



THE WORD

Editor: Stuart Baker: stjohnbirkdaletheword@gmail.com



**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. 254

MARCH 2024

ST. JOHN'S PARISH CHURCH

God Centred, Relationship Driven and Life Transforming



Time and Talents

In Luke's Gospel (chapter 19 verses 11-27) we read that Jesus told the Parable of the Talents. A master put his servants in charge of his goods (his 'Talents') whilst he was away on a trip. Upon his return the master assessed the stewardship of his servants by evaluating how faithful each had been in making wise investments of his goods to obtain a profit. The master expected some return from his servants' management of his goods and rewarded each according to how they had handled their stewardship.

He rewarded the two faithful servants who had put his property to good use, but he rebuked and punished the one who had hidden the property which he had been left in charge of and had done nothing with it. This servant had not lost the property but he had failed to use it wisely or at all.

We are all servants of the Lord. We have all been blessed with abilities, whatever they may be. These are our talents. We all have the ability to do something which can be for the benefit of others. What better way can there be to serve the Lord than to use our talents for Him?

£10 challenge

During the Spring this year St John's will give all of its congregation the chance to use their talents for the benefit of our church. On 28th April (the day of the APCM) the church will offer to give £10 to everyone who is willing to serve the Lord in this way. The challenge is to use that £10 and make it grow, by however much, in seven weeks by the date of the Summer Social on 15th June when the £10 must be returned with any profit from the use of it.

See the notice on page 12

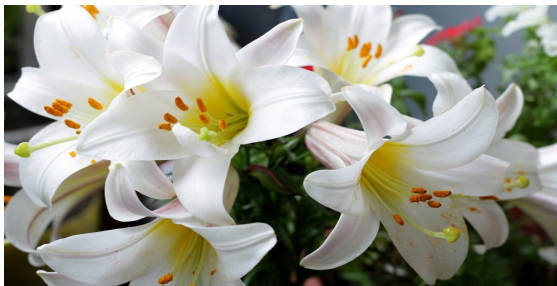
**FOR ALL ENQUIRIES TO OR ABOUT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH PLEASE CONTACT US
BY EMAIL info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk OR PHONE: 07732 691542**

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JOHN'S

Priest (retired):	Rev. Roy Doran (572387)	Church of England	
Reader:	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)	Children's Society:	Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071)
Churchwardens:	Clive Morris (564206) Tim Wright (553977)	Mothers' Union:	Mrs. Linda Caton (564737)
Wardens' Assistant::	Miss Lucy Wright (553977)	Girl Guides	Mrs. Janette Law (565951)
PCC Treasurer:	Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071)	St. John's Brownies:	Mrs. Helen Jones and
PCC Secretary:	Mrs. Sally Wright (553977)	Brownie Guiders:	Mrs. Lesley Scott
Parish Hall Secretary:	Mrs. Jean Morris (564206)	St. John's Rainbows:	Mrs. Lesley Scott
Electoral Roll Officer:	Stuart Harris (563789)	Church Flowers:	Mrs. Cath Whiteside (568874)
Deanery Synod Reps:	Clive Morris (564206) Tim Wright (553977) Stuart Baker (560518)	Magazine Editor:	Stuart Baker (560518)
Safeguarding Officer:	Mrs. Abbie Holden (07961003359)	Magazine Printer:	Mrs. Christine Baker (560518)
		Notice boards, I.T, Website developer, Publicity designer:	Mrs. Sally Wright (553977)
		Buildings Inspector:	David Halsall
		Recruiter:	Stuart Baker (560518)

Easter Lilies

If any of our readers would like to contribute to the provision in church of Easter Lilies in remembrance of loved ones please contact Cath Whiteside or Judith Foster as soon as possible. The names of those who are remembered will be displayed in the chancel or sanctuary.



COLLECTING BOXES

With Christmas behind us it is now time for us to open our Children's Society collecting boxes. If you are a holder of a box and would like me to open it on your behalf, please let me know and I will arrange to collect it. Alternatively, if you wish to open it and let me have it's contents either by cash or by cheque I will be happy to receive them in that way. I can be contacted on 564071. Your help with this will be greatly appreciated. Many thanks,
Sylvia Kent

PARISH REGISTERS

Burials and Cremations

2nd February 2024 **Graham Ormerod, died on 6th January 2024 aged 64 years.**

7th February 2024 **Judith Margaret Smith, died on 15th January 2024 aged 79 years.**

Thursday Evening Prayers on 7th and 21st March on zoom.

The meetings start at 7.30pm and last half an hour.

If there is anything which readers would like to be included in the prayers please contact Roy Doran, Christine Baker, Clive Morris, or Sally, Tim or Lucy Wright.

The number of those joining these prayer meetings has gradually increased. Do join us if you can. See page 31 for details about logging in on zoom by computer or by telephone.



St John's Church Birkdale

BIBLE STUDY GROUP

2nd & 4th
Wednesdays
2-4pm

St John's small hall

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



FRIDAY

Coffee, Cake & Chat

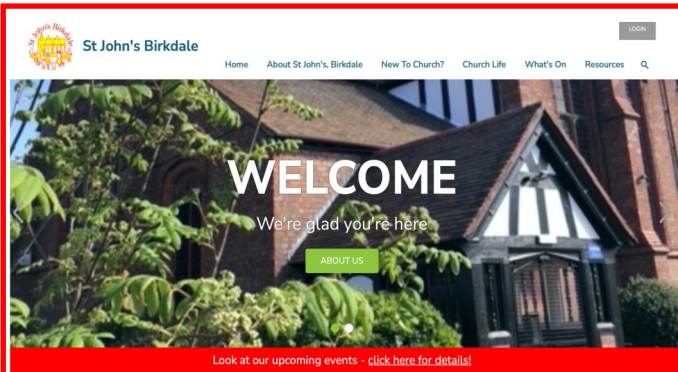
ST JOHN'S CHURCH, ST JOHN'S RD, BIRKDALE PR8 4JP

ST JOHN'S CHURCH BIRKDALE
MONTHLY
2ND FRIDAYS
10.30AM

**NEXT MEETING:
8TH MARCH**



WHAT'S ON AT ST. JOHN'S



Visit our website

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**

St John's Presents

FILM NIGHTS

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

- 12 January
- 9 February
- 15 March
- 26 April
- 10 May

The film titles will be displayed on the church noticeboards.

If you wish to come, please sign the list in church or contact Christine on 01704-560518

£5 to include tea, coffee and homemade cakes

ST JOHN'S INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN OUR

SOCIAL EVENTS 2024

Please contact Christine 07821 982477 or Sally 07800 550097

Friday 26 January @ 7pm

Friday 23 February @ 7pm

Friday 22 March @ 7pm

Friday 19 April @ 7pm

Friday 17 May @ 6.30pm

Saturday 15 June @ 11-2pm

Saturday 20 July @ 2pm

Friday 20 September @ 7pm

Friday 18 October @ 7pm

Saturday 16 November @ 7pm

Friday 6 December 6-9pm

Saturday 7 December 10-3pm



Burns Night Supper

Late, Late Pancake Party

Andy Dean's Quiz Night

Italian Food Night

Car Treasure Hunt

Summer Fair & Afternoon Tea

Strawberry Tea

Harvest Supper

Music 'in the' Hall

Barn Dance and Bangers

Christmas Tree Festival and Christmas Fair

YOUNG ADULT SOCIALS

2023 - 2024

Sunday 5th November

River of Light @ Albert Dock

Friday 8th December

Christmas Games Night @ Lucy's

Saturday 20th January

Pantomime Rapunzel

February TBC

Pancake Party @ Lucy's

Saturday 23rd March

Pottery Painting and Cafe

Sunday 14th April

Pinewoods Walk and Picnic

St John's Church, Birkdale

Worship on the
Third Sunday of
Lent

SUNDAY 3rd MARCH
HOLY 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 Third Sunday of Lent

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first He suffered pain, and entered not into glory before He was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

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

**Jesus -
The Man Arrested**

The Reading: Mark ch.14 vv.32-42

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

34 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.

36 "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

37 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?"

38 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

39 Once more he went away and prayed the same thing.

40 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

41 Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners.

42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Worship on the
Fourth Sunday of
Lent.

