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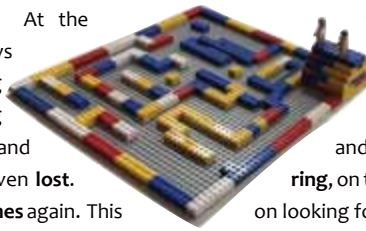
Dear Friends,

As I have written before, I feel I have to state the date I am writing, because by the time you read this letter, life will have **moved on** or **changed** dramatically. Today is 24th October and Rishi Sunak has just become Prime Minister. If I had written this letter when the editor hoped I would, we were still settling in with the **previous** prime minister, and thinking when did the new Chancellor start? And who **knows what** will be happening by the time you read this in a week or so.

Life can be a **maze!** At the moment we do not always know where we are going or what is happening nationally. It is **unsettling** and people feel powerless – even **lost**. We move into **uncertain times** again. This follows on closely from the shock of the death of the Queen just last month. And the month before that? Well, I will leave it there.

However, today, as if to look at the problems around us in a different way, and maybe even find an antidote because of the theme, by coincidence, we held another **Messy Church** event. Many children between 4 and 11 came along with their parents or carers. The theme was **'Safe and Sound'** based on the 'Parable of the **Lost Sheep**' told by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke (15:1-7). Jesus tells the crowd a parable about a missing sheep. If one of them owned 100 sheep and one was lost, wouldn't they go out to look for the **missing one** until they found it? And then bring it home and celebrate with their neighbours. The parable speaks of **God's love** for each of us individually: like this good shepherd, he **will pursue** the lost sheep until it is found.

The children at **Messy Church** did different activities at the tables round the hall whilst the parable was simply explained (see the pictures inside). At my table, the Lego one of course, I had made a **maze** out of **Lego bricks** laid out on a large baseboard. The task was to pick up the board and gently roll a large marble (the sheep) through the maze to get it the hut, to



a place of safety, **safe and sound**. At first the task was not easy, as it was hard to guide the lost sheep to safety avoiding the wrong turns and losing it again.

Thinking of **lost things!** Why is it that when we drop something it always falls into the most awkward and **inaccessible** of places? Instead of falling into the middle of the room, somehow it invariably ends up in some obscure **nook or cranny**, never to be found again. How long we are willing to keep on looking for it depends on **the item** in question. If it is a **penny**, we will soon shrug it off and abandon the search; a **gold ring**, on the other hand, we will keep on looking for many weeks, hoping that it will finally turn up. Few if any of us, however, will keep on looking for ever.

Yet this is the wonderful picture that Jesus paints of God in the parable of the Lost Sheep. God, we are told, is like the **Shepherd** who goes on looking for his missing sheep 'until he has found it!' What a great picture that is – an astonishing testimony to God's **amazing grace!** This is the **'love that will not let me go'** of which the hymn-writer George Matheson speaks; a love that **goes on looking** for us whenever we go astray or fall; never resting and never giving up until we have been restored to the Father's side. It is a love **unlike anything** else we can ever know. Such is the love God has for us.

We have a God **who seeks** us out. And our Church family is the rest of the flock, where we belong, where we are loved and can find healing, a place of safety, be **safe and sound**. Church is a refuge for the **lost**, and it is a place to serve each other. God has never failed to meet us there. As we move into **uncertain times** again, let us trust him. God **doesn't change** although things around us will. He is the **great Shepherd**.

With gratitude to our Living Shepherd
John

Sunday Worship

NOVEMBER 10.30am unless specified

- 6 Revd John Lee, Communion extra-ordinary Church Meeting
- 13 Revd David Witts, Remembrance Sunday **9.30am**
- 20 Revd John Lee and church band
- 27 Roy Tubb Church Meeting



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**Deadline for next issue:
 Sunday 13 November**

REMEMBER IN
YOUR PRAYERS



Keri Eynon, Rosemary King, Margaret Gill, Messy Church and our Toddler Group.

Loving Father, Here we are in November, the month of short days and mist and remembering. And this year we have so much to remember. The year our Servant Queen left us and came to be with you, the King of Kings she had served so faithfully. Remembering celebration and sadness Lord, as we thank you for Queen Elizabeth, but looking forward too as we prepare for Advent. As we work towards Christmas, yes, we remember your coming as a baby in Jesus, but even more reassuring in these difficult times we can hold on to your promise that You will come back again as our glorious King, when there will be no more death or mourning, crying or pain - when You will make all things new, when all shall be well! Come Lord Jesus! Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

Flowers from the church have been passed on with our love to: Val, Mary & Keri



A prayer for Pakistan

Compassionate God
Hear our prayer for the people of Pakistan;
For those who have lost their lives in the floods
And for those forced from their homes.
Yet again, God, it is the poorest who are hit hardest
And those with least who lose most. Our hearts are heavy with the Death, distress and destruction we see.
But we are not helpless to act. God of love and justice:
Call us to generous giving for those in need
And urgent action to combat climate chaos.
Let those in need today know they are not alone,
And unite us in hope
For a world where all can live in safety and security.
Amen

EMBRACE the Middle East

(extracts from Prayer Diary)

6 November St Luke's Hospital, Nablus, runs first aid courses in secondary schools, but it can be difficult to spare staff from the hospital to deliver them. We pray for their new project, training Ministry of Education health coordinators, so ensuring the first aid courses will be sustainable in the future.

