

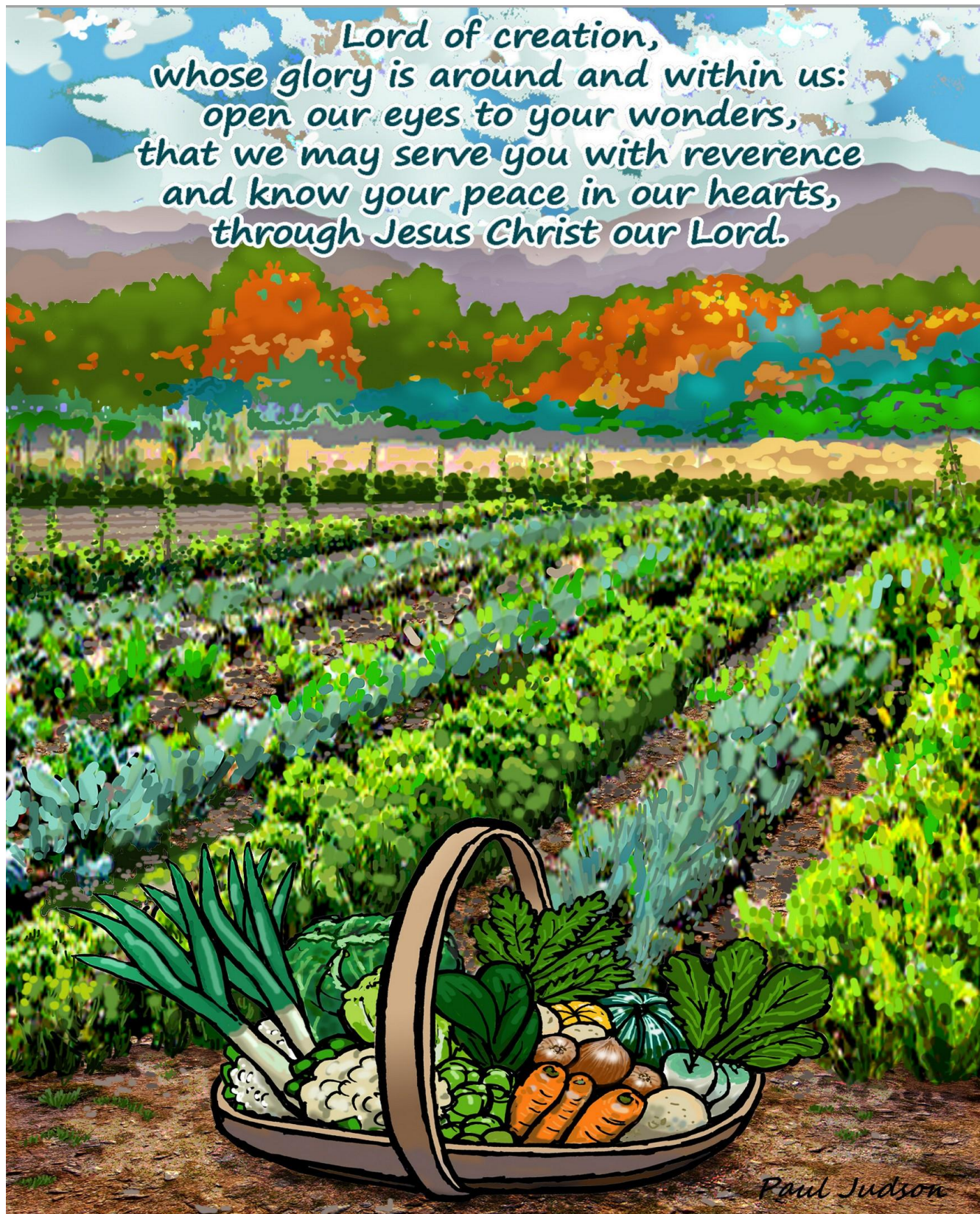
Rushall Parish News

September

2025

Newsletter for the Churches of
St. Michael the Archangel and Christ the King
Rushall

Free online. 30p print copy



Some useful numbers

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See our website www.Rushallparish.org or
our Facebook page RushallParish for regular
updates.

20 years ago, on 12th Sept 2005
that the evacuation of all Israeli
security forces and Israeli
civilian settlements from the
Gaza Strip was completed.
Israel had occupied the Gaza
Strip for 38 years..



*As far as Reg could tell, the burglar had
disturbed nothing in the vestry*

Life without God is like an
unsharpened pencil – it has no
point. – *Billy Graham*

Please send any articles for the
short October magazine to Colin at
colinsuch01@gmail.com by Friday
19th September.

Canon Paul Hardingham continues his series on the books of the Bible.

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What's the Big Idea? *An Introduction to the Books of the New Testament: 1 Corinthians*

'When people become Christians, they don't at the same moment become nice. This always comes as something of a surprise' (Eugene Peterson).

After founding the church in Corinth Paul spent a year and a half with them, showing them how to live out this new life as a community of believers. Corinth was a major commercial centre in Greece and a crossroads for travellers and traders across the Empire. Its people placed a high premium on wisdom, but Corinth was also known for its immorality. Little wonder that the church was plagued with so many problems! However, after Paul left the church factions developed, immorality was rife, and worship had become a selfish grabbing for the supernatural. Paul's letter, written around AD 55 in Ephesus, is a response to these problems.

It is clear that, although the church was gifted (1:4–7), it was immature and unspiritual (3:1–4). Paul's purpose for writing was to:

- instruct and restore the church in its areas of weakness, correcting erroneous practices such as divisions (1:10–4:21), immorality (ch. 5; 6:12–20), litigation in pagan courts (6:1–8) and the abuse of the Lord's Supper (11:17–34).
- correct false teaching concerning the resurrection (ch. 15).

This letter is very relevant for us today, as we are also powerfully influenced by our cultural environment. Many of the questions and problems that confronted the church at Corinth are still with us. Yet despite the problems, Paul's focus remained on knowing Christ in His life and trusting in the power of the cross: *'For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.'* (2:2).

Autumn: Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness

A few weeks ago Stephen Mangan, a guest on Radio 4's "Room 101" programme, requested that Autumn be put into Room 101. His reasoning was that Autumn is a season of death and decay. The discussion ranged through bleak nights, foggy days and cold, damp evenings with dying leaves and the winding down of nature thrown in for good measure. In the end, Autumn was not put into Room 101 and so was saved.



