

St. George's Montezbury

Magazine 50p



December 2025

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Contributions for **St. George's Magazine** should be sent to the Editor by the **15th** of the **previous month**. It may not be possible to include until the following month contributions which are received after this date.
 Send e-mail & attachments to stgsmagazine@googlemail.com

Items for inclusion in the **Deanery News** should be sent by the **10th** of the **previous month** to Ann Jones
annmorganjones456@gmail.com





LIFTING UP OUR EYES

With Rev Stuart Carter

"A Gift Worth Searching For"

It was early Christmas morning and already Wendy and I could hear the children pulling sweets and small presents out of their stockings and stuffing their faces with the contents of their chocolate selection boxes. Soon they piled onto our bed showing us what has arrived in the dead of night while they had, despite all their efforts to stay awake, remained fast asleep.

The bigger presents were still to come - Oh, the agony of waiting! Breakfast first, mostly more chocolate (who wants soggy cornflakes on Christmas Day?!). Then get the turkey in the oven, and vegetables peeled and ready to go. After that, off to Church for the Christmas Day Service – compulsory for me, of course, being a vicar. Singing the familiar carols, recounting the Christmas story and prayers around the manger scene. Then home to gather round the Christmas tree and... PRESENTS!

Lucy's main present was nowhere to be seen. All she received was a piece of paper with a clue to follow. You see, her present that year was a new bicycle. It was far too big to wrap, except for a few token shreds of wrapping paper to decorate it. So, it was hidden away in the garage with all the tools and boxes and junk.

What do you think Lucy did? Did she sit and wonder at the message written on the note? Did she spend some time talking to her brothers about what this all might mean and how wonderful the tree looked? NO WAY!!! She tore off in a cloud of dust through the door and down the corridor, looking in every space until she stumbled through the garage door and discovered her present propped up against the shelves. Instantly the paper was stripped away and there it was all bright paint and chrome – her new bike!

I couldn't get the garage door open fast enough for her. Thirty seconds later she was in the saddle pushing at the pedals and wobbling along the pavement while I held her up and pushed at the same time. Balancing would take a little longer.

At Christmas Time we hear again the Good News of the greatest gift humanity has ever received. Not richly wreathed in pretty paper under a decorated tree, but wrapped in swaddling clothes, waiting to be discovered in a shed in Bethlehem. Shepherds and Wise Men were given clues – an angel's message or a bright star – and they went on a search to find the gift – the Christ Child. Jesus, the King of Heaven and Saviour of our souls, was to be found in the back yard of the world, present and accessible to shepherd and king alike.

Jesus is still near and accessible to those who seek him today. He is the gift that remains for us all. The one who has shared our life, our joys and our sorrows, and has carried the consequences of human failure and wickedness in his body on the Cross. He was born for us, and he died for us in his determination to draw us back into faith and fellowship with God. In love he lived and died, and in power he rose from the dead to lead us into a life and a future with him.

Its great news! The Christmas story presents us once again with the clue to discovering the gift of Jesus for ourselves. **The question is, will we just talk about him as someone to wonder or speculate about? Or will we, thoughtfully and prayerfully, with excitement and hope, go searching for him until we find him or rediscover him for ourselves?**

Let's hear again the song of the angels and respond: *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."* (Luke 2;10)

If you are serious about this search, but don't know where to begin, talk to one of the ministers from the local churches, or keep your eyes open for an Alpha Course, or visit the following website:

www.christianity.org.uk/the-basics


Happy Christmas!

Rev Stuart Carter



Readings and Services for this MONTH

Here are the Sunday Service details, and the readings which you may enjoy at home if you are unable to join a church service this month.

Date	Service	Readings
2 nd December	Tea Service 2.30pm	
7 th December 2 nd Sunday of Advent	Holy Communion 10.30am	Isaiah 11. 1-10 Romans 15. 4-13 Matthew 3. 1-12
11 th December	Messy Church Christingle 3.30pm	
14 th December 3 rd Sunday of Advent	Morning Worship without Communion but with Children's Church	Isaiah 35.1-10 James 5. 7-10 Matthew 11. 2-11
21 st December 4 th Sunday of Advent	Holy Communion and Children's Church 10.30am Carols with the Benefice Choir 7pm	Isaiah 7. 10-16 Romans 1. 1-7 Matthew 1. 18-end
24 th December Christmas Eve 	Carols on School Green at 6pm Midnight Communion Holy Trinity Minsterley 11pm	Isaiah 52. 7-10 Hebrews 1. 1-4 John 1. 1-14
25 th December Christmas Day	Holy Communion 10.30am	Isaiah 62. 6-end Titus 3. 4-7 Luke 2 [1-20]
28 th December The Holy Innocents	Holy Communion 10.30am Group Service Holy Trinity Minsterley	Jeremiah 31. 15-17 1 Corinthians 1. 26-29 Matthew 2. 13-18

Our church COMMUNITY

COME AND SING FOR CHRISTMAS!

