

St. George's Montezbury

Magazine 50p



February 2024

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LIFTING UP OUR EYES

With Revd Fran Brierley

As I write this in mid-January, from my window I can see the roofs and paths are covered with a dusting of snow. Perhaps by now you are looking forward to the return of warmer weather, not least so we can keep our heating bills under control. The Old English word for spring was *lencten*, which comes from the same root as 'long' and 'lengthen'. It is also the word which gives us the name for Lent, the season in the church which leads up to Easter. We are already seeing the days growing longer, even if they are not yet much warmer. The coming of lighter evenings does not of course mean we have seen the back of wild weather – the Old English name for February quite possibly means 'mud-month'!

Yet as the month draws on, we will increasingly see signs of the arrival of spring: daffodils in the supermarket, crocuses in our gardens, and buds in the hedgerows. Anglo-Saxon writings describe the snow and ice of winter as 'frost's fetters'; when spring comes, God releases the world from its captivity into new life. C.S. Lewis used this image in his book 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'. When the White Witch is defeated by the lion Aslan, the snow which has covered Narnia for generations begins to melt.

We may not see so often the bitter winters of Anglo-Saxon times, and if we do, most of us have the means to protect ourselves from the cold. But, of course C.S. Lewis, and the Anglo-Saxons before him, were writing about more than the weather. They point us to the state of the human heart, turned away from God, imprisoned by sin and needing his rescue. As we begin Lent in the middle of February, we are invited to spend time reflecting on our own lives, acknowledging our need of forgiveness and transformation. It is this, rather than the giving up of luxuries like chocolate or alcohol which is the real point of Lent.

On Ash Wednesday we are encouraged to look deep into our own hearts, acknowledging our frailty and inability to live the life we are called to. We

receive the mark of the cross in ash on our foreheads, and hear these words: 'Remember you are dust and to dust you will return. Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ'. Each year this is for me an extremely sombre and yet very joyful moment.

For God is good, and he will forgive our sins when we turn to him. What's more, he promises to walk alongside us and to help us to be faithful. During Lent we don't stop with our failures, we look on towards the cross where Jesus gave himself for our freedom. I encourage you to share in this year's Ash Wednesday service which will be held at St George's on February 14th at 7pm. There, together, we will begin the journey which will end with the sadness of Good Friday and the celebrations of Easter Sunday.

Revd Fran



Prayer for February 2024 by Daphne Kitching

Father,

In this coldest and shortest of months, this month when traditionally thoughts turn to love and the promise of Spring, help us to be thankful and steadfast and to see Your bigger picture in what is sometimes a frightening world, a world where love between nations seems to be in short supply and the future uncertain.

We pray for all those whose lives are in turmoil through a lack of love and justice. Help us to remember the great love You have for Your world and Your people, so great that You sent Jesus to show us how to live, how to love and how to overcome the troubles of the world.

Thank you that Your love is stronger than the forces of evil, stronger than death. Help us to put our trust in Jesus, to keep our focus on Him, knowing He will never leave us or forsake us. Thank you that His love is stronger than the forces of evil, stronger than death.

In his name,
Amen.

Readings and Services for this MONTH

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

Date	Service	Readings
4 th February 2 nd Sunday before Lent	All Age Worship 10.30am	Proverbs 8 v1,22-31 Colossians 1 v15-20 John 1 v1-14
Tuesday 6 th February	Tea Service 2.30pm	
11 th February Sunday next before Lent	Morning Prayer with Hymns 10.30am	2 Kings 2 v1-12 2 Corinthians 4 v3-6 Mark 9 v2-9
14 th February Ash Wednesday Group Service St. George's	Holy Communion 7pm	Joel 2 v1-2,12-17 Psalm 51 v1-18 John 8 v1-11
18 th February 1 st Sunday of Lent	Holy Communion 10.30am	Genesis 9 v8-17 1 Peter 3 v18-end Mark 1 v9-15
25 th February 2 nd Sunday of Lent Group Service St. George's	Holy Communion 10.30am	Psalm 22 v23-end Romans 4 v13-end Mark 8 v31-end

God's army

Dewey was in front of me coming out of church one day, and the minister was standing at the door, as he always is, to shake hands. Suddenly he grabbed Dewey by the hand and pulled him aside. The minister said sternly, "Dewey, you need to join the Army of the Lord!"



Dewey replied, "I'm already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor."
The minister retorted: "Then how come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?"

Dewey replied in a whisper: "Well, I'm in the secret service."

*Our services in church for the next few months
will follow this pattern:*

St Georges Church,
Pontesbury.



In 2024, the normal rota of services on Sundays will be:

1st Sunday	All Age Family Worship (in a modern format without Communion)
2nd Sunday	A more traditional Morning Prayer with Hymns (no Communion)
3rd Sunday	Holy Communion
4th Sunday	Holy Communion.

