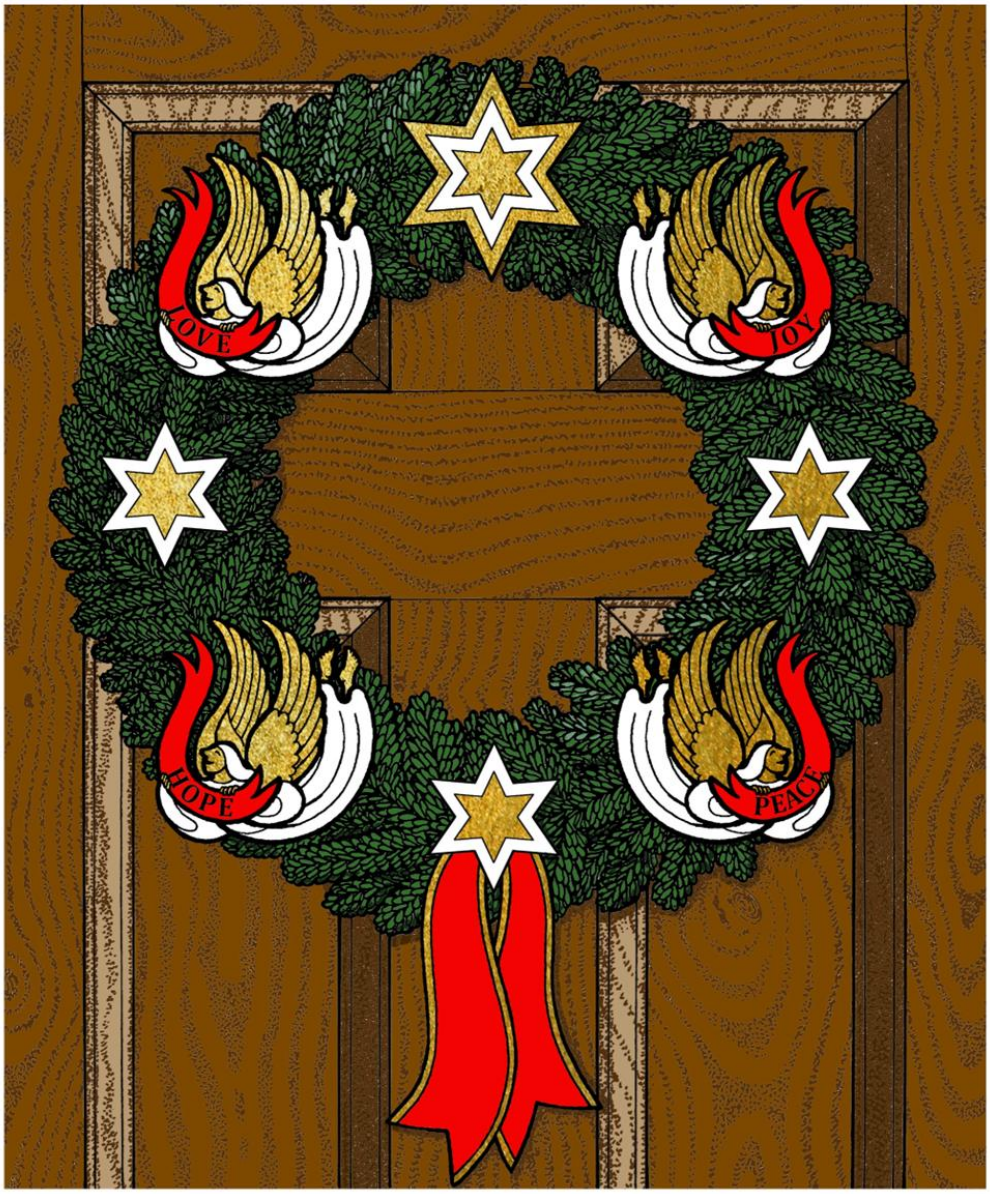
Astley, Tyldesley and Mosley Common

Team Magazine

December 2025 – January 2026



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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. 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)

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, because Luke tells how they ran 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 stored up in her mind all her memories of the birth and all that the shepherds had shared about their angelic visit. She knew it was treasure and she quietly pondered on the meaning and significance of everything 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, during this Advent season, let's be filled with the joy that the Saviour has been born 'to us' when we interact with our friends, colleagues and families. But let us also give some time to reflect on why God gave his gift to us and also it`s wider meaning.

Acknowledgement –Tony Horsfall, Author and Retreat leader

This Team Magazine is also available on-line and can be found at **www.achurchnearyou.com** Where it says **Enter your location** type in **your postcode.** A drop-down list of options will appear. **Select your address**. Then click the **Arrow/Find**. A list of nearby churches will appear. Select the one you want. From the Menu select **News and Notices.** Here you will find the up-to-date magazine plus several archived copies.

Please note any views, thoughts or opinions expressed in this magazine belong solely to the person who has contributed the associated article, and not necessarily to the Team Ministry or Editorial team.

REFLECTIONS

We are entering the season of dark nights with streets lit up like 'Blackpool Illuminations!' There are endless light shows to visit across the region and Christmas trees twinkling in our homes.
We are also entering the season of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, all of which share the theme of light.

We begin Advent with the lighting of the Advent candle in preparation for what, or should I say, who is coming.

We remember, at Epiphany, the wise men who followed the star in their search to find Jesus.
And, of course, we celebrate Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world.

In John's Gospel, when Jesus spoke to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." He proclaimed that he was God - the source of all light and life, and he also proclaimed how we can have light by following him and living like him in the world. So, we wait, we prepare, and we welcome, once again, the light of the world. There is hope in this Christmas gift of light, offering guidance, protection, and illumination. God's light is a source of comfort, direction, and salvation for all who seek it.

What a gift!

It is not always possible to appreciate the light without talking about the darkness. A Christmas tree without any fairy lights could appear incomplete. A ship lost at sea in the middle of the night without a lighthouse could remain lost. A child struggling to sleep without a nightlight could become frightened. Light in the darkness can illuminate the Christmas tree, become a beacon of hope for the ship and offer comfort and peace to a child.

Jesus came into an imperfect world. From the lyrics of Tim Hughes in 'Here I am to Worship,' we sing, "Light of the world, You stepped down into darkness, Opened my eyes, let me see..."

Do you see Jesus? Do you see the light in the darkness?

John wrote, "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 original Greek word for 'overcome' can also mean 'comprehend' or 'grasp.' The darkness is unable to understand or overcome the light. This symbolises the persistence of Jesus, or God's light, which cannot be extinguished by the darkness of this world.

In good times, Jesus, light of the world, shines so bright that he can light up my life like Blackpool Illuminations, yet in the dark times, he is still there.

On a recent trip to RHS Bridgewater, I felt compelled to take this photo of the sunlight breaking through the dark clouds. It reminded me that the light does indeed shine in the darkness; it reminded me that Jesus, light of the world, stepped down into darkness, opened my eyes and gave me hope.

Sarah Hughes

SERVICES FOR DECEMBER 2025 AND JANUARY 2026

All details correct at the time of going to press; any changes or additional information will be shared in church notices, on social media and 'A Church Near You' pages.

Date	St Stephen's	St George's	St John's	Mission Church
30th November Advent Sunday	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word	10am Team Communion with Christingle	
1st December Monday			Christingle for school (time tbc)	9am Prayer Walk 10am Act of Worship
7th December Sunday	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word with pop up Nativity	2.30pm Sunday service with meal
8th December Monday				9am Prayer Walk
11th December Thursday	*6.30pm* *Christmas Carol Service @ Astley Memorial*			
14th December Sunday	10am Service of the Word	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church	
15th December Monday				9am Prayer Walk 10am Act of Worship
18th December Thursday	10am Thursday Team Communion	10am SGCS Christmas Carol Service *2pm* *FLHS Y7 Christingle*		
19th December Friday		*12.15 communion [after Place of Welcome]*		
20th December Saturday	9.30am Stepping Up			

Date	St Stephen's	St George's	St John's	Mission Church
21st December Sunday	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word *4pm Crib & Carol Service*	10am Team Communion *6pm Carols by Candlelight*	2.30pm Communion
22nd December Monday				9am Prayer Walk
24th December *Christmas Eve [Wednesday]*	4pm Communion	11pm Communion	7pm Communion	4pm Songs of Praise
25th December *Christmas Day [Thursday]*	*10am* *Team Morning Prayer*	-	*10am* *Morning Prayer*	11am – 12 noon Morning Prayer
28th December Sunday	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word	
29th December Monday				9am Prayer Walk 10am Act of Worship

For those able to access information online please check out our Facebook page: *Astley, Tyldesley, Mosley Common Worship*. Alternatively, you can find information [including a digital version of the Team Magazine] on the 'A Church Near You' website – each church has an individual section.

2026	St Stephen's	St George's	St John's	Mission Church
4th January Sunday Epiphany	10am Service of the Word	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church 4—6 Pizza & Prayers	2.30pm Sunday service
5th January Monday				9am Prayer Walk
8th January Thursday	10am Thursday Team Communion			

11th January Sunday	10am Café Church	10am Service of the Word	10am Team Communion 12.30 Baptisms	
12th January Monday				9am Prayer Walk 10am Act of Worship
17th January Saturday	3pm Stepping Up			
18th January Sunday	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church *12.30 Baptisms*	10am Service of the Word	2.30pm Sunday service with meal
19th January Monday				9am Prayer Walk
25th January Sunday	10am Service of the Word	10am Team Communion	10am Café Church	
26th January Monday				9am Prayer Walk 10am Act of Worship
29th January Thursday	10am Thursday Team Communion			

IN ADDITION TO THESE SERVICES …

There is a **monthly communion service** at the Rowans.

On the last Thursday of every month there is a communion service at 3.30pm at the Rowans Care Home, Lindale Road, Mosley Common, M28 1BG. Everyone is welcome.

VACANCIES AT ST STEPHEN`S

Currently, St Stephen`s PCC has two vacancies.
The first is for PCC Lay Chair and the second is for a Safeguarding officer.
If anyone would like to express an interest in volunteering for either of these roles then please contact Elaine Dickinson using the contact details on the inside front cover of this magazine. Thank you.

Elaine Dickinson
Church Warden

WHAT`S ON – DECEMBER AND JANUARY

St Stephen's and locally

The **House Groups** hosted by John Howarth will be taking a break and will start again on Tuesday 10th February 2026 – see notice at the end of the What`s On pages.

