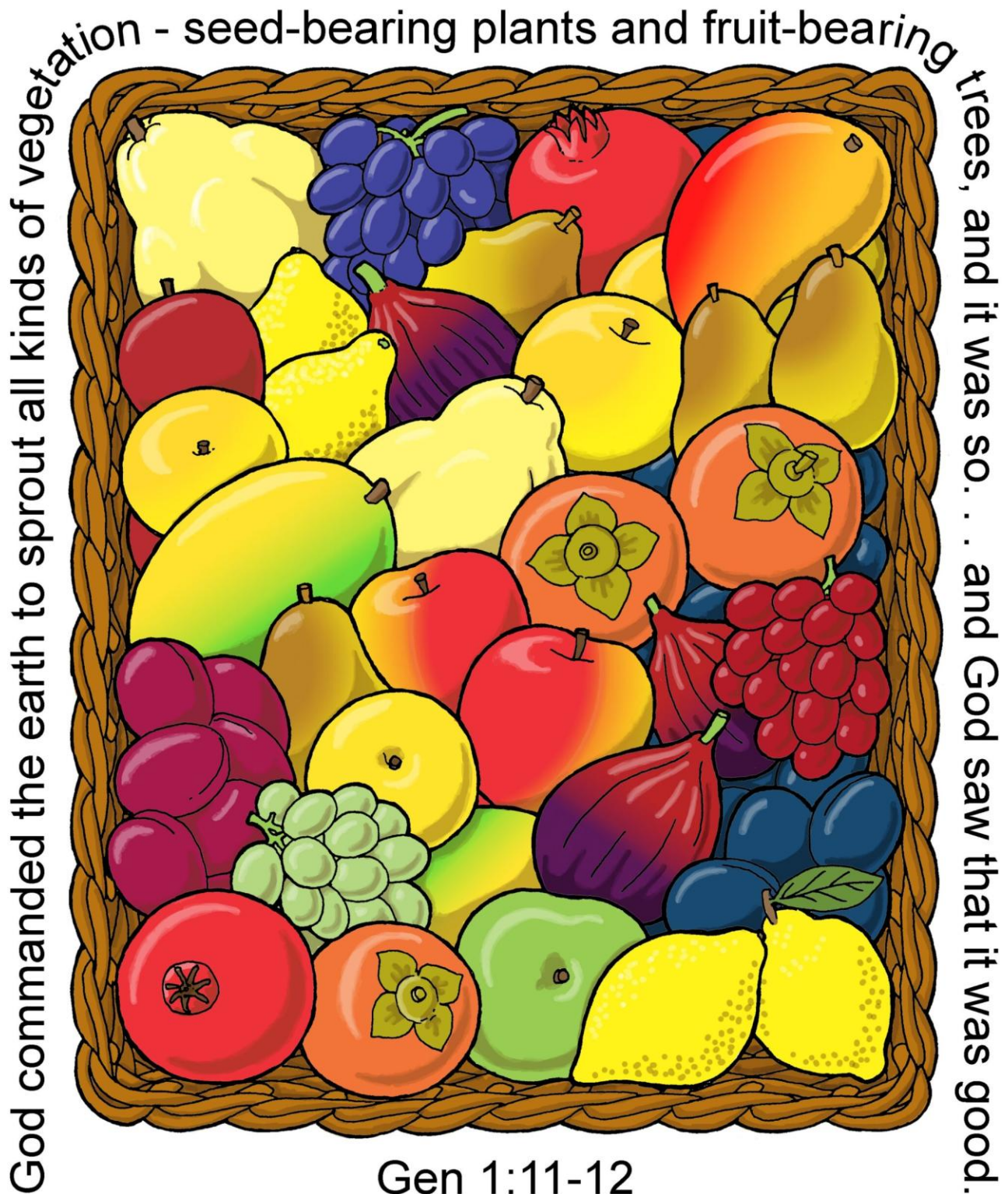


Rushall Parish News

October 2026

Free online. 30p print copy

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



Some useful numbers

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Wedding Enquiries:
Contact the vicar

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



"Wait a moment, dear, this isn't a tourists'-
attraction ratings guide, it's a Health
and Safety warning!"

800 years ago, on 3rd October
1226 that St Francis of Assisi,
Italian friar, deacon and mystic,
died. One of the most
venerated religious figures in
Christianity, and founder of the
Franciscan Order.

The gospel is good news. But
Jesus never said it was easy
news. – *Charles Colson*

Please send any articles for the
November magazine to Colin at
colinsuch01@gmail.com by Friday
25th October.

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

What's the Big Idea? - an Introduction to the Minor Prophets

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The Minor Prophets are '*minor*' not because they lack importance, but due to their length. The 12 prophets, Hosea through Malachi, make up the last books of the Old Testament, and were written from around 770 BC (Jonah) until 433 BC (Malachi).

The prophets fall into 3 time-periods:
Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and Nahum = Assyrian period
Habakkuk and Zephaniah = Babylonian period
Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi = Post-exilic period.

Hosea and Amos spoke to Israel (Northern Kingdom), calling the people to acknowledge their sin and return to God. Joel and Micah addressed Judah (Southern Kingdom), including prophesies about the coming of the Messiah and the church. Habakkuk and Zephaniah spoke to Judah shortly before they were taken into exile into Babylon. Obadiah spoke God's judgment against the Edomites, while Jonah and Nahum both spoke against Assyria and their capital city of Ninevah. Following the people's return from exile, Haggai exhorted the people not to neglect rebuilding the Temple. Zechariah encouraged them with the promise of the future glory of Zion and of its shepherd king, while Malachi reminded them that if he is rejected, God would judge His people.

The minor prophets remind us that God cared not just for the Jews, but also for the Edomites, Assyrians, Egyptians and all of His creation. For Christians today the challenge remains to take the message of God's grace to all nations in the power of the Holy Spirit: *'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.'*³(Joel 2:28, 29)

“Memories”

I find myself doing a lot of reflecting at the moment. The (ex-council) house I grew up in and have inherited is now empty and so is available for me to use as a bolt hole on my days off and for holidays and eventually it will be the home for me to live in when I retire. At the moment I am working on the front garden so that in years to come, when I do eventually retire, it will be established and easy to look after.

While I’m there I am also looking at what furniture I need to be able to stay over on days off and while doing so I see in my mind how it used to be so many years ago.

When I come home to the vicarage I also have many memories as this month marks the 22nd anniversary of my installation as vicar of Rushall.

