

Rushall Parish News

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

December 2025

January 2026

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.

30 years ago, on 21st Dec 1995
that the city of Bethlehem
passed from Israeli to
Palestinian control. On
26th Dec Israel also passed
dozens of West Bank villages
over to the Palestinian
authority.



We've got online carol-singers again!

Happiness is made to be shared.
– French proverb

Please send any articles for the
February magazine to Colin at
colinsuch01@gmail.com by Friday
23rd January.

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What's the Big Idea? An Introduction to 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.

“Merry Christmas.”

I love Christmas, although I shall be working in the morning. One of my favourite parts in the journey home after the Midnight Mass. After all the drama of the Christmas Liturgy, a church full of People singing Christmas carols and



celebrating the birth of Christ, after the tidying away and locking up when everyone else has gone home, there comes the journey home along the dark streets. Here and there a house will have some lights on and the occasional car might be seen but generally everything is still and quiet, waiting for the morning.

Various Christmas carols come into my head as I drive along, “O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie, above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by...” and “Hail thou ever blessed morn, hail redemption’s happy dawn, sing through all Jerusalem, Christ is born in Bethlehem”. Soon enough it will be morning and services to be done, after them

dinner to be started (most of the preparation will already be done) and then a walk with the dogs.

Then, finally, dogs walked, dinner cooking, services done – time to rest for a short while before Christmas dinner with family and friends.

All in all a wonderful time; a time to worship, time to reflect, time to enjoy a quiet walk and time to share with others, what could be better?

Then, finally, with the dishwasher doing overtime, time to collapse – another Christmas done!

I hope we all have a peaceful and wonderful Christmas.

4Colin

17th December: Eglantyne Jebb – founder of ‘Save the Children’

Here is a modern-day saint whose compassion and determination has saved literally millions of lives.

Eglantyne did not begin as an obvious ‘mover and shaker’ of people. Born in Shropshire in 1876, she grew up in Ellesmere, studied history at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford, taught at Marlborough, and then resigned as she was not physically robust.

Eglantyne moved to live with her mother in Cambridge, and it would have been so easy to settle for a life of peaceful obscurity. But she was a Christian, and at Oxford she had developed a passion for social concerns, so this compassion now drove her to take action.

She began in 1906 by publishing research on the poverty she’d found in Cambridge.

Then in 1912 the Balkan Wars broke out, and Eglantyne left Cambridge for Macedonia. Her months among the refugees led her to decide that long-term constructive aid was more effective than short-term handouts.

The First World War left Eglantyne horrified by the prolonged Allied blockade on Germany and Austria-Hungary, which even after Armistice meant starvation for millions of civilians, especially children.

And so in 1919 Eglantyne and her sister Dorothy Buxton helped found the ‘Fight the Famine’ Council, which wanted to end the blockade and establish a League of Nations.

One day during a rally in Trafalgar Square, Eglantyne was arrested for distributing a leaflet showing starving children which read: “Our blockade has caused this – millions of children are starving to death.”

She ended up in court and was fined, but the judge was so impressed with Eglantyne’s commitment to children that he himself paid her fine. His money became the first donation to Save the Children, the new charity just set up by Eglantyne and Dorothy.

Save the Children was officially launched at the Albert Hall in May 1919, with the aim of helping the starving civilians of central Europe. It was a success, raising £400,000 in that first year alone.

When in the autumn of 1921 Russia was facing famine, Save the Children chartered a cargo ship, the SS Torcello, to carry 600 tons of lifesaving food and medical supplies to Russia – saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

By 1922 Save the Children had become one of Britain’s biggest charities. Eglantyne’s Declaration of the Rights of the Child, written in 1923, was adopted by the League of Nations the following year. The present-day UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is derived from it.

But ten years of running Save the Children had sapped Eglantyne’s fragile strength, and she died in Geneva in 1928, aged only 52.

M&M: Monty and Matty

Apparently it's nearly Christmas. You wouldn't know it from the weather though. We had a bit of frost this morning but most of the time it's been warm, damp and muddy. What happened to "seeing amid the winter snow" or "snow falling on snow, snow on snow"?



The servant's not complaining though – he says he's saving money on the heating bill! Mind you, the lack of snow makes it easier to get around. Why is it that every time it snows the world suddenly grinds to a halt. You'd think you would be used to it by now.

Whatever the weather, what we do know is that we will still have our walks around the Lime Pits and there will still be plenty for us to sniff at and investigate.

Soon it will be another new year, the nights will start to get shorter and warmer and the promise of spring and summer will appear. In the meantime we're going to make the most of the winter and perhaps we'll get the chance to play in some snow.

Lots of woofs,
Monty and Matty

How to keep those New Year Resolutions

We are full of good intentions at the start of each year. How come we usually fizzle out by February? Here are some tips to keep you going...

Be realistic. If you have several goals, don't attempt them all at once. Research has found that if you stagger your goals, you will have more success. So, for example, if this year you want to spend less money, do more exercise and spend more time with your family, start one change this month, another in February, and start the third in March.

Be specific. For example, don't tell yourself: Lose weight. Decide exactly how much you want to lose. When do you want to lose it by? How will you do it? If you want more time with your family, how and when will you do that? The more exact you can be, the more likely you are to succeed.

Write it down. There's something about committing thoughts to paper that helps to cement your resolve. Why not start some sort of journal this year, to track your thoughts, your hopes, your goals – and your successes!

Tell other people. If you intend to do something, tell someone, and therefore you will feel more obliged to get going with it... your pride may keep you going when all else fails!