Mothering Sunday

SUNDAY 10th MARCH
10.30am service IN CHURCH
and via zoom & phone.

Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

O Lord, we beseech you, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, our heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Collect for Mothering Sunday

Merciful God, whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary, shared the life of a home in Nazareth and on the cross drew the whole human family to Himself: strengthen us in our daily lives that in joy and sorrow we may know the power of your presence to bind together and to heal; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

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

**Jesus—
The One Who Loves US**

**The
Reading:
John ch.3
v.16**

FOR GOD SO
LOVED THE WORLD
THAT HE GAVE HIS
ONE AND ONLY SON,
— THAT WHOEVER —
BELIEVES IN HIM
SHALL NOT PERISH
— BUT HAVE —
ETERNAL LIFE

St John's Church, St John's Rd, Birkdale

Mothering
Sunday
SERVICE

Mother's reward

A man was decorating his new den and decided it was a good place to display all the awards he and his two sons had won at athletic competitions.

When he had filled two whole walls, he remarked to his wife that it was a shame she had no awards to contribute.

The following day, she produced, neatly framed, the birth certificates of their two sons, and added them to the display.

SUNDAY 10 MARCH

10.30 am

A time to say thank you

Worship on the Fifth
Sunday of Lent

SUNDAY 17th MARCH
10.30am service **IN CHURCH**
and via zoom & phone

Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ has delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in Him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of His victory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

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

**Jesus -
The Sacrificial Lamb**

The Reading: Exodus ch.12 vv.21-27

21 Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb.

22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning.

23 When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

24 "Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.

25 When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony.

26 And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?'

27 then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.' " Then the people bowed down and worshiped.

Midweek Book of
Common Prayer Holy
Communion



WEDNESDAY
20th MARCH
10.30am service
IN CHURCH

A Vicar's Criminal Burden, by (and with thanks to) Patrick Kidd (The Times newspaper 21.2.2024)

Church Times subscribers who like ITV drama were amused recently to see an advert for the vicar of Grantchester (Diocese of Ely). "It's typical of the unspoken duties being loaded on the clergy" said Francis Young, a church historian, "that this advert says nothing about the expectation to solve crimes." Not only is Grantchester well known these days as a hotbed of murder but the vicarage, where Rupert Brooke famously had honey for tea, has been occupied for forty years by Jeffrey Archer.



Worship on



SUNDAY 24th MARCH
10.30am service
IN CHURCH
and via zoom & phone.

Collect for Palm Sunday

Almighty and everlasting God, who of your tender love towards the world has sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon Him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of His patience and humility, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

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

**Jesus -
On The Back Of A Donkey**

The Reading: Mark ch.11 vv.1-10

1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples,

2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.

3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.' "

4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it,

5 some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?"

6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.

7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.

8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.

9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted "Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

10 Blessed is the coming of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven."

Worship on



THURSDAY 28th MARCH

**There will NOT be a Maundy
Thursday service at St John's
but there will be a Communion
service at St James' church on
Lulworth Road at 7.00pm.**

Worship on



FRIDAY 29th MARCH

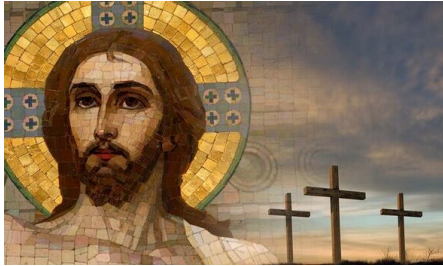
10.30am service

IN CHURCH

and via zoom & phone.

We have invited the congregation of Liverpool Road Methodist Church to join us at this service.

Worship on Easter Day



SUNDAY 31st MARCH

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 Easter Day

Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son has overcome the old order of sin and death to make all things new in Him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with Him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity.

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

**Jesus -
The Risen Saviour**

The Reading: Luke ch.24 vv.1-9

- 1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.
- 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,
- 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.
- 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.
- 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?
- 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:
- 7 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' "
- 8 Then they remembered his words.
- 9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others.

St John's Church, Birkdale, PR8 4JP



Quiz
Night

**FRIDAY
22 MARCH**

**ST JOHN'S
BIRKDALE**

QUIZ STARTING AT : 7PM

TEAMS OF UP TO 6

FOOD AT : 8PM

TICKETS : £10

BRING YOUR OWN DRINKS

www.stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk

St John's Church, Birkdale

Italian Night

FRIDAY 19 APRIL

32 HARTLEY

CRESCENT

7PM



TICKETS

£15

**Please let us know of any food allergies
when booking**



Ten Pound Talent Challenge

Are you up for it?

On the day of our Annual Parochial Church Meeting (28th April) after the morning service we shall be giving you the opportunity to enter a very special challenge.

Everyone will be offered £10

Sadly this is not for you to keep for yourself!

It's for you to use in whatever way you choose to grow it into a larger sum for church funds.

You could use the money

- to hold a coffee morning and sell tickets
- to buy something you could raffle
- to buy the ingredients to bake cakes to sell
- to buy craft materials to make something to sell

Or anything else you can think of.

Use your imagination and your own individual talents to see how much you can make.

**Bring your earnings to the Summer Social
on 15th June between 11.00am and 2.00pm**

"There are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit."

£130 for our church: Home Insurance offer from Ecclesiastical Insurance Company

Take out a home insurance policy with Ecclesiastical – one of the UK's most trusted home insurance providers and a Which? "Best Buy" – and Ecclesiastical will donate £130 to our church.

This offer will expire at the end of 2024.



Our Church Finances

On Sunday, 18th February some of our congregation stayed in church after our 10.30 service to receive a summary of our financial position. In the style of 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire' questions were posed for us all to consider. There were no prizes, and nobody walked away with £1 million! But some of the answers were eye-openers and some misconceptions were corrected.

How many of these questions can you answer correctly?

1. Where does the church get its money from?

- A The Diocese
- B The National Lottery
- C The congregation
- D The Government

2. Who in the leadership team gets paid?

- A All of them
- B None of them
- C Roy as retired vicar
- D Tim and Clive as Wardens

3. Does the church own any houses?

- A The leaders' homes
- B A house in St John's Road
- C No
- D The vicarage

4. Who pays for Baptisms?

- A The Baptism family
- B No one, they are free
- C The child being Baptised
- D The Diocese

5. Weddings and funerals are paid for, so who gets the money?

- A All goes to the church
- B The Vicar
- C The church and Diocese
- D The Diocese

6. Does the church pay for a cleaner?

- A Yes
- B No, it is done by volunteers
- C No, it is done by the Vicar
- D No, we never clean

7. What is the Parish Share?

- A Money paid to the Diocese to cover Vicar's wage, pension etc.
- B Money paid to the Diocese to cover church maintenance
- C Money paid to the Diocese to rent the church building
- D Money paid to the Diocese to cover church running costs

8. How much do we pay in Parish Share each year?

- A £410, 253
- B £4125
- C £41,253
- D £412

9. Who pays for the vicarage?

- A The Diocese completely
- B Provided by Diocese, we pay Council tax, telephone and water rates
- C The church congregation
- D The Vicar

10. Who pays for our Grade11 listed church building repairs?

- A The Diocese completely
- B St John's congregation
- C A combination of Diocese and St John's
- D National Lottery Funding

11. How much does it cost to keep the church open each week?

- A £150
- B £1500
- C £550
- D £1050

12. Does this figure include any repairs or maintenance?

- A Yes, all of it
- B Some is put into a maintenance fund
- C None of it
- D Just covers the roof repairs

13. Do we have a shortfall each week?

- A Yes
- B No

14. What do we do to address the shortfall?

- A Fundraising - fairs, socials etc
- B Prompt the congregation to think about their giving
- C Pray
- D Keep renting the hall out

15. What can we do to help?

- A Think about your weekly giving, can you increase it?
- B Nothing
- C Put an extra £1 in per week
- D Leave it to someone else

16. How do I know how much to give?

- A Decide on a figure and stick to it
- B Give what you have always given
- C Think about tithing your income
- D Leave it to someone else

Answers on page 14

Our Church Finances

Answers:

1 C, 2 B, 3 C, 4 B, 5 C, 6 A, 7 A, 8 C, 9 B, 10 C, 11 D, 12 C, 13 A, 14 All of them, 15 A, 16 C

It is hoped that those questions and answers will provide information which many of our congregation have not previously known.

