



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
Vicar: Rev. Jennie Hardy**

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. 264

DECEMBER 2024

ST. JOHN'S PARISH CHURCH

God Centred, Relationship Driven and Life Transforming



As Christmas approaches we shall have a lot to do at St John's. On Sunday 1st December we shall be erecting the boards which will support the trees for our annual Christmas Tree Festival and we look forward to the trees being delivered on Wednesday 4th December. Dressing of the trees will take place on Thursday in readiness for the opening of the Festival on Friday 6th at 6.00pm. This has been an annual event for many years and is an excellent opportunity to welcome visitors, friends, relatives and local residents into our church. Let's all support this event and the Christmas Fair which Sylvia Kent works so hard to organise each year.

Serving at St John's

Last Sunday, 24th November, our congregation was invited to consider how they might help to undertake the many jobs and activities which are a necessary part of maintaining our church and its fellowship. The response was magnificent and many members of our congregation accepted the invitation and offered to help in many ways. To all who offered: **THANK YOU!**

The meaning of Christmas

Amidst all the busyness and excitement in preparing for Christmas we must not lose sight of its meaning and significance. God came to the earth in human form to reveal His glory and to save mankind from sin. Do come, if you can, to our Carol Service on Christmas Eve at 6pm when we shall hear nine lessons from the Bible which explain the reason for and the mystery of Christmas.



The editor wishes all of our readers, advertisers and contributors a joyful and peaceful Christmas and we hope that you will continue to read **THE WORD** in 2025.

**FOR ALL ENQUIRIES TO OR ABOUT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH PLEASE CONTACT US
BY EMAIL info@stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk OR PHONE THE VICAR: 07872 400718**



Tidings of comfort and joy, **WORD** readers!

I hope, as Advent is upon us and Christmas fast approaches, that you know both God's comfort and His joy. At times, for various reasons it can be difficult to join in with the joyfulness of this season. Christmas is not a happy time for a lot of people.

In my word to you in this issue of **THE WORD** the message I feel that the Lord has put on my heart to share with those who feel less joyful this Christmas is that He sees you, He is with you and He will never leave you.

It's easy for us, even us church folk, to lose sight of the baby Jesus amid the chaos of Christmas Fairs, festivals, Nativities, Christmas shopping and so on during December. But as followers of The Word, the Son of God, this season of waiting and preparation should not be overcome with the temporariness of the decorations we hang.

In the Christian calendar, Christmas is a season, much like the season of Lent, when we have the opportunity to take time to refocus our faith, where, amidst whatever your Christmas day preparations look like, you take time to prepare your heart for Jesus. If we're not intentional about this, it can be easily missed.

At St John's, during the Advent and Christmas season in our Sunday talks we will be looking at Christmas through the lens of the "Characters of Christmas" appreciating what we can learn from the characters who take us through the Christmas story in the Bible.

However, during our Carol service, "Nine Lessons" we will also be looking at the big story of God's amazing plan to send Jesus in to the world, for us. Let's have a look at a summary of this:

- 1st Genesis 3:8-15 - God tells sinful Adam that he has lost the life of paradise and that his seed will bruise the serpent's head.
- 2nd Genesis 22:15-18 - God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall all the nations of the Earth be blessed.
- 3rd Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 - The prophet foretells the coming of the Messiah.
- 4th Isaiah 22:1-3a, 4a, 6-9 - The peace that Christ will bring is foreshown.
- 5th Luke 1:26-35,38 - The angel Gabriel salutes the blessed virgin Mary.
- 6th Luke 2:1, 3-7 - Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.
- 7th Luke 2:8-16 - The shepherds go to the manger.
- 8th Matthew 2:1-12 - The wise men led by a star to Jesus.
- 9th John 1:1-14 - John unfolds the mystery of the incarnation.

For those pressed for time – the last reference to John's gospel shares the big story succinctly. The point is that the Christmas story is true and it was not something that God just desperately brought to pass at one point in history, it's that God had a plan.

God had a plan and purpose for numerous seemingly insignificant events that happened up until the birth of Jesus, God incarnate. He had a plan for the years Jesus was on the Earth and all that He accomplished in that short space of time. He had a plan for after the

ascendance of Jesus, for the Church to grow, for people to continue to follow God through His revelation of Himself through Jesus.

God always has a plan and purpose, for even the most seemingly insignificant occurrences in life many of which were joyless or even painful at the time.

At this time of year, watching others have joy and merriness can leave some feeling sad that they are not 'feeling' the festivities. We know that this Christmas many in our community are mourning.

From God's Big Story, we can glean hope that each season is temporary, for every season of mourning there also comes great joy. For the senseless and painful experiences, there remains hope.

When we focus on the season of Advent and Christmas in its true spirit, it is one of waiting. Until Christmas day the joy has not come. We are in a time of waiting. For the Characters of Christmas this season involved confusion, fear and faith.

During our waiting period for Jesus to return as the Bible promises, not as a newborn baby but as a victorious Saviour, while we live through stormy and confusing life events, when we will all, at one time or another, experience troubles and fear, we can look back over God's Big Story that we are all a part of knowing that there is hope for the future in our faith and in the hope of the eternal life and vision of Heaven promised to all of God's faithful people. For those who continue to feature in God's Big Story, there is still work to be done!

Howard Thurman reminds of this in his poem, 'When the song of the angels is stilled:'

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among the people,
To make music in the heart.*

Not only is God aware of you and with you, He also has a plan and purpose for you to feature in His Big Story as Thurman reminds us. So, no matter how you feel at this time of year, may it be a time of waiting, of preparation to welcome Jesus, the Saviour of the World, into your heart and to accept His invitation to find, heal, feed, release, rebuild, to bring and to make.

You have a purpose. You were always a part of God's plan and you have a role as a Character in the Big Story of God.

So be blessed in this season, whatever your circumstances right now in the comfort that the God of the universe loves you so much, that He planned for you to be here, for such a time as this!

Have a peaceful Advent and Christmas.
Love, Jennie xx

WHO'S WHO AT ST. JOHN'S

| | |
|---|--|
| Vicar: | Rev. Jennie Hardy (07872 400718) |
| Priest (retired): | Rev. Roy Doran (572387) |
| Reader: | Mrs. Christine Baker (560518) |
| Churchwarden: | Clive Morris (564206) |
| PCC Treasurer: | Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071) |
| PCC Secretary: | Vacant |
| Parish Hall Secretary: | Mrs. Jean Morris (564206) |
| Electoral Roll Officer: | Stuart Harris (563789) |
| Deanery Synod Reps: | Clive Morris (564206) Stuart Baker (560518) |
| Safeguarding and Recruitment Officer | Stuart Baker (560518) |

| | |
|--|---|
| Transport Officer: | Mrs. Jean Morris (564206) |
| Church of England Children's Society: | Mrs. Sylvia Kent (564071) |
| Mothers' Union: | Mrs. Linda Caton (564737) |
| Girl Guides | Mrs. Janette Law (565951) |
| St. John's Brownies: | Mrs. Helen Jones and |
| Brownie Guiders: | Mrs. Lesley Scott |
| St. John's Rainbows: | Mrs. Lesley Scott |
| Church Flowers: | Mrs. Cath Whiteside (07732 993025) |
| Magazine Editor: | Stuart Baker (560518) |
| Magazine Printer: | Mrs. Christine Baker (560518) |
| Buildings Inspector: | David Halsall (07790 822343) |
| Eco Champions: | Mrs. Elizabeth Rothwell and Duncan Rothwell (564192) |



Pray
Together

Thursday @ 7.30pm

on Zoom

Meeting ID: 83550743780

Passcode:

7ehHEK

The prayer meetings are on the **1st and 3rd Thursdays each month** and last half an hour.

This month they will be on **5th and 19th December**.

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

Do join us if you can. See page 34 for details about logging in on zoom by computer or by telephone.



*We don't sing carols no more...
you 'ave to listen to 'em off me iPod!*



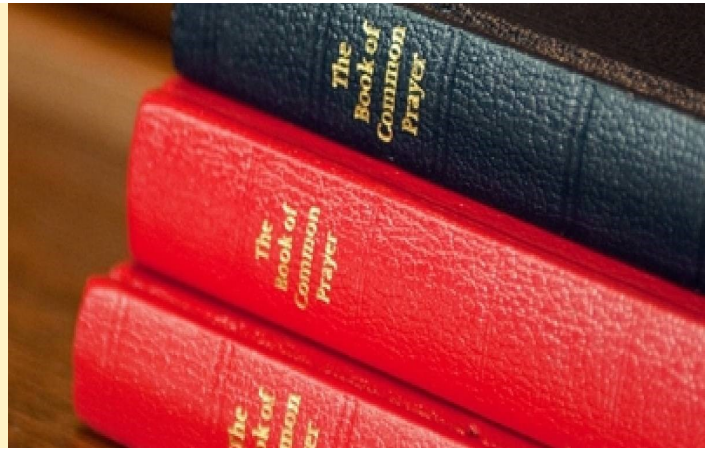
"I'm sorry Michael – even if you HAVE changed your ring-tone to 'Away In-A-Manger', it's still ALL mobiles OFF!"

WHAT'S ON AT ST JOHN'S ON WEDNESDAY 18TH OF DECEMBER

MIDWEEK COMMUNION SERVICE

There will be a Midweek Communion service (Book of Common Prayer) at 10.30am in church on [Wednesday 18th December](#).


