

*News and views from the Parishes of Shurdington,
Badgeworth and Witcombe with Bentham*

Three in One



Hay bales & Crickley Hill
Taken from Dark Lane, Bentham.
From Robin Gilbert's Wide valley calender

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Three in One Magazine for July

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THREE IN ONE MAGAZINE

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The Archangel Michael
Albrecht Dürer

SHURDINGTON CHURCH HALL

School Lane, Shurdington

Lettings for groups and private functions.
Rates £22 large room, £16.50 small room per
session Further details from
Mrs Julie Miller Tel. 01242 701127 (no later
than 8pm please)

WITCOMBE & BENTHAM VILLAGE HALL

Enquiries should be made to the Custodian
07518 137635

witcombevillagehall@gmail.com

www.witcombevillagehall.co.uk

BADGEWORTH VILLAGE HALL

Our newly refurnished old school hall is an
excellent venue for rehearsals, meetings,
receptions and small parties, seating a
maximum of 50 people.

Reception hall, main hall and fully fitted
kitchen.

New car park for hall users (opposite hall).

Hire charge per session: £20

(8am-1 pm, 1 pm-6pm, 6pm-11 pm)

For enquiries and bookings, please contact
Rachel Cottell on 01452 715034 or email
badgeworthvillagehall@gmail.com

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Contributors please note: material for
the August 2021 issue to
John Cummins at
editor3in1@gmail.com
by Wednesday
14th July



Pastoral Letter

Robert writes



July 2021

My dear friends

To prepare for this Parish Letter I decided to read the one I wrote last year, only to find that so much has remained exactly the same. Yet this year feels very different.

The Covid pandemic we thought might be on the wane then has proved to be a much more difficult and demanding problem to deal with. Indeed, the expectation of a short-lived experience proved rather wide of the mark.

What was relatively novel at that time has become the norm. The rule of social distancing, wearing of facemasks, regularly washing and sanitising of hands. Many of the tighter restrictions have been lifted with hairdressers being able to open, being able to meet outside in larger groups and in smaller groups inside. At time of writing the severe restrictions on numbers at weddings are about to be lifted, which I am sure will be a cause for relief, great joy and celebration.

Numbers at funerals, too, have been raised to the numbers that buildings can accommodate safely within the social distancing rules. That means that the bigger churches and crematoriums can hold, for example, sixty in the Oak Chapel and thirty at the Willow Chapel in Cheltenham Crematorium. Sadly, the social distancing rules remain and so traditional funerals in our beautiful, but smaller, churches are still not

viable due to the practicality of keeping two metres between bearers and ministers. This is not a problem with graveside funerals, where we can also now sing congregationally, which is not allowed yet inside buildings. Some churches are allowing small choirs to sing live, though there are practical restrictions in place.

Our Sunday worship pattern has remained under constant review, and this has led to small congregations meeting for services inside our churches. Further changes in that pattern will come about as restrictions are lifted.

It has to be said that the changes will be gradual, so please be patient and keep your expectations low. Some of the changes that have been brought in will, I am certain, become part of our regular pattern as they have proved popular and worthwhile.

There are many things to be thankful for at this time. The selfless, unstinting work of medical staff and support staff in our hospitals, the endeavours of scientists and laboratory technicians in discovering and developing vaccines, the workers in pharmaceutical factories producing massive volumes of medication, those involved in the production, delivery and distribution chains of essentials, to name but a few.

Considering all that we have gone through, that the situation nationally and internationally could have easily been much, much worse than perhaps restrictions remaining in place for a little longer is a small sacrifice to make in the grand scheme of things.

Robert Poole

Your churches – services, support and prayer

We are open for worship and private prayer but if you're not sure what's going on, just ask! We are trying to add more services in to our worship pattern, but as we go to print we aren't sure what that will look like for July. **Therefore, there is no list of services for July in this magazine, but there will be services in churches and online.**

To find out what we are doing, please use the links provided below for each church, especially the Facebook page. The pinned post on Facebook usually has the most up to date situation. You can also call for information:

For St Paul's, call Clare Stewart on 01242 862598

For St Mary's, call Sue Padfield on 01452 862509

For Holy Trinity, call Paul Stanfield on 01242 512926

As we go to print the churches are open, see below for details, or you can call Clare, Sue or Paul (see above for phone numbers) to arrange for the church to be opened for your private prayer. As soon as we feel it is safe to do so, we will open the churches all day, as we were delighted to do before Covid.