Dec 3rd	Wreath Making - Wed 3rd December 2025. Afternoon session 1-3pm and Evening session 6.30 – 8.30pm. Tickets £5 - pay on the day. We've had a lovely time in previous years so please come and join us at this event in St Stephen's meeting room -refreshments of mulled wine and mince pies. For more information, or to book, please email janet.graham7@btinternet.com or text 07947 557299 leaving your name and contact details.
Dec 7th	Christmas Afternoon Tea – Lancashire Mining Museum – contact 01942 895841 for more info or see Facebook page.
Dec 11th	Carol Service at Astley Memorial on the Bullcroft 6.30pm. Mulled wine and mince pies available on a limited basis. Astley Brass Band will be playing the music and Astley Rotary Santa Sleigh will also be attending.
Dec 13th	Santa Express -10.30am – 3.30pm at the Lancashire Mining Museum – 01942 895841 for more info or see Facebook page.
Dec 13th	Carols in the Courtyard at Damhouse 5pm-7pm
Dec 14th	Santa Express -10.30am – 3.30pm at the Lancashire Mining Museum – 01942 895841 for more info or see Facebook page.
Dec 17th	7.30pm – St Stephen's Mothers Union – Carols and Mince Pies
Dec 18th	Carol Concert 7pm at the Lancashire Mining Museum – 01942 895841 for more info or on Facebook
Dec 18th	3.30pm Communion Service at The Rowans, Lindale Road, Mosley Common M28 1BG
Dec 20th	10am – 12pm St Stephen's Coffee Morning – in church meeting room.
Jan 17th	10am – 12pm St Stephen's Coffee Morning – in church meeting room.
Jan 20th	Mothers` Union Christmas Meal – please not this is on **TUESDAY** (not Wednesday) – full details from MU Committee.
Jan 29th	3.30pm Communion Service at The Rowans, Lindale Road, Mosley Common M28 1BG

St George's Diary Dates

12th December – The Early Doors Club, 5pm-8pm: FLHS Brass Band and Take Note Choir

Tickets are available on a Pay What You Can basis – choose a price that suits you best. All proceeds go directly back into supporting live music in local venues through The Early Doors Club. Book tickets via Eventbrite, or contact Susie Mallon on 07873 149627

14th December - Brass Band Concert: Tyldesley Brass Band

Church doors open 6.30pm, concert starts at 7pm. Tickets £8 each, under 16s free: cash on entry. Raffle tickets available. Refreshments served in the interval.

9th January – The Early Doors Club, 5pm-8pm: John Bramwell [I Am Kloot]

Tickets are available on a Pay What You Can basis – choose a price that suits you best. All proceeds go directly back into supporting live music in local venues through The Early Doors Club. Book tickets via Eventbrite, or contact Susie Mallon on 07873 149627

25th January - Brass Band Concert: British Army Band with FLHS Brass Band

Church doors open 6.30pm, concert starts at 7pm. Free entry but donations welcome. Raffle tickets available; £2 per strip. Refreshments served in the interval.

Regular events continue with:

Team Prayers

Every Friday morning 9.30am -10am: an opportunity to join together for a time of prayer -open to everyone.

Place of Welcome @ St George's

Weekly drop in every Friday morning in church between 10am and 12 noon. Free cuppa and biscuits/toast. An opportunity to come and have a natter with others or just find a quiet space. For the crafty among you bring your knitting/crochet projects and join the group of ladies who 'knit and natter' in church on a Friday morning.

Over the Christmas period please note the following:

Place of Welcome will take place on Saturday 27th December at 10.30 -12.30 instead of Friday 26th December.

Place of Welcome will take place on Friday 2nd January - 10-12 as usual.

Tyldesley Historical Society: No meeting in December.

Meetings will continue to take place on the last Monday of the month in St George's Church. The next meeting will be on Monday 26th January 2026. Refreshments served from 7pm, meeting starts at 7.30pm. Contact Susie Mallon – 07873 149627 for further details.

St John's What's On

Dec 3rd – 6pm Carols on the Common – outside on the Common around the pit wheel.

Dec 6th – 3pm Christmas Afternoon Tea in the Lounge – tickets required – see Marge Owen or Joan Taylor.

Dec 13th – 7pm Mosley Common Historical Society meet in the Lounge at St John`s Church.

Dec 19th – 12.00 noon Soup and Roll Community Lunch in the Lounge - Free

Bible Study at St John's - Making the most of Exodus

If you want to understand God, his plan for salvation and the place of his people in his purposes, study Exodus. God brings his chosen people out of slavery in Egypt into his service to himself. In doing so he shows his character and his glory. It is a path that leads in the end to his Son, Jesus! Find out more by coming to the Bible Group in the Church Lounge at St John's 7.30pm on the 9th December.
The next Bible Study course after this will be in late January 2026 – programme and dates to be confirmed.

Regular events continue with:

St John's Mosley Common. Place of welcome Café
Come and join Jean and Joan for our weekly café in the church lounge on Tuesdays from 10am – 12pm
Contact Jean 07817 857988 or Joan 01942 870095 for details.

St John's Mosley Common. Toddler Group
Thursdays (term time) 9.30 – 11.00am - £1 per person (including drink and toast)

Welcome to CAMEO - Come And Meet Every One
CAMEO is a local friendship group based in Mosley Common meeting every other Tuesday at St. John's Church lounge from 1:30pm.
Everyone is welcome. Come along and join in the activities or just have a good chat. No admission or membership fees. Refreshments tea or coffee and biscuits only £1. Everyone welcome.
For further info contact Marje on 07519 853279.

Social Walks: Boothstown Medical Centre and PPG in association with "Be Well Wigan". Everyone is welcome to join our FREE hour long social walks. Suitable for all including beginners. Wear comfortable clothing and footwear. Meet outside St John`s church at 10.30am every Thursday. Refreshments and toilet facilities available inside church. For more information search for www.bewellwigan.org

HOUSE- GROUP MEETINGS

The 8pm House Group at 33 Ullswater Road, Astley – hosted by John Howarth. Tel 07471460988.

We are pleased to announce that our next series of meetings will begin on Tuesday 10th February 2026 at the above address following our winter recess.
All February and March dates and studies will be published in the February and March edition of the Team Magazine.
God has truly Blessed our House group in its continuance so please come along in fellowship, conversation, prayer and learning even if it's just to listen, all are welcome.

In God's Love
John Howarth

IAIN HODCROFT 1951-2025

Bethany, Amy and myself would like to say 'thank you' to everyone who has sent messages of condolence, cards, flowers and biscuits following Iain's sudden death. We, and his extended family have felt incredibly supported during a particularly difficult time. Iain had not been unwell so there was an incredible sense of shock at his death. We are however grateful that Iain did not have to cope with a prolonged illness – he would have been an unbearable patient!

There have been many tributes shared in memory of Iain and it would be impossible to share them all but Revd Cath read out the following before she led us in worship at St George's the day after Iain died.

"Before we begin our service today, I'm sorry to say I have some incredibly sad news to share, for those who haven't already heard. Iain Hodcroft, our church warden, ALM, friend, and dad to Amy and Beth, passed away suddenly this week. It's a shock to all of us, and today is a deeply sad day as we come together to mourn the loss of Iain.

Iain leaves a big hole not just in his lovely family or even in this church—but in the whole community he loved so much. He meant a lot to so many—those inside these walls, and far beyond. In fact, it's not just St George's mourning Iain today, but churches and friends from many different denominations, which just goes to show how wide and welcoming Iain was in sharing God's love.

He threw himself into so much. Historical society, helping to regenerate the technical school, being a school governor, chairing committees, and—close to his heart—supporting asylum seekers newly placed in our local community. Everything Iain did, he did wholeheartedly and with God firmly at the centre of his life.

And of course, if we're being honest, sometimes that passion meant he could come across as the grumpy old man at the back of church! There were times we didn't fully appreciate just how much heart and time he gave to all the roles he juggled. But underneath it all was deep care, commitment, and love for people.

Today we mourn, but we also give thanks—to God—for Iain's life, for the love and service he showed, and for all the ways he made a difference, often quietly, sometimes loudly, but always because he cared, and because he followed Christ's example as best he could.

Iain understood that church was as much what happened here on Sunday as happens over the sharing of a brew.

The Reverend Canon Anne Edwards, Senior Chaplain to the Bishop of Manchester Bishop's Chaplain emailed to say that a number of people from the Diocese would have liked to attend Iain's funeral but were already committed to attending a long arranged Bishop's Leadership Team residential. However, she asked for the following to be shared at the service:

"Part of the shock of losing Iain in such sudden circumstances is that he was such a force of nature. He was always a memorable and warm presence. His contributions both to diocesan life, not least on Bishop's Council and the Board of Education, as well as his work as a churchwarden at St George's Tyldesley bore the characteristic mark of his passion and dedication. Characteristically, when Astley, Tyldesley and Mosley Common Benefice went into interregnum Iain was among the first to engage with the search to find a new incumbent. He had a great longing to see the church grow, both in Tyldesley and across the diocese and he will be sorely missed. May he rest in peace.
From the Bishops, Archdeacons and all on the Bishop's Leadership Team"

There have been some heartwarming messages shared with us but it is also important that we don't make out that Iain was a saint! He wasn't – he was a man, a human with flaws, but he had a big and generous heart who would do anything he could to help others. He was passionate about promoting Mission Church and 'team'; at times the delivery of his message could be brusque but it always came from a good place. Iain was affectionately referred to as a 'grumpy old man' but he was our grumpy old man and will be much missed.

Iain would have been more than a little taken aback and bemused by the level of shock and how many tears his death provoked. Thank you to everyone who helped us celebrate Iain's life at his funeral on the 11th November.

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace : according to thy word.

Susie Mallon

The Diocese website posted this message from Mr James Cowley Lay Chair of the Salford and Leigh Deanery

" Dear friends,
It is with great sadness that I share the news of the sudden death of Iain Hodcroft, our Deanery Secretary.

From the inception of the new deanery structure, Iain served faithfully, supporting the work of the deanery, preparing minutes, and representing us at Diocesan Synod.

Locally, he served as churchwarden at St George's, Tyldesley, and as a school governor at the local primary school. He also gave himself to many community and social projects. His vision and steady drive shaped so much of what he undertook. His historical knowledge of our area was vast, the kind of wisdom a community leans on. His faith, and his passion for social justice, animated his service and made a real difference.

Please keep the Astley, Tyldesley and Mosley Common Team in your prayers, and especially Iain's family, at this very difficult time.

He was a good and faithful servant, true to his gospel calling in Christ. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

With every blessing from,
The Revd Richard Worsfold *Mr James Cowley*
(Area Dean, Salford and Leigh) *(Lay Chair, Salford and Leigh Deanery)".*

SOME THINGS JUST HAPPEN

Some things happen in our lives but we don't always know why
Some things happen in our lives which hurt and make us cry.

Some things happen for a reason which isn't always clear
Some things happen which seem to hurt the ones we hold most dear.

Some things are unexpected over which we have no control
but believe that God is watching us He will not let us fall.

Some things happen so we will learn what can and cannot be
Some things happen to make us aware what we didn't always see.

God says He will never leave us that our name is written on the palm of his hand.
How wonderful to know that and to know He understands.

So, when these 'some things' happen just stay strong and true
You know that God works wonders He will look after you.

