

St. George's Montezbury

Magazine 50p



October 2023

Rector

The Revd. Greg Smith
07902 794653

Greg's DAY OFF is FRIDAY**Curate**

The Revd. Richard Lonsdale
07922 830488

Richard's DAY OFF is TUESDAY**Churchwardens**

Mrs Mary Worrall 791069

Mrs Marianne McCall 07944 333830

Assistant Churchwardens

Mrs Helen McCall 790296

mobile 07985 312192

Mrs Heather Ryder 790359

Treasurer

Roy Munton 07751 764442

Parish Administrator

Mrs Krys Rodgers
officepontstip@gmail.com

PCC Secretary

Mr Allen Marsden 791822

Choir Secretary

Mrs Carolyn Lewis 860714

Prayer Chain Coordinator

Revd. Shirley Small 791885

Parish Visitors Team

Mrs Marion Elliott 792256

Parish Safeguarding Officer

Mrs June Cribb 07947 482066

Oasis

Mrs Heather Ryder 790359

Little Dragons

Mrs Valerie Butterworth 790587

Bell Tower Officer

Mrs Sheila Bower 790294

West End Room Booking

Contact Mrs Mary Worrall 791069

Website

Mr Richard Elliott 792256

webmaster@st-george.org.uk

Magazine Editor

Mrs Sheila Bower 790294

Advertisements

Mrs Marion Elliott 792256

Printing team

Mrs Carolyn Lewis 860714

stgsprinting@gmail.com

Contributions for St. George's Magazine should be given to the Editor 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

Telephone: 01743 860158

email: alisonbebb5@gmail.com





LIFTING UP OUR EYES

With Greg Smith

I heard an inspiring testimony recently from a very elderly gentleman, who told me that he had been a bit of tearaway in his youth. However, one day he was cycling through one of the many beautiful south Shropshire villages when he experienced an overwhelming conviction that he needed to stop and go into the local church. This he did, and there began a journey of faith that has endured seven decades since and is still going.

I was struck by two thoughts hearing this story. In a sense, they are equal and opposite. The first thought is that God can meet us any time, anywhere. He inhabits the whole universe by His Spirit. However, roads and hills seem to be one of the most common meeting places. Jesus had many important spiritual moments on hill tops including the transfiguration and the ascension. In doing so, he was following in the footsteps of Moses who met with God in a burning bush on Mount Horeb and then later received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai; and Elijah who did battle with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. He also had many important meetings on the road: the Road to Damascus, when Paul was converted; the Road to Emmaus in which he walked with two disciples and heard their pain at his crucifixion before revealing to them the glory of his resurrection; and the Road into Jerusalem on which he encountered blind Bartimaeus, whose eyes He opened.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding God's propensity to meet with people in high places and as they journey, there is no doubt He quite likes to meet with people in Church. This is not a prelude to urging you to go to church as regularly as possible (although I would say that) but rather a plea for churches to be open. For a millennium and a half, the

idea of a church being locked would have been unthinkable, literally a notion that would not have computed. The fact that in the last century, we have moved to lock churches testifies to two things. First, that we became very fearful, more concerned about what the outside world might do to us than what we could do for them; and second that we treat the church building as belonging to a select few rather than the whole community.

Thankfully, we are increasingly moving away from the days of locking church doors. By way of encouragement, I look to Revelation 21:25 which testifies that Heaven is a place whose gates will never be shut.



*Thanks to
technology,
replacing the
worn out hymn
books didn't cost
a penny.*

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
1 st October 17 th after Trinity	Morning Worship 10.30am	Ezekiel. 18. 1-4, 25-end (Phiippiansl.2.1-23) Matthew 21. 23-32
Tuesday 3 rd October	Tea Service 2.30pm	
8 th October 18 th after Trinity Harvest	Holy Communion 10.30am	Malachi 3. 6-12 Romans 12. 1-8 Luke 8. 4-15
15 th October 19 ^h after Trinity	Holy Communion 10.30am	Psalm 23 (Philippians.4.1-9) Matthew 22. 1-14
22 nd October 20 th after Trinity	Holy Communion 10.30am	Isaiah. 45. 1-7 (1 Thessalonians.1.1-10) Matthew 22. 15-22
29 th October Bible Sunday The last Sunday after Trinity	Group Service at St.George`s Holy Communion 10.30am All Souls Service 4pm	Psalm 119 9-16 Colossians.3. 12-17 Matthew 24. 30-35

Harvest

*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.
A retiring collection will be taken at our Harvest service.*

Our Local and Church COMMUNITY



St George's Church All Souls Service Sunday October 29th At 4pm

A time to think of lost loved ones
with a sensitive service of remembering.
Everyone is welcome.



**St George's Church in Pontesbury is seeking to recruit
a new Choir Director to work with our dedicated group
of a dozen choristers.**

The choir sing three times a month at our 10.30am communion services and on other special occasions. They are accustomed to practising once a week and are very open to learning new material.

The post is suitable for an experienced musician or a younger person seeking to take on a leadership responsibility for the first time. While the ability to play the keyboard or organ is desirable, it is not essential.

Please contact Revd Greg Smith on 07902 794653
for an informal discussion.

A job description and application form is available from our administrator
at officepontstip@gmail.com

Some Bits & pieces from Greg for this month:

Year of Prayer

As part of the Year of Prayer designated by the Hereford Diocese, we continue within the Benefice with a prayer evening at Habberley on Tuesday October 10th at 7 p.m. The benefice choir will be singing and wine and soft drinks will be served afterwards.

