



Artwork by Francesca Ross

February 2023



The Parish of Stockport and Brinnington
ST MARY'S - ST THOMAS' - ST LUKE'S



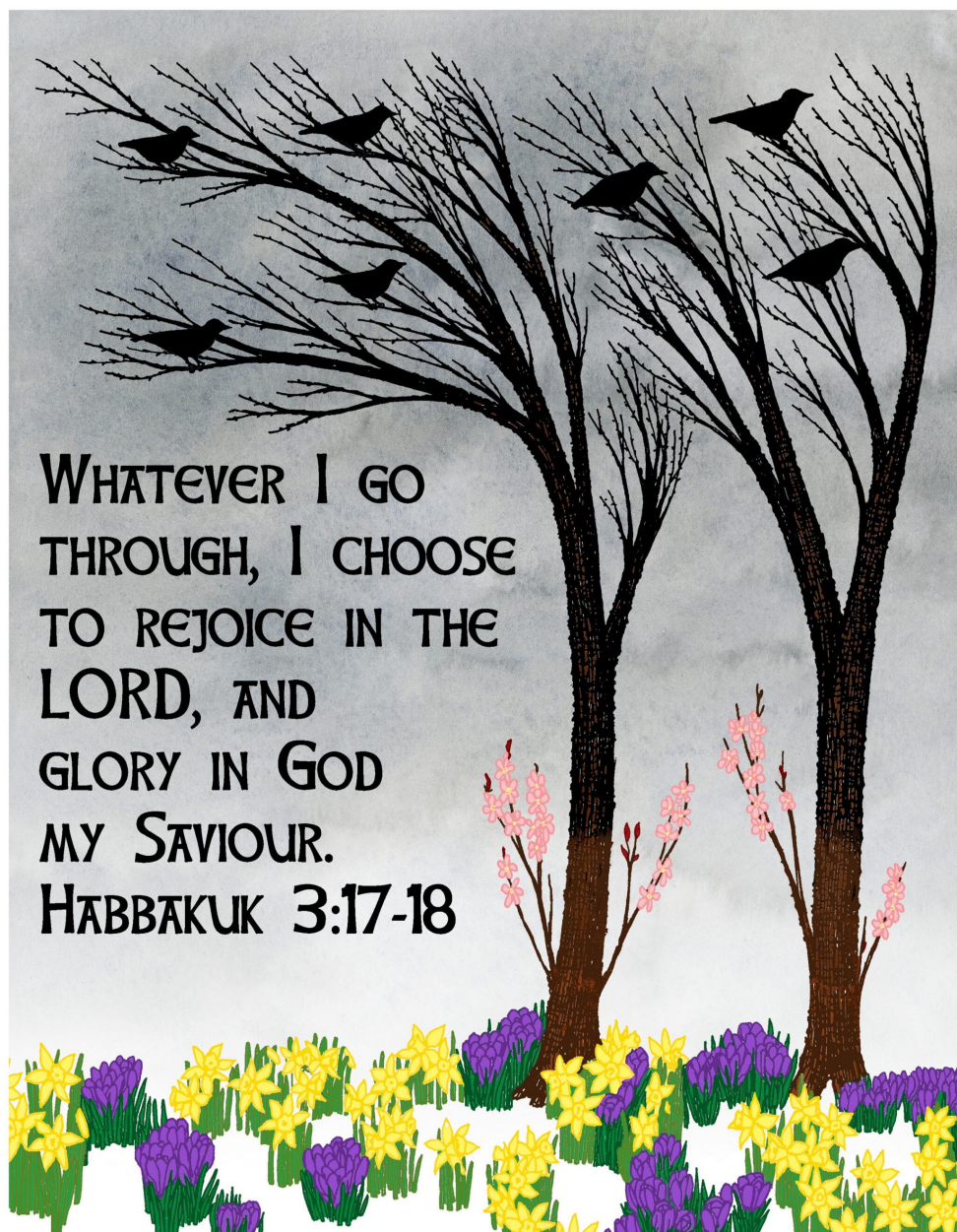
**Welcome to
our February
2023 parish
magazine**

—a new month bringing us
Candlemas, Valentine's
Day and the beginning of
Lent.



Look out for details of our
Lent Study sessions with
Rev Chris

February of course also
brings us the first anniver-
sary of the war in Ukraine
and a special service to be
hosted at Stockport Parish
Church (St Mary's in the
Marketplace) on Sunday,
26th at 2.30pm.



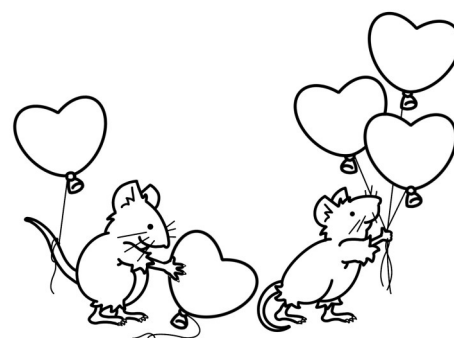
Tuesday lunchtime service at St. Mary's 12.15pm

Creation and Climate

7 Feb
14 Feb
21 Feb
28 Feb
7 March

God sustains the Earth
Advocating for Nature
Nature longs for Liberation
Loving others
Living to protect Creation

Ian Hamilton
Ken Livingstone
Hayley Wall
Christine Rablen
Ben Jeffrey



Artwork by Deborah Noble



Shown—from left The Ven Ian Bishop (Archdeacon of Macclesfield, Rev Canon Elaine Chegwin Hall (Rural Dean), The Rt Rev Sam Corley (Bishop of Stockport), Rev Chris Blunt, (Rector of Stockport and Brinnington), The Ven Dr Mick Gilbertson (Archdeacon of Chester).

It was such a joy to welcome our new Rector - Revd Chris Blunt—to our Parish at his recent induction service on the 9th January 2023.

If you were with us that evening you will know what an enjoyable service it was - our thanks to everyone who came to support us (and in particular Chris) on this special evening.

Exciting times ahead as Chris and his family find their feet, unpack their belongings and settle into life in Stockport.

Sundays of the Month

5th February

Third Sunday before Lent – Septuagesima

St Thomas' 9.30am—HC (Chris)
St Mary's 10.30am—HC (Marie)
St Luke's 10.30am—HC (Chris/Brenda)

12th February

Second Sunday before Lent – Sexagesima

St Thomas' 9.30am—HC(Marie)
St Mary's 10.30am—MW (Chris)
St Luke's 10.30am—HC (Marie/Brenda)

19th February

The Sunday next before Lent – Quinquagesima

St Thomas' 9.30am— HC(Marie)
St Mary's 10.30am—HC(Chris)
St Luke's 10.30am—HC(Marie/Brenda)

Wednesday 22nd February

ASH WEDNESDAY

St Mary's 7.00pm (Chris)

26th February

The First Sunday of Lent

St Thomas' 9.30am—HC(Chris)
St Mary's 10.30am—MW/Baptism(Marie)
St Luke's 10.30am— HC(Chris/Brenda)

St Mary's—2.30pm Service for Ukraine

Correct at time of publication—subject to amendment if needed



Sadly for us, the time is approaching for our much loved Curate to move to pastures new and take on her own Parish.

Congratulations to Marie as she prepares to take over the reigns at St Alban's / St John's (Offerton) - once all the legal

bits and other formalities are sorted— a church she knows well and with a congregation delighted at her returning to their Parish.

Our very best wishes to Marie and her family— we're sorry her Curacy with us is nearly over—but delighted that this opportunity just up the road has arisen at this time. Wonderful news!



Jesus said "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10.10).

