# St. George's Hontesbury

Magazine 50p



March 2024

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It'S OK TO BE NOT OK,
GOD MEETS YOU WHERE YOU ARE

MESSAGE SEEN OUTSIDE SHREWSBURY URC

**Contributions** for <u>St. George's Magazine</u> should be sent to the Editor by the **15**<sup>th</sup> 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 <u>Deanery News</u> to be submitted by 10<sup>th</sup> of previous month to Alison Bebb - Keepers Cottage, Cruckmeole, Shrewsbury, SY5 8JN

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# LIFTING UP OUR EYES With the Online Vicar

### Looking for the Resurrection

An old couple are driving down the motorway when the wife gets a call from their daughter. 'Mum, there's a car driving the wrong way down the motorway!' The wife warns her husband that there is a lunatic on the motorway. Her husband, clutching the wheel in terror, replies: 'One lunatic? There are dozens of them, all headed straight for us! 'What we see is determined by our perspective on life.

In the Nicene Creed we say: 'We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.' In the gospel accounts of the Resurrection, there is a lot of looking and seeing. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome went early to the tomb. They saw the stone rolled aside and inside the tomb a young man dressed in white said to them: 'Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him...He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him' (Mark 16: 6,7).

Like the women we would probably have been left 'trembling and bewildered' by what we saw that morning. Had the body been taken? Was the young man an angel or deceiver? Was Jesus raised to life again, or was this an elaborate hoax?

Easter gives us a choice. We can approach life looking for disappointment, fear and despair. Or we can look for resurrection and find not just an empty tomb, but encounter the living Christ. He continues to meet us in our daily lives bringing new hope, forgiveness of sin, healing and wholeness and the assurance of His presence through the darkest of times. God invites us to see our lives differently and look for Christ's resurrection life at work in our lives and the people around us.

### Readings and Services for this MONTH

Here are the Sunday Service details, and the readings

Date	Service	Readings	
3 <sup>rd</sup> March 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent	All Age Worship 10.30am	Exodus 11: 4-10 Exodus 12: 1-13, 21-39.	
5 <sup>th</sup> March	Tea Service 2.30pm		
10 <sup>n</sup> March 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent <b>Mothering Sunday</b>	Holy Communion 10.30am	1 Samuel 1: 20-end Psalm 127: 1-4 John 19: 25b-27	
17 <sup>th</sup> March 5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent (Passiontide begins)	Holy Communion 10.30am	Jeremiah 31 31-34 Hebrews 5 5-10 John 12 20-33	
24 <sup>th</sup> March Palm Sunday	Holy Communion 10.30am	Dramatised Passion	
28 <sup>th</sup> March <b>Maundy Thursday</b> Group service HTM	7pm	1 Corinthians 11: 23-26 John 13: 1-17, 31b-35	
29 <sup>th</sup> March Good Friday	10.15am Children`s Activities at St.George's 2.45pm Act of Witness on School Green 7pm Tenebrae at HTM		
31 <sup>st</sup> March Easter Day	Holy Communion 10.30am	Acts 10: 34-43 1Corinthians 15: 1-11 John 20: 1-18	

### Looking ahead to next month: APCM 2024

St. George's APCM (Annual Parochial Church Meeting) this year will be held on Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> April following the 10:30am Service.

All members of the Electoral Roll are invited to attend the APCM, when we appoint Church Wardens, Assistant Wardens, Sidespeople and PCC Members.

We hope you will be able to join us.

Allen Marsden, PCC secretary St. George's Pontesbury

## HOLY WEEK

### in the Pontesbury and Stiperstones Benefice

Monday March 25 <sup>th</sup>	Passover Supper	7 p.m.	St. George's
Tuesday March 26 <sup>th</sup>	The Gathering	7pm	Marton Village Hall
Wednesday March 27 <sup>th</sup>	Passion Praise	7 p.m	St. George's
Maundy Thursday March 28th	Footwashing/Holy Communion	7pm	HTMinsterley
Good Friday	Easter Activities Service of Witness Hour at the Cross Tenebrae	10.30 am 12 noon 2pm 7pm	St George's Pontesbury Shelve HT Minsterley
Holy Saturday	Easter Trail	10.30am	HT Minsterley
Easter Day	Sunrise Service Holy Communion	6.30 a.m. 9am 10.30am 10.30am 10.30am 10.30am	Pontesford Hill Snailbeach Hope Habberley Minsterley Pontesbury