Come and join the Benefice Choir at St George's
on Fridays 6.15pm in the WER
in preparation for the
Carol Service on 21st December.
Just turn up or contact Barbara on 07813 682485



TIME OUT

A new support group, sponsored by the local churches,
for those struggling with the stresses and strains of life,
has begun at St George's Church, Pontesbury,
on the second and fourth Thursday afternoons of the month.

We are deliberately a small, friendly group aimed at people who
find large gatherings too daunting. You will be made very welcome,
and there's always a listening ear, tea, coffee and biscuits.

Feel free to bring a friend.

MEDITATION SERVICE

St George's Pontesbury and St Ruthen's Longden have been
working in partnership over the last year to offer a service of
meditation (in this busy world) on
the second Sunday of the month.

This is just an hour to stop and reflect. We listen to Taize music,
keep silent and meditate, with nothing asked of you.

The next services are:
St Ruthen's Dec 14th at 5 p.m.

Welcome to The Tea Break



Wednesdays 2pm - 4pm
St George's Church
Pontesbury

OASIS *FREE lunch & companionship* for anyone living in
Pontesbury, Minsterley and surrounding villages, who has been
recently bereaved ...

... on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays every month, 12pm - 1.30pm
Minsterley Methodist Chapel, Horsebridge Rd, Minsterley.

Transport is Available—Friends & Family are Welcome too.

Contact Heather Ryder for more information, at
ryder928@btinternet.com or 01743 790359

St. George's Prayer Chain, a small group of people who
believe that prayer can make a difference, is being revived under Mary
Worrall's leadership. Each person within the group offers daily prayer for
anyone who asks for prayer—**would you like to join this group?**

Please contact Mary Worrall
maryew15mp@gmail.com or on 01743 791069

All information given is given in confidence.



Monthly Tea Service

(not August)

1st Tuesday afternoon

2.30pm to 4pm

St George's Church,
Pontesbury.

A moment of prayer,
A short Holy Communion followed by tea and cake

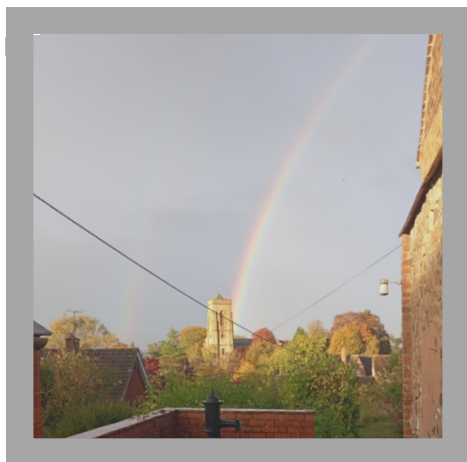
Our local COMMUNITY



The Rea Valley Transport Scheme is now fully operational, enabling residents of the area to access medical appointments including Pontesbury & Worthen surgeries, and Shrewsbury, Telford and Oswestry hospitals. The scheme also undertakes whenever we can to get people to opticians, dental and other wellbeing appointments.

Please note that the scheme is not set up to help with emergency appointments or to assist with other transport requests such as shopping.

Our drivers are all volunteers, but are insured, DBS checked and safely recruited. However, they are not medical professionals. Your driver will collect you from your home address and take you in good time for your appointment. To request transport, please contact our scheme administrator, Emma, at reavalleytransportscheme.info@gmail.com or by calling **07468 115939**. If possible, please give us a minimum of a week's notice of when and where your appointment is.



*What's that at the
end of the rainbow?*

*Thanks to Derek Jones for
the photo taken from his
home at the bottom
of Pontesbury Hill.*

Looking ahead—Open Gardens
Sunday 17th May 2026



**Rea Valley Foodbank wishes everyone
 in our local communities a Happy
 Christmas and New Year – we couldn't
 do it without our donors,
 supporters and volunteers.**

Christmas and New Year Opening times.

