

# *St. George's Montezbury*

Magazine 50p



*February 2023*

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QUOTE: No medicine is more valuable... none better suited to the cure of all our temporal ills than a friend to whom we may turn for consolation in time of trouble  
- and with whom we may share our happiness in time of joy.  
- *St Aelred of Rievaulx*



## *LIFTING UP OUR EYES*

*With Greg Smith*

One of the highlights of 2022 were the Lent lunches that St George's hosted. The lunches had been regularly mentioned to me as a valued part of church and community life, but until I had experienced them for myself, I hadn't properly understood their significance. It was wonderful to see the West End Room full of people enjoying fellowship (and soup) in what can only be described as enthusiastic conversation. What was especially important to me was to see all four Pontesbury denominations well represented, each playing a full part.

Last year, our focus was on the Cross, and the individuals gathered around it or who had led the way to it, including Mary, Judas, Pilate, the Centurion and the penitent thief. It was an excellent way to prepare for the Passion as well as uplifting and challenging to hear what other Ministers had to say. It's amazing how much content can be fitted into a ten-minute talk. This year, our focus is rather different. Recognizing that this is the Year of Prayer for Hereford Diocese, which will include plenty of opportunities to pray and to learn how to pray through the course of the next 12 months, we will be revisiting the Lord's Prayer at our Wednesday lunches. Each week, beginning February 22<sup>nd</sup>, we will consider a different sentence and explore its meaning.

I am as guilty as anyone else in saying the prayer by rote (I must have learnt it in the infants) without always properly engaging with what it is that I'm actually praying. I will be grateful for the reminder to pray the most important prayer ever written intelligently and thoughtfully; to recognize how much of what we otherwise find ourselves praying for in our intercessions is already foreshadowed in the prayer Jesus taught us; and to embody the fact that when we say "Our" Father, this embraces Christians of all denominations and languages across the world.

Many people say from time to time: if only I knew how to pray better. One exercise I sometimes commend is to rewrite the Lord's Prayer in your own words. I doubt if you can improve on them, although the English version (traditional or modern) is only an imperfect translation from the original Greek, but it is a way of owning the words. In this way, it becomes not just The Lord's Prayer, but yours.



*The Ven John Barton considers what you need to remember when you pray.*

## *Some hints about prayer this Lent*

Prayer is instinctive for human beings, even those who don't regard themselves as religious. You are standing at a bus stop in the wind and the rain, thinking 'I do hope the bus will come soon'. It's an inner yearning. It defies logic: either the bus is coming, or it isn't. But we all do it. It's instinctive and it's the raw material of prayer. Hoping for something better is basic. Like all instincts, it needs to be trained.

To whom do we pray? What you pray, and the way you do it will be shaped by your view of God. Christian prayers are fashioned by what we know of Jesus and what He taught about prayer.

We pray by invitation. Again and again, Jesus encouraged His companions to pray. A couple of His parables on the subject have been misinterpreted as instructions to persuade a resistant God to do what we want. Have a look at Luke 18, verses 1-8, about a widow whose perseverance finally persuaded an unwilling judge to rule in her favour. The lesson is that God is *not* like that! Similarly, an unwelcome neighbour who persistently calls for help in the middle of the night gets what he wants (Luke 11:5-13). The lesson? If tenacious lobbying can overcome human unwillingness, *how much more* our gracious God will heed His children's cry.

Pushing at an open door. Jesus is already praying for us. So, when we start to pray, we step on to an already moving staircase. Sometimes prayer seems tougher than it need be. Jesus invited us to be linked to Him, in the way an inexperienced bullock is yoked to a mature ox. Have a look at Matthew 11:28-29, which concludes "for my yoke is easy and my burden is light". When Marion Bartoli unexpectedly won the 2013 Women's Wimbledon final, she said "I believe if you put all your heart and effort into everything you are doing, then God is there to help you."

Is your prayer on the right lines? Try adding "for Christ's sake" at the end. "Please let my marrow win the Gardening Club competition"? No. "Not my will but yours" is the key. So when praying, don't give God instructions, just report for duty.

## Pray

By Daphne Kitching

*(Matthew 6:5,9)*

When you pray...

Words and wisdom of Jesus –

He doesn't say, if or in case,

He says, when... you pray.

And we will.

From deep within,

Our spirit calls out to God,

Created to communicate with the Creator.

Cinemas can ban,

Statistics can suggest we won't,

But Jesus says, when you pray...

Say, Our Father,

And when we do, he hears and answers

And pours out his love,

Always.


## Giving up for Lent

At the end of the pre-Lent sermon, the vicar suggested, as an example to the rest of the community, that the congregation should worship in an unheated church for the whole of Lent. As they made their way into the chill Sunday air the vicar addressed one member of the congregation, asking what she had decided to give up for Lent. "Church," she replied firmly.



# Readings and Services for this MONTH

Here are the Sunday Service details, and the readings which you may enjoy at home if you are unable to join a church service this month.

| Date   | Service                           | Readings   |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| 5 <sup>th</sup> February<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday<br>before Lent  | Morning Worship<br>10.30am        | 2 Corinthians 4 5-15<br>Luke 10 1-9,17-21                    |
| Tuesday<br>7 <sup>th</sup> February  | Tea Services<br>2.30pm            |  |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> February<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday<br>before Lent   | Holy Communion<br>10.30am         | TBA  |
| 19 <sup>th</sup> February<br>Sunday next<br>before Lent  | Holy Communion<br>10.30am         | (Exodus 24 12-end)<br>2 Peter 1 16-end<br>Matthew 17 1-9     |
| 21 <sup>st</sup> February<br>Shrove Tuesday  | 11am<br>St. George's<br>Explorers |  |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> February<br>Ash Wednesday<br> | 6.30pm<br>Holy Communion          | Isaiah 58 1-12<br>(Psalm 51 1-18)<br>John 8 1-11             |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> February<br>1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent  | Holy Communion<br>10.30am         | (Genesis 2 15-17, 3 1-7)<br>Romans 5 12-19<br>Matthew 4 1-11 |

Quote: There is nothing round the corner which is beyond God's view.  
- J Charles Stern



Canon Paul Hardingham considers  
what showing love can mean in  
everyday life.

## *The Language of Love*

Valentine's Day reminds us of the importance of expressing our love to those close to us. But how can we go beyond simply offering flowers and a card? Jesus says: '*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another*' (John 13:34). How can we express love like Jesus in our everyday relationships to our partner, children, neighbours or work colleagues?