At our monthly BCP Communion on Wednesday 21st February Rev. Roy Doran asked us if we are creatures of habit. We all agreed that we are. One habit which is very easy to get into is making a commitment to give a regular sum to a charity and then forgetting to increase it. We can habitually make the same gift for many years without thinking that each year the value of our gift is eroded by the effect of inflation. What may have seemed an appropriate or generous level of giving some years ago may now not be so.

Question 13 asks if the church has a shortfall, ie a difference between what our congregation (those who attend in person **and** those who join us by telephone or zoom) give in regular offerings and what the church has to pay in order to keep the doors open and to heat the building in winter (to the extent that we can afford to do so!)

As this magazine has a wider readership than our own congregation we will not publish in these pages the extent of the shortfall. Suffice it to say that if we did not receive some income from the letting of our church hall, and if we did not have the money which comes from our Summer and Christmas Fairs, the shortfall would be significant. This should not be so. We should not have to rely on our church hall income, or on the hard work of the few people who organise and run the Fairs. We should aim to make our books balance by having enough regular giving income to cover our outgoings.

Several years ago we asked our congregation to reconsider their giving and this led to a healthy improvement in our financial position but, perhaps because many of us are creatures of habit, the overall level of giving has not reflected the huge increases in the cost of gas, electricity, insurance, maintenance of the church building and the Parish Share (which alone is more than £41,000 each year: approximately £800 per week).

What is Parish Share? It is a sum which we are assessed as being required to pay to the Diocese of Liverpool as a contribution towards the cost of employing clergy (even though we have not had a Vicar for several years), clergy pensions, clergy training, and clergy housing. Liverpool Diocese is the poorest Diocese in the country and does not have the substantial resources which many older Dioceses possess. All of its income comes from the parishes. The Diocese tells each Deanery how much it requires that Deanery to pay. Our Deanery (North Meols) then divides the total amongst the 15 parishes. The sum requested from each parish is not the same. Those with larger congregations and which are objectively more affluent are requested to pay more than those with smaller congregations or which are objectively less affluent. At St John's we are not complaining about the way in which the sum is assessed. No system is perfect, and the one which exists is arguably as fair as any other. But it results in us having to pay more than £41,000 which is a huge sum for our church which has fewer than 70 people on its Electoral Roll.

The PCC does not want any of our church family to feel financially embarrassed by increasing their giving but does ask **everyone** to consider the questions and answers in the Quiz and to reflect on whether they are able to reassess their contributions to the church, particularly if their level of giving was decided by them several years ago and has not changed since then. Whatever each of us may think, please do not just leave it to someone else and do nothing. **We all have our part to play.** As St Paul said in his letter to the early Christian community in Corinth: "... each should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **God loves a cheerful giver.**"



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

On Why Pews SHOULD Be Uncomfortable

The Rectory,
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

Visits from your parishioners to our church are always welcome. But I did not expect them to return to you complaining because our pews are uncomfortable.

Pews are *meant* to be uncomfortable. The unshakeable belief of our congregation is that the more uncomfortable the pew, the holier the worship must be. By the same token, an 8am Service is more fervent than one at 11am, since it is much more socially inconvenient. If you add on enduring sub-zero temperatures and damp, then sainthood clearly beckons.

Your people may be used to lolling in upholstered chairs in tropical temperatures, but I am sure such comfort places their souls in grave peril. Our pews were built 500 years ago, when people were several inches shorter and many pounds lighter, and so could accommodate themselves on them perfectly adequately. The fact that a twenty-first century body is in constant danger of sliding off the seat and requires knees to be folded somewhere near ears at least helps to keep minds focussed – apart from Colonel Wainwright, who still manages to sleep peacefully throughout Mattins every Sunday.

I could point out that your chairs make kneeling almost impossible – although I suspect that posture is not encouraged in your church, as people would then be unable to read the words on your overhead projector or wave their arms about quite as easily during the hymns. While the majority of our congregation find the Anglican crouch perfectly adequate, you can see those who flop to their knees on hearing “let us pray” from the clouds of dust sent up from suddenly compressed hassocks, which were purchased to commemorate Queen Victoria’s Accession.

I may also point out that our box pews are very useful for modern times. Once a family is seated, with the door firmly shut, then any toddler is penned in and unable to use the aisles as a racing circuit. Medieval carpenters were clearly forward-thinking people. Admittedly, box pew doors do tend to stick, and few manage to look dignified while they wait for step ladders to be brought before they can climb out.

If only you would remove your chairs and substitute benches without backs, turn off all heating and replace carpets with slate slabs, I am sure your congregation’s religious zeal would soar.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

From the Archives: Windows in Our Church

In recent months we have researched the seven stained glass windows in our church.

Further research relating to the earliest of these windows, the one in the east wall, has revealed that it was installed in two sections three years apart. The scene in the lower half, depicting Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, was provided by Ellen Brierley and was installed in about 1902. The upper section of this window, in which Jesus asks that children should be allowed to come to Him, was installed on Sunday 12th March 1905 (according to a report in the 'Manchester Courier' dated 14th March 1905). Present at the unveiling in 1905 were the Vicar-Elect of Birmingham (Canon Denton Thompson) and a large congregation.

In the February issue of **THE WORD** we asked our readers if they could offer any suggestion as to who is depicted in the most modern of our windows. The panel on the left is, we believe, obviously Jesus and His parents. Jesus is surrounded by a halo. Mary is dressed in a blue gown which is the traditional colour associated with Mary in art. And the man appears to be somewhat older than Mary. And at the top of the panel there is a crown.

In the panel on the right there is a man and a woman (not dressed in blue) and a boy (not surrounded by a halo). Who could these three people be? Whilst we have not been overwhelmed by responses from our readers we have had one from our Reader, Christine, who suggests that the family may be John (later 'the Baptist') and his parents Elizabeth and Zechariah.

Christine writes:

John used baptism as the central symbol or sacrament of his pre-messianic movement and in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, John is recorded as baptising Jesus. One of the symbols representing John the Baptist has therefore come to be a shell, signifying baptism as shown in this painting by Murillo (below), where John is holding a shell to baptise Jesus. If we look at the top of our stained glass window there is a shell.



This concludes our series of articles on our stained glass windows. If any of our readers are interested in seeing other stained glass windows in our locality there are some very fine examples in St James' church and St Peter's church in Birkdale.

At St Peter's there is a window made by a celebrated artist Henry Gustave Hiller, who worked at the Reuben Bennett studio in Manchester, and there is another example of the works of Shrigley and Hunt in St James'.

Also in St James' is a particularly interesting window honouring the lives of six Notable Women: Dorcas of Joppa; St Werburgh; St Margaret; Elizabeth Fry; Florence Nightingale; and Gladys Aylward (part of whose life was inaccurately dramatised in the film 'The Inn of the Sixth Happiness'). Below the window is an inscription: "There are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit."

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Love and serve one another

On Maundy Thursday we recall the final command that Jesus gave to His disciples before His death. After the Last Supper, He rose and washed His disciples' feet. This was astonishing for a 'teacher' to do, but He had a firm purpose in mind: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." His disciples were to love through service, not domination, of one another.

In Latin, the opening phrase of this sentence is 'mandatum novum do vobis'. The word 'mundy' is thus a corruption of the Latin 'mandatum' (or command). The 'washing of the feet' ceremony was an important part of the medieval church's liturgy, symbolising the humility of the clergy, in obedience to the example of Christ.