NO MIDWEEK COMMUNION ON 4TH DECEMBER BECAUSE WE SHALL BE ERECTING THE CHRISTMAS TREES




WHAT'S ON AT ST JOHN'S ON WEDNESDAY 11TH OF DECEMBER (NO BIBLE STUDY OR GROWTH GROUP ON 25TH DECEMBER)

**BIBLE STUDY LED BY
REV. ROY AT 2.00PM**

**GROWTH GROUP LED BY
REV. JENNIE AT 7.30PM**

 2nd & 4th Wednesdays
2pm



**God's
Word**

STUDY
GROUP

@ the small hall, St John's
Church PR8 4JP
revroydoran@btinternet.com

 2nd & 4th Wednesdays
7.30pm



Growth

HOME
GROUP

@ the vicarage - 17 Kirkstall
Road PR8 4RA
food. fellowship. fun.
revjenniferhardy@gmail.com

ST JOHN'S ROAD, BIRKDALE, SOUTHPORT, PR8 4JP

*St John's Church,
Birkdale*

ST John's
Birkdale

DRIVEN BY JESUS

Christmas

Tree

Friday 6 December

6pm-9pm

Saturday 7 December

10am -3pm

**Switch On
Friday 6pm
All Welcome**

Festival &

Fair

VISIT FATHER
CHRISTMAS

ON SATURDAY!

ALL DAY CAFE

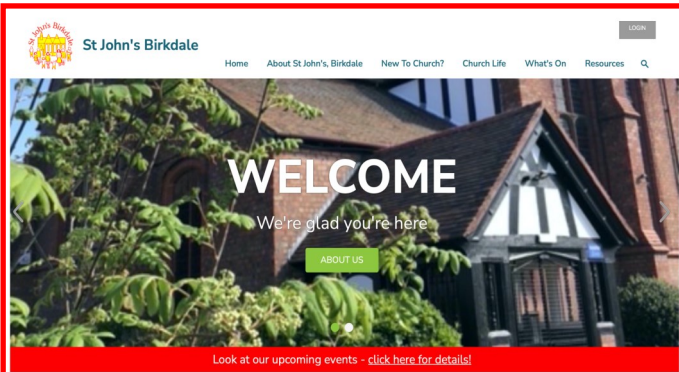
Christmas Stalls

***Cakes *Tombola *Raffle**

Children's activities

**Free
Entry**

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

- 21 June
- 26 July
- 13 September
- 4 October
- 8 November
- 20 December

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



| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Friday 26 January @ 7pm | Burns Night Supper |
| Friday 23 February @ 7pm | Late, Late Pancake Party |
| Friday 22 March @ 7pm | Andy Dean's Quiz Night |
| Friday 19 April @ 7pm | Italian Food Night |
| Friday 17 May @ 6.30pm | Car Treasure Hunt |
| Saturday 15 June @ 11-2pm | Summer Fair & Afternoon Tea |
| Saturday 20 July @ 2pm | Strawberry Tea |
| Friday 20 September @ 7pm | Harvest Supper |
| Friday 18 October @ 7pm | Music 'in the' Hall |
| Saturday 16 November @ 7pm | Barn Dance and Bangers |
| Friday 6 December 6-9pm | Christmas Tree Festival and |
| Saturday 7 December 10-3pm | Christmas Fair |

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:
13th DECEMBER**

WHAT'S ON AT ST JOHN'S DATES FOR YOUR DIARY IN 2025



Upcoming Events

JAN
24
7PM
"Cheese, Wine & Quizzes"

FEB
22
7PM
*"Greek Night"
with Abba & Dancing*

MAR
15
7PM
*"Games Night"
classics with snacks*

APR
18
7PM
"Good Friday Film & Fish Supper"

MAY
24
7PM
*"Indian Night"
Food & Activities*

JUNE
13-15
10AM - 3PM
"Summer Fair & Flower Festival"



Worship on the
First Sunday of
Advent

SUNDAY 1st DECEMBER
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 First Sunday of Advent

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

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

**Characters of Christmas:
Zechariah**

The Text: Luke 1: 5-25

5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.
6 And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.
7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.
8 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty,
9 according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.
10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.
11 And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.
12 And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.
13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.
14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,
15 for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.
16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,
17 and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."
18 And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."
19 And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.
20 And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."
21 And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple.
22 And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute.
23 And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.
24 After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying,
25 "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."



Erecting Christmas Trees

There will not be a Midweek Communion today. Please come and help if you can. Bring stout gloves.

**WEDNESDAY
4TH DECEMBER
9.00am**

IN CHURCH
Tea, coffee and biscuits will be served

**Worship on the Second
Sunday of Advent**

**SUNDAY 8th DECEMBER
10.30am service IN CHURCH and
via zoom & phone**

Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent:

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness we are grievously hindered in running the race that is set before us, your bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honour and glory, now and for ever.

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

**Characters of Christmas:
Mary**

The Text: Luke 1: 26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,
27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!"

29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.

31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,

33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

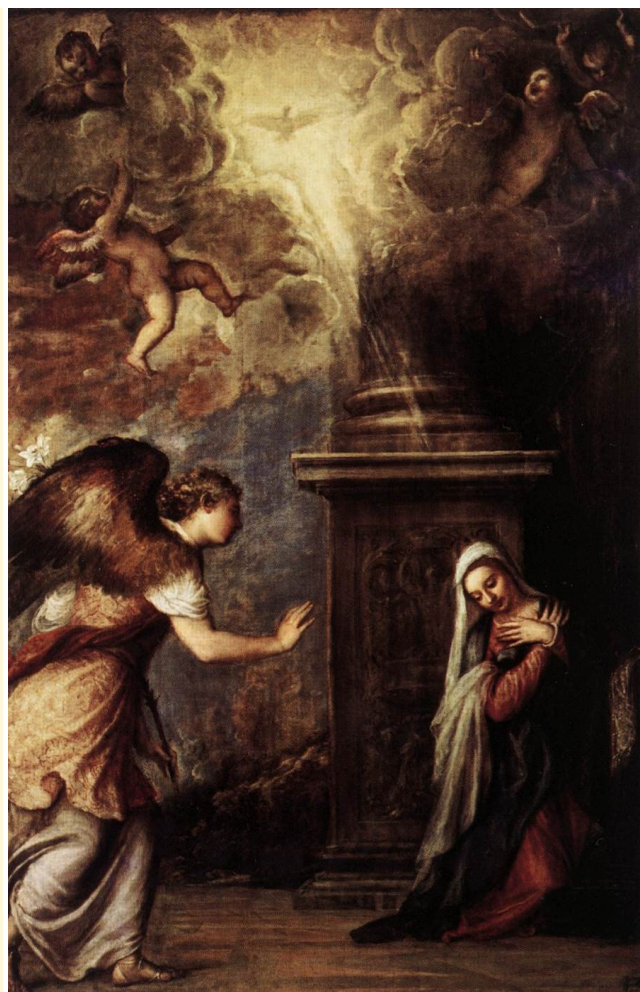
34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.

37 For nothing will be impossible with God."

38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.



*The Anunciation
by Titian
(circa 1557)*

**Morning Worship on the
Third Sunday of Advent**

SUNDAY 15th DECEMBER

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

Collect for the Third Sunday of Advent

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

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

**Characters of Christmas:
Joseph**

The Text: Matthew 1: 18-23

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"

**Evening Worship:
Christingle Service**



SUNDAY 15th DECEMBER

**6.00pm service IN CHURCH and via
zoom & phone**

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

**The Star:
A Great Light**

The Text: Matthew 2: 1-12

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem,

2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;

4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

6 "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him."

9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

11 And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Midweek Book of
Common Prayer
Holy Communion



WEDNESDAY
18th DECEMBER
10.30am service
IN CHURCH

Morning Worship on the
fourth Sunday of Advent

SUNDAY 22nd DECEMBER
10.30am service IN CHURCH and via
zoom & phone

Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

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

**Characters of Christmas
The Shepherds**

The Text: Luke 2: 8-16

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.



TUESDAY 24th DECEMBER
6.00pm service IN CHURCH and via
zoom & phone

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

**The 'Big Story'
The Gospel Message**

The Texts: Nine Lessons

Genesis 3: 8-15

Genesis 22: 15-18

Isaiah 9: 2 & 6-7

Isaiah 22: 1-3a, 4a & 6-9

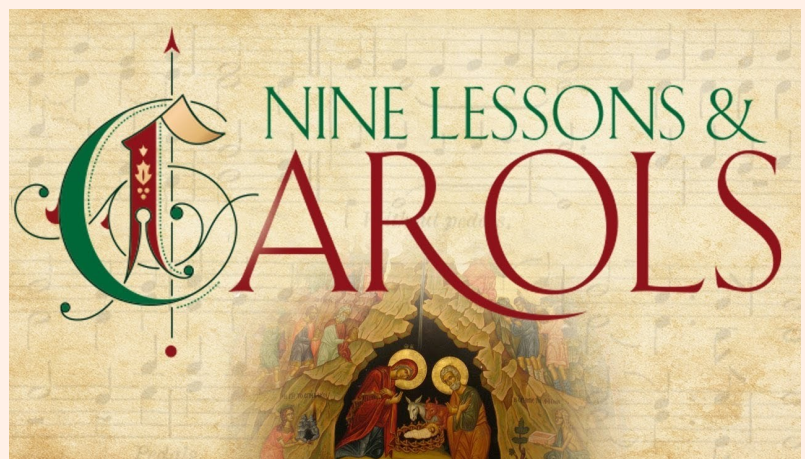
Luke 1: 26-35 & 38

Luke 2: 1 & 3-7

Luke 2: 8-18

Matthew 2: 1-12

John 1: 1-14



Christmas Day

Family Service

WEDNESDAY 25th DECEMBER

**10.00am service IN CHURCH
and via zoom & phone**

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

**Characters of Christmas:
Baby Jesus!**

The Texts:

Isaiah 9: 6

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Luke 2: 1-7

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

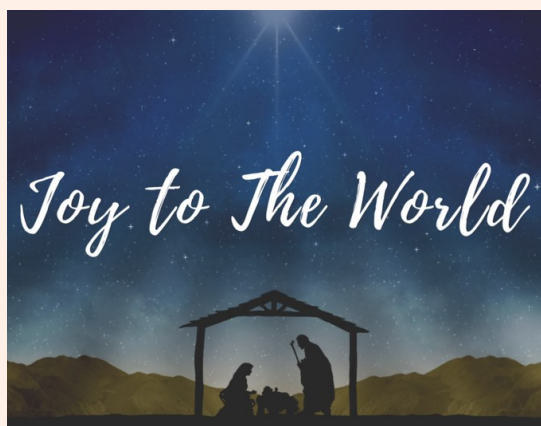
3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,

5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.