*I hope you have that sense of abundance through faith in him. I certainly sensed that through the welcome offered at my induction service (thank you all), through all of the different and wonderful parish events that I've seen over the last couple of weeks, the services I've had the privilege to lead and the schools I've been able to visit. As I see others offering help and hope (as you do) I'm encouraged and sense that abundance. But it's easy to be distracted by the problems of life and suddenly lose touch with Jesus' abundant life, isn't it? One of our aims at church is to constantly be pointing each other back to God in Christ as the source of all our hope. We do that through our gathered worship, our acts of service in our communities and our godly conversations. In addition, during Lent, I'm going to be running a 6 session Lent Course looking at the Archbishop of Canterbury's 2023 Lent book: *Failure: What Jesus said about Sin, Mistakes and Messing Stuff Up* by Emma Ineson - details of times and venue still to be confirmed. That sounds quite negative! I haven't read the book yet, but I'm expecting us to be encouraged that we don't need to be perfect people, perfectly living out the Christian life to be loved by God, useful in His purposes and therefore part of His abundant life. Do try to join the course if you can.*

Chris

Midweek Activities

Monday: Together at St Luke's

13th, 20th & 27th February 2pm

NB: 6th February –Closed

Tuesday St Luke's Mums & Tots Group

7th February / 14th February /

28th February

NB: 21st February—Closed for half-term

Tuesday, St Mary's

open 10.30am—2pm [Host Café 11am-1.30pm] along with the Stockport Heritage Trust

Lunch-time service at St Mary's

12.15pm

7th February

with Marie/Ian Hamilton

14th February

with Chris/Ken Livingstone

21st February with

Marie/Hayley Wall

28th February with Marie/Chris

Thursday Coffee Morning - St Luke's

9.45—11.15am

Friday—St Thomas' - Open—9.30-11am

Saturday—St Mary's 10.30am—2pm

Private prayer / Host Café & Stockport Heritage Trust

Foodie Friday: 24th February

St Mary's open 6.30—8pm.

Correct at time of publication—subject to amendment if needed



Artwork by Jean Valour

2nd February Candlemass – the Presentation of Christ in the Temple

In bygone centuries, Christians said their last farewells to the Christmas season on Candlemas, 2nd February. This is exactly 40 days after Christmas Day itself.

In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child – to 'present Him to the Lord'. At the same time, she, as a new mother, was 'purified'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

So, where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year's supply of candles for the church on this day – hence the name, Candlemas.

The story of how Candlemas began can be found in **Luke 2:22-40**. Simeon's great declaration of faith and recognition of who Jesus was is of course found in the Nunc Dimittis, which is embedded in the Office of Evening Prayer in the West. But in medieval times, the Nunc Dimittis was mostly used just on this day, during the distribution of candles before the Eucharist. Only gradually did it win a place in the daily prayer life of the Church

A Prayer For Candlemas

Dear Lord,

Here we are in February – month of cold days, winter days, but days that promise hope and signs of Spring. Snowdrops and lengthening light; echoes of the hope and light that Jesus brought to Simeon and Anna all those years ago in the Temple.

Thank you, Lord, that you always bring light, you always bring hope and peace and joy when we put our trust in Jesus, our Saviour. Jesus, Lord of all our days and seasons. In His name we thank you, as we look to His Light.

Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

Valentine's Day reminds us of the importance of expressing our love to those close to us. But how can we go beyond simply offering flowers and a card? Jesus says: *'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another'* (John 13:34). How can we express love like Jesus in our everyday relationships to our partner, children, neighbours or work colleagues?

Listening

We need to listen to others, just as Jesus did. He asked questions of people and waited for them to process their answer. According to James, *'everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry'* (James 1:19). How well do we listen to others? How often do we find ourselves already thinking of what we want to say before somebody's finished speaking? Listening takes time; don't rush it!

Touching

Jesus reached out to touch the untouchables in His world, including lepers, the sick and children. This was completely out of character for rabbis of His day. For us today, a warm handshake may be of value. Of course, it should always be an *appropriate* touch – helpful for the other person, not just for ourselves.

Speaking

Jesus' conversation was always full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Do we speak words of *grace*, by offering comfort, giving encouragement or expressing care and concern? However, we should also be ready to speak words of *truth*, in asking for forgiveness, seeking reconciliation or addressing conflict. As Paul urges us, don't avoid: *'speaking the truth in love'*.

Where is the challenge for us in expressing love this Valentine's Day?



Artwork by Deborah Noble

Its all in the VALENTINE:

For God so loVed the world,
That He gAve
His onLy
BegottEn
SoN
That whosoever
Believes In Him
Should Not perish,
But have Everlasting life."

John 3:16



Artwork by Francesca Ross

14th Feb: Valentine's Day mystery

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century – one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer's time the link was assumed to be because on these saints' day -14th February – the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine's Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or 'sweethearts' during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love – Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

14th Feb:

Cyril and Methodius, helping the Slavs

Cyril and Methodius are saints for anyone with good secular qualifications, who now suspects that God may be calling them to use those skills in His service.

Cyril and Methodius were brothers, born into a wealthy family in Thessalonica, in 826 and 815 respectively. Their upbringing destined them for lives of respect and influence.

Methodius, the elder brother, was appointed governor in a Slav province of the Roman Empire, although within a few years he became a monk on Mount Olympus in Asia Minor. Meanwhile his younger brother, Cyril, went into academia in Constantinople, becoming a lecturer in philosophy and librarian.

But then, in 863, the ruler of Moravia, Rostislav, asked the emperor to send him some Christian teachers who could conduct services and teach his people in the Slavonic tongue. Emperor Michael III chose Cyril and Methodius.

It was a daunting task, for the Slavonic language had not yet been written down. But nonetheless, the brothers methodically set about their great work.

Cyril used his academic ability to create an alphabet for the Moravians, which eventually became the Cyrillic alphabet. The brothers then used this written language to teach Christianity in Slavonic, and to provide a way for the Moravians to worship in their own language. The brothers translated much of the liturgy and the gospels to this form.

During their time in Moravia, the brothers faced opposition from missionaries of the German Church, who believed that the official languages of the church should only be Hebrew, Greek or Latin. But the Pope pronounced that both brothers were orthodox, and made them both bishops, with Methodius ending up as Archbishop of Rastislav and Svatopluk.

Cyril and Methodius have been held in high honour, as men who pioneered the use of the vernacular language in church services. Cyril would have been astonished if he had known the eventual consequences of his hard work. For not only did the Slavonic language spread quickly, with him becoming known as the Father of Slavonic Literature, but Slavonic went on to become the language of the Liturgy in the 9th century Russian Church.

Nigel Beeton writes: "100 years ago on 16th February 1923 the archaeologist Howard Carter broke the seal on the tomb of Tutankhamun. When he and the Earl of Carnarvon had peered through a small hole in November 1922 Carter had described seeing 'wonderful things', as indeed they turned out to be. Such treasures, laid up with the mummy of a dead pharaoh were intended to provide security in the after-life, the tomb of Tut was unique in that it hadn't been plundered previously by thieves. But Jesus had advice on this very subject, which we can find in Matthew 6:19-21:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Wonderful Things

Mister Carter
And the Earl
Went off to Egypt, hot
Just as they'd planned
They dug the sand –
And look at what they got!

