



Dec & Jan

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Thatcham United Reformed Church

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Dear Friends,



I know a **true story** of a happily married young woman who, as a result of a serious car accident and several operations, had a **disfigured** jaw and therefore the skin tissue and lips were **distorted** also. As she recovered from the last operation, the nerves around her mouth and lips that had been damaged couldn't be repaired and she couldn't pull her lips together, and the lower lip hung down to one side. Movement of her head was also significantly limited. 'Will I always **look like this**?' 'Yes', she was told.

As she lay there feeling **very low**, she was naturally unhappy and tearful. She felt she looked hideous, unworthy and she was **fearful** for the future. 'What has happened to me?' 'Why did it happen?' No one will want to see me. My husband will be **repelled**.

She hadn't noticed that her husband had arrived. Thinking she was dozing; he had been standing there by the bed **gazing at her**. She feared his repulsion, but he said to her, '**I love you**'. And then he stood closer and gently bent over to kiss her crooked mouth. But he wanted to **align** his lips with hers to be able to kiss her properly. To do that he had to lean across her, twist his head one way and **contort** his back another way, and then twist his own lips to meet hers. And so, where she hurt the most, his kiss was still **effective**.

And when he looked at her face, her eyes were full of tears. They were tears of **relief** and **joy** because her disfigurement was not a barrier to his love and did not repel it. He loved her so much he was prepared to **contort his own** body to show his love. And she felt **loved** and **valued**. She felt the perceptible presence of his 'giving love' and it **drove away** her fears.

Isn't this small story a **picture** of a larger and amazing gospel story – the **Christmas** story?

For God so loved the world, he gave to us his own Son; to be known as Jesus. And from the glory of heaven, he was **contorted** to become a human being, a **person**, like us. He was '**shoehorned**' into a human body, into human life on earth, with its sin, sickness and death. He was to be **confined** by time, ageing and weakness, **suffering** human feelings and temptations. They must have felt like **straightjackets** binding him. But this was so he could **align with us**, and communicate his love **effectively**, knowing what it is like to be human.

The **most amazing claim** of the Christian faith is that **God became incarnate**, took **human** form, and of all places, was laid in a lowly feeding trough at his birth, in the person of Jesus Christ. This was the **miracle** of miracles, that God became human. What **amazing** love!

Christmas is the largest celebration in the world. But for many, sadly, it is depressing, and the Christ is **lost**. For others it is for indulgence, Christ is **irrelevant**. For many the birth of Jesus is a **myth**. All of this **erodes** Christmas. **This is not Christmas**. Jesus came and lived a perfect human life, died a **contorted** agonising death on the cross and then **rose again** in triumph over death. He was the 'first fruits' of the new creation and our eternal destiny. This is our celebration. **This is Christmas**.

This is **the Christian's story**, familiar and the most thrilling story on earth. It is our Christmas story, **breath-taking**, **heart-breaking**, powerful and still very **relevant**. At the heart of Christmas is the deep and giving **love of God**, and **Jesus Christ**, fully God and fully man. Christmas is our **hope** and **celebration**! The Lord bless us and keep us, and give us **peace** at Christmas.

Yours in the incarnate love of Jesus

John and Rachel

Sunday Worship

DECEMBER 10.30am unless specified

- 5 Revd John Lee, Church Anniversary, Communion and Christmas Lunch
- 12 Revd John Lee
- 19 The Nativity Story
- 26 Karen Fakes (YouTube or printed copies only)

JANUARY

- 2 Revd John Lee, Communion
- 9 Revd John Lee
- 16 David Weller
- 23 Karen Fakes
- 30 Cafe Worship in the hall



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**Deadline for next issue:
Sunday 16 January**

REMEMBER IN
YOUR PRAYERS



Gwen Woodgates (Gill's mum), now at peace, remembering Gill, Alan & family;
Rachel, tested positive for COVID, Amanda and her Mum Pat, Val, John & Sandra Baron. and any others known to us individually.

Remembering All Souls

In lieu of our annual All Soul's Evening Service, which would have been held earlier this month, we remember the following people, who have died this year and last year. They are names from our church family and close relatives, as well as friends associated with our church. We remember:
Olive, sister to Iris. Jo, Ted Graham's partner. Ian, brother to Val. Roger Cox. Karen Mott. George Wilson, brother to John. Phyllis Mossman, Alan M's mother. Malcolm Langford. Marion Tarry, Alan T's mother. John Wilson. John Sugden. Flo Rye. Jon Paris. John Eggleton. Nina Vokins. John Monger. Margaret Fletcher and Peter Little, Dorothy's partner. Gwen Woodgates, Gill's mother.



(An alternative Lord's Prayer from Central America)

Our Father, who is in us here on earth, Holy is your name in the hungry who share their bread and their song. Your kingdom come - a generous land where confidence and truth reign. Let us do your will - being a cool breeze for those who sweat. You are giving us our daily bread, when we manage to get back our lands or to get a fairer wage. Forgive us for keeping silent in the face of injustice and for burying our dreams. Don't let us fall into the temptation of taking up the same arms as the enemy, but deliver us from evil which disunites us. And we have believed in humanity and in life and we shall have known your kingdom which is being built for ever and ever.

Amen

God did not send Christ to us;
God came to us in Christ.
- Don Skinner

EMBRACE the Middle East

(extracts from Prayer Diary)

5 December Life in Cairo is difficult for many people, including refugees fleeing conflict in other African countries. They face squalid living conditions and lack of employment. Please pray for Refuge Egypt, providing food and health care to help refugees survive their first year in the city and offering training in marketable skills for the future.

'Please pray with us that the refugees who come through our doors would know the hope and joy of Jesus and find hope for the future' (Medical Director of Refuge Egypt)

19 December This Christmas week, as we celebrate the new born Christ, please pray for babies and their mothers in today's Holy Land. Our partners at the Near East Council of Churches run an ante-natal programme in Gaza, ensuring that disadvantaged women have the best chance of a healthy pregnancy and birth.

Amen

ST MUNGO'S EVEN LESSER

On the 20th day of November
In the Year of Our Lord
2021

To Uncle Eustace
Rector

St James the Least of All



Dear Uncle Eustace,
I am shocked. Mother brought me up not to tell lies! But here I am, being advised to upset the Bishop and mislead the senior clergy.

As for upsetting the 'staff', St James the Least of All is very fortunate in having any. Our gardener puts, what he thinks florally acceptable, into the cleaner's bucket, near the font; our organist is still at junior school, and the verger is on a long-term sabbatical.

Your loving nephew,
Darren

A professor was lecturing his physics class. "If molecules can be split into atoms and the atoms split into electrons, can the electrons be broken down any further?"

"I'm not certain," replied one of his pupils, "But a sure way to find out would be to post some of them in a Christmas package marked 'fragile.'"

Christmas at URC

Covid restrictions permitting

Sunday 19th 10.30am: The Nativity Story

Christmas Eve 6pm: Carols by Candlelight

Numbers may be restricted by tickets

Christmas Day 10am: Come and join the celebration

**ST. JAMES THE LEAST OF ALL
from The Rectory**



My dear Nephew Darren

After all these years, I now understand why the non-conformist denominations sit down, rather than kneel, to say their prayers. That way, no decisions have to be taken over the number, size, shape, colour, material and design of kneelers in church.

Our present set was donated by a retired Major-General in 1899 to celebrate the Relief of Mafeking, and after more than a century of use by the pious and not-so-devout has taken its toll. Like certain members of our congregation, they now look a little worse for wear. Many have sprung leaks, so that when used, a jet of flocking is emitted all over the clothes of their neighbour, who then leaves Mattins looking like a Yeti.

Other kneelers have been occupied by grateful mice, who find them most congenial for nesting and who leave in high umbrage, creating chaos as Miss Mapp chases them down the aisle with her umbrella; that this provides her with the perfect excuse to leave before the sermon is, I am sure, entirely coincidental. The

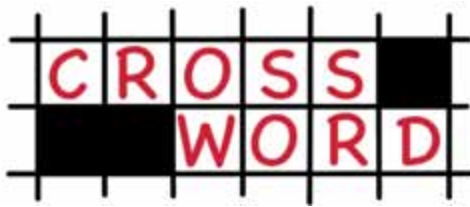
final straw came when my own, by some quirk in its design, now sounds like a whoopee cushion every time I kneel. It may cause the choirboys much amusement, but it lends nothing to the dignity of our worship.

So, we have decided to have a completely new set - and therein lies the problem. Who makes them? What will be the designs? Who co-ordinates the whole project? There is enough here to occupy the combined minds of our Church Council for the next Millennium and there will be enough scheming, manoeuvring, signing of non-aggression pacts and formation of tactical truces to make the United Nations look like amateurs. Unfortunately, we do not have the ecclesiastical equivalents of the blue berets to enforce peace.

The more patriotic members of the congregation have suggested they all show the Union Jack - presumably so they can be waved at appropriate moments in our services; one belligerent individual wants to see depictions of St Michael slaughtering the dragon, John the Baptist's head on a platter and other such tasteful scenes; on the other hand, dear Miss Timmins wants them all to depict doves or small fluffy creatures, which would make the church look more like pets corner.

Cutting through these vital issues, I have suggested that the entire congregation converts to Roman Catholicism... and then we could stand for our prayers and do without kneelers entirely.

