

IN TOUCH

Magazine of the Hanley Team Ministry



FEBRUARY 2026

FEBRUARY DIARY

Events in bold take place each week but check with organisers

Mondays	Cobridge Kiddies	Christ Church	10.00
Tuesdays	Lunch Club	Christ Church	12.00
Wednesdays	Places of Welcome	St. Luke's	08.30
	Open Door	St. Mark's	09.30-13.30
	'Drop-In'	Christ Church	10.00
	Baby & Toddler Group	St. Luke's	13.00
	Over 55s	St. Matthew's	13.30
Thursdays	Place of Welcome	St. Mark's	08.30
	Alpha Course	St. Mark's	12.00
Fridays	Open Door	St. Mark's	09.30-12.30
Second Sat	Bingo Afternoon	St. Luke's	15.00
Last Sunday	Bubble Church	St. Luke's	15.00
Tue 10	PCC	Christ Church	19.15
Sat 14	Valentine's Night	St. Mark's	19.00-23.00
Sun 15	Evensong	Holy Trinity	16.00
Mon 16-Fri 20	School Half-Term		
Wed 18	Ash Wednesday	St. Luke's	11.00
		Christ Church	19.00
Saturday 21	Coffee Morning	St. Matthew's	10.00

SUNDAY READINGS IN FEBRUARY

1st. The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany

1 Kings 17: 8-16 1 Cor. 1: 18-31 John 2: 1-11

OR **Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)**

Mal. 3:1-5 Heb. 2: 14-18 Luke 2: 22-40

8th. The Second Sunday Before Lent

Gen. 1:1 – 2:3 Rom. 8: 18-25 Matt. 6: 25-34

15th. The Sunday Next Before Lent

Exod. 24: 12-18 2 Pet. 1: 16-21 Matt. 17: 1-9

22nd. The First Sunday Of Lent

Gen. 2: 15-17; 3: 1-7 Rom. 5: 12-19 Matt. 4: 1-11

WINNIE THE POOH AND LENT 2026

Rev. Roy Shaw

Remember the Winnie the Pooh stories? And Kanga's insistence on Baby Roo's taking his Strengthening Medicine?

It's 'really quite a nice taste when you get used to it', she explained, although I'm not convinced Baby Roo always agreed.

It can be helpful to think of Lent as a sort of medicine; an opportunity to strengthen us in the things that are good, rein in other facets of our personality, and reset the compass to the true North of following Jesus. A Spring-clean of the soul, if you like.

Baby Roo (and Piglet on the one occasion he was subject to it) found Strengthening Medicine not to their liking, and we may groan inwardly at the thought of 'giving up something for Lent'. Think of what lies behind this 'giving up'. It's so that we may be strengthened, our character refined, our prejudices examined, our junk thrown overboard, and we may come to Passiontide and Easter more fit to walk the way of the Cross, and rise in new life with Jesus at His Resurrection.

Nor is Lent just a case of giving up chocolate. One year I gave up Facebook for Lent, having spent far too much time scrolling through it each day. It freed me to do other, more constructive things.

Instead of giving up, why not take up something you've been meaning to do but never got round to; something life-affirming, something good for God.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which this year falls on 18th February. Many Christians go public with their intention to keep a good Lent by being 'ashed' - the sign of the Cross made on the forehead in a mixture of ash and holy oil at a special service that day. The ash is usually the burnt remains of the palm crosses from last year. Having been ashed, the intention of the 40 days of Lent is to maintain a steady course closer to God, symbolised by the giving up of something which has a hold on us.

We walk with Jesus on the way to the Cross, mindful of the 'riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience' as St Paul has it, and mindful too of Jesus' choice of the Cross as a way for us to enter those riches more fully. To face the immensity of that sacrifice, and the immensity of God's riches made available to us in Jesus, we need all the Strengthening Medicine we can get!

Rev. Roy Shaw is a retired but active priest in the diocese of York, where he is a spiritual director.