**Worship on the First Sunday
of Christmas**

SUNDAY 29th DECEMBER

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

JOINT SERVICE WITH ST JAMES', ST PETER'S & LRMC

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

**Characters of Christmas:
Zechariah's Song**

The Text: Luke 1: 67-79

67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people

69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,

70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;

72 to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,

73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us

74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,

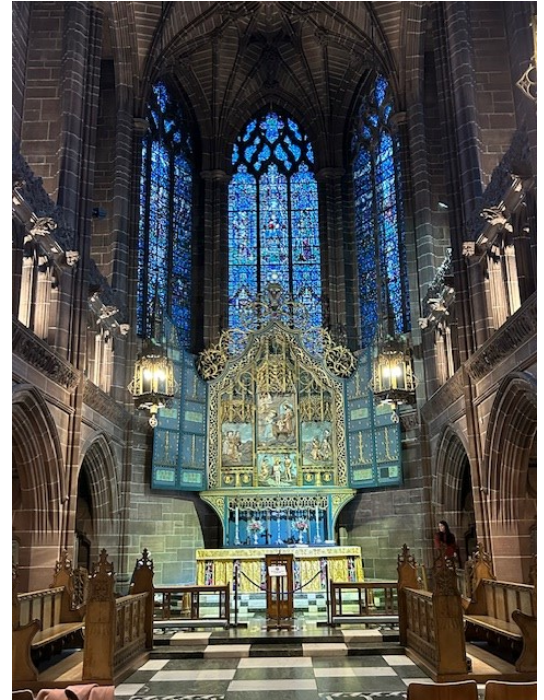
78 because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high

79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Confirmations at Liverpool Cathedral

On Saturday 9th November three members of our congregation at St John's (Martin, Colin, and Sara) and one from St James' (Gemma) were confirmed in their faith by The Rt Revd Dr John Perumbalath, Bishop of Liverpool, in the magnificent Lady Chapel at Liverpool Cathedral. The Bishop's sermon was based upon Mark's Gospel account of Jesus calling four fishermen, Simon, Andrew, James and John, to follow Him and how they immediately left their nets and followed Him.

The oldest part of the Cathedral, the Lady Chapel has some of the most beautiful stained glass in the Cathedral.



The confirmees were joined by several members of our church who went to support them on this special day, and after the service they and Rev Jennie enjoyed a meal in a Greek restaurant in Liverpool's Duke Street.

Our readers might be interested to learn that in December there will be a wide range of events at Liverpool Cathedral ranging from spectacular light shows ("The Light Before Christmas Starlight") to Carol Services, a War Memorial Tour, and a concert performance by tenor Russell Watson. There is a great programme of events to choose from.

For those with access to the internet you can see the whole programme by visiting the cathedral's website at: www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

Safeguarding in the Church of England

In the light of the recent shocking disclosures about the failure some of the highest figures in the Church of England to act in a timely way upon their knowledge of appalling sexual and physical abuse committed by a perpetrator over many years, it has never before been more important for everyone who visits our church or who has any contact with it to know and be confident that the Church of England as a whole, and this church in particular, take very seriously their duties to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

The Liverpool Diocese will report to the Bishops' Council and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel with recommendations for action to improve the church's observation and enforcement of its safeguarding policies. There is no point in having a policy if it is not adhered to.

Having a Safeguarding policy must never be merely a box-ticking exercise.

Here at St John's we have a Safeguarding Policy and a Safeguarding Officer who is answerable in the first place to our PCC all of whose members have undertaken safeguarding training and have undergone DBS checks. We are committed to, and we pray for, a safe church.

Loving God,
we pray that this church may be a place of
welcome, security and compassion.
Keep us watchful yet caring,
trusting yet ready to question,
that all who worship here may do so in safety and
in the knowledge of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



**CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL
AND CHRISTMAS FAIR
6TH & 7TH DECEMBER 2024**

I can't believe that the Christmas Fair will soon be upon us! This year seems to have flown.

The team are busy working hard in preparation to make this a huge success, but as always, it is not possible without your help. If you are able to donate any items or gifts for any of the stalls it would be much appreciated.

We will have various stalls including home-made cakes, tombola, bottle stall, raffle hamper, good quality book stall; children's crafts; Christmas plant stall; a selection of fragranced hand-made candles and wax melts, either for your Christmas table or as an ideal gift. As an added bonus we are also pleased to welcome four new stalls, firstly, assorted hand made crafts, secondly, Rituals luxury skin care, thirdly, Christmas gifts and lastly, a selection of resin and crochet items so there's plenty to choose from when you are looking for that ideal Christmas present!

Boxes are available at the back of church for your contributions; however, if you join our services via zoom or are unable to come to church for any reason, please telephone me on 564071 and I shall be happy to collect your gifts from you. ***Please note that the last day for these gifts to be delivered to the church will be Sunday 1st December.***

Lastly, don't forget you will also be able to visit our cafe with it's home-made meals, sandwiches and cakes, tea and coffee, or stop for a delicious mince pie with mulled punch (non-alcoholic!) so you won't even have to worry about driving.

Please support our stalls with whatever you are able to provide and let us show Rev Jennie what a fantastic event our Christmas Tree Festival really is!!

Do remember to put the dates in your diary and come along and support us with as many family, friends and neighbours as possible.

Many thanks, Sylvia Kent

Editor's Note: the Christmas Trees will be delivered on Wednesday 4th December. They will have to be erected on the pew-top boards as in previous years.

Dates for your diary:

Sunday 1st December (shortly after the end of the 10.30am Communion Service): putting the boards on the pew-tops.

Wednesday 4th December (morning): erecting the trees.

THESE JOBS BOTH REQUIRE MANY HANDS: PLEASE BE WILLING TO COME AND HELP. (And to protect your hands, bring a pair of gardening gloves for use when moving the boards and the trees!)

Teaching the Lord's Prayer across the north of England

The Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell plans to teach the Lord's Prayer across the North of England throughout 2025, a priority of his vision for Faith in the North.

Archbishop Stephen is to visit dioceses in the Northern Province of the C of E where he will be sharing the relevance of the Lord's Prayer to our world today, encouraging people to pray and live by this, as part of their missionary discipleship.

Archbishop Stephen is encouraging prayer, storytelling and church planting inspired by the Northern Saints such as Hild, Cuthbert, Bede and Paulinus. The aim is to foster deeper connections with the Christian faith across the north and renew the Church's missionary purpose to share God's love with all.

Archbishop Stephen said "In less than 70 words, Jesus gives us a prayer to learn by heart and a prayer that gets inside our hearts, shaping the way we live. The Lord's Prayer surely is the best place to start. It is said in just about every church service, from the coronation of the King to the christening of a child. It's a challenging prayer and when we say this prayer together, we become part of God's movement of change, of bringing God's heaven to earth. It teaches us how to pray. But it also teaches us how to live".

Current Dates of the Lord's Prayer Tour 2025 include

Monday 10th March – Chester Cathedral

Monday 17th March – Liverpool Cathedral

Tuesday 1st April – Manchester Cathedral

Friday 10th October – Blackburn Cathedral

To learn more about Faith in the North visit www.faithinthenorth.org

Faith in the North is a movement of prayer and strategic resourcing which aims to help recapture the missional energy and commitment to prayer of the Anglo Saxon saints leading towards 2027, with the celebration of the 1400th anniversary of the establishment of the Church of Saint Peter in York and baptism of King Edwin by Paulinus in 627.

SOUTHPORT ORCHESTRA

SATURDAY 30 NOVEMBER

A FEW TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR

Elgar
Three Bavarian Dances, Opus 27

Brahms
Violin Concerto in D major, Opus 77

Dvorak
Symphony No.9 "From The New World," Opus 95

Tickets available now at southportorchestra.co.uk
email admin@southportorchestra.co.uk or call 07795 862245 or buy on the door

SCAN ME

How the celebration of Christmas began

It was 1,750 years ago, on 25th December 274, that the Roman Emperor Aurelian founded and launched the cult of Sol Invictus as an official religion. He erected a temple and declared 25th December a national holiday, to be known as the Feast of the Unconquered Sun. In 336, after the conversion of the emperor Constantine, the Church in Rome began to celebrate Christmas on 25th December. Aurelian, who was born in Moesia – the south-eastern Balkans – rose from modest beginnings to become a strong and successful Emperor at one of the most difficult times in Roman history. His idea in promoting Sol Invictus as the main divinity of the Empire was to try to give everyone a god to believe in without betraying their own gods. However, when Constantine the Great, who was born during Aurelian's reign, became Emperor in 306 and converted to Christianity, it was the beginning of the end for Sol Invictus – and the start of the dominance of Christianity in the Roman Empire. The date of 25th December was taken over and celebrated as the birthday of Jesus – and has been ever since, though scholars agree that this is an impossible date because flocks of sheep would not have been out in the fields in the dead of winter, and therefore shepherds would not have been out either. It is a happy irony that in English, Christmas can be described accurately as the Feast of the Unconquered Son!