## Our local and church COMMUNITY

# Could you spare some of your time to help improve children's literacy?

Pontesbury Primary School is asking for more volunteers from St. George's to listen to pupils read aloud. You would be joining our "Pray-Bake-Read" team. Each of us spends an hour or so at the school each week listening to pupils read aloud on a one-to-one basis. We PBR team members find this rewarding and a good use of our spare time because a child's reading aloud to an attentive adult is a vital part of acquiring full literacy.

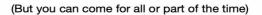
You will be given necessary training and - as you would expect - both the school and St. George's will arrange with you to obtain up-to-date DBS certification.

Please speak to me, Allen Marsden, if you are interested.



# Big Church Cleaning Day Can you help? We need you!!!

Saturday March 14th 9.30 until Noon



Please bring a duster and cleaning items which might help.

Bacon Butties and hot drinks will be served!!

Please let Mary know if you think you can come.

#### **Beetle Drive & Pancakes**

I thought last year was the noisiest Beetle Drive ever, but this was surpassed by this year's 'Beetlers'. The majority of Players managed their travels round the tables extremely well, albeit with a lot of noise and laughter. Movement was somewhat easier this year as we managed to borrow several small tables, resulting in less confusion when it came to 'clockwise' or 'anticlockwise. Thanks to Caroline and Ray for sorting out the tables and, with Marion E, set up the WER. during Tuesday mornig. .

It really was a fun evening but hearing-aid-wearers were wise if they switched off their technology! The WER echoed to the sound of glee, or frustration when the number '6' was elusive following the shake of the dice.

Many, many pancakes, provided as ever by Head Chef, Mary, were enjoyed. Thank you, Mary. You definitely make the best pancakes ever. Thanks to all who purchased raffle tickets from Marianne and also to those who generously contributed to the huge number of prizes on offer—we hope candle flames will burn bright in several local homes...

The outright winner this year was our Curate, Richard, with daughter, Liv, as runner-up. (Hmm!) Booby prize winners were Jenni and Carole. {Hope you enjoy the chocolate coins, ladies}. The evening ended with the grand raffle and a general consensus that we had had a fun evening, raising around £300 for church funds. A really enjoyable evening. Many, many thanks to all who supported us.

DASIS

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

St. George's Prayer Chain is a small group of people who believe that prayer can make a difference. Each person within the group offers daily prayer for anyone who asks for prayer.

If you yourself or someone you know needs special prayer for any reason, please contact

Revd. Shirley Small 01743 791885.

All information given is given in confidence. A name is enough if that is all you wish to give.

## Come and sing!

Do you like to sing?

St George's church choir would welcome some new singers. We rehearse on Friday evenings, at 6.30pm.



No need to be able to read music—just enjoy singing a tune.

Contact any choir members or call Barbara on 07813682485



Rea Valley 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. The Foodbank is available to people living within the Rea Valley ie, Hanwood, Pontesbury, Minsterley, Hope, Worthen, White Grit, Bentlawnt, Yockleton, Westbury, Habberley, Snailbeach Stiperstones, Brockton etc

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 GP's and schools are able to make referrals

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 ipnewson@daimon-bs.co.uk

#### DONATION APPEAL

As with every other Foodbank in the country, donations are getting fewer and fewer 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 -

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

> If you would like more information then please email support@reavalleyfoodbank.co.uk

### **Pontesbury Festival**

Plans are afoot for a Pontesbury Festival in the summer of **2025**, involving every community group possible and providing activities for all ages.

A first exploratory meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday March 13th at 7 p.m. at the Pavilion. Everyone is welcome to attend.

If you would be interested in this venture, but can't attend the meeting please contact Greg Smith at <a href="mailto:rectorpontstip@gmail.com">rectorpontstip@gmail.com</a>

### St. George's PCC: what it does

Our PCC is one of those committees which form the backbone of British civic life. We are a busy, active church and our PCC meetings have lengthy agendas and many issues to discuss. These tend to fall into broad categories: Ministry, Finance & Fundraising, Fabric, and Safeguarding....often involving more than one. Some agenda items are for information, where individuals or groups report on progress and plans. These can have the magic "no further action required" connotations for the rest of us. Other agenda items require a decision from PCC Members: a paper may be circulated in advance to allow the necessary discussion to be informed and on-topic. Usually, this results in the proposal and seconding of a motion, followed by a vote. If carried, what was a proposal has become recorded policy.