Focus on GAIN, not loss. Ever notice how many resolutions are about giving something up? Why not put it the other way round - instead of saying you will eat less, tell yourself you are headed for those skinny jeans....

Give yourself rewards. If you are quitting smoking or sweets, for example, put the money that you would have spent in a jam jar, and treat yourself to something nice (and healthy) with it.

Break your resolution into steps. Some goals will take months to achieve. So, break each one down into tiny steps, and simply head for each step. Build in some time frames, to prevent you procrastinating.

Finally, don't let failure defeat you. You will make mistakes. But the secret is to simply get up again and to keep going. Only if you stop are you *really* defeated. None of us are perfect, and the Bible encourages us to always start again.

Gardening Notes for December and January

After the heavy rain in November, which hopefully helped our depleted reservoirs, the soggy garden was then subjected to plummeting temperatures. None of this weather encourages gardening when as usual there are still jobs to be done. I have resorted to a few decorating jobs indoors until there is a chance to grab any good spells of weather. If it dries out the leaves can be blown or raked into borders and so protect the grass from yellowing under leaf fall. To clear borders is always an aim but often has to wait until January when we need to clear space to see the snowdrops.

The planned final cut of the lawns is looking increasingly unlikely as the ground is very wet and looks to be come frosty.

Despite my reservations about the success of fleecing vulnerable plants we have wrapped the new salvias put in our north facing border. In the short time they have been in they have flowered and it would be a pity (and expense!) to lose them at this early stage.

Now the evergreen shrubs come into their own and it is their time to shine. Personally I do like to see some shrubs shaped where is possible to do this without compromising their growth and they look particularly good in winter. Given spaces now would be the time to plan where extra shrubs could be added and incidentally now is a good time to plant. As mentioned before bargains can be found in many garden centres. There is a lot to recommend shrubs in winter especially when frosted or dusted with snow. The winter box, *Sarcococca Confusa* generally remains quite small and planted near the house gives off a heady perfume each time you pass.

When we are into January hopefully there will be an opportunity to clear borders and appreciate snowdrops and await the soon to come spring bulbs.

In the meantime time to enjoy Christmas and wishing a Happy New Year to all,

All about Christmas trees

How many are sold each year? According to recent figures, about five million real Christmas trees are sold in the UK each year.

How old are they? Your typical Christmas tree of six to seven feet is between ten and 12 years old.

How are they grown? Seed is collected from trees either in the wild or in specially selected seed orchards. It is sown in a nursery, where the seedlings then grow for three to four years. The young plants are then planted by a grower and grown on for a further seven to nine years. While they are growing, the grower will fertilise, shape and prune the tree many times each year.

What are the different types of Christmas trees? Here are just some...

Nordmann Fir – the most popular Christmas tree in the UK. Much loved for its symmetry, strong branches and excellent needle retention. The lush, dark green needles provide great background for displaying ornaments.

Fraser Fir – the tree with the wonderful fragrance. Pyramid-shaped, it has strong branches with dark green, needles that are silvery underneath.

Noble Fir – A bluish-green tree with short, stiff branches ideal for heavier ornaments. A fresh fragrance, and great needle retention.

Douglas Fir – Very popular in the USA, with a great shape, and probably the strongest scent of all Christmas trees. Only problem – harder to decorate as usually very dense branches.

Norway Spruce – A dark green conical shaped tree with a strong fragrance. Needs to be well-watered for good needle retention.

Blue Spruce – This is ideal for your small or second tree. It's beautiful, unique blue colouring and good stiff branches are great for showing off heavy decorations. Needs watering well.

Lodgepole Pine – Beautiful tapered branches with green/yellow needles. A tree loved by traditionalists.

The British Christmas Tree Growers Association (BCTGA) estimates that approximately 75% of the trees sold in the UK consist of Nordmann Fir, with the remaining portion comprising Norway Spruce, Fraser Fir, and a selection of other less prevalent species. The BCTGA urges people to buy a British grown tree to support the local economy, agriculture and the environment. Buying British means money is going directly back into the country's economy and helping provide employment in the agricultural sector.

A natural two-metre Christmas tree without roots, disposed of burning on a bonfire, planting it or having it chipped to spread on a garden, will have a carbon footprint of around 3.5kg of CO₂. A two-metre Christmas tree made from plastic has a carbon footprint of around 40kg of CO₂.

Find a stockist who stocks British grown trees at www.bctga.co.uk.

Walsall Almshouses

Lench's Trust, Head Office, 80 Ridgacre Road, Birmingham, B32 2AQ



Welcome to Margaret Coloquhoun Chavassee

The Chavassee family name is widely recognised with Francis Chavassee becoming the second Bishop of Liverpool and the founder of St Peter's College in Oxford. Margaret's father was Horace Chavassee vicar of Rushall, the two charming properties pictured above were erected in 1886 as a tribute to her mother and father. Margaret Coloquhoun Chavassee sadly passed away in 1930.

These two charming pre-war properties are in the historic village of Rushall first mentioned in the Domesday Book and comprise of two one bed roomed semi-detached bungalows situated on Lichfield Road. Whilst they are positioned on a busy road they offer a haven of peace with garden spaces to the rear of each bungalow. There is ample parking close by and in the surrounding area.

The location of the bungalows allows access to a wide range of shops and facilities within walking distance and good public transport links offer

easy access to the town of Walsall which is 2.3 miles away and all the amenities on offer there. Today, Rushall is still described as a village with swathes of rural land and yet still it provides everything that is required to provide for modern living.