13 November Refugees fleeing conflict and persecution in African countries arrive in Cairo with few possessions and no source of income. We pray for our partner Refuge Egypt as they provide refugees with emergency assistance and longer-term help with medical care, education and employment.

20 November Hundreds of people work for our partner organisations across the Middle East, using their expertise and compassion to change the lives of vulnerable people in their own communities. We give thanks for every one of our partners' dedicated staff, and ask for God's blessings on them in their ministry.

27 November We give thanks and pray for our partner Musalaha, a ministry of reconciliation that brings together Israeli and Palestinian women, giving them the opportunity to learn from each other's perspectives. The women are trained in leadership skills so they can have a positive influence on their wider communities.

ST MUNGO'S EVEN LESSER

On the 20th day of October
In the Year of Our Lord
2022

To Uncle Eustace

Rector

St James the Least of All



Dear Uncle Eustace,

It is with a heavy heart that I have to admit that there do not appear to be any redeeming features in your recently printed tome. I am, however, in the interests of science, prepared to read it, from cover to cover. Once.

Mother has been asking when you will be visiting her, for afternoon tea. It was a waste of breath explaining how busy you were. She did not believe me. And last Thursday the cat has had yet another litter in her sewing bag. It has not been a good week.

Your affectionate and loving nephew,
Darren

Sometimes people think of church as being like a giant helicopter. They don't want to get too close in case they get sucked into the rotas.

- Milton Jones

Remembrance Sunday

13 November at Thatcham URC



Revd David Witts will lead a Service of Remembrance at 9.30am

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old, Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn, At the going down of the sun and in the morning, We shall remember them"

Please see local press for road closures on the day and park accordingly

ST. JAMES THE LEAST OF ALL from The Rectory



My dear Nephew Darren

It is a great shame that your church doesn't have chandeliers - although in your low-ceilinged converted cinema, any chandelier more than a few feet tall would also be embedded in your floor carpeting. But I find that there is

nothing like watching the standard bearers on Remembrance Sunday parading up the aisle with their flags and getting them caught up in our brass candelabra.

One year, the procession ground to a halt while a bearer fought to retrieve his flag, and was obliged to leave it flying in the centre of the church while he presented me with an empty pole. I always feel obliged to tell parishioners that, since all the candelabra will inevitably be sent spinning, not to stare at them, or they may leave the church hypnotised. On the other hand, Miss Simpson generally leaves the church looking like that.

Major Hastings always arrives bejewelled with so many medals that

every time he kneels for prayer, it sounds as if he is taking the collection. Their weight increases his stoop by at least ten degrees, to the point where some feel we should support him with a personal flying buttress.

Since the trumpeter playing the Last Post can be of varying quality, your idea of broadcasting it from London into your church is inspired. However, your worries about whether your radio will be good enough need not trouble you. If you tell your congregation that they are about to hear the broadcast silence and you then simply not switch the thing on, no one will be able to tell the slightest difference whether the silence is being broadcast or not. In fact, they will even congratulate you on hitting 11am at

exactly the right moment.

I always use subterfuge; I have the church clock disconnected and then when we reach the time for silence, irrespective of the true time, I get a churchwarden to toll the bell eleven times. This way, I have apparently come to the exact moment without a hitch for the last 30 years.

You will also find that preaching about warfare and of man's inhumanity to man will give you greater insights into the working of your church council. The only difference is that on committees - sadly - the use of machine guns is rather frowned on.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

CROSSWORD

Across

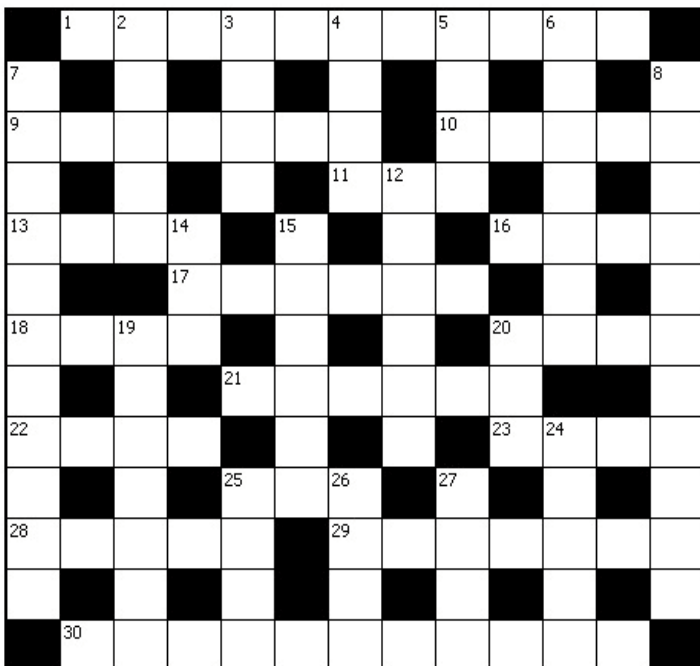
- 1 and 20 Down 'Lord of all _, Lord of all _, whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy'(11,3)
- 9 Moses question to a fighting Hebrew labourer: 'Why are you _ your fellow Hebrew?'" (Exodus 2:13) (7)
- 10 Acclaimed cellist who contracted multiple sclerosis at the height of her fame, Jacqueline _ (2,3)
- 11 'At even _ the sun was set, the sick, O Lord, around thee lay'(3)
- 13 A descendant of Gad (xNumbers 26:16) (4)
- 16 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but _ for the gift my Father promised' (Acts 1:4) (4)
- 17 Clambers (Jeremiah 48:44) (6)
- 18 Peter's response to questioning by the Sanhedrin: 'We must _ God rather than men!'(Acts 5:29) (4)
- 20 Christian paraplegic author, artist and campaigner, _ Eareckson Tada (4)
- 21 Bird partial to the nests of other birds (6)
- 22 'Such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat _ _'(Matthew 13:2) (2,2)
- 23 Infectious tropical disease (4)
- 25 Tree (3)
- 28 'No fear of me should _ you, nor should my hand be heavy upon