Church opening times (correct at time of publication)

St Mary's Sat and Tues 10 until 4

St Paul's Weds 10 until 2

Holy Trinity Weds 9 until 12 noon

You can watch videos of services here:

GreenwayChurches https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6jdAqgLdOic0_pVLNT2r5g

and on Facebook:

GreenwayChurches <https://www.facebook.com/greenwaychurches>.

Our website equivalent is on "A Church Near You":

St Paul's

Shurdington <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/14188/>

St Mary's Witcombe with

Bentham <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/14176/>

Holy Trinity

Badgeworth <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/church/14187/>

You should find up to date information on these pages, as well as contact details.

PASTORAL CARE TEAM - support and prayer:

If you or someone you know might like a call or perhaps a visit from one of the pastoral care team, please contact one of the team. You can also advise people to call for themselves. The team:

Clare Stewart, Sue Padfield, Mary Tombs 01452 713200
Chris Nation 01242 521280, Rob Poole 01452 855660
Revd Ian Gobey 01242 863977, Revd Susan Cooke 01242 321806

Some of the team may not be ready to visit, but all are ready to talk, pray and offer support. We're still here - just ask!

Susan and the church teams.

More Murphy's toddlers laws

When you need to carry a child they will want to walk.

When you want them to walk they will want to be carried.

When you bring the stroller they will want to walk.

When you forget the stroller they will want to ride.

The more potential a food has for stains the greater the coverage area when it is hurled by a child.

Corollary: The more potential a food has for stains the more expensive the item of clothing/fabric/furniture it strikes.

A child's favourite one day is never a favourite the next day (especially food).

The intensity of the tantrum is directly proportional to the amount of people around to witness.

SAVE the DATE!



WITCOMBE w BENTHAM COMMUNITY EVENT DATES

(as Covid regulations allow)

Sunday 18 July Family Fun-Day at the Cricket Club

Sunday 15 August Gt Witcombe VJ Day celebration

Saturday 11 September Wheels-on-the-Green +Teas

Saturday 9 October Witcombe Pudding Club evening

Friday 22 October The Quiz

More details to follow

July 2021

Bedtime church brings families flocking

Amy Todd, Children and Youth Worker for Vale and Cotswold Edge tells about how they have stayed connected with local families throughout the pandemic.

Amy said, “On Sunday nights we started off doing 6pm Bedtime Church. Children could come along in their pyjamas or dressed as superheroes or princesses. The children could chat, see one another and feel connected. Some families that were attending that didn’t come to Sunday school or mainstream church. They felt comfortable logging in to something that was aimed at children and the parents were around on the periphery. We don’t want to lose that connection.”

They started to create family packs full of themed crafts, prayers, activities and treats, which proved so popular that families they had never had previous contact with started to request them, hearing about them through friends. The number of children receiving the packs grew from 25 to 100 children plus youth groups for older children.

Amy said of the older children, “The group of young people we have at the moment are passionate about justice, black lives matter, the environment...They don’t want to be just a generation that talks about issues, they want to help to make change. We need them to know that the church doesn’t shy away from issues and that we are engaged with it and can provide wisdom and spiritual guidance in all areas of their life.”

Read the full story at <https://bit.ly/3vSisym>

Godparents' Sunday

Sunday 11 July is national Godparents' Sunday (although of course any day is a good one to celebrate your Godchildren).

Churches are being encouraged to hold a picnic for Godparents, godchildren and the whole church family. There are resources available to help you plan at

<https://churchsupporthub.org/godparents-sunday>

If your church is taking part, that's great news, but if not, why not plan something special to do with your Godchildren this 11 July?

You might want to send them a card or a little present to let them know that you're thinking of them and that you still continue to pray for them regularly. You might want to invite them to spend some time with you, reconnecting after a year where we have all been apart far too much.

If you don't have any Godchildren or Godparents, you might want to pray for your local school, donate some money to a charity that supports children, locally or further afield, sign up to hear children read in school or think about a vision for your local church and how children and families fit into that vision.