Carolyn & John Chadwick

As many will know, Carolyn and John are going to be moving to Winchester at the end of next month. They will be much missed. Their last Sunday in Shropshire will be October 29th. Carolyn will preside that morning at the Group Service at St George's. The service will be followed by a bring and share lunch at The Deanery from 12.30.

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.



**We would like to run a Children's Church after
October half term, but need help to find leaders.**

Please contact Krys Rodgers at

officepontstip@gmail.com

Or find out more from Greg

St George's PCC has agreed to launch Children's Church after the October half-term to provide Christian teaching and fun activity for children attending church on Sunday mornings. We are looking to recruit volunteers to form two teams, as well as a coordinator for this new ministry.

Job descriptions are available for both roles, along with an application form from Krys Rodgers at officepontstip@gmail.com

If you have any questions about either role, please contact Greg.



Coming soon — save the dates:

**Saturday 4th November - Bingo, Bangers & Mash
in St George's at 7pm**

AND then—

**Christmas is coming ! and so is the Shrewsbury Brass
Band**

**Friday 15th December an evening Christmas concert
in St. George's Church, Pontesbury.**

Looking at GOD

With Bible Sunday on 29th October, Canon Paul Hardingham considers why Christians put such a high value on the Bible.

Bible Sunday – 29th October

At the recent Coronation the King was given a Bible with the words *'the most valuable thing that this world affords'*. As Bible Sunday is celebrated this month, let's ask why we should read the Bible?

The Bible isn't a single book, but a library of 66 books, composed by some 44 writers over 1500 years in a range of styles including history, poetry, prophecy, letters and apocalyptic (looking at the end times). Despite having a number of different writers, it claims one authority - God Himself! *'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work'* (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is inspired (*'the word of God in the words of men'*) and equips us to live for God in every aspect of our lives. We also have the promise of the Holy Spirit to guide us when we read: *'when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth'* (John 16:13).

How should we read the Bible? Consider these guidelines:

Right time: We need a regular routine, to meet our needs. This will vary according to our circumstances: e.g., a mum at home with young children, somebody with a demanding job or a retired person.

Right Place: We need to find a space where we can be undisturbed (e.g. lounge, bedroom, train or kitchen).

Right Version: We need a version of the Bible which we can readily understand and use. A number of versions are available (e.g. NIV, The Message), as well as Bible apps we can access on our phone.

Right Help: Reading notes also help us to understand a passage and apply it to our lives.

Right ... Let's get reading!!



Lester Amann considers how the Bible Society was inspired to begin its work.

Bibles for all

Think for a moment about something you really want. How much would you spend to buy it? How far would you go to get it?

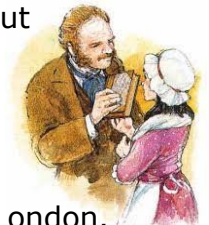
Young Mary knew what she wanted. It took years before she could afford it. She was ready to walk 25 miles over mountainous terrain to get it. Mary just wanted a Bible.

Mary Jones lived in a small village in Wales at the end of the 18th century. From an early age, Mary loved to hear stories from the Bible. Every Sunday she attended her local chapel and enjoyed listening to people reading from the Scriptures.

When Mary was only nine years old, she decided on the most important thing in her life. She wanted to read from her own Bible. Unfortunately, Bibles were hard to come by. They were expensive and Mary's parents couldn't afford to buy one. So, Mary decided to do odd jobs for people and earn enough money to buy a Bible.

Six years later, Mary had saved enough money for her special book. Although the nearest shop which sold Bibles was in Bala, 25 miles away, undaunted she set out on her long journey. In Bala, she discovered that the book shop had sold out of all the Bibles! We can only imagine how upset and disappointed she was.

When the bookseller, Thomas Charles, heard about her long walk and that she would return home empty handed, he gave her his Bible. Later, Thomas Charles wondered if there were other children (and adults) around the country who wanted a Bible but had problems getting one.



Soon after Mary's visit, Thomas Charles went to London. Here, he met influential people including William Wilberforce and shared with them the story of Mary Jones. From this meeting came a response to Mary's situation. On 7th March 1804 the *British and Foreign Bible Society* was formed. Its purpose was to provide Bibles throughout the world, in a language people could understand and at a price they could afford.

After this, other national societies were created and in 1946 the *United Bible Societies* was established to co-ordinate the work worldwide. Today, there are over 100 Bible Societies, working in nearly 200 countries. While they are busy with translation, production and distribution programmes, there are still countless numbers of people who do not have the Scriptures.

If we own a Bible, let's give thanks we have God's Word in our hands and, if possible, support a Bible Society's valuable work.

29th October - Bible Sunday:



Ukrainians request more Bibles

The war in Ukraine has led to a dramatic rise in the demand for Bibles, as people ask existential questions about life and death.

The Ukrainian Bible Society reports that, in the last 15 months, some 700,000 Bibles have been distributed across the war-torn country. This is a five-fold increase on numbers handed out before the war. In 2020, some 136,767 Bibles were distributed in Ukraine.

Anatoliy Raychynets, deputy general secretary of the Ukrainian Bible Society explains, "The experience of this time is that so many people are looking for Bibles and churches.

"We are doing everything possible to reach all the needs, but more Bibles are needed. With the help of the Word of God, we can bring the love of God to those who need it."

Bibles are distributed around the country, including to soldiers and civilian communities on the front line, and to those in hospital. "Wherever the Bible is taken, it is very much appreciated," said Anatoliy.

Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal:

Christian Aid thanks supporters



Eight months on from the devastating earthquakes that killed at least 58,000 people across southern Turkey and northwest Syria, Christian Aid has thanked the generosity of their supporters for raising over £3.4m to help "tens of thousands of people who lost homes, livelihoods and loved ones."

Since the deadly earthquakes on 6th February, the first of which struck in the early hours of the morning when many people were asleep and destroyed thousands of buildings, survivors have faced torrential rains and flooding and then the extreme summer heat affecting much of southern Europe.

In northwest Syria, working through local partners and with funding from several donors, Christian Aid has been able to reach more than 60,000 people badly impacted by the earthquake and another 5,000 people in Southern Turkey.

Canon Paul Hardingham considers spiritual disciplines that help us to grow and
deepen our faith.



Spiritual Disciplines: Worship

'Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.' (John 4: 23).

The spiritual discipline of worship has both a personal and corporate dimension. It includes worship services as well as day-to-day activities. God is actively seeking worshippers (John 4:23) and worship is a response to our experience of God's love. The main words used of worship in the Bible have the sense of *submission* and *service*. They remind us that our lives need to be shaped by worship *on a daily basis*.

There are different ways into worship: practising stillness, offering praise (cf Psalm 95) and offering the whole of our lives as a living sacrifice (cf Romans 12:1). Worship is an act of the will; we choose to honour and please God. Depending on our circumstances, worshipping God requires effort on our part. However, entering into worship is to be transformed by His presence into the likeness of Jesus (cf 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline* offers some helpful ways in which to engage with worship on a daily basis:

- ~*Learn to practise the presence of God daily* by punctuating every moment with praise and adoration.
- ~*Have different experiences of worship*, both in large and small gatherings (i.e., small group)
- ~*Be prepared for gathered worship* in heart and mind.
- ~*Be willing to let our worship transform* our thinking and practice as God meets us.
- ~*Cultivate holy dependence* on God for everything in our lives, looking forward to all God wants to do.
- ~*Learn to offer a sacrifice of worship*, however we are feeling!

**'Now the worship is over, let the service begin'
(Bishop Michael Marshall, closing a service)**

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

Reflecting Faith—Seating in churches

In many 'old' churches and cathedrals today the original wooden seats or pews have been completely removed. They have been replaced by moveable chairs, enabling the space to become flexible. Thus, concerts and exhibitions can more easily take place.

But where does the priest or worship leader sit?

Often there will be a special chair or 'stall' set aside for them. In older churches, you may find as many as three.

The first is a 'prayer stall' between the choir stalls and the nave. From here the priest will conduct the majority of the first section of the Sunday service, and during the week will use this stall for their morning and evening public office.

There is likely to be also a chair for them in the sanctuary, and in older church buildings you will see in the chancel area some seats (sedilia) set into the wall. Depending on the size of the original parish, these vary from being a single plain seat for the priest alone to something quite ornate, seating up to four people. They even come stepped, so that people are sitting at different heights.

In medieval times, during Mass, the priest was the celebrant, the deacon read the Gospel and the sub-deacon read the Epistle. They would be seated in the sedilia while the Creed and Gloria were sung, giving them a time of rest during a long ceremony.

Where the seats are at different heights, the priest would sit on the highest one, nearest the altar. Later when Chantry endowments provided some churches with several clergy in full orders, the seats were all made at one level.

In many churches nowadays, you have to look very carefully for these seats, as over time they have been rearranged, and sometimes even the floor around them has been raised so they no longer look like seats.

More modern churches also need somewhere for the priests and deacons to sit, and often you will find very fine chairs placed near the altar for them.

This month: What happens when the bishop comes to your church? Where does s/he sit? How do you know? What does the formality or informality of these chairs say about the way your church thinks about these roles?

Looking at the CHURCH Worldwide

After the wildfires in Hawaii

A pastor at a chapel on the Hawaiian island of Maui has spoken of the terrible day that strong wildfires swept through many homes on the island.

Pastor Kirk Milhoan, from Calvary Chapel in the south of the island, recently told Premier Christian News that on the day, everyone was 'in the dark', with no means of texting or phoning when the fires began.

"Survivors have lost friends and loved ones, fathers, mothers, grandparents, and children. Also, all the people who live on tourism, now suddenly they have no income.

"So, it's just layer after layer of difficulty. But what we have is the Word of God that says, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.' We have a good shepherd in Jesus Christ.

"When I look at all the healing that's required in our land, right now we have physical healings required, we have financial healing that's required, we have emotional healing that's required. But most importantly, we have spiritual healing that's required."

Pastor Kirk said: "I don't have to figure out all the things of God. I just want to direct people back to the Saviour. He is the only one who can heal this horrible hurt."

If you would like to help victims of the disaster, please contact the American Red Cross at [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org).



Prisons Week - 8th to 14th October

Prisoners and their families need help, if they are to really repair and rebuild their lives.

And so it is that Prisons Week has been growing steadily, year by year. It currently has 25 Christian denominations and organisations working together to use "all our skills and gifts to see God's kingdom come and His peace be established in a place of suffering and weeping."

Prisons Week is supported by the Church of England, the Catholic Church, the Free Churches Group, and the Salvation Army. It is also supported by the prison ministry organisations including Prison Fellowship, Prison Advice and Care Trust, and Caring for Prison Leavers. Other supporting organisations include Bible Society, the Mothers Union, and Youth for Christ.

The week-long campaign each October aims to provide Christians across the country with information, expertise, resources, and encouragement for this particular, and challenging, area of ministry.

