

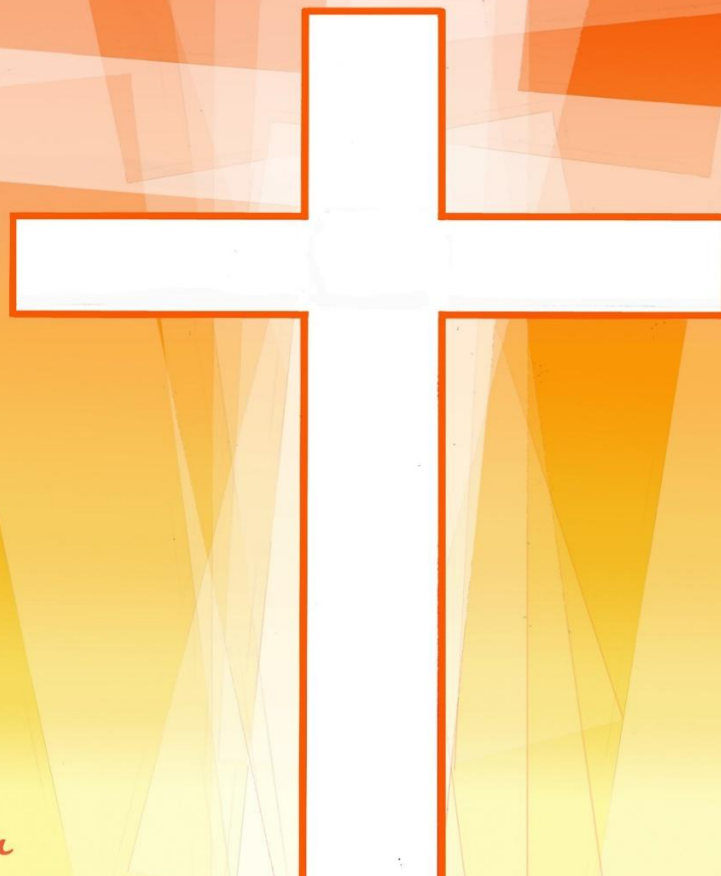
Rushall Parish News

April 2026

Free online. 30p print copy

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

Risen Christ,
you filled your disciples with
boldness and fresh hope:
strengthen us to proclaim
your risen life and fill us
with your peace,
to the glory of God the Father



Paul Judson

Some useful numbers

Vicar: Revd Colin Such Tel: 01922 624677
Email colinsuch01@gmail.com

Lay Reader & Dementia Lead
Mrs Carol Beckwith Tel: 01922 648138

Churchwardens:
Mr Bob Barnard
Tel: 01922 624943
Mrs Jan Firth (Lay Reader)
Tel: 01922 449089

Safeguarding Officer:
Mrs Gill Clark
Tel: 01922 624583

To hire the hall:
Mrs Gill Clark
Tel: 01922 624583.
Email clagilli@aol.com

Wedding Enquiries:
Mrs Glenys Barnard
Tel: 01922 624943
Email glenysbarnard@btinternet.com

See our website www.Rushallparish.org or
our Facebook page [RushallParish](#) for regular
updates.

30 years ago, on 1st April 1996 that during the BSE ('mad cow disease') outbreak, the government announced that it would begin slaughtering all cattle over the age of 30 months to eradicate the disease. In the end, 80,000 cattle were slaughtered



Most people want to serve God,
but only in an advisory position.
– Anon

Please send any articles for the May
magazine to Colin at
colinsuch01@gmail.com by Friday
24th April.

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

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

The Book of Lamentations consists of five laments over the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of Judah's leading inhabitants to Babylon. Tradition ascribes the book to Jeremiah, who witnessed Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC. Each lament is an *acrostic* i.e. each verse begins in order with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet (except the fifth).

The themes of the laments can be summarised as follows: Jerusalem in Agony (1); the LORD's Anger (2); Judah's complaint against Adversity (3); Jerusalem's Anxiety (4); and Judah's prayer to the Almighty (5). Lamentations portrays the overwhelming sense of loss that accompanied the destruction of the city, along with its Temple with its worship and sacrifices. However, the book is not simply concerned about Jerusalem's destruction, but for the lessons that can be learned from it.

Jeremiah sees the Babylonians as human agents of God's judgment upon Judah's sin. It was God Himself who destroyed the city and temple. However, God's action was not arbitrary, for the people had deliberately sinned against Him and broken their covenant with Him. Although the people's tears and cries for vengeance are understandable, God looks for a sincere heartfelt sorrow from the people. The book begins with lament, *'How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she who once was great among the nations!'* (1:1), but finishes with repentance, *'Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old'* (5:21). However, in the middle of the book there is a reminder of God's goodness and faithfulness: *'Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.'* (3:22-23).

This month's Contents:

Lamentations	3
Vicar's Letter	4
Easter Eve	5
M&M	6
Why Easter will never go away	7
Gardening Notes	8
Resurrection Life	9
The Almshouses	10
Our dementia advisor	12
Never far away	13
Out and about	14
Easter chocolate	15
Eco update	16
Martyrs of the early church	17
Recipe	18
St. George	19
The cost of obesity	20
Good Friday	21
Sudan War	22
Catherine of Sienna	23
St. James the Least	24
Bible Bites	25
Puzzles	26
Mouse Makes	27
Crossword	28

Love's redeeming work is done

I sometimes think I'm dreaming or have drifted into an alternative reality. It really can't be real that an American President would threaten to invade Greenland, start an illegal war in Iran, insult his allies, cause global economic turmoil and publish foul mouthed childish rants on social media – and then be compared to Jesus Christ whilst his cronies claim that the deliberate bombing of innocent people gives glory to God.

A few years ago the stories that appear in our news bulletins today would have been seen in either a spoof political comedy show or an apocalyptic horror movie, neither of which would have seemed believable at the time.

Meanwhile as we approach local elections other politicians are crying out for us to drill for oil and gas (ignoring the climate disaster that is facing us all and the need to change the way we live) and to turn away those who are seeking new lives having fled from the horrors in other countries whilst claiming to be "soldiers for Christ".

In the darkness of the night a light shone, in the dawn the reality of



resurrection was seen. A new way of life as Christians was begun, a life that was born through the pain and suffering of the cross but was transformed into the joy and light of Easter.

