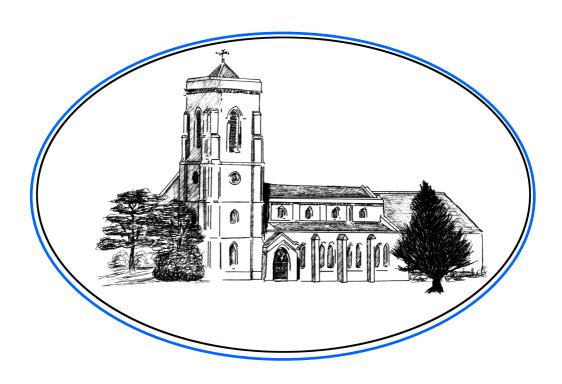
# St. George's Montesbury Magazine 50p



September 2023

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Contributions for <u>St. George's Magazine</u> should be given to the Editor by the **15**<sup>th</sup> 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 <u>Deanery News</u> to be submitted by 10<sup>th</sup> of previous month to Alison Bebb - Keepers Cottage, Cruckmeole, Shrewsbury, SY5 8JN Telephone: 01743 860158 email: alisonbebb5@gmail.com

### QUOTE:

Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.

- Martin Luther King



# LIFTING UP OUR EYES With the On-line Vicar

Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' He told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him. (Matthew 9:9).

This month we remember Matthew's call as one of Jesus' 12 apostles. It consisted of a simple invitation, 'Follow me', and an immediate response. The resulting meal at Matthew's house also helps us to understand the challenge of his call.

#### Jesus' welcome:

At the dinner many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with Him and His disciples. (v10). Jesus welcomed each person unconditionally, in a way that most Jews would not! In the same way, Jesus welcomes us and shows us how we should welcome others. Our welcome cannot be conditional, expecting people to be like us or to behave as we expect.

## Jesus' challenge:

When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'(v11). The Pharisees were upset and avoided sinners, because they believed only the pure and untainted could have access to God. However, Jesus reminded them that they were witnessing God's love in action: 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill.'(v12). When God is at work in the lives of those we don't expect, we need to let Him open our hearts to embrace and encourage what He is doing.

### Jesus' compassion:

But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners. (v13). The Pharisees were so committed to keeping the law, that they had forgotten God's heart of compassion. Our religious practice is meaningless without love and mercy towards others. In what ways can we express love towards others, especially those outside the community of faith?

# 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
3 <sup>rd</sup> September 13 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity	Morning Worship 10.30am	Jeremiah.15. 15-21 (Romans 12. 9-end) Matthew 16. 21-end
5 <sup>th</sup> September Tuesday	Tea Service 2.30pm	
10 <sup>th</sup> September 14 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity	Holy Communion 10.30am	Ezekiel. 33. 7-11 (Romans 13. 8-end) Matthew 18. 15-20
17 <sup>th</sup> September 15 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity	Holy Communion 10.30am	Psalm 103.1-13 (Romans 14. 1-12) Matthew 18. 21-35
24 <sup>th</sup> September 16 <sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity	Holy Communion 10.30am	Psalm 145. 1-8 (Philippians. 1. 21-end) Matthew 20. 1-16



# Our Local and Church COMMUNITY

# St. George's PCC: what the Committee is up to...

For anyone not familiar with our PCC ("Parochial Church Council"), it can seem a little mysterious. And for those who are allergic to committees, maybe the PCC is something to be avoided. But as most members of St. George's PCC would surely agree, it actually plays a key role in the running of our church.....and doesn't take up vast amounts of precious spare time.

### But first, a little history....

Back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, local government (parish councils and local authorities) didn't exist. Instead, many parishes formed "Vestry Committees" which looked after both the running of the local church and the provision of local services and amenities. These often included local roads, bridges and Poor Law Relief: "indoor" in the form of Workhouses, and "out-door" in the form of financial help to tenant families. In many cases, Workhouses became hospitals of a sort for the poor and care-homes of a sort for the elderly. Sometimes run by cliques of wealthier members of the parish, Vestry Committees acquired a mixed reputation, so a series of reforms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw them lose their civic role and become today's PCCs. However, memories linger on and even today, some parts of some communities still think of their parish church as "them"....

### So what does St. George's PCC get up to these days?

Briefly: the PCC is the parish church's executive committee, made up of the Clergy, the Churchwardens and representatives of the Laity. The PCC is responsible for the financial affairs of the parish church and the maintenance of its buildings – and it assists the Clergy in the management of church matters and of Mission to the community. It has charitable status, most recently confirmed by the Charities Act 2011. Roads, bridges, the NHS and all that are left to Shropshire Council and Westminster. Write to your Councillor or MP.......

And what's the PCC doing this month?

The PCC meets six times a year (plus an AGM, the "APCM", once a year) and as it happens, there's a meeting this month, on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September. At time of writing, the agenda is yet to be finalised but it seems likely that we'll be discussing St. George's finances and what needs to be done about them. No less important are other regular items including the state of the fabric of the building (and what needs to be done about it) and forth-coming church festivals (and what needs to be done to make them a success). As you may suspect, items often need urgent attention - so the meeting is no "talking shop". Instead, discussions lead to action: decisions are put forward, on which the PCC votes. Those that receive assent are to be acted upon.

