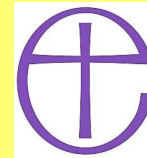




THE WORD



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. 267

MARCH 2025

ST. JOHN'S PARISH CHURCH

God Centred, Relationship Driven and Life Transforming



We shall soon be in the season of Lent, and it will be a busy period at St John's. We shall have a Pancake Party on Shrove Tuesday at 4pm at which you can try your hand at tossing pancakes and racing with them, and then on Ash Wednesday we shall start our Lenten observance in a traditional Holy Communion service at 10.30am followed by a brunch.

On the same day, 5th March, we shall have the first meeting of the Alpha course which will last until early May with meetings on Wednesday evenings. Each meeting will start with a meal but as we shall be in Lent do not expect there to be chocolates on the menu.

Following the great success of our Greek evening recently we shall have a lighthearted Games evening on 15th March in the church hall.

On Sunday 30th March our morning service will be held at St John's. Although we have in recent years shared our morning services with St James', St Peter's and LRMC when there is a fifth Sunday in the month each church has decided to hold its own service on 30th March which this year is Mothering Sunday. This will be an opportunity for all of us to think of our mothers and be thankful to them and to God for all that they have done for us. To all mothers we say:



**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**

Howdie, **WORD** readers! I'm writing to you today in the spirit of our 'Being the Church' sermon series as I write about the **Alpha course** that we will be hosting at St John's.



Our sermon on 19th January focussed on the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." It is in this spirit that we, together with St James' and St Peter's in Birkdale, have decided to run an Alpha course, to reach out to people, to make new disciples and to help us all in our current discipleship to grow in our walk with Jesus, being equipped with knowledge and blessed with food, fellowship and good teaching.

We want to make disciples who make disciples as this command of Jesus was to the whole church, not just those who lead or wear dog-collars, but God has called each of us to strive to make new disciples or followers of Christ. The Alpha course is a proven, tried and tested method of doing this, so it's a great course to run during Lent.

Rev Sam and I want to really encourage you to plan to join us if you can, even if you can't make the whole course, come to the sessions you can and, if at all possible, not alone! We'd encourage you to be praying about who you might be able to invite to come along with you.

As we know, Lent is a time for self-reflection, penitence and drawing closer to Jesus and I believe there's no better way to do this than obeying the final command that Jesus gave us before His ascension.

What's it all about, Alpha!?

So, what is Alpha? For those who may not be familiar with the Alpha course some background may be helpful. The Alpha course was written by Rev Charles Marnham of Holy Trinity Brompton Church in London and began in 1977. It was first used as a basics course for those within the church but over time developed into a course for seekers outside of the Church. When in 1990 Nicky Gumbel took over leading the course it saw huge expansion

and it is now estimated that over 25 million people have experienced Alpha in over 140 countries and in over 100 languages.

Personally, I have led the Alpha course a number of times in churches, cafes and even pubs! I valued doing the course as a new Christian as it helped me to learn and grow and even when running the course since I always learn something new every time. This is partly due to the diversity of the course and people who are on the course. I have seen many people become Christians from the impact of the Alpha course and we will hear personal stories from one or two people on the **launch of the course on Ash Wednesday 5th March at 7.30pm.**

The course will run for 11 weeks having a break for a week on 9th April and will include a Holy Spirit Day on Holy Saturday 19th April. The topics covered include, 'Is there more to Life than this?', 'Who is Jesus?', 'How can I have faith?', 'Why and how should I read the Bible?', 'Who is the Holy Spirit?', 'How can I resist evil?' and more!

Each evening will consist of a welcome, a meal together, a talk and a discussion on your table led by a table leader and a helper. Everyone is welcome, I've found the most exciting guests are the ones who say they are atheists! This leads to some interesting discussion! So, there's no limits on who you can invite to come along, everyone really is welcome. If there's someone who you have been praying for why not take this opportunity to invite them. We will be providing some small invitation cards in our three churches over the next few weeks that you can use to invite people.

Why not use this Lent as a time to give up your Wednesday evenings to grow in your faith and be a part of a group that will be introducing people to Jesus for the first time! I can't think of anything better to do during Lent, personally! I'm going, it's going to be great, why don't you come too – and bring a friend!

Please also do be praying for the course over the coming weeks as we prepare, that we will all deepen our faith and are able to draw others into the Kingdom of God as we go!

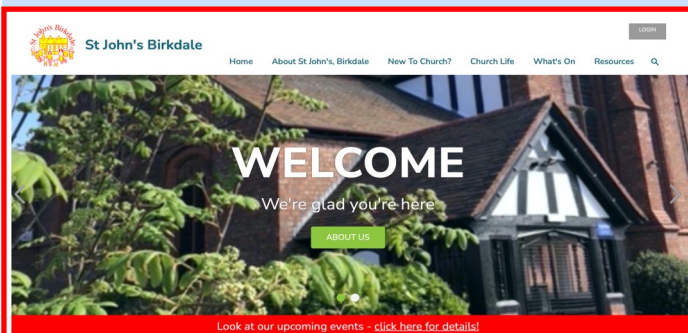
Hope to see you there!

Love, Rev. Jennie xx

WHO'S WHAT 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)



Visit our website

stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk

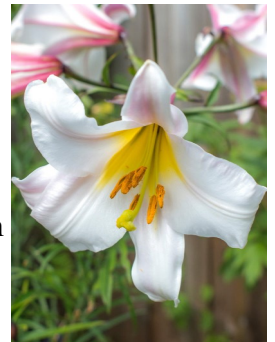
- Find out about what's going on at St John's
- Check out the calendar for upcoming events
- Listen to the weekly talks
- Find out about booking the hall
- Free on-line bible
- Show it to your friends and family

**God centred, Relationship driven,
Life transforming**

Easter Lilies

At Easter our flower arrangers will use lilies to decorate the church.

If members of our church would like to make a donation to the church in order to provide lilies in memory of a loved one please contact Cath Whiteside or Judith Foster.



Summer Fair/Flower Festival

In last month's edition of **THE WORD** we announced that this year's Summer Fair on Saturday 14th June would be held in conjunction with a **Flower Festival** in our church.

We regret to inform our readers that the Flower Festival cannot be held, but we are pleased to confirm that our annual Summer Fair **WILL** take place on 14th June. Further details of this will be given closer to the time.

Mothering Sunday and Mother Church

The Fourth Sunday in Lent was called 'Mid-Lent' or 'Refreshment Sunday', when the rigors of Lent were relaxed more than was normal for a feast day. It is called Mothering Sunday as a reference to the Epistle reading for the Day (Galatians 4:21-31). The Lenten Epistles follow from each other with teaching about our life as Christians and how we are to follow Christ. On Mid-Lent Sunday the Epistle talks of bondage and freedom; the bondage of the Law and the Old Covenant as compared to the freedom in Christ, "the promised one", and the New Covenant. Verse 26 reads "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." We gain our freedom from Christ and, as it was seen before the Reformation, the Church. Thus, Mothering Sunday is about the freedom that we gain through the promise of Jesus Christ delivered through our Mother the Church. People were encouraged to go to their 'Mother Church' (their home church or their home Cathedral) to worship and give thanks. Hence apprentices, and others, went home for the weekend and often brought gifts (or accumulated pay) home to their family. On the other hand, Mother's Day is a secular festival invented in 1904 and is celebrated on the 2nd Sunday in May in most countries in the world. The UK seems to be the exception. In recent years Mothering Sunday has been hijacked to take the place of a special, secular day to give thanks for our mothers.

GOT QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE



#tryalpha

You're Invited!
Hosted at St John's
Church, Birkdale
Starts Wednesday 5th
March 2025
7.30pm
Relax, food, chat



Course runs for 11 weeks and
includes one Saturday

For more info contact
Jennie:
07872 400718
revjenniferhardy@gmail.com

WHAT'S ON AT ST. JOHN'S



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.

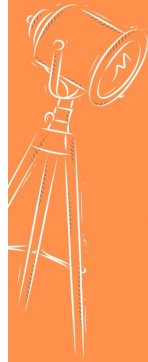
This month they will be on **6th and 20th March.**

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 31 for details about logging in on zoom by computer or by telephone.



Even off duty, the Treasurer's favourite trick was balancing money.



FILM NIGHTS

January 10th
February 14th
March 14th
April 18th - Good Friday special with Fish Supper
£15 please book
May 9th
June 20th
July 4th



Contact Christine: 01704 560518
Start: 6.30pm with hot drinks & Cake
For which we charge £5

St John's Hall, PR8 4JP

Our copyright licence does not permit us to advertise the titles of the films outside our church or by publications. A list of films will be displayed on the noticeboards in the church, and details can be requested from Christine.