Creating friendships across generations is so important not just for a thriving church but also for a thriving community. When a young mindset flows through the church, combining with the experience of older people, we all learn and grow in our faith together.

New eco resource for youth groups

9 out of 10 Christian teenagers surveyed by Tearfund are concerned about climate change, but just one in 10 believe their church is doing enough to respond to the climate crisis.

Caring for the environment is part of our responsibility as Christians and stewards of all that God has given us.

Barrie Voyce, Senior Youth Connector for the Diocese of Gloucester wants to help give churches the tools to connect with young people and to ensure that church remains relevant to them.

He has put together an easy to follow programme for an evening of youth activities themed around the environment. It's free to download and to use and is aimed to make tackling this topic fun and inspiring.

With a quiz, a debate, personal challenges and videos to learn more, this will be an interesting evening for the young people and the leaders alike.

Download the resource from www.gloucester.anglican.org/2021/new-eco-resource-for-youth-groups

The first Christian Eco Youth Forum meetings for the Diocese of Gloucester happened at the end of June. Visit our website in July to find out more about what happened and to hear about the next steps.

Events and training

More details for these events and more, at gloucester.anglican.org/events

LIFE Prayers – Children and Families

Tuesday 6 July, 5.30 pm - 6pm

A series of prayer meetings has been organised by Diocesan Missioner, Tim Hastie-Smith. You are invited to join this evening of prayers via Zoom, where Jo Wetherall will be leading the session with a focus on Children and Families as part of the LIFE Vision. You can join the prayer meeting on Zoom here <https://zoom.us/j/97290986173?pwd=VDRpeVZYSkhsL29UU1NOaDU4NHhoQT09>

Meeting ID: 972 9098 6173

Passcode: 356282

More than words

Wednesday 7 July, 7pm to 8.30pm

Lockdown has had a detrimental effect on babies and toddlers, especially regarding their attachment to significant adults and to the development of speech.

Jo Wetherall and Debbie Godsell will explore some of the insights into brain development, attachment theory and how it impacts language.

We will also explore how our understanding of being made in God's image can support our pandemic recovery ministry with children and families.

To book your place visit <https://bit.ly/2TJiytZ>

Have your say

Visit Facebook **f/Diocese.of.Gloucester**, email Katherine at **kclamp@glosdioc.org.uk**, follow us on Twitter **@glosdioc**, view videos on YouTube **Diocese of Gloucester** or visit our website **Gloucester.anglican.org**

A Burglary

A burglary is an unpleasant thing, upsets and makes us wary,
For OAPs and individuals it can be really scary.

If those who perpetrate these crimes,
would only stop and think,

Of the distress they cause to their fellow men,
just to spend on drugs and drink

One day they may be old and weak and struggle on through
life

And then the 'crunch' will come perhaps they'll get some strife
Give us the 'good old days' with unlocked doors the norm
And peace retained within our hearts, and we could weather
any storm.

Cicely (Haidon)



BOOKS AND BANTER

Shurdington book club

We are a friendly bunch of book lovers, meeting every 4 to 6 weeks.

New members are always welcome.

Where: on zoom

(for now, but in Beauty and the Teacup once restrictions allow)

We met on Friday 25th June and our next meeting is in August:

6pm on 20th August 2021

We're having a little break in July!

If you'd like to join, please email

revsusancooke@gmail.com or ask

Wendy Lovett in Beauty and the Teacup.

All welcome! *Susan & Wendy.*

Witcombe and Bentham Chess Tournament

Don't worry if you've never played before – what better time to start?

Partake in the first ever village tournament in which the winner will be crowned King or Queen for a year (unless they're impeached by a 2/3 majority). The games will be played using a **free** app called *Chess Time – Multiple Players* by Haptic Apps LLC, which can be down loaded onto a smartphone from the appstore.

There will be an entry fee of £5 to finance the coveted prize and the excess wealth will go to the WSF for local charitable purposes. So make your move and register an interest with Christine Dyer at christinedyermmx@btinternet.com or on 01452 862399 saying whether you are a beginner, intermediate or grand master. Once the number of entrants is known, the games will be arranged, and payments taken; so watch this square.



