

St. George's Hontesbury

Magazine 50p



March 2026

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

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

QUOTE: Sunday clears away the rust of the whole week.

-Joseph Addison



LIFTING UP OUR EYES

With Rev Stuart Carter

“Risk Taking Love” – a reflection on a mother’s love.

In the middle of Lent, at a time when Christians are encouraged to prayerfully think about their lives and how they might grow to reflect the goodness and love of God, we find ourselves celebrating Mothering Sunday. It’s a time to honour and appreciate our mothers and all those who nurture and care for us. How precious it is to know that unconditional and constant compassion in our lives, and how we miss it when it isn’t there.

One of the best descriptions of unconditional love can be found in the Bible. We often hear it read at weddings in church. It includes these words: *“Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, never gives up... Love never fails.”* (1 Corinthians 13;7-8a)

The Bible contains wonderful example of this kind of love in the story of a mother who comes to Jesus seeking healing for her daughter. The woman is a Canaanite. Today you might well describe her as a Palestinian and, in much the same way, relationships between Jews and Canaanites were not good. We see that playing out in this encounter.

It took some courage for this woman to seek help from a Jew, even if that Jew was Jesus. But if you truly love someone, you’ll be willing to take the risks. *You can find the original account in Matthew chapter 15, but I have paraphrased it below to emphasise the depth of this mother’s love. (I’ve suggested some traditional middle eastern names to personalise the story a little more.)*

Love always protects...

Arisha didn’t know what was wrong. Yasmine her daughter was in a terrible state. She was up and down. She could be smiling one minute and crying or shouting the next. Sometimes she would hurt herself, badly... and it was

getting worse! Yasmine was a cauldron of rage and desperation. It was as if she had something living in her that made her sad or angry or scared or everything at the same time.

Arisha loved her daughter, and she wasn't going to take this anymore. Her daughter needed help, and she was going to get it. After all, love wants to protect doesn't it... Love always protects.

Love always trusts...

Arisha had heard of Jesus. He was different. He was a Jew and she was a Caananite, and they didn't usually get on. But Jesus seemed like someone she could trust. He loved people and he healed people. Yasmine needed loving and healing.

So, Arisha said to Yasmine, "I'm going to get help, I won't be long." And off she went to find Jesus.

She found him with his disciples, and she didn't waste any time. "Lord, Son of David, help me. My daughter has an evil spirit and is suffering terribly."

It was time to trust... Love always trusts.

Love always hopes...

He didn't seem to be listening. Perhaps he was thinking about something else. She shouted a bit louder until the disciples said to Jesus, "Haven't you heard the Caananite woman?"

Jesus said, "I have to help the lost Israelite tribes first."

Well Arisha could have lost hope right then... she could have gone home in despair thinking it was all over. But 'No Way!'. Jesus may have plans she didn't understand, and know things she didn't know, but she was going to trust his compassion. She wasn't going to lose hope... Love always hopes.

Love never gives up...

She walked right up to Jesus. "Lord, help me." she said.

"Do you think it's right for me to help you before my own people?" Jesus asked. "Wouldn't that be like giving the children's food to the dog instead?"

Arisha looked at Jesus. She trusted and she hoped, and she wasn't going to give up... because love never gives up!

Love never fails...

“That may be true,” she said to Jesus, “But even dogs need feeding, and who else is going to feed them except the master?”

Then Jesus looked at her and smiled. “Woman,” he said, “You have great faith! You trusted, and you hoped, and you haven’t given up. Your prayer is answered and your daughter is well.”

Arisha walked, no, *ran* home... filled with the love that protects, trusts, hopes and never gives up. She ran to her daughter who was waiting at the door, smiling, full of love, joy and peace.

This love, which protected and trusted and hoped and never gave up, would never fail. Yasmine discovered her mother loved her like that. And Arisha rejoiced in her discovery that Jesus had recognised it, supported it and blessed it with his own unconditional love that had overflowed the differences between them. The risk had been worth it.

God made true love to be like that... love that always protects, always trusts, always hopes, never gives up... and never fails.

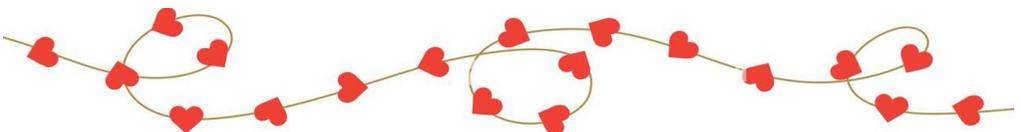
By the end of this month and of Lent we will see that unconditional, overflowing love in action as Jesus, on the Cross, risks and sacrifices everything for love of us all. Easter is when Christians most appreciate the love of Jesus that always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and never gives up on us.