### **Listening**

We need to listen to others, just as Jesus did. He asked questions of people and waited for them to process their answer. According to James, '*everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*' (James 1:19). How well do we listen to others? How often do we find ourselves already thinking of what we want to say before somebody's finished speaking? Listening takes time; don't rush it!

### **Touching**

Jesus reached out to touch the untouchables in His world, including lepers, the sick and children. This was completely out of character for rabbis of His day. For us today, a warm handshake may be of value. Of course, it should always be an *appropriate* touch – helpful for the other person, not just for ourselves.

### **Speaking**

Jesus' conversation was always full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Do we speak words of *grace*, by offering comfort, giving encouragement or expressing care and concern? However, we should also be ready to speak words of *truth*, in asking for forgiveness, seeking reconciliation or addressing conflict. As Paul urges us, don't avoid: '*speaking the truth in love*'.

Where is the challenge for us in expressing love this Valentine's Day?

# Our Local and Church COMMUNITY

**2023 CELTIC EVENING SERVICES** are planned for  
31st January, 10th May, 2nd August, 1st November,  
all beginning in St. George's at 6.30pm.

*Tuesday 31st January:*

## *Imbolc—Welcoming the light*



Whether you are a practising Christian or have no particular faith, you are welcome to join us in exploring the wisdom and spirituality of the Celtic Christian past. Based on long-forgotten texts recently translated from Latin, Irish and Welsh, our journey will take us into times and places which, while very different from our own, offer fresh insights and wisdom for the challenges we face today.

These quiet candle-lit services last around 50 minutes and consist of meditation and prayer, readings of scripture and poetry, a short presentation as well as a little singing and some piano music. You will be welcome to light a votive candle at the beginning. The services are open and welcoming to everyone; there is no Holy Communion or Creed, just peace and fellowship.

**St. George's PARISH VISITORS** Would you, or someone you know, appreciate some help or a phone call? Maybe you're feeling lonely, isolated, in need of support and friendship?

*St. George's Church has a team of friendly people who would love to **phone** or **visit** you - **if we can help, we will !***

*Call in confidence: Phone **Marion Elliott 01743 792256***

**St. George's Prayer Chain** is a small group of people who believe that prayer can make a difference. Each person within the group offers daily prayer for anyone who asks for prayer.

If you yourself or someone you know needs special prayer for any reason, please contact

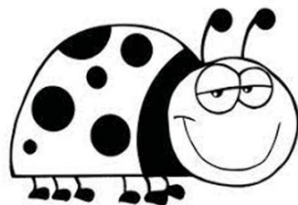
**Rev. Shirley Small 01743 791885.**

All information given is given in confidence.

A name is enough if that is all you wish to give.



# Beetle Drive with Pancakes



**£5 per ticket - from**  
**Val 790587**  
**Mary 791069**  
**Heather 790359**

**Tuesday**  
**21st February**  
**West End Room**  
**St. George's Church**  
**7pm**

*Coming soon:*

**March 18th.**

*Curry and quiz evening.*

Tickets £8, starting at 7.00pm.

**April 22nd**

*Big Breakfast.*

Tickets £10,  
from 9.30 to 11.30am

***OASIS***

*FREE lunch & companionship for anyone living in Pontesbury,  
Minsterley and surrounding villages, who has been recently bereaved...  
...on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays every month, 12pm - 1.30pm  
Minsterley Methodist Chapel, Horsebridge Rd, Minsterley.  
Transport is Available—Friends & Family are Welcome too.*

Contact Heather Ryder for more information, at  
[ryder928@btinternet.com](mailto:ryder928@btinternet.com) or 01743 790359

We now have our own logo so look out for further information over the next few weeks as we continue to grow and become better known throughout the Rea Valley.

The support of Shrewsbury Food Bank Plus continues as we become more established and enables us to help the many households where budgets are under huge pressure. In these unprecedented times, sudden illness, a delay in benefits, a large unexpected repair bill, etc. can easily cause a financial crisis. We will bridge the gap until your circumstances improve by providing a weekly parcel of nutritionally balanced food.

Throughout the county of Shropshire, people are keen to share with others and the Rea Valley community is no exception. We're here to pass that support on to those who could do with a bit of extra help.

You do need a referral but just call  
Reverend Greg Smith 07902 794653  
or Reverend Richard Lonsdale 07922 830488

and you will be warmly welcomed by our team when you  
come to your collection point.

|                                 |                      |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Holy Trinity Church, Minsterley | Tuesdays 10am-12.00  |
| St George's Church, Pontesbury  | Thursdays 10am-12.00 |

*FINANCIAL DONATIONS ARE HUGELY WELCOME AND ENABLE US  
TO BUY ITEMS WE RUN SHORT OF.*

*HERE ARE THE ACCOUNT DETAILS:*

The Rea Valley Foodbank  
51-61-06  
76841804

The reference is: Donor

If you would like more information then please email  
[support@reavalleyfoodbank.co.uk](mailto:support@reavalleyfoodbank.co.uk)

You know about the Rea Valley Food Bank, working in our local community with the Shrewsbury Food Bank PLUS.

**But do you know about the ...**



Shrewsbury Food Hub is a charity which collects surplus food from local supermarkets, manufacturers and farms, and shares it fairly with groups and individuals in the community. This is food which is still good to eat but would otherwise go to landfill.

**Everyone** is welcome at **Foodshare** which runs in several venues across Shrewsbury on 7 days a week: you don't have to be referred, just **come along and help yourself**.

The volunteers at Foodshare don't know what food there will be to share each day, but there's always bread and bakery items, and often fruit and vegetables, eggs or frozen food. Food shares run on a 'pay as you feel' basis, and there are no worries if you are unable to donate – everyone is helping by getting the food eaten and thus helping the planet by reducing the food waste going to landfill.

Foodshares are held in 12 locations all over the Shrewsbury area.

**Information, including the venues and opening times of Foodshare sessions, are available on the website**  
**[shrewsburyfoodhub.org.uk](http://shrewsburyfoodhub.org.uk)**

**and also on the Food Hub page on FaceBook.**

**Come reign in me** by Sam Doubtfire

Oh God, who made the world so fair,  
And formed the earth, the sky, the  
sea;  
Who gave us ears, and eyes, and minds,  
To hear, to see, to know all love is thee.

Oh God, who in the Lord Jesus,  
Gave us a light to light our way;  
Let our life's lamp be lit by Him  
Whose strength will see us safely  
through each day.

