



# THE WORD

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**THE PARISH MAGAZINE OF  
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH  
ST. JOHN'S ROAD, BIRKDALE. PR8 4JP  
Charity Number 1128171**

**St. John, Chapter 1, verses 1 and 14:**

***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...  
The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."***

**ISSUE No. 241**

**JANUARY 2023**

## OUR CHURCH

**God Centred, Relationship Driven and Life Transforming**



### New Year... New Series of Sunday Talks

As we enter 2023 our worship leaders will start a new series of talks entitled "Recognising Jesus." These talks will all be based on texts from the New Testament and we shall be looking at: Simeon and Anna who had been waiting many years for Jesus to arrive; the Magi who followed a star and came from the east to recognise who Jesus was (and is!); Nicodemus, who was seeking to know who Jesus is; and Peter, who had that "lightbulb moment" when he knew who Jesus is. Join us on Sundays at 10.30 to find ways to recognise Jesus.

**HAPPY NEW YEAR**  
to all our readers

In January 1916, when this country was at war the Vicar, Rev. Charles Middleton, wrote:

*St. John's Parish Magazine.*

"We desire to wish all our parishioners a very Happy New Year. We pray that this year peace may be restored, with all its inestimable blessings. We ask the prayers of all our readers that the Divine blessing may be given to all the ministrations in Church and in the Parish."

We are not at war now but there is a tragic conflict in Ukraine causing immense loss of life, injury, destruction and untold misery. Rev. Middleton's New Year message is as relevant today as it was 107 years ago.

We hope and pray for peace throughout the world and that during 2023 we shall welcome to our parish a new Vicar who will lead us in our mission to spread the good news of Jesus to the people of Birkdale. We pray that we may find a person of vision, leadership, enthusiasm and vigour.

**FOR ALL ENQUIRIES TO OR ABOUT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH PLEASE CONTACT US BY EMAIL OR PHONE:**  
Email: [info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk](mailto:info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk) Phone: 07732 691542

## WHO'S WHO AT ST. JOHN'S

Priest (retired)	Rev. Roy Doran (572387)	Church of England	Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071)
Reader:	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)	Children's Society:	
Churchwardens:	Stuart Baker (560518) Clive Morris (564206)	Mothers' Union:	Mrs. Linda Caton (564737)
Deputy Warden:	Tim Wright (553977)	Girl Guides	Mrs. Janette Law (565951)
Wardens' Assistant::	Miss Lucy Wright (553977)	St. John's Brownies:	Mrs. Helen Jones and
Treasurer:	Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071)	Brownie Guiders:	Mrs. Lesley Scott
PCC Secretary:	Alex Vernon	St. John's Rainbows:	Mrs. Lesley Scott
Parish Hall Secretary:	Mrs. Jean Morris (564206)	Church Flowers:	Mrs. Cath Whiteside (568874)
Electoral Roll Officer:	Stuart Harris	Magazine Editor:	Stuart Baker (560518)
Safeguarding:	Stuart Baker (560518) and Ms. Michelle Baldeh	Magazine Printer:	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)
		Notice boards, I.T, Website developer:	Mrs. Sally Wright (553977)
		Buildings Inspector:	David Halsall

## Growth Groups

2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 7.30pm  
@ 32 Hartley Crescent

*Finding out more  
together*



WE'D LOVE YOU TO JOIN US

*We believe in  
the power of  
prayer*

**PRAYER  
TIME @ ST  
JOHN'S**

Led by the leadership team

**1st and 3rd Thursdays  
7.30pm**

**SEE WEBSITE FOR ZOOM DETAILS**



## Thursday Evening Prayers

The next prayer meetings by **zoom** and telephone will be at 7.30pm on 5th and 19th January.

If there is anything which you would like to pray about with others contact Sally, Tim or Lucy Wright, or Christine, Clive or Roy.





## A Year of Change Closes.. And a Year of Opportunity Begins!

On 1st January 2022 few people would have foreseen that Russia would invade Ukraine and unleash a brutal war on its civilian population; or that our nation would have three Prime Ministers and four Chancellors of the Exchequer; or that we would sadly suffer the loss of our longest reigning monarch, the late Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and that we would enter a new Carolean age. Events over which we have no control can take us by surprise and our lives can fundamentally change.

As Christians we believe that there is a constant and unchanging presence in our lives. God is with us always, no matter what life throws at us. Our challenge as Christians is to be with God. Our Lord Jesus Christ showed us the way. He is the Way, and the Truth and the Life. There is no better or other Way.

As we enter 2023 the three parishes in Birkdale all await the appointment of two Vicars whose tasks will not only involve them ministering to the people in their own congregations and parishes but also to work in co-operation with each other to proclaim the Gospels throughout the whole Birkdale area in the hope of bringing more people to a knowledge of Christ.



In our own Church of St John's we enter the new year with confidence that a new Vicar will find us to be in good shape. We have a team of worship leaders who provide Bible-based preaching every week; we have a strong sense of community in which our people care for each other and care for many outside of our church by supporting the Soup Kitchen, the Food Pantry, Family Emergencies, CMS, Revive International, The Children's Society and making a large donation to pay for a new source of water to be found for a rural community in Nigeria. Many people came to our church over the Christmas period to visit the Christmas Tree Festival and The Fair, and more than 100 people attended our Christmas Eve carol service! It was a solid end to the year and will give a new Vicar a good start. Let us hope and pray that the right person is moved by God to want to come to our parish and lead us as we go forward in good spirits into a New Year.

### What is the one word that best sums up 2022 for you?

For its 'word of the year' in 2022, The Collins English Dictionary has chosen 'permacrisis' - meaning 'an extended period of instability and uncertainty'. Considering the on-going pandemic, war in Europe, droughts, floods, famine and wildfires of climate change, political instability, and now a truly frightening cost-of-living crisis, 'permacrisis' is a good description!



No wonder if our Christmas celebrations and 'Happy New Year' hopes may be a bit muted this year. Many people are deeply worried about the future.

And yet **as Christians, we have somewhere to turn, someone to turn to, for comfort and for reassurance that we are not forsaken**, and that we need not be overwhelmed by whatever 2023 may bring to us. God can be our strength, a trusted refuge in times of trouble.

The Bible is a treasure trove of uplifting words. At the start of this New Year take comfort from these:

"Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken." (Psalm 55:22)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5,6)

## Dates for your Diary: Coming Soon in 2023



### St John's Film Nights

Our next film to be shown on **Friday 6th January** will be the highly acclaimed "The Two Popes." An intimate story of one of the most dramatic transitions of power in the last 2,000 years. Frustrated with the direction of the church, Cardinal Bergoglio (Jonathan Pryce) requests permission to retire in 2012 from Pope Benedict (Anthony Hopkins). Instead, facing scandal and self-doubt, the introspective Pope Benedict summons his harshest critic and future successor to Rome to reveal a secret that would shake the foundations of the Catholic Church. Inspired by true events. Please let Christine know if you will attend (560518). Tea, coffee, homemade cakes are provided. £5.



### An early, early Burns Night Supper

**Friday 13th January 2023 at 7pm** in the church hall.

Haggis, neaps, tatties, cranachan, bagpipe music, and Scottish themed entertainment to celebrate (12 days early!) the 264th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns, the Bard of Scotland. Bring your own drinks. Hoots mon! What's not to enjoy? Tickets £10 from Sally.



### A late, late Pancake Party

**Friday 24th February 2023** at Tim and Sally's house.

Rather than have pancakes on Shrove Tuesday St John's will have a late, late pancake party three days late. OK, Lent will already have started but just give up chocolates instead of pancakes! Come and enjoy friendship and fun and let Tim cook bespoke pancakes of your choice. Further details closer to the date.

The church hall was full to capacity when we hosted Anne, Lady Dodd on 18th November. There was a great atmosphere of friendship amongst the 120 people who enjoyed a cheese and biscuits supper with wine and then listened with great interest to the speaker. As the late Rev. Jack Harding might have said, although in a very different context, "that's typical of St John's."

If that has whetted your appetite, there will be **other friendship events at St John's during 2023** including a Quiz Night with our genial quizmaster Andy Dean and glamorous scorer Cheryl; a right royal Bangers & Mash evening at about the time of the Coronation; a summer fair; a strawberry tea; an Italian themed evening; for those who enjoy puddings, Just Desserts; and an evening of fun and excitement playing Beetle and Bingo! Watch this space!!



