



THE WORD

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**THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
ST. JOHN'S ROAD, BIRKDALE. PR8 4JP
Charity Number 1128171**

St. John, Chapter 1, verses 1 and 14:

***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...
The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."***

ISSUE No. 242

FEBRUARY 2023

ST. JOHN'S PARISH CHURCH

God Centred, Relationship Driven and Life Transforming



We had hoped that in this February issue of **THE WORD** the PCC could inform our readers that we had interviewed at least one candidate for the position of Vicar of St John's and Assistant Curate at St James' and St Peter's but this has not been the case. There were no applications for the positions at St John's or at St James' and St Peter's.

It may be that the current economic climate has deterred potential candidates from applying. In the Liverpool Diocese there is not a large pool of priests who are eligible to seek an appointment at this time, and our Diocese tends not to attract applicants from elsewhere.

We must look upon this as an opportunity to wait for the right person to apply in God's time rather than in ours. The Archdeacon has told our parish representatives and patrons that when the post is re-advertised the position will be simply that of Vicar of St John's without the additional role of Assistant Curate elsewhere.

Whilst we are waiting we have a strong sense of fellowship amongst our congregation and we shall continue to maintain our services at St John's and to foster good and close working and worshipping relationships with St James' and St Peter's and with Liverpool Road Methodist Church.

Please pray for the PCC to receive God's guidance in moving forward.

Joint service on 29th January

It was the fifth Sunday of the month and the three Anglican parishes combined in a joint service with Liverpool Road Methodist Church which was led by the Methodist Minister Patrick Evans.

The service was well attended and included 26 from St John's. After the service there was time for fellowship over coffee and the Faith Lunch.

**FOR ALL ENQUIRIES TO OR ABOUT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH PLEASE CONTACT US
BY EMAIL info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk OR PHONE: 07732 691542**

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JOHN'S

Priest (retired) Reader:	Rev. Roy Doran (572387) Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)	Church of England Children's Society:	Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071)
Churchwardens:	Stuart Baker (560518) Clive Morris (564206)	Mothers' Union:	Mrs. Linda Caton (564737)
Deputy Warden: Wardens' Assistant::	Tim Wright (553977) Miss Lucy Wright (553977)	Girl Guides St. John's Brownies: Brownie Guiders: St. John's Rainbows:	Mrs. Janette Law (565951) Mrs. Helen Jones and Mrs. Lesley Scott Mrs. Lesley Scott
Treasurer:	Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071)	Church Flowers:	Mrs. Cath Whiteside (568874)
PCC Secretary:	Alex Vernon	Magazine Editor:	Stuart Baker (560518)
Parish Hall Secretary: Electoral Roll Officer:	Mrs. Jean Morris (564206) Stuart Harris	Magazine Printer:	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)
Safeguarding:	Stuart Baker (560518) and Ms. Michelle Baldeh	Notice boards, I.T, Website developer, Balloon Inflater and Bunting Arranger:	Mrs. Sally Wright (553977)
		Buildings Inspector:	David Halsall

Growth Groups

2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 7.30pm
@ 32 Hartley Crescent

*Finding out more
together*



WE'D LOVE YOU TO JOIN US

*We believe in
the power of
prayer*

**PRAYER
TIME @ ST
JOHN'S**

Led by the leadership team

**1st and 3rd Thursdays
7.30pm**

SEE WEBSITE FOR ZOOM DETAILS



Thursday Evening Prayers

The next prayer meetings by **zoom** and telephone will be at 7.30pm on 2nd and 16th February.

If there is anything which you would like to pray about with others contact Sally, Tim or Lucy Wright, or Christine, Clive or Roy.





A New Series of Sunday Sermons for Lent

Starting on Ash Wednesday (22nd February) our worship leaders will start a new series of Sermons: **"Give It Up For Lent."**

The talks will encourage us:

- to give up looking behind and instead to move forward
- to give up doubting the power of Satan
- to give up lacking confidence
- to give up thinking we are being punished
- to give up thinking we are not special enough
- to give up giving God second best

Do join us to hear these talks as we draw closer to Easter.

How to Pray: Report for Duty

The Ven John Barton considers what you need to remember when you pray.

Prayer is instinctive for human beings, even those who don't regard themselves as religious. You are standing at a bus stop in the wind and the rain, thinking 'I do hope the bus will come soon'. It's an inner yearning. It defies logic: either the bus is coming, or it isn't. But we all do it. It's instinctive and it's the raw material of prayer. Hoping for something better is basic. Like all instincts, it needs to be trained.

To whom do we pray? What you pray, and the way you do it will be shaped by your view of God. Christian prayers are fashioned by what we know of Jesus and what He taught about prayer.

We pray by invitation. Again and again, Jesus encouraged His companions to pray. A couple of His parables on the subject have been misinterpreted as instructions to persuade a resistant God to do what we want. Have a look at Luke 18, verses 1-8, about a widow whose perseverance finally persuaded an unwilling judge to rule in her favour. The lesson is that God is *not* like that! Similarly, an unwelcome neighbour who persistently calls for help in the middle of the night gets what he wants (Luke 11:5-13). The lesson? If tenacious lobbying can overcome human unwillingness, *how much more* our gracious God will heed His children's cry.

Pushing at an open door. Jesus is already praying for us. So, when we start to pray, we step on to an already moving staircase. Sometimes prayer seems tougher than it need be. Jesus invited us to be linked to Him, in the way an inexperienced bullock is yoked to a mature ox. Have a look at Matthew 11:28-29, which concludes "for my yoke is easy and my burden is light". When Marion Bartoli unexpectedly won the 2013 Women's Wimbledon final, she said "I believe if you put all your heart and effort into everything you are doing, then God is there to help you."

Is your prayer on the right lines? Try adding "for Christ's sake" at the end. "Please let my marrow win the Gardening Club competition"? No. "Not my will but yours" is the key. So when praying, don't give God instructions, just report for duty.

WHAT'S ON AT ST. JOHN'S

ST JOHN'S INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN OUR

SOCIAL EVENTS

If you'd like further details or to book a place please contact Christine 07821 982477 or Sally 07800 550097



Friday 13 January @ 7pm	Early, Early Burns Night
Friday 24 February @ 7pm	Late, Late Pancake Party
Saturday 11 March @ 7pm	Andy Dean's Quiz Night
Friday 21 April @ 7pm	Italian Food Night
Friday 5 May @ 7pm	Coronation Bangers & Mash
Date to be confirmed	Summer Fair & Afternoon Tea
Saturday 8 July @ 2pm	Strawberry Tea
Friday 22 September @ 7pm	Harvest Supper
Friday 20 October @ 7pm	Just Desserts
Friday 17 November @ 7pm	Bingo and Beetle Night
Friday 1 December 6-9pm	Christmas Tree Festival and Christmas Fair
Saturday 2 December 10-3pm	

St John's Presents FILM NIGHTS

Come and join us as we enjoy great films and refreshments @ 6.30pm
film begins at 7pm

For details of our screenings see our church noticeboards

17 February

17 March

28 April

26 May

23 June

Free entry, refreshments available



Visit our new website

stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk

- Find out about what's going on at St John's
- Check out the calendar for upcoming events
- Listen to the weekly talks
- Find out about booking the hall
- Free on-line bible
- Show it to your friends and family

God centred, Relationship driven,
Life transforming

YOUNG ADULT SOCIALS

2022/2023

Sunday October 9th

Pumpkin picking & Sunday Lunch

Saturday November 5th

Bonfire party @ Hurlston Hall

Saturday December 3rd

Christmas fayre & supper @ Lucy's

Friday January 20th

Snow White Panto @ The Atkinson

Friday February 10th

Film and fajita night @ Lucy's

Sunday March 12th

Waffles and Walk in the pinewoods

St John's Church, Birkdale

St John's Church, Birkdale

LATE, LATE
PANCAKE PARTY

TICKETS £5



FRIDAY 24 FEBRUARY
7PM

32 Hartley Crescent

We would love it if you could join us

Dates for your Diary: Coming Soon in 2023



St John's Film Nights

The next film to be shown will be on 17th February and its title will be displayed on the main church noticeboard. There is no charge for watching the film which will be shown in the small hall. Tea, coffee, homemade cakes will be available from the kitchen in the large hall for which donations will be welcome. Please ask Christine what the next film will be and let her know if you will attend (560518).