*Wonderful things, glorious things
Of silver and of gold
Marvellous things, beautiful things
And very, very old!*

Mister Carter
And the Earl
They peered into the gloom
And what they spied
Deep inside
Was Tutankhamun's tomb:

*Wonderful things, glorious things
Of silver and of gold
Marvellous things, beautiful things
And very, very old!*



Mister Carter
And the Earl
They shouted out for glee!
For twenty years
Through lots of tears
They'd hoped this sight to see:

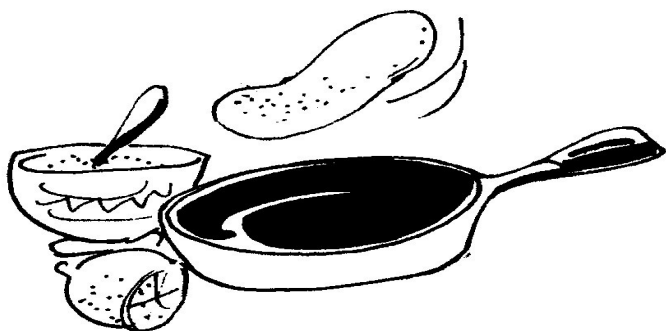
*Wonderful things, glorious things
Of silver and of gold
Marvellous things, beautiful things
And very, very old!*

Our treasure, too
Is stored for us
In Heav'n, not underground!
And when we die
Both you and I
Will hear the angels' sound:

*Wonderful things, glorious things
As promised by the Lord
Marvellous things, beautiful things
Our Father kept His Word!*

By Nigel Beeton

21st February: Shrove Tuesday



Artwork by Jean Valour

Pancake Day, or Shrove Tuesday, is the traditional feast day before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Lent – the 40 days leading up to Easter – was traditionally a time of fasting and on Shrove Tuesday, Anglo-Saxon Christians went to confession and were “shriven” (absolved from their sins). A bell would be rung to call people to confession. This came to be called the “Pancake Bell”

Shrove Tuesday always falls 47 days before Easter Sunday, so the date varies from year. Shrove Tuesday was the last opportunity to use up eggs and fats before embarking on the Lenten fast and pancakes are the perfect way of using up these ingredients.

A pancake is a thin, flat cake, made of batter and fried in a frying pan. A traditional English pancake is very thin and is served immediately. Golden syrup or lemon juice and caster sugar are the usual toppings for pancakes.

The pancake has a very long history and featured in cookery books as far back as 1439. The tradition of tossing or flipping them is almost as old: “And every man and maide doe take their turne, And tosse their Pancakes up for feare they burne.” (Pasquil’s Palin, 1619).

The ingredients for pancakes can be seen to symbolise four points of significance at this time of year:

Eggs ~ Creation

Flour ~ The staff of life

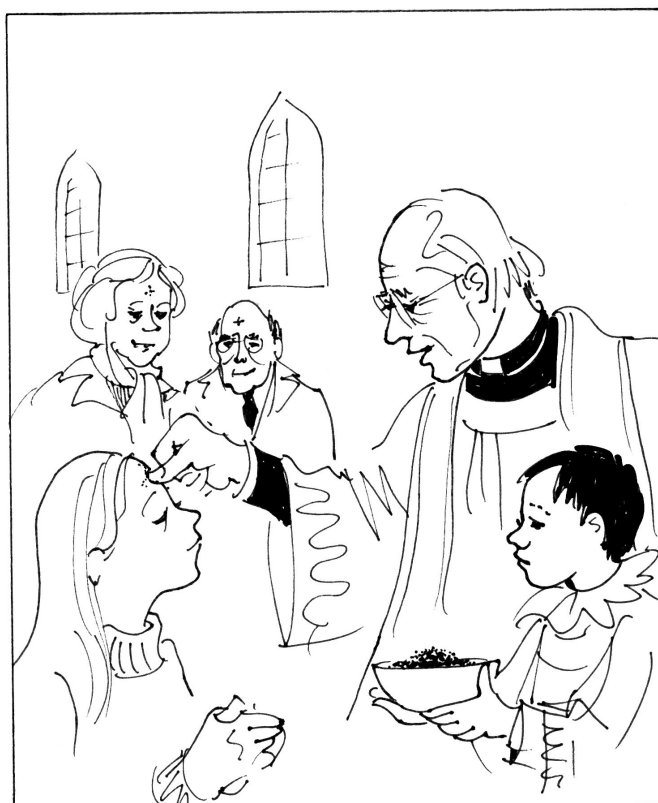
Salt ~ Wholesomeness

Milk ~ Purity

22nd February: Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent and is always 46 days before Easter Sunday. Lent being a 40-day season (not counting Sundays) marked by repentance, fasting, reflection, and, ultimately celebration. The 40-day period represents Christ’s time of temptation in the wilderness, where he fasted and where Satan tempted him. Lent asks believers to set aside a time each year for similar fasting, marking an intentional season of focus on Christ’s life, ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection.

*Ash Wednesday Service
at
St Mary’s
7pm
All Welcome*



Artwork by Jean Valour



Artwork by Deborah Noble

Nigel Beeton writes: "The season of Lent begins this month. In times gone by it was observed very strictly, on pain of excommunication. Maybe these days we don't pay it such attention, but taking a bit of extra time with God during Lent is time that He will richly repay:"

Lent

The monk, within his monastery,
The ploughman and the lord;
Would keep the Lent time patiently
And keep a simple board.

Rich food nor meat could touch their lip
Just plain and simple fare;
Dried bread in sauce they could not dip –
Or face the Parson's glare!

Today, such things don't tend to be
We've left them in the past!
Just those within that monastery
Who keep the Lenten fast.

But all should come to love anew
The treasured time of Lent
And spend more time with Father, who
Rewards such time well spent!

By Nigel Beeton



Artwork by Deborah Noble

Some hints about prayer this Lent

The Ven John Barton considers what you need to remember when you pray.

Prayer is instinctive for human beings, even those who don't regard themselves as religious. You are standing at a bus stop in the wind and the rain, thinking 'I do hope the bus will come soon'. It's an inner yearning. It defies logic: either the bus is coming, or it isn't. But we all do it. It's instinctive and it's the raw material of prayer. Hoping for something better is basic. Like all instincts, it needs to be trained.

To whom do we pray? What you pray, and the way you do it will be shaped by your view of God. Christian prayers are fashioned by what we know of Jesus and what He taught about prayer.

We pray by invitation. Again and again, Jesus encouraged His companions to pray. A couple of His parables on the subject have been misinterpreted as instructions to persuade a resistant God to do what we want. Have a look at Luke 18, verses 1-8, about a widow whose perseverance finally persuaded an unwilling judge to rule in her favour. The lesson is that God is *not* like that! Similarly, an unwelcome neighbour who persistently calls for help in the middle of the night gets what he wants (Luke 11:5-13). The lesson? If tenacious lobbying can overcome human unwillingness, *how much more* our gracious God will heed His children's cry.

Pushing at an open door. Jesus is already praying for us. So, when we start to pray, we step on to an already moving staircase. Sometimes prayer seems tougher than it need be. Jesus invited us to be linked to Him, in the way an inexperienced bullock is yoked to a mature ox. Have a look at Matthew 11:28-29, which concludes "for my yoke is easy and my burden is light". When Marion Bartoli unexpectedly won the 2013 Women's Wimbledon final, she said "I believe if you put all your heart and effort into everything you are doing, then God is there to help you."

Is your prayer on the right lines? Try adding "for Christ's sake" at the end. "Please let my marrow win the Gardening Club competition"? No. "Not my will but yours" is the key. So when praying, don't give God instructions, just report for duty.

What the temptations mean for us—

by Canon David Winter

Immediately after His baptism in the River Jordan, Jesus faced and resisted three powerful temptations during 40 days in the wilderness of Judea. This time of testing and temptation was His preparation for the work God had sent Him to do on earth. It's the principle behind the season of Lent, which begins on 22nd February. Although the temptations were personal to Jesus, many of us will recognise their relevance in our own lives.

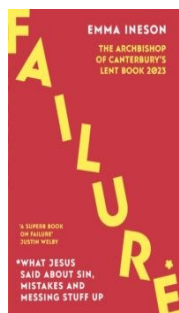
The first was simple. 'You're hungry. You can do miracles. Well, turn these hot stones at Your feet into loaves of bread'. It sounds quite plausible, but in fact it's an invitation to put one's own needs first. Temptation rejected.

Then came the second: 'throw yourself off a pinnacle of the Temple. You know that God will send His angels to catch you before you hit the ground'. Again, it's plausible (there was even a verse from the Bible to back it up). But this would be to substitute one spectacular publicity stunt for the hard slog of travel, preaching, healing and touching individual lives. Temptation rejected.

The third was outrageous. 'Fall down and worship corrupt and evil power, and You will have infinite worldly power and success'. In other words, the divine Son of God should deny His Father and worship the devil, to glean success without going to the Cross. For the third time, temptation resisted.