# WHAT'S ON AT ST. JOHN'S

ST JOHN'S INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN OUR

## SOCIAL EVENTS

If you'd like further details or to book a place please contact Christine 07821 982477 or Sally 07800 550097



Friday 13 January @ 7pm	Early, Early Burns Night
Friday 24 February @ 7pm	Late, Late Pancake Party
Saturday 11 March @ 7pm	Andy Dean's Quiz Night
Friday 21 April @ 7pm	Italian Food Night
Friday 5 May @ 7pm	Coronation Bangers & Mash
Date to be confirmed	Summer Fair & Afternoon Tea
Saturday 8 July @ 2pm	Strawberry Tea
Friday 22 September @ 7pm	Harvest Supper
Friday 20 October @ 7pm	Just Desserts
Friday 17 November @ 7pm	Bingo and Beetle Night
Friday 1 December 6-9pm	Christmas Tree Festival and
Saturday 2 December 10-3pm	Christmas Fair

St John's Presents

## FILM NIGHTS

Come and join us as we enjoy great films and refreshments @ 6.30pm  
film begins at 7pm

6 January - The Two Popes  
17 February - The Dig  
17 March - Official Secret  
28 April - The Duke  
26 May - The Terminal  
23 June - The One Hundred Foot Journey



Home About St John's, Birkdale New To Church? Church Life What's On Resources Q



## Visit our new website

[stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk](http://stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk)

- Find out about what's going on at St John's
- Check out the calendar for upcoming events
- Listen to the weekly talks
- Find out about booking the hall
- Free on-line bible
- Show it to your friends and family

God centred, Relationship driven,  
Life transforming

## YOUNG ADULT SOCIALS

2022/2023

Sunday October 9th  
Pumpkin picking & Sunday Lunch

Saturday November 5th  
Bonfire party @ Hurlston Hall

Saturday December 3rd  
Christmas fayre & supper @ Lucy's

Friday January 20th  
Snow White Panto @ The Atkinson

Friday February 10th  
Film and fajita night @ Lucy's

Sunday March 12th  
Waffles and Walk in the pinewoods

St John's Church, Birkdale

Worship on the  
First Sunday of  
Christmas

**SUNDAY 1st JANUARY: COMMUNION**

**10.30am service IN CHURCH and via  
zoom & phone**

**Worshippers in church are invited to remain in  
church after the first part of the service has  
concluded and receive Communion.**

## **Collect for the First Sunday of Christmas**

God in Trinity, eternal unity of perfect love: gather the nations to be one family, and draw us into your holy life through the birth of Emmanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ.

**The subject of  
Roy's talk:**

**Simeon and Anna Waiting**

## **The Reading: Luke ch. 2, verses 25-40**

25. At that time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem. He was a good, God-fearing man and was waiting for Israel to be saved. The Holy Spirit was with him

26. and had assured him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's promised Messiah.

27. Led by the Spirit, Simeon went into the Temple. When the parents brought the child Jesus into the Temple to do for him what the Law required,

28. Simeon took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God:

29. "Now, Lord, you have kept your promise, and you may let your servant go in peace.

30. With my own eyes I have seen your salvation,

31. which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples:

32. A light to reveal your will to the Gentiles and bring glory to your people Israel."

33. The child's father and mother were amazed at the things Simeon said about him.

34. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, "This child is chosen by God for the destruction and the salvation of many in Israel. He will be a sign from God which many people will speak against

35. and so reveal their secret thoughts. And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart."

36. There was a very old prophet, a widow named Anna, daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She had been married for only seven years and was now eighty-four years old.

37. She never left the Temple; day and night she worshipped God, fasting and praying.

38. That very same hour she arrived and gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were waiting for God to set Jerusalem free.

39. When Joseph and Mary had finished doing all that was required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to their hometown of Nazareth in Galilee.

40. The child grew and became strong; he was full of wisdom, and God's blessings were upon him.

Worship on the First  
Sunday of Epiphany

**SUNDAY 8th JANUARY**

**10.30am service IN CHURCH  
and via zoom & phone.**

## **Collect for the First Sunday of Epiphany**

Heavenly Father, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son: may we recognise him as our Lord and know ourselves to be your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

**The subject of  
Lucy's Talk:**

**Wise Men Recognise Jesus**

## **Reading: Matthew ch. 2, verses 1-12**

1 Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king. Soon afterward, some men who studied the stars came from the East to Jerusalem

2 and asked, "Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard about this, he was very upset, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem.

4 He called together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?"

5 "In the town of Bethlehem in Judea," they answered. "For this is what the prophet wrote:

6 'Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least of the leading cities of Judah; for from you will come a leader who will guide my people Israel.'"

7 So Herod called the visitors from the East to a secret meeting and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem with these instructions: "Go and make a careful search for the child; and when you find him, let me know, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the East.

10 When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

11 They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshiped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.

12 Then they returned to their country by another road, since God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.



Worship on the Second  
Sunday of Epiphany

**SUNDAY 15th JANUARY**  
**10.30am service IN CHURCH**  
**and via zoom & phone**

## Collect for the Second Sunday of epiphany

Eternal Lord, our beginning and our end: bring us with the whole creation to your glory, hidden through past ages and made known in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**The subject of  
Christine's talk:**

**Nicodemus 'Seeking'**

## The Reading: John ch.3, verses 1-15

1 There was a Jewish leader named Nicodemus, who belonged to the party of the Pharisees.

2 One night he went to Jesus and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher sent by God. No one could perform the miracles you are doing unless God were with him."

3 Jesus answered, "I am telling you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again."

4 "How can a grown man be born again?" Nicodemus asked. "He certainly cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time!"

5 "I am telling you the truth," replied Jesus, "that no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.

6 A person is born physically of human parents, but is born spiritually of the Spirit.

7 Do not be surprised because I tell you that you must all be born again.

8 The wind blows wherever it wishes; you hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

9 "How can this be?" asked Nicodemus.

10 Jesus answered, "You are a great teacher in Israel, and you don't know this?

11 I am telling you the truth: we speak of what we know and report what we have seen, yet none of you is willing to accept our message.

12 You do not believe me when I tell you about the things of this world; how will you ever believe me, then, when I tell you about the things of heaven?

13 And no one has ever gone up to heaven except the Son of Man, who came down from heaven."

14 As Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the desert, in the same way the Son of Man must be lifted up,

15 so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.



**Midweek Book of  
Common Prayer  
Holy Communion**

**WEDNESDAY 18th JANUARY  
10.30am service IN CHURCH**

**Worship on the Third  
Sunday of Epiphany**

**SUNDAY 22nd JANUARY  
10.30am service IN CHURCH  
and via zoom & phone.**

### **Collect for the Third Sunday of Epiphany**

God of all mercy, your Son proclaimed good news to the poor, release to the captives, and freedom to the oppressed: anoint us with your Holy Spirit and set all your people free to praise you in Christ our Lord.

**The subject of  
Clive's talk:**

**Peter: That Lightbulb Moment**

### **The Reading: Matthew ch.16, verses 13-20**

13 Jesus went to the territory near the town of Caesarea Philippi, where he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 "Some say John the Baptist," they answered. "Others say Elijah, while others say Jeremiah or some other prophet."

15 "What about you?" he asked them. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

17 "Good for you, Simon son of John!" answered Jesus. "For this truth did not come to you from any human being, but it was given to you directly by my Father in heaven.

18 And so I tell you, Peter: you are a rock, and on this rock foundation I will build my church, and not even death will ever be able to overcome it.

19 I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; what you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and what you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."

20 Then Jesus ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Worship on the Fourth  
Sunday of Epiphany

**SUNDAY 29th JANUARY**  
10.45am service at Liverpool  
Road Methodist Church

There will NOT be a service at St John's on this day.

As this is the fifth Sunday of the month we shall join the congregations of **St Peter's and St James' Churches at Liverpool Road Methodist Church** at this service which will commence at **10.45am**.

### Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Epiphany

God of heaven, you send the gospel to the ends of the earth and your messengers to every nation: send your Holy Spirit to transform us by the good news of everlasting life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Wise Men Seek Him

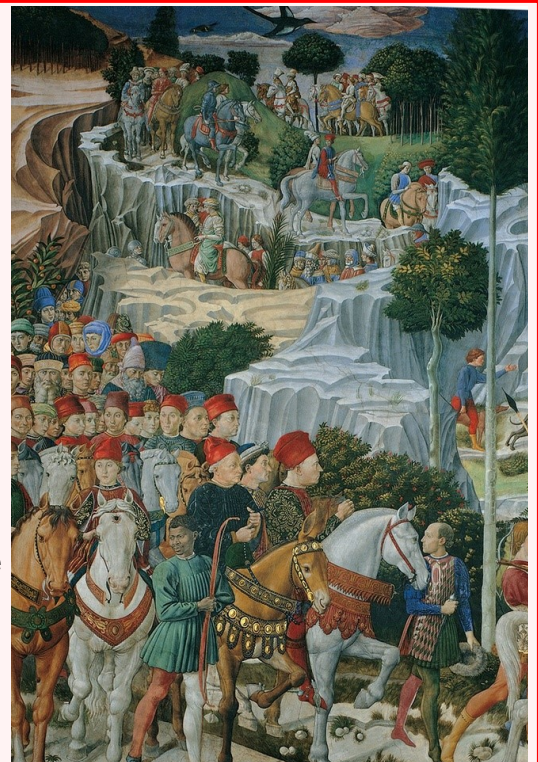
'A cold coming we had of it. Just the worst time of the year. For a journey and such a long journey.' (Journey of the Magi, T.S. Eliot).