- you'(Job 33:7) (5)
- 29 For example, to Titus, Timothy or Philemon (7)
- 30 Week beginning with Pentecost Sunday, according to the Church's calendar (11)

Down

- 2 'O Jerusalem _ how _ I have longed to gather your children together' Matthew 23:37) (5)
- 3 Way out (4)
- 4 Exhort (Romans 12:1) (4)
- 5 Done (anag.) (4)
- 6 Highest of the four voice-parts in a choir (7)
- 7 Concerning the study of God (11)
- 8 Uniquely, it has Abbey, Cathedral and Chapel (11)
- 12 Admonish (Matthew 16:22) (6)
- 14 Frozen (3)
- 15 Established form of religious ceremony (6)
- 19 Inscription often found on gravestones (7)
- 20 See 1 Across
- 24 Behaved (Joshua 7:1) (5)
- 25 Time (anag.) (4)
- 26 Lists choice of meals (4)
- 27 'For the wages of sin is death, but the _ of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 6:23) (4)

Answers next page



Suffering from truth decay? Brush up on your Bible.

Blind Club



Tess Smith & Sheila Cooper who recently retired as volunteer helpers at Thatcham & District Blind Club after over 30 years' service were invited to the Club's meeting in September for a fish and chip lunch in the British School Hall when they were thanked by the Chairman David Brazier for their dedicated service and presented with a gift and flowers in recognition of their tremendous service. Tess was responsible for organising the monthly entertainment and Sheila was the Club Secretary.

Volunteers are needed to help run the Club which meets on the first Tuesday of the month in the British School Hall. If anyone is interested, please contact David Brazier 01635-2535944. Full training will be given and a DBS Certificate obtained.

PHOTOS

- 1 Presentation to Sheila Cooper
- 2 Presentation to Tess Smith
- 3 David Brazier with Tess Smith & Sheila Cooper



All in the month of November

175 years ago, on 4th November 1847 that Scottish obstetrician James Young Simpson discovered the anaesthetic properties of chloroform. He helped popularise its use in medicine.

Also 175 years ago, on 8th November 1847 that Bram Stoker, Irish-born British writer, was born. He is best known for his Gothic horror novel Dracula.

125 years ago, on 15th November 1897 that Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan, British politician was born. He was the Minister of Health 1945-51 who led the establishment of the National Health Service.

100 years ago, on 4th November 1922 that British archaeologist Howard Carter discovered the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen. On 26th November he reached a second sealed doorway and discovered the famous treasures.

80 years ago, on 5th November 1942 that the WW2 Second Battle of El-Alamein ended. British troops led by Generals Alexander and Montgomery defeated Rommel's German forces in Egypt. On 10th November, Winston Churchill announced: "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

75 years ago, on 20th November 1947 that the marriage of Princess Elizabeth and Philip Mountbatten, Duke of Edinburgh, took place at Westminster Abbey in London.

70 years ago, on 1st November 1952 that the USA carried out the first successful detonation of a hydrogen bomb, in a test on the Pacific island of Elugelab, Marshall Islands. The island was completely destroyed and no longer exists.

60 years ago, on 20th November 1962 that the Cuban Missile crisis ended and US President John F Kennedy lifted the military blockade of Cuba.

40 years ago, on 30th November 1982 that Michael Jackson's album Thriller was released.


30 years ago, on 11th November 1992 that the Church of England voted to allow women to become priests. The first women were ordained in March 1994.

Also 30 years ago, on 20th November 1992 that the Windsor Castle fire broke out in a private chapel and spread to a large part of the building. Damage was extensive and took five years to repair, at a cost of £40 million. Buckingham Palace was opened to the public for the first time to help raise the money.

20 years ago, on 11th November 2002 that Microsoft founder Bill Gates pledged \$100 million to help fight AIDS in India.

Also 20 years ago, on 15th November 2002 that Myra Hindley, one of the notorious 'Moors Murderers' (with Ian Brady) died.

15 years ago, on 19th November 2007 that Amazon released its first Kindle e-book reader.



Commitment for Life

The United Reformed Church | Christian Aid

Supporting Bangladesh

An emerging Bangladesh debt crisis

Debt is strangling the poorest people in Bangladesh, and in any sane world would immediately be cancelled. Together with Global Justice Now, Commitment for Life works to cancel the debt of the highly exploited nations like Bangladesh. Thank you for all you do to bring about justice in our world through effective debt cancellation.

