

St. George's Montezbury

Magazine 50p



January 2024

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St George's Church in conjunction with Holy Trinity Minsterley has employed Emma Stevenson as its **new administrator**.

Emma, who will work Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, will be the first point of contact for all administrative matters and is available on officepontstip@gmail.com

Pastoral concerns should be brought to the attention of one of the clergy.

Contributions for St. George's Magazine should be sent to the Editor by the **15th** of the **previous month**. It may not be possible to include until the following month contributions which are received after this date.

Send e-mail & attachments to stgsmagazine@googlemail.com

Items for inclusion in the **Deanery News** to be submitted by 10th of previous month to Alison Bebb - Keepers Cottage, Cruckmeole, Shrewsbury, SY5 8JN

email: alisonbebb5@gmail.com

'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' (Isaiah 9:6)

These familiar words of the prophet Isaiah were given by God in a time of equal political and economic uncertainty. The Assyrians had just conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, fulfilling Isaiah's warnings to the people, who had turned their back on God and his ways. However, Isaiah also brings a word of hope, ***'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light'*** (2). For Isaiah, it felt as if the future had already arrived! However, after 700 years the promised child was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. For us, facing a New Year, He continues to be an answer to both our needs and questions:

As we prepare for Christmas and the New Year, we are all too aware of the uncertainties which we face next year. Wars and climate change on the international stage, but also in terms of our own private lives - our finances, jobs, and economic prospects for 2024. We can often wonder: *what shall I do?; who can help me?; who cares for me? and what do I say?*

Wonderful Counsellor: He will give us the wisdom we need, when we have difficult decisions to make at work or home, or in dealing with future.

Mighty God: He will provide the help and strength for us to face the difficult diagnosis, family crisis or relationships breakdown.

Everlasting Father: He cares for us as a father cares for his children, so we can come to Him when we feel alone or we are really struggling, knowing that He will hear and help us.

Prince of Peace: He has secured peace by His cross and resurrection, and so we can find in Him true acceptance, forgiveness and peace for our lives, relationships and future.

Therefore at the start of 2024, may 'our joy be increased', as it was intended for the people in Isaiah's day. Whatever the mess and mistakes we have made over the past year, God can deal with them.

With Him, both our present and our future are secure.

May we wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas and a good start to 2024.

*From Anne Coomes and the Parish Pump Team,
who offer many of the articles used in our Church magazine.*



LIFTING UP OUR EYES *With Greg Smith*

Hereford Diocese has designated 2024 as The Year of Faith. It is tempting, I appreciate, to ask whether the Diocese thinks last year was the Year without Faith. But let us put cynicism aside. It is also tempting, I have no doubt, to assert that you already have faith thank you very much. But that is to think of faith as a lifeless object that we bury in the ground, ready to produce when we come face to face with our Maker.

However, Faith is less a noun, and much more a verb, a doing word. You can believe a chair is real, trust that it will support your weight, commend it to others as an impressive piece of furniture, but it's only when you sit in it that you are showing your faith in it. Faith is a living thing that is only alive if it is growing. And it only grows if we use it. We are generously providing three opportunities to use and/or grow your faith in the early days of 2024.

On 13th January, the Bishop of Hereford is visiting St George's from 9.30-1 p.m. to speak about how we may have confidence in the Word of God. St George's has the great privilege of hosting the launch event for the Diocese's Year of Faith and everyone is warmly invited to attend. It is a ticketed event and tickets, which are free, are available via <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/bishops-teaching-event-growing-confidence-in-the-word-of-god-pontesbury-tickets-768335410897>

On Monday 10th January at 7 p.m., we are launching The Bible Course, an 8 week course produced by The Bible Society, designed to help you understand how the different books of the Bible fit together and explore key themes. No prior knowledge is necessary, but everyone is guaranteed to learn something. Allen and Margaret Marsden have very kindly offered to host the course on a fortnightly basis. Anyone is welcome to attend, but please speak to them or one of the clergy so that we know to expect you.

Finally, Lent will soon be upon us (the start coinciding with Valentine's Day this year). I would like to encourage everyone to consider a carbon fast

during Lent. You can find out more of what this entails by visiting <https://www.climatestewards.org/resources/carbon-fast/>

This may all sound like quite hard work. However, St Paul encourages us to “Fight the good Fight” (1 Timothy 6:12). This suggests that our faith won’t grow much while we are sitting back in our armchairs, but rather we should exercise it like a muscle. I can’t think of a better prayer for me or you for 2024 than for our faith to grow.

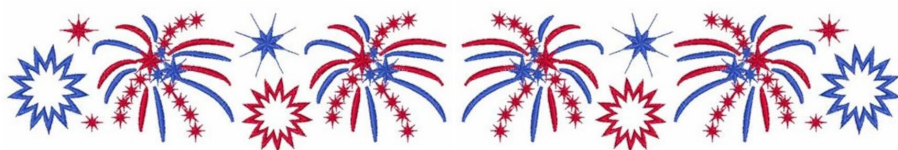
Yours in Him
Greg



Readings and Services for this MONTH

Here are the Sunday Service details, and the readings which you may enjoy at home if you are unable to join a church service this month.