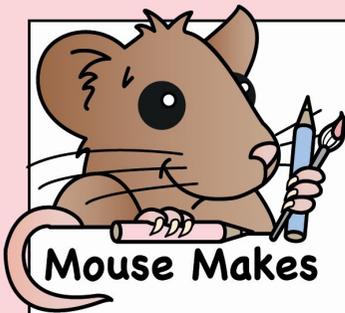
May we all discover God’s unconditional love for us in Jesus.

May we find delight and thankfulness in honouring our mothers and all those who have loved and mothered us.

May we learn to bless others with that same compassionate risk-taking love, whatever the distance and differences between us.

Rev Stuart Carter





Mouse Makes

The Bible has many stories of mothers who had great faith in God. With their love, care, encouragement and prayers their children grew up to be great people of God.



Who saved her baby by putting him in a basket in the river?

Exodus 2:1-3 and 6:20

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

Who was 90 years old when she had her son Isaac?
Genesis 17:19



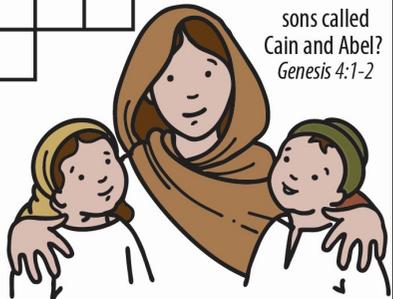
Whose prayers for a child were answered by God?
1 Samuel 1:20

Across

- 3. **Obed's** mother
Matthew 1:5
- 4. **John's** mother
Luke 1:57-60
- 7. **Reuben's** mother
Genesis 29:32
- 8. **Joseph's** mother
Genesis 30:22-24
- 9. **Jesus'** mother
Acts 1:14

Down

- 1. **Boaz's** mother
Matthew 1:5
- 2. **Solomon's** mother
1 Kings 1:11
- 4. **Timothy's** mother
2 Timothy 1:5
- 5. **Ishmael's** mother
Genesis 16:15
- 6. **Jacob and Esau's** mother
Genesis 25:21-26



Who had two sons called Cain and Abel?
Genesis 4:1-2

Answer the questions then put them into the crossword

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Readings and Services for this MONTH

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

Date	Service	Readings
1st March 2 nd Sunday of Lent	Holy Communion 10.30am	Genesis 12.1-4a Psalm 121 John 3.1-17
3rd March	Tea Service 2.30pm	
5th March	Messy Church 3.30pm	
8 th March 3 rd Sunday of Lent	Morning Worship without Communion. Children`s Church 10.30am	Exodus 17.1-7 Romans 5.1-11 John 4.5-42
15th March Mothering Sunday	Holy Communion and Children`s Church 10.30am	1 Samuel 1. 20-end Colossians 3. 12-17 Luke 2. 33-35
22 nd March 5 th Sunday of Lent (Passiontide begins)	All Age Family Worship 10.30am	Psalm 130 Romans 8. 6-11 John 8. 1-11
29th March Palm Sunday	Dramatised Passion 10.30am	



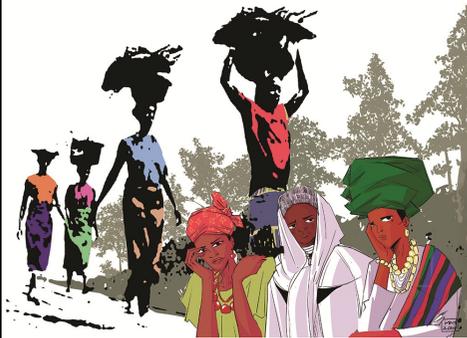
MEDITATION SERVICE

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

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

The next service will be at **St.G's on March 8th at 7pm.**

Our church COMMUNITY



WORLD DAY of PRAYER

Prepared by
Christian women from
NIGERIA

"I will give you rest" Matthew 11:28-30

Friday 6th March, 2.30pm
at
PONTESBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Followed by refreshments

Everyone is very welcome!

COMING SOON in APRIL—

An invitation to all Members of the Electoral Roll :

APCM 2026

St. George's APCM (Annual Parochial Church Meeting) this year will be held on Sunday, 26th April following the morning Service.

