

St. George's Montezbury

Magazine 50p



June 2023

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This June we look back on two events which changed modern British history: it is 70 years since the last Coronation, and 75 years since the arrival of Windrush. It is also the month of Refugee Week, with some refugees reflecting on the compassion and kindness they have found here in the UK.

Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine and now the violence in Sudan disrupts the lives of millions. Aid agencies are doing what they can, but they need our support to be able to help these desperate people.

And here in the UK food banks are still on the rise, with some alarming statistics from the Trussell Trust.

June also brings us the regular yearly observance of Trinity Sunday, Father's Day and the Summer solstice.

All in all, there is a lot going on, lots to read in this month's church magazine...

Contributions for St. George's Magazine should be in by the **15th** of the **previous month**. It may not be possible to include until the following month contributions which are received after this date.

Send e-mail & attachments to stgsmagazine@googlemail.com

Items for inclusion in the Deanery News to be submitted by 10th of previous month to Alison Bebb - Keepers Cottage, Cruckmeole, Shrewsbury, SY5 8JN

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LIFTING UP OUR EYES

With Greg Smith

Dear friends

What a spectacular occasion the Coronation of King Charles III was! I don't think any other nation on earth does this as well as we do. The music was glorious; Westminster Abbey was displayed at its majestic best and the pageantry was unrivalled. All who watched must have been captivated by the splendour of the whole thing. However, outside and across the nation, there were heart-felt protests against the institution of the monarchy.

Though hardly a dyed in the wool royalist, I thought this was mis-judged. After years of bitter division over Brexit and the subsequent disillusion with politics and politicians, we desperately need to come together as a nation. I am not denying republicans right to protest or necessarily disputing the merits of their case. And it would be hypocritical of me to pretend I haven't done my fair share of protesting in my time – indeed my relationship with Fran started during a campaign protesting a local school closure.

Protestors have some complex calculations to make. To protest in an obscure location at a random time of day is to risk that no one will notice. However, a protest that is designed to effect maximum disruption and inconvenience (don't worry I am not going to get into rail strikes!) may be effective in bringing attention to the cause, but actually alienate potential supporters. Ultimately, little changes until the minority view becomes the majority view. This takes time, sometimes centuries and isn't for those in a hurry.

Meanwhile, Christians follow a man who did change the world. This is unarguable whether you're a Christian or not. Jesus didn't set out to change the world. The fact that he did is only incidental to his true mission: to change the hearts of men and women. For him, the symbol of protest was the cross, which looked for all the world like a symbol of total defeat. Like Charles, he had a crown placed upon his head, but in his case made of thorns



in cruel mockery. The Romans helpfully lifted him up high so that everyone could see him. That image which has been reproduced countless millions of times does not speak as the Romans assumed it would of the inevitable defeat that lay in store for their enemies, but of the all-conquering nature of God's love. A successful protest campaign against the power of sin and death.

***Many blessings
Greg***

Foundations
(Matthew 7:24-29)

What will happen to my house Lord,
Now that the rain is falling,
Now that the floods are rising,
Now that the wind is blowing
And beating, beating upon it?

Sunday by Sunday
I hear your Word
With interest,
With conflict,
With questions.
I hear your Word
As I build my house.

But will it stand, Lord,
When the rain and the floods
And the winds challenge?
Are my foundations
Sunday sand of hearing only,
Or daily rock of hearing *and* doing your will,
Living your Word,
Strong in the storm?

Lord, Lord,
Help me to hear,
Move me to act.
Let my house stand.

By Daphne Kitching

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
4 th June Trinity Sunday	Morning Worship 10.30am	Psalm 8 (2 Corinthians 13.11-end) Matthew 28.16-end
Tuesday 6 th June	Tea Service 2.30pm	
11 th June 1 st Sunday after Trinity	Holy Communion 10.30am	(Psalm 50.7-15) Romans 4.13-end Matthew 9.9-13,18-26
18 th June 2 nd Sunday after Trinity	Holy Communion 10.30am	(Psalm 100) Romans 5.1-8 Matthew 9.35- 10.8
25 th June 3 rd Sunday after Trinity	Holy Communion 10.30am	(Psalm 69.14-20) Romans 6.1b-11 Matthew 10.24-39

A Prayer for this month: *By Daphne Kitching*

Dear Father.

As we come to this beautiful time of year, the month of June, we thank you for the wonder of your creation and the way our spirits are lifted as we see all around us the freshness of a new summer.

This month we remember Barnabas, whose name means, *child of encouragement*. He was a good person, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. Lord, help each of us to be a *Barnabas* to someone today, to encourage and lift up, led by your Holy Spirit and full of faith.

Help us to share your love and goodness, especially with those whose circumstances are difficult. Help us all to trust you through good times and testing times, knowing you are always with us, always encouraging us, always faithful.

In Jesus' name.. Amen



There are now more foodbanks in the UK than there are McDonalds!

No-one wants to see foodbanks but they are now an essential service and we are really encouraged by the following figures since we began the Rea Valley initiative in September:

*299 people living in the Rea Valley have been supported
1634 kilos of food and other essentials have been donated
4425 kilos have been distributed*

So, THANK YOU to Shrewsbury Foodbank PLUS for donating 2971 kilos of food to make up our shortfall and enable us to support so many families. However, we know that many more people still need our help to get them through financial difficulties.

Please don't choose between buying food or paying household bills.

Let us sort the food until your situation improves.

You need a referral to ensure that your parcel meets the needs of you and your family and take into account any diet requirements.

It's really easy, just call:

Rev Greg Smith 07902 794653 or Rev Richard Lonsdale 07922 830488

Your collection points are:

Holy Trinity Church, Minsterley Tuesdays 10am-12.00

St George's Church, Pontesbury Thursdays 10am-12.00

Thank you so much to those of you who are making financial donations, they have made a huge difference. Here are the account details if you would like to donate:

The Rea Valley Foodbank

Sort code 51-61-06

Account no.76841804

Reference is: Donor

For more information then please email [**support@reavalleyfoodbank.co.uk**](mailto:support@reavalleyfoodbank.co.uk)



Our Local and Church COMMUNITY

Saturday 3rd June 2023

10am — 12noon

Coffee and Cake

Lots of cake and produce
to eat and to buy



**And at 12noon -
The Duck Race**

Come and join in the fun,
ducks available from Mary W.



Come and enjoy
AFTERNOON TEA

at St. George's

on Sunday 25th June 2023

4 until 6pm, outside weather permitting.