St John's Remembrance Sunday Service

On Sunday 10th November our annual service of Remembrance was held at St John's. Our Guides, Rainbows and Brownies attended in good number and there was a large congregation of 74 adults and 21 children. A few moments before 11.00am two of our Brownies escorted the wreath-bearers, Dennis Davis and George Ball, to the War Memorial where the wreath was laid. The names of the Men of Birkdale who died in the two World Wars and whose names are engraved on the Memorial were read by the Guides and the congregation observed two minutes of silence after which the Last Post was sounded. Members of the Brownies drew some attractive poppy wreaths, some of which we include here, and members of the congregation were invited to lay memorial poppies on a red sheet in the chancel.



Dennis Davis and Rev. Hardy after the conclusion of the service

What's the Big Idea? – An Introduction to the Gospel of John

By Canon Paul Hardingham

'John's Gospel is like a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. It is for the beginner in the faith and for the mature Christian.' (Leon Morris).

The Apostle John is usually credited with the authorship of this Gospel, writing in Ephesus at the end of the First Century. His purpose is *'that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.'* (20:31). Throughout he stresses the deity of Christ and presents Jesus as the Son of God.

In the prologue (1:1-14) Jesus is presented as the pre-existent and incarnate Word of God revealed by the Father. It also highlights how He has come as light into the world, so that those who believe in Him will not remain in darkness (cf [12:46](#)).

The heart of John's narrative contains 7 signs or miracles, which demonstrate who Jesus is and demonstrating His transforming power over creation and people: turning water into wine (2:1-11); healing the royal official's son (4:46-54); healing the paralytic (5:1-18); feeding the 5000 (6:1-14); walking on the water (6:16-21); healing of the man born blind (9:1-41) and raising Lazarus (11:1-44).

After these signs, the story moves into the upper room discourses followed by the story of His death and resurrection. The whole Gospel is a revelation of the glory of God's only Son, who comes to reveal the Father and then returns in glory to the Father.

It can be well summed up in the famous verse: *'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.'* (John 3:16).

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St John's Prayers for those in need

St John's is a church that believes in the power of prayer and we are eager to include as many people who currently need prayer in our twice monthly prayer meetings and on the screen on a Sunday.

We aim to keep the prayer list current and to receive regular updates on people who need longer term prayer so that we can pray meaningfully at the zoom prayer meeting.

Names will be on the list for a month at a time, so the lists will be refreshed at the beginning of each calendar month.

If you would like to be on the list for December **please let Rev. Jennie know** with a current update of why you would like prayer so that we can use that information on a Thursday. If you would like to put someone else on the list, provided you have asked their permission, then pass their name, and any other information on why they would like prayer, to Jennie.

There are many ways to get this information to her: see page 3 for her telephone number or through the church WhatsApp group. If at the end of the month, you, or the person

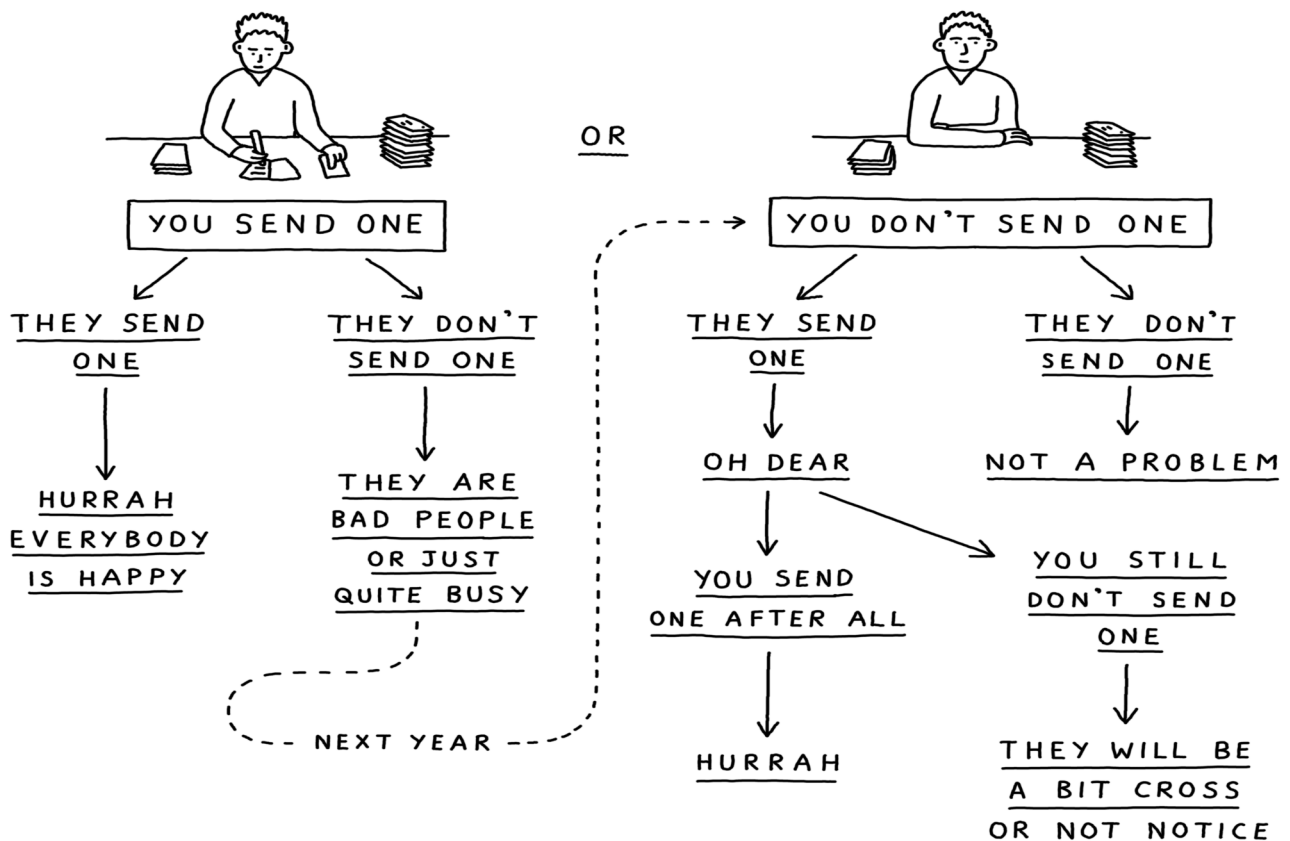


you have put on the list, wish to remain on the list just let Jennie know. If there is need then names can remain on the list for as long as necessary, we just want to keep it current and meaningful. People with long term conditions may feel that their conditions are being managed, treatments have been successful, or pain controlled but then may have a change later on and need to come back onto the list.

Names will no longer be automatically carried forward into the next calendar month.

If you want to discuss anything about this change please contact Jennie.

CHRISTMAS CARDS





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

On Why Carol Services Are So Dangerous

The Rectory,
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

So, you are excited about being invited to plan your first Carol Service. The dangers involved are only slightly less than being invited to judge the best cake made by the Ladies' Group. You seem to have no idea of the lifelong offence you will inevitably cause. In decades to come when you will either be a seasoned old clergyman – or more likely a double glazing salesman – you will be remembered as “the Curate who offended Mrs Smith.”

First, you have to decide which groups are going to be represented to give the readings. If the Brownies were asked last year, then it has to be the Cubs this time. But don't forget that every third year, the Boys' Brigade must be asked, or they will take their revenge and get their flag tangled in the nave chandelier come Remembrance Sunday. If someone represents the choir, then over a four year period, all four voice parts must be called on – and if the organist isn't asked on the fifth year, then all hymns subsequently will be played at double speed and with one verse missing.

Should one person have been invited to read for two successive years, then their annual appearance thereafter will be taken as an inalienable right for the rest of their lifetime – and probably longer than that. To drop them may well invoke legal proceedings.

Then there is the batting order to be considered. Someone from the church council will take it as a deliberate slight if they are placed lower in the order than a representative of the Men's Fellowship and no self-respecting bell ringer would voluntarily follow a brass cleaner.

If you do not specify where they should read from and how the readings should end, then a form of ecclesiastical inflation will happen. If the first reader speaks from the chancel step, the next one will go to the lectern; after the sanctuary and pulpit have been utilised, the final reader will probably ask you to move so he can take your place.

The variations on “Here endeth”, “This is the Word of the Lord”, and “Thanks be to God”, are endless and will increase in length as the Service progresses. The final reader will probably end with a lengthy exegesis on what he thinks the passage means, correcting whatever you said in your sermon.

I once made the mistake of not telling all readers which Bible translation to use. One, an Old Testament expert, therefore decided to read in Hebrew. Not to be outdone, another read her Gospel passage in Greek – apologising beforehand that it may not be a perfect rendering, as she was spontaneously translating it from the English. And some say Christians are not competitive.

You have two alternatives: either repeat last year's Service without any alteration, saying that it could not be improved, or design your own – and then take Christmas off.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

Do you want to rent a space?

CHURCH & HALL AVAILABLE TO RENT FOR CONCERTS, PARTIES, MEETINGS...

ST JOHN'S CHURCH BIRKDALE



Large Hall

Are you looking to hire a space for a regular group activity or for a family celebration such as a children's birthday party? Our halls are ideal.

We have both a large hall and a small meeting room available for hire for an hourly charge. A professional standard kitchen is also available.

If you would like to make a booking for any of our rooms in the church hall please contact Jean Morris - phone 01704 564206.

Small Meeting Room

- Dimensions - 30ft x 15ft (9.1m x 4.57m)
- Equipped with chairs and tables
- TV monitor screen

Ideal for meetings and small gatherings

- Dimensions - 55ft x 33ft (16.76m x 10m)
 - Equipped with chairs and tables
 - Theatre style capacity for up to 100
 - Ideal for parties, concerts, clubs, meetings
- Regular or one-off events

Kitchen

- Fully equipped, professional kitchen including cooker, heated cupboard and dishwasher.

Church

The church can accommodate 250 and can be available by arrangement for concerts by musical and choral groups. If you would like to enquire about using the church please contact Clive Morris - phone 01704 564206.