Come and be 'Ashed'
Ash Wednesday, 18 February
11.00 a.m. at St. Luke's
7.00 p.m. at Christ Church

*'Angus is making a real effort for Lent
He's giving up the remote control and
walking to the TV'*

**Saturday, 14 February is
Valentine's Day**

A man confided to his friend that he and his wife had had a serious argument the night before. "It finally ended," he said, "when she came crawling to me on her hands and knees."

"What did she say?" asked the friend, amazed.

The husband replied, "She said, 'Come out from under that bed, you coward!'"

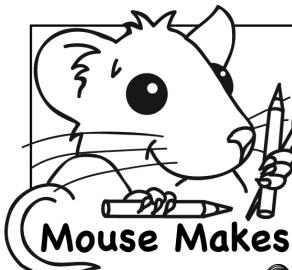


**Saturday 14th Feb
7pm-11pm**

**MUSIC WITH DJ MARK
DANCING
FOOD & BAR**

St. Mark's Church, Shelton ST1 4LT

Tickets £8
<https://buylotterytickets.com/stmarksshelton/2023129>
or on the door



Read the story in
Luke 4:1-13



SECOND TEMPTATION THE DEVIL SAID:

"I will give you power
and wealth if you worship me."

JESUS REPLIED:
"Worship the Lord your God
and serve only Him."

Read Deuteronomy 6:13

WE LEARN:
Put God first
Worship only Him.



THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

After Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan where did the Holy Spirit lead him to? v1

How many days was Jesus being tempted by the devil? v2

What did Jesus eat? v2

What did the devil tempt Jesus to turn a stone into?
What did Jesus say? v3-4

What did the devil offer Jesus if He worshipped him?
What did Jesus say? v7-8

What did the devil ask Jesus to do?
What did Jesus say? v9

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SERVEBTI
JORDANJEG



FIRST TEMPTATION THE DEVIL SAID:

"If you are God's Son order this stone to turn into bread."

JESUS REPLIED:
"Man shall not live on bread alone."

Read Deuteronomy 8:3

WE LEARN:

Read the Bible

Learn God's word.



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

JESUS • BAPTISED • RIVER • JORDAN • HOLY SPIRIT • LED
WILDERNESS • DESERT • FORTY DAYS • HUNGRY • DEVIL
TEMPTATION • STONE • BREAD • WRITTEN • SON • WORLD
KINGDOMS • GLORY • WORSHIP • SERVE • GOD • HIGH
JERUSALEM • TEMPLE • SON • JUMP • DOWN • LIFT • FOOT • LORD • TEST • LENT

THIRD TEMPTATION THE DEVIL SAID:

"If you are God's Son throw yourself down, the scriptures say God will take care of you."

JESUS REPLIED:
"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Read Deuteronomy 6:16

WE LEARN:

God cares, trust
Him do not test Him.



DRAW NEAR IN LENT

Helen Emery, the diocese's Whole Life Discipleship Officer is excited about ways of adding meaning to Lent this year.

- Opening the curtains each morning and seeing the light which floods the room as God flooding my day with His light of love.
- Savouring the first sip of coffee I take, thanking God for the joyful flavour and asking to be shown joy in whatever the day has ahead.
- Seeing my shower as a mini – baptism preparing me for the day head.
- Using my commute to work or my drive to the supermarket as an opportunity to pray for those I will encounter there.
- Asking God to take away any rubbish which is not helpful in my life as I take the bins out each week.

These are all ways of infusing our everyday habits with deeper, life-giving meaning. The challenge for me is to take the big picture of what I believe about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the mind-blowing, eternal significance of it, the heart-swelling enormity of it, and ensure it makes a difference to the tiny detail of my every day, ordinary, here and now life. However you do that – whether it be through actions and re-actions, prayers and practicalities – I believe it is the essence of lent. Self-examination, repentance and sacrifice.

For Lent 2026, resources published from Church House will be under the banner of “Draw Near: Life-giving habits for Lent”. So this theme of building our ‘rhythms of life’ – habits and patterns which help us grow as disciples of Christ day by day – is particularly current. The booklet and app will focus on 6 aspects - worshipping together, praying, exploring the Bible, sharing communion, offering service and sharing the good news with others.