Date	Service	Readings
2 nd January Tuesday	Tea Service 2.30pm	
7 th January The Baptism of Christ	Holy Communion 10.30am Confirmation Service	Acts 19.1-7 John 3 16-21
14 th January 2 nd Sunday of Epiphany	Morning Prayer 10.30am	1 Samuel 3 1-10 Psalm 139 1-5,12-18 John 1 43-end
21 st January 3 rd Sunday of Epiphany	Holy Communion 10.30am	Genesis 14 17-20 Revelation 19 6-10 John 2 1-11
28 th January 4 th Sunday of Epiphany or, The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)	Holy Communion 10.30am Group service at St.George`s	Ecclesiasticus 47 2-11 Psalm 18 31-36,50-end Mark 6 14-29



Our local and church COMMUNITY

Farewell to Revd Pam Bickley

Stiperstones and Pontesbury benefices bid a very fond farewell to Revd Pam Bickley who retires from active ministry on Dec 31st.

Pam has served our churches so faithfully and so well for many years. Her kindness, compassion and attention to detail have been widely appreciated. Her sensitivity has been a tremendous blessing to many a baptism family, wedding couple and families who have experienced bereavement. Her wisdom and mischievous sense of humour has also endeared her to so many.

Pam is not moving away, so we look forward to seeing her around, but wish her every blessing as she hangs up her stole.

Christmas tree festival



A big thank you for the 64 amazing Christmas trees and cribs which adorned St George's Church Pontesbury on the 8th, 9th and 10th of December 2023. We would like to thank everyone who decorated a tree and crib in the church. All the helpers and public for coming and supporting us and Severn Hospice.

The people's choice award was won by Pontesbury C of E Primary school, for their tree made of books.

Next year's theme is *Reduce, Recycle and Reuse*.

Provisional dates are : 6th, 7th and 8th December 2024

Marianne and Holly McCall

Repair Café

The next Repair Café will be held in St George's on Saturday 20th January, from 10 until 12 noon. Do arrive in good time to give the repairers time to fix your item.

Year of Faith Hereford Diocese has designated 2024 as the Year of Faith, and the launch event rather than be hosted by the Cathedral is going to be hosted by St George's on Saturday January 13th from 9.30-1 p.m. The Bishop is going to address the half-day conference. Given that this is a great privilege, it is incumbent on us to ensure a good turnout. Please do sign up if you possibly can. You can book tickets (free of charge) via the following link: [Bishop's Teaching Event - Growing confidence in the word of God @Pontesbury Tickets, Sat 13 Jan 2024 at 09:30 | Eventbrite](#)

You can also turn up on the day, but if too many people do that, it makes planning quite difficult.

***OASIS** FREE lunch & companionship for anyone living in Pontesbury, Minsterley and surrounding villages, who has been recently bereaved...
...on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays every month, 12pm - 1.30pm
Minsterley Methodist Chapel, Horsebridge Rd, Minsterley.
Transport is Available—Friends & Family are Welcome too.*

Contact Heather Ryder for more information, at
ryder928@btinternet.com or 01743 790359

***St. George's PARISH VISITORS** Would you, or someone you know, appreciate some help or a phone call? Maybe you're feeling lonely, isolated, in need of support and friendship?
St. George's Church has a team of friendly people who would love to **phone** or **visit** you - **if we can help, we will !***

*Call in confidence: Phone **Marion Elliott 01743 792256***

Windows

A wife texted her husband on a cold winter morning:
"Windows frozen."

Her husband texted back: "Pour some lukewarm water over it."

Five minutes later the wife texted back: "Computer's completely not working now."





Trustee Vacancies

The Pontesbury Project provides 24 hour care for 17 people who are in need of support. They live in houses owned by the Project but which are their homes. These homes are scattered through Pontesbury and Minsterley.

The Project has always been Christian led. Dr Ian Bradley and his wife Beryl had the vision. A vision brought to fruition with the assistance of people from different local churches.

We want to remain Christian led and are now looking for volunteers to join the current Trustees. The Project provides homes and care to those in need of support in Shropshire, thus enabling them to stay local to their families and friends and giving the reassurance of excellent, local care to their relatives.

Do you think you might be interested in joining us?

If so, please take a look at the Pontesbury Project website which you can access via any search engine. If you would like to chat informally please contact me, Jane, or Philip:

jane.cooke@pontesburyproject.com

or philip.bradley@pontesburyproject.com

Jane Cooke
Philip Bradley

Chair of Pontesbury Project - Special Needs
Chair of Pontesbury Project - Housing

QUOTE: The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved. loved for ourselves. or rather. in spite of ourselves.

- Victor Hugo



**St George's Church
Pontesbury**

Plough Service



**28 Jan 2024
7pm**

**Praying for blessings on our farming
community in the coming year.**

Service followed by light supper

A Retreat in Daily Life

A week to walk more closely with God through accompanied prayer

25th February – 2nd March 2024

At the start of this year of prayer, Bishop Richard said that as a parish priest, accompanied prayer was the most life changing part of his ministry -it drew people closer to God more than anything else that he did. We are very blessed that a team of prayer guides will be coming to the deanery and offering a service of accompanying individuals in prayer for 5 days. Do sign up, this opportunity does not often happen.

Taster Evening: Wednesday 10th January 7.00- 9.00pm at St George's Church, Pontesbury

An opportunity to learn more about the week, get an idea about how it works and talk to some of the team holding the week.