Give to Church

Give cash, use the card reader at the back of church or give regularly and most efficiently through the Parish Giving Scheme



Scan to learn more

Tinsel and Trash

A poem by Penny Candlin

Tinsel and Trash,
Bright lights and parties,
Broken promises and debt.
Long awaited but quickly forgotten.
How we are pulled into a false sense of consumerism,
I must have, I want, I desire.
Christmas is lost in all the glitter.
A time of giving of ourselves,
A time to be thankful for what we have,
A time of sharing with the less fortunate.
A time to honour God,
A time to praise God for his Son Jesus.
Christmas, a call to serve Jesus Christ.

Making Donations to St John's through online banking The church's bank details are:

**Account name:
Parochial Church Council of St John's
Parish (Birkdale)**



"What a Christmas! First the North Pole melts, then all the elves get laid off."

Warm Space

Struggling with the cost of living? Feeling lonely?
Looking for a quiet, safe place to gather your thoughts?
Or, just need a friendly chat over a hot drink?

**EVERY
THURSDAY
10am - 4pm**

The Stationmaster's House,
2 Liverpool Road, Birkdale. PR8 4AR

Birkdale
Community Hub & Library
At the Station Master's House



**FULLY
ACCESSIBLE**

With disabled access, a large accessible lift and disabled toilet with baby changing facilities.

A warm welcome guaranteed by our friendly hosts at our 'enhanced' warm space, community hub and library. We offer free tea, coffee and biscuits as well as newspapers, puzzle books, activities and occasional guest speakers alongside other services. FREE WI-FI and computer access.



Christmas shopping

It was Christmas and the judge was in a benign mood as he asked the prisoner what he was charged with. "Doing my Christmas shopping early," replied the man. "Why, that's no offence," said the judge. "How early were you doing it?" "Before the store opened," replied the defendant.

Barn Dance

On Saturday 16th November we had a Barn Dance in our church hall. It's not a barn, and it would not be too harsh to say that our plodding steps and mix-ups over the *dos a dos* could only with generosity be described as dancing. But an enjoyable time was had by all who attended. Almost everyone had a go at following the instructions of the caller, who exhibited saintlike patience when those who took to the floor seemed determined to do the very opposite of what was directed. Somehow, and with the assistance of The Cauty Band who provided excellent musical accompaniment to our efforts, we got through each dance without any casualties. It was a bit like Eric Morecambe's attempt at playing the Grieg piano concerto... by Grieg: we did all the right steps but not necessarily in the right order!

Between dances we were treated to Bangers and Mash followed by apple sponge pudding. The portions were hearty. One dancer who had clearly worked up an appetite had a very hearty (or was it Hardy) meal and admitted to having eaten seven sausages. This was met with disbelief when the gourmand took to the floor again. I have a trencherman's appetite but could only manage three!

Our thanks must go to Christine for doing the catering and to all those who helped serve the food and clear away afterwards. There was a lot of fun and a lot of hard work and it was a pleasure to see nearly 50 of our congregation and friends enjoying themselves. And special thanks to The Cauty Band and their caller for their excellent playing and tolerance!

Stuart Baker



Christmas carols

One night as Christmas approached, some friends decided to go carol singing. A man answered the door of one house, and gasped as they launched into the opening lines of the first carol. Within half a minute, he looked stricken. Soon tears were welling up in his eyes. The carollers sang and sang, and the man looked very moved by what he heard. One caroller ventured: "I understand - our singing reminds you of your happy childhood Christmases."

The man looked at her with misery in his eyes. "No," he whispered back. "It's just that I am a musician!"

W CROSS R D

Solution below

The Bible version used in our crosswords is the NIV.

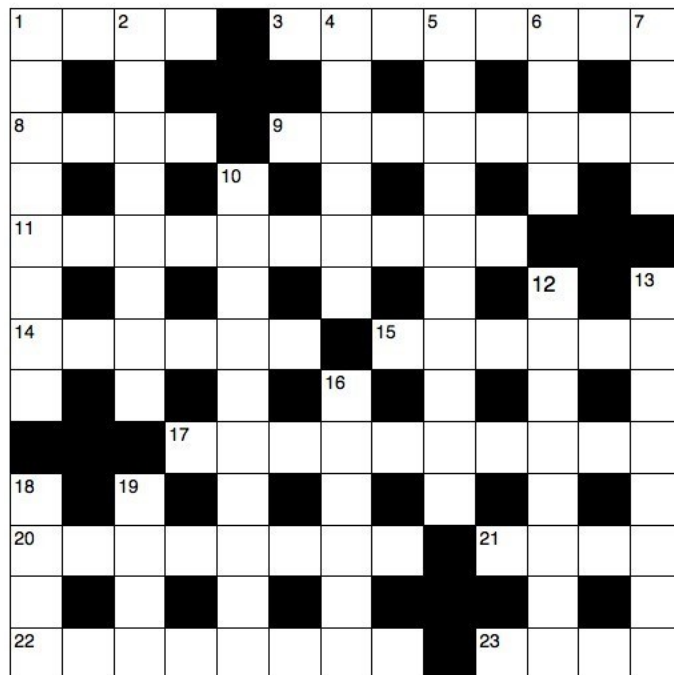
Crosswords reproduced by kind permission of BRF and John Capon, originally published in Three Down, Nine Across, by John Capon (£6.99 BRF).

Across

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the — walk' (Luke 7:22) (4)
 3 Got (Philippians 3:12) (8)
 8 Leave out (Jeremiah 26:2) (4)
 9 Castigated for using dishonest scales (Hosea 12:7) (8)
 11 Weighty (1 John 5:3) (10)
 14 'Now the serpent was more — than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made' (Genesis 3:1) (6)
 15 'Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot — God' (Romans 8:8) (6)
 17 Because Israel lacked one of these, tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:19) (10)
 20 In his vision of the two eagles and the vine, this is how Ezekiel described the latter (Ezekiel 17:8) (8)
 21 Rite (anag.) (4)
 22 Nine gigs (anag.) (8)
 23 'The eye cannot say to the — , "I don't need you"' (1 Corinthians 12:21) (4)

Down

- 1 'Flee for your lives! Don't — — , and don't stop anywhere in the plain!' (Genesis 19:17) (4,4)
 2 Principal thoroughfare (Numbers 20:19) (4,4)
 4 'The tax collector... beat his — and said, "God have mercy on me, a sinner"' (Luke 18:13) (6)
 5 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will — this' (2 Kings



- 19:31) (10)
 6 'The day of the Lord is — for all nations' (Obadiah 15) (4)
 7 Specified day (Acts 21:26) (4)
 10 Deadly epidemic (Deuteronomy 32:24) (10)
 12 Roman Catholic church which has special ceremonial rights (8)
 13 Tied up (2 Kings 7:10) (8)
 16 In his speech to the Sanhedrin, Stephen described Moses as 'powerful in speech and — ' (Acts 7:22) (6)
 18 'Although he did not remove the high places, — heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life' (1 Kings 15:14) (4)
 19 Tribe (Deuteronomy 29:18) (4)

In our Book of Remembrance in December

- 2nd Horace Hall (1998)
 4th Harry Pennington (2004)
 6th John Jones (2014)
 7th James Rimmer (1972)
 9th William Ball (1991)
 Margaret Foster (2002)
 10th Harry Allen (1991)
 12th Thomas Lacy (1989)
 15th Maud Monk (1984)

- 16th Walter Marshall (1976)
 Emma Wright (1978)
 Hilda Banham (2005)
 18th Jack Greensmith (1982)
 19th Albert Carr (2014)
 20th Leonard Carrington (2011)
 21st John Heap (1956)
 22nd Blanche Yarwood (1983)
 Carol Astley (2002)
 23rd William Ryan (1985)
 24th Charles Bateman (1965)
 25th Elsie Hamer (1982)
 Daniel Randles (1990)
 27th Mary Wright (1979)

- 27th May Williams (1985)
 Ivan Coop (1989)
 Julie Kershaw (2007)
 28th Sarah Halsall (1964)
 29th Mary Ball (1988)
 30th James Lloyd (1985)

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, Lame; 3, Obtained; 8, Omit; 9, Merchant; 11, Burdensome; 14, Crafty; 15, Please; 17, Blacksmith; 20, Splendid; 21, Tier; 22, Singeing; 23, Hand.
DOWN: 1, Look back; 2, Main road; 4, Breast; 5, Accomplish; 6, Near; 7, Date; 10, Pestilence; 12, Basilica; 13, Tethered; 16, Action; 18, Asa's; 19, Clan.

From Our Own Correspondent

Andy Dean

A Cotswolds Dorset Diary

It was 17 years ago when, because of a work relocation, the Deans left St John's and Birkdale and moved to a little village called Paxford in the North Cotswolds. Having spent all our lives in Southport, a busy and vibrant town, this was a huge change and it took us quite a while to settle, but settle we did and it's been a lot of fun and a great place to bring up children.

But Cheryl and I are now retired and Tom and Will are in their twenties and a remote Cotswold village brings its own challenges. The nearest M&S (how the middle classes measure remoteness) is 35 minutes away and the nearest reasonably priced pub (how I measure remoteness) is 25 minutes away. There's no public transport at all and the nearest hospital a good hour away – don't hold your breath for an ambulance to arrive. We've always been attracted to the seaside too and you can't get much further away than the Cotswolds. The Cotswolds is attractive, for sure, but property is very expensive (should my children ever look to buy) and job opportunities in the immediate vicinity are almost exclusively agriculture or hospitality. With Tom having just left university and Will just starting university, now seemed a good time to re-assess where we want to be and we concluded it was not the Cotswolds.

However, knowing where you don't want to be and knowing where you want to be are 2 different questions. One thing's for sure though and that is until you sell your house you ain't going anywhere. So we've taken a leap of faith and sold our house and are now renting while we consider our long-term future. Happily, we love Dorset and we have friends there who own a rental property on their land where we can stay. We've now been here 2 weeks and are loving it.