Your loving uncle, Eustace



Across

- 11 Provisional meeting place of God and the Jews (Exodus 25:9) (10)
- 7 David's third son, killed when his head got caught in a tree during a battle with his father (2 Samuel 18:14-15) (7)
- 8 They ruled much of the west coast of South America in the 15th and early 16th centuries (5)
- 10 Small deer of European and Asian extraction (4)
- 11 Seized control of (Numbers 21:25) (8)
- 13 Terror (Luke 24:5) (6)
- 15 First World War heroine shot by the Germans in Brussels, Nurse Edith ____ (6)
- 17 Stormy (8)
- 18 A bitter variety of this, together with lamb and unleavened bread, was the Passover menu for anyone 'unclean' (Numbers 9:11) (4)
- 21 Arson (anag.) (5)
- 22 How John Newton described God's grace in his well-known hymn (7)
- 23 Habitation (Isaiah 27:10) (10)

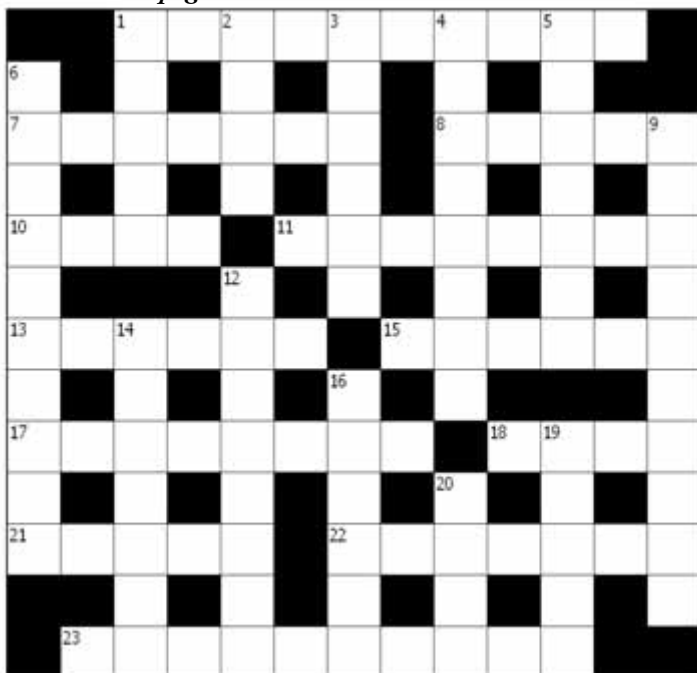
Down

- 1 ' ____ and see that the Lord is good' (Psalm 34:8) (5)
- 2 'The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as ____ as a lion' (Proverbs 28:1) (4)
- 3 One of the exiles, a descendant of Parosh, who married a foreign woman (Ezra 10:25) (6)
- 4 He escaped from Nob when Saul killed the rest of his family and joined David (1 Samuel 22:19-20) (8)
- 5 City and lake in Central Switzerland (7)
- 6 'Offer your bodies as living _____, holy and pleasing to God' (Romans 12:1) (10)
- 9 Pouches carried by horses (Genesis 49:14) (10)
- 12 One who accepts government by God (8)
- 14 Aromatic substance commonly used in Jewish ritual (Exodus 30:1) (7)
- 16 He asked Jesus, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38) (6)
- 19 Are (Romans 13:1) (5)
- 20 'You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will ____ his people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21) (4)

Drive carefully this Christmas. It's not only cars that can be recalled by their maker. - Anon



Answers next page



West Berks foodbank

Throughout December, West Berks Foodbank run a Reverse Advent Calendar. This is where you give something each day from a list, instead of receiving. The items below are just ideas, this is a great way to show children and grandchildren that Christmas is about giving as well as receiving. There will be a collection box in the vestibule throughout Advent, I can also arrange to collect anything for anyone unable to make it to church.

Thank you for your support. Your generosity will help to make someone's Christmas.

Esther

| | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1st UHT Milk (Long Life) | 2nd Jam or Spread | 3rd Instant Coffee | 4th Soup or Cup-a-soup | 5th Shower Gel |
| 6th Sugar | 7th Chilli Packet Mix | 8th Toilet Rolls | 9th Tinned Vegetables | 10th Tinned Tomatoes |
| 11th Pasta Sauce | 12th Shampoo | 13th Sponge Pudding | 14th Biscuits | 15th Tinned Fruit |
| 16th Instant Mash | 17th Fruit Juice (Longlife) | 18th Tinned Custard | 19th Baked Beans | 20th Chocolate or Sweets |
| 21st Tinned Meat Meals | 22nd Washing Up Liquid | 23rd Tinned Fish | 24th Cleaning Product | Thank You, You're Amazing! |

What do I do with it when it is finished?
Please take it to our warehouse, 80 Gresham Business Park, RG19 6HW (Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri) between 9am to 12pm
or Email info@westberks.foodbank.org.uk, or call 07836 500610

or
Arrange collection with Esther, or leave it in the Church Vestibule
If possible, by 5th December

A lot of money is tainted - It taint yours and it taint mine.

Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis

Once you've seen one shopping centre, you've seen a mall

I don't always go the extra mile, but when I do it's because I missed my exit.

All in the month of December

1500 years ago, on 7th December 521 that St Columba, Irish missionary who spread Christianity in Scotland, was born. He was one of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland.

250 years ago, on 25th December 1771 that Dorothy Wordsworth, writer, poet, and diarist, was born. She was sister to the poet William Wordsworth.

175 years ago, on 21 December 1846 that the first surgical operation in Europe using anaesthesia took place. Robert Liston amputated a servant's leg at University College Hospital in London.

150 years ago, on 24th December 1871 that the world premiere of Giuseppe Verdi's opera Aida, was held in Cairo, Egypt.

100 years ago, on 6th Dec 1921 that the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in London. It ended the Irish War of Independence and established the Irish Free State (with effect from December 1922.)

80 years ago, on 7th December 1941 that the Japanese made their surprise bomb attack on Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. The USA, UK, Netherlands, New Zealand, and other countries declared war on Japan the following day. The War in Europe had now become a World War.

75 years ago, on 18th December 1946, that Steve Biko, South Africa anti-apartheid activist, was born. Founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, he was beaten to death by state security officers in 1977, aged 30.

60 years ago, on 4th December 1961, that birth control pills became available on the NHS.

50 years ago, from 3rd to 16th December 1971, that the Indo-Pakistani War took place. It was one of the shortest wars in history, but still between one and three million Bangladeshis were killed. Indian victory leading to the founding of Bangladesh.

40 years ago, on 14th December 1981, that Israel annexed the Golan Heights, formerly part of Syria, which it had occupied since 1967.

30 years ago, on 25th and 26th December 1991, that Mikhail Gorbachev resigned as President of the Soviet Union, and the next day the Soviet Union was officially dissolved. The 12 remaining Soviet republics became independent states.

25 years ago, on 10th December 1996, that South African President Nelson Mandela signed a new constitution, completing the transition from white minority rule to full democracy.

Also 25 years ago, on 27th December 1996, that the first genocide trial began in Rwanda, following the 1994 civil war in which 800,000 people were killed.

20 years ago, on 2nd December 2001, that Enron, the world's largest energy trading corporation, collapsed, sparking one of the biggest corporate accounting scandals in US history.

Commitment for Life
The United Reformed Church
Christian Aid
Supporting Bangladesh

Nelson Mandela used to say that overcoming poverty was not the task of charity. Overcoming poverty is always an act of justice.

There are many deeply unjust situations facing the world and the church today. Imagine being a worker in Bangladesh; you have no worker rights, you work insane hours with no toilet breaks, in conditions that would make salve owners blush. Imagine being a young Zimbabwean farmer having to face climate disruption with absolutely no help. Imagine being a young Palestinian growing up in Gaza, a region that has been described by some as a vast, an open-air prison. What about facing the prospect of waiting for up to 57 years before your country's COVID vaccine programme is complete when the UK will have finished its programme by February or March 2022? When we arrive in heaven, God will want to know how we worked for justice and I want to make sure that Commitment for Life is a reasonable answer!

Crossword Answers

ACROSS: 11, Tabernacle. 7, Absalom. 8, Incas. 10, Roes. 11, Captured. 13, Fright. 15, Cavell. 17, Cyclonic. 18, Herb. 21, Sonar. 22, Amazing. 23, Settlement.

DOWN: 1, Taste. 2, Bold. 3, Ramiah. 4, Abiathar. 5, Lucerne. 6, Sacrifices. 9, Saddlebags. 12, Theocrat. 14, Incense. 16, Pilate. 19, Exist. 20, Save.



Also 20 years ago, on 13th December 2001, that the Pentagon released a videotape of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, in which he stated that the deaths and destruction achieved by the 9/11 attacks had exceeded his most optimistic expectations.

15 years ago, on 30th December 2006, that Saddam Hussein, President/dictator of Iraq (1979 to 2003) was executed for war crimes.

Wordsearch for December

Christmas is nearly here! Two thousand years ago the Jews were longing for the coming of their Messiah. The Old Testament had promised that when He came, He would preach good news to the poor, bind up the broken hearted, proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, comfort all who mourn and to bestow on His people a crown of beauty instead of ashes. Jesus did all those things. He was and is the Son of God, and whoever has seen Him has seen the Father. Whoever believes in Him will have the best gift of all - His Spirit within them, which gives them eternal life.

O R S H O U U G U I S T
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- Messiah
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- Heart
- Freedom
- Darkness
- Ashes
- Son
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Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Matthew 2:1-10

Around the time of Jesus' birth, in a land far to the east of Israel, there were men who studied the stars...

When they saw a new star they believed it showed a special King had been born.



They set off to see that King.



They reached Jerusalem, the home of King Herod.



Where is the new King whose star we saw?

The Romans had made Herod King of the Jews about 30 years earlier. He was ruthless.



The Jews hated him and he was always worried that people were plotting against him.



He had them killed even if they were his wife or children...



So what the wise men said about a new King upset Herod



and that made everyone else afraid

Herod got the teachers and priests together and asked about the King's birthplace.



That would be little Bethlehem



Micah 5:2

Herod secretly met the wise men and asked when they had first seen the star.



Go to Bethlehem and look for the child. When you find him let me know so I can come and worship him.



As they left Jerusalem the wise men were elated to see the guiding star again.

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|----------|-----------|------------|
| upset | Jerusalem | birthplace |
| hated | Jews | worship |
| King | teachers | Herod |
| star | guiding | secretly |
| priests | little | Jesus |
| new | born | child |
| plotting | Bethlehem | wise |
| killed | elated | afraid |



The little boy was to be an angel in the Christmas play and his one line was: "Behold, I bring you good tidings." He asked what tidings were and his mother explained that the word meant news.

On the night of the play, the youngster had stage fright and, after a long silence, blurted out: "Hey, have I got news for you!"

Mouse Makes

Colour the tree then colour in one star each day until Christmas. Leave the large star at the top of the tree to colour in on Christmas day!

What's on the Christmas Tree?

Presents at Christmas under the tree, A red Christmas stocking waiting for me, But what really is Christmas, What is it about? Just look and the Bible and you will find out! It's about **JESUS** - the best present of all, **JESUS** our Saviour, God's gift to us all!