I know these temptations were tests of the Messiah Jesus, but can't we see in them temptations that come to all of us from time to time? Look after number one, and all will be well. Take the short cut to success and avoid all the hard slog. Compromise your integrity, in order to fulfill your ambitions. Or choose the hard way: walk the narrow path of honesty, commitment, and truth. That's really the Lenten choice.

BOOK REVIEW—for Lent 2023



'A superb book on failure . . . humorous, realistic and absolutely not judgemental.'
JUSTIN WELBY

Failure: What Jesus Said About Sin, Mistakes and Messing Stuff Up—The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2023-

By Emma Ineson, SPCK £8.99

In 2019, Emma Ineson wrote about ambition and what it means for Christians to be successful. And then there was a global pandemic . . . Suddenly failure began to feel very much more familiar than success.

But what is failure? What did Jesus think of it? What did he say about sin, mistakes and generally mucking things up? At the start of this wonderfully humorous and encouraging book - which will end at the cross - it's suggested that our tendency to lump all kinds of failure together could be a bit unhelpful. A more nuanced understanding of what sort of failure we're dealing with might just allow us to make friends with it and respond more appropriately.

This idea leads us 'Towards an (Imperfect) Theology of Failure', based on key Christian thinking, and Emma poses the question of whether sin is an individual or corporate thing. Looking at the church, we consider, what is God's purpose for it? And in the light of key concerns such as safeguarding and racial justice, how might we re-examine concepts of success and



Artwork by Francesca Ross



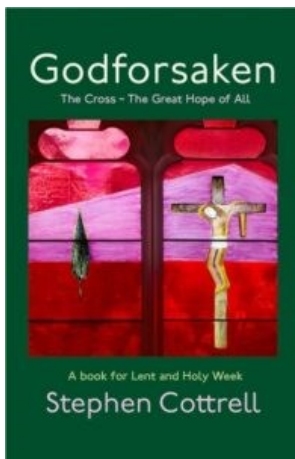
Coming up during Lent—a six session study with Rev Chris based on the book “Failure” -

What Jesus said about Sin, Mistakes and Messing Stuff Up: The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book for 2023.
Author: Rt Rev Dr Emma Ineson

Dates/Times & Venue to be confirmed

We are reminded of our calling to live life to the full, to take risks despite our fears. We are bound sometimes to fail! Yet gazing at Jesus - who looked like the greatest failure of all - we may discern in the heart-ache, vulnerability and humility of failure, the glory of the cross.



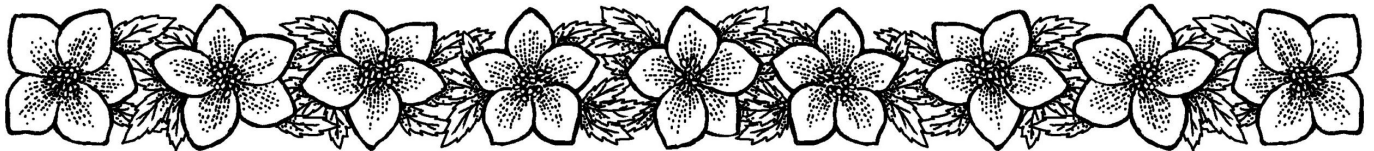


Godforsaken: The Cross, the Greatest Hope of All
The Archbishop of York's Lent Book for 2023
by Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, John Murray Press, £14.99

Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell explores Jesus' final words on the Cross in this powerful new book. In the Gospel of Mark's account of the Passion narrative, Jesus calls out from the cross 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is the Aramaic for 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' – the first line of Psalm 22. It's an anguished expression – traditionally ascribed to King David – of defeat, failure, abandonment and despair.

This series of reflections, written for Lent and Holy Week 2023 by the Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell, ponders the significance of these words. What does it mean for Jesus to have quoted them, at the very end of his life? What do those words mean for us?

This is a beautiful and compelling exploration of the dark, suffering side of the Passion – and how Jesus' words lead us to the greatest hope of all.

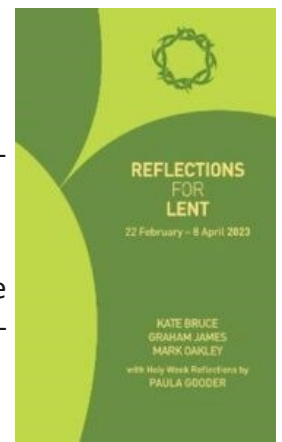


Reflections for Lent 2023

By Kate Bruce, Mark Oakley and Graham James, CHPublishing, £4.99

Reflections for Lent are designed to enhance your spiritual journey through the forty days from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday.

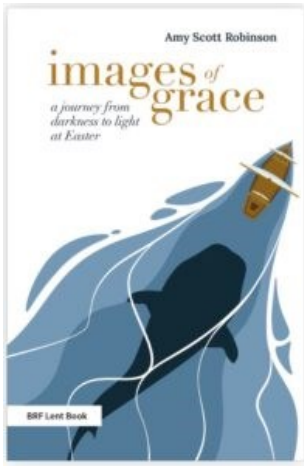
Covering Monday to Saturday each week, it offers reflections on readings from the Common Worship Lectionary, written by some of today's leading spiritual and theological writers.



Each day includes: full lectionary details for Morning Prayer; a reflection on one of the Bible readings; a Collect for the day

This volume offers daily material for 22nd February to 8th April 2023. It is ideal for individuals and groups seeking Lectionary-based reflections for use during Lent and Holy Week, or for anyone wishing to try Reflections for Daily Prayer before committing to a year's worth of material. It also features a simple form of morning and night prayer, a guide to keeping a good Lent and an introduction to lectio divina by Stephen Cottrell.

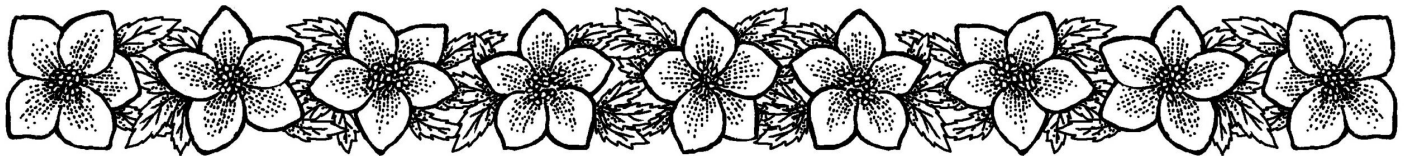




Images of Grace: a Journey from Darkness to Light at Easter
The BRF Lent Book for 2023
By Amy Scott Robinson, BRF, £9.99

At the heart of the Christian message is a collection of abstract nouns: love; sin; forgiveness; grace. It is quite difficult to explain what the gospel message is without using some or all of those words. But the problem with abstract nouns is that when we use them, we assume that the person we are talking to understands them, and not only that, we assume that they have the same understanding of the word that we do...