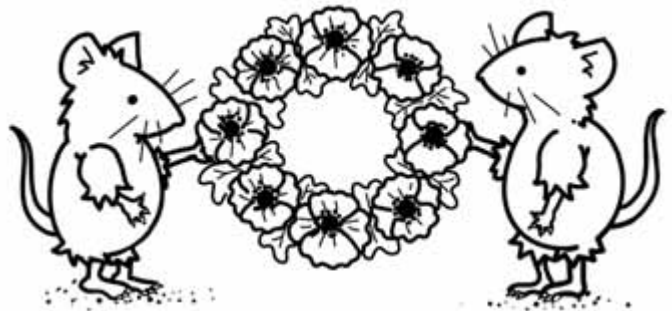
Prayer for Jubilee God of Abundance, help us find alternatives to debt. Give us the wisdom, means, courage to forgive debt, thereby subverting empire's economics for the sake of your kingdom. We pray for Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Israel and Palestine; all are caught up in a web of debt that suffocates everyone, even the planet. Amen

Crossword Answers

ACROSS: 11, Hopefulness. 9, Hitting. 10, du Pre. 11, Ere. 13, Ozni. 16, Wait. 17, Climbs. 18, Obey. 20, Joni. 21, Cuckoo. 22, In it. 23, Yaws. 25, Elm. 28, Alarm. 29, Epistle. 30, Whitsuntide.

DOWN: 2, Often. 3, Exit. 4, Urge. 5, Node. 6, Soprano. 7, Theological. 8, Westminster. 12, Rebuke. 14, Icy. 15, Ritual. 19, Epitaph. 20, Joy. 24, Acted. 25, Emit. 26, Menu. 27, Gift

We remember



Wordsearch for November

November is a wistful month, tinged with sadness and good-byes. The last of the leaves are falling, as the trees go to sleep for winter. It is a month of remembrance, of poppies, of remembering lost loved ones, and of letting go. It is a month of bonfires for the 'Guy', and Thanksgiving for Americans. It is a month of remembering Saints and looking forward to triumph - the church year ends with the joyful Sunday of Christ the King. And then Advent begins...looking forward to a very special Baby!

E S Y R V G Y R A A C N Y A
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 R L A R E L I Z A B E T H E
 L Y U Y U G N Q A N E A D R

- poppies
- remembrance
- courage
- bravery
- flanders
- dead
- guns
- war
- peace
- afghanistan
- iraq
- thanksgiving
- turkey
- all
- saints
- advent
- leaves
- sadness
- angel
- mary
- elizabeth
- bonfire
- gunpowder
- guy

Easy sodoku

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"Exercise?" I thought you said, 'Extra fries.'

The best vitamin for making friends is B-1. - Anon



Skittles

Saturday 12 November 2022
7pm
in the British School Hall
URC, Church Lane, Thatcham

Tickets £5
including Hot Dog supper.
Juice, tea and coffee provided, or you may
bring your own beer or wine

I'd like to go to church

A - Is the Auntie who will come -to tea
 B - Is the bed that won't release me
 C - Is the car, we do need fresh air
 D - Is the dinner, just mum can prepare
 E - For extremes, too high or too low
 F - For my feelings, when they're right I'll go
 G - Is for garden much nearer God's heart:
 H - Is my husband who won't play his part
 I - For intruders who sit in my pew
 J - Is for jokes which the preacher thinks new
 K - All that kneeling which tires me so
 L - The old language, its so out of touch
 M - Is for money they always want more
 N - For new tunes I've not heard before
 O - Is for overtime, double on Sunday
 P - The preparing I must do for Monday
 Q - The queer noises that come from the choir
 R - Is -the reverence they never inspire
 S - Is for sermons as dull as can be
 T - Is for -telly we really must see
 U - For unfriendly, no welcome I find
 V - For the voice of that woman behind
 W - Is -the weather too cold or too hot
 X - For excuses, I've got such a lot
 Y - For -the yells of the kids left behind
 Z - For the zeal which is what I can't find

(From Church Magazine 'Together')
 Submitted by David Weller

The Two Minutes Silence

In the month when we think about those who have given their lives in war, the Two Minutes Silence is a significant act of remembrance. The silence provides an opportunity to remember those who have suffered in war and how we can work for a peaceful world. However, we can also find ourselves thinking about lunch or whether we've switched off our phone?

Victor Frankl, a victim of Auschwitz, suggested that the most intolerable of all human conditions is not imprisonment or hunger, but lack of meaning. The two minutes of silence enables us to connect with Jesus' message, which offers true meaning to our lives and world. He spoke of giving ourselves in love for each other and the world, 'Love your enemies and pray for those that persecute you' (Matthew 5:44). He also demonstrated such love in sacrificing His own life, 'Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends' (John 15:13). When observing the silence, let's use it to reflect on this sacrificial love, as we call to mind those who have laid down their lives.

In our busy lives, where so much clamours for our attention, silence gives us an opportunity to reflect on our priorities and rediscover true meaning in our lives. This is not just for Remembrance Sunday, as Jesus often withdrew to find silence to seek God (eg: Luke 5:16). Let's use silence in our lives as space to seek God's will and offer ourselves to Him, just as those who gave themselves in conflict through the years.



We invite you to join us at

Vintage Adventure

A time of fun, making friends, singing, informal Christian worship, activities, drinks and homemade cakes

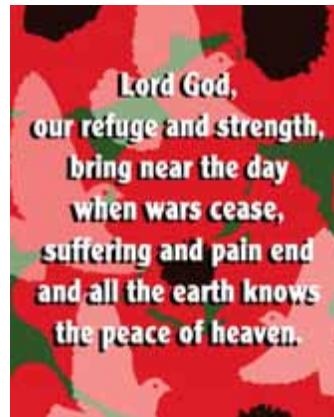
For the young at heart in our community
 Inclusive and dementia friendly
 Led by the Churches in Thatcham



Theme: Dance

Thursday, 17 November 2022
2.30-4.00pm
Thatcham Methodist Church

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



INTERMEDIATE

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National Memorial Arboretum

We visited here in June on our return from a biking trip to Northumberland.