A STAR shows the way to Jesus
Read Matthew 2:1-12

ANGELS bring messages from God
Read about Gabriel's message in Luke 1:26-38
Read the shepherd's story in Luke 1:26-38

LIGHTS AND CANDLES remind us that Jesus lights our way to God
Read Luke 2:29-32

PRESENTS remind us of God's special gift to us ... **JESUS!**

"For God loved the world so much that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life." John 3:16

Dec 21 © Deborah Noble - parishpump.co.uk

INTERMEDIATE

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'God is a big part of my life and always will be' - the Christian faith of West End star Alexandra Burke

By Lauren Windle 10 August 2021

Since winning The X Factor in 2008 Alexandra Burke has released hit singles, starred in Strictly Come Dancing and taken her talents to the West End. As theatres re-open after an 18 month hiatus, it seems her Christian faith is as strong as ever

After a heart-breaking hiatus from theatres, the stage is set for shows to make a glorious return and no one is more excited than Christian performer Alexandra Burke.

The talented songstress, who received rave reviews for her performance as the narrator in Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's much loved classic Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, broke down in tears live on stage during a matinee last week as it hit her that "we were back on stage after not performing for such a long time."



Relying on prayer

Despite all her energy, talent and appearance of confidence, Burke has previously said that performing doesn't come easy for her and she needs her Christian faith to see her through.

Speaking to The Radio Times, she explained that she relies on prayer before taking to the stage, "There is no joking when it comes to praying - I'm always praying. Because I'm always quite hyper, if I'm silent, it's me praying to myself."

Despite the nerves she confessed to feeling before a show or performance, the star always had her sights set on singing. Burke's mother Melissa Bell, a member of 80s band Soul II Soul, was an inspiration for the aspiring artist growing up. Burke described her as having "the best voice in the world." But as a result of her mother's touring with the band, Burke was forced to grow up quickly, taking care of her brother and picking him up and dropping him off at school.

Because I'm Christian, I want to make sure the message in my music is positive

Writing for the Daily Mail, Burke said: "Our Christian faith was a big deal for us growing up. I know that God is a big part of my life and always

will be." Speaking in 2018 to BBC's Songs of Praise, she added: "I grew up going to church and I just remember from a very young age wanting to sing gospel."

Early success

Fortunately, Burke was able to back up her passion for music with some serious talent; enough to make it all the way to final of The X Factor in 2008. She beat off competition from JLS - with a little help from an epic duet with Beyonce - to win the series.

As always, the winning contestant released a Christmas single. Burke's was 'Hallelujah', which sold more than a million copies in the UK, earning her the Christmas number one. It was also the top-selling single in the UK that year. The singer continued to release hits before taking over from Beverly Knight in The Bodyguard on the West End stage.

Burke has previously said that her faith is central when making choices about projects and songs she works on. Speaking to Songs of Praise, she said: "As I've grown up in the music industry, I've always said to myself, whenever I make music, because I'm Christian, I want to make sure that the message I'm giving out in my music is positive, it's with love and it always has a spiritual aspect to it."

Seeking support

While it seems like Burke went from success to success, things didn't always come easy for The X Factor winner. She said: "I took a life-coaching course in 2013 in New York to help with my confidence. I was quite low back then - changing record labels knocked me."

Then in 2017, just as she was about to start competing in BBC's Strictly Come Dancing, her mother passed away at the age of 53. Melissa Bell sadly died on the same day as the Strictly red carpet launch event on 28th August, but despite the tragedy, Burke decided to continue with the competition.

I grew up going to church and from a very young age wanted to sing Gospel

In a statement on Twitter, Burke said: "Mummy has always been my biggest supporter and was over the moon when I told her I was doing Strictly... I know that she would have wanted me to carry on."

In interviews, the X-Factor winner said that Church helped her to be "positive, hopeful and thankful, which is a really important part of life" and God's support not only helped her perform but would "drive [her] through the competition". But she was also frank about the toll the bereavement had on her faith.

Speaking to HELLO! she said: "Losing my mum so young made me question my faith in God and so many things, because I was completely in denial with how sick she was. I asked them in hospital if she was deteriorating and they said no. But then, boom, she was gone. She is meant to be here."

Despite the understandable questions that grief and pain raised in her life, it appears Burke is still invested in her faith. In a recent post on social media, the talent singer uploaded a glam picture of herself with the simple caption: "God made this."

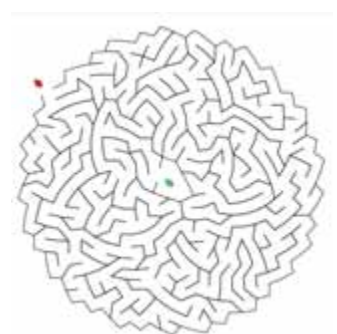
Lauren Windle Lauren Windle a journalist, author and presenter who focuses on faith, recovery and love. Her debut non-fiction book Notes On Love: Being Single and Dating in a Marriage Obsessed Church (SPCK) is out now.

The Revd Canon Paul Hardingham on waiting for Christmas.

Waiting is not popular in our culture, when so much can be obtained simply at the press of a button! Advent, when we wait for the coming of Christmas, is also an opportunity to learn what it means to be waiting for the promised return of Jesus. He says: 'It's like a man going away: he leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore, keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back' (Mark 13:34-35).

We live between Jesus' first and second comings and this parable reminds us of the need to watch and wait, as disciples living faithfully for Him. It reminds us of two kinds of waiting: passive and active. Imagine you're at the railway station, awaiting the arrival of a train. On the platform a man is asleep, as he thinks there is plenty of time before the train arrives. He is passively waiting. There is also a small boy on the platform who is excited about the train coming. He can't sit still and constantly looks down the track to see if the train is coming. He is actively waiting, for he expects the train to arrive at any moment.

Advent gives us a choice: how will we wait for Jesus' coming? Passive waiting doesn't require much attention on our part. We can live our Christian life pre-occupied with our own concerns, rather than looking to God. However, active waiting involves an eager expectation, as we await Jesus' return or simply look to him coming to us today. All we want is to be found faithful as His disciples. There is nothing more important than being ready to meet our Master!



Home schooling

Most of our Generation of 60+ was home schooled in many ways .

1. My mother taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE.
"If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning."
 2. My mother taught me RELIGION.
"You better pray that will come out of the carpet."
 3. My father taught me about TIME TRAVEL
"If you don't straighten up, I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week!"
 4. My father taught me LOGIC.
" Because I said so, that's why."
 5. My mother taught me MORE LOGIC .
"If you fall out of that swing and break your neck, you're not going to come shopping with me."
 6. My mother taught me FORESIGHT.
"Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."
 7. My father taught me IRONY.
"Keep crying, and I'll give you something to cry about."
 8. My mother taught me about the science of OSMOSIS.
"Shut your mouth and eat your supper."
 9. My mother taught me about CONTORTIONISM.
"Just you look at that dirt on the back of your neck!"
 10. My mother taught me about STAMINA.
"You'll sit there until all that spinach is gone."
 11. My mother taught me about WEATHER.
"This room of yours looks as if a tornado went through it."
 12. My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY.
"If I told you once, I've told you a million times, don't exaggerate!"
 13. My father taught me the CIRCLE OF LIFE.
"I brought you into this world, and I can take you out..."
 14. My mother taught me about BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION.
"Stop acting like your father!"
 15. My mother taught me about ENVY.
"There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do."
 16. My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION.
"Just wait until we get home."
 17. My mother taught me about RECEIVING.
"You are going to get it from your father when you get home!"
 18. My mother taught me MEDICAL SCIENCE.
"If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they are going to get stuck that way."
 19. My mother taught me ESP.
"Put your sweater on; don't you think I know when you are cold?"
 20. My father taught me HUMOUR.
"When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."
 21. My mother taught me HOW TO BECOME AN ADULT.
"If you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up."
 22. My mother taught me GENETICS.
"You're just like your father."
 23. My mother taught me about my ROOTS.
"Shut that door behind you. Do you think you were born in a barn?"
 24. My mother taught me WISDOM.
"When you get to be my age, you'll understand."
 25. My father taught me about JUSTICE.
"One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!"
- This should only be shared with the over 60 crowd because the younger ones would not believe we truly were told these "EXACT" words by our parents.

**What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa?
A rebel without a Claus**

**What do elves do after school?
Their gnome work!**

Elders Away Day



Aston Tirrold – 13th November 2021

The day started with worship led by John.

Morning session

The theme of the day was wellbeing and John started the day looking at Kintsugi pottery. Kintsugi is the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold — a metaphor for embracing your flaws and imperfections. Even broken and put back together, it is beautiful.

John shared some Bible verses, telling us of God looking out for us even though times may be difficult. Some elders shared the cracks that they felt in their lives and prayers were said in their support.

Afternoon session

John shared thoughts on Nehemiah and the resilience he showed to keep going despite scoffers and discouragement. The elders have worked tirelessly during the Covid pandemic to provide support in so many ways. Finding ways to continue to worship and providing pastoral support.

There was an agreement that recovery was the main priority.

Discussions were had regarding possible actions that could be put in place.



Cafe Service

Sunday 31st October 2021

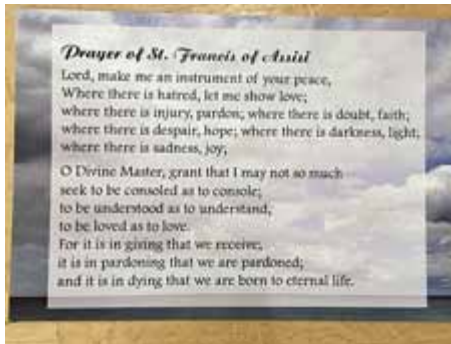
God's loving care

Led by Diane, Nikki and Esther

We began with a video of 'Make me a channel of your peace' by Katherine Jenkins



Here we are Lord, your people, your church meeting together in your presence. We welcome each other and we welcome you. Make yourself known to us through our worship, our prayers and our understanding of your Word. Amen



Let there be love shared among us,
let there be love in our eyes.
May now your love sweep this nation,
cause us, O Lord, to arise.
Give us a fresh understanding
of brotherly love that is real.
Let there be love shared among us,
let there be love.



