

THE WORD

MAGAZINE OF ST JOHN'S BIRKDALE

GOD CENTRED, RELATIONSHIP DRIVEN AND LIFE TRANSFORMING

DECEMBER 2025 ISSUE 276

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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*

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

Editor's column

THE year is drawing to its end but there is still plenty happening at St John's. An orchestral concert, the start of Messy church for children, our annual Christmas Tree Festival and Fair, a Christingle service and (of course) Christmas carols. December will be a very busy month.

It would be easy to become so bound up in all these activities that we lose sight of what Christmas means to us. Against a history of man rebelling against God our Saviour was born and became the everlasting Light of whom we sing in 'O little town of Bethlehem' (see page 30 for the story about that carol).

In our Sunday sermons our preachers will address several different aspects of this wondrous story. We hope that many will come to worship during December and be inspired by the ancient story of the nativity.



At this time of the year we give thanks to everyone who has supported THE WORD during 2025 by reading it, subscribing to it and contributing articles and material for it. We hope that all our readers will renew their subscription for 2026 which we shall keep at the same keen price as in 2025: £12 per annum for a monthly printed copy (delivered to your door in Birkdale) or £10 per annum if you prefer to receive it as a PDF attachment to an email.

Please tell the editor if you would like to renew your subscription, and please think about whether you can submit anything for future issues.

The Editor, the Printer and both of our delivery cyclists wish all of our readers a very happy and peaceful Christmas and a healthy New Year.



WHO'S WHAT AT ST. JOHN'S

Vicar:	Rev. Jennie Hardy (07872 400718)	Girl Guides:	Mrs. Janette Law (565951)
Clergy (retired):	Rev. Roy Doran (572387)	St. John's Brownies:	Mrs. Helen Jones and
Reader:	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)	Brownie Guiders:	Mrs. Lesley Scott
Churchwarden:	Clive Morris (564206)	St. John's Rainbows:	Mrs. Lesley Scott
PCC Treasurer:	Mrs. Amanda Potts (07530 950100)	Church Flowers:	Mrs. Cath Whiteside (07732 993025)
PCC Secretary:	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)	Magazine Editor:	Stuart Baker (560518)
Gift Aid Secretary:	Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071)	Front Cover design and artwork:	Ian Bennett MBKS
Parish Hall Secretary:	Mrs. Jean Morris (564206)	Magazine Printer:	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)
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Deanery Synod Reps:	Clive Morris (564206) Stuart Baker (560518)	Eco Champions:	Mrs. Elizabeth Rothwell and Duncan Rothwell (564192)
Lead Safeguarding Officer & Recruiter	Stuart Baker (560518)	Leadership Team:	Rev. Jennie Hardy Rev. Roy Doran Mrs. Christine Baker Clive Morris
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Mothers' Union:	Mrs. Linda Caton (564737)	Church email:	info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk
		Website:	https://www.stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk

Message from the Vicar:

Good tidings of joy, WORD readers!

If not by plan but perhaps by design, the last two articles I've written have been on change! In this article I am continuing the theme, practically thinking about 'little' Zacchaeus. In Luke 19 we read of a man short in stature and morals who becomes both taller (by climbing a tree) and an example we can look to for moral teaching.

Zacchaeus said to the Lord, "I will give half of my money to the poor. If I have cheated anyone, I will pay that person back four times more!" (v.8) Some say the last part of a person's conversion is their wallet. We see in Zach's case, this is true. He heard about Jesus. He met Jesus, He developed a relationship, a faith and finally, perhaps the most convincing part of his conversion, his financial pledge came.

I'm thinking about trees and 'climbing' at the moment. Maybe you are feeling the same as you face the climb to the loft to dust off the Christmas decorations and put up your tree or you may be preparing to come and help us put up our many trees at church for our Christmas tree festival.

We acknowledge more than ever at Christmastime the gift of giving and how "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35) just as we remember the gift that came swaddled on that first Christmas morning, Jesus, God Himself, came to redeem, bless and save. This reminder is for us, as Christians the driving force of our giving at this time of year. But as Christians, this should be the driving force of our faith all year through.



"We don't just want to survive at St John's, we want to thrive...."

We are transformed as new creations in Christ and we most forcibly demonstrate this in how we give. By how we give of ourselves, our time, but also, of our wallets. As our Saviour gave His life sacrificially, so we should give sacrificially. To give this way isn't comfortable, but when we do so, we are blessed. As we look

forward to the new year, I will be asking everyone who is a member of St John's to look at their giving and to assess whether it is appropriate.

For many we decide in our hearts what to give and rather than reassess over time, with inflation and other changes in mind, our giving remains the same. **Unfortunately the cost of running the church is largely affected by inflation and other growth in costs, so as givers and sustainers, we too must assess our giving.**

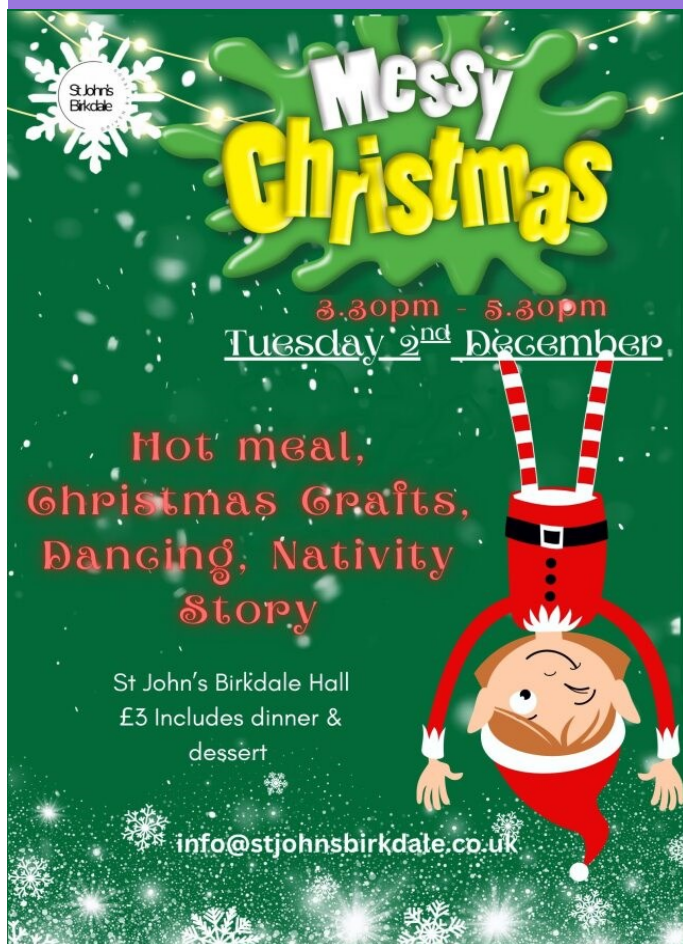
I too will be doing so and prayerfully discerning whether after a year or so of giving around 10% of my income to two church communities, whether this needs to change and I would ask us all, those transformed by the gift of Jesus that if over this season of giving, you might join me and begin to pray about this important aspect of our faith as we head into the new year.

We don't just want to survive at St John's, we want to thrive so that we can fulfil the call of the gospel in making disciples in our community and beyond.

Have a peaceful and blessed Advent and Christmas everyone.

Love, Jennie xx

CHRISTMAS AT ST. JOHN'S



Messy Christmas
3.30pm - 5.30pm
Tuesday 2nd December

Hot meal,
Christmas Crafts,
Dancing, Nativity
Story

St John's Birkdale Hall
£3 Includes dinner &
dessert

info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk



**CHRISTMAS
Tree Festival & Fair**
5TH DECEMBER 6PM - LIGHT SWITCH ON
6TH DECEMBER 10AM - 3PM

Stalls
Cafe
Mulled Drinks
Crafts
Grotto & More

ST JOHN'S BIRKDALE
info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk



Christingle Service 6PM
Sunday 14th December

A service for all
the family.
Supporting the
Children's
Society.

