

# THE WORD

MAGAZINE OF ST JOHN'S BIRKDALE

GOD CENTRED, RELATIONSHIP DRIVEN AND LIFE TRANSFORMING

JANUARY 2026 ISSUE 277

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*John 1:1 & 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*

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St John's Church, St John's Road, Birkdale, PR8 4JP  
Vicar: Rev. Jennie Hardy Charity number 1128171

## GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

**A**t the start of the new year we have much to look forward to at St John's.

The most exciting prospect is the beginning of Kids' Church, our own modern version of Sunday School. This will be organised by Jennie and will be staffed by a number of leaders and helpers who will all have done necessary safeguarding training. We look forward to welcoming children into Kids' Church and also to Messy Church one weekday afternoon each month and Jolly Tots on Fridays.

And for grown-ups we shall continue with Godspeed exercise cycle classes, Film Nights, our Knit and Knatter meetings, and our Growth Groups and Bible Study.

We wish all of our readers a healthy and happy New Year and that your faith in the Lord will be strengthened. There is much to do at St John's and everyone can play a part in it. It just requires us to resolve to do it: make a plan and persevere. So instead of making a New Year's resolution to go the gym we should all think about how we can individually help our church in our mission as Christians in Birkdale.



# Pray Together

**Thursday @ 7.30pm**

**on Zoom**

**Meeting ID: 83550743780**

**Passcode:**

**7ehHEK**

This month the prayer meeting will be **only on Thursday, 15th January** and will last half an hour.

If there is anything which readers would like to be included in the prayers please contact Jennie Hardy, Roy Doran, Christine Baker or Clive Morris. Do join us if you can.

## WHO'S WHAT AT ST. JOHN'S

<b>Vicar:</b>	Rev. Jennie Hardy (07872 400718)	<b>Girl Guides:</b>	Mrs. Janette Law (565951)
<b>Clergy (retired):</b>	Rev. Roy Doran (572387)	<b>St. John's Brownies:</b>	Mrs. Helen Jones and
<b>Reader:</b>	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)	<b>Brownie Guiders:</b>	Mrs. Lesley Scott
<b>Churchwarden:</b>	Clive Morris (564206)	<b>St. John's Rainbows:</b>	Mrs. Lesley Scott
<b>PCC Treasurer:</b>	Mrs. Amanda Potts (07530 950100)	<b>Church Flowers:</b>	Mrs. Cath Whiteside (07732 993025)
<b>PCC Secretary:</b>	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)	<b>Magazine Editor:</b>	Stuart Baker (560518)
<b>Gift Aid Secretary:</b>	Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071)	<b>Front Cover design and artwork:</b>	Ian Bennett MBKS
<b>Parish Hall Secretary:</b>	Mrs. Jean Morris (564206)	<b>Magazine Printer:</b>	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)
<b>Electoral Roll Officer:</b>	Stuart Harris (563789)	<b>Buildings Inspector:</b>	David Halsall (07790 822343)
<b>Deanery Synod Reps:</b>	Clive Morris (564206) Stuart Baker (560518)	<b>Eco Champions:</b>	Mrs. Elizabeth Rothwell and Duncan Rothwell (564192)
<b>Lead Safeguarding Officer &amp; Recruiter</b>	Stuart Baker (560518)	<b>Leadership Team:</b>	Rev. Jennie Hardy Rev. Roy Doran Mrs. Christine Baker Clive Morris
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## New Year's Message from the Vicar:

Happy New Year! As you may expect, in my first article this year I would like to talk about... couch to 5ks! Okay, new beginnings! However, a couch to 5k is a great example of how we might want to start any new venture this new year, if you plan to start any at all. For many, the start of a new year is a time to evaluate, plan and make decisions about not only how we would like the year ahead to go but how we would like our lives to go.

Races are mentioned a few times in the New Testament. They refer to finishing well, endurance and perseverance. I haven't taken part in any races for a while, my most attested race was a half marathon, completed in 2 hours 5 minutes, ten years ago! I am considering signing up to take on a Hyrox race this year. I have already begun to evaluate whether this is achievable for me and what I'd need to do in training, before I'll sign up.

We are all called to 'run with perseverance the race marked out for us' (Hebrews 12:1). To run any race with perseverance you need a plan and then you need to execute it. It is the same with our faith.

Do you want to grow in faith? Would you like to grow closer to God this year? Verse 2 of Hebrews 12 instructs us what to do – 'fix your eyes on Jesus'.



Rev'd. Jennie Hardy

**... run with  
perseverance  
the race  
marked out for  
us...**

Sometimes Faith (my dog) sits with me while I'm working in my home office.

Sometimes I get that feeling, that I'm being watched. I turn to find her big eyes completely fixed on me.

Other times on our walks, her eyes are completely fixed on my hand, which holds her sausage that she is given as a reward for good behaviour! Faith demonstrates very clearly what she wants by fixing her eyes on it. That is what Hebrews 12 is encouraging us to do. To be so steadfast on Jesus that we are looking to Him intently, completely focused, without distraction.

This year, why not start by making a plan about how you might grow closer to Jesus this year so that you imitate Him more closely and become more Christlike in your daily life. It might include developing your prayer life or making more space for quiet times with Him.

Perhaps a new Bible reading plan. Maybe you need to plan a retreat this year in order to take some meaningful time out with God. Plan it. Fix your eyes on Jesus. As Nike is famous for saying, 'Just do it'!

Make this one new year's resolution that lasts for all eternity as you draw closer to the One who drew close to you.

Be blessed,

Love, Jennie xx

# WHAT'S ON AT ST. JOHN'S

**GODSPEED**  
**INDOOR CYCLING CLASSES**  
TUESDAY 7.30PM  
THURSDAY 6PM  
FRIDAY 9.30AM

St. John's Birkdale  
DRIVEN BY JESUS

Scan to book!

QR code

**ST JOHN'S BIRKDALE FILM NIGHTS**  
CHURCH HALL, ST JOHN'S ROAD, BIRKDALE PR8 4JP

**2026 PROGRAMME**

16 <sup>th</sup> JANUARY	FILM TITLES ARE
20 <sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY	DISPLAYED ON THE
27 <sup>th</sup> MARCH	CHURCH NOTICE
17 <sup>th</sup> APRIL	BOARDS
29 <sup>th</sup> MAY	
19 <sup>th</sup> JUNE	
24 <sup>th</sup> JULY	

£5 PP PER SCREENING  
6:30PM REFRESHMENTS | 7:00PM SCREENING | BOOK WITH CHRISTINE 01704 560518

**Jolly Tots**  
Every Friday in term time  
1pm - 2.30pm

For tots, babies & bumps  
St John's Hall, St John's Road, PR8 4JP

Connect with other parents  
and bring your little one for  
nursery rhymes, dancing, play,  
stories and more.

CONTACT  
[info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk](mailto:info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk)  
[stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk](http://stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk)  
07905875944

3rd Monday of the month  
7.30pm

St. John's Birkdale  
DRIVEN BY JESUS

**Growth**  
THE BIBLE COURSE  
EXPLORE THE BIG STORY!  
@ *Stuart & Christines*  
**food. fellowship. fun.**

[info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk](mailto:info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk)

WHAT'S COMING TO ST. JOHN'S

St John's  
Birkdale

DRIVEN BY IDEAS

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

# Beetle Drive & Bingo

23 January 2026

7pm

Bring your drinks & a glass!

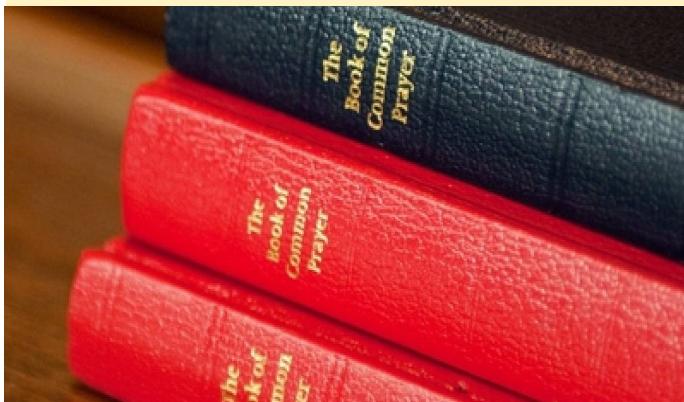
Tickets £5

[Info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk](mailto:Info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk)

# WHAT'S ON WEDNESDAYS AT ST JOHN'S

## MIDWEEK COMMUNION SERVICE

1st & 3rd Wednesdays at 10.30am



There will be a Midweek traditional Communion service at 10.30am in church on **Wednesdays 7th & 21st January**.

On 7th January the service will be followed by Brunch.

On 21st January the service will be followed by tea, coffee and biscuits.

2nd & 4th Wednesdays  
7.30pm



# Growth

HOME  
GROUP

@ Clive & Queen Jeans  
food. fellowship. fun.

[info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk](mailto:info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk)



2nd & 4th Wednesdays  
2pm

# God's Word

STUDY  
GROUP

@ the small hall, St John's  
Church PR8 4JP  
[revroydoran@btinternet.com](mailto:revroydoran@btinternet.com)



# CHURCH SERVICES IN JANUARY

**Worship on the Second Sunday of Christmas**

**SUNDAY 4th JANUARY**  
**08.30 Holy Communion, in church only**  
**10.30am Holy Communion & Baptism in church and via zoom and phone**

## Collect for the Second Sunday of Christmas

God our Father, in love you sent your Son that the world may have life: lead us to seek him among the outcast and to find him in those in need, for Jesus Christ's sake.