Prayers of Praise and Approach

God of goodness, we come into your presence so aware of our human frailty and yet overwhelmed by your love for us. We thank you that there is no human experience that we might walk through where your love cannot reach us.

If we climb the highest mountain you are there and yet if we find ourselves in the darkest valley of our lives, you are there.

Teach us today to love you more.

Help us to rest in that love that asks nothing more than the simple trusting heart of a child. Amen



Blessing

May the Father's hand
Keep you from stumbling,
The footprints of Jesus
Give you confidence to follow,
And the fire of the Spirit
Keep you warm and safe in your walk with God
this day. Amen

Offertory envelopes

Now that we are at the end of the year, weekly offertory envelopes for 2022 are available and will be available on the table in the vestibule next to the church door – please collect your numbered envelopes from there.

Background

In recent years the number of members using envelopes has decreased. This is partly because of an increase in members organising a standing order for their offertory direct to the church account. However a few others had abandoned their use of envelopes. Because of the pandemic, and decreased attendance at live services, as well as the period of no in-church services, the Elders earlier in 2021 encouraged more people to accept envelopes and put aside their weekly offertory until such time as they came to church services again or could pass on their offertory.

So even if you do not pay tax and therefore cannot Gift Aid your donations, that does not mean that envelopes are not for you.



There are two good reasons to use envelopes.

Firstly, if you are a tax payer, and have signed up for the church to receive tax relief on your donations, then the use of envelopes ensures that the Gift Aid secretary can identify the donor and the donations. (If you donate by standing order, then that requirement is obviously satisfied). If you are a tax payer but have not signed a Gift Aid form, please consider doing so. Forms are available from Alan, Jackie or Allan. The church can claim back 25% of your donations from the Inland Revenue. Only the Gift Aid secretary knows the identity of each number.

Tax relief has recently been enhanced by an element from the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS). Under GASDS, relief can be claimed on most small donations not registered or eligible for normal Gift Aid (whether anonymous or not): ie we can claim on most of our offertory income, whether gift-aided or not. However there are limits on eligibility

and on the total amounts, both collectively and individual donations, which can be claimed in this way, and it remains preferable for members and friends to Gift Aid their donations where permissible. The GASDS element of giving (and hence tax rebate) has been badly hit by the pandemic.

The second reason that use of envelopes is recommended is to ensure regular giving. As mentioned above, Church members, for whatever reason, are not always able to attend every week, but would still like to give regularly.

But are envelopes the way forward?

Recent changes by our bank (and banks in general) have now made it more difficult and costly to pay in cash and cheques. Therefore we would be grateful if donations and offertory could be made

electronically into the church account if possible, either as a Standing Order, or as a one-off electronic transfer. If the latter, then it

would be very helpful if a reference identifying the donor could be included. If you do not wish your name to appear, then your envelope number can be used.

It is recognised that some members may be unwilling or unable to set up either a Standing Order or a one-off transfer occasionally, and that is why we are still providing envelopes. Members can also save their weekly offertory in the dated envelopes, but then occasionally do a one-off transfer to the account rather than present the envelopes to the church. Moreover, as the life of the church returns to normal (hopefully!) and social events with donations become the norm again, where it is unlikely that an individual bank transfer is made, a numbered envelope is useful to identify each donation, particularly if Gift-Aided.

Finally, since the beginning of the pandemic, envelopes have been made available **at no cost to the church.**

Allan C

Advent ring



At the recent Vintage Adventure afternoon at the Methodist Church, Iris crafted this lovely advent ring



Spending at Christmas

Are you going to go into debt for Christmas? Under the relentless pressure of advertising, those of us with money troubles may find that the demand for elaborate decorations, Christmas cards, presents, food and drink, can be overwhelming.

It may be time to take a reality check.

Make a note of any debts you already have. Then rough out what you are likely to spend over Christmas. Then consider your income. If the figures don't add up, then take a deep breath. This is where you either surrender to Christmas commercialism for another year, and take on additional debt, or you stick with a sensible budget for Christmas.

Remember what Christmas is really about: welcoming the birth of the Son of God in a stable in Bethlehem, not about how much more you can put on your credit card this month. It is true that the very best thing in life is free!



Mike aged 10



Mike, same place, just 66 years later



Grange Court, 1956-1959



Ludham



How Hill



Spot the satellite dish



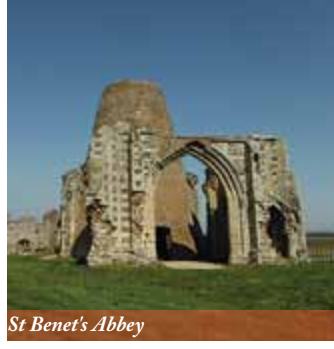
Horsey wind pump



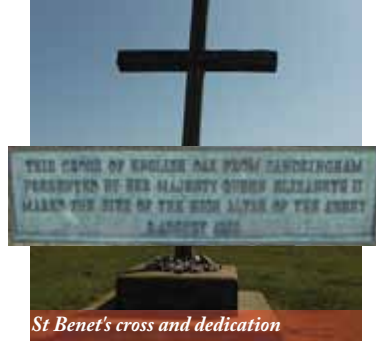
Thurne wind pump



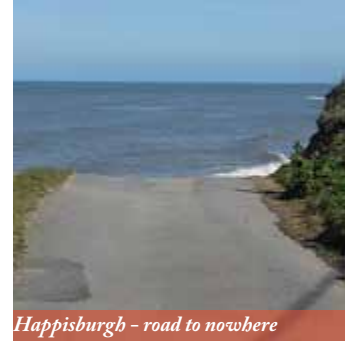
Thurne



St Benet's Abbey



St Benet's cross and dedication



Happisburgh - road to nowhere

As the year draws towards the end, we reflect on the year 2021 and our travels in Lottie.

I must start by saying how lucky I consider Mike and I to be having made the decision to buy a motorhome eleven years ago. It has been a difficult year for us all, many not being able to go on holiday again this year. Having Lottie has been our salvation as, for us, self isolation is no problem at all. Our travels started in April.

April

We decided, on a whim, to go to the Norfolk Broads, somewhere neither of us knows very well. The idea was born through Mike's love of windmills and he is bereft not having been to Holland since 2018! Normally we go each year but 2019 was not a good year for me and of course lockdown interfered in both 2020 and 2021. Not normally blessed with good weather we struck lucky and although cold and sometimes windy we had blue sky for the whole week and based ourselves at Ludham near Wroxham. We arrived on Saturday afternoon having visited some friends, who are extending and rebuilding a bungalow in Sandon, a

village east of Baldock, in Hertfordshire. (One of several villages Mike used to visit with Connie when she was lay-preaching from the Congregational Church in Baldock.) In fact our journey to them was by way of memory lane for Mike. When he was between 5 and 11 he lived in Letchworth. We found both the house and flat that he shared with Connie during her teaching days. He insisted I took this photo outside Grange Court! The photo is a replica of another photo where he is sitting on the same wall. Yes, he was once a curly haired little mischievous 10 year old!

Our first morning in Ludham included a walk along the Broad and found us chatting to a local couple who were cleaning their boat. They suggested that we go to Sea Palling at sometime during the week. The visit turned into the highlight of our week, but of that more later. So here we are on our first day already looking for windmills which we have to say was a great disappointment for Mike. Most have been allowed to fall

into such a poor state, though we did see a few that are undergoing renovation. Throughout the week we followed his 'windmill map' on our walks. We found a few that have been preserved and cared for. The mill owned by the National Trust at Horsey (Horsey Wind Pump) was one and another was at Thurne.

Another walk took us along the dyke to St Benet's Abbey, which can be dated back to Anglo-Saxon times. (It is said that St Benet's was founded on the site of a 9th-century monastery where the hermit Suneman was martyred by the Danes.) Though now derelict it still has one service a year.

"It has been claimed that St Benet's is the only religious house not closed down by Henry VIII during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, but that instead he united the Abbacy with the Bishopric of Norwich. It would follow that the Bishops of Norwich have remained abbots of St Benet's to this day. The Bishop of Norwich, as Abbot, arrives once a year, standing in the bow of a wherry

and preaches at the annual service on the first Sunday of August."

Another piece of luck with nature, during this walk from the campsite, was that we saw a Marsh Harrier in flight. Sadly no photograph of this beautiful bird which, in the United Kingdom, is only found in Norfolk. A striking bird, not quite as big as our local red kites but so majestic in flight.

I spoke earlier about the 'highlight' of our week. As I said, the boat owners we spoke to on Sunday were local so knew exactly what we were going to see. We had hired a car for the middle of the week and, as a result, on the Wednesday we drove to the coast to Sea Palling.

On the way we went to Happisburgh (pronounced 'Haze-bruh'). Here we were really surprised to see the amount of erosion of the cliffs in that area. Seeing pictures on television just doesn't seem so dramatic as parking the car and walking towards a sheer drop which used to be someone's garden. We spoke to a couple of local residents, who have no insurance safety net and just live, hoping it won't happen to them in their life time.

Travels in Lottie 2021



Happisburgh - cliff erosion



Seals and pup at Sea Palling



Britannia Monument



Potter Heigham Bridge



Norwich cobbles



Norwich cathedral entrance gate



Norwich Cathedral



Cathedral window



The Cloisters



Orchard



Blossom



David Hall, but what did it used to be?

From there, we drove on towards Sea Palling when we noticed a large, rather full car park to our left. Obviously something of interest!

Having parked up and paid our money, we walked, with lots of other people, through the gap in the dune to the sea wall and there, to our total surprise, must have been a minimum of 200+ grey seals and their pups. As we understand it, anything up to a thousand seals have been counted along this piece of coastline. It was the most amazing and exciting sight. Some were in the water and some were within feet of us. A pup was just below us on the sand. There appeared to be few fights but most were just relaxing. Our photos sadly don't do justice to their movements but on video we have playful young ones, scratching of ears with flippers, and adults just sleeping and basking in the very cold wind coming off the North Sea onto the beach. (If anyone would like to see our video, please ask.) Our photos will give you the general idea of their numbers. Truly amazing!

We then drove on to Great Yarmouth which was looking very sad, bleak and unloved on a this very windy day. We did stop for an ice

cream, but not near the kiss-me-quick sea-side stalls!