In both of these places the memories are not so much of the building that I have or am living in but of the people that I have known and shared time with and moments experienced whilst there.

In both places people have gone, either moved away or passed on and the surrounding area in both locations has also changed.

It would be so easy to lose myself in the past and concentrate on what used to be but is no more (especially at this time of year as the nights draw in), but we can’t live in the past; and though we may plan for the future we must live in the present moment; the past is gone and who knows what the future may bring?



So as I do a little work in the front garden when I can visit what is now my retreat from work and when I sit at my desk in the vicarage study compiling service rotas, reports and notice sheets I can look back at what used to be (and smile at the memories) and I can plant a shrub or decide on a service time and place (and preacher) with a view to what may be needed in the future but in doing so stay very much in the present with the knowledge that in both places I am building upon what is already there but recognise that the world, the church and myself have changed and so has what is needed now and for the future. As Edmund Burke (1729-1797) wrote “You can never plan the future by the past” – describing the need to balance learning from the past whilst actively engaging with the present moment and so opening ourselves to approach the future with an open mind, eagerly embracing the uncertainty it brings.

Colin

4th October – 800 years since the death of St Francis of Assisi

You'll have heard of Giovanni di Pietro di Bernadone, although he is more probably familiar as Francis of Assisi. On 4th October we will mark 800 years since his death; such was his fame, influence and holiness that he was declared a saint by the pope less than two years after his death.

Francis was born into a prosperous family of silk merchants in Assisi, central Italy, probably in 1181. As a young man he loved clothes, spent money lavishly, and enjoyed a reputation of a jack-the-lad, pleasure-loving and irresponsible. But experience both as a prisoner of war and of illness led him to think deeply about his life, although it took some time for this reappraisal to bear fruit.

Just outside Assisi was the ruined chapel of San Damiano, and it was here that he felt God speak to him, asking him to "repair my church, which as you can see, is falling into ruin". Little did Francis know at that point that 'repairing my church' meant much more than repairing this simple chapel - a task he set about doing.

Francis became known for his devotion to Christ and also his commitment to the poor and bereft. Others were attracted to join him in preaching the gospel and serving the poor. Eventually this was organised into a congregation of poor men (friars), which today we know as the Franciscans.

He established a Rule of Life for these men, later revised as more joined them. A sister organisation, the Poor Clares, was founded for women who wanted to give their lives to God and the service of the poor. Two years before his death, in a period of intense prayer, he is said to have displayed the *stigmata* - the wounds of Christ - in his hands and side. By then he was increasingly ill; blindness and malaria took its toll. He died aged just 45.

Simplicity was a hallmark of his life, which has come down to us in a number of ways. Care for the environment is one way; patron saint of animals is another. World Animal Day is the marked on the same day as Francis' death. Many churches will be holding a 'Blessing of the Animals' service, often a cheerful riot of barking dogs, hissing cats, rats and mice in cages, even a stick insect, and horses tethered outside. Is there one in your area where you could take your pet to be blessed?

We should see Francis as a visionary and inspirer, who, impelled by the love of Christ, was able to give himself to, and draw others to, a life of service to the poor, care for the environment, and prayer. By the time he died, there were Franciscan friars over much of Europe. Today, inspired by his legacy, his followers - friars, sisters and lay people - are found all over the world.

Do you have a Rule of Life which you try to live by, one which honours God and seeks the best for humanity? How do you inspire those around you? How do you mark your care for God's creation? You love your pets, but is it time to re-evaluate if you are doing the best by them?

One of Francis' prayers asks God 'to grant us the grace to do for You alone what we know You want us to do, and always to desire what pleases You.' That could be a good rule of life, a star to live by; could you make it yours?

M&M: Monty and Matty

Hurrah! Monty has been given the “all clear” after his operations and scans!

We’ve also promoted the servant to “Chauffeur” and let him drive us to Studley (where he grew up) to meet up with family and spend the day. (It also meant that for Monty a trip in the car



didn’t end with injections, being shaved and cut open for a change!)

We went for a pub lunch and were very well behaved (of course), though we think the servant/chauffeur should have given us more than just the crusts of his pizza!

We then went for a walk in the fields and the churchyard (the church is a mile outside the village) in the sunshine with our cousin Peggy (a cockapoo) who sometimes comes to visit us in Rushall.

Then it was back into the car and off up the M42 and M5 to home. Luckily the traffic wasn’t too bad so we just settled down and had a doze for most of the way. It was only when we got towards Walsall that the traffic slowed down. Still, it was a nice day out and it gave the servant a break, we’ll have to do it again soon.

Lots of woofs,
Monty and Matty

Do the Bible and Science contradict each other?

For the Christian, the Bible is God's Word to us; it tells us about His character and creative purposes, how He has related to people in the past, and His promises for the future. Science is a specific way of studying the world, exploring the physical properties of things – a wonderful way to explore God's creation. So, the question to ask if the Bible and Science seem to be contradicting each other is, have we made a mistake in interpreting one or the other?

Science is very good at answering certain types of questions: 'What size is it?', 'How fast does it travel?', 'What is it made of?', and so on. Questions like 'What's it for?', 'What should I do with it?', and 'What's it worth?' can't be answered using scientific methods. Some of the misunderstanding in discussions of science and religion come from not recognising the limits of science.

It's also important to recognise what the Bible is, and what sorts of questions it can answer. The Bible was written well before people began to investigate the world in ways we would recognise as scientific. Of course, people in the Ancient Near East were studying the world around them, observing the movements of the stars, the processes of life and death that happened all around them, the seasons, the behaviour of physical objects, and so on. But they did not study the mechanisms underlying these things systematically using the tools of science, and they did not see or describe the world in scientific terms – not because they weren't intelligent, but because science as we know it wasn't happening at that time.

Instead, the biblical writers used words that were commonly used in their own cultures to record events, share truth and wisdom, and tell stories that convey deep truth about God's character. If we want to understand God's intention in inspiring these words, we need to do some careful work to connect with those ancient writers and find out what they meant, before we can discover what those words mean to us today.

These principles can help us have far more fruitful conversations about science and Christian faith. If we allow any apparent conflict between Science and the Bible to fuel our search for understanding, not only will we learn as individuals, but we will be able to draw others into a conversation that is relevant to wider society today.

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Gardening Notes for October

By mid-September the garden had improved greatly. The grass was green, albeit with dead patches and the borders had bare soil.