The Arboretum was the brainchild of Commander David Childs CBE who wished to establish a national focus for Remembrance and following a meeting with Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC, an appeal was launched in 1994 by then Prime Minister, John

Major. The project began with no money, no land, no staff and no trees. The National Lottery granted some 40% of the funds needed and this was matched by thousands of donations from a wide variety of organisations, military, civilian, corporate and voluntary. From the start it was seen as a place of joy where the lives of people would be remembered by



living trees that would grow and mature in a world at peace.

Our first stop on entering the arboretum was the Millenium Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness where we joined the daily short Act of Remembrance which was followed by a very informative talk about the history of the Arboretum. The candlesticks on the altar were created by a Birmingham silversmith in collaboration with a noted tableware company and a local jeweller. They represent the 12 knives used by apostles and are bound by barbed wire as a reminder that people still starve as a result of war. Additionally they currently bear a ribbon of the colours of the Ukranian flag. The roof of the Chapel is supported by 12 columns of Douglas fir, each carved with one of the 12 disciples.

Following on from our visit to the Chapel we then began our tour of the site beginning in the Far East zone

which includes a 30 metre section of the notorious Burma railway which was originally manufactured in Middlesbrough in 1904 and was brought back to Britain in 2001 and laid as a permanent memorial to those who lost their lives working on the railway.

Central to the Arboretum is the Armed Forces Memorial which records the names of over 16,000 service personnel who have died in operational theatre or been targeted

by terrorists since the end of the Second World War. The memorial has been constructed with a gap in the two southern walls which allows a shaft of sunlight to penetrate to the heart of the memorial on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year.

The Arboretum is a very special and moving place and if you haven't visited we would definitely recommend that you do. In my ignorance, before our visit I assumed

that all the memorials were of a military nature. Not so, alongside those you would expect to see, there are tributes to civilian and religious organisations and many others, including the Donor Family Network and Stillbirth and Neonatal Death gardens.

Although we spent about 4 hours at the Arboretum we did not manage to see everything and plan to return when we can. Gill & Alan Mossman



14



15

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1-4 Inside the chapel | 14 Christmas Truce |
| 5 Royal British Legion | 15 Royal Welsh |
| 6 Metropolitan Police | 16 Women's Royal Air Force |
| 7-8 Boys' Brigade | 17 Showmans Guild |
| 9 British Evacuees Assoc | 18 Devonshire & Dorset |
| 10 Polar Bear Assoc, first memorial in the Arboretum | 19 Polish Forces |
| 11 King's African Rifles | 20 Anne Frank |
| 12 Pegasus Bridge | 21 War Widows |
| 13 RAF 47 Squadron | 22 Shot at Dawn (for desertion) |
| | 23 Royal Army Chaplains |
| | 24-25 Armed Forces |



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Harvest Festival and the Barfield plaque – Sunday 9 October 2022



Members of Thatcham United Reformed Church welcomed nine members of the Barfield family last Sunday morning. Eight of the guests were direct descendants of John Barfield, founder of the church in 1804 and of the British School, adjacent to the church in 1846. Members of the Barfield family were last here on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the church in 2004.

Last weekend's gathering was to mark the 175th anniversary of the opening of the British School on 21st September 1847. Following a harvest service in the church, everybody gathered outside the Old British School, firstly to hear words of welcome from Revd John Lee, who spoke of the many uses for which the building has been used and is still being used, ranging from dancing lessons to the weekly gatherings of local toddlers and their parents. There followed a few words from Roy Tubb on the history of the building.

John Barfield, a solicitor, lived at The Priory in Church Lane. Besides being the founder of the independent Chapel (now the United Reformed Church, John responded to a nationwide appeal from the Government for more schools by providing the land on which the Old British School now stands. He purchased three cottages in 1846 and had them demolished in to make way for the new school.

Most of the money was raised by public subscription and Sarah Barfield (John's wife), described as 'a talented and energetic lady' was instrumental in raising much of it. It was recorded that she raised about £300 in Liverpool alone (worth about £39,000 in today's prices). The Duke of Wellington gave her £5 (worth £650 today).

The school soon had 220 pupils on the roll. Sarah Barfield was its first manager, a post which she held for five years. Sadly, John died in 1851 and Sarah left Thatcham soon afterward.

To mark this historic occasion, a heritage plaque was then unveiled on the building by Sebastian Barfield, a great-great-great grandson of John and Sarah Barfield. Everybody then enjoyed a harvest lunch provided by members of the church in the Old British School.

The presence of the Barfield family and the unveiling of the plaque together with the harvest lunch made it a memorable day in the history of our church.







Messy Church 24th October 2022

On Monday 24th October we held our autumn Messy Church. The theme was 'Safe and Sound' and was based on the parable of the lost sheep. We opened the door at 10 o'clock and very soon 17 children and their parents and carers joined us for a great morning's activities. We had 13 leaders and young helpers and there was a great atmosphere and soon everyone, young and not quite as young, was joining in with enthusiasm.