The triumph of Easter is won through sacrifice, through self-giving and the laying down of a life for love of friends. The Easter victory is won not through the use of power but through the power of love, not through force but through sacrifice.

As I watch the news the prayer that comes to mind is that of the cross – "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do". And I say it in the trust that the light of God's love and Christ's triumph shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

Colin

Easter Eve or Holy Saturday

Easter Eve is the last day of Lent. It is the day between Good Friday and Easter Day, and represents the one full day that Jesus was dead. It is a day of quiet reflection and anticipation for Christians worldwide.

In various church traditions it is known as Easter Eve, Holy Saturday, the Great Sabbath, Hallelujah Saturday, Saturday of the Glory, and Black Saturday.

Easter Eve is sometimes incorrectly called Easter Saturday. But Easter Saturday is the Saturday *following* Easter Sunday.

Most churches do not have any services on Easter Eve. In the Catholic Church, the altar remains stripped completely bare. Many Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, and other churches observe many of the same customs as the Catholic Church; however, their altars may be covered in black instead of being stripped.

In the Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Methodist traditions, Easter Eve lasts until nightfall, after which the Easter Vigil is celebrated, marking the official start of the Easter season.

What did Jesus do on that one full day in the grave? Christian understanding varies on this.

The Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and most mainline Protestant churches teach that Jesus descended to the realm of the dead on Holy Saturday, to save the righteous souls who died before His crucifixion.

The catechism of the Catholic church calls the descent "the last phase of Jesus' messianic mission," during which He "opened heaven's gates for the just who had gone before Him."

Often called "the Harrowing of Hell," the dramatic image of Jesus breaking down the doors of Hades has proved almost irresistible to artists, from the painter Hieronymus Bosch to the poet Dante to countless Eastern Orthodox iconographers.

But some Protestants say there is little scriptural evidence for the detour to hell, and that even Jesus' own words contradict it. For on Good Friday, Jesus told the Good Thief crucified alongside Him that "today you will be with Me in Paradise," according to Luke's Gospel."

"That's the only clue we have as to what Jesus was doing between death and resurrection," John Piper, a prominent evangelical author and pastor from Minnesota, has said. "I don't think the thief went to hell and that hell is called paradise."

The Bible says little about the interlude between Jesus' death and resurrection. Churches that teach He descended to the realm of the dead usually quote 1 Peter 3:18-20. "Christ was put to death as a human, but made alive by the Spirit," Peter writes. "And it was by the Spirit that He went to preach to the spirits in prison."

The descent might not have become a doctrine if not for a fourth-century bishop named Rufinus, who added that Jesus went *ad inferna* - to hell - in his commentary on the Apostles' Creed. The phrase stuck, but it was officially added to the influential creed only centuries later.

M&M: Monty and Matty

Well, what a difference! The mud is gone, the servant's wellies no longer used and the lawn has been mowed. The servant has even been out in the garden throwing a stick for us. (He does keep stopping to do some gardening – which is annoying – he doesn't seem to understand the priorities involved!)



For a few days we thought the summer had come – it was very hot, a reminder of what we might expect in a few months' time perhaps. The servant didn't seem to mind – he even looked happy when he looked at the cost of heating, especially bearing in mind that we keep leaving the back door open.

We notice that the leaves are beginning to appear on the trees around the Lime Pits and the squirrels seem to be very busy at the moment. We've seen quite a few people on our walks over the Easter holiday, it's nice to see people making the most of the outdoors though we do wish they wouldn't leave their rubbish behind. Luckily the litter pickers are out and about too, though they keep forgetting to leave any tasty treats on the pavement for us to find (which for some reason seems to please the servant). Still, we're enjoying the weather,
Lots of woofs,
Monty and Matty

Why Easter will never go away

How do you make sense of the Resurrection? Dead men don't rise, so why believe that this particular dead man *did* rise?

At the end of St Luke's gospel we read that: "they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement" (Luke 24.4). This is highly significant. The Gospels do not show us a group of disciples who were in a receptive frame of mind. After the crucifixion, they were in hiding, frightened and scattered. Then suddenly, they came out of hiding and were totally different; excited, joyful. By Pentecost they were confident, with one firm message: 'You crucified Jesus, but God raised Him up!'

How did they know this? Because of direct personal experience. Some of them had visited the tomb of Jesus: it was empty. Others claimed to have seen and touched the risen Lord. Were they hallucinating? People can hallucinate in groups – when taking drugs, for example. But of course, each one will see a different hallucination. But the disciples all saw the same thing. Or rather, the same person. Jesus.

Were they lying? Jesus had died a humiliating death as a criminal. Perhaps they wanted to rescue His good name. So, did they pretend they had seen Him?

This theory has a big problem. Their preaching led them into trouble with the authorities. They were beaten and imprisoned and some of them killed. People will die for ideas and causes which they believe in passionately. But not for things they have made up. We might suffer for our convictions, but we will not suffer for our inventions.

What about the 'swoon' theory? That Jesus didn't die on the cross, despite terrible wounds? That He recovered in the tomb, and then escaped? That the disciples nursed Him back to health? But Roman soldiers knew when a man was dead; and there was the guard on the tomb. Also, the events which followed simply don't fit. If the disciples had been hiding Jesus all along, they would have kept very low-key, and out of the way, so that the authorities did not come after Him again.

Besides, to preach that God had raised Jesus from the dead – which is exactly what they did preach – would have been a lie. Beatings and threat of death would soon have loosened their tongues. Inventions crumble under pressure; convictions hold fast.

Another reason for believing in the Resurrection is this: Jesus' continuing impact. Thousands and soon millions of people in every generation since have shared an inescapable sense of being 'accompanied' through life. Though unseen, they identify this presence as the Risen Lord.

This central notion was captured, most movingly, by the great Albert Schweitzer: 'He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou me," and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the suffering which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is.'

Have a joyful – and a challenging – Easter.

Gardening Notes for April

The ramblings of a keen but inexperienced gardener!!