In respect of the grass it was cut and bare patches raked to loosen the soil and remove the thatch. I mixed grass seed with compost and sprinkled this lightly where needed and hopefully with the episodes of rain we are having germination will take place. September is the ideal time to repair the lawn although, if temperatures stay mild, seeding October could yield results.

I offer the following observations on the way in which our plants have fared in the extreme weather we have had and which may happen increasingly often in the future.

Shrubs almost certainly lost: -

Rhododendrons, Small skimmias and small euonymus - which were newly planted earlier this year,

Shrubs which lost their leaves but will probably still be alive: -

Established Skimmias, Witch Hazel (Hamamelis), Weigela, Honeysuckle, Cornus Kouza and Sambucus Niga - both of which partially lost their leaves and most surprising Spotted Laurel where the leaves turned completely black, I thought this was a very tough plant!

Shrubs which retained their leaves: -

Viburnums, Garrya Elliptical, Callicarpa, Quince, Green/ Orange Acer, Nandina Heavenly Bamboo, Roses, Some clematis, Cotinus, Pieris, Corkscrew hazel

Perennials surviving well above ground: -

Salvias, Napeta, Achillea

If the rhododendrons have died I may replace them with a red variety of Cotinus (Smoke Bush) to sit next to the green specimen that has fared so well.

It is very tempting to buy the lovely violas and winter pansies however we find that as soon as the weather turns colder they survive but cease to flower. The flowers then come in Spring and often cross over with the time for summer bedding then is tempting to keep the pansies but have to avoid stocks of summer plants running out . There are many new and attractive varieties of tulip bulbs available and I would like to plant some on containers to enjoy them near the house. Also it seems to give them a better start than planting in borders which can become waterlogged. Apparently some varieties will come back on subsequent years but this information would only be obtained from specialist companies like Blom Bulbs.

In October we can have some days of calm, soft and warm weather which would be very welcome

Ann

The Revd Paul Hardingham considers our earth

Season of Creation

In the church year the *Season of Creation* (September 1st - October 4th) is an opportunity for us to reflect on our responsibility to care for the planet. As the season draws to an end for this year, have you considered:

The world is not ours:

'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it' (Psalm 24:1). The world is not ours, but God's! This means we have a responsibility of caring for God's world: *'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.'* (Genesis 2:15). Clearly, we have not done the best job! The effects of global warming have been all too obvious this summer. And 2025 ranked as the third warmest year on record globally, 1.3°C to 1.44°C above pre-industrial levels. This follows the historic peak in 2024, driven by ongoing fossil fuel emissions and high ocean surface temperatures.

Our hope is found in Jesus:

Any hope for the future lies in Jesus Himself. He is the one who sustains creation and will bring everything to completion: *'all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.'* (Colossians 1:16,17). God's plan is *'to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.'* (Ephesians 1:10). We can look forward to the climax of history when God through Christ will restore our broken world and make everything new.

In the present, we are empowered by Christ to take our proper place as stewards of the earth. Simple everyday actions can help to sustain our planet, including recycling of waste, energy saving, choosing reusable options, careful diet and a commitment to simple living can help the planet.

However difficult the climate crisis gets, as Christians, we can engage it with faith and not fatalism!



Some men will spin out a long prayer telling God who and what He is, or they pray out a whole system of divinity. Some people preach till everybody wishes they would stop, and God wishes so, too, most undoubtedly. – *Charles Finney*

By the Revd Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, and a former communications director for the C of E.

Could sleep be spiritual?

“Sleep is spiritual,” is the claim made in a newly-published guide to discipleship, written by London-based Church of England vicar, Sarah Guinness.

Although over-looked by many, ‘The Alternative Guide to Discipleship’ places sleep firmly at the core of growing in Christian spirituality.

Sarah Guinness writes, “Sleep is not wasted time. It is an opportunity for God to seal our dreams, and to deposit things and ideas in our hearts and minds.

“I’d like to imagine that at night God, who knit our brains and bodies together, stands by our beds, ready to sort through the day that we’ve had, patching the holes, processing that conversation, mending the tears in our armour so that we wake up feeling repaired, refreshed and ready for another day.”

Guinness, the Vicar of Brentford, West London, believes that sleep can be creative, an opportunity for God to speak to us, a place to be vulnerable and a practice run for our Christian lives.

She cites how Adam fell into a deep sleep, and wakes to find Eve, how God speaks to a sleeping Abram about His promises and seals a covenant with him, and how Jesus sleeps and then wakes with clarity to curse a fig tree and clear the temple.

In Mark 1, Jesus goes to bed, sleeps and awakes early to pray, and later in the day tells the disciples they need to move on to other towns. “It’s as though,” says Guinness, Jesus “goes to sleep, has a divine download and feels focused on His priorities.”

It’s in our dreams that God speaks to us most powerfully, she explains. “God, being God, can do far more in our sleeping than we can do in our waking. He uses dreams to get our attention.

“People talk about being woken in the night with a strong urge to pray for a person or a situation. Why? Because sleep isn’t dead space when our bodies reboot. Sleep is spiritual.”

In ‘The Alternative Book of Discipleship,’ Sarah Guinness goes beyond the importance of sleep to map out a route to spiritual growth based on managing boundaries, embracing emotions, learning to play, surrendering outcomes, and other insights. It is founded on the author’s experiences as a parish priest and, before that, 12 years as an occupational therapist.

100 years of Winnie-the-Pooh

One hundred years ago, on 14th October 1926, the children's book *Winnie-the-Pooh*, by A A Milne, was published.

It was set in the Hundred Acre Wood, an innocent world described as “largely Edenic” but based on Ashdown Forest in East Sussex, which the Milne family often explored from their home in nearby Hartfield. It came about through the encouragement of E H Shepard, Milne's colleague on the humorous magazine *Punch*, who provided the beguiling illustrations.

Alan Alexander Milne was firstly a playwright and occasional mystery story writer who, again with Shepard, wrote the book of children's verse *When We Were Very Young*, which contained the seeds of *Winnie-the-Pooh* and its sequel, *The House on Pooh Corner*, all of which proved extremely popular.

It was apparently during a family visit to London Zoo, where Christopher Robin encountered a tame bear called Winnipeg, that the book was conceived. Winnie's literary friends, such as Piglet and Eeyore, were originally toys of the real Christopher Robin.

Sadly, the book eventually had an adverse effect on the Milne family. The author said that he felt “amazement and disgust” at the fame his son had had thrust upon him: “I do not want C R Milne to ever wish that his name was Charles Robert.” Nevertheless, the son did become estranged from his parents, especially following his marriage to his mother's niece.