Let's take "fabric" – the physical building we call St. George's and the churchyard-extension. Plus all the fixtures and fittings such as the central-heating, photo-copiers and the beautiful but ageing stained-glass windows. Maintenance, repair and replacement cost money and require careful planning and budgeting. This inevitably involves "Finance". Can we afford? Can we afford not to? This year? Next year? Do we need reports first? Tough decisions made tougher because our finances are in a bad way. So we turn to fund-raising: do we need a special campaign and if so, when? Can we apply for grants to help meet the bill?

Then there's "Safeguarding" – where we ensure that vulnerable people are treated properly in all that we do. We must – and do – comply with the House of Bishops "Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines". Many of St. George's activities that nuture our congregation and spread the Christian message through outreach have to meet these exacting requirements. If a new "Ministry" policy creates a new activity, this will need job-descriptions, proper interviews and probably DBS certification for those appointed. And all outreach activities must have PCC approval in the usual way – and this must be recorded in the minutes.

All this makes for intense PCC meetings, but Members do have their say and their votes matter – so this is democracy at work. If you are not a PCC Member but feel you could be, then please give it serious thought.

Allen Marsden PCC Secretary, St. George's

### THE DIOCESE OF HEREFORD

March 2024

## Thoughts from Richard, Bishop of Hereford

I have just read the Rule of St. Benedict, to my shame for the first time. It is a monastic rule from the 6th century that sets out the disciplines and structures for the effective running of a monastery. The rules of poverty, chastity and obedience are highly restrictive; the punishments for violations severe; the lifestyle highly demanding. Praying at set offices eight times a day (including at 2 in the morning) meant that the monk would rarely get more than few hours of unbroken sleep. Central heating was for wimps and the diet uninspiring. Although eased in later centuries, it has been the basis for the monastic tradition in Western Europe ever since. It's not the sort of discipline that works in everyday life, but that doesn't mean it has no value. It is designed to foster Christian virtues of humility, and obedience (albeit expressed through submission to the Abbot), and a growing Christlikeness. Most of March will be the season of Lent, when we Christians have traditionally given up things that give us pleasure to focus on our spiritual journey. As our world has changed it seems increasingly anachronistic. Our culture screams at us from the lifestyle sections that the way to real fulfilment is getting what you really desire. The idea that giving something up might be good for you, other than as a grudging acknowledgement of post-Christmas weight gain, is anathema. Consumerism works by creating desire and then offering to fulfil it. But our strongest desires are not necessarily our deepest ones. Giving things up or fasting can get us in touch with these deeper desires that only God can satisfy. There is evidence that restricting calories by intermittent fasting or turning our mobiles off is actually good for us physically and psychologically.

A good lent can be like leaving the Christmas presents unopened under the tree until Christmas day. There is a joy in the opening that is enhanced by the

waiting. So, as well as helping us grow closer to God, our Lenten restraint can amplify the joy of Christ risen when we get to that glorious Easter celebration.

I once gave up tea and coffee for lent and had my first large cup on Easter morning. Before I knew it, I'd done three services and built a compost heap! Lent can be spiritual dynamite.

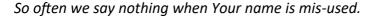
#### +Richard

This month is Lent, when we take a good hard look at where we stand with God...

## A reflection on The Lord's Prayer

(Matthew 6:1-18) by Daphne Kitching

Our Father in heaven, please help us. We, Your children, learn slowly.



Often our lives do not reflect Your ways,

Mostly we do what we want on earth, And this can make heaven unimaginable.

We expect so much more than we actually need each day.

Sometimes we think we don't need forgiveness, Sometimes we think we are unforgivable, And we forget that other people make these same errors of thinking.

When it comes to temptation, we find our own ways,

We are confused about what is and is not evil, We are confused about deliverance, We are confused......

And here is the wonder, the grace and the mystery, That You know us completely, Our failings, our secrets, And love us forever and ever, Amen.



