

Rushall Parish News

February 2026

Free online. 30p print copy

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

R



Mt 4:16-17, Mk 1:10-11, Lk 3:21-22

Some useful numbers

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



Henry is making a real effort for Lent – he's giving up the remote control and walking to the TV

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

It costs to follow Jesus Christ, but it costs more not to. – Anon

Please send any articles for the March magazine to Colin at colinsuch01@gmail.com by Friday 20th February.

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What's the Big Idea? - An Introduction to the Old Testament: Isaiah

Isaiah is often regarded as the greatest of the prophets. His name means '*The Lord saves*' and he began his 50-year ministry in 740 BC when King Uzziah died (6:1). Many scholars challenge the claim that Isaiah wrote the entire book, however there are striking verbal parallels between chapters 1–39 and 40–66.

Isaiah spoke during the stormy period marking the expansion of the Assyrian empire and the decline of Israel. The Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom in 721. Judah was left to decide whether they would make alliances with other kingdoms or rely on God to protect them. Isaiah warns Judah that her sin would bring captivity in Babylon, which eventually took place in 586.

Isaiah sees the Messiah coming from the line of David. He speaks of a new temple being established (ch2); a child born with a new kingdom (ch9) and judging differently to other kings (ch11) as well as the nature of His suffering (ch53). The '*suffering servant*' (chapters 42–53) also applies to Israel as a nation, who are called to be a '*light for the Gentiles*' (42:6). Not surprisingly Jesus applies Isaiah's words to His own life and ministry. eg Is 61:1 quoted in Luke 4:18. Throughout his book Isaiah presents the full dimensions of God's judgment and salvation as '*the Holy One of Israel*' (6:1), as well as the '*Sovereign Lord*' far above all nations (40:15–24).

Isaiah looks forward to the promise of a new city of Zion (chs 60–66), in which the people offer praise to the Holy One of Israel. '*Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.*' (65:17).

“What child is this?”



February begins with Candlemas, the bittersweet festival in which we turn from the crib to the Cross. The figures from the crib are removed and the candle procession gathers at the font.

This year Lent begins early with Ash Wednesday falling on 18th February.

The year seems to be rushing past already; the Christmas trees and candles now disappear and by Ash Wednesday all the flowers and decorations in church will be gone. Mind you, Christmas for many people finished by the New Year; having put their decorations out in November they disappeared as soon as Christmas Day and Boxing Day were over!

It is so easy to let time slip by, but each day and each moment are special. Daily Morning Prayer begins with a prayer in which we thank God for “gift of this new day.”

Parents will tell us how quickly their children grow up and their children after them. Time is fleeting and too easily wasted.

It’s tempting to celebrate Candlemas and then wait impatiently for Easter.

But there’s much to ponder and celebrate before then; the gift and wonder of creation, the gifts that God gives us and which we take too much for granted (which is why we give them up for Lent) and the wonder of God’s love.

The Cross comes soon enough, for now let us continue to rejoice in the God who comes among us to reveal the extent of God’s love.

Nails, spear shall pierce him through,

The Cross be borne for me, for you;

Hail, hail the Word Made Flesh,

The babe, the son of Mary! Colin



2nd Feb: Candlemas, The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

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

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

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

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



How people fast during Lent

Many of us fast during Lent. It seems that the kind of fast you undertake may be connected to your denomination. A recent survey found the following:

94% Black Majority Churchgoers give up all food for a set time.

85% of Orthodox churchgoers cut out specific foods and/or drinks.

83% of Pentecostal churches give up all food for a set time.

79% of Roman Catholics cut out specific foods and/or drinks.

76% of New Churches give up all food for a set time.

57% of C of E cut out specific foods and/or drinks

30% or less of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists cut out specific foods and/or drinks.

The survey was done by the charity Green Christian

M&M: Monty and Matty

Mud, glorious mud!
Despite the weather
we've been out for a
walk every day
except two; once
when the ice and
snow were too
dangerous, even for
us, and the other
when it just rained
heavily non-stop
and the servant
didn't want to get
soaked (no staying
power!)



We've ducked under fallen trees, paddled through puddles the size of ponds, trudged through thick, slippery mud and enjoyed every minute. Every walk has been an adventure – what will we find? What will have changed since the day before?

The servant doesn't seem to have the same sense of adventure; he mutters while he puts on his wellies (we just go as we are!) and then slips and slides his way across the fields and tracks. Perhaps if he went barefoot like us he wouldn't slip so much – but you try telling him!

He's not even happy when we get home. We splash our way around the garden (it is mostly underwater at the moment) and then we come back in – just after he's mopped the floor. We then proceed to leave a trail around the house for him to follow – at least he knows where we've been. Anyway, we like the paw print pattern, it has a certain style.

Lots of woofs,
Monty and Matty

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

Winnie the Pooh and Lent 2026

Remember the Winnie the Pooh stories? And Kanga's insistence on Baby Roo's taking his Strengthening Medicine? It's 'really quite a nice taste when you get used to it', she explained, although I'm not convinced Baby Roo always agreed.