In this poem, T.S. Eliot imagines the journey of the Magi to worship Jesus, as told in Matthew 2. This story is at the heart of our celebration of Epiphany, as we remember the astrologers from the East following a star to find the baby: 'Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.' (Matthew 2:1,2).

The Magi provide a powerful picture of the journey we make in searching for God in our lives. Like them, it requires time and effort (they travelled for months) and will not always be easy! As they followed the star, so we are called to pursue God's light in our lives.

What does this say to us at the beginning of a New Year? Are we ready to go deeper in our relationship with God? Are we looking for new ways to use our time, treasure and talents for Him? It is a great time to offer these things to Him, and like the Magi, commit ourselves to pursuing Him. His light, through prayer, worship and His Word, will be our guide on the way.

T.S. Eliot used the imagined journey of the Magi to reflect on his own spiritual journey. It reveals the pain and doubts he experienced on his long and troubled journey to find the light of Christ. He describes finding Christ as a 'hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death'. Are we prepared to make this journey for ourselves?



*Journey of the Magi, by Benozzo Gozzoli,  
Palazzo Medici-Ricardi, Florence*



St John's Church, Birkdale

*Early, Early*

# BURNS NIGHT



**Food and  
Entertainment**

Bring your own drinks



**FRIDAY 13 JANUARY**

**IN THE HALL @ 7PM**

**TICKETS £10**

*Please let us know of food allergies when booking*

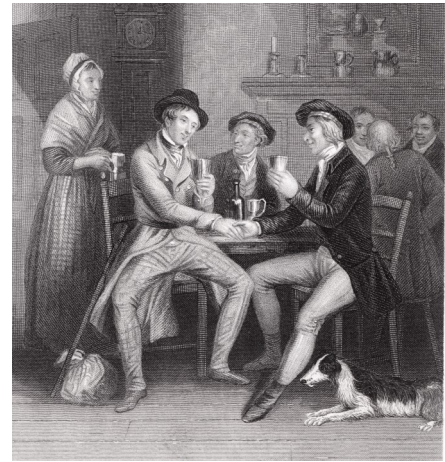
With New Year's Eve and our Early, Early Burns Night approaching...

## A Short Analysis of Robert Burns' 'Auld Lang Syne'

by Dr Oliver Tearle

'Auld Lang Syne' – which loosely translates into modern English as 'old long since' – is one of Robert Burns's most famous poems, which is remarkable since Robert Burns almost certainly didn't write it.

What are the origins of this, one of the most famous songs in the world? In this article we're going in search of the meaning of 'Auld Lang Syne', as well as offering some words of analysis of its lyrics.



### Auld Lang Syne

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And auld lang syne!

Chorus. For auld lang syne, my dear,  
For auld lang syne.  
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,  
For auld lang syne.

And surely ye'll be your pint stowp!  
And surely I'll be mine!  
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,  
For auld lang syne.

For auld, &c.

We twa hae run about the braes,  
And pou'd the gowans fine;  
But we've wander'd mony a weary fit,  
Sin' auld lang syne.

For auld, &c.

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,  
Frae morning sun till dine;  
But seas between us braid hae roar'd  
Sin' auld lang syne.

For auld, &c.

And there's a hand, my trusty fere!  
And gie's a hand o' thine!  
And we'll tak a right gude-willie waught,  
For auld lang syne.

For auld, &c.



Although it's often attributed to Robert Burns, 'Auld Lang Syne' (i.e. 'old long since' or 'a long time ago') was based on a traditional song which Burns wrote down in an attempt to preserve the traditional oral culture of his country. Burns himself described 'Auld Lang Syne' as 'an old song, of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript until I took it down from an old man's singing.'

'Auld Lang Syne' is, of course, among the most recognisable poems or songs written in English, thanks to its popularity at New Year celebrations around the world. The last line should technically be 'For auld lang syne' rather than 'For the sake of auld lang syne' – the three extra syllables are usually added to avoid stretching that monosyllabic 'For' for – well, for a long, long time, but they aren't in the original (whoever the 'original' might have been by).

To 'tak a right gude-willie waught' may sound borderline rude, but it actually means simply 'take some good will' or 'have a drink together'. So, now we know. And while we're glossing words, 'jo' means 'joy' (in 'my jo'), 'ye'll be your pint stowp' means 'you'll pay for your pint cup', 'braes' are slopes, to have 'pou'd the gowans' is to have pulled the daisies, and your 'fitt' is your foot. A 'burn', of course, is a stream, while 'dine' is dinner-time. 'Braid' means broad, and your 'fiere' is your friend.

Like many good songs, 'Auld Lang Syne' has a refrain, and is organised into quatrains rhyming abcb, with the last line iterating the title, 'Auld Lang Syne'. How many people link arms and sing the song every New Year without being aware either of the title's meaning or the fact that Robert Burns never wrote it?

**This article was written by Dr Oliver Tearle, Loughborough University. Dr Tearle has very generously given permission for the article to be reproduced in **THE WORD** and we are most grateful to him. The article originally appeared on the website "Interesting Literature."**

## THE LONGEST WORD

The Church of England is the established, official state church in England. Most people would think that **antidisestablishmentarianism** (opposition to the proposal for the disestablishment of the Church of England) is the longest word in the English language (ignoring **supercalifragilistic-expialidocious** as it is not a real word).

But is it? Recent letters to the editor of The Times newspaper have suggested otherwise. Nigel Austin of Dorchester offered the word **floccinaucinihilipilification** (the act of considering things worthless) which has one more letter than antidisestablishmentarianism.

You might think that this would have settled it. But no! The next day along came another suggestion from Dr Phil Stephenson of Glasgow: **pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis** (a lung disease contracted from the inhalation of very fine silica particles, specifically from a volcano). This magnificent word comprises 45 letters. It was coined by Everett Smith, the President of *The National Puzzlers' League*, in 1935 purely for the purpose of inventing a new "longest word". *The Oxford English Dictionary* described the word as factitious. Nevertheless it also appears in the *Webster's*, *Random House*, and *Chambers* dictionaries. and must surely take the trophy as the longest word in the English language... unless YOU know better...

If you know a longer real word (but NOT a place name in Thailand, New Zealand, Wales or America) please write to the editor of **THE WORD** who will reward you with a supercalifragilisticexpialidocious prize (of his choice!).





The Rev Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace'

## On the Art of Ringing in the New Year

The Rectory,  
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

I am sure I had warned you about church bells. They are simply not to everyone's taste. And the idea of switching on your recorded bells - no matter how digitally enhanced - at midnight for an hour, in order to welcome in the New Year, may have seemed inspired at the time, but considering that most of your inner city parish is Moslem, that you are surrounded on one side by a hospital and another by a care home for the elderly, it is not too surprising that the joyful sound was not well received.

But to be fair, we too had a small misjudgement on New Year's Eve. Our bell-ringers, who practise the art of campanology, and don't use electronic equipment, have always been something of a trial. They ring with great enthusiasm for half an hour before our services each week, but then as we are singing the first hymn, they emerge from the church tower, putting on hats and coats while loudly discussing who made the error in the middle of that morning's grandsire triples.

This New Year's Eve they met in the bell tower at 11pm to have some champagne, and then a period of ringing before further refreshment became necessary. By midnight, the champagne had so refreshed them that they somewhat exceeded their accuracy, and the village heard the New Year being joyfully welcomed by a set of eight bells being rung in an entirely random order.

I still managed to drift off to sleep, only to be woken three hours later by one bell being mournfully but persistently tolled. Finally, I felt obliged to go and find out why. I discovered Colonel Bradshaw alone in the bell tower. When the party had ended and the ringers trooped out, the Colonel had dashed back in to retrieve his hat. The others, ignorant of his absence, then locked the church and went home to their beds. That lone bell was his way of announcing his predicament.

At least I was able to reassure him that his six-hour vigil in the church tower partially made up for his absence from Mattins for the previous 12 months.

Your loving uncle,  
Eustace

### To Be A Christian

At the entrance to Hereford Cathedral these words are displayed on a poster. There could hardly be a better definition of what our faith means:

To be a Christian is to live as a brother or sister of Jesus Christ and to know that we are children of God. Christians believe that through His death on the Cross and His rising to new life Jesus is with us in all times and places. Jesus lived a way of life that put love at the centre of everything. He taught us to love one another and to love God above all things. Prayer and compassion are the heart of Christianity. When we care for the sick, the poor and the suffering we are caring for Him. When people care for us we meet Jesus in them.

**God be with you as you go on your way.**

# Christmas Tree Festival & Fair

On Friday 2nd December at 6pm St John's church celebrated the start of our annual Christmas Tree Festival.

Before the tree-lights were switched on we were treated to some songs performed by Lucy Wright and then it was time for the countdown.