Programme

The week starts with a 90-minute Introduction from 4pm on Sunday 25th February at St George's Church, Pontesbury. You commit to praying for 30 minutes each day and then meeting with a prayer companion for up to 30 minutes, for five days, Monday 26th February to Friday 1st March. It finishes with a breakfast feedback on Saturday 2nd March at 9am at St George's Church, Pontesbury. There is a charge of £25 to pay for the expenses of the guides, a grant is available if you cannot afford this.

The companion's role is to listen and suggest ways of praying that are creative and life giving. Companions do not direct, but affirm and encourage, seeking to recognise the movements/nudges of the Holy Spirit. This pattern of prayer and reflection can be deeply rewarding, giving attention to God and seeking a deeper experience of God's presence.

Some comments from those who have taken part in previous Retreats in Daily Life:

"It really helped me to pray in a way that felt real."

"Life is very busy and I wasn't sure about committing so much time to the Week. It's the best thing I've done in a long time - listening to myself, to God and slowing down I intend to make some changes!"

"I think I always prayed in my head and have never thought feelings to be that important – probably not a good idea to feel too much! After this Week's experience I see that both heart and head are important and something is changing."

"I have found the idea of 'listening to what God is saying to me' rather difficult. God must have given me my life for a purpose and I have wanted to discover what that is while I am still able to fulfil it! I found it surprisingly easy to express myself to an attentive, uncritical listener. I feel, at the end of the week, more at ease with myself and more accepting of the person I really am."

What is it?

Prayer is so much more than the few ways we might pray in church. Too often we think of prayer as talking to God, and miss out on the prayer of listening for God.

A Week of Accompanied Prayer is an opportunity to explore and to grow through having a go at ways of listening for God in prayer.

The nudges of God can be better noticed and responded to by giving particular attention to the experience of prayer, and sharing with an experienced prayer companion or guide.

Many who have participated in Weeks of Accompanied Prayer speak of great richness in their praying as a result.

"I feel that I have been a dead branch that has been grafted back onto the trunk of the vine. The sap of Jesus' power can start to seep into me to produce in me from within the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace,"

Who is running this?

Pontesbury Deanery are hosting this. Companions will meet with those who are praying in St George's Church, Pontesbury and St Thomas Church, Hanwood.

The team of prayer companions are trained and supervised by the Hereford Diocese.

Who can participate?

NO EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY. Anyone can participate, Christian or not, praying or not. All you need is a desire to grow closer to God.

What does it cost?

There is a charge of £25 towards costs but please ask about help with this if you need to.

For more information or if you'd like to talk it over please speak to
Revd Greg Smith, Revd Graham Phillips, or Mrs Mary Worrall.

To participate, please complete this form and return it by 17th January 2024
with a cheque for £25 made payable to 'St George's PCC' to:

Revd Greg Smith
The Deanery
Main Road
Pontesbury
Shrewsbury
SY5 0PS

Name:

Address:

Phone No:

Email address:

I would like to participate in the Retreat in Daily Life Sunday 25th February to Saturday 2nd March 2024 in Pontesbury Deanery.

I am available to meet with a prayer guide (please indicate when)

Afternoons

Evenings

(Please note there are no meetings between 5pm and 7pm)



THE REA VALLEY FOODBANK TEAM WISHES YOU ALL A HAPPY AND HEALTHY 2024

**As we continue to extend the work of the Foodbank,
we welcome new VOLUNTEERS.**

If you would like to know more about volunteering then please contact:

Jon Newson 07973 209856 or email him at jpnewson@daimon-bs.co.uk

The Rea Valley Foodbank supports anyone unable to meet their food bills and will provide a weekly parcel of food and other essential household goods until financial circumstances improve. You need a referral to ensure that your parcel meets your needs, but it's really easy, just call

Greg 07902 794653

or Richard 07922 830488

Alternatively, GPs and schools are able to make referrals

DONATION APPEAL

As with every other Foodbank in the country, donations are getting less and less, as everyone is affected by the high cost of food and energy. We desperately need in-date tinned and packet foodstuff, toiletries, cleaning products, pet food and nappies. If you are able to donate and can help us to help others in our community please drop off at the following venues.

Pontesbury Co-op – we are really grateful to both the Co-op and people who donate there. All donations which go into the Co-op bin are solely for our local Rea Valley Foodbank.

Hope and Worthen– we began our Community Aid Appeal this year in both Hope and Worthen village halls and it was well supported so we are continuing with the appeal into 2024. These are the darker months when many clients struggle so your support not only feeds the households that need assistance but it also sends a message that we care as a community. Members of our team will be there to receive donations on the following dates:

Hope Village Hall, 10 January 12.00 – 2.00pm

Worthen Village Hall, 17 January 8.30 – 11.00am

For more information please email support@reavalleyfoodbank.co.uk

*Thoughts from Sarah, Dean of Hereford*

Dear Friends,

I'm wondering if like me you might be looking forward with some trepidation to what the New Year might bring. After all, it seems that many of the things we took for granted might be rather less secure than we thought. That realisation can be ground-shakingly alarming, or it can make us count our blessings and realise what we have.

My mother has advanced dementia, and my father is creaking from every painful joint and needs oxygen if he exerts himself. It occurs to me, as I watch them struggle- and many dear church members in similar wise- how little gratitude I have felt for the ability simply to jump in the car and go to the supermarket or take a quick walk into town entirely free from pain. I have never really thought to be thankful for this.