Mavis Wright,
St. John's Church, Mosley Common

WINTER ROAD TRAVEL

The Emergency Services and Motoring Associations have issued their annual advice for travelling by road in poor weather conditions.

It is recommended the following items are carried with you when travelling by road:-

- Warm clothing including hat, scarf and gloves
- blankets or sleeping bag
- stout shoes or boots
- a shovel
- snow chains
- de-icer
- jump leads
- flares and reflective triangle
- tow rope
- flash light (spare batteries)
- 1st aid kit
- mobile phone and charger
- food and drink for 24 hours.

I felt a complete idiot on the V1 this morning !!

With acknowledgement to Paul Melhuish

RIDDLE

Q. Why was Cinderella so bad at football?
A. Because she ran away from the ball

JESUS IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM

"Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise" Matthew ch1 v 18

Virtually all we know about the earthly life of Jesus is to be found in the four Gospels contained in the New Testament which were not composed until at least 30 years after Jesus`s death. During this period the material used in the Gospels was preserved and handed down by word of mouth and also by a few written records which no longer survive. This has led some sceptics to claim that the Gospel stories are not reliable evidence of Jesus`s mission and teachings, or even of his existence.

Undoubtedly there are differences between the four Gospels; even in the Christmas story of Jesus`s birth we have quite different accounts from Matthew and Luke. Mark and John don`t include this story at all. So, could it be that the stories of the life of Jesus were passed on orally so many times that parts were forgotten or mis-remembered or mis-interpreted through the decades?

In answer to this question we can first look at the example set by Jewish rabbis of this time. They were very experienced in handing down the many stories and prophecies of the Old Testament and it was important to them to take great care to hand down oral material accurately. Stories were handed down in Aramaic, the language spoken by Jews at this time, and in a poetic form to make them easier to remember. So, we can presume that the Jewish disciples of Jesus, such as Matthew, did very much the same thing in order to maintain the integrity of the account of Jesus`s life.

It wasn`t long after Jesus` death that the young Christian church realised the need to get down in writing all the stories about Jesus. But we must remember that the stories were not preserved out of an academic interest in history but because of the practical relevance to the first Christians. They wanted to be able to continue to live as Jesus had prescribed and to continue to pass on Jesus`s teachings accurately.

The other important point to be made is that the 4 Gospels may well appear to have slightly different accounts of Jesus`s life because they were written with very different audiences in mind. Only Matthew and Luke take their accounts as far back as Jesus` birth; Matthew was writing for the Jewish followers of Christ, Luke was writing for the non-Jews, the Gentiles who converted to Christianity as a result of Paul`s missionary work around the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. So, we see that Matthew and Luke`s accounts of the birth focus on different aspects of the events in order to make a relevant point to their respective readers.

Because Matthew wrote his gospel for the Jewish followers of Christ, we see that his account always takes great pains to make it clear that Jesus really was the long-awaited Messiah who came to relieve them of their years of suffering and whose birth had been predicted by the teachings of the prophets in the Old Testament. Matthew wanted to offer them a blueprint for the moral life of the believer.

His account focusses more on Joseph, a devout Jew, who struggles with his religious beliefs when he finds out that Mary is expecting a baby. Matthew makes the point that, despite contravening the old customs, Joseph acts with compassion, just as God`s visiting angel advises him to do, so he avoids a scandal which would have severely impacted Mary`s life. In deciding to marry Mary as planned, Matthew illustrates that Joseph puts his own life in God`s hands, he accepts God`s plans for his future, even if it meant facing the hurtful insults of those who mockingly referred to Jesus as the "son of Mary", (because of the rumour that Joseph was not Jesus`s father).

In Matthew`s Gospel there is no mention of the visit of the shepherds on that starry night in Bethlehem, instead, Matthew`s gospel jumps forward a few months, or even years, to the visit of the wise men or Magi. Travelling from the East they represent the Gentile (non-Jewish) world coming to worship the new King and Matthew includes this story to illustrate that the Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah has been fulfilled "and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60 v3). Matthew ends this story with Joseph`s second dream in which the angel advised him to "Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee to Egypt for Herod will seek the young boy to destroy him". Again, Joseph is seen to set an example to the Jews in that he dutifully follows the command of God`s messenger.

Matthew records that the family stayed in Egypt until Herod died, a couple of years later, then he details the third visitation of an angel appearing in a dream to Joseph. This angel advises him to take his family and go into the land of Israel. Joseph does this and travels "into the parts of Galilee, and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." Again, Matthew includes this story to prove that Jesus is the very Messiah that the Old Testament predicted would come.

Luke`s is a fuller account of the birth of Jesus; he focusses on Mary and we get the feeling that much of his information must surely have come from Mary herself. Some of the detail is very intimate such as her cousin Elisabeth feeling her baby "leap in her womb" when she saw Mary. The Gospel is carefully compiled from reliable first-hand sources and Luke`s selection of stories reflects his own warm interest in people, especially the sick and the poor, women, children and social outcasts. Luke, the doctor, is Paul`s companion on his missionary journeys and, perhaps having time on his hands during Paul`s imprisonment at Caesarea, he sets himself the task of compiling an accurate record for the benefit of those Gentiles who had converted to Christianity during Paul`s missionary work.

Luke`s Gospel tells how the impending birth of Jesus is announced to the young woman chosen to be his mother and without the involvement of a human father. Mary`s quiet acceptance of a situation which was bound to cause scandal and possibly the breaking of her marriage contract, shows something of the kind of woman which God chose to fulfil his purpose. When Mary hears that her cousin Elizabeth is also expecting a baby she sets out on what would have been a 4 or 5 day journey South to visit her. When the two women meet Luke explains the joy and significance for them both. Elizabeth salutes Mary with her words of benediction "Blessed art thou among women" and Mary sings a hymn of praise which is full of Old Testament phrases that Mary would have learned in childhood "My soul doth magnify the Lord".

Luke sets the scene for the birth in Bethlehem, explaining that Caesar Augustus gave the decree that "all the world should be taxed". A census was organised to effect a head-count of everyone who would pay and this is what took Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, a town set on a ridge in the mountains 70 miles south of Nazareth. It would have been a long and tiring journey from their home town, especially as Mary was heavily pregnant at the time. When they arrived they found there was no room for them. The Inn may well have been a house with a few guest rooms and the animals would probably have been kept in a cave beneath the house. So this is where Jesus was born; in a stable where his cradle was shared with the animals.

The visit of the wise men is not mentioned in Luke`s Gospel, instead he wanted to focus on the witness of the shepherds, who were chosen by God to be the first to visit the new King. These humble shepherds were deemed by many Jews to be sinners because their life out in the fields meant they were unable to follow all the Jewish religious customs. Luke includes this story because his readers would have easily related to the sad circumstances of these men. Luke illustrates that everyone, no matter their background, is important to God. These shepherds were chosen to be the first witnesses of God`s miracle and Luke reports that they returned to their friends and families to tell the amazing story of what they had seen, praising and glorifying God. These shepherds became the first evangelists, sharing the good news of Jesus`s birth, and Luke wanted to encourage his readers to do the same.

In comparing Matthew and Luke`s accounts of the birth of Jesus we find they do vary significantly, however, these 2 Gospels can be viewed as supplementing one another and provide the full account if read together. It`s also interesting to note they are both keen to place much emphasis on one particular point in the nativity story and that is the power and the activity of the Holy Spirit in the birth of Jesus. They both include the detail of the Virgin birth and explain that this is the miracle which God employed in order to bring his Son into the world.

Of course, the supreme miracle is that God became incarnate in his Son and lived amongst ordinary men and women in order to show us what it truly means to love one another. Christmas time is a great opportunity to show love to those around us, those less fortunate, those who are lonely or afraid. Thank you to everyone who has donated time, talents and money to someone in need this Advent season. Let`s keep them in our thoughts and pray that this Christmas will be a time of peace for all.

Michelle Lewthwaite

Acknowledgement – The Lion Handbook of the Bible

SMILE LINES

Did you hear that a mummy covered in chocolate and nuts has just been discovered in Egypt? Archaeologists believe it may be Pharaoh Roche…

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HARVEST LUNCH AT ST STEPHEN`S

On 28th September St Stephen's held a lovely Communion Service, presided over by Angela, to celebrate Harvest. A food collection for Leigh and Atherton Food Bank was extremely successful with tinned/dried foods being donated by members of the congregation.

The service was followed by a lunch of homemade vegetable soup, crusty bread and butter with apple crumble and custard for dessert.

We would like to thank all those who provided, prepared and served the delicious lunch and to all who donated the Harvest items.

Jenny Evans

HARVEST AT ST GEORGE`S AND ST JOHN`S

St John`s received many items which were donated as part of the Harvest festival celebrations and service. All the produce was shared out between the Mission Church at Shakerley and the Beehive Community Centre at Mosley Common.

Mavis Grundy runs the Beehive Community Centre and she is doing amazing work on a daily basis - supporting people who are in need.

Social workers from our area regularly give recommendations to people who are struggling to buy food and they often put these people in touch with Mavis at the community centre on Lindale Road. There is a well-stocked larder of staple food items which needy people can access for a small donation.

Also, Mavis has recently been involved in a special Christmas project to raise money for young people leaving the care system, some of whom are as young as 16 years old . £1000 was raised to enable these young people to have a good Christmas.

St George`s church received fresh fruit and vegetables as well as tinned items during their Harvest festival. All the food donated was distributed locally.

Contributed by Marjorie Owen and Kath Topping

BICENTENNIAL OF ST GEORGE`S CHURCH

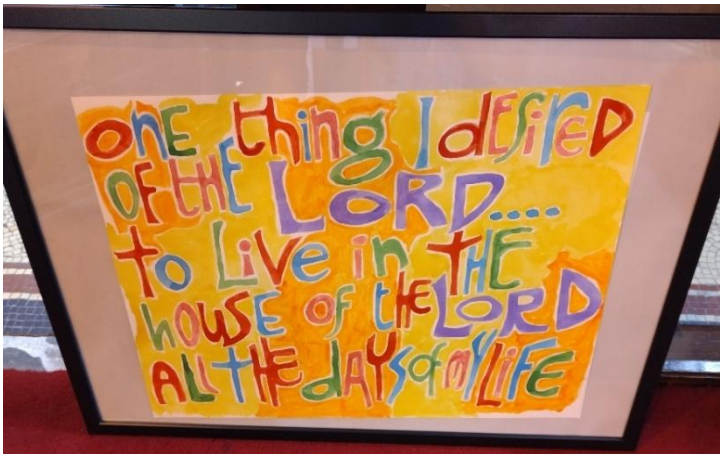
Iain Hodcroft was rightly proud that the service to celebrate the Bicentennial of St George`s church drew a very large congregation and was a beautiful tribute to the focal point which the church has provided for the town and also a tribute to the hundreds of memories which it holds for so many people.

The joyful service took place on Sunday 21st September with Matthew, Bishop of Bolton presiding. During the service there was a presentation of artwork from St George`s Primary school and from community artist, Jed Maloney.