The church lights were turned off and then the fairy lights on all 28 trees were switched on simultaneously and (thankfully!) they all worked.



There were "oohs" and "ahs" from the congregation and then it was time for the Fair to commence. It ran in the hall from 6.30 until 9.00pm on Friday, and from 10.00am to 3.00pm on Saturday and was well attended. There was a lot for visitors to enjoy, and the most popular attraction (as always!) was the café which was run by Linda Caton with help from Stella Pettifer and Cath Whiteside, and the orders were taken by Linda's husband Bob.



Other attractions were Christine's cake stall, Tina's candles, Phyllis's handcrafts, Clive and Jean's books, Stuart's woodcraft, the Tombola, two raffles (with magnificent prizes which had all been donated by our congregation), Judith's Christmas gifts, the sale of Christmas plants on behalf of SSAFA, and Sylvia and Mavis serving mulled punch and mince pies.. well, this WAS Christmas! Lucy and Abbie provided activities for children in the small hall.





The Fair was very successful and enjoyable, and as a result of the generosity of all who supported it the Fair has raised more than £2,500 for our church's funds. This is such a welcome addition to the church's income at a time when our gas bill for heating the church will be about four times as much as it was last year. A fantastic effort!

To everyone who helped in any of many different ways, and to all who supported the Fair: **THANK YOU!!**

Not everyone was able to come to the Fair, but if anyone would like to make a donation to the proceeds it is not too late. Our Treasurer Sylvia Kent will be delighted to receive any further contributions.



**From Doris, Our Own Correspondent in Ilkley, on viewing pictures of the trees:**

"They are all delightful I miss seeing them and being with you all. I wish you a HAPPY CHRISTMAS and a HEALTHY NEW YEAR."

*And all at St John's wish a very Happy New Year to Doris and to all our other readers who live far away from Birkdale, wherever they may be. Ed.*



## CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL AND CHRISTMAS FAIR

As we put our Christmas Fair behind us for this year, I couldn't end the year without saying a massive **THANK YOU** firstly, to all the Team for all their incredible hard work and dedication in making the event such an enormous success! It was amazing. We are so lucky to be blessed with such people.

Secondly, my thanks also go to **EVERYONE** who helped in any way, whether it was decorating the halls, helping with the Christmas trees in church, setting up ready for the Fair, giving your time to help on the stalls or welcoming people into the church, donating the many items for the various stalls, and most importantly, to **YOU ALL** for coming and supporting our fabulous annual event. We couldn't make it such a success without you.

Lastly, if you have an hour to spare on 5th January to take down and clear away the Christmas trees we would really appreciate it! Remember, many hands make light work!

It just remains for me to wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year and hope for blessings for 2023.

Sylvia Kent

*And on behalf of everyone at St John's and all who visited the Festival and Fair THE WORD says THANK YOU to Sylvia and to Judith Foster for the enormous amount of work and preparation which they put in to making the weekend such a success. Ed.*

### Cornelia (Corrie) ten Boom

1892-1983 Holocaust survivor and Evangelist.

A reflection, by **Dennis Davis**

On reading the last paragraph on the article "The History of Christmas" (**THE WORD**, December 2022) the name Cornelia (Corrie) ten Boom was mentioned and had I not read "Victorious" by Stan Guthrie I would have had no idea of who she was or of what she had done.

She was born in Harlem in Holland she trained as a watchmaker, and was the first woman in the Netherlands to become a certified watch maker. She went on to form a youth group for young teenage girls where she taught them sewing and handicrafts and provided religious instruction.

It was her Calvinistic faith and upbringing that gave her the inspiration to serve society by offering, food, money and shelter to the needy. Corrie and her family went on to apply this concept during the German occupation of Holland when they opened their doors to Jewish refugees and helped them to escape the death camps.

They were betrayed by an informer and the whole family was arrested and imprisoned and eventually sent to Ravensbrück where her father died after a few weeks and her sister some time later. A short while after, Corrie was released by a clerical error. A little later all the other female prisoners in her age group were sent to the death chamber.

After the war she returned to Holland and set up a rehabilitation centre and became a public speaker visiting some 60 countries. On visiting Germany she forgave two German overseers, one of whom had been particularly cruel to her sister.

Corrie wrote many books and spread her message of forgiveness, hope, love and salvation through the grace of Jesus Christ. She died in the USA after several strokes in April 1983.



*Canon Paul Hardingham begins a new series on the spiritual disciplines that help us to grow and deepen our faith. It will run throughout this year.*

## **Spiritual Practices**

January is a time for thinking about New Year Resolutions, even though we can struggle to keep them very long! However, this month is a good time to re-set our spiritual disciplines. These practices, which engage our whole person, help our spiritual growth as disciples of Christ.

If we want more of Jesus' presence in our lives, we often find ourselves thinking, 'I'll have to try harder: to pray, listen to God or read the Bible'. Paul makes the important distinction between training and trying in the Christian life:

'Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever'. (1 Corinthians 9:24,25).

Paul insists that runners undergo strict training if they are to win the race. It would be foolish to enter a marathon without adequate training. The runner wouldn't complete the course despite trying hard! The same principles apply to the Christian life: God wants us to train by developing spiritual practices: 'to train means to arrange my life around activities I can do that will enable me, over time, to do what I cannot do by direct effort alone' (Dallas Willard).

In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster lists the following spiritual disciplines:

Inward Disciplines: Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, Study

Outward Disciplines: Simplicity, Solitude, Submission, Service

Corporate Disciplines: Confession, Worship, Guidance, Celebration.

Over the coming year we will be looking at some of these. Effective discipline is not drudgery, but delightful! Richard Foster insists that we can 'celebrate' these disciplines which can help us grow.

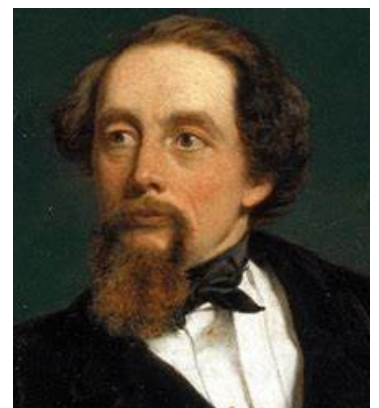
## **“The Life of Our Lord”**

We probably all know the story of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. Many of us could even recite the first two sentences: “Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that.”

But it is probable that few people know that between 1846 and 1849 Dickens wrote a short history of the life of Jesus entitled “The Life of Our Lord.” Its only intended audience was his own children to whom he read it every Christmas and it is a shortened version of the main elements of the four Gospels. He forbade its publication during his lifetime, and it was not published until 1934. Roy Doran kindly lent it to the Editor of **THE WORD** and the concluding paragraph of the book is reproduced here:

**REMEMBER !- It is Christianity TO DO GOOD always even to those who do evil to us. It is Christianity to love our neighbour as ourself, and to do to all men as we would have them do to us. It is Christianity to be gentle, merciful, and forgiving, and to keep those qualities quiet in our own hearts, and never make a boast of them, or of our prayers or of our love of God, but always to shew that we love Him by humbly trying to do right in everything. If we do this, and remember the life and lessons of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and try to act up to them, we may confidently hope that God will forgive us our sins and mistakes, and enable us to live and die in Peace.**

Charles Dickens



## A name on the 1914 -1918 War Memorial at St John's

by *Richard James, PCC Treasurer of St Peter's, Birkdale*



During a recent visit to St John's I took time to read the War Memorial at the back of the church. I was very interested to see the name of **Stoker George Brooks** who served on RMS Lusitania. This Cunard Ocean liner was sunk on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1915 by German U-boat U-20 11 miles off the southern coast of Ireland, killing 1,195 passengers and crew.

The sinking occurred 2 years prior to the US declaring war on Germany and was a major factor in building American support for the war.

George Brooks was about 30 years of age and lived at 17, Shaftesbury Road, Birkdale. The church memorial describes him as a stoker, but other records show him as a 3<sup>rd</sup> class waiter and inspector of the linen department. Only two months previously he had married Miss Louie Lloyd at St Andrew's Church, Southport. This church was founded in 1872 and was closed in 1967. It was on Eastbank Street at the corner of Yellow House Lane. St Peter's Birkdale was also founded in 1872.

An entry in the Southport Visiter dated 11/05/1915 stated that up to the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1915 his relatives had heard no news of him, so he was presumed dead.

The Lusitania was built in 1906. She was 785ft long; she carried some 2,000 passengers and had a crew of 850. At the outbreak of war, the Lusitania continued to sail between Liverpool and New York. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1915, an advert appeared in the New York newspapers advertising the scheduled departure of the Lusitania, on the same page the Imperial German Embassy stated in an advert that ships flying the flag of the UK were liable to destruction in the waters adjacent to the British Isles.