All Welcome
St John's Birkdale
PR8 4JP



Joy To The World
CHRISTMAS EVE CAROL
SERVICE
24.12.25 - 6PM

ST JOHN'S BIRKDALE
PR8 4JP
Info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk



Christmas

AT ST JOHNS



CHRISTMAS
LIGHTS
SWITCH-ON

2 Dec

3.30 - 5.30pm



5 Dec

6 - 9pm

Christmas Tree
Festival & Fair

6 Dec

10am - 3pm

Christmas Tree
Festival & Fair

14 Dec

6pm

Christingle
Service

24 Dec

6pm

Carol Service

25 Dec

10am

Christmas Day
Holy
Communion



info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk

WHAT ELSE IS ON AT ST. JOHN'S



Memorial Service

JOIN US FOR A TIME OF PRAYER AND TO REMEMBER YOUR LOVED ONES

At
St John's Church
St John's Road
PR8 4JP

SUNDAY 7TH DECEMBER
4PM



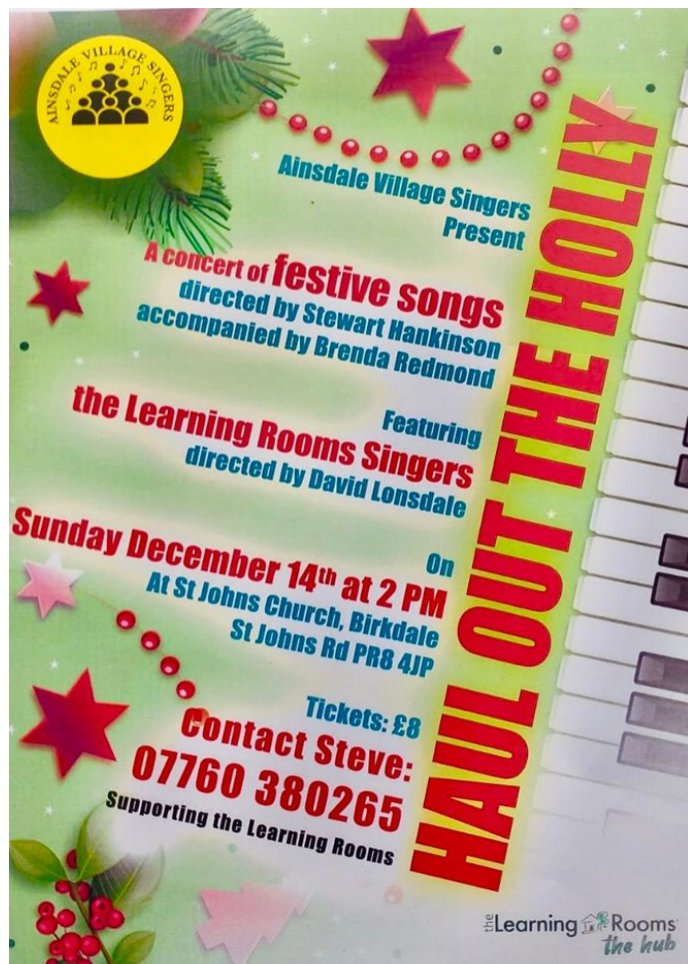
FILM NIGHTS

~~September 12th~~
~~October 10th~~
~~November 21st~~
December 12th ★

Contact Christine: 01704 560518
Start: 6.30pm with hot drinks & Cake
For which we charge £5

St John's Hall, PR8 4JP

For details of our films contact Christine



HAUL OUT THE HOLLY

Ainsdale Village Singers Present
A concert of **festive songs**
directed by Stewart Hankinson
accompanied by Brenda Redmond

Featuring
the Learning Rooms Singers
directed by David Lonsdale

On
Sunday December 14th at 2 PM
At St John's Church, Birkdale
St John's Rd PR8 4JP

Tickets: £8
Contact Steve:
07760 380265
Supporting the Learning Rooms

Learning Rooms the hub



MONDAY 15th DECEMBER
@ 7.30pm

St John's Birkdale
DRIVEN BY

Growth

THE BIBLE COURSE
EXPLORE THE BIG STORY!

@ Stuart & Christines
food. fellowship. fun.

info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk

MORE ON AT ST. JOHN'S



Pray Together

Thursday @ 7.30pm
on Zoom
Meeting ID: 83550743780
Passcode:
7ehHEK

The prayer meetings are on the **1st and 3rd Thursdays each month** and last half an hour. This month they will be on **4th & 18th December**. 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. See page **32** for details about logging in on zoom by computer or by telephone.

GODSPEED INDOOR CYCLING CLASSES

St John's Birkdale

Christmas playlist has been dropped

Tuesday: 6pm
Thursday: 6pm
Friday 9.30am

Scan to book!

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
 stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk
 07905875944

SOUTHPORT ORCHESTRA

Saturday 29th November, 7.30pm
 St John's Church, St John's Road
 Birkdale, PR8 4JP

Performance at St John's on Saturday 29th November.
 The orchestra will share with the church the proceeds of the tickets sales. Come and enjoy a wonderful concert and support our church at the same time!

Brahms
 Academic Festival Overture

Arnold
 Flute Concerto No. 2

Franck
 Symphony in D minor

Tickets available now at southportorchestra.co.uk
 email admin@southportorchestra.co.uk, call 07795 662245 or buy on the door
 Adults £12 | Under 18s £6

SCAN ME

Contact Stuart Baker (560518) for any last minute tickets

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 3rd & 17th December**. On 3rd December the service **WILL NOT** be followed by Brunch.

On 17th December 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



2nd & 4th Wednesdays
2pm

God's Word

STUDY
GROUP

@ the small hall, St John's
Church PR8 4JP

revroydoran@btinternet.com

St John's Birkdale
DRIVEN BY SPIRIT

Knit and Knatter will not be meeting on 24th December.
Next session: 28th January 2026

JOIN OUR NEW KNIT & KNATTER GROUP

The 4th Wednesday of each month
2:30pm
In the vicar's vestry @ St John's church PR8 4JP

STARTS 24TH SEPTEMBER 2025
Refreshments provided

Fee: Just £1
Contact: info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk
Call: Christine on: 01704 560518

CHURCH SERVICES IN DECEMBER

MIDWEEK TRADITIONAL COMMUNION SERVICE



WEDNESDAY
3rd DECEMBER
10.30am
IN THE SMALL HALL

**Worship on the Second Sunday
of Advent**

SUNDAY 7th DECEMBER

08.30 Holy Communion, in church only

**10.30am Holy Communion in church and via
zoom and phone**

Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, purify our hearts and mind, that when your Son Jesus Christ comes again as judge and saviour we may be ready to receive him, who is our Lord and our God.

The subject of Christine's talks:

I wonder as I wander

The Text: John 1: 1-5 & 9-14 NIV

**In the beginning was the Word, and
the Word was with God, and the Word
was God. He was with God in the
beginning.**

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

SUNDAY 7th DECEMBER

4.00PM

**Memorial Service in church and via zoom
and phone**

Preacher: Rev. Jennie



CHURCH SERVICES IN DECEMBER

Worship on the Third Sunday of
Advent

SUNDAY 14th DECEMBER

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 Advent

God for whom we watch and wait, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son: give us courage to speak the truth, to hunger for justice, and to suffer for the cause of right, with Jesus Christ our Lord.

The subject of Clive's talks:

Wonder-Filled

The Text: Isaiah 9: 2-7 NIV

**The people walking in darkness have seen a
great light; on those living in the land of
deep darkness a light has dawned.**

You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.

For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their

oppressor. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

SUNDAY 14TH DECEMBER at 6pm

The subject of Jennie's talk:

The Christmas "to-do" list

The Text: Luke 2: 1-20 NIV

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But

the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests". When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.



CHURCH SERVICES IN DECEMBER

MIDWEEK TRADITIONAL COMMUNION SERVICE

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be served after the service



**WEDNESDAY
17th DECEMBER
10.30am
IN CHURCH**

Worship on the Fourth
Sunday of Advent

SUNDAY 21st DECEMBER
8.30am Holy Communion in church only
10.30am Service of the Word in church and via
zoom and phone

Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Heavenly Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised saviour: fill us your servants with your grace, that in all things we may embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The subject of Roy's talks:

A Wonderful Night

The Text: Matthew 1: 18-25 NIV

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because

what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, for because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Worship on Christmas Eve

WEDNESDAY 24th DECEMBER
6.00pm Carol Service

Collect for Christmas Eve

Almighty God, you make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**The subject of Jennie's talk:
The Wonder of His Love**

The Text: John 3: 16 NIV

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



CHURCH SERVICES IN DECEMBER

Worship on Christmas Day



THURSDAY 25th DECEMBER
**10.00am Holy Communion in church
and via zoom and phone**

Collect for Christmas Day

Eternal God, in the stillness of this night you sent your almighty Word to pierce the world's darkness with the light of salvation: give to the earth the peace that we long for and fill our hearts with the joy of heaven through our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The subject of Jennie's talk:

A Tiny Gift– Strangely Wrapped, Silently Delivered

The Text: Matthew 2: 1-12 NIV

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Worship on the First Sunday of Christmas

SUNDAY 28th DECEMBER
**10.30am Service of The Word in church
and via zoom and phone**

Collect for The First Sunday of Christmas

Eternal God, in the stillness of this night you sent your almighty Word to pierce the world's darkness with the light of salvation: give to the earth the peace that we long for and fill our hearts with the joy of heaven through our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The subject of Christine's talk:

Keeping the Wonder of Christmas

The Text: Mark 11: 1-11 NIV

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.' " They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that

colt?" They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, 'Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!' Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL AND CHRISTMAS FAIR

FRIDAY 5th & SATURDAY 6th DECEMBER

Having enjoyed a lovely summer this year, it seems to have made a swift exit and autumn has swooped in with a vengeance, reminding us that Christmas will soon be upon us with all our Christmas festivities and our Christmas Tree Festival and Christmas Fair.

