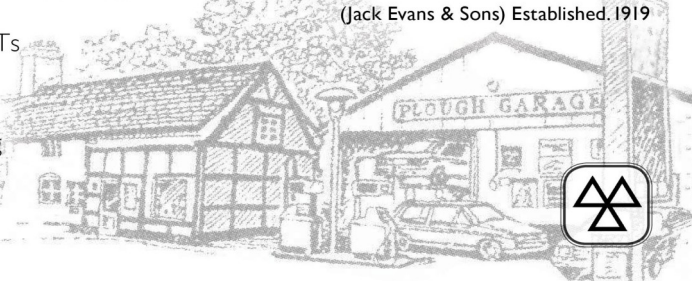


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St. George's Pontesbury

Magazine 50p



June 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

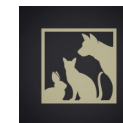
Items for inclusion in the **Deanery News** should be sent by the **10th** of the **previous month** to Ann Jones
annmorganjones456@gmail.com

QUOTE: 14th May is Ascension Day...
 Astronauts sink into insignificance
 beside this ascension! - V Havner

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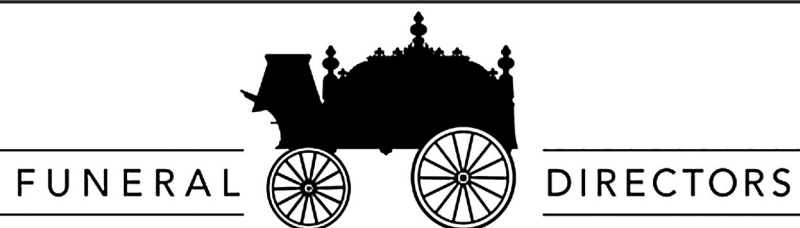


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LIFTING UP OUR EYES

With Rev Fran Breazley

Seeing the Big Picture

Not so long ago I travelled to London and went with my sister to see an exhibition of Turner and Constable paintings at the Tate Gallery. Marking 250 years since their births, the exhibition explored Turner and Constable's intertwined careers and importance. Over 170 paintings, sketchbooks and personal items of the two artists were on display.

Throughout our childhood, and for much longer, our mother had a print of Constable's 'The Hay Wain', on her wall. I remember she got it by collecting coupons from Persil Soap Powder packets. It measured less than 3 foot across. So, one of the surprises when you see the original of this and other famous paintings, is how large they are. They dwarf the visitor, filling whole walls of the gallery. Up close you can make out the individual brushstrokes, but you need to stand well back to take in the whole picture.

We may be familiar with Bible stories, at Christmas and Easter we focus on the details of the life of Jesus, but like those vast paintings, sometimes it is good to stand back and see how these stories fit together into God's big picture, the story of his love for humanity and his purpose to transform the whole world.

Both Turner and Constable were famous for the way they depicted the natural world in their paintings, sometimes with scenes of the gentle English countryside, sometimes showing the raw power of the weather, and majestic and towering mountain ranges. It is a reminder of the variety of God's creation, that surrounds us every day, and yet we do not always notice it.

Many of Constable's paintings are of his home county of Suffolk. If you look carefully you will often see a church tower peeping through the trees in the distance, pointing towards the heavens. The church was important to Constable, as a bulwark and firm guide for society. Today the church's place is less certain, but it still holds a valued place in many of our communities. As churches now, we are also called to look to God as our guide and strength, and to be part of his big picture of love for all the world.

Rev Fran



*There is a lot of talk about 'mindfulness' these days,
and how to find calm moments in our daily lives.
As Christians, we have an extra, divine resource to call on.*

Peaceful mind in June

June is a time when we tend to spend more time outside, and probably see more of other people...

A man that has friends must show himself friendly... *Proverbs 18:24*

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord. - *Leviticus 19:18,34*

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! - *Psalms 133:1*

Whoever would foster love covers over an offence, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends. - *Proverbs 17:9*

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SAMARITANS

In the NEWS

Stabbing of two Jewish men in Golders Green 'devastating' says Bishop of Edmonton

The Area Bishop of Edmonton, in the diocese of London, Dr Anderson Jeremiah, has expressed shock and sadness after two Jewish men were recently stabbed in Golders Green, north London,

The Jewish men, one in his 70s and one in his 30s, were treated at the scene for stab wounds; both were then taken to hospital. A 45-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder.

Dr Jeremiah said: "This was not just an attack on individuals, but on the safety and spirit of our entire neighbourhood. In the face of such darkness, our community must stand firm. We must respond with unwavering resilience and a commitment to the kind of love and unity that overcomes bigotry."

Archbishop of Canterbury 'appalled' by rise in anti-Semitism across UK

The Archbishop of Canterbury has said that she is "appalled" by the growing aggression against Jewish communities in the UK, after a series of anti-Semitic attacks in London, including an arson incident, in Harrow, and a stabbing of two men in Golders Green.

"An attack on Jewish people is an attack on us all — we must stand together against the virulence of antisemitism that brings only violence, fear and hatred," Archbishop Mullally wrote on X. "We must face this challenge together across society and within all our communities. I want to assure the Jewish community of my wholehearted support, solidarity and prayers."