COMING SOON in MAY—

A Free ORGAN RECITAL

With **RICHARD WALKER ARCO FRCO**
Assistant Director of Music at St.Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

Saturday 23rd May 11 am



Welcome to The Tea Break



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

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

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

Transport is Available—Friends & Family are Welcome too.

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

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

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

All information given is given in confidence.



Monthly Tea Service

(not August)

1st Tuesday afternoon

2.30pm to 4pm

St George's Church,
Pontesbury.

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

Our local COMMUNITY



Rea Valley
foodbank

Supporting those in food crisis within the Rea Valley Community

Thank you to Pontesbury Co-op for £250 for Foodbank costs

Craig Pugh, Pontesbury Co-op's Manager enabled Foodbank to gain this generous grant from the Co-op, which will go towards our running costs. We really appreciate Craig's help, the staff at the store and the local support from our communities.



Jonathan Brown, RVF & Craig Pugh, Co-op

Please keep donating in date tinned and packaged food, toilet-

tries, and cleaning products. All donations are very welcome; it is especially helpful if you can check our "Items in Need" on our website

<https://reavalleyfoodbank.co.uk/donating/>

Please help us by telling people about our Foodbank as we know there are people out there who need our help. Do encourage them to take the first step. It's easy to get referred, or they contact us themselves, or you can contact us on their behalf. You are welcome to come along with them to their first Foodbank visit and stay for a hot drink and a chat. Our volunteers are friendly and non-judgmental, so please do try us.

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



Open Gardens
Sunday 17th May



CANCELLED



The Rea Valley Transport Scheme ...

... has now been up and running since the end of last September. In that time, we have transported nearly 30 patients to a variety of venues including Shrewsbury Hospital, Pontesbury Surgery and Gobowen. The scheme, which is entirely free, is designed to get patients to the Doctors, dentists, hospital, opticians and other wellbeing services.

We can never guarantee to be able to help but we have been able to respond positively to most requests. To request transport, please contact our scheme administrator, Emma, at reavalleytransportscheme.info@gmail.com or by calling **07468115939**. She works Monday-Friday 10-2.30 and 3.30-5. We do not operate an answering machine service, so please call back if you receive no answer. If possible, please give us a minimum of a week's notice of when and where your appointment is.



Truth Encounter *By Daphne Kitching*

(Luke 4:1-14, John 17:17, James 4:7)

Led by the Spirit
And tempted by the devil
He wandered in the wilderness,
Hungry
And focussed on God,
And the truth and power of His Word.
Truth and power enough
To resist His enemy and ours.
To go on - armed with the Spirit -
To give His life,
To give us life.

A lesson in tactics then:
Know the truth,
Submit to God,
Resist the devil
And our wildernesses will blossom.
We will bear fruit,
Fruit to be known by
As His.

Looking at GOD

The Way of the Cross

'Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me.' (Luke 9: 23)

These words of Jesus are spoken at a turning point in the gospel. Jesus challenged the disciples about His identity and their commitment to Him: *'who do the crowds say I am?'* (Luke 9:18). It is at this point that He *'resolutely set out for Jerusalem'* (9:51). On our journey through Lent, as we look to the events of Good Friday and Easter, what are our priorities as Jesus' disciples?

To deny ourselves: this means to saying *No* to ourselves and *Yes* to God, as we humbly submit our will to His. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane *'not My will but Yours be done.'* (Luke 22:42). It means putting Jesus first in everything: our work, family, ambitions, possessions, marriage, finance and future. We will not be guided by self-interest, but by allowing God to show us how to live in His way.

To take up our cross: this reminds us that the disciple is not immune from suffering, as we follow Jesus along the way of the cross. Just as He carried His cross to Golgotha, we cannot avoid experiencing suffering in a fallen world. Every day we are to live in way that demonstrates to everyone that we have died to ourselves, our selfish ways and ambitions, and seek to live for God. It means breaking old selfish habits and ways of thinking, as we allow God to renew us by His Spirit.

Perhaps that is something we should learn—to wait for Jesus our Master, to be always obedient to Him, to serve Him with all our hearts, and to bear the mark of His grace in our lives.

In all of this we cannot lose, because like Jesus, it is only through death that we find God's new life. *'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose.'* (Jim Elliot).



Lester Amann considers the little donkey of Palm Sunday...