For anyone, or any group, who would like to support Prisons ministry, there are several campaign resources available at their website.

Above all, Prisons Week urges individual Christians to pray for prisoners and their families, that their lives might be rebuilt and renewed.

Prisons Week describes its aim as "relieving the human suffering caused by crime and imprisonment." For more info, please visit: www.prisonsworld.org

Many of us in Pontesbury will remember Dorothy Headland who was always keen to encourage us support the work of the Prison Fellowship.



From the Dragon's Den

Meetings began with a vengeance as Little Dragons, Old and New, congregated with their Carers for our first session of the Autumn Term. It was lovely to see the smiles of those known to us and great to see the reactions of those who were new to our group.

A new supply of play dough was very popular and spaces at the art table were quickly filled as brightly-coloured teddy bears were produced.

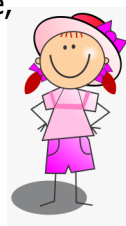
The huge, cuddly teddy bear and several smaller bears took part in Storytime and provided suggestions for songs and rhymes. Of course, as ever, the 'Grand Old Duke' was top favourite, followed by snacks.

Such a busy morning that 'Big Dragons' probably all went home to enjoy a welcome snooze after a very joyful, hectic morning.

Joy to everyone, from Val, Frank, Marion E, Marion W, Pat, Caroline, and from we three ...



George, Uncle Sam & Idris



Off to school

Mother to young daughter after first day at school: "Well, dear, what did they teach you today?"

Daughter: "Not much. I've got to go back again tomorrow."

Heredity

Everyone believes in it, until their child does something really stupid.

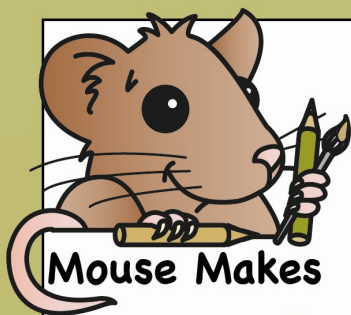


Salt

The Sunday School teacher was describing how when Lot's wife looked back at Sodom, she turned into a pillar of salt. Young James nodded with understanding. "My mum looked back once while she was driving," he observed, "and she turned into a telephone pole."

Sleep

Scientists have finally discovered exactly how much sleep a human being needs ... just five minutes more.



Mouse Makes



CONNECT THE BIBLE FOOD PAIRS

MANNA	HONEY
OIL	WINE
WATER	FISH
LOCUSTS	QUAIL
LOAVES	FLOUR



What drink ran out at the wedding?

_____ and what did Jesus use to make more?

John 2:3 and 7



What food did God supply for his people in the wilderness?

_____ and _____

Numbers 11:7-9 and 31

After Elijah came to visit, what never ran out?

_____ and _____



1 Kings 17:14



What food did the ravens feed Elijah?

_____ and _____

1 Kings 17:6



What food did John the Baptist eat in the wilderness?

_____ and _____

Matthew 3:4

What did the boy give Jesus to feed 5,000 people?

Five _____

and two _____

John 6:9



FIND THE BIBLE VERSE

Change each letter in this bible verse to the letter **before** it in the alphabet.

NBO TIBMM OPU
MJWF PO CSFBE
BMPOF, CVU PO
FWFSZ XPSE UIBU
DPNFT GSPN UIF
NPVUI PG HPE.

NBUUIFX 4:4

DID YOU KNOW?

As Lot escaped Sodom with his family an angel told him not to stop or look back, but Lot's wife did look back and became a pillar of salt.

READ Genesis 19 v15-26



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

Find the words below and the answers to the questions all in the word search

OLIVES • CHEESE
FIGS • DATES
MUSTARD
RAISINS • WHEAT
SALT • GRAIN
FRUIT • GRAPES
VEGETABLES

Deanery of Pontesbury

DEANERY NEWS

Rural Dean: **The Revd Bill Rowell**

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

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH FROM: Bill Rowell,

Rector of the Chirbury Hills Group

I have always loved poetry, and I find that a poem can often express more in a few words than any other form of writing. There is always a risk to writing poetry, though. No poem is ever complete, there just comes a time when you have to leave it alone, and release it . . . and the nature of poetry is such that the words are no longer just yours, as each reader engages with your words, the images that form in their mind will be different.

Autumn, as a time of change, has always been fertile ground for poets. Almost everyone knows at least the first line of John Keats' ode "To Autumn" - "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness". Shelley addressed the "wild west wind, thou breath of Autumn's being", while Robert Frost conveys the gentle sadness of Autumn as he writes, "Then leaf subsides to leaf, So Eden sank to grief, So dawn goes down to day: Nothing gold can stay."

I think my own best poems have mostly been written out of feelings of sadness or loss, and have perhaps been my attempt to discern the presence of blessing in times that have seemed barren, the presence of God even though the prayers I make seem to just fade away. You can find some of the same thoughts in the Psalms, which together are one of my favourite books of the Bible. "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" we read in Psalm 137, while in Psalm 57 the Psalmist writes that "I lie in the midst of lions that devour the people" - yet he goes on to say in the final verse, "Exalt yourself above the heavens, Lord, and your glory over all the earth." Again and again the Psalmist finds hope, glory, God's protecting and reviving power, in what have seemed like hopeless situations.

Autumn in the Church calendar will take us through All Saints and All Souls, Remembrance, times when we admit to loss and the passing of the days, once we have celebrated the fruits of the earth and the harvest home. I can't help but feel a gentle sadness as the leaves fall and daylight ebbs away, and that seems to me to be reflected in the themes of our worship, too.