The argument against Autumn was made, obviously, for comic effect. However, for some people Autumn does herald a time of depression. For some Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) takes hold, caused, it is assumed, by the lack of sunlight due to shorter days. For others the cause of depression is quite simply due to the lack of company occasioned by the darker nights and the need to stay in the warm. For some (too many) depression can be caused by the struggle to pay the bills as energy costs increase.

The "Ode to Autumn" (whose first line is quoted in the title above) was written by John Keats who himself died at the age of 25 in Rome, long before reaching the autumn of his life, which was another reason given for consigning the season to Room 101.

And yet, despite all the talk of depression caused by the changing of the season Autumn is, for me, a wonderful season. I love frosty mornings (though remind me

of this statement when I'm scraping the windscreen in the morning!)

I also love walking in the fog and then, in the evening, settling down with a book with the dogs.

There are downsides of course, having to walk the dogs in the rain, the mud and damp cold that seems to creep into your bones. Nevertheless, Autumn still remains a season of wonder, the gold and reds of the leaves, the sunsets and the moon at night, harvest, All Saints and Remembrance Sunday (though I'd quite happily lose bonfire night and the fireworks, though they seem to be all year round these days).

I hope climate change doesn't change Autumn too much this year and I pray that those who do find it difficult find the help and assistance they need to cope as the year continues on its course.

1st Sept St Giles of Provence - helping those damaged by life

St Giles was an immensely popular saint in the Middle Ages, and no wonder: he was the patron saint of cripples. In those days, there were many people who, once injured, were never really whole again. Even today, a serious injury – either physical or mental or emotional, can leave us damaged for months, years or even longer. At such times, we, too, find inspiration in others who, though also damaged by life, have not been overwhelmed.

St Giles was probably born in Provence, southern France early in the 7th century. The 10th century *Legenda Aurea* (Golden Legend) tells us he lived as a holy hermit deep in the forest of Nîmes, near the mouth of the Rhone. A hind, or Red Deer, was his only companion. Then one day, while out hunting, King Wamba spotted the deer, and pursued it. The hind fled back to St Giles for protection. King Wamba shot an arrow which missed the deer but pierced the saint who was protecting it. Thus the king encountered the saint. The saint's acceptance of his injury, and his holiness greatly impressed the king, who conceived a great admiration for St Giles.

In the end, much good came out of the original harm of the encounter, for the king built St Giles a monastery in his valley, Saint-Gilles-du-Gard. The little monastery was put under the Benedictine rule and became a source of blessing for the area roundabout. In later years, St Giles' shrine would become an important pilgrimage centre on the route for both Compostela and the Holy Land, as well as in its own right.

There is a further story connected with St Giles. Another legend tells how an emperor sought forgiveness from him for a sin so terrible he dared not even confess it. While St Giles said Mass, he saw written for him by an angel the nature of the sin in question. But his prayers for the emperor were so efficacious that the letters naming the sin faded away. As Christians, we know that the Bible urges us to pray for others, no matter how hopelessly bad they seem, because Christ's mercy and forgiveness are extended to everyone who truly turns to Him and repents.

St Giles, the crippled saint who helped others find wholeness with God, became patron saint of cripples, lepers and nursing mothers. In England 162 ancient churches are dedicated to him, as well as at least 24 hospitals. The most famous of these are St Giles in Edinburgh and St Giles in Cripplegate, London. In art, St Giles is represented as either a simple abbot with staff, or protecting the hind, or saying the Mass, and thus interceding for the emperor.

M&M: Monty and Matty

We're back walking around the Lime Pits. It takes us a little longer than it used to as we walk a little slower, but we're back!

Monty is still doing some physiotherapy exercised, at least he should be but he cheats, but he is able to walk quite well now.



It's nice to be back walking around but it's sad to see all the vandalism that has taken place. The bug hotel has been robbed of all its wood so there is nowhere for the insects to stay. The stolen wood has been used to start fires, including some inside a beech tree. The tree has managed to survive so far but it's a shame to see it suffering. A wooden signpost is gone and the wooden edges of the path have been ripped up and thrown into the lake. Why some humans have to destroy anything that's nice is beyond us.

The foal in the field is growing nicely, though he always seems to be asleep when we walk by so we make sure we keep a good distance so as not to disturb him.

We hear quite a few dogs and a guinea pig went to the pet service at church. We get enough at home so we didn't go ourselves but we hear those who went had a good time.

Hopefully we'll see you out and about,
Lots of woofs,
Monty and Matty

Is Gen Z coming to church?

Dr Peter Brierley considers some recent statistics. His sources for this article include: The Quiet Revival (Bible Society); Church Times reports from March and April; Daily Telegraph "Features" supplement, 16th April; and Statistics for Mission 2023, Church of England.

Could it be true that a *Quiet Revival* (as the report is called) is taking place? Another reasonably large survey commissioned by the Bible Society's research team suggests it could be.

In March 2025 Bible Society repeated a survey they had carried out in 2018, asking 13,000 people if they went to church (It was 19,000 in the 2018 study).

Perhaps to their surprise, but, as suspected by others, and to the incredulity of still many others, they reported that attendance at church once a month in England and Wales had increased from 8% in 2018 to 12% in 2025, and the increase was mostly seen among those aged 18 to 34, defined generally as those born between 1997 and 2012; that is, those now aged 12 to 27 in 2024.

A more detailed breakdown showed that in every age-group, men are attending more than women, except for those aged 65 plus, where the percentages are equal. For men aged 18 to 24, this meant an increase from 4% in 2018 to 21% in 2024 and for women from 3% to 12%, respectively.

Whatever the reason some Gen Z people are coming to church, the report's findings agreed with other studies - that churchgoers are often happier than those not going to church.

As for denominations, the Roman Catholic growth has been substantial and widespread. The *Daily Telegraph* 'Features' supplement in April had the headline: 'The extraordinary resurgence of Catholicism in Britain', and explained, "Gen Z want to belong – modern life can be lonely They have digital friends but never meet them. They are crying out for community." The Catholics have 1.8 million people attending Mass on a Sunday.



Don't give up on yourself. God doesn't. Even Moses was once a basket case. – *Anon*

Gardening Notes for September

How different the September garden will be this year, with no appreciable rain for the last two months. Usually given fair September weather the garden is often settled and quite lush and colourful. This year the ground is hard and the lawns have brown and straw like patches. Having had a beautiful early summer with wonderful early flowering plants now seem to have run out of steam.

I have cut back all the perennials which have finished flowering and it seems unlikely that there will be a further flowering. The best displays left are the annuals in pots and hanging baskets. Although there may not be much more growth it is essential to keep these border plants watered so that they will continue into next year. I missed a small hydrangea which had shrivelled and almost died, it needed much water before sprouting a few new leaves. A hydrangea petiolaris also looks sad which has taught me that hydrangeas will not tolerate very dry conditions.