As always, the team are busy working hard in preparation to make this event another huge success, but this will not be possible without your help. If you are able to donate any items for the raffle or gifts for any of the stalls it would be much appreciated.

We will have various stalls including home-made cakes, tombola, bottle stall, raffle hamper, good quality book stall; children's crafts; Christmas plant stall; hand crafted wooden items; a selection of fragranced hand-made candles and wax melts, either for your Christmas table or as an ideal gift. As an added bonus we are also pleased to welcome three new stalls, i.e, Christmas gifts, assorted handmade gifts and Avon skin care products, so there's plenty to choose from when you are looking for that ideal Christmas present or just the perfect treat for yourself.

Boxes are now available at the back of church for your contributions; however, if you join our services via zoom or are unable to come to church for any reason, please telephone me on 564071 and I shall be happy to collect your gifts from you. Similarly, please see the hamper lists at the back of church and kindly sign against the item you wish to donate, or alternatively, refer to the hamper lists attached to THE WORD, and let me know if you would like to contribute anything, which again I shall be happy to collect.

Lastly, don't forget you will also be able to visit our cafe with its home-made meals, sandwiches and cakes, tea and coffee, or stop for a delicious mince pie with mulled wine or non-alcoholic punch if you prefer! so you won't even have to worry about driving.

Please support our stalls with whatever you are able to provide. Your generosity on these occasions is always much appreciated, especially with the continual calls made on you throughout the year. We are very grateful to you all.



Do remember to put the dates in your diary and come along and support us with as many family, friends and neighbours as possible.

HELPERS ARE REQUIRED

Dates for your diary:

- 1. Saturday 29th November:** Erect banner outside church (daytime, time to be arranged)
 - Sunday 30th November:**
 - 2. at 12.30pm,** after the morning service: Decorate the church halls with Christmas decorations.
 - 3. at 2.00pm,** erect the boards over the pews in the side aisles to support the trees.
 - Wednesday 3rd December:**
 - 4. at 9.00am,** delivery of the trees and erecting them on the boards in church; followed by hoovering and tidying.
 - Thursday 4th December:**
 - 5. at 7.00pm,** setting up the hall with tables and chairs.
 - Monday 9th January:**
 - 6. at 9.00am:** take down the trees; store the boards, and clean the church.
- PLEASE CONTACT SYLVIA KENT WITH YOUR AVAILABILITY TO ASSIST AT 1, 2 & 5 ABOVE, AND JUDITH FOSTER AT 3, 4 & 6 ABOVE.**

Those who will come and help with erecting and dismantling the supporting boards and erecting the trees should bring gardening gloves or some other sturdy gloves.



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

On Your First Parish—Beware

The Rectory,
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

And so, the old year draws to a close, and you are packing to move to your own first parish in January. Let me give you some final words of advice.

Curates, you will have noticed, are forgiven everything. I hope you have appreciated this period of grace, because come 1st January, all that will change. You will then become responsible for everything that goes wrong in your church. You must be able to mend leaking taps, shovel snow, arrange flowers, mow the churchyard and run jumble sales. You will be expected to know the moment someone falls ill – preferably the day before.

In addition, they will expect you to preach profound sermons – in seven minutes flat, and to lead a life of prayerful solitude while being the life and soul of the parish. From the day your predecessor left, he will have turned into a saint. You will be their new disappointment. Be assured that *whatever* you do, you will *always* disappoint someone.

Be prepared for phone calls at 3am telling you that someone has left a light on in church, and shouldn't you go and turn it off? You will be asked about car parking arrangements for the October Harvest Service by mid-January, while hymns for the 9 Lessons and Carols will be required by early summer. I suggest you buy in extra pullovers, overcoats and scarves for life in your vicarage. A good number of mousetraps may well come in useful too. Welcome to your new life of an incumbent.

Expect that each Sunday morning, as you prepare for the service, there will be a straggling queue of people who want to tell you an astonishing variety of things: there is a large cobweb 30 feet up over the pulpit, they don't like the second hymn on the board, the flowers look rough this week, there may be a bat in the vestry, some child has left a shoe in the back porch, and the car park has broken glass in it.

You may find this a distraction as you prepare for a worship service. But remember that at least they have bothered to come to church at all. In my experience, congregations are always irritating, but at least they do take up a lot of space, and that looks good in the pews. The church would look empty without them.

Your loving uncle, Eustace

Parish Registers

Funeral:

Frank Sells, died on 11th October 2025 aged 77 years.

Holy Baptism:

on 2nd November, Elsie Rowlands.

Remembrance Poppy Appeal

St John's collected for the Royal British Legion £110 which was donated by our congregation for Remembrance Poppies this year.



Rotary



CHRISTMAS
TOY
COLLECTION

Southport Rotary Club are collecting **new** toys to be sorted and distributed to families in Southport. They are given a list of places which have names of the families in need of toys. Wrapping is not essential, but if they are wrapped they need to have a label with the relevant age and gender of the child for whom the toy is intended. Rotarians will be sorting the toys on the 16 December.

If members of St John's would like to give a toy or toys please bring them to church by **not later than Sunday 14th December**.

The Amazing Technicolour Blanket

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



If you speak nicely to your neighbour on the pew, two of you may be able to benefit from it. There will be more in the pipeline.

If you'd like to come along to Knit & Knatter we meet on the fourth Wednesday each month at 2.30pm in the vestry. We shall not meet on Christmas Eve but will start again on January 28th.

Cost £1.00 to include refreshments!

Contact: Christine Baker (560518)

Ground Force St John's

The shrubs in the church grounds were in need of a haircut. St John's is very fortunate to have Tony (from SSAFA) keeping our gardens tidy (thanks to the generosity of Judith Foster and Brenda Donoghue), but tackling all the shrubs is a big job and on 11th November Elizabeth and Duncan Rothwell, Andy Dean and Stuart Baker made a start at trimming and shaping the bushes so as to reduce the burden on Tony.



And here they are: clearly enjoying themselves! Seven large sacks were filled and taken to the local tip, and our green bin was filled.

The shrubs alongside the west wall of the church near the porch will be trimmed and tidied by Tony in the near future and we hope that our readers will be pleased with how neat the gardens are



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

We have three trained First Aiders:

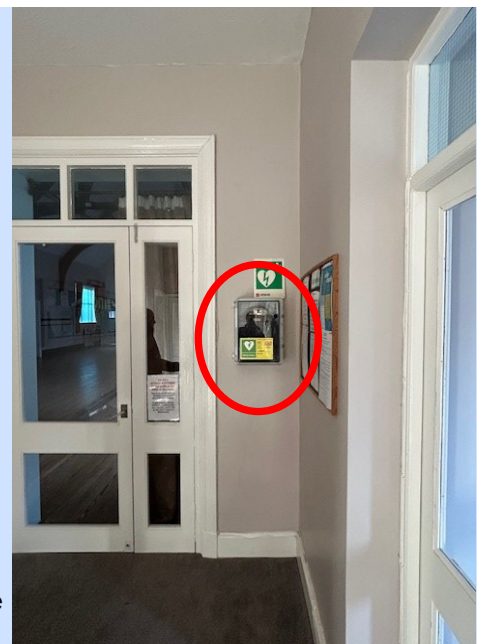
Rev. Jennie, Janette Law and Jayne Parkinson.

If neither 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. We do **not** have a payphone in the church or hall.



Our defibrillator (outlined in red)



POTENTIAL LIFE SAVER

ESSENTIAL HANDS-ON INTRODUCTION TO DE-FIB

Let's hope we never have to use the excellent tuition 19 of us received from Jo Duff, Cardiac Physiologist, from the charity Heartbeat on 21st November.

After explaining the difference between a heart attack (akin to a plumbing problem) and a cardiac arrest (an electrical defect) Jo showed us how to use a defibrillator and what we should do if someone suddenly collapses and stops breathing.

Call 999, do quite forceful chest compressions (to the rhythm of "Staying Alive" by the Bee Gees) and get the defibrillator as soon as possible. It may just save a life.

Above all, don't panic. Our defibrillator is in the main entrance lobby in the church hall.

THE COLOUR OF FUN

ST JOHN'S FIRST COLOUR THEMED EVENT

What's a colour party?

On Saturday 15th November we found out.

You bring a dish of food and you wear something in a colour which reflects what you have brought to eat. And you play games in a brightly coloured church hall. And you have a lot of fun.

We had a colour themed quiz and the winners had a purple patch of correct answers and made the other teams green.

Jennie, dressed as a tangerine, was the caller in a game of Colour Bingo. Thanks to Jennie, Clive, Christine, Andy and Cheryl for creating an enjoyable evening.



Micah's Message – look forward to the child born in Bethlehem

By Lester Amman

Why is the news so full of depressing stories? Why can't they report some good news for a change? Indeed, our world is always full of troubles, and we may wonder if better times will ever come.