Look out for the ‘Draw Near’ resources on the Church of England’s various channels: www.cofe.io/DrawNear and join in individually or as small groups on social media channels (@thechurchofengland and the ‘Everyday Faith’ app on smartphones.

NATURE NOTES

Harriet Carty, Diocesan Churchyard Environmental Adviser

Spring Messenger

As winter starts to draw to a close and the days are getting noticeably longer we all start to search for signs of spring.

One of the first spring flowers is the Lesser Celandine. This little plant, often viewed as a garden weed, lights up our churchyards with bright, shiny, yellow stars set off beautifully by the surrounding dark green heart-shaped leaves. An old name for Lesser Celandine was 'Spring Messenger' and, like the Snowdrop, it can lift the spirits with the message that spring is coming.

Another old name is Pilewort, suggesting that this plant was used to treat haemorrhoids. Richard Maybey in his *Flora Britannica* considers this prescription to have been due to the Doctrine of Signatures, a belief that similar shaped plants could cure specific ills. In the case of Lesser Celandine it is the knobbly tubers that were thought to resemble piles!

Lesser Celandine is a common plant which can spread fast and likes shady damp areas, but it is not fussy and can be found in grassland, at the base of walls or monuments, on banks, verges and along path edges and is always to be found within churchyards, chapel yards and cemeteries. The cheerful yellow flowers can carpet the ground offering an important early nectar supply to emerging insects such as queen bumblebees, beetles and other pollinators.

Although small, the Lesser Celandine has attracted the attention of the famous. Wordsworth wrote three poems about it and the naturalist Gilbert White of Selborne in Hampshire recorded when he saw his first Lesser Celandine each year, the average date being the 21st February. This date has been known as Celandine Day since 1795.

All the best, Harriet

**RT. REV'D. and Rt. HON. DAME SARAH MULLALLY, DBE
106TH ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
A Potted History**

Born in Woking in 1962, one of four children, with two sisters and one brother.

Worked as a nurse in the National Health Service, specialising as a cancer nurse, and became a ward sister at Westminster Hospital, before being made Director of Nursing at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. In 1999, at the age of 37, appointed the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England in the Department of Health. Made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 2005 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nursing.

Became a Christian at the age of 16. While working as the Chief Nursing Officer for England, she discerned a call to ordination. Ordained in 2001 and served her curacy in St Saviour's Battersea Fields, initially as a self-supporting minister.

On 12th May 2018, was installed as the 133rd Bishop of London at St Paul's Cathedral. Sarah sits in the House of Lords as one of the Lords Spiritual, having been introduced on 24th May 2018. She was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council in March 2018 and became Dean of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal in July 2019.

Sarah is married to Eamonn, an Irish-born IT and Enterprise Architect who enjoys beekeeping and volunteering as a London tourist guide. The couple have two grown-up children, Liam and Grace.

She is Chair of Christian Aid.

She has spoken openly about her dyslexia, describing her difficulties with writing and reading.

In her spare time, Sarah loves cooking, walking and pottery.



Hanley St Luke's CofE Academy part of Three Spires Trust

SCHOOL STREETS INITIATIVE

This initiative aims to deter parking in and around schools to help create a safer environment for the school community.

Access to Wellington Road and Ludlow Street will be restricted during school arrival 8.15am - 9.30am and collection times 2.30pm- 4.00pm.

This scheme is due to operate from 23rd February.

Half-Term: Monday 16 – Friday 20 February

PREPARING CHILDREN FOR AN AI FUTURE: BIRD NET PROJECT

Following the success of being awarded the Computing Quality Framework Mark last year, the academy is placing a strong focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and, most importantly, on teaching children how to understand and use AI responsibly. Upon moving into the Summer term, children in Years 5 and 6 will begin learning more about AI during their Computing lessons. These sessions are part of a bespoke curriculum designed to equip our next generation with the skills and knowledge they will need for future job roles. AI will play a key part in the world they grow up in, and the academy is committed to preparing children for this.