The Archbishop's social media post came after bishops in London also expressed their "solidarity" with the Jewish community, saying that they "condemn unequivocally" the "abhorrent" incidents.

They were recently joined by the Bishops of Chelmsford, Gloucester, Southwark and Norwich in condemning the current rise of anti-Semitism in Britain.

Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamiyya (HAYI), an Islamist militant group, was reported to have said that it was behind several of the attacks.

Readings and Services for this MONTH

Here are the Sunday Service details.

The readings are included: if you are unable to join the service in church, you may like to use these at home.

Date	Service	Readings
2 nd June Tuesday	Tea Service 2.30pm	
4 th June Thursday	Messy Church 3.30pm	
7 th June The First Sunday After Trinity	Holy Communion 10.30am	Hosea 5. 15-6.6 Romans 4. 13-25 Matthew 9.9-13, 18-26
14 th June The Second Sunday After Trinity	Morning Worship with Children's Church but without Communion. 10.30am	Exodus 19.2-8a Romans 5. 1-8 Matthew 9.35- 10.8
21 st June The Third Sunday After Trinity	Holy Communion Children's Church 10.30am	Jeremiah 20.7-13 Romans 6.1b-11 Matthew 10.24-39
28 th June The fourth Sunday After Trinity	All Age Family Worship. 10.30am	Jeremiah 28.5-9 Romans 6. 12-end Matthew 10.40-end



Our church and local COMMUNITY

Rea Valley Big Green Day in Pontesbury – Saturday 2nd May 2026

The first ever Rea Valley Big Green Day, which took place on a dry and bright Saturday 2nd May, was a really happy celebration of nature and working together. Originally the idea of St George's Eco Group and Pontesbury Climate Emergency Action Group, the event brought together lots of local groups and individuals to shape the day. Thanks to **everyone** who contributed, came along, took part and supported in so many ways. Congratulations to everyone who collected all the stamps at each venue and won a prize!

We had a birdsong walk on Earl's Hill; FOPL Plant Sale, with Tombola and cake stall; Nature Recovery Map; a visit from Julia Buckley MP; nature group displays and stalls; a wildlife photography exhibition; talks; wildflower planting; litter pick; BBQ; Repair Café; indoor and outdoor eco-crafts; community garden tours; bellringers; and a wide variety of refreshments at the Public Hall, Pavilion and Church. And not forgetting the marvellous owls and birds of prey!

We heard lots of good comments:

"A really lovely event"

"The children so enjoyed the day"

"Really nice – reassuring to see people taking their time to promote nature".

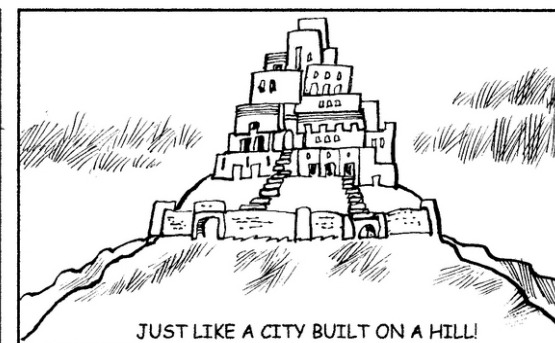
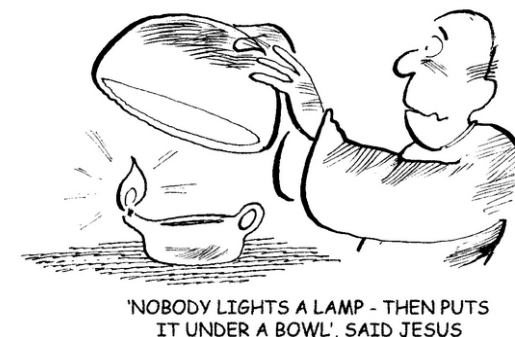
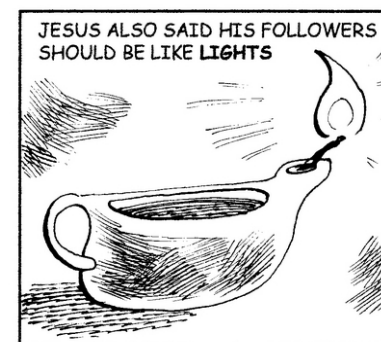
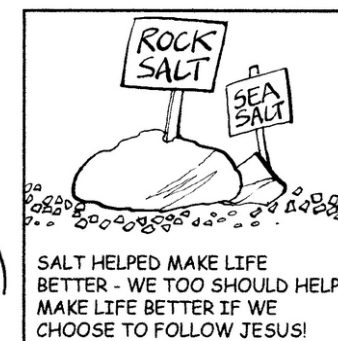
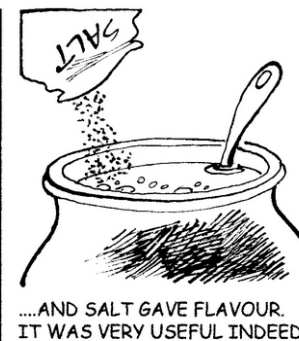
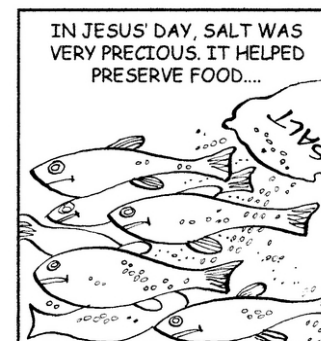
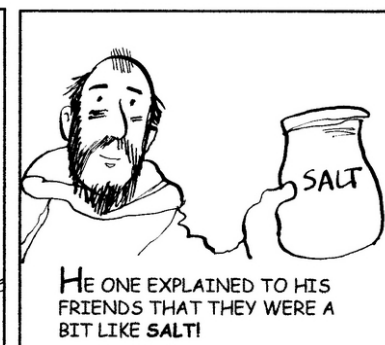
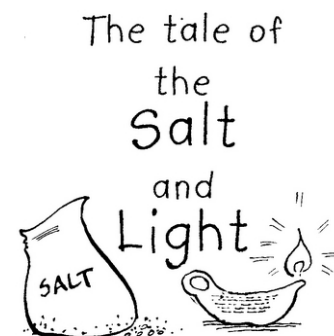
Pontesbury's uniformed organisations led a litter pick around the village, and picked up amazing quantities of rubbish! They also created a beautiful communal mosaic art work, and a huge bug hotel for the churchyard.