Similar comments might have been directed at many of the Old Testament prophets who nearly always said negative and gloomy things. The people of Micah's day (about 700 years before Jesus was born) had many problems. They were surrounded by warring nations and peace in their time was unlikely.

It was Micah's task, as God's messenger, to tell the people how it was and how it was going to be, no matter how painful the facts. Micah was deeply concerned with the social ills of his day and spoke out against false prophets who were leading the people into contrived hopes and errors.

Micah was quite forthright. He announced that God would punish the people for their sinfulness and their enemies would overcome them. Micah came with bad news and there seemed no end to his reprimands and denouncements.

But in the desert was an oasis. Amidst his

descriptions of imminent pain and suffering, Micah looked forward to a time of peace with freedom from injustice, fear and war. Micah delivered God's promise that from Bethlehem there would come a ruler to free them from their oppression. Their Saviour would come. (Micah 5:2)

Of course, Micah's hearers did not understand about the Babe at Bethlehem, but they were told to stand firm in their faith no matter what troubles or disasters would befall them. They were to look forward to their deliverance, whenever that would be.

Amidst Micah's attack on the deplorable actions of leaders and the nation's wrong values and behaviour, he gave hope that God was with them in the failures and difficulties. Only God could take them through their troubles to a place of peace.

Micah's message still stands for us today. God wants us to mend our wilful ways; to correct bad attitudes and behaviour; to strive for heaven's values of justice, peace, equality, love and harmony.

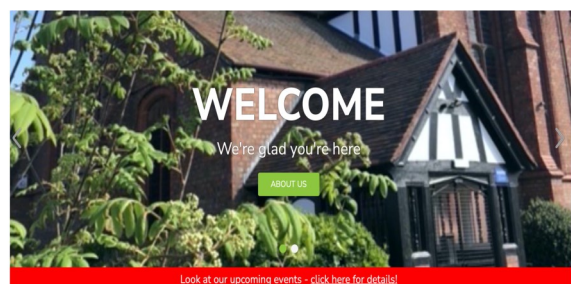
As we approach a New Year, we would do well to respond to Micah's words: *What does the Lord require of me? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.* (Micah 6:8)

Ten Fun Facts about Christmas Trees

1. Even before the time of Christ, evergreen trees were seen in winter as a symbol of fertility.
2. It was the 16th century monk, Martin Luther, who is credited with the idea of having lights on Christmas trees. He added candles to his tree, to look like stars in a forest.
3. Windsor Castle got its first Christmas tree in 1800, brought by Charlotte, wife of George III.
4. It was in 1835 that the term 'Christmas tree' was first used in English.
5. It was in the 1840s, when Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria, began bringing trees inside, that led to their popularity throughout the UK.
6. It was Woolworths who first sold manufactured Christmas tree ornaments – back in 1880.



7. The tree in London's Trafalgar Square has been a gift from the city of Oslo, Norway since 1947.
8. The world's tallest Xmas tree, at 221ft high, was erected in a Washington shopping mall in 1950.
9. In a survey of the nation's favourite smells, real Christmas trees came eighth, just behind the sea, but ahead of perfume.
10. About five million real Christmas trees are sold in the UK each year.



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AESOP'S FABLES

We will all know at least one of Aesop's fables: the story of the tortoise and the hare. We learned as children that slow and steady wins the race (although that is not always true).



Who was Aesop, and what did he write?

He is said to have been a slave and a storyteller in ancient Greece about 500-600 years before the birth of Jesus. It is not known how many stories were told by Aesop as they were not written down when he lived, and they have come to us through oral storytelling over the centuries, but various sources suggest that he was the originator of perhaps as many as 600-700 stories. They came to be known as fables which are short fictional tales which teach a moral lesson. Aesop's fables were about animals, plants or objects which often acted, and had the ability to think and speak, like humans.

The themes included many basic and unattractive human traits such as greed, pride, cunning and dishonesty: not unlike *The Canterbury Tales* which we have been revisiting in *THE WORD* over a number of months.

In future issues Stuart Baker will look at some of Aesop's fables and attempt to extract some moral lessons from them.

We shall make a start with **The Fir Tree and The Bramble.**

Once upon a time, in a big forest, there was a tall and strong tree called the Fir Tree. Near its roots, there was a small plant called the Bramble. The Fir Tree often looked down on the Bramble, thinking it was much better. One day, the Fir Tree said in a mean voice, "You're not as useful as me. People use me to build their homes. Everyone wants me, but nobody notices you."

The Bramble, with its small, rustling leaves, listened quietly. After a moment, it replied calmly.

"You may be tall and strong," the Bramble said, "but have you ever thought about the tools humans use? They use axes and saws to cut down big trees like you. They usually ignore small plants like me."

The Fir Tree suddenly felt afraid. It had never thought about being chopped down. It had always been proud of its size and importance.

"If I were you," the Bramble added, "I would rather be small and safe than big and in danger. Being a Bramble, safe on the ground, seems much better than being a Fir Tree that might be cut down one day."



Moral:

Be content with your lot; those who seem better off often face greater dangers.

There is a more modern version in the form of a limerick:

The Fir-tree looked down on the Bramble.

"Poor thing only able to scramble

About on the ground."

Just then an axe sound

Made the Fir wish himself but a Bramble.

Moral: Pride of place has its disadvantages.

With New Year's Resolutions in mind, here is John Wesley's rule of conduct:

Do all the good you can
By all the means you can
In all the ways you can
In all the places you can
At all the times you can
To all the people you can

The manager of a department store put this notice in the window: 'If you need it, we have it.' But in the window of a rival, a sign appeared, stating: 'If we don't have it, you don't need it.'

Correction: last month we referred to Andy Roberts working for the Christian Mission Services. It is of course the Christian Mission Society whose work we have supported for many years.

Do you want to rent a space?

CHURCH & HALL AVAILABLE TO RENT FOR CONCERTS, PARTIES, MEETINGS...

ST JOHN'S CHURCH BIRKDALE



Are you looking to hire a space for a regular group activity or for a family celebration such as a children's birthday party? Our halls are ideal.

We have both a large hall and a small meeting room available for hire for an hourly charge. A professional standard kitchen is also available.

If you would like to make a booking for any of our rooms in the church hall please contact Jean Morris - phone 01704 564206.

Small Meeting Room

- Dimensions - 30ft x 15ft (9.1m x 4.57m)
 - Equipped with chairs and tables
 - TV monitor screen
- Ideal for meetings and small gatherings

Large Hall

- Dimensions - 55ft x 33ft (16.76m x 10m)
 - Equipped with chairs and tables
 - Theatre style capacity for up to 100
 - Ideal for parties, concerts, clubs, meetings
- Regular or one-off events

Kitchen

- Fully equipped, professional kitchen including cooker, heated cupboard and dishwasher.

Church

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

The Nicene Creed: Trinitarian Faith

by Canon Paul Hardingham

In the last of our series on the Nicene Creed, we want to ask about its significance today. The original Creed dates from 325 AD, but was expanded at the Council of Constantinople in 381. Over the last months we have seen how the Creed provides a 'big picture' of who God is and challenges our commitment to him. Its value can be seen in three main areas:

The Nicene Creed stresses the need to believe the right thing:

Sadly, we often hear Christian leaders and churches denying the essential articles of the Christian Faith. To be a part of orthodox Christianity, we must believe in what is affirmed in the Nicene Creed. *'For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures'* (1 Corinthians 15:3-5).

The Nicene Creed affirms the importance of the Trinity:

Generally, Christians give little thought to the Trinity, and many churches rarely teach on the subject. However, by regularly reciting the Nicene Creed, people are reminded of the doctrine about the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It protects the truth about the Trinity, especially in opposition to Arianism, which sees Jesus as the first and greatest of God's creatures, but not the same as God the Father. To be a Christian is to be baptised in the triune name and to worship God, who is three persons in one Godhead: *'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'* (Matthew 28:19).

The Nicene Creed focuses on God's salvation:

At the heart of the Nicene Creed is the good news that Jesus came down from heaven 'for our salvation'. It understands Christianity as essentially being about sin and salvation, judgment and forgiveness, and new life in Jesus Christ.

This theme is very relevant at Christmas, when we celebrate the baby born in Bethlehem as our Saviour. As the angels said to the shepherds: *'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'* (Luke 2:11,12).

Immanuel A poem by Penny Candlin

God is with us
The light to put out all darkness
The saviour to redeem us
The redeemer to forgive
Immanuel
Perfect in every way
Humble to serve
Gentle to heal
Patient to wait
Immanuel
God became man and dwelt among us
God bore our pain and suffering
God walked among us to show us the way
God paid for our sin to come closer to us
Immanuel
Jesus Christ saviour of the world
Obedient unto death
To bring us to life eternal.

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 December or January **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.

Elderly and depressed this winter: go to church!