How wonderful it's Spring, daffodils, early tulips are everywhere and forget-me-nots are beginning to give their blue haze. A few days of sun and warmth have made many things burst forth. What easy plants forget-me-nots are and their spreading causes no problems as once we have enjoyed their flowers they are easily removed by which time they will have seeded all around. Their small seedlings are no trouble but can be removed where they are in the way. Dead heading daffodils and later on tulips is recommended although how do wild daffodils flower prolifically whereas the older ones in are garden now come up blind!

This is a great time to invest in small pots of perennials and they will have a good start and for a fraction of the price of larger plants bought in flower in the summer. We noticed they have arrived at our favourite nursery Woodhouse in Yoxall (honestly we don't have shares there but their plants are often half the price of our local large Garden Centres and they grow some of their own seasonal stock).

It has been my intention to remove several scrappy rose bushes lining our front drive but last year when they started flowering I did not have the heart to dig them up. So this year it was a matter of finding their replacements. After looking around at plants and consulting books (old school) to find small shrubs which could be shaped to give winter structure we settled on Euonymus family and two skimmias. A particular favourite being Euonymus Himalayas which shows white leaves at the tips of the shoots and is the central plant.

Now the ground is finally drying out it is such a pleasure to be able to cut the grass and hoe the borders.

As early flowering shrubs go over it is a good idea to trim off faded flowers as soon as possible to preserve next year's flowers.

Now is a good time to plant lily bulbs in the garden or pots. Plant deep and if possible with a little gravel underneath and try to protect pots from ever watchful squirrels. I am trying a ring of short canes round the edge of the pots.

A plant I have just added is Erysimum 'Bowles Mauve' the perennial wallflower which can be in flower for months. At the end of March there were good plants available at Morrisons Aldridge and the purchase of the mauve, lemon and white varieties added an unplanned £15 to my bill but they look good among the plants in a mixed border which is sheltered, reasonably well drained and sunny and much cheaper than garden centre prices. We can all now look forward to the warmer months and emerging growth after the long wet and dreary winter, so let's enjoy,

Ann

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

Resurrection life

Did you have 'a good Lent'? Were you able to make the journey with Jesus through the turmoil of those last days of His earthly ministry as He set His face to go to Jerusalem, knowing He would be killed there? I find the Lenten journey, particularly Holy Week (the week leading up to the crucifixion) harrowing, and by 3 o'clock on Good Friday - the hour at which Jesus traditionally died - I am wrung out.

All of which makes Easter Day and the weeks that follow, with the joy and reality of new life, so much the sweeter. No wonder Christians make this the most important day of the year - much more so than Christmas. God, in the resurrection of Jesus, has vindicated the way of love, truth, sacrifice and service, kindness and hope over the self-serving and grubby ways that seek power, self-advancement, privilege, hatred and division. Hallelujah!

It's all summed up in the poem 'Easter Wings' by the 17th century poet and priest George Herbert. For me, it's not the words of the poem so much as its shape - it's written in the shape of a butterfly's wings. Now that's clever; - to let both shape and words express something lovely, like the freedom and beauty of a butterfly on the wing. That sums up Resurrection life.

We are not asked to explain how the Resurrection took place. That is known to God alone, and we would trip ourselves up in all sorts of ways as we seek to find a rational explanation as to how it happened. But we are invited to live it - yes, live the Resurrection in ourselves - as we ask the Risen Lord to lead us through each day. In time, this constant invitation to live out the Resurrection changes our whole being, as we try, in the words of Mother Teresa to 'do little things with great love.'

The more I try and live out Resurrection life (more properly, the more I allow Jesus to live the Resurrection life through me) the more boundless I find it to be. Which I guess is why God gives us a season - seven weeks up till Pentecost - to allow this stupendous fact of the Resurrection to sink into us, call out a response from us.

Enjoy your Easter eggs, your Easter bonnets, your egg-pacing; in fact, have a great Easter. But don't let the Resurrection pass you by. It's the gateway to what Jesus calls 'life in all its fulness'.

Walsall Almshouses

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



Welcome to Margaret Coloquhoun 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 Coloquhoun 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 bedroomed 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.



Just because two people argue, it doesn't mean they don't love each other and just because they don't argue, it doesn't mean they do. – *Anon*

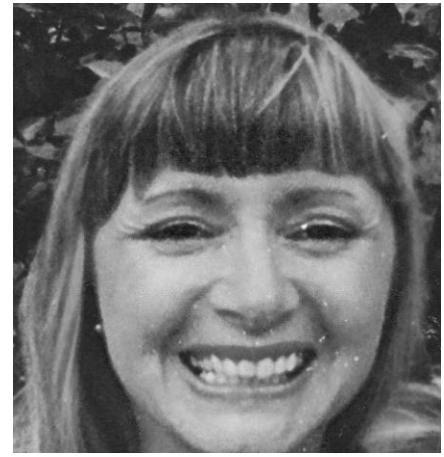
DEMENTIA

CO-ORDINATOR

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

And

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



NAME; Carol Beckwith

PHONE: 07971 977464

EMAIL: carolbeckwith@hotmail.com

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

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

The Memory Café

Tuesday 28th April 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

Never Far Away

We can only imagine how the two travellers to Emmaus felt, knowing that Jesus had died. Gone were their hopes for a bright future. They thought God had let them down. They had suffered a cruel blow and were bewildered and upset.

In their grief, the risen Jesus came alongside them and spoke with them at length, but somehow, they didn't recognise Him. Why was this, and why did Jesus intend to leave them at Emmaus without first revealing who He was?

The answers may be found by looking back at the encounters Jesus had with people. He never forced His true nature onto anyone. Every individual had to make up their own mind as to who He was, and to decide if the things He said were true.

Today, Jesus does not 'gate-crash' into our lives. In a number of ways, He gently and persuasively reveals Himself. So, the story of the walk to Emmaus should encourage us each time we feel His absence; at those times when we thought He would step in and immediately solve our problems! On *our* journey of life, we can have times of sadness, and it can seem as though God is far away.

But while we are thinking that Jesus has left us alone, He is actually with us. He knows where we are and what we are feeling. He can quietly draw alongside us. Surprisingly, it can sometimes be in situations of sadness and solitude that Jesus 'speaks' to us more clearly.