Children and parents from Pontesbury Primary School planted out wildflowers which had been potted on previously by the children. School Green and the Community Garden look beautiful...and the planting will support insects, butterflies and wider food webs.

A highlight for the Repair Café was the lad who brought in his remote-controlled truck to be repaired –instead of consigning the toy to the bin, he wanted to bring it to the Repair Cafe to see if it could be fixed. Tom showed the lad what the problem was, and hopefully the control unit can be re-ignited....

Thanks again to **all** the groups and individuals who made the event happen so successfully, including Pontesbury Parish Council who gave us a grant of £500.

Pontesbury, Minsterley and Hanwood are all part of the Rea Valley Nature Recovery Network, led by the Parish Councils. Would you like to see another similar



40 years ago, on 22nd June 1986 that the 'Hand of God' goal took place during the quarter-final of the 1986 FIFA World Cup in Mexico City. Argentine football player Diego Maradona scored a goal against England using his hand, which the referee mistakenly thought was his head, and allowed the goal. England was knocked out of the World Cup as a result, and Argentina won it.

Also 10 years ago, on 23rd June 2016 that the UK European Union (EU) membership referendum was held. 52 per cent of voters voted to leave the EU, and 48 per cent voted to remain. The UK left the EU on 31st January 2020

Remembering John Constable by Tim Lenton

It was 250 years ago, on 11th June 1776, that John Constable, British landscape artist, was born.

Widely known as a painter in the Romantic tradition, Constable had a deeply conservative faith centred on the Church of England, which he viewed as an essential stabilising force in society. His painting of Salisbury Cathedral is regarded as a symbol of this.

Born in East Bergholt, Suffolk, to a wealthy corn merchant who owned Flatford Mill, he was expected to take over the business: although he was the second son, the eldest was regarded as incapable. But John Constable was always focused on painting, and the business was eventually taken over by his younger brother.

Constable enjoyed painting the areas he knew well – primarily those on the border of Suffolk and Essex which is now known as Constable Country. "Painting is but another word for feeling," he wrote to a friend. He regarded nature as a reflection of God's creation and his own work as spiritual, though a tour of the Lake District in 1806 did not convince him of the attraction of mountains.

He is now highly valued, but he was never successful financially in his own lifetime, though he was elected to the Royal Academy at the age of 52. He was more popular in France than in England, but refused invitations to travel to promote his work, saying he would rather be a poor man in England than a rich man abroad.

After the death through tuberculosis of his wife Maria Bicknell at the age of 41, Constable became depressed: it had been a love match that triumphed over opposition from her wealthy relatives, and he was left a widower with seven young children. He continued to paint, but in a different style, darker and semi-abstract, but still compelling.

event next year, perhaps in Minsterley?

Let us know your ideas and what you would like the focus to be...reducing food waste, cleaner water, renewable energy....? ? ?

Send any thoughts to Greg at rectorpontstip@gmail.com



*Wildflowers in the Community Garden
with Julia Buckley MP*

A talk with the Owls



*Wildflower planting
on School Green*



And a Maypole in Church!

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(not August)

1st Tuesday afternoon

2.30pm to 4pm

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The world-wide COMMUNITY

BBC Proms will still celebrate the US – despite Trump's lawsuit

The BBC will mark the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence with a programme of American classical music this summer.

That is while Donald Trump pursues his multi-million lawsuit against the corporation.

But he is not the only thing that is making the BBC uneasy. BBC insiders are also wary of the shifting political situation between the US and Iran, which could make the Proms concerts at the Royal Albert Hall a target for anti-war demonstrations.

However, the concerts will still go on to showcase the music of famous US composers, including George Gershwin, Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein. American conductors will even lead several of the shows.