Holy Trinity Church Minsterley TUESDAY	St. George's Church Pontesbury THURSDAY
16 December Open as usual + Xmas extras	18 December Open as usual + Xmas extras
23 December Open as usual + Xmas extras	25 December CLOSED CHRISTMAS DAY
30 December Open as usual	1 January Open on NEW YEAR'S DAY

Extra Funds help bring some Winter cheer

The Foodbank was successful in
 gaining £750 from an **Asda
 Foundation Grant**. This was
 presented by Anne-Marie Eggby,
 Asda Community Champion, who
 met our volunteers in October. The
 money will go towards our ongoing
 costs of buying in some items, and
 for vouchers for fresh produce for
 use in specific local shops.



*Margaret Marsden, Anne-Marie Eggby, Asda
 Community Champion, Joan Rogers
 and Wendy Williams*

The Callow Club at Worthen kindly
 donated £300 from their raffle at
 a performance by local band
Tin Soldiers. We are so grateful for
 this local support, it is much appreci-
 ated.

Harvest Festivals– Thank you. Over the Autumn the Foodbank has greatly
 benefitted from generous donations from Harvest Festivals at our schools,
 churches, and other organisations. All items go to local people in need and
 reduce our costs.

To use the Foodbank, or find out more: Call for a chat with Rev. Greg
 Smith 07902 794653 or Rev. Richard Lonsdale 07922 830488, or ask your
 GP, school, nursery, social/health worker, housing provider or other support
 agency. See our website: <https://reavalleyfoodbank.co.uk/> or Facebook.

In October we said farewell to our good friends

Jan and Robert Pither

who are re-locating across the country near to Cambridge.

Over the years Robert has always been ready to step up and help, and has done a lot for the church and for our community.

He sang in the choir, and he has done the printing for many years with awful equipment. He managed the production of leaflets, of information sheets and posters, and after very occasional creative language up there in the print room, eventually ensured we had better equipment up there!

With Richard Elliott, Robert worked long and hard setting up and running the church website until time and technology made it too complex a task to continue.

Robert was one of the founders of the Broadplace in 2007 until it was overwhelmed by COVID in 2020. He was there every Thursday without fail for 13 years, and helped thousands over those years to get on the web.

As a very fine photographer, Robert has influenced many people here with his example and his training courses, both at Broadplace, and at Shrewsbury College. He was the main compiler and author of the 'Churches and Chapels of Pontesbury Parish', which is an excellent guide for anyone keen to explore the area.

For many years he was a member and helper at The Shrewsbury Macular Society Support Group, and also helped at National level with his technical expertise assisting Visually Impaired people. The list could go on.....

Jan too was a very staunch worshipper here, and with the WI, enjoyed demonstrating her entertaining skills. She was a skilled mimic with accents



galore, but her increasing frailness recently, has meant that unfortunately she had to re-locate to a care home. Robert has found Jan a new home not far from his new home, near his son Nick and Katie.

We will miss you Robert, but we wish you and Jan well in your new adventure. We hope you'll be able to keep in touch and let us know how you get on.

*For those who like more traditional poems, here are verses from a famous one by the American poet
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, written in 1863.*



I heard the Bells on Christmas Day

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:
'There is no peace on earth, ' I said
'For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.'

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men.'

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Micah's Message – look forward to the child born in Bethlehem

by Lester Amann

Why is the news so full of depressing stories? Why can't they report some good news for a change? Indeed, our world is always full of troubles, and we may wonder if better times will ever come.

Similar comments might have been directed at many of the Old Testament prophets who nearly always said negative and gloomy things. The people of Micah's day had many problems. They were surrounded by warring nations and peace in their time was unlikely.

It was Micah's task, as God's messenger, to tell the people how it was and how it was going to be, no matter how painful the facts. Micah was deeply concerned with the social ills of his day and spoke out against false prophets who were leading the people into contrived hopes and errors.

Micah was quite forthright. He announced that God would punish the people for their sinfulness and their enemies would overcome them. Micah came with bad news and there seemed no end to his reprimands and denouncements.

But in the desert was an oasis. Amidst his descriptions of imminent pain and suffering, Micah looked forward to a time of peace with freedom from injustice, fear and war. Micah delivered God's promise that from Bethlehem there would come a ruler to free them from their oppression. Their Saviour would come.

(Micah 5:2)

Of course, Micah's hearers did not understand about the Babe at Bethlehem, but they were told to stand firm in their faith no matter what troubles or disasters would befall them. They were to look forward to their deliverance, whenever that would be.

Amidst Micah's attack on the deplorable actions of leaders and the nation's wrong values and behaviour, he gave hope that God was with them in the failures and difficulties. Only God could take them through their troubles to a place of peace.