## 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: Leviticus & Numbers

These books are concerned with Israel's wandering in the desert, on their journey from slavery in Egypt to the promised land of Canaan.

Leviticus focuses on the regulations about worship, ceremonial cleanness, moral laws and holy days. The key theme is that of *holiness*, as every detail of our lives is affected by the presence of a holy God. The aim of the sacrifices, feast and Sabbaths was to enable the people to enter God's presence. We should see the instructions and practices in Leviticus as pointing to Jesus. He totally fulfilled the law through the sacrifice of His life, as Easter reminds us. He demonstrated the love and holiness of God, so that we can share His life: *'Be holy, because I am holy'* (1 Peter 1:16, cf Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7).

The book of Numbers tells the story of Israel's journey through the wilderness. The people were coming to terms with their *identity* as God's people and the *call* to serve Him. They didn't always respond with faith, gratitude and obedience, but with unbelief, ingratitude and rebellion. As a result of their refusal to enter Canaan (ch 14), they were condemned to spend the rest of their lives in the desert. However, God in His grace allowed their children to enter the Promised Land. The book reminds us that the Church is called to be a community that honours God, learns how to deal with sin in ourselves and others, and lives out love and justice in daily life.

'The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26).

## Why we should be like donkeys—thoughts from Lester Amann

Are you a pet-lover? Many people own a dog, a cat or a budgie, but most of us don't own a donkey! Yet in Bible times, donkeys were essential to daily life. They did everything from helping to grind corn, to ploughing, to carrying people, to transporting their belongings. Despite their small frame, donkeys are surprisingly tough. They can survive on poor fodder, can travel an average of 20 miles a day.



There are two occasions in the Christian calendar where donkeys walk into the picture. At Christmas, Mary travelled the 100 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem on a donkey. And although a donkey doesn't get a specific mention in the manger story, that same one that transported her was probably there; where else would it have been?

On Palm Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Jesus deliberately chose this animal rather than a horse. Why? In Bible times, the horse was associated with war, conquest and worldly might. But the donkey was a symbol of peace and humility. So, Jesus used this animal to show that He had come with the dignity of the king of peace. His entry into the Holy City also fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy concerning the Messiah.



Donkeys are hardworking and undemanding. They wait for their master to put them to the work He has chosen for them. And, remarkably, each one bears the mark of the Cross on their backs!

Perhaps that is something we should learn—to wait for Jesus our Master, to be always obedient to Him, to serve Him with all our hearts, and to bear the mark of His grace in our lives.

### QUOTE:

The best news the world ever had came from a graveyard - Anon

The Revd Dr Jo White considers the Christian symbols in our churches.

## Reflecting Faith - Lychgates

On the moors near to where I used to live in West Yorkshire, there were a couple of large stones with crosses marked on them. Many people thought that they were boundary or marker stones, and in so far as they marked the way towards the oldest church in that area they were. To be more exact, they were on the route towards the oldest churchyard.



Holy Trinity Minsterley

In ages past bodies were carried by hand, sometimes

over long distances, and there were restrictions placed on where they could be laid to allow the bearers to rest. These two stones were 'resting' stones.

When a body arrived at the church for burial, it would again be put down while the administrative formalities were carried out, and again the bearers could rest. So, a resting stone was placed at the edge or start of the consecrated land around the church.

The priest conducting the funeral would meet the cortege here, not originally out of respect, but rather to receive the required legal certificate for burial before he allowed them to enter the church grounds.

Because of typical English weather - rain and wind - it was usually sheltered, and benches were built for the bearers. There would also be a cross within the construction to signify the start of holy land. This is what today we call the 'lych-gate'; lych coming from the anglo-saxon word *lich* or *lic*, related to the modern German word *leiche*, all meaning corpse.

Few old lychgates remain today, as many were destroyed or damaged after the Reformation, and most of those that survived were constructed of timber and have since decayed. In the eighteenth century, when the use for the resting stones and thus lychgates declined, many were removed and replaced with gates, often retaining the shelter as it continues to be a meeting place for the priest to receive funeral parties.

<u>This month</u> Try and visit a lychgate this month and actually spend a few moments under its shelter. Have a think about what burdens you want to lay down. What do you need to be sheltered from?

Make the most of this Lent season with a **free 'Watch and Pray App'**.