We don't have to go off in search of some 'religious experience' or to a special 'holy place'. He is present in the here and now. Jesus is the unseen companion on every journey and the unseen guest at every meal. In His way and in His time, our Lord reveals Himself to us in different situations. We may be aware of His presence in surprising circumstances and on unexpected occasions. How important it is that we stay alert.

There will be times when we will be like those two men on the Emmaus Road, searching for answers. We will earnestly desire clear and direct answers to our questions and the knowledge, understanding or revelation may be slow to come. But, with Jesus, there are many lessons to be learnt along *our* Emmaus Road that would not have been discovered any other way.

Further reading: Luke 24:13-35

Out and about walking, driving and visiting:

Short Walks Around Hoar Cross.

Park in a small layby opposite Hoar Church (well worth a look with much gold endowed by a young widow at the Hall in the mid Victorian era) .

In dry weather there is a public footpath heading diagonally left across the fields by the car park.

When the path reaches a stile onto the lane turn right past some interesting black and white houses and down to the crossroads with the Meynell Ingram Arms on the left, lovely food and interior if you are feeling flush! Turn left taking care of traffic on this slightly busier road. The views are pretty with some properties nestling back from the road.

At the next crossroads turn into Roost Hill this is a climb up to Maker Lane. Turn left and follow the lane until reaching a crossroads. Here if crossing to the opposite road a short distance finds a public footpath on the left through the grounds of Hoar Cross Hall. Otherwise turn left and first right when Hoar Cross Hall will be in view and the car further on.

The walk can be extended by passing Roost Hill until the next left turn Dark Lane is reached and a steep short hill gains the left turn into Maker Lane.

The junction of Dark Lane marks the edge of the village and short walk onward finds a tearoom opposite the church, open Tuesday to Friday 10am to 4pm and Saturday 10 to 1.

When the fields are not dry enough to start the walk as suggested, continue ahead from the car and take the right fork by the entrance to the Hall and turn right at the junction down to the Meynell,

Ann

A history of our Easter chocolate

Chocolate. Just a mention of the word can trigger off all kinds of emotions: craving, greed, passion. Few foods have the ability to get such a hold on people. As you buy your Easter eggs and bunnies and whatever else this month, here are some of the facts of chocolate:

Where does chocolate come from? Chocolate is made from the seeds of the tropical cacao tree, *theobroma cacao*. The Greek word 'theobroma' means literally 'food of the gods'. The Cacao Tree is found in Latin America.

Who first discovered it? The Aztecs. The cacao beans were used to prepare a hot, frothy beverage with stimulant and restorative properties, something like hot chocolate.

Who was (probably) the first chocoholic? The Emperor Montezuma. He drank 50 goblets a day of the frothy drink.

Who used chocolate as currency? The Aztecs. 100 cacao beans would buy a slave; 12 cacao beans bought the services of a courtesan, etc.

When did chocolate as we know it today begin? Surprisingly, not until 1879. That year Rodolphe Lindt had the inspired idea of triglyceride cocoa butter. The cocoa butter in chocolate contains saturated fat, but a normal level of consumption doesn't have any bad effects.

At what point does a chocolate lover become a chocoholic? It is generally considered to be when a person feels impelled to consume 12 or more 60 gram bars of chocolate per week. Chocolate contains its own cannabinoid (a chemical that prolongs pleasurable sensations) and when you eat chocolate, there is an increased blood flow in areas of the brain which are also activated by addictive drugs such as cocaine. But scientists agree that occasional over-indulging will cause no long-term problems... except perhaps around your waistline!

How to get the best from your chocolate:

Keep your chocolate cool (16 – 18 degrees Centigrade) and in a dry, airtight place. Never put your chocolate in the fridge (if you already have, let it warm to room temperature for a couple of hours before you eat it).

Bring out the full flavour of chocolate by drinking water with it.

If you are drinking tea or coffee, don't bother with expensive chocolates – you won't be able to appreciate them properly!

Eco Update

Churches Count on Nature dates announced

Caring for God's Acre have announced the dates for 2026. This will be held on **Saturday 6th to Sunday 14th June** and CfGA look forward to burial grounds across the country joining us to discover and share the range of wildlife found within. Do please share this information within your Diocese

For over 16 years they have been encouraging all who help to look after churchyards, chapel yards and cemeteries to celebrate these fantastic places in the lovely month of June.

Churches Count on Nature is part of Love Your Burial Ground Week, focusing on the brilliant wildlife to be found in churchyards and chapel yards. It is a joint initiative promoted by Caring for God's Acre, the Church of England, the Church in Wales and A Rocha UK. National Cemeteries Week is hosted by the National Federation of Cemetery Friends.

Registration will be live from 16th March and we are hoping out Sunday School will be involved again this year. They produced some wonderful posters last year on the event.

Supporting Eco Champs - New resource

A Rocha are continually adding new resources to help churches respond to the survey questions. They are pleased to share that what has recently uploaded [Being an Eco Champion](#) to their resources page. This resource may be useful to share with your networks of Eco Champions along with [Ideas for talks and stalls.](#)

13th April: Carpus, Papyrus & Agathonice, martyrs of the Early Church

In the month of Christ's ultimate sacrifice of Himself for us, the martyrdoms of Carpus, Papyrus and Agathonice are well worth remembering. What they said as they died could be said by the many thousands of Christians who are facing persecution all over the world today.

Carpus, Papyrus and Agathonice lived in Pergamum (Asia Minor) in the late second century. Carpus was a bishop, Papyrus was a deacon, and Agathonice was his sister. Trouble began when the proconsul Optimus ordered them to sacrifice in the name of the emperor.

Carpus refused, saying, 'I am a Christian and because of my faith and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I cannot become one of you.' He was hung up and tortured by iron claws.

Papyrus was a wealthy citizen, but he had also led many people to faith in Christ. As he suffered the same fate as Carpus, he said, 'I feel no pain because I have Someone to comfort me; One whom you do not see suffers within me.' Both men were then burnt alive.

Finally, it was his sister's turn. She too refused to sacrifice to demons. 'If I am worthy,' she said, 'I desire to follow the footsteps of my teachers.' On being urged to have pity on her children, she replied, 'My children have God, who watches over them; but I will not obey your commands.' As she was consigned to the flames, she cried out three times: 'Lord Jesus Christ, help me because I am enduring this for you.' She died soon after.