Sam Jackson, the BBC Radio 3 controller, said: "The 250th anniversary of American independence is a major moment in world history. We live in uncertain times, but our current geopolitical situation should not lead us to 'cancel' great music, or to deny licence fee payers the opportunity to hear repertoire of both the past and the present."

The Proms will launch with the First Night on 17th July.

All in the month of JUNE

It was:

150 years ago, on 19th June 1876 that Nigel Gresley, railway engineer, was born. He designed some of the best-known steam locomotives in Britain, including the Flying Scotsman.

100 years ago, on 1st June 1926 that the American film actress, model and sex symbol Marilyn Monroe was born. Remembered for Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, The Seven Year Itch, and Some Like it Hot, among others. Died 1962.

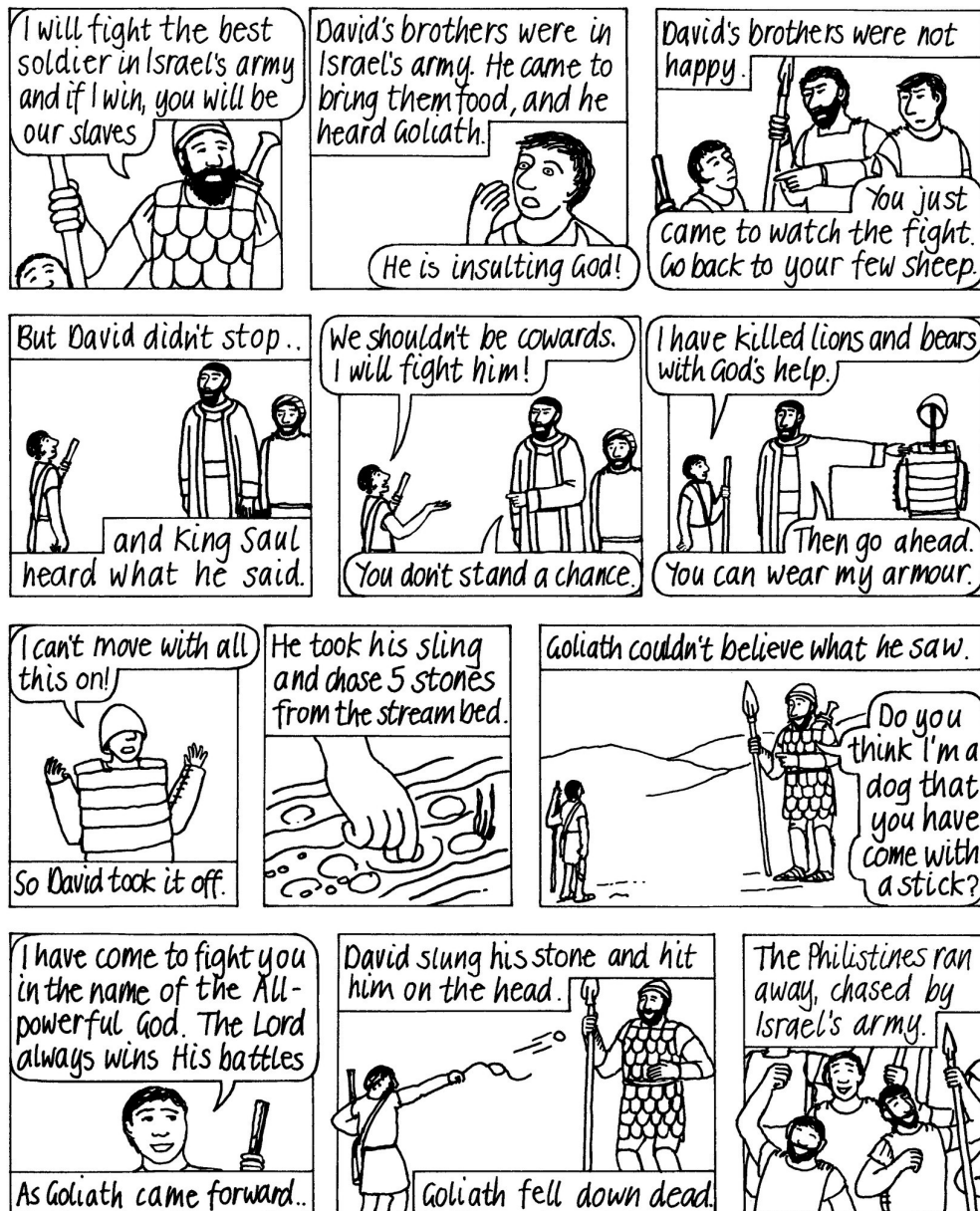
65 years ago, from 4th June to 9th November, that the Berlin Crisis of 1961 took place. It led to Berlin being partitioned into East Berlin and West Berlin, and the erection of the Berlin Wall on 13th August.

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
1 Samuel 17:1-50

The Philistine and Israelite armies
faced each other. For 40 days, the gigantic
Philistine champion, Goliath, taunted them..



We are always very grateful to everyone who donates what they can, when they can, as it makes a real difference to how much we must buy in.