The school children had designed and produced a banner with the theme of "200 years of Church and School"; one of the emblems being the church as a light-house sending out beams of friendship, compassion, forgiveness, trust, endurance, justice and hope.

Community artist, Jed Maloney, had created 2 paintings which he felt symbolised the feelings people might have when they come into the prayerful space of St George`s with the 200 years of memories that it holds.

All 3 pieces of artwork will be on display at St George`s.



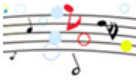
Also, to mark the special occasion, Iain commissioned a glossy booklet entitled "Under St George's Spire: Two hundred years of Tyldesley Lives" and he also updated an existing booklet called "A short history of St George's, Tyldesley". Both of these are available to buy at St George`s for the price of £2.50 each. Proceeds will go to church funds. The booklets give a glimpse into the past, a living narrative of daily life, faith, resilience, and community.

Contributed by Michelle Lewthwaite

SMILE LINES

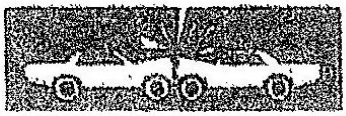
School Children`s Version of Christmas Carols:

"….Sleep in heavenly peas"
"Deck the Halls with Buddy Holly…"
"We three kings of porridge and tar…"
"On the first day of Christmas my tulip gave to me…"



New Year's Eve is coming soon…

Bring not a bagpipe to a man in trouble.
Jonathan Swift.



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A MESSAGE FROM ARCHBISHOP DESIGNATE – SARAH MULLALLY

Shortly after the announcement of her nomination as the next Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop Sarah Mullally delivered an address at Canterbury Cathedral, reflecting on her calling, the challenges facing the Church, and her hopes for its future.

Rooted in her early vocation as a nurse and shaped by her ministry in London, she spoke of "washing feet" as a guiding image of Christian service, and of finding hope in the quiet faithfulness of churches, chaplaincies, and communities across the Anglican Communion.

She addressed the Church's responsibility in safeguarding, the need to confront power dynamics, and the importance of standing against hatred and antisemitism.

She said she would seek to be "a shepherd who enables everyone's ministry and vocation to flourish," and expressed her desire to nurture confidence in the Gospel. "Held fast by the Lord's hand," she concluded, "please pray for me as I will pray for you."

The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE was born in Woking in 1962 and is one of four children. She attended Winston Churchill School and Woking College and became a Christian at the age of 16.

Before being ordained, Bishop Sarah worked as a nurse in the NHS, specialising as a cancer nurse. She became a ward sister at Westminster Hospital, before being made Director of Nursing at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. In 1999, aged 37, she was appointed the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England; she was the youngest person to be appointed to this post. It was whilst working in this role that Bishop Sarah felt called to ordination and began her training ministry. She was ordained in 2001 and served her curacy at St Saviour's Battersea Fields, as a self-supporting minister. In 2004 she left her Government post and later described this as "the biggest decision I have ever made". In 2012 she was installed as Canon Treasurer at Salisbury Cathedral and 3 years later took the role of Suffragan Bishop of Crediton, Exeter, only the fourth woman to become a Bishop in the Church of England. Then in 2018 Bishop Sarah was installed as the Bishop of London at St Paul's Cathedral, the first woman to hold that role.

In 2005 Bishop Sarah had been made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nursing. She sits in the House of Lords as one of the Lords Spirituals; her maiden speech paid tribute to the NHS on its 70th anniversary, telling the Lords: "I am the Bishop I am today because of that first vocation to nursing. Compassion and healing are constants at the heart of who I am." As a Lord Spiritual, she has drawn from both her pastoral experience and her background in nursing and has played a key role in the ongoing debates on assisted dying.

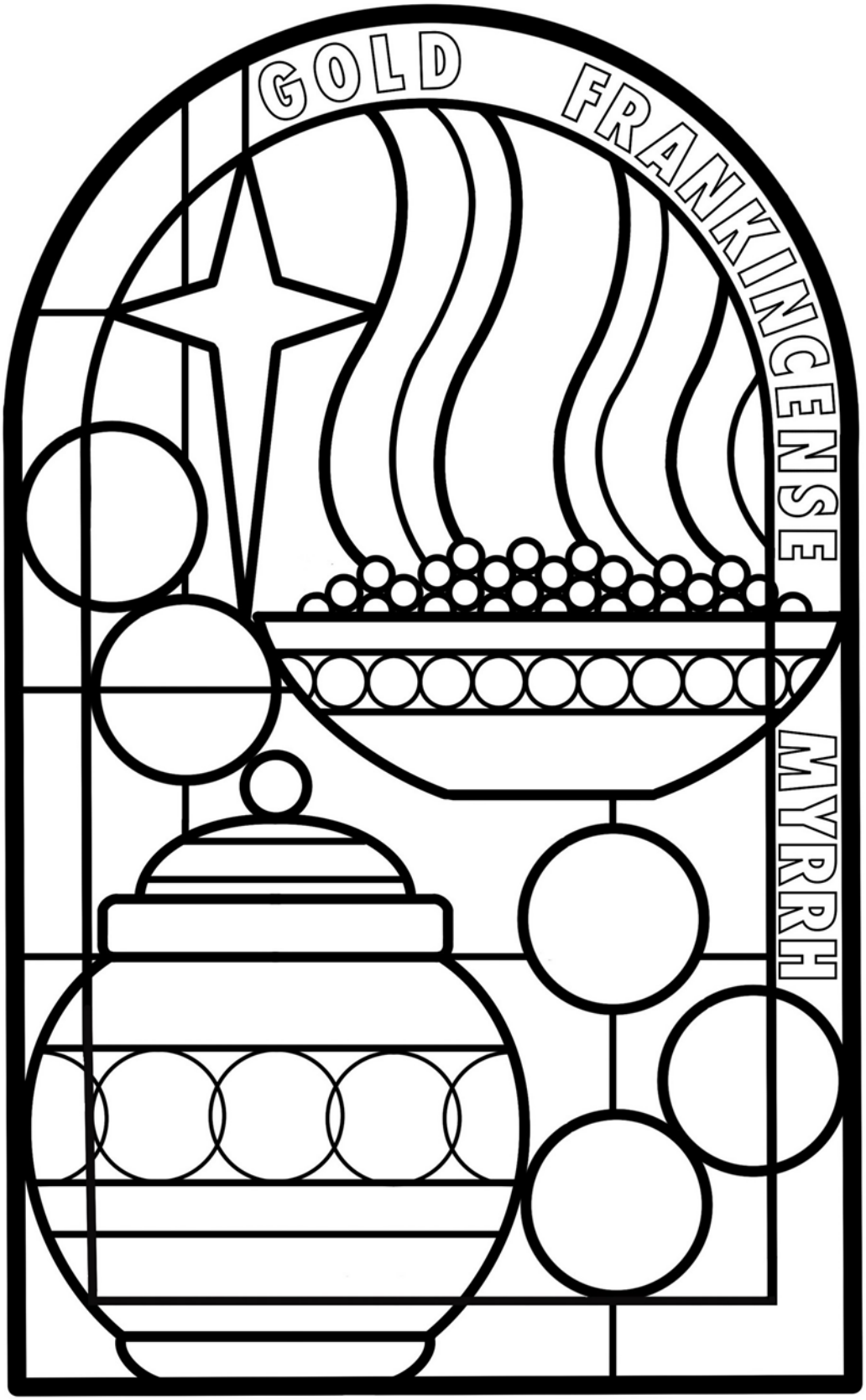
As Bishop of London, Bishop Sarah has served on the Church's National Safeguarding Steering Group, she is also Lead Bishop for Health and Social Care issues and this year she chaired the Triennium Funding Working Group that developed the Church of England's three-year spending plan which led to significant investments in local churches and parish clergy.

Bishop Sarah is married to Eamonn and they have two grown-up children, Liam and Grace. She has spoken openly about her dyslexia, describing her difficulties with writing and reading. In her spare time, she loves cooking, walking and pottery.

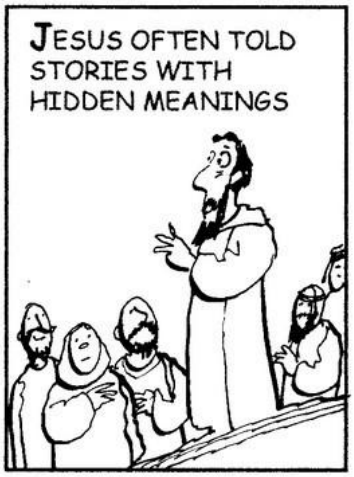
Acknowledgement: www.ChurchofEngland.org

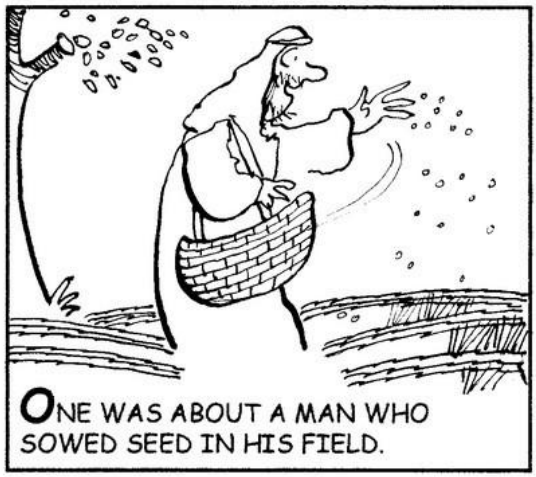
CHILDRENS PAGES

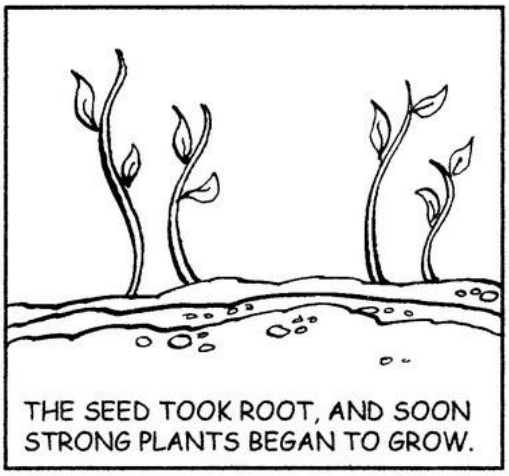
COLOUR IN

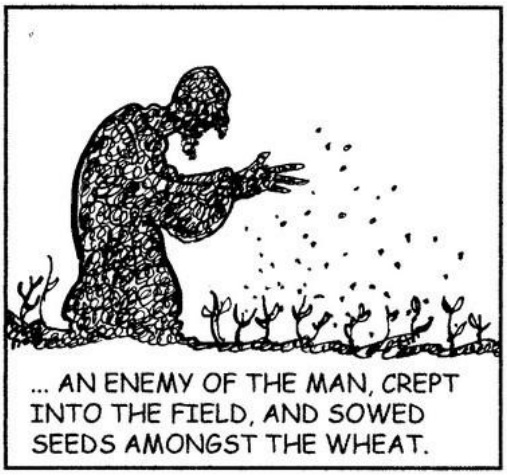


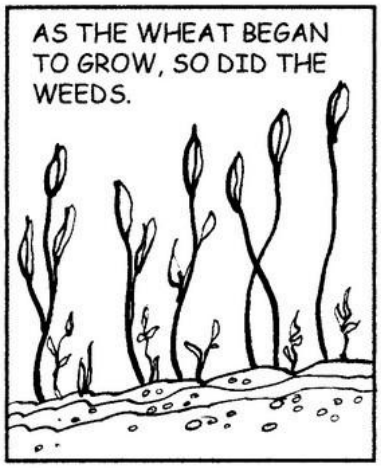
The tale of the Wheat and the Weeds











CHRISTMAS WORDSEARCH

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shepherds
Christ
Saviour
glory
news
praising
hillside
singing