Terrible deaths, but also, triumphant ones. These three Christians loved Jesus so much that the only thing they could NOT bear was to deny Him. Sadly, the persecution goes on today, in countries where Jesus Christ is still bitterly hated. Pray for the Christians who live in these countries, that they too may have courage and endurance – to the end.

Recipe

Bread Pudding

Before I started helping with cakes for Church Faye's I didn't realise the popularity of bread pudding with local folk.

This is the recipe I use: -

Ingredients

A small loaf (400 g)

4oz sugar

6oz butter cut into small pieces

5 tp mixed spice

12oz mixed dried fruit

Juice and grated rind of one lemon and one orange

2 eggs beaten

Fresh milk to mix if necessary

Caster sugar to serve

Custard or fresh cream to serve

1. Bresh bread into small pieces and place in a large bowl
2. Cover with cold water and stand for 30 mins
3. Squeeze all water out of bread and crumble in bowl.
4. Add all the other ingredients and stir to a dropping consistency.
5. Pour into a greased and lined baking tin (I use one about 10 by 6 in and at least 1in deep)
6. Bake at 180 or gas 4 for 1 hour 30 mins or until firm to touch. If top starts to get too brown cover with grease proof paper. If liked sprinkle with sugar

7. When cold cut into squares. Can be served hot or cold, with custard or cream or eaten as a cake.

Ann

7. When cold cut into squares. Can be served hot or cold, with custard or cream or eaten as a cake.

Ann

Dawn chorus

If you sleep with your bedroom window open, you will know all about the dawn chorus around now. The birds are busy establishing their territorial rights, and the 'early birds' have probably already selected a nest site and started building.

The blackbird builds a solid cup of twigs, plant stems and leaves, lined with a thick skin of mud covered with finer grasses and leaves. The long-tailed tit forms a soft hollow ball of mosses, hair and wool, with a tiny hole as entrance. The wrens do it differently, with the male wren sometimes building several nests before his finicky mate will accept one. He gets his revenge, though, because he sometimes installs a second wife in one of the rejected sites.

23rd April: St George, our Patron Saint who isn't English

The English have a patron saint who isn't English, about whom next to nothing is known for sure, and who, just possibly, may not have existed at all. But that didn't stop St George being patriotically invoked in many battles, notably at Agincourt and in the Crusades, and of course it is his cross that adorns the flags of English football fans to this day.

It's most likely that St George was a soldier, a Christian who was martyred for his faith somewhere in Palestine, possibly at Lydda, in the early fourth century. At some point in the early centuries of the Church he became associated with wider military concerns, being regarded as the patron saint of the Byzantine armies. There is no doubt that St George was held as an example of the 'godly soldier', one who served Christ as bravely and truly as he served his king and country.

The story of George and the dragon is of much later date and no one seems to know where it comes from. By the Middle Ages, when George was being honoured in stained glass, the dragon had become an invaluable and invariable visual element, so that for most people the two are inseparable. Pub signs have a lot to answer for here: 'The George and Dragon'.

However, it's probably more profitable to concentrate on his role as a man who witnessed to his faith in the difficult setting of military service, and in the end was martyred for his faithfulness to Christ.

The idea of the 'Christian soldier' was, of course, much loved by the Victorian hymn-writers - 'Onward, Christian soldiers!' The soldier needs discipline. The heart of his commitment is to obedience. The battle cannot be avoided nor the enemy appeased. He marches and fights alongside others, and he is loyal to his comrades. In the end, if the battle is won, he receives the garlands of victory, the final reward of those who overcome evil.

St George's Day presents a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to distance the message of his life from the militarism and triumphalism that can easily attach itself to anything connected to soldiers and fighting. The opportunity is to celebrate the ideal of the 'Christian soldier' - one who submits to discipline, sets out to obey God truly, does not avoid the inevitable battle with all that is unjust, wrong and hateful in our world, and marches alongside others fighting the same noble cause.

Discipline, obedience, courage, fellowship and loyalty - they're not the most popular virtues today, but that doesn't mean that they don't deserve our admiration.

Our obesity is costing us millions

66% per cent of UK adults are now overweight or obese. That is according to recent NHS England figures. Around 30% of these are officially obese, with a Body Mass Index of 30 or above.

It is affecting our chairs, our ambulances, and even our coffins. Furnishing companies are getting orders to provide bigger chairs. Airports provide wider seating. We now have bariatric ambulances with double-width stretchers to accommodate patients. And our firefighters are given special training on how to rescue people whom they can no longer lift.

One doctor at the University of Cambridge explained what is happening: “We are surrounded by cheap calories, and they are available in more places.”

Meanwhile, obesity has become a huge public health issue: it is the main cause of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and strokes. Treating weight-related diseases is now costing the NHS an estimated £11.4 billion a year.

What does your child know about red squirrels?

Sadly, red squirrels are now so rare in Britain that many of our children are not even sure what they are. A recent study found that one in 10 children are unable to even identify a red squirrel when shown a picture of one. And a third of British children do not know that red squirrels live in the UK.

It all means that our native species of squirrel is at risk of being forgotten as the larger grey American invader takes over.

In order to combat this trend, Center Parcs, in collaboration with The Wildlife Trusts, has launched a campaign to create a red squirrel emoji. The aim is to help increase awareness of the species among our young people.

What home gadgets do you regret buying?

You know what they are: those things you never knew you needed until you saw one in an advert. Then suddenly you felt that life would never be complete without one.

And so, you brought home the spiraliser that makes vegetables look like spaghetti. And the pasta maker that you can't quite figure out how to use. And the ice-cream maker that makes everything sticky and helped you put on another three pounds. And the robot vacuum which terrorises the cat. As for the bread maker, well at least it makes a good shelf on the kitchen counter.

If this is you, you are not alone. A recent survey by Saga has found that 65% of us have experienced ‘gadget regret’. It occurs when we buy something and then wonder why we ever bothered, because who needs it anyway?

Top of the list of regrets is the spiralizer – 62% of us woke up one morning to realise that no one needs vegetables to look like spaghetti. Second place belongs to digital picture frames, which 52% of us regret buying. After that comes the pasta maker (45%), the ice-cream maker (42%), VR headsets (35%), the bread maker (31%), the internet-connected exercise equipment (31%) and finally, the robot vacuum (29%).