Assistance with access to benefits is available for successful applicants.

All repairs are undertaken by the Lench's Trust maintenance team and subject to the maintenance policy which is available to all residents.

There is a dedicated out of hours emergency repairs service to assist residents with emergencies that occur outside of normal office hours.

If you would like to join our waiting list, then please contact Jayne McGettrick on 0121 426 0455 ext. 332 or via email at jayne.mcgettrick@lenchs-trust.co.uk.

The Charity called the Margaret Colquhoun Chavasse Almshouses

A residence will soon be available for persons in need who are not less than 60 years of age and who have at any time prior to the date of appointment resided in the Ecclesiastical Parish of St. Michael, Rushall for a period or periods amounting in total to not less than five years. Preference will be given to members of the Church of England, and subject thereto, to married couples.

For more details contact the vicar, Colin.



Traffic light: a green light that changes to red as your car approaches. – Anon

DEMENTIA

CO-ORDINATOR

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

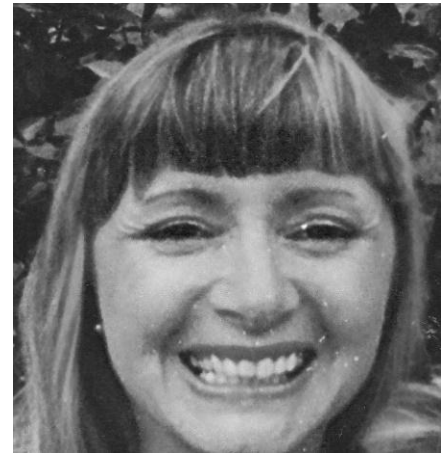
And

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 26th February 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': Madonna and Child from Donatello's workshop

Each month during this year we have visited art galleries and museums in England that are often overlooked by the tourist trail, but which contain treasures that can inspire and deepen our Christian faith. Our final visit in this series is to a gracious, elegant Georgian villa rejoicing in the odd name of the Ranger's House. It is outside the western wall of Greenwich Park in London and is home to the Wernher collection of art.

Julius Wernher was a diamond magnate who died in 1912, and in his lifetime, he amassed an amazing array of 700 works that make up this collection. There are paintings by Joshua Reynolds and Romney, Renaissance jewellery, and a marble statue by Bergonzoli, 'The Love of Angels.'

But this month we focus on another love – the love of a mother and child by the workshop of Donatello. When I was a student I visited Florence for the first time, and I can always remember the impact of entering the Bargello and being greeted by the sculptures of Donatello. It was a special moment of revelation to be able to look around and wonder at the glorious works of this sculptor filling the second floor of the castle.

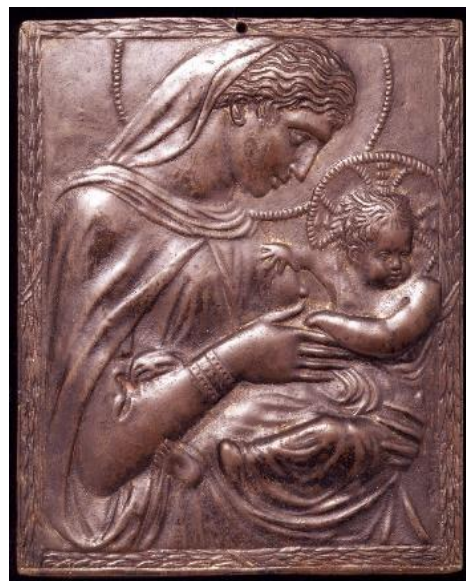
By contrast the Madonna and Child in the Ranger's House is a miniature, a bronze plaque just 4 inches square. Our Lady is depicted in classical profile with flowing robes and wavy hair, but the mood is one of tenderness as she cradles the Christ-Child. She holds His left hand in hers, while He looks down at something that has caught His attention. Perhaps it is a noise at the stable door or the sound of an animal in the Bethlehem night. Perhaps it is St Joseph getting everything ready for the Holy Family to leave. We don't know, but it is another special moment of revelation caught in this little plaque. It may not be by Donatello himself, but we sense the master overseeing the creation of this work.

At Christmas we ponder the mystery of infinity caught in a little space, the cradle at Bethlehem, just as the mystery of love, maternal and divine, is caught in the little space of this plaque. Margaret Rizza's carol, 'Jesus is our joy' captures the mood of wonder, joy and hope as we open the stable door to see the love of a mother and her new-born baby expressed here and at the heart of the Christmas gospel:

'Lovely in your littleness,
longing for our lowliness,
searching for our meekness.....

Held in Mary's tenderness,
tiny hands are raised to bless,
touching us with God's caress.

Joy then in God's graciousness,
peace comes with gentleness,
filling hearts with gladness.'



Out and about walking, driving and visiting

Bakewell.

This month I was planning to suggest the Christmas Market at Bakewell only to discover that it took place over a weekend in mid-November!

However Bakewell's Monday Market is worth a visit. We usually park at Ashford-on-the-Water and walk down to the town. At this time of the year the walk along the river is not an option as it will be muddy. The market is spread over two town car parks and is mostly reasonable quality goods. Just off the street in the town centre is the very scenic river across which are the large town centre car parks.

In one of the side streets just past the Co-op is a chip shop with a very popular and smart restaurant upstairs. A limited menu is based on fish / scampi and chips which are sent straight up from the takeaway below fresh and piping hot. There are various tearooms in the town and an acceptable coffee shop as part of the large Co-op.