Oh God, whose Spirit gave us birth,  
And holds all life secure, e'en mine;  
Take all I am, and all I have,  
Bless and redeem them for they  
both are Thine.

Oh God the Father, God the Son,  
And God the Spirit, three in one;  
Blessed be thy name, come reign  
in me,  
And in me let thy will be done.

# Looking at GOD

## What the temptations mean for us

*by Canon David Winter*

Immediately after His baptism in the River Jordan, Jesus faced and resisted three powerful temptations during 40 days in the wilderness of Judea. This time of testing and temptation was His preparation for the work God had sent Him to do on earth. It's the principle behind the season of Lent, which begins on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Although the temptations were personal to Jesus, many of us will recognise their relevance in our own lives.

The first was simple. 'You're hungry. You can do miracles. Well, turn these hot stones at Your feet into loaves of bread'. It sounds quite plausible, but in fact it's an invitation to put one's own needs first. Temptation rejected.

Then came the second: 'throw yourself off a pinnacle of the Temple. You know that God will send His angels to catch you before you hit the ground'. Again, it's plausible (there was even a verse from the Bible to back it up). But this would be to substitute one spectacular publicity stunt for the hard slog of travel, preaching, healing and touching individual lives. Temptation rejected.

The third was outrageous. 'Fall down and worship corrupt and evil power, and You will have infinite worldly power and success'. In other words, the divine Son of God should deny His Father and worship the devil, to glean success without going to the Cross. For the third time, temptation resisted.

I know these temptations were tests of the Messiah Jesus, but can't we see in them temptations that come to all of us from time to time? Look after number one, and all will be well. Take the short cut to success and avoid all the hard slog. Compromise your integrity, in order to fulfill your ambitions. Or choose the hard way: walk the narrow path of honesty, commitment, and truth. That's really the Lenten choice.



*And here, Canon Paul Hardingham begins a new series on the spiritual disciplines that help us to grow and deepen our faith.*



## *Spiritual Practices—Study*

*'The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people.'* (Richard Foster)

Spiritual disciplines are practices designed to develop and grow our lives as disciples of Jesus. This month we are looking at the place of *study* as a spiritual practice.

*'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.'* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The study of God's Word is vital if we are to grow in understanding God's will for our lives. The discipline of study can take different forms: reading the Bible as a book or on a digital device and listening to an audio Bible. We can hear the Bible taught in church on Sundays or online any time.

One helpful way of studying Scripture is *Lectio Divina*. It consists of five steps:

- ⇒ Select a Scripture passage to read.
- ⇒ Read the passage, preferably out loud, two or three times. Use the first time to get a feel for the passage. On the second time, note any words or phrase that draw your attention.
- ⇒ Meditate on the word or phrase that stood out to you. How is God speaking to you through these? Take time and allow God to speak personally about your life now.
- ⇒ Respond to what God has been saying to you. What is your response? What is your prayer?
- ⇒ Rest in God's presence and allow His love to embrace you by His Spirit.

Why not try this for yourself to hear God speak?

*'We present you with this Book, the most valuable thing this world affords.'* (words used when the late Queen received a Bible at her Coronation).

The Revd Dr Jo White continues her series ...

## *Reflecting faith – what animals can remind us about our faith*

There are various rather peculiar 'creatures' that are used in decorations in and on church buildings.

Around the outside of many larger churches and cathedrals you may well have found some downright scary beasts! They are usually used as downspouts off the roof or at the head of vast columns. Often, they were intended to scare away anything or anyone who was evil from entering the church building, and therefore kept all those on the inside safe.

When we go to worship – especially somewhere we haven't been before – we want to be assured that what will be said during the service will be 'of God'. We want to be able to relax and just be ourselves and secure in God's presence. And that was the thinking behind those beasts.

There are, however, plenty more welcome creatures often found inside the building. Jesus is often spoken about as 'The Lamb of God'. Indeed, we use that phrase within most Communion services during the Gloria as well as just before we go to receive the bread and wine: *'Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.* 'So, we can see a lamb as representing innocence, purity, vulnerability and sacrifice itself.

*This month:* Have a look to see if there are any other 'creatures' on show in a church near you. What do they 'say'?

## *The Grace of Giving*

Money can be a sensitive subject in church, especially when it comes to giving. Paul describes the support given by the Macedonians to the impoverished Christians in Jerusalem as evidence of the 'grace of giving' (2 Corinthians 8:7). They were following the example of Jesus: *'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich'* (9). How does he describe their giving?

Sacrificial giving: *'Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity'* (2). In giving, our first response can be *'How much?'* For Paul, *'rich generosity'* is always a response to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. How serious and sacrificial is our giving?

Regular giving: *'they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability'* (3). The Macedonians were thoughtful in their giving. Is our giving regular and planned, or do we simply put our loose change into the collection plate? How can we give regularly to God's work in our local church and beyond?

Willing giving: *'Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.'* (2 Cor 9:7). It's not often that we find ourselves laughing when putting money on the plate! Let's prayerfully review our giving (as well as our spending), and ask God to help us to respond appropriately.

God doesn't just want our money; He wants all of our lives: *'they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us'* (5). Is God the sole owner or simply a shareholder in our lives? Let's seek to *'excel in this grace of giving'*!

*With Lent in mind, you may find this famous prayer, attributed to Sir Francis Drake, 16th century, to be an inspiration...*

### **Disturb us, Lord**

Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves,  
When our dreams have come true  
Because we have dreamed too little,  
When we arrived safely  
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when  
With the abundance of things we possess  
We have lost our thirst  
For the waters of life;  
Having fallen in love with life,  
We have ceased to dream of eternity  
And in our efforts to build a new earth,  
We have allowed our vision  
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,  
To venture on wider seas  
Where storms will show your mastery;  
Where losing sight of land,  
We shall find the stars.  
We ask You to push back  
The horizons of our hopes;  
And to push into the future  
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

## Funeral Bells

Before telegrams, phones, radio, TV, and the internet with social media existed, when even newspapers were few and far between, church bells were a source of information. They warned of fires and invasions. They signalled the start of church services and town meetings. They also served as an instant obituary notice, through an ancient practice called the death knell.

A **death knell** (also called a death bell) is the tolling of a large church bell immediately upon death to announce that a death has taken place. A death knell was rung as soon as the minister or sexton became aware that a parishioner had died, in order to communicate the sad news to everyone within earshot of the church. This practice had roots in the English medieval custom of ringing bells immediately after a death to frighten away evil spirits, which might otherwise try to divert the newly departed soul from its path to heaven.

