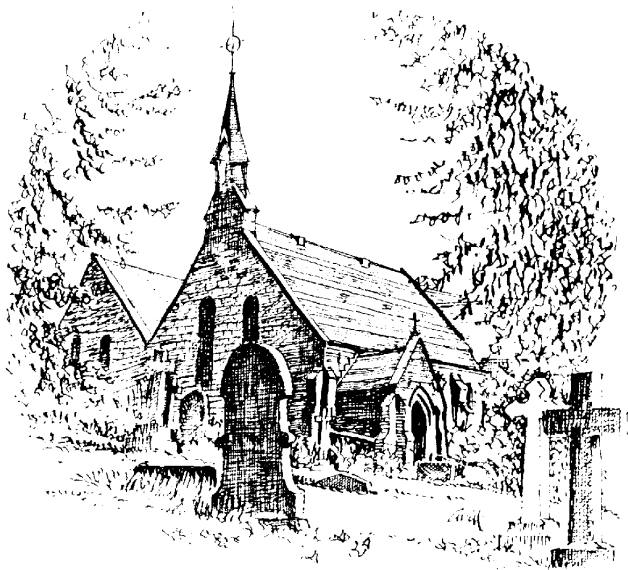


2023

A Year in the Life of

**St John the Divine
Menston with Woodhead**



**prepared for the APCM
Sunday 28 April 2024**

CLERGY REPORT

“See I am making all things new!” *Revelations 21:5.*

What a year 2023 has turned out to be! With quite a few significant changes.

We celebrated the completion of our huge roof project last year, and we were grateful that we managed to pay for it before costs spiralled out of our grasp completely. However, things never stand still and there are always other things that need our attention.

Please join me in thanking not only our wardens but the teams of volunteers who assist in cleaning the church and the Parish Room, and who keep the garden beautifully maintained. Without our teams of willing volunteers we could not manage as we do, thank you.

You would have been forgiven if you thought that the wardens were rehearsing for the village pantomime, because their cry of, “new lamps for old,” meant

that at last, the lantern outside the front door, restored to its original beautiful copper, is now shining bright along with the lanterns on the gate posts. Lights illuminate the steps and hopefully encourage people to see St John’s as a place filled with light.

The wonderful thing about the people of St John’s is your involvement in so many local community activities. When we think about our mission and ministry we are, by association, bringing the church’s influence into the life of our village. There’s Menston in Bloom, Menston Cares, the library at Kirklands, the Community Fridge, the Christmas Lights, the Parish Council, the Uniformed associations, Menston Climate Action Group, Menston Heritage Group - the list goes on and on. We work side by side, shining our light, and helping things to change and improve.

Clergy Report

As a whole community we celebrated the Coronation of our new King, as the varied events brought people together, for a wonderful weekend that many will remember.

During this year there have been several people engaged with a diocesan training course around personal growth and leadership. We thank God for all those who step into positions of leadership, and we pray that some of those who have completed the course will now find outlets for their new skills here in St John's.

Obviously one area of change and newness will be in the search for, and appointment of, our new vicar. As a church family we said our sad goodbyes to Steve, Elaine, Samuel and Phoebe. We are already feeling their loss in many ways, often through those little things that we only notice now they are not being done!

Steve brought about many changes in our work and witness here at St John's, in our Worship times and styles, in how we

consider our mission and ministry, in his teaching style in sermons, and in the way we view our relationship with the wider community. Thinking of the promise to make all things new, we now pray fervently for the new person who will come and join us on our continued spiritual journeys.

There are yet more people to thank, and people to pray for as we make our search for a new vicar: those who have helped to produce the promotional materials that the diocese encourage us to make and those who are on the PCC who have helped complete the Profile and supported the Parish Representatives, who will be part of the selection process.