Year 6 pupils will also be taking part in an exciting Bird Net project, where they will use AI to investigate birds in our local area and beyond. This project will link closely with their Science topics and other areas of the curriculum, helping children to see how Computing and AI can be used in real-life contexts.

DENISE KENT (9 April, 1954 – 5 January, 2026)

Denise Kent, was a stalwart of Holy Trinity Church. From 2011 she was the Verger.



Denise was the daughter of Brenda and Joseph Frearson. She was known for her deadpan look and offbeat humour. She was a private person and quite organised. In fact, she wrote her own eulogy, stating '*It isn't very often that the deceased gets to write their own eulogy, but it saves time and who better to do it?*'

Denise grew up in Northwood. After secondary school, she trained as a chef, baker and confectioner. One light she kept under a bushel is that she also learned to play the piano (up to grade 8) and viola. Her interest in music was eclectic, comprising visits to the Glastonbury Festival and The Proms and the music of Rod Stewart and The Eagles. She believed the words of the Port Vale anthem '*The Wonder Of You*' expressed her relationship with God in her own way. She was a lifelong Vale fan which, she said, gave her a sense of humour and a desire to help the underdog.

Denise met her husband Tony at the Miners Arms, Milton, through mutual friends; they married at Holy Trinity on 23rd April 1977. The day started with fog followed by brilliant sunshine, then snow and ice, all on the same day. She made her wedding dress, bridesmaids dresses and wedding cake. They have three children, Victoria, Matthew and Alice and latterly two sons- in -law, Mark and Josh.

The family used to go haymaking and milking at a local farm. They enjoyed holidays in the beautiful Devon countryside and Smytham Manor Holiday Park and, in later years, Northumberland, watching the seals and dolphins swimming off the coast. At home, Denise liked nothing better than to sit in the garden with a book, or listen to her iPod. She was an avid reader, interested in history, music, English literature and crime. Her home was full of books, vinyl records, CDs and wool. Her great love of knitting produced many baby clothes (and a cardigan for George Charles we think).

'I am no-one special. Like many other people, I was a daughter, sister, wife, mum and granny bringing up three children, of whom I am immensely proud.' Denise considered herself particularly blessed upon the birth of her 'beautiful boy', grandson Malakai in 2024.

Tributes have been paid by former clergy:

'I always appreciated how friendly Denise was and generous in so many ways to Holy Trinity. She was always very helpful, too, as the verger for weddings and funerals. More importantly, though, I'm sure, she was the centre of her family and will be much missed.'

Phillip Jones

'A remarkable lady with a heart of gold' Christine Broad

'A great champion for the faith, quiet, and full of common sense.'
George Charles

Denise penned these final words for everyone: ***I have been through a lot, but I've had lots of happy moments as well. I have come to the conclusion that we must not expect too much from life. We must give to life at least as much as we receive from it. Every moment we live is different from the others. The good, the bad, the hardship, the joy, the tragedy, love and happiness are all interwoven into one indiscernible whole that is called life... whatever part you have played in my life, however small, has no doubt enriched it, so thank you.'***



In January, the Lunch Club at Christ Church, Cobridge finally sat down to tuck into their Christmas Party fare after the event had been postponed due to bad weather.



Winnie Wilshaw, Chris Turner and Jenny Wiggins have raised hundreds of pounds for St. Matthew's Church through their monthly Coffee Mornings.

ST. JAMES THE LEAST OF ALL

Historically, the Church of England has had its share of eccentric clergy. Clergy such as the elderly, Anglo-Catholic Uncle Eustace, who is incumbent in the small parish of St James-the-Least-of All, somewhere in Very Rural England. Eustace despairs of his nephew, Darren, who has become an evangelical curate in a busy urban parish... and so he writes letters, to try and properly 'educate' Darren in how to run a parish. The Revd Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace'...

On the art of drinking well

The Rectory
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

You closed your last letter with the remark that it was time to retire to bed with a cup of cocoa. That may be all very well for the pious intensity of a theological college – although a stiff whisky was always acceptable in my day – but it is not a style to continue once in the parish. I do feel obliged to give you a few hints about what should and should not be drunk in public as a parish priest.