Tickets £10 per person:

book your place by 18th June

from Marianne McCall on 07944333830

*Thanks to everyone who attended the Big Breakfast on the 22nd April.
A great time was had by all, so much so that we are having another one
on **23rd September 2023!***

*Special thanks to Rob, Holly, Caroline, Fran, Heather and Mary for giving
up their Saturday morning to help and to raise
much needed funds for St George's Church.*

Thanks, from Marianne.



Monthly Carers support morning

You are warmly invited to the monthly Carers support morning on the last Friday in a month 10.30 - 12.00 at The Pavilion in Pontesbury.

Everyone is welcome—the sessions are a chance to have a cuppa, chat, share information and connect with others who are supporting family or friends.

The group is supported by Shropshire council, Age UK STW, Pontesbury and Worthen Care Coordinator, Alzheimer's society, Pontesbury Parish council and Community Good Neighbours, all working together to support unpaid carers locally.

Please note the June 30th carers group session will be later, from 11.30 - 13.30 and will include a light sandwich lunch and entertainment as a celebration of carers week earlier in June. We require numbers for the lunch so please call Celia on 01743 250679 or email h.tazewell@nhs.net or lia.macintyre@shropshire.gov.uk to book.

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 or 01743 790359

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.

Looking at GOD

Celebrating Fatherhood

By Canon Paul Hardingham

'What is a Christian? The richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father. If you want to know how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his Father.' (J I Packer, *Knowing God*)

The month we celebrate fathers on Father's Day. Unlike Mothering Sunday, this doesn't have a distinctly Christian origin. However, it does provide an opportunity to celebrate God's fatherhood and what it means for us.

At His baptism, as Jesus came out of the water: *'heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.'* (Matthew 3:16,17). What can we learn about Jesus' relationship with His Father, the role of fathers and our relationship with God?

The Father's presence

When Jesus was baptized, the Father made His presence real by the Holy Spirit. It's the Spirit who enables us to call God *'daddy'* (abba, Galatians 4:6). God is with us and knows our joys and sorrows, fears and trials. In this way, dads can relate to their children.

The Father's love

The Father described His Son as *'beloved'*, who like us, is subject to His unconditional love. Dads should be constant in assuring their children of their love.

The Father's pleasure

The Father tells Jesus that He is *'well pleased'* with Him. We also need to hear this, if we feel that we are disappointing God or letting Him down. This can arise with harsh words spoken by our parents. Fathers should use every opportunity to demonstrate their pleasure in their children, especially when things go wrong.

God - the Three in One

This month we celebrate Trinity Sunday. The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most important of the Christian faith, for it goes to the very heart of what God is like. The Bible is quite clear: there is one God, but He is revealed in three 'persons' – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Have you ever wondered at what point in the Bible God is revealed as being more than one person? Well, you don't have to read very far: only to Genesis 1:26, where God (Elohim – a plural noun) says: Let US make man in OUR image. (Gen. 1:26)

The Bible reveals a pattern: God the Father lives in heaven and has never been seen. God the Son became the incarnate Jesus Christ, who made known to us the Father, and God the Holy Spirit, who is unseen, has been sent to live within and to equip His people, the Church.

The Trinity is basic to our salvation – for these three persons in the one Godhead have combined to save us from our sins: it is the WILL of the Father, the saving WORK of the Son, and the indwelling WITNESS of the Holy Spirit. (John 14:16, 23-26).



*Continuing our occasional series, looking at the stories
BEHIND some of our favourite hymns...*

The story behind the #YMN: Lord, for the years

*Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord for the years, we bring our thanks today.*

*Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,*

*teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.*

By Timothy Dudley Smith

This well-loved hymn was written in 1967 by the Revd Timothy Dudley Smith, who later became Bishop of Thetford. He later confessed: "I wrote it on a train when I was very pressed for time. I'm thankful if something I write gets picked up, but I suspect anyone who does something in a rush later regrets that they didn't find time to apply the sandpaper a bit more!"

Dudley Smith had been asked to write a hymn for the centenary service of the Children's Special Service Mission, now Scripture Union, in St Paul's Cathedral. His commission was to write words that could be fitted to Jean Sibelius's *Finlandia*, as it was to be accompanied by an orchestra with this tune in their repertoire. And so – 'Lord for the years' was written.

Dudley Smith need not have worried about lack of time – his lyrics were a 'hit' in the cathedral on the day, and went on to become so well-loved that George Carey chose the hymn to be sung at his consecration as Bishop of Bath and Wells, and then again later, in 1991, at his consecration as Archbishop in Canterbury Cathedral.

The hymn continued to be widely sung and loved, until in 2002 Timothy Dudley Smith was asked to write an extra verse for it so that it could even be sung around the time of the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

Many of the words in the hymn were true for the Queen herself. She did indeed thank God 'for the years your love has kept and guided, urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way'...

The 'extra' verse, added for the Queen, can now become our prayer and hope for King Charles.

*Lord for our hopes, the dreams of all our living,
Christ and his kingdom one united aim,
Rulers and peoples bound in high thanksgiving,
Lord of our hopes, our trust is in your Name.*

Kindness is a language that the deaf can hear and the blind can see. – Anon

Silent company is often more healing than words of advice. – Anon

Canon Paul Hardingham continues a series on the spiritual disciplines that help us to grow and deepen our faith.



Spiritual Practices: Simplicity

'Clutter is not just the stuff on your floor. It's anything that stands between you and the life you want to be living.' (Peter Walsh).

The spiritual discipline of **simplicity** is about living more simply and ensuring that possessions don't end up possessing us! Jesus expresses the heart of simplicity in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:19-34). He emphasises trusting God, not worrying about material things but *'seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness,'* (Matthew 6:33).

'The Christian Discipline of simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward life-style. Both the inward and the outward aspects of simplicity are essential.' (Richard Foster).

What happens in our hearts impacts the way we live our lives. But what does this look like in practice? Richard Foster lists a number of outward expressions of simplicity in his book **Celebration of Discipline**. These include:

- Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status value eg cars, clothes.
- Reject anything that is addictive to us eg drinks, TV, social media.
- Develop the habit of giving things away to others who need them.
- Don't get caught up with buying the latest electronic gadget.
- Develop a deeper appreciation of creation.

How can we simplify our life?

Step 1: Find something that needs simplifying eg decluttering the house or limiting the time consuming TV or social media. It's about stopping whatever prevents us from making the kingdom of God our top priority.

Step 2: Take time to reflect and write down how we will embrace simplicity in that area eg. stop using the phone one hour before bed and keeping it outside the bedroom.

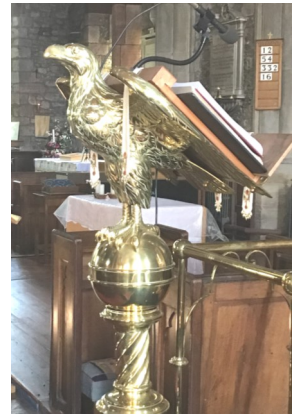
Step 3: Ask someone to keep us accountable!