You can drop off in-date, unopened packaged food and toiletries at: Pontesbury Co-op, Longden Village Stores and Worthen Village Hall, 3rd Wednesday of month, 8.30-11am. Foodbank Donation boxes are in many local churches, please see our website for a full list <https://reavalleyfoodbank.co.uk/donating/>.

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The Rea Valley Transport Scheme, which is entirely free, is designed to get patients to the doctors, dentists, hospital, opticians and other wellbeing services. To request transport, please contact our scheme administrator, Emma, at reavalley-transportscheme.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. Whilst we can never guarantee to be able to help, we have so far been able to respond positively to most requests.



**From: The Venerable Derek Chedzey
Archdeacon of Hereford**



One of the things I have not quite got used to since living in Herefordshire is the multi culturalism of a large city. We simply don't have the diversity of faiths and culture our more metropolitan areas take for granted. Difference can bring great benefits and the opportunities to discover cultures and traditions other than our own. Yet if we are not careful the politics of division and hatred can draw attention to cultural diversity in an unhelpful way which creates tension and divides communities.

So, the question I want to pose is how do you cope with difference? We all think we are good at dealing with diversity, but the reality is that most of us like and feel most comfortable with people just like us! We all have a certain amount of preference and bias, and it is important that we know how to spot our blind spots and the issues that can trip us up. Yet the bible speaks about difference in a positive way because it recognises all of us are unique expressions of God's love.

In the very beginning of creation God created diversity and difference not just in humanity but in the entire creation. However, uniquely, he created human beings to reflect his divine nature. Whatever preferences we have, at heart we are called to treat others as we ourselves want to be treated. When we reject those who are different, we are in effect rejecting God's love for our world.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-3)

Paul recognised that difference was a key part of our faith. Christians are called to live counter culturally and that alone marks us as different from those around us. Our values are shaped by the kingdom and in the kingdom the differences that matter in this world are meaningless. Instead, Paul wants us to know that what is important is our trust in Jesus as our Lord because this enables us to be citizens of heaven.

"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)

Finally when we look elsewhere in the New Testament, we also find a similar

Many of the words in the hymn were true for Queen Elizabeth herself. She would have celebrated her 100th birthday this April, and her 'official' birthday on the second Saturday in June. She did indeed thank God 'for the years Your love has kept and guided, urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way'...

And so indeed the 'extra' verse added for the Queen also held true:

*Lord for our hopes, the dreams of all our living,
Christ and his kingdom one united aim,
Rulers and peoples bound in high thanksgiving,
Lord of our hopes, our trust is in your Name.*

Nigel Beeton writes:

Every June the Monarch's 'official' birthday is marked by a military parade in London, Trooping the Colour. It originated as a way of making sure that troops recognised their standard flag - the colour - so that they could rally to it in a battle. This year it takes place on 13th June.

Trooping the Colour By Nigel Beeton

A National occasion in crimson and black
No button misplaced; no harness is slack.
The rhythmic precision of mass marching feet -
The pulse of the nation and heritage meet!



The beat of the drums, the sound of the band
The parade is exquisitely, perfectly planned.
The long months of training, hard effort applied
Build up to this moment of national pride!

The horses and soldiers all form up in ranks
The audience watching can't help but gives thanks!
For those standing tall out there on the sand
Prepared to give all for our King and our land.

The story behind the HYMN: Lord, for the years

*Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord for the years, we bring our thanks today.*

*Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the Word, receive your people's praise.*

**Lord, for our hopes, the dreams of all our living,
Christ and his kingdom one united aim;
Rulers and peoples bound in high thanksgiving,
Lord of our hopes, our trust is in your Name. ...*

By Timothy Dudley Smith

This well-loved hymn was written in 1967 by the Revd Timothy Dudley Smith, who later became Bishop of Thetford. He later confessed: “I wrote it on a train when I was very pressed for time. I’m thankful if something I write gets picked up, but I suspect anyone who does something in a rush later regrets that they didn’t find time to apply the sandpaper a bit more!”

Dudley Smith had been asked to write a hymn for the centenary service of the Children’s Special Service Mission, now Scripture Union, in St Paul’s Cathedral. His commission was to write words that could be fitted to Jean Sibelius’s *Finlandia*, as it was to be accompanied by an orchestra with this tune in their repertoire. And so – ‘Lord for the years’ was written.

Dudley Smith need not have worried about lack of time – his lyrics were a ‘hit’ in the cathedral on the day, and went on to become so well-loved that George Carey chose the hymn to be sung at his consecration as Bishop of Bath and Wells, and then again later, in 1991, on his consecration as Archbishop in Canterbury Cathedral.

The hymn continued to be widely sung and loved, until in 2002 Timothy Dudley Smith was asked to write an extra verse for it so that it could even be sung around the time of the Queen’s Golden Jubilee.

message, in fact John goes further in his letters because he says if we love God but hate those we can see then our faith is flawed. John says when we reject difference, we have not let our faith shape who we are.

“We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”

(1 John 4:19-21).

Looking at GOD

Giving thanks for fathers

There is no finer sound in the world than your child calling you ‘daddy’, or ‘dad’. I love it!