Occasional 5th Sundays will be a Shared Benefice Communion service at either St Georges or Holy Trinity, Minsterley

**ST GEORGE'S CHURCH
CHILDREN'S CHURCH**

**ALL AGES
WELCOME**

**EVERY 2ND & 3RD SUNDAY
AT 10:30AM**

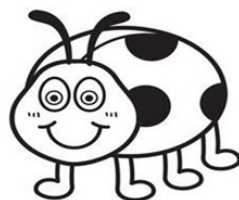
STORIES, CRAFTS AND ACTIVITIES

Term Time Only

No need to book in advance

Our local and church COMMUNITY

Beetle Drive With Pancakes



Tuesday 13th February 7pm

**West End Room
St. George's Church**

£5 per ticket - available from

Val 790587 Mary 791069

Heather 790359

The Gathering

An evening of Praising & Worshipping God

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

1 Thessalonians 5.11

Everyone welcome

**Refreshments
from 7pm**

**Tues 27th February
2024, 7.30pm start**



Marton Village Hall

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**

"Jesus walks with us through our grief and isolation" - Church of England online service

Jesus accompanies those experiencing grief, loneliness, and sadness. That was the message of a recent national online service.

In a sermon recorded at St Nicholas Church in Rattlesden, Suffolk, where she is Rector, the Rev Sharon Grenham-Thompson spoke of her grief for her teenage son Leo, who died in 2021.

But Jesus, she said, is the 'Good Shepherd', and He knows us "behind the outer masks we wear." He calls us by name, and He will never cease to reach out to us.

She said: "Jesus died in pain and loneliness upon the cross – and He understands our isolation and grief. This Jesus speaks to me. This Jesus doesn't trivialise or deny my tribulations – He takes my hand and walks with me through them. This is Mary's Jesus, my Jesus, and your Jesus.

If you are going through a time of grief and isolation, you can access the Church of England's mental health resources at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/mental-health-resources>

or make a space to pray by lighting a virtual candle.



WORLD DAY of PRAYER

Prepared by the Christian women of Palestine

"I beg you, bear with one another in love"

Ephesians 4:1-3



Pontesbury Congregational Church

Friday 1st March 2.30pm

Followed by refreshments

Everyone is very welcome!



In light of the recent conflict our
prayers are particularly needed at this time

Do what we can to help...

Several women in the church prayer group were visiting an elderly friend who was ill. After a while, they rose to leave and told her: "We'll do what we can to help. We promise to keep you in our prayers."



"Thank you," she said. "But really, I can do my own praying. The thing I can't do is the dishes in the sink in the kitchen...."

Here's something you might consider this Lent.

Check out the website for full details:

<https://www.climatestewards.org/resources/carbon-fast/>



Carbon Fast

for Lent

In the Bible, caring for creation is God's first instruction to humans. This Lent, a time when Christians traditionally fast and focus on God, we encourage you to take up our Lent challenge – living more simply and finding new ways to cut your carbon footprint.

How the Carbon Fast works:

If you sign up, each week will feature a different theme designed to help us take climate action. Beginning on 14th February, you will receive a weekly email containing some key facts, suggestions for how you could reduce your carbon footprint, and a prayer. Or you could simply follow these ideas here, week by week:

LENT 2024 WEEKLY OVERVIEW

FEB 14 - FEB 18

FAST FROM UNAWARENESS

- Expand your knowledge about climate issues
- Watch a documentary, listen to a podcast, read a book

1

FEB 19 - FEB 25

FAST FROM SILENCE

- Pray for creation
- Talk about the climate crisis
- Join a climate campaign group

2

FEB 26 - MAR 3

FAST FROM MEAT AND DAIRY

- Go meat-free
- Already vegetarian? Fast from dairy products
- Already vegan? Cut down on desserts and sweets

3

MAR 4 - MAR 10

FAST FROM FOOD WASTE

- Make a plan for using leftovers
- Compost fruit and vegetable scraps

4

MAR 11 - MAR 17

FAST FROM DRIVING

- Lift share, cycle, walk or take public transport

5

MAR 18 - MAR 24

FAST FROM EXCESSIVE ENERGY USE

- Save energy by reducing consumption
- Turn off appliances when not in use
- Turn down the thermostat

6

MAR 25 - MAR 30

FAST FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

- Find alternative activities, like a games night instead of streaming a movie
- Get outside and enjoy creation
- Log out of all social media for the week

7



*Thoughts from the Venerable Derek Chedzey,
Archdeacon of Hereford*

Ash Wednesday this year will fall on the 14th February which of course is also St Valentine's day! Ash Wednesday is traditionally the beginning of Lent and this has been marked over the years as a period of self-discipline, fasting and spiritual journeying. It is a period of penitence and self-examination and seeing ourselves from God's perspective. Even if we don't have a strong faith, we have learnt through the work of Educational Neuroscientists that intentional self-reflection helps us to learn and enhances how we apply, transfer, retain and recall new ideas and information.

The bible recognises that as we go through life we will be tempted and tested and that our response to those times will help to shape the depth of our spiritual lives.

I am often astounded by the way many Christians have been shaped by sermons and theology that promise good things but never talk about the cost of following Jesus. The writer and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer called this a theology of cheap grace.

"Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

Lent gives us an opportunity to realign our lives with God's values, it gives us a prolonged and focussed time to reflect and pray and to read the bible and deepen our faith. The 40-day period is time enough to build in new habits and actions into our lives, which will have a lasting effect.