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



WHAT'S ON WEDNESDAYS AT ST JOHN'S

WEDNESDAYS 5TH & 19TH MARCH

MIDWEEK COMMUNION SERVICE

There will be a Midweek traditional Communion service at 10.30am in church on [Wednesdays 5th and 19th March](#).

On 5th March the service will be followed by Brunch: do stay and enjoy fellowship and a bite to eat.



WEDNESDAYS 12TH & 26TH MARCH

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



**GROWTH GROUP LED BY
REV. JENNIE**

St John's Birkdale
DRIVEN BY SPIRIT

2nd & 4th Wednesdays
2pm

God's
Word

STUDY
GROUP

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

St John's Birkdale
DRIVEN BY SPIRIT

#tryalpha

Alpha

During March and April the Growth Group will not meet on Wednesdays because we shall have an Alpha course in the Church hall on Wednesday evenings. **If you have been coming to the Growth Group do give Alpha a try, and bring a friend if you can.**

WHAT'S COMING TO ST. JOHN'S

St John's Birkdale
DRIVEN BY SJS

Pancake Party

stjohnsbirkdale.co.uk

Crafty Pancakes

Pancake Races

Biggest Tossler Challenge

Tuesday 4th March
4pm
@ St John's Church Hall
St John's Road

St John's Birkdale
DRIVEN BY SJS

GAMES Night

Saturday 15th March
7 - 9 PM

Tickets £5
including nibbles

BRING OWN DRINKS!

Let's play!

LENT

ACTIVITIES THAT ARE FROWNED UPON

EDUCATIONAL
LEAFLETS

FREE
SAMPLES



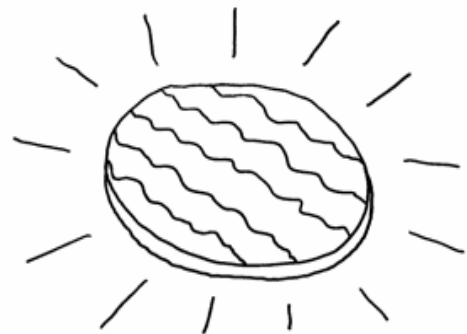
PARISH BREWERY TRIPS



FOUL LANGUAGE ANYWHERE IN THE DEANERY



HAVING TOO MUCH FUN



CHOCOLATE BISCUITS AFTER THE 10 A.M.

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 Sunday Next
Before Lent

SUNDAY 2nd MARCH
HOLY COMMUNION
10.30am service **IN CHURCH** and via
zoom & phone

Collect for the Sunday Next before Lent

Holy God, you know the disorder of our sinful lives: set straight our crooked hearts, and bend our wills to love your goodness and your glory in Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

**Being The Church:
Gifts and Talents**

The Text: Matthew 25: 14-30

- 14 Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.
- 15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.
- 16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more.
- 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more.
- 18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.
- 19 After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.
- 20 The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'
- 21 His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'
- 22 The man with two bags of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.'
- 23 His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'
- 24 Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.
- 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'
- 26 His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?
- 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.
- 28 'So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags.
- 29 For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.
- 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

**MIDWEEK TRADITIONAL
COMMUNION SERVICE**

**Brunch will be served after
the service**



**ASH WEDNESDAY
5th MARCH
10.30am
IN CHURCH**

Worship on the First Sunday
of Lent

SUNDAY 9th MARCH
**10.30am service IN CHURCH and via
zoom & phone**

Collect for the First Sunday of Lent

Heavenly Father, your Son battled with the powers of darkness, and grew closer to you in the desert: help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer that we may witness to your saving love in Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

**Being the Church:
Fruits of the Spirit**

The Text: Galatians 5: 13-26

- 13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.
14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself."
15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.
16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.
18. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
19. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;
20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions
21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Worship on the Second Sunday
of Lent

SUNDAY 16th MARCH
**10.30am service IN CHURCH
and via zoom & phone**

Collect for the Second Sunday of Lent

Almighty God, by the prayer and discipline of Lent may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings, and by following in his Way come to share in his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

**Being the Church:
Reaching Out**

The Text: Matthew 5: 1-16

- 1 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,
2 and he began to teach them. He said:
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.
12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
13 You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.
14 You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.
15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.
16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

**MIDWEEK TRADITIONAL
COMMUNION SERVICE**

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be served after the service

**WEDNESDAY
19TH MARCH
10.30am
IN CHURCH**

Worship on the Third Sunday of Lent

**SUNDAY 23rd MARCH
10.30am service IN CHURCH and
via zoom & phone**

Collect for the Third Sunday of Lent

Eternal God, give us insight to discern your will for us, to give up what harms us, and to seek the perfection we are promised in Jesus Christ our Lord.

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

**What is the Spirit saying to the
church: Awaken!**

The Text: Romans 13. 8-12

- 8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.
- 9 The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself."
- 10 Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.
- 11 And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.
- 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.

Worship on the
Fourth Sunday of Lent
(Mothering Sunday)



**SUNDAY 30th MARCH
10.30am service IN CHURCH and via
zoom & phone**

Collect for Mothering Sunday

God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful: watch over us and hold us all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The subject of Christine's talk:

Mothering Sunday

The Text: Matthew 23:37

37. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.



**Don't forget to put your clocks and watches forward by
one hour before going to bed on Saturday 29th March.**

**British Summertime begins at 01.00am
on Sunday 30th March.**

MOTHER'S DAY



SOME
PRETTY
FLOWERS



A TASTY
MEAL



SOME
TEMPTING
CHOCOLATES



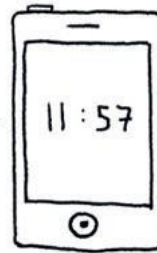
MAKING A BIT OF
AN EFFORT TO TIDY
MY ROOM (BUT IT IS
NOT EASY WHAT WITH
THE NUMBER OF THINGS
I HAVE AND THE LACK
OF CUPBOARD SPACE).

AN INNOCENT GUIDE TO...

PUTTING YOUR CLOCKS FORWARD.

SMARTPHONE

DON'T WORRY.
IT DOES IT
WITH MAGIC.

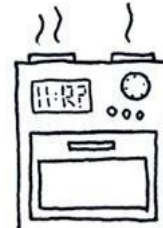


DIGITAL WATCH.

HOLD DOWN THE TOP
RIGHT AND BOTTOM
LEFT BUTTONS. WHILST
HALF PRESSING THE
LIGHT BUTTON.
OR SOMETHING.

ALARM CLOCK

THROW
AGAINST
WALL,
HOPE FOR
THE BEST.



COOKER

YOU'LL NEED
A MASTERS IN
ELECTRONIC
ENGINEERING.
AND A HAMMER.

Time for a new Church Electoral Roll

This is the year when EVERYONE gets dumped off the Electoral Roll – and needs to make a definite decision to come back on again.

It happens in the Church of England every six years. Whereas for five years, the Electoral Roll is revised annually, **in this sixth year, the roll is dissolved, and we must all re-apply and re-commit ourselves.**

If you wish to be on the new Electoral Roll please obtain an application form (there are some in church, but we can deliver one to you if you are not able to attend church in person), complete it, and return it to Stuart Harris by not later than 30th March.

A Lenten Reflection

By Canon Paul Hardingham

Somebody asked a Christian friend why he was eating doughnuts, when he had given them up for Lent! He answered, *'At the bakers I told God, that if He wanted me to buy doughnuts, He should provide a parking space in front. On the eighth time around, there it was!'* Rather than seeing Lent simply as a time to give things up, let's use it intentionally for self-examination, reading Scripture, penitence, fasting and prayer.

At Jesus' baptism, God's voice says, *'You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased.'* (Luke 3:22). The Holy Spirit then leads Jesus into the wilderness, where we find Him coming to terms with who He is. Satan's temptations challenge Jesus in three key three areas of His identity: His divine sonship, political power and Messianic role (Luke 4: 1-13). It is as though Jesus was looking into the mirror at Himself to discern what kind of Saviour He should be.

For us, Lent is an opportunity to hold up a mirror to ourselves and ask the question, *'who am I?'* It's a season of honest encounter with who we are, what we've done, and how we should live. What will we see when we hold up the mirror to ourselves? Keeping Lent, the 40 days running up to Easter, could mean taking time to read Scripture, studying a Christian book or spending five minutes each day in silence! We might fast by missing one or two meals, refraining from TV, alcohol, social media, or scrolling on our phones. All of these can help us to give more attention to God in our lives.

Whatever we do, Lent is a season for self-reflection, as we put ourselves in a position to receive afresh the forgiveness and healing that God offers.