And as I look around our neighbourhood, dads today are far more involved in their children’s lives than when I was a child. Pushing prams, holding hands while out on a walk, bathing, playing games. Dads are in all these activities and more. I see the dads on either side of our house, and they obviously love their kids with all their hearts.

Unfortunately, too many kids grow up without a stable and involved male figure in their lives over the whole of their childhood and beyond. And no prizes for guessing the outcome; when they reach fatherhood, their kids often grow up without a stable and involved male figure in their lives.

The month of June brings Fathers’ Day- this year on the 21st June. May all dads reading this be pampered like never before! If it’s a fine day, it may be a case of ‘Stand back everyone- dad’s going to bar-b-q’. But before we get carried away, let’s spare a thought for those who for one reason or another couldn’t be dads, or whose dads fell far short of the high expectations we invest in them, or who lost a dad at a crucial time in life and feel a permanent ache where ‘Dad’ should be.

Our Christian faith teaches us to look at God as ‘Father’- we address Him as such in the opening words of the Lord’s Prayer, and it was Jesus’ custom to talk to God as ‘Father’. Maybe, taking into account those who have had a very mixed experience, or a bad experience of fathers, we should qualify what we say of God and call Him ‘the Good Father’, or ‘our Good Father’.

Because that is what the experience of countless Christians would testify to; that God is a good father. I think of the picture Jesus paints in the parable of the Prodigal Son; the father on the look-out for his wayward son day after day, and when he sees him in the distance runs all the way to him to embrace him. Now in Jesus' time, in that culture, fathers did NOT run, least of all to welcome returning no-goods who had wasted half the father's fortune. Fathers were people of dignity. Run? Never!

Jesus has turned that on its head. We can be sure that a welcome awaits us; we turn to God, or return to God, and find that He's already half-way towards us, coming at speed to embrace us.

Lester Amann considers the man who is our 'spiritual father'...

Jacob: the man who encountered the holiness of God

Have you ever had a dramatic turning point in your life? Was there an incident, a meeting or something you saw or read which profoundly changed you? The Old Testament character Jacob had a dream, which changed his life.

One night, in the region of Luz, a Canaanite city, Jacob had a dream. He saw a ladder, on which were angels, linking earth with heaven. The dream revealed to him that God is continually connected with this world. When Jacob woke up, he knew he was in a special place. He became a changed man and changed the place name from Luz to Bethel, which means House of God. Many years later Jacob changed his name from Jacob to Israel. Bethel became a holy place.

How might we define a holy place? We could say it's a place where God has touched earth with something of heaven e.g. with a miracle or a vision. Venues such as Lourdes (France), Lindisfarne (England), St Peter's in Rome or Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre are considered Holy Places. The Garden of Gethsemane was a special place for Jesus.

Jacob certainly wasn't faultless or impeccable. His encounter with God didn't completely change the way he behaved, but it gave him a fresh perspective on life and where he fitted into God's plans. Like Jacob we too may encounter God at a particular time and grow slowly with God and His plans for us. God doesn't wait until we are perfect before He can use us. Sometimes we too may need a Holy Place to make or to return to, to help us remember we are in God's hands.

Dear God, in my busy life, find for me a place where I can be still; a place to meet with You. I am weak and need your strength for each situation. Give me a holy place where I know your arms are embracing me, always safe and secure. Amen.

Ben Sims, head of policy and public affairs for the National Churches Trust, recently told *Premier Christian News* that the figures are "really concerning" at a time when churches are facing financial pressures, including the scrapping of VAT relief on listed places of worship.

"Imagine you're one of the volunteers," Sims said. "You come and discover that all of the gravestones have been smashed, all the windows have been smashed. Or inside, the pews have been broken up. It's a really demoralising, quite scary thing to happen."

Nigel Beeton writes: The Thursday after Trinity is celebrated in the Catholic Church as the feast of Corpus Christi, the Body of Christ. I understand that it is essentially a celebration of Mass, or Holy Communion to non-Catholics. Whatever our denomination, whatever time of year, we should never take the service for granted.

Miracle at the Table

Thy table is set, but no lavish spread
A simple communion of red wine and bread.
Simple yet holy – where heaven bends low
That those knelt before Thee Thy true grace may know.

We follow where firstly our Saviour has led
We listen to words that Jesus first said:
'This is My body, it's broken for you
And this is My blood, shed for you too.'

The bread that is broken, the wine seen outpoured
They tell of the sacrifice made of our Lord.
His body was broken that we might be saved
But death was defeated – He rose from the grave!

So, kneel in the stillness of this holy place
Gladly receiving these tokens of Grace.
Then go from here knowing His Spirit in you
Will help you to do what He'd have you do!



With expectation. As the Curate climbs the pulpit steps, pray that God will take over and speak through him or her. This isn't "Britain's Got Talent", so you are neither a judge nor a member of an audience. You are a disciple, eager to learn and, with God's help, to change.

With generosity. Find out if they can afford to make ends meet. As well as covering family and household expenses, they should be buying theological books from time to time. These can be really expensive.

With understanding. Curates have to continue their studies and that will include participating in diocesan training schemes. If married, they must also spend quality time with their families. They shouldn't be working seven days a week.