MAUNDY
THURSDAY
FINAL
COMMAND
JESUS
DISCIPLES
DEATH
LAST
SUPPER
WASHED
FEET
ASTONISHING
PURPOSE
TEACHER
AS
LOVED
YOU
MUST
ONE
ANOTHER
SERVICE
DOMINATION
LATIN
CEREMONY
MEDIEVAL
HUMILITY
OBEDIENCE

I	H	O	D	T	H	U	R	S	D	A	Y	J	I
J	D	T	E	A	C	H	E	R	N	N	D	E	I
E	M	O	A	P	T	L	A	A	G	O	V	I	M
R	N	R	M	E	P	A	S	T	N	T	L	N	R
L	A	V	E	I	D	E	M	Y	I	H	S	W	L
O	D	E	C	P	N	R	S	T	H	E	H	A	T
V	F	S	N	O	P	A	S	I	S	R	T	S	L
E	I	O	E	O	F	U	T	L	I	I	N	H	T
D	N	P	I	O	M	E	S	I	N	Y	D	E	Y
O	A	R	D	C	E	R	E	M	O	N	Y	D	E
C	L	U	E	F	M	V	S	U	T	N	N	S	E
E	P	P	B	T	C	I	S	H	S	U	S	E	J
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E	C	I	V	R	E	S	S	M	U	N	C	R	M

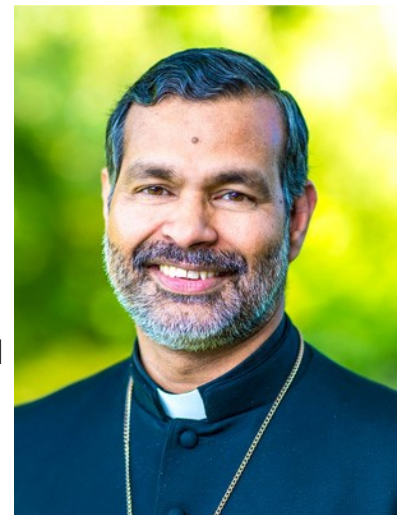
Car insurers cut their cloth with higher prices for archbishop

When the clergy renew their car insurance, it pays to be venerable. John Inge, Bishop of Worcester, has been experimenting on the Money Saving Expert website with how the quotation is adjusted by an algorithm for different job titles and found that while a humble curate would pay £600, the same deal for an archdeacon would cost just £343. Chaplains get a few quid off, unless they are prison chaplains, while there is £128 difference between calling yourself a rector and a vicar. Bishops pay an extra £13, possibly because of the risk of scratching the paintwork with their crosier, but an archbishop has to stump up an almighty £2,227. I wonder if this is because Justin Welby has "Most Rev" before his name and the AI thinks that he is a joyrider?

Author: Patrick Kidd. First published in The Times newspaper on 22.2.2024.

We thank Mr Kidd for kindly permitting us to publish this in **THE WORD**

Bishop John's message at the beginning of Lent



Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The calendar dictates that we have hardly had time to pause for breath after the Christmas season and we find Lent upon us. My prayer is that you have the opportunity to use Lent wisely for you and your worshipping community. The spiritual disciplines that we can properly observe during the Lenten season are for our benefit as we seek to grow as disciples of Christ.

For me Lent is about focusing my heart and mind on the direction that God wants for me. Observing spiritual disciplines are a challenge in the modern world with the pressures of commercialism swirling around us. Ash Wednesday occurs on Valentine's Day this year as we try to engage with a serious message at a time when the world seems focused elsewhere. These pressures are often strong enough to lure us into a spirituality that is consumerist, rather than a path of love.

In one sense, love is revealing to someone one's beauty. I need someone else to help me discover my own beauty. By receiving someone else's love, you discover yourself. By accepting God's immeasurable love, we discover ourselves fully. Can we, in this Lenten season, find quiet and private time to get to know a bit more about ourselves and about others who are around us, and spend time in our inner room with shut doors to discover something more of the profundity of God? Warnings in Matthew 6, 1-6 and 16-18 about almsgiving, prayer, and fasting – the classic disciplines of the penitent – point to the need to shed superficiality, to remove any traces of attention getting, to eschew mixed motives. These warnings are a call to self-disclosure, the disclosure of some of our secrets. But they are also a guarantee that going to God in intimacy will unveil for us some of God's own profound truths and mysteries. And such an encounter with God is not going to keep us where we are; rather it would lead us to where we are expected to be. The challenge of Lent here is one for change and transformation: to become what we are meant to be.

The gospels show how Jesus modelled taking time to focus on being close to God. Yet he also showed us the resolution and determination to focus on the task God appointed him for. He was set for Jerusalem to fill his purpose in his death and resurrection. He was not to be diverted from this divine task.

We must be determined to face the challenges before us as we serve God in the contexts he called us to. At our last Diocesan Synod we heard of the financial challenges, pressure on church numbers, the loss of giving and the strain that places on all church communities. We need to support each other through the challenges but we need to have a Jesus-like clarity to remain on course.

We have a clear vision and purpose. We want to see more people knowing Jesus and have more justice in the world. We know that if we are to achieve that then we all need to introduce people to Jesus and deepen their discipleship. From there we can grow leaders and have communities working for justice. Agreed by synod and one that I, my senior colleagues and all who serve at St James House are working towards. We hope that this is something you have signed up to and are working towards.

It is easy to be swayed off course. It is tempting to find the easy way out, to duck the challenges and to follow other paths believing this is right. It is tempting to lose heart besieged by tales of failure and overcome by a sense of responsibility for the place we find the church in. This does us no good. We are part of God's church, called by Jesus to make disciples and we can do that together. *Continued on next page*

Togetherness in Christ's service is massively important. Our diocese carries the marvellous legacy of the Sheppard Worlock vision of being better together. This vision was carried forward by their successors and I am honoured to hold it now. As such I was privileged to be part of prayers for unity in Merseyside then conferring with Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in Norwich.

In our diocese, parishes are still aiming to come together in the discernment over Fit for Mission. It is the people of God discerning locally how best we do the mission of God – locally, determinedly, and humbly. This reimagining of church trying to create a parish system for the 21st century that maintains a resilient Christian presence in every community will only succeed if we work at it and pray for it together.

Lent marks the time before Jesus started his public ministry. The bible shows us that he was tempted to shape that ministry according to the patterns that might have made him popular in the short-term. During his journey to Jerusalem, his enemies are shown to be trying to prevent him achieve his purpose. He remained resolute.

I call on you to spend this lent to focus your heart and mind on God's purpose for you. I encourage you to support each other in this. And I hope that, as part of your spiritual discipline, you will join me at the diocesan Chrism Eucharist where we renew our commitment together. Then my prayer for you is that you remain resolute in achieving that purpose as you seek to build the kingdom in the context God has called you to serve in.

With every blessing,
Bishop John



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30 years since the ordination of women

It was 30 years ago this month, on 12th March 1994, that the first 32 women were ordained as priests in the Church of England. The service was officiated by Bishop Barry Rogerson at Bristol Cathedral.

Bishop Rogerson ordained the women in alphabetical order, so Angela Berners-Wilson was the very first woman to be ordained. She was a university chaplain.

The youngest woman to be ordained that day was aged 30. The oldest was 69. By 2004, ten years on, one of the women priests had died, and 14 had retired.

Bishop Rogerson reckoned it would take 10 years before the first woman would be ordained as a bishop. In the end, it took 21 years.

Then Libby Lane was ordained the first female bishop in the Church of England. She became Bishop of Stockport, a suffragan bishop in the Diocese of Chester.

The first woman to be ordained a diocesan bishop was the Rt Revd Rachel Treweek, Bishop of Gloucester, appointed on 26 March 2015

There are currently 25 women bishops in the Church of England out of a total of 108. It is estimated that of the (approximately) 20,000 active CofE clergy 30% are women.

An Introduction to the Book of The Bible: Leviticus and Numbers

These books are concerned with Israel's wandering in the desert, on their journey from slavery in Egypt to the promised land of Canaan.

Leviticus focuses on the regulations about worship, ceremonial cleanness, moral laws and holy days. The key theme is that of *holiness*, as every detail of our lives is affected by the presence of a holy God. The aim of the sacrifices, feast and Sabbaths was to enable the people to enter God's presence. We should see the instructions and practices in Leviticus as pointing to Jesus. He totally fulfilled the law through the sacrifice of His life, as Easter reminds us. He demonstrated the love and holiness of God, so that we can share His life: '*Be holy, because I am holy*' (1 Peter 1:16, cf Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7).

The book of Numbers tells the story of Israel's journey through the wilderness. The people were coming to terms with their *identity* as God's people and the *call* to serve Him. They didn't always respond with faith, gratitude and obedience, but with unbelief, ingratitude and rebellion. As a result of their refusal to enter Canaan (ch 14), they were condemned to spend the rest of their lives in the desert. However, God in His grace allowed their children to enter the Promised Land. The book reminds us that the Church is called to be a community that honours God, learns how to deal with sin in ourselves and others, and lives out love and justice in daily life.