Our last visit was an enjoyable day out and being sunny some lovely Peak District countryside.

Ann



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 221 ft 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.

2nd Jan: St Basil the Great, champion of the Church

Basil was most people's idea of the perfect diocesan bishop. He was a theologian of distinction, who as a monk devoted himself to much prayer and teaching. He leapt to the defence of the Church from the persecution of the Arian emperor Valens, but also appreciated great secular literature of the time, gave away his inheritance to the poor, knew how to run a soup kitchen, and counted thieves and prostitutes among his converts. Not your everyday bishop!

Basil (c330-79) came from a distinguished and pious family, and he had the best education available at Caesarea, Constantinople and Athens. He decided to become a monk with Gregory of Nazianzus, and settled as a hermit near Neo-Caesarea. He became bishop of Caesarea in 370, with 50 suffragan bishops to look after. It was the time of the great Arian heresy, and Basil would come to be seen as one of the great champions of the Church, defending it from secular encroachments.

Basil loved his people and was known for his generosity and care for the poor, both through food and medical care. He was a great preacher – preaching both morning and evening to vast congregations, and organising services of psalms before daybreak.

He was interested in monastic legislation, and to this day, nearly all monks and nuns of the Greek Church follow his rule. His emphasis was on community life, liturgical prayer, and manual work, rather than on solitary asceticism. His rule allowed for almsgiving, hospitals and guesthouses. Basil also wrote some important works on the Holy Spirit.

He died at 49, worn out by austerities, hard work and disease. He was so loved that even strangers mourned his death, and in the centuries that followed, many artists painted pictures of him. His cult spread rapidly in the West, through Greek monks in Italy and through St Benedict admitting that his rule had been inspired by “our holy father Basil.”



Elderly and depressed this winter? Try going 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.

11th Jan: Mary Slessor of Calabar

Courage, vision and leadership are found in the most unlikely of places.

Mary Slessor was born in December 1848 into a wretchedly poor family. Her father was an alcoholic who lost his job as a shoemaker. Mary was the second of seven children, and in 1859 they moved from Aberdeen into the fetid slums of Dundee. Her father and mother worked in the mills, and Mary joined them there when she turned 11.

When Mary's father and both brothers died of pneumonia, Mary's mother struggled on to keep Mary and her two sisters alive. By the time Mary was 14 she was doing a 12-hour day as a jute maker.

But life was not all drudgery. Mary's mother was a devout Christian who read the family Bible to her daughters, and also the *Missionary Record*, a monthly publication from the United Presbyterian Church. The stories of the missionaries captivated Mary. When she heard that David Livingstone, the great missionary explorer, had died, she decided that she would follow in his footsteps. She wanted to devote her life to taking the gospel to Africa. She was 25.

In August 1876 the Presbyterians sent her out to Calabar, Nigeria, an area where no European had ever yet set foot. With her red hair and blue eyes, Mary grabbed attention wherever she went, but despite recurring illness and constant danger, Mary settled happily among the tribes. She learned their traditions, quickly becoming fluent in their language, Efik. Soon she won the confidence of their tribal leaders. She taught their children and was soon determined to put an end to some of their barbaric practises, such as the killing of twins (whom they thought were evil).

Over the years Mary put an end to many witchcraft practises, and she adopted every twin child she found abandoned. And she talked endlessly about Jesus Christ, the passion of her life.

Mary was tough – she made long trips through the jungles and took canoes up remote rivers. When her shoes gave out, she went barefoot. Her great passion was to go to 'the regions beyond' with the Gospel. She thrived in places and among people who would have terrified most women in her day.

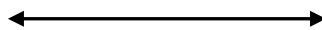
It has been written of her: "Practically singlehanded she tamed and transformed three pagan communities in succession. It is a question if the career of any other woman missionary has been marked by so many strange adventures, daring feats, signal providences, and wonderful achievements." (Dr Robert H. Glover, *The Progress of World-Wide Missions*.)

When in 1901 Southern Nigeria became a British Protectorate, Mary was appointed the first ever female Magistrate in the British Empire. She became a skilful diplomatic emissary.

She was known for saying: "It is not Mary Slessor, but God and our united prayers that have brought the blessings to Calabar. Christ shall have all the honour and glory for the multitudes saved."

When she finally died of fever in January 1915 the native Christian girls and women wept bitterly: "Our mother is dead. Everybody's mother has left us."

Mary Slessor once wrote to a friend who had long prayed for her: "I have always said that I have no idea how or why God has carried me over so many funny and hard places, and made these hordes of people submit to me, or why the Government should have given me the privilege of a Magistrate among them, except in answer to prayer made at home for me. It is all beyond my comprehension."



How much do you spend on Christmas gifts?

As you wait to buy your Christmas presents this month, ever wonder how much the other shoppers in the queue are spending?

According to various retail polls, we tend to spend according to the depth of our relationship with the person. And it is estimated that we spend on average:

- ~ for our friends and colleagues, £10-£20 per person.
- ~ for our extended family, £25 to £50 per person.
- ~ for our immediate family, £50 to £100 per person.
- ~ for our children, a whopping £400 plus.

The crucial thing is to set a budget ahead of time and to stick to it. Christmas is NOT worth crippling your finances for months to come. A rough rule of thumb is to spend no more than 1-to-2% of your annual income on Christmas. So for example, if you earn £25,000, keep it to between £250 and £500.