Micah's message still stands for us today. God wants us to mend our wilful ways; to correct bad attitudes and behaviour; to strive for heaven's values of justice, peace, equality, love and harmony.

As we approach a New Year, we would do well to respond to Micah's words: *What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.* (Micah 6:8)



Canon Paul Hardingham continues looking at the books of the Bible:

What's the Big Idea? - An Introduction to the Books of the New Testament: Philippians

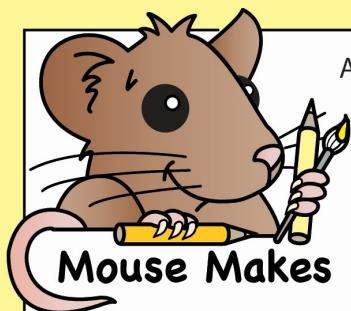
This letter was written to Christians in the Macedonian city of Philippi when Paul was in prison, probably in Rome (60-62 AD). His primary purpose in writing was to thank them for the gift they had sent him upon learning of his imprisonment. However, he also uses the letter as an opportunity to report on his situation; to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances; to exhort the church to live in humility, fellowship, and unity; to commend Epaphroditus and Timothy to them; and to warn them about false teaching. This included Judaizers who were persuading the Philippians to submit to circumcision.

The central message of Philippians focuses on joy (the word occurs some 16 times!). For Paul, joy isn't simply an emotional response to favourable circumstances. True joy is to be found through a relationship with the resurrected and glorified Christ. Death ceases to be an enemy, because through it we can more fully enjoy the presence of Jesus. This joy is also rooted in an expectation of the return of Jesus, which gives urgency to the task of sharing the gospel. So, Paul begins his letter by thanking the Philippians for their partnership together in the work of the gospel through the offerings they have sent.

Paul also powerfully appeals to the Philippians to be of '*one mind*' in pursuing humility and unity. He gives the example of Jesus himself '*who made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant*' (2:7) to the point of dying the death of a common criminal. '*Therefore*', say Paul, '*God exalted him to the highest place*' (2:9). This 'Jesus attitude' is the one that all believers should share.

QUOTE From John Betjeman 'Christmas'

*This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall.*



Mouse Makes

A baby needs clothes
to keep warm like
a snugly sleep suit
or a vest and nappy.

What were you dressed in?

Jesus was wrapped in
.....

read Luke 2:7



A baby needs
somewhere
to sleep like
a crib or a cot.

*What did you
sleep in?*

Jesus slept in a
.....

read Luke 2:7



At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus,
God's Son and our Saviour
coming into the world as a baby,
and we look forward to the time
when Jesus will come again,
not as a baby but as the
King of kings and Lord of lords!

read

John 14:3



A baby needs somewhere
to be born like at home
or in a hospital.

Where were you born?

Jesus was born
in a stable in
.....

read Luke 2:1-6



A baby needs
a name.

*What name were
you called?*

Jesus was given
a special name
that had a
special meaning.

read

Matthew 1:21-23



HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

NADOLIG LLAWEN ★ NOLLAIG CHRÌDHEIL ★ NOLLAG SHONA

JOYEUX NOËL • FELIZ NAVIDAD • BUON NATALE • GOD JUL • FROHE WEIHNACHTEN

Looking at GOD

Canon Paul Hardingham considers the Christmas story.

Christmas Unwrapped!

All of us have received unwanted gifts at Christmas. For Joseph the gift of a child, as recorded in Matthew chapter 1, was not something he really wanted. Although he was engaged to Mary, her pregnancy would be grounds for divorce. Not surprisingly, with the associated social disgrace, Joseph wanted to divorce Mary quietly (Matthew 1:19). However, God intervened in a dream: *'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means, God with us.'* (1:23). In a scary and uncertain world, what does the message of **Immanuel** say to us today?

God is present with us

God assured Joseph that He was working in all that Joseph was going through. The eternal and creator God entered time and space as a baby. This baby is both uniquely divine but also fully human. This means that we can know God personally, not just know about Him. The Holy Spirit is committed to making Jesus' life and character real in us, and bringing meaning to our circumstances, just as He worked in Mary's life.

God is on our side

Christmas touches some raw nerves in our lives, including stress, family rows, loneliness and financial pressures. However, God does not remain aloof from our experiences. In Jesus He enters our world of hopes and fears, joys and disappointments. He understands what we are going through, as He is alongside us. By the cross and resurrection, He gave His life that we might know His love, joy, peace and forgiveness.