Older people with depression can see a bigger improvement in their mental health if they start going to church than if they engage in charity work or sport. **Research from the London School of Economics** found that joining a religious organisation is the best way of combatting depression. It may be both that having a faith gives benefit, and also because meeting up with other people of faith gives a sense of belonging. The LSE also found evidence that membership of some political and community organisations may have a poor impact on an older person's mental health.

W CROSS R D

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

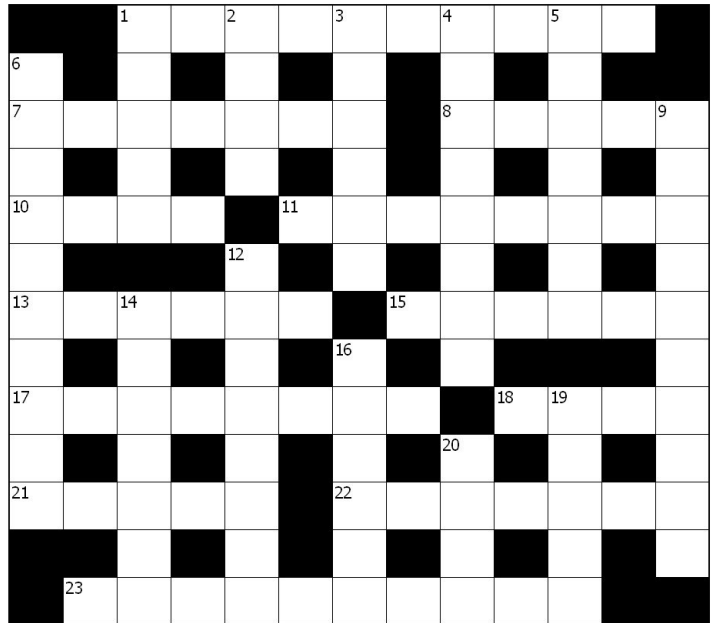
Solution below

Across

- 1 Provisional meeting place of God and the Jews (Exodus 25:9) (10)
 7 David's third son, killed when his head got caught in a tree during a battle with his father (2 Samuel 18:14,15) (7)
 8 They ruled much of the west coast of South America in the 15th and early 16th centuries (5)
 10 Small deer of European and Asian extraction (4)
 11 Seized control of (Numbers 21:25) (8)
 13 Terror (Luke 24:5) (6)
 15 First World War heroine shot by the Germans in Brussels, Nurse Edith (6)
 17 Stormy (8)
 18 A bitter variety of this, together with lamb and unleavened bread, was the Passover menu for anyone unclean (Numbers 9:11) (4)
 21 Arson (anag.) (5)
 22 How John Newton described God's grace in his well-known hymn (7)
 23 Habitation (Isaiah 27:10) (10)

Down

- 1 and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8) (5)
 2 The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as ... as a lion (Proverbs 28:1) (4)
 3 One of the exiles, a descendant of Parosh, who married a foreign woman (Ezra 10:25) (6)



- 4 He escaped from Nob when Saul killed the rest of his family and joined David (1 Samuel 22:19,20) (8)
 5 City and lake in Central Switzerland (7)
 6 Offer your bodies as living, holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1) (10)
 9 Pouches carried by horses (Genesis 49:14) (10)
 12 One who accepts government by God (8)
 14 Aromatic substance commonly used in Jewish ritual (Exodus 30:1) (7)
 16 He asked Jesus, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38) (6)
 19 Are (Romans 13:1) (5)
 20 You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will ... his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) (4)

In our Book of Remembrance In December

- 2nd Horace Hall (1998)
 4th Harry Pennington (2004)
 6th John Jones (2014)
 7th James Rimmer (1972)
 9th William Ball (1991)
 Margaret Foster (2002)
 10th Harry Allen (1991)
 12th Thomas Lacy (1989)
 15th Maud Monk (1984)
 16th Walter Marshall (1976)
 Emma Wright (1978)
 Hilda Banham (2005)

- 18th Jack Greensmith (1982)
 19th Albert Carr (2014)
 20th Leonard Carrington (2011)
 21st John Heap (1956)
 22nd Blanche Yarwood (1983)
 Carol Astley (2002)
 23rd William Ryan (1985)
 24th Charles Bateman (1965)
 25th Elsie Hamer (1982)
 Daniel Randles (1990)
 27th Mary Wright (1979)
 27th May Williams (1985)
 Ivan Coop (1989)
 Julie Kershaw (2007)

- 28th Sarah Halsall (1964)
 29th Mary Ball (1988)
 30th James Lloyd (1985)

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

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1, Tabernacle. 7, Absalom. 8, Incas. 10, Roes. 11, Captured. 13, Fright. 15, Cavell. 17, Cynlonic. 18, Herb. 21, Sonar. 22, Amazing. 23, Settlement.

DOWN: 1, Taste. 2, Bold. 3, Ramiah. 4, Abiathar. 5, Lucerne. 6, Sacrifices. 9, Saddlebags. 12, Theocrat. 14, Incense. 16, Pilate. 19, Exist. 20, Save.

God in the Arts

The Revd Michael Burgess surveys great works of sacred art.

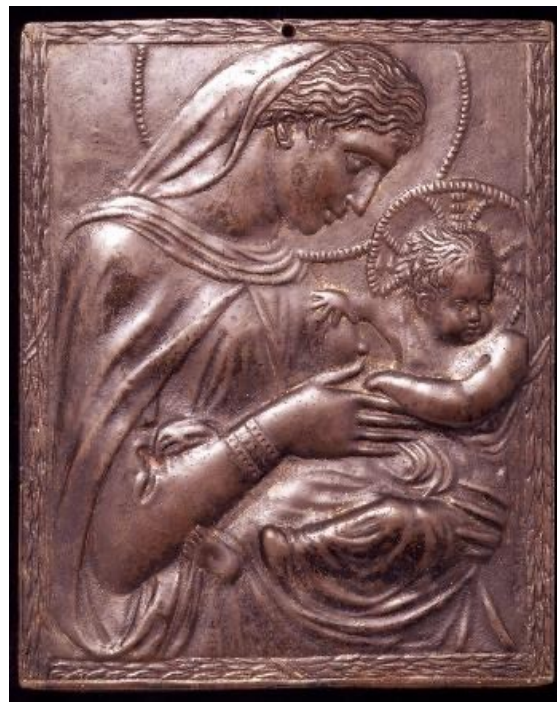
'He gave us eyes to see them': Madonna and Child from Donatello's workshop

Each month during this year we have visited art galleries and museums in England that are often overlooked by the tourist trail, but which contain treasures that can inspire and deepen our Christian faith. Our final visit in this series is to a gracious, elegant Georgian villa rejoicing in the odd name of the Ranger's House. It is outside the western wall of Greenwich Park in London and is home to the Wernher collection of art.

Julius Wernher was a diamond magnate who died in 1912, and in his lifetime, he amassed an amazing array of 700 works that make up this collection. There are paintings by Joshua Reynolds and Romney, Renaissance jewellery, and a marble statue by Bergonzoli, 'The Love of Angels.'

But this month we focus on another love – the love of a mother and child by the workshop of Donatello. When I was a student I visited Florence for the first time, and I can always remember the impact of entering the Bargello and being greeted by the sculptures of Donatello. It was a special moment of revelation to be able to look around and wonder at the glorious works of this sculptor filling the second floor of the castle.

By contrast the Madonna and Child in the Ranger's House is a miniature, a bronze plaque just 4 inches square. Our Lady is depicted in classical profile with flowing robes and wavy hair, but the mood is one of tenderness as she cradles the Christ-Child. She holds His left hand in hers, while He looks down at something that has caught His attention. Perhaps it is a noise at the stable door or the sound of an animal in the Bethlehem night. Perhaps it is St Joseph getting everything ready for the Holy Family to



leave. We don't know, but it is another special moment of revelation caught in this little plaque. It may not be by Donatello himself, but we sense the master overseeing the creation of this work.

At Christmas we ponder the mystery of infinity caught in a little space, the cradle at Bethlehem, just as the mystery of love, maternal and divine, is caught in the little space of this plaque. Margaret Rizza's carol, 'Jesus is our joy' captures the mood of wonder, joy and hope as we open the stable door to see the love of a mother and her new-born baby expressed here and at the heart of the Christmas gospel:

'Lovely in your littleness,
longing for our lowliness,
searching for our meekness.....

Held in Mary's tenderness,
tiny hands are raised to bless,
touching us with God's caress.

Joy then in God's graciousness,
peace comes with gentleness,
filling hearts with gladness.'

Christmas Cards

We send an estimated 900 million to 1 billion Christmas cards in the UK each year. Royal Mail delivers around 150 million. On average, each person in the UK sends and receives about 17 cards. This year the final Royal Mail Christmas posting dates are as follows:
Wednesday, December 17th: 2nd Class and 2nd Class Signed For

Friday, December 19th:
Saturday, December 20th:
Signed For
Sunday, December 21st:
Tuesday, December 23rd:
Guaranteed.