We humans are a grumbly glorious bunch who spend a lot of time and energy wanting what we don't have and forgetting to be actively grateful for what we do have. Not one of us will keep all the possessions that we have now or all the people that we love now or the health, hair or dress-size that we have now!

Here is my New Year's Resolution. I intend to stop as often as I can (which will not be often enough!) and ask myself what I have that I would miss dreadfully were it to be taken away. I cannot think of a better way of focusing on what I am deeply thankful for;

A body that still functions without much fuss.

A roof over my head and a job that pays the bills.

A pesky cat who walks all over my laptop activates factory reset and inserts random strings of characters into my emails but who loves me devotedly.

My husband, parents, and children.

Faith in Jesus Christ and the purpose He gives me.

The people with whom I live out that purpose.

None of these can be taken for granted. Ask a Ukrainian or a resident of Gaza or someone diagnosed with a terminal illness. So, as you look into the New Year, why not make gratitude your resolution and give thanks to God from whom all blessings flow?

New Year Prayer for 2024 by Daphne Kitching Lord,

We stand on the threshold of a new year. Some of us are excited, some of us are fearful. We don't know what 2024 will bring, but we know that there will be ups and downs, joy and sadness mixed in with the months.

As we step into this New Year, help us to keep our eyes fixed on you; to know for certain that, whatever happens, you will be in it with us, not watching from the sidelines, but right in the middle of it with us. Help us to put our trust in what Jesus did on the cross, maybe for the first time, maybe as a New Year re-commitment, so that we will *know* that nothing can separate us from you.

Let the storm rage, let the sun shine – we are safe!

In the name of the risen, living Lord Jesus.

Amen.

A few QUOTES as we consider 2024 stretching ahead :

- ♦ When you flee from temptation, be sure not to leave
a forwarding address. – *Anon*
- ♦ Lose an hour in the morning, and you will spend all day
looking for it. – *Richard Whately*
- ♦ Christians may not see eye to eye.
but they can walk arm in arm. – *Anon*
- ♦ You are today where your thoughts have brought you:
you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you. – *James Allen*

Looking at GOD



Canon Paul Hardingham begins a new series which will run for many months:

What's the Big Idea?

An Introduction to the Books of the Bible: Genesis

This is the first of a new series aimed at providing an overview of the Bible. This month we consider the first book, Genesis.

As the title suggests, Genesis is primarily about beginnings. In chapters 1-11, it records the creation of the heavens and the earth and human beings; marriage and family; sin's effect on society and the world. The following chapters record God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and their families. In this story of the Patriarchs we see God establishing a people called to bless the world, as He blesses them.

The book of Genesis is key to understanding the whole Bible. It is supremely about relationships; the relationships between God and the created order, God and human beings, and between human beings themselves. Fundamentally man has been created in the image of God, so that he can relate to God in a personal way: *'God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them'* (1:27). However, Genesis plots how this relationship was broken by sin, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, resulting in the fall of human beings and the created order. By creating people with free will, God risked the possibility that they might reject Him. This is inherent in His love for human beings.

In Genesis, God enters into covenants with the world (the rainbow following the flood) and with Abraham and his descendants (circumcision), pledging His love and faithfulness to them and calling them to respond to Him in faith. It reminds us that God is fundamental to living. Without a sense of the centrality of God's place in our lives, we can never get our lives right.

This year much of the C of E Lectionary will focus on Mark. So here is a short introduction to this much loved gospel....

The Godspell about Jesus

Mark is the shortest of the Gospels, and most likely the first to be written (about 65 – 70AD). It is certainly the most action-packed!

The gospel of Mark was written by John Mark, whose name occurs often in Acts. His mother lived in a house in Jerusalem, where Jesus' followers met in the early days of the church there (Acts 12:12). John Mark was cousin to Barnabas, Paul's travelling companion.

John Mark had set off with Paul on the first great missionary tour, but then disgraced himself by going home – not making himself popular with Paul! However, Barnabas gave John Mark a second chance, and in later years John Mark won the friendship of Paul. When Paul was in prison, John Mark stood by him (Colossians 4).

Mark's gospel was written not when John Mark was in Jerusalem, but later, when he had spent some time with Peter in Rome. Peter had come to love John Mark as his own son. (1 Peter 5:13), and there is a strong early tradition that John Mark set down Jesus' story as he had heard it directly from the apostle Peter.

For example, Papias, writing about AD140, said: "Mark, who was the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he remembered, whether of sayings or doings of Christ, but not in order. For he was neither a hearer nor companion of the Lord."

Some years later Irenaeus wrote that Mark's gospel was written "when Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel in Rome and founding the church there." After their deaths, "Mark, Peter's disciple, has himself delivered to us in writing the substance of Peter's preaching."

John Mark wrote his gospel with extraordinary vividness. And he obviously knew he would have non-Jewish readers because he often explains Jewish customs.

The Gospel begins with a bang: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God..." No beating about the bush – here is the purpose and the message right from the opening verse.

The word 'gospel' in Greek is *evangelion* – good news (hence the term evangelist). So where does the actual word 'gospel' come from? The Anglo-Saxons first thought it up, using the term 'Godspell', a word that may mean 'good news' or 'news about God'. It was an apt way to refer to the new faith when it reached them. (Hence 'Godspell' as the name of the West End musical about the life of Jesus.)