For Joseph, as well as us, the Christmas message is one of hope in an uncertain world. It is a time to re-consider the claims of **Immanuel** ('God with us') as we entrust ourselves to Him for the coming year.

QUOTE: Making the most of today is the best way to be ready for tomorrow. - Anon

Reflecting Faith: *This month Revd Dr Jo White considers*

Reading the gospel in church.

One of the highlights of the Christmas services is the reading of the opening passage from John's Gospel, 'In the beginning was the Word ...'

I love the poetry of the words and sentences, as well as their very meaning. In most churches everyone will stand for that reading, which emphasises its importance. But what makes it important?

Most gospel passages that are read in church include the words of Jesus Himself, handed down to us over the centuries, but here there are none. Rather, this is the defining statement of who Jesus is and where He came from.

The way that the gospel readings are valued by the Church can be seen in our church buildings over the years. In older churches you will find two lecterns, one either side of the central altar. The right-hand side is for the Old Testament and epistle readings, and the left-hand side lectern (as the congregation faces the altar) is for the gospel reading.

On the altar, the holder for the priest's book was physically moved to that side, so that as he read out the gospel he would be facing the northern side of the church. Traditionally that was the colder, darker side, thought to be 'least' holy and therefore in need of the gospel most.

Nowadays all readings may be given from the same place at the front of church, though in some churches the gospel book will be processed with or without candles, into the centre of the congregation, to bring us all gathering around Christ's words.

It is because of this absolute importance of the gospels that people face the gospel, so as it is processed, they move their body and heads towards it. This will leave some people with their backs to the altar for that time, but it is the 'Word made flesh' that we honour.

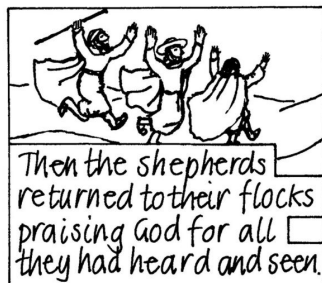
This month: *This year during the Christmas season, listen out for that wonderful passage from John chapter 1 and consider how and where it is being read from and how that reflects the faith of the congregation you are within.*

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

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

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



And there were shepherds...

by Tony Horsfall, a Bible teacher and conference speaker.

In his gospel, Luke tells how the shepherds in the fields were keeping watch over their flocks when they were terrified by the sudden arrival of heavenly angels, surrounded by the glory of the Lord. And the message of the angel that night has rung down the centuries:

"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10,11)



And so, the first people to greet the Saviour were not rich VIPs, but humble shepherds. And in turn, it was the shepherds who became the first evangelists: for they would have gone home to their families and neighbours that night with the amazing news of what they had seen.

Meanwhile, for Mary there followed a time of reflection. She gathered up in her mind all her impressions, and all that the shepherds had shared about the angelic visit. She knew it was treasure, and not to be squandered. Then she quietly pondered in her heart the meaning and significance of all that had happened, so that she would never forget.

Exuberant witness and quiet contemplation are not opposites. They are, in fact, good companions in the spiritual life!



So, this Christmas, let's be filled with the joy that the Saviour has also been born 'to us'. May our lives reflect the glory of His coming, even in a small way. May our interactions with friends, colleagues and families during this Advent season reflect the great joy that the angels brought that night, so long ago.

QUOTE: Think not on what you lack as much as on what you have.

-Greek proverb

Looking at CHURCH, at home and worldwide

The Ven John Barton explains the meaning of the colours of the vicars' stoles.

Why is the vicar wearing white today?

You may have noticed that the Minister who officiates at Church Services may wear a long, thin scarf which is called a stole. This can be white, purple, red or green.



White is for festive occasions like Christmas and Easter, christenings and weddings. **Purple** is worn during Advent and Lent, when we bring to mind our sins and seek God's forgiveness, in preparation for the wonderful seasons of Christmas and Easter. **Red** at Pentecost, symbolises the fire of the Holy Spirit, and on Saints Days it signifies that many of them (and some today) were martyred because they were Christians. **Green**, marking growth and hope is worn for the rest of the year.

So, white for 'best', purple for penitence, red for the Holy Spirit and the blood of the Martyrs, and green for growth.

You will also spot the same changing colours for items on the Altar-Table at the beginning and end of the Service of Holy Communion. The Burse is a flat, square case holding a linen cloth called the corporal, on which the vessels used in Holy Communion are placed. The Veil covers them until they are used.