But there is glory too in the colours of those autumn leaves, blessing in the fruits of harvest, and we are reminded that the journey of our lives is a journey home and into love. And just as many a Psalm closes with a shout of praise, so as our Church Year closes we hail Christ as our King.



ON BEING STUCK BEHIND A TRACTOR!

Hoorah!! It is harvest time again!! There you are, hurtling through the lanes in your car on some mission of huge national importance, muttering venomously at cyclists in helmets shaped like wasps' bottoms, inconsiderate enough to want a bit of your road, rounding a bend and coming up behind the ponderous majesty of a tractor and trailer. On closer inspection over the next ten minutes, you conclude that it is actually a convoy of three tractors and two trailers and the glory of the aforementioned ponderous majesty begins to wear a bit thin! Hoorah! It is harvest time again. And I would wager a considerable sum that most of you do not at this point start singing songs of everlasting thanks and praise to our great God for his generous provision, or blessing the farmers for the work they do to put food on our plates!

So here is your challenge for harvest and beyond. I've learned to do it and if I can manage it, anyone can. If you get stuck on your travels behind a tractor or a combine or a plough or any other mysteriously shaped implement of the sod, (by which I mean, of course, the soil!) take it as an opportunity for reflection, for thanksgiving and for praise.

Why should you bother? Firstly, because praising God for what he gives us should become a matter of habit in all of us and secondly because as a nation we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the farmers who are taken totally for granted by most of us who have become emotionally and practically detached from the source of our food.

We cannot and must not take national food security as a given. Climate change and population growth mean that it is more difficult to produce enough grain for the world's needs. The situation in Ukraine is calamitous for the food security of millions in vulnerable nations. Global markets will sell to the highest bidder regardless of need. Political mismanagement and the power of global enterprise in the inherently local business of food production are putting countless family farms out of business.

So, when you get stuck behind that tractor take a deep breath, smile and wave at the farmer, even if he does stare back at you

with blank amazement and ask for God's blessing on his family and work. Reflect on our corporate relationship to food and the land as the God given source of all our well-being and praise God from whom all blessings flow.

And if the vicar rushes in late to take your service on a Sunday morning you will understand why!

Happy harvest to you all. I hope to see some of you at your harvest service.

From Sarah, Dean of Hereford



31st October at 7pm
Marton Village Hall
7pm for refreshments, 7.30pm start
Car parking available
Everyone welcome

The GATHERING

An evening of Praising and Worshipping God

"Encourage one another and build each other up,
just as in fact you are doing" 1 Thessalonians 5.11

GROUP TO MEET AHEAD OF NOVEMBER SYNOD

A group drawn from across different traditions within the Church has recently met, as part of ongoing work in the Living in Love and Faith process.

This is ahead of the November General Synod, which will once again consider proposals to enable same-sex couples to come to church following a civil marriage or civil partnership for prayers of dedication, thanksgiving and for God's blessing on the two people.

The group was created at the invitation of the Co-Chairs of the Living in Love and Faith Steering Group, Bishop Sarah Mullally and Bishop Philip Mounstephen. It brings together a wealth of knowledge from prior involvement in the LLF process, as well as a range of lived experiences.

The group was given an update on the ongoing work on pastoral guidance and pastoral assurance in relation to the Prayers of Love and Faith, and members were asked to provide their insights and reflections. These will be fed into discussions at meetings in the autumn of the College and House of Bishops, ahead of the November Synod.

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, said: "The House and the College of Bishops have a real desire to create a loving, generous, ecclesial, and pastoral space, despite deeply held differences of opinion, in which we can share our ministry and implement the motion agreed by the Synod in February.

"There is a desire to joyfully offer a pastoral response to loving, faithful and long-term same sex relationships. There is at the same time no intention of changing the doctrine of marriage as expressed in the canons and the authorised liturgy of the Church of England.

"Holding these commitments together is at times painful and com-

plex. As part of this we are seeking to listen to people's hopes and concerns and to ensure that they are satisfied that their views have been taken into consideration."

Membership of the group will be published at a later date.

PUBLIC OPINION AND A 'PROPHETIC' VOICE - BISHOP NICK RESPONDS TO NEWSPAPER SURVEY

The Church has a duty to challenge popular culture but also to listen and be challenged by it, the Bishop of Leeds Nick Baines, has said.

He was speaking as a recent survey in *The Times* newspaper highlighted views among some clergy on a range of questions. The findings were based on replies by clergy who responded to a list of email questions this past summer.

Bishop Nick said it highlighted the challenge the Church has faced in every generation in seeking both to listen to public opinion but also being a "prophetic" voice.

"The Church is the Church, and, as such, not a club, he said. "It has a distinct vocation that does not include seeking popularity. As God's Church, it is made up of people who love God, His world and its people. Worship, love, and justice lie at the heart of its vocation.

"This means that the Church – in every generation – has to live with the tension of being prophetic (challenging the way the world is) whilst listening to the challenge the world brings to it.

"'Repentance' means being open to changing our mind in order that society should encounter both love and justice. And this means sometimes going against the flow of popular culture, however uncomfortable that might be.

"What this survey seems to show is that clergy aren't detached in an ivory tower, but really wrestling – thoughtfully and prayerfully - with the kinds of questions our society is also addressing. This is how it has always been and should be.

"Evidently, the Church hasn't always got it right, but cannot escape the demands of its calling to be faithful to God in loving His world."