baby
message
night
carefully
palace
flocks
manger
good

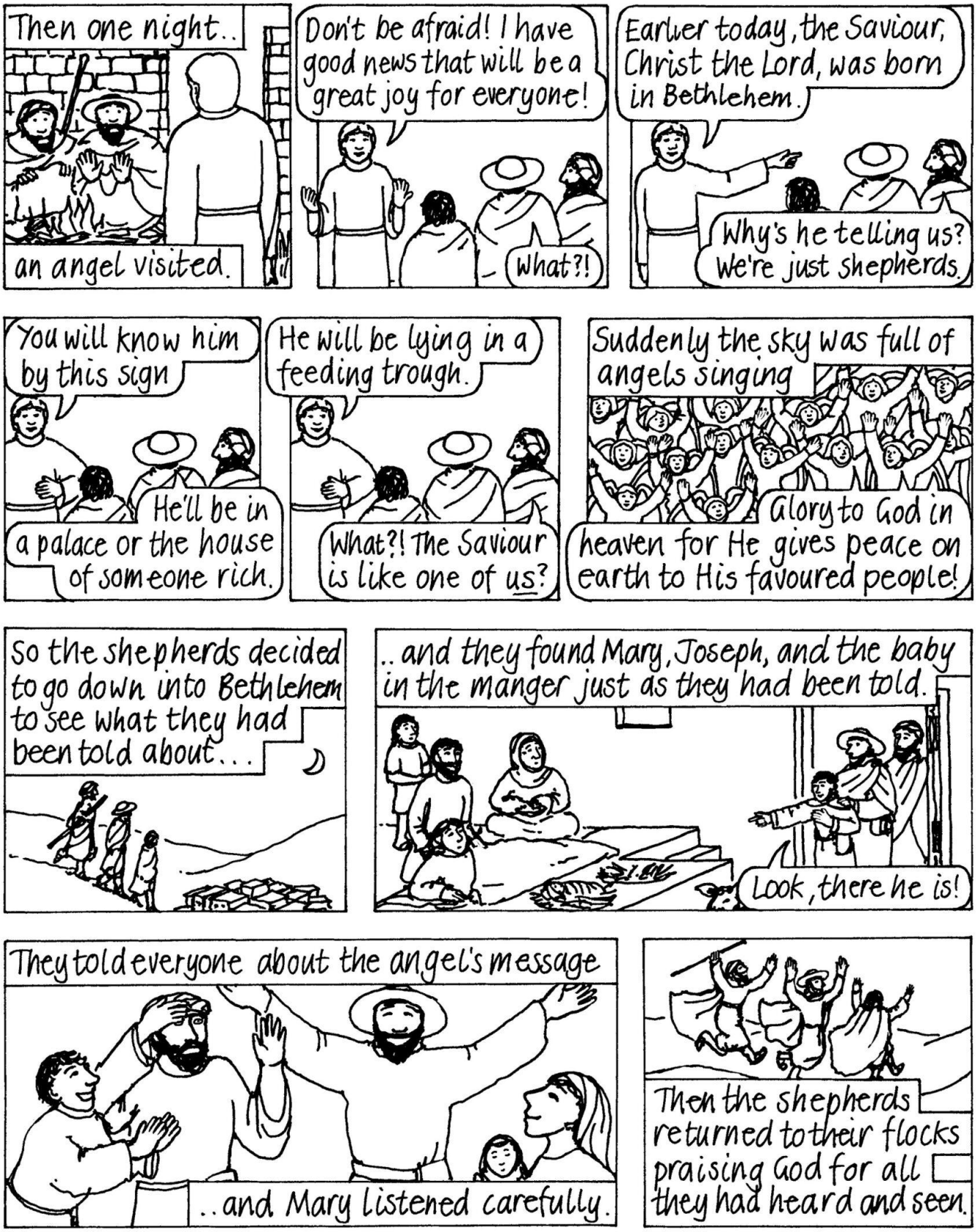
heard
sky
angel
Bethlehem
heaven
Mary
God
seen

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Luke chapter 2 verses 8 to 20

Shepherds were paid to look after the flocks out on the hillside. Uneducated and rough, they were usually avoided, or overlooked.



JESUS

Who is He?

"You are to give him the name JESUS because he will save his people from their sins" Matthew 1 v 21
"They will call him Emmanuel which means - God with us". Matthew 1 v 23
"a saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord". Luke 2 v 11

Why did He come?

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". 1 Timothy 1 v 15
"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full". John 10 v 10

What did He do?

"He made peace by his blood shed on the cross". Colossians 1 v 20
"He gave himself as a ransom for all people". 1 Timothy 2 v 6

Where is He now?

"He was raised on the third day". 1 Corinthians 15 v 4

"Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us". Romans 8 v 34

Will He come again?

"and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" John 14 v 3

He calls us – are you ready?

"Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved" Acts 16 v 31

Now

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come, the old has gone, the new is here!" 2 Corinthians 5 v 17

Contributed by Michael Williamson

FROM THE TEAM MAGAZINE COMMITTEE

We welcome any contributions to the Team Magazine.

You can email articles, stories, poems, dates of social events or any notices to the contacts listed below. Hand written articles are also welcomed and can be typed up by the team.

The cut-off date for submission of items for the next magazine is:-

MAGAZINE EDITION	EDITORIAL MEETING	CUT- OFF DATE	PERSON COMPILING THE MAGAZINE
February 2026 / March 2026	Wed 7th January	Tues 13th January	Andrea Taziker

Contacts:-
For "What`s On" items (dates of social events) please email jennymevans98@outlook.com
For other items please email a.taziker@gmail.com (St John`s); dmlewthwaite@talktalk.net (St Stephen`s); or mrs.topping1944@btinternet.com (St George`s)

Thank you. *The Magazine Committee*

MOSLEY COMMON COMMUNITY APPLE ORCHARD

REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE 11th November 2025

On the day in 1918 when the guns of World War I were silenced, 80 years since the end of World War II, we remembered all of those who fought and died in these World Wars. Especially the 16 men who left Mosley Common village and community to fight in these conflicts and never returned and who are represented in the 16 apple trees planted by Blooming Mosley Common.

Pupils from St John's C.E. Primary School and Holy Family Catholic Primary School read the words from Laurence Binyon's poignant 'From the Fallen'.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

Each of the 8 pupils had 2 poppies on which the names of all those from our village had been written by their classmates and just before 11 o'clock they placed one at the bottom of each of the apple trees and then stood next to one of the trees. David Watkinson born and bred in Mosley Common and ex pupil of St Johns School laid a wreath on behalf of BMC and St John's and Holy Family Schools at the base on one tree. A little crowd had gathered and we all stood in silence for 2 minutes. Each child and each tree standing as mute sentinels to remember Fred Simkin, John Whitehead, James Devonport, Moses Yates, Edward Clare, James Kee, John Amos, Edwin Clare, Albert Dewhurst, William Holden, William Lloyd, Harry Morris, Thomas Parkinson, Harry Alcock, Arthur Hampson, and James R Markland. It is sad to think that despite their sacrifice war is still ever present in our world and something that the children of today are still living with.

As that reflective time came to an end the pupils read the Kohima Epitaph:

"When you go home, tell them of us and say, For your tomorrow, we gave our today".

The young people read beautifully with feeling and looking at each one standing for those who did not return and who had all they could have been denied by war; it gave hope for the future and a certainty that their sacrifice will never be forgotten by the children and people of Mosley Common.

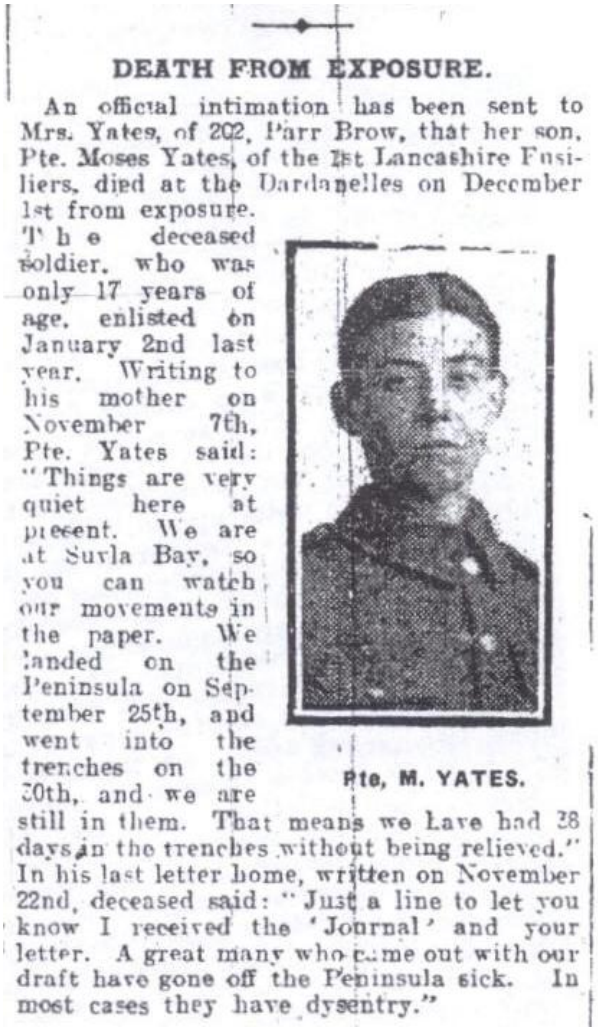
One of those young men whose name is on one of the poppies was Moses Yates. **Moses Yates** was born on the 18th July 1898 at 50 Sale Lane, Tyldesley. He was the eldest of five children; Lily, Minnie, Annie, and Polly. He joined the army, the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, on the 2nd January 1915 aged 16. After training he was shipped to Gallipoli, arriving on the 25th September 1915 at Sulva Bay, and in the trenches five days later.