With ongoing war in Ukraine, the conflict between Israel & Hamas and so much uncertainty in our world I am finding that there is a great deal of anxiety in society about the future and a sense of aimlessness and general anger and tiredness.

Lent gives us as Christians an opportunity to give these feelings back to God and to ask him to heal and restore us. It is also, as Paul reminds us, a time to recognise that our human experiences are common and that whilst heightened by the personal challenges or world events, are not unique to us but the difference is that our faith will endure.

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to all. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

As Christians, whilst we can use this time for reflection, we also know how the story ends and we have an enduring hope within us because Jesus has conquered death and brought forgiveness to us. We are forever Easter people who live in the light of the resurrection, and we can mark Lent because of his sacrifice for us. The rhythm of the spiritual and liturgical year is a helpful tool to remind us that there is a cost and a purpose to our faith, which is not about self-benefit and self-fulfilment but about generosity, servant heartedness and a simple humbler faith. As Christians, we have a message of hope for a better future and Lent gives us the perfect opportunity to prepare our hearts and minds to share the good news.



Looking at GOD



Canon Paul Hardingham begins a new series which will run for many months:

What's the Big Idea?

An Introduction to the Books of the Bible: Exodus

This month we are looking at Exodus, the second book of the Old Testament. Its name means departure, reminding us that Israel's flight out of slavery in Egypt is the major focus of the book.

Exodus is a book of two halves! The first part (chapters 1-19 & 32-34) is the story of an oppressed people who are delivered from slavery into a life of freedom. The second half (chapters 20-31 & 35-40) consists of detailed instructions about the life and worship of God's people. The book introduces us to their *salvation* or deliverance, as *story*. God's promises to Abraham are fulfilled as the people journey to the Promised Land. He also renews His covenant with them at Sinai, expressed in the Ten Commandments (20: 1-17).

At the heart of Exodus is the person of God Himself. In chapter 3 God reveals His name as YHWH or '*I am who I am*' (3:14) to Moses. This is the name by which God is known throughout the Old Testament, expressed in the title '*the LORD*'. To know God's name is to know Him, as well as His character ie- His justice, truthfulness, mercy, faithfulness and holiness. He is the God who controls history, delivering the people out of Egypt, while the death of the Passover lamb points us to Jesus' death on the cross (1 Corinthians 5:7).

God's promises of help remain true for us today: '*Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today*' Exodus 14:13.

'This Exodus story continues to be a major means that God uses to draw men and women in trouble out of the mess of history into the kingdom of salvation.' (Eugene Peterson).

As Lent begins, it is a good time to look at the things Jesus said, and the claims that He made. By the Revd Dr Herbert McGonigle.

What's so special about Jesus?

The gospels record that people were astounded by many of the things that Jesus said. Even His enemies, intent on trapping Him, admitted: "No one ever spoke the way this man does." (John 7:46) Furthermore, "the crowds were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." (Matthew 7:28-9)

For in Jesus, we find something without precedent in the span of human literature. While urging humility on others and while giving the impression of the ultimately humble person, Jesus' teaching and claims are basically *ego-centric and completely focussed on Himself*. In ordinary life, that would get a person labelled as crazy or as a megalomaniac!

Just think of the few astounding claims Jesus made about Himself. "I am the Resurrection and the Life." (Jn 11:25) "I am the Bread of Life." (Jn 6:35) "I am the Light of the World." (Jn 8:12) "I am the Good Shepherd." (Jn 10:7,9) "... whoever lives and believes in Me will never die." (Jn 11:26) And – most staggering of all – "anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father." (Jn 14:9)

CS Lewis comments on the inescapableness of Jesus' uniqueness: "There is no half-way house, and there is no parallel in other religions."

That Jesus cannot be ranked among a pantheon of religious leaders or prophets becomes further obvious when one reflects further on His claim of being at both the beginning and at the end of Creation and of History. He said: "I am the First and the Last" (Rev 1:17), as well as : "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Mt 28:18).

Clearly the disciples accepted this, as John begins his gospel with these words: "In the beginning was the Word (Jesus) and the Word was with God and the Word was God... Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.... and in Him all things hold together." (Col 1:16,17)

When we look at what Jesus goes on to say about the end of history, we are even more startled, as when He said of any person who follows Him: "I will

raise him up at the last day.” (Jn 6:40) This was the local carpenter, remember! And when we note that throughout the Bible final judgement is a function reserved to God alone, it is astounding to register that Jesus says of Himself: “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son authority to judge because He is the Son of Man.” (Jn 5:26—27)

Yes, between Creation and the end of History stands Jesus. That also means, of course, and we note it with comfort, because everything in between is His also.

During this Lent, why not spend some time just quietly thinking about these claims of Jesus?

What is the point of temptation?

‘Happy is the man who doesn’t give in and do wrong when he is tempted, for afterwards he will get ... his reward....’ James 1:12

Temptation becomes a stepping stone rather than a stumbling block, when you realise that it’s *just as much an opportunity to do the right thing, as the wrong thing*. Temptation just gives you the choice!