A late, late Pancake Party

Friday 24th February 2023 at Tim and Sally's house.

Rather than have pancakes on Shrove Tuesday St John's will have a late, late pancake party three days late. OK, Lent will already have started but just give up chocolates instead of pancakes! Come and enjoy friendship and fun and let Sally (or possibly Tim) cook bespoke pancakes of your choice. Further details closer to the date.



"If I was enjoying anything I could give it up for Lent"

There will be **other friendship events at St John's during 2023** including a Quiz Night with our genial quizmaster Andy Dean and glamorous scorer Cheryl; a right royal Bangers & Mash evening at about the time of the Coronation; a summer fair; a strawberry tea; an Italian themed evening; for those who enjoy puddings, Just Desserts; and an evening of fun and excitement playing Beetle and Bingo! Watch this space!! You will always be able to read about it in **THE WORD**.

ALPHA COURSE AT ST. JAMES' CHURCH

St James' church will be running an Alpha Course which started on Thursday evening, 26th January. It runs from 7.00pm - 8.15pm each week and lasts for 10 weeks.

Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to create conversation in small groups.

For each Alpha session, a video will be shown and the video will ask questions which will be chatted about in a group. Refreshments will be served during the evening in the form of tea, coffee and soft drinks and cakes.

ALL WELCOME

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



FRIDAY 3RD MARCH at

11.00am

A SERVICE FOR EVERYONE!

I have heard about your faith

**At Lord Street West
United Reformed Church**

INFORMED PRAYER, PRAYERFUL ACTION

**24/7 365 DAYS A YEAR
PRAYER MOVEMENT * ECUMENICAL *
INTERNATIONAL * WOMEN-LED**

Worship on the
Third Sunday before
Lent

SUNDAY 5th FEBRUARY: COMMUNION

**10.30am service IN CHURCH and via
zoom & phone**

**Worshippers in church are invited to remain in
church after the first part of the service has
concluded and receive Communion.**

Collect for the Third Sunday before Lent

Eternal God, whose Son went among the crowds and brought healing with his touch: help us to show his love, in your Church as we gather together, and by our lives as they are transformed into the image of Christ our Lord.

**The subject of
Roy's talk:**

**The Samaritan Woman
Recognising Jesus**

The Reading: John ch. 4, verses 7-29

7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

11 The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? 12 Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"

13 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

15 The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

17 The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

19 The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."

26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

27 And at this point His disciples came, and they marvelled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men,

29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

Worship on the
Second Sunday
before Lent

SUNDAY 12th FEBRUARY

**10.30am service IN CHURCH
and via zoom & phone.**

Collect for the Second Sunday before Lent

Almighty God, give us reverence for all creation and respect for every person, that we may mirror your likeness in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**The subject of
Tim's Talk:**

The Centurion: Lordship

Reading: Luke ch. 7, verses 1-10

- 1 After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum.
- 2 Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him.
- 3 When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant.
- 4 And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him,
- 5 for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue."
- 6 And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.
- 7 Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed.
- 8 For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."
- 9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."
- 10 And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.





**Midweek Book of
Common Prayer
Holy Communion**

**WEDNESDAY 15th FEBRUARY
10.30am service IN CHURCH**

**Worship on the Sunday
next before Lent**

**SUNDAY 19th FEBRUARY
10.30am service IN CHURCH
and via zoom & phone**

Collect for the Sunday next before Lent

Holy God, you know the disorder of our sinful lives: set straight our crooked hearts, and bend our wills to love your goodness and your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**The subject of
Clive's talk:**

**Saul: No one is beyond
God's love**

The Reading: Acts ch. 9, verses 1-9

- 1 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest
- 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- 3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.
- 4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
- 5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
- 6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."
- 7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.
- 8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.
- 9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

**God's love is not drawn out by our loveliness, but wells up,
like an artesian spring, from the depths of His nature.**

Alexander MacLaren



Ash Wednesday
Service

WEDNESDAY 22nd FEBRUARY

**7.30pm service
ON ZOOM ONLY**

Collect for the Ash Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

Worship on the First
Sunday of Lent

SUNDAY 26th FEBRUARY
10.30am service IN CHURCH
and via zoom & phone.

Collect for the First Sunday of Lent

Heavenly Father, your Son battled with the powers of darkness, and grew closer to you in the desert: help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer that we may witness to your saving love in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**The subject of
Christine's talk:**

**Give Up Doubting
The Power of Satan**

The Reading: Luke ch. 4 verses 1-13

1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness
2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry.
3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."
4 And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"
5 And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,
6 and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.
7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."
8 And Jesus answered him, "It is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."
9 And he took him to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,
10 for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,'
11 and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone."
12 And Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"
13 And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Advice on how to read the Bible

David Suchet, the actor who is perhaps best known to many for his portrayal of Agatha Christie's Belgian sleuth Hercule Poirot, became a Christian in 1986.

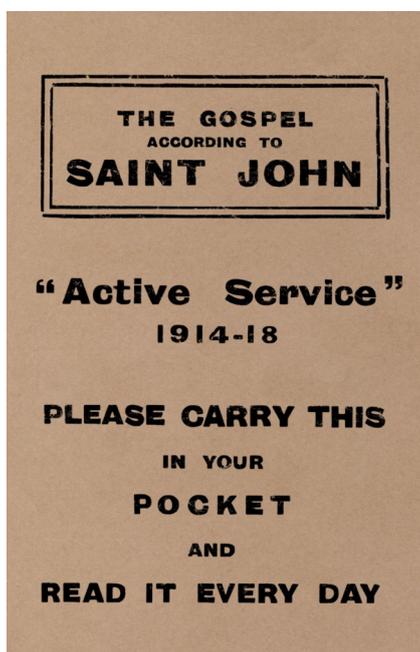
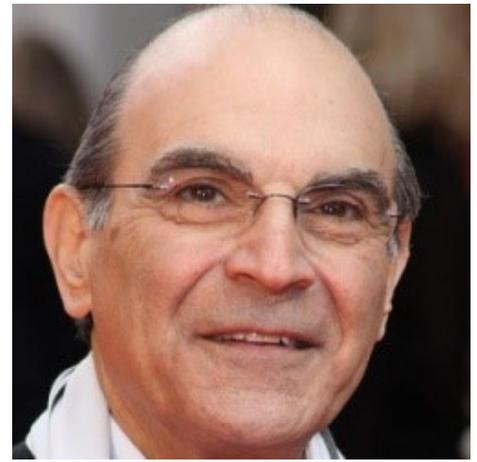
He had become acquainted with Christianity when he was at school when he had to take exams but he did not believe most of it.

In a recorded interview with the Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle he said that in about 1986 he was, somehow, driven to the Bible and he started reading Paul's letter to the Romans. He decided that what he was reading was real and he felt that he had to find out more about Jesus.