The Beauty of Good Friday

Some of the most beautiful things in the world have an ugly side. What about the emperor penguin chick, nestling in a feathery pouch above its parent's feet? There's a lovely moment when mum and dad greet each other over the gaping beak of their fuzz-ball offspring. Heads bent together, making a heart shape in the air, we can't help seeing a reflection of our own ideals of love in the pair.

But the reality of what those birds are going through is even more gruelling than human parenthood. Father penguin has spent all winter sheltering the egg from freezing hurricane-force winds, while mother penguin was feeding at sea. When the chick hatched its parents started an exhausting game of tag, taking it in turns to walk across the ice and risk being eaten by leopard seals or killer whales, in order to catch fish for their new offspring.

The living world is truly wonderful in so many ways, but the darker side of the picture is never far away. Creation is groaning (Romans 8:22), and just waiting to be rescued. Enter Jesus, through whom all of Creation was made. The king of the universe came to live with us, bringing His great love and wisdom to the human population of first-century Israel. The Creator was relating to His creation in a very personal way, and this could have been a totally beautiful picture.

But there is a horrifically ugly side of Jesus' story that threatens to obscure the beauty of what He did on Good Friday. It was a brutal and terrifying day when human sinfulness resulted in the Son of God being executed by His enemies, but thankfully there was much more to it than that. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ set off a seismic wave of spiritual events whose effects are still rippling out across the world.

So that ugly day over 2,000 years ago is called 'good' because of what it achieved. Those who follow Jesus find their lives are changed for the better, even if their day-to-day existence may still be incredibly tough. When people come to understand what Creation is for and who it belongs to, they can begin to serve and preserve the earth as they should. These things are only whispers of what is to come, but they give me hope for the future redemption of all Creation. I can choose to dwell on the beauty of Jesus' death because it was not the end of the story – the future beckons.

This article is extracted (with permission) from [New Life: Reflections for Lent](#), edited by Amy Robinson and Wendy H Jones (£7.99).

Sudan war – 15th April to mark third anniversary

This month brings a tragic milestone – the third anniversary of the vicious civil war in Sudan.

Since the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) began fighting in 2023, more than 12 million people have been internally displaced, and more than four million refugees have fled to neighbouring countries. Now a staggering 33.7 million people (two-thirds of the population) need humanitarian aid. Of these, more than 21 million face high levels of food insecurity.

Sudan is the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. It is also the largest and fastest displacement crisis. No end is in sight, as both SAF and RSF leaders have regional backers, and both continue to profit from Sudan's war.

Meanwhile, the country is in chaos: civilians and infrastructure are often attacked; sexual violence is widespread; and forced child soldier recruitment is common. With 70% of Sudan's hospitals destroyed, millions have no access to medical care. Cholera and other diseases are spreading fast.

Several Christian relief agencies are still operating in Sudan or neighbouring countries. If you would like to help, you might consider supporting:

Christian Aid: Working through local partners to provide emergency cash, water, and sanitation to over 20,000 families in Sudan, while also supporting refugees in South Sudan.

World Vision: Providing food assistance and water, particularly in Chad for Sudanese refugees, serving around 70,000 on a daily basis.

CAFOD: Delivering emergency aid and repairing water pipelines.

Barnabas Aid: Supporting Christian refugees fleeing the conflict.

29th April: Catherine of Siena, or how to survive in a large family

Catherine of Siena, who was born 1347, should be the patron saint of anyone who has grown up in a large family, and mastered the two vital skills for survival: how to stand up for yourself, and how to make peace with others.

Catherine had siblings! At least 19 of them, and Catherine was the youngest. Her father was a Sienese dyer, and wanted her to marry, but Catherine did not. She became a nun instead, a member of the Dominican Third Order.

Perhaps after sharing a house with at least 22 people, Catherine wanted some peace and quiet: in any case she spent six years in solitude, giving herself to prayer and penance. Then she moved back into the world, through nursing the local sick people, and then beginning to travel. Catherine travelled frequently, with a number of her 'disciples' – a mix of Dominicans and Augustinians, and even an English Friar. Wherever they went, people listened to their proclamation of the total love of God through Jesus Christ, and their calls to reform and repent. There were some spectacular conversions.

Catherine could not write, but soon someone else was taking down her 'Dialogue' by dictation – it ran to 383 letters. Catherine's thoughts centred on Christ crucified, the supreme sign of God's love for man. The quality of these letters made them widely read for years to come.

A godly woman who could lead and teach! Soon new opportunities presented themselves: in the last five years of her life, Catherine found herself involved in the politics of both State and Church. This included trying to make peace during the Great Schism in the Church after 1378, when Pope Gregory XI died, and two new popes – bitter rivals – claimed the papacy. Catherine wore herself out in trying to promote peace, had a stroke on 21 April 1380, and died eight days later. (A warning to ecumenists everywhere?!)

Catherine soon became Siena's principal saint, loved for her writings and her example of godliness and self-sacrificing love. Her house and an early portrait survive at Siena, and her memory lives on today: she was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970, nearly 600 years after her death.

On the perils of small study groups

The Rectory
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

So, you are about to run an Alpha course in your parish; I am sure your bishop will be delighted. I remember him from my Oxford days. He was just starting his course as a gangly undergraduate when I was finishing my doctorate on Eusebius.

I recall him as a keen rugby player who took early morning dips in the Isis, who led intense discussions on Saint Paul's theology of 'the body' over cups of cocoa in the evenings in his rooms and who spent his holidays laying paths for the National Trust in the Lake District while lodging in Youth Hostels. He's exactly the sort of person who will empathise with your ministry – hearty, enthusiastic and overflowing with compassionate intensity. We were not close friends.

We tend not to go in for those sort of things, here at St James the Least of All, preferring matters a little more relaxed and understated. If we ever do hold discussion groups (and they are a regrettable necessity during Lent), they always start with a good lunch, finishing with coffee and one of Mrs French's excellent Madeira cakes. Once we have removed from the table, those who manage to stay awake will start to tackle the chosen topic.