#### Then what?

No doubt, all will be made clear by Notices at the following Sunday services....then it's down to you, dear reader – and the rest of us - to do what we can to get things done! Your Secretary is happy to provide you with Minutes of PCC meetings. If you want your say on an issue, then tell your Churchwardens. If you want to contribute to PCC debate and discussion by becoming a PCC member, speak to your Secretary.

Allen Marsden (Secretary, St. George's PCC)

QUOTE:

Certain thoughts are prayers.

There are moments when, whatever be the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees.

– Victor Hugo



### Parish 'at very heart' of God's mission, General Synod hears

The General Synod has recently backed the parish as key to the spreading of the message of the Christian faith, in a debate where the local church was described as 'at the very heart' of God's mission.

Members were told that the parish system is central to the Church of England's Vision for growth, in a debate led by Revd Canon Kate Wharton, from the Diocese of Liverpool.

"The parish system exists not so that we can be territorial and protective of 'our patch' and work only in our own silos, but so that we can ensure that every single soul in the land is held within a system in which they matter and can be known."

The General Synod members voted to welcome the Church's commitment to increasing the numbers of ordinands, as well as an increasing emphasis on lay ministry and the expansion of Licenced Lay Ministers.

"This isn't about survival, somehow bringing in enough people and enough cash to ensure we can keep going," Canon Wharton said. "Rather, this is about a community of believers coming together to dream dreams with God about what might be possible in His perfect plan for their future."

### The importance in having a cause greater than yourself

A survey was conducted among people who lived to be more than 100 years old. What had kept them going so long? You'd have thought that they would recite their health diets, their miracle drugs, or their devotion to strenuous exercise. Instead, the one thing all these centenarians had in common was a purpose in life. They had had a good reason to get out of bed each morning.

St Paul writes: 'For me to live is Christ' (Philippians 1:21). For Paul, that kept him going. He lived to exalt the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to share the Good News. Sadly, too many of us are instead like the man who said; 'No matter what I'm working on, I'd rather be doing something else.'

A wise man once said: There are two most important days in your life. The day you were born, and the day you discover WHY you were born. God made you for a purpose. Have you discovered it yet? You haven't really lived until you know what it is.



Everyone is affected nowadays by the high cost of energy, food and essential household items. The Rea Valley Foodbank is here for all those

who are unable to meet their food bills and will provide a weekly parcel or nutritionally balanced meals, along with other household goods. Everything you receive is in date and we can help for a period of time until circumstances improve.

You do need a referral to ensure that it takes into account any diet requirements, but it's really easy—just call:

Reverend Greg Smith 07902 794653 or Reverend Richard Lonsdale 07922 830488 Alternatively, GPs and schools can make referrals.

Our teams give you a warm welcome when you come to either of these collection points:

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

Donations of men's and women's toiletries, carrier bags, pet food and in-date food items are needed. If you can help. please drop donations into either of the churches.

**PASIS** 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 rvder928@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

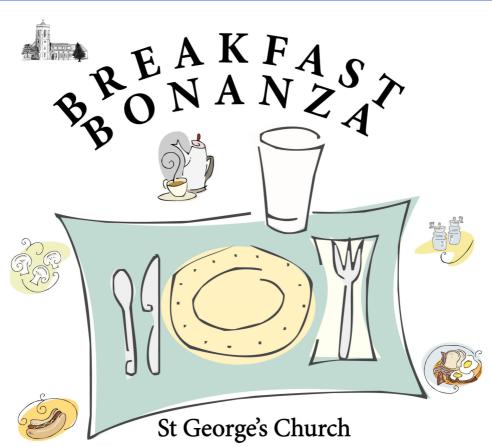
that prayer can make a difference. Each person within the group offers daily prayer for anyone who asks for prayer.

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

#### Revd. Shirley Small 01743 791885.

All information given is given in confidence. A name is enough if that is all you wish to give.





Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September

9:00 - 9:30

9:30 - 10:00

10:00 - 10:30

10:30 - 11:00

Choose your time then get your £10 tickets (in advance only) from

Marianne McCall - 07944 333830

or

Mary Worrall - 01743 791069

# Looking at GOD

Our church will hold Harvest thanksgiving in October this year; others do so in September. Here are some thoughts with a Harvest theme by Lester Amann.

# The divine Gardener

This is the time of year for many churches to hold their Harvest Festival services. No doubt, there will be displays of food, some grown in local gardens. While gardeners have pleasure growing fruit and vegetables, it can be hard work tending to them.

Jesus knew about the care given to vines. In John 15:1-8 Jesus compared Himself to a vine and referred to God as the gardener. In this parable, God is responsible for pruning the vine. He sees what parts are useful, and what parts useless. The unproductive parts are cut away, so that growth is encouraged. Jesus is telling us that God will prune our lives, not to harm us, but to encourage our spiritual growth.

God's pruning cuts away wrong attitudes and wasteful behaviour, all of which serve no useful purpose in our lives. This pruning is required so that we become more fruitful. And the fruit God wants is love, joy, patience etc. (see Galatians 5:22-23) These holy qualities are intended to influence the world to change it from the bad to all that is good.

To encourage its growth, a vine has regularly to be cut back. The effect looks drastic, but it is still essential. When God cuts away the dead wood in our lives, He does it because He knows how our lives can grow. The pruning knives are in the hands of our Father God who only desires the best for us. This pruning process can be painful, but Jesus says that it is vital if the Holy Spirit is to flow through us to produce the fruit that God wants.