'Always remember the essence of Christian holiness is simplicity and purity: one design, one desire: entire devotion to God.'
(John Wesley)

Reflecting Faith—the Lectern (part 2)

Why not have a good look at the lectern in your church, to see what it was made from and if it has a particular design.

There seem to be two distinct styles for lecterns, either a 'simple' plain book holder or one in the shape of a bird. Both styles are usually made from either wood or gilt metal (brass).



The bird is an eagle - often holding the world in its talons. The intention being that the eagle is known as the most powerful bird, which can fly the highest and longest without pausing and so can take the Word of God - the Bible that it holds - to all the places in the world.

There are 44 mentions of eagles in the Bible, but just two to include here:

In Exodus after the Israelites have left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea they camp in the wilderness, where they are not surprisingly worried about what will happen next. Shall we say 'there's a bit of grumbling and groaning' going on?

So God calls to Moses with words to encourage them, *'The Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.'* (Ex 19: 3- 5)

And the second is one to uplift us all when we are in need of support:

Isaiah in chapter 40 is trying to describe how awesome and powerful God is and concludes that even our youth will grow weary in comparison. However, *'those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.'* (Is 40: 30 – 31)

So perhaps as we hear the words of the Bible passage read to us from that symbolic figure we are reminded to both trust in the Lord and to gain inner strength.

This month

As you hear the Bible passage(s) read from the lectern during this coming month, listen not just to the words themselves but reflect on their intention to encourage you.

Nigel Beeton writes:

Sunday 4th June is Trinity Sunday. It is not, perhaps, one of the glorious highlights of the Christian calendar, just the start of a long series of 'proper' Sundays that will take us through to Advent. And yet the doctrine of a triune Godhead is central to our Christianity; I'm not a trained theologian, and many can explain it better than I, but I hope I've captured the basics in this little poem! Tune: Brother James' Air.

THE TRINITY

Praise to the Father and the Son
And to the Holy Ghost.
Praise to the Holy Trinity
From Earth and Heaven's Host;
For they shall be eternally
A triune mystery!

The Father God, creative one
Who gave the world its form,
He knew us from the mists of time
Ere we were even born.
He made us all and it was He
Who lit the earth's first dawn!

"Let there be Light", the Word of God
He spoke and it was done!
Though He was God, He took our flesh
As Jesus, God's own Son.
He came to earth and died for us
And life o'er death He won!

The Spirit broods on waters deep –
No depth too deep for Him.
He breathes into the soul of man
And leaves no room for sin.
We'll live with Him eternally
If we just let Him in!

Praise to the Father and the Son
And to the Holy Ghost.
Praise to the Holy Trinity
From Earth and Heaven's Host;
For they shall be eternally
A triune mystery!

Looking at the CHURCH Worldwide

From John Barton—this is the first in a short series on how some refugees have found life in the UK. These stories come from conversations in the Diocese of Canterbury, and simply represent the experiences of the refugees who have chosen to contribute.

In celebration of Refugee Week, 23rd – 27th June

How are the refugees who have come to the UK getting along?

Refugee Week, a UK-wide annual festival which celebrates the contributions and resilience of refugees, provides a programme of arts, cultural, educational and media events, through which refugees can find their voice in the UK.

This year the refugees have chosen to share their experiences on the theme of 'what compassion looks like in action'.

Hanna from Ukraine tells her story:

We are all very traumatised, even if it doesn't show. Every day we read news about our country, talk with relatives there. We are also trying to work, study English, manage our home, raise children, and understand the UK culture. People in Ukraine are constantly in danger. Those who have left feel guilty. It tires and exhausts.

Life has changed for everyone; the whole world feels the worsening economic situation due to the war, yet you in the UK continue to support us. It's incredible.

My heart is torn in half. I am afraid for everyone who stayed in Ukraine. I am angry with Russia for everything she is doing. My anger will pass. What remains unchanged is a feeling of deepest gratitude to the British for opening their hearts and families to us. Your kindness and mercy help us not to despair. We understand that without you, we would not exist long ago. Perhaps this is how God created people.

Canterbury resident Richard Llewellyn writes of his experience:

I had volunteered to be a 'mentor' to a young man from Chad, so two years ago I met Adam from Chad, to help him learn English. Since then we have tried to meet weekly for about an hour simply to have a conversation about whatever seems appropriate at the time.

I am not able to tell you anything about how, why, and when Adam became a refugee and arrived in England. In the training I received I was told never to ask, but only to wait until the refugee wants to tell his or her story. I am still waiting.

I know Adam wants to stay here, and train as a plumber. I also discovered that he is a devout Muslim, saying his prayers five times a day and going to the mosque on Friday. I told him that I am a committed Christian and therefore we have something very important in common, in that we have put our trust in the same God – the only God. With a puzzled expression he asks me, "Then what about Jesus?" I reply that for Muslims Jesus is a Prophet, and for Christians something more than a Prophet, but that we both worship the same God. I don't think that he was entirely convinced but, for all our differences, we have remained good friends.

Sahed, 18 last month, has been living in a small English town for a year, after she and her family fled Jordan.

I came here with my parents and my two brothers and little sister, and I arrived knowing only 'Hi' and 'How are you' in English. So I set myself the goal of learning the language online, going to college and volunteering at the local library.

Now I am virtually fluent, which means that I am the only one to act as interpreter for my family. It's vital, as my 20-year-old brother has a severe mental health illness, which means frequent hospital admissions.

Some of our neighbours, alarmed at the noise my brother was making during an episode, called the police. They were actually very kind and just wanted to make sure everyone was alright; in fact all our neighbours are kind and welcoming - except one who is always very rude.

I want to get my GCSEs, and then go to University - maybe York or Manchester. I want to study business management.

Please pray for these refugees, and others, and for those who, in Christ's name, are providing sanctuary.

For more on Refugee Week, please go to:
<https://refugeeweek.org.uk>



Russia is 'weaponising religion' and persecuting churches in Ukraine

A new report claims that Russia is 'weaponizing religion' in its conflict with Ukraine.

The report, by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), states that since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russian soldiers or occupation authorities, have closed or taken over 76 places of worship, looted, desecrated or destroyed 13 of them, and have killed or seized 29 religious leaders in occupied Ukraine.

According to the Institute for the Study of War, Russia's primary target is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), which continues to assert its independence from the Moscow Patriarchate. 34 per cent of the reported acts of persecution are against the UOC.

The report warns: "Russia will continue to weaponize the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and religion to incite social tensions in Ukraine and influence battlefield realities."