He then turned his attention to the Gospel of St John and decided that if he did not believe in Jesus there is not much future. He observes that the word "believe" appears 98 times in John's Gospel which was written by an old man many years after the other three gospels. He says that he was overwhelmed by the message of the Gospel which proved, from John's point of view, that Jesus is the Son of God.

On page 4 of this month's issue there is guidance from The Ven John Barton about how to pray. In David Suchet's interview with Dr Hoyle there is good advice about how to read the Bible. When the King James Bible was written the scholars who had translated it into English gathered together in the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster Abbey and read the entire Bible aloud. Dr Hoyle says that the text takes on a different vitality in the act of reading it aloud. In this way the King James Bible was tested by ear. On page 12 of this month's issue Canon Paul Hardingham gives similar advice.

David Suchet has recorded his own reading of the Bible. He makes the very valid point that nowhere in the Bible does it say "read the word of the Lord." On the contrary, in 36 verses in the OT and another 2 verses in the NT it says **"hear the word of the Lord."** **When he is alone he reads it out softly to himself which gives him a very intimate relationship with what he is reading.**



He also recommends reading the entire Gospel and not merely short extracts from it. As an interesting aside he produced a copy of the Gospel according to St John which had been issued to servicemen during the First World War. The front cover urged the men to read the Gospel every day. That may have been expecting rather a lot because to read the Gospel in its entirety would take the better part of two and a half hours.

But if they read it they may have felt an intimacy with the Lord. In the Gospel Jesus talks gently to his disciples after the Last Supper, informing them of the coming of the Holy Spirit and of his own death, and assuring them that they will not be alone.

If our readers wish to see the interview (it last less than 12 minutes) you can view it on the internet: www.youtube.com/lifewords

Canon Paul Hardingham continues his new series on the spiritual disciplines that help us to grow and deepen our faith. It will run throughout this year.

Spiritual Disciplines - Study

'The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.' (Richard Foster)

Spiritual disciplines are practices designed to develop and grow our lives as disciples of Jesus. This month we are looking at the place of *study* as a spiritual practice.

'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.' (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The study of God's Word is vital if we are to grow in understanding God's will for our lives. The discipline of study can take different forms: reading the Bible as a book or on a digital device and listening to an audio Bible. We can hear the Bible taught in church on Sundays or online any time.

One helpful way of studying Scripture is *Lectio Divina*. It consists of five steps:

Select a Scripture passage to read.

Read the passage, preferably out loud, two or three times. Use the first time to get a feel for the passage. On the second time, note any words or phrase that draw your attention.

Meditate on the word or phrase that stood out to you. How is God speaking to you through these? Take time and allow God to speak personally about your life now.

Respond to what God has been saying to you. What is your response? What is your prayer?

Rest in God's presence and allow His love to embrace you by His Spirit.

Why not try this for yourself to hear God speak?

'We present you with this Book, the most valuable thing this world affords.' (words used when the late Queen received a Bible at her Coronation).

Remembering Ukraine – one year on



24th February is the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine, which has seen nearly eight million people displaced and thousands killed. This winter is the worst in living memory for most Ukrainians, with medicine, food, water, and heating in short supply. If you would like to mark the first year by helping the people Ukraine, here are some charities from which you might choose:

The Disaster Emergencies Committee (DEC) is an umbrella group of UK charities.

<https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal>

Christian Aid was founded in 1945 by British and Irish churches to help refugees after the Second World War. Sadly, with war back in Europe, it is now back at work on the Continent.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal-2022>

Barnabas Fund distributes food through local churches to Christians in the poorer areas, both in Kyiv and in rural regions.

<https://www.barnabasfund.org/gb/latest-needs/help-ukrainian-christians-in-their-hour-of-need/>

Samaritans Purse has been airlifting medical supplies into the country, distributed more than 45 million kilos of food, and built water systems providing more than 30 million litres of water.

St John's Church, Birkdale

Early, Early

BURNS NIGHT

On 13th January 36 parishioners and their friends and friends from St James' and Liverpool Road Methodist Church enjoyed a hearty meal of haggis with neeps and tatties, followed by crancachan when we celebrated Burns' Night nearly two weeks early.

The haggis was brought to the feast by the chef to the accompaniment of the swirl of bagpipe music. Sadly, we do not have a resident bagpipe player at St. John's so we resorted to recorded music which had the advantage that we could turn it off at a time of our choice without offending the player. If any of our readers can play the bagpipes please keep that fact to yourself!



Rabbie Burns



Hail to the Chef

The haggis was appropriately addressed (in English) and the meal commenced. Between the main course and the pudding there were Rounds 1 and 2 of a Scottish Quiz which was very competitively contested with some high scoring (and some low). After the cranachan we had Rounds 3 and 4 and the Quiz was eventually won by a single point. A close run thing, as the Duke of Wellington might have said. A somewhat narrower margin than at the Battle of Bannockburn.

After the Quiz we all decamped to the large hall for a novelty game of tossing the haggis, a cross between bowls and tossing the caber. We had a haggis target on the floor and a fabric lookalike haggis which had to be thrown, tossed, bowled, lobbed or otherwise propelled to the target and the closest was the winner. After two play-offs the eventual winner was Sally Wright who took the prize of a handmade Spurtle (traditional Scottish porridge stirrer). Whether that was entirely down to her aim or was due to the gentlemanly sportsmanship of Doug Hinds who in the final play-off missed the target by a wide margin is difficult to say, but congratulations are given to the winner, the runner-up and all who took part.

On behalf of all who attended a traditional toast of thanks was given to "The Lassies", and in particular to the Chef (Christine) and to Sally who decorated the hall and Jean who helped with the serving. Thanks also to Howie, Clive and Tim for their assistance in serving and clearing away.

This was a fun evening and it was a pleasure to be joined by members of St James' and LRMC. The churches in Birkdale are continuing to forge links and this was another opportunity at which we were able to get to know each other better.



The Rev Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace'

On Why Churchgoers Like To Freeze In Church

The Rectory,
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

Winter certainly exposes the difference between those of you who live in cities and us rural folk. While you bask in your centrally heated flat, with every modern convenience that could be imagined and complain about the half an inch of slush that makes your life so inconvenient, we country folk wear overcoats in our houses, open all doors and windows to let the heat in and battle through snow drifts, measured in feet, to get the morning paper.

Colonel Wainwright has acquired a new toy: a snow blower, of sufficient power that I believe it could clear the Antarctic. He kindly volunteered to clear the paths around the church. Working outwards from the church door, the path to the church soon became snow free. Unfortunately, he only realised when his job was complete that the blown snow then formed a five-foot drift under the lychgate. We now have to climb over the churchyard wall and negotiate buried gravestones before we can reach his pristine paths.

Miss Margison, ever meaning to be helpful, decided to unfreeze the pipes in the church hall. A blow torch was not the ideal solution, although the resulting burst did make some rather attractive ice sculptures round the kitchen equipment. The village badminton team that uses the hall has now temporarily changed sport to ice hockey.

Inevitably, our congregation has soared these past few weeks. There is nothing like adversity for making people want to prove they have the moral fibre to overcome it. Much satisfaction seems to be obtained on discovering who has *not* dared venture out, which is taken as judgement on their strength of character. The Prentices upstaged most people by arriving on a sleigh. Mr Prentice was warmly wrapped in a travelling rug, while his wife pulled it. As her husband explained, he couldn't possibly let the pony work in such conditions.

What I momentarily thought was applause during my sermon was merely people keeping their hands warm and the hymns were drowned out by the stamping of feet. Our organist complained that the cold made his fingers so numb that he couldn't play properly – although I didn't notice that things were much different from normal.