It’s helpful to remember that God develops the fruit of the Spirit in us by allowing circumstances in which we’re tempted – to express the exact opposite quality! For instance, He teaches us to love by bringing unlovely people into our lives. It takes no character to love people who are lovely and loving you. God teaches us joy in the midst of sorrow by causing us to turn to Him for comfort and strength, when all our other supports are gone.

He develops peace within us, not by making things go the way we planned, but by allowing times of chaos and confusion. Peace comes when we choose to trust God in situations where we’re tempted to worry or be afraid. Likewise, patience is developed through circumstances in which we’re forced to wait and are tempted to be angry or have a short fuse.

You can’t claim to be good, if you’ve never been tempted to be bad; or be faithful if you’ve never had the opportunity to be unfaithful. Integrity is built through defeating dishonesty; humility grows as you refuse to give place to pride; endurance develops as you reject the temptation to give up. The truth is that each time you defeat a temptation, you become more like Jesus.

Adapted from: UCB, The Word for Today.

Life on a spin

Many years ago, at the Pleasure Beach at Blackpool, there was a certain 'ride' or amusement that was strictly for the physically fit. It consisted of a flat wooden disc about 20 feet in diameter and set at an angle of 45 degrees in the floor. When it began to rotate, the aim was to get to the centre where there was a pole. As the disc rotated faster and faster, everyone who failed to get to the pole got flung off. Nowadays there's probably a European Community regulation banning it as far too dangerous!

The principle of the game was a basic law of physics. When any wheel rotates, the outer rim moves fastest of all. Half way to the centre and you are moving a lot more slowly. And, at least theoretically, at the absolute centre will be a point which is totally still. That's why anyone who reached that pole could stand there quite comfortably.

We have just started the Church's season of Lent. It's generally thought of as being a time for giving up chocolate, wine, whatever. But it's really a time to remind us that in our own rapidly spinning world, God is the still centre. All around God is motion, sound, change and decay – galaxies circling, seasons and years rotating, life developing and decaying. And at the still centre, where there is no variableness, is God, the same yesterday, today, forever.

Only about seven weeks ago Christians worldwide were thinking of God getting involved in a special way in the ever moving and changing life of the world. And one great characteristic of Jesus was His stillness. Busy, harassed, injured people found someone with neither clever chat nor idle gossip, neither vulgar boasting nor loud opinion. His life always seemed to rotate round a still central point, which gave Him balance and authority.

"Be still then and know that I am God" wrote the Psalmist. Lent is a time for us to try and do just that – to find the still centre of God in our own individual lives.

Of course, we're all of us very much in the world, and must live our lives in all of its busyness. But it may do none of us any harm to be a little more silent than we often are – quick to listen and slow to speak. And the more silent spaces we give ourselves, the more we'll give that still, small voice within each one of us the chance to be heard.

Reflecting Faith: Memorial Stones

When you last visited a churchyard with very old memorials, what did you notice?

The oldest stones probably just had the name of the person, date of death and perhaps their age. But the slightly more recent stones may well have included where the person had been born, lived, and who they had married.

These stones probably belonged to the wealthier people, as they needed to be large, to include all this information! As for the poorer folk, as cheaper stone became available, they also wanted to mark their loved one's place of rest, even with just the bare details.

With the advent of the railways, a firm in Scotland started a business for shaping the stone with recessing, into which a local stone mason would be able to carve the words. This is why you will see many similar shaped stones in every churchyard in England, Wales and Scotland for that period.

In different areas of the country, both locally sourced stones and the availability of the stonemason create very different looks – whilst within that area are many reproductions.

Also, the 'floweriness' of the inscriptions grew over the years. What started with just the name of the person later had added before the name, 'With affection', then 'With great affection', then, 'Greatly loved' and so on. It was almost as if people were trying to outdo each other on who loves who most.

Meanwhile, by the early 20th century many churchyards were 'full', and if adjoining land was available this was consecrated, but otherwise separate land was purchased – which became a 'cemetery' and was usually not the responsibility of the church. A churchyard, on the other hand, is by definition under the auspices of 'the church', whether open or closed.

Because people continued to want to be interred in 'holy land', eventually all cemeteries were set aside and consecrated by and for the different religions and denominations, reflecting the needs of the local communities.

This month Think about where you'd like to have as *your* final resting place. Whether you choose cremation or burial, is being in a set-aside 'holy place' important to you and to those who will visit?

The gardener and the Vine

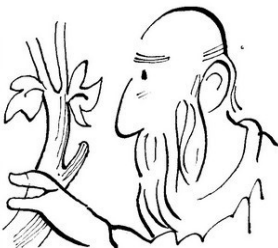


JESUS OFTEN TOLD
STORIES WITH
HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONCE HE TOLD HIS FRIENDS ALL
ABOUT A GARDENER.

THE GARDENER'S JOB WAS
TO CARE FOR THE VINES



HE WOULD LOOK AT EACH
BRANCH CAREFULLY...

... AND IF IT WAS PRODUCING
GOOD FRUIT, HE WOULD CARE
FOR IT AND NOURISH IT.



IF IT WAS PRODUCING BAD
FRUIT...