Morning visits are to be discouraged, but if one is unavoidable, and you are invited to have a drink, then it has to be coffee. It is the only time of day when a mug is acceptable – provided, of course, that it is bone china or porcelain. In the afternoons one changes to tea, but only from cups. Blended varieties may be all very well for Curates in their first year, but it should be Darjeeling for an incumbent. And fruit teas are for Quakers only.

If an inappropriate vessel is offered, then the drink should be accepted, but left untouched. Since the visit will be discussed in the finest detail throughout the parish the moment you have left, your host will soon learn why and not make the same error a second time.

It is for the same reason that if you ever want to circulate a piece of news round the parish as quickly as possible, never put it in the parish magazine, just mention it casually during one of your visits. Everyone will know by teatime.

Alcoholic drinks must be carefully judged. A sherry – dry, naturally – is probably best if you are invited to lunch. In the early evening, a gin and tonic would be the drink of choice. To ask for whisky would indicate that you are about to go over to Rome, and a mineral water that you have your roots in non-conformity. Beer is never, ever drunk in someone's house unless you suffer from some personal tragedy, such as being the diocesan youth chaplain.

However, an occasional beer in the pub with the bell-ringers (who will be real ale fanatics to a man) or after choir practice – which seems to be the real purpose of holding practices anyway – or as a treat for the sacristan, will show you are a man of the people. It is some years since I visited the pub.

Understanding wine should be taught at every theological college as an essential part of the ministry. Develop a taste for claret, dear boy, and you will be starting your journey towards high office.

And perhaps you should give that tin of cocoa to the verger.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

Can you get across the pedestrian crossing in time?

Have you ever had to hurry to make it to safety across the street because the pedestrian crossing light is about to turn red again? The length of time given at crossing points usually assumes a walking speed of 1.2m per second, but the average speed of adults aged over 65 is only 0.77m per second. A researcher said: '*This is potentially a barrier to independence, physical activity, and social connection, all of which often decline in later life.*'

Journal Age and Ageing.

COBRIDGE KIDDIES

Howard Jones

Cobridge Kiddies started life in 2012 in Cobridge Community Centre. Howard and Catherine felt that our neighbourhood definitely needed a toddler group and CK was born.

When the community centre closed in 2014, we were so delighted to be able to move to Christ Church, where we were made very welcome. We've been here ever since, storing the toys up in the balcony.

Before it even started we felt that we wanted it to 'feel like family' and that's been our guiding principle ever since. We have always felt it to be a huge privilege to be part of the lives of these very young children and their families. Jesus said, 'of such is the Kingdom of heaven' and (unsurprisingly) he was so right!

On one level it's very simple and uneventful. We get the toys down and the kids play and do some simple crafts, then we have fruit and toast before all helping to pack away (to the Tidy Up song) and finally singing a few songs together (Howard's guitar can almost play The Wheels on the Bus by itself by now). But the overall feeling is one of joy, fun and love.

Parents have frequently told us that they love coming here, and their children always know the church to be a special place because that's where playgroup is.

In fact, when we broke the news that we were leaving, one of our lovely volunteers said she would love to enable it to continue, because it was too special a thing to lose.

We will miss so many things about being in Cobridge, so many friends, so many happy memories, but Cobridge Kiddies will stand out as one of our happiest ones.



Again, nothing dramatic, just the simple joys of seeing tiny kids lifting up a doll or a small box to help tidy up, or watching mums, grandparents, carers and toddlers chatting and eating toast together, or marching round the church while we all go on a bear hunt together, or being able to encourage parents during a time of life when everyone can

sometimes get a bit overwhelmed, or Christmas parties and teddy bears picnics.

So thank you Christ Church for being here for us and for being a safe and welcoming venue for us over the years, and into the future too.

[Thank you also, Howard, for your work and friendship. We wish you, Iona and family all the best for the future. Ed.]

NEXT MONTH ...

Alpha Course Continues on Thursdays 12.00 at St. Mark's Church. The course is open to the parish as a whole.