There are so many people who work tirelessly and frequently unseen, but an interregnum period often brings this into the light. Due to the care of a small number of people we do not become like a ship without a captain, or worse still without a rudder. It is important in these coming months that we continue

Clergy Report

to follow our processes and stick to what we know. This is not a time for people to go solo, we are all the richer for doing this together. Being without a vicar also means that we must rely on each other so much more.

May I, on your behalf, thank all those who are finding they have even more work to do right now. Especially those who have stepped up to leading Zest, supporting the team there, and keeping a caring eye on new people.

Thank you to those on any kind of rota for the 11.00am service, from welcomers, through to chalice bearers, readers, pray-ers, sacristans and flower arrangers, indeed all those who are helping to keep the light shining.

There is a very important person that I want to single out and say thank you to. It is a sign of all that she does that many people will not even notice what she does. However, Amy, our administrator, does a huge job behind the scenes, keeping us

all up to date, preparing the slides for each service, the parish notes each week, all the legal documentation for baptisms, marriages and funerals. I cannot imagine the chaos if we didn't have Amy. Thank you so much.

During the weeks, outside of our church building small groups continue to encourage each other. There's both the house groups with their welcoming leaders, but also the men's and women's groups who meet once a month at the Malt Shovel to offer a more relaxed and informal support again to new faces where needed.

Our Mothers' Union continues to do a great job in supporting each other and providing an interesting and edifying programme each month.

Another call for things to be new is the encouragement we are offering everyone to become part of the Church Giving Scheme. Our work and witness is only possible through your generosity and like

Clergy Report

everything at the moment we know that this is being squeezed. Our Parish Share system reminds us of our need to help each other, and to ensure that we provide much needed support services into the Church. Giving is an important part of our spiritual life and if we regularly assess what we give we may help to make things new.

for our new vicar, whoever they might be. May we continue to be a thriving and relevant presence here in Menston, never resting on our laurels, active in our community, and witnessing to our God who does indeed make all things new.

*Rev Andrew Howorth
Associate Priest*

As in every year, we have said final goodbyes to old friends. We give thanks for the way that their lives touched ours, and, as we remember their witness, so we pray that we might be stepping stones or signposts for others.

Finally, please allow me a personal thank you to all those who have sent me cards and messages, those who have prayed for my recovery, and those who have supported me. I continue to describe my recovery as miraculous, and trust that I will be able to get back to doing all that I did very soon.

Please join me in continuing to pray for St John's, and especially

HOME COMMUNION

Holy Communion at home is an important part of the church's ministry to any who are unable to attend normal services for whatever reason. It enables people to feel they are still a vital part of our church family and that, whatever is happening to them, Christ will be with them on their journey of faith and that we are grateful for their prayers as much as they are grateful for ours.

During 2023 a team of five people who are available to take communion to any who have requested it was established and are regularly available wherever needed. People's needs vary, so

numbers are infinitely variable. However a regular feature which seems particularly appreciated is the provision for any residents of The Beeches care home on the first Monday of every month where up to seventeen residents now attend.

We look forward to providing this important ministry during 2024 and are always happy to receive requests to visit at anyone's convenience. Also if you feel you may be called to help in the provision of such ministry then your help would be appreciated.

Wendy Thornhill

INTERCESSIONS

The intercessions group continues to lead the prayers at the 11am service. Hopefully the congregation feel we fulfil our task of interceding on their behalf. This coming year will prove more difficult as

our numbers are seriously depleted, and the visiting clergy will be needed to fill in any gaps. I am very grateful to everyone who continues to provide this service on our behalf.

Kathy Roberts

HOME GROUP

This past year, our home group of eight members has together completed three courses: The Bible Course, where the group discussed all the different books of the Bible, The Prayer Course, and The Lectio Course, where we explored the different aspects of prayer.

We are continuing our meetings and will soon be starting the Talking Jesus Course to help us

share our faith with others that we meet in daily life, with more discussions planned too.

This has been a good year for the home group, with many people coming together to share different perspectives of our faith. We strive to be an inclusive and sharing space for all in the year ahead.