Mark opens the action not with the birth of Jesus, but rather with His baptism by John. Then the action moves swiftly towards the crisis of the cross and resurrection. Within this framework, the material tends to be not in chronological order, but rather grouped by subject. The book bustles with action and details. It gives far more detail than Matthew's in the accounts of what Jesus did, but deals more briefly with Jesus' teaching.



Mark does not have much that is all his own – in fact - only four paragraphs in all! This is because both Matthew and Luke borrowed heavily from him when they came to write their gospels. And yet we still have something unique in Mark: moving pictures of Jesus in action, convincing us by what He does that His claim to be the Son of God was true. There are fewer stories in Mark than in the other gospels, but these stories are longer, and the detail in them hints of Peter's remembered eye-witness accounts.

As a New Year begins, some lines from a poet of long ago ...

Turn your love

*... Turn your love to Him, who in His love
Upon a cross, our souls to save today,
First died, then rose, and sits in heaven above;
And now will fail no-one, I dare to say,
That will His holy heart upon Him lay!
And since He best to love is, and most meek,
Why should we feigned love go to seek?*

By Geoffrey Chaucer (1343 – 1400)

Lester Amann considers the future...

Looking ahead

January is named after the Roman god Janus. He had two faces, so he could study the past and see into the future.

At the start of a new year, we dispose of old calendars and diaries. No doubt, it is only natural to look back at the former year. Perhaps we recall occasions of happy times that include special moments with dear friends. On the other hand, our old year may have had disappointments, such as loss of employment or deterioration of health.



We might also reminisce at the life of our church. We remember our building regularly filled for our services. There were many joyous occasions in which we were encouraged and supported. However, over time, things have changed. We may now have a dwindling congregation, with its regular members elderly and less active.

However, these pondering are not meant to make us depressed! We can look back with thankfulness that God has been with us. Also, we can look to the future, praying that God will give us wisdom, strength and guidance for our journey ahead.

The Bible is full of instances where individuals and indeed the Jewish nation looked back. They had annual Feast Days, through which God showed them His grace and favour. These festivals were important because they had a dual purpose – to look back and face forward. The Passover looked back to the Israelites deliverance from slavery in Egypt. This meal was a reminder that just as God had cared for them in the past, He would be with them in the future.

Similarly, for us, the Communion Service is a reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus who secured our salvation. We look back to His life, death, and resurrection so that we can live with confidence that our sins are forgiven, and one day we will live in God's eternal Home.

January can be a month when remember God's blessings and faithfulness in the past, enabling us to look to the future with confidence. As we start a new year, may it be our prayer that God will enrich us wherever we are, and that we will know He is always with us.

Looking at the CHURCH UK & Worldwide

Visiting other churches

'... this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord ... (Psalm 27:4)

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is this month (18th – 25th January), so it's probably a good time to meet with other local Christians – or at least to visit one of their churches.

And when visiting other churches, it's fun to have a good nose around.

Fewer churches seem to have guides nowadays, and probably not many are open every day. But when you next visit a church, why not look beyond the building itself and its monuments which show the history of the place? Try to discover *what is going on there now*.

First, ask yourself how easy it is to find out the following information:

What are the services in the church, and when are they held?

Who is who, and how do you contact people?

Are the photos and notices up to date?

Secondly, is there a church magazine? They can be the lifeblood of the church and community, keeping people in touch with each other. Also, as church magazines can be delivered door to door each month, they are an excellent way of reaching out to local non-churchy people, reminding them that they will always be welcome.

Thirdly, why not keep an eye out for any good ideas that the church has got – and pinch them for our own church? This can work the other way, too – if you see something that does NOT work, make a note of that as well.

Above all, try and 'get a feeling' for what the church is really like to attend. Would you want to belong there? Some churches, like people, feel welcoming and alive, while sadly others seem to be struggling and downright

gloomy. Whether it is 'high' or 'low' is not as important as whether it is welcoming and caring.

And what about our own church? How about inviting a non-church friend to come along and tell you their honest first impressions of our church? We might be pleasantly surprised!

Grim outlook for people in poverty in the UK

January always brings us a financial reckoning, but this year things look especially grim for many people in the UK. Recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found that one in five people in the UK are living in poverty. In real terms, that's a staggering 13.4 million people.

Some recent sobering statistics from Christians against Poverty:

56 per cent of clients had to borrow money to pay for food, clothing, or other living costs.

61 per cent of clients could not afford basic toiletries like soap, toothpaste, or sanitary items.

66 per cent of clients had fallen behind with one or more household bills.

No wonder that a recent national poll by Christians Against Poverty (CAP) found that the majority of adults (88%) think more needs to be done to tackle poverty in their area.

Lyn Weston, director of church partnerships at Christians Against Poverty, asks: "With so many in our society struggling with severe financial challenges at this time, how can we support those being overpowered by poverty without losing *our own peace of mind*? Instead of us feeling propelled and activated, sometimes the enormity of demand can leave us feeling overwhelmed, helpless and even despondent."

But she believes that "if God is calling us to respond with Him, then somehow He will provide us with the help, agency and power we need to problem solve and create change." Basic to our response, she says, is a heart of compassion, based on God's love.

Please turn to page 13 for news of our local Rea Valley FoodBank

Looking at the wider COMMUNITY

Holocaust Memorial Day 2024 - 27th January

'Fragility of Freedom' is the theme for this year's Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), as 2024 marks the 30th anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust explains that only "49 years after the Holocaust ended, 19 years after the genocide in Cambodia, the world stood by as Hutu extremists shattered the fragile freedom in Rwanda, following decades of tension and violence, culminating in the murder of over one million Tutsis in just one hundred days.