The ISW also warns that Russia may try to eradicate religious organisations that remain independent of Kremlin control. Russian forces did the same with the Crimea's Muslim Tartar population, after occupying the peninsula in 2014.

Release International urges Christians in the UK: "Please pray for the Christians of Ukraine, that they may weather the storm."

An estimated 15.7 million Ukrainians need humanitarian assistance

Christian Aid is warning that since the Russian forces invaded Ukraine, "An estimated 15.7 million Ukrainians need humanitarian assistance. This includes 7.1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in private homes with host communities and in collective centres."

Millions of Ukrainians are living in damaged homes or in buildings which are inappropriate for their needs. Winter temperatures can plummet to as low as -20C in parts of the country.

Christian Aid is working with partners to provide hope and to en-

sure people survive and rebuild. Its partner organisations provide shelter, distribute lorryloads of food, and give out life-saving medical equipment, hygiene kits, baby incubators, lifesaving drugs, thermal blankets, and trauma kits. They also offer a shelter for refugees, where women and children are prioritised so that they don't need to sleep at overcrowded railway stations.

Christian Aid says: ***"Every prayer, every gift, every action brings hope to the people of Ukraine. By joining us, you can give hope to our brothers and sisters in Ukraine."***

If you can help, go to: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk>.

Does everyone who attends your church actually believe in God? It may seem an odd question, but Dr Peter Brierley has some unexpected statistics.

'Yes, I'm an atheist churchgoer'

An English vicar had a regular church attendee who came to church on average twice a month, and who volunteered to keep the church hall tidy. He also frequently helped out by doing practical repairs or improvements. But – he didn't believe in God, in Jesus or the Bible!

In another church, while the PCC was discussing worship, the lady church treasurer suddenly said, "Yes, that's all very well, but what about those of us who don't believe?"!

An American university survey undertaken in 2022 by the Public Research Institute found that 29% of people who said they were atheists "sometimes" went to church. Another survey by *Christian Today* found that 1% of atheists went to church regularly, even weekly!

The obvious question to these findings is "Why does someone who clearly doesn't believe in God go to a church set aside for the worship of God?"

An article published in *Backyard Church* on 3rd April 2023 suggested three reasons:

1) Some go to keep their spouse happy, usually the wife dragging the husband along.



From the Dragon's Den

One Little Dragon brought a little friend to a recent session. She brought her own toy dragon, a red dragon, who she has called Idris, just like our own Idris.

When we named our Idris, we did so because he is a lovely shade of red, so, as we had a George (for England), Uncle Sam (for America), we thought that Idris could represent Wales. I looked up the meaning of the word Idris - and it means fiery leader. Well, our Idris, has a sense of mischief and fun; he looks fiery, but is very appealing and is well-loved by all our Little Dragons.

Uncle Sam is the extrovert of the group and loves to leap into the air at the end of our song. George, remains the steadying influence on our three heroes. At the age of 17, he knows his responsibilities (well, maybe!).

Our three intrepid heroes bring much joy to our Little Dragons. Thank you, George, Uncle Sam and, not least, Idris.

Joy to everyone, from Val and from we three



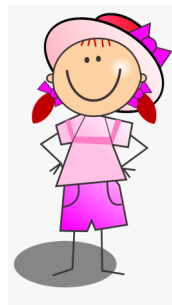
George,



Uncle Sam

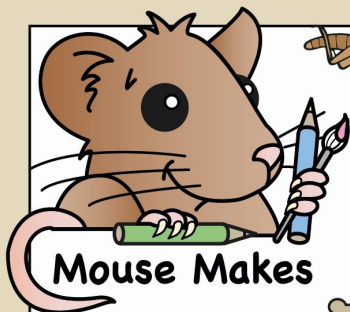


& Idris



One test of a person's strength is his knowledge of his weakness. – *Anon*

When we take least notice of our good deeds ourselves. God takes most notice of them. – *Matthew Henry*



Mouse Makes



The Lord said to Moses,

"Your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land... The Egyptians shall know that I AM the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt..."

As Pharaoh's heart was hardened against the Israelites, God sent ten plagues upon him...



1

Water turns to Blood

Which water turned to blood?

Read - Exodus 7:19

2

A Swarm of Frogs

In which places were the frogs found?

Read - Exodus 8:3-4



3

A Plague of Gnats

When Aaron struck his staff on the ground what became Gnats?

Read - Exodus 8:16-17



4

Swarms of Flies

In which land were the flies not be found?

Read - Exodus 8:22



5

Death of Animals

Which animals that belonged to the Egyptians died?

Read - Exodus 9:2



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

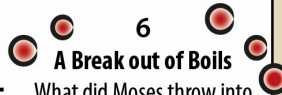
GOD • PLAGUES • MOSES • AARON
WATER • BLOOD • STAFF • RIVER • NILE • FISH
FROGS • SWARM • GNATS • DUST • FLIES
GROUND • DEATH • ANIMALS • SOOT
BOILS • PEOPLE • HAIL • THUNDER • FIRE
MAN • BEAST • LOCUSTS • WIND • LAND
DARKNESS • FIRSTBORN • MIDNIGHT

6

A Break out of Boils

What did Moses throw into the air before boils appeared on people and animals?

Read - Exodus 9:10



7

A Rain of Hail

What also rained down with the hail? Where did it not hail?

Read - Exodus 9:24-26



8

A Swarm of Locusts

Where did the wind come from that brought the locusts to the land?

Read - Exodus 10:13



9

Darkness over the Land

How many days did it remain dark?

Read - Exodus 10:21-22



10

Death of the Firstborn

At what time would the firstborn in the land die?

Read - Exodus 11:4-6



Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Genesis ch 25:19-33, 27:1-42

Jacob had cheated his father and brother, and had run away to stay with his uncle Laban. On the way there..

Jacob saw angels and heard God.

I will be with you

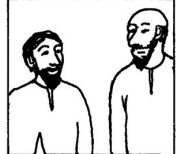


At Laban's house, Jacob met his cousin Rachel



Work for me for 7 years and you can marry her

7 years later



Can I marry Rachel now?

But Laban tricked him into marrying her sister Leah



So Jacob worked 7 more years to marry Rachel



Then he said to Laban

As you aren't paying me wages, can I have the black sheep?



Laban agreed, but that day he moved all the black sheep far away



But God blessed Jacob and his black flock grew



Laban became very jealous of Isaac



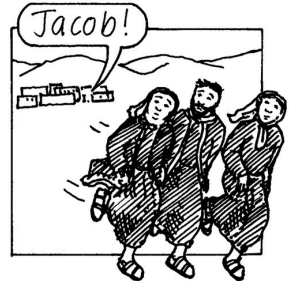
Your father doesn't like me any more. We need to go back to my home.