So, shop around, compare prices, and look out for discounts. Limit your 'gift-giving circles' – you don't have to give everyone you know a present!

Recipe

Tiramisu Con Ciliege

Cherry Tiramisu

Not everyone likes Christmas pudding and it is often nice to offer a lighter desert.

Serves 4

Ingredients

14oz cherries (obviously fresh cherries would difficult to find in winter, so use tinned or the excellent frozen sweet dark cherries) If using tinned and they are in syrup omit the sugar , frozen cherries can be treated as fresh.

2oz caster sugar

4 tbsp cherry or amaretto liqueur

8 small trifle sponges or use sponge finger biscuits.

2 tbsp toasted almond flakes

For Mascarpone Cream

2 egg yolks

2tbsp caster sugar

9oz mascarpone cheese

2tbsp cherry or amaretto liqueur

1. Heat the cherries with sugar and liqueur, omitting sugar if using tinned in syrup. Cook until sugar dissolved and cherries are softened and skins are popping.

2. For mascarpone cream, whisk egg yolk and sugar in a bowl until pale . Beat in mascarpone and 2tbsp liqueur.

3. Place a layer of sponge in the bottom of 4 individual glasses or a serving dish and spoon a little remaining liqueur over. Add a layer of cherries and juices. Top with the cream. Repeat layering and finish with the cream.
4. If liked finish with toasted nuts.
5. Chill for 2 hours before serving.

Ann

If you are sending a present to someone overseas

How about choosing from among the top ten 'curated list' of items seen as quintessentially British? They are: Fine English Tea (No list of British gifts could start anywhere else); quality biscuit; posh marmalade, fine bone china, cashmere scarf or shawl; gin; and traditional British sweets.

A reunion is when you meet people your own age who all look a lot older than you. – *Anon.*

From slaughter on a beach through gates of splendour

It was 70 years ago, on 8th January 1956, that five young American evangelical Christian missionaries were killed by members of the savage and isolated Auca tribe in the rainforest of Ecuador.

The missionaries had been attempting to bring Christianity to the small tribe of about 500 Auca people, and so had spent several months trying to befriend them by dropping gifts from an airplane.

By the 6th of January they had established a small camp a few miles from the Auca settlements, but despite initial friendliness from some of the tribe, it suddenly all went wrong. Two days later, while meeting with the Auca, all five missionaries were suddenly attacked and speared to death on the beach, their bodies left floating in the water.

The news of the five missionaries killed in Ecuador hit world headlines. Their savage murder and how they had left five young widows and eight young children, ran in Life magazine, the Reader's Digest, as well as in dozens of national newspapers. Part of the reason for this was the behaviour of the five widows, who responded with dignity and forgiveness instead of anger and hatred.

One widow, Elizabeth Elliot, decided she would stay on in Ecuador. Rachel Saint, the sister of one of the murdered missionaries, Nate Saint, decided to join her.

In time, the two women made good contacts with the Auca people, and went to live among them for two years. They shared with them the gospel of Jesus Christ and showed by their personal example how to forgive fearlessly and to love unconditionally.

In response, many Auca people became Christians, including Mincaye, the man who had murdered Nate Saint. The Auca Christians built a small church and learned to read from the Bible. Mincaye became a leader of this church, and on one momentous day he was invited to baptise Nate's grandson, Steve. The tribe even changed its name from Auca ('savage'), to Huaorani ('humans').

Our long love affair with coffee

London's first coffee house opened in 1652, using beans imported from modern-day Yemen. Although many in Cromwell's Britain had doubts about this new drink, others welcomed its reviving effects - and asked for another cup.

Nearly 400 years on, coffee drinking in Britain is a vast industry. We drink 98 million cups of it every day. Even though a takeaway flat white can now cost you more than £5 in London, still coffee has become a daily necessity for millions of us. And nearly 400 years on, we can better appreciate why this should be so.

Coffee keeps us awake. This is because when caffeine accesses the brain, it actively blocks our adenosine-producing receptors, which run our sleep-promoting system.

Coffee makes us alert. The caffeine drives our brain towards a more excited state which allows us to process information faster.

Coffee can also improve our mood, especially during the winter, when the loss of daylight acts as a depressant. And although too much coffee can make us jittery and even prone to heart palpitations, there is even growing evidence among neuroscientists that coffee can even help to lower our risk of neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Crufts welcomes mongrels

The Royal Kennel Club, which runs Crufts, is going to admit mongrels for the first time in its 150-year history.

Crufts will become a 'year-round community', available to all dog owners, whatever kind of dog they have. Its new online platform will launch in February 2026.

Jannine Edgar, chief executive of the RKC explains: "While our initiatives in areas such as health, research and breeding have historically been focused on pedigree dogs, we recognise that dog ownership has evolved and therefore we must too.

"So now our remit extends to all dogs, and we will be investing our efforts to do more for every dog and their owners through the Crufts brand, which will be much more than an annual show."

This year Crufts Dog Show takes place 5th to 8th March at the NEC in Birmingham. Crufts has also held events aimed at non-pedigree dogs since 2000, after launching the crossbreed competition 'Scruffts'.

The late Queen, who was devoted to her corgis, was patron of The Kennel Club for 70 years. Following her death, the King granted the organisation a royal prefix in 2023.

The Incarnation: fearfully and wonderfully made

*My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in
your book
before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:15-16*

You began life as a single cell. For a few hours you were a miniscule but highly complex blob of jelly, until it began to divide: two cells, four, eight, sixteen, a ball, a hollow ball, and then something more recognisably like a living organism. You were still tiny, but developing a nervous system, a head, a body, arms and legs.