We had several activities that entailed making or drawing sheep; sheep money boxes, sheep pebbles and sheep made of cotton wool or wool. One of the activities was really messy and the children (and adults) had to find toy sheep hidden in sensory bins filled with sand, jelly, rice etc. John was in his element making mazes from lego so sheep could be guided back to their pens. Kevin was busy with his camera taking photos of us and then putting the printed photos 'safe in the arms of Jesus'. Grapes, blueberries and bananas were arranged on plates to look like sheep's faces and later the children ate the fruit for their snack. Serin also made up an impromptu sheep hunt! Finally, we made a Welcome Home banner, to welcome home the lost sheep.

Karen led our time of celebration. It was a very joyful occasion and we all enjoyed joining in with enthusiasm as we heard how the shepherd looked for Fluffy, who was lost, and then we heard how happy he was when he found Fluffy and took him home again. What a great story!

Thank you so much to all the leaders and helpers for their enthusiasm, and especially to Esther for leading the session. It is so good to be able to welcome the children and their parents and carers into our church again. We hope you will look at the Messy Church display in the church to see some of the activities that we enjoyed doing. Now we look forward to the next Messy Church.

Diane





Roy travels to The Netherlands

HOLLAND is one of the seven kingdoms in Europe. Its present monarch is King Willen-Alexander. He and Queen Maxima have three daughters. From 1890 to 2013, three queens were heads of state, Queens Wilhelmina, Juliana and Beatrix and there is no male heir at present so it appears that another queen will follow the present king.

1) Having heard about travellers queuing at Dover for 10 hours or more during the last weekend of July, we must consider ourselves lucky for on the following Monday, we had to queue for just two hours on the bus before boarding the ferry!

2) Heineken's Brewery in Amsterdam. Gerard Adriaan Heineken acquired a small brewery in Amsterdam in 1864. Since then, four

generations of the family have expanded the company throughout the world. In 2007 there were about 54,000 employees and 170 brand names of the beer. The product is made to the same recipe in all of the 119 or so breweries in more than 65 countries.

3) Amsterdam has more than 62 miles of canals, several of which encircle the city centre. The three main canals were dug in the 17th century during the Dutch Golden Age.

4) Royal Palace in Dam Square,

Amsterdam. This is one of three palaces in Holland at the disposal of the Monarch (currently King Willem-Alexander). It was built in the 17th century as a City Hall, being converted into a palace by King Louis Napoleon I of Holland in or soon after 1806. He was a brother of Napoleon Bonaparte. The building on its right is the Nieuwe Kerk, originally a Roman Catholic Church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary & St Catharine. Built in 1380-1408, it was needed because the Ould Kerk had become



too small for the expanding population of Amsterdam. It became a Dutch Reformed Church in 1578. Having been almost destroyed by fire in 1645, it was then rebuilt in Gothic Style. Renovation that took place during 1959-80 proved too expensive and the church was transferred to a foundation. It currently belongs to the Protestant Church of the Netherlands (Calvinist & Lutheran) but is no longer used for church services. Although being used for Royal Investitures, it now generally

functions as an exhibition space and the occasional organ recital.

5) Main Railway Station, Amsterdam, opened in 1889, replacing an earlier station. Major reconstruction has taken place since 1997.

6) This decorative building was completed in 1899 in neo-Gothic and neo Renaissance style as the Central Post Office of Amsterdam. In 1974 it was listed as a national heritage site. Later the Post Office was moved elsewhere and during 1991-92 the

building was converted to a shopping centre known as the Magna Plaza.

7) Ould Kerk, Amsterdam. This is Amsterdam's oldest building. It was consecrated in 1306 as St Nicolas' Catholic Church, taken over by the Calvinist Dutch Reform Church in the 16th century. In 1578 the church became the location for the city archives. It is now a centre for contemporary art and heritage.

The floor of this building consists entirely of gravestones: there are 2,500 graves underneath which are

buried 10,000 Amsterdam citizens. Rembrandt's sister Saskia van Uylenburgh is buried here.

8) Breaking up this road in Amsterdam to create a pedestrian area – the noise was deafening.

9) Damrak Avenue in Amsterdam. Notice the ever-present McDonald's (seventeen in Amsterdam) and KFC (at least five in Amsterdam). Notice also the buildings, one of which (Amsterdam Today) appears to be leaning on its neighbour.

10) Anyone for a cruise on



Amsterdam's canals? Central railway station is in the background.

11) Cycle racks exists in abundance in Amsterdam and may even be seen alongside a bus stop in the countryside. Cycling has long been part of Dutch culture: indeed, there may be more bikes in Amsterdam than people. Special cycle tracks exist in Amsterdam and pedestrians are well advised not to walk or stand still on these tracks. Having won a campaign against motorists many years ago, cyclists passionately

defend their right to these tracks. However, the sad fact is that about 15,000 bikes are fished from the canals every year, which is why most owners lock their bikes to a railing.

12) St Nicholas' Church, situated opposite the central railway station, dates from 1886. It is Amsterdam's primary Roman Catholic Church and was raised to the status of a "basilica minor" in December 2012, officially the year of its 125th anniversary.

13) St Vincent's Roman Catholic Church in Volendam. Most of the

citizens in Volendam, which is situated on the western shore of the Markermeer, are Roman Catholic. Volendam (full dam) was originally the site of a new harbour for nearby Edam (home of Edam cheese).

14) Demonstrations of cheese making may be seen here. Edam cheese is said to travel well, merely hardening with age. The red rind that usually covers the exported cheese is made of paraffin wax.

15) A notable feature of Volendam is its rather attractive higgledy-

piggledy arrangement of (traffic-free) housing close to the beach.