Matthew Smith

FUNDRAISING

With the completion of the roof, the major fund-raising activities enjoyed a short break. It had been a marathon task to complete, and thanks were due to everyone for helping in a variety of ways. The work however needs to continue—perhaps not at quite the same pace, but the needs are there all the same.

So thank you to all who have helped to organise and run the popular Christmas Quiz, the occasional cake stalls, the

concerts, the crafts, and all the regular giving. Whenever we ask for support for baking, crafts, or staffing various stalls there are many who step up to the call. Also our children, young people and their parents who are willing to contribute in lots of different ways, so thank you again for all that you do. We look forward to another exciting year of activities, building up the church family as well as raising much needed funds.

Rev Andrew Howorth

THE 6PM SERVICE

We continued to offer the 6pm service every first and third Sunday throughout 2023.

This service seeks to offer an informal blend of worship, teaching, reflection and interactive/individual times of prayer. In some senses it develops on the principles and form of Zest, but is not tailored for young children. As with Zest, a key tenet of the 6pm service is discussing the bible passage in groups, allowing deeper engagement and exploration of the text and our faith. We are also blessed with a band who regularly play live worship.

The service is led by different individuals each week, on rotation, being a mixture of clergy and non-ordained people. This year, one of our youth even led and preached at one of the services!

The hope and aim for this service is that it offers a chance for members of the congregation and the village to engage with Church and their faith in another, different, way, and at a different time of day. It is a fact in today's society that Sunday mornings can be busy times, for example with sporting activities for young people, so this provides an alternative for those people.

Given the small size of the 6pm congregation, the service has been paused during the interregnum, as we wait for our new vicar. We are hoping as a congregation (and with the support of the PCC) to reignite the service once the new vicar is appointed. We would encourage members of the congregation and the parish to come and see what we're about, if only so you can tell others that it might suit all about it!

Hannah Needle

THE CORE

The Core is a group for children aged 7-11. We meet once a month on a Sunday afternoon. During the session the children explore different bible stories, from both the Old and New Testaments. This year we have learnt about Daniel in the lion's den, Jonah and the whale and Joseph and his coat. We have read some of Jesus' parables and celebrated Christmas, Easter and Ascension. During the session we bake, play games and do some fantastic art and craft projects.

and it has been fantastic to welcome new faces to our group.

Elaine Proudlove has been a big part of The Core since it started, so we were very sorry to see her go in January. We have however been fortunate to find some new volunteers and Catherine, James and Jenny have all joined the team. This means that we are able to continue meeting regularly and learning about God together.

We encourage the children to invite their friends along to Core

Sally Smith

THE DEN

The Den is our youth group which would meet weekly on a Sunday evening. The Den is a space for young people to socialise, play games, explore the Bible, and pray together. During the session the young people enjoy eating pizza and have a lively discussion about different bible passages. Some highlights of the year have

included cooking sausages and roasting marshmallows on the fire pit, a rainy walk to the Wetherby Whaler for chips and a very messy mocktail master class!

It has been a privilege watching our young people continue to grow in confidence and faith. We were very proud of Thomas

and Eddie when they wrote and presented a section of the Good Friday service in 2023. Our youth have also been involved in the 6pm service and Zest.

During the interregnum we have had to pause The Den. Our young people are going over to All Saints in Ilkley on a Sunday

evening to join their youth group. However, we intend to restart the group at St John's once we have a new vicar in post. It is important that we continue to serve our young people and give them a space to explore their faith.

Sally Smith

Supporting Worship

ALTAR FLOWER GUILD

Sincere thanks to all who have provided the lovely altar flowers during the last year, helping to enhance our worship. Lent and Advent are the only periods of the Church Year when tradition dictates no flowers in church.