We did, however, find Nelson's Column! (No, not in Trafalgar Square, London) on the Denes, an area of Great Yarmouth close to the docks. The 'Britannia Monument' is very similar to the one in London and also a memorial to Admiral Nelson and his victory at Tragalgar.

After taking the hire car back, our week ended with a visit to Norwich. Walking through cobbled streets and of course the Cathedral and it's gardens. The Cloisters at Norwich Cathedral are the second largest of their kind in the country and one of the most complete features from the Middle Ages in England. (Salisbury Cathedral having the largest.). The cathedral spire, at 315 ft (96m), is the second-tallest in England, again exceeded by Salisbury which is 404 feet (123 m).

May

Our second trip of the year was to Westdown Orchard in Somerset. We have been several times but this trip was to see the orchard's apple blossom in bloom. Hope you enjoy the photos we managed to take

during the few hours of sun we had. It's a very relaxing place to stay being only a two hour drive away. Stonehenge permitting!

The weather was not so kind but, of course, the local hostelry was very welcoming. We love the Royal Oak in Over Stratton and always receive a warm welcome. It's the sort of pub that provides morning coffee and newspapers, lunch and of course dinner. Clare and Frank Callanan enjoyed the atmosphere when we took them there last year.

We walked into South Petherton one day, battling against quite a strong wind. An interesting old market town with two very distinctive churches.

Well, one isn't a church any more, it is the David Hall; I'll leave you to find out about when it was a church. It was built in 1863. (It's closer to home than you think!)

The Church of England Church of St Peter and St Paul has Saxon origins. It retains a 13th-century crosswing, with the remainder of the buildings dating from the 15th century, however, it underwent major restorations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It has been

designated by English Heritage as a grade I listed building. The tower is an irregular octagon on plan, wider on east-west axis, which is believed to be the tallest octagonal church tower in the UK.

July

Our next trip was very much anticipated. The Gower peninsula is totally new ground for us both. In 1956, The Gower was the United Kingdom's first area designated to be an area of outstanding beauty. If you remember, we had sun and a heatwave in July. We had struck lucky again. Dear Tess couldn't believe that we had been so lucky! We stayed on a campsite in Port Eynon and were pitched within 100 yards of the beautiful beach there. It was hot and idyllic with amazing views. What an incredible area! We probably didn't travel around the area as much as we would have chosen, for two reasons. The heat; and 'Sir' who is a total sun worshipper and loves the heat (I don't cope quite so well), was in his element until one afternoon having walked the village in flip-flops in the morning, decided to walk along the



Worm's Head



Rosilli beach, tide in



10 mins down; 30 minutes up!



Rosilli beach, tide out



One of the Rosilli church grass cutters



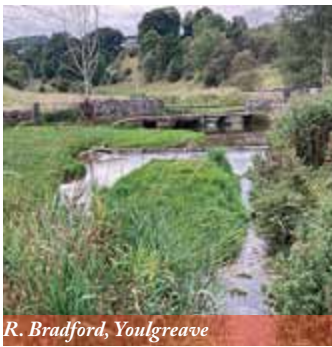
Skysea Campsite & Port Eynon beach



A padlocked bridge



A lane in Youlgreave



R. Bradford, Youlgreave



Weir on R. Larkbill



Come on Lottie, you can make it,



The cottage

shore line of the beach, in and out of the water during the afternoon. Sand, salt and burning sun was not, for him, a good combination! His feet burnt so badly that any footwear was nearly impossible! Hence a lot of our walking was dramatically curtailed!

We did walk round the campsite and, in doing so, found the remains of an old Salthouse. Basically, a large pan was allowed to fill with sea water which was then left to evaporate so that the salt residue could be harvested.

On the Thursday, we spent the most beautiful day at Rhossili. For those who know Rhossili, please humour me! Rhossili is known as one of the top 5 beaches in the United Kingdom with 3 kilometres of sand and the most outstanding views. This reputation has endured for many years. The day was perfect, a little breeze and perfect blue sky. We walked the cliff top with amazing views of the Bristol Channel and Worm's Head. No shipping today, just pure perfection. Our very steep walk later in the day, down to the beach, took us approximately 10 minutes. However, a walk down

means a later walk back up! Now tiring a little from heat and exercise it took us a mere 30 minutes to climb back up to the village! Hey ho, it had to be done!

The bus ride back to Lottie was interesting and very welcome. How those bus drivers navigate through the lanes and down to the coastal villages; they have my complete admiration. And the speed, touching both sides of the lane, is a memorable experience, especially as the driver informed us, several times, that it is a two way road! We visited several beaches and villages along the coastline of the Gower but none were as spectacular as Rhossili, it certainly deserves its accreditation.

The Gower did not disappoint!

Our second week was to visit our friends, Dale and Tracy, in Looe in Cornwall. We have been many times before, as they live in Plymouth and have a static caravan on a site between Looe and Polperro. We stay on the same site. (Long ago are the days when Mike held his Artstamps Exhibitions across the country and Tracy was a demonstrator for him; then Dale joined me on the front desk.)

(As an aside, and name-dropping for a moment, Sara Davies, she of Dragons' Den and more recently Strictly Come Dancing fame, started her business by exhibiting at Mike's Wales exhibition in 2006!)

The journey from Port Eynon to Looe was arduous taking nearly seven hours. Clever old Lottie, she didn't complain, but the drivers were a little weary when we arrived. However, six more days of the glorious weather gave us a boost. Our days were spent very lazily, walking in this heat was not for me and Mike's feet were still causing a problem! (But very much helped by the attendance of Tracy, the District Nurse, who soon told Mike what he should be doing!). This was turning out to be the most relaxing of our holidays. Sheer bliss!

An excellent Sunday lunch at the Hannafore Point Hotel overlooking Looe bay with Dale and Tracy was the perfect ending to our summer holiday.

The journey home was less arduous, except for the dreaded Stonehenge! It is a joke for us, as Stonehenge completely passes me by, unlike the traffic!

September

Our next adventure was to the Peak District by way of Warrington. A funny detour you may say!

We were scheduled to go to an Army retirement party for Mike's friend Jamie who, with his wife and family, after travelling the world, has moved back, permanently, to his roots. As many guests would be staying the night, it was suggested that we bring Lottie, as extra accommodation.

Going all that way, we decided to make a detour on the way home. Fifty miles across country and we were in Bakewell. Well, actually, we were five miles south in a small village called Youlgreave. We were, in fact a mile from the village.

Up and down in the Peaks meant more walking and exercise on this holiday! (...and no sun-burnt feet for Mike!) Again, an area not known to Mike or me; so much exploring to do. Bakewell on Monday to explore the recommended market. A real comprehensive combination of stalls, selling 'Harrods' pillows to small electrical gadgets and tools (guess which one Mike chose to peruse?). We found a quaint Austrian restaurant with



View from kitchen window



Really? Derwent Water



All together



The Howk



Someone is watching over Honister Pass



Buttermere trees



Buttermere, spot the dog



Iconic Buttermere



Waterfall into Buttermere



Honister pass



Lowther castle



Returning home, God's promise in the sky

'Andre Bocelli' serenading us outside the garden! Excellent weather for outside eating and a great ambience. Mike was happy with his bratwurst and we shared a Bakewell pudding!

Later that day, we found ourselves in the pudding and tart shop!

We walked every day that week and so enjoyed the countryside and complete peace of the campsite., which was beautifully maintained by the wardens, including hanging baskets on the chemical loo – too much information? We shall return and explore further this special area of England.

For our next holiday (this is where I cheat a little) we travelled without Lottie. A very strange experience for us, loading up the car for a 9 day holiday in the Lake District with Steve and Kate (Mike's son and partner) plus Schnuck, their Alaskan Malamute. Each year Steve and Kate rent the same cottage near Keswick for two weeks. They had asked us earlier in the year, to join them for part of their stay. We travelled for seven hours (A34 and M6 – say no more!) but were rewarded by the views on the M6 going into Cumbria, just before it got dark. The weather for

this holiday was not so kind and we arrived in the dark and rain. We followed Steve and crew from Keswick to the cottage which was two and a half miles from the nearest hamlet of Caldbeck. Arriving in the dark, I truly thought we were arriving in something out of a mystery novel... banging doors, ghosts and mist... you know the sort of thing! However, the following morning we were greeted by the most amazing view from the kitchen window. I do hope you enjoy our photos of this area, even if you have been yourselves. The whole week, walking and driving was punctuated with "just look at that view". Saturday we went back into Keswick and walked along a stretch of Derwent Water.

Walking from Caldbeck, most of Sunday, alongside a stream, we came across an old watermill. Interestingly, 'The Howk' was a Bobbin Mill, if you remember what they were! The walk ended in traditional fashion – at the local hostelry; again in Caldbeck. Then back to the cottage for Sunday roast cooked by yours truly, so Steve could watch his beloved Grand Prix. A perfect day in beautiful sunshine. A walk around Ambleside on Monday,

again in sunshine, allowed us to choose a lazy day on Tuesday as it rained most of the day! Wednesday, and Buttermere beckoned. Walking all around the lake, back to where we started, just happening to be parked outside a lovely quaint hotel for a very late lunch! Following country trails, waterfalls, more lakes and rivers was truly enriching our spirits as the week went on. Schnuck loves to paddle so at every opportunity he would wade in. A man of my own heart – never to be fully submerged!

A visit to Lowther Castle on the Friday completed our week.

"Of the many treasures waiting to be discovered in the English Lake District, Lowther Castle is a particular gem. Built at the turn of the 19th century on the site of two previous houses, the castle was a grand affair boasting a room for every day of the year. Its gardens were the envy of the north.

But in 1957 the castle was demolished. Just the façade and outer walls remained standing and for over half a century, the place was empty – home only to chickens, pigs and the odd bat. The gardens were lost to wilderness.

Today Lowther Castle is one of the most intriguing visitor attractions in the country. Dramatic ruins, gardens within gardens, an adventure playground to rival the best in the land. lowthercastle.org/ and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowther_Castle

Dinner at the Snooty Fox in Uldale on a couple of occasions made for a very relaxing holiday for Kate and me. Sadly we were not so good at the quiz played with quizmaster Steve in charge! Guess who won? Yes "old burnt feet" himself! So with only two days of rain out of eight, we considered it a very happy and relaxing holiday, though hard on the legs and feet!