From its superstitious beginnings, the death knell evolved into a practical means of communication, informing people which of their neighbours had just died. The traditional code for a death knell called for the bell to be rung twice three times (six times) for a woman, or three times three (nine times) for a man. Then, the bell would toll one stroke for each year of the deceased's life. Those listening and counting had a good idea of who had died. They could prepare for a funeral, probably in a day or two, after which more tolling would accompany the body from church to the grave.

Newspapers and telephones eventually made the death knell obsolete. Urbanization and an ever-growing population, attending many different churches, also led to its demise. But tolling half-muffled church bells for a funeral remained common practice, and in some cases, the bell ringer would toll the years of the deceased's life as the procession nears the church or as it leaves after the funeral service—an echo of the old death knell custom.

A church bell was tolled at the funeral on 27<sup>th</sup> January of Myra Heap, at the request of John Lewis her son-in-law, who is one of the band of ringers at St. George's.

*These notes taken from Church Bells and Death Knells, an article by Meg Costello in the Archives of Falmouth Museums on the Green*



# Looking at the CHURCH

## *The gates of hell*

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has “opened the gates of hell” and unleashed evil around the world.

So said the Archbishop of Canterbury during a recent interview on BBC1’s *Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg*. He told of how, during his recent visit to Ukraine, he had seen the mass grave in Bucha, and heard of the massacres and torture carried out by the occupying Russian forces. The Russians are driven by “an ideology of conquest” he said, their only goal is “getting historic Ukraine back.”

Justin Welby said it was important for Britain to continue to support Ukrainian resistance, and to recognise that “you can’t talk about reconciliation when the guns are firing, because people are just concentrating on whether they’re alive for the next 20 minutes.”

He said how the Ukrainians had told him that “for us, that word (reconciliation) means surrender, and we’re not going to do that’.” There was a way forward, said the Archbishop: “and that’s withdrawal and ceasefire by Russian forces.”

## *Remembering Ukraine – one year on*

*By the Ven John Barton*

On 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine without warning. Ukraine had been part of the Soviet Union 1922-1991 and even before that had been overshadowed and often overpowered by its larger neighbour. In 1932 millions of Ukrainians were deliberately starved to death in a famine, contrived by Joseph Stalin. This genocide, or Holodomor, is commemorated every year on the fourth Saturday in November.

The area had been overrun for centuries by successive external forces, until absorbed by Russia. In 1991, when the USSR was dissolved, Ukraine voted for independence, by a huge majority. There are still pro-Russian minorities in the East of the country, as there

were in Crimea before 2014, when it was annexed by Russia.

In the last 12 months, one-quarter of the civilian population of Ukraine has been displaced, with 5+ million refugees escaping for temporary sanctuary in other countries. 95% of them are women and children. They have had to learn new languages (and a new script), find jobs and schools, and become accustomed to foreign cultures. When it seems safe, they want to return home and some have already done so.

The UK government, in partnership with County and District Councils, launched the Homes for Ukraine scheme last year. Would-be homes were inspected, and prospective hosts checked out for suitability and safety. A young Ukrainian woman lived in my home for six months before returning to Kyiv. In that time my pantry and fridge made room for bulgar wheat, lots of mushrooms and Salo, which is the name for slabs of cold cured pork fat, and much tastier than it sounds!

Most Ukrainians count themselves as Christian, including a number of Greek-Catholics, but the majority belong to what was the Russian Orthodox Church, and is now the independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The two churches separated after the Moscow patriarchate backed President Putin.

The Archbishop of Canterbury visited Kyiv in December and had to take cover in a bomb shelter when air raid warnings were sounded. He said the people of the West needed to realise the costs of this war were not short term, adding "there must be no way in which we force peace on Ukraine ... Peace is always better than war. But there are times when justice demands the defeat of an evil invasion."

One year on there is still an urgent need for British people to open their homes to Ukrainian refugees.

This winter is the worst in living memory for most Ukrainians, with medicine, food, water, and heating in short supply. If you would like to mark the first year by helping the people Ukraine, here are some charities from which you might choose:

**The Disaster Emergencies Committee (DEC)** is an umbrella group of UK charities.

<https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal>

**Christian Aid** was founded in 1945 by British and Irish churches to help refugees after the Second World War. Sadly, with war back in Europe, it is now back at work on the Continent.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal-2022>

**Barnabas Fund** distributes food through local churches to Christians in the poorer areas, both in Kyiv and in rural regions.

<https://www.barnabasfund.org/gb/latest-needs/help-ukrainian-christians-in-their-hour-of-need/>

**Samaritans Purse** has been airlifting medical supplies into the country, distributed more than 45 million kilos of food, and built water systems providing more than 30 million litres of water.

<https://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/idr-crisis/crisis-in-ukraine/>

Quote: No amount of good deeds can make us good persons.  
We must be good before we *can* do good. - *Chester A Pennington*

## WORLD DAY of PRAYER



By the women of Taiwan

"I have heard about your faith" Ephesians 1:15-19

Methodist Church  
on  
Pontesbury Hill

Friday 3rd March 2.30pm

Followed by refreshments

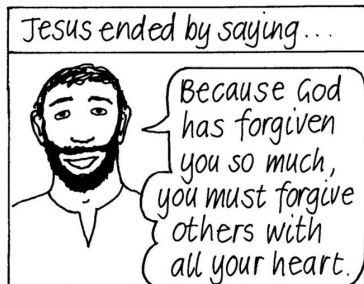
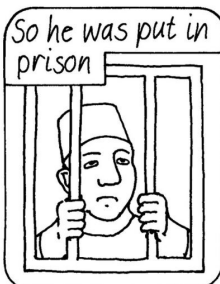
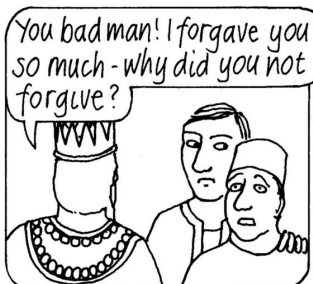
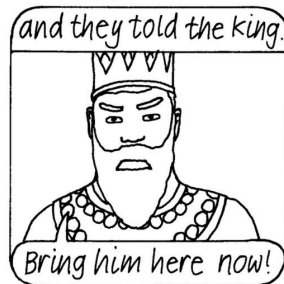
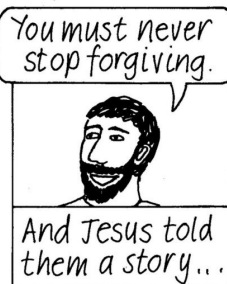
Everyone is very welcome!