Why we should be like donkeys

Are you a pet-lover? Many people own a dog, a cat or a budgie, but most of us don't own a donkey! Yet in Bible times, donkeys were essential to daily life. They did everything from helping to grind corn, to ploughing, to carrying people, to transporting their belongings. Despite their small frame, donkeys are surprisingly tough. They are content with poor fodder like thistles and can travel an average of 20 miles a day.



There are two occasions in the Christian calendar where donkeys walk into the picture. At Christmas, Mary travelled the 100 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem on a donkey. And although a donkey doesn't get a specific mention in the manger story, that same one that transported her was probably there at the birth; where else would it have been?

On Palm Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Jesus deliberately chose this animal rather than a horse. Why? In Bible times, the horse was associated with war, conquest and worldly might. But the donkey was a symbol of peace and humility. Jesus used this animal to show that He had come with the dignity of the King of peace. His entry into the Holy City also fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy concerning the Messiah.



Donkeys are hardworking and undemanding. They wait for their master to put them to the work he has chosen for them. And, remarkably, each one bears the mark of the Cross on their backs!

Two donkeys

Two donkeys were walking the streets of Jerusalem. One said: "Just a few days ago I came down that hill carrying Jesus, and the people were all singing and shouting and throwing down their cloaks and palms for me to walk on. But today they don't even recognise me."



The other donkey replied: "That is how it is, my friend. Without Jesus, none of us amounts to much."

Mothering Sunday

Mothering Sunday- the fourth Sunday of Lent- offers families an opportunity to honour the women who have nurtured them. Lots of different streams and traditions have come together to make Mothering Sunday the special day that it is.

In the Middle Ages it was an occasion for everyone to visit their 'mother' church- the place where they had been baptised. Later, an opportunity for those who worked away from home to visit their mothers became added to the mix of reasons to make it a special day.



Today we honour all women who have in one way or another been special to us, and in church this is usually signalled by small bunches of flowers for every woman present.

Treating mums and grans to Sunday lunch, chocolates and flowers is also part of the present mix. And will there be a simnel cake to be seen - a tradition from ages past- with its rich layers of marzipan, and eleven balls of marzipan on top, reminders of the 11 disciples who remained faithful to Jesus?



Not everyone has enjoyed a wonderful or enduring relationship with their mum, so lest we get carried away on a wave of love and sentimentality, there is usually space in the Mothering Sunday church service to reflect on and pray for those whose relationships with their mother were not all they might have been.

Also, there are the families blighted by the lack of, or death of a child; families remembering a mum who died tragically young; women who never had a child but would have dearly loved the opportunity; all these and more are a recognition of the imperfections of human love, human life.

These imperfections can be brought in prayer to the God who mothers us. In the Old Testament, Isaiah speaks of God comforting His people like a mother hen. In the New Testament, both Matthew and Luke bear witness to Jesus expressing His desire to gather His people as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Yes, God has strong maternal qualities which He invites us to discover and enjoy!

Have you discovered the mothering, nurturing, maternal qualities which God offers to all people? It's lovelier than flowers, more long-lasting than simnel cake, better than a visit from family, and it's free to everyone who wants it- it could be yours!

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



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

What's the Big Idea? - An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament: Jeremiah

Jeremiah is described as *'a true, honest, and God-revealing companion for the worst of times.'* (Eugene Peterson). He was a priest from the village of Anathoth, near Jerusalem. His ministry to Judah began in 626 B.C. and continued until after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Jeremiah brought a message of judgment and hope: *'See, I have set you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.'* (1:10).

During Jeremiah's ministry, Judah had rejected the Lord for idols (2:13). They claimed to be God's people, yet they refused to heed God's word by refusing to be corrected and following false prophets who spoke what the people wanted to hear. Therefore, Jeremiah was the prophet of judgement. He called Judah to repent, but they refused (6:16-17). However, he also brought a message of hope. He preached that they should trust God (9:23-24) and that a faithful remnant would be restored to the land (23:3; 31:7-9).

Jeremiah was a reluctant prophet, who felt compelled to speak God's word (20:9). His life was characterised by sorrow, *'O my Comforter in sorrow, my heart is faint within me.'* (8: 18). His people continually refused to listen to him, rewarding his labour with rejection and persecution.

Much of Jeremiah's message remains relevant today, because we still fall into idolatry, whether it is wealth, talents or social standing. Sin requires repentance and restoration; obedience brings blessings and joy with it. However, Jeremiah also points to Christ, as the one who makes this possible. He showed great compassion for His people and shed tears for them. He suffered their ingratitude, but still forgave them.



The Revd Dr Jo White considers various aspects of Christianity.