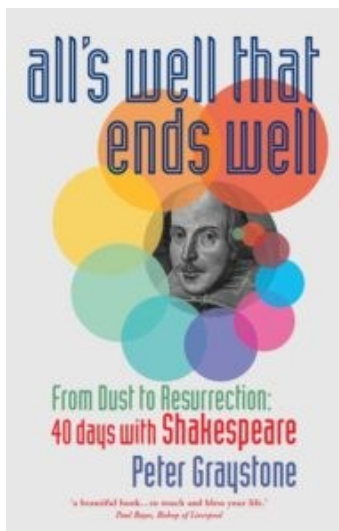
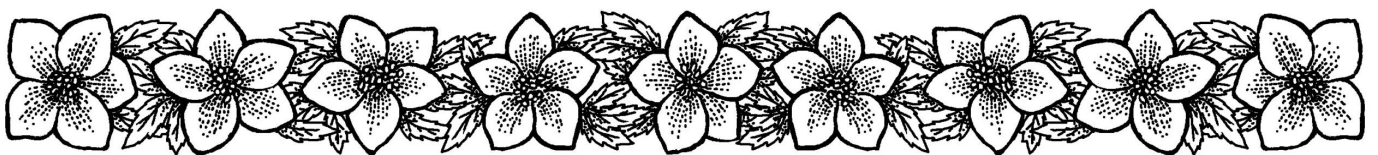
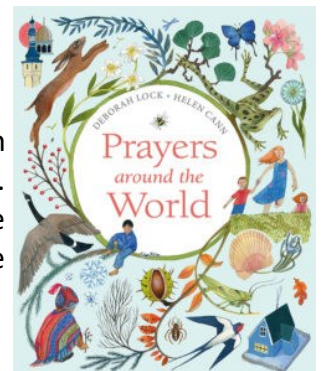
Lent is traditionally a time of repentance, fasting and prayer as we prepare to celebrate our salvation at Easter. Through daily readings and reflections from Ash Wednesday to Easter Day, Amy Scott Robinson explores different biblical images of repentance, sin, forgiveness and grace, bringing them together in Holy Week as a lens through which to view Christ's work of reconciliation on the cross.



Prayers Around the World

By Deborah Lock and Helen Cann, Lion Children's Books, £7.99

Across the continents, **this beautifully illustrated book of prayers** reflects on God's amazing world, celebrating different countries, landscapes and traditions. From fishing villages to the African plains, farming in Peru to the snowy landscape of Greenland, blossoms in Japan and leaf kicking in Eastern Europe and to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, these prayers share God's love and care for His world.



All's Well That Ends Well – Through Lent with Shakespeare
By Peter Graystone, Canterbury Press, £12.99

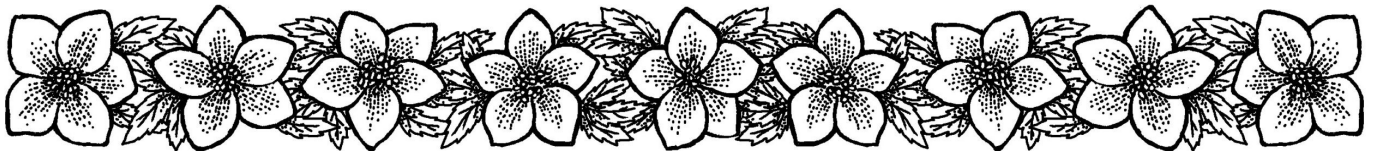
Few writers have a deeper understanding of the foibles of human nature and life's absurdities and tragedies than William Shakespeare. This makes him a fascinating companion for the season of Lent, a traditional time for a spot of self-examination.

This engaging, wise and often amusing Lent book sets quotations from Shakespeare's characters and poems alongside biblical passages and reflects on the resonance between them – one reflection for each day of the season.

Continued over

It starts with dust on Ash Wednesday ('Golden lads and girls all must, As chimney-sweepers, come to dust', from *Cymbeline*) and ends with resurrection as Easter Sunday approaches ('It is required you do awake your faith', from *The Winter's Tale*). In between, it considers many rich spiritual themes: mercy, love, loyalty, trust, good vs evil, guilt, forgiveness, ageing, grief, death, hope and more.

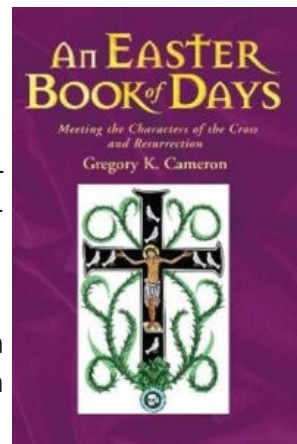
Each day's reflection opens with a quotation from Shakespeare and explores its ideas in conversation with the Bible and Christian thought.



Easter Book of Days – Meeting the Characters of the Cross and Resurrection
By Gregory Cameron, Canterbury Press, £10.99

Following the bestselling *Advent Book of Days*, Gregory Cameron turns his artistic, literary and pastoral skills to the Easter story, introducing us to the characters who populate the crucifixion and resurrection.

He explores 25 characters from the stories of Lent, Holy Week and Easter from the perspectives of scripture, history and legend and asks how they can enrich our practice of faith today.



As well as the familiar figures – Christ Himself, Mary His mother, Mary Magdalene, the disciples, Pilate, the soldiers, and the thieves crucified with Jesus, he explores aspects of the story not found in scripture, such as Veronica wiping the face of Jesus as He carried His cross. Considering biblical accounts alongside folk legends, he also explores the rich traditions that have built up around the cross and the crown of thorns, as well as tales of how the robin got its red breast, or what happened to the disciples after the ascension, creating a richly textured guide to the Easter season.



War, hunger, cold ... and hope – bishops look ahead and share their thoughts

With a focus on food banks, warm spaces, community, the war in Ukraine, and migration, bishops across England have shared messages of hope for the coming year.

The Bishop of Lichfield, Michael Ipgrave, has highlighted not only many churches will be open for services, but also as a warm, heated space for those who need it.

“The instinct to welcome people into our own space is deep within us as human beings,” he said. “And the welcome we give, or fail to give, to people who are cold, hungry, struggling with finances today says so much about our own society.

The Bishop of Dover, Rose Hudson-Wilkin, looked back on 2022 as a year of upheaval and “of seismic proportions ...the loss of our beloved late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

“The shadow of Covid-19 remained with us and we heard stories of the lasting impact of the pandemic, especially through Long Covid, [and] the effects of lockdown on children’s and adults’ mental well-being,” she added.

“But we have also seen compassion in action as thousands of families offered to share their homes with those Ukrainian families who have been lucky enough to get visas. We also saw our churches working with many charities to offer support by way of warm community spaces; assisting with language lessons; providing clothing and food.

“Indeed, the words of our Lord came into their own: ‘I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink, naked and you clothed me, sick and in prison and you visited me.’ Thank you for your part in this.

The Bishop of Chelmsford, Guli Francis-Dehqani said: “As we begin another year, with all the uncertainty that continues raging around us, and with continued worries about the cost of living and the changing nature of the church, it’s perhaps worth remembering that the same Christ child who drew kings and magi to His crib is the one who invites us to follow Him still today.”



CONGRATULATIONS to Stockport Market who recently won Best Small Indoor Market 2023 at the Great British Market Awards.

It doesn't seem that long ago that the future of the market looked a little uncertain - so this great news for "Stockport Old Town".



“Loss and Damage”

COP27

was the 27th United Nations Climate Change conference, held from Sunday 6 to Friday 18 November 2022 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. COP27 closed with a breakthrough agreement to provide “loss and damage” funding for vulnerable countries hit hard by climate disasters.

Christian Aid has produced an activity pack “Rise Up and Pay Up” which helps to explain loss and damage and aims to engage churches in learning and acting on the issue. See:

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-01/riseuppayup-church-activity-pack.pdf>

It includes the prayer:

God of love, hope and justice

We give thanks that a loss and damage fund was agreed.

We pray for UK leaders. Bless them with wisdom, boldness and a heart for justice like yours.

May you gift them with the skills and opportunities required to work in unity with all world leaders, so that money for a fund is provided quickly.

May they act humbly and deliver a fund that makes polluters contribute the most, and benefits the poorest and most climate-vulnerable communities first.

And may we all lament for our polluting lifestyles which damage your creation.

Amen

Patricia Hamilton, Environmental Officer



The climate crisis is making extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods and hurricanes, more common.

The impact can cause communities to lose everything, and the damage done can be irreversible.

This is a key issue for communities on the frontline of the climate crisis, who have done the least to cause it.

For 30 years they have been calling for action on loss and damage and finally, at November's United Nations climate talks, the creation of an international loss and damage fund was agreed.

Now countries need to ensure that money is provided. It's time to rise up together to make polluters pay for loss and damage.

This activity pack will help explain loss and damage, and engage your church in learning and acting on the issue. It will guide you through the key points of loss and damage and then provide instructions for a creative, communal action, which can help everyone to reflect and pray on the issue of loss and damage.