The effect of the book on others has been happier. A plaque at Ashdown Forest declares that Milne and Shepard “captured the magic of Ashdown Forest and gave it to the world”.

Despite creating a kind of Eden, Milne, who was a pacifist, said little about religion. But he did say on joining the Home Guard that “in fighting Hitler we are truly fighting the Devil, the Anti-Christ ... Hitler was a crusader against God.”

The four Winnie-the-Pooh books went on to sell more than 50 million copies worldwide. The first book became the first-ever foreign-language book on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

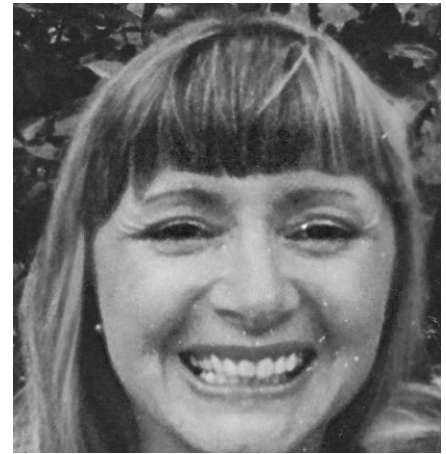
DEMENTIA

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 27th October 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

Looking back on the Jarrow March

Ninety years ago, from 5th to 31st October, the Jarrow March took place. Some 200 men walked from Jarrow in north-east England to Westminster to draw attention to the severe unemployment and poverty in their area.

Because of the huge number of unemployed in the town, on the banks of the Tyne, the marchers felt compelled to do something dramatic to stir the government out of its apparent complacency. Their loss of Palmer's shipyard two years previously had meant that a staggering 70 per cent of the town were jobless.

They called their walk of nearly 300 miles a Crusade, and they received widespread support from local political parties of all kinds on their way to London, and from the population generally.

Before they left, the mayor, Alderman J W Thompson, the town clerk, members of the town council, and their extremely supportive MP, Ellen Wilkinson, attended a service at Christ Church, in which all the clergymen and ministers of the town took part. The Bishop of Jarrow, Dr Geoffrey Gordon, gave a blessing.

But there was little official support from the Church at top level, who seemed to regard the Crusade as political and disruptive. Dr Gordon was in fact rebuked for this reason by his superior, the Bishop of Durham, the Rt Revd Hensley Henson.

However, the men walked for 25 days in a peaceful line, causing no trouble at all. Miss Wilkinson joined them for much of the journey. On reaching London, the 12,000-signature petition calling for the government to build more industries was presented to Parliament, but it was not debated.

Although the men from Jarrow, who returned home by train, undoubtedly regarded their Crusade as a failure, it did in fact effect change, leading up to the creation of the Welfare State after the war.

Out and about walking, driving and visiting: Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings

We recently visited the Museum when they had an open weekend. It is decade since I visited and was surprised by how many buildings and structures have been rebuilt on the site from medieval buildings to a prefab and a working windmill all set in pleasant grounds.



A guided tour which enhanced the experience was provided on this occasion by a knowledgeable and approachable volunteer.

The museum is off the A38 in Bromsgrove (B60 4JR) Leaving M5 at junction 4 and taking the second exit A38. After passing a Morrisons store a small island has a brown sign to Avoncroft.

There are family friendly events and children are half price in school holidays

Ann



Be nice to your knees

Osteoarthritis is the main cause of knee pain in people over 50. Here are some tips that may help:

Be aware of the several major groups of muscles that support your knees. They include the

quadriceps at the side and front of your thighs, the hamstrings at the back, and your calf muscles. If you can give these muscles regular exercise that keeps them strong, they will help protect your knees.

Be aware that your knees *like and need* to move. Using them less is one of the worst things you can do, because it only weakens them. If you have bad osteoarthritis, then ask your doctor for alternative ways of exercising them, instead of walking.

Be aware that knees do better when you lose weight. Just losing one kg of body weight will bring down the compressive force on your knees by as much as 4kg with each step. That will help preserve your knee cartilage.

It seems that doctors disagree over the value of taking supplements such as glucosamine or turmeric, but they say that if you find they work for you, then certainly keep taking them.

1st October Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury - the Poor Man's Earl

Think of Piccadilly Circus, and that small statue of the angel poised with bow and arrow. Most people think it stands for Eros. It does not. It stands for Anteros, his brother, the god of selfless love. It is a memorial to the greatest Christian Victorian philanthropist, politician and social reformer of his generation – Lord Shaftesbury.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury (1801 – 1885) was a devout Christian who spent his life fighting to help ease the plight of lunatics, chimney sweeps, children in factories, women and children in the mines, opium addicts, and children without any education.

His own early life was loveless and bleak – his parents formal and frightening, his early schooldays a ‘horror’ of ‘cruelty and starvation’. The only love came from the family’s housekeeper, Maria Millis. A biographer wrote: ‘She provided for Ashley a model of Christian love that would form the basis for much of his later social activism and philanthropic work.’ The reality and homely practicality of her Christian love were a beacon for the young Ashley. She told him Bible stories, she taught him a prayer.

After Christ Church Oxford, where he proved an outstanding scholar, Ashley turned to politics. In 1826, aged 25, he was elected as Tory MP for Woodstock. He was eager to serve on parliamentary committees that got things done; his great life’s work had begun.

Lunatics: In 1827 lunatics were kept chained naked in straw, forced to sleep in their excrement. They were washed in freezing cold water, with one towel for 160 people and no soap. There was gross over-crowding and inedible food: asylums were places to die in.

Shaftesbury’s maiden speech in Parliament was in support of a Bill to improve conditions. He wrote: ‘By God’s blessing, my first effort has been for the advance of human happiness.’



Continued from page 14

It took years: from 1827 to 1884 he fought for a succession of Lunacy Acts, writing later of 'the years of toil and care that, under God, I have bestowed on this melancholy and awful question.'

Child Labour and Factory Reform. Again, reform took years. Shaftesbury fighting for the Ten Hours Act from 1833, 1842, 1844, 1846 and 1847 – when it finally got through Parliament. No child under the age of 9 should work in the cotton or woollen industries below the age of 9, and no one under 18 must work more than ten hours a day.

Miners. In 1842 he fought to outlaw the employment of women and children in coal mines.