# Bible Bite

## A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in  
Matthew chapter 18 verses 21-35

Jewish teachers used to say you only had  
to forgive people three times before  
getting revenge, so Peter asked Jesus..



*With Lent in mind, this famous prayer of  
Sir Francis Drake may well be an inspiration to us...*

## *Disturb us, Lord*

Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with  
ourselves,  
When our dreams have come true  
Because we have dreamed too little,  
When we arrived safely  
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when  
With the abundance of things we possess  
We have lost our thirst  
For the waters of life;  
Having fallen in love with life,  
We have ceased to dream of eternity  
And in our efforts to build a new earth,  
We have allowed our vision  
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,  
To venture on wider seas  
Where storms will show your mastery;  
Where losing sight of land,  
We shall find the stars.  
We ask You to push back  
The horizons of our hopes;  
And to push into the future  
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

*Attributed to Sir Francis Drake, 16th Century*





# From the Dragon's Den

A very wet and windy day and we thought it would be a quiet morning at Little Dragons. Certainly, a few of didn't arrive, but 23 Little Dragons did, along with their various Carers, ready to enjoy time together. It was a great morning and, especially enjoyable was story time, when Dora the Explorer and her friend, Boots the monkey, helped Little Star to find a BFF (best friend forever - for the uninitiated). We all shone brightly along with Little Star, followed by a very lusty singing session, with several favourite songs.

A very enjoyable morning, made especially good by the fact that one Little Dragon brought along a contribution to start off our collection for Ukraine. We currently have a Little Dragon whose homeland is Ukraine, but who is here with his Mummy, a brother and, a recently- arrived, Granny. We are going to have a small fund-raiser, a contribution to make life perhaps a little easier for those living in his hometown which has been badly damaged during the onslaught. It brings the reality of those less fortunate closer to home, helping us to appreciate the things that we have and perhaps take for granted.

Well done Little Dragons, for caring!

Joy to everyone, from Val and from we three:



Idris,



George



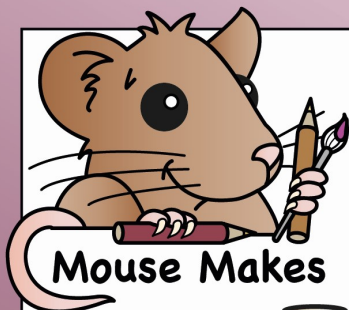
& Uncle Sam



**St. George's  
Explorers**

*Tuesday  
21st February  
11am*





## Mouse Makes

What did Jesus give thanks for and share?

Matthew 26:27

What did Jesus say this represented?

His  
Matthew 26:27-28



SUPPER  
LAMB • LORD  
DISCIPLES  
TOGETHER  
EVENING  
ROOM • JAR  
WATER • TWELVE  
JESUS • CHRIST  
NIGHT • TOOK  
THANKS  
BLESSING  
BROKE • GIVEN  
COVENANT  
DRINK • EAT  
FORGIVENESS  
SINS • HOLY  
COMMUNION  
EUCARIST

What was the special meal Jesus was preparing to eat?

Matthew 26:18



What did Jesus take, bless and break?

Matthew 26:26

What did Jesus say this represented?

His  
Matthew 26:26



Jesus instructed his disciples to continue to break bread and share the cup "in

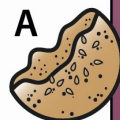
of me."

1 Corinthians 11:24-25



|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| O | R | F | B | R | O | K | E | J | H | O | L | Y | C |
| R | O | O | M | B | C | U | P | T | O | O | K | E | H |
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| T | H | A | N | K | S | K | L | A | M | B | G |   |   |

Find the words from the questions too!



### **WAR, HUNGER, COLD ... AND HOPE – BISHOPS LOOK AHEAD AND SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS**

With a focus on food banks, warm spaces, community, the war in Ukraine, and migration, bishops across England have shared messages of hope for the coming year.

The Bishop of Lichfield, Michael Ipgrave, has highlighted not only many churches will be open for services, but also as a warm, heated space for those who need it.

"The instinct to welcome people into our own space is deep within us as human beings," he said. "And the welcome we give, or fail to give, to people who are cold, hungry, struggling with finances today says so much about our own society.

The Bishop of Dover, Rose Hudson-Wilkin, looked back on 2022 as a year of upheaval and "of seismic proportions ...the loss of our beloved late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

"The shadow of Covid-19 remained with us and we heard stories of the lasting impact of the pandemic, especially through Long Covid, [and] the effects of lockdown on children's and adults' mental well-being," she added.

"But we have also seen compassion in action as thousands of families offered to share their homes with those Ukrainian families who have been lucky enough to get visas. We also saw our churches working with many charities to offer support by way of warm community spaces; assisting with language lessons; providing clothing and food.

"Indeed, the words of our Lord came into their own: 'I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink, naked and you clothed me, sick and in prison and you visited me.' Thank you for your part in this.

The Bishop of Chelmsford, Guli Francis-Dehqani said: "As we begin another year, with all the uncertainty that continues raging around us, and with continued worries about the cost of living and the changing nature of the church, it's perhaps worth remembering that the same Christ child who drew kings and magi to His crib is the one who invites us to follow Him still today."



## **COST OF LIVING CRISIS: 2.6 MILLION SEEK HELP FROM CHURCHES AND FAITH GROUPS**

Nearly three million adults in the UK are estimated to have sought help from church or other religious organisations since the start of last year, as a result of the cost-of-living crisis, according to research published.

New findings show that, overall, almost four in 10 (38 per cent) of UK adults sought help last year because of the squeeze on living costs. Family and friends were the most common source of help, at 24 per cent and 14 per cent respectively.

However, the polling by Savanta, for the Church of England, also found that five per cent of UK adults, approximately equivalent to 2.6 million people, sought help from churches or other religious organisations.

Six in 10 of those who sought help from churches and other religions said they had received free food or groceries (60 per cent). Half said they received low-cost food or groceries (50 per cent) or hot food (48 per cent), and four in 10 (40 per cent) said they had been provided with warm spaces.

The survey showed that, overall, 61 per cent of UK adults said they had *not* sought help in 2022 as a result of the cost-of-living crisis, but this figure fell to 24 per cent of 18-to-24 year olds and 30 per cent of 25 to 34-year-olds.

When early last year the Warm Welcome campaign was launched, it was supported by thousands of churches and other public buildings, which are opening their doors this winter to provide a warm space for people amid surging energy bills.

The Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, who speaks for the Church of England on welfare issues, said: "Churches have been providing a lifeline to people struggling to balance their household budgets and provide for their families through food banks and food clubs and other forms of hospitality for many years.

"The cost-of-living crisis has seen churches step up this support, with many providing warm spaces through the Warm Welcome campaign this winter for people struggling to heat their homes.

"The figure of nearly three million people seeking help from church or other religious organisations since the start of this year is almost certainly an underestimate of the extent of the support, as many visit church-run food banks and food clubs in order to provide for their families and wider households."

# Looking at you

*David Pickup, a solicitor, considers the legal implications of love...*

## *Who owns the engagement ring if you split up?*

*He also said, "Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out ...Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed." Ruth 3:15,17*

A Jewish family left Judah to go to Moab. The son married a local girl called Ruth but he died. Ruth decided to return home with her mother-in-law. Back in Judah she meets and later marries a rich man. A typical boy meets girl story with plenty for lawyers to ponder as the couple make their plans together.

In this passage Ruth gets what amounts to a pre-engagement gift – some barley for her mother-in-law. But if you are planning on a Valentine's Day gift or even engagement, flowers or chocolates may be better than grain.

Whatever present you buy your loved one, the law says that you have a thirty day right to return it, if it is not of satisfactory quality. In other words, it must not be faulty or damaged, be fit for purpose and must match any description given by the manufacturer. This does not apply to perishable goods like flowers.

Supposing things go well on Valentine's Day, and you propose. If you change your mind later, the good news is that you can no longer be sued for breach of promise of marriage. The bad news is that if you give an engagement ring, then the law presumes this is an absolute gift. So, if you later break up, you cannot get it back unless you made it clear that it would be returned if the marriage did not take place. If the ring was a family heirloom it may be possible to argue this.

While still down on one knee on Valentine's Day, you could, of course, make it clear, preferably in writing, that if the engagement is called off then you want the ring back. However, if you are as unromantic as this, perhaps you should stick to gifts of barley grain!

As always, this is a rough guide to English law and if you are worried about engagement rings and other material aspects of love and marriage, you should get advice.



### From the Archdeacon of Ludlow

One of the most moving services I have ever attended took place on Ash Wednesday 2009, in Westminster Abbey. I was an ordinand, in training for ministry, and was on placement at the Abbey. As the choir sang the achingly beautiful setting of Psalm 51 "Miserere mei, Deus" (Have mercy on me, God) by Allegri, complete with perfectly piercing top C from the chorister given the solo that year, we all went forward.

The Dean said the solemn words, "Remember you are dust, and to dust you will return," as he marked my forehead with the sign of the cross, using ashes from the previous year's palm crosses.

It was a new experience to me, as the imposition of ashes hadn't been part of the tradition I'd known up to then. I confess I was overwhelmed - by the depth of my human sinfulness, the depth of God's mercy, and the depth of the love of Christ in going to the cross for the sin of the world, including mine.

Far from being frightening, or leading me to despair, those words, "Remember you are dust, and to dust, you will return," seemed in that moment to be strangely comforting. They reminded me of words from Psalm 39, where the Psalmist says to God, "Show me, Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is." We, humans, are frail and fragile creatures of the creator – a truth we don't always recognise or accept. To dwell on that truth during Lent, holding it together with the equal and opposite truth that we are, as the title of a book says, "**Beloved** Dust" seems to me a good spiritual discipline for these 40 days. For by the grace of God in Christ, we are both fragile *and* strong, mortal *and* immortal. We are dust, and to dust, we will return, yes. But that's not the end of the story, for from dust we shall rise, clothed with life and immor-

tality, to live with God eternally.

As we move through Lent together, I invite you to take time to meditate on these paradoxical truths: that we are creatures, limited, finite, and weak, *and* that we are held in the hands of an unlimited, infinite, and strong God; that our time in this life is brief, *and* that our time with God in the world to come is eternal; that we are as humans deeply flawed, *and* we are deeply loved – and that in the cross with which we are marked in baptism, and may be marked on Ash Wednesday, all of that comes together.

## **Pontesbury Deanery**

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**28th February**

**Marton Village Hall**

**7.00pm for refreshments, 7.30pm start**

**Car Parking Available**

**Everyone Welcome**

# **The GATHERING**

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**An evening of Praising and Worshipping God**

**"Encourage one another and build each other up,  
just as in fact you are doing" 1 Thessalonians 5:11**

## Deanery of Pontesbury

### DEANERY NEWS

Rural Dean: **The Revd Bill Rowell**

telephone: 01938 552064 • email: [wkrowell@btinternet.com](mailto:wkrowell@btinternet.com)

### THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH from Mark Hackney

I don't know about you but I think you get great sense of encouragement if someone comes and says you are doing a great job. No matter what it is, you will always feel better; it builds you up and makes you feel that the next time I will do even better. On the other hand, if someone comes and says, that's not very good it has the opposite effect and can destroy your confidence.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 it says; "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing". I have put this verse on the advert for "The Gathering", a Deanery event that happens on the last Tuesday of every month at Marton Village Hall, 7.30 - 9.00. (Check this magazine for more info). I feel that "The Gathering" is a place where the people of the Deanery and beyond can come together to Praise, Worship, meet with God and minister to one another so that we can go back to our own churches refreshed and hopefully empowered to "Go and make new Disciples". If you have not been to one yet, can I encourage you to come to the next one. I promise you will go home uplifted.

In this part of 1 Thessalonians 5 Paul says "You are all children of the light and children of the day." He reminds us of the armour of God telling us to put on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet and this section of the chapter ends with; "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." So, my thought for today and hopefully every day is simple. If we encourage each other, (even if we don't quite get everything right all the time), we will be children of God who feel valued, loved and ready to share our story with the world.

We hope to see you at Marton on the 28<sup>th</sup> for the next "Gathering".