Until recently I hadn't thought much about Jesus being an embryo. Somehow, I find that thought even more shocking than His birth. How could God, who made the universe, have become something so completely and utterly vulnerable? Maybe in the past, when the development of a child happened in 'secret', it was possible just to let that part of the Christmas story go untold.

Today, when we see images of a developing child, or even embryos outside the womb, it is harder to ignore the process of Jesus developing into a baby. The incarnation meant that God's Son went through all the stages in the diagram in my developmental biology textbook: 'zygote', 'morula', 'blastocyst', implantation, and so on.

Jesus was there in the beginning, and all life owes its existence to Him. But instead of remaining aloof, He chose to become one of us. The Son of God shared the same kind of DNA as every other organism on the planet. He knows what it feels like to have a body, to feel hungry and thirsty, pain and pleasure, dark and light.

In Psalm 139, the writer is meditating on God's intimate knowledge of him, which began when he was an embryo. There is nothing God doesn't know about him, and even darkness cannot obscure him from God's sight. The incarnation means that God's intimacy with us now extends even further. He became one of us, lived alongside us, and shared our very fragile material nature.

The transcendent God is also immanent, longing for us to relate to Him as Father. He became as fragile as we are so He could rescue us from the messes we so often find ourselves in. With His help, we can remember what it means to be fearfully and wonderfully made.

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.

27th Jan: St Angela Merici, helping children in need

With international concern about the welfare of children, Angela is a good saint to remember. Not only did she herself survive a harsh childhood, but she went on to dedicate her own life to helping children in need.

Angela was born near Lake Garda, in Desenzano, where she was orphaned as a young child. The 1480s were hardly an easy time for orphaned girls, but somehow Angela survived to grow into her teens, when she became a Franciscan tertiary. However miserable her own childhood, Angela chose to let it work for good in her life: she decided to devote her own life to the education of poor girls. Girls! This was a time when most of the *men* were illiterate!

But Angela was an audacious woman, and she had only just begun. She and some close companions set to work in the name of Christ, seeking out the poor families in their community. Angela taught the young girls all that she could, and prayed with them, assuring them that even they were precious in the eyes of their Creator.

All of which left the Roman Catholic Church badly baffled. What should they do with religious sisters who had taken no vows, still wore their lay clothes, and who, instead of walling themselves up in some nunnery to lead an enclosed life, spent their days in a decidedly mobile, highly visible fashion – out and about in community support?

It wasn't until 1565, some 25 years AFTER Angela's death, that the Church decided it approved of such work. By then the Ursuline nuns, as they were by then called, were going from strength to strength. They still flourish today, with some 2400 Ursuline Sisters in 27 provinces on six continents. They have been well described as 'the oldest and most considerable teaching order of women in the RC Church.'

It took nearly 300 years, but in 1807 the Roman Catholic Church decided that Angela, unveiled, unenclosed and unsupervised as she had been, had been a saint after all – and 'made' her one.

31st January - John Bosco, founder of the Salesian Teaching Order

John Bosco is the saint for anybody concerned for deprived young people.

Bosco never trained as a youth worker, as he was born into a peasant family near Castelnuovo in Piedmont, northern Italy, in 1815. He never belonged to a youth group - he was out in the fields shepherding his family's sheep. But he longed to work with young people, and so in 1835 he was accepted at the seminary in Chieri, where he was ordained a priest in 1841.

Bosco had had a vision, in which he saw a young child, and heard the words: "Not with blows, but with charity and gentleness must you draw these friends to the path of virtue." He knew then that God had given him a specific vocation: his life's work was to be serving deprived youngsters.

And so Bosco headed for the dreary slums of Turin, where he began his ministry in the poor Valdocco quarter of the city. He was haunted by the wretched lives of the many youngsters there, and reached out to them, showing a kindness which they had never encountered before. Soon, as well as his church services, Bosco launched evening classes and training workshops in various trades for the boys in his neighbourhood. For those boys who were homeless, he opened a boarding house, installing his own mother as housekeeper.

Bosco had uncovered a great social need, because his 'Oratory' grew from 20 boys in early 1842 to 400 boys, only four years later, in 1846. By 1859 the 'Pious Society of St Francis de Sales,' commonly known as the Salesians, had been born. The municipal authorities, at first suspicious, soon greatly valued the work that Bosco and his Salesians were doing.

By the time he died in Turin in 1888, the Salesians had 250 houses throughout the world, housing and educating 130,000 poor children. 6,000 of the boys went on to become priests.

Your first parish

The Rectory
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren



And so, the old year draws to a close, and you are packing to move to your own first parish in January. Let me give you some final words of advice.

Curates, you will have noticed, are forgiven everything. I hope you have appreciated this period of grace, because come 1st January, all that will change. You will then become responsible for everything that goes wrong in your church. You must be able to mend leaking taps, shovel snow, arrange flowers, mow the churchyard and run jumble sales. You will be expected to know the moment someone falls ill – preferably the day before. In addition, they will expect you to preach profound sermons - in seven minutes flat, and to lead a life of prayerful solitude while being the life and soul of the parish. From the day your predecessor left, he will have turned into a saint. *You* will be their new disappointment. Be assured that *whatever* you do, you will *always* disappoint someone.

Be prepared for phone calls at 3am telling you that someone has left a light on in church, and shouldn't you go turn and it off? You will be asked about car parking arrangements for the October Harvest Service by mid-January, while hymns for the 9 Lessons and Carols will be required by early summer. I suggest you buy in extra pullovers, overcoats and scarves for life in your vicarage. A good number of mousetraps may well come in useful too.