Climbing boys. Thousands of young boys were dying in terrible pain – scorched, blinded and suffocated by soot, or with cancer of the scrotum. Ashley fought for Bills in 1840, 1851, 1853, 1855, 1864 until finally the Chimney Sweepers Act 1875 closed the practise down.

Education reform: 1844 Ashley became president of the Ragged School Union that promoted education for poor children. He wrote that if it were to fail, 'I should die of a broken heart'.

Religion. Lord Shaftesbury was a devout Christian who became a leading figure in 19th century evangelical Anglicanism. He was President of British and Foreign Bible Society for nearly 30 years. He was very sympathetic to the Jews, and advocated their return to the Holy Land.

Lord Shaftesbury's funeral service at Westminster Abbey on the morning of 8th October 1885 drew thousands of people. The streets along the route were thronged with the poor: costermongers, flower-girls, boot-blacks, crossing sweepers, factory hands and many more. They waited for hours just to see his coffin go by. He was dearly loved by them as the 'Poor Man's Earl'. One biographer wrote: 'No man has in fact ever done more to lessen the extent of human misery, or to add to the sum total of human happiness.'

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon called him 'the best man of the age'. He 'lived for the oppressed', he was a 'moral anchor in a drifting generation', 'friend of every living thing', 'he had a 'fervent love to God, and hearty love to man.'



"Every great dream begins with a dreamer" – **Harriet Tubman** – Black American abolitionist and Union spy.

You've got the wrong person!

At church recently, we stood to sing Charles Wesley's hymn 'Come Holy Ghost our hearts inspire'. Except the organist was playing the tune which normally accompanies the Christmas carol 'While shepherds watched their flocks by night'. (No, not 'On Ilkley Moor bar t'aht' - the other one).

I had never sung Wesley's hymn to this tune before, and it took a bit of believing that it was possible, a bit of getting used to. Some hymn tunes are what I call 'portmanteau tunes' - we can sing a number of hymns to the same tune, and we are usually quite happy about it. But we mess with carols at our peril! Most people know them, and they have become identified with very particular hymn tunes. Give us what we expect, please, organist!

We can all be a bit fixed like this. The Bible is full of examples of 'Who me? You've made a mistake there, God!'. Or it comes down to 'Here I am, Lord, send him!' Perhaps the most well-known example is Jonah, who was so convinced that God had made a mistake in calling him to go and tell the citizens of Nineveh to turn from their wicked ways, that he set off in entirely the opposite direction to Nineveh, and took a ship going west, until he was ambushed by God and ended up in the belly of the great fish. But once Jonah realised God was serious, and that God would be with him, he set off as God had asked him to.

Moses is another example. 'Me, tell Pharaoh to let my people go? Me? You cannot be serious, Lord!' But again, once Moses was convinced that this was the way God wanted him to go, he submitted to God's plan, and became the great leader of his people, bringing them out of slavery in Egypt to the boundary of the Promised Land.

God's plans for us are always bigger than our horizons can presently accommodate. If you have a niggling feeling God is calling you to a particular task, or to abandon a particular something, it may take time to come round to God's point of view, but it will ultimately turn out to be a better way. When God calls, He does not leave us at that point; He will always resource us for the task, often in surprising ways.

'Who, me, Lord?' Yes, YOU!

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

Recipe

Sticky Toffee Sponge

This recipe also works well as a pudding with cream or custard.

Ingredients

75 g sultanas
150g stoned dates chopped
1tsp bicarbonate soda
2tbsp butter
200g brown sugar
2 eggs
200g S.R. flour
grated orange peel to decorate
Sticky toffee sauce
2tbs butter
175ml double cream
200g brown sugar

1. To make sponge, put the fruits and bicarbonate of soda into a heatproof bowl and cover with boiling water and set aside to soak.

2. Put butter in a separate bowl, add sugar and beat well. Beat in the eggs, then fold in flour. Drain soaked fruit and add to the bowl and mix. Spoon into an 8 in greased and lined cake tin. Transfer to a pre heated oven gas 4 /180 degrees. Bake for 35-40 minutes until skewer inserted into middle comes out clean. About 5 minutes before cake is cooked make sauce.

3. Melt butter in a saucepan over a medium heat. Stir in cream and sugar and bring to the boil, stirring constantly. Lower heat and simmer for 5 minutes.

4. Turn out the sponge onto a serving plate and pour over the sauce. Decorate with orange zest and serve with whipped cream.

5. Makes 6-8 portions

Enjoy,
Ann



Sticks

Long ago when men cursed and beat the ground with sticks, it was called witchcraft. Today, it's called golf.

6th October: William Tyndale, Bible translator and Reformation martyr

This month is the 501th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation, and so a good time to pay tribute to an outstanding English scholar, translator and martyr of the Reformation.

William Tyndale (c. 1494 - 6th October 1536) was born near Gloucester, and studied at Oxford and Cambridge. He could speak seven languages, and was proficient in ancient Hebrew and Greek. As a priest, his abilities would have taken him a long way, but by 1523 Tyndale's only desire was to translate the Bible, so that English men and women could read it for themselves. It became his life's passion.

For Tyndale had rediscovered a vital doctrine that the Church had been ignoring: that of justification by faith. He had found it when reading Erasmus's Greek edition of the New Testament. In fact, his life's work was well summed up in some words of his mentor, Erasmus: "Christ desires His mysteries to be published abroad as widely as possible. I would that [the Gospels and the epistles of Paul] were translated into all languages, of all Christian people, and that they might be read and known."

Tyndale's translation was the first Bible to be published in English, the first to draw directly from Hebrew and Greek texts, and the first English translation to take advantage of the printing press.

It was to cost him his life. For Tyndale's work was seen as a direct challenge to the power of both the Roman Catholic Church and the laws of England in maintaining the Church's position.

When the authorities had tried to stop his translation, Tyndale fled to Hamburg, Wittenberg, Cologne, and finally to the Lutheran city of Worms. It was there, in 1525, his New Testament emerged. It was quickly smuggled into England, and King Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey, and others, were furious.

Tyndale moved on to Antwerp, where for nine more years he continued his work. Then in May 1535 he was betrayed, arrested, and jailed in a castle near Brussels. Tied to the stake for strangulation and burning, his dying prayer was that the King of England's eyes would be opened. Sure enough, two years later King Henry authorised the Great Bible for the Church of England, which relied largely on Tyndale's work.

Not only that, but in 1611, the 54 scholars who produced the King James Bible drew very heavily from Tyndale. Even today we honour him: in 2002, Tyndale was placed at number 26 in the BBC's poll of 100 Greatest Britons.