"Our world often feels fragile and vulnerable, and we cannot be complacent. Even in the UK, prejudice and the language of hatred must be challenged by us all. Together we bear witness for those who endured genocide, and we honour the survivors and all those whose lives were changed beyond recognition."

There is guidance for HMD activity organisers across the UK this year, in light of the ongoing conflict in Israel and Gaza and the impact this has had on community relations in the UK. Please go to: <https://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/>

27th January was chosen for Holocaust Memorial Day, as it marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp.



The tale of the Two Sons



JESUS OFTEN TOLD
STORIES WITH
HIDDEN MEANINGS

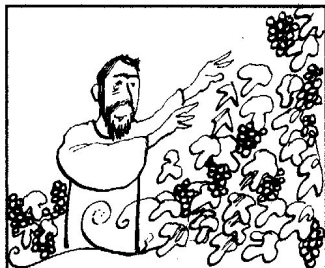


HE ONCE TOLD A STORY ABOUT A
FATHER WHO HAD TWO SONS.

THE FATHER WENT TO HIS
OLDER SON AND ASKED HIM
TO WORK IN THE VINEYARD



'NO I WON'T' SAID THE
OLDER SON...



...BUT THEN HE CHANGED HIS
MIND AND WENT AND HELPED.

THE FATHER THEN WENT TO HIS
YOUNGER SON AND ASKED HIM TO
HELP IN THE VINEYARD TOO.

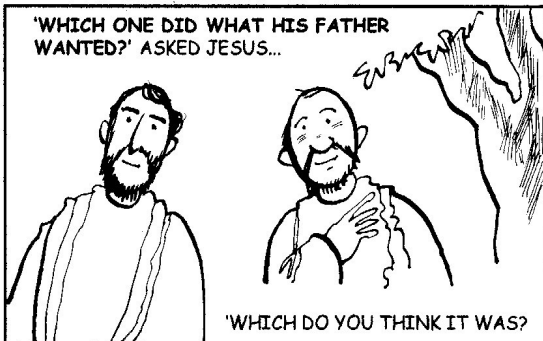


'OF COURSE I WILL!' SAID THE YOUNGER SON. BUT
HE PROMPTLY FORGOT ALL ABOUT IT....

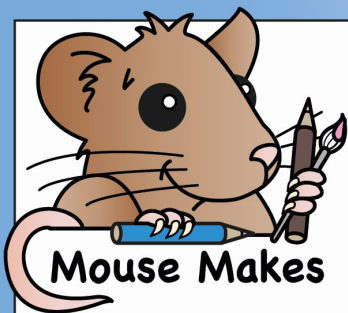
...AND DIDN'T DO A STROKE OF WORK!



'WHICH ONE DID WHAT HIS FATHER
WANTED?' ASKED JESUS...



'WHICH DO YOU THINK IT WAS?



EPIPHANY is the time in the Church year that we remember when the 'wise men' or 'Magi' followed a star that led them to the Christ child Jesus. They bowed down, worshipped him and left *three* special gifts.



Where was Jesus born?

Luke 2:1



What three gifts did the wise men give Jesus?



_____ and _____

Luke 2:11



Who was the king?

Luke 2:1

Where did the wise men come from?
the _____

Luke 2:1

How were the wise men warned not to return to Herod?
In a _____

Luke 2:12

What had the wise men seen?
a _____

Luke 2:2



Look up the Bible verses, fill in the blanks, find them in the word search then look for the words opposite.

C H I L D S T A R J D K
J E S U S W A E B O B I
E S R E J O I C E Y O N
W H A C H R I S T H R G
S E E E O S J C H U N O
Y P L A U H R U L E R L
G H I S S I T H E R O D
I E M T E P I P H A N Y
F R A N K I N C E N S E
T D R S W I S E M E N E
S M Y R R H D R E A M I

JESUS
WISEMEN
WORSHIP
SHEPHERD
KING • JEWS
CHRIST • CHILD
BORN • RULER
ISRAEL • REJOICE
JOY • HOUSE • MARY
GIFTS • EPIPHANY

How many other words can you make from the letters in EPIPHANY?



From the Dragon's Den

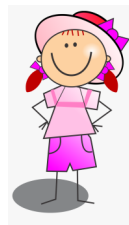
George, Uncle Sam and Idris have had a wonderful time at the Christmas Tree Festival. They love it as it is the time of year when, instead of being shut away in the Dragon basket, they sit under the Little Dragon Christmas Tree and keep an eye on everything that is going on. They love it when youngsters who were once Little Dragons visit and recognise our three friends. They feel quite famous when they hear someone declare, 'Oh, look, George, Uncle Sam and Idris'.

Now, much to their disappointment, they are back in their basket, safely out of sight in the Dragon cupboard. Still, there is the excitement of the Christmas Party to come and, hopefully, a visit from the famous man in red. George has the jingle bells at the ready.

Joy to everyone, from Val, Frank, Marion E, Marion W, Pat, Caroline
All three dragons send greetings to all readers, wishing everyone a Happy New Year.



George, Uncle Sam & Idris



Church-speak



MAGI: The most famous trio to attend a baby shower.

PEW: A medieval torture device still found in some churches.