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

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

Nor is Lent just a case of giving up chocolate. One year I gave up Facebook for Lent, having spent far too much time scrolling through it each day. It freed me to do other, more constructive things. And instead of giving up, why not take up something you've been meaning to do but never got round to; something life-affirming, something good for God.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which this year falls on 18th February. Many Christians go public with their intention to keep a good Lent by being 'ashed' - the sign of the Cross made on the forehead in a mixture of ash and holy oil at a special service that day. The ash is usually the burnt remains of the palm crosses from last year. Having been ashed, the intention of the 40 days of Lent is to maintain a steady course closer to God, symbolised by the giving up of something - like chocolate - which has a hold on us. We walk with Jesus on the way to the Cross, mindful of the 'riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience' as St Paul has it, and mindful too of Jesus' choice of the Cross as a way for us to enter those riches more fully.

And to face the immensity of that sacrifice, and the immensity of God's riches made available to us in Jesus, we need all the Strengthening Medicine we can get!

Gardening Notes for February

This is the month when hopes of getting back into the garden even for just an hour or two are encouraged by the increasing light in the afternoon. The weather of course is more than usually uncertain but hope springs that there will be some good interludes.

Snowdrops will be reliably in flower now although as of the middle of January their growth was not as advanced as usual. Having cleared surrounding leaf litter to see the flowers and once the flowers are over clumps can be split and the stock around the garden increased for free Chirk Castle and Attingham Park are good places to see massed snowdrops. Usually the earliest perennial to flower in our garden will be *Geranium Phaeum* which has rather dark purple flowers which not everyone likes, however they are long lasting in flower when flowers are in short supply. This is the time to see what needs cutting back and tidying so as not to impede summer plants having room to expand.

Some of the earlier *Camillias* will soon flower adding some welcome colour. Later my favourite *Camellia* in a delicate pink and with rosebud pointed flowers in bud will flower for up to six weeks.

We are advised to cut down late flowering clematis to 4 inches from the ground and protect with mulch. I tried this with *Clematis 'Guernsey Cream'* last year and had much strong growth which should have borne the year's flowers, however, flowers there were none!

I have kept small bulbs such as *Crocus* and *Iris reticulata* only in containers as they do not seem to survive being planted in borders, perhaps the soil is often just too wet.

Having been given a lovely present of 'Twelve Days of Garden Surprises' where each box comprised a different bulb or bulbs. I am now conscious that as soon as possible these need to be planted over the periods suggested. At our previous house we had rapidly spreading *muscari* and took steps to remove some of them, now here in Leigh Road a few miles away, it is a struggle to keep them, apart from their spreading. Mostly the soil here is much better than heavy clay but perennials which mostly survive well do not generally oblige by increasing to fill all the space available perhaps they more food than we supply!

To all those who are also anxious to be outside (foolish or not) enjoy this time of hope and anticipation,

Mary Shelley and Frankenstein

It was 175 years ago, on 1st February 1851, that the novelist Mary Shelley died. She is best known for her Gothic novel *Frankenstein*.

Her parents were the influential philosophers William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, a strong advocate of women's rights who died 11 days after Mary's birth from complications. The future Mary Shelley was herself fascinated by books and philosophy but spent two long, enjoyable spells "for her health" with the Baxters, a dissenting family who lived near Dundee.

She started on the novel *Frankenstein* – not the name of the eight-foot, lovelorn 'Christian' monster but of the scientist who created him – at the age of 18 after a conversation about ghosts with her husband, the atheist Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, and others. After her book was published anonymously, many suspected that her husband had written it or was co-author, but this was not the case: he may have done some light editing.

Mary, a baptised Anglican who came to despair and doubt, wrote several other books, but her life was tragic on many levels. Her husband had affairs, and they mixed in circles where that was encouraged. A four-year period in Italy with Byron and others, initially welcomed by Mary, became especially hard for her to endure. According to him, she had described Naples as "a paradise inhabited by devils".

Three of her four children died at a very young age; only the fourth, Percy Florence, reached adulthood. And her husband died, aged only 29, in a mysterious sailing accident in 1822 in The Gulf of Spezia near Genoa.

Her last book, however, was a travel narrative about rambles in Germany and Italy which she had undertaken with her son Percy in the early 1840s. She died aged 53, perhaps of a brain tumour or a stroke. She was buried at St Peter's Church in Bournemouth.