The larger shrubs have drooping leaves and would require a great deal of water but fortunately perhaps being deep rooted they should recover after normal rainfall. It is probably a good time to observe which plants fair best in dry conditions, roses seem to be mostly unaffected and salvias still flower continuously. If the climate is altering we may have to assess what we plant.

High winds and dry conditions mean leaf drop has been continuous for some time now and leaf collection has started early!

Trimming shrubs continues to give shape and form.

The apple harvest will be abundant and despite much fruit dropping and mostly rotting, there is still an excellent crop.

Having had an excellent spring it looks as if we will have to endure a less colourful autumn and maybe plant for drier conditions and at least if the sunshine continues we have that to enjoy.

Ann

4th Sept St Birinus – apostle of Wessex. Died 650

Did you ever feel that God was calling you to do something big for Him, even though you were not quite sure of the details? If so, Birinus is the saint for you.

He was a French Benedictine monk who in 634 was made a bishop at Genoa, and sent by Pope Honorius 1 to extend the evangelisation of England. (Augustine had arrived in Canterbury about 35 years before.)

Birinus landed at Hamwic, near Southampton. His original plan was to evangelise Wessex and then penetrate up into the Midlands, where no preacher had ever yet reached. But Birinus soon found the West Saxons so pagan that he decided to concentrate just on them.

Birinus had little to help him become the apostle to Wessex. So, he simply used what he did have: his own two feet and his voice. He wandered around preaching at every opportunity, trusting in God to help him. And He did: Birinus became known and respected, and soon a big breakthrough occurred: for political reasons the King of Wessex, Cyneigils, wanted to convert to Christianity, and he asked Birinus to help him.

So Birinus instructed and baptised King Cyneigils, who was then able to marry the Christian king of Northumbria's daughter, Cyneburg, and in due course Birinus baptised their family as well.

In return, Cyneigils gave Birinus the town of Dorchester (upon Thames) to be his diocesan see. It was a perfect location: a Romano-British town right on a road and a river, in the midst of a populated area.

During his 15 years as Bishop of Dorchester, Birinus baptised many people and built churches all over the area, with the king's blessing.

Before he died in 650, Birinus dedicated a church at Winchester. It was a glimpse of the future: for Winchester's growing importance made it inevitable that in time it would also become the ecclesiastical centre of the kingdom.

Luke 11:1: 'Lord, teach us to pray.'

Luke tells us that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray after He had just prayed. This is very important. In His preaching Jesus had spoken about prayer; (e.g. Matt. 6:5-8) He had also included prayer in His teaching; e.g. Luke 18:1. But it was neither His preaching or teaching on prayer that inspired this request from His disciples; it was His *example* in prayer. Also, Jesus had sent His disciples out to preach, yet their request was not, 'Lord, teach us to preach.' They had witnessed the mighty miracles that He performed and saw the astonishment of the crowds (Luke 9:43), but they did not ask Him, 'Lord, teach us to perform miracles.' No, they asked instead, 'Lord, teach us to pray.'

The disciples were beginning to learn that there was a direct link between the prayer life of Jesus and His Spirit-anointed ministry. We need go no further than what we find here in Luke's Gospel to see the consistent prayer life of Jesus. As news of His mighty ministry spread far and wide, 'great multitudes gathered to hear and be healed' (Lk. 5:15). This was 'high noon' in the ministry of our Lord and as the crowds gathered to hear Him, 'He withdrew to the wilderness and prayed' (v.16).

The next chapter tells us that Jesus made a habit of having whole nights of prayer. 'In those days He went out into the hills to pray, and He continued all night' (6:12). A little later the evangelist records that immediately following the feeding of the five thousand, the disciples were with Jesus – and He was praying (9:18). When Luke recounts the Transfiguration of Jesus, he says the Lord took Peter, John and James up the mountain 'to pray' (9:28).

Luke wants his readers to know about the prayer life of Jesus. At every step of His ministry we see Jesus praying. He prayed early in the morning before the day began; He prayed late in the evening after hours of demanding ministry; He prayed in secret; He prayed with His disciples, and He often prayed all night. He prayed in homes; He prayed by the roadside; He prayed on mountains; He prayed in boats; He prayed in the wilderness; He prayed in the synagogue; He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane; He prayed on the Cross.

No wonder that Jesus' example in praying prompted His disciples to ask, 'Lord, teach us to pray.' As we read and study the life and ministry of our Lord, we will be likewise moved to ask Him, 'Lord, teach *us* to pray.'

Schools to teach children that being worried is not a mental health condition

More children and young people are in danger of confusing the normal anxieties of life with a genuine mental health condition.

So says the government, and it has issued new guidance to schools to try and correct the trend.

The guidance states that pupils should be taught “that worrying and feeling down are normal, can affect everyone at different times and are not in themselves a sign of a mental-health condition”.

Bridget Phillipson, the Education Secretary, believes that too many children are relying on social media to learn about managing their moods and emotions. Instead, she says that they need more balanced guidance from their parents, teachers and trained professionals.

The new government guidance comes in the face of a soaring amount of young people being signed off as too ill to do anything. The number of 16 to 24-year-olds who are not in employment, education or training (Neet) has surged to a near-decade high of a million.

And so it is that schools have now been instructed to make sure that lessons help pupils understand and differentiate between genuine mental health conditions and ordinary feelings.



How to have a ‘more healthy’ heart

Gratitude may help you recover more quickly from a heart attack. So says a study by the University of California, who examined gratitude as part of an outlook that involves appreciating the positive aspects of life, and often goes hand in hand with spirituality.

It was found that people who have a life attitude of being grateful are also likely to have a better mood, better sleep, less fatigue, and lower levels of inflammatory biomarkers related to cardiac health. Researchers said they were surprised to find that gratitude accounted for such beneficial effects. As one scientist put it, “It seems that a more grateful heart is indeed a more healthy heart.”

How can you express gratitude in an easy-to-remember and daily way? Why not bring back the habit of pausing to say a simple grace of thanks before each meal? And why not take a few minutes to say your prayers before bed each night?

