a space in my heart for You to fill"

Rev Dave.

The next 'Gathering' will be on **Sunday 1 February**
at 10:30am at St Oswald's in Askrigg



God Equips in 2026



At our Benefice service in January we began to consider our focus phrase for 2026. Considering Romans 12:1-8 we will look further into what this might look like for each and every one of us. 'The Gathering' is the only occasion where centralised teaching can be given for the whole of the Benefice. It would be wonderful to see you there.

Be a Blessing – Be Encouraged – Be Church



Beautiful skies over
St Margarets
Picture taken by
Martin Betts



Church Finances



Every year, as a Benefice we have to pay what is known as our 'Parish Share'. This money goes to support the funding of mission and ministry in the 440 parishes across our large Diocese. This year our Benefice is being asked to contribute over £53,000 across our four church communities. This is in addition to any fuel, insurance or repair costs that we inevitably face. This money is found through our own sacrificial giving. Our Treasurers are doing all they can to balance our budgets but it is very hard to do so when the monthly income is so irregular. Thank you for all of your contributions to enabling the sharing of the Gospel message in our area. We would be so very grateful if you haven't already done so, to arrange a regular bank transfer to your church PCC.

EASYFUNDRAISING

A huge thank you to everyone who used Easyfundraising over the Christmas period. Thanks to your everyday shopping, we've raised £35 to support our churches. It might seem small, but every pound genuinely makes a difference, and we're very grateful for your continued support. If you haven't joined us on Easyfundraising yet, it's an easy way to help raise funds at no extra cost to you. Thank you.

TOWER PROJECT WINS PRESTIGIOUS KING OF PRUSSIA GOLD MEDAL

St Oswald's Church was delighted to win the King of Prussia Gold Medal at the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association (EASA) annual meeting held in London last week. The medal is awarded for innovative, high quality church conservation or repair.



The Tower Project was one of 6 finalists celebrated at the ceremony and was up against some other wonderful church projects across England. The judging panel commended Askrigg on a strong solution to a long-standing problem and for its use of traditional lime render.

The team were represented at the Awards by architect Andrew Boyce, from Donald Insall Associates, Will Hague, Mason & Foreman from Matthias Garn & Partners and from the church, Rev Dave Stephanie and MaryRose. They received their award from Prince Nicholas von Preussen, the Patron of the EASA.

The project, which received grant funding from the National Churches Trust, the Wolfson Fabric Repair Fund, the Headley Trust, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Sustainable Development Fund, the Elm House Trust and the Benefact Trust, and countless individuals, has saved the church tower from irreversible decay and ensures the building can continue to serve its community for generations to come.



CHRISTMAS

Christmas was a lovely time across the Benefice, although it seems quite a long time ago! There were concerts at Hawes and Hardraw, community carols in Hawes and Askrigg, and Christingle services in the schools and Askrigg. A wonderful meal at the Wensleydale Pantry. Communion services on Christmas Eve across the Benefice which were all very well attended.



The Askrigg Christmas Tree Festival took place and included a week long programme of events from concerts to soup lunches. Christmas Day celebrations at Hardraw saw a packed church, with hearty singing of carols and much ringing of bells.



Wensleydale Filling Station



Thornborough Hall, Leyburn 7-9pm

Friday 13th February 2026

Speaker: Simon and Grace Stretton-Downes

Worship led by Dave and Sarah Clark

Next Meeting: Friday 13th March - Allen Langham (Coverdale)

Advanced Notice – Funeral service for Elaine Ewbank – 92

Many of you will know Elaine through her years of faithful service as organist for Marsett Chapel. Elaine died on Jan 23rd in the Friary. The service will be held in St Oswald's in Askrigg on Wednesday Feb 18th at 1pm

Coffee Morning



• Saturday 7th February •

• 10am to 12 noon •

• in St Oswald's Church •

Cake stall, tombola & jigsaw stall

Come and join us for a cup of tea or coffee with a delicious scone. Browse the cake stall, buy a jigsaw or try your luck on the tombola.

Don't worry – the heating is on!