Reflecting Faith: Togetherness

Last month we began our Lenten journey with ashes on Ash Wednesday, reminding us of our beginning and our ending; soon we will conclude that time with Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Such a relatively short time for so great a distance. I'm reminded of this by the opening words used in Church of England services at the Palm Sunday services:

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, during Lent we have been preparing by works of love and self-sacrifice for the celebration of our Lord's death and resurrection. Today we come together to begin this solemn celebration in union with the Church throughout the world. Christ enters His own city to complete His work as our Saviour, to suffer, to die, and to rise again. Let us go with Him in faith and love, so that, united with Him in His sufferings, we may share His risen life.

It's all about togetherness. Together as a small group of people in that one church where we worship. Together with 'the' Church across all denominations and throughout the world. Together with Christ Himself.

It's one of the reasons that we process on Palm Sunday. Ideally it will be a joyful and noisy procession with banners and rejoicing – reminding us of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as much as into our own lives.

This month:

It's in this joy wherein lies the contrast with our solemn and silent procession on Good Friday. We need them both. One on its own doesn't tell the full story. Just like a play on Good Friday without its follow-up on Easter Sunday leaves you hanging.

We all know that social media tends to only show happy occasions but that underneath all those meals and holidays and smiling faces there can be great heartaches and sorrows.

It's the togetherness of both of those emotions where the true depth of joy is to be found and not on the surfaces.

How do we greet Christ anew on Resurrection Sunday without the devastating loss of Good Friday, or that long week travelling in and out of the city walls? May you find real joy in togetherness this Eastertide!



The Seven Deadly Sins: ANGER

Canon Paul Hardingham continues his seven-part series.

'Anger is never without a reason, but seldom with a good one' (Benjamin Franklin).

Who or what makes you angry? In the third of our 7 Deadly Sins, we are looking at *anger* (or *wrath*).

It describes uncontrolled feelings of hatred and resentment, and it can lead to resentment and grudges, quarrelling and damaged relationships. Jesus warns us about the consequence of anger: *'I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.'* (Matt 5:22).

Jesus Himself got angry, notably when He saw the Temple being exploited by the money changers (Matt 21:12-13). Such *righteous anger* is a measured response to injustice or evil, motivated by love not vengeance.

However, it is important for us to deal with unrighteous anger in our lives: *'In your anger do not sin: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.'* (Ephesians 4:26,27). What practical steps can we take to do this?

Acknowledge your anger: What are the root causes of our anger? Often it comes from deeper feelings, like fear, inadequacy or the desire to control.

Control your anger: Stepping back before reacting can prevent anger from controlling us: *'everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry'* (James 1:19,20).

Seek to forgive: Practising forgiveness, not seeking revenge or holding grudges, will enable us to overcome anger: *'Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.'* (Colossians 3:12,13). Christ died to take the wrath of God we deserve, that we might know God's forgiveness.

'People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing' (Will Rogers).

There is a lot of talk about 'mindfulness' these days, and how to find calm moments in our daily lives. Both the BBC and Classic FM have radio stations devoted to 'mindful' and 'calm' music. But as Christians, we have an extra, divine resource to call on ... read on

Peaceful mind in Lent

Lent is a time of prayer and inward reflection, when we take stock of where we are with God...with this in mind, the following may be helpful.

* "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." *Matthew 11: 28-30.*

* "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
John 16:33

* "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him." *James 1:12*

In a special service at St Paul's Cathedral, at her Confirmation of Election Bishop Sarah Mullally DBE legally became the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury on 28th January.

Bishop Sarah said:

"It is an extraordinary and humbling privilege to have been called to be the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury. In this country and around the world, Anglican churches bring healing and hope to their communities. With God's help, I will seek to guide Christ's flock with calmness, consistency and compassion.

"These are times of division and uncertainty for our fractured world. I pray that we will offer space to break bread together and discover what we have in common – and I pledge myself to this ministry of hospitality.

"I want us to be a Church that always listens to the voices of those who have been ignored or overlooked, among them victims and survivors of church abuse who have often been let down.

"I am committed to equipping the Church to be a kind and safe place that cares for everyone, especially those who are vulnerable, as we rise to the challenge of God's call to justice, equity, peace and the care of creation".

Looking at CHURCH, at home and worldwide



Artwork for new mural in honour of Scots heroine of the Holocaust unveiled

The artwork for a striking new mural in Paisley to commemorate the bravery of a Scot who died in Auschwitz has been unveiled.