SHURDINGTON & BADGEWORTH GARDENING SOCIETY



We have been advised that the Social Centre will re-open for regular users in September. Therefore the Gardening Society plan to restart in September and I hope to advise details of the speaker booked next month. Restarting will be dependent on Covid restrictions at the time.

One of the main gardening jobs is to deadhead bedding plants: hardy geraniums, delphiniums, roses and sweet peas to encourage further flowering. Terracotta pots are prone to evaporation so dampen the pots down to keep roots inside cool and damp.

Pinch out tomato side shoots each week and feed with diluted tomato fertiliser. Cut off any leaves growing below the lowest ripening fruit trusses to improve air circulation and prevent disease. Resist the temptation to harvest rhubarb, leave the stems in place to build up reserves for next year.

Water as needed and hopefully there will be plenty to harvest.

Stay safe keep gardening
Janette Willis (Secretary)

Julian Meetings

The Julian meetings have resumed. In July, there is a meeting on Wednesday 28th at 2:30 pm. At present, it meets under the rule of 6 in doors (which is fine for the usual attendance); by late July.

The next Julian meeting is ; 30 minutes of silent prayer in the company of others; Wednesday 28th July. Hosted by Wendy & Ian Davies; do contact them for details (01242 861293). (Subject to Covid guidelines.)

Greenway



Gifts

Groceries

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation”- Mark 16:15

Greenway Gifts spreads the gospel message of God’s love by bringing comfort, joy and prayer to those in need, and following Jesus’ command to feed the hungry.

If you are in need of a little extra help with food, please do get in contact with us. We can arrange for a couple of bags of food to be ready for you to collect at St Paul’s Church Hall in Shurdington.

Please email: greenwaychurches@gmail.com

or leave a message on: tel: 07587 444142

If you are shielding or isolating we can arrange a home doorstep delivery.

This is open to anyone who lives in the Greenway Benefice (Badgeworth, Shurdington, Witcombe with Bentham), or with children attending Shurdington C of E Primary School or Shurdington Pre-School.

If some longer term help might be appreciated, please do also let us know as we can put you in contact with some lovely charities who will be able to offer support.

Greenway



Gifts

What we do!

Greenway Gifts began in October 2020 during the height of the pandemic. With many parents and carers on reduced hours and reduced wages, we recognised a need to help struggling families. During the October half term, those children who would usually receive support from the government for funded meals wouldn't be getting any provision- we knew it was our christian duty to step in and help.

During that week, we gifted activity bags and grocery bags to over 70 children from Shurdington C of E Primary School, Shurdington Pre-School and within the Greenway Benefice.

Christmas 2020, and after the astonishing success of our previous giving project, we wanted to reach out to even more members of our Benefice and community. This resulted in Greenway Gifts Comfort and Joy. We not only gifted to an even greater number of children and families than last time, but over 80 adults received a lovely Christmas gift bag (and groceries if wanted). We also paid for a hot Christmas meal for those who needed it most. These small acts of kindness provided many with a little joy during what was for most, a very difficult time- all whilst spreading the news of the love of God.

April 2021- we continued to build on the success of our previous giving projects with Easter Joy! Again we welcomed families to the church hall to receive kids' activity packs and bags of groceries. We also provided hot Easter celebration meals for a number of adults. A band of volunteers again ensured that over 85 adults received their Easter Joy gift bags, full of little treats to enjoy and delivered right to their door.

There is a very visible need for us to help individuals and families in between these seasonal gifting projects.

Greenway Gifts Groceries is available all year round. We have a dedicated phone line and email address that people can ring, email or text (all in confidence) if they would like us to deliver them a grocery bag or two to get them through a tough week.

If you would like a grocery bag for yourself or someone you know, please contact us on our dedicated Greenway Gifts email address: greenwaychurches@gmail.com or tel: 07587 444142

None of these gifting or grocery projects would be possible without the generosity of our donors; either financial or in the giving of food/hygiene products. We also cannot forget all the hard work that goes on by many behind the scenes to organise and manage these projects.

I would like to pass on my thanks to Revd Susan and The Greenway Benefice for their continued love, prayers and support for Greenway Gifts.