They waited until Laban was away..



but he was told ...



Here's the BibleBite Wordsearch grid—
can you find all the words from the list below hidden in
the grid?



a	w	a	y	r	u	n	d	n	e	p
m	h	t	r	a	j	e	s	c	e	o
b	r	o	t	h	e	r	l	e	a	h
l	m	l	m	r	a	c	h	e	l	w
a	a	n	g	e	l	s	o	h	r	a
c	r	a	y	g	o	d	n	e	s	g
k	r	w	r	y	u	i	h	i	e	e
j	y	o	s	i	s	t	e	r	v	s
a	s	r	r	u	a	m	o	v	e	d
c	b	k	o	f	l	o	c	k	n	l
j	a	c	o	b	l	a	b	a	n	e

sheep

Leah

years

run

flock

agreed

God

work

sister

Rachel

black

father

angels

jealous

away

marry

Jacob

wages

seven

brother

home

Laban

cousin

moved



From the Dean of Hereford, Revd Canon Sarah Brown

On stripping the chameleon

I like the idea of chameleons –clever lizardy things that allegedly blush camouflage green when they are tongue-lassoing bugs in a bush, or come over all dusty beige when they are skulking in a sandpit (look out toddlers!) or exude an apeeling (sorry) oranginess when they are snoozing in a basket of satsumas. (I cannot help but wonder what a chameleon would make of my granny's rose print patchwork quilt - but that is an experiment for another day when I can catch one.) My point is that they adapt to the environment in which they find themselves and survive because of it. Unless you are hoping to be rescued by mountain rescue being an orange lizard, (or even a pink skink) in the snow is a high-risk strategy. Blending in is much safer.

We do it too. Not literally but socially. Most of us adapt our behaviour, language and the image that we present to the world so that we fit in with those around us or with their perceptions of us. Sometimes it is about what we look like and what we own, sometimes it is about how we talk, sometimes it is about keeping our real opinions quiet to avoid the disapproval of others. The Church has been blending in to not upset the world for decades and is at risk of blurring into the social wallpaper as a result and look at all the "shy Conservatives" in elections over the last ten or 15 years or the lifelong Christians who don't even tell their best friends that they love Jesus. Sometimes we join in with things we don't enjoy in order to blend in. And mostly we know when we are doing it and remain essentially ourselves.

But what if the normally khaki chameleon is made to live its whole life in a purple box and forced against its nature to be forever aubergine? For some people the pressure to be a certain way is like that. It is true captivity, even oppression, when people live their whole lives to fulfil other people's expectations and it can result in serious health and social problems.

If you are someone who lives as a captive chameleon in thrall to someone else or to society, history or a set of circumstances have a go at asking God for courage to be yourself. Read Psalm 139 and see how well God knows the real you and how he wants you to live your life in all the fullness he created you for. There is only one opinion that matters. His.

And for all you brilliantly well-adjusted geckos out there the real question is how we deal with the different, the difficult and the desperate. The answer, of course, is with love.

Deanery of Pontesbury

DEANERY NEWS

Rural Dean: **The Revd Bill Rowell**

telephone: 01938 552064 • email: wkrowell@btinternet.com

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH FROM Revd David Moss

Westbury, Worthen & Yockleton Benefice

As I write this article, it is the day following the coronation of HM King Charles. It has been a fabulous weekend, and in my opinion, worth every penny of the expense of it, just to see a nation, standing together, smiling and enjoying itself.

Many people had said that coming out of the Covid years, the nation needs something to lift it, and look forward to; well, the coronation certainly seemed to deliver on that front.

In many ways focussing on something big and exciting is a good metaphor for 'spiritual' wellbeing too. In the Psalms, David teaches us a lot about how to rise up above our circumstances, however low and isolated we may have been feeling, by focussing on God's greatness. He teaches us that sometimes we find it difficult to see God at all, because we feel like we are in a shadow, maybe a shadow of the obstacles that face us in our lives.

When I used to fly a paraglider, there was a term called '*obstacle fixation*' which simply meant that whatever you focus your gaze and attention on, you are sure to collide with. In other words, when looking for a safe landing zone, don't stare at the power lines or the big boulder in the field! Focus your attention on the safe, flat grassy area. But of course, that's not always easy to do when panic is setting in.

David begins Psalm 57 with:

*Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge.
I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.*

We believe that he composed this Psalm when he was hiding in a cave from the danger King Saul. Saul used to fly into rages and would try to kill David. If anyone knew what it was like to face tough times, it was David. When you read his Psalms often the opening passages would sound as though he doubted God was even there. Just like us today, sometimes God feels a long way off or is hard to find. But this is just how it feels, not how it is.

David always has a way of fixing his gaze on God and recognising God's faithfulness even when he, David, may have lost faith in himself. Something that we are all prone to do at times. David continues in Psalm 57:

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

Awake, my soul! I will praise you, Lord, among the nations;

I will sing of you among the peoples.

For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

Canon Lucy Winkett writes that when David opens this Psalm with the words *I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings*, it is inviting us to do the same, saying to us that when we are so closely enveloped in God's wings, we will no longer be able to see our problems, his wings give us shelter from the storm until it has passed.

So let us all try to remember to praise God, allowing ourselves to be lifted out of the despair of our chaotic world. We need '*obstacle fixation*' not on the size of our problems but on the size of our God.

Bits and Pieces from Greg and what's going on around the Deanery:

Songs of Praise

We have all been warmly invited by Pontesbury Baptist Church to a Songs of Praise evening on Sunday June 4th at 6.30 p.m. We have had a wonderful time on previous occasions. Do join us if you can.

Shropshire Supports Refugees GARDEN PARTY

On June 17th 11.00 – 16.00 at The Paddock, Annscroft, SY5 8AN
Come and enjoy - Live music, food market, and willow weaving master class, face painting & hair braids, craft /handmade market

Mitchell's Fold

The annual service at Mitchell's Fold Stone Circle: Sunday 2nd July, 6.00 pm (Stapeley Common, Middleton-in-Chirbury parish).

Halfway House Male Voice Choir

4pm on Sunday 18th June at St. Mary's Church Trelystan. Male voice choir favourites delivered with style and humour, followed by a buffet tea. Tickets £10 from 01938 552064

In the News

UK foodbanks busier than ever

More food parcels were given out in the UK this past year than ever before. During December 2022, an emergency food parcel was handed out the equivalent of every eight seconds.

These are the most recent figures from the Trussell Trust, which supports more than 1300 foodbanks in the UK.