The vessels are called Paten and Chalice. The Paten is like a plate on which the bread is placed. A bowl, called a Ciborium, may be used for the same purpose. The Chalice is a cup for the wine. Because the bread and wine represent the Body and Blood of Christ, which He sacrificed for us when He was crucified, we handle them with care.

The minister's ceremonial robes, called vestments, and the vessels all point to something greater. In one of St Paul's letters in the New Testament, he explains in these words that receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion has past, present and future significance: *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."*

QUOTE: Happiness is made to be shared. - French proverb

Looking at YOU

David Pickup, a solicitor, considers the legal hazards of daily life in winter.

The legal hazards of life in winter

Lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding...(Psalm 148:8)

We are promised a hard Winter this year. The abundance of nuts and berries is supposed to be a sign of bad weather. Whether that is true or not is another question. Supposing we do get ice, snow and more frost. Early one cold morning you get up and go outside to clear a path of snow on your driveway and salt the doorstep. You playfully pick up a handful of snow and throw it carelessly. The car is covered in ice, so you start the engine and leave it running to defrost. You then go inside to warm up.

On your return outside the mail deliverer has fallen over. The car is missing because you had left the keys inside. The snowball you threw broke a neighbour's window because it had a stone inside. The front door slams shut, and you are outside in your pyjamas, then fall over on the ice which had thawed in the road and then re-frozen. Sounds a Winter nightmare!

What are legal issues?

The Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 requires occupiers to take reasonable care to ensure visitors are reasonably safe. 'Reasonable' is the important word there. You are unlikely to be sued if you clear a pathway through the snow. Visitors and pedestrians are expected to look where they are going, dress appropriately and be careful. If you melted snow and it froze again causing a patch of ice, there might be blame, but even then it is doubtful. If a householder knew about a problem and did nothing again that might lead to a claim. For example, if the postie complained to you the day before your path is treacherous and you did not do anything then possibly to blame, but the post person would know to take care.

It is different on public roads, as under the Highways Act 1980, the council must ensure that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice. Councils are required to ensure the public can have safe passage "so far as is reasonably practicable" on roads and pavements. In addition to using gritting vehicles and snow-ploughs to keep roads and pavements free of ice and snow, most councils also provide grit bins, usually located on steep gradients or near sharp bends, so

that members of the public can spread grit to reduce the slipping hazard. Not all roads are salted or gritted, and sometimes the weather takes an unexpected turn.

Snowball fights

Court cases involving snowball fights are rare. You must not deliberately add rocks or stones to snowballs carelessly or deliberately. Do not throw snowballs randomly. If you take part in a snowball fight, you are consenting and would expect to be hit and wet with snow.

There was a case in America that involved a snowball. After the New York Jets football game on Seattle Seahawks' home ground in December of 2008, as the Jets left the field, they were pelted by snowballs from the stands. One fan waved a sign at the departing players. A player, Sean Ellis picked up some snow and threw it at the fan, apparently hitting him in the head or body. Two years later the fan sued the player. You can watch the video on the internet but I have not found out what happened in court. Ellis was fined \$10,000 by the NFL for the incident.

What about your car? Arguably an insurance company could refuse a claim on basis the insurer did not take reasonable care to protect their property. And a neighbour could complain if you are outdoors in your nightwear, depending on whether it is decent or not.

This is a light-hearted item—always take care and get proper advice if needed. Look after yourselves and neighbours, particularly in bad weather. Perhaps your church or local council could have a list of owners of all-weather cars that could help.

Elderly and depressed this winter? Go to church!

Older people with depression can see a bigger improvement in their mental health if they start going to church than if they engage in charity work or sport.



Research from the London School of Economics found that joining a religious organisation is the best way of combatting depression. It may be both that having a faith gives benefit, and also because meeting up with other people of faith gives a sense of belonging. The LSE also found evidence that membership of some political and community organisations may have a poor impact on an older person's mental health.



From The Very Revd Sarah Brown,
Dean of Hereford

Not Christmas.

I'm not going to wish you a merry Christmas even though this is technically my last opportunity before the great day to infest the whole diocese with my festive cheer, at least in print. Please understand that it isn't that I DON'T wish you a blessed and happy Christmas – that would be unusual and distinctly unclerical, (not to mention untrue). But as I write this, the thoughtful season of advent has not even begun – the time when we God-Botherers ponder how much we need a Saviour – so I don't want to hohoho at you just yet. I do hope that despite the chill in the air caused by national and global events you will avail yourselves when the time comes of all the hope and joy that your local church and community can muster.