We're in a large village in NW Dorset called Yetminster (not to be confused with Yes Minister) about 5 miles from Sherborne and a similar distance from Yeovil. Yetminster has a population of about 1,200 and has a church, primary school, train station, village hall, surgery, pub, café and Spar – everything one could possibly need. Yetminster also has a church clock which faithfully strikes the hour but also, every 3 hours, day and night, plays the National Anthem – a legacy from Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. This does irritate some newcomers and there are occasional appeals to silence the clock overnight but, to date, such appeals have been unsuccessful. Sherborne has its famous abbey and public school and is a very attractive market town with lots of independent shops as well as a station, garden centre and a couple of castles. The monthly Sherborne market is very popular. Yeovil, it has to be said, is less attractive but has large supermarkets and some cultural centres.

One disappointment of our time in the Costwolds was that we never found a church where we felt at home, certainly never as much as we did at St John's. The nearby village churches were very poorly attended (occasionally I was the only one there) and the larger ones were not terribly friendly and had little or no fellowship outside the Sunday service. Already in Dorset we have noticed a difference. The villages are slightly larger, but the sense of community is on a different level – perhaps Dorset villages are more “working villages” and less touristy with fewer second/holiday homes, who knows? As I write this, Cheryl and I have just returned from a Community Spirit service at St Andrew's church in the nearby village of Leigh (pronounced “Lie”) and what a joy this was. The church was full of young and old and a couple of dogs, and the theme of the service was Stir-Up Sunday. So, at points during the service, the kids had to find ingredients for a Christmas pudding secreted around the church. The pudding mixture was then prepared and we were all invited to stir, east to west as is traditional, whilst singing the following (to the tune of Thomas Tallis's canon): *Stir up you faithful people all, with fruits of plenty in our bowl.*

Within our hearts your blessings bind, to make us caring, good and kind.

Stir up our willing hearts to pray and guide the kings upon their way.

Their hope and wisdom burning bright, leads us from darkness into light.

We then enjoyed coffee and cake and took our own mini Christmas pudding home to cook.

Last week I went to the Abbey and the contrast with today's Community Spirit service could not have been greater. The Abbey services are very formal and a bit too high church even for me but the singing from the choir in that ancient and magnificent building was divine. Yesterday we went to the monthly Choral Evensong at St Peter's church in Dorchester with a choir of about 30 and nearly as many in the congregation. I don't know what it is, perhaps it stems from my time as a boy chorister, but I've always loved a good choral evensong and its liturgy (“Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord”).

Over the next 2 weeks we have much planned – film nights in the local village hall, a pop-up pub in Leigh, Bach's Christmas Oratorio in Sherborne Abbey and a quiz night in the local pub. Christmas markets, carol services and Christmas tree festivals abound and, oh yes, I'll be helping sell Christmas trees. I've even been persuaded to join the local church choir for its Christmas services.

We're loving it here and have no regrets about leaving the Costwolds. Of course, we may be in the honeymoon period and the appeal may fade. Will we stay here permanently? To be honest, I have no idea.... but that's a decision for another day. We did always say we wanted to be nearer the seaside.

Wishing all our many friends at St John's a wonderful Christmas.

WORD SEARCH *solution on page 28*

Father Christmas is based on St Nicholas, who was born in the 3rd century in the Greek village of Patara, on what is today the southern coast of Turkey. His family were both devout and wealthy, and when his parents died in an epidemic, Nicholas decided to help people. He gave to the needy, the sick, the suffering, and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. As a bishop, he suffered in prison with other bishops under the emperor Diocletian's persecution of Christians.

One story of his generosity explains why we hang Christmas stockings over our mantelpieces today. There was a poor family with three daughters who needed dowries if they were to marry, and not be sold into slavery. Nicholas heard of their plight, and tossed three bags of gold into their home through an open window – thus saving the girls from a life of misery. The bags of gold landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. Hence the custom of children hanging out stockings – in the hope of attracting presents of their own from St Nicholas - on Christmas Eve. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols of St Nicholas.

FATHER
CHRISTMAS
NICHOLAS
BORN
THIRD

CENTURY
GREEK
VILLAGE
DEVOUT
WEALTHY

NEEDY
SICK
SUFFERING
PRISON
EMPEROR

POOR
FAMILY
THREE
DAUGHTERS
STOCKINGS
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Glorious the Song when God's the Theme

By The Rev. Michael Burgess

In the Middle Ages, at the end of the Christmas Midnight Mass, the clergy would often tell the animals' version of the Nativity story and imitate the sound of each animal. The cock would crow 'Christus natus est.' (Christ is born). The cows would moo 'Ubi?' (Where?). The sheep would bleat 'In Bethlehem.' And the donkey would cry 'Eamus' (Let us go there). It was a way of expressing something of the joy and fun of the Christmas celebration.

(We have never tried this at St John's. Should we revive this ancient tradition? Ed.)

Commercialism with all its trappings has sadly made fun and festivity the be all and end all of Christmas. We need to capture again the heart of the Incarnation, which is a mystery rooted in silence and wonder. The book of Wisdom reads 'For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, the all powerful Word leapt from heaven, from the royal throne.'

Those words remind us that at Bethlehem there is that silence and wonder. The animals may rejoice to tell the Good News of the Incarnation at the Midnight Mass, but at the crib they gather with the Holy Family and the shepherds. We are given no words of Mary and Joseph and the shepherds around the crib. The mystery of what

was happening seems to have intensified their silence. They did not know what the future held for this new-born child, but they did know that God was acting in a special way. They were like people standing in the faint light of the dawn, and their response was an expectant and wondering worship.

It is at the heart of this month's beautiful and moving setting of some words from the matins of Christmas morning, 'O magnum mysterium.' 'O great mystery and wondrous sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord, lying in the manger. Blessed Virgin, whose womb was found worthy to bear Christ the Lord. Alleluia.' The words were set by the American composer, Morten Lauridsen in 1994 and first performed a few days before Christmas in Los Angeles. Since then, the setting has been sung by choirs, both professional and amateur, around the world.

The world will call us in this month to a frenzy of doing and buying amid a clamour of noise and muzak. 'O magnum mysterium' by Morten Lauridsen invites us to step into the stable again and join the animals, the Holy Family and the shepherds to find a joy and a wonder there that can nourish the soul. At the crib we can know 'the silence of eternity interpreted by Love' and with the choir we can respond Alleluia.

You can listen to this enchanting music online by typing O Magnum Mysterium into a search engine and following a link to YouTube, and it is also available on Spotify.

God in the Sciences

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

Meditation on the Incarnation

*After the bright beam of annunciation
fused heaven with dark earth
His searing sharply-focused light
went out for a while
eclipsed in amniotic gloom:
His cool immensity of splendour
His universal grace
small-folded in a warm dim
female space.*

This extract from Luci Shaw's poem *Made Flesh* captures something of the wonder of the moment when the second person of the Trinity became an embryo.

How does a single cell turn into an infant, and what does that process say about us – and God? These are the questions that Professor Jeff Hardin, a developmental biologist, asks himself. Having studied theology as well as science, he has a unique perspective on embryonic development.

A new-born baby is made of around five trillion cells. These cells come in hundreds of different types, each of which must be in the correct place for the child's body to function properly. Every new life is the result of intricate and highly ordered processes. Three things must happen as an embryo develops.

The first important process is for cells to take on their identity as types of muscle, bone, nerves, and so on. The second is when each cell learns which part of the body it belongs to. Third, those cells are moved around to form the different tissues and organs. These three are

not discrete stages, but they all happen at around the same time, building up gradually like the different aspects of a picture coming into focus.

All three of these processes are driven forward by the movement of cells, the connections between them, and the signals they pass to each other. Jeff studies a sort of cellular glue which is involved in joining cells together. Making and breaking these adhesions can affect how cells move and signal to each other, their identity in the body, how they are organised as groups, and ultimately their survival. This glue is found on the surface of cells throughout the animal kingdom, including the small worms Jeff's lab studies.

For Jeff, peering down a microscope at tiny worm embryos can be an act of worship. It is also an exercise in art appreciation, as he learns to appreciate the created order. Understanding the complexities of development, while also being aware that God knows that process intimately both as Creator and created, fills Jeff with a profound sense of awe, wonder and worship.

Does the minute scale of our early development, compared to the incomprehensibly vast and ancient universe, give us a sense of insignificance? Psalm 8 says, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"

For Jeff and the Psalmist, such feelings can be a positive experience if they serve as a reminder to be humble in the face of a universe that is vastly complicated but also deeply meaningful, made by a God who loves each one of us.

Thoughts on the Incarnation

The Son came out from the Father to help us to come out from the world; He descended to us to enable us to ascend to Him. – *Anthony of Padua*

Christ became what we are that He might make us what He is. – *Athanasius*

God became man to turn creatures into sons; not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man. – *CS Lewis*

My brother heard a woman on the bus say, as the bus passed a church with a Crib outside it, Oh Lor'! They bring religion into everything. Look – they're dragging it even into Christmas now!' – *CS Lewis*

The hinge of history is on the door of a Bethlehem stable. – *Ralph Sockman*



We have received a newsletter from the overseas charity which we have been supporting for many years. We reproduce below some extracts from it. Please continue to support Revive. Their work is so important and can transform the lives of the children whom they help.

We began September with a journey of challenges and resilience. Right at the start, we faced health struggles with our girls. M.C., only 13 years old, developed swelling around her neck, which quickly escalated into a more serious inflammation. She was taken to the emergency room and stayed hospitalised for 15 days. Just as M.C. was nearing the end of her stay, another girl, Y.N., aged 7, also required urgent care and was admitted due to severe atopic dermatitis. With intensive treatment, M.C. was discharged, while Y.N. remained in hospital for another 15 days until she improved. Y.N. is still undergoing treatment, experiencing occasional flare-ups triggered by stress, but we remain hopeful for her full recovery.