**The subject of Jennie's talks: Brave New Year– The Wonder of Epiphany!**

### **The Text: Isaiah 60: 1-2, 18-19 NIV**

1 "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. 2 See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you.

18 No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. 19 The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

**MIDWEEK TRADITIONAL COMMUNION SERVICE**  
Followed by Brunch



**WEDNESDAY 7th JANUARY**  
**10.30am**  
**IN CHURCH**

**Worship on the First Sunday of Epiphany**

**SUNDAY 11th JANUARY**  
**8.30am Holy Communion in church only**  
**10.30am Service of the Word in church and via zoom and phone**

## Collect for the First Sunday of Epiphany

Heavenly Father, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son: may we recognize him as our Lord and know ourselves to be your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

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

**A Little is Enough**

### **The Text: Mark 6: 30-44 NIV**

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." 32 So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. 35 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. 36 Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy

themselves something to eat." 37 But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" 38 "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish." 39 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. 44 The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

# CHURCH SERVICES IN JANUARY

Worship on the Second  
Sunday of Epiphany

**SUNDAY 18th JANUARY**  
**8.30am Holy Communion in church only**  
**10.30am Service of the Word in church and via  
zoom and phone**

## Collect for the Second Sunday of Epiphany

Eternal Lord, our beginning and our end: bring us with the whole creation to your glory, hidden through past ages and made known in Jesus Christ our Lord.

### The subject of Christine's talks:

#### The Text: 2 Corinthians 9: 1-15 NIV

1 There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the Lord's people. 2 For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. 3 But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. 4 For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. 6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able

to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written:

**"They have freely scattered their gifts  
to the poor; their righteousness endures  
forever."**

10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

**MIDWEEK TRADITIONAL  
COMMUNION SERVICE**  
Tea, coffee and biscuits will be  
served after the service



**WEDNESDAY  
21st JANUARY  
10.30am  
IN CHURCH**

## Observations on Christian life and faith

Life is too short for us to do everything we want to do; but it is long enough for us to do everything God wants us to do. – Anon

The future belongs to those who belong to God. This is hope. – W T Purkiser

An atheist is someone who believes that what you see is all you get. – Anon

Philosophy and religion may reform, but only the Bible can transform. – B Edwards

# CHURCH SERVICES IN JANUARY

Worship on the Third Sunday of Epiphany

**SUNDAY 25th JANUARY**

**8.30am Holy Communion in church only**  
**10.30am Service of The Word in church and via zoom and phone**

## Collect for the Third Sunday of Epiphany

God of all mercy, your Son proclaimed good news to the poor, release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed: anoint us with your Holy Spirit and set all your people free to praise you in Christ our Lord.

### The subject of Jennie's talk:

### The Text: Acts 20: 32-38 NIV

32 "Now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34 You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. 35 In everything I did, I

### The Blessing of Giving

showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" 36 When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. 37 They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. 38 What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

## The Story Behind..

### "The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended"

This well known and much loved hymn was written by John Ellerton, vicar of St Michael's Church, Crewe Green, Cheshire. He was born in London of parents from Yorkshire in 1826 and was educated at school on the Isle of Man and then at Trinity College, Cambridge where he became interested in Christian Socialism. He came under the influence of Charles Kingsley, author of 'The Water Babies', and showed real concern about the social deprivation and atrocious conditions prevalent in Victorian working class Britain.

In 1860 he became the vicar at St Michael's, Crewe Green and acted as Chaplain to Lord Crewe and attended to the spiritual needs of Lord Crewe's estate workers. He also took evening classes at the Mechanics' Institute for workers on the London and North-Western Railway when Crewe came to prominence as a railway town.

While at Crewe Green he wrote 86 hymns including "The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended" as a final hymn for missionary meetings. It first appeared in a new hymnal, "Church Hymns", whose musical director was

Sir Arthur Sullivan and which aimed at being less high church in tone than "Hymns Ancient and Modern."

Ellerton suffered a slight stroke when he was 65 and died two years later in Torquay. At his funeral service six of his hymns were sung. History does not record if "The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended" was one of them but it probably was because of its implications of the end of life and the end of a day. It was chosen by Queen Victoria for her diamond Jubilee service in 1897 and would have been sung by most of the Evensong congregations throughout the land on the following Sunday.

The traditional tune for the hymn is 'St Clement', composed by Rev. Clement Schofield in 1874. The tune was roundly condemned by Vaughan Williams and in 1932 by Cosmo Lang, then the Archbishop of Canterbury. Nevertheless, it remains a popular hymn to this day with a recognisable and relatively easy to sing tune. It was sung at the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II on 19 September 2022 and has an enduring popularity, coming in third place in a BBC Songs of Praise poll of favourite hymns in 2005.

Stuart Baker

Source: "Every Hymn has a story" by John Large; BBC News and Press Office.

# The Star of Bethlehem

## A new theory

The New Testament account in Matthew's Gospel of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus includes the arrival of some wise men (Magi) from the east who brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They visited King Herod and asked where was the newborn king of the Jews and explained that they had seen his star as it arose and had come to worship him. They continued on their quest, guided by the star which stopped over the place where Jesus was.

There has been much scholarly debate over the centuries concerning the star. Sceptics dismiss it as a myth. Others have sought an explanation. Was it a comet? Or an exploding star? Or light emitted by the conjunction of Jupiter with Saturn or Venus? Was it a divine light or angelic manifestation? Whatever it was, Matthew's Gospel records that the wise men claimed to have followed it. So what was it?

The account that the star rose, moved and then stood still is not how stars usually behave, and this made it difficult for researchers to conclude that it was an astronomical event.

A possible answer has recently been advanced by a NASA planetary scientist, Mark Matney, writing in the Journal of the British Astronomical Association. He suggests a possible explanation: a comet.

He had this idea when he was a student working in a Christmas sky show which asserted that no astronomical object could act as the biblical star did,



Elihu Vedder's "Star of Bethlehem" (Milwaukee Art Museum)

Every celestial body rises in the east and sets in the west—nothing should ascend in the southern sky and come to a standstill, as the Star of Bethlehem was described doing.

But Matney suggests that a comet that takes hundreds to millions of years to orbit the sun might have that appearance. If a bright comet comes near to the Earth at just the right speed, direction and distance, it could look like it is frozen in time for a little while. He scoured ancient astronomical texts in search of such an event.

An historical account from China documented a strange star that appeared in the year 5 BC (which would fit with the timeline of the Magi visiting King Herod before his death in 5BC) and glowed for more than 70 days. Constructing an orbit for this odd star—which Matney suspects was a comet—resulted in a plausible explanation for the Star of Bethlehem. This comet's eastward motion could have appeared, briefly, to cancel out the effect of the Earth's rotation and give the appearance of standing still.

Ralph Neuhauser, an astrophysicist in Germany, casts doubt on the reliability of the old Chinese record, but Matney asserts that generally they have been found to have been quite accurate. He concedes that his own theory is plausible although not proven. But whatever this star was, it was real to the Magi who followed it and found our Lord and Saviour of mankind.

Stuart Baker  
Sources: "The Times", 8th December 2025; The "Daily Mail", 9th December 2025; The Smithsonian Magazine, 15th December 2025.

# CHRISTMAS at St John's *Birkdale*



DECEMBER HAS BEEN SUCH A BUSY MONTH AT ST JOHN'S. The first events were Messy Christmas for young children which will continue in the new year as Messy Church, and there was a party for Jolly Tots.

We had a Memorial Service for anyone who wanted to light a candle to the memory someone whom they loved. And then we had our annual Christmas Tree Festival and Fair at which we were treated to singing by young pupils from Farnborough Road school, the Learning Room Singers and The Ainsdale Village Choir.

The Fair drew quite large numbers of visitors despite the atrocious weather and this helped to pay for the cost of repairing roof leaks and failed electrics.

We also had a Christingle service, and a lovely Christmas Carol service which was attended by more than 140 adults and children.



Our connection with Farnborough Road school involved Rev. Jennie and Head Teacher Jennie Sephton being snowballed at FRIS Christmas fair after assemblies in the school, and the juniors came to St John's and donated to the tree charities and sang.

## Colourful Clergymen

### The Rev. Dr. Edward Drax Free (1764-1830)

Continuing with our series of occasional articles about clergymen who have not been a credit to their vocation, our readers may remember that last July we looked at the life of, and scandals surrounding, the Rev. Harold Davidson, Rector of the parish of Stiffkey, who was defrocked in 1932 for his debauchery. You may have thought that his outrageous behaviour could not be surpassed but, as is often the case in life, just when we think that nothing could be worse we find that something **is** worse—and by a long margin!

Modern vicars do not compare to Rev. Dr. Drax Free. Almost anyone would be remembered as a saint compared to him. At University he developed the reputation of being a drunkard and troublemaker. Having been made a Fellow of St John's College, at the age of 20 Oxford University was relieved to get the opportunity to free themselves of him after a disciplinary hearing in which he punched the Bursar in the face.

It was then, in 1808, that the troubles of the villagers of Sutton in Bedfordshire started. He was installed as the Rector of All Saints church and it immediately became clear that he had no intention of attending to his parish. He kept the church locked most of the time and rarely turned up for services.