Receive daily reflections, prayers and Bible passages to help you draw closer to God and seek His presence, peace and purpose. Download the app to your Apple device.



https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/watch-and-pray/id1336487241

Nigel Beeton writes: On the subject of gardens, Paul uses the analogy of planting and watering in 1 Corinthians 3:6, making the point that, whether planting daffodils or churches or anything in between, nothing we do will be productive unless God makes it happen. And, as we approach Easter, consider that when Mary misidentified the risen Christ as the gardener, maybe she was closer to the truth than she realised.

### The Gardener

Spring's a time for planting in the warming earth Seeds and saplings growing at this time of birth. Carefully we tend them, pulling out each weed Watering and weeding every plant and seed.

Yet we are just helpers – nothing done alone For without our Father, nothing will be grown; He's the Creator, He alone can bring Growth into our gardens each succeeding spring.

Let us praise our Maker who makes life appear, Praise Him in the springtime, and throughout the year; Praise Him for all nature – ev'ry tree and flower Gaze upon the garden, praise Him every hour!

> God the gracious gardener cares for more than plants As to us, His children every breath He grants. He that for salvation gave His only Son, Do not fail to praise Him for all that He's done.

By Nigel Beeton

Coming soon to Pontesbury: OPEN GARDENS—May 19th



## Looking at the wider COMMUNITY

### The story behind the hymn: 'Christ Arose!'

This Easter marks the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of this much-loved hymn, sung each year by millions of Christians worldwide. It all began on a little pump organ in the living room of a college professor in Pennsylvania, back in 1874.

Robert Lowry was professor of literature at Bucknell University, and pastor of a nearby church. He had a passion for poetry and music, and explained his 'muse' this way: "I watch my moods and when anything strikes me, whether words or music, no matter where I am, at home, on the street, I jot it down. My brain is a sort of spinning machine, for there is music running through it all the time. Sometimes the words come, and the music follows."

Easter 1874 was approaching, and on this particular day Robert Lowry had

been meditating on the gospel narratives of the Passion and Resurrection. The angel's words at the empty tomb, 'He is not here, but is risen' kept running through his mind. There was something there... Lowry moved to the little pump organ in his living room and gave himself up to the moment. Soon the words and the music for this joyous Easter hymn just fell into place.



#### Christ Arose

Low in the grave He lay Jesus my Saviour! Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes; He arose a Victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever with His saints to reign, He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose! Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my Saviour! Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!

Death cannot keep his prey, Jesus my Saviour! He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!

By Robert Lowry (1826-1899)

# Deanery of Pontesbury DEANERY NEWS

Rural Dean: The Revd Bill Rowell

telephone: 01938 552064 • email: wkrowell@btinternet.com

## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH FROM Revd David Moss Hopelessly lost till I look up at last.

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." — John 14:5-7

Since being a boy, I have loved to pour over maps, I loved Dad's Ordnance Survey maps, with the contour lines defining the shapes on the ground, the colours of the moorland and forests, the symbols for Youth Hostel or Station and the feel of the then 'linen' fabric.

Ordnance Survey maps now give us the option to buy a map and have your own village positioned right at the centre.... Rather like the famous Mappa Mundi in Hereford Cathedral, drawn with Jerusalem at the centre of the world.

One can lose oneself in an OS map, it is almost like an experience from Narnia, bringing a sense of wonder. We gain so much information from them, secrets like when a contour line hits a stream it always points uphill and every time we climb up a thousand feet on those contour lines, the air will be one degree cooler. Sadly today, we are a modern generation with heads angled downwards most of the time as we look at Satnavs on our little LCD phone screens; and (like the Satnav in the car) it's okay until we hit a road closure and then we are hopelessly lost. There's no perspective, no relief, just white space. You can't just look for the sun and reorientate the map.

Have you ever been bumped into by someone with their head down, engrossed in their smart phone and thumbs tapping out some form of Morse code?

I think that the journey through the season of Lent, is an opportunity to shout, 'look up!' to those around us. Look up, look around and see what you are missing. Lent is a season of Pilgrimage, in which our map for this year is the gospel of Mark. Mark leaves us in no doubt who Jesus is; he opens with 'the beginning of the good

news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.'