OUR RECENT GREEK EVENING

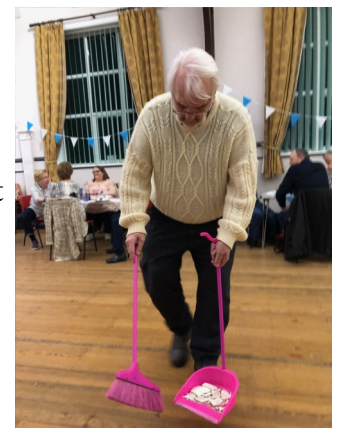
On Saturday 22nd February fifty members of St John's and their friends enjoyed a lot of fun in the church hall on a Greek themed evening.

Clive Morris had prepared an entertaining introduction which involved us having to guess what Greek places, objects or foods he had thought of and placed in an imaginary suitcase, and the winner was crowned as The Dancing Queen for the evening. He did not tell us The Name of the Game, but One of Us had to win and, as we know, The Winner Takes it All. The winner was Robin Rootes (pictured *right* with Clive). Readers may wonder why Robin is pictured holding a china plate in front of a large cardboard carton. It had been proposed that we would have some (almost) traditional Greek dancing and plate-smashing. The cardboard box was for the plate to be thrown into and to smash without sending shards of china across the floor. Good plan. Clive is our acting Health and Safety Officer and had clearly thought of (almost) all that could possibly go wrong. But not, in fact, everything. Robin raised the dish and cast it down, and so it met its Waterloo. The good news was that she missed Clive. The bad news was that she missed the box. See the picture *below, left*. The plate moved so fast that it is only a blur. It certainly made a big smash when it hit the floor and caused gasps and much merriment. We thank Robin for being a good sport by doing the plate-smashing, but we advise her that at the next Olympic Games she may not qualify for the Discus event and should certainly not wield a javelin!



Greek-style food was prepared by some ladies at quite short notice. Janet Trencher and Christine Baker spent hours in the kitchen on Saturday afternoon making a large buffet of hot and cold food which was greatly enjoyed by all.

And then the dancing commenced to the accompaniment of music by Abba. This was led by Karen Parkinson who, with the patience of a saint and the persistence of Robert the Bruce, got us to do some complicated steps. Well, in truth they were not that complicated, but when thirty people with no experience of Greek dancing try to do it for the first time the result was bound to be more amusing than artistic. The photo *right* may appear to show Roy doing some fancy footwork on the dancefloor but in fact he was sweeping up the broken china.



The photo *left* shows Karen demonstrating the actions to The Dancing Queen, and *right* we were paying attention and getting ready for action.



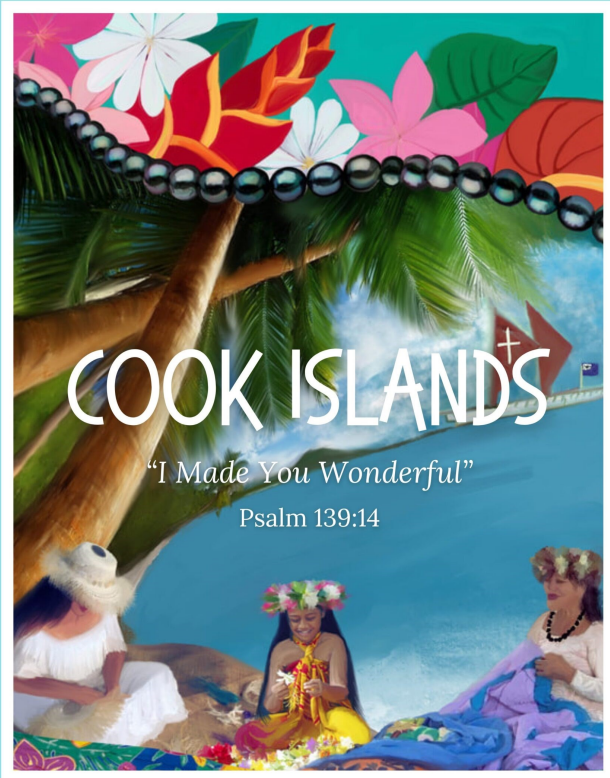
And finally, *left*, here we all were strutting our stuff. "Take a chance on me" as Karen might have said. "Mamma Mia, here we go again" as we might have replied. To Clive, our Super Trouper, we say "Thank You for the music." And When All is Said and Done, I say thank you to everyone who helped to make this event such a success; yes, I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do. (*With apologies to Abba*)

Stuart Baker

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER | MARCH 7, 2025



In partnership with World Day of Prayer International



Holy Trinity Church

Hoghton Street,
Southport

at 11.00am.

A service for
EVERYONE

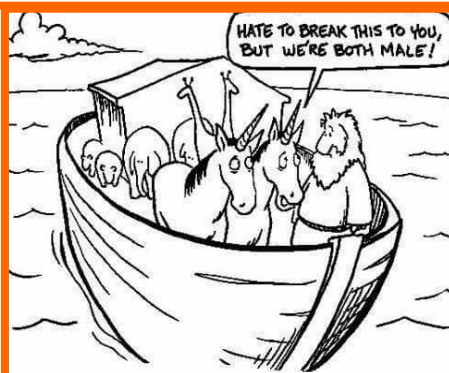
Every year, the World Day of Prayer unites people across the globe in a spirit of worship, solidarity, and shared faith. This year our focus is the **Cook Islands**. The theme, *"I Made You Wonderful"* from Psalm 139:14, serves as a beautiful reminder of God's creative work in each of us and His love of diversity. This verse expresses a sense of awe and gratitude for God's craftsmanship, not just in our physical being, but in the unique purpose and identity He gives each life.

The Cook Islands' traditions of music, dance, and storytelling remind us of the beauty of human expression. Embracing these traditions while engaging in World Day of Prayer allows participants to honour their cultural identity as part of God's creation.

World Day of Prayer is also an opportunity for the global Christian community to stand together in prayer, lifting up the unique needs and blessings of the Cook Islands. Prayers may focus on environmental stewardship, the health and prosperity of its people, and the continued growth of faith in these communities.

A clergyman consulted his doctor about his wife's snoring. "It has to STOP," he insisted. The doctor was intrigued: "Does it really bother you that much?"

"Well, it's not just me," confided the minister. "She is bothering the whole congregation."



Why there aren't any unicorns



"I slept in church because I'm striving to be more like God, and on the seventh day He rested."

St John's Prayers for those in need

We believe 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 March **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 add someone else to the list, provided you have asked their permission, then pass their name, and any other information on why they would like prayer, to Jennie.



Social Events Coming Soon at St Peter's Birkdale



29th March: Mad March Quiz Night

23rd April: Easter Bingo

8th June: Annual Open Church and Garden

31st August: Family Fun Day

For more details about these events please contact stpetersbirkdale@hotmail.com



The Canterbury Tales

We have dipped into the Tale of the Pardoner and the Tale of the Nun's Priest in previous editions. This month we shall look at the Friar's tale, and next month it will be the Summoner on whom we shall focus our attention.

The mediaeval Catholic church was plagued by corruption and scandal. In order to increase its revenue the Church began the practice of selling indulgences. Indulgences were basically documents issued by the Church entitling their owners to various spiritual blessings. Pardoners roamed the country and purported to pardon people's sins provided they paid enough money or bought or paid to see fake religious "relics" such as pieces of bone or splinters of wood.

Summoners were officials of the Ecclesiastical courts and their job was to summon to the court people who were believed to have broken canon law by not paying tithes or taxes or by committing various immoral offences. They became known as spies and blackmailers because they abused their position by receiving bribes and by extorting money from people by threatening to summon them to the court for non-existent offences.

The Friars were a religious order and they wandered and preached among the people, helping the poor and the sick. They supported themselves by working and by begging for food, but they were forbidden to accept money either as payment for work or as alms.

Anyone who can remember "The Adventures of Robin Hood" on television may recall Friar Tuck who was played by a rotund actor named Alexander Gauge, (right). The character was



depicted as a genial and good man of the church but in mediaeval times many Friars were corrupt and used their position for their own benefit.

The Pardoner, the Summoner and the Friar each told a tale which in some way reflected badly on one of the others in ways which would have been familiar to their fellow pilgrims.

The Friar's tale:

The Friar relates the comeuppance of a corrupt Summoner in a story based on a mediaeval French tale. The Summoner befriended a bailiff, who was the devil in disguise, and the two agreed to share the proceeds of their extortions. The Summoner heard a frustrated man mutter "The devil take all, cart, horse, and hay in one!" and urged the devil to take up the offer, but the devil declined, explaining to his overeager friend that it was not meant as a literal request. When the Summoner tried to extract a bribe from a poor widow, and she too asked for the devil to carry him away, the devil asked her if she really meant it. When she agreed, he whisked the Summoner off to hell.