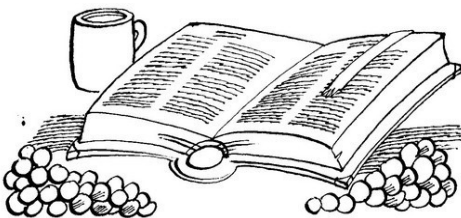


...OR NO FRUIT AT
ALL...



...THEN THE GARDENER WOULD
CHOP IT OFF, AND BURN IT IN
THE FIRE!!

JESUS WANTED HIS FRIENDS TO SHARE
THE GOOD NEWS - THAT'S LIKE THE
VINE BEARING GOOD FRUIT.



YOU CAN READ THIS SPECIAL PARABLE IN JOHN'S
GOSPEL, CHAPTER 15.

Looking at the wider COMMUNITY

Ukraine - Two Years Later

Although Russian troops were massing near the borders of Ukraine in February 2022, we naively believed their denial that an attack was imminent.

Since then, an all-out war has resulted in tens of thousands of civilian deaths, and hundreds of thousands of military casualties. A quarter of the Ukrainian population has been displaced. Eight million are now refugees, spread across Europe.

Few of us realised that a war between the two countries really started in 2014, when pro-Russian regions of Ukraine rebelled and Crimea was annexed.

Hostilities between the two countries had begun even earlier. Ukraine had joined the Soviet Union in 1922 and ten years later lost more than a million of its population in the 'Holodomor' famine, now widely regarded as genocide inflicted by Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader.

Relationships between the two countries have always been turbulent, and Russia's possessive attitude towards its neighbour is deeply resented.

Ukrainian refugees in the UK are mainly women and children, for their men are needed for war service. So, they have organised themselves into self-help groups, painstakingly learning to read and write in English, as well as working full or part-time and keeping up their morale by organising groups for young and old. Choirs have sprung up, often assisted by British musicians. One member wrote movingly of how singing helped her cope with the mental trauma of her homeland fighting for survival.

Ukrainians are unceasingly grateful for our hospitality, but they fear our compassion may wear thin, as our attention has been diverted by news of the barbarity between Israelis and Palestinians. That conflict also has a long history of smouldering hatred on both sides. Wars rarely solve disputes. When wearied people recognise their futility, settlements may be negotiated. Forgiveness takes longer.

Food shortages are ‘likely’ this year

You might find some supermarket shelves empty in the coming months.

A combination of global conflicts, climate change and transportation issues are making it harder for food producers to get their products out of the field and onto your plate. And as at the end of last month (January), it got even more complicated, with the introduction of new checks on the goods coming from the EU into the UK.

Professor Chris Elliott of Queen’s University Belfast is a food security expert. He explains: “It’ll be about affordability but also availability, and the likelihood of empty shelves, particularly fresh produce shelves, in 2024 is alarmingly high.”

Professor Elliott said: “We are virtually totally dependent on other countries for most of our fresh produce, our fruit and our vegetables. We were reasonably self-sufficient in dairy, we were reasonably self-sufficient in poultry and eggs. But that’s also on the decline now, as a result of the collapse of some sectors of the food industry in the UK.”

According to the gov.uk website, just under half of the actual food on our plates is produced within the UK.

20 years of Facebook by Tim Lenton

Twenty years ago, on 4th February 2004, Facebook, the social media networking platform, was launched.

Originally known as thefacebook.com, it was intended by Mark Zuckerberg and four other Harvard students – Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes – to create “a directory of information for college students”, but it soon expanded, and each of the five co-founders developed different roles. All except Moskowitz are now not part of the Facebook empire, but all are extremely rich.

A year after it was launched, Facebook lost the “the” from its name, and the

following year it got rid of its students-only restriction. In its new form Zuckerberg, from an early stage the main man of Facebook, said the original aim was for Facebook users to take their online identities with them around the internet without having to register individual accounts for each website or app.

The swift development of Facebook, which went public in 2012, has involved Zuckerberg in many lawsuits, and he has demonstrated a wide-ranging ability to win people over. He is also extremely clever. He has never revealed his own political affiliation or voting history, and is hard to pin down. He was raised as a Reform Jew, went through a period when he espoused atheism, but more recently has said he "believes religion is very important".

In September last year his net worth was estimated at not far short of £50 billion, but he receives a one-dollar salary as CEO of Facebook, and he and his wife Priscilla Chan give away huge amounts of money, some of which goes to fighting antisemitism and backing educational and community initiatives. Facebook is banned in China.

As of late September 2023, Forbes estimated Zuckerberg's net worth at about \$64.4 billion, making him the 16th-richest person in the world.



Sometimes women are overly suspicious of their husbands.

"When Adam stayed out very late for a few nights, Eve became upset. "You're running around with other women," she charged.

"You're being unreasonable," Adam responded. "You're the only woman on earth." The quarrel continued until Adam fell asleep, only to be awakened by someone poking him in the chest. It was Eve. "What do you think you're doing?" Adam demanded.

"Counting your ribs," said Eve.