(Just imagine what would have happened to these children if they had not been in the care of Revive. Ed.)

September also brought us Ellie, our new volunteer, who joined us with boundless energy and enthusiasm, offering dance, craft activities, and English classes to our girls. Additionally, we celebrated Social Educators' Day with a special gathering. We visited a lovely local dessert shop where all our educators could come together and celebrate the special work they do each day.

Why God became Man: a Christmas Story (but not the real one)

A story is told of a farmer who didn't believe in Jesus. One snowy Christmas Eve, his wife was taking their children to a service at their local church. He refused to come saying: *'Why would God lower Himself to come to Earth as a man? That's ridiculous!'* So, they left him at home.

During the evening the winds grew stronger, and the snow turned to a blizzard. He heard a series of loud thumps on the window. In the field near his house he saw a flock of wild geese. They had been migrating south when they got caught in the snowstorm. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter.

The man wanted to help the geese and so he opened the doors of the barn, hoping they would go inside for shelter. But the geese didn't do anything,

In October, we hosted a concentrated hearing session in our home, attended by the judge, his team, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and the Public Defender's Office. All of our girls were heard, and some important recommendations were made. Although there were no immediate placements, this meeting provided essential support and guidance for their wellbeing. We also have wonderful news to share: our dear M.T., aged 15, landed her first job as a young apprentice in a supermarket chain here in Olinda. She is thrilled about this new opportunity, and we all celebrate this important achievement with her!

Foster Family

In recent months, we welcomed two babies, J.L. (boy - 7 months) and J.G. (boy - 1 year and 6 months). The new children are not related, but both were born into at-risk situations and require extensive health care. Their foster families are delighted with their temporary little ones, and we pray that their future is blessed with the best that God allows. We also have H.A. (girl - 6 years old), who has been with us since August, and there is a possibility of reintegration with a maternal aunt. May the best be done for her and her family!

In October, we participated in an event at the Farol Church, attended by around 200 people from various companies. We had the opportunity to share about our work at Reaviva and sell handmade products to support our activities.

Finally, we give thanks to God and to everyone who prays and contributes so that the children are protected and well cared for while their future is being studied and decided.

despite the man's efforts to move them. He made a breadcrumb trail leading to the barn and tried to shoo them toward the barn, but they only got more scared and scattered.

Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn: *'Why don't they follow me?!'* Then he realised: *'If only I were a goose and become one of them, then I could save them.'*

Finally, he understood the heart of the Christmas message. God has become one of us in Jesus. The eternal creator God has entered time and space as a baby, to show us who God is and how we can know Him.

This Christmas, let's celebrate again this amazing truth that we have a God who knows and can meet our needs in Jesus. *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means 'God with us''*. Matthew 1:23.

Christmas: Time to remember Christians facing persecution

This Christmas, there are about 360 million Christians worldwide who will not be celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. They dare not do so.

That's because 1 in every 7 believers globally live in countries where they suffer oppression and discrimination for their faith.

So, instead of going to church and singing carols, they face violence and abduction, while others risk losing their jobs and livelihood. According to the latest World Watch List from Open Doors, there are 13 countries where Christians face extreme persecution, and 37 more where they face general persecution.

Fortunately, there are charities working on the frontlines to help these persecuted believers. You may wish to support one this Christmas, as a way of showing solidarity with our Christian brothers and sisters worldwide.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide – specialises in freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). They work in 25 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. CSW is the only advocacy organisation with a sole focus on freedom of religion or belief that has United Nations accreditation. Go to: <https://www.csw.org.uk/home.htm>

Help The Persecuted – works in 13 countries, including some in the Middle East, Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Yemen & North Africa. They currently provide a safe refuge in Lebanon to those fleeing the Middle East Conflict. Go to: <https://htp.org>

Open Doors – has been helping persecuted Christians in over 60 countries for more than six decades. They supply Bibles, provide emergency relief and help persecuted believers stand strong for the long-term. Go to: <https://www.opendoorsuk.org>

Release International – Supports persecuted Christians in 30 countries around the world – prayerfully, pastorally and practically. Go to: <https://releaseinternational.org/>

WHETHER WE SUPPORT ANY OF THOSE ORGANISATIONS OR NOT PLEASE PRAY FOR CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD THAT THEY MAY NOT BE PERSECUTED FOR THEIR FAITH



What's on at St James' and St Peter's in December

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|--------------------------|---|
| 7th December at 7.30pm | Jazz at Christmas—St Peter's |
| 11th December at 2pm | Christmas Bingo—St Peter's |
| 15th December at 3pm | “Christmas Party” - St James' Hall |
| 21st December at 11am | Carols in the Community—outside Broughs (Butchers) in Birkdale Village |
| 22nd December at 3pm | Cake and Carols—St Peter's |
| 22nd December at 6pm | Carols by Candlelight—St James' |
| 24th December at 4pm | Christingle—St Peter's |
| 24th December at 5.30pm | Quiet Communion—St Peter's |
| 25th December at 9am | Traditional Communion & Hymns—St James' |
| 25th December at 10am | Christmas Day service—St Peter's |
| 29th December at 10.30am | Joint service at St John's, Birkdale |

St Peter's Church, Birkdale
Christmas jazz night
 With the Seaside Stompers
7th December, 7.30pm

Tickets
£7.50

Tickets from:
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 07746219942
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Christmas
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PRIZES
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DERIAN HOUSE APPEAL

We have been asked to mention in this issue the Children's Hospice Derian House in Chorley. It has been a home from home for seriously ill babies, children and young people for more than 30 years. Its caring staff help children and their families to make the most of their time together creating precious memories to last a lifetime.

The Hospice looks after the whole family too, including parents, siblings and grandparents with bereavement support, counselling and support groups for as long as they are needed. There is no time limit to the care which they provide.

In a typical year they care for 400 children and 100 neonatal babies who face an uncertain future, and they provide 2,000 overnight respite stays at the Hospice.

Our readers are invited to consider whether they would like to give any support to Derian House. Their fundraising team can be contacted on 01257 271 271 or by email to fundraising@derianhouse.co.uk. Their website is www.derianhouse.co.uk



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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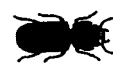
Tuesdays : O.A.P rates by Diane

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THE GOOD and BAD KINGS of ENGLAND

By Dennis Davis

The Fall of King Edwin in 633AD

King Edwin was defeated and killed with his two sons in a battle at a place called Heathfelt (Heathfield). No details of the battle were recorded although the Saxon Chronicles and the Welsh and Irish Annals make reference to it. There are two main contenders for where it was. Some historians claim that it was at Hatfield, near Rotherham in Yorkshire, but their Historical Society has been unable, despite money from a charity, to find any positive evidence of a battle of this scale in which so large an army was slain. The other was Cuchney, in Nottinghamshire but the battle there was in 679, more than 40 years after King Edwin's death.

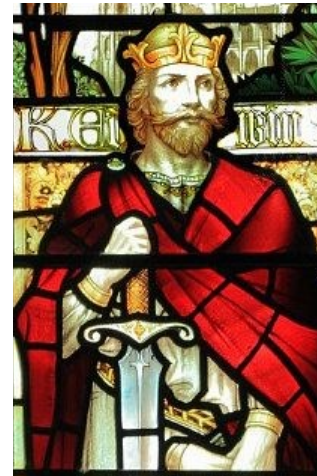
I was brought up in the village of Bradwell in the Hope Valley, an area where place names indicate a violent past: Rebellion Knoll, Win Hill, Lose Hill, Dead Man's Clough, Gore Lane and a legend that a King called Edwin was killed and hung from a tree known locally as Edentree house. There has not been any other King of England called Edwin! I have already studied this in the past. According to a local historian, evidence of a battle was found when a large number of bones, bits of harnesses and other artefacts were found. Could this be the site of so large a battle? The area is now built on. No other person has attempted to study this site. What clues could there be to such a claim? The Grey Ditch, Thought to have been the border between Northumbria and Mercia at the point where the old Roman Road called Bathum Gate crossed the ditch. The nearby road is called Gore Lane, leading up to Smalldale. It is thought that Cadwallon used the old Roman road from Gwynedd to Buxton via

Bathamgate to the Roman Camp at Anavio where it branches for Yorkshire and to Hatfield, and Glossop in the other direction. Did the Mercians use a southern route by Dore Moor and catch Edwin in a pincer movement? We will never know! All the claims are just conjecture, but this is just as plausible as the other claims.

In its earlier history, Bradwell was noted for its hat making called the "Bradda Hat" claimed to be the pattern used to make the old 1st World war steel helmet.



Sources of information
Celt and Saxon. The Struggle for Britain AD 410-973 by Peter Berresford Ellis.
Northanhymbre Saga history of the Anglo Saxon Kings of Nothumbria by John Marsden
Bradwell Ancient and Modern by Seth Evans.
And a very fertile imagination.



Stained glass, window, by J Powell & Son, 1900, at St Nicholas Church, Blakeney, Norfolk,

Food for Thought: Think Twice before buying a Goat in Ghana

What are you buying your friends for Christmas this year? If you are tempted by 'socially responsible' gifts that involve you NOT giving your friends anything at all, but instead giving your money to a charity 'in their name', you may wish to think again. Such gifts as goats in Ghana or chickens in Chad can make you feel virtuous, but may damage your relationships.

A recent study has found that people who buy others 'socially responsible' gifts can actually be considered to be self-serving and inconsiderate by the people to whom they give them. It seems that such givers often over-estimate how appreciative their friends will be to receive nothing. A study at the University of Southern California found that to be successful, a gift must make the recipient feel 'extraordinary, and special.' If you suspect giving your various loved ones news about a goat won't achieve that, there is only one solution: instead of *giving* only socially responsible gifts, insist on *receiving only them*. Then your mantelpiece will be full of photos of happy goats and chickens, and your family and friends will enjoy your more usual gifts, and still be speaking to you.