No, my dear nephew, you continue to fret about your church heating dropping to temperate, and a few flakes of wet snow obliging you to close your carpark for health and safety reasons. We shall continue to triumph heroically over adversity and return home after Mattins, feeling we have proved our Christian commitment by being utterly uncomfortable.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

***a clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory* (anon)**

GOD in the Arts

The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a look at *“Christ in the Wilderness - The Scorpion”* by Stanley Spencer (1939)

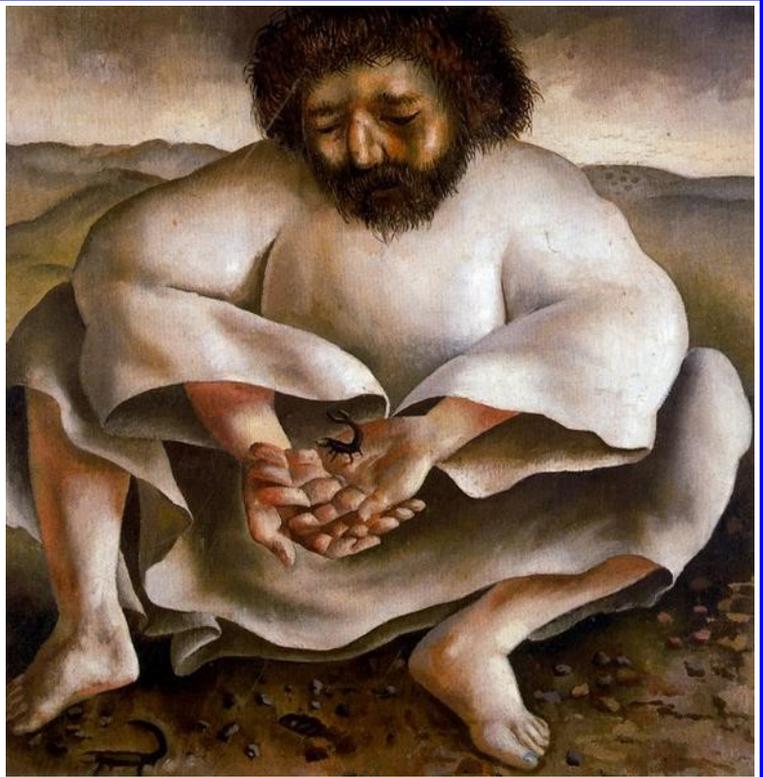
<https://www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/christ-in-the-wilderness-the-scorpion>

Forty Days and Forty Nights

At the end of this month we enter the season of Lent: those 40 days when we follow Jesus into the wilderness and prepare ourselves to celebrate His Easter victory. In the last century an artist called Stanley Spencer planned to create a series of 40 paintings, each depicting a day in the wilderness. In the end he completed nine, one of which is this month's painting from 1939: 'Christ in the Wilderness – Scorpions.' It is held in a private collection.

Stanley Spencer lived and worked in the village of Cookham in Berkshire. The village and the local countryside were the setting for many of his paintings, and the village's inhabitants his models. Through their everyday life he was trying to glimpse and convey the transcendent. 'Angels and dirt' he called it: the divine seen in the ordinary. So, in a painting of Christ carrying His cross, Jesus has the face of the local grocer.

Another villager modelled for this Jesus in the wilderness: a strong, hefty, broad figure. This is a great contrast to the Christ of stained-glass windows who often seems too good to be part of our world. Here is real life: a large man filling the canvas with His head, His hands and His feet. This figure of Jesus comes as a shock: a very human model, ordinary with nothing handsome or special about Him, apart from His tunic which seems to sprawl and undulate like the hills around. Here is a Jesus born into this world and one with this world.



There are two focal points in the painting – the neat, little scorpion and the massive, unkempt head contemplating each other. One is life in all its hefty reality; the other a tiny creature able to squeeze that life out by one swift flick of its tail.

Jesus is shown in the wilderness pondering the life and ministry called of Him by God – a life and ministry that will take Him from the countryside into the towns and villages and take Him also to the death of Good Friday. Will He find the strength and renewal to embrace that ministry during His time in the desert?

During Lent as we follow Jesus, we seek to live for God. That may mean dying to all that separates us from God. He has a ministry, a calling for each of us.

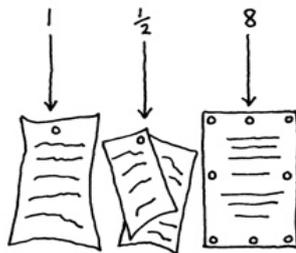
As we contemplate that calling in this season of Lent, we may find it is a calling that leads us through these 40 days to life and Easter life – we may find it a journey that calls us to die to self to find our God.

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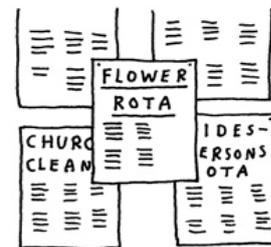
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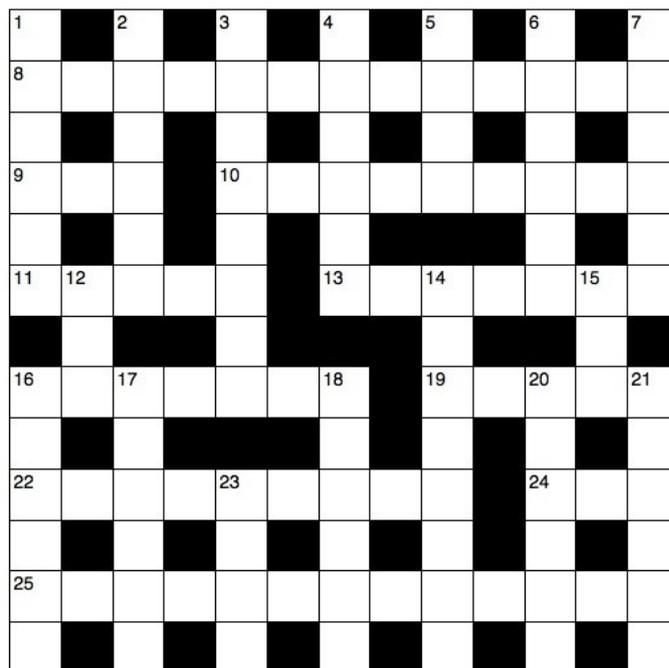


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St John's Church gratefully acknowledges Howard's Funeral Directors' support for **THE WORD** by becoming an advertiser and also for making a generous donation towards the work of the church.

W CROSS R D

Solution on page 21



Across

- 8 Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)
 9 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap' (Leviticus 4:12) (3)
 10 Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books of Esdras and the Maccabees are part of it (9)
 11 Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2)
 13 Clay pit (anag.) (7)
 16 Went to (John 4:46) (7)
 19 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to — your bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5)
 22 David's plea to God concerning those referred to in 14
 Down: 'On — — let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7)
 24 Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1)
 25 How the book of Ezekiel refers to God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4)

Down

- 1 Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6)
 2 One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6)
 3 Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8)
 4 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father' (1 Timothy 5:1) (6)
 5 One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4)
 6 Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4)
 7 God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3)
 12 Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1)
 14 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to

- harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8)
 15 The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3)
 16 Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6)
 17 How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6)
 18 What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2)
 20 Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6)
 21 Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6)
 23 Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1) (4)

In our Book of Remembrance in February

- 2 Howard Stoner, 1986
 6 Maud Whaite-Chapman, 1944
 7 Arthur Hignett, 1989
 9 Ivy Sinnott, 1988
 11 Simon Owens, 1990
 Ann McCann, 1995
 12 Jean Arnold, 2021
 13 William Whaite, 1982
 14 Susan Halsall, 2019
 15 Ernest Bennett, 1999
 17 Joseph Pritchard, 1981
 19 Stephen Rigby, 1986
 20 Winifred Beeley, 1951
 21 Edith Smith, 1966
 22 Ernest Ball, 1963
 24 Lucy Leather, 1987
 25 Elizabeth Clegg, 1978
 27 Harry Campion, 1984
 Barbara Hughes, 1996
 28 Harry Beckingham, 2014

If any of our readers wish to have the name of a deceased relative inscribed in the Book of Remembrance please contact Stuart Baker.