The morals of this tale: Beware of strangers, they may not be who you think they are; and the bad will get their comeuppance.



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

On the Perils of Parking Near Church

The Rectory,
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren,

I cannot be wholly sympathetic because your church car park is now inadequate, only having space for 100 cars. Your solution of advising members of the congregation to park in the adjoining supermarket car park may not have been wise. The maximum time people can stop there is 90 minutes, and as your services often reach that length, returning to find their cars clamped may not make you universally popular – although it may give your congregation the opportunity of practising Christian forgiveness.

Since the medieval architect who built St James the Least of All was not overly concerned with car parking, the only space we have is along the road by the church. Inevitably, it gets blocked, which causes us all immense satisfaction when those not attending church but intending to have a morning shopping, find themselves unable to get out of the village until Mattins is over.

I did once encourage people to walk to church across the fields, but after we had nearly lost the present Earl in that swampy bit near the brook, I decided the idea was best dropped.

For most, the inconvenience of parking only makes attending church more of a pleasurable challenge; we so enjoy having something to complain about. Major Hastings, however, who has complained endlessly about parking problems, made a point last Christmas by leaving his car in the middle of the vicarage lawn. I was so pleased he happened to park just where I had had a garden pond filled in only the previous week. He returned to find that the car had sunk up to the windscreen and needed a crane to remove it.

For weddings, a farmer allows us to use the field adjoining the church. While he rarely attends church on Sundays, he is always there the week before – I suspect praying for heavy rain, so he can make a fortune charging to tow out with his tractor those who have got stuck. Perhaps the greatest act of witness your church could perform would be to get everyone attending church to park on the ring road, bringing the entire town to a halt until your Sunday morning Service is over.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

Translations which didn't come out quite right...

Danish airline: We take your bags and send them in all directions.

Heathrow: No electric people carrying vehicles past this point.

Japanese taxi: Safety first: please put on your seatbelt. Prepare for accident.

Kenyan maternity ward: No children allowed.

Beijing shop: Haircuts half price today. Only one per customer.

Swedish furrier: Fur coats made for ladies from their own skin.

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Sir Giles Gilbert Scott

In this article we remember Sir Giles Gilbert Scott who died 65 years ago, He was an architect who, in the northwest of England, is perhaps best remembered for his designs for the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. He was noted for his blending of Gothic tradition with modernism, making what might otherwise have been functionally designed buildings into popular landmarks.



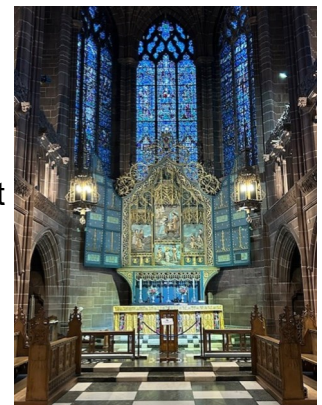
In 1901, while Scott was only 20 years of age and a pupil in an architect's practice, the diocese of Liverpool announced a competition to select the architect of a new cathedral. Two well-known architects were appointed as assessors for an open competition for architects wishing to be considered. Architects were invited by public advertisement. The project was to design what was to be only the third Anglican cathedral to be built in England since the Reformation in the 16th century (St Paul's Cathedral being the first, rebuilt from scratch after the Great Fire of London in 1666, and Truro Cathedral being the second, begun in the 19th century). The competition attracted 103 entries, from architects including Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Scott submitted his own entry, on which he worked in his spare time.

In 1903, the assessors recommended that Scott should be appointed. There was widespread comment at the nomination of a 22-year-old with no existing buildings to his credit. Scott admitted that so far his only design to be constructed had been a pipe-rack which his sister had made! The choice of winner was even more contentious when it emerged that Scott was a Roman Catholic, but the assessors' recommendation was accepted by the diocesan authorities.



In 1910 Scott realised that he was not happy with the main design, which looked like a traditional Gothic cathedral in the style of the previous century. He persuaded the cathedral committee to let him start all over again (a difficult decision, as some of the stonework had already been erected) and redesigned it as a simpler and more symmetrical building with a single massive central tower instead of the original proposal for twin towers. Scott's new plans provided more interior space. At the same time Scott modified the decorative style, losing much of the Gothic detailing and introducing a more modern, monumental style.

The Lady Chapel, (in which Sara, Martin, Colin and Gemma were confirmed by the Bishop of Liverpool last November) was the first part of the building to be completed and was consecrated in 1910 by Bishop Chavasse in the presence of two archbishops and 24 other bishops. Work was severely limited during the First World War, with a shortage of manpower, materials and money. By 1920, the workforce had been brought back up to strength and the stone quarries at Woolton, source of the red sandstone for most of the building, reopened. The first section of the main body of the cathedral was complete by 1924, and on 19 July 1924, the 20th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone, the cathedral was consecrated in the presence of King George V and Queen Mary, and bishops and archbishops from around the globe.



Construction continued throughout the 1930s, but slowed drastically throughout the Second World War, as it had done during the First. Scott continued to work on the project until his death, refining the design as he went. He designed every aspect of the building down to the fine details. The cathedral was finished in 1978, nearly two decades after Scott's death on 8th February 1960.



Amongst Scott's long list of iconic designs perhaps the one which is most familiar to us was the red telephone kiosk, an example of which is to be found in the cathedral. It is regarded as a British cultural icon throughout the world. In 2006, the K2 telephone box, designed in the 1920s, was voted one of Britain's top 10 design icons, which included the Mini, Concorde and the Routemaster bus. Next time you visit Liverpool Cathedral be sure to look for the red phone box and remember that the same architect designed that vast building and such a small iconic structure when he was less than thirty year old.

Stuart Baker

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

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

Observations on daily life

A bank is a place that will lend you money if you can prove that you don't need it.

A healthy adult consumes each year one-and-one-half times his own weight in other people's patience.

A pun is the lowest form of humour - unless you thought of it yourself.

Based on my calculations, I can afford to retire five years after I die.

Birthday cake is the only food you can blow on and spit on, and still everybody rushes to get a piece.

Coffee: starter fluid for the morning impaired.

Hospitality: making your guests feel like they're at home, even if you wish they were.

I recently decided to sell my vacuum cleaner - all it was doing was gathering dust.

My dog will eat anything until you put a pill in it. Then he's Gordon Ramsey.

DESIRE

You hanker for things that will not last
 Things that will rust and fade
 Focus on the true treasure that will last
 Treasure that will not be consumed by moth or fire
 Treasure that is more precious than gold or diamonds
 Why desire wealth and money
 When you can have real riches in abundance
 Pure love is free; from
 A lavish abundant God
 A friend and confidant in Jesus
 A guide and teacher in the Holy Spirit
 All things will pass away but the word and love of God will remain
 Desire the higher gifts that will not scratch or spoil
 Desire what can be yours for eternity
 Treasure that cannot be lost or stolen
 Treasure that is more beautiful more consuming than one could ever imagine.

by Penny Candlin

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

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I'm giving up eating chocolate for a month.
 Oh, wait, sorry, bad punctuation.
 I meant, I'm giving up. Eating chocolate for a month.



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ORCHESTRA**



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with soloists Tom Kimmance, Ben Cartlidge & Heather Stark

SATURDAY | **22ND** | **AT 7:30PM**
MARCH |

Christ Church, 124 Lord St, Southport, PR8 1AA

Tickets £12 (under 18s £6.00)

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The programme includes:

Coates "London Every Day" suite for orchestra

Brahms "Hungarian Dance No. 5"

Copland "Hoe-Down"

Khachaturian "Spartacus Suite, Adagio" (*Theme music for 'The Onedin Line'*)

Massenet: "Meditation"

Fauré: "Sicilienne"

Fauré: "Pavane"

Borodin: Overture from "Prince Igor"

W CROSS R D

Solution below

The Bible version used in our crosswords is the NIV.