Thank you to the small band of flower arrangers who helped to arrange the Easter lilies and to decorate St John's for Christmas. This is not a closed shop and details of arranging times will appear in the Parish Notes and Magazine in advance. We would welcome new arrangers! This could be an opportunity to develop a new

skill and a very rewarding hobby. Help and advice is always available.

If you arrange the altar flowers please keep an eye on them. Make sure that they are topped up with water and removed when past their best, usually two weeks. You are welcome to use your own vase or one of the church vases stored in the sluice room.

St John's uses bio-degradable oasis, which, whilst not 100% compostable, is considerably better for the environment.

The new flower rota is now in the porch and we hope that many of you will sign up for a

Supporting Worship

Sunday during the year - perhaps one that has a special significance for you.

If you are unable to arrange them yourselves, speak to Jan

Alexander and a member of the church flower team will be happy to help you or to arrange them on your behalf.

Jan Alexander

Pastoral

PASTORAL SUPPORT

In 2023 we continued to send cards, on behalf of the congregation, to members of St John's who were ill, bereaved or in any kind of trouble.

We offered words of comfort, sent them our love and told them that we were remembering them in our prayers. We made pastoral telephone calls or visits and attended the funerals of those who had died whenever it was possible. We also wrote to the bereaved families expressing our sympathy.

Every year we send Christmas and Easter cards to past members of our congregation who have moved into care or

nursing homes to show that they have not been forgotten. And although we have made pastoral visits ourselves, it is our intention to get together with members of our visiting team and revive the service which tended to fall apart during the pandemic. This would be particularly important during the interregnum. Also, without a vicar, we are reliant on referrals coming from members of the congregation.

On reflection it is very encouraging to know that members of St John's do care about one another and there are many acts of kindness.

Jane Pratt & Sue Lee

PARISH MAGAZINE

Thank you to all who have been involved in producing the magazine in 2023.

Last year the magazine made an excellent profit. This is largely due to the huge savings we make by printing and collating the magazine 'in house' and to the small increase in price to £1 per copy. Thanks to Glenys Prince for her dedication to the printing of the magazine, to the three collating teams and to Charmian Thomas who looks after the distribution of the magazine. Together, they enable the magazine to make a very worthwhile contribution to St John's finances. Thank you to Amy, our administrator, who uploads the magazine onto the website each month, thus ensuring a world-wide circulation!

Reviewing the last 10 issues makes me realise how grateful I am to those of you who contribute articles on a regular basis. Advertising of church

events, PCC and MU reports all help to keep a level of communication going within the parish. Prayer Points continue and hopefully draw our thoughts to many different possibilities for prayer. New contributors are always welcome.

When copy is a bit sparse I use articles from Parish Pump News Service. We pay an annual subscription to this excellent website which gives me access to a wide range of articles on all things Church and much else. They are a church magazine editor's saviour!

Advertising raised £962 last year. The support of local businesses is vital and we offer all our advertisers our sincere thanks. PLEASE let them know where you saw their advert if you use their services.

So what for 2024?

- Contributions welcome from all. Ideas for improving the magazine are also welcome.

Communications

- Collating teams - If you would like to join one of the collating teams – 3 monthly, Thursday mornings in the Parish Room – please get in touch with Jan Alexander via the Parish Office 872433. New recruits are welcome.
- Readership—Can you help? - The readership of the magazine continues its gentle decline. Hard copies are still valued by many – not everyone finds it

easy to read the magazine on the church website. It may surprise you to learn that 54% of those who take the magazine are non-church members.

We are hugely grateful for their support of St John’s. Can you persuade a neighbour or friend to take the magazine? If so, please contact the Parish Office.

Jan Alexander (Editor)

PARISH WEBSITE

The parish website continues to be a very useful resource for the church. The Parish Notes are uploaded every week so they can be viewed by anyone, anywhere, at any time. The ‘latest’ section is also updated regularly, keeping people up to date with the latest news and events, as well as giving access to the Parish Notes, the Parish Magazine, and other useful resources. Statistics show that access to the magazine is frequent, expanding the readership base.