Can it really be that long ago....?

50 years ago, on 8th Feb 1973 the US Senate established a select committee to investigate the Watergate scandal. This led to US President Richard Nixon's resignation in August 1974.
 40 years ago, on 8th Feb 1983 the champion racehorse, Shergar, was kidnapped in Ireland and a £2million ransom demanded. The horse was never seen again.
 20 years ago, on 1st Feb 2003 the US space shuttle Columbia disintegrated over Texas during re-entry, killing all seven astronauts.
 15 years ago, on 29th Feb 2008 Prince Harry was immediately withdrawn from active service in Afghanistan, after the media revealed he was serving a tour of duty with British troops there.

A Life Remembered

On 28th February 2014 one of our parishioners, Captain Henry ("Harry") Beckingham, died on his 94th birthday. His name is inscribed in our Book of Remembrance.

Many years ago Harry gave a very interesting talk to our long-since disbanded Men's Fellowship group about his work as a Bomb Disposal officer during and after the Second World War.

As we approach the anniversary of his death Mavis Beckingham has agreed that **THE WORD** may contain a short article about Harry and the dangerous work which he undertook. This article is based upon two books which Harry wrote: "Living with Danger" and "The History of the German Minefields on Guernsey 1940-45."

Harry was born in 1920 and joined the Territorial Army in June 1939, three months before war was declared. Having served for a short period of time in the Royal Engineers he was sent on a detachment to Sheffield in May 1940 (at the age of only 20) to be in one of the first Bomb Disposal Parties. He remained in Bomb Disposal until June 1946.



Captain Harry Beckingham

Following the first major air-raid on London in September 1940 his unit was ordered to the capital to commence the immense task of dealing with unexploded bombs which had fallen. He spent four years in London and in Hull and was appointed Officer Commanding a Bomb Disposal Platoon which was to take part in the Liberation of the Channel Islands.

On a training course the lecturer asked the trainees what makes a good Bomb Disposal Officer. A bright NCO replied "single, a fast runner, and well prepared for the afterlife." How true this was. During the war 246 officers and men engaged in bomb disposal lost their lives. During the early stages after the German bombing campaign of 1940 the average life expectancy of Bomb Disposal Officers was only about 10 weeks.

But in his first book Harry said "On looking back after 55 years I cannot recall being concerned about one's safety when digging down to a bomb. The thought that it could explode never apparently crossed one's mind." Harry attributed this to youthful naivety, but it was also a mark of conspicuous bravery. He had several near brushes with death.

Harry was promoted to Sergeant in April 1942 and became a commissioned officer in August 1943.

Guernsey was liberated in May 1945 and Harry was involved in an operation which cleared 66,456 land mines and other explosive devices on the island in the space of not much more than ten weeks. 300 German Prisoners of War were retained to assist in this exercise and the work was carried out seven days each week, 12 hours a day.

For those of us who were born after World War II or who were too young to remember it we may find it difficult to imagine the horrors and the hardships which relentless bombing by a hostile enemy causes. We may gain a little insight by watching the daily news reports about the shelling and bombardment of cities, towns and villages in Ukraine, and the death, the injuries, the human misery and the destruction which results from it. We can only marvel and thank God for the bravery of their rescue teams and the Ukrainian Bomb Disposal experts—men like Harry—who risk their lives to prevent the further loss of others.

God in the Sciences

Dr Ruth Bancewicz, who is based at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Every person who ever lived was once a sperm and an egg. Those two cells fused together, and in nine months they turned into a living, breathing, human being. Each of us emerged from this same embryonic development process, which is highly complex and organised, but variable enough to turn out a unique individual every time.



If you like order – such as neat piles of stationery, or tidy colour-coded files – you will enjoy this story. One of the most important stages of an embryo's development is when each section of the body, from head to rump, takes on its identity. Each part is told what shape to take, and which limbs or internal organs to grow: legs or arms, lungs or kidneys, and so on.

The most beautiful part of this body-patterning process is that it brings the dimensions of time and space together in such a neat way. The DNA instructions for the procedure, known as genes, are organised in the order in which they are needed during development which is also the order in which they appear on the body. No other sets of genes are known to be arranged in such a tidy pattern.

So, as the embryo develops, the tissues near the head end activate the first sets of genes. Those active genes then make all the proteins needed for that part of the body to grow and develop in the right way. The tissues just below the head then switch on the second set of genes, and so on. A wave of activation passes down the embryo, specifying each section of the trunk in turn.

The Wisconsin-based developmental biologist Jeff Hardin often quotes Psalm 139 to express the wonder of embryonic development. The Psalmist did not understand how this process happened, but he knew that it was a marvellous thing. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb...your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth."

The story of the tidy genes brings out the hidden beauty in the very early stages of embryonic development. The more biologists get to find out about how we came to be born, the more we can say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made"!

WORD SEARCH

Solution on page 22

In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child - to 'present him to the Lord'. At the same time, she, as a new mother, was 'purified'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, 40 days after Christmas. Jesus is described in the Bible as the Light of the World, and so early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year's supply of candles for the church on this day - hence the name, Candlemas. The story can be found in Luke 2:22-40, where Simeon makes his great declaration of faith and recognition of Jesus. Simeon's 'Nunc Dimittis', is embedded in the Office of Evening Prayer.

Forty
Days
Baby
Boy
Public

Appearance
Mary
Jewish
Mothers
Temple

Jesus
Purified
Present
Lord
Festival

Presentation
Light
World
Candlemas
Simeon

Nunc
Dimittis
Office
Evening
Prayer
West

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

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

ACROSS:

8, Cross-examined. 9, Ash. 10, Apocrypha. 11, Sci-fi. 13, Typical. 16, Visited. 19, Offer. 22, No account. 24, RAC. 25, Sovereign Lord.

DOWN:

1, Oceans. 2, Hopini. 3, Islamist. 4, Exhort. 5, Omar. 6, On spec. 7, Add all. 12, CBI. 14, Plotting. 15, Awe. 16, Vanish. 17, Starve. 18, Daub it. 20, Furrow. 21, Recede. 23, Cure.

***for every action there is an equal an opposite criticism* (anon)**

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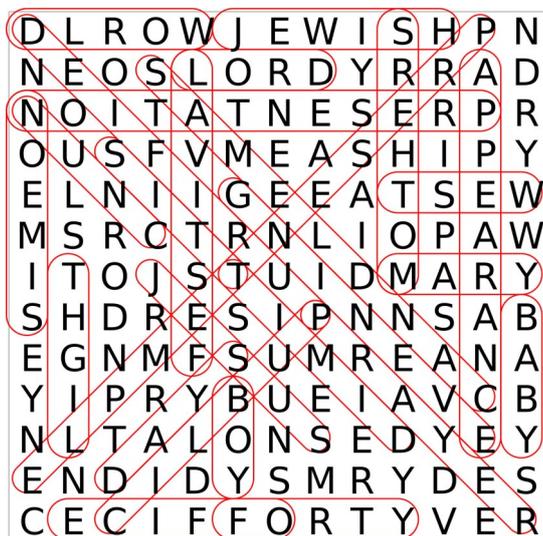
To find out more, email elderberriesgardening@gmail.com or call Shelley Lewis-Lavender on [01704 560690](tel:01704560690).