Mark then introduces John the Baptist who summons us to repentance and cleansing in the waters of baptism before we begin our journey.

In our journey we begin with Shrove Tuesday - Shrove the past tense of the word shrive – the day when we shrive(d). It means to confess and be absolved of sin.

Then we had Ash Wednesday – where we are reminded of our own mortality - "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Before finally, we walk with Christ to the triumphal entry of Palm Sunday.

Our Lenten Pilgrimage is time to stop looking at what the world offers and start looking at what creation offers. In a sense it is in solidarity with the Old Testament flight from Egypt and the slavery of sin, being set free in waters of baptism within the Red Sea; and the arduous journey through the wilderness, full of hunger, wrong turns, moans, groans and doubts before a final entry into Promised Land. But you have heard all this before, I'm sure.

I often read poetry when I am on long walks, recently I discovered (in a book by Malcolm Guite) this following poem by Holly Ordway, called simply 'Maps.'

Antique maps, with curlicues of ink
As borders, framing what we know, like pages
From a book of travellers' tales: look,
Here in the margin, tiny ships at sail.
No-nonsense maps from family trips: each state
Traced out in colour-coded numbered highways,
A web of roads with labelled city-dots
Punctuating the route and its slow stories.
Now GPS puts me right at the centre,
A Ptolemaic shift in my perspective.\*
Pinned where I am, right now, somewhere, I turn
And turn to orientate myself. I have
Directions calculated, maps at hand:
Hopelessly lost till I look up at last.

\*(Ptolemy had the earth at the centre of the universe whereas Copernicus had the sun).

Lent is about taking time to look up and in so doing discovering that we were all hopelessly lost; blind but now free. Amazing Grace indeed.

## In the News

### Support for Russian priest who prays for peace

Thousands of Russian Orthodox Christians have been urging Patriarch Kirill of Moscow to reinstate a very popular priest in the capital, the Revd Alexei Uminsky, who has refused to recite an official prayer for Russia's victory over Ukraine.

An open letter, which attracted more than 11,000 signatures, including the heads of local charities, says:

"The decree banning this priest from serving will deprive thousands of people of spiritual support – a great tragedy for many believers, for children's hospice patients, for hundreds of prisoners and thousands of homeless people."

Uminsky had repeatedly warned that he could not endorse the invasion of Ukraine.

Now Russia's online news agency, Gazeta.ru, says that Fr Uminsky was banned from ministering under a decree issued by the Moscow Patriarchate, for suggesting in a YouTube interview that Christians should "pray for peace, rather than victory".

The Russian news agency went on to say that Uminsky has long been seen as "a thorn in the Kremlin's side" for his anti-militarism. He was branded a 'criminal in a cassock' by the Russian Orthodox Church's own TV channel Spas, after calling for mercy for the opposition leader Alexei Navalny, during his prison hunger strike.

For the moment, Uminsky remains banned, and may face defrocking as a priest. More than 300 Russian Orthodox priests, who signed an appeal against the Ukraine invasion of 2022, have since been silenced, or forced to emigrate.





# From the Dragon's Den



We have had visitors in the Little Dragon cupboard. It appears that a family of mice have discovered that there are lots of things there to enjoy. We usually keep our store of snacks in the cupboard but moved them out when we realised that they were being enjoyed by other than our Little Dragons – so – they decided to try the sugar paper stored there – then moved onto the wet wipes.

It must be desperate times for them. We hear that they are trying out different venues within church. John Betjeman wrote the poem, 'Diary of a Church Mouse'. I think he wrote of one such creature, but he or she must have passed the message on that organic snacks were available – not any longer I am afraid. Sorry, Mouse Family, you've had your chips (so to speak)!