Unlike the trenches in France, at Gallipoli troops could not recuperate behind the lines in relative security since there was nowhere to go that wasn't within artillery or rifle range of the Turks.

Moses wrote to his mother, Ellen, on the 7th November telling her that 'things are very quiet here at present, we are still at Sulva Bay, so you can watch our movements in the papers, we have been in the trenches since the 30th September, without being relieved'.

In his last letter home, written on the 22nd November, Moses wrote 'just a line to let you know I received the 'Journal' and your letter. A great many who came out with our draft have gone off the Peninsula sick, in most cases they have dysentery.'

On the 26th November terrific thunderstorms flooded the Peninsula followed by freezing snow. Many men froze to death in the trenches. Sadly, one of these was Moses, who died on the 1st December 1915 aged 17. Moses has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Helles Memorial in Gallipoli and on the Tyldesley cenotaph. Moses was posthumously awarded the Star, War and Victory medals. His family still have Moses' death penny.



DEATH FROM EXPOSURE.

An official intimation has been sent to Mrs. Yates, of 202, Parr Brow, that her son, Pte. Moses Yates, of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers, died at the Dardanelles on December 1st from exposure. The deceased soldier, who was only 17 years of age, enlisted on January 2nd last year. Writing to his mother on November 7th, Pte. Yates said: "Things are very quiet here at present. We are at Suvla Bay, so you can watch our movements in the paper. We landed on the Peninsula on September 25th, and went into the trenches on the 30th, and we are still in them. That means we have had 38 days in the trenches without being relieved." In his last letter home, written on November 22nd, deceased said: "Just a line to let you know I received the 'Journal' and your letter. A great many who came out with our draft have gone off the Peninsula sick. In most cases they have dysentry."

Pte, M. YATES.

Acknowledgement - Wigan and Leigh Archives

Andrea Taziker

SHARE THE FAITH

Christianity should be taught because it is true, because it answers the deepest needs of human nature, and without a knowledge of the love of God and a relationship with Him, men and women will live impoverished lives.

The aim of a Christian education is to build up confidence in life and in people from the earliest years. Security stems from the love within the family and within the community.

From Ronald Goldman's " Readiness for Religion"

Contributed by Michael Williamson

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Café Eva Opens Its Doors to Bring The Community Together

New venture at Shakerley Community Centre honours Eva's legacy while creating a welcoming space for neighbours

SHAKERLEY, 13th October 2025 – A new community café opens its doors on Monday morning at Shakerley Community Centre, created in memory of Eva, a young local girl who passed away from leukaemia earlier this year.

Café Eva will serve affordable breakfasts, lunches and hot drinks, operating on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from the community centre on Cumberland Avenue in the heart of Shakerley. The café aims to provide a warm, welcoming space where people from across the local area can connect over good food and company.

"Eva had a deep love for this community she was so proud to call home, and we wanted to create something positive that would honour her memory while bringing people together," said Revd. Cath, who is heading the project alongside her team of amazing volunteers. "The café is about more than just food and drink – it's about building relationships and supporting each other."

The project has been made possible through a generous three-year grant from the Council for Social Aid, ensuring the café can remain affordable and accessible to all. Every Wednesday, a community lunch will be served completely free of charge.

The soft launch begins on Monday 13th October, with the café welcoming customers from Shakerley and the surrounding Tyldesley, Astley and Atherton communities. Future plans include expanding services and hosting special events.

Café Eva operates from Shakerley Community Centre, Cumberland Avenue, Shakerley, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Some of the Mission Church volunteers ready for the opening of Café Eva

Contributed by Eileen Hartigan

WHAT GOD CAN DO!

I have been reading about some work the Church Mission Society is doing in Honduras. Lindsey and Steve Poulson are CMS mission partners working in a very tough city context where gang violence, corruption and poverty are normal.

They want to create safe spaces for at risk children and young people who often feel abandoned. This work includes a monitoring programme – bringing caring adults into their lives as they seek to introduce them to Christ. They have started several small businesses that can bring in income for the work, to sustain it and provide employment opportunities for teenagers as they get older.

One such enterprise is a café which thrived. Incidentally, I thought of our café church here! I have no experience of anything like this in my own work, but in Droylsden I did once dream of starting up a café in a vacant shop, and run by the older youth to reach more teenagers for Christ – but unfortunately it stayed a dream through lack of vision and practical application! At St Stephen's our café church is really an alternative Sunday service. Lindsey and Steve had a bigger idea. Theirs is a café. People come, spend time, meet each other and are introduced to what's going on and generally are known and get to know the Christian work.

As the café was a success, in 2022 Lindsey and Steve wanted to appoint a proper manager with experience so they could hand over the running to them and it could expand. Their friend Carolina gave them the perfect answer - it was her husband, Carlos! He was an actual barista with experience, working in a successful café, but he had no interest in church (they found out that, in fact, he had been hurt by a church in the past, but was at least open to belief).

Lindsey and Steve's café was on a good site and by God's amazing planning their friends Carlos and Carolina came to them with ideas of what they might do there! Here was not just making money but creating future employment opportunities for young people. After a lot of prayer and discussion (Carlos' background contrasted radically with what the café was all about and he was used to sole responsibility) they appointed him.

In the first year Carlos had a difficult problem and made a mistake. Steve offered pastoral support. This was the turning point. Carlos came to Steve and told him "That showed me that you care about me, not just the shop. Anyone else would have just got rid of me. You guys are just like the Jesus I've read about in the Bible". From then on Carlos was more open to faith in Jesus.

Another amazing moment of God-planning occurred when one day a pastor came into the coffee shop and started chatting to Carlos about the work. Eventually he said "So far this shop has been run on the faith of someone else, but now it needs to run on your faith". Carlos felt challenged and sensed God speaking to him and began to seriously seek God for himself. He went along to church with his family and soon after he offered his life to Jesus. Steve says "As Carlos grows in faith …. now sometimes I am being ministered to by him!"

Michael Williamson

CHRISTIAN AID - CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN

No crib for a bed …when you are fleeing violence

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, let's not forget communities affected by conflict. While many of us share a joyful and peaceful Christmas in our homes and churches, please consider families like Chance's — facing unimaginable hardship after fleeing violence.

Meet Chance:-

Home: Minova, on the shores of Lake Kivu, East Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Displaced to: Katashola Camp

Children: 8. Her baby was just 2 months old when she fled.

Status: Separated from her husband (due to the conflict), who is feared dead.

Dream: To protect her children so they can grow up in peace — and one day see her baby become a journalist who gives a voice to others like her.

Chance with baby Siborge at the camp

Before the fighting life was simple, Chance lived in a small farming community in the eastern region of DRC. Her children went to school and she worked as a shopkeeper alongside her husband. "I thought my life would always be happy – working with my husband, feeding and educating our children. I never expected to have to leave my village".

When violence reached her village, Chance had to make an impossible choice – but she knew her family had to escape to survive. For days, Chance and her children fled on foot, terrified and exhausted, searching for safety. Chance isn't alone; she's one of millions forced from their homes in the DRC and now living in make-shift camps like Katashola.

At the camp, Chance found safety, but life is still hard. There`s no running water in her shelter so she has to walk long distances to collect water and she worries daily about how to feed her children, keep them healthy and how to hold onto hope for their future.

How you can help - When every essential is out of reach, Christian Aid`s partners offer families like Chance's a vital lifeline. Your support funds cash grants that help mothers buy the food and medicine their children need.

- **£15** could buy a 20kg bag of beans – adding vital nutrition to a family`s diet and helping to fight malnutrition
- **£18** could buy enough soap to help protect a baby`s health all through its first year
- **£36** could buy personal hygiene kits for more than one family, keeping children safe and healthy ; helping mothers who have lost everything to protect their children`s lives.

Please donate whatever you can

Cheques can be sent to:- Income Processing Team, Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London, SE1 7RT.

Or you can go to Christianaid.org.uk to donate on line.

Thankyou

Michelle Lewthwaite

MISSION CHURCH SHAKERLEY –A CHURCH GROWING FROM THE EDGES

According to the English Indices of Deprivation 2025, deprivation is "a lack of resources needed in life." Shakerley ranks among the most deprived nationally—a reminder that poverty is not just about income, but about opportunity, dignity, and hope.

It began with vision, prayer, potential—and a quiet sense that God was already at work in a place.

Mission Church began to take root in the Community Centre at Shakerley. Not to replace what already exists but to respond to what is needed.

Mission Church is shaped by sharing life alongside people—listening, learning, growing together. It is church formed from within the community: a presence, building trust and relationship. A place of purpose, of belonging, being, and sharing, where faith is woven into the rhythms of daily life.

Each Monday begins with a prayer walk around the estate, followed by a reflective Morning Prayer in the Community Centre, accompanied by a warm welcome and a hot drink.

We gather in many ways including:

- A fortnightly Discipleship Group
- Warm Space coffee mornings
- A free community meal every Wednesday, served in our newly refurbished Café Eva
- Café Eva also opens on Monday and Friday afternoons, offering a wide selection of reasonably priced meals
- A well-stocked free community fridge and food parcels available to those in need
- Every other Sunday, we hold a service of worship and celebration, followed by a shared meal

Mission Church is not just about events—it's about presence. It's about being alongside people in the ordinary and sacred moments of life. It's where prayer meets practicality, where everyone is welcomed and invited to belong, to feel that they are seen, heard, and valued.

Here are some words that speak for themselves. There are many more stories of transformation.

A – 'It's feeling hugged when nobody's got their arms around you.'

B – 'I'm a Christian but never felt I belonged at any church before.'

C - has no church background other than Sunday School as a child. Whenever the doors are open, she is there. '***I wouldn't go anywhere if I didn't come here. There are people to chat with and have a laugh.***' She enjoys the social side and has found faith, comes to all our services and Discipleship Group. At 78 she was the first adult to be baptised at Shakerley and recently confirmed at St Georges.

D - hadn't practiced her faith for many years. Various life challenges brought a lack of purpose and she became agoraphobic. After being coaxed by her daughter to the Community Centre a couple of years ago, she is now an integral part of Mission Church. She shares her many gifts, offering a warm welcome, sharing craft ideas in the weekly Fellowship Nook she now runs with one of the friends she has made, or lending a hand in the kitchen. Another place where stories are shared, burdens are lightened, and community is quietly built. She enjoys the services and contributes enthusiastically to the Discipleship Group. ***'Mission Church has helped me to feel valued. To find my way back to God and given me a pathway back to people.'***

The Discipleship Group meets fortnightly

E - has been walking a courageous path of recovery. She is open about her journey with those she trusts and recently shared her joy at being "clean for a few months." She was happy for this to be shared. When asked what difference Mission Church has made in her life, she wrote:

> ***'Comfortable environment to be open and honest about feelings and issues that are important to me. Friends and Community Spirit and support during times of need. The Mission Church has helped me to become more confident and open, and I've developed many friendships because of the church. Xx'***

These words echo the heart of Mission Church—a place where healing begins in relationship, and where faith is lived out in kindness, consistency, and shared life. She hadn't been baptised but spoke openly, honestly, and with deep understanding about her faith. On Sunday 16th November, she was baptised at Mission Church. Not just a ceremony, but a celebration of belonging. A response to faith nurtured in community. A moment that reflected what Mission Church is becoming: a place where people are known, welcomed, and encouraged to take meaningful steps in their journey with God.