"The season of Lent begins this month. In times gone by it was observed very strictly, on pain of excommunication. Maybe these days we don't pay it such attention, but taking a bit of extra time with God during Lent is time that He will richly repay:"

The monk, within his monastery,
The ploughman and the lord;
Would keep the Lent time patiently
And keep a simple board.
Rich food nor meat could touch their lip
Just plain and simple fare;
Dried bread in sauce they could not dip –
Or face the Parson's glare!
Today, such things don't tend to be
We've left them in the past!
Just those within that monastery
Who keep the Lenten fast.
But all should come to love anew
The treasured time of Lent
And spend more time with Father, who
Rewards such time well spent!

By Nigel Beeton

WORD SEARCH solution



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THE WORLD OF DREAMS

By John M Shakespeare

Some believe dreams are a form of inspirational driving force which can encourage or discourage us in future actions. What drives and encourages our dreaming sensations are put down to much of the food that we eat, the climate, or the cultures we live in. This theory suggests that dark dreams are more prevalent in Scandinavian countries and that romantic dreams are more Latin inspired.

Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) said dreams were the best ways of finding out about our hidden thoughts. Dreams can be seen as a form of representation of our feelings and emotions that normally we would otherwise repress. The things we encounter in our dreams are perhaps symbols for wishes, that lurk in our own unconscious minds.

Actual dreams have a nature and content that is parasitic upon normal experiences, since the things in our dreams are persons and objects of a kind with which we are generally familiar.

Philosophically, dreams are a convenient image of possibilities of happenings and experiences, between what is imagined and what in fact happens in the real world. Our dreams can often be fantastic and even in some cases terrifying (nightmares).

Post traumatic disorder is a definition recognised now as relating to previous bad experiences. We tend to forget whilst we dream, therefore a good idea is to try and record our dreams, as soon as we wake up, by writing our dreams on a scrap of paper. Or there again it maybe preferable to put behind us dreams that were upsetting.

The great thing to keep clear in our heads and our thinking is that a dream is only a form of fanciful expression. In many ways dreams

can be seen as therapeutic in expressing current worries in a comparatively safe situation. Drug induced dreams through the use of cocaine, heroine and other hallucinating substances have been used by authors, composers and playwrights to produce artistic works. Dreams are not merely a succession of visual images, rather they are expressions of living feelings and emotions in a world of changing events.



Psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), takes a very positive view of the mind, seeing the psyche as a self-regulating creative system, striving for individual identity.

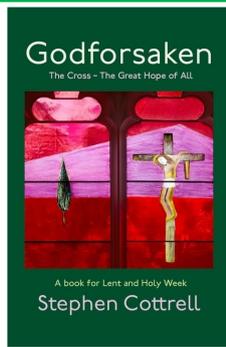
Dreams, he believed, convey practical advice from the unconscious to the conscious mind, assisting in our achievements as individuals. Humanity must understand its dream symbols, as a part of the creative development of our conscious mind.

In the Book of Joel, Zion's children are told this message from God, "Then afterwards I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions", (Joel Chapter 2, verse 28). This message is repeated in the New Testament book of Acts, (Chapter 2, verse 7). Its implications are there for all believers to see.

There can be little doubt that dreams do take a symbolic influence on our ways of thinking, either in conscious or unconscious states. It is important to always remember that dreams are very personal. The knowledge of the dreamer's own mood and feelings, and also of his or her own circumstances, define how dreams become truly meaningful. There remains a widespread belief in the significance of dreams either as prophecies or divine messages, valuable indications perhaps as to what might be!

BOOK REVIEW

Godforsaken: The Cross, the Greatest Hope of All
The Archbishop of York's Lent Book for 2023
by Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, John Murray Press, £14.99



Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell explores Jesus' final words on the Cross in this powerful new book.

In the Gospel of Mark's account of the Passion narrative, Jesus calls out from the cross 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is the Aramaic for 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' – the first line of Psalm 22. It's an anguished expression – traditionally ascribed to King David – of defeat, failure, abandonment and despair.

This series of reflections, written for Lent and Holy Week 2023 by the Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell, ponders the significance of these words. What does it mean for Jesus to have quoted them, at the very end of his life? What do those words mean for us?

This is a beautiful and compelling exploration of the dark, suffering side of the Passion – and how Jesus' words lead us to the greatest hope of all.

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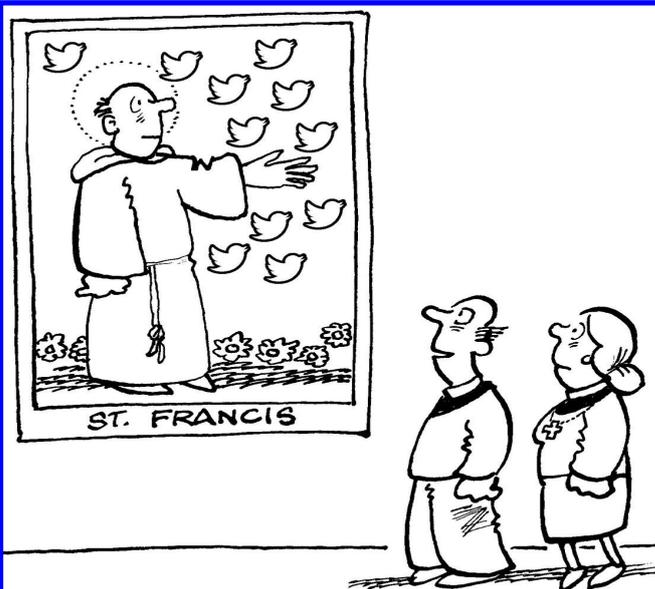
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The calls are **free**. Each talk lasts about 15 minutes and is available for a week.

Each recording becomes available during the afternoon of the Sunday on which it is given.



He's been updated. He's now the patron saint of tweeting!

Book of Remembrance

A request has been received for a name to be inscribed in the Book of Remembrance and the Book will be delivered to a professional calligrapher in early March. If anyone would like to have the name of a loved one inscribed in the Book please contact Stuart Baker **before the end of February** so that the additional names can all be inscribed at the same time.

Passionate about the Bible

Heather Cox continues to explain why she is passionate about the Divine Revelations in the Bible

So, back to my passion. Have you thought about what your passion is yet? Have you got a passion for God's written Word, the Bible? Some Christian's don't read or study their Bible because they think it's too hard to understand. Of course! It's a collection of writings inspired by The Creator God but in our 21st century we're privileged to have access to all manner of resources to help us understand and interpret it. And if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the Holy Spirit who will guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

I returned home from Thailand in March 2011. It felt quite a relief actually because it had been a difficult two and a half years. But I felt a failure! God had called me to Thailand and here I was, two and half years later, back home. So that's definitely a FAIL!



Have you ever failed at something? An exam? A driving test? Some failures feel bigger than other's, don't they? A divorced person might

feel they've failed at marriage. A couple with a wayward child might feel they've failed at being a parent. We've all failed in some way because of sin. But sometimes our failure is for other reasons. How do you feel you've failed? I failed at being a missionary. As much as people told me I hadn't failed, in my head I had. So how did I deal with that failure? How do you deal with your failure?