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



Welcome to Margaret Chavasse

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

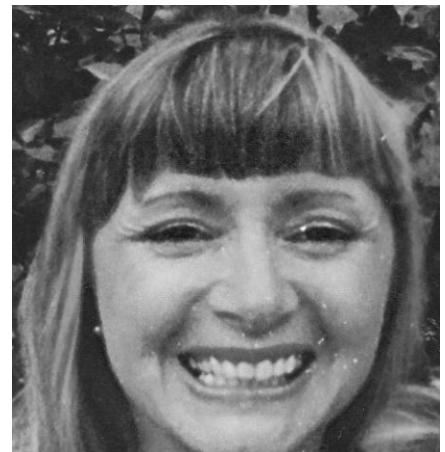
For more details contact the vicar, Colin.



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
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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

4th Feb: Phileas, brave bishop and martyr of Egypt

When did you first encounter Christianity? If it was as an adult, then Phileas is a saint for you. His life shows that Truth matters, whenever you encounter it, but is also a warning that you need to count the cost of becoming a Christian.

Phileas was a rich man living in Egypt at the end of the third century, when he first met Christians. Highly educated, he did not convert quickly, but instead studied their Gospels, and also at least part of the New Testament. Only then did he conclude that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

It was good that Phileas had done his research and was firm in his faith, because after his conversion, events came thick and fast. In those pressured times, the Church hadn't the luxury of long training programmes for leaders, and so Phileas was chosen to be bishop of his city in the Thebaid, a desert region of ancient Egypt.

Sadly, the new bishop hardly ever had a chance to pastor his flock. Soon after his consecration at Alexandria in 303, Phileas was arrested under the edicts of the Roman emperor Diocletian. He spent the next three years in prison, deeply moved by the willing martyrdoms of other Christians around him. Finally, in 306, it was Phileas' turn. He faced the questioning of the prefect, Culcianus, who could not fathom why such a previously wealthy man had thrown his life away to follow some (long dead?) carpenter from Galilee.

Phileas' strength now was that he really knew what the Bible said. And so when questioned about Jesus's divinity, he replied that "... He performed the works of God in power and actuality... He cleansed lepers, made the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dumb speak, He drove demons from His creatures at a command; He cured paralytics, raised the dead to life, and performed many other signs and wonders."

Still Culcianus urged him to save his life, by sacrificing to the gods. Phileas again had a biblical answer ready. Paraphrasing St Paul, he said that the sacrifices which God requires are "a pure heart, a spotless soul and spiritual perceptions which lead to deeds of piety and justice..." Pressed one final time, he replied "I have reflected many times, and this is my decision." And so, he was led out and beheaded.

Out and about walking, driving and visiting: Oxford .

'City of Dreaming Spires ' also a very busy city where the main routes sometimes have multi laned roundabouts all with bumper-to-bumper traffic.

For the purpose of a day trip probably the best way into the city would be to use one of the various Park and Ride facilities. The most useful from our area would be Oxford Parkway just beyond Kidlington (A34) or Peartree (A40). If staying overnight some hotels and B&Bs in the city have limited private parking.

One of the best ways to see Oxford city is on foot, self-guided, concentrating on the areas between and around the 'High' (High Street) and the 'Broad ' (Broad Street). Walking around, many Oxford University Colleges can be seen often just through the gates. One of the Colleges we did find open to visitors was Christ Church College with its famous Tom Tower Bell. Adjacent is Oxford Cathedral on the edge of the University Parks which offer a large area of attractive walking.

Incidentally this area has featured in TV series Morse, Lewis and Midsomer Murders, but in reality is much more peaceful.

Turl Street is one of many narrow streets and has the entrances to Exeter and Jesus Colleges and the famous quaint pub the Turl.

There is the scenic 'Bridge of Sighs' and the Bodleian Library (a friend once suggested we had a tour of the Bodleian but I felt miles of underground book storage, although amazing, did not sound very interesting!)

The University Church of St. Mary is interesting as is the café, the Vaults overlooked by the iconic Radcliffe Camera. Standing on Magdalene Bridge imagining the May morning singing from the college over the road but the volume of the traffic could somewhat of a distraction.

On a longer stay travelling a little further south, Wallingford and the village of Dorchester - on - Thames are worth visiting.

The later has Dorchester Abbey and beautiful riverside walks where the river Thame meets the Thames. A climb up oddly named Wittenham Clumps gives all round panoramic views. The George pub in the village is another recognisable location used many times in Midsomer Murders.

Also worth a visit is Henley - on - Thames where even the Weatherspoons is more up- market!

Ann

Eco Church by Jan

An Eco Update

A prayer for the environment, for reflection on creation care and focussed on the fifth mark of mission.

God of life,

we praise you for the beauty of creation,
its richness and variety;
yet, through greed and ignorance,
we scar your world with plastic waste
and throw so much away.

Make us more like Jesus,
treading gently on our common home,
and breathe your Spirit on us,
that we may care more deeply for your Earth.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

(Rt Revd Graham Usher, Bishop of Norwich and Lead Bishop on the Environment)

A ROCHA & ECO CHURCH.

A Rocha are celebrating 10 years of Eco Church in 2026 so watch this space for information on the celebrations taking place through the year.

Congratulations go out to Christ the King who recently achieved bronze.