Grandma's Pantry Local Historian Mervyn Edwards will be giving a talk reminding us of many items that were around and part of our lives when we were younger. The event takes place at Christ Church, Cobridge on **Saturday, 7 March at 2.00 p.m.** Tickets, priced just £6, are available from Jenny Otter. There will also be a Raffle, the proceeds from which will be donated to a defibrillator to be installed near to the church.

Easter Wreath-Making Margaret Bromage reports that £340 was raised at Christmas. For Easter, Margaret has places for a wreath-making session at St. Luke's Church on Friday, 20 March, 7.00 -9.30. Contact Margaret to book a place. Price £20.00

MY FIRST 100 DAYS (OR SO) OF RETIREMENT

Rev. Phillip Jones

When someone has completed 100 days in a new job or role, people sometimes check if they have done what they said they would do.

I was recently asked to write an article about my first 100 days of retirement, although it's now actually nearer to 200 days. And unlike those being checked up on in their job, I intended to do as little as possible in my first 200 days.

I haven't quite done nothing, but I knew I needed a break and a rest. Lots of people who were retired told me that you need to get used to it; one person said it took them a year to adjust.

I have to say that I was perfectly happy to get off the treadmill and to let go of all the hassle that goes with working, even for a 'vicar'. And after 40 years of long hours, and even more years in my whole working life, I wanted a rest and to recharge my batteries.

Of course, I miss all of you, but fortunately I've been able to fit into a church here and I have been perfectly happy to sit in the pews and watch other people leading services and to not think about all the challenges and controversies that go with leading churches.

I still have opinions, but I know that there are a lot of things I can no longer change, even if I thought I could (but often couldn't) when I was working. It no longer matters quite so much now.

I have done some things in the past six months, including a lot more walking – 10,000 steps a day in the summer, a bit less in the winter with the dark nights – and reading books. I've put solar panels on my roof and fitted a heat pump in place of the gas boiler, which I couldn't do when I lived in a vicarage. I've also just mended a leaking pipe, rather than calling in a plumber, which is the other side of living in your own house.

I've got my weekends back, and so I've been able to go and visit my son more often and for longer. Sadly, some of that was because his dog, who was much loved by all of us, became ill and had to have a lot of treatment before we, in the end, had to have her put to sleep.

This may be the time I now feel ready to look into doing some more things. I shall ask about getting 'permission to officiate' so I can take services from time to time, if that's useful. As well as walking, I shall see about doing some more to keep fit, though I doubt you will see me at the gym. I care a lot about global warming and the environment, so I shall see what sort of groups there might be that campaign or do something about that.

But I also still want to allow myself time to 'be' and, as I said when I left Hanley, time for prayer and reflection and thinking about what faith means now I don't have to worry so much about what it means in an organisational or church sense. Maybe by 365 days I will have adjusted some more, and perhaps by then I will be able to answer the question I've been asked several times about what I make of retirement and if I'm 'enjoying' it.

Phillip



ENCOUNTER

Encounter Stoke brings together local churches, schools and people in loving and serving communities. We create safe, welcoming spaces where everyone can feel that they belong. Opportunities are provided to spend time together, learn new things and explore the difference faith can make whilst working together to bless our local area. Alongside this, our vision is to see nine new inter-generational worshipping communities established across the city, each one reflecting the unique flavour of its local community. St. Luke's Primary Academy and Church are one of those nine locations. Work at this location includes support for Bubble Church, parent and carer café in the church, lunch time faith club in the school and an after-school club. This sits alongside seasonal intergenerational worship events. A second church, St Mark's and St Mark's Primary Academy, also within the parish, will be in the next phase of Encounter in 2026 which will mean that the parish will have two of the nine Encounter satellites.

Rev. Mike Bridgewater

LONG AGO IN THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY

300 years 20th Feb 1726 William Prescott, an American colonel in American Revolutionary War was born. Famous for giving the order: 'Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes.'

200 years 4th Feb 1826 James Fenimore Cooper's historical romance novel *The Last of the Mohicans* was published.

175 years 1st Feb 1851 novelist Mary Shelley died, aged 53. Best known for her Gothic novel *Frankenstein*.