'The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26).

Quiz on the Book of Numbers

Before trying this Quiz why not read the book of Numbers? It is the fourth book in the Old Testament. Then see how much you have remembered!

1. How many chapters are there in the Book of Numbers?

- 34
- 35
- 36

2. "*Bemidbar*," the Hebrew title of the book "Numbers" means what?

- In the beginning
- In the wilderness
- Accounting

3. What does the book of Numbers describe?
the priestly rituals and rules for conduct
the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt
the numbering of God's people

4. How many years will the Israelites wander in the wilderness?

- 30
- 40
- 50

5. What tribe was given the responsibility of doing the work of the tabernacle?

- Asher
- Judah
- Levi

6. In Numbers 16, a man named Korah led a rebellion against Moses. How did God end this rebellion?

- They were all stricken with leprosy.
- They were eaten by worms.
- The ground opened up and swallowed them.

7. Why does God prohibit Moses from entering Canaan in Numbers 20?

- because he spoke to the rock
- because he threw the rock
- because he strikes the rock

8. What did Moses hold up in Numbers 21, to heal the people who had been bitten by poisonous snakes when they looked at it?

- The Ten Commandments
- A Brass Serpent
- Aaron's Rod

9. When the twelve spies were sent to Canaan, how many returned with a good report?

- Two
- Twelve
- One

10. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' What are these verse from Numbers 6 called?

- The Shema
- The Mezzuzah
- The Aaronic Blessing

Answers on page 22

GOD in the Arts

The Revd Michael Burgess begins a year-long series looking at great works of Christian music.

In this series we have looked at the psalms of the Old Testament and the songs of the New Testament, and now we enter the Middle Ages. But it is the Middle Ages through the eyes of a record producer in the last century.

In 1980 Ted Perry decided to found a new independent record company, Hyperion. If that was not financial risk enough, in the following year Hyperion issued a CD of a composer virtually unknown in the 1980s – Hildegard of Bingen. The risk paid off, and Gothic Voices' recording of the music of this remarkable medieval nun became a best seller. The CD sold in its thousands and received awards from the gramophone industry.

'A feather on the breath of God', the title of the CD, is how Hildegard described herself. 'Listen, there was a king sitting on his throne. Around him stood great and wonderfully beautiful columns ornamented with ivory, bearing the banners of the king with great honour. Then it pleased the king to raise a small feather from the ground and he commanded it to fly. The feather flew, not because of anything in itself, but because the air bore it along. Thus am I a feather on the breath of God.'

Hildegard was born in 1098, the tenth child of noble parents who lived in western Germany. Aged only eight, she was given into the care of Jutta, abbess of a monastery in the Rhineland, near Bingen. There she lived the life of an enclosed nun, her only contact with the

world outside via a grille through which food was passed.

After 30 years, Hildegard left that cell and was assigned a scribe, who wrote down her visions and meditations in two volumes. She founded two monasteries, wrote books on medicine and natural healing and the first morality play, and composed a great range of songs. She corresponded with the great and the good, and as the 'Sybil of the Rhine,' her advice was sought by popes and emperors, by kings and bishops. A truly creative life of prayer and service until her death in 1179.

The starting point for her own compositions was the plainsong of that time. Modern techniques of singing and performing often make plainsong slow and heavy. The secret to bringing plainchant alive is to sing it with relaxed attention. In many ways that is the secret of the life of prayer: that paradox of resting in the Lord while being alert to the promptings of his spirit. Hildegard realised that secret as she brought to her music, as she did to everything, an intensity of emotion and faith, developing the medieval plainchant into melodies that flowed off the page and soared into the skies.

It is all there in the chant 'O ignis spiritus' on the CD – an ecstatic song, praising the life of God's Spirit as breath and spark of flame, as a power within and armour without. As Hildegard contemplates this gift, her music moves and grows, reaching upwards to God's throne of glory in praise and adoration and outwards to those who listen.

Johann Sebastian Bach's St Matthew Passion

Bach's setting of St Matthew's account of the Passion of Christ will be performed on Saturday 16th March at 7.00pm at Saint Nicholas' (Liverpool Parish) Church, Old Courtyard, Liverpool L2 8TZ. Tickets available online at www.eventbrite.co.uk

The Numbers Quiz

Answers:

1. 36
2. In the wilderness
3. The numbering of God's people
4. 40
5. Levi
6. The ground opened up and swallowed them.
7. Because he struck the rock instead of speaking to it
8. A brass serpent
9. Two
10. The Aaronic Blessing

Colourful Clerical Characters

In recent issues of **THE WORD** we have looked through the window into the lives of some colourful clergymen: Rev. Robert Hawker ('The Mermaid of Morwenstowe'), Rev. William Webb Ellis (the alleged creator of Rugby football), Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould (author of 'Onward Christian Soldiers'), and Rev. William Spooner (the originator of Spoonerisms).

This month we feature Rev. John "Jack" Russell, a Sporting Parson, who was the Vicar of Swimbridge in Devon from 1832 to 1880. He was considered by some of his contemporaries as the finest huntsman who had ever walked on English soil.

He grew up in Devon with the ambition of being England's finest horseman. He came close to being expelled from his school when it was discovered that he was secretly keeping a pack of hounds in an outbuilding. In 1814 he went up to Exeter College, Oxford where his academic prowess was modest but his expertise in the equine and canine worlds increased. He rose early in the morning so as to enjoy a full day in the saddle.

One day, whilst riding in a hamlet named Manston, he encountered a milkman who had a terrier which had distinctive tan markings on its face and tail and an athletic physique. Russell was so impressed with this dog that he asked the milkman to sell it to him. This resulted in him developing his own signature breed of dog: the Jack Russell Terrier.

The dog's name was (and this is true!) Trump. As **THE WORD** is not a politically satirical publication we shall refrain from drawing a link between the words 'Trump' and 'barking', but our readers are free to make up their own minds.

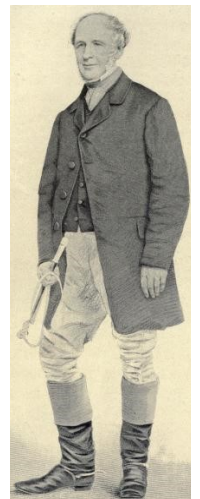
Russell was ordained in 1831 and he returned, with Trump, to the West Country and acted as his father's curate. In 1831 he secured the living of the parish of Swimbridge but he appears not to have been particularly assiduous in ministering to his parishioners. He spent much of his time riding across the countryside shouting "View Halloo" wherever he went. The Bishop of Exeter, Henry Phillpotts, berated him for spending so much time riding and so little time amongst his parishioners. Russell boldly, and perhaps incorrectly, told the Bishop that this was not any of the Bishop's business and he became something of a celebrity.

His sporting interests led him to help founding The Kennel Club in 1873; he reintroduced stag hunting on Exmoor; and he tried to encourage young men of Devon to compete in an annual wrestling match against the men of Cornwall. He worked his way through a sizeable fortune. He married a wealthy bride and spent—some might say dissipated—her assets of £50,000 (in today's values this is worth about £6 million). Perhaps because he had disposed of her money he abandoned Swimbridge on 1880 for the more lucrative parish of Black Torrington.

His memory survives in Swimbridge. There is a pub named after him which has a copy of a portrait of Trump (the original painting, which was commissioned by King Edward VII, hangs in a private collection at Sandringham).

It would be pleasing to end by observing that the breeder of this very well known species of terrier was also the originator of a clerical garment, the dog collar. But, sadly, this is not the case. Although the 'dog collar' became part of clerical dress in the mid 19th century when Russell was still alive there is nothing to suggest that he wore one. A hunting jacket, breeches and a cravat were his standard attire.

Sources: Sabine Baring-Gould "Devonshire Characters and Strange Events".
Fergus Butler-Gallie, "A Field Guide to the English Clergy".