Pancakes at Busk

Tuesday 17th February

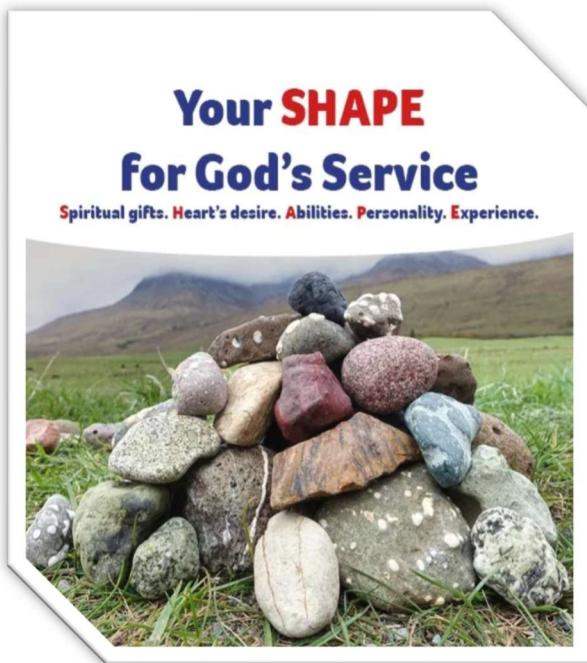
St Matthew's Church

12 until 1pm



Always a fun time together!

LENT STUDY GROUP: 2026 – ‘God Equips’ **SHAPE** **Spiritual Gifts, Hearts Desire, Abilities, Personality, Experience**



‘Your SHAPE for God’s Service’ was originally written by Amiel Osmaston for ‘Resource Ministries’. Many of you are now familiar with ‘Resource’ through our ‘Sanctuary Day’ in June last year and the ‘Alive in Christ’ which has been run across the Benefice on many occasions now.

‘**SHAPE**’ has been used in hundreds of churches to inspire confidence and help individuals to identify the ways in which God is calling them to serve.

We have a strong history of enabled leadership in the Benefice ... I see this as another way of helping us discover where we might fit in.

There are six enjoyable and interactive learning sessions designed to help everyone to discover their God-given SHAPE:

* If you are interested in joining the group over Lent please contact the Vicarage, speak to Steph or Dave or leave a message by phone or email.*

40acts: Do Lent generously

Starts 18 February 2026

Join thousands this Lent for a 40-day generosity challenge – building habits, deepening faith and reflecting the heart of Jesus through everyday acts. Each day offers a simple invitation to give, bless, and grow in generosity – one act at a time. Find out more detail (and sign up) here:

[40acts: Do Lent generously](#)

This year, 40acts comes to life through your Stewardship Giving Account app.

It’s more than just a way to give, it’s your personal hub for daily acts, reflections and putting generosity in action. You’ll be able to set aside funds to give with purpose as opportunities arise, track your daily progress and build momentum.

Whether you’re giving time, money or kindness, your Giving Account helps you make generosity a habit – one act at a time. [Download on the App Store](#) [Download on Google Play](#)

FROM THE BENEFICE CALENDAR



Baptisms

6 Dec 2025

Edward Boughen

Askrigg

Funerals

19 Jan 2026

John Lawrence Faulkner Askrigg

Stay Connected and make the most of the Bible teaching taking place across the Benefice.

Search for:

'Rev Dave from Wensleydale'

Latest episodes include:

20 Jan – Be a Pointer

12 Jan -Are you a Doer

6 Jan – Where are you Going?

Available on Apple podcasts and Spotify [OR:](#)  **Upper Wensleydale Church - CofE**



Join us for Evening Prayer

For some time now we have been offering the opportunity of sharing in a service of Afternoon/Evening Prayer by telephone in your own home. It is very simple to join in. I am confident that there are many more people in the upper dale who would benefit from joining with us. You may be one of them, or you may know someone who would appreciate the chance to do so. If this is the case, then follow the instructions below and we look forward to welcoming you at 4pm on a Sunday afternoon.

As 4pm approaches, call this number **03330 164757**. You will then be asked to enter the room number **893 277 00#** and the **PIN 2772#**. Then you are in! Say hello, sit quietly, and join in with the half an hour service of prayer and reflection





Upper Wensleydale Benefice Services

February 2026

	St Mary & St John's, Harddraw 9.00am	St Margaret's, Hawes 10.30am	St Oswald's, Askriigg 10.30am	St Matthew's, Stalling Busk 2.30pm	
January 30 th					Sycamore Hall: Communion Service in the 'Activity Room' – 10:00am
1 February	The Gathering - Benefice Family Service St Oswald's Church, Askriigg at 10.30am				Evening prayer by telephone
8 February	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	Café Style	12.30 Soup followed by Afternoon Prayer	Evening prayer by telephone
15 February	Holy Communion	Family Service	Morning Prayer		Evening prayer by telephone
18 February	Ash Wednesday Benefice Communion Service with The Imposition of Ashes St Mary & St John's Church, Harddraw at 6.30pm				
22 February	Morning Prayer	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	Afternoon Prayer Pathfinders and Explorers	Evening prayer by telephone



Prayer suggestions for February

- the new Archbishop of Canterbury
- the SHAPE course to be run in the Benefice
- the financial situation of our churches

Rev Dave Clark

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Administrator: Stephanie Durrant (work hours 1-5pm Tuesdays and Thursdays)