Welcome to your new life of an incumbent.

Expect that each Sunday morning, as you prepare for the service, there will be a straggling queue of people who want to tell you an astonishing variety of things: there is a large cobweb 30 feet up over the pulpit, they don't like the second hymn on the board, the flowers look rough this week, there may be a bat in the vestry, some child has left a shoe in the back porch, and the car park has broken glass in it.

You may find this a distraction as you prepare for a worship service. But remember that at least they have bothered to come to church at all. In my experience, congregations are always irritating, but at least they do take up a lot of space, and that looks good in the pews. The church would look empty without them.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

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.



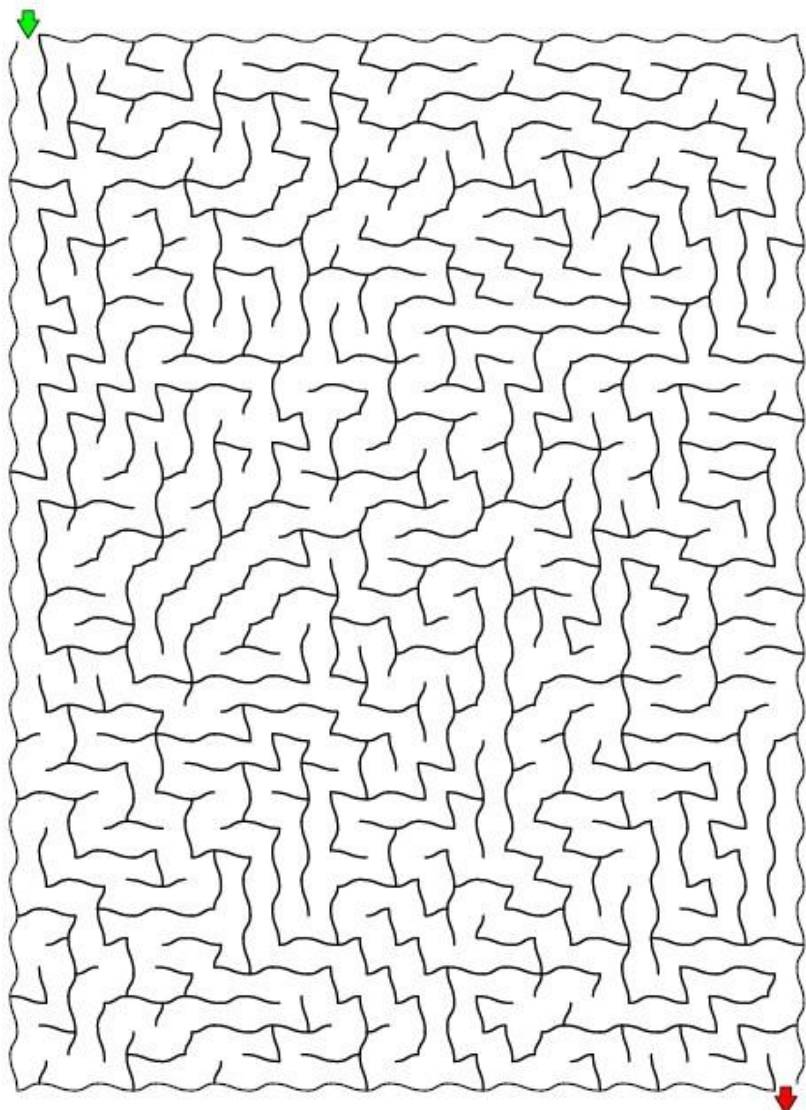
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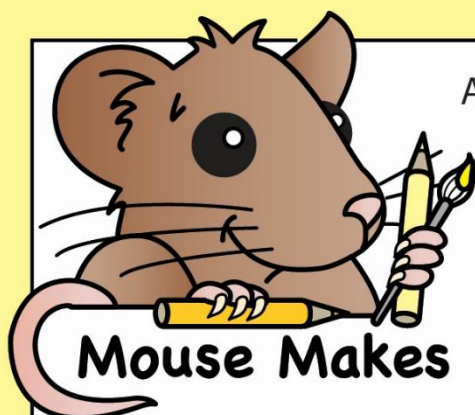
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November's Solution

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

Can you solve
the maze?





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 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 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
somewhere
to sleep like
a crib or a cot.
*What did you
sleep in?*

Jesus slept in a

.....