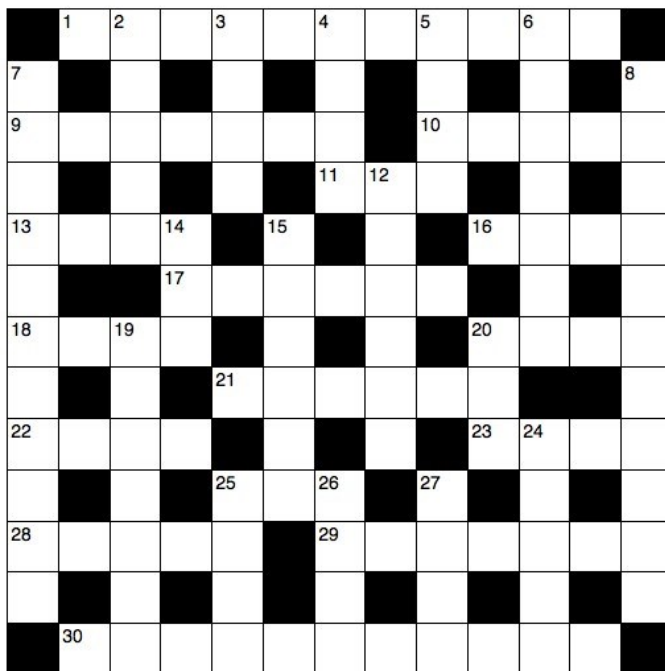
Crosswords reproduced by kind permission of BRF and John Capon, originally published in Three Down, Nine Across, by John Capon (£6.99 BRF).

Across

- 1 These letters come between Romans and Galatians (11)
 9 'You will not — me to the grave' (Psalm 16:10) (7)
 10 King of Moab to whom the Israelites were subject for 18 years (Judges 3:14) (5)
 11 Town possessing mineral spring (3)
 13 Mede (anag.) (4)
 16 High-fidelity (abbrev.) (4)
 17 He succeeded his father Rehoboam as king of Judah (1 Kings 14:31) (6)
 18 A son of Simeon (Genesis 46:10) (4)
 20 Controversial religious book of the 1970s, The — of God Incarnate (4)
 21 'He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you — — and hear' (Acts 2:33) (3,3)
 22 'You — me together in my mother's womb' (Psalm 139:13) (4)
 23 Edit (anag.) (4)
 25 'Who has believed our message and to whom has the — of the Lord been revealed?' (Isaiah 53:1) (3)
 28 Abraham's brother (Genesis 22:23) (5)
 29 'When Mordecai learned of — that had been — , he tore his clothes' (Esther 4:1) (3,4)
 30 Sympathetic (Proverbs 11:16) (4-7)

Down

- 2 'That was why his parents said, "He is — —; ask him"' (John 9:23) (2,3)
 3 Integrated Services Digital Network (1,1,1,1) 4
 4 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his — of thousands' (1 Samuel 18:7) (4)
 5 Concept (John 8:14) (4)
 6 'Do we, then, — the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law' (Romans 3:31) (7)



- 7 Industrious (2 Timothy 2:6) (11)
 8 'I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be — in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you (Ephesians 1:18) (11)
 12 'Out of the same mouth come — and cursing' (James 3:10) (6)
 14 This was how many of the Jewish leaders described Jesus (John 10:20) (3)
 15 Vitality (Job 20:11) (6)
 19 He urged David to kill Saul at Hakilah (1 Samuel 26:8) (7)
 20 'So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul — with the church and taught great numbers of people' (Acts 11:26) (3)
 24 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord — —' (Deuteronomy 6:4) (2,3)
 25 Parched (Matthew 12:43) (4)
 26 'In the image of God he created him; — and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27) (4)
 27 Disparagement (Psalm 15:3) (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

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1, Corinthians; 9, Abandon; 10, Eglon; 11, Spa; 13, Deem; 16, Hi-ft; 17, Abiyah; 18, Ohad; 20, Myth; 21, Now see; 22, Knit; 23, Tide; 25, Arm; 28, Nahor; 29, All done; 30, Kind-hearted.
 DOWN: 2, Of age; 3, ISDN; 4, Tens; 5, Idea; 6, Nullify; 7, Hardworking; 8, Enlightened; 12, Praise; 14, Mad; 15, Vigour; 19, Abishai; 20, Met; 24, Is one; 25, Arid; 26, Male; 27, Slur.

God in the Arts

The Revd Michael Burgess considers the sacred in Art.

'He gave us eyes to see them': 'Menorah' by Roger Wagner

In the midst of the dreaming spires and Gothic splendour of Oxford stands the Ashmolean Museum. Its classic proportions are a contrast to the buildings around. Within, the addition of thirty new galleries has doubled the exhibition space, and the visitor to the museum will discover a wealth of beautiful and impressive works – Renaissance drawings, Eastern art and British paintings. The last category includes this month's work: 'Menorah' by Roger Wagner. It was painted in 1993 and at that time it was the largest contemporary painting acquired by the Ashmolean. It is now on loan to St Giles' Church at the northern end of the city.



Roger Wagner was born in 1957. He graduated from Oxford and now worships at the Romanesque church of Iffley. He works on a small scale with book illustrations, but also creates large canvases that juxtapose traditional religious images with contemporary symbols in a startling and arresting way. The background of 'Menorah' is Didcot Power Station, which can be seen from the windows of the Oxford-London train. The central chimney and the cooling towers around form the shape of the seven-branched candlestick of

Judaism. In front of them are the three crosses of Calvary. Around the scene of crucifixion we can see a couple consoling each other in the foreground and isolated individuals wandering in the mud in grief and perplexity. They are dressed in Hasidic robes.

An earlier work of Roger Wagner's is 'The Burning Furnace' where angels are painted in the setting of a Victorian iron works. It is the same contrast of ancient and modern in this painting: the Good Friday of 2000 years ago and an industrial, bleak landscape of today. The artist is also contrasting the menorah of Judaism and the cross of Christianity – the suffering of the Holocaust and the suffering of the Saviour.

The menorah would burn in front of the Holy of Holies as a sign of God's invisible presence. In the book of Revelation, St John describes his vision of Jesus the Lamb in the midst of the same seven

flaming torches, moving with grace and glory. Here in 'Menorah' the figure of Jesus is insignificant against the immense scale of industrial buildings spewing out pollution into the bright sky.

But it is that figure of Jesus on the Cross who draws us this month in Holy Week and draws us in this painting. The mourners around look like figures in a concentration camp: victims of man's inhumanity to man. The cooling towers are a vivid reminder of our violation and destruction of mother earth. And in the centre we see our crucified Lord. We hear Isaiah's

song of the suffering servant that there is no sorrow like this sorrow. We also hear Jesus crying 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' And we can ponder this painting as we ask: Is it a sign of the absence of God, or, like the Menorah lit in the temple, a sign of the presence of God? There is human chemistry creating the destruction of life and earth as depicted by Roger Wagner. Can we proclaim a divine chemistry at work which will transform suffering and death into the new life of Easter in the power of the Resurrection?

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON LAW

Reflections of Lord Denning, one of the foremost English Judges of the twentieth century.

TRUTH

Let me start first with Truth. No one reading this doubts, I hope that it is his duty to tell the truth. Nevertheless if your actions were governed by expediency alone, without regard to the precepts of law, religion or morals, you would soon find that there is as much to be said for lying as there is for telling the truth. You would discard the old saying that "honesty is the best policy" as a maxim fit for fools but not for clever people like yourself. If it were necessary, in order to attain your ends, that you should tell a lie, then tell it you would: for the end would justify the means. For instance if your friend was charged with being drunk in charge of a car, and it would help him for you to say he was sober, then say it you would, although you knew he was drunk.

The reason why that reasoning is not acceptable to most of us is, I believe, because we have been taught the contrary from our mothers' knee. The Christian religion has always stressed the importance of truth, absolute truth, in all our dealings, Just as the psalmist commends the man who "speaketh the truth from his heart" (Psalms 15:2) so also St Paul enjoins the early Christians in these words:



Lord Denning,
drawn by Sallon

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25). If there is one thing that gives rise to more resentment than anything else, it is to be deceived, to be told a lie. It is an affront to the whole personality. Just as we do not wish others to deceive us, so we should not deceive them.

Copyright in Lord Denning's book is owned by the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship whom we thank for their kind permission in allowing us to publish extracts from it.

The Government slashes funds for repairing churches

Labour has been accused of bringing in a 'worship tax' by halving the tax relief paid out for repairs to listed places of worship. About 1,000 such churches are at risk of immediate closure. The average spend per year has been £42 million. It is now capped at £23 million, and individual places of worship will be given at most £25,000 per year.

Even worse, churches, synagogues and mosques have been warned that the scheme is guaranteed only for another year from March, before a further decision is made whether to continue it. The scheme was first introduced by Labour in 2001. It exempts listed places of worship from paying the full 20 per cent VAT on restoration work.

This could be a serious blow to St John's. Our recent Quinquennial Report reveals that we need to

spend several thousand pounds in the next few years on repairs. We will struggle if we cannot reclaim the 20% VAT on those works. We must hope and pray that the Government will continue with Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme for many years to come or else we shall see churches closing.

Sir Philip Rutnam, chairman of the National Churches Trust and former Home Office permanent secretary, said: "We are deeply concerned."