Being a nurse, I was able to find work again soon after I returned home. I still had my flat, which was rented out, so eventually life took on the 'normal' again. Work at a local Nursing Home, back in my own flat, someone gave me their old bicycle (the first of 6 I now have!!) and so I settled into a routine.

Have you read the story of Moses? It's in the books of Exodus and Numbers. He was a pretty special guy (Numbers 12:3) and God used him in such an incredible way. But Moses failed. He murdered a guy (an Egyptian). I'd say that was a pretty big FAIL!!!

And John Mark. Have you read about him? Now I can relate to his failure. He was the cause of Barnabas and Paul having a major fallout (Acts 16:36-41). Basically, John Mark was a deserter. He gave up. He failed in his ministry assignment too.

Whilst life for me took on it's normal flavour in the years since I returned from Thailand, I still had the lingering belief that I had failed. And because of this I believed that God would never call me or want to use me for anything again, because I was just a failure. Have you ever felt like that? You failed at something, or you repeatedly keep failing so it's obvious that God would never be interested in doing anything with you or speaking to you or having a relationship with you? WRONG! WRONG! WRONG!

Let's go back to Moses. He murdered someone yet God still used Him in an incredible way to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and then God actually met with Moses and spoke to him like you speak to your friend (Exodus 33:11).

And John Mark, the deserter who caused such a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas is described by Paul in 2 Timothy 4:11 as helpful to him in his ministry. That's quite a turnaround isn't it?

One of my favourite people in the Bible is the woman described in Luke 7:36-50. She's described as a woman who had lived a sinful life. That's means she's definitely a failure. A failure at life. But what she did for Jesus was so beautiful that it brings tears to my eyes each time I read it. She knew she was a failure but she also knew Who Jesus was. As she wept at the Saviour's feet, because of her failure at life, she expressed her deep love for Him by pouring out her most precious possession, an expensive perfume. Her sins were forgiven. Her failure forgotten. She went away with peace in her heart (Luke 7:50).

My own peace with my failure came when I was reading Romans chapter 6, verse 4. I've got a new life! I've had this new life since I became a Christian aged 11 but last summer when I was reading through Romans the Holy Spirit shouted at me! Heather, because Jesus was raised from the dead, you've got a new life too! So, yes, I failed at being a missionary (and loads of other stuff) but I don't have to continue living as a failure.

And the same goes for you too.

I began my last letter telling you I had a passion. I hope you can see why Christians need to have a passion for God's Word, the Bible. To Christians, the Bible is Divine revelation. It is God's message to the world. The Bible tells us who we are, why we exist, why we are so messy, how we relate to God and how, one day He will make everything right. Above all the Bible will shows us JESUS.



I also told you that my passion is for God's Word to be read, heard and studied. Can I encourage you to read your Bible daily? There are many daily reading plans to suit different needs and circumstances. Listen to God's Word. In Nehemiah 7:73b-8:11 we read of the Israelites (God's people) gathering together and listening as the Book of the Law of Moses was read aloud to them (and they listened attentively! v3).

We need to hear God's Word read to us, in our churches, in our homes, over zoom. We need to hear God's Word.

Finally, we need to study God's Word. Jesus often used small group study to teach His disciples (Luke 6:12-16) so can I encourage you to join a Bible study group? Learning together around God's Word is both encouraging and a Biblical command! We learn from each other, no matter our knowledge or background.

Psalm 119 is full of exhortations and encouragements about why we should be reading, hearing and studying God's Word, the Bible. JESUS also commands us to remain in His Word (John 15:5-8).

May God abundantly bless you as you seek Him, through this wonderful gift He has given us, the BIBLE.

Christingle and Christmas Tree Festival—Postscript



Sylvia Kent has received a letter from Andrew Moran of The Children's Society thanking St John's Church for making a donation of £80 which was collected at the **Christingle Service** on 11th December. Mr Moran asks that his thanks shall be extended to everyone who contributed towards this sum. He knows how much work goes in to arranging Christingle services and he observes that supporting The Children's Society in this way really does change lives and lets children know that they have a brighter future.



Judith Foster has received letters of appreciation from Lieutenant Colonel Wayne Kitney of the SSAFA (the Armed Forces charity) and Charles O'Hara of the Southport Talking Newspaper thanking St John's Church for providing an opportunity to promote their charities and to leave a collection box in the church.

The missing apostrophe

Seen in a church magazine but never in **THE WORD!** : "Bring your old newspapers (and your neighbours), put them in a sack and tie them in if possible."

From Our Own Correspondent: Doris Brookfield

A New Year's message from Ilkley, West Yorkshire

How lovely to have Zoom so I and my family can still remain part of the St. John's family back in Southport. Of course I miss being there, but God guided me here to be near Adele and Paul and it was the right decision. The only thing I miss is being in Church for Sunday services. Such a shame nobody here has offered me a lift, and without a car up here nearly at the top of Ilkley Moor my only way is by Zoom with you all.

Last year is now a thing of the past and we have a new year ahead of us, what it will bring is unknown as yet, but it's what we do with this time that is important.

I really and truly believe God guides us every day, and it's up to us to follow his guidance.

I watch so many people on their own or couples walking up the steep road by me to get to the top of the moor and the Cow and Calf rock formation. Others come in large walking groups. They pass my little cottage (not a bungalow as I thought). It is what they officially call it here.



*On Ilkley Moor
The Cow and Calf Crag*

What I have realised is that they all want to get to the top of the hill and it's a long walk from Ben Rhydding. It's a mile long, walking up the winding road, all of it up hill, to reach here. Some look very tired but on the way down they all look happy to have achieved it. I think that's what we are all aiming for in life, to get to the top.

I'm so glad Bob and I walked to the top of some of the highest mountains in the Lake District even though it took us quite a while to achieve it, but oh! what a glorious feeling when we got there looking at the panoramic view surrounding us whichever way we turned. Then the walk down was trickier than going up, but how grateful we were that we had been able to do it, and we were so happy.

This last year has been a challenge for my family and myself but I think now we have reached the top and we've got through the bad times together. I pray that 2023 is a better one for all of us. So many of St. John's family have had serious health conditions over the last 2 years and have battled their way through tough treatment and survived. Also many also have had heartbreaks and are still coming to terms with losing loved ones. But with the prayers and support of Roy and the team at St. John's they have helped us all.

May St. John's get the right Vicar it deserves this year, you have all worked so hard to keep it going over the last 2 years, everyone of you have been St. John's angels. How could anyone visiting St. John's not feel the presence of Jesus there?

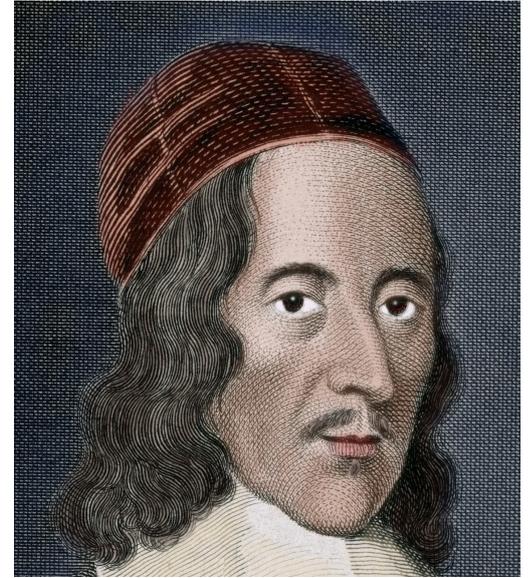
God Bless.
Doris.