Deanery of Pontesbury

DEANERY NEWS

Rural Dean: **The Revd Bill Rowell**

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

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH FROM: *Revd Greg Smith*

Dear Friends

My oldest son's in-laws supposedly left their Methodist Church in South Wales and have subsequently been de-churched because they were always being asked for money. I know nothing of that church's circumstances, but inevitably my sympathies are with their Minister. It's true: the Church always needs money. We have to pay our ministers (not very much I promise you); mend leaky roofs and attend to the repointing of buttresses (I didn't know that was a thing until I was ordained); pay increasingly extortionate energy bills, insurance and all those consumables (bread, wine, candles, paper, coffee and biscuits).

Sometimes, we ask for money directly. I suspect the days when the Rector has the temerity to pass the plate around twice because there are insufficient contributions the first time round, are now gone. However, I once spent a sabbatical attending a Pentecostal Church in Bedworth and recall that the exhortation prefacing the passing round of the plate was as long as the sermon (and they preach for a long time in Pentecostal churches). We produce leaflets, publish targets, and mention casually in sermons how much the church is affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Indirectly, the message can be even louder. An exhausting programme of social events often proclaims not so much that we are a church that likes to have fun, but rather we are a church that needs money. The inevitable raffle is the clincher. And so it is that people who never set foot in church will proclaim confidently that "the church is always after our money".

What if we were to be more effective in telling a different story? In response to a God who gave us everything including His own Son (Romans 8:32) we are a church that overwhelmingly gives to our community rather than takes from it. This generosity is exemplified by the building being available for funerals and weddings irrespective of whether a family attends church or

makes a financial contribution to it. That building is likely to have been lovingly cleaned and decorated with flowers arranged by a team of volunteers, freely giving of their time.

By the same token, the church runs toddler groups and foodbanks; offers bereavement support and drop-in groups. Its ministers visit the sick, support our schools, counsel the distressed and pray for their people, all freely given.

These are things that people take for granted or are unaware of. How do we therefore persuade people to say, "the church is always after our money so that it can continue to exhibit such reckless generosity to our community"?



"Next Sunday I think I'll do a new take on the Parable of the Virgins and the Oil."



From the Dragon's Den

George, Uncle Sam and Idris hope that the New Year has started well for all our Readers. Just to let you know that we are back in action, welcoming 26 Little Dragons to our first meeting in January. It was good to see them all and they were really pleased to see us.

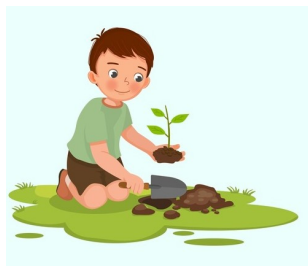
We like it when they join in our Dragon song. At first, they just sing the end of each line, then, little by little, they learn a bit more until they know it almost as well as they know Baa, Baa, Black Sheep, which is one of their favourites. Idris would like you to know that, although he is Welsh, he does sing the English words to everything. He thinks that everyone would think he was showing off if he sang in Welsh; and of course, that would only encourage Uncle Sam to do his impersonation of Elvis Presley. Best to stick to the English version.

Good wishes to everyone, from Val, Frank, Marion E,
Marion W, Pat, Caroline

And from we three

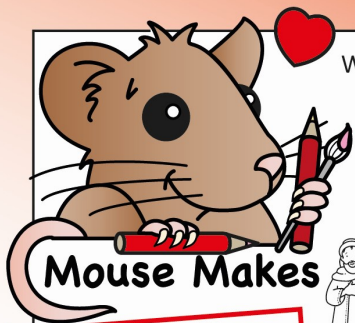


George, Uncle Sam & Idris



COMING SOON —- a DATE for your Diary

MAY 19th is the date for this year's
Open Gardens event.



Mouse Makes

CONNECT THE BIBLE COUPLES

ADAM	ELIZABETH
ABRAHAM	MARY
ISAAC	HANNAH
JACOB	PRISCILLA
BOAZ	EVE
ZECHARIAH	RUTH
ELKANAH	REBEKAH
AQUILA	RACHEL
JOSEPH	SARAH

Which couple helped the Apostle Paul in his ministry?

_____ and _____ Romans 16:3

Who were the first couple?

_____ and _____

Genesis 2:22-25

Who's wife became a pillar of salt because she disobeyed the angel's warning?

_____ Genesis 19:26



Which of Laban's daughters did Jacob love?

_____ Genesis 29:18

Who was Moses' wife?

_____ Exodus 2:21

Who married Boaz to become King David's great-grandmother and a distant relative of Jesus?

_____ Matthew 1:5



FIND THE BIBLE VERSE

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

XIBU HPE IBT
KPJOFE UPHFUIFS,
MFU OPU NBO
TFQBSBUF.

NBSL
UFO WFTSF
OJOF

DID YOU KNOW?