With honesty. If you want to criticise, make sure it's constructive. Don't try to wound or settle scores - have something positive to say at the same time.

With hospitality. Invite them to a meal and while you're at it, invite a non-churchgoing neighbour as well.

With humour. Enough said!

Ten crimes against churches a day

On average, ten crimes are committed against church properties every day. And of the nearly 4,000 offences in the past year, most of them were either theft, vandalism or violence, according to police data.

It is a rise from the average of eight crimes a day recorded between 2022 and 2024, and the true figure could be higher, as not all police forces responded to Freedom of Information requests sent by the Countryside Alliance.

Earlier this year, £250,000 worth of historic silverware was stolen a church in Hertfordshire. Criminals targeted another in Nottinghamshire, by kicking in its stained-glass window. Others targeted gravestones outside a church near Preston, in what police have treated as a hate crime.

The Revd Dr Jo White considers various aspects of Christianity.

Reflecting Faith: The Creed (Part 2)

Last month we considered where the Creed is placed within the service. This month let's think about what is in the Creed(s).

It's important to know that the earliest known Creed, which is still substantially used today was first found in a letter from around AD 341. This is known today as the Apostles' Creed because it is widely thought to have been originally written by the Apostles themselves.

Every phrase in it can be noted as derived directly from biblical texts and it is the compilation that has taken so much thought and discussion until we arrive at the versions we use in churches today.

Because the Creed succinctly includes everything Christians believe, it unites us all in those truths; whichever Christian denomination you choose to worship within.

So, establishing wording that expresses the faith of all Christians has been the challenge.

Protestants sometimes wonder at the phrase, 'the holy catholic Church' being included, but the word 'catholic' here has the meaning of 'universal' rather than denominational.

We are ALL united in our basic faith: this is what makes us Christians and distinguishes us from other 'churches', whether they have the name of Jesus in their title or not.

Only Churches which acknowledge and include one of the recognised creeds can join the international organisation of 'Churches Together'.

Essentially, this is a sure way to know that you are at a Christian service.

This month

Because the Creed has to be universally accepted within established churches, deviations from the texts are not permitted.

However, just for the joy of thinking ...

*What would you include in a statement of faith if you were drafting it?

*Which friends would you want to include on your 'committee'?



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

What's the Big Idea? - An Introduction to the Books of the Bible: Colossians

This month we look at Colossians, a book of the New Testament. Many today are asking: *'How does Jesus uniquely reveal God to us?* This question lies at the heart of Paul's letter to the Colossians. The church in Colossae was a fruit of his three years ministry in Ephesus (52-55 AD). Paul went on to write this letter while in a Roman prison around 61 AD.

Paul was dealing with gnostic false teachers who denied that Jesus was fully God and man. They taught that enlightenment could be reached through special knowledge and rigorous self-discipline.

Paul attacked this false teaching by focusing on the supremacy of Christ: *'in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have this fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority'* (2:9-10).

He affirms that Jesus is:

Lord of all Creation, who sustains everything. As the exact representation of God, He is first-born overall creation (1:15-17) and there is no place for worshipping angels or any other power (2:18).

Head of the Church (1:18), to whom the Colossians should submit (2:6, 7) and not be seduced by vain speculations (1:16-18).

Supreme Saviour (3:11), who has defeated all spiritual powers on the cross (2:15), allowing them to share in the power of His resurrection (2:20). All are adopted into His family and so there are no special qualifications needed to experience God's favour (2:8-20).

In chapters 3&4 Paul demonstrates the practical implications for the Christian's daily life. We are challenged to abandon the old life and cultivate our new life in Christ (3:5-4:6). If we maintain Jesus as our Lord, He will prove truly sufficient for all our needs.



Only recently nine Alawites (a minority group that supported the former Assad regime in Syria) came to faith in Christ and were baptised. An Easter service, attended by more than 500 people, was led by a group of youngsters who our partner has been nurturing, and who have been sharing the gospel with thousands over social media.

Release says: "Our partner is a beacon of light shining in a dark place and attracting many.

Our partner told us, 'All Christians are being persecuted throughout the Middle East, and, in many places, Christianity has been all but driven out. We are pushing back against the tide as we send people back into some of those countries, with former church members now working as missionaries in Jordan, Syria and other parts of the region.'

More info at: <https://releaseinternational.org>

The Ven John Barton offers the following to churches that have a 'new' deacon or curate joining the church ...

With Petertide Ordinations coming, how do you handle a new Curate? Ten tips.....



With care! Put yourself in his or her shoes. Only a few days ago Curates were trying on their dog collars for the first time and probably feeling pretty self-conscious. They will be both excited and daunted at the prospect of putting 'Revd' in front of their names.

With respect. The new curate has been trained and set apart by ordination as a minister in the Church of God. If it's the Church of England, the first year will be spent as a deacon; after that, most will be ordained priest.

With prayer. This is the secret ingredient. And the most important. From now on, give your curate a regular mention in your prayers. And tell them you're doing so - it will encourage them no end.

With humanity. Clergy aren't perfect. It's an old joke but a good one, that if you don't like the clergy you've got, remember there's only the laity to pick from. By the way, clergy spouses and children aren't ordained, so don't expect them to be theologians.