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HOPE AT CHRISTMAS

by John M. Shakespeare

The birth of Jesus Christ was a message of Hope, I believe, from God to us all. A life of fellowship between people is possible, it is there for us all to work towards.

Throughout this life I've often been told that I am an optimist, and I am happy to admit to this. At this time of year, with a New Year just around the corner, we need Hope, not quite the same as optimism, but a conviction that things will be better given half a chance!

This to me is a good time for new resolutions to rid us of the prejudices that seem to abound nowadays e.g. Religious, Racial, Sexual.. The list seems endless!

Voltaire (1694-1778), was a champion of free speech, "I hate what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it". This is a Hope that I support fully in these stressful times.

Having read quite a lot of poetry in my time, I still feel comforted by the poem "Hope", by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). I quote the first verse: "Hope is the thing with feathers, that perches on the soul, and sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all". I will finish this paragraph with the final verse of three, "I've heard it in the chilliest land and on the strangest sea, yet never in extremity it asked a crumb of me".

Staying with the theme of inspiration I would like to make mention of the anthem "Walk On", by Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) and Oscar Hammerstein (1895-1960) written originally for the musical "Carousel", and was adopted by Liverpool Football Club, "Walk on, walk on, with Hope in your heart, and you'll never walk alone!".

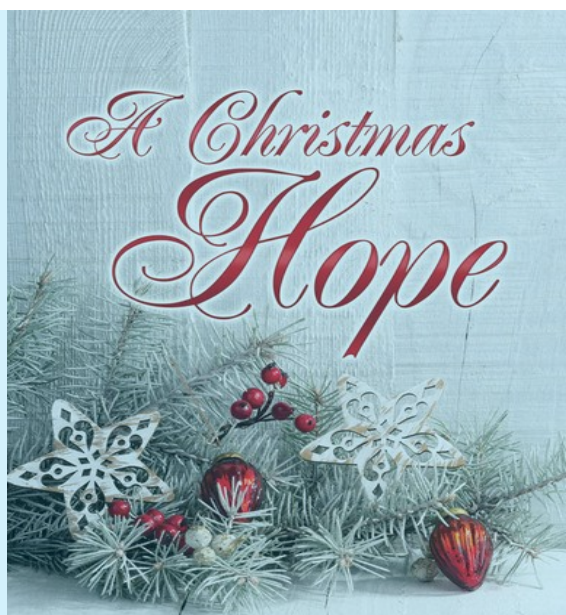
In the book of Proverbs there is a statement which I feel puts Hope into perspective. Proverbs (Ch13 verse 12), reads "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of Life".

Many times in this life we will hope for something to happen the way that we want it to be, but then have to face disappointment when it does not. However, an unrequited Hope may not be lost, it may only be deferred until such a time that it is perhaps more favoured, and then we can move on with certainty.

The so-called "Age of Realism or Enlightenment", of the 17C and 18C, saw a rise in in the Hopes of people of many different politics and religion, for people power! Personally I can see no contradiction in the mottoes of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness for all, in the aims of Christianity, of peace and goodwill.

I feel frustrated especially at this time of year by the multitude of forms of Christian worship there are, because the Protestants, Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, etc., all worship the same God, so why does each one have to be different? Think of the effect throughout the World if we just revelled in the term, we are all Christians!

I will end this article with a proverb, which I think does express the message, that we should never abandon our Hopes whatever they may be. "There's Hope while your fishing line remains in the water"



Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

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: 812 3403 0688

The Password every Sunday will be: 201823

To join the **weekly Sunday morning services** by **TELEPHONE**:

The telephone number you must ring is: 0203 481 5240

The Meeting Identification Number every Sunday will be: 812 3403 0688

When prompted to do so, enter that number and then press HASH (#)

The Password every Sunday will be: 201823.

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: 835 5074 3780

The Password every Thursday will be: 7ehHEK

To join the **twice-monthly Thursday evening prayers** at 7.30pm by **TELEPHONE**:

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IF YOU NEED ANY HELP: Please contact Clive (564206) or Rev. Jennie for any further details you require.

Was it really that long ago?...

60 years ago, on 31st December 1964 Donald Campbell broke the world water speed record, and became the only person to break both the land speed record and the water speed record in the same year.

50 years ago, on 5th December 1974 the last episode of the TV comedy series *Monty Python's Flying Circus* was broadcast in the UK. It had begun in October 1969.

50 years ago, on 24th December 1974 British politician John Stonehouse was arrested in Australia (on suspicion of being Lord Lucan.) He had faked his death on 20th November by leaving a pile of clothing on a beach in Miami Florida.

40 years ago, on 3rd December the Bhopal disaster took place in India. A poisonous gas leak at a Union Carbide pesticide plant killed thousands of people and left at least 120,000 with long-term health problems.

Also 40 years ago, on 31st December 1984 the Bank of England stopped producing one pound notes. They remained legal tender until 1988.

20 years ago, on 26th December 2004 the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami (also called the Boxing Day Tsunami) took place. A massive undersea earthquake near Sumatra caused a devastating tsunami that swamped coastal areas in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and East Africa. It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history, killing more than 230,000 people in 14 countries.

What Sort of Christmas Card Person Are You?

The time to send and receive Christmas cards has come round again – time for our annual shock at the cost of a coloured card, and disbelief at what the Post Office intends to charge us to deliver them.

It seems there are three kinds of people when it comes to Christmas cards: the total abstainers, the total givers and the selective givers.

Abstainers write 'Happy Christmas everyone' on Facebook, and consider the job well done. Total givers spend a fortune on cards and stamps and send them to everyone they know. Selective givers try to cut corners, but then cannot remember who sent who what, and as the cards pour through their door, spend time worrying... However you do it, it is good to stay in yearly touch with your widest circle of friends and family. Proverbs points out that: 'Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.' Prov 25:25. Your loved ones will enjoy hearing from you!

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.

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

Wednesday

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

Thursday

1.00pm to 2.00pm: **Balance Classes for the Elderly.**

Contact: ageingwellmerseyside@outlook.com.

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.

Poem for December 2024

by Daphne Kitching

Everyday Christmas

(Mal 4:2, Mt 1:23)

Light a candle, look into the light,
Pray.

Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings

As the flame rises,

Smooth, bright,

Know the comfort of Christ

In the carol speaking afresh.

Bringing Jesus Into heart and prayer.

Emmanuel, God with us.

Light of the world,

Out of the stable into our situations.

Because of Jesus Christmas is everyday.

The Lord is here.

Hallelujah.

Prayer for December 2024

Father, the days are short; darkness deepens in December and this year it seems to reflect the darkness in so many parts of the world. We think especially of the land You came to, all those years ago, and other nearby lands where so many are suffering.

Father, thank you that Jesus came into the world as Your Light; that He shines today as brightly and powerfully as He did then, and will do forever.

Help us to open our hearts and minds to allow His light to fill us with the assurance that, no matter what is going on, we are safe in Him.

Thank you that, in Jesus, You have conquered death and darkness; that one day, everyone will bow before Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whose Kingdom shall never end.

£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.

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To: Mavis Beckingham on 28th December

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

The Last Laughs

The Budget

It is with great sadness that I have to mention the loss of a few local businesses as a result of Rachel Reeves' recent budget announcement. A local bra manufacturer has gone bust, a submarine company has gone under, a manufacturer of food blenders has gone into liquidation, a dog kennel has had to call in the retrievers and a company supplying paper for origami enthusiasts has folded. Interflora is pruning its business and Dyno-rod has gone down the drain. The saddest one though is the ice cream van man who was found dead, covered in nuts and raspberry sauce. He couldn't take it any more and topped himself.

Boris Johnson on "Britain's Obesity Crisis"

Boris Johnson has blamed the Church of England for Britain's obesity crisis, saying that its failure to provide the spiritual sustenance that people need is leading them to "gorge themselves".

The former prime minister said that when he was younger "it was very rare for there to be a fatso in the class. Now they're all fatsos, and I'd be shot for saying they're fatsos, but it's the truth".

He said: "When I was a kid, we were all out playing in the streets.... People were skinnier, they ran around a huge amount, they drank phenomenal quantities of Tizer, ate Spangles and Curly Wurlies and nowadays kids are sitting on screens and being told that it's too dangerous to go outside because there are paedophiles everywhere apparently."

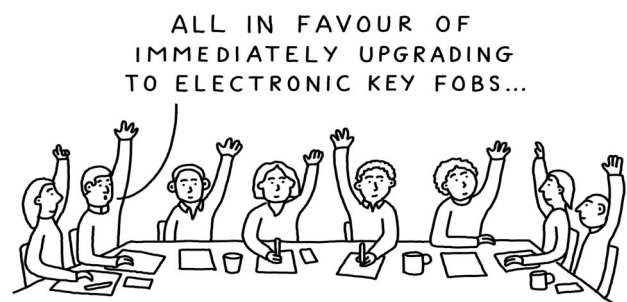
Is this man certifiable? Hard to imagine him ever having played in a street, and what sort of skinny diet is Tizer, Spangles and Curly Wurlies? Ed.

WHO DIDN'T LOCK UP?

THE MAIN SUSPECTS



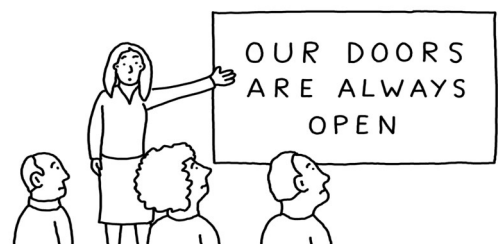
THE VICAR



THE P.C.C.



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