Using the prayer people you create in the activity, you can then demonstrate the desire for action to the wider community and to decision makers.

Carbon emissions reduce as Church of England makes progress towards 2030 target

The Church of England saw a gradual but steady reduction in carbon in 2021, according to the latest data from its national Energy Footprint Tool (EFT).

Meanwhile, more than 400 churches across England are now reporting 'net zero' carbon emissions, an increase of 157 on the previous year, as part of the most comprehensive data collection to date.

The EFT was launched in 2019 to measure and record carbon emissions across the Church of England and is reporting data for the third time. For 2021, the data is now consolidated across all settings, including Church of England schools.

It estimates that overall carbon emissions were down by 5,000 tonnes CO₂e in 2021 to 410,000 tonnes overall, compared with 415,000 in 2020, despite buildings being open for more of the year than in 2020. The data also included travel-related emissions for the first time.

The 2021 report includes data from church schools, clergy housing, cathedrals, offices, theological education institutions, and work-related travel, in addition to the actual church buildings which were also recorded in 2020.

It also notes that Covid-19 mitigations, including lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, were likely to have had an impact on the figures, with churches closed for public worship and gatherings for some parts of both years.

The Bishop of Selby, John Thomson, who is the Church of England's lead bishop for Net Zero Carbon, said: "There are some positive indicators that the Church of England is making progress towards our target, and every effort, small or great, is important and welcome."

Church of England's National Investing Bodies publish Deforestation Policy

Deforestation sits at the heart of climate, biodiversity and food and water security challenges, all of which many parts of the world are currently struggling to address.

The Church of England has therefore said: "We recognise the need to support a transition to sustainable policies and practices in a way that conserves and restores forests while also protecting local communities and livelihoods."

To that end, the National Investing Bodies of the Church of England (NIBs) have published a Deforestation Policy, to address these critical issues before they become crises.

"We recognise the critical role which tropical forests play in stabilising the earth's climate system, absorbing one-third of the CO₂ released annually from burning fossil fuels. The policy is aimed at halting tropical deforestation related to agricultural commodities that put forests at risk, such as palm oil, soy, beef, pulp and paper, and timber."

Parish of
Stockport and Brinnington
Energy Audit

We have until the 31st July to
input our parish data to the
CofE Energy Footprint Tool

The Energy Footprint Tool allows all churches around the country to enter their utility bills and find out their "carbon footprint".

Nationally, it helps the CofE to know the carbon baseline - where we are starting from - and how much progress we are making.

Cost of living crisis: 2.6 million seek help from churches and faith groups

Nearly three million adults in the UK are estimated to have sought help from church or other religious organisations since the start of last year, as a result of the cost-of-living crisis, according to research published.

New findings show that, overall, almost four in 10 (38 per cent) of UK adults sought help last year because of the squeeze on living costs. Family and friends were the most common source of help, at 24 per cent and 14 per cent respectively.

However, the polling by Savanta, for the Church of England, also found that five per cent of UK adults, approximately equivalent to 2.6 million people, sought help from churches or other religious organisations.

Six in 10 of those who sought help from churches and other religions said they had received free food or groceries (60 per cent). Half said they received low-cost food or groceries (50 per cent) or hot food (48 per cent), and four in 10 (40 per cent) said they had been provided with warm spaces.

The survey showed that, overall, 61 per cent of UK adults said they had *not* sought help in 2022 as a result of the cost-of-living crisis, but this figure fell to 24 per cent of 18-to-24 year olds and 30 per cent of 25 to 34-year-olds.

When early last year the Warm Welcome campaign was launched, it was supported by thousands of churches and other public buildings, which are opening their doors this winter to provide a warm space for people amid surging energy bills.

Coming to church at St Mary's in the car on the 12th? - drive down early to find a parking space close by.

The Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, who speaks for the Church of England on welfare issues, said: "Churches have been providing a lifeline to people struggling to balance their household budgets and provide for their families through food banks and food clubs and other forms of hospitality for many years.

"The cost-of-living crisis has seen churches step up this support, with many providing warm spaces through the Warm Welcome campaign this winter for people struggling to heat their homes.

"The figure of nearly three million people seeking help from church or other religious organisations since the start of this year is almost certainly an underestimate of the extent of the support, as many visit church-run food banks and food clubs in order to provide for their families and wider households."



The Vintage Village Valentine's Fair!

Sunday 12th February

10:00 AM TO 4:00 PM

AT STOCKPORT COVERED MARKET HALL, SKI IEU

Always the second Sunday of every other month

ENTRY £2.00 • CONCESSIONS £1.50 • UNDER 12s FREE

Join us for heaps of Vintage Valentine Fun!

Dozens of Vintage Stalls Selling Authentic Vintage & Pre-loved Clothing, Accessories, Decorative items, Books, Vinyl & Homeware.

Love Songs, Rock 'n' Roll, Soul, & Classic Hits Sang & Played All Day.



info@vintagevillagestockportmarket.co.uk
07884 296 994

Find us on Facebook @Vintage_Village And Instagram @vintagevillageuk

Supporting Sustainability in Stockport!

It's coming to something when your new best friend is a "Snuggle Blanket"—with a hood and fastening to keep it snug. It's easy to wander around the house in and even better to wrap around yourself watching television on an evening.

We are most likely all aware of the meter spinning around (or keeping an eye on any smart meter display we may have) and trying hard to keep the heating under control—running at a lower temperature or maybe leaving it off for as long as possible each day. BUT it is so important to look after ourselves and those around us.

Tips to Stay Warm This Winter

- > Dress in layers: Layering your clothing allows you to adjust your level of warmth as needed.
- > Stay hydrated: Okay we can't be brewing up all day and it's easy to forget to drink water when it's cold outside, but staying hydrated is important for maintaining body temperature. If you're not over keen on the taste of water—then it's easy to add a little flavour—and just maybe those people who carry a water bottle with them and take frequent sips during the day are getting it just right—summer and winter alike.
- > Eat warming foods: Soup, chili, and other warm, hearty meals can help warm you up from the inside out. It has been said that incorporating warming spices like ginger, cinnamon, and turmeric into your meals can also help boost your body's natural warmth.
- > Keep your home warm: Even with the cost of energy these days it is best (if you can of course) to keep the heating on—set your thermostat to a comfortable temperature and use draft excluders to seal any gaps around windows and doors. You may have, or find it helpful to invest in, a programmable thermostat so you can help save energy and money by setting the temperature to lower when you're not home.
- > Use heating devices: If you're feeling extra cold, try using a space heater, hot water bottle, or electric blanket to help warm up a specific area. Just be sure to use these devices safely and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- > Stay active: Exercise helps your body generate heat, so try to stay active even when it's cold outside. Go for a walk, hit the gym, or do a home workout to keep your body warm. Easier said that done of course if you have difficulty getting around.



Artwork by Francesca Ross



Roggie Dog here ...

Hello everyone—nice to be writing to you again although I am not too impressed that Mummy has made me write my page twice this month. I had done it once—but somehow or other Mummy messed up and didn't save it properly. An entire magazine lost! Even searching in the Re-cycle Bin was of no help at all—isn't it annoying when hours of work just disappear at the click of the mouse. I'm just glad it was Mummy who made the mistake and not me—although rather suspect that the lost document (which was auto-saved) will re-appear sometime. But I love writing to you so it was of course no problem to start again—if only I could have remembered what I had written about first time round.

February—so it must be Valentines Day on the 14th —not that I understand what all the fuss is about —but whatever day it is I only have eyes for Mum.

Mummy says the best Valentines ever for her was the year she received a very special envelope—the final set of exam results for her ICSEA examinations—

after several years studying and travelling up and down the country—taking exams in Leeds whilst living in Dorset—and with several set-backs and resits along the way—finally an envelope with a PASS letter enclosed. Who needed a Valentine's card!