Jane Haining was the matron of the Scottish Mission School in Budapest, Hungary during the Second World War and refused to abandon Jewish girls in her care.

She was arrested in April 1944 and eventually deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland where she died in a gas chamber a few months later.

The town was chosen for the first wall mural in Scotland in her memory because she worked as a secretary at J&P Coats' Ferguslie Mill for 10 years before moving to Budapest in 1932 to take up her role at the Church of Scotland school.



The Scottish Mission School had around 400 day and boarder pupils aged from six to 16 years old, a mixture of Jews and Christians.

Miss Haining helped keep the children safe for more than four years after the war broke out in 1939, until she was betrayed by the cook's son-in-law, whom she scolded for taking scarce food meant for the girls, some of whom were orphans or abandoned by their parents.

She was determined to stick to her post and repeatedly ignored Church of Scotland requests to return home, saying: 'If these children need me in days of sunshine, how much more do they need me in days of darkness?'

Miss Haining was arrested by German officers in April 1944 and former pupil Agnes Rostas said her haunting last words to sobbing children were: "Don't worry, I'll be back by lunch".

Support from the Baptist family for Spurgeon's students

The whole 'Baptist family' has responded magnificently to the **Baptist Union of Great Britain's** (BUGB) Spurgeon's appeal - £90,000 has been donated by churches and individuals to support Baptist students who had been studying at Spurgeon's College when it sadly and unexpectedly closed its doors in July 2025

Many students were facing considerable financial disadvantage because of the change of their host college. Some had already paid fees for 2025-26 with no guarantee that the money would be repaid. Others were going to incur additional travel and accommodation costs as they accessed training beyond London. These were the reasons why BUGB launched an appeal for support for these students in September.

The Baptist family rose to the occasion and by the time the appeal closed in early November, £90,000 had been collected. This has enabled BUGB to ensure firstly that all Baptist students who had already paid fees were fully compensated. And secondly, BUGB has been able to give a substantial sum to each of the Baptist students on a ministerial training pathway.



*My sermon today comes from
Apps Chapter 1 beginning at verse 2...*

Looking at CHURCH, at home and worldwide

Deanery of Pontesbury

DEANERY NEWS

Rural Dean: **The Revd Greg Smith**

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Thought for the month from: the Rev. Freddie Strong

Lent: An invitation to draw close to God

For millions of Christians around the world Lent is a season for reflection; an opportunity to draw closer to God by making space for prayer, bible reading and contemplating God's amazing love. Fasting or 'giving-up' something is a spiritual discipline that many engage with during Lent as a means of focusing on God's saving love.

I wonder what Lent means to you? I suspect many of us see it as an opportunity to "give-up" or fast from something in the period between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. For some reason chocolate seems to be high on the list of things to give up! Of course, it might be other things too – sweets, alcoholic beverages, switching off from social media, not eating meat and lots of other things.

Have you given up something for Lent? If so, how are you getting on? Excited at how well you're doing or exhausted by the whole experience so far? Is your heart soaring up or sinking down? I think all of us will have different feelings and experiences whatever we choose to do or not to do during Lent. Some of us find it easier to engage with spiritual disciplines like fasting or praying than others.

Whatever practice we might engage with during Lent, at the heart of it lies our motivation. What is it that we're seeking after? Are we simply chasing after an experience or are we wanting to experience more of God's presence in our lives? It's a question worth pondering.

I don't know where you might be on your journey of faith. Perhaps you've

been a follower of Jesus for many decades. Perhaps you've just begun to explore the Christian faith. Perhaps you're somewhere in-between. Perhaps like me you long for more of God's presence in your life – you long to know and experience more of Him on a daily basis.

If that's true, then let me encourage you to seek God wholeheartedly in this season of Lent and beyond. There's a wonderful promise in the Old Testament book of Jeremiah where God says, 'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart' (Jeremiah 29:13).

We can seek after God by reading his word in the Bible (why not start with Mark's gospel in the New Testament), through prayer, fasting, worship, in silence, stillness and contemplation. There are also many helpful bible apps that you can listen to such as Lectio 365 which contain a short bible passage and a reflection to help you. One size doesn't fit all. See what works for you. The important thing is to be intentional. Nurture a daily habit of spending time with God in prayer, bible reading and listening. Why not try 10 or 15mins a day for Lent and see how things go. You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain!