Royal Mail Tracked 48
1st Class and 1st Class

Royal Mail Tracked 24
Special Delivery

(It is best to post as early as possible to avoid the last -minute rush.)

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON LAW

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

A PROBLEM OF ETHICS

One of the most difficult problems of Christian Ethics of our time is this: is it permissible for society to exterminate those who have an irresistible impulse to murder? A similar problem arises about sterilisation. If a man is subject to mad sexual impulses which cause him to inflict grave injury on innocent women, is it permissible compulsorily to sterilise him? or alternatively to keep him in prison indefinitely until he is past the age when he will do such things?

In Denmark they have a law whereby a sexual offender is sentenced to prison for as long as the State thinks fit to keep him there, but he can obtain his freedom by submitting to sterilisation. In England we have never gone so far. We do not generally permit sterilisation of the unfit, at least as a punishment or as a protection for society (as opposed, in very extreme cases, to it being done for the protection of a person of unsound mind against the consequences of her or his own instincts: a doubtful practice which has crept in in the last few years (*prior to 1989. Ed*)).

I expect the refusal of the law to sterilise the offender has its origin in the sanctity which Christianity attaches to human life. Just as life itself is sacred, so are the means of producing

it; and it is not to be taken away except by him who is the creator of it. The danger is, of course, that once authority is given to society to exterminate, to sterilise or to intern indefinitely some of its members, you may find that those who are in authority in the State may use it, as the Nazis did, against those whom they dislike.

I offer no solution except to suggest that true Christianity should try to strike a correct balance between the individual and the society of which he forms part.

Copyright in Lord Denning's book is owned by the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship whom we thank for their kind permission in allowing us to publish extracts from it.

Editor's Footnote:

When Lord Denning wrote his book in 1989 castration of male offenders, whether surgically or chemically, was not part of the criminal sentencing law in England and Wales. In 2025 it remains the case that surgical castration is not permissible, but chemical castration (the administration of drugs to suppress libido coupled with psychological or psychiatric therapy) is available to some sexual offenders on a voluntary basis in a pilot scheme in a few prisons. The current Government is reported to be considering increasing the number of prisons where this can be carried out and whether the law can be changed so as to make lawful the mandatory chemical castration of some sexual offenders without their consent.



Lord Denning,
drawn by Sallon

Reflecting Faith: Listening to the Gospel

by Rev. Dr. Jo White

One of the highlights of the Christmas services is the reading of the opening passage from John's Gospel, **'In the beginning was the Word ...'**

I love the poetry of the words and sentences, as well as their very meaning. In most churches everyone will stand for that reading, which emphasises its importance. But what makes it important?

Most gospel passages that are read in church include the words of Jesus Himself, handed down to us over the centuries, but here there are none. Rather, this is the defining statement of who Jesus is and where He came from.

The way that the gospel readings are valued by the Church can be seen in our church buildings over the years. In older churches you will find two lecterns, one either side of the central altar. The right-hand side is for the Old Testament and epistle

readings, and the left-hand side lectern (as the congregation faces the altar) is for the gospel reading.

On the altar, the holder for the priest's book was physically moved to that side, so that as he read out the gospel he would be facing the northern side of the church. Traditionally that was the colder, darker side, thought to be 'least' holy and therefore in need of the gospel most. [*In St John's we have only one lectern, on the right-hand side as we face the sanctuary. Ed.*]

Nowadays all readings may be given from the same place at the front of church, though in some churches the gospel book will be processed into the centre of the congregation, to bring us all gathering around Christ's words.

It is because of this absolute importance of the gospels that people face the gospel, so as it is processed, they move their body and heads towards it. This will leave some people with their backs to the altar for that time, but it is the 'Word made flesh' that we honour.

WORD SEARCH

Solution on page 26

Did the Old Testament expect Jesus to come? Yes indeed! Here are just some examples of OT prophecies:

He would be born of a virgin. 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son and will call Him Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7:14)

He would be born in Bethlehem. 'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel...' (Micah 5:2)

His lineage would be of the line of David. 'I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.' (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

He would bring healing. 'Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.' (Isaiah 35:5-6)

He would be crucified. They pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. (Psalm 22)

He would rise from the dead. 'You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay...' (Psalm 16: 8-11)



BORN	ISRAEL	HEALING	CRUCIFIED	RISE
VIRGIN	DAVID	BLIND	PIERCE	DEAD
IMMANUEL	KING	DEAF	HANDS	ABANDON
BETHLEHEM	JUST	LAME	FEET	DECAY
RULER	RIGHT	MUTE	GLOAT	REALM

An Introduction to Books in the New Testament: Philippians

Canon Paul Hardingham continues his series exploring books in The Bible.

This letter was written to Christians in the Macedonian city of Philippi when Paul was in prison, probably in Rome (60-62 AD). His primary purpose in writing was to thank them for the gift they had sent him upon learning of his imprisonment. However, he also uses the letter as an opportunity to report on his situation; to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances; to exhort the church to live in humility, fellowship, and unity; to commend Epaphroditus and Timothy to them; and to warn them about false teaching. This included Judaizers who were persuading the Philippians to submit to circumcision.

The central message of Philippians focuses on joy (the word occurs some 16 times!). For Paul, joy isn't simply an emotional response to favourable circumstances. True joy is to be found through a relationship with the resurrected and glorified Christ. Death ceases to be an enemy, because through it we can more fully enjoy the presence of Jesus. This joy is also rooted in an expectation of the return of Jesus, which gives urgency to the task of sharing the gospel. So, Paul begins his letter by thanking the Philippians for their partnership together in the work of the gospel through the offerings they have sent.

Paul also powerfully appeals to the Philippians to be of 'one mind' in pursuing humility and unity. He gives the example of Jesus himself 'who made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant' (2:7) to the point of dying the death of a common criminal. 'Therefore', say Paul, 'God exalted him to the highest place' (2:9). This 'Jesus attitude' is the one that all believers should share.

the elderberries gardening club

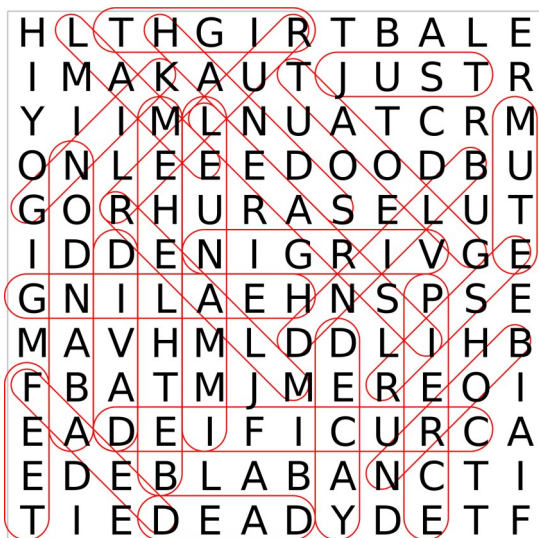
The group meet from 10.30am-noon on the **second Wednesday of every month** at **St. John's Church** on St. John's Road in Birkdale.



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

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

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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.

The Incarnation: fearfully and wonderfully made

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. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:15-16

You began life as a single cell. For a few hours you were a miniscule but highly complex blob of jelly, until it began to divide: two cells, four, eight, sixteen, a ball, a hollow ball, and then something more recognisably like a living organism. You were still tiny, but developing a nervous system, a head, a body, arms and legs.

Until recently I hadn't thought much about Jesus being an embryo. Somehow, I find that thought even more shocking than His birth. How could God, who made the universe, have become something so completely and utterly vulnerable? Maybe in the past, when the development of a child happened in 'secret', it was possible just to let that part of the Christmas story go untold.

Today, when we see images of a developing child, or even embryos outside the womb, it is harder to ignore the process of Jesus developing into a baby. The incarnation meant that God's Son went through all the stages in the diagram in my developmental biology textbook: 'zygote', 'morula', 'blastocyst', implantation, and so on.

Jesus was there in the beginning, and all life owes its existence to Him. But instead of remaining aloof, He chose to become one of us. The Son of God shared the same kind of DNA as every other organism on the planet. He knows what it feels like to have a body, to feel hungry and thirsty, pain and pleasure, dark and light.

In Psalm 139, the writer is meditating on God's intimate knowledge of him, which began when he was an embryo. There is nothing God doesn't know about him, and even darkness cannot obscure him from God's sight. The incarnation means that God's intimacy with us now extends even further. He became one of us, lived alongside us, and shared our very fragile material nature.

The transcendent God is also immanent, longing for us to relate to Him as Father. He became as fragile as we are so He could rescue us from the messes we so often find ourselves in. With His help, we can remember what it means to be fearfully and wonderfully made.

And there were shepherds...

by Tony Horsfall, a Bible teacher and conference speaker.