DEMENTIA

CO-ORDINATOR

St Michael the Archangel,
Leigh Road, Rushall, WS4 2DS

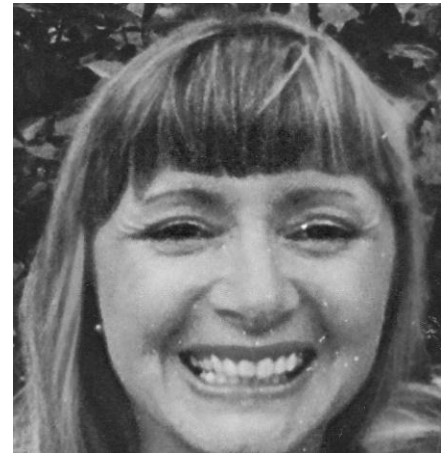
And

Christ the King, Lichfield Road,
Walsall, WS4 1HB

NAME; Carol Beckwith

PHONE: 07971 977464

EMAIL: carolbeckwith@hotmail.com



Hello, I'm Carol, the Dementia Co-ordinator for our churches.

- **SOMEONE TO SPEAK TO:** I'm here for a conversation if you have concerns about memory loss or dementia, or if you are living with dementia or caring for someone who has dementia.
- **SHARING INFORMATION:** I'm happy to share information about local groups and resources available to people living with dementia and their families/carers. Have a word if you'd like to know more: I may be able to signpost you on to something locally that you may find helpful.
- **PRAYERS:** I will pray for people affected by dementia and will ensure that they are prayed for regularly in our church services.

The Memory Café

Tuesday 30th September 2pm – 4pm in St. Michael's Community Hall



Dementia friendly but open to
anyone who'd love to come for
a chat and refreshments,
Come along and join us

God in the Arts

'He gave us eyes to see them': William Holman Hunt's Scapegoat

14th September in the Jewish calendar is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It is a time of fasting and prayer, and its observance is regulated by Leviticus 16.

The Old Testament ritual involved cleansing the priesthood and the people when a scapegoat bearing the sins of the faithful was sent into the wilderness. Much of that ritual has lapsed, but the heart of Yom Kippur is prayer that the relationship of love and service between God and His people would be renewed and restored. The goat that was sent by relays into the desert had a scarlet cord – a reminder that 'though our sins be scarlet, yet they shall be as white as snow.'



It is the subject of William Holman Hunt's famous painting that is in the Lady Lever Art Gallery at Port Sunlight. This village was founded by Lord Leverhulme in 1889 for the workers in his soap factory. It consists of gabled houses and Elizabethan style cottages which nestle side by side around the impressive domed art gallery containing a wealth of paintings and sculptures.

Work on 'The Scapegoat' began in 1854 and was completed two years later. Holman Hunt went to the Dead Sea to paint the goat in situ, following the Pre-Raphaelite principles of art embodying exact detail and accuracy in its subject matter. There is a photograph of the artist by his easel, a paintbrush in one hand and a rifle in the other. It was a time of political tension between Syria, Palestine and Turkey, which combined with the constant danger of hostile tribesmen in the area.

Undaunted, Holman Hunt sketched by the sea and then finished the details off in his rooms in Jerusalem. He described the scene as a 'beautifully arranged horrible wilderness.' In the distance are the hills of Edom against the sky, and in the foreground the solitary goat with the scarlet cord over its head. It is a bleak landscape, and on the frame surrounding the picture are the words from Leviticus: 'The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region, and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.'

At the time critics were not sure what to make of the painting, as there was no recognisable story or moral so beloved of the Victorians. Elegant ladies inquired if the artist was going to put in the rest of the flock, and one critic said it was an excellent portrait of Lord Stratford.

We look at the painting with the eyes of faith and realise that the scapegoat was sent over the river Kidron into the wilderness, the very same river our Lord and His disciples crossed to the Garden of Gethsemane which heralded the passion of Jesus. We can see this sad creature, isolated and alone, bearing the sins of God's ancient people, and think of Isaiah's words: 'He was despised and rejected by others.' A scapegoat in the Old Testament bearing the sins of the people: the Lamb of God in the new covenant who takes away the sin of the world.

Out and about walking, driving and visiting

A short walk from Alrewas.

Park in the village along Church Road, you can join the canal making a left turn either here or further along the road at the next canal bridge. Pass a lock and then a series of concrete bridges constitute the towpath. The first one is named the quarter mile bridge and transverses the place where the canal and river combine.

Further along barriers mark place where the river continues over a weir to the right. After the last concrete bridge a stile is passed where at the top of a hill is Wychnor Church.

Continue along the canal until the A38 is reached. The canal at this point continues parallel to this main road and is probably not a particularly attractive place to walk.

At this junction turn sharp left into a lane which eventually will come to a crossroads, at which point turn left towards Wychnor Church. After passing a handful of cottages there is a gate with a notice board giving historical information.

Go through this gate and down the hill. Climbing over a stile regains the towpath where a right turn returns you to the village where there are three pubs and a tearoom.

Ann



British Food Fortnight 2025 – 26th September to 12th October

This annual ‘celebration’ of the diversity and quality of British Food is aiming to be bigger than ever this year, involving restaurants, pubs, schools, universities, care homes, the NHS, and even the Houses of Parliament.

Why not take advantage of the fortnight, and see what one of our local restaurants and pubs might offer?

14th Sept Holy Cross Day

On Holy Cross Day the Church celebrates the Cross as a symbol of triumph, as the sign of Christ's victory over death. Holy Cross Day goes right back to 14 September 335, and we have the mother of a Roman Emperor to thank for it. Helena was a devout Christian, and after her son, Constantine, was converted, they agreed that she should travel from Rome to Israel, and seek out the places of special significance to Christians.

Of course, much of Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans around 135 AD. But even so, Helena finally located what she believed to be the sites of the Crucifixion and of the Burial (and modern archaeologists think she may well be correct). The sites were so close together that she built one large church over them - the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

That church, built in honour of the Cross, was dedicated on 14 September 335. The sign of the Cross has been used by Christians since early times. Tertullian, writing his *De Corona* (3:2) around AD 211, noted that Christians seldom did anything significant without making the sign of the cross.

What is its significance? Well, people often put their initials or some sort of personal mark on something to show that it belongs to them. The Cross is the personal mark of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we mark it on ourselves as a sign that we belong to him. Even in the book of Revelation, we read that the servants of God are 'sealed' or 'marked' on their foreheads as a sign that they are His.

A preacher once put it this way: if you were explaining to someone how to make a cross, you would say: "Draw an I." That is you standing before the Lord, saying, 'here I am'. Then cancel that vertical stroke with a horizontal stroke – as if to say: "Lord, I abandon my self-will and make you the centre of my life instead. I abandon myself to your love and service."