W CROSS R D

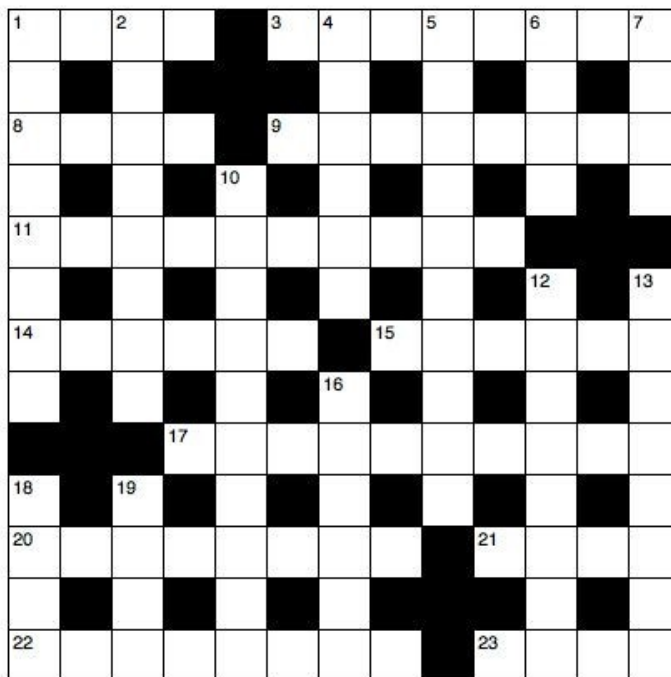
Solution below

Across

- 1 Made from the fruit of the vine, symbol of the blood of Christ (4)
 3 'You are to set an ambush behind the city. Don't go very far from it. All of you be on — — ' (Joshua 8:4) (3,5)
 8 Seep (4)
 9 Celebrated by Jesus on the night of his betrayal (Luke 22:15) (8)
 11 One of the supposed sites of Christ's burial place in Jerusalem (6,4)
 14 'A city on a hill — be hidden' (Matthew 5:14) (6)
 15 He inherited Elijah's mantle (2 Kings 2:12-13) (6)
 17 Where Jesus prayed 'Not as I will, but as you will' (Matthew 26:36, 39) (10)
 20 'Only in his home town and in his — — is a prophet without honour' (Matthew 13:57) (3,5)
 21 Sail (anag.) (4)
 22 How Jesus was punished before his crucifixion (Matthew 27:26) (8)
 23 Eye sore (4)

Down

- 1 Can't grow (anag.) (5,3)
 2 A servant girl to Peter, 'You also were with that — , Jesus' (Mark 14:67) (8)
 4 Well-being (Proverbs 3:8) (6)



- 5 Pentecostal denomination, — of God (10)
 6 One of the 'obvious' acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19, 21) (4)
 7 'I preached that they should repent and — to God' (Acts 26:20) (4)
 10 ' — — , the world will not see me any more, but you will see me' (John 14:19) (6,4)
 12 He betrayed Jesus: Judas — (Luke 6:16) (8)
 13 Jesus to Peter: ' — — of my sheep' (John 21:16) (4,4)
 16 The centurion said, 'Surely this man was — — of God' (Mark 15:39) (3,3)
 18 Baked bread (Mark 8:14) (4)
 19 'Blessing and honour, glory and power, be — Him' (Handel's Messiah) (4)

In our Book of Remembrance in March

- 3rd Winifred Hare, 2005
 5th Gladys Whipp, 1994
 7th John Hamer, 1930
 8th Elsie Leather, 2011
 9th Harry Pickering, 1985
 10th Ethel Street, 1994
 11th Doreen Pennington, 2023
 13th Doris Ashworth, 1982
 14th Isaac Bell, 1974
 15th John Crosby, 2005
 18th William Sawyer, 1979
 Arthur Short, 1961

- 25th Elizabeth Pacey, 2007
 27th Margaret Fitton, 2010
 Joan Fawbert, 2018
 29th George Hind, 1996
 30th Dorothea Wignall, 2004
 31st Margaret Pierce-Jones, 1984

If any of our readers wish to have the name of a deceased relative inscribed in the Book of Remembrance please contact Stuart Baker (01704 560518)

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1, Wine, 3, The alert, 8, Ooze, 9, Passover, 11, Garden Tomb, 14, Cannot, 15, Elisha, 17, Gethsemane, 20, Own house, 21, Lisa, 22, Flopping, 23, Style.
 DOWN: 1, Wrong act, 2, Nazarene, 4, Health, 5, Assemblies, 6, Envy, 7, Turn, 10, Before long, 12, Iscariot, 13, Take care, 16, The Son, 18, Loaf, 19, Unto.

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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 or call Shelley Lewis-Lavender on [01704 560690](tel:01704560690).

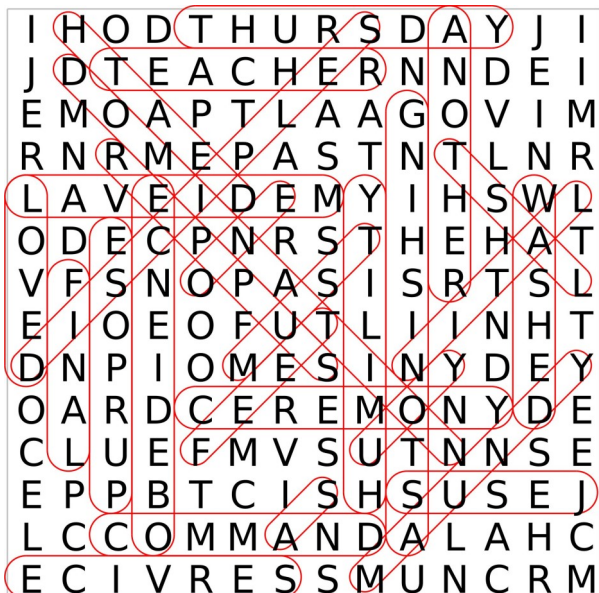


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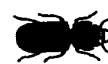
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WHAT IF...?

By Dennis Davis

Dennis continues his research into the religious wars, terror, persecution, murder, rebellion and turmoil after the Reformation. It is his aim to show what was done in the past for the religious freedom we have today. What if this had never happened? Our world would be a different place today.

Prince in Despair

The French had been planning to humble Spain and obtain the hand of Queen Elizabeth for the Duke of Alencon but the plans were dashed by the St Bartholomew's day Massacre when the plot was revealed. Elizabeth, on hearing the news, went in to mourning; she spurned with contempt the French ambassador who came to see her.

Alva now tried to get King Phillip to initiate war in the Netherlands. Mons fell and resistance in the Southern Netherlands ended when Brabant and Flanders fell. The prince went from defeat to defeat and was nearly captured when he was asleep during a surprise raid. However his Spaniel dog's barking woke him up and he managed to escape.

The town of Amerfort tried to discuss terms with Don Frederic, Alva's son, who was just as blood thirsty as his father; they handed over the keys to the city; meanwhile the city wives gave a feast for the Spaniards. As the feast ended the Church bells rang out and everyone gathered in the church when the Spaniards entered and started to shoot all present; about 100 escaped but were later captured, stripped naked, and hung upside down and left to die. 20 or so offered to pay a ransom but when it had been paid they were killed also. Only Holland and Zealand escaped these massacres. The prince, now unable to raise another army, went to Holland to share their fate with them.

This was followed by an attack on Bergen which lay at a narrow point and if captured would cut the province in two and the prince's troops would be unable to resist.

Alva's Stadtholder, Bossu, issued a proclamation that if there was any resistance every man woman and child would be exterminated in the same way as all previous towns captured. This led to steel the resolve of the defenders. They felt encouraged when a small fleet of ships that had been frozen up joined them. They dug a trench round the ships then it froze again and formed a fortress. Alva's men, as they approached the city, were astonished when they were attacked by a body of Arquebusiers on ice skates. They sped in and opened fire. Alva, in response, ordered 7000 pairs and trained his men on how to use them.

Next to face the Spanish was Harlem the battle started in August 1572 and lasted until mid 1573. The Patriots opened the flood gates, daily skirmishes caused heavy casualties and the citizens were unable to find food. The Prince sent a fleet to break the siege but was defeated. The losses were so great that Don Frederic wanted to raise the siege but Alva, his father, threatened to disown him if he did so and raise it himself. Eventually it fell with the ensuing massacres.