The total number of churches in the Lichfield Diocese registered with A Rocha for Eco Church is 202. We currently have 2 Gold eco awards, 21 silvers and 52 bronzes.

CARING FOR GOD'S ACRE

Planning is well underway for our second Love Your Yew Week, which will take place on 9th - 15th February 2026.

Love your yew tree week aims to encourage those with veteran, ancient or even younger yews in their churchyard, chapel yard or cemetery to break down the job of caring for them into achievable tasks.

In 2026 the theme is clearing around the root plate to avoid compacting the soil or affecting the oxygen and water reaching the roots. Our [Love your Yew week webpage](#) is full of information, including a comprehensive set of FAQs. Do please share this to anyone you think may be interested.

SPOTLIGHT ON NATURE: See the latest report from the Church Commissioners for England and their approach to supporting nature and biodiversity.

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/spotlight-on-nature_final.pdf

Introducing Dame Sarah Mullally - the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury

The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE officially became Archbishop of Canterbury on 28th January 2026, when she was legally confirmed at St Paul's Cathedral.

Most people know that she had been Bishop of London for several years, and that she is the first woman to ever become Archbishop of Canterbury. But what else do you know about her?

1. She was born in Woking in 1962, and is one of four children, with two sisters and one brother.
2. She attended Winston Churchill Comprehensive School and Woking Sixth Form College. She went on to South Bank Polytechnic and Heythrop College, University of London
3. She worked as a nurse in the National Health Service, which she has described as "an opportunity to reflect the love of God". She specialised as a cancer nurse and became a ward sister at Westminster Hospital, before being made Director of Nursing at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.
4. In 1999, at the age of 37, she was appointed the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England in the Department of Health. She was the youngest person ever to be appointed to the post. Bishop Sarah was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 2005 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to nursing.
5. She had become a Christian at the age of 16. While working as the Chief Nursing Officer for England, she discerned a call to ordination and entered training ministry at the South East Institute for Theological Education.
6. She was ordained in 2001 and served her curacy in St Saviour's Battersea Fields, initially as a self-supporting minister, before leaving her government post in 2004, which she has described at the time as "the biggest decision I have ever made".
7. In 2012 she was installed as Canon Treasurer at Salisbury Cathedral and three years later took the role as Suffragan Bishop of Crediton in the Diocese of Exeter, the fourth woman to become a Bishop in the Church of England.

8. On 12th May 2018, Bishop Sarah was installed as the 133rd Bishop of London at St Paul's Cathedral, the first woman to hold the role.
9. Bishop Sarah sits in the House of Lords as one of the Lords Spirituals, having been introduced on 24th May 2018. Her maiden speech paid tribute to the NHS on its 70th anniversary, telling the Lords: "I am the Bishop I am today because of that first vocation to nursing, and compassion and healing are constants at the heart of who I am."
10. She was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council in March 2018 and became Dean of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal in July 2019.
11. As Bishop of London, she led the Church of England's Living in Love and Faith process from 2020 to 2023. This included the formative stages of discernment and decision making which saw the introduction of the Prayers of Love and Faith for same-sex couples.
12. She has served on the Church's National Safeguarding Steering Group and is also Lead Bishop for Health and Social Care issues.
13. As a Lord Spiritual, she has drawn from both her pastoral experience and her background in nursing and healthcare and has played a key role in the ongoing debates on assisted dying.
14. This year, she chaired the Triennium Funding Working Group that developed the Church of England's three-year spending plan that led to significant investments in local churches and parish clergy.
15. Archbishop Sarah is married to Eamonn, an Irish-born IT and Enterprise Architect who enjoys beekeeping and volunteering as a London tourist guide.
16. The couple have two grown-up children, Liam and Grace.
17. Archbishop Sarah has continued her interest in the health service having been a non-executive director at the Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust then at Salisbury NHS Foundation Hospital.
18. She is Chair of Christian Aid.
19. She has spoken openly about her dyslexia, describing her difficulties with writing and reading.
20. In her spare time, she loves cooking, walking and pottery.

Recipe

Italian Almond Cantuccini Biscotti

Served with coffee for dipping in the hot drinks these biscuits are hard to find in the average supermarkets and can be otherwise quite pricey in more specialist outlets. This recipe gives a fairly good result although for a more almond taste a little almond essence could be added.

Makes approximately 48

Ingredients

7oz (200g) whole unbleached almonds

7 and half oz (215g) plain flour

3 and a half oz (100g) sugar

Pinch of salt

Pinch of saffron powder, if available

3 eggs

One egg white lightly beaten

1. Preheat oven to 190 / Gas5

2. Spread almonds on a baking tray and bake until lightly browned about 15 mins. When cool grind 2 oz up and coarsely chop remainder into several pieces.

3. Combine all dry ingredients in a bowl and make a well in the centre and add eggs. Stir into a rough dough.

Transfer onto a floured board and knead until well mixed, then knead in chopped almonds.