Also in this parable, Jesus said He was the Vine, and we are

the branches. We have no existence apart from Jesus. We can do nothing for God on our own and must be joined to Jesus. In the same way a vine utilises the life-giving sap to flow into the branches, so we need the Holy Spirit to flow His life into us. It is only by us remaining in Jesus, that He can give us the inner resources for an effective fruit-producing life.

Jesus said, 'Abide in Me' (John 15:4 King James Version). Abiding speaks of sustenance, being upheld and supported, enduring and withstanding. So, if we are to reap a harvest of holiness, may we be prepared for God's pruning, and continue to abide in Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

### Feel the tug

Have you ever wondered how you can be certain about who and what God really is? One Christian put it this way: "I'm reminded of the story of the little boy who was out flying a kite. The wind was brisk and large billowing clouds were blowing across the sky. The kite went up and up until it was entirely hidden by the clouds. Then a man came by and asked the little boy what he was doing, staring up at an empty sky. "I'm flying my kite," he replied.

The man replied: "What kite? How can you be sure it is still there? You can't see a thing."

The little boy agreed that he could see nothing, "but every little while I feel a tug, so I know for sure that it is still up there and is connected to me!"

When it comes to God, you don't need to take anyone else's word for it. You can find Him for yourself by inviting Jesus Christ into your life. Then you too will know, by the warm wonderful tug on your heartstrings, that though you can't see Him, He is up there, and that He lives in you. You are connected!

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

# Spiritual Disciplines: Service

'Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.' (John 13: 14-15).

We are all familiar with those requests for more to 'serve on a team' at church, whether the coffee rota or with the children. However, these can hinder our understanding of the spiritual discipline of service.

The discipline of service involves learning from Jesus' example, when He washed the disciples' feet. Like His disciples, we are all called to take the place of a servant and be willing to serve those around us. Richard Foster in 'Celebration of Discipline' contrasts 'self-righteous service', human effort wanting to impress others and be rewarded, with 'true service', which is rooted in our relationship with Jesus and delights in the service itself.

In his book, Richard Foster highlights the value of small, everyday sacrificial acts of service which flow from the place of being a servant: 'service is not a list of things to do, though in it we discover things to do. It is not a code of ethics, but a way of living.' He goes on to highlight a number of acts of service, including: hiddenness (working behind the scenes); small acts of service; guarding the reputation of others; being willing to be served ourselves; practising hospitality; listening and bearing the burdens of each other. We need to pray for wisdom and discernment, so that we know when to say 'yes' and 'no' to serving. If we say 'yes' too much we can easily find ourselves becoming bitter or burned out!

Why not make it your prayer each morning: 'Lord Jesus, if it would please You, bring me someone today who I can serve?'



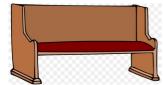
# The Revd Dr Jo White continues her series on finding faith in the fabric of our church buildings.

# Reflecting Faith — Pews and Chairs

Most of us think of pews as having been installed at the same time the church building was built, with occasional upgrades over time. But that's not the case.

Originally church floors consisted of little more than stone flags or beaten earth on which grasses or rushes were lain as a renewable winter covering for cleanliness and insulation. Each year, in late summer, the old and rotten rushes were cleared out and new ones taken to the churches in carts. There are still a number of English towns, in particular in the north of England, that celebrate 'Rushbearing' each year.

The people stood for all the services. However, it was recognised that the infirm and elderly needed support, and stone benches - often backless – were placed by the walls for them. It was not until the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s that wooden pews were introduced for everyone to be able to be seated.



Society was organised in classes or hierarchies and the richer and more important folk had the best seats near the front so they could hear what the priest was saying and watch the service.

One's place to sit was arranged by your place in Society, so the poorer and least important were at the back.

Sermons alone could be lengthy; two hours was not unusual, and if you could pay for privacy to doze off and some form of personal heating for winters, then clearly that made sense.

### This month

Have a look at the seating in a church near you. Are all the chairs or pews the same? Are some more elaborately decorated or larger? Is there a difference between the pews in the nave for the congregation and those for the choir and different again in the sanctuary? Does any of this reflect your faith?

# Looking at the CHURCH Worldwide

This month it's 'Back to Church Sunday' on 17<sup>th</sup> Sept, when church members are encouraged to invite their friends and neighbours to come along.

# Come back to church!

To encourage friends to attend, how about if we offered:

**Beds** - for those who say Sunday is their day to sleep-in. **Safety helmets** - for anyone who fears the roof would fall in if they entered a church door.

**Blankets and hot water bottles** – for those who find our church too cold.

Fans and ice cream - for those who find our church too hot.

Cushions - for anyone who finds our seats too hard.

**Bicycles** – for those who exercise on Sunday mornings.

**Hearing aids** - for those who find the minister speaks too softly.

**Cotton wool** - for those who find the minister speaks too loudly.

**Score cards** - for all who want to rate the hymns/sermons/coffee. **Ready-meals** - for anyone who can't come because they have to

cook Sunday lunch.

**Some flowers** - for those who prefer to seek God in nature. **Christmas poinsettias and Easter palms** - for all those who have never seen the church without them.

See you on Sunday!!

# How China is increasing persecution of Christians

China has been trying to tighten its grip on Christians in China through a programme of 'Sinicization', a policy to compel churches to adopt the atheist ideology of the Communist Party.

According to reports, a recent conference in Jilin was attended by state-appointed pastors of the government-controlled Three Self Church. It called for Christianity with a Communist

core to be exported around the world. And it concluded with a rallying cry to 'change the face of world Christianity' – which was greeted with thunderous applause.