For a child without parents in Kenya, life can be very difficult. Some survive on just one meal a day, many cannot afford to go to school. Their health is poor, and their future is bleak.

The children become orphans for many reasons — illness (such as HIV/AIDS), tragic accidents, mental health issues, or abandonment. These children are often taken in by ageing grandparents or extended family members, who are already struggling to provide for their own needs.

To such children, Kisumu Children Trust can bring hope. Just recently, 11-year-old Valerie was matched with sponsors through its child sponsorship programme.

Valerie was only two years old when her mother left her in the care of her grandmother. Today, no one knows where her parents are. But thanks to the support of new sponsors, Valerie can now go to school, eat regular meals, and have hope for her future.

Grace, a 14-year girl in the trust's care, lost her parents when she was very young. She told her sponsor: "No one can defend me apart from God."

Kisumu Children Trust says "there is a profound blessing in standing with these children — in reminding them that they are not forgotten, but that they are deeply loved. We want every child we care for to know that they were not a mistake."

If you would like to help an orphan in Kisumu, whether through prayer, sponsorship, or by spreading the word, please visit www.kisumuchildren.org.uk



Gospel witness in Lebanon

In the midst of warfare, a Release International partner in the Middle East is seeing the gospel of Christ bearing fruit.

The partner in Lebanon provides a haven for Christians and other minorities fleeing violence elsewhere in the region. While they provide food, clothing and bedding for those with nothing, they are also telling people about Jesus Christ.



The Seven Deadly Sins: Gluttony

'They're called deadly because they lead to the death of the soul.' (Richard Newhauser).

This month we are looking at *Gluttony*. Which food do we find hardest to resist?

It is reported that 66% of adults in the UK are overweight or obese. Gluttony is indulgence to excess, usually involving food, but can also include drinking, screen time, shopping etc.

Paul warns us about the dangers of gluttony when he refers to those whose minds are set on earthly things: *'their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame.'* (Philippians 3:19). Our struggle with gluttony is often the outward sign of a spiritual hunger for acceptance, love, or self-worth. This desire for satisfaction cannot be satisfied by food alone.

How can we overcome gluttony?

Glorify God with your body: 'Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?' (1 Corinthians 6:19). Paul reminds us that our bodies belong to God; as temples of the Holy Spirit, we should use them to glorify God.

While we have freedom in the things we consume, we are also called to honour God in our actions.

Exercise self-control: 'live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.' (Galatians 5:16). Paul goes on to list self-control as one of the Fruit of the Spirit (5:23). As we examine ourselves and identify those areas where we lack self-control, we can entrust them to God, asking for the strength of the Holy Spirit to overcome gluttony.

We recognise that true satisfaction is only found in a desire for God alone: *'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.'* (Matthew 5:6).

Mouse Makes

"May the grace of the Lord
JESUS CHRIST and the
love of **GOD** and the
fellowship of the
HOLY SPIRIT be
with you all."
2 Corinthians 13:14

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JESUS • CHRIST SON • SAVIOUR • LORD EMMANUEL • MESSIAH SHEPHERD • LAMB • WAY TRUTH • LIFE • DOOR BREAD • WORD • HEALER VINE • ALPHA • OMEGA	GOD • FATHER ABBA • LORD • JEHOVAH YAHWEH • ALMIGHTY HOLY ONE • SAVIOUR ETERNAL • CREATOR KING • MAJESTY • JUDGE SHIELD • ROCK • I AM	HOLY SPIRIT GIFT • HELPER • WITNESS COMFORTER • GUIDE ADVOCATE • WISDOM POWER • TRUTH • BREATH LIFE • ETERNAL • DOVE WIND • FIRE • TEACHER
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Looking at CHURCH, at home and worldwide

Christian Giving

Stewardship's recent *Generosity Report* explored 'Christian giving in the UK' and is based on 6,000 churchgoers, 1,700 of whom attend church weekly, 1,200 who go monthly and 3,100 who attend less frequently.

On average, these Christians gave £124 a month to different charitable causes, made up of £98 to their church and £26 to other charities.

The more committed Christians, who attend their church and read the Bible at least weekly, tend to give more than others. They give to Christian charities, then secular charities and finally individual Christian workers.

Why give? "Gratitude for the blessings God has given me (home, finance, family etc.)" is the reason about a third of them give. This is followed by "gratitude for what Jesus did for me on the Cross" (30%) and being "part of something that can make a difference" (29%).

How do Christians feel about their giving? The answer: "Responsibility and joy," is closely followed by "gratitude." Mostly, Christians keep quiet about their giving, not even discussing it with friends.

Supporting those in need was a prime reason for giving (say sponsoring running a marathon), whether to family or friends or homeless strangers on the streets. The faith affiliation of charities was less important – it was what they were doing which counted.

Committed Christians usually support two charities.



Bringing hope to the fatherless

In the book of James, we are reminded: "True and pure religion in the sight of God is to care for orphans and widows in their distress."

This is the calling of Kisumu Children Trust, a small UK-based charity supporting orphans and vulnerable children in Kisumu, western Kenya.