*RMS Lusitania*

Despite the warning she sailed with 1,195 civilians, including some 100 Americans and over 700 crew. She failed to steer a zig-zag course as recommended by the Admiralty. She sank 15 minutes after being torpedoed, many of the lifeboats were not launched. Altogether over 700 persons were rescued, approx. 1,195 lives were lost.

Argument over whether the ship was a legitimate military target raged back and forth throughout the war, but after the war it was revealed that at the time of her sinking, she was carrying over 4 million rounds of machine gun ammunition (.303 calibre), almost 5,000 shrapnel shell casings (for a total of some 50 tons), and 3,240 brass percussion artillery fuses.

America eventually declared war on Germany 6<sup>th</sup> April 1917 and the arrival of 2 million American troops by April 1918 on the western front had a profound influence on the course of the war.

This article brings into focus one tragic event where local people were involved. It takes its place amongst so many diverse and numerous tragic historical events.

References:

Stuart Baker kindly provided me with 2 source documents: St Johns Birkdale, War Memorial; Splendid Hearts by Victoria Bannister. RMS Lusitania-Wikipedia

Research into the names on our War Memorial remains open and readers who have knowledge of any of the fallen whose names are inscribed are asked to give such information to Stuart Baker. He has recently found, by chance, in a copy of the Parish Magazine in October 1916 that Sergeant Silas Lloyd who died in France on 17th April 1917 had been married in our church to Priscilla Dewhurst only seven months earlier on 5th September 1916. It's a small and now not very significant fact but it is a reminder that all the fallen were not merely names on a Roll of Honour which we remember once a year but were men of Birkdale who lived ordinary lives just as we do and who gave their tomorrows for our todays.



## GOD in the Arts

*The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a look at 'Steamboat in a Snowstorm' by J. M. W. Turner. Credit: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

**'He gave us eyes to see them':**

### Joseph Turner (1775-1851)

Amid the hectic, busy lives we lead, many people fall under the control of 'the hurry syndrome.' We have to do 'A' as soon as possible, and we have get to 'B' as soon as possible. And along the way, we have phone calls to make, emails to open, and Facebook and Twitter and all the social media to check.

It means that we often go through the world without giving that world a second glance. This year in these articles we are going to pause, and, as the poet says, 'stand and stare.' Each month we shall be looking at a painting that celebrates the wonder, the joy, the mystery, and the marvel of the created world in which we live.

Joseph Turner (1775-1851) was one of the great artists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But he did little to conform to that accolade. But no matter – he was passionate about his vision of the world around which inspired his art. Wherever he went, he sketched and painted.

The ending of the Napoleonic wars meant that people could travel safely through Europe, and he visited Italy many times. That country and its scenery taught him the place of light in art, which in many ways was the foundation of the paintings of his last 15 years. Ruskin hailed Turner as 'a great angel of the Apocalypse, sent as a prophet of God to reveal to men the mysteries of the universe.'

Turner was not particularly religious himself, but in the paintings of his old age, he was like a creator grappling with the elemental forces of light and sky, of water and sun.



In 1842 he painted 'Steamboat in a Snowstorm.' We see the water and the sky and the snow all cascading around each other. The clouds and driving snow, the churning of the water – all are there in abundance, and in the midst there is the steamboat trying to keep afloat and make its way through the forces of nature. Without that title we might think this painting is a modern abstract. With the title, we sense the wildness and wonder of the great forces of sea and sky, snow and clouds.

This month of January can bring snow which stops the traffic and maroons us in our homes. Here in the painting the snow and wind beat around the steamboat: it could be an image of human life tossed around by circumstance and event.

But I think Turner wanted us to see something of the extraordinary power the great forces of nature have over life – not to make us fatalistic and gloomy, but to proclaim that here in our world are mysteries and marvels that can stop us in our tracks.

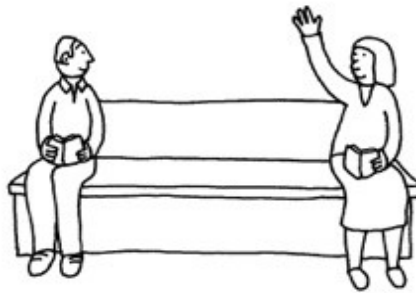
It is like the voice of God speaking to Job, who has questioned the justice of God's ways in His world. 'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?' God asks Job. 'Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion?' Job's response is to question no more. He puts his hand over his mouth and looks out at the world God has created in wonder and amazement.

# NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

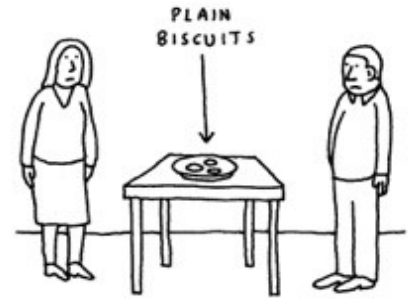
HOW THE CHURCH CAN HELP



EXERCISE



MEETING NEW PEOPLE



HEALTHY EATING



GETTING ORGANISED

AT THE PCC WE'LL DISCUSS THE APCM,  
CW VS THE BCP, THE LLM'S CRB,  
AND THE OLM'S BAP. OH, AND  
THERE ARE LETTERS FROM THE DAC,  
THE DDO, THE HOB AND THE ABC



LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE



TRAVELLING TO NEW PLACES

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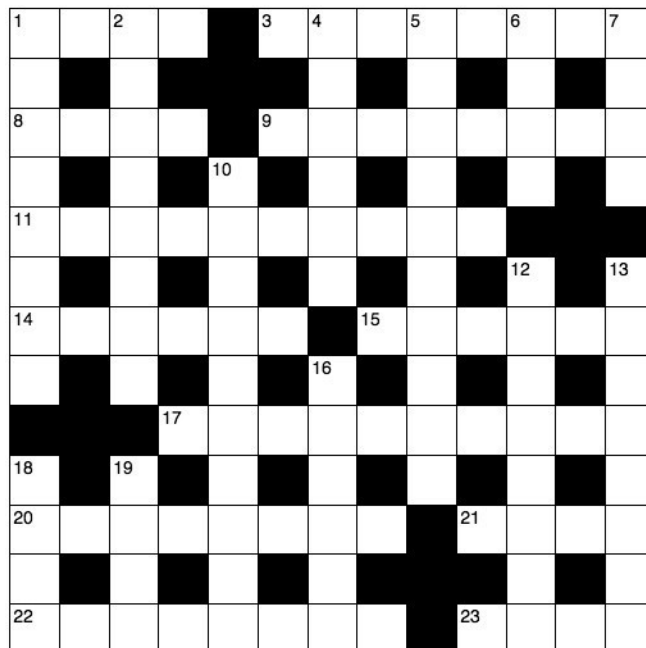
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# W CROSS R D

*Solution on page 28*



### Across

- 1 'Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a — began to crow' (John 18:27) (4)  
 3 Fetters (Job 33:11) (8)  
 8 Perform on a musical instrument (1 Samuel 16:23) (4)  
 9 Paul describes it as 'the third heaven' (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) (8)  
 11 Loyalty (Deuteronomy 11:13) (10)  
 14 Hens? Me? (anag.) (6)  
 15 Not visible (Matthew 6:6) (6)  
 17 Predicted site of the final great battle (Revelation 16:16) (10)  
 20 Jacob's youngest son (Genesis 35:18) (8)  
 21 One of Zophar's eleven sons (1 Chronicles 7:36) (4)  
 22 For example, London, Paris, Rome (8)  
 23 United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (1,1,1,1)

### Down

- 1 Favourite church activity: Fellowship round a — — — (3,2,3)  
 2 Divinely bestowed powers or talents (8)

- 4 Pile together (1 Thessalonians 2:16) (4,2)  
 5 Commanded to justify (John 8:13) (10)  
 6 Timothy's grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5) (4)  
 7 Killed (Psalm 78:34) (4)  
 10 One of Graham Kendrick's best-known songs, — — King (3,7)  
 12 Indecency (Mark 7:22) (8)  
 13 Unceasing (Jeremiah 15:18) (8)  
 16 He prophesied 'the abomination that causes desolation' (Matthew 24:15) (6)  
 18 British Board of Film Classification (1,1,1,1)  
 19 Pans (anag.) (4)

## In our Book of Remembrance in January

- |      |                      |      |                       |
|------|----------------------|------|-----------------------|
| 1st  | John Smith, 1964     | 13th | Eliza Hind, 1970      |
| 5th  | Lilian Burdon, 2010  | 14th | Edward Livesley, 1984 |
| 8th  | George Yarwood, 1985 | 16th | Harold Hamer, 2009    |
| 10th | John Higgins, 1983   | 21st | Henry McCann, 1959    |
| 11th | Peter Arnold, 2017   |      | Susan Hellewell, 1977 |
|      |                      | 24th | Mary Gee, 2000        |
|      |                      | 25th | Craig Smith, 2015     |
|      |                      | 27th | Laura Marsh, 1994     |
|      |                      |      | Betty Gordon, 2009    |
|      |                      | 28th | Audrey Draper, 2002   |
|      |                      |      | Jean Jones, 2018      |

*If any of our readers wish to have the name of a deceased relative inscribed in the Book of Remembrance please contact Stuart Baker.*

## Can it really be that long ago....?

50 years ago, on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1973 the Watergate scandal began when seven men were convicted of conspiracy, burglary and wiretapping at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate Complex in Washington DC.