What's the Big Idea? – An Introduction to Books of the Old Testament: Psalms

By Canon Paul Hardingham

This month we continue our examination of a selection of books from the Old Testament.

'The Psalms have a unique place in the Bible, because most of the Scripture speaks to us, while the Psalms speak for us' (Athanasius of Alexandria).

The Book of Psalms contains 150 prayers or songs of praise, the majority (73) attributed to David, although some were composed later. They were mostly composed for liturgical worship. There are songs of praise, in which people joyfully express praise for God's work of creation and sustaining (eg 135 & 136). In others, the psalmist recounts a desperate situation and gives thanks for God's answer to his prayers (eg 30 & 116).

There are a significant number of psalms of lament, both individual (eg 3-7; 22) and communal (eg 44), which begin with a cry for help. Some express deliverance from sin (51 & 130), or point to the certainty that the Lord has heard their prayer (7, but contrast 88). The theme of trust is central in many psalms (23, 62 & 91).

The 'royal psalms' (eg 20, 21 & 72) point to the promised Messiah, fulfilled in Jesus. There are also psalms teaching wisdom (eg 37, 49); 'torah' psalms, focussing on the law of the Lord (eg 1, 19 & 119), and psalms which celebrate the history of Israel and God's faithfulness (eg 78, 105 & 106).

The psalms can help us in our own prayers, by providing us with models to follow, as they express our own deepest feelings as we approach God: *'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul'* (Psalm 23:1-3).

WORD SEARCH *Solution on page 28*

March brings us Lent and Mothering Sunday. Lent is a time of spiritual self-assessment as we prepare for Easter. It is a time to turn to God, and to grow closer to Him. Mothering Sunday reminds us of not only the mothers that have loved and raised us, but of Mother Church, who has spiritually loved and nurtured us throughout our Christian pilgrimage. How many words can you find on these themes in this month's Word Search?

e	e	f	e	p	d	n	t	l	y	r	l	g	p	i
l	c	r	t	r	r	y	f	a	m	i	l	y	n	u
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lent	desert	mothers	disciples
spiritual	selfdenial	love	worldwide
easter	repentance	care	flowers
preparation	seeking	nurture	thankyou
fasting	finding	learning	nursing
prayer	Growing	teaching	family

The story behind "Abide With Me"

This is one of the best known hymns in the English language. Millions of people who never go to church have sung it at the FA Cup Final since 1927, the year when Cardiff City beat Arsenal 1-0 and became the only non-English side to lift the trophy. It had been used once before at the FA Cup final of 1923 when crowds spilled on to the pitch before kick-off and the event choir of St Luke's sang it while the pitch was being cleared.

It was written by Henry Francis Lyte who also wrote many other hymns of which one of the best known is "Praise my soul the King of Heaven." He was born in 1793 at Ednam, near the Scottish border town Kelso, and at the age of ten he was sent to a school in County Fermanagh where he proved himself to be popular and the most able boy in the school. He was academically gifted and at the age of 20 he was awarded a major scholarship to Trinity College, Dublin. Although he had intended to become a doctor he took Anglican holy orders in 1815 and became a curate in a parish in Cornwall in 1817 and the vicar of a new parish at Lower Brixham in 1823. Much could be written about his ministry in that parish, but this article is about "Abide With Me" so we shall bypass the biographical details and move to the hymn. There is no unanimity amongst historians about when this hymn was written. An article in *The Spectator* in 1925 posited that Lyte composed the hymn in 1820, but other commentators opine that

he probably wrote the hymn many years later when he was very ill with tuberculosis. One fact on which there appears to be some agreement is that in about 1820 he went to comfort an old friend, William Auguste Le Hunte, who was dying, and Hunte kept repeating the words "abide with me." Although Lyte may have written some lines in 1820 the balance of opinion is that he composed the hymn in its entirety in 1847 only a few weeks before he died whilst staying with his daughter in a hotel in Nice.

The biblical link for the hymn is Luke 24:29 in which the disciples asked Jesus to abide with them "for it is toward evening and the day is spent."

The tune to which we sing this hymn was composed by W.H. Monk. The story goes that whilst giving a music lesson to a none too talented pupil Monk cast around for distraction from the unmelodious noise and finding the words of "Abide with me" close to hand he composed the tune in less than ten minutes.

History records that the hymn was sung by nurse Edith Cavell the night before she was executed by the Germans, and by Ernest Shackleton the night before he died, and by the doomed passengers of the *Titanic*. For those who trust in God it reminds us that there is comfort even unto death. It is hardly surprising that it has become such a frequently requested hymn at funerals.

Stuart Baker

Primary Source: "Every Hymn Has a Story, Vol. 1", John Large

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.

Science and a sense of the Transcendent

What is the difference between a cathedral and a physics lab? Are they not both saying: 'Hello'? - Annie Dillard

Scientists often speak of a reality beyond the objects they are studying, and for some this is encountered in powerful – if rare – episodes of wonder and awe. The Christian writer J.W. Sire quotes this line from Annie Dillard in his book *Echoes of a Voice*, which explores spiritual or 'transcendent' experiences.

In his analysis of these experiences Sire describes moments that are “emotional, intellectual, highly charged, usually sudden, unannounced, often odd, some weird, others glorious”, and places them on three different levels:

A material object that points beyond the material reality. For example, someone might develop a sense of what is good and evil, based on the actions of others.

Experience of “something personal...just behind the surface of what we are directly experiencing, often something with which one feels at peace or even at one, or, perhaps, as dangerous or threatening.”

A felt presence that has a specific character or presence, e.g., holiness, or inspiring humility, fearful awe or wonder.

According to Sire, level 1-2 experiences are fairly common but level 3 is rare. He gives a wide range of examples, including scientists. Some of these people are religious or interested in spirituality, others are atheists. Some of their moments of transcendence carried a particular meaning, others simply sparked curiosity.

The famous geneticist Francis Collins described several significant moments when he was young: “being transported by the experience of looking through a telescope”, or “a Christmas Eve where the descant on a particularly beautiful Christmas carol...left me with a sense of unexpected awe and a longing for something I could not name”.

These experiences meant that when Collins was faced with the question of belief in God, “all [his] arguments seemed very thin”. Now, as a fully-fledged scientist and a believer in God, he is able to say that “for a scientist who occasionally is given the remarkable privilege of discovering something not previously known by man, there is a special kind of joy associated with such flashes of insight.”

Most of us are not scientists, but we may well have had experiences like this in different contexts. How can we, in our engagement with scientifically minded individuals, make connections through our shared experience of the transcendent? Can we listen as well as explain, finding some common points of connection?

The Revd Dr Jo White considers the history of baptism

Reflecting Faith: The Meaning of Baptism

One of the clearest visual symbols inside a church building relates to where the font, used for baptism, is placed.

We often think of Baptism as being uniquely Christian, but this is not the case. Most established religions have some form of rite to welcome a new person – regardless of their age – into their fellowship.

If you think of Jesus being baptised in the river Jordan by John, it is clear that this was something within the Jewish practice happening before 'Christianity' came into being.

When Paul writes to the Corinthians in his first letter, he compares the Christian rite with baptism 'into Moses in the sea'. This comes from him being a Hillelite rabbi who argued that as

'the Jews passed from slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea into Canaan, so the Gentile passed from heathenism through baptism into the "promised land" '.

Baptism was intended as a symbolic action of outward cleansing, meaning change, from not being part of the 'group' to being welcomed into it. It was accepted that the person's inside did not change! There was and still remains nothing magical about that (unfortunately).

In the Book of Acts there is an instance where one person chose to follow Christ, and the whole family was baptised.

The Early Church took baptism very seriously, and new believers had to spend a good length of time preparing for it. As the years passed, the babies of Christian believers came to be baptised shortly after birth.