Our last photo says it all.

October

You are now up to date with our travels in 2021. I do hope you have not been bored and have enjoyed reading this. We have one more trip next weekend, back to Looe before Tracy and Dale and West Wayland campsite close for the winter. We have been lucky with our holidays this year and thank God for Our Travels In Lottie.

Christine

URC Wessex Synod: Sharing-the-Vision

Deployment Consultation

The October meeting of Synod included a presentation addressing the deployment of stipendiary ministers of word and sacraments across the Synod. Available

This is not a new discussion but we are now at the point where we wish to consult with congregations and all those concerned about how we address these issues.

We would ask that you send your ideas and feedback to the Synod Clerk by the end of January 2022.

Annual Church Returns (ACR)

- an important change to note for Church Secretaries

This year, the URC plans to introduce online Annual Church Returns. Churches will be able to submit their statistics and updated information by entering this directly onto the user-friendly URC Church Update portal – this will be open to receive updated ACR data from churches during January and February 2022. The information supplied will be sent electronically to Church House and this will be shared with the Synod. Church House will be contacting Church Secretaries again with further information about the portal and they will receive an individual login and password in due course.

Longfleet URC Poole Closure

Longfleet URC in Poole is closing at the end of this year. A celebration service will be held at the Church on Sunday 19th December. If you have previous connections with the Church and would like to attend, please get in contact with Thelma Green on (lacrosse@ntlworld.com or 01202 383171) by 7th December for catering purposes if you would like to stay for Afternoon Tea after the service.

URC Holiday Forum

Beat those winter blues...

It's getting darker outside and the days are getting shorter, but you've got a chance to warm yourself up by joining our ZOOM SOCIAL DROP-IN EVENING on

SATURDAY 4th DECEMBER - 7 - 9.30pm!

This is a very relaxed drop-in evening - there'll be break out rooms to catch up with people and a few quiz rounds to keep you entertained.

It's the perfect opportunity to catch up with Forum friends before the new year...

All you need is the following zoom link:

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82281200423>

See you there!

Synod Big Day Out – 7th May 2022

URC Wessex Synod - Big Day Out

Date: 7th May 2022

Time: 11am till 5pm

Venue: Hollycombe Steam Fair and Museum near Liss

(Wessex Synod will have sole use of the whole site)

Theme: Jubilee: 50th anniversary of the URC

Green Living Group - The Sequel!

You may remember the virtual Green Living Group based at Avenue St Andrew's URC in Southampton which reported in May 2020 that we were using the Dorset Green Living Guide (greenliving.sustainabledorset.org) to look at our individual carbon footprints relating to food, energy, transport, waste, water and community in our lives. At that stage we thought we might finish by July 2020 and see where we went from there.

Since then, we've run two more courses based on the Sustainable Dorset project, one for church members and one ecumenical one involving Roman Catholic and Methodist friends. The Roman Catholics in particular have taken this up and are running with it! The Diocese of Portsmouth is currently running an online Green Living course based on our materials and Pope Francis' writing

on the climate, Laudato Si', involving up to a hundred participants! And our relationship with St Edmund's, our local Roman Catholic neighbours across the Avenue, has been strengthened, with a pulpit swap for Climate Sunday coming up and a joint litter pick in the local area.

Back at Avenue St Andrew's, the church meeting has discussed and adopted a Climate Change declaration - you can see it on our website at <https://asauc.org.uk/climate-change/> - which has a number of practical outworkings for our church, from greening the church courtyard to displaying a banner (see picture) outside our church to encourage others to act on climate too. It is on a busy main road with traffic lights, a pedestrian crossing and a bus stop outside, so we hope the message will get through! And the very same banner is displayed outside St Edmund's - a demonstration of Christian unity in our mission to become better stewards of God's creation.

Mental Health First Aid training

Become a certified Mental Health First Aider. A two-week online course which includes four live zoom sessions with the trainer. Wessex Synod will cover the cost. Register via the Synod Office, not direct.

Course starting on Tuesday 9 November. Further details.

Course starting on Monday 6 December. Further details.

Booking is essential and places are limited so book early to avoid disappointment. Please email bookings@urcwessex.org.uk to receive the link to register on the course.

Kennet Community Lunch

12.30–1.45 £3

Wednesday 15 December



We invite you to join us at our

Christmas Celebration

A time of fun, friendship, Christmas Carols, informal

Christian worship, activities, afternoon tea

For the young at heart in our community

Inclusive and dementia friendly

Led by the Churches in Thatcham



Thursday, 16 December 2021

2.30-4.30pm

Thatcham Methodist Church

Chapel Street, RG18 4QL

Book your place: contact Karen on 07444 851606 or email: pastoraldevelopmentworker@outlook.com

Thanksgiving inspiration

He was at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester getting a new valve or something put in his heart. His social worker said that people with Downs Syndrome often have heart problems at an early age so this wasn't unexpected, and there was a good chance he would come through the surgery in good shape and be back at work in a few months.

A ripple of excitement ran through the staff later that morning when word came that he was out of surgery, in recovery, and doing fine. Frannie, the head waitress, let out a war hoop and did a little dance in the aisle when she heard the good news. Bell Ringer, one of our regular trucker customers, stared at the sight of this 50-year-old grandmother of four doing a victory shimmy beside his table. Frannie blushed, smoothed her apron and shot Belle Ringer a withering look.

He grinned. "OK, Frannie, what was that all about?" he asked.

"We just got word that Stevie is out of surgery and going to be okay."

"I was wondering where he was. I had a new joke to tell him. What was the surgery about?"

Frannie quickly told Bell Ringer and the other two drivers sitting at his booth about Stevie's surgery, then sighed:

"Yeah, I'm glad he is going to be OK," she said. "But I don't know how he and his Mom are going to handle all the bills. From what I hear, they're barely getting by as it is." Belle Ringer nodded thoughtfully, and Frannie hurried off to wait on the rest of her tables.

Since I hadn't had time to round up a busboy to replace Stevie and really didn't want to replace him, the girls were busing their own tables that day until we decided what to do. After the morning rush, Frannie walked into my office. She had a couple of paper napkins in her hand and a funny look on her face.

"What's up?" I asked.

"I didn't get that table where Bell Ringer and his friends were sitting cleared off after they left, and Pony Pete and Tony Tipper were sitting there when I got back to clean it off," she said. "This was folded and tucked under a coffee cup."

She handed the napkin to me, and three \$20 bills fell onto my desk when I opened it. On the outside, in big, bold letters, was printed "Something For Stevie."

Pony Pete asked me what that was all about," she said, "so I told him about Stevie and his Mom and everything, and Pete looked at Tony and Tony looked at Pete, and they ended up giving me this." She handed me another paper napkin that had "Something For Stevie" scrawled on its outside. Two \$50 bills were tucked within its folds.

Frannie looked at me with wet, shiny eyes, shook her head and said simply: "truckers."

That was three months ago. Today is Thanksgiving, the first day Stevie is supposed to be back to work. His placement worker said he's been counting the days until the doctor said he could work, and it didn't matter at all that it was a holiday. He called 10 times in the past week, making sure we knew he was coming, fearful that we had forgotten him or that his job was in jeopardy.

I arranged to have his mother bring him to work. I then met them in the parking lot and invited them both to celebrate his day back. Stevie was thinner and paler, but couldn't stop grinning as he pushed through the doors and headed for the back room where his apron and busing cart were waiting.

"Hold up there, Stevie, not so fast," I said. I took him and his mother by their arms. "Work can wait for a minute. To celebrate you coming back, breakfast for you and your mother is on me!"

I led them toward a large corner booth at the rear of the room.

I could feel and hear the rest of the staff following behind as we marched through the dining room. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw booth after booth of grinning truckers empty and join the procession. We stopped in front of the big table. Its surface was covered with coffee cups, saucers and dinner plates, all sitting slightly crooked on dozens of folded paper napkins.

"First thing you have to do, Stevie, is clean up this mess," I said. I tried to sound stern. Stevie looked at me, and then at his mother, then pulled out one of the napkins. It had "Something for Stevie" printed on the outside. As he picked it up, two \$10 bills fell onto the table.

Stevie stared at the money, then at all the napkins peeking from beneath the tableware, each with his name printed or scrawled on it. I turned to his mother.

"There's more than \$10,000 in cash and checks on table, all from truckers and trucking companies that heard about your problems. "Happy Thanksgiving,"

Well, it got real noisy about that time, with everybody hollering and shouting, and there were a few tears, as well. But you know what's funny? While everybody else was busy shaking hands and hugging each other, Stevie, with a big, big smile on his face, was busy clearing all the cups and dishes from the table. Best worker I ever hired.

Plant a seed and watch it grow. At this point, you can bury this inspirational message or you can share this with someone else! If you shed a tear, hug yourself, because you are a compassionate person.



The Cavell Van

Having finally managed to arrange my Christmas (2019) present from Gill, which was Digger Racing, we looked around to see what else we could do in Kent to make a weekend break. We managed a National Trust garden on the way on Saturday and after a National Trust castle on Sunday, we spied a steam train pulling in to Bodiam station, so went to investigate.



Also at the station was The Cavell Van, which is the railwayman's name for the prototype Passenger luggage Van built by the South Eastern and Chatham Railway at Ashford Works in 1919 as a one off 'pattern wagon' but was soon to be dubbed a 'Special Van'. It was used for the repatriation of the bodies of two civilians executed during the First World War – Edith Cavell and Charles Fryatt. It was later used to return the remains of The Unknown Warrior in 1920. In this role it was the centrepiece of national mourning and



particularly as it stood in vigil with the Unknown Warrior overnight on 10th/11th November 1920 before the warriors great ceremonial interment.

The Cavell Van was withdrawn from service in 1991 and moved to the Kent and East Sussex Railway for use as a store. Its provenance as the prototype van was immediately recognised although it took some years of research to establish its full, nationally important, history. Unfortunately ownership and funding issues severely delayed its

proper restoration which could not be achieved till 10th November 2010, the 90th anniversary of the carriage of the body of the Unknown Warrior. To commemorate this a replica coffin was installed, built by volunteers and finished with ironwork made by Meurig Williams the grandson of the original craftsman. This was made at Brunswick Ironworks, Caernarfon. Great difficult was initially found in making the bands from modern materials but a search of scrap wrought Iron in the abandoned quarries in the nearby Nantlle Valley yielded the necessary material, skills were rediscovered and the work was done to perfection.