40 years ago, on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1983 Breakfast Television was launched in the UK with the BBC's Breakfast Time programme. The ITV's TV-am followed on 1<sup>st</sup> February.

30 years ago, on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1993 the Liberian-registered oil tanker *MV Braer* ran aground off the Shetland Islands, spilling 84,700 tons of crude oil into the sea, and causing massive ecological damage.

25 years ago, on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1998 the film *Titanic* was released in the UK.







# Marcio Ciechanovicz and Noemi Celeti


Link Letter no. 1 | December 2022

Contact details: m.ciechanovicz@gmail.com





Location: Brazil



**What we do:** Connecting with people beyond the reach of traditional church, sharing the gospel in new ways and ministering to people's physical needs.

Dear friends and partners,

### Travelling light

When was your last house move or transition? Remember all the packing, sorting and cleaning for the move, followed by unpacking, not knowing where things are and finding your way around a new neighbourhood? We all know that moving house is a major event in our lives, and up near the top of the stress list. As some of you know and have probably experienced, there are also a lot of emotions that go into sorting, letting go of items and saying goodbye to neighbours and the home where so many memories have been made.



The group eating at House 244

During our move, we found ourselves reflecting on Bible passages that deal with moving. We wondered about how the Israelites felt as they had to pitch up tent at night and pack up everything in the morning before they set off again. How hard that must have been to do on such a regular basis! We were comforted by Psalm 34:7, that says, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them." How comforting to know that God himself is "camping" with us and is present in our everyday situations regardless of how messy or upside-down they may be.

In September we moved into House 244, the CMS community house that we are living in as part of our training. We feel so blessed to be welcomed by the host family and to meet the other five mission partners in training. So, what is community life like, you may wonder? In the morning it may mean bumping into people making breakfast, navigating your way around a large kitchen island trying to get what you need while not getting in anybody's way. After a few weeks it becomes like a dance, and you begin to work as a team.

At other times during the day you might find us having a cuppa together while having deep theological conversations. The kids might be outside jumping on the trampoline, doing homework or sometimes interacting with one of the adults. We have learned so many interesting things as well, such as how to spin wool, how to make wax wraps and so many new recipes!

The best part of the day is dinnertime, when we sit down for a community meal together. On Wednesdays we take turns telling our testimonies, and it has been such an enriching experience to get to know these other mission partners, gain insight into their different cultural views, and hear the creative ways that God has called each of us into his Kingdom.

Support Marcio and Noemi:  
[churchmissionsociety.org/mnc](http://churchmissionsociety.org/mnc)

With Jesus  
With each other  
To the edges





After half-term, we find ourselves now halfway through our training; and as we look forward to our final move, to Brazil, God has helped us to reflect on “travelling light”. In Luke 10, when Jesus sent out the 70 into the neighbouring villages, one of the instructions he gave them was to not take extra clothes and supplies. They were to receive the hospitality of the people of peace and not worry about their belongings.

The lesson we feel God is teaching us is that this is a time for us to get rid of clutter, to leave a mindset of worry for physical things and to concentrate on what is most important for this phase: our training! We sense that God has been using this time for us to learn flexibility, humility and openness to one another. We are also letting go of our old “knowledge” and experience and making ourselves open to the new. As we go in faith, we hope that this will help us to go out into the ecological park in the same way as the 70 went out.

We are so encouraged to have met and visited our link churches and have felt such connection with all of you. As we meet some of you to say goodbye, we want to say how grateful we are for the friendship and the role that each one of you has in our lives. We are blessed to have so many of you praying and encouraging us as we prepare to go to Brazil.

#### Could you pray for:

- ▶ Our studies, as Marcio and I work on our presentations for the end of the year
- ▶ Our children, for them to feel loved and a sense of God’s peace in the midst of transitions
- ▶ Our country, Brazil, for peace and for political stability



*Photos from top to bottom: Beautiful candle used during a worship morning at House 244 to reflect on community; visiting a church in Weymouth; our future team for the project at the ecological park in Indaiatuba; our family*

#### From the kids’ perspectives

- ▶ Evangeline: “I like living in the community house because it’s big.” When asked about how she feels about Brazil: “I feel excited because I’ve never been there. “
- ▶ Isabella: “It’s nice, we’ve never really had to share a house before. You get to know about different people.” About Brazil: “I’m going to miss my friends here, but I’m going to make more friends there.”
- ▶ Nathanael: “Living at House 244 is fun because the house is big, spacious and there’s a big garden. There are loads of kind people living there.” About Brazil: “I’m really excited ‘cause the weather will be nice and I would love to go fishing.”

#### Prayer points:

- ▶ Please pray for us as a family, for us to be able to create spaces for us to have family time together, and to really listen to how our children are doing
- ▶ Please pray for our country as there have been reports of fraud in the elections and the nation is really divided. We pray for unity among believers and that any corruption would be revealed

Marcio and Noemi



## Going further with Church Mission Society

**Stories from the edges:** Find out how God is meeting people on the edges around the world through CMS people in mission. [Go to churchmissionsociety.org/stories](https://www.churchmissionsociety.org/stories)

Please note that opinions expressed in link letters are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email [supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org](mailto:supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org) or call 01865 787400. Church Mission Society is a mission community acknowledged by the Church of England. Registered Company No. 6985330 and Registered Charity No. 1131655 (England and Wales) and SC047163 (Scotland).

## God in the Sciences

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

### Science and Miracles

We live in a world where we can expect the sun to rise tomorrow and the milk to pour out of the bottle when we tilt it over our cereal. But for God, the properties of matter and the biological processes that we know and read about in textbooks are simply the usual ways He works. If He chooses to do something unexpected to demonstrate something about His character, His relationship with us, and His purposes, then He will.

A group of 14 UK-based science Professors wrote to the Times in 1984, saying that "We gladly accept the Virgin Birth, the gospel miracles, and the Resurrection of Christ as historical events. We know that we are representative of many other scientists who are also Christians standing in the historical tradition of the churches." For the non-believer, I would suggest a thought experiment: if God exists, why should He be bound by the same laws of physics as us?

If you don't believe  
in **MIRACLES**  
perhaps you've  
forgotten that  
**YOU** are one...

Professor Christine Done is an Astrophysicist at the University of Durham. In the book *True Scientists, True Faith* (Monarch, 2014) she writes: "Even when I was an atheist I used to get cross at discussions...on how all Jesus's miracles could be physically explained. To me, once you have believed in a God, a supernatural being, then it's obvious that supernatural stuff could happen, since any God who can make the physical universe and its laws can presumably suspend those laws in any time and way He chooses."

There are also miracles which appear to be a case of wonderful timing. The wind blew all night, and the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry land, for example. The biblical writers don't seem especially interested in distinguishing between wonders that seem to break the usual rules of how things happen and those that don't.

Many in Jesus' audiences were not won over by His wonders. Most of the people in the crowds who ate the food He produced out of nowhere were quite happy to turn on Him when the religious authorities decided He was dangerous. We can only make sense of something unexpected, such as an answer to prayer for healing, in the context of a growing relationship with God.

The exciting task for a Christian is to explain what this interaction looks like, and to demonstrate what 'your kingdom come' looks like in our communities. God works through us in words, works *and* wonders.



# REVIVE INTERNATIONAL

## RESTORING LIVES, RENEWING HOPE

### Community Market

Earlier this year, we set up the first Community Market in the community of Aguazinha. We pick up surplus food from a supermarket and redistribute it to the families who most need it. We now have a total of 22 families registered which reaches about 100 people.

These families not only receive help with food each week but have a new network of support in the team and other families who use the service and regular workshops about issues like health and finances. We are excited that some of the families have also started to attend the partner church 'Agua Viva' through our work at the Community Market.

To finish the year, with the help of partners and sponsors, we were able to provide each of our families with a full Christmas hamper so they could have a special Christmas dinner.

In 2023 we are looking forward to being in a bigger space for the market which we will have exclusive use of. This will help us to be able to store food and manage its distribution better. We hope to partner with more supermarkets to make sure we can always have food available for the families.



*Christmas Hampers from the Community Market*

### Revive Foster Service

This year so much has happened in Revive's fostering service. The Foster Care law was passed in our city, we trained and registered our first foster family and we had our first child placed into foster care.

We have reached so many amazing milestones this year! We are really grateful to God for all the doors that have opened and that this service is now fully underway after years of background work.

In the coming year we will run more foster carer training, to increase the amount of foster families available to receive children into their homes. We also hope to expand the team to provide support for the families and children as the service grows.