In all, the charity says it gave out nearly three million food parcels between April 2022 and April 2023. More than one million of these were for children.

These three million parcels from the charity's foodbanks represent a 37-per-cent increase in England on 2021. And more than 760,000 people used a foodbank for the first time, which is up more than one third in 2021-22.

Soaring inflation and energy costs have driven the increase in demand. The charity reports an unprecedented rise in the number of employed people using their foodbanks, because they are "no longer able to balance a low income against rising living costs."

The problem now, says the trust, is that food donation levels are not keeping up with the need. "This is putting us under a lot of strain."

Death of George Verwer, founder of OM

George Verwer, the founder of Operation Mobilisation, died on 14th April, aged 84, in his home near London. He had been ill for some time.

Verwer was known worldwide for his commitment to evangelism, and he made Operation Mobilisation one of the world's leading mission charities for more than four decades.

He has been described as one of "the most outstanding North American missionary statesman of the last 60 years." He handed out more than one million free books during his lifetime.

Since his retirement from OM in 2003, he managed special projects, spoke at church events, and wrote more than a dozen books. He never shied away from admitting his own imperfections and

honouring God, who graciously forgives and works through people, despite their mistakes. He called it "messiology."

Archbishop of Sudan forced to flee

According to recent reports from Sudan, the Archbishop of the Province of Sudan, Ezekiel Kondo, was forced to evacuate from the Anglican Cathedral in Khartoum when the fighting began. The archbishop and 42 people, including his family members, had to walk to safety amid the fighting in the city.

Sudan Cathedral is linked to the Diocese of Salisbury, where churches across the diocese have been praying for reconciliation and peace in Sudan.

Archbishop of Canterbury speaks about depression — and Winnie the Pooh

The Archbishop of Canterbury has said that he takes antidepressants so that he can maintain an "Eeyore status", instead of "something much worse."

He referred to his depression during a recent lecture he gave in Canterbury Cathedral, where he also spoke of having sought professional help for his mental health.

Archbishop Welby said: "As the psychiatrist I see tells me, the aim is not to make me so laid back that I'm horizontal, but just to settle things enough that I react like an average sort of human being. I'm sad when things are sad, and happy when they're happy, and so on and so forth."



The Archbishop went on to say that he likens human emotions to the characters in Winnie the Pooh, and compared himself to Eeyore, the often melancholy donkey, as opposed to a "bouncy" Tigger.

The Archbishop said that taking antidepressants "restore me to Eeyore status from some-

thing much worse." He went on: "Some of us are Tiggers, some of us are Eeyores. Probably, some of us are many of the other characters in Winnie the Pooh."

Archbishop Welby then recalled a conversation he'd had with a former Archbishop of Canterbury. "Rowan Williams once said to me: 'There is almost no human situation that cannot be explained with the hermeneutical tools of Winnie the Pooh.' Only Rowan could say that and be both humorous and profound at the same time."

Looking at you

David Pickup, a solicitor, considers the do's and don'ts of our letters

The letter is in the Post....

After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea. (Colossians 4:16)

We all like getting post, so drop a friend a line if you can! A nice card, or a letter. But what if it goes wrong?

Suppose the pile of letters on the mat includes a letter for your neighbour which went to you by mistake, a brown envelope addressed to a Mr Smith, but the address is yours. There is a letter for a relative who is at college and another from an ex-partner who has been making a nuisance. The letter for Smith looks official and your relative is getting mail from a bank.

Technically you should put misdirected mail into the post-box. It is a bit worrying that Mr Smith's mail comes to you. You could just put the wrong letters through the right letterboxes. It is a crime to open other people's post. It is even a crime to delay mail getting through.

Don't box the mail deliverer's van in! It does no harm to phone your relative to say they have mail, and you could offer to send it on. Would you offer to open it? You might think it is good news from Aunt Agatha but if it is something personal it would be embarrassing.

If you keep getting letters at your address, but not to you, just put 'wrong address' on the envelope and return it. If you throw away

mail meant for someone else, it is a crime as well.

Supposing you then go to the post-box and see the post office worker there can you give it to them or do you have to post it in the letterbox? If you do drop in it the mail and then realise you posted the wrong letter can you get it back?

You can give it to the mail worker, but he or she is unlikely to let you take out mail that has been posted. As soon as it is in the post office or box then the Royal Mail has to deliver it. If you think your letters are being stolen, you should contact the Royal Mail.

Sometimes letters get held up, but generally the Royal Mail is excellent and the daily delivery service is an essential part of the community.

Visiting the (recovering) sick

Nowadays people are generally not in hospital for long. Even a major operation only earns you a few days' stay in one of their beds. With almost embarrassing enthusiasm they get you out of bed, walk you up and down the ward and duly announce that you're 'well enough to go home'.

Visiting the recovering sick is a simple art. They want to be told how well they look, how bravely they've endured their treatment, and how good it is to see them about to return to the normal business of life. They'd like to be brought up to date on the local news and gossip, of course. Often, they value a little prayer of thanksgiving for recovery. Gratitude is never inappropriate!

A spell in hospital reminds us how 'shut off' patients tend to be, even in the very best institutions. Those who have recently experienced it are well placed to remind the rest of us that friends and fellow church members in hospital are not transferred to another planet. They may not expect frequent visits from those who are not close friends or family, but it's often quite easy to pick up the phone and speak to them on the ward - just the sort of contact we would have with them at home.

The same kind of simple contact can work very well when they are eventually back home - a brief call simply enquiring if everything's OK, with perhaps the offer of practical help with shopping, for instance, or a lift to the GP surgery. Thus, the nearly-well become the completely whole!

Looking at the wider COMMUNITY

75 years since the arrival of Windrush

It was **75 years ago**, on 21st June 1948, that the passenger ship *HMT Empire Windrush* docked in London, bringing the first large group of immigrants from the West Indies to the UK.

It was a result of the British Government's invitation to people from Commonwealth countries to settle in Britain and help rebuild the country after the devastation of the Second World War. The promise was one of prosperity and full employment, and the *Windrush* – ironically built and launched in Germany in 1930 – carried more than 1000 people, though the figure is often given as 492. In fact, there were probably 492 men from Jamaica, but also men and women from other islands, plus Polish men and women.

Most of the Caribbeans remained to settle permanently, despite mixed reactions. The first of what became known as the Windrush generation were housed temporarily in the Brixton area, where Windrush Square – an open space in front of the Brixton Tate Library – marks their arrival.

The Windrush generation generally defines everyone who emigrated to Britain from the Caribbean between 1948 and 1971, at which point all Commonwealth citizens living in the UK were given the right to remain. In 2018 a scandal emerged involving ineptitude by the Home Office which had resulted in people from this generation being wrongly detained, denied legal rights and threatened with deportation. It was calculated that more than 80 had been wrongly deported.