Looking at you

David Pickup, a solicitor, considers St Luke.

Just what the Doctor ordered

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (Luke 1 1-4)

Saint Luke, the gospel writer and author of the Book of Acts, is celebrated on 18th October. It reminds me of a series of sermons which we once had in church.

One sermon was on the law, and a doctor preached about them. When my turn came up, I had to talk about doctors. In my daily work as a lawyer, I frequently work with medical colleagues. The two professions have one big thing in common: that is that we both *deal with evidence*.

Of course, we have different types of evidence to consider. A doctor needs evidence of someone's symptoms to make a diagnosis, while a lawyer needs witnesses or paperwork to prove a case. (Though sometimes, when clients come to tell me about a problem, they are surprised when I ask what witnesses or papers they have as evidence. Without that, the case is not going to get very far.)

I wonder if that is why Luke was chosen as a gospel writer. He explains in the opening verses of his gospel that he relied on "eyewitnesses" and that he, himself, had also "...carefully investigated everything from the beginning."

So, his faith, like our faith, was based not on feelings and made-up stories, but on *hard facts*. Just what the doctor ordered!

Collect:

Almighty God, you called Luke the physician, whose praise is in the gospel, to be an evangelist and physician of the soul: by the grace of the Spirit and through the wholesome medicine of the gospel, give Your Church the same love and power to heal; through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

The Ven John Barton is intrigued by some modern-day usage of our language.

Those over-the-top words that we use (OTT)

I'm trying to stop saying the word 'incredible'. It's overused and has become almost meaningless. "We are incredibly grateful"; "I had an incredible meal". As the word really means 'beyond belief or understanding', it can't actually apply- in either case.

'Unbelievable' is similarly misused. So is 'fantastic', which is meant to describe something belonging to an imaginary world. So, strictly speaking, a fantastic tennis player can't be a real one.

How about 'amazing'? Count how many times you hear it to-day. It should be reserved to describe something astonishing, out of this world. If you think about it, if everything is amazing or incredible, then nothing really is. When the exceptional becomes normal or commonplace, nothing is special.

We seem to be struggling to find words to convey something out of the ordinary. Try 'iconic'. Iconic only appeared recently and has been distorted to mean 'historic' or 'traditional' or 'classic'. My dictionary tells me iconic actually means something to do with an icon, which is a depiction of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or a saint.

In fact, most of these over-the-top words, now in everyday use, have a religious association. Originally, they were reserved to communicate otherness, difference, deep respect.

For example, what about 'awesome'? It should mean 'awe' or reverence. It's a take-your-breath-away word. Awe is what Moses felt when he saw a bush on fire, because it didn't actually burn away, and he sensed the presence of God. Awe is something St Peter experienced, when he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!'

If you try to imagine what Moses and Peter actually felt, words like 'unworthiness' and 'fear' might come to mind. They really were experiencing something out of the ordinary, too hot to handle. They were out of their depth. An experience like that stayed with them for life. They had encountered holiness. Now there's a word worth using.



Is now a good time to grow old?

"Don't grow old," a parishioner of advanced years warned me some while back. "You won't like it."

Sadly, that dear woman is no longer with us, and I'm a whole lot older than when she offered me that kind advice. But was there wisdom in her words?

It's true that generally people are living longer and in better health than in generations before, but there are increasing challenges for older men and women in our society.

My friend, Maggie Dodd is an 'Anna Chaplain' for older people. She is one of around 300 such chaplains up and down the country. They spiritually support people – of strong, little or no faith – in care homes, sheltered housing or in their own homes.

Maggie has told me how life is becoming harder for older people, and we've swapped notes on what we have both observed.

She told me: "Some of the basic services older people need are becoming more difficult to access. I hear about doctor's surgeries asking for patients to print out their own forms or send photos to or from smartphones. Banks are phasing out high street branches, pushing everyone towards online banking. Many older people feel very uneasy about going online, worried of being scammed out of their savings.

"A trip to the shops is also becoming more complicated. Checkouts in supermarkets are increasingly self-service. Mobility can also be affected as car parks often need an app to be uploaded onto a smartphone to park. In many car parks there is no option to pay by card or cash!"

Plans to remove the ticket offices at train stations will make matters worse for many older would-be rail travellers.

Maggie told me "This gradual marginalisation of people can leave them feeling lonely and isolated. Loneliness can have a huge detrimental effect on health and wellbeing. Prolonged social isolation and loneliness are the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day."

It's good that many churches run special events and activities for older people, as well as groups for all ages. But is this enough? Christians are called to follow Christ's example and speak out for at risk of being marginalised in our society.

Today, that could be our older brothers and sisters.

*Some thoughts on our
Christian pilgrimage:*

Exercise daily - walk with the Lord. -
Anon

One thing all nations have in common is
the ability to see each other's faults. -
Anon

In giving until it hurts, some people are
extremely sensitive to pain. - *Anon*

Some people treat God as they do a
lawyer: they go to Him only when they
are in trouble. - *Anon*

The wages of sin is death. Repent
before payday. - *Anon*

The Bible has a great deal to say
about suffering and most of it
is encouraging. - *A W Tozer*

Nigel Beeton writes: 'This poem is not by me, it was written by a patient who (in the spirit of confidentiality) is happy to be known as 'Hilda'. It was published in our staff newsletter, and I loved it, so I begged permission to share it with my friends on the Parish Pump.'