Advent is about looking at ourselves and at the world and realising just how much we need a Saviour. Christmas would be pointless if we didn't - just a marketing ploy cooked up by sellers of toys, perfumes and frozen party nibbles to get us all to spend as much money as possible. Let's face it, if a fire engine screeched to a halt outside your house with sirens blaring and blue lights flashing you might wonder what it was doing there if your house was not on fire. You might be mildly interested but you would hardly celebrate your salvation! In the same way the baby whose birth we celebrate on Christmas Day and who we hail as Saviour is similarly baffling and underwhelming if you cannot see anything that we need saving from!

Sometimes it seems easier to believe in evil than in God. But if you do believe that evil exists – if you see it in all its brutality in our daily news, if it touches you in grief, fear, loneliness, hatred, jealousy- then you may dimly begin to understand why we need our Saviour. If you look at the impact on individuals of national, international and corporate greed then you may begin to understand why we need our Saviour. If you look at the wars devastating communities across the globe you will understand why we need our Saviour. If you dare to look into the devices and desires of your own heart you may begin to ruefully understand why you need a Saviour.

Perhaps deep inside we all vaguely sense the need for a Saviour because we can all see what is wrong. It is only a step- a stride admittedly- from faintly sensing the need for a Saviour to considering that salvation might come from God and not human endeavour and then another step again to truly recognizing Him from the Christmas story repeated every year for 2 millennia by those persistent folk in the churches and deliciously enacted by our tiny children with tea towels on their heads.

Deanery of Pontesbury

DEANERY NEWS

Rural Dean: **The Revd Greg Smith**

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Thought for the Month from the Rev Fran Brealey

The season of Advent begins on 30th November this year, but as I write this on Remembrance Day, many people are already well into the countdown to Christmas. One of my neighbours has candy cones and Christmas Elves decorating her front garden, and the television adverts are full of suggestions as to how we might spend our money to have an even better Christmas this year. In the church we are probably already swept up into planning carol services, Christmas fayres, Messy Christmases and Christmas trails.

I want to shout, ‘slow down, you move too fast’! In a previous job I never let the Christmas tree go up before Advent Sunday (I thought even that was a bit too early). It was an Anglican college, but I think my colleagues still thought I was being a Scrooge! The season of Advent is meant to be a time of quiet reflection and preparation of our hearts for the spiritual meaning of Christ’s birth as a human baby. But we have to face the reality of our lives which can become a whirlwind of busyness and often stress at this time of year.

So this December, why not seek God in the midst of our activity. After all, the Christmas story has very few moments of quiet contemplation, even in the comforting sentimentality of many of our Christmas carols. Mary and Joseph’s enforced journey to Bethlehem at the command of foreign rulers, their anxious search for a place to stay in a town overflowing with travellers, the birth itself (unlikely to have been exactly a restful experience!), and then a parade of enthusiastic but strange visitors. All culminating in a desperate flight to escape Herod’s murderous intentions. Yet God was there in the midst of it all, as he will be for us if we reach out to him.

It is the amazing truth of the incarnation, the Word becoming flesh, that God is with us, in the midst of the reality of our world. He is not far distant from us. He does not need to wait for a quiet moment to make himself known to us. And he understands all our troubles, anxieties and sadness. However we feel about Christmas this year, may we know God's peace and love around and within us.

In the News

Archbishop Designate, Sarah Mullally, sets out her hopes for the Church

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

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

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

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

Memorial service to honour lives lost on Snowdonia's mountains

A new memorial event has taken place in Snowdonia to remember those who have died on Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) and the surrounding peaks.

The gathering, titled *Cysgod yr Wyddfa* ('In Yr Wyddfa's Shadow'), was held at Nant Peris Church. It had been organised by the Revd Naomi Starkey, Ministry Area Leader for Bro Eryri, following a series of recent mountain fatalities.

“Having lived in Bro Eryri for over a year, I've come to realise the dan-

gers as well as the beauty of the amazing landscape,” said Revd Naomi. “It’s so poignant to hear of people coming for an adventure in the mountains and how that adventure sometimes ends in serious injury or death.”

Recent months have seen several fatalities on Yr Wyddfa and nearby routes, including incidents on Crib Goch, which is above Nant Peris Church, and in the foothills and rivers around the mountain.



The bilingual gathering was an open space for quiet reflection rather than a formal church service. It included gentle music, readings, and the opportunity to light a candle.