16) This is Enkhuizen, which had (in the 17th century) one of the most important harbours in Holland but owing to silting up, lost its position to Amsterdam. The picture shows a double-leaf bascule bridge over a canal entrance to the town. The tower is known as the Drommedaris, the lower part of which was erected as a defence work 1540, the oldest structure in Enkhuizen. It was renovated and enlarged in the mid-



17th century. Over the years, the building has been used to store gunpowder, as a prison, guardhouse, excise office, weaving mill and telegraph office.

17) Scheveningen, popular seaside resort on the North Sea coast, not far from Den Hag (the Hague). The large building is the Grand Hotel.

18) Mauritshuis, which has been described as the "most beautiful building in The Hague". It houses the best of Dutch painting from the age of Rembrandt and Vermeer and is close to the Binnenhof, home of the Dutch Parliament and the office of the Prime Minister.

19) The Hofvijver lake with the Binnenhof to the right. The Prime Minister of Holland, who may be described as the 'first among equals' in the 'cabinet', does not have as much authority as that of a British prime Minister. Mark Rutte has been PM since 2010.

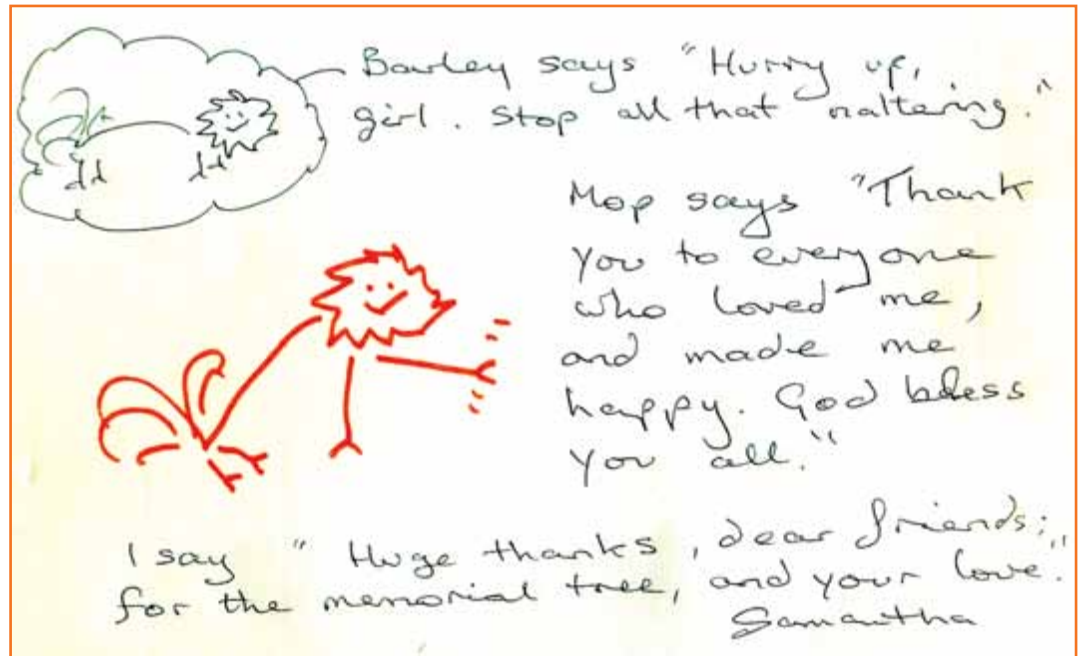
20) Attractively designed building in Den Hag (The Hague) – a shopping centre. Behind it with the tall tower is the Grote Kerk (Great Church) in Den Hag. Originally a Catholic Church, later transformed into a Protestant Reformed Church. With falling attendance in the 20th century, it was almost agreed in 1981 that the church be demolished. However, a number of citizens set up the Grote Kerk Foundation and saved it. Today it is used for such things as concerts, exhibitions, receptions, fair and weddings.

21) Delft City Hall and yours truly. The building is mostly early 17th century but the lower part of the central tower dates from the late 13th century. Delft is famous for its blue pottery.

22) Taken from our moving coach so somewhat blurred but at least ten wind turbines should be visible. Unlike in England, where onshore wind turbines are considered an eyesore, the Dutch have embraced them in a big way.

23) This is Zevenbergen, ten minutes' walk from our hotel. The name means 'seven mountains' which is rather strange because although there are at least four hills in Holland over 500 feet above sea-level, they are not in this area. The average height of land in Holland is just under 100 feet above sea level. Only about half of Holland exceeds 3.4 feet above sea level and about a quarter of the country is below sea level.

24) Onboard our Leger "Luxuria" coach, just three seats abreast, ample leg room and only 27 passengers. Each passenger could view a map of the journey, see the driver's view of the road ahead, listen to music or even view a film.



Harvest gifts

Thank you so much for the generous donations received from Thatcham United Reformed Church at your Harvest service. At a time when demand is increasing, donations like yours are essential for the Foodbank to be able to offer help and support to those in difficulties in

our local communities. The donations weighed a wonderful 63.4kgs, which is equivalent to 133 meals for our clients, enough to feed a family of 4 for 11 days! Please pass on our grateful thanks to everyone at Thatcham URC for their generosity. In due course you will receive a Harvest

certificate from WBF to acknowledge your generosity and record our heartfelt thanks.