So, what does this hybrid of Communism and Christianity look like in China itself?

The official policy of Sinicization, of state assimilation and control, has led to a ban on online religious content and the tearing down of more than a thousand crosses from official churches. Pastors have been imprisoned, along with Chinese lawyers who try to defend their legal right to display the cross of Christ on their buildings.

The Communist Party has insisted that pictures of Mao and President Xi Jinping are displayed in churches and demanded recently that a large hammer and sickle be put up beside a church sign in Zhejiang province.

Pastors who rock the boat are put under surveillance, singled out for harassment, and accused of extremism. Some who take up offerings have been arrested for fraud or illegal business operations.

The current wave of persecution in China has been described as the most severe since the Cultural Revolution.

Yet China watchers point out that thousands of Chinese Christians each year express what they think of Sinicization by voting with their feet to leave the Three Self Church. There is an exodus to the unofficial house churches.

Bob Fu, a partner of UK-based Release International, says that, despite worsening persecution, the church is growing: "Secular Purdue University estimates the number of Christians in China today has already – at minimum -- exceeded 100 million."

QUOTE: The church is the only society in the world that never loses any of its members. even by death. – *Anon* 

# Chinese Christians learn in small groups – thanks to Bible Society

Church leaders in China have thanked Bible Society UK for sending them discipleship materials suitable for them to use in small groups.

The Abundant Life and The Abundant Grace have been widely used to help Chinese Christians grow in their faith in a country which is actively against them having any faith at all. Yet still Chinese believers want to learn; one church leader, Elder Wang, has 700 names on her list of people wanting to join small discipleship groups.

One church leader, Pastor Zhen, says: "The materials from Bible Society were just what we needed. From one small learning group, we have grown to more than 20 groups now, consisting of 240 people. And from our church, we have gone to share this small learning-group format, using the Bible Society materials, with 14 other churches in Feicheng."

If you want to help support Bible Society's resources for Chinese Christians, please go to: https://www.biblesociety.org.uk



Nigel Beeton writes: 'To refer to the second coming of Jesus using the metaphor of a crime is, perhaps, surprising, but Jesus Himself uses the allusion first as recorded in Matt 24:43 – if the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have allowed his home to be broken into. Paul in 1 Thess 5:2 and John in Rev 16:15 return to the theme.

I wondered why this example was used and not another unexpected event such as an accident or a natural disaster, which can be equally unexpected, but the point is, I think, that the thief knows when he is coming, but does not choose to give advanced warning of his plans. The date and time of the second coming is known, but Jesus tells us (Matt 24:36) that not even He knows that information, but we must live from day to day and from moment to moment in readiness for His return:



### A Thief in the Night

We must live our lives each day As disciples of the Way And we'll walk ev'ry day in the light; Because Jesus will return And the Bible will confirm He will come like a thief in the night!

And so no-one knows the time Be sure none can see a sign And each person who tried was not right! So we must not be misled But believe His word instead — He will come like a thief in the night!

Yes, the Bible is so clear
That we must hold Jesus near
(For we live, anyway, in His sight!)
And we'll not be surprised
When He's there – before our eyes
And He's come like a thief in the night!

By Nigel Beeton



# From the Dragon's Den

George, Uncle Sam and Idris have just enjoyed their annual wash and brush -up and have spent a happy time swinging back and forth on the washing line. Now they are bright and bushy-tailed and all ready for the Autumn Term at Little Dragons.

New mats have been purchased and Little Dragon cushions are about to be checked and refreshed. Paint brushes are clean and tidy and paint supplies are to be replenished where required. No need for anything sparkly, as we have sufficient quantities of sequins and shiny bits to light up the night sky. A little time left before 'Big Dragons in Action'.

Joy to everyone, from Val, Frank, Marion E, Marion W, Pat, Caroline

And from we three







George, Uncle Sam & Idris



## A few miscellaneous quotes:

Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.

- Martin Luther King

Certain thoughts are prayers. There are moments when, whatever be the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees. – *Victor Hugo* 

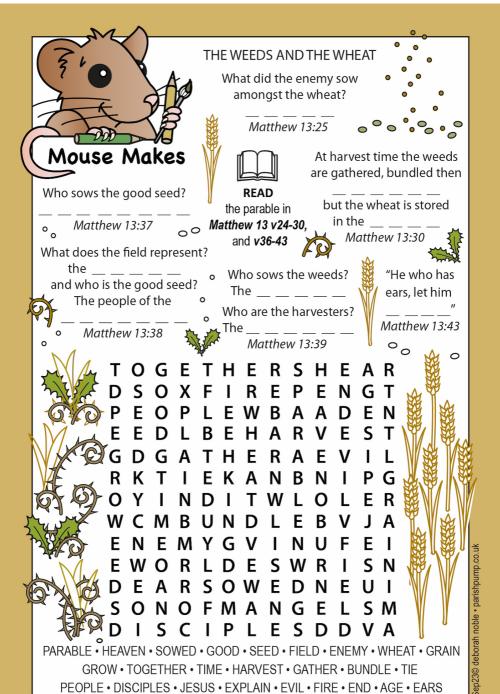
When praying, don't give God instructions - just report for duty. - Anon

Prayer is the original wireless communication. - Anon

Perhaps the straight and narrow path would be wider if more people used it.

- Kay Ingram

Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking together in the same direction. - Antoine De Saint-Exupery, French writer.