THE DIOCESE OF HEREFORD

March 2026

As I write this we are fast approaching the fourth anniversary of the full scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 22nd. I have learnt through listening to the Ukrainian community who came here following that invasion that for many this war actually began in 2014 when Russia invaded the Crimea. Our communities have offered hospitality, love and care to those displaced by this act of war.



Wherever we look our news is constantly full of conflict and around the world there are armed conflicts and tensions which cause us all to stop and ask is there not a better way to resolve our differences. Whatever the politics and reasons for the Russian invasion what is clear is that despite peace negotiations this war is continuing to see people killed and injured on both sides. It is important we do not lose sight of the fact that in war there are no winners only losers.

There are many theological arguments on whether warfare can ever be just and how we appropriately remember those lost in war. For us as Christians the

Bible has a lot to teach us about the root causes of warfare and bloodshed. We are also reminded in those same pages that we are called to serve one another and to care for those who suffer. The ultimate sacrifice will always be to give our lives away for others.

“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”John 15:13

As Christians we are called to build relationships that create peace and harmony and offer the reconciling power of Jesus’ love. We are to offer a better more appropriate way to live and it is through the empowering of the Holy Spirit that we are changed. It is the Holy Spirit that builds the fruit of the Kingdom within each of us, and this enables us to bear one another’s burdens and create communities of peace.

As Jesus prepared for his own death, he warns the disciples not to lose heart when they see strife in the world. As they stand outside the temple in Jerusalem, he warns them what is to happen in their lifetime. His words are fulfilled in 72AD when the Romans destroy the temple in Jerusalem, but they are also just as true today for us as for his disciples.

“Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

All these are the beginning of birth pains.”Matthew 24:4-8

Jesus does not mean that we have to accept war with its horror and bloodshed but that we should respond to it appropriately. The New Testament teaches us that human selfishness, greed and intolerance lead to conflict. The church has a message of hope and the solution to these driving passions deep within humanity. If we are in any doubt, it is Jesus and his sacrifice for us that reconciles us to God and helps us offer peace in the world. We are called to fight evil and stand up for the Kingdom and its values; in doing so we help to build a better world. Our job is not to judge but to offer love and support.

As a clergy person I have had the privilege of hearing the stories and experiences of grief and pain that war brings from those most impacted by it. I have always tried to bring God’s love, forgiveness and compassion to those who are tormented by memories of war. As the church we are called to care for those who suffer and to build a more peaceful world. In this period of Lent perhaps we should all pray for peace and reconciliation wherever there is conflict.

The Venerable Derek Chedzey - Archdeacon of Hereford

The world-wide COMMUNITY



Marie Curie's Great Daffodil Appeal 2026 – as it celebrates 40 years

Throughout the month of March, the end-of-life charity Marie Curie will be holding its annual flagship fundraiser, the Great Daffodil Appeal.

There's only one chance to give someone the best possible end of life.

And one chance for you to help give care that makes all that possible. Care that protects someone's dignity – instead of leaving them alone or in pain. This Great Daffodil Appeal is that chance.

Now in its 40th year, the appeal raises vital funds to help Marie Curie provide end of life care and support in homes, hospitals and hospices across the UK. By donating and wearing your daffodil this March, you can help Marie Curie Nurses bring expert end of life care when there's no cure, whatever the illness.

Money raised also funds the charity's free support line and webchat which is available to anyone with an illness they're likely to die from and those close to them. It offers practical and emotional support on everything from managing symptoms and navigating care to financial information, including how to get help with energy bills and bereavement support.

Whether it's taking part in a fundraising challenge, organising a bake sale or volunteering your time to collect donations, every penny will help Marie Curie deliver quality care to those who need it most.

The Great Daffodil Appeal only happens once a year. This is your chance to make it count.

For information and to donate visit: [Mariecurie.org.uk/daffodil](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/daffodil)

QUOTE: Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car. - *Anon*



Do You Know About This ????

Earth Hour 2026 – a time to turn off your lights

The Earth Hour 2026 takes place on Saturday 28th March, when at 8.30pm in their local time millions of people worldwide will turn off their non-essential lights for one hour.

Organised by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the 20th anniversary of this global initiative will aim to raise awareness of the earth’s climate crisis, and to encourage environmental action through sustainable, actionable lifestyle changes.

The first Earth Hour was held in Sydney, Australia, on 31st March 2007, and has since become a global movement. The 2025/26 theme is ‘Giving an Hour for Earth’ is encouraging people to adapt sustainable habits in their daily lives.

And while our lights are off for an hour, Earth Hour will encourage us to spend the time in nature, or stargazing, or engaging in environmental, educational, or sustainable activities.