On Holy Cross Day, we recall Jesus' wonderful promise: "And when I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)



Your choice

One beautiful Sunday morning, a priest announced to his congregation: "My good people, I have here in my hands three sermons...a £100 sermon that lasts five minutes, a £50 sermon that lasts 15 minutes, and a £10 sermon that lasts a full hour. "Now, we'll take the collection and see which one I'll deliver."

September is "Creationtide", here are some book ideas from Jan

A Climate of Truth by Mike Berners-Lee

"It is such a thorough analysis of what Mike Berners-Lee calls the Anthropocene and its Polycrisis, itemised, described, unpicked and worked through in detail - with very helpful appendices at the back. Readable, applicable and authoritative."

Debby Plummer, Eco Volunteer, Diocese of Leeds

Orbital by Samantha Harvey

"This Booker Prize winning novel is, in effect a love-song to the earth."

Jo Chamberlain, National Environment Officer, Church of England

'Hope in Hell'; A decade to confront the climate emergency by Jonathon Porritt

"Porritt confronts the crisis head on with the underlying

theme of hope and emphasises the part we all have to play for future generations. This book is particularly interesting because it presents both the science and the politics behind climate change. It's written in an intelligible academic style and whilst it doesn't talk about religion the underlying theme is the Christian virtue of 'hope'."

Jan Firth, Diocesan Environmental Officer, Diocese of Lichfield



Saving Us by Katherine Heyhoe



"How to give a positive message in the gathering gloom."

David Castle, Net Zero Programme Manager, Diocese of Sheffield

"This book inspired me hugely as I took on the role of DEO - Katharine is what I'd term a "realistic optimist". She's a climate scientist who is also a Christian and a very good communicator. Practical but inspirational, in equipping us to build bridges, find commonality and work together to enact change."

Barbara Bryant, Diocesan Environment Officer, Diocese of Norwich

High House by Jessie Greengrass

"An example of climate fiction that was, at times, very hard hitting in its realism, but was a well written story."

Rev Grace Thomas, Diocesan Environment Officer, Diocese of Manchester

The Great Derangement by Amitav Ghosh

"[Ghosh] links climate change to European imperialism that helped me to grasp how interconnected they are. He also writes of the way the environment is omitted in modern high literature."

Rev Nigel Cooper, Diocesan Environment Officer, Diocese of Ely

Just Earth by Tony Juniper

"This describes the central role that inequality has played in driving climate change and environmental harm, and in how a fairer world can help save the planet."

Pete Brotherton, Diocesan Environment Officer, Diocese of Peterborough

The Serviceberry: An Economy of Gifts and Abundance by Robin Wall Kimmerer

"A very inspiring read, which has helped shape some thinking."

Sandra Millar, Diocesan Environment Officer, Diocese of Gloucester

Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation by Fred Bahnson & Norman Wirzba

"As we look for stories of hope in a time of environmental crisis, in 'Making Peace with the Land' Bahnson and Wirzba paint a series of pictures of the ways in which God has called a community to reconciliation with the earth... From the abundance that God seeks to give us in the present age, they show how, in the new age, God comes down from heaven so that he can make his home among us, and He brings heaven along."

Although I bought this book some years ago, I regularly return to it as I find it renews my vision of our calling to be fellow gardeners with God."

Godfrey Armitage, Diocesan Environment Officer, Diocese of Coventry

**Did you spot many butterflies this past summer?**

The wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation is deeply worried about our butterflies. Or rather, the lack of them. It seems that more than 80 per cent of our species have declined sharply in number since 1970s.

Each summer sees the Big Butterfly Count, when the public is encouraged to send in the number of butterflies they have seen over a short period of time. Last year saw the lowest number of butterflies spotted in the count's 14-year history. Even the familiar species like the small white, common blue and small tortoiseshell had their worst summer ever. And a record number of people saw no butterflies at all. Butterflies have been hit by climate change, the use of pesticides, and damage to their habitats. The drought this summer will have been bad news for their caterpillar offspring, which need growing plants to feed on.

So, this autumn, why not plan a happier year for butterflies in 2026? As you prepare your garden for winter, go to <https://www.rhs.org.uk/wildlife/butterflies-in-your-garden> for some ideas of how to make your garden butterfly-friendly.

Recipe

Lemon Drizzle Cake (from a book called 'Grandma's Best Recipes')

Ingredients

Butter for greasing
7oz plain flour
2 tsp baking powder
7oz caster sugar
4 eggs
5fl oz soured cream
grated rind of one large lemon
4tbs lemon juice
5fl oz sunflower oil
Syrup
4tbs icing sugar
3tbs lemon juice

1. Preheat oven to 180 degrees/ gas 4
2. Sift flour and baking powder into a mixing bowl and stir in sugar.
3. In a separate bowl whisk eggs, sour cream and oil together. (If sour cream is not available just add some lemon juice into double cream)
4. Pour egg mixture into dry ingredients and mix until evenly combined.
5. Pour the mixture into a greased and lined 8in loose bottomed cake tin. Bake for 45-60 minutes until well risen and golden brown.
6. While cake is cooking make the syrup.
7. Mix the icing sugar and lemon juice in a small saucepan and stir over a low heat until it becomes syrupy.

8. As soon as cake comes out of the oven piece the top all over with a skewer then brush the top with the warm syrup.

Leave the cake in the tin to cool completely before turning it out

Serves 8-10

Ann

Which milk is best?

Plant-based milk drinks, including soya milk, oat milk and almond milk, have soared in popularity in recent years. But how do these compare with cow's milk?

A recent report from the nutritional experts who advise the government says that vegan milk is not 'nutritionally equivalent' to cow's milk.

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment has also warned that the vegan alternatives to cow's milk often have a higher amount of sugar.

The report suggests that nutritional concerns might be "lessened" if people instead go for the unsweetened soya, oat and almond milk drinks, and if those drinks were to be fortified with vitamin A, riboflavin, vitamin B12, calcium and iodine at similar levels to those found in cow's milk, and also with vitamin D.

How do persecuted Christians cope with the stress?

None of us likes to read, or hear of, Christians suffering persecution. Stories of people being imprisoned, being forced to flee, or seeing loved ones martyred can be challenging.

Often when we hear such stories we might be tempted to think, 'How do they keep going?' If the story highlights a persecuted Christian standing resolute in their faith, and perhaps showing a forgiving attitude to persecutors, we might well also think, 'I'm not sure I could react in such a godly way if that were me.'

Here, ironically, is where stories of persecution can actually become an encouragement to us!

For whenever we hear of a suffering, persecuted Christian standing strong in faith, and showing a Christ-like attitude, we need to realise that there is *flesh and blood evidence of the grace of God*. I have seen it personally. 'God is in control.' 'I have forgiven.' 'I pray God will change their hearts.'