4. Divide dough into 3 equal parts and roll into logs about an inch in diameter. Place on lined baking sheets, brush with egg white and bake for 20 mins.

5. With a very sharp knife cut each log diagonally to half inch slices. Return to baking sheets and cook on the oven for a further 25 minutes having lowered the temperature to 140 / gas 1.

Remove from oven.

6. Cool and store in airtight jars. As a quicker alternative there is a new product in Morrisons, chopped almonds. I found substituting 5 oz of these and 2oz of ground almonds worked well, Ann

Some Christians are not only like salt that has lost its savour, but like pepper that has lost its pep.

– *Albert George Butzer*

14th February - The Two Valentines

If you dig into the history of Valentine's Day, you discover it has a complicated past. There seems to have been two Valentines: Valentine of Terni and Valentine of Rome. But there was only one road involved: the Via Flaminia, or Flaminian Way.

According to some sources, Valentine of Terni was a third century bishop found "guilty" of having encouraged some young men to convert to Christianity. When the prefect of Rome heard of this, he was furious, and had Valentine of Terni arrested.

Valentine of Terni was then taken to Rome on the Flaminian Way, which was the road linking Rome and Terni. In Rome, Valentine of Terni was beheaded in 273. His remains were then taken back to Terni for burial. An 8th century basilica named after him is found on the Flaminian Way.

Valentine of Rome was a priest who was also martyred in the middle of the third century, this time under the authority of Claudius II. But Valentine of Rome's death may have occurred on the Flaminian Way, where another basilica, bearing his name, has also been found. This one was completed by Pope Theodosius about three centuries later.

The two stories have understandably become confused. Two Valentines, both martyred, in a time of persecution of Christians, and one Flaminian Way. Even Common Worship's choice of c.269 as the date of death is at best a guess.

One thing seems sure: our present-day custom of sending cards and flowers to declare our love has nothing to do with either Valentine. Instead, these may come from the poet John Donne in about 16322. He wrote a marriage song which includes religious commemoration of Valentine along with fertility symbolism. Even the pagan Lupercalia festival may have gone into the mix which flavours our current celebrations of the day.

Eating Disorders Awareness Week:

23rd Feb to 1st March

Do you suffer from an eating disorder? Or are you close to someone who struggles with one? If so, then you will know the long battle that sufferers can wage with anorexia, bulimia, binge eating and EDNOS (or 'eating disorder not otherwise specified'.)

Eating disorders ruin lives. They ruin relationships. They also ruin careers. They are estimated to cost the UK economy about £9.5 billion a year.

This year the annual Eating Disorders Awareness Week website says: "An eating disorder can be isolating, making people feel alone, whether someone has an eating disorder themselves or whether they are supporting someone.

And so it is that "We're celebrating the power of community and the vital role family, friends, and other support networks play in helping someone feel supported, understood, and never alone on their journey from seeking help, undergoing treatment and beyond.

How can people with eating disorders be best supported by their employer and colleagues? Visit <https://edaw.beateatingdisorders.org.uk> for details.

Can you get across the pedestrian crossing in time?

Have you ever had to hurry to make it to safely across the street because the pedestrian crossing light is about to turn red again?

If so, you are not alone. A recent study has found that pedestrian crossing timings are simply too brief for many elderly people and especially those with mobility problems.

The length of time given at crossing points usually assumes a walking speed of 1.2m per second. But the study found that the average speed of adults aged over 65 is only 0.77m per second.

So more than half of older people need to increase their normal walking speed by about 50 per cent, just to reach the other curb safely.

One of the researchers said: "This isn't just a safety issue – it's potentially a barrier to independence, physical activity, and social connection, all of which often decline in later life."

Another said: "Allowing enough time to cross the road can boost confidence, support independence, and help them remain engaged in their communities, all key to a better quality of life."

The study was published in the journal *Age and Ageing*.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Every person who ever lived was once a sperm and an egg. Those two cells fused together, and in nine months they turned into a living, breathing, human being. Each of us emerged from this same embryonic development process, which is highly complex and organised, but variable enough to turn out a unique individual every time.

If you like order – such as neat piles of stationery, or tidy colour-coded files – you will enjoy this story. One of the most important stages of an embryo's development is when each section of the body, from head to rump, takes on its identity. Each part is told what shape to take, and which limbs or internal organs to grow: legs or arms, lungs or kidneys, and so on.

The most beautiful part of this body-patterning process is that it brings the dimensions of time and space together in such a neat way. The DNA instructions for the procedure, known as genes, are organised in the order in which they are needed during development *which is also* the order in which they appear on the body. No other sets of genes are known to be arranged in such a tidy pattern.

So, as the embryo develops, the tissues near the head end activate the first sets of genes. Those active genes then make all the proteins needed for that part of the body to grow and develop in the right way. The tissues just below the head then switch on the second set of genes, and so on. A wave of activation passes down the embryo, specifying each section of the trunk in turn.