However, we always seem to veer off to discussing more interesting matters, such as why Colonel Chorley is never allowed to sing solos in the choir anymore, or who moved Mrs Cholmondeley's flower arrangement from the font the previous week. Apparently, she has given notice that her weekly contributions on the plate will be much reduced unless an appropriate apology is received.

These matters may not seem as important to you as deciding what the 'white stone' in Revelation 4 is all about, but let me assure you that to members of our congregation, knowing why the second verse of the National Anthem is no longer sung at our Remembrance Services is of pivotal importance.

At 2.30pm we wake up those who have enjoyed an hour's slumber and totter off home, knowing we have once again done our bit for faith in the parish.

I am sure your own group will also return home after your sessions - even if a digestive biscuit and weak tea is all that has been offered – invigorated and braced to tackle the heathen in the parish. We all take our pleasures in different ways.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Luke 22:24, John 13:3-17

Jesus and his disciples were celebrating the Passover with the special meal. The disciples were bickering again.

I'm most important because I've known him the longest

But I'm the oldest!

I've given up the most to follow him!




There was a reason why no-one wanted to be the least important - the roads were mud and everyone's feet got very dirty.

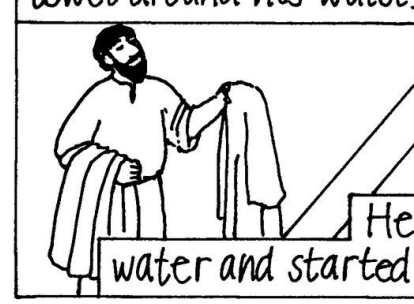
It was the job of the least important servant to wash everyone's feet...




The disciples didn't have a servant, and none of them wanted to do the feet washing...



Jesus took off his outer robe and tied a towel around his waist.



He filled a large bowl with water and started washing the disciples' feet.



Peter couldn't believe what he was seeing!



Are you really going to wash my feet?

You will understand later why I am doing this.



I can't ever let you serve me like this!

If you don't let me, you will no longer be my disciple




Then wash all of me!

If you've had a bath, then you only need your feet washing!



Once Jesus had washed all their feet, he put his robe back on and sat down.



Do you understand why I, your teacher, did this? I am setting you the example of how you are to serve each other. Do it, and God will bless you.

#

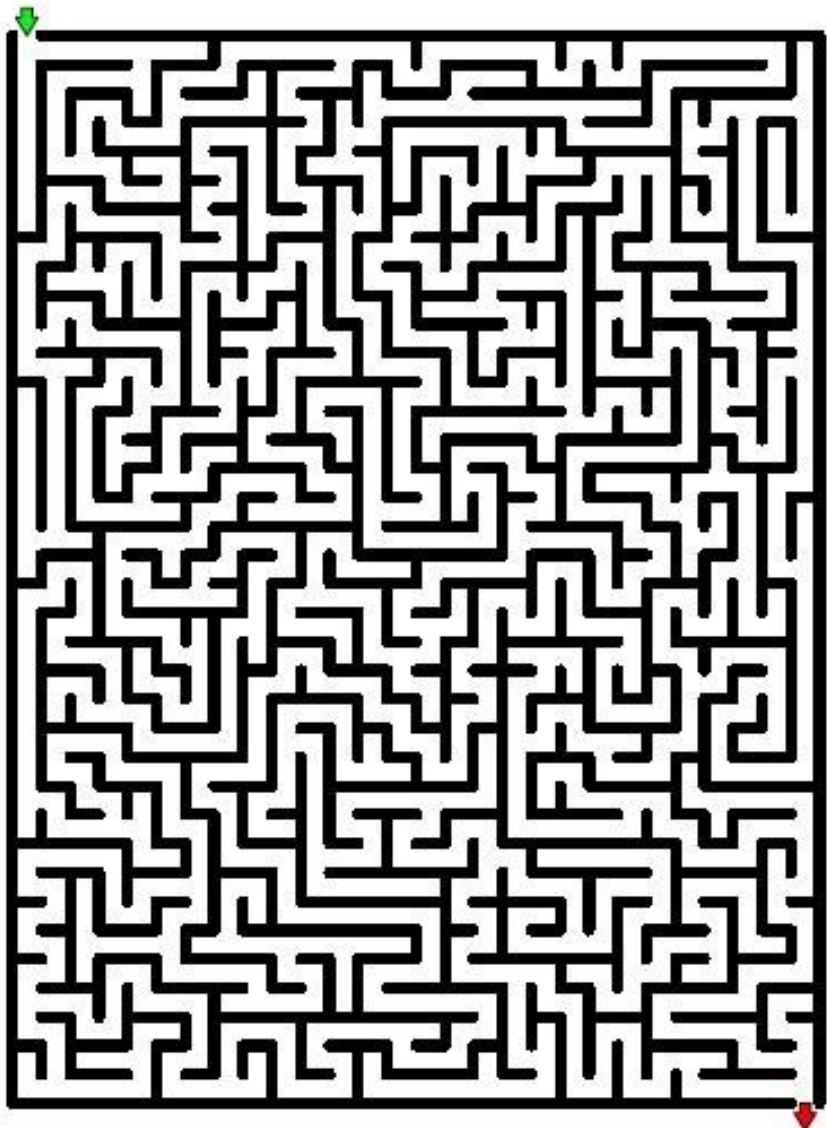
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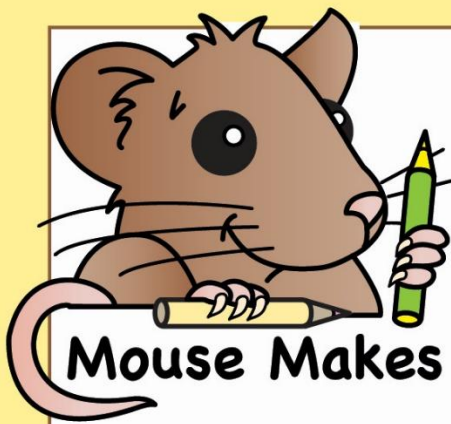
March's Solution

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

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Can you solve
the maze?