The website is also the first point of entry for those outside of the church. Through our online ‘Contact Us’ form we receive many enquiries from the general public—often for important life events such as funerals, baptisms and weddings.

Matthew Smith has volunteered to get on board and help with keeping the Parish Website up to date. His help is greatly appreciated and needed—thank you, Matthew!

Amy Elliott (Administrator)

ECO CHURCH GROUP

The group achieved a Silver award from the A Rocha Eco Church award scheme in September 2023. This felt like a huge milestone. The award recognises action on the climate emergency in the following areas:

- Worship and teaching: 88/110 (Gold)
- Buildings: 307/490 (Silver)
- Land: 95/145 (Silver)
- Community and Global engagement: 147/220 (Silver)
- Lifestyle: 81/160 (Silver)

The group achieved a lot in 2023. We arranged tree planting; installed a water butt and garden pots for vegetable growing; made bee and bug hotels; undertook a visit to the Recycling and Energy Recovery Centre in Leeds; organised an Eco Quiz for families and an Easter workshop. An opportunity to recycle blister packs is now operating and the communal Christmas card scheme made use of our own post box. A Christmas Jumper sale/swap

took place at the lights switch on and the idea was well received. A Walk to Church Sunday was promoted in June to try and the village is encouraged to use the churchyard as a place for contemplation, given its lovely setting. The group contributes Eco tips each month for the Parish Magazine and generally tries to raise awareness of the impact of our choices on our planet. We assisted the PCC in their review of St John's environmental policy and the goal of the Church of England to reach net zero emissions by 2030.

Another Easter workshop to include seed sowing is planned plus an Eco Quiz in April. Nearer Christmas we will encourage people to get involved with an upcycling session to create gift tags from the Christmas cards we have collected.

Working with Climate Action Menston and the Parish Council, the group is looking to re-launch the Menston Businesses Backing

Climate Action initiative that was started in 2019. Businesses sign up to take action to reduce their environmental impact. The group hopes that more people will make personal pledges during the year too as we strive to get 'gold'.

It has been a good year for the group with lots of ideas being put into action and achieving a silver award. More members are always welcome.

Catherine, Sally, Matthew, Marilyn, Jen and Jeanne-Claire

GRASS CUTTING

Unlike the year before, when much of the grass was covered by scaffolding, we had free access in 2023. However, our team has dwindled to about 5 people to whom we all owe our thanks.

As noted in last year's report, Steve applied to 'close' the churchyard. This simply means that it no longer has room for further burials. Once that happens the local authority takes over routine grass cutting - but on a 'minimum necessary' basis, which is likely to mean just 3 cuts of the grass annually. We are, however, free to supplement this level of maintenance if we wish (e.g. for a special occasion).

Our request to close the churchyard is now 'awaiting final approval from the Ministry of Justice' - but it will take a while before any change is noticeable. There might be work required to make the churchard suitable for the Council working methods and equipment.

In the meantime we need to carry on through 2024! I hope the remaining team will be prepared to continue. I give my thanks to all of them. Perhaps there are some who have not volunteered in the past for fear of a never ending responsibility. Now is your opportunity!

Roger Banister

CHURCHYARD

In its own way the weather in 2023 proved as difficult as 2022. Last year when we planned to meet it poured with rain and with the warm temperatures everything seemed to grow twice as fast. Our little team worked very hard to nurture attractive borders and I hope the weeds weren't too much in evidence.

We don't yet know exactly what the future holds with the closure of the churchyard, but while we can, we will continue to meet alternate Monday mornings trying to maintain an attractive place for the village to enjoy.

Chris & Kathy Roberts

Broader Horizons

OUTREACH

The Outreach Group comprises of three members who are joined by a PCC member on a rota basis.