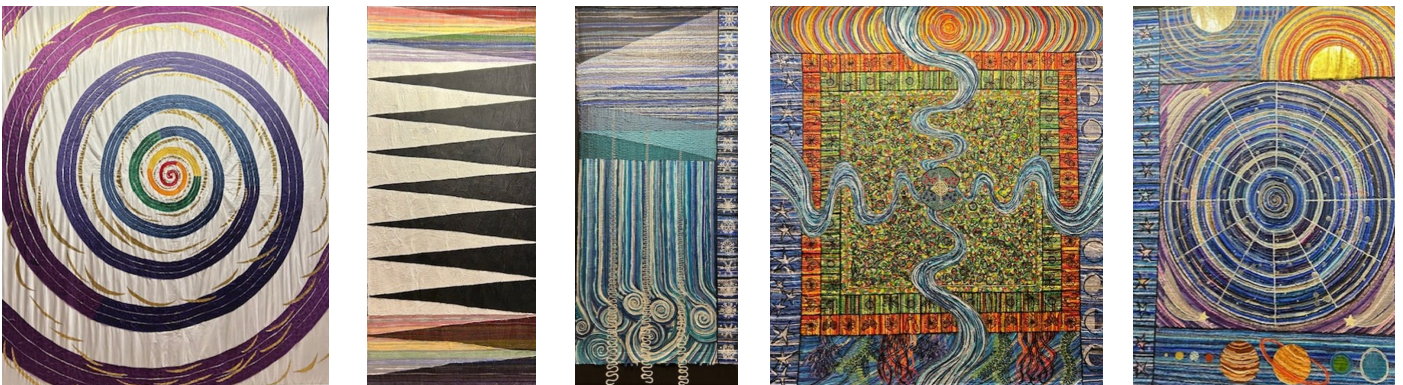
Threads Through The Bible

At Liverpool Anglican Cathedral recently there has been an exhibition of textile art which was created by Jacqui Parkinson and is in three huge sequences: Threads through Creation; Threads through the Cross; and Threads through Revelation. They are said to be possibly the largest textile project created in the last 600 years.

Designing and making the 44 panels has taken about 10 years and used more than 25 million stitches. If the panels, some of which are almost 8 feet high, were to be presented side by side they would stretch to more than 80 metres.

Each panel is based on a text from the Bible, and the artist very imaginatively interpreted those texts in order to design intricate works of art by which to illustrate them. Because the Anglican Cathedral is such a vast building it was possible for the three sections of the display to be located in three separate areas.

The first section. Threads through Creation, starts (as its name suggests) by telling the wonderful story about the creation of the universe and our world. It is a story which resonates with many faiths and which has been told and retold for thousands of years.



These seven panels represent the creation of the heavens and the earth and all that is on our planet. The first imagines the swirling mass of everything at the time of creation, the time when order was made of chaos, with God at the centre. The second panel represents the separation of light from darkness, day from night. This was all part of the first "day". The third panel illustrates the separation of waters and the creation of the sky ('Day' 2). The fourth is the separation of dry ground (land) from water

(seas) and the bursting forth of plants and seeds and trees ('Day'3). The fifth is the creation of the sun, the moon and the lights in the sky ('Day' 4). The sixth panel is 'Day' 5 when God created fish and birds of every kind, and the seventh panel is the creation of every kind of animal (on 'Day' 6) and man and woman.

This exhibition will end on Sunday 2nd March in Liverpool (so you can still see it if you go on Saturday or Sunday after this issue of **THE WORD** is delivered) and thereafter it will be displayed in Southwell Minster in March and April, Ely Cathedral in May and June, and it will return to the northwest by visiting Chester Cathedral in May and June 2026. It is highly recommended

Why are the Leek and the Daffodil the symbols of Wales and St David?

This may have its roots in legends. In the year 1346, when the Prince of Wales defeated the French at the Battle of Crécy in northern France, Welsh archers are said to have fought bravely in a field of leeks, and as a reminder of their bravery and loyalty, the Welsh began to wear a leek in their caps every St David's Day (1st March).

The legend makes an appearance in William Shakespeare's play Henry V written in the 1500s, when Fluellen, a character from Wales, wears a leek to show that he is from Wales. During the Tudor period, monarchs asked their guards to wear leeks on their uniforms on St David's Day. One legend has it that when St David went into battle, he asked all of his army to wear leeks on their armour to keep them safe.

And in 1536, Henry VIII is said to have presented his daughter with a leek on St David's Day. The Welsh word for daffodil is **cenhinen Bedr**, which translates to "Peter's leek". Sadly, it's not known who the mysterious Peter was who gave his name to the flower. Because these plants both bloom at this time of year, the daffodil might have been chosen as a prettier and more pleasant smelling option than the leek. If any of our readers have any better explanations please tell the Editor.



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).

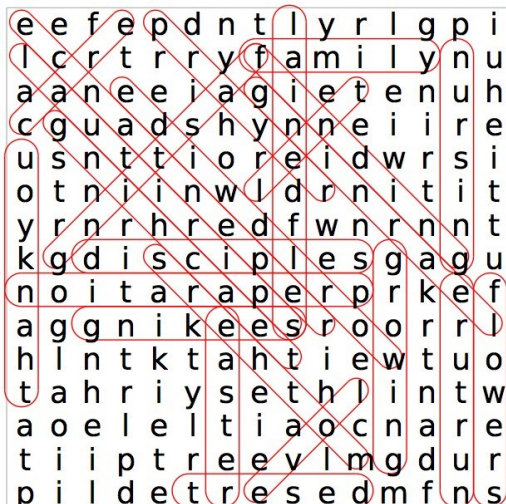


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THE GOOD KINGS AND BAD KINGS OF ENGLAND

By Dennis Davis

*Dennis continues his exploration of some of our Kings and finds that some were less good than some others. This month he looks at **James II**.*

James Stuart, Duke of Albany, Duke of York and the last Stuart King of England, Scotland and Ireland, was born at St James Palace London in 1633, the second surviving son of Charles I and Henrietta Maria and was named after his Grand father King James I of England and VI of Scotland. He lived in Oxford during the Civil war. Parliament ordered his removal to St James's Palace. He escaped to France where he joined his father; he joined the French army and was said to have been brave and courageous but not a brilliant soldier. He changed sides when his father made a treaty with Spain. James fled to Bruges and joined the Spanish army taking part in the battle of the Dunes for which he was made Duke of Albany.

At the Restoration of Charles the 2nd, James returned to England and was given command of the Royal Navy, serving 13 years during which time the British fleet was defeated at the battle of Medway. He later took part in the 3rd Anglo Dutch war, when the Dutch were defeated the Dutch province of New Amsterdam was captured and renamed New York in his honour and James was made Duke of York.

In 1660 his first marriage caused a scandal when he married Anne Hyde the Prime Minister's daughter secretly and without permission; they were to have 2 surviving children, Mary who was to marry William of Orange; and Anne. Also in 1668 he converted to Catholicism but did not lose the right to succession. His Brother insisted that James was still to attend Anglican services and his children to be brought up as Protestants. James gave up all his offices and refused to take an anti-Catholic oath. The general public were alarmed by this.

James came to the throne in 1685. On the death of his first wife he remarried Mary of Modena, a Roman Catholic Princess. He gave Catholics high ranks in the army and Judiciary and made a declaration of Indulgence for the Catholics causing hysteria among the population. A small group of nobles met in the Cock and Pynot Inn in Old Whittington near Chesterfield, later known as the Revolution House. The Duke of Devonshire and the Earl of Danby were two of the plotters to overthrow James, but not to kill him.



James's daughter Mary and her husband the William, Prince of Orange were invited to take the British throne. James fled to France when he heard that William had landed at Tor Bay sparking the "Glorious Revolution". James gathered an army in France with French help. They landed in Ireland where the Jacobites rushed to support him. William sent an Army to Ireland who captured Carrickfergus castle where William was to land and take command. He brought troops from the Netherlands including his famous Blue Guards.

After several small battles the armies met at the River Boyne. It was said that there were Catholics in William's army and that the Pope had given them his blessing. At the start of the battle the Irish army repelled the British as they tried to cross the river; they then tried to cross at another ford lower down, Again they were repulsed and fell back. General Schlomberg, William's general went to rally the Inniskillens who were retreating. He pointed to the other bank and shouted: "Gentlemen there are your persecutors" at which point Schlomberg was shot and killed. The Blue Guard forced a crossing with the Inniskillens and attacked the flank causing the Irish to flee except for a small group who held out to the end. James, over a mile away from the battle had fled to the disgust of the Irish who gave him a name which we shall not include in these pages but which revealed that they thought he was a Very Bad King!

James fled to the continent where he later died. Many Jacobites fled with him and in later years tried to take back the throne. The old Pretender and later Bonny Prince Charlie, the young Pretender, both failed in their attempts. That is another story...

The Bible is a letter God has sent to us; prayer is a letter we send to Him. –
Matthew Henry

ADAPT OR PERISH

by John M. Shakespeare

To survive in today's world of climate change, as well other threats to our well-being, we must seek solutions. In reaching either a physical or mental state of well-being, we have to Adapt to meet the needs of a changing and also evolving society, or literally stand in danger of Perishing.

Take physical disability: huge strides have been made in the development of prosthetic limbs to help us to adapt. In the fields of mental health, the fact that we now recognise "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder", and other traumas that we are open to in today's world, means better and more understanding, concerning treatment in such cases. The sick in body or mind are no longer left to Perish.