Find the words from the questions too!

# Help more children get back to school this month

As our children return to school this month, World Vision has been reporting on its work in countries where more and more children will NOT be going to school this autumn.

Instead, the worldwide cost-of-living-crisis means that such children will either be **skipping meals to make ends meet, unable to go to school because of the fees,** 'sold' into early marriage, or sent to work as child labour.

World Vision is warning that: "Forcibly displaced children are paying the price for the international community's failure ... new and protracted conflicts, disasters, and extreme weather, alongside the reverberating impacts of the pandemic and higher costs are driving the **shocking rise in hunger and malnutrition** seen in many parts of the world today."

And so it is that 85% of forcibly displaced families are unable to afford enough food to meet their daily nutrition needs. 25% of families are responding to increased financial pressures by keeping their children out of school, and 19% have sent their children to work.

**Meanwhile, significant numbers of families** in Afghanistan and Niger (12% and 7% respectively) are using child marriage as a coping mechanism for decreased income.

If you can help World Vision to provide help for such children, go to: https://www.worldvision.org.uk





# From the Archdeacon of Hereford, Derek Chedzey

Achievement – One of the things I have done as part of my study leave is to walk the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. I have wanted to do this since I was in my late teens.

I actually did around a third of it back in 1986 and have done different parts ever since but never got around to walking the whole path. I can now say that after walking for 16 days I have completed all 186 miles and enjoyed every moment of it! Whilst written out it does not seem quite so challenging, as it was coastal walking it certainly contained a lot of climbing up and down. According to the Coast Path, guidebook the ascents and descent are said to be the equivalent of climbing Mount Everest - 35,000 feet! In addition, I lost weight and raised with my sister-in-law £3000 for the Alzheimer's Society. It actually feels like I have achieved something, and it got me thinking about the idea of success.

In our society today, we are often measured by how successful we are and whilst we should all aim to do our best and work hard that will not always lead to success. It is so easy for us to try to emulate others or to search out the golden bullet that will change our fortunes, but the reality is chasing after superficial success will not help us spiritually.

The same is true in our churches it is far too easy to compare ourselves with others or think that there is a clever solution to our problems. The reality is there is no one way to grow our churches or to be successful because it is God who grows the church not us. When we chase after clever tools and copy other people's strategies, we miss the point completely.

"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So, whoever knows

the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." James 4:13-17 James writing to the early church recognised that it is only God who can create our spiritual growth and grand plans that don't include God are fruitless. When we chase success for successes sake we will simply end up missing what God is about and fool ourselves. James isn't suggesting we have a fatalistic faith but what he is saying is that we need to see what God is doing amongst us and join in with him. So often, we create plans and then invite God to bless them rather than asking God in prayer what he would have us do. James wants the church to be a place that is faithful to the gospel and to listen to God and not chase after success and achievement so we can boast about ourselves. When we put God first in our lives then we will see achievement in a different light.

Achievement also does not come without cost, and it amazes me how so often we stockpile our resources and then wonder why we don't see more fruit from our church life.

Generosity and hospitality are core parts of our faith and yet we often fail to share what God has given us with others. If we truly want to see our churches grow and flourish, we have to live out the values of our faith and not allow ourselves to become inward looking. Our faith is not a business transaction where we get what we pay for instead we are called to give ourselves away for the sake of the kingdom. This is what Jesus taught his disciples and it is just as true for us today.

"Don't pile up treasures on earth, where moth and rust can spoil them, and thieves can break in and steal. But keep your treasure in Heaven where there is neither moth nor rust to spoil it and nobody can break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is, you may be certain that your heart will be there too!" Matthew 6:19-21

The good news is that we can all achieve things for God if we put our minds to it and he has given us all the resources we need if we put our trust in him. It doesn't matter if we are part of a church with six members or sixty, we all have a part in God's plan if we ask him and listen for the whispers of the Holy Spirit to guide us. Instead of trying to be successful, we need to learn to be faithful and obedient to the call of God to serve our communities.

I love the words of the missionary teacher William Carey that remind us to trust God and have a go!

"Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God."

### **Deanery of Pontesbury**

# DEANERY NEWS

Rural Dean: The Revd Bill Rowell

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

# THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH FROM: Ruth Leigh of Westbury, Worthen & Yockleton

Sometimes the long queue at Dobbies is not always as dull an experience as it usually is.

It was the end of July, the Women's World Cup had begun, the Open golf challengers were battling the elements, the Formula One venue was bathed in sunshine for the whole weekend, and I was off to Dunelm for some new PVC cloths in the pouring rain. Stuck on the A5 in the line of camper vans, tractors cars and lorries still quite some way to go.

I turned on the radio. It's a newish car and my car Infotech Entertainment System is still quite a mystery in many respects. I can find Premier Radio but don't yet know how to change stations or save a different station. (You don't get a manual any more, do you?)

So Premier Radio came on and the item under discussion was 'Where in the world are you most likely be persecuted for being a Christian?'

I thought I knew about a few hotspots but was shocked to hear there was such a thing as a top 10 of countries vying for these rankings. The spokesperson from the charity Open Doors UK was claiming 360 million Christians worldwide were suffering high levels of persecution.

I have to say hearing this made me feel rather helpless and despondent. I know God is in control. I know God has got this. But we still feel we have to *do* something, don't we?

Our Diocesan year of prayer still has some months left. I suspect, but am always happy to be proven wrong, that the majority of prayer sessions and requests may well centre around our own churches and the Deanery. How can we appeal to families? How do we proclaim God's kingdom in our contexts and settings?