Since the introduction of button voting by the congregation, the group prepares information for the magazine and PowerPoint presentations about each of the three charities in the categories of local, national and international and then attendees at church can vote for the charity of their choice. Button voting has engendered good conversations about the various charities, especially for parents and young people at The Core and The Den.

The charities with the most votes are then recipients of an amount decided by PCC at the end of the financial year, which aims to be 5% of unrestricted income. Wheatfields, Samaritans and Medecin sans Frontieres were each due to receive £1799 from our 2023 income.

Broader Horizons

However, due to confusion over which charities are being paid each year, the charities chosen to be recipients of 2024 funds have been paid instead, ie Behind Closed Doors, Shelter and Water Aid. The group has put forward proposals to PCC as to how to move forward.

The church welcomed a speaker from Samaritans to a Sunday service in June 2023 and she was interviewed by the vicar about the work of the charity. This was well received by all.

The group discussed that there is no link between voting and actual giving and the merits of possibly having a dedicated giving Sunday or specific events for fundraising were considered. The matter was put on hold due to the interregnum.

The group will continue to research further charities for the button voting in the future together with PowerPoints and magazine articles. It hopes to engage more of the congregation in the why and how of giving. The group would also welcome biblical teaching on giving and generosity.

The group spends a considerable time researching charities. We are troubled by the lack of connection between voting and giving and would welcome a review of the current arrangements. New members to the group are always welcome.

*Jan Alexander, Jane Pratt
& Marilyn Banister*

MOTHERS' UNION

Maintaining our membership with 20 members, we met once a month during the year. We had 3 meetings with a speaker and two services in church for Lent and Christmas.

Other meetings were more of a social event, and we had our summer lunch outing in June to the Caring for Life restaurant.

We had two events where a little fundraising was possible in order to support our Mothers' Union charities – a lunch in the Parish Room in May and a Strawberry Tea at a member's home in June.

At the start of this year, 19 members renewed their Mothers' Union membership, which means we can carry on as a group for the foreseeable future.

We had a programme in place until the summer break, but we are sorry now to be entering an interregnum period and losing the support of Steve, our vicar. Hopefully there will be other clergy available to meet our needs if required.

Due to our aging membership we are not able to be physically very active, but are happy to meet together in our church under the umbrella of the Mothers' Union. In our prayers we underpin the work of the Mothers' Union worldwide in the support of marriage and family life, in particular those families whose lives have met with adversity.

*Marjorie Boddy
Branch Treasurer*

MENSTON SCOUNTS

It is disappointing that since Bradford Council offered us the land we need to build a new headquarters that will be large enough for our expanding group, there is nothing to see on the ground. But there is a lot of activity in the background. The project is likely to cost in the region of a million pounds - which is a big deal!

To check that there is an appetite for all the effort and work that will be needed we arranged a meeting at the new Burley HQ and the response was very positive, so we are gearing up to recruit more volunteers who have the relevant skills and experience.

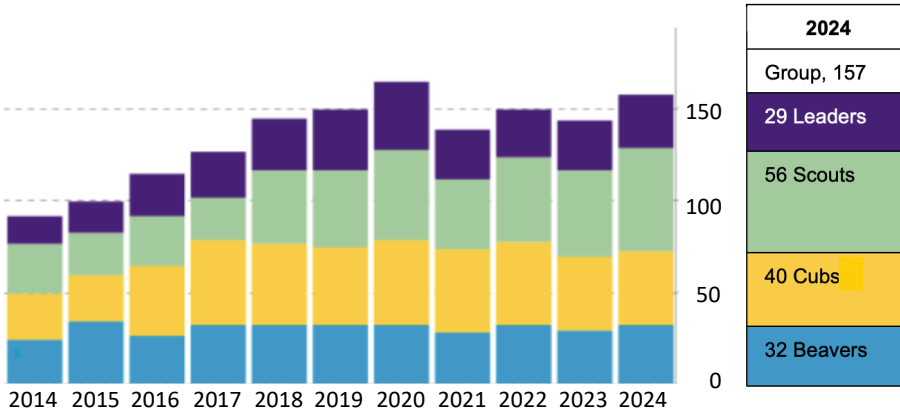
One of the obvious requirements is to organise a Fundraising Team. They have recently issued a Newsletter which can be seen by typing this: <https://bit.ly/NewsletterMar24> exactly as shown, into the browser address bar of a computer