Good wishes to everyone, from Val, Frank, Marion E, Marion W, Pat, Caroline and from we three

George, Uncle Sam & Idris

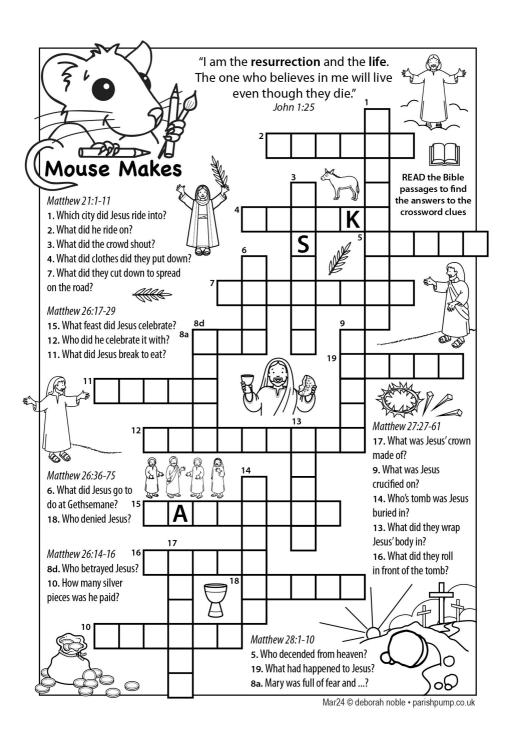
The Crossroad By Megan Carter

The road was hard, no turning back, The way ordained by mighty God. 'Your will, not mine' was all He said, As humbly down that path He trod.

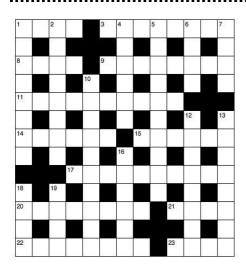
The crowd that cheered Him once with palms
Began to shout for Him to die,
They chose Barabbas in his stead
And with one voice cried 'Crucify!'

Between two thieves on Calvary's hill They put to death the Prince of Life One cried for help, the other cursed. The first was promised Paradise.

This promise now is for us all:
Christ gave His life to set us free.
The Cross divides, it always will The question is: what side are we?



## Your PUZZLE for Easter 2024



#### Across

- 1 Made from the fruit of the vine, symbol of the blood of Christ (4)
- 3 'You are to set an ambush behind the city. Don't go very far from it. All of you be on --' (Joshua 8:4) (3,5)
- 8 Seep (4)
- 9 Celebrated by Jesus on the night of his betrayal (Luke 22:15) (8)
- 11 One of the supposed sites of Christ's burial place in Jerusalem (6,4)
- 14 'A city on a hill be hidden' (Matthew 5:14) (6)
- 15 Hè inherited Elijáh's mantle (2 Kings 2:12-13) (6)
- 17 Where Jesus prayed 'Not as I will, but as vou will' (Matthew 26:36, 39) (10)
- 20 'Only in his home town and in his — is a prophet without hoour' (Matthew 13:57) (3,5)
- 21 Sail (anag.) (4) 22 How Jesus was punished before his crucifixion (Matthew 27:26) (8)
- 23 Eye sore (4)

### Down

- 1 Can't grow (anag.) (5,3) 2 A servant girl to Peter, 'You also were with that ,Jesus' (Mark 14:67) (8)
- 4 Well-being (Proverbs 3:8) (6)
- 5 Pentecostal denomination, of God (10)
- 6 One of the 'obvious' acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19, 21) (4)
- 7 'I preached that they should repent and to God' (Acts 26:20) (4)
- 10~--, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me' (John 14:19) (6,4)
- 12 He betrayed Jesus: Judas (Luke 6:16) (8)
- 13 Jesus to Peter: '— of my sheep' (John 21:16) (4,4) 16 The centurion said, 'Surely this man was — of God' (Mark 15:39) (3,3)
- 18 Baked bread (Mark 8:14) (4)
- 19 'Blessing and honour, glory and power, be Him' (Handel's Messiah) (4)

## God in the ARTS & SCIENCES

The Revd Michael Burgess looks at great works of music....

### 'Glorious the song when God's the theme': Hildegard of Bingen

In this series we have looked at the psalms of the Old Testament and the songs of the New Testament, and now we enter the Middle Ages. But it is the Middle Ages through the eyes of a record producer in the last century.

In 1980 Ted Perry decided to found a new independent record company, Hyperion. If that was not financial risk enough, in the following year Hyperion issued a CD of a composer virtually unknown in the 1980s – Hildegard of Bingen. The risk paid off, and Gothic Voices' recording of the music of this remarkable medieval nun became a best seller. The CD sold in its thousands and received awards from the gramophone industry.