The Van is in the care of The Colonel Stephens Railway Museum and is usually on display at Bodiam Station.

Alan M



Remembrance Sunday

Sunday 14th November

Our church service, at 9.30am, was led by Revd David Witts and included a moving account of the commitment of the life of young servicemen. The flowers and display were arranged by Irene.

Many of those who attended went on to watch the parade and followed on to take part in the Civic Service of Remembrance at the War Memorial.

The parade was led by St John's Ambulance Cadets alongside the town mayor John Boyd, shortly followed by our very own Graeme Panting carrying the United Nations flag. Music was provided by Cold Ash Brass.

Soldiers from the Royal School of Military Survey and a contingent of former Gurkhas were in the parade, with a very good turnout from Thatcham's youth organisations.



*Why did the orange take a
prune to the Christmas party?
Because he couldn't find
a date!*

On the whole British people are happy with the title 'Father Christmas', a suitably neutral name for the central character in children's Christmases, writes David Winter.

In America, however, and by a process of cultural indoctrination increasingly in other English-speaking countries, the same red-coated and bearded fellow with his sack of presents is known as 'Santa Claus'. They are, of course, one and the same

Who is 'Santa Claus'?

person, distantly related to a bishop in Turkey in the fourth century (hence the red coat and hat – a cope and mitre originally). His name was Nicholas, and he was known as a patron of children, who would from time to time distribute gifts to them.

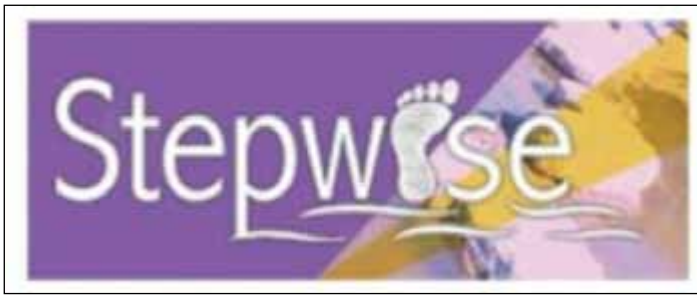
From that comes the practice of giving presents at Christmas. We

can't give them to Jesus on His birthday, so we give them to someone else, in love and gratitude. That, at least, is the theory. Quite how the massive commercialisation of such giving developed probably owes more to smart marketing than Christian generosity.

It's not Nicholas's fault, of course,

nor of the Dutch Christians who took the practice to America as migrants 300 years ago. In any case, his feast day, 6th December, is when 'Christmas' presents are handed over in Holland.





Stepwise is making a difference!

What is Stepwise?

Stepwise is an integral part of Walking the Way – living the life of Jesus today, the United Reformed Church's focus on whole-life discipleship and mission.

Wessex Synod is delighted that Stepwise is now part of the life of the Synod with people having completed the first stream, while others are just about to start. A Synod Stepwise Advocacy Group has been formed and they have been working hard to make sure that all the procedures are put in place to ensure that Stepwise has been able to happen through the last 18 months.

Stepwise is a programme of learning and discipleship development for everyone – including you! – whether you are exploring and enriching your personal faith life, discerning where God's call on your life may be leading, preparing for a new direction, or developing a specific role within your community or church.

One key aspect is that, as a Stepwise participant, your group will have a facilitator and you will also have a mentor who will be with you throughout your Stepwise stream. The Synod Advocacy Group is ensuring safe recruitment and orientation of voluntary facilitators and mentors.

What is a Stepwise Stream? Stepwise has five streams: Faith Filled Life, Faith Filled Worship, Faith Fuelled Leadership, Faith Filled Confidence and Faith Filled Community. Everyone starts with Faith Filled Life, and then after that depends on you! You don't have to follow any set path through it.

Stepwise is open to anyone who is keen to reflect on and develop their Christian faith. If you're ready to be stimulated and challenged – and want to make a difference in your own life and the lives of others – then Stepwise could be just what you're looking for.

Stepwise is learner orientated and designed to draw on the strengths and to address the needs of individual learners, in the context of their communities and churches. The programme emphasises the vital importance of people learning from their daily lives, wherever and whoever God calls them to be.

There are different start times, so there should be a group that is convenient for you – either online or in person.

This is what you need to know

- All participants wanting to engage in the Stepwise programme will have to begin with completing Faith Filled Life
- If you want to participate in Faith Filled Life, go to our Synod website and fill in an application form, and send this to Ruth Heine, development@urcwessex.org.uk You will then be contacted by a member of the Synod Advocacy Group.
- Synod will identify where the learning Hubs will be located within the Synod, and what online offering there may be.
- Groups will be formed logically for participants and will be registered with Synod. This will connect you for your login for your online learning.
- You will have a mentor throughout Stepwise, and if you are unable to identify one from your church, you will be given help to find one.

If you want to know any more about this, please contact

Mary Thomas dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk or Ray Stanyon dso-n@urcwessex.org.uk

Father Christmas enters through a hole in the chimney and leaves through a hole in your pocket

Amazed!

Some people like surprises. The pleasant ones, anyway!

When we look at the Christmas story, it is full of surprises. Mary didn't expect to be chosen by God to give birth to His Son. Joseph was surprised and shocked that his fiancée was pregnant. The couple thought they would start married life together in Nazareth, but political circumstances forced them to go to Bethlehem and then into Egypt.

The Bethlehem shepherds were surprised and frightened by the heavenly choir and an angel with a marvellous message. Later, they rejoiced at seeing the Saviour – a new born baby in a manger.

The Wise Men were surprised to see a unique star, and so they followed it all the way to Jerusalem. They thought a royal birth would be in a city and in Herod's Palace. They were surprised again, to be redirected to a remote village called Bethlehem. Herod too was surprised that a new king had come, and felt his position and authority were being threatened.

What is most surprising is that God had planned the coming of Jesus thousands of years before it happened. Prophets had told of His coming and their hearers were waiting for Him to appear. But still they were surprised when the Messiah came, for He did not come as a conquering hero but as a suffering Servant.

Jesus came to save people from their sins. He came to restore a broken relationship and bring His people to a glorious Home. The biggest surprise? It was also done for you and me!

Mother decided that ten-year old Cathy should get something 'practical' for Christmas. "Suppose we open a savings account for you?" she suggested. Cathy was delighted. "It's your account, darling," mother said as they arrived at the bank, "so you fill out the application." Cathy was doing fine until she came to the space for 'Name of your former bank.' After a slight hesitation, she put down 'Piggy'.

Loving, Almighty God,

Thank you that You came into the darkness of this broken world on that first Christmas night, pouring in your Light, in the person of your Son, Jesus.

Lord, so much of our world seems dark, still. So many dreadful things we can't make sense of: the on-going pandemic, acts of violence and injustice against good people - innocent people, child poverty, employment problems, broken relationships ... so many difficulties. It's easy to feel overwhelmed.

Lord, help us to focus on you this Christmas. Open our eyes to see your bigger, eternal picture. Help us to hear afresh the Good News that nothing and no-one can ever extinguish your Light.

Jesus overcame the troubles of the world by His death and resurrection. Father may we reconnect with you, through Jesus, this Christmas and know the Love, the Joy and the Peace, which are your Christmas gifts to us, as we trust Him.

We pray in Jesus' wonderful name, Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

Christmas Rush

That time again, my trolley's full
Buying all the Christmas fare,
A turkey crown, a rib of beef,
Crisps and nibbles, lots to spare.

Christmas crackers and serviettes,
Paper for wrapping and cards to send,
Nuts and oranges, figs and dates
The list goes on, there seems no end.

In all this rush it's good to pause
And think about that special Day,
When shepherds watched and
angels sang
As a Baby lay in a bed of hay.

By Megan Carter

In Jane's Christmas drawing,
two of the camels were
approaching the inn, over which
was pictured a large star. The
third camel and its rider were
going directly away from it.
"Why is the third man going in
a different direction?" her
mother asked. Jane replied:
"Oh, he's looking for a place to
park."

What the papers say...

Spanish told they must take a course if they want a dog

By James Badcock in Madrid, Daily Telegraph, 8th October 2021

Spain is to ban the sale of pets in shops and will force dog owners to take a training course as it rolls out strict animal rights laws.

The rules to be introduced by the Left-wing government set a 24-hour legal limit on how long a dog can be left on its own, minimum amounts of space pets need, and will see the creation of a list of people who are banned from having animals.

The ban on sales in pet shops has caused uproar in Spain's animal retail sector, which claims that the laws will force the trade of pets online hidden from regulation. "This law is animal rights ideology taken to an absurd limit" Josep Arnas, secretary general of the ASAC pet shop association, said.

"There is a terrible problem with the abandoning of pets in Spain but these are not animals from shops. Pet shops are inspected regularly, have associated vets and all the animals sold have microchips", Mr Arnas explained.

The reform, which includes a ban on wild animals being used in circuses, has been largely welcomed by green and animal rights organizations. Ines Sabanes, of the green Equo party in Spain's Parliament, said the presenting of the draft animal rights bill was an "exciting" moment and she hoped it would be approved by Congress as soon as possible.

Sceptics such as Mr Arnas, however, think the law goes so far as to give animals more rights than humans. "People will have to take a course to have a dog, something parents aren't asked to do before having a child".

Confession is above the law in sex abuse cases, says Archbishop

By Our Foreign Staff, Daily Telegraph, 8th October 2021

The French government yesterday summoned a senior archbishop who said priests should not go to the police after hearing about child sexual abuse during confession.

Archbishop Eric de Moulins-Beaufort made the remark after a government inquiry lifted the lid on

"massive" sexual assault in the French Catholic Church, estimating 216,000 victims over 70 years in systemic abuse covered up by a "veil of secrecy".

The commission recommended a series of measures to protect minors from predatory clergy, which included priests informing prosecutors of any child abuse they hear mentioned during the confession, a sacrament traditionally bound by strict secrecy.

"We need to find another way of doing this", Mr Moulins-Beaufort, head of the Bishops' Conference of France, told France Info radio on Wednesday. The secrecy of confession "is above the laws of the Republic", he said.