Greenway



Gifts Giving

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation”- Mark 16:15

Greenway Gifts spreads the gospel message of God’s love by bringing comfort Joy and prayer to those in need, and following Jesus’ command to feed the hungry

We achieve this by providing grocery and hygiene bags to individuals and families struggling financially gifting hot meals to people who otherwise do not have one and the giving of both seasonal kids’ activity packs and adult gift bags

We would be very grateful for any donations of dry food (with 6 months+ best before date). baby/personal care/hygiene products. A drop off point is located inside each of our three churches.

If you would like to make a financial donation. please find bank account details below

Shurdington Parochial Church Council Sort Code: 20-20-15 Account number. 70810002 Reference. Greenway Gifts
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We ask that you email: greenwaychurches@gmail.com so we can keep track of your donation.

Working with Morrisons, Feed Cheltenham, The Welfare Trust. Beauty and the Tea Cup, Great Witcombe Parish Meeting, Shurdington C of E Primary School, Shurdington Pre-School, Shurdington Chapel and Shurdington Community Support



Useful Phone Numbers:



Furniture Recycling Warehouse	01452 331333
Removal of Bulky Waste	01684 295010
Glos Highways	0800 0 514 514
Faulty Streetlights	0800 0 514 514
Police (non-emergency)	101
101 is 15p, the local call number is	01452 726920
Fire/Police/Ambulance (emergency only)	999
NHS 'Out of Hours'	08454 220220
NHS Help line	111
Adult social services and District nurses	01452 328224
Samaritans	116123
Citizens Advice	01452 527202
Children's social services	01452 328213
CARE direct	0800 444000
Electricity Power Loss	0800 328 1111
Water Services & Emergencies	0800 783 4444
Gas Emergency	0800 111 999
Emmaus*	01452 413095

*at Chequers Road, Gloucester:

Collections and Sale of furniture, electrical goods etc.

**at Chequers Road, Gloucester:*

Collections and Sale of furniture, electrical goods etc.





SHURDINGTON CHURCH & VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

Churchwardens	Mrs Clare Stewart	(01242) 862598
	Mr Andrew Spence	(01242) 862101
PCC Secretary	Mrs Lisa Pearson	(01242) 862538
PCC Treasurer	Mr Mark King	(01242) 862505
Gift Aid Officer	Mrs Joan Puffett	(01242) 862647
Sacristan	Mr Andrew Spence	(01242) 862101
Church Flowers	Mrs Helen King	(01242) 862505
Sunday School Staff	Mr Kevin Stubbs	(01242) 577123
Electoral Roll Officer	Mrs Lisa Pearson	(01242) 862538
Mothers' Union	Mrs Kate Thompson	(01242) 862467
Church Hall Lettings	Mrs Julie Miller	(01242) 701127
Verger	Mr Michael Cass	(01242) 861139
Parish Council Clerk	John Kay	(07841)
204404		
Shurdington Pre School	Tess Engelbrecht	(07867) 813627
Gardening Society	Mr. G. Woodruffe	(07792) 269353
Scouts Group	Mr Paul Calleja-Gera	(07770)
480272		
Shurdington Sports Club	Mr J Barnfield	(01242) 862826
Friendship Club	Mrs Maureen West	(01242) 863991
Childrens' Society	Mrs Helen King	(01242) 862505

In time of illness if you would like a visit and / or to be remembered in prayer please contact Clare Stewart (01242) 862598, Sue Padfield (01452) 862509.

Three in One Magazine
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email: iandavies@pobox.com



WITCOMBE & BENTHAM CHURCH & VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

Churchwardens	Mrs Sue Padfield	(01452) 862509
	Mrs Lynne Cooper	(01452) 864523
PCC Secretary	Mrs Sue Padfield	(01452) 862509
PCC Treasurer/Gift Aid Officer	Mr Jon Frewin	(01452) 862583
Verger	Mrs Jane Bell	(01452) 862558
Captain of Bells		
Electoral Roll Officer	Mrs Lynne Cooper	(01452) 864523
Magazine Coordinator	Mrs Sue Padfield	(01452) 862509
Village Hall Enquiries Custodian		(07518) 137635
Witcombe Social Fundraisers	Mrs Christine Dyer	(01452) 862399
Witcombe Under 5s	Kyla Hill	thevictoria@btinternet.com