AMEN: The only part of a prayer that everyone knows.

BULLETIN: Your receipt for attending a church service.

The Wicked Fairy at the Manger

My gift for the child:

No wife, kids, home;

No money sense. Unemployable.

Friends, yes. But the wrong sort -

The work-shy, women, wimps,

Petty infringers of the law,

Persons with notifiable diseases,

Poll tax collectors, tarts;

The bottom rung.

His end?

I think we'll make it

Public, prolonged, painful.

Right, said the baby.

That was roughly what we had in mind.



As time goes by!

*As a New Year begins, do you suspect it is time to tone down your life style?
Remember...*

King David and King Solomon
Led merry, merry lives,
With many, many lady friends
And many, many wives;
But when old age crept over them,
With many, many qualms,
King Solomon wrote the Proverbs
And King David wrote the Psalms.

By James Ball Naylor

Vestry cupboard that hid "precious" Welsh Bible

A Bible printed in 1620, one of the very first to be produced in Welsh, has been discovered by chance in a vestry cupboard in St Martin and St Enfail's Church in Merthyr, near Carmarthen.

Mari James, Library Development Officer at St David's Cathedral, described the 400-year-old Bible as "quite a treasure" and "a precious part of Wales' history of Christian worship".

A former Merthyr churchwarden, Huw Evans, found the Bible forgotten and unrecognised among candles, communion wine and linen in the back of the cupboard.



Copies of the Bible, known as the Bishop Parry version, were distributed to all churches in Wales to comply with Queen Elizabeth I's instruction that everyone should be able to read the Scriptures in their own language. This was the main Reformation project in Wales, intended to consolidate Protestantism.

The volume was based on the 1588 translation by Bishop William Morgan. The Old Testament was translated directly from the original Hebrew, and the New Testament from Greek. Some of the work was carried out in St David's.

A Welsh Book of Common Prayer, dating from 1710 in the reign of Queen Anne, was also found languishing - in the same vestry cupboard.

Great lives

Lives of all great men remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Exodus chapter 2 verses 1 to 12

In Egypt the Hebrew people flourished so
well that the new Pharaoh grew scared and
ordered all their new-born boys to be killed.

Moses' mother hid him
when he was born, but
he grew too big.



She made a basket from
reeds for him and put it in
the grass by the river Nile.



She told Moses' sister
Miriam to keep watch.



Pharaoh's daughter
found Moses



Shall I get someone to look
after the baby?



So Miriam got her mother.



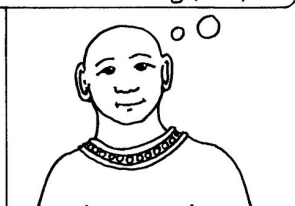
The princess adopted
Moses as her son.



When Moses was grown up
he went to see where his
people worked as slaves.



Perhaps I will be the
one to save my people.



Moses saw an Egyptian
beating a Hebrew slave.



Moses checked no-one
was looking and...



He hid the body in
the sand.



This is the WordSearch based on the BibleBite story:

o	w	n	m	m	g	r	a	s	s	b	y
r	l	s	i	p	o	x	c	l	z	a	i
d	p	i	r	l	k	t	n	a	o	s	e
e	w	h	i	o	e	p	h	v	s	k	d
r	g	d	a	u	g	h	t	e	r	e	h
e	k	y	m	r	m	r	c	s	r	t	e
d	i	e	p	s	a	n	d	a	e	m	b
o	l	b	o	t	i	o	c	v	e	o	r
f	l	o	u	r	i	s	h	e	d	s	e
i	e	d	p	s	b	a	b	y	s	e	w
l	d	y	g	r	o	w	n	q	b	s	a
r	i	v	e	r	v	n	b	u	u	a	v

sand

mother

grown

grass

save

princess

Pharaoh

flourished

reeds

Nile

Egyptian

slaves

river

son

Moses

scared

basket

killed

daughter

ordered

Miriam

body

baby

Hebrew

Your PUZZLE for January

ACROSS

1 Paul said the wrath of God 'is being revealed from heaven' against this (Romans 1:18) (11)

9 Go smite (anag.) (7) 10 'But — I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee' (Matthew 26:32) (5)

11 'Take and —; this is my body' (Matthew 26:26) (3) 13

Type (2 Thessalonians 2:10) (4)

16 'Woe to those who — iniquity' (Micah 2:1) (4)

17 'How shall we — if we ignore such a great salvation?' (Hebrews 2:3) (6)

18 Opposite of evens (4)

20 Previously cited (Latin) (4)

21 'There is surely — — of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife' (Genesis 20:11) (2,4)

22 The Thessalonians were warned to keep away from every brother who was this (2 Thessalonians 3:6) (4)

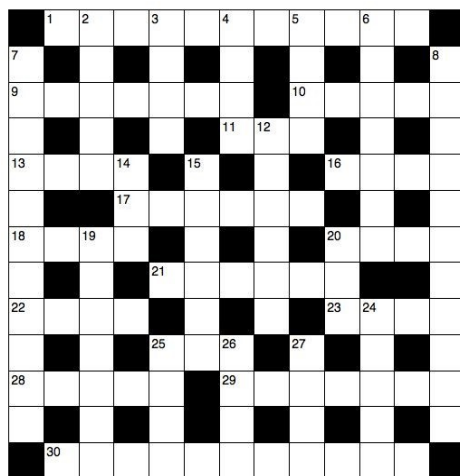
23 Beat (anag.) (4)