King Solomon had **700** wives!
They were princesses of royal birth and he loved them all, but his wives caused him to turn away from God
See 1 Kings 11:1-3

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

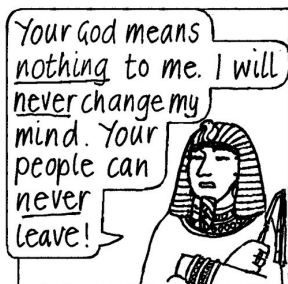
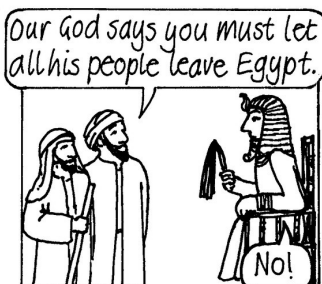
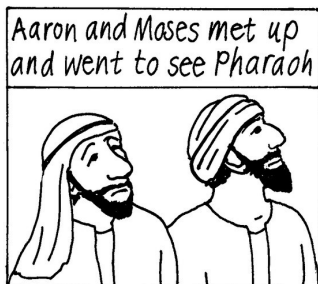
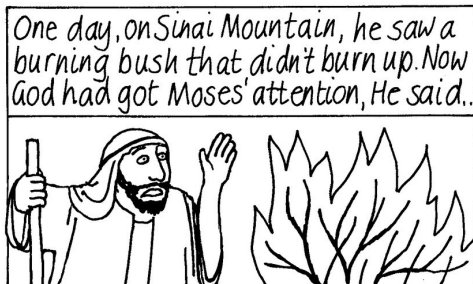
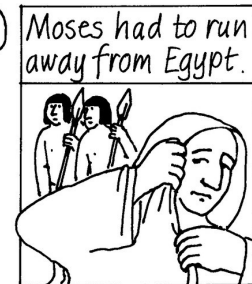
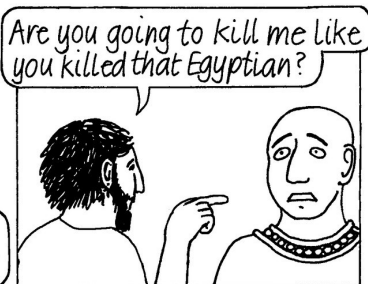
ABRAHAM
ADAM • AQUILA
BOAZ • ELKANAH
ELIZABETH
EVE • HANNAH
ISAAC • JACOB
JOSEPH • MARY
PRISCILLA
RACHEL
REBEKAH • RUTH
SARAH
ZECHARIAH

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Exodus 2:13-4:23, 4:27-5:2

Moses: a Hebrew adopted by an Egyptian princess. He killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave, and hid the body.



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

change

burning

choice

Moses

father

leave

Egypt

bush

attention

mountain

Paraoh

sheep

run

Hebrew

body

Sinai

brother

killed

Midian

Aaron

princess

married

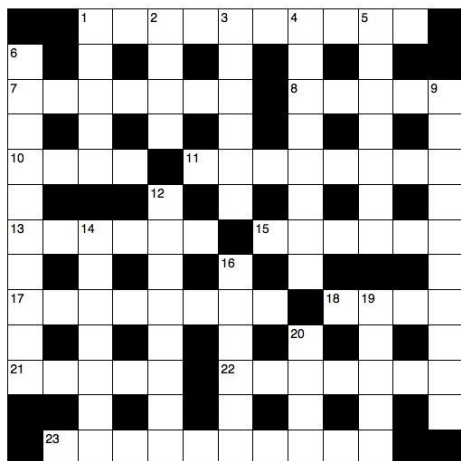
people

never

Crossword answers:

ACROSS: 1, Prosperity. 7, Raisins. 8, Admit. 10, View. 11, Confetti. 13, Dis-til. 15, Groyne. 17, Navigate. 18, Whit. 21, Enoch. 22, Trodden. 23, Proph-
etess.
DOWN: 1, Pride. 2, Ovid. 3, Pastor. 4, Reaffirm. 5, Timothy. 6, Providence. 9, Tridentine. 12, Kingship. 14, Saviour. 16, Statue. 19, Hades. 20, Rome.

Your PUZZLE for February



Across

- 1 Success or wealth (Deuteronomy 28:11) (10)
 7 Forbidden fruit for Nazirites (Numbers 6:3) (7)
 8 Concede (Job 27:5) (5)
 10 Look at (Psalm 48:13) (4)
 11 Much in evidence after weddings (8)
 13 Condense (Job 36:27) (6)
 15 Breakwater (6)
 17 Give a tan (anag.) (8)
 18 More usually now called Pentecost, — Sunday (4)

- 21 After living for 365 years, it was said of him that 'he walked with God' (Genesis 5:23–24) (5)
 22 Trampled (Judges 9:27) (7)
 23 For example, Miriam, Deborah (Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4) (10)

Down

- 1 Arrogance (Proverbs 8:13) (5)
 2 Roman poet from first century BC (4)
 3 So rapt (anag.) (6)
 4 Declare again (2 Corinthians 2:8) (8)
 5 Paul's 'fellow worker', to whom he sent two epistles (Romans 16:21) (7)
 6 God's foreseeing care and protection (Job 10:12) (10)
 9 Traditional form of Roman Catholic Mass (10)
 12 'The Lord... has given the — of Israel to David and his descendants for ever' (2 Chronicles 13:5) (8)
 14 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my — ' (Luke 1:46–47) (7)
 16 The central element in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, identified and interpreted by Daniel (Daniel 2:31) (6)
 19 'On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of — will not overcome it' (Matthew 16:18) (5)
 20 City where Paul was under house arrest for two years (Acts 28:16) (4)

God in the ARTS & SCIENCES

The Revd Michael Burgess looks at great works of music.