A Funny Old Lady

I look in the mirror
And who do I see?
A funny old lady
Looking at me

A little like my Nan
A lot like my Mum
A face that shows
A life well run

I am young
With a life to live
Full of hope
And love to give

I look in the mirror
And who do I see?
I see the young woman
I used to be.

By Hilda

I don't know her
Who can she be?
That funny lady
She isn't me

Lines and wrinkles
Are all I see
That tired old face
Can't be me

I can skip
And dance and run
The life ahead
Has just begun
The joys the pain
Are yet to come



Your PUZZLE for October

Crossword Clues

Across

1 He must be 'the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well' (1 Timothy 3:12) (6)

4 'For we must all — before the judgement seat of Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:10) (6)

7 'They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their — end' (Ps 107:27) (4)

8 See 19 Across

9 It concerned who among the disciples would be the greatest (Luke 9:4)(8)

13 Formed by the Jews in Thessalonica

to root out Paul and Silas (Acts 17:5)(3)

16 'He has sent me to bind up the —' (Isaiah 61:1) (6-7)

17 Moved rapidly on foot (Matthew 28:8) (3)

19 and 8 '— a great company of the — host appeared with the angel' (Luke 2:13) (8,8)

24 Hindrance (Romans 14:13) (8)

26 Empower (Acts 4:29) (6)

27 'Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a —' (John 2:16) (6)

Down

1 Sunrise (Psalm 119:147) (4)

2 The part of the day when Cornelius the Caesarean centurion had a vision of an angel of God (Acts 10:3) (9)

3 He was one of those who returned with Zerubbabel from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 7:7) (5)

4 'No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born —' (John 3:3) (5)

5 Animal hunted or killed as food (Ezekiel 22:25) (4)

6 'He encouraged them — — remain true to the Lord' (Acts 11:23) (3,2)

10 Ruses (anag.) (5)

11 Jewish priestly vestment (Exodus 28:6) (5)

12 Visible sign of what had been there (Daniel 2:35) (5)

13 This was the trade of Alexander, who did Paul 'a great deal of harm'

(2 Timothy 4:14) (9)

14 'This is my — , which is for you; do this in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:24) (4)

15 One of Noah's great-great-grandsons (Genesis 10:24) (4)

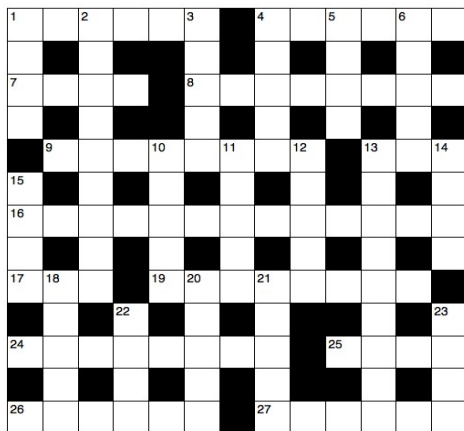
18 Traditionally the first British Christian martyr (5)

20 Relationship of Ner to Saul (1 Samuel 14:50) (5)

21 Jacob had one at a place he named Bethel while on his way to Haran, fleeing from Esau (Genesis 28:12) (5)

22 Bats (anag.) (4)

23 'You strain out a — but swallow a camel' (Matthew 23:24) (4)



Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Genesis chapters 39:20-41:44

Joseph's brothers had sold him as a slave
and he had ended up in Egypt. Then he was
wrongly accused and was sent to prison.



Joseph was trusted to look
after the other prisoners.

Then Pharaoh's butler and baker were sent to
the prison. One night they had strange dreams.



.. I made
juice from the grapes
and gave it to Pharaoh..

.. all the
bread in my baskets
was eaten by birds.

God knows what your dreams mean -
you will be pardoned but you won't.



The two men
left the prison.



Don't forget me!

But they did

Two years later
Pharaoh had a dream

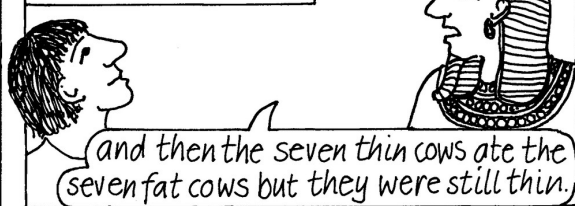


None of his advisors could
explain it...



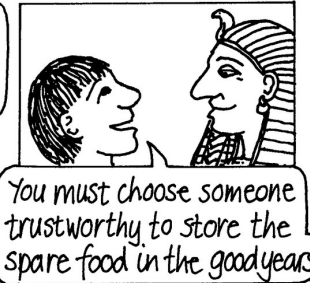
.. then his butler
remembered Joseph.

So Joseph was cleaned up
and sent to Pharaoh



and then the seven thin cows ate the
seven fat cows but they were still thin.

God says there will be
seven bumper years, then
seven years of famine.