He was a heavy gambler and accrued large debts. To raise money he resorted to fining parishioners for not attending church services, relying on an ancient anti-Catholic law which had been enacted in the reign of Elizabeth I. He made the mistake of trying to extract £360 (now worth about £40,000) from a local squire, Montagu Burgoyne, by suing him for unpaid fines. Burgoyne successfully argued that he could not have attended church on the alleged dates because the church had not been open, and also he was not a Roman Catholic and therefore that law did not apply to him.

Rev Drax Free lost the case but had made an enemy of Burgoyne, who was one of his churchwardens, and this unleashed a devastating response. Burgoyne instituted Ecclesiastical proceedings with the aim of ousting Free from the parish. The charge sheet was lengthy and, short of murder, contained almost every offence and misconduct which one would hope never to encounter in a priest:

- the crime of fornication; he employed various women (spinsters) as housekeepers and succeeded in making three of them pregnant;
- profane cursing and swearing;
- indecent conversation;
- drunkenness, and immorality, including possession of French pornography;
- his lewd and profligate life and conversation;
- neglect of divine service on many Sundays;
- using the porch of the church of the parish as a stable and for foddering cattle, and turning out swine into the churchyard;
- refusing the use of the church for vestry meetings lawfully called;
- selling the lead on the roof of the chancel of the church for his own profit;
- refusing, and neglecting, and delaying to baptize or christen children of his parishioners;
- refusing or neglecting to bury various corpses;
- requiring illegal fees to be paid to him for baptisms and burials.



Rev. E. Drax Free

It may be said that Burgoyne threw the book at this troublesome priest. Free managed to spin the proceedings out for seven years but eventually was found to have committed all these transgressions and was ordered to leave the parish and the Rectory. He refused to do so and the Bishop sent men and a Constable to evict him. Free threatened them with pistols and it was decided that the best course was to lay siege to the Rectory and thereby starve him out. After two weeks this succeeded.

After his expulsion from the parish he returned to Oxford where he tried unsuccessfully to force his college to restore his Fellowship. He met his end when he exited from a tavern and was struck by a cart.

He was a disgrace to himself, his college and the church. How today's Sunday tabloids would have loved him! His lasting legacy was the enactment of the Church Discipline Act 1840 which was designed to prevent anyone like him ever staining the reputation of the church so badly again.

Stuart Baker

Sources: "A Field Guide to the English Clergy", Fergus Butler-Gallie; pamphlet by Montagu Burgoyne, 1830, held in Harvard University Library; "Scandal in the Church" by R B Outhwaite.

# CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL AND CHRISTMAS FAIR

## THANK YOU

**A**s we approach the end of another busy year we look back at the successful Summer and Christmas Fairs, but more latterly at the Christmas Fair. Despite the weather which wasn't too kind to us (but then it is December!!), we amazingly raised £2,600 from the generosity of everyone who came and supported the Fair by buying presents and items from the many various stalls.

None of this could have been achieved without the hard work of the Team behind the scenes. As always, my very sincere thanks go to each one of them for their loyalty and continuous hard work each year in helping to raise our much needed funds for so many ongoing maintenance projects. Without their help it would not have been possible.

My thanks must also go to all those who gave their time to help in setting up and decorating the halls in preparation; also, not forgetting the "strong arms" who placed the boards round the church in readiness for the arrival of the Christmas trees, which look so decorative.

Lastly, I must not forget to thank all those who donated items for the raffle, tombola and bottle stalls. It was much appreciated.

As we move forward into 2026, let us hope and pray for a peaceful New Year.

With best wishes, Sylvia Kent

**Holocaust Memorial Day**, held each year on 27<sup>th</sup> January, marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp. Under the Nazis, six million Jewish men, women and children were murdered, as well as millions of Gentiles. Holocaust Memorial Day also commemorates the more recent persecutions and slaughter in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

A spokesman explains: "HMD is for everyone. Each year across the UK, we bring people together to learn more about the past, empathise more with people today, and work to build a better future. Together we bear witness for communities who suffered attempted annihilation, and we honour the survivors and all those whose lives were changed beyond recognition."

This year's theme is 'Bridging Generations'.



## Eating a Rainbow is good for you

The supermarket chain Tesco has reported a surge in demand for brightly coloured vegetables, from rainbow carrots to pink onions.

The trend follows calls from nutritionists for people to 'eat the rainbow' of fruits and vegetables, so that they get the whole range of vitamins and minerals.

Demand for rainbow carrots and pink onions is up by 100 per cent this autumn versus last, the demand for rainbow chard is up 70 per cent and that for Cavolo Nero – also known as 'black cabbage' – is up around 30 per cent on last year.

### Red (Tomatoes, Strawberries, Radishes):

Lycopene for heart health & antioxidants.

### Orange/Yellow (Carrots, Sweet Potatoes, Oranges):

Carotenoids for vision, skin, immunity.

### Green (Spinach, Broccoli, Avocado):

Antioxidants, vitamins, minerals for overall health.

### Blue/Purple (Blueberries, Eggplant):

Anthocyanins for brain health & digestion.

### White/Brown (Onions, Garlic, Cauliflower):

Allicin & flavonoids for heart health & immunity.



### How to "Eat the Rainbow"

#### Variety is Key:

Don't stick to just a few favourites; try new produce to get diverse nutrients.

#### Aim for 5+ A Day:

The NHS recommends at least five portions of different fruits and veg.

#### Include Skins:

Eat colourful skins (apples, eggplant) where possible for concentrated nutrients.



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

## On the Perils of Leading Church in Prayer

The Rectory,  
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

I do hope you have now settled down in your first parish – although it is such a pity that you did not choose a more distinguished one. I know you feel your vocation lies in inner city work – whereas mine, fortunately, has always been to the better sort of rural village. I have always felt that the Almighty understands me well in that regard.

We had a little flurry of activity in church on Sunday. At the signal "let us pray", as the congregation dutifully flopped to their knees, sounding like a flock of geese settling in for the night, Major Hastings lost his glass eye. Yes, again! That man is so careless at times. Anyway, released from captivity, the eye rolled under the pews like a fugitive marble, ricocheting from hassock to handbag over the stone flags.

My sonorous entreaties to the Almighty were completely lost as the entire congregation scuttled under pews, trying to retrieve it. It finally appeared on the collection plate – along with £4.17, 100 pesetas and Miss Simpson's front door key. I was unsure whether the last item represented a fit of absent-mindedness or an improper suggestion. I returned it to her very firmly at the end of the service.

The eye stared at me mournfully as I blessed it, along with the money. But it left a small social dilemma. What is the etiquette of returning a lost glass eye to its owner?

To have processed down the aisle with it, accompanied by crucifer and verger seemed a little too public. To sneak it to him as we shook hands at the door seemed a little too furtive. I finally decided to send a server to deliver it during the last hymn. I still wonder if it was the right decision. Perhaps you could look through that new Common Worship book and see if they have included an appropriate rite for returning lost glass eyes. We here at St James-the-Least-of-All haven't yet got round to Common Worship. The days are evil enough as it is.

Your loving uncle, Eustace

# Parish Registers

## Funerals

**23rd December:** Eileen Elizabeth Harrison, died on 30th November 2025 aged 92 years.

## Safeguarding in the CoFE

The Bishop of Tewkesbury, Robert Springett, is to be the Church of England's new Lead Safeguarding Bishop, taking over from Bishop Joanne Grenfell who leaves the role at the end of March 2026.

Bishop Robert will work closely with the National Director of Safeguarding and other members of the National Safeguarding Team. The C of E is continuing to strengthen its safeguarding practices by committing to independent scrutiny and improving delivery. Bishop Robert said, "Safeguarding should not be seen as a burden, but embraced with joy for the opportunity it offers to serve others."



The boiler only worked if the verger switched it on

## Another Amazing Technicolour Blanket

**The second Knit & Knatter blanket  
is complete and ready  
to be used in church!**



If you'd like to come along to Knit & Knatter we meet on the fourth Wednesday each month at 2.30pm in the vestry. After putting our needles down for Christmas we will start again on January 28th.

Cost £1.00 to include refreshments!  
Contact: Christine Baker (560518)



This lovely nativity scene was made by Cheryl Dean, one of our knitters and knatterers. Project completed! But the possibilities are endless. Do come and join in.

## In the event of Medical Emergency at St John's

**We have three trained First Aiders:  
Rev. Jennie, Janette Law  
and Jayne Parkinson.**

If none of them is available there are two points of contact: Clive Morris and Stuart Baker. They are not trained First Aiders but if they are available they can be contacted and they will contact the emergency services if necessary or give access to the First Aid kit which is kept in the church hall kitchen.

We have a Defibrillator which was generously given to the church by the Guides and is maintained by them. This is in the entrance lobby in the church hall next to the door which opens into the corridor leading to the church.