The Wisconsin-based developmental biologist Jeff Hardin often quotes Psalm 139 to express the wonder of embryonic development. The Psalmist did not understand how this process happened, but he knew that it was a marvellous thing. *"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb...your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 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."*

The story of the tidy genes brings out the hidden beauty in the very early stages of embryonic development. The more biologists get to find out about how we came to be born, the more we can say, "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made*"!

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

27th Feb: Gabriel Possenti, the enjoyment of romance

If you have been hurt in your search for romantic love, Gabriel Possenti (1838-62) may be a good saint for you. Because Possenti, born to the governor of Assisi, began by having it all. He grew up doing the mid-19th century equivalent of eBay, nightclubs, cinema and online dating, only in those days it was done by having a tailor who made you an exquisite wardrobe, and then going often to the dances and the theatre with as many young ladies as he could possibly find. Gabriel loved romance; he loved women: his friends called him Il Damerino (the ladies' man).

But the beautiful young ladies were not there for him when Gabriel fell gravely ill. Lying alone in bed Gabriel turned to the only One who could still be found. He prayed that if God would heal him, he would devote his life to him. Sure enough, Gabriel got well. But - he forgot God, and returned to his insatiable search for romantic love.

Gabriel fell ill again, and again the doctors despaired of his life. Again, he prayed, again he was healed, again he returned to his women.

But then one night, when he had joined a sacred procession of the miraculous ikon of Spoleto, something suddenly happened to Gabriel Possenti. He was suddenly overcome by a sense of the presence of God, and the love of God. It was a love he had never dreamed of, and far better than anything he had found with his many women. That night Gabriel decided to forsake the search for the perfect romance, and return to the Lover of his soul.

He joined the Passionist monastery at Morrovalle in 1856, and although his new life was very austere, Possenti was now full of joy that depended on no one but God, and so could never be taken away from him. Sadly, he died young of tuberculosis – at only 24, but his sunny personality and love for God were so outstanding that he became patron of youth. Immense numbers of pilgrims have visited his shrine down the years.

27th Feb: George Herbert, priest and poet

If we were to name someone prominent from the 17th century, we might mention Rembrandt or Shakespeare. It is unlikely we would remember George Herbert. However, he was a prolific writer, a gifted speaker and musician. His hymns are still sung today.

Herbert was born into a wealthy family in Mid-Wales on 3rd April 1593. His father was a Member of Parliament who died when Herbert was three years old. His mother moved her large family to London where, aged 12, Herbert entered Westminster School. In 1609, his mother remarried, and Herbert left home to be a student at Trinity College, Cambridge.

By the age of 23, Herbert had graduated with two degrees. He was fluent in Latin and Greek and in 1620 was elected as the University's Public Orator. He held this position for seven years, and for a short time was MP in his hometown in Wales.

Although Herbert was securing an illustrious future and his speeches had gained the attention of King James 1, he was restless. He felt God was calling him to the priesthood and much of Herbert's poetry expressed his inner spiritual conflicts.

When the King died in 1625, and two influential patrons also died at about the same time, Herbert responded to God's call on his life and gave up his secular ambitions. He married in 1629 and became a priest in a small Anglican church in Bemerton in Wiltshire.

Here he found inner peace at last, serving God in the local community. His poetic talent continued to flourish along with his musicianship as a skilled lutenist. After only three years as a priest, he died of tuberculosis on 1st March 1633. He was 39.

Some ninety of Herbert's poems have been set to music by such composers as Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten. His most well-known hymns are *Teach me my God and King*, *Let all the world in every corner sing* and *King of glory, king of peace*.

A number of artistic commemorations of Herbert exists in several churches and cathedrals including a stained-glass window in Westminster Abbey and a statue at the front of Salisbury Cathedral.

On the art of drinking well

The Rectory
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren



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

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

If an inappropriate vessel is offered, then the drink should be accepted, but left untouched. Since the visit will be discussed in the finest detail throughout the parish the moment you have left, your host will soon learn why and not make the same error a second time. It is for the same reason that if you ever want to circulate a piece of news round the parish as quickly as possible, never put it in the parish magazine, just mention it casually during one of your visits. Everyone will know by teatime.

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

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

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

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

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

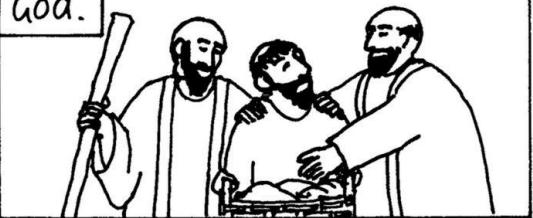
Bible Bite

It can be read in the Bible in
1 Samuel 2:11-17, 22-25, 3:1-21

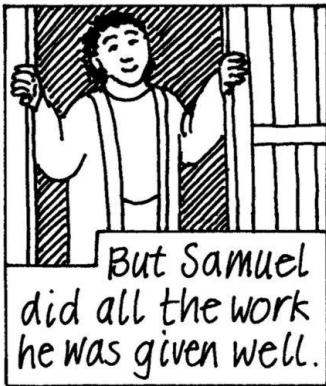
A short story from the Bible

As soon as he was old enough to leave his parents, Samuel went to live at God's temple in Shiloh, with the priest, Eli..