'A feather on the breath of God', the title of the CD, is how Hildegard described herself. 'Listen, there was a king sitting on his throne. Around him stood great and wonderfully beautiful columns ornamented with ivory, bearing the banners of the king with great honour. Then it pleased the king to raise a small feather from the ground and he commanded it to fly. The feather flew, not because of anything in itself, but because the air bore it along. Thus am I a feather on the breath of God.'

Hildegard was born in 1098, the tenth child of noble parents who lived in western Germany. Aged only eight, she was given into the care of Jutta, abbess of a monastery in the Rhineland, near Bingen. There she lived the life of an enclosed nun, her only contact with the world outside via a grille through which food was passed.

After 30 years, Hildegard left that cell and was assigned a scribe, who wrote down her visions and meditations in two volumes. She founded two monasteries, wrote books on medicine and natural healing and the first morality play, and composed a great range of songs. She corresponded with the great and the good, and as the 'Sybil of the Rhine,' her advice was sought by popes and emperors, by kings and bishops. A truly creative life of prayer and service until her death in 1179.

The starting point for her own compositions was the plainsong of that time.

Modern techniques of singing and performing often make plainsong slow and heavy. The secret to bringing plainchant alive is to sing it with relaxed attention. In many ways that is the secret of the life of prayer: that paradox of resting in the Lord while being alert to the promptings of his spirit. Hildegard realised that secret as she brought to her music, as she did to everything, an intensity of emotion and faith, developing the medieval plainchant into melodies that flowed off the page and soared into the skies.

It is all there in the chant 'O ignis spiritus' on the CD – an ecstatic song, praising the life of God's Spirit as breath and spark of flame, as a power within and armour without. As Hildegard contemplates this gift, her music moves and grows, reaching upwards to God's throne of glory in praise and adoration and outwards to those who listen.

And here Dr Ruth Bancewicz, Church Engagement Director, The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge, writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

## What will March bring? Mental health ideas for uncertain times

We may all have rather mixed feelings on reaching March this year. On the one hand, it is lovely to see the onset of Spring, but the wars in Ukraine and Israel-Gaza grind on, as does the cost-of-living crisis. We may need to find new ways to keep going, so here are some suggestions that draw on both science and Christian theology, and which may help bring us closer to God, to each other, and to His creation.

<u>Getting outside</u> Time outdoors in a natural environment is very good for you – and you can't argue with the happy hormones produced by exercise. Attending to the details of nature can also inspire awe, which has been linked to positive mood, and increased life satisfaction. Enjoying Creation can also help us connect with God.

<u>Looking outside</u> If you are truly stuck indoors, try putting bird feeders outside your window so creation comes to you. This is also an act of kindness (see below)!

<u>Lament and praise</u> The Psalms are a rich resource to help us express both our grief and our thanks to God. Try reading one or two each day.

<u>Journaling</u> Keep a journal of thoughts, experiences or practices you have engaged with during the day. Constructing a personal narrative or story is now recognised as a very powerful psychological and spiritual tool for building resilience. It is also a vital learning tool that we can go back to when tough times return in the future.

<u>Acts of kindness</u> Helping or encouraging someone else is obviously a good thing to do in itself, but it also has a very positive effect on the giver - spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and even physically. Whichever way you look at it, finding new ways to show kindness to others can be a very effective way to help ourselves feel better too.

<u>Gratitude</u> Gratitude is another natural drug – in a sense – that can help us feel better. Try keeping a grateful diary, adding a few things each day.

<u>Laugh, sing, make music, dance</u> All of these activities are deeply rooted in our physical and mental makeup. You may have forgotten how great they feel, especially in times of sadness, but we can learn from children who do them very naturally.







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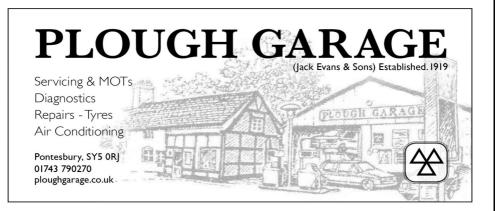
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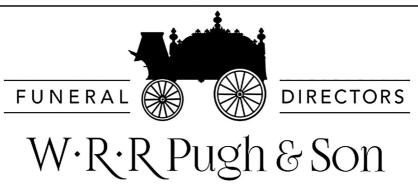
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