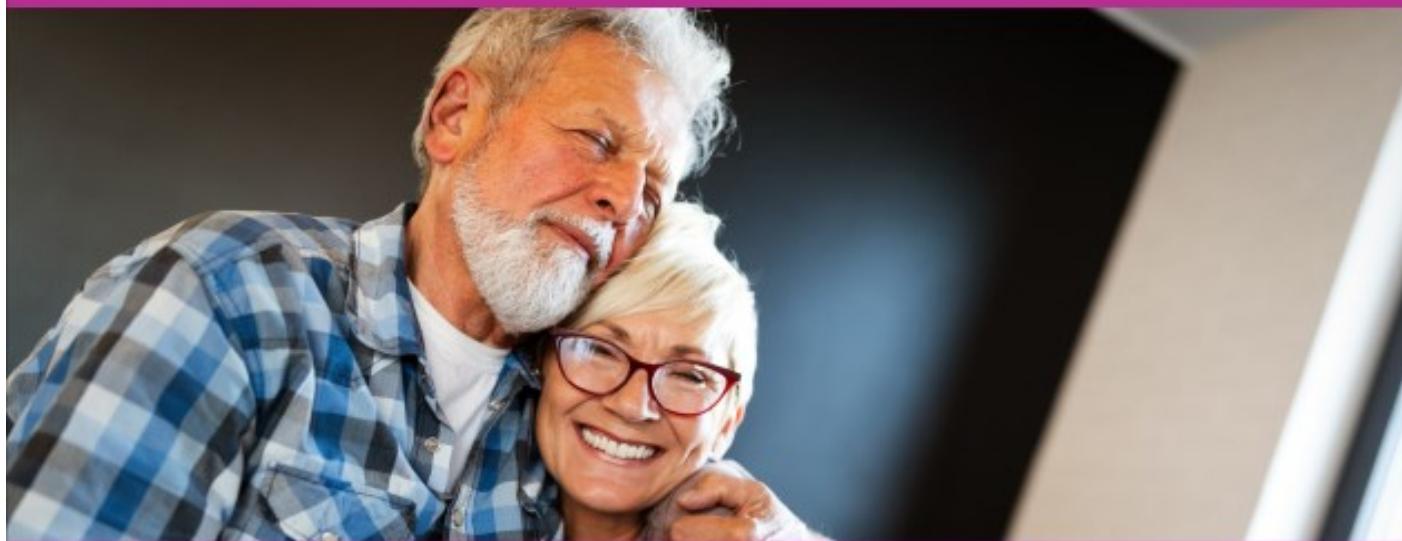
Instructions for use of the Defibrillator are contained in the machine.

We recommend that worshippers and other visitors to our church should carry a mobile phone with them. There is not a payphone at the church or in the church hall.



Our defibrillator (outlined in red)

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## AESOP'S FABLES

Stuart Baker revisits these ancient stories in search of the morals which they contained. This month he looks at

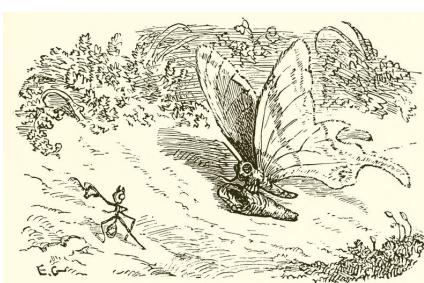
### The Ant and the Chrysalis

**A**n Ant nimbly running about in the sunshine in search of food came across a Chrysalis that was very near its time of change. The Chrysalis moved its tail, and thus attracted the attention of the Ant, who then saw for the first time that it was alive.

"Poor, pitiable animal!" cried the Ant disdainfully. "What a sad fate is yours! While I can run hither and thither, at my pleasure, and, if I wish, ascend the tallest tree, you lie imprisoned here in your shell, with power only to move a joint or two of your scaly tail." The Chrysalis heard all this, but did not try to make any reply.

A few days after, when the Ant passed that way again, nothing but the shell remained. Wondering what had become of its contents, he felt himself suddenly shaded and fanned by the gorgeous wings of a beautiful Butterfly.

"Behold in me," said the Butterfly, "your much-pitied friend! Boast now of your powers to run and climb as long as you can get me to listen."



So saying, the Butterfly rose in the air, and, borne along and aloft on the summer breeze, was soon lost to the sight of the Ant forever.

#### The morals of this story:

**Do not judge by appearances:** What looks small, ugly, or limited may be in the middle of a great transformation.

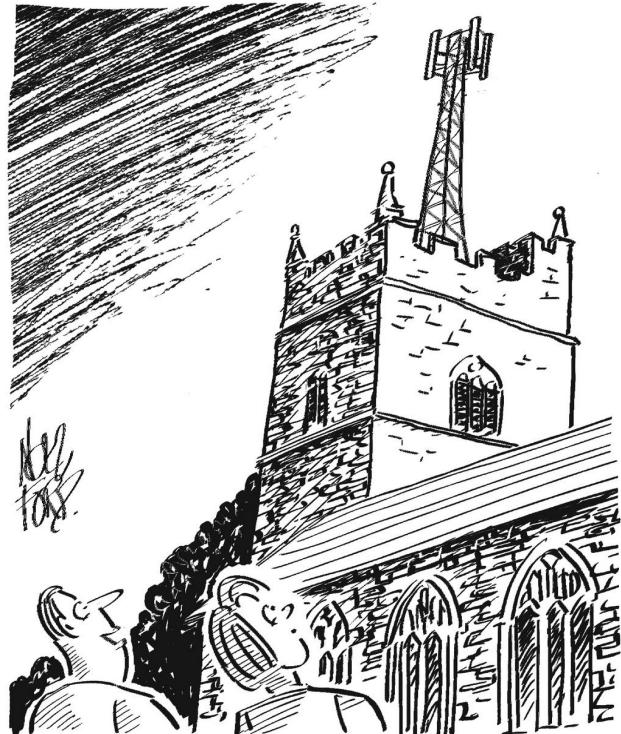
**Avoid arrogance:** Boasting about one's current advantages is foolish, as situations can change.

#### Softly does it....

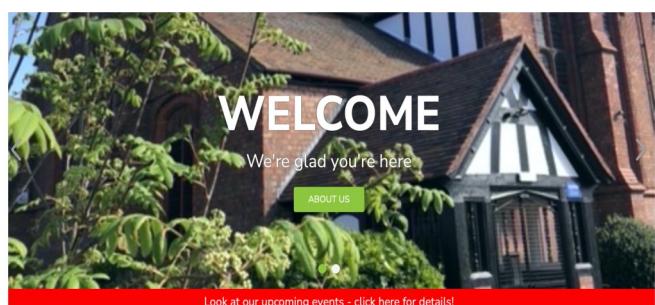
A churchwarden went to the Police Station wishing to see the burglar who had slipped in and out of the church during evensong.

"You'll get your chance in court," said the Desk Sergeant.

"I don't want revenge," said the man. "I want to know how he got out of the service early without the vicar noticing. I've been trying to do that for years!"



Spot the Churchwarden. Ho ho ho! Happy Christmas!



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The church can accommodate 250 and can be available by arrangement for concerts by musical and choral groups. **If you would like to enquire about using the church please contact Clive**

## Epiphany! by the Rev. Roy Shaw

You probably know from tales of Greek mythology that gods and goddesses would often appear out of nowhere in ancient Greece to beguile or trick mortals. The word for this in everyday Greek was 'epiphany'; - the appearance or manifestation of a divine being on earth to humans. For Christians Epiphany is the season after the 12 days of Christmas.

Our Epiphany Bible readings tell of the 'manifestation' of Jesus to a wider audience than those in the Christmas stories. We mark this in the first instance by placing the Wise Men in the crib scene; they have now arrived to see the consummation of their hopes and travels in the infant Jesus. And our Epiphany readings usually continue through the season with Jesus' baptism; John the Baptist's witness to Christ; Jesus' family attempting to take charge of Him because of His popularity with the crowds; and the Presentation in the Temple. In all these, something of divine glory is being made manifest.

In more common parlance today, an epiphany means a sudden or blinding realisation ('I had a sudden epiphany that John was going to marry Celia'). That modern meaning is helpful; 'Gosh, epiphanies can be part of our Christian experience!' Remember that occasion we were so conscious of God's love holding us? Or the time we knew the words we used to that stranger were infused with a grace we didn't know we had? These and similar experiences which we've probably all had can be seen as our epiphanies- a time when God was made manifest to us (and possibly through us) in a distinct way.

Have you ever thought of those sorts of experiences as an epiphany? Not ring-fenced to a particular time of year, but part of our everyday experience, as we seek to live out our baptism promises, and follow Jesus through the ups and downs, the humdrum and the extraordinary, the joys and sorrows of the everyday.

The promise and reality of Christmas is 'Emmanuel-God with us'. And the reality of Epiphany is that God *IS* with us, in the everyday realisation of how great God is, how much God loves us, and how God pours upon us grace after grace after grace.

May we have many epiphanies in 2026, and may they all bring us closer to the God who has chosen in His love to reveal Himself to us.

## Looking Forward

A poem by Penny Candlin

Looking forward  
Focused on the goal  
Distractions to the left and to the right  
Looking forward  
Obstacles in the way  
Challenges to be overcome  
Looking forward  
New doors to be opened  
Doors to be closed  
Looking forward  
Fears to be conquered  
Time to be allocated to prayer  
Looking forward.

## St John's Prayers for those in need

We believe in the power of prayer and we are eager to include as many people who currently need prayer in our twice monthly prayer meetings and on the screen on a Sunday. We aim to keep the prayer list current and to receive regular updates on people who need longer term prayer so that we can pray meaningfully at the zoom prayer meeting. Names will be on the list for a month at a time, so the lists will be refreshed at the beginning of each calendar month. If you would like to be on the list for January or February **please let Rev. Jennie know** with a current update of why you would like prayer so that we can use that information on a Thursday. If you would like to add someone else to the list, provided you have asked their permission, then pass their name, and any other information on why they would like prayer, to Jennie.