### Sewing group

This year Revive started its first community sewing project. The project has 12 women who are learning to sew as a business to support their families. We hope that in 2023 these women can start to support their families with their income and pass on their skills to others.

### The Revive Homes

This year has been very mixed in the Revive houses. We have seen many comings and goings in both houses. There have been children who have been reunited with family, children who have been adopted and children who are still here after another year of waiting.

The financial challenges that Revive has faced has meant cuts in all areas including having to say good-bye to some staff, stopping children's extra activities and reducing the menu in the kitchen.

Even with the cutbacks, we believe the children have received the most important thing, which is to be loved and cared for. Our staff team has worked hard to give the children lots of care and love and the attention that they need. We are really proud of our staff and the heart they have for the children here who have come from some of the worst situations imaginable.

Even with the financial challenges we have managed to have some fun. The children have visited the beach, parks, science museum, gone on cultural walks and, thanks to our local partnership with the pizza restaurant, have had some delicious pizza!

One of the highlights of our year is always the Revive Christmas Party and this year was no different. We had so much fun and exchanged gifts with the Secret Santa, and danced the night away. The children are now on school break for Christmas the whole of January and the older girls will also start the Alpha Course in the new year.

We have hope that in 2023 things will be more settled financially as we work on gaining more partnerships with businesses and supporters both here in Brazil, in the U.K and in the U.S.

**Thank you so much for all your prayers and support during this year.**

We are excited for 2023 and all that it brings for the Revive houses and the Revive projects. We pray that you have a peaceful Christmas and a joyful new year.

God bless!

Elise Canuto  
Revive Director

## **THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY BOXES**

After a successful Christingle on Sunday 11th December which raised £80.00 for the **The Children's Society**, it is now time to empty any collection boxes which you may have, and in which you have been saving your loose change over the past year.

If you would prefer to empty your own box please feel free to do so and let me have the money at church. However, I will be only too happy to do this for you if you bring the box to church on any Sunday in January.

For those who are not able to get to church, please contact me and I will make arrangements to either collect your box from you, or alternatively, accept your donation by cheque made payable to The Children's Society or by cash.

On behalf of the Children's Society, your donations in this financially difficult time towards this very worthy cause are most gratefully appreciated. Please continue to support them.

Wishing you all happy and peaceful New Year.

Best wishes,

**Sylvia Kent** Tel. no. 564071

**The  
Children's  
Society**



## The Coming of the Magi

'Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.' So Matthew tells of the coming of the Magi, or Wise Men, to the baby Jesus. Today we remember it on Epiphany, on 6<sup>th</sup> January. Did they come from Arabia Felix – nowadays southern Arabia? How many came? No one knows, but by the 6<sup>th</sup> century they were named Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. Why gold, frankincense and myrrh? Gold stands for kingship: Jesus was King of the Jews. Frankincense stands for divinity; Jesus was to be worshipped. Myrrh stands for death and burial; Jesus would become a sacrifice and die for His people. The Wise Men were the very first gentiles ever to worship Jesus. Isaiah foresaw this response to Jesus: 'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.' The Magi wanted to worship Jesus; Herod wanted to kill Him. But the Jewish leaders who knew about the prophecy of a Messiah born in Bethlehem did not even bother to visit to Bethlehem. And it is only six miles from Jerusalem!

- King
- Jews
- Star
- East
- Worship
- Magi
- Wise
- Men
- Baby
- Jesus
- Epiphany
- Arabia
- Felix
- Gaspar
- Melchior
- Balthasar
- Gold
- Frankincense
- Myrrh
- Kingship
- Divinity
- Death
- Isaiah
- Nations
- Herod
- Prophecy
- Bethlehem
- Jerusalem
- Priests
- Scribes

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A	E	A	H	B	N	I	A	A	P	P	E	E	M
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Decades ago our Church Magazine, in common with those of many other parishes, published each month a list of donations and donors, showing that Mrs. Brown had given 5 shillings, that Mr. Jenks had generously donated 3 shillings and sixpence, and that the Misses Snooks had contributed 7 shillings and threepence ha'penny between them. We don't do that now, but **we are very grateful for ALL donations to the church, large or small.** Our bills (as with most of the heating in church) have gone through the roof! If any readers of **THE WORD** who do not already support St John's would like to do so nothing could be easier than making a donation online. Here are the church's bank details:

**Making Donations to St John's through online banking**

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**Sort Code: 60-20-11**  
**Account Number: 86882120**



**the elderberries gardening club.**

The group meet from 10.30am-noon on **the second Wednesday of every month** at St. John's Church on St. John's Road in Birkdale.

The club offers talks from guest speakers, trips to historical houses and gardens, and social events.

To find out more, email [elderberriesgardening@gmail.com](mailto:elderberriesgardening@gmail.com) or call Shelley Lewis-Lavender on [01704 560690](tel:01704560690).

**A Prayer for the New Year**

Jesus,  
 Heir of the promise,  
 Hope of the years,  
 You are here.  
 Help us Lord,  
 To know that You are *there*, too,  
 Before us  
 As You are behind us,  
 Already in the new moment,  
 The new day, the new year.  
 Help us Lord.  
 To delight in Your company,  
 To walk Your safe way,  
 To shine Your clear light  
 Of hope for the year. By Daphne Kitching

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I	G	A	M	J	G	I	P	I	H	S	R	O	W
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## BORN FREE

By John M Shakespeare

The French and American Revolutions had "Liberty" as their reason for happening. In the same vein in the 19C, the cry for freedom by British liberals was similar, but with a different emphasis. The views of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), can be expressed in the sentiment "Freedom to do as you wish, so long as that freedom of expression does not interfere with the freedom of others to do likewise".

Freedom for us all comes at a price. This we have paid for through generations of fighting wars, to resist the oppressors who would have conquered and enslaved us to their way of life. The sentiment of a fight for freedom, and its demands on our behaviour is, I believe, expressed in the poem, "Vitaï Lampada", by Sir Henry Newbolt (1862-1938). One verse I quote from the poem to illustrate this sentiment is:

"The sand of the desert is sodden red,  
Red with the wreck of the square that broke.  
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead.  
And the Regiment blind with dust and smoke.  
The river of death has brimmed his banks  
And England's far, and Honour a name.  
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks,  
Play up! play up! And play the game".

When he was an old man William Wilberforce, saw a Bill for the Abolition of Slavery passed in 1833, abolishing slavery throughout the British Empire. That same year Lord Shaftesbury got a Bill passed, The Factory Act of 1833, which forbade the employment in factories of children under 9, and fourteen years later The Factories Act 1847 limited the work of women and young persons in the textiles industry to 10 hours a day.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), believed that human beings are naturally good, left to their own impulses of behaviour. Envy, greed and sins of the flesh, he argued were the result of living together, when we become obsessed with competitive drives. In The Social Contract of 1764, he championed the idea of those democratic ideals that existed in ancient Sparta, and were centred upon the idea of actively participating in politics and legislation, in order to live Freely.

I believe the most sincere expression of being free, is the emotion of love. To quote Romans (Ch 12 verses 9-13), "Let love be genuine, hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good. Love one another with mutual affection, outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, extend hospitality to strangers".

Where as freedom of movement is important, it is necessary to hold on to the freedom of speech, writing and even thought, all of which have been suppressed by some authoritative regimes.

George Orwell's book of a visionary future, "1984", should help to keep us all alert to any infringements of our liberties. Problems could arise, if we start to take for granted, the freedoms that we enjoy!

The principle of being free individuals, is then something that we all cherish. The question is, to what extent we can be Free, whilst still regarding the rights of others with differing ideals of what it means to be Free!

John Henry Newman (1810-1890), an English theologian, I suggest, summed up our responsibilities with regard to being Free: "We can believe what we choose. We are answerable for what we choose to believe."

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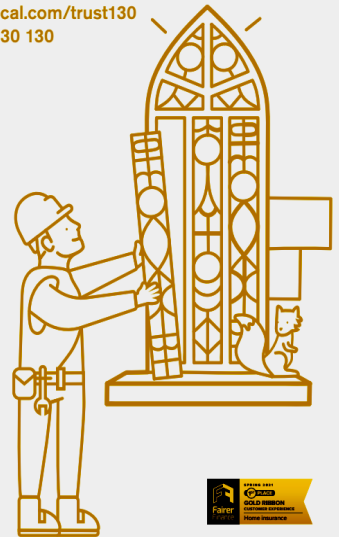
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## Have you got a passion?

By Heather Cox

Some people are passionate about sport, some about politics, some about the environment. There are lots of things that people can be passionate about. I found out recently that I had a passion, and Clive (one of the church leaders) has asked me to tell you about it.

A definition of passion is 'strong and barely controlled emotion.' I knew I had passion for this subject because I was aware of my strong emotion when I spoke about it. Interestingly, another definition that is given for passion is 'the suffering and death of Jesus'.