read Luke 2:7

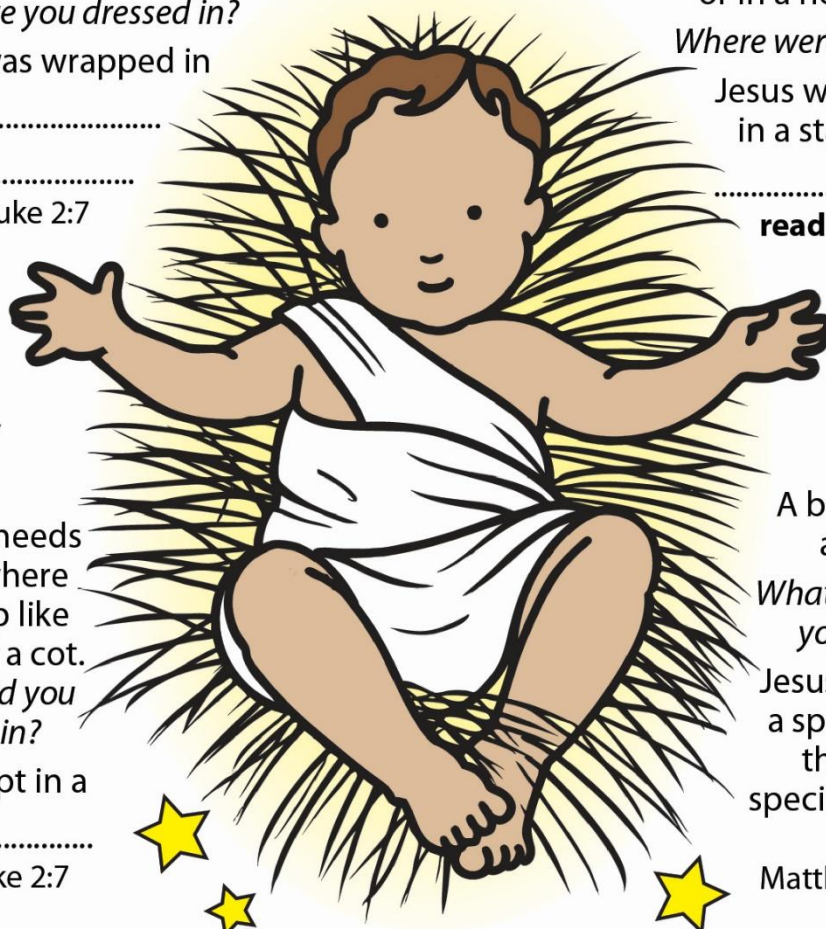
A baby needs
a name.

*What name were
you called?*

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

read

Matthew 1:21-23

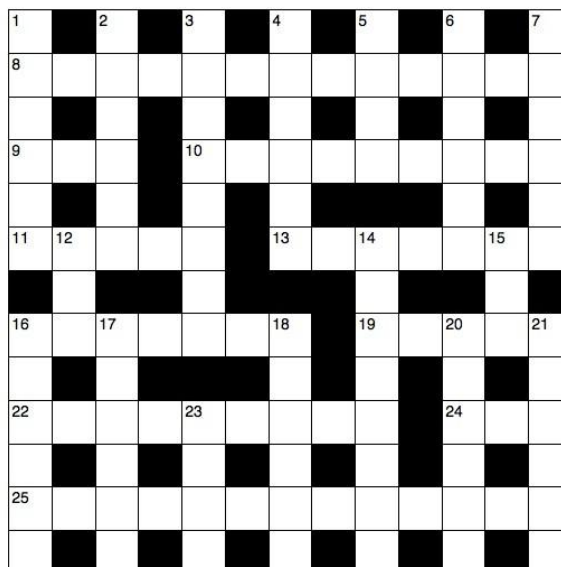


HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

NADOLIG LLAWEN ★ NOLLAIG CHRÌDHEIL ★ NOLLAG SHONA
JOYEUX NOËL • FELIZ NAVIDAD • BUON NATALE • GOD JUL • FROHE WEIHNACHTEN

Across

- 8 How the Abyss (NIV) is described in the Authorized Version (Revelation 9:1) (10,3)
9 Frozen water (Ezekiel 1:22) (3)
10 The Ten Commandments (9)
11 In Roman Catholic theology, neither heaven nor hell (5)
13 Des cons (anag.) (7)
16 'Though [your sins] are red as — , they shall be like wool' (Isaiah 1:18) (7)
19 Keen (Romans 1:15) (5)
22 Repugnant, loathsome (Jeremiah 24:9) (9)
24 Drink like an animal (Judges 7:5) (3)
25 First and last (Revelation 22:13) (5,3,5)



Down

- 1 Father of Ahi, a Gadite (1 Chronicles 5:15) (6)
2 Where David found the stone with which he killed Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (6)
3 'Hour by hour fresh lips are making thy — doings heard on high' (8)
4 'And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their — at night' (Luke 2:8) (6)
5 United Society for Christian Literature (1,1,1,1)
6 'If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would — — or a tax collector' (Matthew 18:17) (1,5)
7 Where Paul was taken when things became difficult for him in Berea (Acts 17:15) (6)
12 Istituto per le Opere di Religione (Vatican Bank) (1,1,1)
14 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new — ; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 Corinthians 5:17) (8)
15 Used to colour ram skins red for use in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:5) (3)
16 Vat car (anag.) (6)
17 'Be joyful — — , patient in affliction, faithful in prayer' (Romans 12:12) (6)
18 'The parts that are unrepresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts — — special treatment' (1 Corinthians 12:23) (4,2)
20 Ancient rowing boat (Isaiah 33:21) (6)
21 Say again (2 Corinthians 11:16) (6)
23 What Jesus did in the synagogue in Nazareth after he stood up (Luke 4:16) (4)

November's answers:

ACROSS 1. Bartholomew. 9, Evil one. 10, Adore. 11, Ran. 13, Oreb. 16, Zinc. 17, Entail. 18, Hung. 20, Lehi. 21, Joshua. 22, Pity. 23, Wide. 25, Age. 28, Alarm. 29, Partake. 30, Sennacherib.

DOWN: 2, Alive. 3, Took. 4, Over. 5, Onan. 6, Emotive. 7, Jehoshaphat. 8, Melchizedek. 12, A light. 14, Beg. 15, Strong. 19, Not have. 20, Law. 24, Iraqi. 25, Amen. 26, Epic. 27, Free.