These people had been living and working in the UK for decades but had never been provided with the official paperwork, and the Home Office had kept no record of those granted leave to remain. The UK Government apologised, and the Home Secretary at the time, Amber Rudd, described her department's performance as "appalling".

Do any of our readers know of a family who came over in 1948?

The leasing of Hong Kong

Just **125 years ago**, on 9th June 1898, Britain leased Hong Kong from China for 99 years, and it became a British Crown Colony. It was transferred back to China in 1997.

The original contract was arranged to ensure that the territory could be defended efficiently. Claude MacDonald, the British representative in the talks, said he decided on a 99-year lease because he thought it was "as good as for ever": at the time the UK did not think it would ever have to give the territories back.

The Chinese Government had already agreed to make Hong Kong a Crown colony in 1842, following British victory in the First Opium War. Although the 1898 lease specifically referred to the New Territories, a productive inland area north of Hong Kong Island, it was agreed that the island and the Kowloon Peninsula would also be returned to China in 1997, and at midnight on July 1 of that year it was handed over in a ceremony attended by international dignitaries including Prime Minister Tony Blair and Prince Charles.

The new Hong Kong chief executive agreed on behalf of China to maintain a two-system capitalist government with some independence from China, although China had sovereignty.

Since then, there have been civil disobedience protests about increasing Chinese influence, notably in 2014, 2019 and 2020. Some Christians have supported these protests, but so far there have been no overt curbs on religious freedom, except where religious activities have been interpreted as political.

Hong Kong's population is now in decline – a process precipitated by harsh restrictions during the pandemic.

The brilliant Pascal *by Tim Lenton.*

Four hundred years ago, on 19th June 1623, Blaise Pascal was born in central France. This brilliant mathematician, physicist, theologian and philosopher invented one of the first mechanical calculators – among many other things.

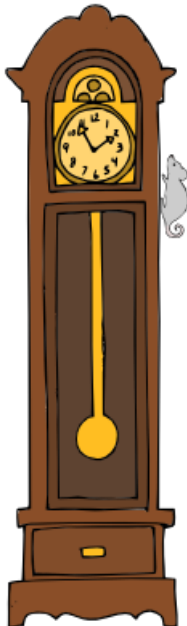
Pascal, whose mother died when he was three and who was brought up by his father, was prominent from a young age in different scientific fields – he laid the foundation for the modern

theory of probabilities, created Pascal's principle of pressure, invented the hydraulic press and the syringe, and devised a primitive roulette wheel while searching for a perpetual motion machine.

He created his calculator – the Pascaline – to assist his father, then the local administrator at Rouen, in his tax assessments. It operated by counting integers and thus was in a sense the first digital calculator.

At the age of 31 he had a mystical experience that he called a "night of fire", which changed his life. After that he became involved closely with the Catholic Church (as was his similarly brilliant sister, Jacqueline) and wrote extensively on theological matters, insisting that men must be brought to God through Christ alone. His scientific training lent his Christian writing a strength of argument, and he produced many memorable quotes, such as the words he put in Jesus' mouth: "Be comforted; you would not be looking for me if you had not found me."

Pascal was never a well man, possibly suffering from coeliac disease, and died in great pain in 1662, probably from a combination of stomach and brain cancer. One of his last major achievements was introducing the first bus service to Paris, using a carriage with many seats on a fixed route at a fixed price. Whereas most buses are late, this service was before its time and closed in 1675.



Clock

*I am the keeper of time,
I hold each small, set span
within its own appointed bounds.
Then one by one, I let them go.*

*They meet their fate with man.
Used or squandered at his will,
each passes by, full charged
with hope to change a waiting world.*

*Mine is the grace to give.
For me, the privilege to offer time.
For man, the power to make it work
in man's own interest and good.*

*So grasp the challenge
while you may.
This moment will not live to see another day.*

by Megan Smith

Nigel Beeton writes: I was in Amsterdam last year, a city which was the home of an extremely courageous young woman, Anne Frank. From 1942 until her arrest in 1944 she and her family (and some other refugees) lived in a small section of an Amsterdam House, the entrance hidden by a bookcase. We can barely imagine what life was like crammed into that tiny space, completely unable to get out and stretch your legs or take a breath of air.

It all ended in probable betrayal and arrest, and the Frank family could have just been part of those terrifying statistics were it not for the fact that Anne's diary was discovered after they had gone:

The Bookcase by Nigel Beeton

A simple wooden bookcase

So plain to prying eyes

Concealed a family, hiding

From Nazis and their spies.

And Anne Frank kept a record

Of their long time inside

She told us of the tensions

And what it's like to hide.

How hard it is to live so close

As day comes after day;

When you must stay well hidden –

When there's no other way.

She told us of the arguments

With strangers and with kin

She told us of the hunger

And dread of life within.

She told us of the bravery

Of those who, though unpaid,

These brave souls daily risked their lives

To bring them food and aid.

She told us of her youthful hopes

When evil men had fled,

In forty-four, those hopes were dashed

The Nazis came instead.

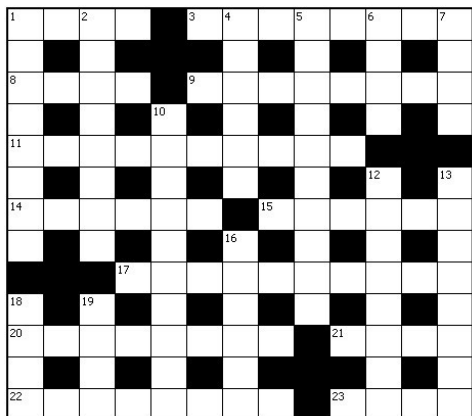
But how would we, who live in peace

Whose lives run close to plan

Have known of life in fear and dread

If it wasn't for brave Anne?