Eli's sons were also priests, but they helped themselves to what people had brought to give to God.



Eli talked to them about it. They ignored him.



But Samuel did all the work he was given well.

One night, after everyone had gone to bed, Samuel heard someone calling him.



He thought it was Eli, so he ran to him.



It happened again.

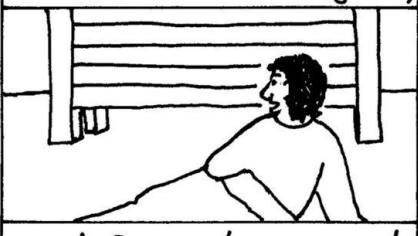


The third time, Eli knew it must be God calling Samuel.



You must say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'

God called Samuel again,



and Samuel answered as he had been told.

I told Eli his sons had done bad things, but he has not stopped them. Now, even being sorry will not make up for what has happened.



The next morning, Eli demanded to be told what God had said.



Samuel was afraid, but he told him.

He is God. He will deal with us as is right.



God continued to talk to Samuel. He became known throughout Israel.



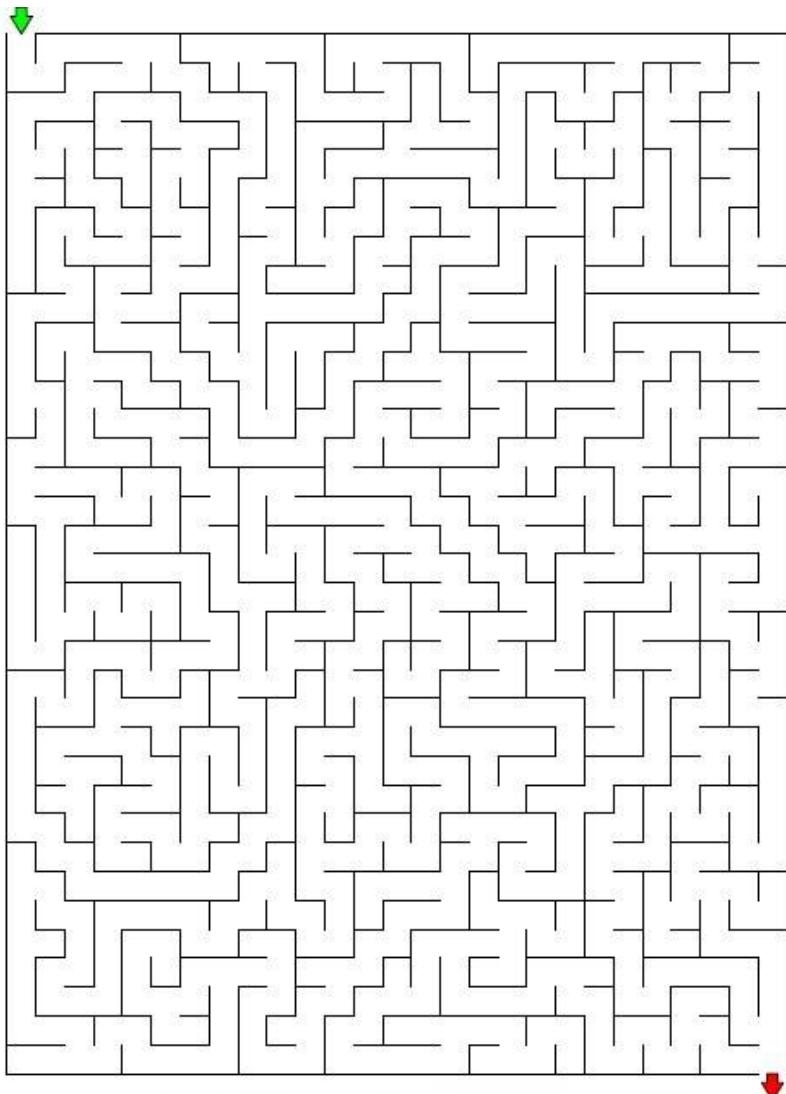
January's Solution

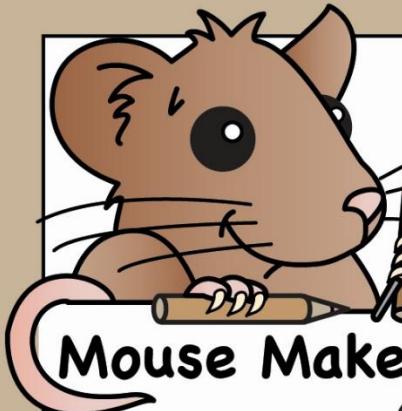
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7	3	1	8	4	9	2	5	6
9	2	4	5	1	6	3	8	7

Can you solve
the maze?