The biggest Valentines card Mummy has ever seen she found in the loft of our house in Stockport. Why the previous owners had hidden it up there we will never know—it was left behind (with a skateboard) mind you the couple had split up and gone their separate ways. I feel a story coming on "The Valentines Card and the Skate Board" but there doesn't seem much of a connection to me.—but why leave two such separate items behind. I assume Mummy threw both away. Well I can't see my Mum whizzing down the road on a skate board!

The sending of Valentine Day cards does seem a popular tradition - perhaps I should get Mummy chocolates though —do you think she would like that? I could sneak some on the supermarket order with my dog treats.



Of course the cost of my dog treats are getting more expensive but so far they are arriving each week with a few moans from Mummy when she puts the order in. There is 16p difference in the price of my chews between Asda and Morrisons (£1.95 against £1.79) BUT at TESCO they are just £1.30! As for my gravy bone biscuits well £2.50 reduced to £1.50 at Morrisons but they were only ever £1.50 at Asda (4 for £5) and Tesco £1.55—but was that with or without the Club Card. I am just pleased I don't need to worry about such things but you humans must be well confused!

We are lucky and although more mindful of cost for ease of lifting and carrying still have all our supermarket shop home delivered—our love of Morrisons is the continued use of plastic bags—we can't be environmentally friendly all the time regrettably BUT we do return them (well most of them). It is so much easier than messing around on the doorstep transferring items from crate to whatever bags are to hand (usually Morrisons with Asda parked outside). We bought some reusable ones (of course we did) and to be fair Asda usually take pity and re-pack into our own bags.

My job on delivery day is to look out for the van to arrive and tell Mummy immediately. I am allowed to put on my lead and stand at the front door (but not go outside) and wait for the driver to bring our bags (or crates) up the path. It's not the easier path in the world with quite a lot of steps.

I am allowed to say hello then go back inside whilst our goodies are delivered indoors. Silly simple Mummy says—with no desire to push a trolley round a shop, put things in—take them out at the check out—put them back in the trolley (with or without a bag for life or something similar), take them out of the trolley to put them in the car. Take them from the car to the house and still have to unpack and put away. Okay—there are substitutes sometimes (but they can go back) and the use by date isn't always as long as it would have been if selecting your own goods—but we like home delivery.



Back to more serious matters, I was keen to ask Auntie Margaret about the shoe box gifts—and amazed to find out just how many boxes (those from St Mary's and other friends in Stockport) went to Teams4U in Wrexham.

Isn't that just amazing— 180



Thank you Auntie Margaret for all the work you undertake to support this annual Christmas campaign. I'm asking Mummy if we can do some more boxes for 2023 and I am pretty sure Auntie Isobel is already knitting.

T4U

real people making
a real difference



Thank you to everyone for all the boxes we sent from St Mary's and with all the others from friends in Stockport 180 boxes went to Teams4u in Wrexham where they were processed. The first load was going to Ukraine and another to Georgia where 30,000 shoe box gifts have been given to refugees from Ukraine. They processed 62,574 boxes and have now distributed the boxes in Romania, Bosnia and Moldova

Margaret Forster
Photos: Teams4U



Lost and found

(A simple poem about a dog, but so often this can apply to us as well!)

Lost and found, what a wonderful sound
To a little dog like me,
I slipped my lead, I gave no heed
It felt so good to be free.

It's getting dark, I'm lost in the park
It's cold and starting to rain,
I should have stayed and never strayed
I'll never do this again.

Footsteps I hear, 'please do come near',
On my collar they see my name,
I'm put in a car, we're travelling so far,
Will life be ever the same?

A knock on the door, kisses galore,
Cuddles and pats on the head,
No more will I roam, I'm now safely home
And warmly curled up in my bed.

By Megan Carter

This is a poem with
a happy ending but
something that
can easily happen
and I know of
great concern it is
to Mummy when
we are out and about—I am very bad at
recall—I get distracted very easily just
wanting to play—not realising the conse-
quences of not doing what Mummy says.
That goes for you children as well as all
doggies—stay close to Mummy or whoever
you are with.

A lesson for all doggies—moat certain-
ly—including me—but it is so exciting to
want to run and chase anything and eve-
rything—so easy to forget.

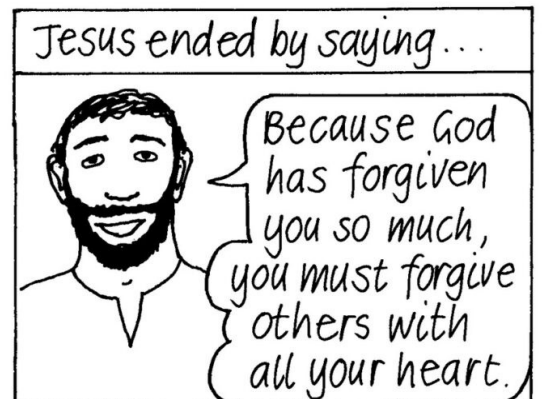
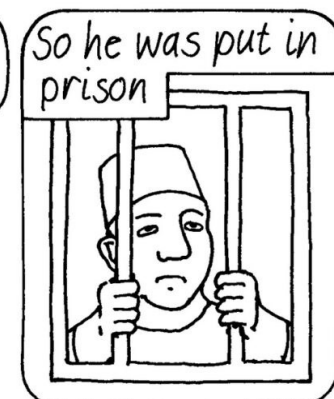
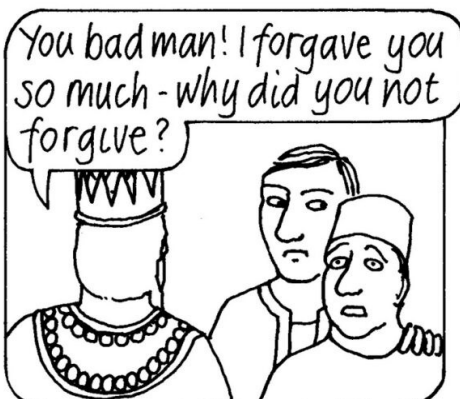


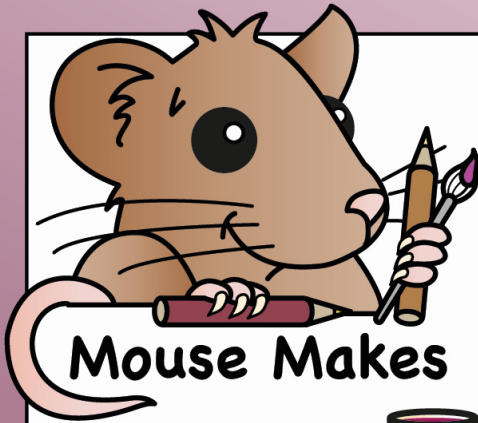
Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Matthew chapter 18 verses 21-35

Jewish teachers used to say you only had
to forgive people three times before
before getting revenge, so Peter asked Jesus..





What did Jesus give thanks for and share?

Matthew 26:27

What did Jesus say this represented?

His _____
Matthew 26:27-28



SUPPER
LAMB • LORD
DISCIPLES
TOGETHER
EVENING
ROOM • JAR
WATER • TWELVE
JESUS • CHRIST
NIGHT • TOOK
THANKS
BLESSING
BROKE • GIVEN
COVENANT
DRINK • EAT
FORGIVENESS
SINS • HOLY
COMMUNION
ECHARIST

What was the special meal Jesus was preparing to eat?

Matthew 26:18



What did Jesus take, bless and break?

Matthew 26:26

What did Jesus say this represented?

His _____
Matthew 26:26



Jesus instructed his disciples to continue to break bread and share the cup "in

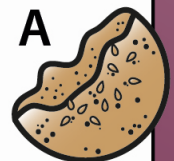
of me."

1 Corinthians 11:24-25



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

Find the words from the questions too!