which is connected to the internet. It should open the newsletter so you can read it. There is more news of the Group in <https://bit.ly/MenstonNewsSpring24>. Turn to page 18 using the page indicator at the very top of the page. (It starts showing 1/24, over-type it to 18/24.)

Meanwhile the normal work of the Group - passing on 'Skills for Life' to all our young people, must continue. We try not to involve the leaders in the project so they can concentrate on their 'day job'. They are obviously doing a good job as our numbers and waiting list continue to grow.

Scouting nationally organises a census on 31 January every year and the barchart on the next page shows the last few years. It clearly shows how the Covid pandemic halted our growth in 2021 but also that growth is starting to recover.

Wider Links



We could only achieve this through the sustained efforts of our leaders while they cope with extra pressure to comply with training requirements to keep our members safe. There are also major organisational changes underway which aim to make volunteering in Scouts more attractive to young adults. We owe all our volunteers huge thanks.

Finally, there has been another change in our Group - Naomi McMorn has taken over from me as Group Scout Leader. I am now Deputy GSL and wish Naomi all the best in leading our amazing Scout Group as it makes more and more of its great potential.

Roger Banister

MENSTON GUIDES

Guiding in Menston continues to thrive in the village with all units (Rainbows, Brownies and Guides) running at full capacity. We have 77 girls across the three units and an additional 44 on the waiting lists.

Girls take part in a range of activities, learning about themselves and their impact on the world, and enjoying being outdoors. We have undertaken joint trips this year as a group of girls from all Menston sections

and enjoyed sharing experiences.

Rainbows have been earning their 'Take Action' theme award and will be focusing on their Camp 1 skill builder by exploring the outdoor local area and taking part in kitchen-less cooking. Brownies have earned their performing interest badge and have also fabric painted flags to show all the things that make them unique. Their new term theme will be the Olympics as well as planning for their pack holiday. Guides worked on their 'Be well' theme award, took part in Parliament week and joined the November camp at Waddow Hall with temperatures reaching minus one! They are currently rehearsing for a pantomime and will focus on outdoor related activities as the weather improves.

We're very grateful to the volunteers who run our weekly meetings and have welcomed new faces this year. Our waiting list numbers show that Menston Guiding would benefit from an

additional Rainbows and Brownies unit but struggle for hut space and leaders so we are, as always, looking for leaders to help open new units in the village. Leading a unit is enjoyable, rewarding and unique every week! Please do get in touch if you'd like to provide girls in our village with the best experiences.

We are now also fully working with the Trustees to build a new hut and the girls have been sharing their ideas of how they'd like this to look and to provide a foundation for the future of Guiding and Scouting in Menston which is very exciting.

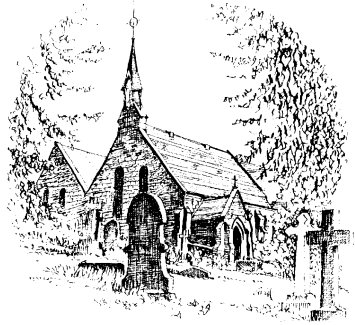
Thanks again to all our committed leaders, assistants and parents that support the Guiding organisation in Menston.

Jayne Finlay & Catrina Forsyth

I would like to help...

Name:

Contact:



- Welcoming people to services
- Reading or prayers
- Crafts
- Visiting people or Home Communion
- Small Group leading
- Practical—gardening, cleaning etc.
- Serving coffee, tea and snacks
- Office administration, website, social media

Please return completed slips to the Parish Office