More info at: <https://www.earthhour.org>

Our love affair with our phones

It was 150 years ago this month, on 10th March 1876, that the world’s first telephone call was made. Alexander Graham Bell called his assistant and said: “Mr Watson, come here. I want you.”



That phone call was the beginning of a worldwide addiction to phones. Phones spread quickly, constantly improved, and after more than 100 years of landlines, mobile phones arrived.

The first was introduced by Motorola in 1983 in the USA. The Motorola DynaTAC 8000X weighed nearly two pounds and cost around \$3,995.

The first smartphone, the IBM Simon Personal Communicator, was released in 1994, combining phone calls with PDA features like email, fax, and a

calendar on a touchscreen. It was so expensive it sold only about 50,000.

But by the late 90s, the BlackBerry had become a top favourite, with its popular email and messaging services beloved by Barak Obama, among many others.



Steve Jobs, and the original iPhone

Then in 2007, Apple released the first iPhone, informally known as the iPhone 2G, with an advanced multi-touch interface and app ecosystem.

Fast forward nearly 20 years, and there are now about **7.5 billion** active smartphones in the world. The total number of all connections (SIMs/devices) now even exceeds the human population of about 8.3 billion.

The mystery of suffering By Megan Carter

Why is there suffering. who can know
When all is well and free from strife?
Job also thought upon these things
Then tragedy struck. upturning his life.
 A curtain in heaven was drawn aside.
 A spiritual battle was all around
 Bringing death. destruction. sickness and woe
 As Satan attempted to bring Job down.
Job's friends arrived to sit and pray.
To fathom out the reason why.
But all their wisdom came to nought.
Even his wife said: 'curse God and die'.
 Unseen forces inhabit our world.
 But God is faithful. His word is true.
 Hold fast to God. He never fails
 For God in Christ will see us through.

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Matthew 25: 14-30

Jesus told a story to help his disciples to be ready for the end of time. 'A rich man was about to go on a journey...'

He gave his servants money to look after, depending on what they could do.

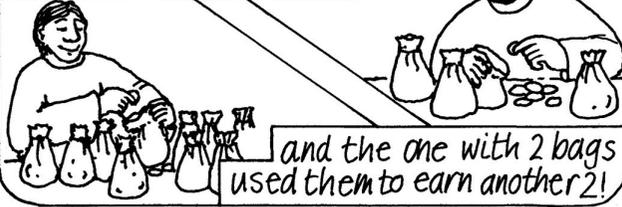


He gave 5 bags of coins to the first, 2 to the second, and 1 to the third.

As soon as he had gone, the first two servants started to work.



The one with 5 bags of coins used them to earn 5 more,



and the one with 2 bags used them to earn another 2!

The third servant dug a hole and buried his bag.



When the master came back, he called his servants to him...



The first two showed him they had doubled his money, and he was very happy with them.



You are a hard man who expects us to work. I was afraid so I just hid it.

If you knew what I expected, why didn't you do it?



Get out of here!



Bible Bite

.... Word search ... these words
from the story are hidden in the grid.

s	e	c	o	n	d	j	w	o	r	k
t	h	x	o	y	z	e	j	h	k	m
a	i	o	p	i	b	s	o	r	m	o
r	b	m	w	e	n	u	u	n	a	n
t	p	m	e	e	c	s	r	u	s	e
e	c	o	u	l	d	t	n	i	t	y
d	i	s	c	i	p	l	e	s	e	d
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s	e	r	v	a	n	t	s	i	d	t
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h	o	l	e	n	d	t	e	a	r	n

could	third	rich
story	servants	showed
end	bags	master
hard	expected	hole
disciples	buried	earn
started	time	first
Jesus	coins	work
money	second	journey

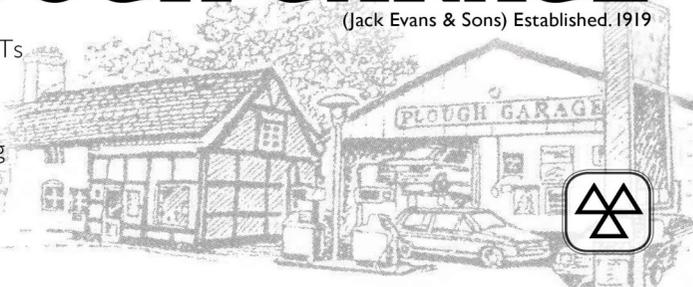


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