I would like to quote at this point the second verse of "Invictus" by W.E. Henley (1846-1899), which I believe expresses admirable spirit.

"In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed."

One of the ways we need to Adapt is linked to the food that we eat. Various environmental pundits in the media have told us that population increase will pose a critical problem with food supplies.

In July 1999 Lord Melchett, along with fellow Greenpeace activists, destroyed a crop of genetically modified (GM) food in Norwich. I believe that we may have to go the way of GM foodstuffs to avoid seeing populations Perish from starvation. In December 2003 the Nuffield Council reported that GM crops could help in drought-ridden parts of the world, and with food scarcity problems in developing countries.

At some time in our lives we will all suffer the loss of a relative or friend. In order to deal with the natural state of grief, we will need to Adapt. This may take the form of moving to a flat, a family home or carrying on in our present habitation. At times like this I believe that Psalm 102 (verses 1-2), is very apt:

"Hear my prayer, O lord, let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face from me on the day of my distress. Incline your ear to me, answer me speedily on the day when I call."

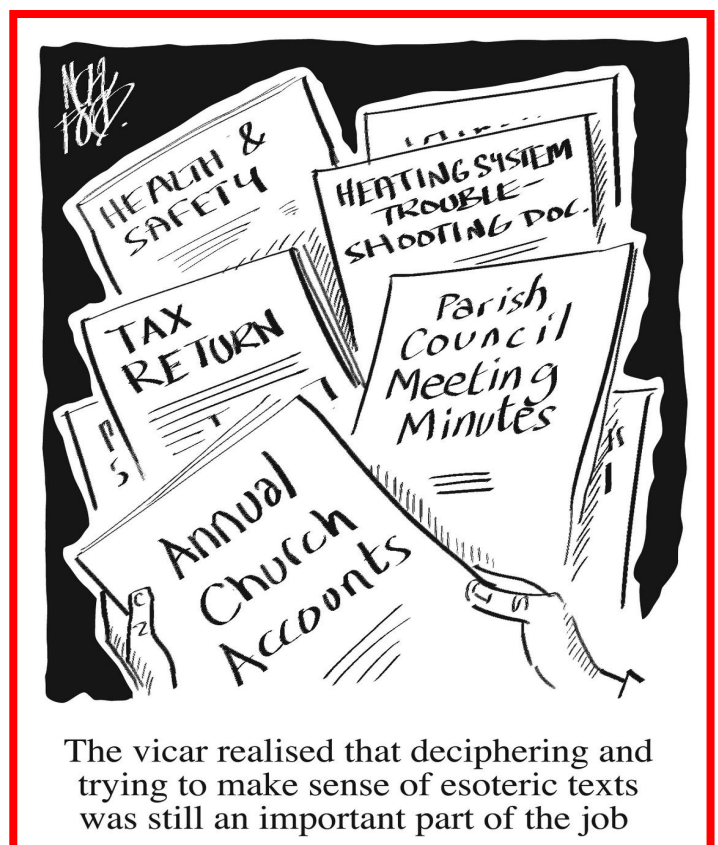
Thomas Robert Malthus's (1766-1834) essay on "Population" undermined a popular belief at the time of the unlimited possibilities of human progress and perfection. He, I believe, saw the

expansion of populations growing faster than the increase in resources needed, this leading to a grim vista of epidemics and famine. I recall seeing on television one of the outdoor gurus saying how much nourishment there was in eating a selection of bugs. He may be right, but hopefully we can come up with something more appetising, to help out with our food requirements.

Poverty is a measure, I would say, as to how well our society Adapts to the demands of the 21st century. It can be argued that poverty is a relative state of affairs between first and third world countries. However, the fact that we have in our country people sleeping in the street despite the myriad reasons does grieve me. To quote Samuel Johnson (1709-1784):

"Resolve not to be poor, whatever you have spend less. Poverty is a great enemy to human happiness, it certainly destroys liberty, and makes some virtues impracticable and others difficult".

There is much good in this world of ours, despite health threats and political ambitions. Of course we need to adapt to changes in our personal and national welfare, but remember the proverb. "To change, and to change for the better, are two different things".



The vicar realised that deciphering and trying to make sense of esoteric texts was still an important part of the job

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**:

The telephone number you must ring is: 0203 481 5240

The Meeting Identification Number every Thursday will be: 835 5074 3780.

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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 8th March 1965 the first US troops arrived in Vietnam. This marked the beginning of the USA's main involvement in the war.

Also 60 years ago, on 18th March 1965 Soviet cosmonaut Aleksei Leonov became the first person ever to make a spacewalk.

50 years ago, on 26th March 1975 the Biological Weapons Convention came into effect. This multilateral disarmament treaty banned the development, production and stockpiling of all biological and toxin weapons. (*Many nations are disregarding this Convention. Ed.*)

40 years ago, on 3rd March 1985 British miners voted to return to work after a year-long strike over pit closures and job losses.

30 years ago, on 2nd March 1995 the 'rogue trader' Nick Leeson was arrested for his role in the collapse of Barings, Britain's oldest merchant bank. Four days later, on 6th March, the Dutch bank ING purchased Barings, for the nominal price of £1.

Also 30 years ago, on 26th March 1995 the Schengen Treaty came into effect in the European Union. Seven nations (Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain) eliminated their internal border controls and tightened their external borders.

20 years ago, on 10th March 2005 Dave Allen, Irish comedian, died.

10 years ago, on 12th March 2015 Terry Pratchett, British fantasy novelist best known for his Discworld series, died of Alzheimer's, aged 66.

Also 10 years ago, on 24th March 2015 the Germanwings Flight 9525 crashed in the French alps, killing all 150 people on board. An investigation found that the co-pilot had deliberately caused the crash. His doctor had declared him unfit to fly due to suicidal tendencies, but he had reported for work anyway.

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.

Prayer for March 2025

Dear Lord,

In this month when Lent begins, we remember the difficult journey Jesus made to the cross, to take upon Himself our sins and the sins of the whole world, to bring us the hope of eternal life by His resurrection.

Lord, we bring to You our own journeys through our daily lives. We bring our disappointments, our bewilderment, our pain, as well as our happy times. We thank You that You are with us in and through all of it.

We thank you that the message of Christmas is the message of Lent and the message of every day – You, our God, are with us always, giving us hope and life, because of Jesus.

Thank You that He made that journey for us, and all we have to do is trust in Him. Help us to do that and to share His good news with others, especially those in distress. We pray in His name. Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

Negotiations with myself – and God

Dag Hammarskjold (1905 – 1961) gave the impression of being an agnostic humanist while he was serving as Secretary -General of the United Nations. So, it was a surprise when after his death in a plane crash, his private papers contained some notes entitled "negotiations with myself – and with God". His prayers have a naked honesty which is deeply moving. This one is from 1961, written the year of his untimely death.

Have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon our efforts, That we before Thee, in love and in faith, Righteousness and humility, May follow Thee, With self-denial, steadfastness and courage, And meet Thee in the silence.

Give us a pure heart that we may see Thee,
A humble heart that we may hear Thee,
A heart of love that we may serve Thee,
A heart of faith that we may love Thee,
Thou whom I do not know
But whose I am.

Thou whom I do not comprehend
But who hast dedicated me
To my fate. Thou –

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To:

Emily Potts on 4th March
 Denise Davey on 5th 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

Goodbye Mr Bond...

A reader of The Times newspaper, Joseph Connolly, lamented the sale of the James Bond franchise to the American business Amazon and wrote that the Bond should always remain British. His letter continued:

"I well remember my fascination with the novels when I read them at prep school, despite not understanding much of it, such as why 007 should wish to share a hotel room with some girl when he could clearly afford one all to himself. Then there was his predilection for drinks to be shaken, not stirred. I tried it one with Tizer and it just went everywhere."

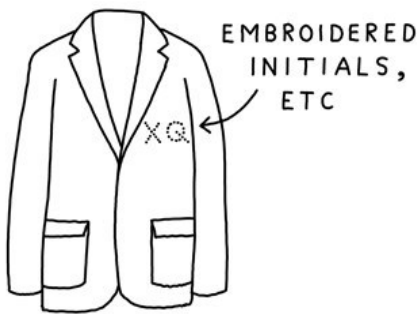
Welsh Wizards...

Those who can remember the thrill of watching the mighty Welsh Rugby Football teams of the 1970s will be saddened by the current Wales team's loss of form, having now lost 15 consecutive matches. The legendary scrum half, Gareth Edwards, *right*, was interviewed after the current team were beaten by France recently. He was asked if his team from the 1970s would have beaten this Welsh team. He said "yes, but only just." The interviewer asked "only just?" Edwards replied "Yes, but to be fair six of us are dead and the rest are in our 70s."



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