The Prince raised another fleet which arrived too late although he saved 200 prisoners. In Holland effigies of the Prince were burned for this failure but the Prince still kept his resolve. Alva was replaced by Don Luis Requesens, appointed as Governor and Captain General. An attempt was made to fool the Hollanders and Zeelanders by an offer of more pacific measures but they were not taken in by this offer as Requesens had preceded him.

After the battle the Spanish troops mutinied because they had not been paid for 3 years. They accepted money and other rewards at a later day when the Prince with a fleet of the Sea Beggars were approaching. A Spanish fleet put out to meet them, but were defeated. The Sea Beggars were the only equals to the Spanish troops.

Alva boasted that he had caused 18,600 inhabitants to be executed.

The Spanish view was that they could not afford this kind of victory and had to send 3 regiments of troops from Italy to make up for their losses.

The political scene was changing. There was ethnic cleansing of Protestants in France and in Flanders. Many Catholics accepted Requesens' offer to come back to Catholicism and pay the taxes. The Prince had been pushed back into the two northern states. France was against Spain and England. Spain was against France and England, England was against France and Spain and the Holy Roman Empire pulling its strings in the back ground. None of them had money to fight each other.

To be continued

God in the Sciences

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

What will March bring? Mental Health ideas for uncertain times

We may all have rather mixed feelings on reaching March this year. On the one hand, it is lovely to see the onset of Spring, but the wars in Ukraine and Israel-Gaza grind on, as does the cost-of-living crisis. We may need to find new ways to keep going, so here are some suggestions that draw on both science and Christian theology.

Getting outside

Time outdoors in a natural environment is very good for you – and you can't argue with the happy hormones produced by exercise. Attending to the details of nature can also inspire awe, which has been linked to positive mood, and increased life satisfaction. Enjoying Creation can also help us connect with God.

Looking outside

If you are truly stuck indoors, try putting bird feeders outside your window so creation comes to you. This is also an act of kindness (see below)!

Lament and praise

The Psalms are a rich resource to help us express both our grief and our thanks to God. Try reading one or two each day.

Journaling

Keep a journal of thoughts, experiences or practices you have engaged with during the day. Constructing a personal narrative or story is now recognised as a very powerful psychological and spiritual tool for building resilience. It is also a vital learning tool that we can go back to when tough times return in the future.

Acts of kindness

Helping or encouraging someone else is obviously a good thing to do in itself, but it also has a very positive effect on the giver – spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and even physically. Whichever way you look at it, finding new ways to show kindness to others can be a very effective way to help ourselves feel better too.

Gratitude

Gratitude is another natural drug – in a sense – that can help us feel better. Try keeping a grateful diary, adding a few things each day.

Laugh, sing, make music, dance

All of these activities are deeply rooted in our physical and mental makeup. You may have forgotten how great they feel, especially in times of sadness, but we can learn from children who do them very naturally.

I hope these ideas may help bring us closer to God, each other, and His creation.

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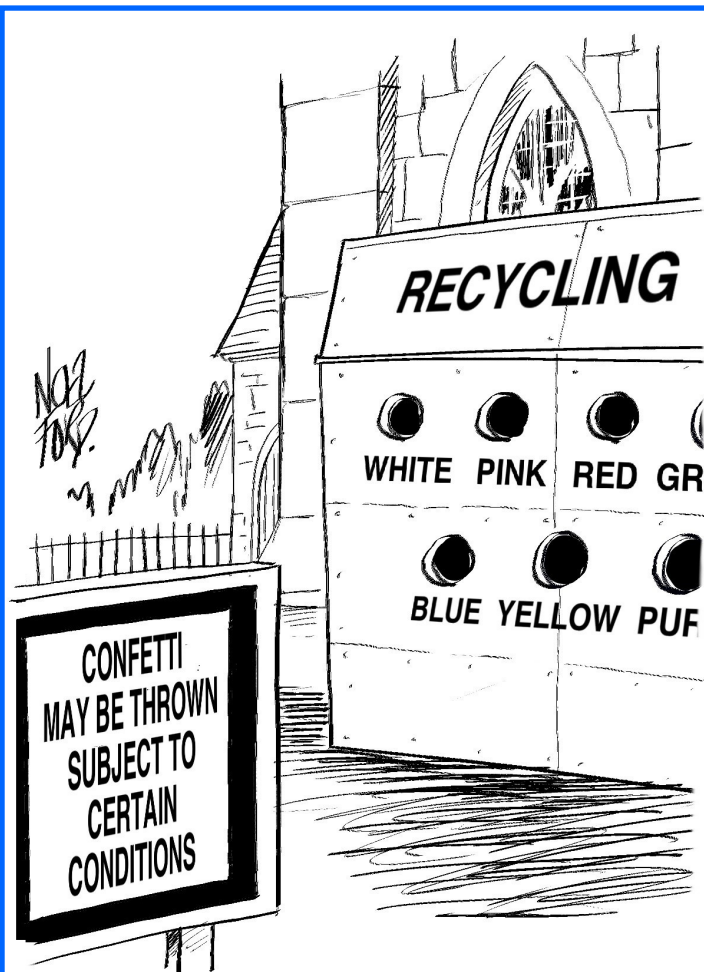
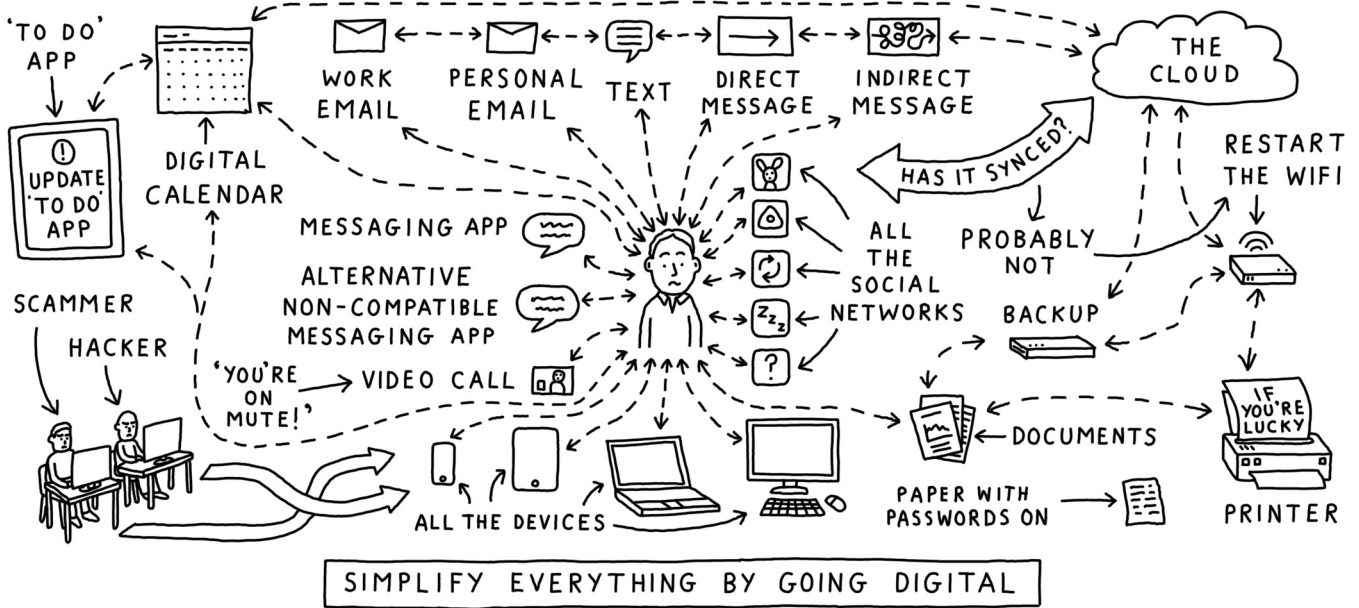
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POWER OF INFLUENCE

by John M. Shakespeare

To be subject to good influences can be instrumental in leading to positive motivation in our own behaviour which, I believe, can be significant in staying the person that we are.

Being an incorrigible optimist has helped influence my attitude in general to life. This belief, I think, is a mixture of religious and family influences. I must admit that it is difficult sometimes to be optimistic about certain circumstances, especially when they are at their most challenging. At such times a quotation from Voltaire (1694-1778), comes to the rescue: "In the best of all possible worlds, all is for the best".