10th October Francis Borgia – ‘the Jesuits’ second founder’

Here is a saint for you if you have lost the person you love. Here is a saint for you if you would not let your wealth and security stop you from doing something daringly good with your life.

Francis Borgia (1510 – 72) certainly began with it ‘all’. He was the son of a duke, the great-grandson of Pope Alexander VI, and also of King Ferdinand V of Aragon. He was a fast-tracker in his career: by 18 he was recognised at the Emperor’s court, and by 19 he was Viceroy of all Catalonia. Soon he was made Duke of Gandia, and then discovered that his magistrates were corrupt. The first big crisis of his life had arrived.

Francis suppressed the corruption – and paid the price. He was scorned at court. So he retired to his estate, and instead of planning revenge, planned for more good: he began a Dominican foundation and restored a hospital for his grateful people.

Then in 1546 the second crisis of his life hit him: his wife died, leaving him and their eight children stricken with grief. Instead of remarrying, or turning to warfare, Francis resigned his dukedom in favour of his son, and secretly joined the Society of Jesus. Francis tried hard to conceal his rank, but his ability could not be hidden. After his ordination, his experience in governing all of Catalonia was put to good use – he was made Commissary for Spain and Portugal, where he founded many colleges and other houses. By 1561 he was called to Rome, and in 1565 he was elected General of the Jesuits.

For the remaining seven years of his life, Francis stirred up a whirlwind: reforming the lives of Christians throughout Europe by inspiring and supporting his clergy. He was so zealous that he has been called the Jesuits’ second founder. He helped found what would become the Gregorian University in Rome, established a new province in Poland, began missionary work in the Americas, and organised relief for the plague-stricken of Rome.

When he finally collapsed, worn out with hard work, he prayed for each of his children and grandchildren in turn, blessing them with a thankful heart before he died.

Francis Borgia was born to worldly greatness, but achieved personal greatness by his indifference to wealth and power: about all he loved God, and wanted to serve Jesus Christ in whatever way presented itself.

Should our church accept bitcoin?

A church on England's south coast made headlines, when it recently announced that it was going to accept bitcoin as donations.

Claygate Church, based in Bournemouth, Southbourne and Poole, is among the first UK churches to accept the digital currency. In the US, increasing numbers of churches and non-profit organisations have already joined the trend.

British churches are approaching cryptocurrencies with caution. Charity and tax regulations between the two countries are different, so no direct comparison can be made.

Fundraisers and church treasurers I have spoken to have expressed scepticism about giving by cryptocurrencies taking off in the UK – certainly in the short-term. But a major UK online giving platform offered me the opportunity of donating in cryptocurrency, when I wanted to support a local schools charity.

So, what's happening?

A spokesperson for the Church of England told me: "Although our national systems do not currently support bitcoin donations, our priority remains providing secure, compliant, and trusted giving solutions.

"Any future consideration of cryptocurrency would need to align with regulatory requirements and available resources to implement well, but we remain interested in monitoring developments in this area."

The Charity Commission, that oversees UK charities including churches, has published guidance to address the rise in cryptocurrencies.

It sets out the 'many risks' of cryptocurrencies including: the volatility of their value as this can change very quickly; potential fraud or theft by hackers; the lack of protection compared to traditional currencies or financial products; and difficulty in tracing donors because donations can be made anonymously.

The Commission has also pointed out that many of these cryptocurrencies use a lot of energy, and this may not comply with a charity's environmental, social and governance policies.

For UK churches, the current risks appear to far outweigh benefits, especially as most British churches have treasurers who are hard-pressed volunteers, combining the role with full-time jobs, or are in their retirement years.

The risks set out by the Charity Commission would make most churches think twice – or many times more than that – before taking a chance with new digital currencies. But it could be that new technology – or changes in regulation – will make bitcoin more acceptable within a few years.

But I'm not sure that will be the case for most churches.

By the Revd Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, and a former communications director for the C of E.

Premier League footballer says: ‘faith helped me through injury.’

A Premier League footballer has revealed how finding faith helped him cope with a series of injuries that kept him off the pitch for periods totalling more than three years.

Josh Dasilva, who plays for west London-based Brentford FC, suffered a hip injury in February 2021 that kept him out of the team for a year, and then a hamstring injury followed between August 2023 and January 2024.

Then, in February 2024, Dasilva suffered a serious knee injury while in training, and did not return to the team until the dying minutes of Brentford’s 3-0 victory over West Ham in May 2026. The crowd gave Dasilva a standing ovation and cheered his every touch of the ball.

Dasilva’s way back to fitness has been long and painful. He now says, “When you seek God honestly and diligently, you’ll find true peace. When I was in dark places, that’s what pulled me out.”

It was four months into rehabilitation, following his knee injury, that Dasilva made a choice that transformed his outlook and his life.

He recalls, “One of my closest friends invited me to church. I’d grown up in church but lost my way. My parents are strong believers. Whenever I went home and visited my parents, my mum would say, ‘Let’s pray quickly’ and sometimes it wasn’t so quickly!”

Returning to church made a major impact on Dasilva. He explains, “Since taking it seriously, my whole life has changed. Faith has become a big part of my life and how I want to live my life. If it wasn’t for Christ, if it wasn’t for Jesus, I wouldn’t be here right now.

“What were the biggest things that helped me? Obviously, my family and friends and the club, but my faith has been number one.”

Dasilva was baptised in May 2025, and prayer and worship became part of his daily routine. He explains, “I always dedicate the first hour of the day to God. I pray and I read. It directs my day.

“God is faithful. Regardless of my situation, whether I was able to play another game of football or not. I knew that God loved me regardless. I knew I would be fine.”

By the Revd Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, and a former communications director for the C of E.

29th October - James Hannington, bishop and martyr in Uganda

James Hannington could have had a most comfortable and respectable life, safe in the peaceful English county of Sussex. Born in Hurstpierpoint in 1847, he'd worked in business and the army before theological study at Oxford and two curacies. Then he was appointed minister of St George's Chapel in Hurstpierpoint in 1875. Still only 27, Hannington had it made for life.

But something had happened to Hannington during his first curacy at Martinhoe in Devon. His cultural Christianity had been transformed by an intense conversion experience to the risen Christ, and with it, his hunger for spreading the Gospel had grown.