Those attending included families of those who have died and members of the mountain rescue community. A collection was taken for Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team, the UK’s busiest rescue team, which responded to over 300 call-outs so far this year.

This is the first time such a memorial has been held, and it may become an annual event.

Christmas *by Megan Carter*

All heaven waited with bated breath
As the Lord sent Gabriel on ahead
To break the news to the young Jewish girl,
‘You will be with child’ was all he said
‘How can this be?’ Poor Mary cried,
‘I am a maid and know no man.’
‘With God all is possible’ came the reply;
This child would fulfil redemption’s plan
News spread fast when the baby was born,
Shepherds were alerted by a heavenly host,
Glory to God and peace on earth,
God was coming to redeem the lost.

This Christmas day we celebrate,
Like the shepherds and wise men we play our part,
As they bring their gifts we worship Him too,
But the one gift He longs for is our heart.



The wider COMMUNITY

10 Fun Facts about Christmas trees

* Even before the time of Christ, evergreen trees were seen in winter as a symbol of fertility.



* It was the 16th century monk, Martin Luther, who is credited with the idea of having lights on Christmas trees. He added candles to his tree, to look like stars in a forest.



* Windsor Castle got its first Christmas tree in 1800, brought by Charlotte, wife of George III.

* It was in 1835 that the term 'Christmas tree' was first used in English.

* It was in the 1840s, when Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria, began bringing trees inside, that led to their popularity throughout the UK.



* It was Woolworths who first sold manufactured Christmas tree ornaments – back in 1880.

* The tree in London's Trafalgar Square has been a gift from the city of Oslo, Norway since 1947.

* The world's tallest Xmas tree, at 221ft high, was erected in a Washington shopping mall in 1950.



* In a survey of the nation's favourite smells, real Christmas trees came eighth, just behind the sea, but ahead of perfume.

* About five million real Christmas trees are sold in the UK each year.



*The manager of a department store put this notice in the window: 'If you need it, we have it.'
But in the window of a rival, a sign appeared, stating:
'If we don't have it, you don't need it.'*

The dictators of Russia and China would like to live forever

This month Christians worldwide welcome the Baby whose life and death and resurrection bring us eternal life. But meanwhile, it seems that Putin and Xi Jinping are wondering if they might achieve a bit of immortality without divine help.

In a recent meeting to attend the Beijing military parade, the dictators of Russia and China were caught on a hot mic discussing how it might be possible to live to be 150. Mr Xi, 72, told Putin: "These days, at 70 years you are still a child."

Mr Putin, also 72, answered: "With biotechnology, human organs can be continuously transplanted, and now people can live younger and younger, and even achieve immortality."

It has been reported that Putin last year ordered scientists to look into '3D bioprinting' to use lab-grown cells to print replacement organs.

Putin later confirmed the conversation, when questioned by reporters. "Yes, yes, modern means of healing, medicine, even all kinds of surgery related to organ replacement allow humanity to hope that active life will continue differently than it does today."

A hope that 'active life will continue differently than it does today'. Sounds a bit like the Christian hope of eternity!

A Prayer for Christmas 2025

Dear Father,

Christmas is coming. It's all such a rush - planning, shopping, spending, wrapping, posting, stressing! What's it all about?

Lord, help us, in all the rat-race busyness, to make time to focus on that baby at the centre of it all. That baby who is Your Son, who was with You in the beginning and who, with You, created all things; that baby who brings life and light and hope and salvation; that baby who was and is Jesus, God, made man.

Lord, thank You for that baby-gift to us - the greatest gift there has ever been. Thank You that because He came, grew up, lived, died and rose again, there is light in the darkness of this world's mess - light that can never be put out, that evil can never overcome.

Jesus—the Light of the World. Putting our trust in Him, we thank You for Christmas - for Your grace and love for us. In Jesus' name.

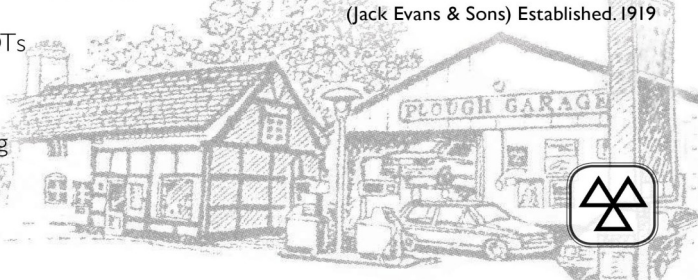
Amen.

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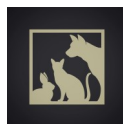
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