Mark Hackney

# Our Stiperstones Benefice COMMUNITY

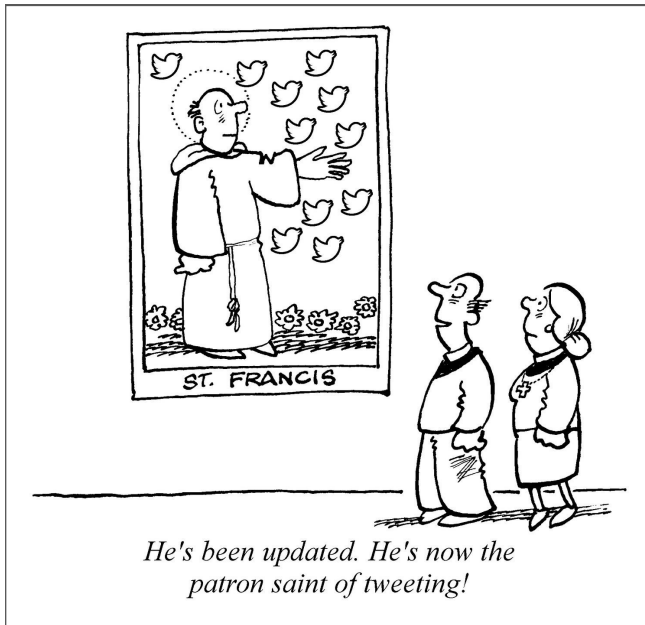
## Bits & pieces from Greg:

### **PCC Secretary and Webmaster for Pontesbury**

After ten years of wonderful service, Val Butterworth will be stepping down as PCC Secretary at St George's at our next APCM in the spring: we continue to seek her successor. If you have wondered whether Val will simply carry on if a replacement isn't found - she won't, and she won't be asked to. And as you know we are still in need of a webmaster, a successor to Richard Elliot.

If you have thought you might be able to take on either post, but assume somebody else better qualified will come forward, they haven't. Please consider this need very seriously.

Do speak to Val (01743 790587) or Richard (01743 792256) to see what the jobs involve.



Quote: Anyone can do their best, but we are helped by the spirit of God to do better than our best.  
- Commissioner Catherine Bramwell-Booth

# Looking at the wider COMMUNITY

## *The unlikely patron saint of television*

by Tim Lenton



It was 65 years ago, on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1958, that St Clare of Assisi (1194-1253) was declared the patron saint of television by Pope Pius XII – on the basis that she had been too ill to attend Mass, but had still been able to see and hear it miraculously on the wall of her room.

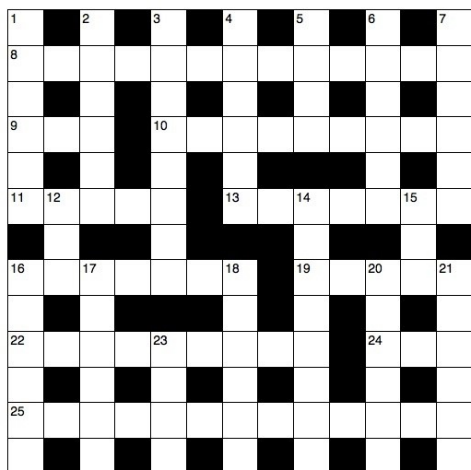
St Clare was born Chiara Offreduccio in Assisi and was one of the first followers of St Francis of Assisi. Both her parents were from wealthy families, and her mother Ortolana was both generous and devout, eventually joining her daughter's monastery – as did two of Clare's sisters: one of them, Catarina, eventually became St Agnes of Assisi.

After hearing St Francis preach, Clare became devoted to poverty, humility and love, and founded the Order of Poor Ladies, which eventually became known as the Poor Clares. She became quite ill towards the end of her life and was unable to attend church, but apparently the images and sounds of the Mass appeared in full on the wall of her room. She is also the patron saint of computer screens, sore eyes and embroidery.

Clare wrote the first monastic Rule of Life known to have been written by a woman and in 1216 became abbess of San Damiano. The life of the sisters there consisted of manual labour and prayer. Reportedly they "went barefoot, slept on the ground, ate no meat and observed almost complete silence".

Many places have been named after St Clare: Mission Santa Clara, founded in 1777 in northern California, gave its name to the valley where it is situated – now better known as Silicon Valley, home of computer technology.

# Your PUZZLE for February answers below.



## Across

- 8** Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)  
**9** 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap' (Leviticus 4:12) (3)  
**10** Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books of Esdras and the Maccabees are part of it (9)  
**11** Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2)  
**13** Clay pit (anag.) (7)  
**16** Went to (John 4:46) (7)  
**19** 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to — your bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5)  
**22** David's plea to God concerning those referred to in 14 Down: 'On — — let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7)  
**24** Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1) 25 How the book of Ezekiel refers to God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4)

## Down

- 1** Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6)  
**2** One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6)  
**3** Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8)  
**4** 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father' (1 Timothy 5:1) (6)  
**5** One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4)  
**6** Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4)  
**7** God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3)  
**12** Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1)  
**14** 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8)  
**15** The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3)  
**16** Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6)  
**17** How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6)  
**18** What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2)  
**20** Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6)  
**21** Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6)  
**23** Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1)

Cure.

**DOWN:** 1, Oceans. 2, Hopini. 3, Islamit. 4, Exhort. 5, Omar. 6, On spec. 7, Add all. 12, CBI. 14, Plotting. 15, Ave. 16, Vanish. 17, Starve. 18, Daub it. 20, Furrow. 21, Recede. 23,

**ACROSS:** 8, Cross-examined. 9, Ash. 10, Apocrypha. 11, Sci-fi. 13, Typical. 16, Visited. 19, Offer. 22, No account. 24, RAC. 25, Sovereign Lord.



# God in the SCIENCES

## *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*

Every person who ever lived was once a sperm and an egg. Those two cells fused together, and in nine months they turned into a living, breathing, human being. Each of us emerged from this same embryonic development process, which is highly complex and organised, but variable enough to turn out a unique individual every time.

If you like order – such as neat piles of stationery, or tidy colour-coded files – you will enjoy this story. One of the most important stages of an embryo's development is when each section of the body, from head to rump, takes on its identity. Each part is told what shape to take, and which limbs or internal organs to grow: legs or arms, lungs or kidneys, and so on.

The most beautiful part of this body-patterning process is that it brings the dimensions of time and space together in such a neat way. The DNA instructions for the procedure, known as genes, are organised in the order in which they are needed during development *which is also* the order in which they appear on the body. No other sets of genes are known to be arranged in such a tidy pattern.

So, as the embryo develops, the tissues near the head end activate the first sets of genes. Those active genes then make all the proteins needed for that part of the body to grow and develop in the right way. The tissues just below the head then switch on the second set of genes, and so on. A wave of activation passes down the embryo, specifying each section of the trunk in turn.