In 1882, he was disturbed and challenged to hear news of the deaths of several missionaries who had been serving in Buganda (now a part of Uganda). After prayer, Hannington decided that taking the gospel to Buganda-Uganda was the true calling of God on his life, and so he applied to the Church Missionary Society, and was sent out.

Arriving on the coast of East Africa, Hannington began the long trek inland to Buganda, but was overcome by dysentery and fever. The CMS recalled him before he died, and it was not until two years later, in 1884, that they allowed him to go back, this time as Bishop of the newly created Diocese of Eastern Equatorial Africa. Hannington was a great success. A colleague at the time wrote: "He was beloved by every missionary. There was never a bishop who could be so firm, and at the same time, so kind and considerate."

Then came July 1885, and Hannington decided to venture into Buganda. He'd heard that the new Kabaka, Mwanga, had been persecuting the Christians, and wanted to encourage his flock there. Disregarding the danger, he set out with a small party from the diocese. But as Hannington's party approached the Kabaka's home village, they were stopped by a local chief. Mwanga sent word that they should all be killed, and so Hannington and his group were speared to death on 29th October 1885.

Hannington was the most high-profile Christian martyr in Uganda until Idi Amin killed Archbishop Janani Luwum in Kampala in 1977.

On how long a sermon should last

The Rectory
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

I am afraid we will never agree about the appropriate length of sermons. Your 50-minute exposition on the theology of St Paul concerning women wearing hats in church is, I am sure, of real interest to you. But as your sermon slowly unfolds, I suspect it will prompt quite a different concern among your congregation. Have they set the oven timer to come on too early?

Whenever I even hint that a matter of theological importance may be about to appear in one of my sermons, an expression of benign incomprehension comes over my congregation. You know the look – you see it on golden Labradors whenever they try and work out what their owners are telling them.

There are certain sure signs that should warn you when you have preached for long enough. One is when members of the congregation reach for their prayer books to try to work out for the umpteenth time how the date for Easter is calculated. The organist turning on the blower when you say “and finally” is another.

Most members of the congregation will count the number of dead flies on the windowsills during your sermon. But when you can see members of the congregation counting the numbers in the congregation counting the numbers of dead flies, that is absolute proof that it is time to stop.

There has only been one occasion when I preached for longer than my standard eight minutes. Our former organist was in the habit of taking his dog for a walk during the sermon. I knew I had to carry on preaching until I heard the latch on the vestry door for the second time. That meant he was back, and ready to play the last hymn. Unfortunately, one Sunday, his dog ran away.

While he searched for it over every field in the parish, I spent the intervening two hours reading the greater part of Leviticus, discussing the food laws set forth in Deuteronomy, and arguing for a Deutero-Isaiah. I was headed for the Babylonian exile when we all heard the vestry door re-open.

After the Service, the congregation left looking as though they had just been rescued from a major shipwreck. And at the next church council meeting, we unanimously voted to buy our organist a stronger lead.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

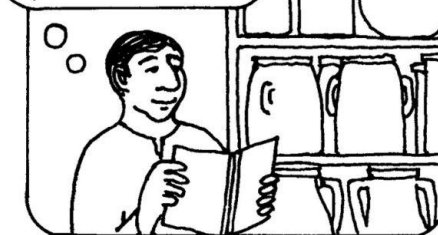
It can be read in the Bible in
Matthew 24:44-51, Luke 12:40-46

Jesus warned his disciples to be always
ready for his return at the end of time
by telling the story of two servants

The good servant



My master could be away a long time; I will work as if he was here.



When the servants came for their food, he had it ready



He made sure everyone got their full amount every day



Then his master came back



I am putting you in charge of everything I have



The bad servant



My master could be away a long time; I can do what I want!



When the servants came for their food, he chased them away!



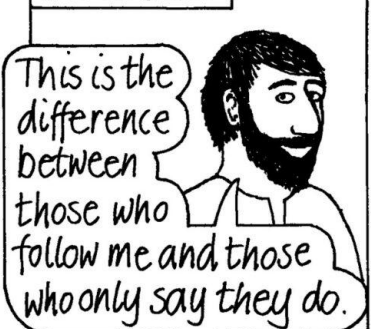
He had friends come round, and they ate and drank as much as they liked.