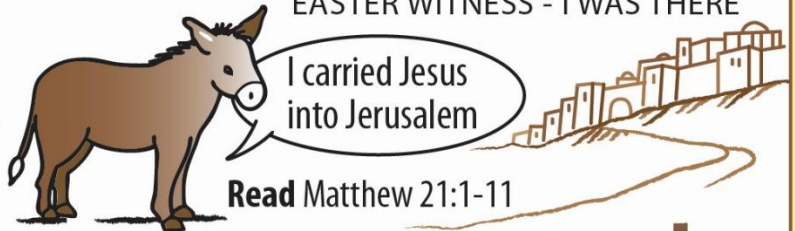


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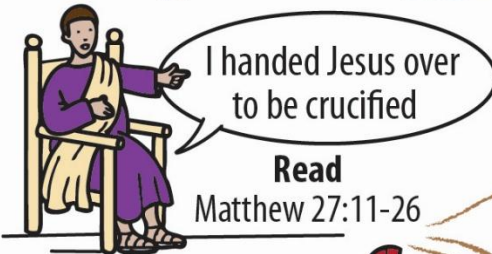
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 HOSANNA • PILATE • THORNS
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 QUAKE • DEATH • BURY
 TOMB • STONE • EMPTY
 ANGEL • MARY • HEAVEN
 RISEN • ALIVE • GOD
 GOOD NEWS • CHRIST
 SAVIOUR • EASTER • JOY



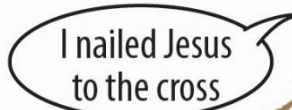
EASTER WITNESS - I WAS THERE



Read Matthew 21:1-11



Read Matthew 27:11-26

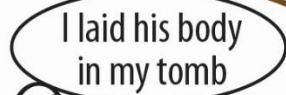


Read Mark 15:16-32

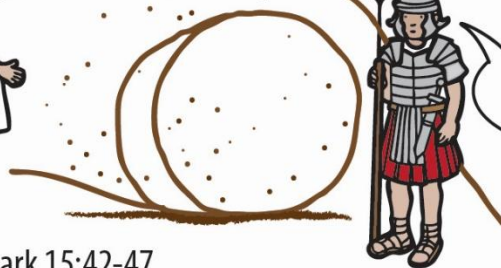


We watched Jesus die

Read Mark 15:33-41

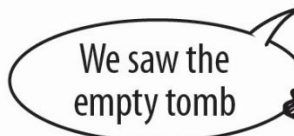


Read Mark 15:42-47



I guarded the tomb

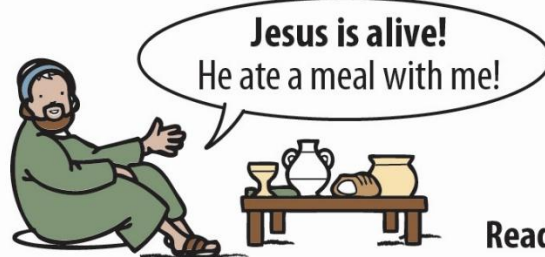
Read Matthew 27:62-66



Read Matthew 28:1-10



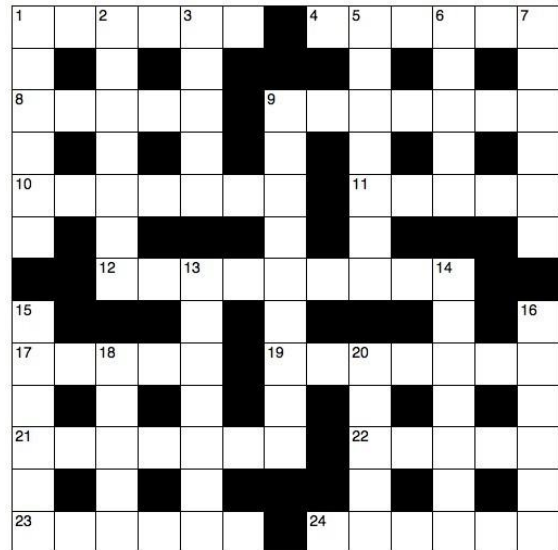
and spoke to the angel



Read Luke 24:13-35

Across

- 1 Relating to the whole universe (6)
4 The disciple who made the remark in 8 Across (John 20:24) (6)
8 'Unless I see the nail marks — — hands, I will not believe it' (John 20:25) (2,3)
9 He urged King Jehoiakim not to burn the scroll containing Jeremiah's message (Jeremiah 36:25) (7)
10 Baptist minister and controversial founder of America's Moral Majority, Jerry — (7)
11 'Look, here is — . Why shouldn't I be baptized?' (Acts 8:36) (5)
12 Repossessed (Genesis 14:16) (9)
17 Port from which Paul sailed on his last journey to Rome (Acts 27:3-4) (5)
19 'Moses was not aware that his face was — because he had spoken with the Lord' (Exodus 34:29) (7)
21 Roonwit, C.S. Lewis's half-man, half-horse (7)
22 Grill (Luke 24:42) (5)
23 'The lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the — apostles' (Acts 1:26) (6)
24 'I was sick and you looked after me, I was in — and you came to visit me' (Matthew 25:36) (6)



Down

- 1 Coastal rockfaces (Psalm 141:6) (6)
2 Academic (1 Corinthians 1:20) (7)
3 Publish (Daniel 6:26) (5)
5 For example, the Crusades (4,3)
6 11 Across is certainly this (5)
7 He reps (anag.) (6)
9 Liberator (Psalm 18:2) (9)
13 Man who asked the question in 11 Across was in charge of all her treasury (Acts 8:27) (7)
14 They must be 'worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine' (1 Timothy 3:8) (7)
15 The human mind or soul (6)
16 'O Lord, while precious children starve, the tools of war increase; their bread is — ' (Graham Kendrick) (6)
18 'We played the flute for you, and you did not — ' (Matthew 11:17) (5)
20 Bared (anag.) (5)

March's answers:

ACROSS 1, Awaken. 4, Quench. 8, Hit me. 9, Sadness. 10, Semitic. 11, Ridge. 12, Testimony. 17, Psalm. 19, Indulge. 21, Deserve. 22, Ariel. 23, Rose as. 24, Beggar.

DOWN: 1, Aghast. 2, Attempt. 3, Eject. 5, Undergo. 6, No end. 7, Hasten. 9, Sacrifice. 13, Samaria. 14, Yelling. 15, Spider. 16, Dealer. 18, Asses. 20, Drake.