Persecuted Christians are not 'super-human'. They are ordinary folk like you. We shouldn't put them on a pedestal. The only thing we put on a pedestal is the amazing grace of God.

The writer of Hebrews encourages his readers:

'Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' (Hebrews 4:16; ESV)

In time of need. So, no, God doesn't show us *now* how we would respond in such situations. That's not how grace works! But we believe God is sufficient—as He continues to demonstrate in the lives of those who suffer for Christ and the gospel.

That means we here in the UK can learn valuable lessons of discipleship from our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world—which is one of the convictions of Release International.

Release International seeks to love and serve persecuted Christians, not only raising their voice, but giving them the resources and support they need to live faithfully for Christ. Will you join us? To find out more about how you and your church can be involved in caring for persecuted Christians, go to: releaseinternational.org.

Dog walkers warned of deadly risk

It has not been a good summer to let your dog go swimming.

The hot and dry weather this spring sparked a rise in toxic blue-green algal blooms which have affected lakes and rivers across the UK. Blue-green algal blooms are triggered when colonies of bacteria use warmth and sunlight to reproduce rapidly. The colourful scum they produce can make people very ill and can kill dogs.

The Dogs Trust says: “We’re urging all dog owners to avoid letting their dogs swim in or drink from lakes or rivers that look green, scummy, have surface foam or have warning signs nearby. Blue-green algae is not always easy to spot, so if in doubt, don’t let your dogs swim in or drink from the water.”

Blue-green algal blooms often persist for several months and do not disperse until cold weather arrives. The blooms have been found from Norfolk and Essex to Birmingham and the Lake District.

Symptoms of blue-green algae poisoning in dogs can begin within minutes and include vomiting, diarrhoea, drooling, muscle tremors, seizures, breathing difficulties, and collapse.

Affected dogs should be taken to a vet immediately. The condition can be fatal as the toxins attack the liver and neurological system, and there is no antidote. Smaller dogs only need to consume a small quantity to be at high risk of death.

The pet charity Blue Cross warns: “Even small quantities of water or licking contaminated water off the coat can be dangerous.”

Learner drivers must wait months for driving test

If someone in your family wants their driving licence this autumn, they may have to wait months before even getting a driving test.

For the average waiting time across all test centres has recently increased to 22 weeks, up from 14 weeks back in February 2024, according to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

The AA Driving School says that: “With the vast majority of driving test centres now showing waits at the maximum the system will allow, the situation cannot get much worse.

“While we would expect [the DVSA’s] changes to take a few months to show a positive impact, it is still disappointing to see that learners are continuing to face an uphill battle when it comes to booking their driving test.”

Was the children’s summer holiday too long for you?

As our children go back to school this month, what do parents really think about the past six weeks?

More than half of all parents found the summer break too long, and a ‘challenge’ to cope with.

So says the national charity, Parentkind. Its recent poll found that more than half of parents feel that the ideal length for the summer break would be four weeks. The remaining two weeks could then be redistributed across the rest of the year. Parentkind then asked the teachers what they would most like. A majority would support a reduction of the summer holiday, but to five weeks, not four.

A full report will be published this month (September) under the charity’s National Parent Survey.

Big perspective, big questions

It was three years ago this summer that the first operational images from the James Webb Space Telescope astonished and delighted astronomers, as well as the rest of us.

Those of us who have grown up in an age when ‘astronaut’ is a career option (albeit a pretty specialist one) might struggle to identify with the wonder of these events, and the true scale of the challenge. Human beings developed the technology to send first a probe, then living people, out of Earth’s atmosphere, and cross the 252,000-mile gap to the moon. It was in 1959 that the Luna 3 probe managed to send back grainy images of the far side of the Moon, and in 1969 Apollo 11 managed to actually land on it, take off again, and arrive back in one piece. It’s the safe arrival home that gets me – like hitting the bullseye twice in a row.

For some space-travellers, seeing Earth from a distance is a life-changing experience; a shift in thinking dubbed ‘the overview effect’. The observer feels a sense of awe at seeing the whole planet as a single entity rather than a fragmented collection of countries, and at getting a sense of the fragility of the whole system. It brings people out of themselves – something psychologists call a ‘self-transcendent experience’.

Some people claim to have a ‘nothing but science’ approach to life that trusts only in things for which we can produce very concrete, measurable, evidence. Is it perhaps ironic, then, that this overview of the whole globe – which is made possible by science – can trigger such a deep sense of meaning?

Science can bring us to the big questions of meaning and purpose, but it doesn’t answer them. It’s important to recognise that science, wonderful though it is, has limits. Beyond those boundaries we step into other ways of knowing, such as philosophy or theology. At the interface between science and theology we can have some fascinating conversations.

The discussions about science and religion that I enjoy most happen when people share what really matters to them. What do you find beautiful? Which scientific discoveries changed the course of your life? How do you see yourself in relation to the cosmos?

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Dr Ruth Banciewicz, who is based at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge, writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

26th Sept Wilson Carlile, founder of the Church Army

Wilson Carlile was born in Brixton in 1847, and did not set out to become an evangelist. Instead, he was brilliant at both languages and music, and excelled as a businessman. That is, until an economic recession and serious illness brought him crashing down and finished his career, aged only 31.

Not surprisingly, a serious breakdown followed, when Carlile questioned everything that he had been attempting in life. This search for a new meaning brought him to faith in Jesus Christ, and so turned his world upside down. He later wrote:

I have seen the crucified and risen Lord as truly as if He had made Himself visible to me bodily sight. That is for me the conclusive evidence of His existence. He touched my heart and old desires and hope left it. In their place came the new thought that I might serve Him and His poor and suffering brethren.

Wilson approached two Christians whose passion for ministry was already well known: the Americans evangelists Moody and Sanky, who were at that time in England. Wilson attended their meetings and supplied music via his harmonium. In return, he learned a lot about effective outdoors evangelism.

Carlile then prepared himself for a life of ministry. He was confirmed into the Church of England, studied at the London College of Divinity, ordained in 1880 and served his curacy at St Mary Abbots in Kensington. But Carlile wanted more than comfortable parish life, and soon began outdoor preaching again. He wanted to reach the poor, unchurched, of the community.

Carlile left Kensington to work in a slum mission, and by 1882 he was busy uniting the local Anglican parish missions into one organisation. Here his business skills in planning and organising proved invaluable, and soon he had founded the 'Church Army.' He then founded two training colleges, to train both men and women evangelists. After slight hesitation, the Church of England agreed to incorporate the Church Army into its structure, and even created the office of Evangelist for the Church Army captains and sisters.