## The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January

This year the prayers and reflections are from the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with the Armenian Catholic and Evangelical Churches.

These resources draw upon centuries-old traditions of prayer and petitions used by the Armenian people, along with hymns that originated in the ancient monasteries and churches of Armenia, some of which date as far back as the fourth century.

# W C R O S S R D

**The Bible version used in our crosswords is the NIV.**  
Reproduced by permission of BRF and John Capon.

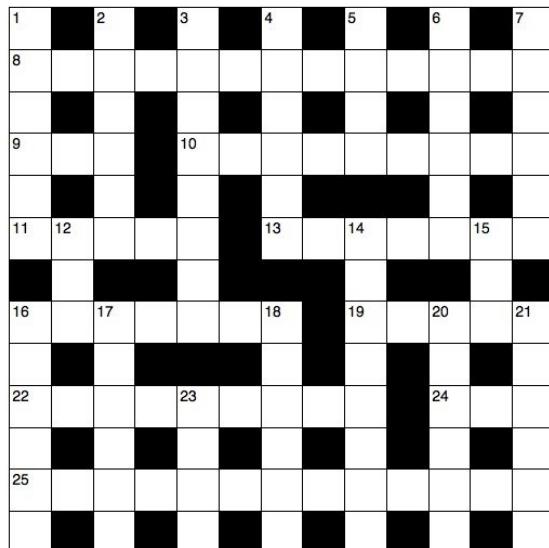
*Solution below*

## Across

- 8 How the Abyss (NIV) is described in the Authorized Version (Revelation 9:1) (10,3)
- 9 Frozen water (Ezekiel 1:22) (3)
- 10 The Ten Commandments (9)
- 11 In Roman Catholic theology, neither heaven nor hell (5)
- 13 Des cons (anag.) (7)
- 16 'Though [your sins] are red as — , they shall be like wool' (Isaiah 1:18) (7)
- 19 Keen (Romans 1:15) (5)
- 22 Repugnant, loathsome (Jeremiah 24:9) (9)
- 24 Drink like an animal (Judges 7:5) (3)
- 25 First and last (Revelation 22:13) (5,3,5)

## Down

- 1 Father of Ahi, a Gadite (1 Chronicles 5:15) (6)
- 2 Where David found the stone with which he killed Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (6)
- 3 'Hour by hour fresh lips are making thy — doings heard on high' (8)
- 4 'And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their — at night' (Luke 2:8) (6)
- 5 United Society for Christian Literature (1,1,1,1)
- 6 'If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would — — or a tax collector' (Matthew 18:17) (1,5)



- 7 Where Paul was taken when things became difficult for him in Berea (Acts 17:15) (6)
- 12 Istituto per le Opere di Religione (Vatican Bank) (1,1,1)
- 14 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new — ; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 Corinthians 5:17) (8)
- 15 Used to colour ram skins red for use in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:5) (3)
- 16 Vat car (anag.) (6)
- 17 'Be joyful — — , patient in affliction, faithful in prayer' (Romans 12:12) (6)
- 18 'The parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts — — special treatment' (1 Corinthians 12:23) (4,2)
- 20 Ancient rowing boat (Isaiah 33:21) (6)
- 21 Say again (2 Corinthians 11:16) (6)

## In our Book of Remembrance In January

1st	John Smith, 1964
5th	Lilian Burdon, 2010
8th	George Yarwood, 1985
10th	John Higgins, 1983
11th	Peter Arnold, 2017
13th	Eliza Hind, 1970
14th	Edward Livesley, 1984
16th	Harold Hamer, 2009
21st	Henry McCann, 1959
	Susan Hellewell, 1977

24th	Mary Gee, 2000
25th	Craig Smith, 2015
27th	Laura Marsh, 1994
	Betty Gordon, 2009
28th	Audrey Draper, 2002
	Jean Jones, 2018

**If any of our readers wish to have the name of a deceased relative inscribed in the Book of Remembrance please contact Stuart Baker on 01704 560518**

**ACROSS:** 1, Abdie, 2, Stream, 3, Wondrous, 4, Flacks, 5, USCL, 6, A pagan, 7, Athens, 12, IOR, 14, Creation, 15, Dye.

**DOWN:** 8, Bottomless pit, 9, Icē, 10, Decalogue, 11, Limbo, 13, Seconds, 16, Crimson, 19, Eager, 22, Abhorrent,

24, Lap, 25, Alpha and Omega.

**CROSSWORD SOLUTION**

## God in the Arts

The Revd Michael Burgess surveys great works of sacred art.

### 'He gave us eyes to see them':

#### The Church Door - St John's Adel

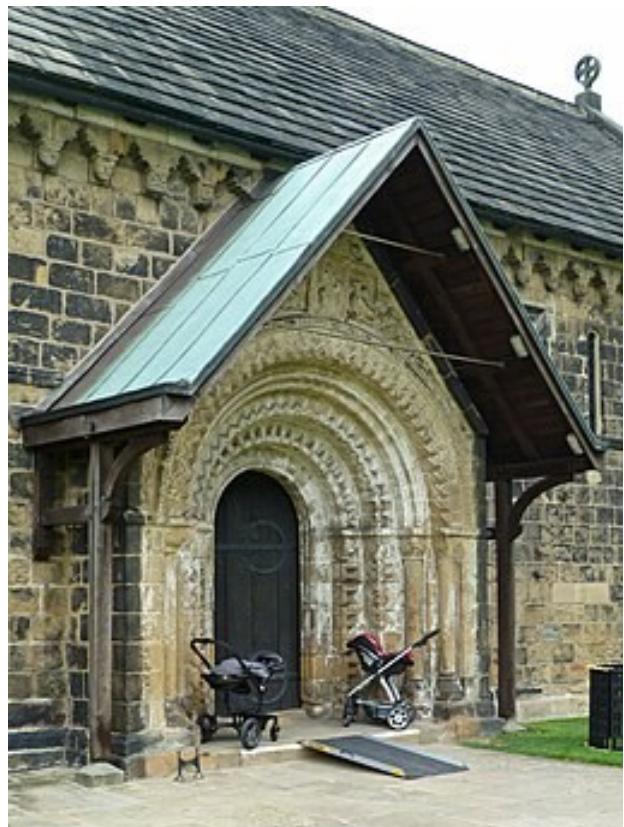
**G**eorge Herbert is a much-loved Anglican poet, who died just 40 years old in 1633.

His volume of poems 'The Temple' was published later that year. In it the poet leads the reader through the church door into the building to meditate on all that is seen inside.

**That procession through the church will be the theme of our monthly articles this year.** We shall visit a variety of English churches as we make our way from the font to the altar.

We begin this month outside the glorious Norman building of St John's Church, Adel, near Leeds in West Yorkshire.

The church has a very fine south doorway with ornate carving. The oak door is a Victorian copy of the original door; the Sanctuary Ring is a replica of the Norman ring/knocker. It shows a monster about to swallow a man, but open the door and there is safety and protection away from the harms of the world.



It is the theme in St John's Gospel of Jesus as the door to the sheepfold. Enter through Jesus, we are told, to find the safety of the flock, and also to find nourishment and renewal.

We can stand at the door of this beautiful church or at the door of our own churches. It opens and welcomes us to enjoy the friendship and refreshment within.

The door could stay closed, protecting us from the storms of life without that threaten us like the dark creature in the Norman sanctuary ring of Adel church. But we know that in the church building we have no abiding city. Our worship ends and the door will open once again to lead us out into that world. Within we have found nourishment in the sacrament of the altar, in the word of scripture, and in the fellowship of the flock. We go out to share those gifts with the world that others may come to know Jesus as the door that leads to life eternal.

[Editor's note: the pictured knocker is a replica of the original sanctuary knocker. Sadly, it is not a replica because the original is in a museum, but because the original was stolen in 2002: an appalling act of vandalism. It had been cast in bronze in York in AD1200].



## THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON LAW

Reflections of Lord Denning, one of the foremost English Judges of the twentieth century.

### MAN AND THE STATE

I have now told you all I wish of Truth and Justice: but these lead me on to consider the relations between man and the State. Truth and Justice do not exist in a vacuum. They exist in a society of human beings, in short, in a State: and a State can be so organised that Truth and Justice can disappear, or at any rate be stifled.

What does Christianity say about this? Let me take for an answer again the words of William Temple: 'The primary principle of Christian Ethics and Christian politics must be respect for every person simply as a person. If each man and woman is a child of God, whom God loves and for whom Christ died, then there is in

each a worth absolutely independent of all usefulness to society. The person is primary, not the society: the State exists for the citizen, not the citizen for the State.



Lord Denning,  
drawn by Sallom

The Christian Church has always insisted that the State has no ultimate and omnipotent authority of its own but derives its authority from God. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (13.1) made this clear. "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained by God." This has been the shield under which our forefathers resisted oppression. To quote St. Paul again- the Ruler of the State was the "Minister of God for good," and so long as he fulfilled his high trust, it was not right to resist him: but if he forsook it and sought absolute power, then resistance was justified.

Stuart Baker

## The Seven Deadly Sins

Our new series looks at the Seven Deadly Sins, a list compiled by Pope Gregory 1 in AD 590 to describe the nature of sin. This month we consider **pride**, 'the beginning of all sin' (Augustine).