Your PUZZLES for June



Across

- 1 See 23 Across
 3 Where the thief on the cross was told he would be, with Jesus (Luke 23:43) (8)
 8 Invalid (4)
 9 Blasphemed (Ezekiel 36:20) (8)
 11 Adhering to the letter of the law rather than its spirit (Philippians 3:6) (10)
 14 Shut (Ecclesiastes 12:4) (6)
 15 'This is how it will be with anyone who — up things for himself but is not rich towards God' (Luke 12:21) (6)
 17 Mary on Isis (anag.) (10)
 20 Agreement (Hebrews 9:15) (8)

- 21 Native of, say, Bangkok (4)
 22 Deaf fort (anag.) (5-3)
 23 and 1 Across 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of — to work it and take — of it' (Genesis 2:15) (4,4)

Down

- 1 Struggle between opposing forces (Habakkuk 1:3) (8)
 2 James defined this as 'looking after orphans and widows in their distress and keeping oneself from being polluted by the world' (James 1:27) (8)
 4 'The one I kiss is the man; — him' (Matthew 26:48) (6)
 5 'Be joyful in hope, patient in — , faithful in prayer' (Romans 12:12) (10)
 6 St Columba's burial place (4)
 7 Swirling current of water (4)
 10 Loyalty (Isaiah 19:18) (10)
 12 'God was pleased through the foolishness of what was — , to save those who believe' (1 Corinthians 1:21) (8)
 13 Camp where the angel of the Lord slew 185,000 men one night (2 Kings 19:35) (8)
 16 'There is still — — — Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet' (2 Samuel 9:3) (1,3,2)
 18 David Livingstone was one (4)
 19 Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (1,1,1,1)

Across
 1 care; 3 paradise; 8 null; 9 profaned; 11 legalistic; 14 closed; 15 stores; 17 missionary;
 20 covenant; 21 Thai; 22 trade-off; 23 Eden
Down
 1 conflict; 2 religion; 4 arrest; 5 affliction; 6 Iona; 7 Eddy; 10 allegiance; 12 preached; 13 Assyrian;
 16 a son of; 18 Scot; 19 DVLA

God in the SCIENCES

*Written by Dr Ruth M. Bancewicz, Church Engagement
Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge.*

A scientist reflects on God's heart for the suffering

It's difficult as a scientist to hear information that is fascinating, but which also involves so much suffering for other people. I worked for a time in a leukaemia research lab. We had to let other people's pain drive our research without it crippling our ability to concentrate on our work. But, during lockdown, I found myself – as a biologically-educated bystander – avoiding looking into the science of COVID-19, because the reminders of its impact on people's lives were everywhere that I looked.

One of the ways I managed my own feelings during the pandemic was by digging deeper into what God has revealed to us about His character, letting that fuel my faith, my prayers, and my actions. For more academic types like myself, study – particularly of the Bible – can be one of the primary ways we connect with God and hear from Him. It's not wrong to be comforted by books, so long as the contents turn our eyes upwards and outwards.

First of all, God hears: "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted" (Psalm 34:18a). In Jesus God took on human form, and He showed us His heart for the world. When His friend Lazarus died, He wept (John 11). God is "the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Human sin has affected the whole of creation, and I believe this is largely the direct impact of our mismanagement of creation and mistreatment of each other. COVID-19 may well be another animal's friendly virus, pushed by human activity into causing havoc in bodies where it doesn't belong.

But God's world remains good. It is still fruitful, praising Him, as Psalm 19 describes. Even pictures of a deadly virus can seem beautiful – especially to a biologist! These good things are hints of the promised "new heavens and new earth" mentioned in the New Testament. One day "creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay" (Romans 8: 21), and for everyone who follows God, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 21: 4).

Behind the debates about suffering is sometimes the assumption that God doesn't care. My experience is that God does care deeply, and He invites His Church to care for those around them – especially the most vulnerable. He is with us, He hears us and grieves with us, He helps us and promises a better future.

God in the ARTS

Michael Burgess continues his look at great works of Christian art. This painting hangs in the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, and this graphic is in the public domain. You can view it online at: <https://images.nga.gov/>

'He gave us eyes to see them': Tintoretto's 'Christ at the Sea of Galilee'

In 1833 Mendelssohn composed two overtures inspired by the sea. 'Fingal's Cave' portrays the gentle roll of the waves and the call of the wind on the waters around Staffa. 'Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage' paints a sea journey when the fog lifts, the sky clears, the safety of land beckons and the boat arrives in the harbour.

This month's painting shows us a very different picture of the sea. It is 'Christ at the Sea of Galilee' by Tintoretto. He was an Italian painter of the Renaissance period who worked in Venice until his death in 1594. All his paintings are marked by intensity and drama, whether it is the Last Supper, the Conversion of St Paul, or this canvas. Tintoretto worked so quickly and so single-mindedly that he was nicknamed 'Il Furioso.' And it is the fury of the sea that is captured here. Not the lazy waters of Venice or the calm seas of Mendelssohn's music. Now the sea and the sky above are in torment and revolt, and the world is dominated by the violence of this storm.

The Sea of Galilee is like that. One moment, the sky is clear and windless, the next, a gust can whip up the waters into anger. In Scripture the sea is always an element to fear. For the psalmist the sea contains creeping things innumerable and even monsters. For John in the book of Revelation, the sea ceases to exist when the new heaven and the new earth appear. The threat of that element is pervasive in this painting. The sail of the boat bends with the raging of the wind, and the vessel is tossed up and down – so near the shore, and yet so far. Above, the clouds frown.

But enfolding the scene are two signs of hope and life. To one side we see a tall tree in leaf and growing. At the other side is the tall figure of Jesus: a sign of safety and hope to the disciples, floundering in the boat. His feet are just vague outlines in the water, but His hand is firm as He beckons to His followers. Peter, brave and headstrong as ever, begins to climb out of the boat with no immediate sense of danger. This month of June ends with his feast day when we celebrate a saint who was so much like us. Wanting to follow Jesus, but finding himself weak; eager to serve, but unable to back words up with deeds. And yet, through all that, God's grace triumphed in Peter's life. We know that he will be saved here as he steps onto the wild water to reach Jesus.

This raging element is a parable of life with its storms and challenges for Peter and for all of us. Just as the sea threatens to swallow the boat and the disciples in it, so we know how the world threatens to swallow us up. Each of us, in our discipleship, faces concerns and challenges, anxieties about the present, even despair about the future. Tintoretto is saying to us from this canvas, Reach out and take hold of the sure hand of our Lord. That will be an anchor for you when the sea of life is calm and when the storm rages. 'Will your anchor hold?' asks the hymn, and we can reply

*'We have an anchor that keeps the soul,
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
Fastened to the rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.'*





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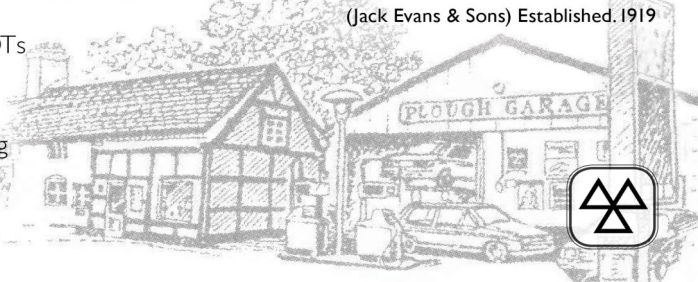
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