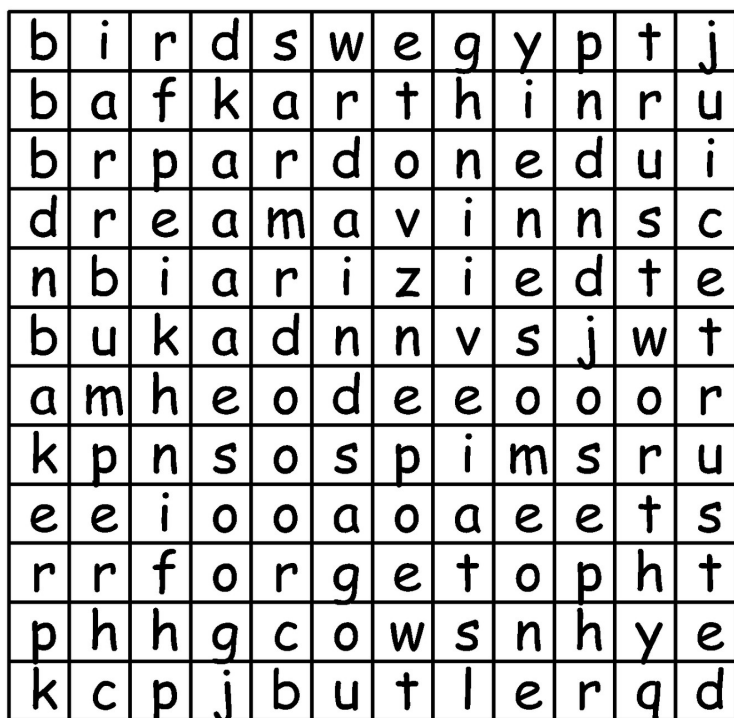


You must choose someone
trustworthy to store the
spare food in the good years

Pharaoh was so impressed
he gave Joseph the job!



Here's the Wordsearch for the Bible Bite story...



Egypt
grapes
butler
pardoned
advisors
someone
forget
trusted

baker
famine
prison
trustworthy
food
birds
cows
Joseph

thin
seven
juice
Pharaoh
dream
bread
bumper
choose

God in the SCIENCES

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

Do the Bible and Science contradict each other?

For the Christian, the Bible is God's Word to us; it tells us about His character and creative purposes, how He has related to people in the past, and His promises for the future. Science is a specific way of studying the world, exploring the physical properties of things – a wonderful way to explore God's creation. If the Bible and Science seem to contradict each other, we should ask: have we made a mistake in interpreting one or the other?

Science is very good at answering certain types of questions: 'What size is it?', 'How fast does it travel?', 'What is it made of?', and so on. Questions like 'What's it for?', 'What should I do with it?', and 'What's it worth?' can't be answered using scientific methods. Some of the misunderstanding in discussions of Science and Religion come from not recognising the limits of science.

It's also important to recognise what the Bible is, and what sorts of questions it can answer. The Bible was written well before people began to investigate the world in ways we would recognise as scientific. Of course, people in the Ancient Near East were studying the world around them, observing the movements of the stars, the processes of life and death that happened all around them, the seasons, the behaviour of physical objects, and so on. But they did not study the mechanisms underlying these things systematically using the tools of science, and they did not see or describe the world in scientific terms – not because they weren't intelligent, but because Science, as we know it, wasn't happening at that time.

Instead, the biblical writers used words that were commonly used in their own cultures to record events, share truth and wisdom, and tell stories that convey deep truth about God's character. If we want to understand God's intention in inspiring these words, we need to do some careful work to connect with those ancient writers and find out what they meant, before we can discover what those words mean to us today.

These principles can help us have far more fruitful conversations about Science and Christian faith. If we allow any apparent conflict between Science and the Bible to fuel our search for understanding, not only will we learn as individuals, but we will be able to draw others into a conversation relevant to today's society.

God in the ARTS

Michael Burgess continues his look at great works of Christian art. You can see the image described by googling 'Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose' by Francisco Zurbarán.

'He gave us eyes to see them': 'Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose'

The weekday eucharist in a parish church, with only a handful of worshippers present, can be a great contrast to the bustle and liveliness of Sunday services. It can offer you a quiet time to focus on the gifts of bread and wine offered on the altar. This month's painting of 1633 is an opportunity to focus on the gifts that have been offered at the altar of *this* table, in 'Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose' by Francisco Zurbarán. He was a contemporary of the more famous Velázquez and worked in Seville until his death in 1664.

There is something quite special and evocative in the arrangement of fruits and flowers – two highly polished plates, one bearing the citrons (not lemons as the title tells us), the other a cup of water and a rose. In the centre there is a basket with oranges and orange blossom. Against the dark background we sense the cool tones of the plates and cup, and the warmth of fruits and flowers.

There is a curious balance and poise here, and some critics have suggested a Trinitarian allusion in the three groups so deliberately placed on the table. Others have pointed to the rose and water as symbols of our Lady, and the fruit and blossom as signs of the new life of Easter. A devout Spanish Catholic in the 17th century would have noticed these allusions, but they may be too fanciful, as X-rays have shown that Zurbarán painted out another plate which simply contained sweet, candied potatoes.

What he has portrayed is an allegory of the senses. We can almost smell the fragrance of orange blossom and the tanginess of the fruits.

We want to reach out to touch and taste. But no, we must look and ponder the offering of these gifts for our delight, and simply give thanks for the artist who has shown us something of the sacramental beauty of creation in them.





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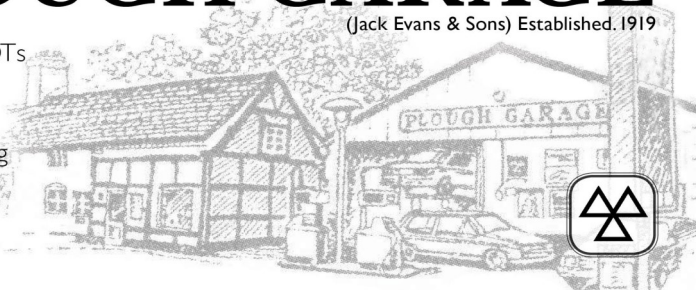
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