Pride is preoccupied with self and denies the need for others or God. We see it present in the first sin, when Adam and Eve wanted to become like God (Genesis 3:5).

What does pride look like? Jesus told the story of two men, a Pharisee and a tax collector, who went to pray in the Temple (Luke 18: 9-14). The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' (11,12). He illustrates how pride is essentially putting ourselves in God's place and believing we can run our own lives. It is subtle and self-deceptive and eats away our lives: 'Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.' (Proverbs 16:18).

So how do we deal with pride? The answer is humility. The tax collector stood at a distance 'he would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' (13). This man was right with God, because he

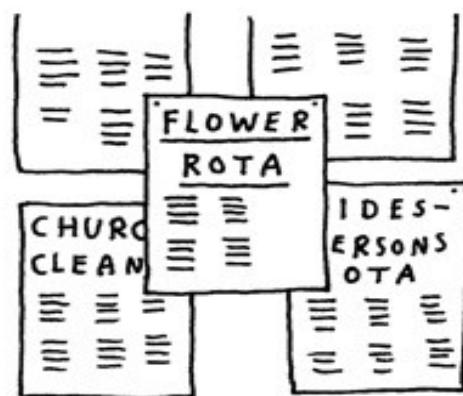
acknowledged his sin and his need for forgiveness. Humility is being realistic about ourselves, and acknowledging our total dependence on God. We develop it by giving ourselves wholeheartedly to God and repenting of our desire to do things our way: 'Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up.' (1 Peter 5:6).

'Humility is not in thinking less of yourself, but in thinking of yourself less' (Rick Warren).

Canon Paul Hardingham

## CHURCH NOTICE BOARDS

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS



PRIDE (COVERING  
UP OTHERS' WORK)

# WORD SEARCH

*Solution on page 24*

## Epiphany

6<sup>th</sup> January brings Epiphany - the visit of the Wise Men to the baby Jesus. Matthew calls them 'Magi', the name of an ancient priestly caste from Persia. Early church tradition says there were three: Balthasar, Caspar and Melchior. Those names do not appear in Matthew's Gospel and there is no record of there being three Magi, only that those three gifts were presented. As for their gifts? Gold is a symbol of wisdom and wealth, incense is a symbol of worship and sacrifice, and myrrh is a symbol of healing - and even embalming. Jesus challenged and set aright the way in which the world handled all three of these things.



EPIPHANY  
VISIT  
WISE  
MEN  
MAGI

PRIESTLY  
PERSIA  
BALTHASAR  
CASPAR  
MELCHIOR

GOLD  
WEALTH  
WISDOM  
INCENSE  
WORSHIP

SACRIFICE  
MYRRH  
SYMBOL  
HEALING  
EMBALMING

ANCIENT  
GIFTS  
TRADITION  
CHALLENGED  
WORLD

## An Introduction to Books in the Old Testament: Song of Songs

By Canon Paul Hardingham

The title of this book, 'Solomon's Song of Songs' (1:1), claims to be written by Solomon, and while his name is mentioned seven times and several verses speak of the 'king', the book may be more about Solomon rather than written by him. However, it is reasonable to assume that Song of Songs was written in the tenth century BC, during Solomon's reign (971-931 BC).

The focus of the Song is God's choicest gifts of love and the voice of this love belongs to a woman, the beloved. It is her experience of love, both as the one who loves and as the one who is loved, that is most clearly expressed. The Song begins with her wish for her lover's kiss and ends with an invitation for intimate love. It describes the intimacies of

married love as God intends it to be. She speaks profoundly of love; of its beauty and delight; its exclusiveness (2:16); its spontaneity (2:7) and its overwhelming power: 'Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.' (8:6,7)

God created man and woman, and established marriage as His purpose for society (Genesis 1:27; 2:20-24). This Song is part of the wisdom literature and shows us how to receive and live the gift of God's love with thanksgiving and celebration. However, the Song also speaks symbolically of the experience of intimacy to be found in our relationship with Christ: 'My lover is mine and I am his...and his banner over me is love.' (2:16,4).

## the elderberries gardening club

The group meet from 10.30am-noon on the second Wednesday of every month at St. John's Church on St. John's Road in Birkdale.



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

The club offers talks from guest speakers, trips to historical houses and gardens, and social events.

## WORD SEARCH *solution*



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## God in the Sciences

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

### Science and Miracles

We live in a world where we can expect the sun to rise tomorrow and the milk to pour out of the bottle when we tilt it over our cereal. But for God, the properties of matter and the biological processes that we know and read about in text-books are simply the usual ways He works. If He chooses to do something unexpected to demonstrate something about His character, His relationship with us, and His purposes, then He will.

A group of 14 UK-based science Professors wrote to the Times in 1984, saying that "We gladly accept the Virgin Birth, the gospel miracles, and the Resurrection of Christ as historical events. We know that we are representative of many other scientists who are also Christians standing in the historical tradition of the churches." For the non-believer, I would suggest a thought experiment: if God exists, why should He be bound by the same laws of physics as us?

Professor Christine Done is an Astrophysicist at

the University of Durham. In the book *True Scientists, True Faith* (Monarch, 2014) she writes: "Even when I was an atheist I used to get cross at discussions...on how all Jesus's miracles could be physically explained. To me, once you have believed in a God, a supernatural being, then it's obvious that supernatural stuff could happen, since any God who can make the physical universe and its laws can presumably suspend those laws in any time and way He chooses."

There are also miracles which appear to be a case of wonderful timing. The wind blew all night and the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry land, for example. The biblical writers don't seem especially interested in distinguishing between wonders that seem to break the usual rules of how things happen and those that don't.

Many in Jesus' audiences were not won over by His wonders. Most of the people in the crowds who ate the food He produced out of nowhere were quite happy to turn on Him when the religious authorities decided He was dangerous. We can only make sense of something unexpected, such as an answer to prayer for healing, in the context of a growing relationship with God. The exciting task for a Christian is to explain what this interaction looks like, and to demonstrate what 'your kingdom come' looks like in our communities. God works through us in words, works and wonders.

### Observations on daily life for 2026

Think like a man of action and act like a man of thought. – Henri Bergson

Unless a man has to do more than he can do, he will not do all that he can do. – Gordon Cooper

It takes a great person to give sound advice tactfully, but a greater to accept it graciously. – J C MacAulay

Anger is temporary insanity. – C H Spurgeon

A gentleman is one who never hurts another's feelings unintentionally. – O Herford

Golf is a game that has produced more liars than anything else except the income tax. – Anon

Fanaticism is redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim. – G Santayana

Politics is the career of plundering and blundering. – Disraeli

A professor is one who talks in someone else's sleep. – W H Auden

A reunion is when you meet people your own age who all look a lot older than you. – Anon  
Silence: what would follow if the average politician spoke his mind. – Anon

Traffic light: a green light that changes to red as your car approaches. – Anon

War: a continuation of politics by other means. – Clausewitz

# THE GOOD KINGS AND BAD KINGS OF ENGLAND

By Dennis Davis

## The Man Who Could Have Been King: Oliver Cromwell.

### Part 2 "The Lord Protector"

**O**liver Cromwell became a radical spirit who championed liberty of conscience to hold and preach as he pleased in matters of religion. He thought the King and country were being misled by evil councillors and needed to be saved from being undermined.

The king signed an agreement with the Scots and Irish that he would impose the Presbyterian system in England, they declared for the King, rioting ensued and Oliver was ordered to bring it under control; the Scots invaded and were defeated at Preston, He pacified the Welsh, by now no longer a voice of moderation. Cromwell declared that the Lord was with him as he forged ahead to destroy the anti-Christ and the advancement of the church; it was the hand of God.

The Army now landed in Ireland and was nearly pushed back into the sea; Cromwell went to help and held the position until reinforcements arrived. He now moved to Drogheda where he thought the Irish who massacred the Protestants were encamped. In fact many of those within the walls were Jacobite supporters and the account of this varies from which sides account you believe. The Irish account is that all were massacred without mercy. The other account is somewhat different in that they allege that terms to surrender were offered and many of the

civilians had already left. It was the custom of warfare at that time that if this was refused the city would be put to the sword. One account alleges that when the terms were offered the emissaries were hung from the walls in reply, which led to the sack of the town.

Cromwell returned to a hero's welcome. In 1650 he became the Commander in Chief of the Army.



*Oliver Cromwell*

He was described as a conservative man who smoked heavily, and may have suffered from malaria. He had compassion for the poor and oppressed Christians. He sat up all night at his eldest daughter's bedside as she lay ill, he collapsed and never recovered from her death. He declared, "It was like a dagger in my heart". On 20th April 1653 occurred an event for which he is remembered: the dissolution of the Rump Parliament when he stormed in and declared "you are no Parliament, I will put an end to your prattling. In December he was offered the title and office of King, he turned it down, sure that the voice of conscience had called him but agreed to be "The Lord Protector". He passed certain moral reforms on gambling, music, sport, the theatre and Christmas. What

these reforms really were I do not know, but he has been called the man who banned Christmas. He also allowed Jews to return to England. On his deathbed he rambled that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God; "I think I am the poorest wretch that lived, but, I loved God or rather was beloved by God". He died on 3rd September 1658 aged 59. He was buried at Westminster Abbey.