In his gospel, Luke tells how the shepherds in the fields were keeping watch over their flocks when they were terrified by the sudden arrival of heavenly angels, surrounded by the glory of the Lord. And the message of the angel that night has rung down the centuries:

"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10,11)

And so, the first people to greet the Saviour were not rich VIPs, but humble shepherds. And in turn, it was the shepherds who became the first evangelists: for they would have gone home to their families and neighbours that

night with the amazing news of what they had seen.

Meanwhile, for Mary there followed a time of reflection. She gathered up in her mind all her impressions, and all that the shepherds had shared about the angelic visit. She knew it was treasure, and not to be squandered. Then she quietly pondered in her heart the meaning and significance of all that had happened, so that she would never forget.

Exuberant witness and quiet contemplation are not opposites. They are, in fact, good companions in the spiritual life!

So, this Christmas, let's be filled with the joy that the Saviour has also been born 'to us'. May our lives reflect the glory of His coming, even in a small way. May our interactions with friends, colleagues and families during this Advent season reflect the great joy that the angels brought that night, so long ago.

THE GOOD KINGS AND BAD KINGS OF ENGLAND

By Dennis Davis

The Man Who Could Have Been King: Oliver Cromwell.

Part 1: the Rise to Power

As we approach Christmas everyone expects a Christmas special, but we do not have an English Christmas King. However there was a man who could have been King and turned it down and was said to have banned Christmas and became the first commoner to rule Britain. Soldier, statesman and "Lord Protector" Oliver Cromwell; much loved by some and hated by others.

He was born on the 25th April 1599. He described himself as being born a gentleman but not living at any considerable height nor yet in obscurity. He is said to have been spoilt by a doting mother which may have led to his later rough temper. His mother was of a respectful family and his father farmed the Church lands at the rear of Ely Cathedral. Cromwell was educated at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. He married Elizabeth Bouchier on 22nd August 1620 at St Giles Cripplegate to whom he became devoted and she was able to manage him.

He became a political agitator and claimed his early life was sinful; he converted to become a proud Puritan. Cromwell became a Member of Parliament and was at the forefront of action against the "murderous and bloodthirsty Irish" who in 1641 had massacred English settlers. This led other Settlers going to fight the Irish at their own expense and taking land of the Irish as

payment, which is still quoted by the Irish to this day. It is said that this led to the King taking up his standard at Nottingham against the Parliamentarians and provoking the Civil war.

Cromwell became a junior officer and formed a troop of cavalry from his own estate and arrived at Edge Hill late in the battle. He made such a



Oliver Cromwell

good impression that he was invited to form a regiment. Many of his officers were from his own family. He was a stern disciplinarian banning swearing, drunkenness and gambling, offenders were punished. Royalist propaganda called him an undisciplined vandal.

After the royalist Prince Rupert burned down Cirencester and Marlborough Cromwell called him, "the Cavalier Robber". Cromwell's cavalry were called The Iron Sides. The Cavaliers called them Roundheads but Cromwell banned the use of that name on threat of punishment.

Cromwell was made the governor of Ely. At the battle of Marston Moor he was accused of playing down the contribution of the Scottish forces. In Parliament he was

critical of the Earl of Manchester's tardy action against the Royalists. Manchester replied in the House of Lords about Cromwell's religious animosity. The Royalists captured Leicester resulting in the vicious slaughter of the defenceless women and children.

Cromwell gathered forces in case the Duke of Montrose and his Blue Bonnets attacked. A petition was made for Cromwell to command the Cavalry and join the main army; it was time to force the King to fight. Cromwell claimed it was the superior training and tactics that had given them the victory and the Lord had put a sword in their hand.

The new Model Army was untried at this time, Parliament took up a masked position on a small hill; Prince Rupert charged and caused chaos. It was here that Cromwell showed his military genius and snatched victory out of defeat. Meanwhile Prince Rupert was plundering the enemy's baggage train. This was the last chance for the King to gain a victory. Prince Rupert's troops burned the City of Bristol. There was dissent in the New Model Army between Presbyterians and independents. Cromwell told them that they all had the same spirit and prayer. The House of Commons failed to confirm this.

The war descended into sieges of fortified houses while the King tried to negotiate an Irish Treaty. He hoped this would help him to beat the Parliamentarians, but, peace was the last thing on their mind. Cromwell now turned to politics; and the new model army was sent to Ireland.

To be continued.

KNOWING OURSELF

by John M. Shakespeare

To recognise who we are we need to cherish our own qualities, the world we inhabit, and the customs and attitudes that guide us.

What makes a nation's wealth is, I believe, the people who inhabit it, and that is the inheritance we pass on to coming generations. In fact it defines who we are!

Jean Paul Satre (1905-1980) was an existentialist philosopher who believed in the personal Freedom of the individual. His book, "Being and Nothingness" asserted that all human beings are free.

This claim however seems somewhat hollow when we are currently living the experience of the Covid pandemic and all its limitations, concerning what we can and cannot do according to Government edicts!

In many ways we come to relish what we have become over the years, however in the Bible, to quote Ephesians (Ch4 verses 22-

24) we are urged to become a new self: "You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness". What we eventually choose to become, will be down to our life choices.

Jean Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) suggested during the early 19th century that the characteristics a person acquired during a lifetime, could be transmitted from parents to offspring. Heritability is a controversial concept based on both Nature and Nurture, factors both affected to a greater or lesser extent, by the genetic nature of the subject. It would seem that we are born with some instincts, whilst others are learnt.

Observing our descendants, I wonder what nightmare we may leave behind when we are no longer treading the stage of this world. A poem by Lorna Wood entitled "To a Descendant" sums up my feelings. I quote the last of the three verses:-

**I shall not cause droughts, be noisy, spoil your life,
In fact, to be brief, I shan't materialize!
But I shall be pleased if anyone ever sees me
In your face, your walk, or the glance of your
laughing eyes.**

Families can be of great support, but they may also lead to strife within a family. The present breakdown in relations between our own Royal Princes, William and Harry, bring to mind a

quotation from William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) an English novelist: **If a man's character is to be abused, say what you will, there's nobody like a relative to do the business.**

Similarities between family members can be seen to be the result of common behavioural antics that are practised in a family context. In this environment they are learnt, so who we are may probably be explained by our genetic makeup.

In getting to know ourselves it may also help if we may as honestly as possible examine the tendencies that we have developed in certain biases towards others. Do we adopt a confrontational bias when faced with ideas that we don't like, or are we more likely to adopt a more consensual bias.

Families can be the great levellers of our self-esteem, the chances are that they know our biases, better than anyone else e.g. our prejudices and our virtues. However the esteem of a family and friends can be a great source of confidence. Remember the proverb, "Without an opposing wind no kite can fly".



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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

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Monday 22nd December

Victoria Centre Foodbank 1:30pm - 3:00pm

Tarleton Pantry (closed)

Tuesday 23rd December

Victoria Centre Foodbank 10am - 3pm

Southport Pantry 9am - 12pm

Wednesday 24th December - Thursday 1st January

All projects closed, except

Monday 29th December

Emergency Foodbank

Victoria Centre 10am - 12pm

Friday 2nd January

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The story behind "O little town of Bethlehem"

One of the most popular Christmas carols which we sing every year is "O little town of Bethlehem." It was written by Phillips Brooks, an American, who was born into a wealthy family in Boston, Massachusetts in 1835. He had a somewhat unusual reputation as being a very fast speaker, reportedly at the rate of 213 words per minute. He graduated at Harvard and intended to become a classics teacher but was not suited to it and instead he became ordained and entered the Protestant Episcopal ministry as a rector.

In 1865 he spent a year travelling far away from America and on one Christmas Eve he visited an old church at Bethlehem. He found that nearly two thousand years since the birth of Jesus the town still retained a sacred atmosphere. Sadly, that is not so in the 21st century because it has become commercialised.

Bethlehem in the middle of winter was not covered in snow, and it is unlikely that frosty winds made moan or that earth stood hard as iron or water like a stone, but it would have been quite cold.

Two years later Brooks composed the carol, remembering the cold, clear night on which he had visited Bethlehem. The lyrics mention the stillness of the night, the starry sky, and the everlasting Light (which of course is Jesus) which shone in the dark streets.

He wrote the carol for his church's Sunday School, just as Sabine Baring Gould had written "Onward Christian Soldiers" in 1865.

Brooks is said to have been a cheerful man and people claimed to feel better after casually talking to him for a minute or two. His sermons did not belabour his congregations with homilies on sin and guilt.

He was a passionate supporter of the struggle to abolish slavery and he was immensely saddened by the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865. He attributed the murder of the President to the sin of slavery.

Brooks died after a short illness at the young age of 58 years. Statues were erected in his memory and schools were named after him. His most lasting memorial is "O little town of Bethlehem" with its timeless words:

We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!

