



# BENEFICE BULLETIN

*Church News for*

*Bedale, Burrill, Leeming and Thornton Watlass*

**3rd May 2026**

## The Fifth Sunday of Easter

### Service Times and Venues

*Daily Morning and Evening Prayer conference calls at 8:30am and 4:00pm  
Thursdays 10:30am BCP communion at St Gregory's*

	<i>Morning Services - St Gregory's, Bedale</i>	<i>Morning Services - St Mary's, St John's and Burrill</i>	<i>16:00—Evensong conference call</i>
<b>3rd May</b>	8:00am St Gregory's #	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	Bedale
	9:15am St Gregory's #F	11am St John's, Leeming #	
<b>10th May</b>	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	Burrill
<b>17th May</b>	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	Thornton Watlass
		11am St John's, Leeming #	

# Communion F Facebook

Conference Call Tel 03330110945 and enter when prompted Room No.66307496# PIN 9498

### APCM Announcements

St John's, Leeming - Sunday 3rd May at 12 noon in the church

### Christian Aid Week from 10th May



We have 1,200 envelopes just to deliver. Any volunteers to help spread the load would be very welcome.

Contact John Critchlow on 07746 970420.

### PRAYERS

#### OUR PRAYERS ARE ASKED FOR

Bel Newman, Mark Newman, Delma Bode, Olive Robinson, Justin, Alison, Dan, John, Rachel Oysten, Doris Pearson, Mal Rowland, Bailey Cuthbert, Claire Bell, Christina, Elizabeth, and Christine.

**We continue to pray for our local schools and care homes.**

### RIP

Neville Webster, Malcolm Williamson, John Hignet, Lorna Tennet, Chris Gilbertson, Carol Grayson, Rachel Parkinson, and Marion Hutchinson.

*May they rest in peace and rise in glory*

## Praying for Edwin in Bolivia

*God, we thank you for the gift of knowledge. We praise you that you provide us with brains to think and question the world around us. We pray that you would help Edwin learn well and flourish. May he discover his unique talents and giftings. Give him a passion for the world around him. Amen.*

### READINGS

#### Collect

**Almighty God, who through your only–begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ our risen Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

#### First Reading - Acts 7.55–end

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’ But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he died.

#### Second Reading - 1 Peter 2. 2–10

Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

‘See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’ To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner’, and ‘A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.’ They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

### Gospel Reading - John 14.1–14

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.'

### Post Communion Prayer

**Eternal God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: grant us to walk in his way, to rejoice in his truth, and to share his risen life; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.**

## COMMENTARY

The key readings deal with the life of faith 'post-Jesus' and how disciples relate to God through the Christ who is in glory.

### Acts 7.55-60

This passage is the end of a relatively long story about Stephen, telling of his martyrdom. There is a deliberate likeness between the death of Jesus as Luke tells it in his Gospel and the death of Stephen in Acts, so Stephen's death becomes an 'example' not just of martyrdom but of how the disciple's life is modelled on Christ in other ways as well. Stephen is rejected as Jesus was, he is described as full of the Holy Spirit, he refers to the vision of the Son of Man and the two phrases he utters in death (v. 59) echo both of those which Luke attributes to Jesus on the cross.

Stephen's trial is also difficult to interpret, as is Jesus', in terms of judicial process or mob rule. The vision Stephen sees (v. 55) is a revealing or unveiling of heaven. He does not see God, but God's glory - which is the privilege of other prophets also. However, the crucial Christian claim of the vision is that Jesus who was crucified is now at the right hand of God and so vindicated. The vision of Jesus is also a way of vindicating Stephen's previous re-interpretation of Israel's history (Acts 7.2-53). The vision of Jesus 'standing' may indicate that he is ready to welcome Stephen, or that he is 'confessing' Stephen before God as Stephen has confessed him before the council. Stephen's calm contrasts strongly with the crowd's rage, heightening the drama of the scene. Almost in passing, mention is made of Saul (v. 58), who will become Luke's key character as the book of Acts progresses. Many have speculated on the disturbing psychological effect that this act 'must' have had on Saul, but there is no hint of that in the text. He is simply a part of this event: what he will be is still to be narrated. It is easy in a culture in which Christians do not face physical persecution to forget that this text could be read very differently by those who do, indeed, face martyrdom for their faith. The martyr is resolute in the face of death and the Scriptures give an example of what is possible.

### **1 Peter 2.2-10**

In this passage the writer's thought flows from one image straight into another, and the reader follows a set of associations rather than an analytical argument. The believers are children needing milk (a positive use of that image) and then like parts of a building - living stones. The building is clearly associated (by v. 5) with the Temple and thus the train of thought leads, through clear Jewish association, to the priesthood of the Christian community (as a whole), before returning to the one stone in the building which is overwhelmingly important, representing Christ. The contrast between acceptance and rejection of Christ is strongly drawn through quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures which were clearly important to the Early Church.

### **John 14.1-14**

In John's Gospel, the discourses of Jesus following the last supper begin here, expanding on themes introduced in chapter 13. As story, they are words of comfort to disciples about to face the devastating death of Jesus. Read as teaching about Jesus, they are words of assurance and encouragement for believers facing life in the 'absence' of Jesus. Verse 6 should be read in that context, not as if it were simply applicable to 21st-century relationships between Christianity and other religions. Jesus is the disciples' route, their means of access and destination. Of the three words (way, truth and life), 'way' is the most important. It links to the notion of 'the narrow way that leads to life' in the Synoptics and to the tradition that early Christianity was known as 'The Way'. In the image of 'my Father's house', the word for 'dwelling places' or 'rooms' is directly linked to the Greek word for 'abide' used in the next chapter. The words speak of the disciples' communion with God. Jesus' coming again could refer to the resurrection, or to the second coming, or to the believer's death, and perhaps it is wise to hold these meanings together, since John does not separate them out. It is stressed (v. 9) that the disciples' relationship with Jesus is the basis for their relationship with his Father, as it has been throughout the Gospel. From verse 12 the theme shifts to the disciples' activity in the world, after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. They will do 'greater' works because Jesus' work will be complete; perhaps also because what the disciples will do will spread throughout the world.