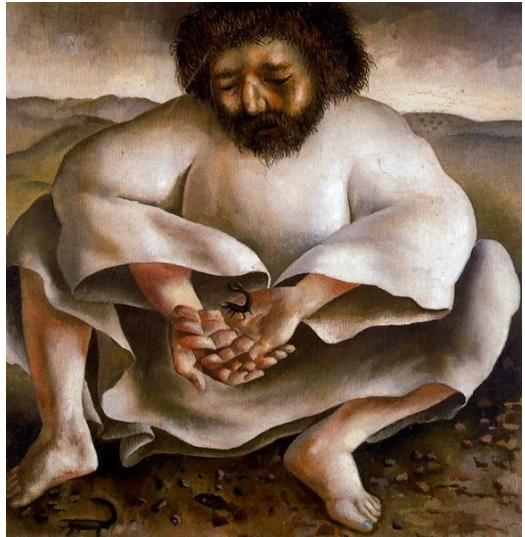
The Wisconsin-based developmental biologist Jeff Hardin often quotes Psalm 139 to express the wonder of embryonic development. The Psalmist did not understand how this process happened, but he knew that it was a marvellous thing. *"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb...your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth."*

The story of the tidy genes brings out the hidden beauty in the very early stages of embryonic development. The more biologists get to find out about how we came to be born, the more we can say, *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made"*!

# God in the ARTS

## *Forty Days and Forty Nights*

At the end of this month we enter the season of Lent: those 40 days when we follow Jesus into the wilderness and prepare ourselves to celebrate His Easter victory. In the last century an artist called Stanley Spencer planned to create a series of 40 paintings, each depicting a day in the wilderness. In the end he completed nine, one of which is this month's painting from



1939: 'Christ in the Wilderness – Scorpions.' It is held in a private collection.

Stanley Spencer lived and worked in the village of Cookham in Berkshire. The village and the local countryside were the setting for many of his paintings, and the village's inhabitants his models. Through their everyday life he was trying to glimpse and convey the transcendent. 'Angels and dirt' he called it: the divine seen in the ordinary. So, in a painting of Christ carrying His cross, Jesus has the face of the local grocer.

Another villager modelled for this Jesus in the wilderness: a strong, hefty, broad figure. This is a great contrast to the Christ of stained-glass windows who often seems too good to be part of our world. Here is real life: a large man filling the canvas with His head, His hands and His feet. This figure of Jesus comes as a shock: a very human model, ordinary with nothing handsome or special about Him, apart from His tunic which seems to sprawl and undulate like the hills around. Here is a Jesus born into this world and one with this world.

There are two focal points in the painting – the neat, little scorpion and the massive, unkempt head contemplating each other. One is life in all its hefty reality; the other a tiny creature able to squeeze that life out by one swift flick of its tail.

Jesus is shown in the wilderness pondering the life and ministry called of Him by God – a life and ministry that will take Him from

the countryside into the towns and villages and take Him also to the death of Good Friday. Will He find the strength and renewal to embrace that ministry during His time in the desert?

During Lent as we follow Jesus, we seek to live for God. That may mean dying to all that separates us from God. He has a ministry, a calling for each of us. As we contemplate that calling in this season of Lent, we may find it is a calling that leads us through these 40 days to life and Easter life – we may find it a journey that calls us to die to self to find our God.

*The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a look at 'Christ in the Wilderness – Scorpions'. It now hangs in a private collection.*

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/christ-in-the-wilderness-the-scorpion>

Quote: I am ready to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is prepared for the ordeal of meeting me is another matter.  
- Winston Churchill, on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday.



Open 5.30pm to 10.30pm

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Buffet Night Tuesdays £14.95 per person  
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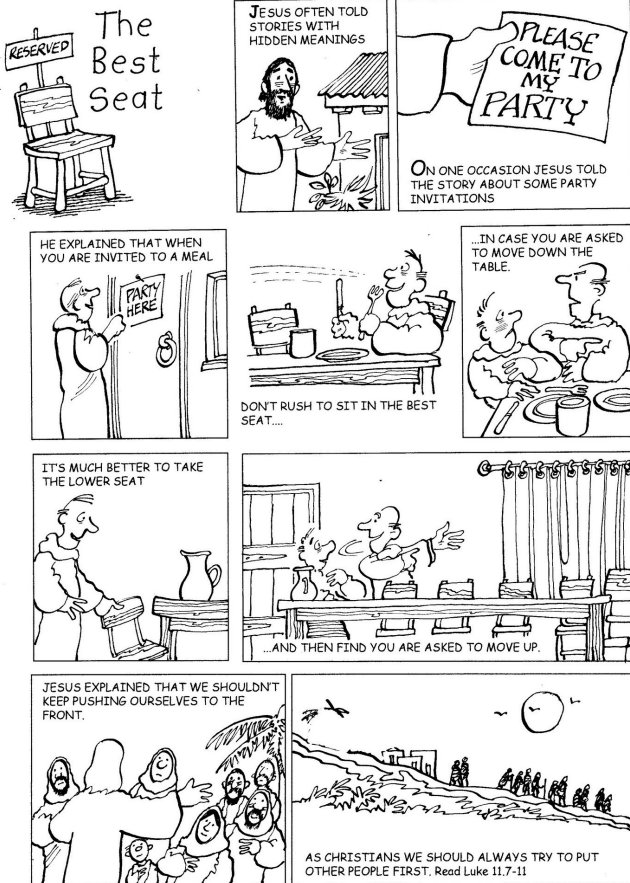


**The Silver Line**  
helpline for older people  
**0800 4 70 80 90**



## Miscellaneous observations on life in 2023

- ♦ Born free. Taxed to death.
  - ♦ By the time you make ends meet, they move the ends.
- ♦ Car service sign: 'If it isn't broken now, we'll break it.'
- ♦ Children are natural mimics - they act like us in spite of all our attempts to teach them good manners.
- ♦ Common sense isn't.
  - ♦ Blessed are the peacemakers: they will never be unemployed.
- ♦ The young person who worked so hard to graduate later wonders what the hurry was.
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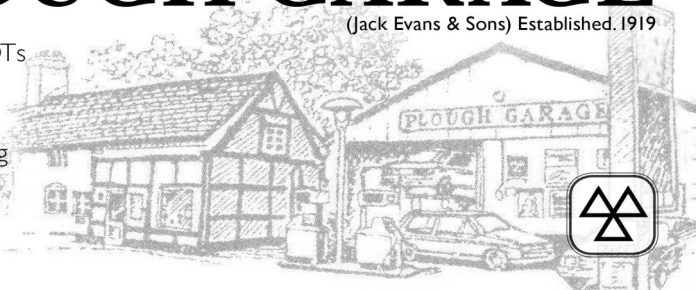


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