Please visit me some time I'll put the kettle on, or open a bottle of wine!

We are very pleased to know that you and your family are enjoying some better times, Doris, after a long period of serious medical problems and gruelling treatment. Let's hope that 2023 is a good year for you and for us all. Ed.

George Herbert, vicar and poet

On 27th February the Church Calendar celebrates George Herbert. For those who are muttering 'never heard of him', just think of the hymn 'Let all the world/ In every corner sing', which he wrote, along with several other hymns which are still popular, even if they are well over 300 years old. In the course of his short life he was a graduate of Cambridge University, a favoured politician of King James, a distinguished poet of the so-called 'metaphysical' school, and a much-loved parish priest at Bemerton, in Wiltshire.



He was born into a wealthy family in Mid-Wales on 3rd April 1593. His father was a Member of Parliament who died when Herbert was three years old. His mother moved her large family to London where, aged 12, Herbert entered Westminster School. In 1609, his mother remarried, and Herbert left home to be a student at Trinity College, Cambridge. By the age of 23, Herbert had graduated with two degrees. He was fluent in Latin and Greek and in 1620 was elected as the University's Public Orator. He held this position for seven years, and for a short time was MP in his hometown in Wales.

As a student he had felt called to ordination, but when he had graduated, he was drawn instead into the government of the time. As a protégé of King James the First he could have pursued a career in government, but that youthful call persisted and after a while he turned instead to the ministry of the Church of England.

When the King died in 1625, and two influential patrons also died at about the same time, Herbert responded to God's call on his life and gave up his secular ambitions. He married in 1629 and became a priest in a small Anglican church in Bemerton.

Here he found inner peace at last, serving God in the local community. His poetic talent continued to flourish along with his musicianship as a skilled lutenist. After only three years as a priest, he died of tuberculosis on 1st March 1633. He was only 39.

It was an era when many clergy were absentee incumbents, paying someone else to do the parish work while they lived elsewhere, but Herbert set himself to be a true parish priest, noted for his pastoral care and practical support of his parishioners.



It is of course his hymns for which he is chiefly remembered today, though his Collected Poems are also regarded as jewels of English poetry.

A number of artistic commemorations of Herbert exist in several churches and cathedrals including a stained-glass window in Westminster Abbey and a statue at the front of Salisbury Cathedral.

News of The Leffler Family

The Lefflers sent a Christmas message to their friends last November bringing them up to date with how they all are and what they are doing. These are the main points:

- Although their family home is on the Wirral Cathy is spending much of her time in Okehampton caring for her parents. Cathy's mother, Gill, is slowly getting better and she is able to do more about the house but tires quickly. Meanwhile, her father Dave's symptoms of Parkinson's Disease have slightly decreased.
- Despite difficulties in arranging for workmen to do jobs in the family home Jeremy is making some progress and has bought a shed which he can use for storage and as a workshop.
- Michael did very well in his GCSEs last summer, achieving four grade 9, two grade 8, and four grade 7 passes. He enrolled at Exeter College on a Geology course which also combines Geography and Biology. A young man of many talents, he continues with ballet lessons and he plays French horn with the college orchestra and with a band.
- Joanna (Durham University, reading Biological Sciences) and Miriam (Aberystwyth University, reading Creative Writing with Film and Television Studies) are now in their final years. They have no settled plans for what they will do after graduation but teaching and post-graduate studies are possible options.

They sent their love and best wishes for 2023.

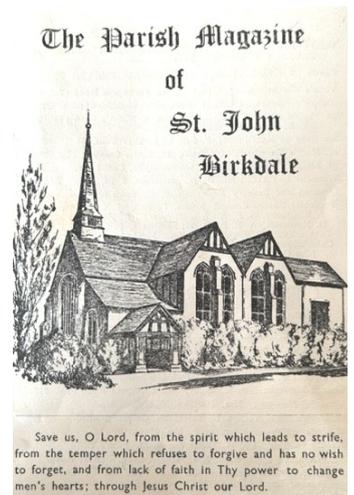
From the Archives

In February 1964 *The Parish Magazine of St John Birkdale* included an article by the Rev. Herbert Evans, then Vicar of Oxshott, entitled "Why your parish magazine MATTERS."

Rev. Evans had been "writing up" parish magazines for nearly 40 years [*the poor chap! He has my profound sympathy. Ed*] and sometimes wondered how much gets through to the readers. He observed that the purpose of a parish magazine is to get across principles and doctrines and to report past and future events in the life of the church and the parish. Since the magazine can fall into the hands of many who have no other connection with the church it is a valuable means of carrying the message and teaching of the church into homes often otherwise untouched by it. Some people who are of no church, or who are part of other Communion, sometimes take "their" parish magazine. It is a noticeboard, a vehicle of teaching, an emissary of the Church wherever it goes.

He also said that "... we must remember that every magazine is better for not being a one-man band. All papers have various contributors and a parish magazine should be no exception." This is a familiar theme in **THE WORD**. Our readers who contribute articles are much appreciated.

Rev. Evans concluded his article by saying that the homely parish magazine is different, and is meant to be different, from the daily newspapers with their glaring headlines. He asked: what newspaper lies about the home for a month or more, encourages home life, breathes out the peace of God and prints so many times the name of Our Lord and Master?



★HAPPY★
BIRTHDAY!

To Judith Harris on 2nd February
Judith Foster on 24th February
Dennis Davis on 25th February
Alex Vernon on 28th February

If there are any birthdays, anniversaries or other reasons to celebrate which our readers would like to share with others **DURING MARCH** please let the Editor know by email to stjohnbirkdaletheword@gmail.com

The Last Laughs

Football: It's a Funny Old Game!

After a Royal Command Performance Tommy Cooper was introduced to Queen Elizabeth II.

"Do you think I was funny?" Tommy asked.

"Yes Tommy," replied the Queen.

"You really thought I was funny?", Tommy asked.

"Yes of course I thought you were funny" said the Queen.

"Did your Mother think I was funny?" Tommy asked.

Queen, "Yes, Tommy...we both thought you were funny."

"Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?" Tommy asked Her Majesty.

"No," replied the Queen, "...but I might not be able to give you a full answer."

"Do you like football?" asked Tommy.

"Well not really" said the Queen.'

"In that case, ..." said Tommy, "....do you mind if I have your Cup Final Tickets?"



Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II upon being asked who played best at a football match she saw replied "The band of the Scots Guards."



Football meets Shakespeare:

David Beckham's son, Romeo, plays for Erith and Belvedere FC. He asked his new club what shirt number he will wear and was told "Wear four out there Romeo!"

And so is Cricket!

A vicar who was a keen cricketer went to see his bishop, for advice on a problem.

Bishop" he said "could you reassure me - do they play cricket in heaven?"

"I'm afraid I don't know," said the bishop, "but if you use that telephone, you can get straight through, and ask them yourself."

The vicar immediately picked up the 'phone and got straight through to St. Peter.

"Please can you tell me", he said "if you play cricket there?"

"Well" said Peter, "do you want to hear the good news or the bad news first?"

"The good news" said the vicar.

"Right - the good news is, that we do play cricket here."

"And the bad news?"

"You're opening the batting next Thursday."

He truly had the last laugh!

Clement Atlee was born 140 years ago. He was described unkindly by Winston Churchill as a modest man with much to be modest about. Yet it was Atlee's government which created the National Health Service. Near the end of his life he neatly and pointedly summed up his career in only five lines:



"There were few who thought him a starter,
Many who thought themselves smarter,
But he ended PM,
CH and OM,
An Earl and a Knight of the Garter."



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