My passion is for the Bible, God's written word. And more specifically, that the Bible be read, heard and studied because it really is God's words to us. The Bible itself tells us that, 'All Scripture is God breathed...' [2 Tim 3:16](#) and that, 'the word of God is living and active...' [Hebrews 4:12](#). Many of you will know and have experienced God speaking to you through His word. But if not, you can, you absolutely can!

As with all emotions, my passion ebbs and flows but when I'm faced with certain situations that passion, that strong emotion, rises up in me. So why do I have such a strong emotion for God's written word, the Bible? That probably comes from my life story or, as Christian's say, my testimony.

I grew up in Ainsdale, going to Ainsdale Methodist Church. As a family we went to Capernwray Hall for New Year holidays. For 9 months of the year Capernwray welcomes (young) people from all over the world to study the Bible and then in between times there are holidays for all ages having lots of fun but giving time each day for Bible teaching and learning more about our Saviour

and Lord, Jesus. It was on one of these holidays, Easter 1981, when I was 11 that I became a Christian. From then on, I went to Capernwray most years with family or with a friend and slowly grew to understand how vital the Bible is for my life as a Christian.

Capernwray grew from one centre in 1945 to over 20 worldwide and in 1987, a week before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, I set off to Australia, to study at their Capernwray Bible school. Without telling anyone, I'd actually thought of going to the Capernwray centre in the USA but my plans changed when my mum asked me if I'd like to go to Australia, if she paid? Erm, OK!!! So Capernwray USA became Capernwray Australia.

After a very special 10 months in Australia I returned to the UK in August 1988. Not long after I returned I was in my bedroom praying and reading the Bible and as I read [Isaiah 33:17](#) I had a very strong sense that these verses had something to do with my future. At that time, I had no idea how or what but I was certain this is what God was telling me through this verse.

I started my nurse training in June 1991. It had never crossed my mind at all to be a nurse but a few months after coming back from Australia, the pastor of my new church asked me if I'd ever thought of care work. They had close ties with a Christian Nursing Home in the town that had a vacancy for a Carer. And so began my journey into Nursing, which has not been an easy one at times.

I've always had an interest in different cultures and all things overseas so it was a natural progression to go on short mission trips with my church. This gradually led to a month's trip with Tearfund to Thailand in 2004 and then a longer 6 month trip with OMF (previously China Inland Mission), again to Thailand in 2006. At the end of this 6 month trip I was becoming increasingly sure that God was leading me into long term mission. However, I had my doubts.

This is me LORD. You're REALLY calling ME to do this? So I looked for jobs instead! And I found a job I thought was just right for me with my experience, applied and got an interview. On the morning of the interview I had some Bible words going round in my head. The words man's plans and heart kept 'popping up' in my head but like I sometimes (too often) do, I ignored them and carried on. The interview went awful!! Probably the worst interview I've had. On the bus home I

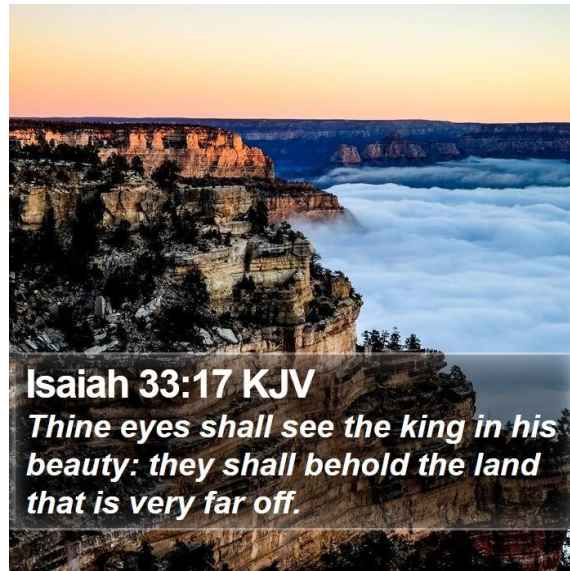


still had those Bible words in my head, so I thought I'd better find where they were from. It didn't take very long.

**Proverbs 19:21** Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

Yes, Heather. I AM calling you to long term mission. OK LORD, but where to? Having been to Thailand twice, it seemed the sensible thing to go to Thailand. I spoke with the elders of my church and other valued Christian friends and they agreed. So I was preparing to go to Thailand, long term, with OMF.

Prior to going out to Thailand I visited some retired missionaries. During one of those visits to a lady on the Wirral I was telling



her of my story and how when I was 18 God had given me the verse in **Isaiah 33:17** which I was certain was about my future.

Her response to this was, "Oh yes, God gave (name forgotten) the same verse to call her out to Thailand."

So there it was! It was nearly 20 years later yet God had fulfilled that word He 'spoke' to me when I was 18. How

humbling it is that our God, our wonderful and awesome God speaks to us through His written word, the Bible.

But what was meant to be a long term mission in Thailand turned out to be only two and a half years. And I returned a failure, or so I thought...

## New Ways of Praying



The most recent national Census reveals that the number of people in the UK identifying themselves as Christian is in decline. However, the number of people using the Church of England's Daily Prayer audio service has recently passed a million, as the podcasting revolution begins to reshape how people worship.

The podcast, also available as audio on the [Daily Prayer app](#), follows the Church of England's traditional cycle of Morning and Evening Prayer, with a range of voices and music.

The short atmospheric services feature prayers and readings following the pattern set out in the Church of England's Common Worship services, recorded by volunteers across the country.

They are edited together with music from the St Martin's Voices choir at St Martin-in-the-Fields in London, by the Church of England's Digital team. It was launched in March last year after churches across the country reported large numbers tuning into prayer services broadcast online during Covid restrictions.

It comes amid signs of a resurgence of interest in the ancient monastic cycle of daily worship.

Thomas Allain-Chapman, Head of Publishing for the Church of England, said: "Adding audio to the existing Daily Prayer app has transformed a useful resource into something truly inspiring and enriching."

So far, the Daily Prayer podcast has reached one million listeners, with around 8,000 listening every day. In total there have now been five million downloads since its launch in March 2020.

Daily Prayer is one of a series of prayer and discipleship apps and podcasts available from the Church of England, including 'Time to Pray', which won Gold for Best Use of Audio at the 2021 Digital Impact Awards.

## Joining the Sunday morning services and Thursday evening prayers by zoom or by telephone

To join the **weekly Sunday morning services** by **ZOOM**:  
The Identification Number every Sunday will be: 827 7997 1592  
The Password every Sunday will be: 860066

To join the **weekly Sunday morning services** by **TELEPHONE**:  
The telephone number you must ring is: 0131 460 1196  
The Meeting Identification Number every Sunday will be: 827 7997 1592  
When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)  
The Password every Sunday will be: 860066.  
When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)

To join the **twice-monthly Thursday evening prayers** at 7.30pm by **ZOOM**:  
The Identification Number every Thursday will be: 879 8059 1143  
The Password every Thursday will be: 966358

To join the **twice-monthly Thursday evening prayers** at 7.30pm by **TELEPHONE**:  
The telephone number you must ring is: 0131 460 1196  
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**BUT PLEASE CHECK YOUR CALL PACKAGE CHARGES WITH YOUR PROVIDER**  
**IF YOU NEED ANY HELP:** Please contact Clive (564206) or Sally (553977) or Lucy (553977) for any further details you require.

## Hearing the Word by telephone

If you would like to hear a recording of the Sunday morning talks telephone **0151-329-2184** at any hour of the day or night.  
The calls are **free**. Each talk lasts about 15 minutes and is available for a week.  
Each recording becomes available during the afternoon of the Sunday on which it is given.

## Thought for 2023

The future looks very frightening indeed. So it did for the Israelites in the time of Jeremiah. Exiled to Babylon, surrounded by their enemies and by false prophets, there was nothing whatsoever for them to look forward to. And yet, in Jeremiah 29:11-13 we read this promise by God to His people:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find me when you seek Me with all your heart."

Because of our faithful God, we can truly say: Happy New Year!





★HAPPY★  
BIRTHDAY!

To Sally Wright on 2nd January  
Sue Madani on 15th January  
Eileen Harrison on 19th January  
Tina Kent on 20th January  
Sue Doran on 29th January

If there are any birthdays, anniversaries or other reasons to celebrate which our readers would like to share with others **DURING FEBRUARY** please let the Editor know by email to [stjohnbirkdaletheword@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnbirkdaletheword@gmail.com)

## The Last Laughs

Nigel Rees, a collector of quotations, tells of a Nativity play in Norwich in which one of the wise men dried up. The first one said "we bring gold." The second told the Holy Family "we bring you myrrh." There was then a long pause during which the third child tried to remember his line and eventually said "Frank sends his love."



"That's two t's in Matthew", said Osric



**Cheeky monkey!**  
This lowland gorilla at London zoo appears to be putting the final touches to a snowman which he built. In fact he is helping himself to the broccoli hair and carrot nose.





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