His words were in line with new Vatican guidelines, released last year on handling clerical child abuse cases, which state that any crime discovered during confession is subject to "the strictest bond of the sacramental seal"

However, in France, victims' advocates reacted furiously to the archbishop's remarks, saying that while French law recognizes professional confidentiality for priests, it does not apply in cases of violence or sexual assault against minors. "Nothing is above the laws of the Republic", Gabriel Attal, a government spokesman said.

MPs are now deaf to the concerns of female voters over trans issues

"There are lots of ways of being a woman but the fact that there are women isn't negotiable".

Says Melanie McDonagh, Daily Telegraph, 30th September 2021

There was an interesting spat on the radio yesterday when David Lammy, the shadow justice secretary, got into a row with Today presenter Nick Robinson on the sensitive subject of trans issues. David Lammy is, I usually find, rather a pleasant individual - he's an ex-choir boy, which helps - but listening to him, you wondered if he had lost the plot.

He got terrifically worked up about the possibility that anyone might care about trans issues, called those who do mind about it "old dinosaurs" and insisted it simply wasn't an issue on the doorstep.

There really are activists who are trying to de-gender real women - and

it is time the rest of us told them where to get off. How would you feel if someone called you a "person with a womb", then? Or indeed, a person with a prostate? A little bemused, I fancy; perhaps a little offended.

Because gender is about more than body parts, isn't it? Gender is ultimately chromosomal, based on whether we've got two X chromosomes or an XY one. It's also based on our related capacity to conceive children, whether we do so or not, or to beget them, whether we do so or not. And, in turn, that affects our life experience, our sense of self, our vulnerabilities and strengths, our way of looking at the world.

There are lots of ways of being a woman but the fact that there are women isn't negotiable.

Except now it is. If you're a trans activist, gender really is all in the mind, to be determined at our own say-so. And on the crucial question of whether we can legally change our given gender at will, without having to jump through any hoops like a medical diagnosis of gender dysmorphia, Labour is backing those who want the process made easy.

This week, the party's outspoken deputy, Angela Rayner, declared at a conference meeting for the Labour LGBT+ group that "women's rights are not in conflict with trans rights - our struggle is your struggle".

Oh, yes? Tell that to the Gower MP, Tonia Antoniazzi, who arranged a fringe meeting of the Labour Women's Declaration, keeping the venue secret, lest it be disrupted by trans protestors after Rosie Duffield, who took part in the event. The MP for Canterbury was advised to stay away from her own party's conference and, at the weekend, Keir Starmer said she had been wrong to make the comment.

Electric vehicles double share in 12 months

By Alan Tovey, Daily Telegraph, 26th October 2021

Tesla has Europe's biggest share of the electric vehicle market at 24%, with Volkswagen on 22% and Vauxhall and Peugeot owner Stellantis on 13%.

Total vehicle sales fell 25% to 964,800 as the chip crisis forced manufacturers to halt production lines, squeezing supplies of new cars. Car companies are focusing on more expensive models such as electric vehicles, which is having an impact on the market share for petrol and diesel

cars. In addition, low-emission vehicles often come with state subsidies as governments try to encourage drivers to buy them.

Market share for electric vehicles has almost doubled over the past year to 23% of the European car market, while petrol has dropped two percentage points to 57% and diesel has plunged 10 percentage points to just 17%.

Mr Munoz said that before the pandemic just one electric car was registered for every 10 vehicles but they were now almost equal. "Shifts of this magnitude are rare and a number of factors have contributed. In addition to incentives, manufacturers have enhanced their offering with more models and better deals and many are shifting their limited supply of semiconductors to the production of electric vehicles, instead of internal combustion vehicles", he said.

Jato's analysis also predicted that SUVs could soon account for one in every two cars sold in Europe.

Eight orphan children die of starvation in Afghanistan

By Ben Farmer in Islamabad, Daily Telegraph, 26th October 2021

A family of eight orphan children have starved to death in Afghanistan, as the United Nations warns the country is on the brink of suffering the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The unnamed children, all thought to be under 10, were found dead in the capital, Kabul, after being left to fend for themselves following the deaths of their mother and father.

More than half the population of Afghanistan are now short of food and the looming catastrophe will soon eclipse crises in Yemen and Syria, according to the latest assessment by the UN's food body.

A long-brewing crisis caused by drought, war and poverty has now been accelerated by the Taliban's rise to power in August. The militants' resumption of their Islamic emirate in one of the world's poorest countries has been accompanied by a suspension of aid [by the international community] and now economic collapse.

The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates nearly 23 million of Afghanistan's 39 million population are now unable to get regular access to enough food. That figure has risen from 14 million two months ago.

David Beasley, executive director of WFP, said “Children are going to die. People are going to starve. Things are going to get a lot worse. I think we may witness millions of people and especially children, dying at the rate we are going, with the lack of funding and the collapsing of the economy”.

The eight orphans were found dead around three weeks ago in west Kabul, according to local leaders. The family’s father had been bedridden and suffering from a tumour before dying.

The mother, who had heart disease, died soon afterwards, according to Mohammad Ali Bamiani, a cleric.

The children were left alone and relied on occasional bread and water from neighbours but were found dead by the landlord.

Save the Children, the UK aid charity, said families were taking desperate measures to survive, such as selling their possessions to buy food, sending their children to work or getting by on bread alone.

Italy’s vaccine passports mean it doesn’t expect UK levels of infection

Italians are ahead of UK on vaccination levels

By James Imam, The ‘I’ Newspaper, 1st November 2021

Italian experts and officials have credited the country’s strict vaccine passport scheme with limiting infection rates, while condemning the UK government for its “relaxed” approach to managing the pandemic.

As Britain considers introducing vaccine passports as part of “Plan B” health measures in England, Italians are adapting to life with their own latest version of the scheme.

On 15th October, Italy became the first country in Europe to require most employees to show a “green pass” certifying that they have been vaccinated, received a negative test in the previous 48 hours or are immune. The vaccination rate subsequently surged, with 71% of the population in Italy now fully vaccinated, compared with 68 % in Britain.

However, opposition to the measure has led to sometimes violent protests and a decline in work

attendance. Italians have needed the green pass to access restaurants, theatres, cinemas, museums, stadiums and to travel by train and aeroplane since the summer. As non-vaccinated workers raced to get jabbed when the scheme was extended, the number of first doses administered soared to 73,000 and 69,000 on 14th and 15th October, up 10,000 from a week earlier, according to government figures.

Meanwhile, infection rates in Italy have remained relatively low, with 4,877 reported on Saturday, compared with 37,520 in Germany and 41,009 in the UK, according to Our World in Data.

Italy is now one of many places with some form of Covid pass for workers. New York City has ordered workers to get vaccinated or take unpaid leave. In France and Greece, healthcare workers must be vaccinated. Canada, Fiji and Costa Rica have vaccine mandates for government employees.

“The green pass has accelerated vaccinations and driven down cases”, Professor Massimo Galli, director of the infectious diseases’ clinic at Milan’s Sacco Hospital, tells this newspaper. “In the spring, our vaccination rate was well below the UK’s, which worried me. Now, it is well above”.

Maintaining social distancing and mask-wearing indoors has also contained the virus, Professor Galli adds. “The contrast [with the UK] is striking: Brits have let their guard down, and now they are in trouble”.

Which countries or continents have given out most vaccines?

From the I Newspaper, 1st November 2021.

Africa has 17.4% of the world population but only 2.7% of the total world vaccines. USA has 4.2% of world population but 6.0% of world’s vaccines. Comparable figures for others are: South America 5.5% of world population with 7.3% of world’s vaccines. The EU has 5.7% of world population with 8.5% of the world vaccines. India has 17.7% and 14.8% respectively while China with 18.3% of the world population has provided 32.7% of the world’s vaccines.

Good reasons to have a church magazine

After a year of lockdown, should we still bother with church magazines now that church life is picking up again? Yes!

It is read by lots of people. If each issue is read on average by two people, then more people see it than ever go to church. So, it is a very good way of putting Christian values and ideas into people’s hands, whether they come to church or not.

It is a service to the community. Communities need local networks to thrive. Magazines are a great way of binding the people who live in one place together. Just delivering the church magazine is a way to get to know the area and the people. It helps build bridges with other Christian churches in the area. We can share some details of their meetings and events.

It can make money. Well, enough to cover the costs of production! Let’s aim for a revenue balanced on paid subscriptions and advertising.

It is seen by those outside the church family. Think of the people just moving into our area, or those who live here already and want to get married or to baptise their child. Our magazine can help them see the sort of community we are, and that we would welcome them to join us.

It is read by people who do not go to church, but who know someone who does. This is a major way of how groups, including churches, grow. Not many people walk into a church off their own bat. Most people are invited, or already have a connection.

It supports local businesses. Local businesses who advertise locally, can thrive. It helps people develop skills. The editorial team will learn about design, marketing, GDPR, editing, copyright, writing, selling, artwork - and apologising. It can help inform our community about itself - especially if we include a local history or local natural history section!

So, don’t believe it if someone tells you that print is dead. It is not. Many people still prefer to read something they can hold in their hands. The future is not EITHER print OR digital, but BOTH AND. People will flick through a magazine that arrives through the door, even though they may never dream of visiting their local church’s website.

Some historical snippets

Party time 1953

The Primary Party was held on 5th January. The afternoon was spent on games after which tea was served. Following this Miss Heather Churchill was presented with a book token upon her leaving the school to take up work in London.

The Junior Party was held on 14th January. Tea was served after which Mr Graeme Panting was presented with a New Testament upon his leaving the school to join the Army. Games followed and at 7pm, five short children’s films were shown.

By coach to Sunday School, 1955 October 30th

Many parents and friends of Congregational Church Sunday School scholars attended the British School on Sunday, when the Revd Roy Booth spoke on the school’s ideals and aims and asked for their help and co-operation. Prizes and bible examination certificates were presented to Tony Precious, Sheila Molloy, Graham Pollard, John Worthy and Eric Panting. After children’s songs and recitations, refreshments were served by the teachers. Arrangements have been made for a coach to collect scholars from outlying districts on Sunday afternoons.

Roy

Christmas is the season when your neighbour’s radio keeps you awake playing ‘Silent Night’.

Did you knock on people’s doors as a kid and run away before they had a chance to answer? If so, this could be the job for you.



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