All very good intentions, but honestly deep down, doesn't the

thought that people are being injured, persecuted and face death because of their faith in Jesus, haunt you?

Would we be prepared to make such a stand in similar circumstances even if we could imagine what those circumstances might look like? Our priorities must take a hit when facts and stats such as these come to light.

By this time the traffic was on the move, it was still drizzling and Dobbies island roundabout had been safely negotiated once again.

I have no great insight or wisdom to finish with. I just feel that sometimes God gives us a nudge and lets us know that it's not all fine and dandy in his Kingdom and that we need to remember to be thankful before we complain and compassionate before we turn away.

God Bless

# A Strong Hold by Megan Carter

Should I slip and lose the way
The Lord will hold me fast,
Should I choose to walk away
I'm firmly in His grasp.

Though I walk through death's dark vale, His rod and staff are there I would not dare to walk this path Without His loving care.

Although my hold on Him is light His loving arms are wide, What He's begun He will fulfil Till I am safe on Canaan's side.

What God is this who loves us so?
Our future He has planned,
We're ever safe in His embrace
And none can snatch us from His hand.

# Our Stiperstones Benefice COMMUNITY with 'Bits & Pieces' from Greg ...

### **New Treasurer for Pontesbury**

Roy Munton has been appointed as the new Treasurer for St George's, with Gerald Worrall acting as his assistant. Roy may be contacted on 07751 764442. We are extremely grateful to Mike Bowen, who took on this role at very short notice, for all his hard work in this role over the last twelve months. Mike continues to act as Treasurer for HTM.

#### **Garden Service**

There will be a joint garden service with the Congregationalists and Methodists on Sunday September 10<sup>th</sup> at 3 p.m. at Pontesbury Congregational Church.

#### **Foodbank**

For understandable reasons, foodbank donations are down across the nation, as people tighten their belts. Nevertheless, the need is only growing. Even one tin makes a difference.

#### **Harvest**

Harvest will be celebrated in St. George's on Sunday 8th October, with lunch following the 10.0 morning service. This year we are making the focus of our harvest celebrations support for the farming community; our harvest appeal is for RABI (Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution) who support farmers through difficult times.

#### **Congratulations**

St George's has been awarded *Silver Eco-church status*. We will celebrate this when Kirsty Stevens from Caring for God's Acre comes to speak at the service on Sept 24<sup>th</sup>.

### **Songs of Praise**

The next Songs of Praise service hosted by Pontesbury Baptist Church will take place on Sunday September 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6.30 p.m. All are warmly welcomed to attend. If you would like us to sing a favourite hymn, please let Mike Wells or Greg know.

#### **Messy Church**

The Messy Church that meets once a month at Minsterley Parish Hall continues to attract good numbers of families, those who otherwise are not connected with the church. The future of the service is in jeopardy however because of the shortage of volunteers. Members of any church would be welcome to come and help out. For further information, please contact Richard Lonsdale.



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# Looking at you

# God can use everything we give Him

The story is told of a man in charge of building a great church, who was pestered by an apprentice who wanted to design the glass for one of the windows. Finally, he agreed that the apprentice should be given one very small window. BUT – the apprentice would have to provide all the materials himself.

Undaunted, the apprentice carefully swept up all the stray bits of coloured glass that had been discarded and set to work. Slowly, and with great care, he pieced together a window of rare beauty. When the church was finally opened, many people stopped to stare in wonder at his small, but so beautiful, iridescent window.

Our lives can be like that - no matter how small we may feel, or that we have only scraps to offer to God, He can still help us use every bit of time and energy and love we do have, to build a life that is beautiful, and which will reflect the glory of God to others.

# A grain of sand at a time

This autumn, do you feel overwhelmed with all the things that you need to get done?

Then think of your life as an hourglass. There are thousands of grains of sand in the top of the hourglass; and they all pass slowly and evenly through the narrow neck in the middle.

We are like that hourglass. When we start in the morning, there are hundreds of tasks which we feel that we must accomplish that day. But if we do not take them one at a time, and let them pass through the day slowly and evenly, as do the grains of sand passing through the narrow neck of the hour glass, then we are bound to break our own fragile physical and mental structure.

The Ven John Barton considers....

## How not to be a Grumpy Old Man (or Woman)

Marvel. Marvel every time you see a child learning to walk and speak at the same time. Share in their delight. Wonder at the dawn of each new season: sunshine and shadows, falling leaves, frost, sudden new growth. You are still alive to take it all in. That's an unexpected bonus.

Appreciate. Have a look around your living room and concentrate on items designed for your comfort and entertainment, which your forbears never had. Think of someone you don't like; now ponder a couple of their good points. Try to desire their welfare more than their downfall.

Forgive. (That's a condition for being forgiven). You may have to do it over and over again for the same person. Unearth grudges which have been lying under the surface. Are they worth preserving that much? Think of the damage they are doing you.

Married or Single? Don't envy. The grass on the other side of the street isn't greener. it's just different. Count your blessings - some will be uniquely yours. Be concerned for the welfare of someone whose circumstances are unlike yours.

Deal with disappointment. If you have become grumpy it's probably caused by a deep-down dissatisfaction with yourself. Stop raking over past failures. Each morning when you wake up. say with the Psalmist. "This is the day the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Change. No. it isn't too late. It will only be too late to change when you are in a coffin. In the meantime, there's still room for manoeuvre. Remember John Henry Newman's words. "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."