BADGEWORTH CHURCH & VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

Churchwarden	Mr Roger Brown	(01242) 239179
Deputy Churchwarden	Mr Paul Stanfield	(01242) 512926
PCC Secretary	Mrs Sally O'Hare	07887422010
PCC Treasurer	Mr Malcolm Brown	(01452) 714639
Gift Aid Officer	Mr Roger Brown	(01242) 239179
Sacristan	Mrs Sue Avery	(01242) 520388
Verger	Mrs Rachel Cottell	(01452) 715034
Captain of Bells	Mr David Turner	(01452) 712302
Electoral Roll Officer	Mr Roger Brown	(01242) 239179
Parish Council Clerk	Mrs H.L. Jones	07840073143
Village Hall	Mrs Rachel Cottell	(01452) 715034
Friends of Church	Mrs Beverly Pickering	(01452) 712907
Badgeworth WI	Mrs Sylvia Dodimead	(01452) 713981



15th Cheltenham

Scouts (Shudington) Scouts

The Scouts have been meeting at Cranham Scout HQ.
We invested Olivier, Azalea and Harry into the Beavers
and Eddie George and Ethan into the Cubs.



and Eddie
George and
Ethan into the
Cubs.



They Toasted bread and marshmallows on the campfire

July or Healing Rain

SCARCELY a whisper stirs the summer leaves,
Or bends the whitening barley sultry-fierce,
The July sunshine beats upon the sward
The brown-parched sward, whose scorching grass-blades thirst
For the life-giving rain!
The fuchsias droop

The full-blown roses drop their withering leaves
The thrush sits mute upon the apple-bough;
A drowsy silence, an unnatural calm.
Pervades the face of nature!
In the fields,

The cattle idly lie beside the hedge,
Seeking for shelter from the sweltering heat;
The blackbird, tenant of the farmhouse porch,
Listless and dumb, sits in his wicker cage
The house-dog, curled, lies blinking in the sun.
Careless of passing tramps.
Hark ! What is that ?

A threatening rumble, muttered, sullen, low.
In the far- distant sky ; a thunder-peal.
Telling of welcome rain !
Anon the drops.

The thick big drops, in quick succession fall
Upon the parching earth: the flowers revive ;
The house-dog rises and the cattle crowd
Beneath the meadow trees ; a gentle breeze
Springs up, and rustles through the barley ears;
The sultry air is cooled : the fresh earth owns
The power beneficent of healing rain!

JUST ASK...

...if you're thinking of a wedding, a marriage blessing or a christening, then your local churches are here for you.

All three churches are ready to welcome you and your family and friends, subject to the appropriate Covid and legal restrictions, to celebrate one of these special occasions with us!

If you're not sure whether you can get married in church... JUST ASK.

We'd be glad to answer any queries you might have.

Please email
greenway.bswb.office@gmail.com
and JUST ASK.

Susan, vicar.



3in1 for WITCOMBE and BENTHAM

If you live in Witcombe or Bentham and would like a hard copy of the 3in1 delivered to you (or know someone who would), please contact Sue Padfield

01452 862509

suepadfield@btinternet.com
with your name and address.

STICK NO BILLS

FIRST NAME TERMS

by the Revd Andrew Rumsey

PREPARING TO REGISTER MY infant son's name, I've been toying with the idea of slipping in an extra one, just to enlarge his palette of options, so to speak Naturally, we've chosen a biblical name for our newborn, but just in case little Tiglath-Pileser III runs into a bit of mild schoolboy ribbing for this, it might be wise to add in an alternative or two.

Happily, the Rumsey family tree is bristling with worthy contenders, of which my clear favourite is Wyldbore manful, dignified, and ever so slightly menacing.

Of course, associates of the original, Victorian Wyldbore will doubtless have had a dozen or so other titles and names to wade through before they reached this corker, and we can safely assume that only his near and dear ones would have had access to such nominal nether regions.

These days of relentless informality can make one quite nostalgic for a time when to give another your Christian name was to admit them across the threshold into a privilege of closeness. I confess to feeling vaguely violated when any Tom, Dick or Harry (forgive me, *Messrs* Tom, Dick or Harry), speaking to me about my gas bill from a Bombay call centre, presumes to address me by the same name whispered in private by my wife.