F - struggles with aspects of God and religion and questions deeply feeling able to discuss these. **'I feel *accepted and not judged. Mission Church is* 'Warm. Welcoming. Comfortable. A Safe Space.'**

Sharrell, by her own admission, was loud, opinionated and colourful, and claimed not to be 'godly.' She was known by many on the estate and joined in with everything at Mission Church, being involved in starting up some important initiatives. She cried when given a Mission Church hoody and again when presented with a cross and chain for her birthday. Sadly, she died quite suddenly in June at 61. At her funeral her daughter thanked everyone at Mission Church for ***'restoring her mum's sense of purpose—something that truly transformed her life.'*** We all miss Sharrell.

There are more stories of transformation unfolding making ministry at Mission Church both a privilege and a profoundly humbling experience. It isn't always plain sailing, but it is always real, rooted and full of grace.

As Jonathan Macy writes in *Sowing Seeds with Songs of Joy*, reflecting on a church much like ours:

"…***the learning ground where I found what works, what doesn't work, and what just sits there undefinable and yet undeniable."*** *(p.3)* ***"If the Gospel works, it can here."*** *(p.4)*

"We break this bread to share in the body of Christ. Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:17)

'Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.' (1 Corinthians 12:4)

Across our churches, each gift is part of the one body, the one table, the one hope. May we continue to grow together in grace, in courage, and in love as we follow our own callings. Amen.

Eileen Hartigan
for The Mission Church at Shakerley Team

Some of the people confirmed at St George`s Church in October

CHRISTMAS RIDDLES

Q. How did Mary and Joseph know Jesus' weight when he was born?
A. They had a weigh in a manger

Q. Why was the snowman rummaging in a bag of carrots?
A. He was picking his nose

Q. What do you call a bunch of chess players bragging about their games in a hotel lobby?
A. Chess-nuts boasting in an open foyer

CHRISTMAS ANAGRAMS

1. Motel Site
2. Dispatching Drums
3. Angels pink bits

(Answers on inside of back page)

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THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS

"Whar's this for?" and "Where did I put that?"
You've posted your cards then one drops on the mat.
Oh 'eck I don't think I sent one to them,
Well, if I did I don't remember when.

"Who's this for" and "Where did I put that?"
Did I buy one for them, I've forgotten, oh drat.
My Christmas card list will tell me what's what,
If their name isn't ticked, then yes, I forgot.

Can't find my stamps though, I am sure I bought some
They are so expensive, so where have they gone?
I know I moved them from here to over there
But where are they now – don't know – no idea.

So much to think of and so much to be done
I haven't ordered the turkey yet, I bet they've all gone.
I still need to wrap all the Christmas presents
Well I would, if I could remember where I hid 'em.

What are those wrapped in that elastic band?
Over there in the corner behind the lamp stand
Oh no! They're my cards and they're stamped as well
So I haven't posted them after all.

So just please help me – I've forgotten what I've lost
And if I've lost it, how much did it cost
And if I found it, would I know whose it was?
It must be Christmas with all this fuss.

May God grant us a peaceful, happy and contented Christmas.

Love Mavis Wright x

PS. Before the year ends I just want to place on record that 2025 is the 140th Anniversary of the laying of St. John's Church Foundation Stone – the 14th September 1885 to be precise.
The Church took 2 years to build after some 20 years of fundraising. Fundraising never stops does it? Just thought I would mention it.
There must be a bit of the old Secretary left in me after all….

SMILE LINES

Overheard at the bar: "Breakfast is all changed since my wife went to Cookery classes.
We don't have porridge anymore – it's called oat cuisine".

ST STEPHEN`S MOTHERS` UNION

September Meeting

Linda opened our service by reading from Psalm 101. We had prayers and sang the hymn "Praise My Soul" ending with the MU prayer and grace.

This month, congregation member and flower arranger, Stephanie Grove, showed us how to create a display from artificial orange flowers and autumn greenery from the garden. Stephanie learned how to arrange flowers after attending an event at St George's and, after telling the couple she was with she would love to do flower displays, was introduced to the flower team there and her interest just grew. She had done one display at home, to save time, and chatted merrily away whilst doing the second display explaining to us what she was doing. The final results were raffled off at the end of the evening. The proceeds were given to Stephanie, who is involved in café church and the money will be donated towards café church equipment. An interesting evening followed by refreshments.

October Meeting

This month Claire opened our service by reminding us of how the Earth was formed. We then sang the hymn "All things Bright and Beautiful". We ended with prayers and the MU prayer.

Our speaker this month was the Rev. Angela Dand, a retired science teacher, founder of the popular "Stepping Up" group and a familiar face to us all. Her talk was entitled "Science and Religion". Here we took a look at the Creation as in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible – each of us reading aloud a paragraph of Genesis chapter 1, describing the six days of Creation and the Sabbath.

We then moved onto the Big Bang Theory and how Earth's atmosphere and its oceans were formed. The swirling cloud of gas and dust that became Earth condensed into a molten planet - and as it cooled a crust formed. In the first billion years there was no atmosphere, only carbon dioxide, and also many volcanic eruptions. The steam from this turned to water , eventually forming warm oceans. Over time a blue green algae evolved and small plants and simple animals grew in the water. The planet developed an ozone layer which filtered out ultra violet light. Plants and animals which could breathe oxygen moved onto the land. The Earth's atmosphere has not changed over the last 200 million years and the Earth's development still has a long way to go. The Rev Angela stated that as the MU was a Christian group who believed in God – which way would we lean?

This was a very interesting and thought provoking talk, excellently presented, ending with tea and biscuits. Then a bit more business – Linda asked the members if they would like to donate £50 to the church for use of the meeting room – everyone was in agreement.

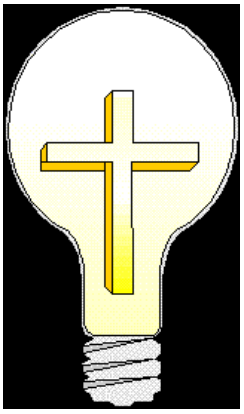
Our meetings are open to all - young, old, male, female, members or non-members of MU and we meet at 7.30pm on the third Wednesday of each month in the church meeting room at St Stephens (entry round the back of the main church building). Do come along if you are interested – you will be made very welcome.

Our Next Meetings are:

17th October 2025	Carols and Mince Pies
20th January 2026	Christmas Meal on TUESDAY (not Wednesday)

Pauline Roberts

Prayers



- Give thanks for those people who, by their support or example, have guided your spiritual journey. Pray that, with God's blessing, you can do the same for others.
- Pray for those who will find Christmas a struggle this year. Those who are facing it for the first time without a loved one. Those who worry about how they'll be able to afford to meet the secular world's expectations. Children who see the images of a perfect Christmas on television and wonder why their own is so very different. People who will be on their own, or on the streets. Those who will spend Christmas visiting loved ones in hospitals, hospices or care homes. Thank God for all the charities, volunteers and workers who will do so much to make the season more bearable for others. Pray that more people will come to see past the commercial pressures and come to recognise the true message of Christmas.
- January marks National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention month. Pray for all those men, women and children across the world and in our own country who are the victims of these abhorrent practices and give thanks for the agencies fighting against the resulting violations of human rights.
- Thank God for his abundant blessings, the reminder of His love for us through the Christmas story, the time we spend with loved ones, the opportunity of renewal and fresh starts each new day and each New Year.

Contributed by Sara Yarwood

With the shepherds of Bethlehem
help us, oh Lord, to stand in vigil on the eve of your coming,
to run with haste to meet you,
to see your face in the faces of others
and to wake from our sleep as a new world is being born.

With the angels of Bethlehem help us,
oh Lord, to tell the whole world of your presence
God is with us!
Let us create peace amongst people
and work for justice amongst nations.

With Jesus, the infant Christ
help us, oh Lord,
to cherish the hope that is born at Advent,
to hear the calling of your people,
to nurture the seeds of your Kingdom
and through our actions to be messengers of your love
in building communities of service and prayer.
Amen

Prayer written by Miguel Alonzo Macias from Honduras

NOTICES FROM ST JOHN`S

The funeral of Ellen Fenwick, a member of St John's for many years, took place on Wednesday 8th October. Our thought and prayers continue to be with the family and friends of Ellen.

NOTICES FROM ST GEORGE`S

The funeral of Mrs Vera Dekaat took place on Thursday 9th October 2025 at St George`s Church.

Also, on the 11th November, the funeral took place of our churchwarden and much loved member of the congregation, Iain Hodcroft.

We offer our sincere condolences to families and friends with the assurance of our prayers.

ST JOHN`S FLOWER ROTA

DECEMBER

7th Marie and Mike Stuckey in memory of her parents

14th Marjorie and Barrie Owen in memory of her mother

21st Carol Priestley in memory of her parents

28th Marjorie and Barrie Owen in memory of her mother

JANUARY

4th Ann Hilton in memory of Roy Hilton and Mary Woolley

11th Maureen and Tom Knox in memory of her brother David Wilkinson Tong

18th In memory of Alice Gregory, from her family

25th Susan and Alan Howarth for their parents

NOTICES FROM ST STEPHEN`S

The people of St Stephen`s were very sad to hear of the passing of June Mills, a lady known by many at church and who has been on our prayer list for some time. We offer our sincere condolences to Polly and the whole family and friends, with the assurance of our prayers.

The family of St Stephen`s were also saddened to hear of the passing of Peter Paddon, husband of Alison. The Café Church team and all members of the church offer sincere condolences and prayers to Alison and family.

IAIN

The Astley, Tyldesley and Mosley Common communities were extremely saddened to hear of Iain`s passing in October.

Iain devoted his life to the service of those less fortunate than himself as well as to protecting the heritage of St George`s church and other historic buildings in the town he loved.

Iain was a huge character and was respected by many for his tireless work in helping others, especially those who are marginalised in our society. He will also be remembered for his tireless work as church warden at St George`s, for his insight, his knowledge and his commitment to his mission in life which was serving God.

Many of us will have our own colourful memories of Iain; as part of the magazine committee he brought lots of ideas for interesting articles to include. He also brought informed debates, sometimes controversy but also, much laughter to our meetings. We will certainly miss him.

There is no doubt that his sudden passing is a huge loss which will be felt all around the town of Tyldesley and beyond.

We remember Susie, Bethany, Amy and all of Iain`s wider family in our prayers.

From the Magazine Committee

TREVOR BARTON M.B.E.