### Are you always a bit late - for everything?

Is this you? -



late for work, late for friends, nearly missing trains and flights, late for lunch dates, late for dinner dates, and late for just about everything else.

If you are habitually late for almost everything, is it an actual mental condition?

When a recent TikTok video called it 'time blindness', that struck a chord – the video has been viewed nearly five million times.

But some psychologists doubt you can just claim being late 'a mental condition'. Instead, they say that a major factor is our childhood experiences of lateness - whether we have since tried to mimic our parent's behaviour about punctuality, or rebel against it.

Certainly, once we have got into the habit of acting in a certain way, we tend to do it long-term, unless we make a really conscious effort to change ourselves.

One common reason for lateness is over-optimism. If we are a bit too positive about our abilities, we may assume that we can leave at the last minute and still get somewhere else in time. We don't factor in any possible problems along the way. Whereas pessimists always imagine there will be problems with the journey, and so give themselves more time.

QUOTE: You are a Child of God. Please phone home! - Anon

# Looking at the wider COMMUNITY



By Tim Lenton

It was 25 years ago, on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1998, that Google, the internet search company, was founded by Larry Page and Sergey Brin, both students at Stanford University in California.

The company was originally based in a friend's garage at nearby Menlo Park.

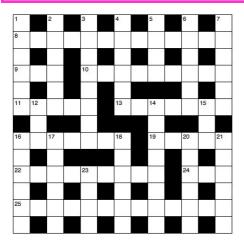
It began in January 1996 as a simple research project which employed links to decide the importance of individual pages on the world wide web. The two students - both Jewish worked from their college rooms and called the search engine BackRub, a name fairly rapidly abandoned. Google is a slight misspelling (or reinvention) of the word googol, which is the mathematical term for a 1 followed by 100 zeros.

This turned out to be quite appropriate, given the amount of information involved. Google is now the world's most used search engine by far, leaving such "competitors" as Duck-DuckGo, Bing and Yahoo! floundering distantly in its wake.

Google Inc was born officially in late summer 1998 when Sun co-founder Andy Bechtolsheim wrote Page and Brin a cheque for £100,000. There was a third founder, Scott Hassan, who wrote much of the original code, but he left before Google was officially founded as a company. Today, however, he is described as a serial entrepreneur with a net worth of around a billion dollars.

Being a huge company, Google has plenty of critics, but its code of conduct, stated in 2004, was "Don't be evil" because "we believe strongly that in the long term, we will be better served - as shareholders and in all other ways - by a company that does good things for the world, even if we forgo some short-term gains".

# Your PUZZLE for September



#### **Crossword Clues**

#### **Across**

- 8 Where the Ark of the Covenant was kept for 20 years (1 Samuel 7:1) (7,6)
- 9 One of the parts of the body on which blood and oil were put in the ritual cleansing from infectious skin diseases (Leviticus 14:14–17) (3)
- 10 Uncomfortable (3,2,4) 11 'Ye' I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have '(Malachi 1:3) (5)
- 13 Where Paul said farewell to the elders of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17) (7)
- 16 'Jesus bent down and to write on the ground with his finger' (John 8:6) (7)
- 19 Prophet from Moresheth (Jeremiah 26:18) (5)
- 22 Comes between Exodus and Numbers (9)
- 24 and 2 Down 'Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the Lord under the '(1 Samuel 2:11) (3,6)
- There was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:7) (4,3,6)

#### **Down**

- 1 Rough drawing (2 Kings 16:10) (6) **2** See 24 Across
- 3 Underground literature (including Christian books) circulated in the Soviet Union (8)
- 4 Lo, mash (anag.) (6)
- 5 The Bible's shortest verse: 'Jesus ' (John 11:35) (4)
- Can a mother forget the baby at her and have no compassion on the child she has borne?' (Isaiah 49:15) (6)
- 7 Can be seen in a dying fire (Psalm 102:3) (6)
- 12 'Send me, therefore, a man... experienced in the of engraving, to work in Judah and Jerusalem' (2 Chronicles 2:7) (3)
- 14 Second city of Cyprus (8)
- 15 United Nations Association (1,1,1)
- One of the women who first heard that Jesus had risen from the dead (Mark 16:1) (6)

  17 Braved (anag.) (6)
- 18 of Evangelism, outreach initiative in the 1990s (6)
- 20 'Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and in their own sight' (Isaiah 5:21) (6)
- 21 'Neither nor depth... will be able to separate us from the love of God' (Romans 8:39) (6)
- 23 What Jesus shed in 5 Down (4)

It can be read in the Bible in Genesis chs. 37:1-36,39:1-20

# A short story from the Bible

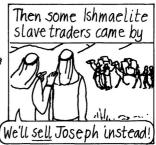
Jacob had 12 sons but his favourite was Joseph, his beloved Rachel's son. He even gave him special clothes to wear...

















Potiphar was very pleased with Joseph's hard work and put him in charge of his household, but.





bad stories about Joseph



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# God in the SCIENCES

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

### How can a Christian be a scientist?

I used to ask this question as a student. I wondered what it was like to have a career in science, and how being a Christian might make a difference. Eventually I met a good number of successful scientists who were sincere Christians, and I learned that science and faith are a great combination. Dr Francis Collins, former Director of the project to decode the whole of human DNA, wrote that it is "possible for the scientist-believer to be intellectually fulfilled and spiritually alive, both worshipping God and using the tools of science to uncover some of the awesome mysteries of His creation." So, what do people like this make of the opportunities and challenges of a life in science?