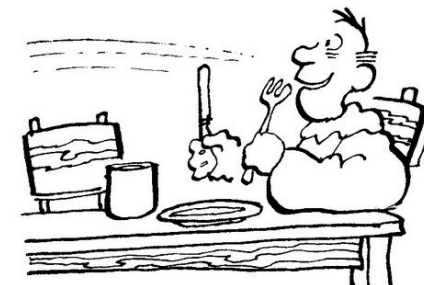
JESUS OFTEN TOLD
STORIES WITH
HIDDEN MEANINGS



ON ONE OCCASION JESUS TOLD
THE STORY ABOUT SOME PARTY
INVITATIONS



HE EXPLAINED THAT WHEN
YOU ARE INVITED TO A MEAL



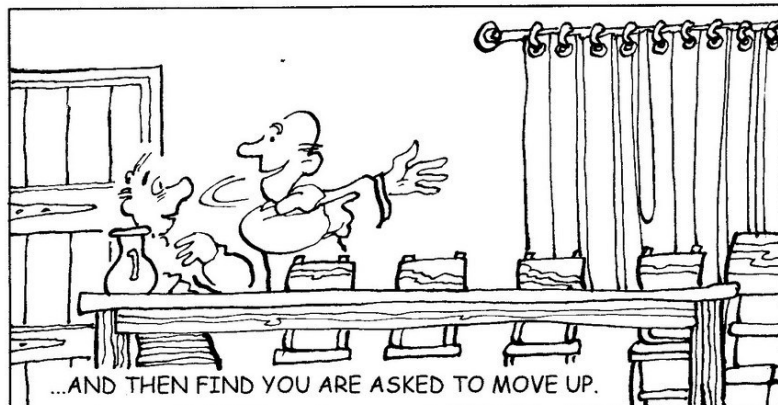
DON'T RUSH TO SIT IN THE BEST
SEAT....



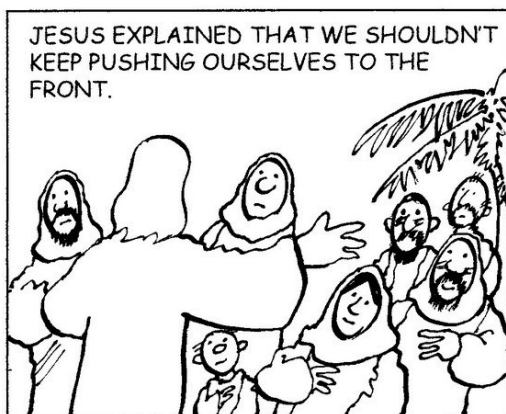
...IN CASE YOU ARE ASKED
TO MOVE DOWN THE
TABLE.



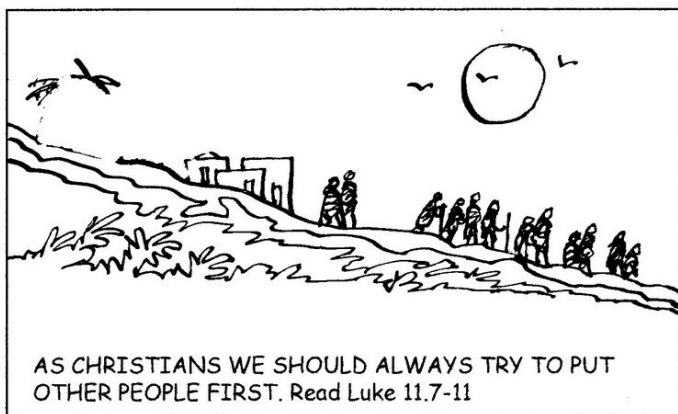
IT'S MUCH BETTER TO TAKE
THE LOWER SEAT



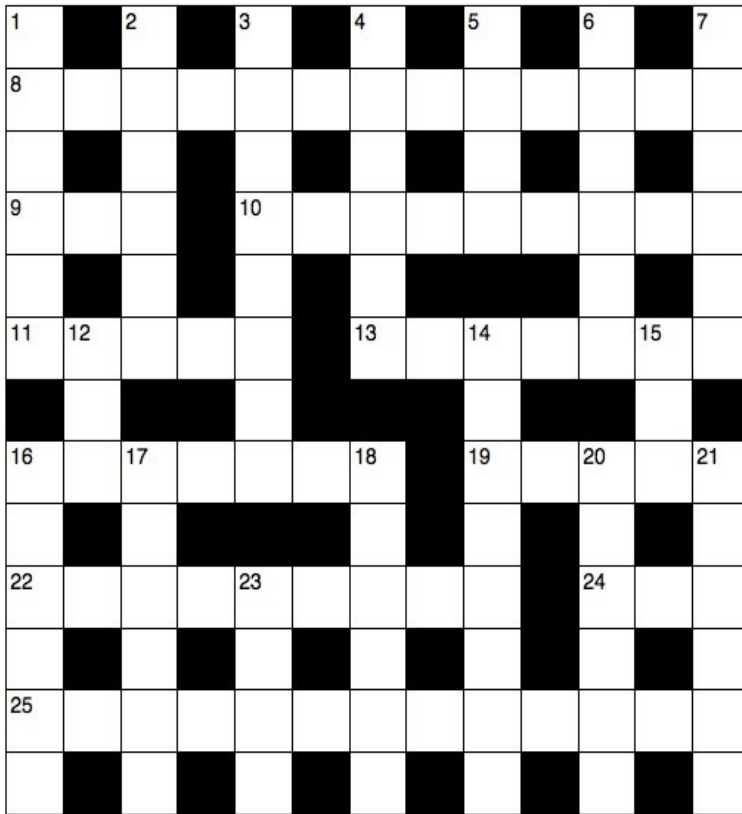
...AND THEN FIND YOU ARE ASKED TO MOVE UP.



JESUS EXPLAINED THAT WE SHOULDN'T
KEEP PUSHING OURSELVES TO THE
FRONT.



AS CHRISTIANS WE SHOULD ALWAYS TRY TO PUT
OTHER PEOPLE FIRST. Read Luke 11.7-11



Crossword Clues and Answers

Across

- 8 Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)
 9 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap' (Leviticus 4:12) (3)
 10 Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books of Esdras and the Maccabees are part of it (9)
 11 Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2)
 13 Clay pit (anag.) (7)
 16 Went to (John 4:46) (7)
 19 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to — your bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5)
 22 David's plea to God concerning those referred to in 14 Down: 'On — — let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7)
 24 Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1) 25 How the book of Ezekiel refers to God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4)

Down

- 1 Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6)
 2 One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6)
 3 Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8)
 4 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father' (1 Timothy 5:1) (6)
 5 One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4)
 6 Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4)
 7 God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3)
 12 Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1)
 14 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8)
 15 The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3)
 16 Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6)
 17 How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6)
 18 What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2)
 20 Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6)
 21 Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6)
 23 Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1) (4)

ACROSS:

8, Cross-examined. 9, Ash. 10, Apocrypha. 11, Sci-fi. 13, Typical. 16, Visited. 19, Offer. 22, No account. 24, RAC. 25, Sovereign Lord.

DOWN:

1, Oceans. 2, Hophni. 3, Islamist. 4, Exhort. 5, Omar. 6, On spec. 7, Add all. 12, CBI. 14, Plotting. 15, Awe. 16, Vanish. 17, Starve. 18, Daub it. 20, Furrow. 21, Recede. 23, Cure.

Wordsearch Clues

and Answers for February 2023

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

In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child - to 'present him to the Lord'. At the same time, she, as a new mother, was 'purified'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, 40 days after Christmas. Jesus is described in the Bible as the Light of the World, and so early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year's supply of candles for the church on this day - hence the name, Candlemas. The story can be found in Luke 2:22-40, where Simeon makes his great declaration of faith and recognition of Jesus. Simeon's 'Nunc Dimittis', is embedded in the Office of Evening Prayer.

Forty	Days
Baby	Boy
Public	Appearance
Mary	Jewish
Mothers	Temple
Jesus	Purified
Present	Lord
Festival	Presentation
Light	World
Candlemas	Simeon
Nunc	Dimittis
Office	Evening
Prayer	West



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Twitter: *@stockportstmary*