125 years 2nd Feb 1901 the funeral of Queen Victoria took place.

80 years 11th Feb 1946, the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was published. It was the first major English-language update of the Bible since the King James version was published in 1611.

70 years 11th Feb 1956 two members of the Cambridge spy ring, British diplomats Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, announced that they had defected to the Soviet Union. They had both vanished in mysterious circumstances in 1951.

65 years 9th Feb 1961 the Beatles played at the Cavern Club in Liverpool for the first time.

50 years 11th Feb 1976 John Curry won Britain's first-ever Olympic gold medal in figure skating.

40 years 12th Feb 1986 the Treaty of Canterbury was signed by Britain and France. It was the agreement to construct the Channel Tunnel linking the two countries. The tunnel opened in 1994.

30 years 15th Feb 1996 the oil tanker Sea Empress ran aground near Milford Haven in Wales, causing a major oil spill along the coastlines of Wales and Ireland.

25 years 19th Feb 2001 the first case of foot-and-mouth disease in the 2001 UK outbreak was detected at an abattoir in Essex.

20 years 18th Feb 2006 the Rolling Stones played the world's largest free rock concert on Copacabana beach, Rio de Janeiro. An estimated 2 million people attended.

Parish Pump

BACK PEW

Hold That Thought

Proponents of quantum computing would have us believe that it will be possible in future to crack in minutes secret codes that currently would take a conventional computer many years to unravel. The motto is '*harvest today, decrypt tomorrow*'. Perhaps the answer to Life, the Universe, and Everything really could turn out to be '42'. Former IT colleagues would argue that nothing was ever permanently deleted, it always remained '*in the ether*'. This was said to re-assure of the possibility of retrieving evidence deleted from computers by the subjects of disciplinary action. That took an age, too, or didn't happen.

It is a frightening thought, though, particularly as we enter the period of Lent with its warnings about judgement and the need to guard our behaviour, particularly what we say. The letter of James (chapter 3) carries an alarming description of an uncontrolled tongue, '*a restless evil, full of deadly poison*'. Similarly, we are advised to take our thoughts captive (2 Cor.10:5), and in a world of un-social media, we have become only too aware that the same applies to the written word. The gospels predict '*there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret except to come to light.*' [Mark 4: 22].

This Lent, as ever, I will try to avoid temptation; I am going to practise counting to ten, accompanied by a vacuous smile. Think of it as a mental fast. There may be an added benefit: '*Fools who are silent are considered wise*' (Proverbs 17:28). It's a pity we don't have a confessional box. I don't know where that would have been in our church. Maybe it was mobile, or disappeared along with the pulpit. There is an architectural imbalance, I think, when original furniture is removed. With pulpits, congregations always look up to their clergy. Was permission to remove it granted under a faculty, I wonder?

Of course, corrected behaviour is meant to spill over beyond Lent. The wise advice is never to say or put anything onto the various media platforms that you would not want read out loud in public. The motto is '*engage brain before opening mouth*'. The problem is that each year, as Lent reminds us, resisting temptation is easier said than done.

CONTACTS



Rector – Vacancy

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SERVICES

Holy Communion Sundays:	09.30 Christ Church, Cobridge
	11.00 Holy Trinity Church, Northwood
	10.00 St. Mark's Church, Shelton
	(First & Fifth Sundays, other Sundays
	Morning Worship)
Evensong	16.00 Holy Trinity (monthly- see page 2)
Bubble Church	15.00 St. Luke's Church
	(Last Sunday of the month)
Midweek:	
Tuesdays	10.00 St. Matthew's, Birches Head
Wednesdays	11.00 St. Luke's, Wellington
Thursdays:	
Service of The Word	10.00 Christ Church, Cobridge

Whilst the Rectorship is 'in vacancy', services will be co-ordinated by members of the laity in conjunction with available clergy.

For general enquiries, banns, baptisms and weddings, the contact is Winnie Wilshaw 07731829785

winnie_184@msn.com

For funerals, contact a funeral director in the first instance, then

Kathleen Durber

01782 219147

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The deadline for March's issue is 15 February