In the years that followed, Church Army has done great work in evangelism, as well as in social and moral welfare. It helped support the troops during World War 1. Carlile remained honorary chief secretary until retirement in 1926. He died in 1942.

27th Sept Vincent de Paul – patron of all charitable societies

Very few people stand out as being incredibly good, but Vincent de Paul was one of them. His life touched thousands of people, who were helped and inspired by his love and kindness.

Vincent de Paul was born in 1581 to a Gascon peasant family at Ranquine. Educated by the Franciscans and then at Toulouse University, he was ordained a priest very young, at only 19. He became a court chaplain, and then tutor to the children of the Gondi family. In 1617 he was made parish priest of Chatillon-les-Dombes.

From here, Vincent de Paul ministered both to the rich and fashionable, and also to the poor and oppressed. He helped prisoners in the galleys, and even convicts at Bordeaux.

In 1625 Vincent de Paul founded a congregation of priests who renounced all church preferment and instead devoted themselves to the faithful in smaller towns and villages. In 1633 they were given the Paris priory church of Saint-Lazare, and that same year Vincent founded the Sisters of Charity, the first congregation of 'unenclosed' women, whose lives were entirely devoted to the poor and sick, and even providing some hospital care. Rich women helped by raising funds for various projects, which were an immense success. Even in his lifetime, Vincent became a legend. Clergy and laity, rich and poor, outcasts and convicts all were warmed and enriched by his charisma and selfless devotion. Vincent was simply consumed by the love of God and of his neighbour. His good works seemed innumerable – ranging from helping war-victims in Lorraine, and sending missionaries to Poland, Ireland and Scotland, to advising Anne of Austria at Court during the regency.

No wonder that after his death at nearly 80, the Pope named him as patron of all charitable societies. Even today, the Vincent de Paul Society is working with the poor and oppressed.

On hymns – ancient and more ancient

The Rectory
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

So, your church does not bother with hymnbooks but uses one of those hideous screens which are invariably strategically placed to obscure the altar. I suppose I am not bothered, as wherever you placed it in your converted cinema, it could never spoil its architectural aesthetics.

In my fortunately limited experience of such devices, they provide the projectionist with endless opportunities for showing the wrong hymn, or the right hymn but wrong verse, or the right hymn and right verse, but all upside down. In any case, the turnover from one verse to the next always takes place some milliseconds after that verse has started. This means that the congregation, having been silenced for lack of words, is then faced with the challenge of singing two lines at double time.

When we decided to move from *Hymns More Ancient* to *Hymns Slightly Less Ancient* some years ago, our Sunday attempts to ‘make a joyful noise unto the Lord’ threatened to get lost in the noise of battle.

Colonel Wainwright was happy so long as we continued fighting good fights and urging Christian soldiers onwards. Very keen on smiting is the Colonel; under his command, the Midianites wouldn’t have stood a chance. The men wanted the hymns they remembered from school, the ladies wanted those they had sung at their weddings, and no one would consider anything that dropped ‘thine’s or ‘wouldst’s. Then a vicious rumour started that the new hymnbook might even offer hymns written in the last 50 years. At this, timetables were consulted for bus services to the next village (and church).

Eventually we reached the perfect solution: we did nothing. Instead, Miss Simpson was charged with buying yards of sticky backed plastic and repairing the current books. But there was still a crisis to come: her young (and radical) niece decided to add a note in the front of every copy. It suggested that if the page for the hymn you wanted was missing, then you could share with the person sitting next to you. Of course, no one has done that yet; it would be an experience almost as traumatic as being invited to pass the peace.

And so, we struggle on with our *Hymns More Ancient*, whenever we can find the words. Harmony reigns once again.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

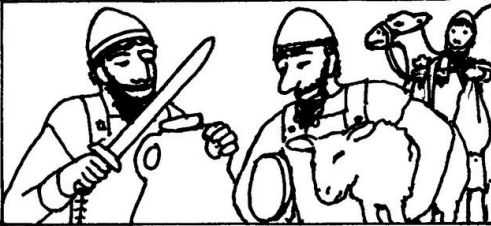
Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Judges 6:1-7, 11-16, 25-35

Once the Israelites had moved into their
promised land, they obeyed God, but not for
long, so God let other countries invade.

The Midianites invaded every
year, and stole all the food
the Israelites had grown.



The Israelites had to
hide in the hills.



After 7 years,
the Israelites called
out to God for help.

Gideon was secretly
threshing wheat when
an angel arrived.



The Lord is helping you,
mighty warrior.



I don't
mean to be rude, but it
doesn't look like He is.

God said

I will give you the
power.



But my clan
is the weakest in our tribe and
I'm the weakest in my family.

I'll be helping you. Start by pulling
down the altar built for Baal and
build one for Me.



Gideon did as he was told (but he
waited and did it at night).



In the morning, people
came to complain to
Gideon's father



If Baal is upset, he
can take his own
revenge, can't he?



Gideon sent out messages
to call men to fight the
Midianites..



and 32000 came.