25 To trouble or afflict (Job 16:3) (3)

28 Part of a roof (1 Kings 7:9) (5)

29 Attain (Job 5:12) (7)

30 Insect noted for its gymnastic ability (Psalm 78:46) (11)



DOWN

2 Smell (John 11:39) (5)

3 Lion's home (Jeremiah 25:38) (4)

4 'Jesus Christ is the — yesterday and today and for ever' (Hebrews 13:8) (4)

5 Tidy (4)

6 Made their home (Genesis 47:27) (7)

7 Their task was to carry the curtains of the tabernacle (Numbers 4:25–26) (11)

8 Timothy's was called Lois (2 Timothy 1:5) (11)

12 The Lover likened the fragrance of the Beloved's breath to these (Song of Songs 7:8) (6)

14 Times Educational Supplement (1,1,1)

15 Eight-tentacled sea creatures (6)

19 'And lead us not into temptation, but — us from the evil one' (Matthew 6:13) (7)

20 D.L. Moody's legendary song leader, — D. Sankey (3)

24 Rarely used musical note (5)

25 'Your will be done on earth — it — in heaven' (Matthew 6:10) (2,2)

26 and 27 'The Lord Almighty will — them with a —, as when he struck down Midian at the rock of Oreb' (Isaiah 10:26) (4,4)

27 See 26 Down

God in the SCIENCES

Written by Dr Ruth M. Bancewicz, Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge.

A Scientist's Letter to Christians: Have power, love and self-control

It has now been four years since the pandemic began to seep into Western consciousness. Dr Francis Collins, a leader in medical research in the US, spoke early in the pandemic about his faith and his hope in God to help us through that time. He expressed the grief that so many were experiencing, and described an intensity of scientific work he had never experienced before. He also shared his conviction that he was in exactly the right place back in 2020 - serving God with science. Throughout the pandemic, he held on tight to the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 1:7, 'for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.'

Power: In 2 Timothy the apostle Paul encourages his friend to 'fan into flame the gift of God' that is in him. I am thankful that scientists like Francis used their own particular talents to understand this virus, and to help prevent or treat infection. The things they discovered are not just useful, but at times also display the beauty and wonder of God's creation.

Love: A scientist shows their love for God, for people and for the rest of creation through their work in the lab. One scientist described his experiences to me: "I study God's fingerprints in His creation to learn more of Him and the world He placed us in and to learn how we should take care of it and each other...I pray for inspiration and insight into how His creation works... and that He provides the opportunities to give the glory to Him."

Self-Control: It is largely our own and others' selfish actions that can turn one animal's friendly virus into our own species' personal nightmare. Thankfully Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection are the solution to evil. Our ultimate and certain hope is that one day all Creation will be renewed. We can also have hope that God is with us in our suffering. When we respond in positive ways to painful events, that is evidence that Jesus is alive and working in our lives.

Science will not solve all our problems, but with God's help and wisdom we can use the tools of science to serve Him and love others.

God in the ARTS

Michael Burgess continues his look at great works of Christian art. [You can see the image described by googling 'wall paintings of Pompeii'.](#)

'He gave us eyes to see them': Wall painting of Pompeii

Each month we have explored how art celebrates the wonder of our world – the seasons, the elements, animals and fish, flowers and fruit. They manifest the glory of God the creator. Irenaeus, the 2nd century theologian, went further and wrote that 'the glory of God is a living person.' He was echoing Psalm 8: 'What are human beings that you are mindful of them...you have crowned them and put all things under their feet.' Yes, the universe teaches of God the creator, but in becoming one of us, the Son of God has put human beings above all Creation.

The nobility of that vision is captured in this 1st century wall painting from Pompeii showing Neo and his wife. They lived at a time when St Paul was preaching and the gospels were being written. We don't know if those events made an impact on their lives. But we do know that St Paul was executed around AD67, and just twelve years later this couple were victims of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

Their almond-shaped eyes are like windows into their souls. We sense the beauty, but also the fragility. They tell us that life is a gift to be cherished precisely because it is so easily taken from us. Neo's intense eyes look at us, while his wife looks beyond into the distance. She has the eyes of hopes and dreams that were cruelly shattered by the volcano.

Living men and women, like this couple, are tokens of the wonder of creation, but they also tell us of the transience of that very gift of life. 'Where can we place our hope?' we ask ourselves. The feasts of All Saints and All Souls tell us that the end of life here is a door opening into a greater glory and a brighter light. There is wonder and beauty in life here, and with the eyes of faith we can look beyond to glimpse the wonder of eternity.



Courtesy of *Naples National Archaeological Museum*



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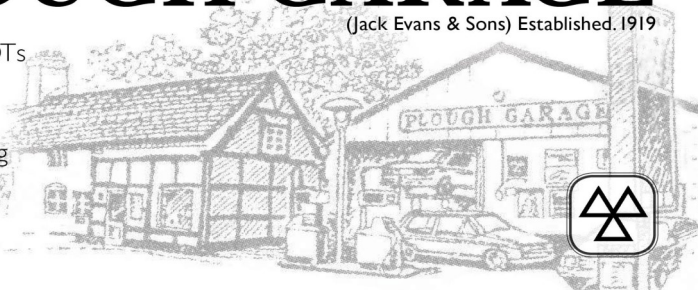
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