Wincingly unfashionable though they be, formalities and titles allow for appropriate levels of intimacy, offer the hallway before the bedroom Once I have given you my name, I have nothing more to offer you - you have me.

IT'S AN INTERESTING POINT to consider in theology. When, transfixed by the burning bush, Moses is sent to Pharaoh, he asks, in effect, "Whom shall I say called?"

This was not his petrified approximation of an Egyptian Jeeves, but a penetrating question, for, to Israelites, a name revealed one's very essence. In Genesis, God had been known by various titles – God Most High, God Almighty and so on – which denoted aspects of his character. Here God uses for himself the enigmatic and awesome name I AM WHO I AM, usually translated in Hebrew as "Yahweh" and, in English scriptures, as "the LORD".

You can almost hear Moses murmuring, "Oh, ah... I see", for this stunning, sort-of-name both reveals and conceals, and hints at dimensions of being the nervy little fellow clutching his sandals is never going to grasp.

Only when we have heard Moses' heart hammering at his ribs can we also hear the pin drop in John's Gospel when, centuries later, Jesus uses this most sacred name of himself, and begin to understand why the Pharisees picked up stones to stone him.

Only then are we ready for the remarkable intimacy with the God of the New Testament _ for the Christ who calls in for tea, and invites us to address Yahweh as young Wyldbore might address his fogleyish father. A Christ who, you feel, wouldn't be averse to felt-tipping his forename on a peely sticker should the occasion demand.

The implications of this behaviour sent the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews scurrying to his scrolls to revisit the language God's people had always used for intimacy with God _ that of sacrificial worship _ and write of now confidently "drawing near" to God, entering "the most holy place" and so on.

The journey from Yahweh to Christ Jesus is the story of scripture, of a divine devotion that dares to speak its name. As such it involves an almighty risk of vulnerability, that the name given will be bandied or abused. When God gives us his name, he gives us himself, and we have him; we can etch it on our hearts or nail it to a cross.

IT'S A COMMONPLACE to hear that name dropped like litter by the careless; what worries me rather is the way in which we believers can presume an easy familiarity with God without reckoning on its cost. When those day-gb wayside pulpits announce the name 'Jesus' in billion-point text I feel the same sense of slight violation, of a name unwittingly taken in vain.

This may be unnecessary and due only to the reactionary old buzzard in me that grows bigger and more buzzardly with each passing year. But I will still mutter, "That's *Lord* Jesus, if you don't mind," as I drive past at a sober 25 miles per hour.

The same applies several times over in worship, of course, though it's probably best not to start on that. Suffice it to say that I'm perfectly happy to sing songs of the "Jesus, let me touch your face" variety, just as long as those purring such words remember that, before Christ, no one could even glimpse the almighty visage and live. Until then, a bit of respect is in order, I feel. Now then, down to the registry office...

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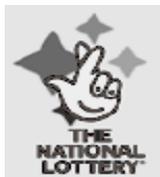
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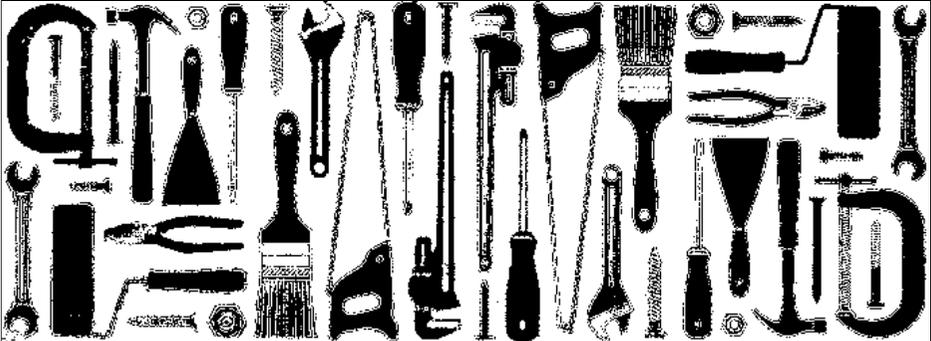
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