I believe that the written word in both poetry and prose have influenced my thinking. Rudyard Kipling, for example, in the poem "If" expresses words of wisdom, on how we should behave in various circumstances in life. The poem "Vitaï Lampada" by Sir Henry Newbolt prompted me in times of stress to recall the words used by Newbolt to "play up, play up and play the game".

Two examples of prose that inspired me were "The Tales of King Arthur and his Knights" and "Beau Geste," a story written by P.C. Wren.

I would like to think that my schooling had some positive influences in the way that I behave towards others. In relation to bullying, for example, we were always taught not to hit boys smaller than ourselves, nor on any occasion to hit girls. I like to think that team games were important as well, because you were playing not just for yourself, but also for the rest of the team.

A respect for learning was owed to the influence of teachers, who enthusiastically believed in what they taught. Their example influenced the way that I myself taught students both at school and later at college.

Having and sharing knowledge is one of the greatest types of influence that can continuously evolve as we progress through this life.

Religion, a belief in God, Jesus Christ

and the Holy Spirit, have influenced my actions and the way I think, and still do. To quote Proverbs (Chp 2 verses 20-22): "Therefore walk in the way of good and keep to the paths of the just: For the upright will abide in the land and the innocent will remain in it, but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it". So here's hoping that I can live a worthwhile and godly existence until it is my time to expire.

Advertising is a multi-million pound business in life today and plays a significant role in influencing what we purchase. I must admit, however, that not all adverts have a clear message. Some seem to be unnecessarily obscure. What we read in newspapers or see on television can even influence the way that we vote, so perhaps they should be taken seriously.

The sincerity of a person in what they think and believe has influenced me. Even when I didn't agree with a proportion of it, the sincere belief of the person giving it influenced me enough at least to give the subject some consideration.

Charles Darwin (1848-1925), was raised as a Christian but became an agnostic with age. He believed in God and his creation of the Universe. However in his famous work "On the origin of Species" he clearly contradicted some biblical accounts.

One movement that influenced my behaviour greatly was the thirty years I spent working for the Samaritans. The Bible story of the Good Samaritan, Luke (Chp 10 verses 30-37), influenced my thinking in taking part in the movement. To help others who are in need is, I feel, a privilege that we can take an active role in pursuing.

Throughout my life I have been influenced by a belief in the freedom of spirit. To quote F. D. Roosevelt (1882-1945), who said that there are four essentials to human freedom, namely:-

- (1) freedom of speech and expression everywhere in the world.
- (2) freedom of every person to worship God in their own way.
- (3) freedom from want.
- (4) freedom from fear.

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The Identification Number every Sunday will be: 827 7997 1592

The Password every Sunday will be: 860066

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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.

Was it really that long ago?...

65 years ago, on 9th March 1959 the Barbie doll was launched at the International Toy Fair in New York City. 9th March is Barbie's official birthday.

60 years ago, on 6th March 1964 American world heavyweight boxing champion Cassius Clay was given the name Muhammad Ali, after joining the Nation of Islam.

50 years ago, on 29th March 1974 the Terracotta Army was discovered in Shaanxi, China by a group of farmers who were digging a well.

40 years ago, 5th March 1984 to March 1985 the 1984 miners' strike took place. 6000 coal miners in Yorkshire began a strike, to protest against pit closures and job losses. By 12th March the strike in Yorkshire became a national one, involving tens of thousands of miners.

30 years ago, on 12th March 1994 the first women priests in the Church of England were ordained.

25 years ago, 21st March 1999 Ernie Wise, British comedian and actor (Morecambe and Wise) died.

20 years ago, on 30th March 2004 Alistair Cooke, British-born American journalist and broadcaster died. Known for his insightful broadcasts on American culture, in *Letter from America*.

10 years ago, on 18th March 2014 Russia annexed Crimea following a controversial referendum in which its citizens voted to secede from Ukraine. Many of those loyal to Ukraine boycotted the referendum.

Also 10 years ago, on 29th March 2014 the first same-sex marriages in England and Wales took place.

Church Hall Users (Note: with the exception of the Friday Film Nights the activities listed below are NOT run by St John's Church. They are run by independent groups who use our hall). Contact details are provided in case readers wish to enquire about or join these groups.

Monday

7.00pm to 8.00pm **Zumba@Fitness**

A fun and friendly class and a great workout.

No dance experience needed. All ages and all fitness levels welcome

Contact: Kay Bennett on 07716312909

Tuesday

4.30pm – 5.30pm **Kiwi Sports Coaching**

Tag Rugby class for boys and girls aged 5-7

School holiday classes sometimes available

Contact: shanehuttonnz@gmail.com

7.30pm – 9.00pm **Connected Voices Choir**

We are a non-audition choir for adults, singing a range of uplifting music – from pop and rock to soul and funk. We are open to anyone who loves singing, whether they think they can sing or not!

Contact: info@connectedvoices.co.uk or for more information visit the website

www.connectedvoices.co.uk

Wednesday

Morning, monthly class. **All Aglow Weaning Workshop**

Start your baby on solid food with confidence with an interactive, relaxed and informal class. Suitable for babies 4-10 months.

Contact: Jennifer@allaglow.co.uk

10.30 – 12 noon

2nd Wednesday of the month only. **Elderberries Gardening Club**

A social gardening club, where speakers are invited to talk on various topics, and visits and social events throughout the year.

Contact: Shelley Lewis Lavender on 01704 560690 or via email:

elderberriesgardening@gmail.com

7pm – 8pm **Functional Yoga**

Exploring joint mobilisation, functional movement and relaxation - suitable for beginners.

Contact Lindsay: 07747038613 or email lindsay@wobblytreeyoga.com

Thursday

6.00-9.00pm: **St John's Rainbows (6.00-7.00pm) St John's Brownies (6.00-7.15pm) and Girl Guides (7.15-9.00pm).**

Contact: Janette Law 01704 565951

Friday

6.30-9.30pm Once per month **St John's Film Nights**

A chance to see some great modern films. Tea, coffee and homemade cake available.

Contact: Christine Baker 01704 560518

Easter Prayer 2024 by Daphne Kitching

Almighty God,
You hold all things in Your hands. You make sense of everything!

So often we only see where we are now, what we feel now, in this moment – but You know the end from the beginning.

In all our troubles, our assurance is in Your sovereignty, in Your mighty act of salvation.

Thank you that, just as after winter comes spring and after night comes morning, so, most gloriously, after death on Good Friday, comes resurrection on Easter Day!

Christ is Risen – and we can know, by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, that He is risen indeed!

We can know, in our real and every-day lives, where our help comes from. Hallelujah! Thank you, living Lord, In Jesus name. Amen.



★HAPPY★ BIRTHDAY!

Emily Potts on 4th March
Phoebe Sullivan on 8th March
Doreen Morris on 13th March
Alex Galbraith on 15th March
Mary Ball on 18th March
Irene Wray on 22nd March
Richard Rothwell on 26th March

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

The Last Laughs

St Patrick's Day groaners

Why can't you borrow money from a leprechaun?

Because they're always a little short.

How can you tell if an Irishman is having a good time?

He's Dublin over with laughter!

What would you get if you crossed Christmas with St. Patrick's Day?

St O'Claus!



And with Crufts this month... How many dogs does it take to change a light bulb?

Border Collie: Just one. Not only that, but I'll replace any wiring that's not up to standard.

Golden Retriever: The sun is shining. The day is young. And you're inside worrying about a burned-out light bulb?

Dachshund: I can't reach the stupid lamp!

Rottweiler: Go Ahead! Make me!

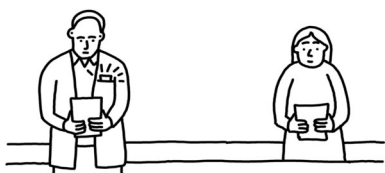
Greyhound: It isn't moving. Who cares?

Old English Sheep Dog: Light bulb? Light bulb? That thing I just ate was a light bulb?

MOBILE PHONES

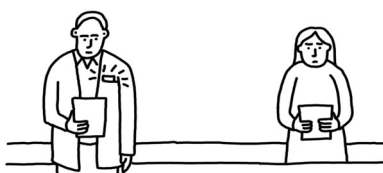
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