

Saint Mary's Newsletter: February

Vicar: David Smithson 027 4213200 Fridays

07 8492761 Afterhours

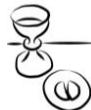
Lay Minister: Charles Clark 021 02691764

Peoples Warden: Sally-Ann Riddell 022 107562

Vicars Warden: John Heaton 021 702871



SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY



Sunday 1st:

10am Candlemas Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Helen

Readings: Charles

Intercessions: Helen

Sunday 8th:

10am Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Kate

Readings: Charles

Intercessions: Charles

Sunday 15th:

10am Holy Communion Service

Refreshments: Karen

Readings: Charles

Intercessions: Karen

Sunday 22nd:

10am Lent 1: Holy Communion service

Refreshments: Kay

Readings: Charles

Intercessions: Kay

TESDOS



Refreshment Roster: Please see the roster on the table near the church entrance, and fill in the spaces / dates that you can provide after service morning tea. Being on the Refreshment roster does not mean you need to be on the intercession part if you are not comfortable with that 😊



Don't forget St Mary's Gordonton is on Facebook: info, thoughts, & updates. Like it!

Parish Giving

Please consider giving to the parish via Automatic Payment. St Mary's has to pay for our Vicar and all other costs of running a Parish, as well as giving a proportion to the Diocese. Please help us to be sustainable by giving via Automatic Payment. It is an easy way to give and is useful for the parish in running its budget. The Parish Bank Account is:

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Lent: Weds 18th Feb marks the beginning of Lent





In [Romans 12:12](#), the apostle Paul urges believers to “be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.” This verse is part of Paul’s instructions on living together in loving fellowship as members of Christ’s body. Knowing that their faith would be tested through persecution, hardship, and internal conflict, Paul encourages the believers in Rome to remain steadfast in three spiritual disciplines: joyfulness in hope, patience in affliction, and faithfulness in prayer.

Concerning prayer, Paul used the Greek term *proskarterouentes* in [Romans 12:12](#), which is translated into English as “be faithful” (NIV), “be constant” (ESV), “keep on” (NLT), or “be persistent in” (CSB). This verb conveys the idea of devoted perseverance, continued determination, and active pressing forward.

To be faithful in prayer means to consistently and persistently engage in prayer, regardless of situations or feelings. It is the commitment to maintain a prayerful life, not just during moments of crisis or need, but as a regular, ongoing practice. Jesus told His disciples they should “always pray and never give up” ([Luke 18:1](#)). Faithfulness in prayer involves dependability, devotion, and persistence, even when answers seem delayed or life becomes challenging.

We don't just pray once and then throw in the towel. We "pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus" for us (1 Thessalonians 5:17–18, ESV). We can conceive of praying without ceasing as always having an ongoing conversation with God, knowing He is always with us.

True prayer is simply spending time in the presence of God, getting to know Him. We talk to God honestly and openly about everything, and we listen for His answer (Philippians 4:6–7). Moses prayed to the Lord, “If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you” (Exodus 33:13). Moses was faithful in prayer because he desired to please God and know Him intimately.

Others in the Bible, such as Daniel, David, and Jesus Himself, exemplified faithfulness in prayer. Daniel prayed three times a day despite significant opposition ([Daniel 6:10](#)). David prayed “evening, morning and noon” ([Psalm 55:17](#)). Jesus often withdrew to pray, even when busy or tired ([Mark 1:35](#); [Luke 5:16](#)). These examples inspire us to make prayer a priority, no matter what the situation.

As we develop our relationship with God through faithful prayer, we demonstrate our trust and dependence on Him and His promises. We build confidence in prayer when we pray according to His will, believing that He hears us and will answer (1 John 5:14-15; Psalm 34:17).

Prayer is not just a spiritual exercise or a rote repetition of words; it is our lifeline to God. Faithfulness in prayer is about seeking God and getting to know Him through His Word. It's about tapping into His character and holiness and letting His Spirit enable us to continue serving and loving others, even in the most challenging conditions (Psalm 119:11; Matthew 4:4; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Qualities associated with being faithful in prayer include the following:

Consistency: Setting aside regular times for prayer as part of our daily routine will build the habit of **faithfulness**. We make it a priority to carve out time for God in our busy lives, for He is our highest priority and most profound need (see Psalm 63:1; Matthew 6:33; Luke 10:38-42).

Perseverance: We continue to pray even when faced with discouragement, unanswered prayers, or spiritual dryness (see [Luke 18:1-8](#); [21:36](#); [Ephesians 6:18](#); [Colossians 4:2](#)).

Sincerity: Since God already knows our hearts, we understand that we can speak honestly with Him in prayer, sharing our joys, struggles, hopes, and fears (Psalm 44:21; 139:1-4). We can ask questions, utter doubts, and ask for God's help in prayer (Psalm 139:23-24; Romans 8:26-27; Hebrews 4:14-16).

Gratitude: Faithfulness in prayer includes thankfulness, recognizing God's work in all circumstances (Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).

To be faithful in prayer means integrating it into our everyday lives, having natural conversations with Him throughout the day. It means turning to God in all things—the joyful, the difficult, and the mundane—and trusting in His presence and response. We remain committed, persistent, and sincere, knowing that, without the constant discipline of prayer, we would be powerless to maintain our spiritual zeal and love for fellow believers, especially in times of affliction.

Lent is a period of fasting, moderation, and self-denial traditionally observed by Anglicans and Catholics. It begins with Ash Wednesday and ends with Easter Sunday. The length of the Lenten fast was established in the 4th century as 46 days (40 days, not counting Sundays). During Lent, participants eat sparingly or give up a particular food or habit. It's not uncommon for people to give up smoking during Lent, or to swear off watching television or eating candy or telling lies. It's six weeks of self-discipline. Lent began as a way for us to remind ourselves of the value of repentance. The austerity of the Lenten season was seen as similar to how people in the Old Testament fasted and repented in sackcloth and ashes (Esther 4:1-3; Jeremiah 6:26; Daniel 9:3). However, over the centuries Lenten observances have developed a much more "sacramental" value. Many Catholics believe that giving something up for Lent is a way to attain God's blessing. But the Bible teaches that grace cannot be earned; grace is "*the gift of righteousness*" (Romans 5:17). Also, Jesus taught that fasting should be done discreetly: "*When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen*" (Matthew 6:16-18). Jesus' command to "wash your face" seems to conflict with the practice of rubbing ashes on one's face on Ash Wednesday.

Fasting can be a good thing, and God is pleased when we repent of sinful habits. There's absolutely nothing wrong with setting aside some time to focus on Jesus' death and resurrection. However, repenting of sin is something we should be doing every day of the year, not just for the 46 days of Lent.

If a Christian wishes to observe Lent, they are free to do so. The key is to focus on repenting of sin and consecrating oneself to God. Lent should not be a time of boasting of one's sacrifice or trying to earn God's favour or increasing His love. God's love for us could not be any greater than it already is.