At the restoration Charles 2nd took his revenge on all those who had signed his father's death warrant,. In 1661 Cromwell's remains were removed and hung at Tyburn.

### Postscript.

It is difficult to condense Cromwell's life into such a small space, so I have tried to dwell more on him as a man rather than as the tyrant his name has become, I make no apology in what some may see as my praise of him. We must remember that there is some good in the worst of us and some bad in the best, Royalist propaganda was rife and I do wonder if some of the things stated about him are completely true; eg. did he totally ban Christmas? Some believe today that we have lost the Christian meaning in some way or other. May be some one would like to research the Puritan beliefs and practices of that time about how they thought of Christmas. maybe we need another Cromwell to reform how Christmas has got so materialised and the prattling of today's Parliament speaks for itself.

May I offer my best wishes to all my fellow worshippers for a Happy and Peaceful New Year. Dennis

**Information from "CROMWELL OUR CHIEF OF MEN"; by Antonia Frazer and various web sites.**

## SEEKING WISDOM

by John M. Shakespeare

**A**eschylus (525-456 BC), an ancient Greek tragedian and soldier, (in fact he is thought to be the father of tragedy), wrote, "In our sleep, pain which cannot forget, falls drop by drop upon the heart, until in our own despair against our will, comes wisdom, through the awful grace of God".

So the question may well be asked, where in fact is the source of Wisdom? I suggest that it is knowledge and experience, which appears to me, to be seen as two of the pillars, that Wisdom arises out of. The Wisdom literature of the Bible includes the books of Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs and The Song of Solomon.

The study of Philosophy is, I believe, where we may find a hint of what the definition of Wisdom is, if such a thing in fact exists. The early seeds of Western Philosophy may be attributed to the Greeks who lived in Miletus, a colony on what is now the Turkish coast. In the 6th century, Milesians as they became known, asked the big question, "What is reality made of". Wisdom is then, I suggest, the conclusions of what we may draw or deduce from, the philosophic discussions of life.

Ann Bradstreet (1612-1672), an American poet, says in her mood of meditation, "An axe without an edge, is a tool that would appear to fail in its purpose". I believe there is proposed a meaning here, that authority expressed without the use of Wisdom will be a failure in its execution. This I would hazard has been demonstrated where the military (Authority), has been used without the Wisdom of its possible consequences, in civil political situations.

In the book of Job in the Bible, we are told that Wisdom is above and beyond the price we give to gold. To quote Job (Ch 28 verses 12-14), "Where shall Wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Mortals do not know the way to it, and it is not found in the land of the living. The deep says, 'it is not in me', and the sea says it is not with me."

To quote Euripides (485-406 BC), "Mere cleverness is not Wisdom". I have been privileged to know in my working life some people who undoubtedly you would classify as clever, but who failed to make clever use

of their knowledge. Wisdom I believe is a dynamic, cultural and historical process that takes time to develop, as discussed earlier, to be applicable in its usage.

I like the definition that Plato (427-347), gives of Wisdom, when he says, "Everything that the human spirit undertakes or suffers, will lead to happiness when it is guided by Wisdom, but to the opposite when guided by folly".

An important element, as I see it in the exercise of Wisdom concerns our attention to duty. Rules are applicable in many cases of action, not in the least, in the Rules of Engagement. It is in the practical application of these rules, where I feel that there is some room for discretion, in putting them into practice.

To exercise your Wisdom in how some rules are applied, I believe, is acceptable behaviour, even if at the time it may seem to be controversial. Again it comes back to those pillars of Wisdom namely experience and knowledge. It is a wise person who, knows their limitations, so heed the warning. Learn to swim before you take the plunge!



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Parochial Church Council of St John's Parish  
(Birkdale)

Sort Code: 60-20-11

Account Number: 86882120

## Are you taking a mid-winter break?

In hotels and train stations and airports all over the world there are polite little signs that will bring a smile to the lips of even an exhausted traveller. For instance, how about these:

Switzerland: We have nice bath and are very good in bed.

Romania: The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret you will be unbearable.

Russia: If this is your first visit to the USSR, you are welcome to it.

Spain: Our wine list leaves you with nothing to hope for.

Canary Islands: If you telephone for room service you will get the answer you deserve.

## Our long love affair with coffee

London's first coffee house opened in 1652, using beans imported from modern-day Yemen. Although many in Cromwell's Britain had doubts about this new drink, others welcomed its reviving effects - and asked for another cup.

Nearly 400 years on, coffee drinking in Britain is a vast industry. We drink 98 million cups of it every day. Even though a takeaway flat white can now cost you more than £5 in London, still coffee has become a daily necessity for millions of us.

And nearly 400 years on, we can better appreciate why this should be so.

Coffee keeps us awake. This is because when caffeine accesses the brain, it actively blocks our adenosine-producing receptors, which run our sleep-promoting system.

Coffee makes us alert. The caffeine drives our brain towards a more excited state which allows us to process information faster.

Coffee can also improve our mood, especially during the winter, when the loss of daylight acts as a depressant.

And although too much coffee can make us jittery and even prone to heart palpitations, there is even growing evidence among neuroscientists that coffee can even help to lower our risk of neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.



## £1 can change a lot

Small donations add up to something big!

**COMPASSION ACTS Pound Appeal**

By donating as little as £1 a month you can help us continue to provide free support to those experiencing poverty and hardship

**Simply scan the QR Code**

Did you know that Compassion Acts relies solely on the generosity of donors and receives no government funding?

Alternative ways of donating can be found on our website: [www.compassionacts.uk/donate/](http://www.compassionacts.uk/donate/)

Registered Charity Number 1172948

CartoonChurch.com



WE DO NOT NEED TO GET SOMEONE IN TO HELP US WITH MARKETING OUR CHURCH AS WE ARE PERFECTLY ABLE TO DO IT OURSELVES

[IN CASE YOU ARE WONDERING, THIS IS NOT ST JOHN'S. BUT WE DO NEED MONEY FOR THE ROOF. Ed.]

# WHAT'S ON IN OUR NEIGHBOURING CHURCHES



**quiz**  
St Peter's Parish Centre  
2 St Peter's Road, Birkdale

**Saturday 10 January 2026 @ 3pm**

**BYOB and snacks**  
**Fantastic Raffle!**  
**Prizes!**  
**Bring your friends & family**

**Tickets £5**  
Marg, Robin or Sue  
telephone:  
**07746219942**  
**07528445677**



**Social Events**  
**Coming Soon at**  
**St Peter's Birkdale**  
**(St Peter's Road)**



For details please contact [dale@hotmail.com](mailto:dale@hotmail.com)

**Social Events**  
**Coming Soon at**  
**St James' Birkdale**  
**(Lulworth Road)**



**First Tuesday of each month:**

Games Afternoon in the church hall. 1.00pm for lunch (pre-book at St James' church office 01704 564907 the week before) or 1.30-3.00pm for games.

**Third Sunday of each month:**

Afternoon Tea in Welcome Area 2.30-4.00pm. Open to anyone who would like some company along with tea/coffee and homemade cakes.



## Warm Space

Struggling with the cost of living? Feeling lonely? Looking for a quiet, safe place to gather your thoughts? Or, just need a friendly chat over a hot drink?

**EVERY THURSDAY 10am - 4pm**

The Stationmaster's House, 2 Liverpool Road, Birkdale. PR8 4AR



**FULLY ACCESSIBLE**

With disabled access, a large accessible lift and disabled toilet with baby changing facilities.



## DO YOU KNOW SOMEBODY IN NEED?

**Compassion Acts** can help or refer to someone who can!

### FOOD

#### EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE - FOODBANK

Call 01704 264505 for a Foodbank parcel (must be collected).

#### LONG TERM ASSISTANCE - FOOD PANTRY

Visit [www.compassionacts.uk/food-pantry](http://www.compassionacts.uk/food-pantry) to download our referral form.

### MONEY

We can help with benefit checks, general advice, debt, and money management.

Call **01704 264505** to speak to our **Welfare Team** and we'll do our best to support you (if you're calling on behalf of someone else, please have them with you when you call).

### WELLBEING

#### WARM SPACE - A welcoming, free drop-in space for all.

Wednesday: 1 - 3pm @ Victoria Centre, 197a Sussex Road, PR8 6DG

Thursday: 11am - 1pm @ Our Lady of Compassion Parish Centre, Formby, L37 3NG

Friday: 10:30am - 1:30pm @ Ainsdale Village Church, Station Road, PR8 3HW

Saturday: 10 - 12pm @ Victoria Centre, 197a Sussex Road, PR8 6DG

#### FAMILY SPACE - Free after school club

for children year 4 - year 7 (siblings welcome and adults must attend). For initial referral please call or email Compassion Acts team.