Stuart Baker. (Source material: 'Every Hymn Has a Story' by John Large)

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Wednesday 17th December:
 Christmas Bingo (2pm-4pm)

For more details about these events please
 contact 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.
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The Identification Number every Sunday will be: 812 3403 0688

The Password every Sunday will be: 201823

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

The telephone number you must ring is: 0203 481 5240

The Meeting Identification Number every Sunday will be: 812 3403 0688

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

The Password every Sunday will be: 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**:

The Identification Number every Thursday will be: 835 5074 3780

The Password every Thursday will be: 7ehHEK

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

The telephone number you must ring is: 0203 481 5240

The Meeting Identification Number every Thursday will be: 835 5074 3780.

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

The Password every Thursday will be 7ehHEK. **SUBJECT TO BEING CHANGED.**

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

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

Was it really that long ago?...

75 years ago, on 25th December 1950 the Stone of Scone, the coronation stone of British monarchs, was taken from Westminster Abbey in London by four Scottish students. They transported it to Scotland but broke it. It was later returned to London and used in the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Since 1996 it has been kept in Edinburgh Castle, with the agreement that it will be transported to Westminster Abbey when needed for coronations.

70 years ago, on 1st December 1955 African American civil rights activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama. This violated the city's racial segregation laws, and led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott (5th to 20th December 1956) and the birth of the modern American civil rights movement.

65 years ago, on 9th December 1960 the first episode of the TV soap Coronation Street was broadcast on ITV.

60 years ago, on 22nd December 1965 Richard Dimbleby, journalist and radio-television broadcaster, died. The BBC's first war correspondent, he was one of the greatest figures in British broadcasting history. Father of the TV presenters David Dimbleby and Jonathan Dimbleby.

30 years ago, on 22nd December 1995 the British 'rogue trader' Nick Leeson was jailed for six and a half years in Singapore for fraudulent financial dealings which had led to the fall of Barings Bank.

Also 30 years ago, on 8th December 1995 Headteacher Philip Lawrence was stabbed to death outside his west London school while trying to protect a student who was being assaulted by a gang of youths.

Also 30 years ago, on 15th December the European Council announced that the new European currency would be called the Euro.

25 years ago, 13th December 2000, George Bush finally claimed the US presidency, 36 days after the election was held. The results were delayed by disputed votes in Florida.

15 years ago, on 16th December 2010 Ireland was granted a 67.5 billion Euro bailout from the European Union to rescue its banks and other financial institutions from collapsing.

10 years ago, on 19th December 2015 Jimmy Hill, football player, manager and host of the BBC football TV series *Match of the Day* (1973-88) died.

Church Hall Users

Wednesday

10.30 – 12 noon 2nd 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

Thursday

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

Contact: 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.

I heard the Bells on Christmas Day

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:
'There is no peace on earth, ' I said
'For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.'

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men.'

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The History of Mince Pies

Mince pies have been traditional English Christmas fare since the Middle Ages, when meat was a key ingredient. The addition of spices, suet and alcohol to meat came about because it was an alternative to salting and smoking in order to preserve the food. Mince pies used to be a different shape – cradle-shaped with a pastry baby Jesus on top.



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To **Mavis Beckingham on 28th December**

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

The Last Laughs

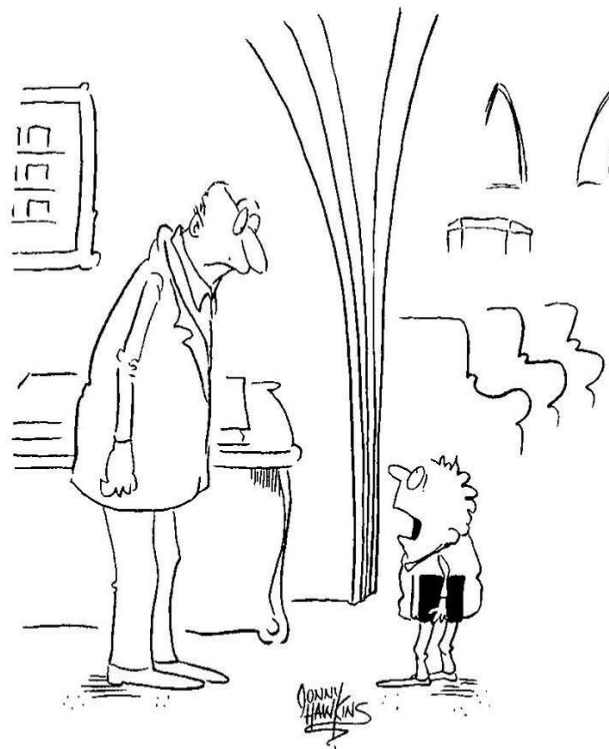
IT WAS IN THE PAPER, SO IT MUST BE TRUE....

A young girl who was blown out to sea on a set of inflatable teeth was rescued by a man on a lobster. A coastguard spokesman commented: "This sort of thing is all too common." (*"The Times"* newspaper)

At the height of a gale, the harbour master radioed a coastguard on the spot and asked him to estimate the wind speed. He replied he was sorry, but he didn't have a gauge. However, if it was any help, the wind had just blown his Land Rover off the cliff. (*Aberdeen Evening Express*)

Local news stories reported in *The Sun* from time to time have had these eye-catching headlines:

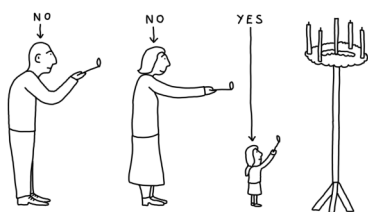
1. Drunk fought invisible man
2. I've been posting my letters in the dog poo box for TWO YEARS
3. Hackney pool 'too wet to swim'



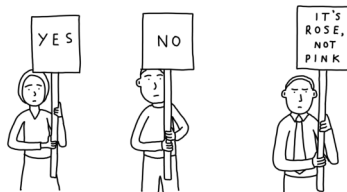
"I slept in church because I'm striving to be more like God, and on the seventh day He rested."

ADVENT

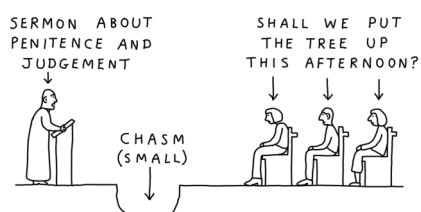
CONTROVERSIES



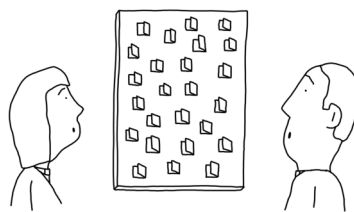
WHO WILL LIGHT THE CANDLES ON THE ADVENT WREATH?



SHOULD THE WREATH HAVE ONE PINK CANDLE?



WHETHER TO PREACH ON CHALLENGING ADVENT THEMES



WHO COULD HAVE EATEN THE VESTRY ADVENT CALENDAR CHOCOLATES?



Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves



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<u>Christmas pudding</u>			
<u>Brandy sauce</u>			
<u>Box mince pies</u>			
<u>Shortbread biscuits</u>			
<u>Tin ham</u>			
<u>Jar Baxters jam</u>			
<u>Jar Baxters marmalade</u>			
<u>Mixed nuts</u>			
<u>Biscuits for cheese</u>			
<u>Chutney</u>			
<u>Bottle wine</u>			
<u>Cranberry sauce</u>			
<u>Small jar Nescafe coffee</u>			
<u>Small packet Yorkshire tea</u>			
<u>After eight dinner mints</u>			
<u>Box chocolates</u>			
<u>Tin John West salmon</u>			

PLEASE SIGN AGAINST THE ITEM YOU WISH TO DONATE AND TICK WHEN YOU HAVE PLACED IT IN THE BOX, AND ENSURE YOUR ITEMS ARE BROUGHT TO CHURCH LATEST BY SUNDAY **30th NOVEMBER.**

CHRISTMAS FAIR RAFFLE
SATURDAY 6TH DECEMBER 2025

ITEM	NAME	TEL NO	TICK
<u>Christmas cake</u>			
<u>Christmas pudding</u>			
<u>Brandy sauce</u>			
<u>Box mince pies</u>			
<u>Shortbread biscuits</u>			
<u>Tin ham</u>			
<u>Jar Baxters jam</u>			
<u>Jar Baxters marmalade</u>			
<u>Mixed nuts</u>			
<u>Biscuits for cheese</u>			
<u>Chutney</u>			
<u>Bottle wine</u>			
<u>Cranberry sauce</u>			
<u>Small jar Nescafe coffee</u>			
<u>Small packet Yorkshire tea</u>			
<u>After eight dinner mints</u>			
<u>Box chocolates</u>			
<u>Tin John West salmon</u>			

PLEASE SIGN AGAINST THE ITEM YOU WISH TO DONATE AND TICK WHEN YOU HAVE PLACED IT IN THE BOX, AND ENSURE YOUR ITEMS ARE BROUGHT TO CHURCH LATEST BY SUNDAY **30th NOVEMBER**.