Although our beliefs may affect what we notice about the world and how we interpret our data, they don't affect the outcome of the experiments themselves. If a Muslim and a Christian drop the same ball from the same height under identical conditions, it will fall at the same speed. This means that a scientist can be respected by her colleagues for doing good work, regardless of what she believes and what her colleagues think of her worldview.

Science is an exercise in observing and measuring things, and coming up with general principles about the way things are. The world has been declared by God to be 'very good' (see chapter one and two of Genesis), and exploring it is a way to express our gratitude to Him. Scientific discoveries can also bring a sense of awe and wonder that feeds into our worship.

Some people don't want to get involved in certain lines of research because of ethical concerns. On the other hand, there are many issues that make Christians want to get stuck into new research that will help care for people and the rest of creation, such as medical research, ecology or developing appropriate technologies.

Organisations such as Christians in Science and the Faraday Institute gather together scientists who are also people of faith, and others who are interested in the subject. They come from a wide range of backgrounds, and express their beliefs in a variety of different ways. What they have in common is the conviction that you don't have to choose between science and God. As the young people in our churches prepare to return to their studies, online if not in person, let's encourage them that science (along with many other fields) is a great way to serve God.

# God in the ARTS

Michael Burgess continues his look at great works of Christian art. You can see the image described by googling 'Vase of Flowers' by Jan Davidsz de Heem.

# He gave us eyes to see them': Flowers - the beauty of the Lord'

In this month of September, we give thanks for God's blessings in all that the earth yields us. Those blessings are focused in this wonderful painting of Jan Davidsz de Heem. He was born in Utrecht in Holland in 1606 and studied art under his father's guidance. De Heem then moved to Antwerp, where for the rest of his life he created paintings of such beauty and depth that one of them – a portrait of Prince William III surrounded by blossoms and fruits - received the highest price ever paid for a painting at that time.

In the 'Vase of Flowers' de Heem has gathered together a bouquet of variegated flowers and plants for our delight. Time stands still in his painting in two ways. First, these thirty-one blooms could never have flowered at the same time, but through the magical touch of the artist, they do for us. Caught on canvas, they are as fresh and vibrant as the day they were painted in 1645.

But there are signs that the gifts of nature do wither and die, as we look closely and see on the marble slab a snail. Nearby is a salamander eyeing his next meal as a spider hangs on a thread from one of the flowers. In the centre, another snail looks at his food, the beautiful and rare red and white tulips. Yet we look again and see also signs of new life: the reeds of wheat are symbols of the Eucharistic bread; the caterpillar and butterfly on the striking white poppy at the top are signs of resurrection; and the peas in their pod and the blackberries mark out the fruitfulness of creation.

The artist shows us a glorious range of flowers - some well-known, others more exotic and brought back to Holland through the colonial expansion of the  $16^{\rm th}$  century. Tulips and poppies dominate, but to the left are some small-scented roses. Each is a testimony to the beauty and goodness of the world we live in.

A 100 years later, Christopher Smart wrote in 'Jubilate Agno': 'For the flowers are great blessings...for the flower glorifies God...for the flowers are peculiarly the poetry of Christ.'

And 200 years later Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote: 'I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it.'

And we, in our own century, can echo poet and painter as we praise God, the author of such flowers and plants that make up a world of 'all things bright and beautiful.'



Picture: 'Jan Davidszde Heem, via Wikimedia Commons'

### And finally, a Prayer for September 2023 by Daphne Kitching

Dear Father in heaven,

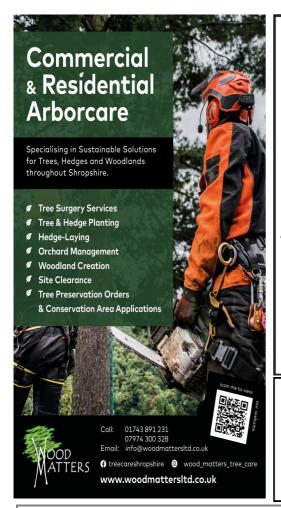
September is a time of change, a change of season, changes in many areas of our lives as a new term begins and new opportunities present themselves. It can be a time of challenge and uncertainty for many of us as well as excitement.

Thank you Lord, that You never change, Your promises never change, Your Holy-Spirit inspired Word never changes.

You are constant and rock-solid, always.

Help us to remember that You make all things new when we put our trust in Jesus, You give us new life and new ways of understanding, but help us also to remember that You never contradict Your revealed self. Help us always to check out our thinking with what You say in Your Word. Help us to be faithful to You as we take each step forward, each new day.

In Jesus name, Amen.



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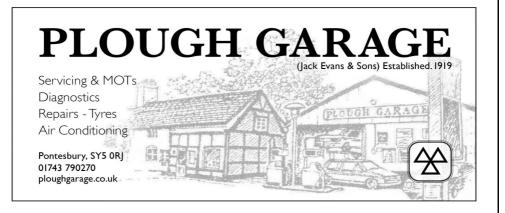
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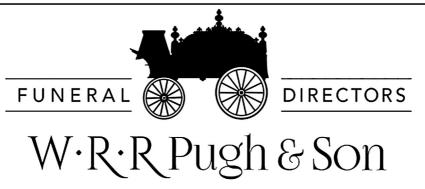
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