Thursday 3:30 - 5:30pm - Lighthouse Church, Church Road, Formby, L37 3NG

Thursday 3:30 - 5:30pm - St James Church, Lulworth Road, Birkdale, PR8 2BQ

#### UNIFORM HUB - Low cost support with school uniforms.

Located at Cambridge Walks, Southport, PR8 1EN

Open Monday - Saturday from around 10 - 4pm

For specific, badged or high cost items visit during our staffed hours

Wednesday and Friday from 11 - 2pm



#### IF YOU WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- Give money to support our work
- Donate food to our Foodbanks and Pantries
- Volunteer your time
- Fundraise for us
- Share our message

01704 264505 | [www.compassionacts.uk](http://www.compassionacts.uk) | [hello@compassionacts.uk](mailto:hello@compassionacts.uk)

### Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January

Victoria Centre Foodbank 1pm - 3pm

### W/C Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January

All projects reopen and resume as normal

## **Joining the Sunday morning services and Thursday evening prayers by zoom or by telephone**

To join the **weekly Sunday morning services at 10.30am** by **ZOOM**:

Identification Number: 812 3403 0688 Password: 201823

To join the **weekly Sunday morning services at 10.30am** by **TELEPHONE**:

Telephone number: 0203 481 5240

Meeting Identification Number: 812 3403 0688

When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)

Password: 201823. When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)

To join the **twice-monthly Thursday evening prayers** at 7.30pm by **ZOOM**:

Identification Number: 835 5074 3780 Password: 7ehHEK

To join the **twice-monthly Thursday evening prayers** at 7.30pm by **TELEPHONE**:

Telephone number: 0203 481 5240

Meeting Identification Number: 835 5074 3780.

When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)

Password: 7ehHEK. When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)

### **BUT PLEASE CHECK YOUR CALL PACKAGE CHARGES WITH YOUR PROVIDER**

**IF YOU NEED ANY HELP:** Please contact Clive (564206) or Rev. Jennie for any further details you require.

### **Was it really that long ago?...**

80 years ago, on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1946 William Joyce, Lord Haw-Haw, British fascist politician died. He had broadcasted Nazi propaganda from Germany during WW2. (Hanged for treason)

80 years ago, on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1946 Elvis Presley received his first guitar on his 11<sup>th</sup> birthday. (Apparently, he would have preferred a bicycle.)

Also 80 years ago, on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1946 the United Nations General Assembly convened for the first time, in Westminster Central Hall, London.

75 years ago, on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1951 the UN headquarters in New York City was officially opened.

70 years ago, on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1956 AA Milne, writer, poet, humourist and playwright died. Best known for his stories about Winnie the Pooh.

65 years ago, on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1961 John F Kennedy was inaugurated as the 35<sup>th</sup> President of the USA.

60 years ago, on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1966 the album Sounds of Silence by Simon and Garfunkel, was released.

50 years ago, on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1976 Dame Agatha Christie, crime novelist, short story writer and playwright died. Best known for creating the characters Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, and for the world's longest running play, The Mousetrap.

40 years ago, on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1986 the US space shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after lift-off from Cape Canaveral, Florida. All seven astronauts were killed, including the first teacher in space, Christa McAuliffe.

30 years ago, on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1996 the first Holocaust Remembrance Day was observed in Germany. It became International Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2005 when it was adopted by the United Nations. It marks the day (27<sup>th</sup> January 1945) that the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration/death camp was liberated during WW2.

25 years ago, on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2001 Swedish football manager Sven Goran Eriksson became the first non-Briton to coach the England national football team.

20 years ago, on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2006 at least 346 people were killed in a stampede during the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mina, Saudi Arabia.

10 years ago, on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 Terry Wogan, Irish radio and TV broadcaster, died. Known for his long-running BBC Radio 2 show, and for presenting TV's Wogan, Blankety Blank, Come Dancing, Children in Need, and for his commentaries on the Eurovision Song Contest.

## Church Hall Users

### Wednesday

10.30 – 12 noon 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month only. **Elderberries Gardening Club**

A social gardening club, where speakers are invited to talk on various topics, and visits and social events throughout the year.

Contact: Shelley Lewis Lavender on 01704 560690 or via email:

[elderberriesgardening@gmail.com](mailto:elderberriesgardening@gmail.com)

### Thursday

1.00pm to 2.00pm: **Balance Classes for the Elderly**.

Contact: [ageingwellmerseyside@outlook.com](mailto:ageingwellmerseyside@outlook.com).

6.00-9.00pm:

**St John's Rainbows** (6.00-7.00pm)

**St John's Brownies** (6.00-7.15pm)

**and Girl Guides** (7.15-9.00pm).

Contact: Janette Law 01704 565951

### Friday

1.00pm-2.30pm **Jolly Tots for tots, babies and bumps**

6.30-9.30pm Once per month **St John's Film Nights**

A chance to see some great modern films. Tea, coffee and homemade cake available.

Contact: Christine Baker 01704 560518.

## As a New Year begins

A prayer by Karl Barth (1886 – 1968). This most prominent Protestant theologian of his time spent much of his life resisting the Nazi movement.

O Lord, our Father!...at the turn of the year... our hearts are filled with sombre thoughts... our ears are deafened by the voices of the radio and the newspapers, with their numerous predictions for the coming year. Instead we want to hear your word, your voice, your assurance, your guidance. We know that you are in our midst, and are eager to give us all that we need, whether we ask or not.

...We ask for one thing only: that you collect our scattered thoughts, getting rid of the confused and defiant thoughts that may distract us, and thus enable us to concentrate on your limitless generosity to us. You were abundantly generous to us last year, and will be no less generous to us next year, and in every year to come. Fill us with gratitude to you.

## New Year 2026

If we put our hand in God's hand  
As we enter this New Year  
Not knowing what the future holds  
But that our Friend is near  
We shall not fear what lies ahead  
If He is by our side,  
Nor wander from the pathway  
If He will be our guide.  
The Sinless One from heaven came  
To dwell with us on earth,  
He sought and bought us with His blood  
And offered us new birth.  
Now as we travel through this year  
He knows the things He's planned,  
So let us trust and know just this –  
Our times are in His hands.  
By Megan Carter

## £130 for our church: Home Insurance offer from Ecclesiastical Insurance Company

Take out a home insurance policy with Ecclesiastical – one of the UK's most trusted home insurance providers and a Which? "Best Buy" – and Ecclesiastical will donate £130 to our church.

**For a price quotation ring 0345 777 3322**





To

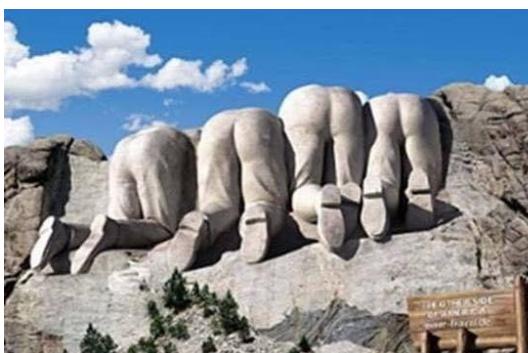
Carl Davey on 2nd January  
Tony Humphries on 7th January  
Sue Madani on 15th January  
Tina Kent on 20th January  
Sue Doran on 29th January

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

## The Last Laughs



Mount Rushmore from the American side



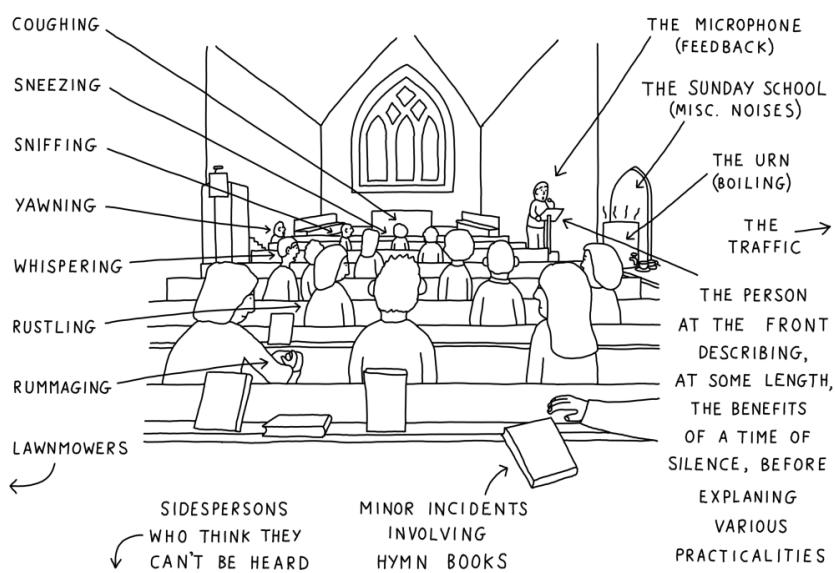
Mount Rushmore from the Canadian side



Hyperinflation at Christingle

## A TIME OF SILENCE

PLEASE IGNORE ALL DISTRACTIONS



CartoonChurch.com

At the age of 65 my grandma started walking 5 miles a day



# Keep Moving Club



## Low Impact Exercise Classes

**Liverpool Road Methodist Church**  
**Fridays**

### **10:15am – 11am Low Impact Dance Fitness – £4.00**

A mixture of aerobics and dance to help you have fun and lose your tum!  
Good music and lots of laughs.

Ideal if you are first on the dance floor or have two left feet – if you're having fun you're doing it right!!

### **11:05am – 11:35am Balance Improver – £3.00**

Using a variety of proven balance techniques to help improve your balance, confidence and coordination.

These can be done seated, standing whilst holding on or unsupported if you're feeling like showing off!

### **11:45am – 12:15pm Seated Dance Exercise – £3.00**

Using a mixture of exercise and dance moves – to a background of sing along tracks to help you have fun and keep moving.

Ideal for those who find a standing session uncomfortable

**Beginners Very Welcome**  
**Work at your own Pace**

For more information please call Kaz Parkinson on 07540 369942.

Or come along and try us out – first session free



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