The Friends of Astley Memorial were saddened to hear of the sudden passing of one of its valued members – Trevor Barton. Trevor was not only an active supporter of the community events and restoration of the memorial at the Bullcroft, he was also a driving force behind the work at Astley Mining Museum, becoming Chairman and then a Life President when he retired.

His partner Eileen asked us to include these words in the magazine:

"Trevor Halliwell Barton was born on the 17th July 1943 in Blackburn and sadly went to sleep on 21st October 2025.

He joined the police aged 19 in 1963 at Stretford and rose up through the ranks, having a distinguished career, and becoming Superintendent in Specialist Operations before finishing his career aged 51 as Chief Superintendent of Greater Manchester Police. He then started his own specialist security firm.

Trevor championed the town of Leigh and it`s people and had key roles volunteering in many organisations including Leigh Miners Rangers Academy, Leigh Mean Business, Wigan Borough Sports Council, Leigh Spinners Mill, Leigh Sports Trust, The Pelican Centre, Astley Rotary Club, Trust in Leigh, the Lancashire Mining Museum, Wigan Borough Community Partnership, RAF Cadets in Leigh and many other charities.

Alongside his beloved partner Eileen, Trevor received both a Queens and a Kings Award for volunteering work.
Also, in November 2009 Trevor received an M.B.E. - Member of the Order of the British Empire - for voluntary services to sport in the Wigan Borough.

He was a major force behind the magnificent Leigh Sports Village and one of his proudest moments was when he introduced her Majesty the Queen to guests when she opened the Stadium in 2009.
Trevor was Chief Executive of Leigh Centurions – now Leigh Leopards – steering the club through some hard times. He became involved in local politics, helping and supporting the youth of Leigh including 40 years at his beloved Leigh Miners Rangers Academy. The facilities and clubhouse are among the finest in the country. Trevor became life president of the club and still took an active role until his passing.

Trevor was a loyal Leigh Leopards supporter and attended all home games and went to Wembley with his beloved partner Eileen to see Leigh lift the trophy in 2023.

Trevor devoted his life to the town of Leigh and it`s people especially rugby league and junior rugby league. He was a giant of a man, both in stature and presence, and he will be greatly missed but he has left a legacy throughout all the local communities and rugby league.
Rest in Peace Trevor."

Contributed by Eileen Strathearn

CHRISTMAS CAROLS ON THE BULLCROFT

with Astley Brass Band

Thursday 11th December at 6.30pm

Please join the Community of Astley for Christmas Carols
at the Astley Memorial on the Bullcroft
Including a visit from Santa`s Sleigh courtesy of Astley Rotary
Mulled wine and mince pies available on a limited basis

A Friends of Astley Memorial Event Supported by Astley Rotary Club, the Co-Operative Store, Sainsbury's and Wigan Brighter Borough Fund.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

In January this year M23 rebels took over the city of Goma (eastern DRC). It was a violent conflict – millions of people displaced, thousands killed, homes and livelihoods destroyed and those caught in the crossfire, fearful, traumatised, weary and crying out for peace. It was widely reported at the time.

Church Mission Society partners who were there were able to provide rapid assistance to about 2000 people, giving food, water and medicine. They were also able to bring comfort and counselling to the bereaved and those who witnessed the slaughter, especially of loved ones. There were increased numbers at churches looking for help and hope. Pastors received resources and support to cope with the demand and also help with teaching newcomers to their churches.

Now people are working to recover and rebuild. The M23 rebels have ordered all displaced persons camps to close. There are reports of hospital raids, mob violence and rape. Martin Gordon, the Anglican Bishop of Goma and a CMS partner says " We are living through a very difficult time, yet there are glimmers of hope. People are crying out for peace and looking to the church for answers".

The people of DRC have suffered violence for 20 years in a longstanding struggle and CMS is in it for the long haul to see transformation. They are dedicated to raising up new disciples to live the way of Jesus, to promote love instead of hate, peace instead of war. Church leaders need to be strengthened and encouraged. People, especially children, need to be able to work through fears and then the cycles of poverty and violence will be removed. Only Jesus can bring about the change the DRC so desperately needs.

The Church Mission Society has had special prayers and fundraising and is now clearly in a position to be of real help as the society recovers.

Michael Williamson

CMS IN DR CONGO

CMS thank supporters and their partners on the ground for much needed relief – financial, food, hygiene, medical and trauma counselling. In an area of 2 million people there are few mental health professionals and CMS and partners have given trauma support to many, including 150 children. CMS Africa, through the diocese of Goma, (led by mission partner Bishop Martin Gordon) continue to focus on helping people and communities to rebuild their livelihoods and faith.

Michael Williamson

WHAT SENIOR CITIZENS ARE WORTH

Did you know that we old folks are worth a fortune? We have silver in our hair, gold in our teeth, stones in our kidneys, lead in our feet and gas in our stomachs! I have become older since I saw you last, a few changes have come into my life. Frankly, I have become a frivolous old woman !!

I am seeing six gentlemen every day ! As soon as I wake up Will Power helps me out of bed, then I go to see Jimmy Riddle and then it's time for breakfast with Mr Kellogg, followed by the refreshing company of Mr Tetley – or my other friend who I only know by his initials – P.G.

Then comes someone I don't like at all – Arthur Itis – he knows he is not welcome but he insists on being here – and what is more he stays for the rest of the day. Even then he doesn't like to stay in one place, so he takes me from joint to joint.

After such a busy day I am glad to get to bed (and with Johnny Walker too !!) – what a hectic life. Oh yes - and I am now flirting with Al Zheimer. The vicar came to call the other day and said at my age I should be thinking of the hereafter. So I told him I did, all the time. For no matter where I am, the bedroom, the kitchen, the sitting room or the garden, I ask myself "Now, what am I here after?"

Well, I'll close now and hope that Will Power is your constant companion too – but do make sure that this friend Emma Royd does not creep up on you from behind !!!

And watch out for the crafty one – Gerry Atric !

Submitted by a senior lady
Thanks to Marjorie Owen for this contribution

COFFEE MORNING RAISES MONEY FOR SHOE BOX APPEAL

On Saturday 15th November St Stephen`s coffee morning raised over £175 for the Samaritans Purse Shoe Box Appeal- or Operation Christmas Child. This charity operates in over 100 countries such as Moldova, Ukraine, Albania, Malawi and the Balkans, and the shoe boxes are delivered to deserving children via a network of participating churches who have specially trained leaders who prioritise the safety of children and lead well-organised celebrations.

The charity has made it really easy to build a shoe box on-line which can be tailored to suit a boy or a girl of any particular age between 2 and 14. Once you have raised £25 to build one shoe box the website lets you choose which particular toys will be included along with the basic supplies of soap, face cloth, tooth brush and toothpaste etc. The website is very interactive, easy to use and makes building the shoebox a fun event.

We were able to build 7 shoeboxes on the day of the coffee morning and some money was left over to make a donation towards the admin costs of the charity. It was quite an enjoyable event which we are hoping will result in a few more happy faces on Christmas day. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

Jane Jones and Michelle Lewthwaite

SMILE LINES A rare worn-down pencil thought to have belonged to William Shakespeare has been discovered. Experts are not yet sure whether the pencil is 2B or not 2B.

YOUR CHURCH GARDEN

First plant five rows of peas :

Presence
Promptness
Purity
Preparation
Perseverance

Next to these plant three rows of squash:

Squash gossip
Squash criticism
Squash indifference

Then plant five rows of lettuce:

Let us be faithful to duty
Let us be loyal and unselfish
Let us be true to ourselves
Let us obey rules and regulations
Let us love one another

And no garden is complete without turnips:

Turn up for meetings
Turn up with a smile
Turn up with new ideas
Turn up with determination to make everything count for something worthwhile.

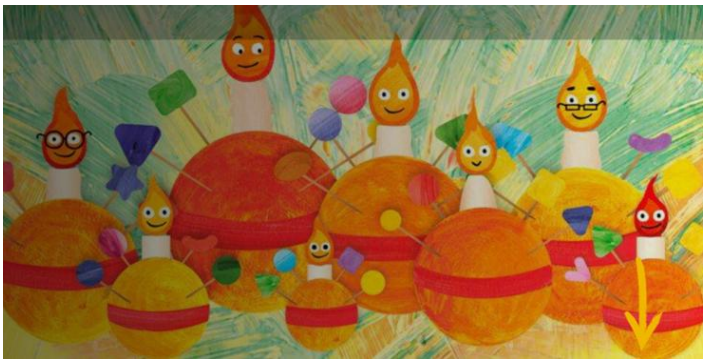
P.S. Don't tell secrets in the garden!!
The potatoes have eyes, the corn has ears and the beanstalk.

Michael Williamson

THANK YOU FROM THE CHILDREN`S SOCIETY

Thank you to everyone who has given to this year`s Team Magazine Christmas Greetings campaign (see back page of the magazine).

The amount raised (at the time of going to press) is a fantastic **£343** which exceeds last years` donations. It will all go towards the Children`s Society Christingle campaign.



The money raised means that the Society can empower more young people to make positive changes and rediscover their hope, and create a society built for all children.

In their report "Good Childhood 2025" the Children`s Society found that many children who were part of the survey said they felt alone and under pressure from things like school stress, negative content and worries about the future. The Children`s Society desperately want to do something about this and so we have run our Team Christmas Greetings campaign again this year so we can make another donation to this worthy cause.

The Children's Society

If you are worried about yourself or someone else's safety please contact the Children`s Society … **Supporter Care Team:0300 303 7000**
supportercare@childrenssociety.org.uk

Janet Graham

CHRISTMAS ANAGRAMS ANSWERS

1. Mistletoe 2. Christmas Pudding 3. Pigs in Blankets

To all our friends across the Team of
St George's, St John's and St Stephen's,
we wish you peace, joy, happiness and
all the blessings of the Christmas season
From...

From Everyone at the Mission Church, Shakerley
Glenys at the Rowans
Judah and Sonia
Jean Bayliss
Marian Blundell
Julie Dickinson
Jenny Evans
Jim and Lynne Fearick
Enid Gallimore
Cliff and Janet Graham
Stephanie and Gary Groves & family
Barbara and John Grundy
Nick and Adele Hardman
Margaret Hatton
Ann Hilton
Diane Leakey
Linda Leese
Darren and Michelle Lewthwaite
Glenys and Chris Maddison
Val Moss
Joan Owen
Marjorie and Barrie Owen
Diane Pennington
Keith and Denise Revill
Elaine Roberts
Glenys Robinson
Margaret Stubley
Marie and Mike Stuckey
Joan Taylor
Andrea Taziker
Kath Topping
Jean and Michael Williamson
Phil Wood and family
Claire and Michael Wright
Mavis Wright
Ruth Wright
Valerie Wright

Thank you all for your donations which total over £**343.00** at the time of going to print. These donations will go to the **Children`s Society** which is a national charity formed 140 years ago. The charity works to transform the hopes and happiness of young people facing abuse, exploitation and neglect. Read more about this charity inside the magazine.