Then his master came back



Jesus said



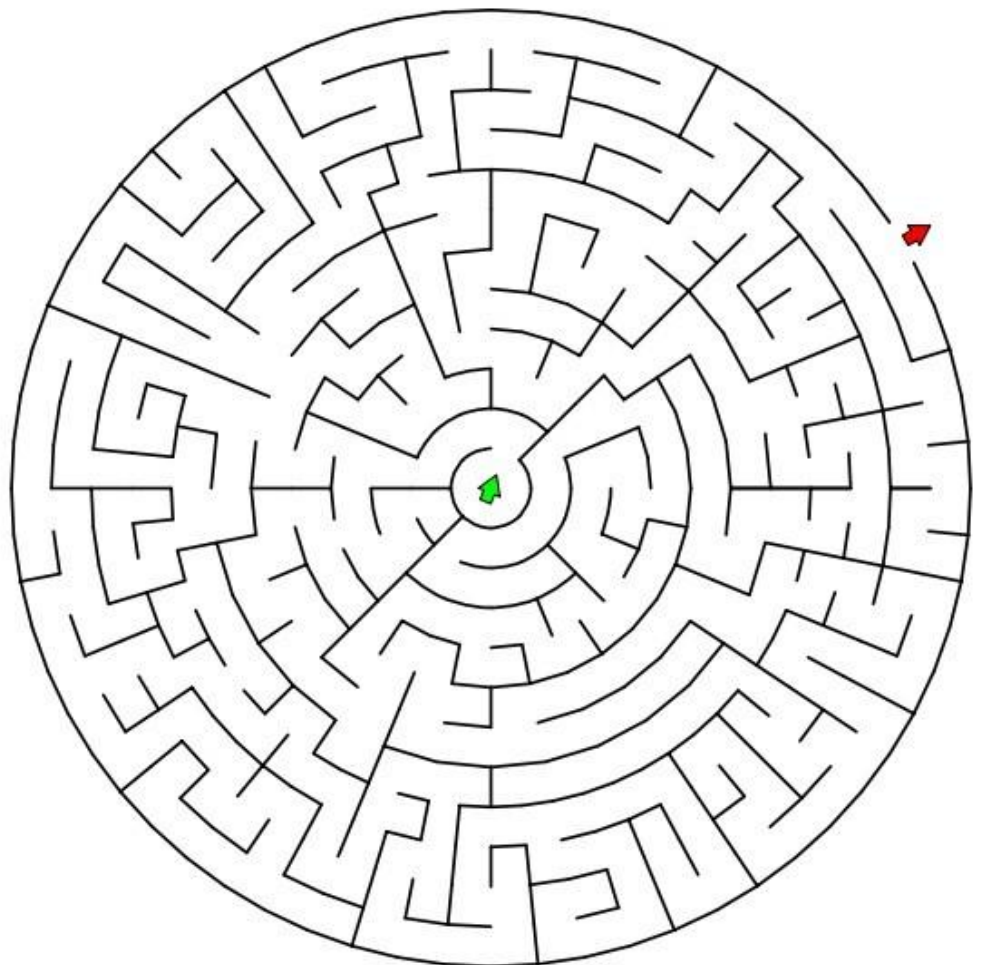
September's Solution

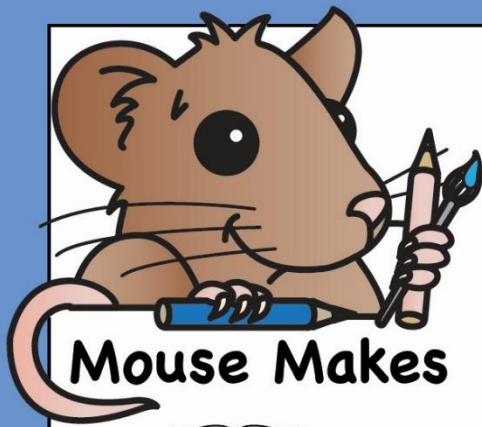
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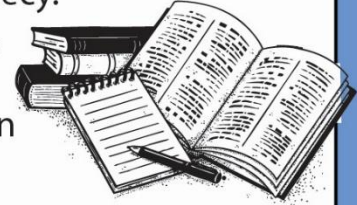
Can you solve
the maze?





The **Bible** is a collection of books, written by many different people who were helped and inspired by God. The **Bible** includes books of history, law, poetry and songs, wisdom, testimony, letters and prophecy.

The **Bible** encourages us, corrects us and teaches us about God and how we can be friends with Him.



2. Which book of the Bible has the shortest title?

1. How many books are there in the New Testament?

3. The Word of God is sharper than a two edged

Hebrews 4:12



B I B L E S U N D A Y

4. He was an Old Testament prophet that has a book named after him.

5. The first book of the Bible.

6. God's word is like?

A _____ and a _____
Psalm 119:105



8. The last book in the Bible.

9. The Old Testament book of poetry and songs.

11. The last book in the Old Testament.

10. Who wrote the third book of the New Testament?

7. What are the first four books of the New Testament known as?

12. Which book tells the story of the spread of Christianity?

13. The Bible is also known as the

14. A book of the Bible named after a woman

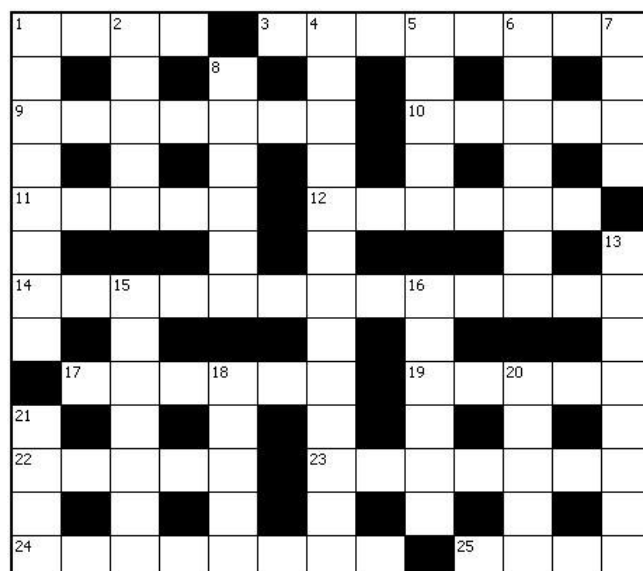


_____ of God.
Hebrews 4:12



Across

- 1 'Those who were standing near Paul said, "You — to insult God's high priest?"' (Acts 23:4) (4)
 3 They were assigned to guard the tree of life (Genesis 3:24) (8)
 9 'Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the — of — , the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite' (1 Samuel 1:1) (3,4)
 10 Surrender (Joshua 24:23) (5)
 11 Where American livestock can be reared (5)
 12 Listen (anag.) (6)
 14 Alternative name for Kiriath Jearim (2 Samuel 6:2) (6,2,5)
 17 He founded Westminster Abbey, — the Confessor (6)
 19 Hebrew word for the place of the dead (5)
 22 Allies of Persia in the fifth century BC (Esther 1:3) (5)
 23 Where John Wesley was forced to preach a lot (4,3)
 24 Rebellion against God; abandonment of religious belief (8)
 25 Note (anag.) (4)



Down

- 1 Give an account of (Mark 4:30) (8)
 2 'I — — the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free' (Psalm 119:32) (3,2)
 4 'He took the ephod, the other — — and the carved image' (Judges 18:20) (9,4)
 5 'You are a chosen people, a — priesthood' (1 Peter 2:9) (5)
 6 The meek, the merciful and the mourners are all this (Matthew 5:4–5, 7) (7)
 7 Musical Instrument Digital Interface (1,1,1,1)
 8 He was the son of Nun (Deuteronomy 34:9) (6)
 13 'Let the little — come to me' (Matthew 19:14) (8)
 15 'About three thousand were — — their number that day' (Acts 2:41) (5,2)
 16 In John's vision, the wall of the new Jerusalem was made of this (Revelation 21:18) (6)
 18 'Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly — a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ' (Philippians 3:20) (5)
 20 'Glorify the Lord with me: let us — his name together' (Psalm 34:3) (5)
 21 Young Men's Christian Association (1,1,1,1)

September's answers:

ACROSS 1, Labour. 4, Autumn. 7, Stay. 8, Darkness. 9, Reasoned. 13, Act. 16, Presbyterians. 17, Sat. 19, Ridicule. 24, Reproach. 25, Abib. 26, Celtic. 27, Intend.

DOWN 1, Lose. 2, Blamerest. 3, Radio. 4, Agree. 5, Tend. 6, Music. 10, Sober. 11, Noted. 12, Doric. 13, Available. 14, Test. 15, Apes. 18, As Eve. 20, Isaac. 21, Ishvi. 22, Fret. 23, Ebed.