Read the story in
Luke 4:1-13



THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

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

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

What did Jesus eat? v2

What did the devil tempt Jesus to turn a stone into?

What did Jesus say? v3-4

What did the devil offer Jesus if He worshipped him?

What did Jesus say? v7-8

What did the devil ask Jesus to do?

What did Jesus say? v9

FIRST TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:

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

JESUS REPLIED:

"Man shall not live on bread alone."

Read Deuteronomy 8:3

WE LEARN:

Read the Bible

Learn God's word.



SECOND TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:

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

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

Read Deuteronomy 6:13

WE LEARN:
Put God first
Worship only Him.

1

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

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

THIRD TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:

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

JESUS REPLIED:

"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Read Deuteronomy 6:16

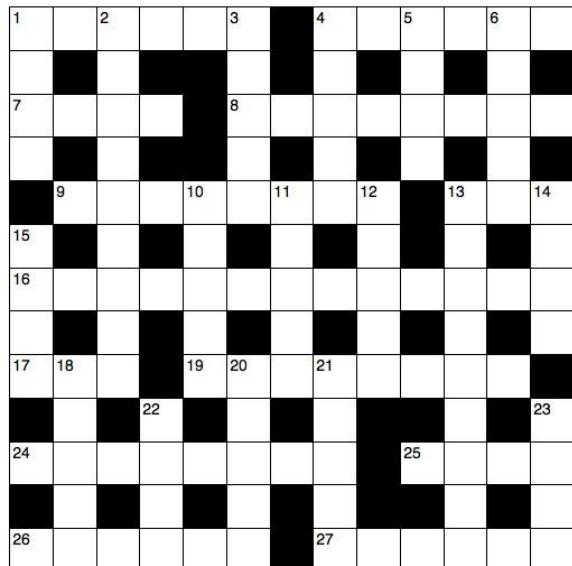
WE LEARN:

God cares, trust
Him do not test Him.



Across

1 'If you love those who love you, what — is that to you?' (Luke 6:32) (6)
4 'They threw the ship's — overboard' (Acts 27:19) (6)
7 The first murderer (Genesis 4:8) (4)
8 He was the head Levite in charge of the singing when the ark of God was brought back to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:22) (8)
9 Samson was noted for this (Judges 16:6) (8)
13 Solicit money or food from passers by (Acts 3:2) (3)
16 What William Booth's Christian Mission became in 1878 (9,4)
17 Alliance of Religions and Conservation (1,1,1)
19 'I will praise your name for ever and ever. — — I will praise you' (Psalm 145:1–2) (5,3)
24 Simon had (anag.) (8)
25 Desperate (Deuteronomy 28:48) (4)
26 Elisha witnessed the boy he was seeking to resuscitate do this seven times before opening his eyes (2 Kings 4:35) (6)
27 The belly and thighs of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream were made of this (Daniel 2:32) (6)



Down

1 'Before the — crows, you will disown me three times' (Matthew 26:75) (4)
2 Relating to the books of the Bible between Acts and Revelation (9)
3 'They have — the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' (John 20:2) (5)
4 Belief (5)
5 'Take the following fine spices: ... 250 shekels of fragrant — ' (Exodus 30:23) (4)
6 'Do not — Jerusalem, but wait for the gift' (Acts 1:4) (5)
10 A seer (anag.) (5)
11 'Even there your hand will — me' (Psalm 139:10) (5)
12 The wild variety was part of John the Baptist's diet (Mark 1:6) (5)
13 A non-Greek speaker who was looked down on by civilized people (Colossians 3:11) (9)
14 Famous 1950s musical whose characters included members of
16 Across, — and Dolls (4)
15 The province from which Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:19) (4)
18 'He was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring — — his hand' (Ezekiel 40:3) (3,2)
20 'Today, if you hear his — , do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion' (Hebrews 3:15) (5)
21 The Jericho prostitute who hid two Israelite spies on the roof of her house (Hebrews 11:31) (5)
22 'And now these three remain: faith, — and love. But the greatest of these is love' (1 Corinthians 13:13) (4)
23 'God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end' (Daniel 5:26) (4)

January's answers:

ACROSS 8, Bottomless pit. 9, Ice. 10, Decalogue. 11, Limbo. 13, Seconds. 16, Crimson. 19, Eager. 22, Abhorrent. 24, Lap. 25, Alpha and Omega.

DOWN: 1, Abdiel. 2, Stream. 3, Wondrous. 4, Flocks. 5, USCL. 6, A pagan. 7, Athens. 12, IOR. 14, Creation. 15, Dye. 16, Cravat. 17, In hope. 18, Need no. 20, Galley. 21, Repeat. 23, Read.