‘Glorious the song when God’s the theme’: the Nunc Dimittis

St Luke tells us in his Gospel that the angels sang praises to God at the birth of Jesus, and he has given us three poems that have become part of Christian song: the *Magnificat*, the *Benedictus* and the *Nunc Dimittis*.

The first two are full of praise and rejoicing. The last comes as Mary and Joseph fulfil the Law of Moses and bring the child Jesus to Jerusalem. In the temple they meet Simeon and Anna. Simeon represents each of us who can look back over life with gratitude in the face of death as he says, ‘Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace.’ It is a story that has inspired preachers and artists, and also composers.

In the Christian Church these words of the *Nunc Dimittis* have become part of worship at the end of each day, not just the end of life. Cathedral and parish church choirs have sung settings of these words in that great tradition of Anglican choral music at Evensong – settings that have captured the sense of quiet resignation, but also conveyed the glory of the light that is Jesus shining for all people. Rachmaninov’s setting is part of his Vespers, the night-long vigil sung in the Russian Orthodox Church on the eve of great feasts.

Rachmaninov composed the work (and it comprises 15 pieces) at great speed, but even so, the Vespers are now seen as one of the great masterpieces of religious music.

This was no more so than in his beautiful setting of the 5th canticle, the *Nunc Dimittis*. Just 36 bars long, it begins with a rocking, undulating figure in the upper voices. A solo tenor enters as the voice of Simeon, and it ends with the basses moving down to a low B flat: ‘a sigh of wonder and resignation on the threshold of eternal rest and peace,’ one critic has called it.

Rachmaninov later recalled, “After I played the passage at the end of the 5th canticle where the basses slowly descend to that low note, the conductor shook his head, saying, ‘Now where on earth will we find such basses? They are as rare as asparagus at Christmas!’ Nevertheless, he did find them.” It was one of the composer’s favourite pieces, and he asked for it to be sung at his funeral in the hope that it would send his ‘ship of death gently towards the unknown region.’”

On 2nd February we shall hear these words as part of the Gospel on the feast of Candlemas. Simeon prays them because his cup is now overflowing. He has looked on the salvation of God. Music allows us to look on that glory and salvation also, and Rachmaninov, in his moving setting, has captured the calm trust of that moment, which shines out like the brightness of the light of Jesus.

And here Dr Ruth Banciewicz, Church Engagement Director, The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge, writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Celebrating the now and future Creation

I find that watching buds swelling on trees and plants during the winter months gives me a tremendous sense of hope. After creation's winter shutdown, the sight of tiny flowers poking out of brown earth may be more important than ever.

Getting outdoors during daylight hours, enjoying green spaces and getting some fresh air and exercise are great ways to keep ourselves healthy at any time of year. A psychologist colleague wrote, "Attending to the details of nature can also inspire awe, which has been linked to positive mood and increased life satisfaction." I expect it is this sense of awe that makes it easier for many of us to connect with God outdoors.

Helping ourselves and others to thrive is a good start to 2024, but it is also vital to have hope for the future. In the face of climate change, we urgently need to care for all of Creation, both human and everything else, with God's help.

Our ultimate hope is in God's promise that He will bring about a new heaven and a new earth. We can look forward to the day when Creation will be fully redeemed and liberated from evil. The Greek word used to describe the new creation is the same as that used to describe someone who becomes a Christian, whose humanity is restored and renewed. There will be continuity between the old and new earth as it is cleansed and purified, surpassing and perfecting what has gone before. There will also be some discontinuity, as there will be no more suffering or death.

So, one source of hope for 2024 is that we can enjoy both caring for and meeting God in Creation. But the parts of Creation that we find most beautiful, giving us a sense of awe and helping us to worship, are also a reminder that there is something much better to come.

Winter Now

From a poem by Samuel Longfellow 1819-92

Tis winter now; the fallen snow
Has left the heavens all coldly clear;
Through leafless boughs the sharp winds blow,
And all the earth lies dead and drear.

And yet God's love is not withdrawn;
His life within the keen air breathes;
His beauty paints the crimson dawn,
And clothes the boughs with glittering wreaths...

O God! Who giv'st the winter's cold,
As well as summer's joyous rays,
Us warmly in thy love enfold,
And keep us through life's wintry days.



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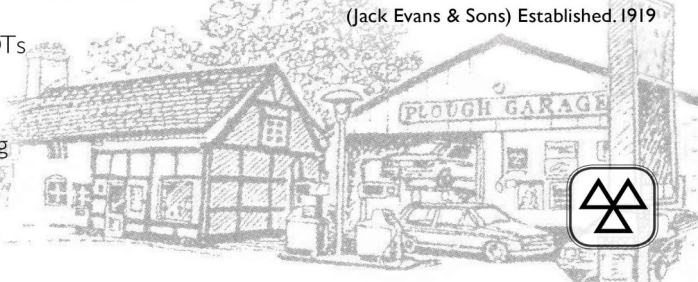
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