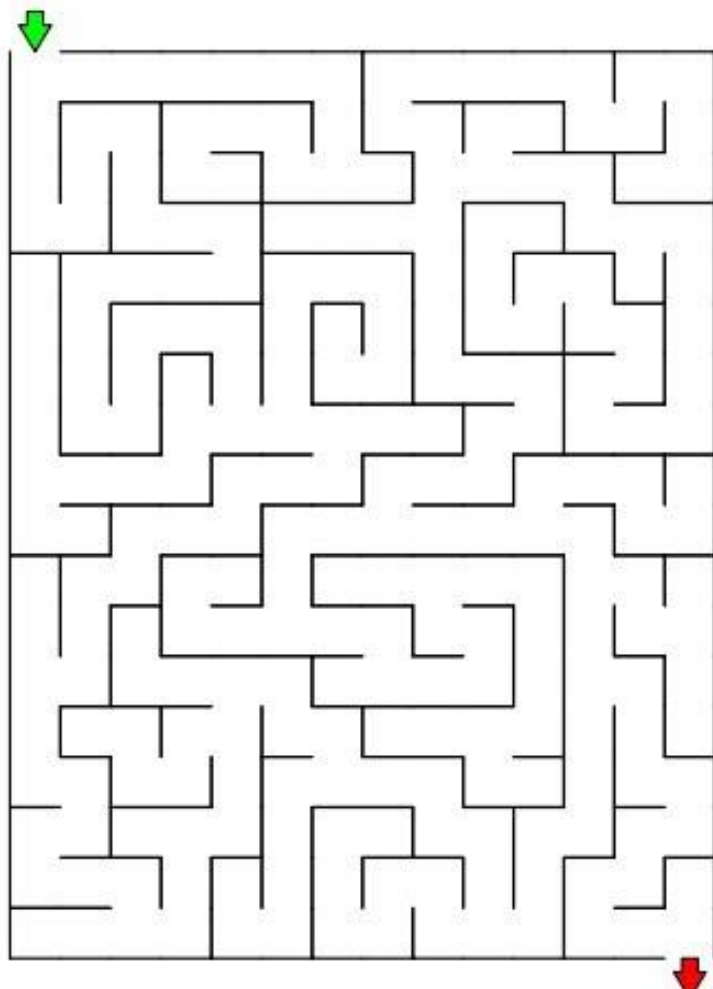
July's Solution

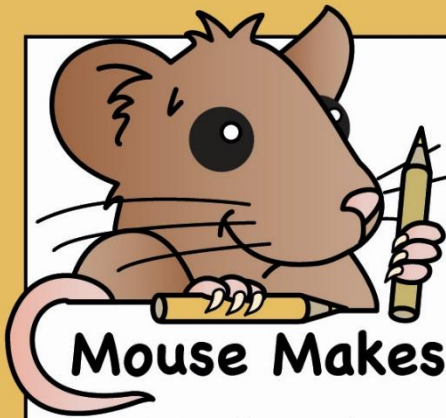
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1	7	6	4	5	8	2	3	9
2	6	4	9	1	7	5	8	3
3	1	7	5	8	4	9	6	2
9	8	5	6	3	2	1	7	4

Can you solve
the maze?





"May the people **praise** you **God**...
The **land yields** its harvest, God,
our God **blesses** us."

- from Psalm 67:5-6

"**Honour** the
Lord with your
wealth and the
first part of
your **harvest**."

- Proverbs 3:9

"Let us fear and respect the Lord our God.
He gives **autumn** and **spring** rains
at the right time. He makes sure that we
have the harvest at just the right **time**."

- from Jeremiah 5:24

"God... gives you **rain** from
heaven and good harvests
at the right times. He gives
you plenty of **food** and
fills your hearts with **joy**."

- from Acts 14:16-17

"So the one who **plants** is not
important, and the one who **waters**
is not important. Only GOD is
important because He is the one
who makes things **grow**."

- 1 Corinthians 3:7

D E B R E A D C R O P S
A P L A N T S G T I M E
S L O I J B P R A I S E
C O R N O L R A H G O D
A U D H Y E I I A S L S
T G R O W S N N R O W E
T H A N K S G I V I N G
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Find the words in **bold** type in the bible quotes in the
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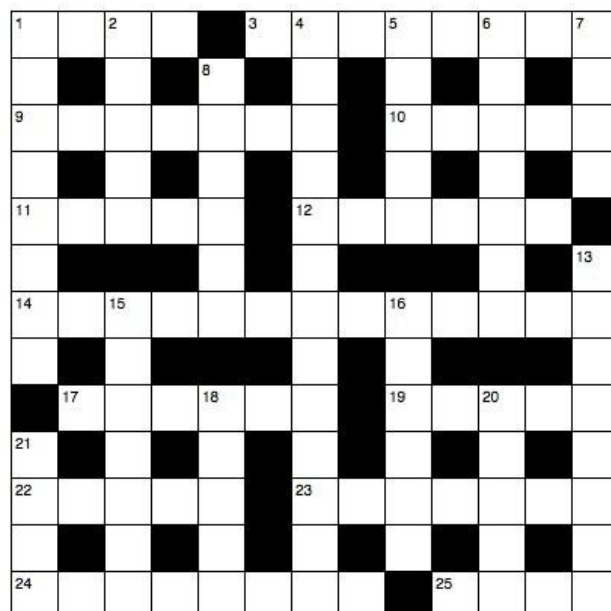
PLOUGH • FIELD • SOIL • SCATTER • SOW • SEEDS • SUN
REAP • PICK • CROPS • GRAIN • CORN • BARN • BREAD • THANKSGIVING

Across

- 1 'A little later someone else saw Peter and said, "You — are one of them"' (Luke 22:58) (4)
 3 Giving (1 Peter 2:5) (8)
 9 They came to Jerusalem seeking an infant king (Matthew 2:7) (3,4)
 10 'An athlete... does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the — ' (2 Timothy 2:5) (5)
 11 Pacifist, temperance advocate, open-air preacher, leading 20th- century Methodist, Donald — (5)
 12 'Come quickly to — — , O Lord my Saviour' (Psalm 38:22) (4,2)
 14 'The God of Abraham, — — — , the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus' (Acts 3:13) (5,3,5)
 17 Seared by intense heat (Revelation 16:8) (6)
 19 'It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust — — ' (Psalm 118:8) (2,3)
 22 Goods (Nehemiah 13:15) (5)
 23 i.e. train (anag.) (7)
 24 Surrounding area (Luke 24:50) (8)
 25 'Righteousness will be his — and faithfulness the sash round his waist' (Isaiah 11:5) (4)

Down

- 1 Elegant and creative (Exodus 31:4) (8)
 2 'Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all — , but we will all be changed' (1 Corinthians 15:51) (5)
 4 'I... delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your — — — is' (Colossians 2:5) (5,2,6)
 5 Enlist (2 Samuel 24:2) (5)
 6 Of the Muslim faith (7)
 7 Sharp intake of breath (Job 11:20) (4)
 8 Woven cloth (Ezekiel 16:13) (6)
 13 Plentiful (Romans 5:17) (8)
 15 CIA char (anag.) (7)
 16 Paul and Silas stopped him committing suicide after an earthquake in Philippi (Acts 16:27–28) (6)
 18 One of the ingredients in the making of incense for the Lord (Exodus 30:34) (5)
 20 Episcopal headwear (5)
 21 Inhabitant of, say, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia or Bulgaria (4)



July's answers:

ACROSS 1, Riches. 4, Abner's. 7, Soul. 8, Damascus. 9, Statutes. 13, Add. 16, Craftsmanship. 17, Old. 19, Redeemer. 24, Walls are. 25, Wise. 26, Target. 27, Thieve.

DOWN 1, Rest. 2, Courtyard. 3, Sadhu. 4, Arm he. 5, Nose. 6, Round. 10, Tutor. 11, Timid. 12, Sense. 13, Ashbelite. 14, Dips. 15, Echo. 18, Lhasa. 20, Exact. 21, Erect. 22, Flog. 23, Mede.