Ukrainian Church leaders rejoice

Ukrainian Church leaders have been welcoming their country's recent dramatic counter-offensive against Russia.

It was reported that Ukrainian tanks and armoured vehicles had recaptured at least 2300 square miles of land around the north-eastern city of Kharkiv, as well as territory closer to Kherson in the south.

President Zelensky praised his troops who were determined to "liberate all temporarily occupied territories", and he also praised Ukraine's military chaplains for "praying for the lives of our soldiers."

The head of Ukraine's independent Orthodox Church, or PCU, Metropolitan Epiphany (Dumendo) said that Christians were "rejoicing" at the latest military successes, and praying that "the Lord will help us overcome evil, and lead us all to victory and a just peace."



The knitted baby cardigan which took 34 years to complete!

This little cardigan was started by Rachel in 1988 ... and finished by Viv Wilding a couple of weeks ago. Why did it take so long?

Rachel had knitted one side and started another but could not carry on when she suffered a traumatic injury to her hand and lost the use of her fingers. The cardigan, wool and pattern stayed in their bag and were tucked away at the back of a wardrobe. Many years passed, and when the wardrobe was demolished, the bag of knitting was found. Maybe the garment could be finished?

Knowing the skill of the Knitter and Natter group, Rachel asked the advice of Dorothy, who passed the bag of knitting to Viv; in a few days, the cardigan with its intricate patterns was completed, and there was even enough wool left over to make a smaller jacket!

The original baby for whom the cardigan was intended is obviously fully grown, and now has children of her own. However, in the fullness of time, two other babies have benefitted, either through the neonatal unit at the John Radcliffe hospital, or from the stall there selling handknitted clothing, thanks to the talent of the Knitter and Natter group and Viv in particular.



News from our 'Roving Reporter'



Snippets:

Roy was impressed by seeing a picture of Julia in Reform, but couldn't find the description.

When asked about riding his Adrian re-furbished cycle, he said the fine weather had gone! (a fine weather cyclist would not please Adrian)!

Whilst Anna and other Regency Park residents have been spotted out on their bikes!

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle. - Albert Einstein

When I was young my parents told me what to do. Now I am old, my children tell me what to do. When will I be able to do what I want to do?

Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth

The message from the Archbishop of Canterbury at her funeral service

“The pattern for many leaders is to be exalted in life and forgotten after death. The pattern for all who serve God – famous or obscure, respected or ignored – is that death is the door to glory.

Her late Majesty famously declared on a 21st birthday broadcast that her whole life would be dedicated to serving the nation and Commonwealth.

Rarely has such a promise been so well kept! Few leaders receive the outpouring of love that we have seen.

Jesus – who in our reading does not tell his disciples how to follow, but who to follow – said: ‘I am the way, the truth and the life.’ Her late Majesty’s example was not set through her position or her ambition, but through whom she followed. I know His Majesty shares the same faith and hope in Jesus Christ as his mother; the same sense of service and duty.

In 1953 the Queen began her coronation with silent prayer, just there at the High Altar. Her allegiance to God was given before any person gave allegiance to her. Her service to so many people in this nation, the Commonwealth and the world, had its foundation in her following Christ – God himself – who said that he “came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

People of loving service are rare in any walk of life. Leaders of loving service are still rarer. But in all cases those who serve will be loved and remembered when those who cling to power and privileges are long forgotten.

The grief of this day – felt not only by the late Queen’s family but all round the nation, Commonwealth and the world – arises from her abundant life and loving service, now gone from us

She was joyful, present to so many, touching a multitude of lives.

We pray especially for all her family, grieving as every family at a funeral – including so many families round the world who have themselves lost someone recently – but in this family’s case doing so in the brightest spotlight.

May God heal their sorrow, may the gap left in their lives be marked with memories of joy and life.

Her late Majesty’s broadcast during COVID-19 lockdown ended with: ‘We will meet again’ – words of hope from a song of Vera Lynn. Christian hope means certain expectation of something not yet seen.

Christ rose from the dead and offers life to all, abundant life now and life with God in eternity.

As the Christmas carol says, “where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.”

We will all face the merciful judgment of God: we can all share the Queen’s hope which in life and death inspired her servant leadership.

Service in life, hope in death. All who follow the Queen’s example, and inspiration of trust and faith in God, can with her say: “We will meet again.””

Christmas gifts that go on giving



<https://charity-gifts.christianaid.org.uk/>

How it works

Do you get an actual gift?

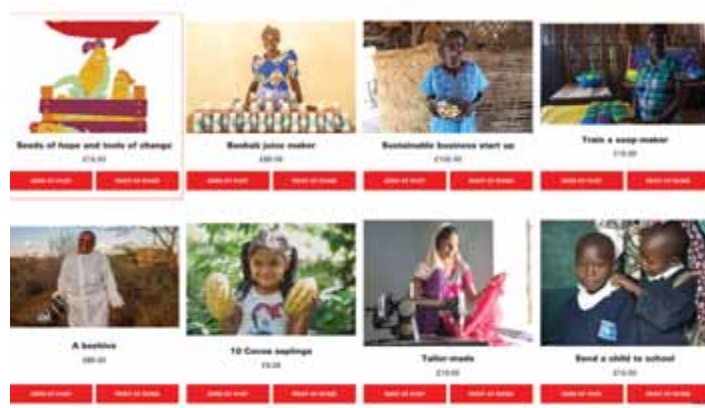
When you buy a virtual gift from Christian Aid Charity Gifts, you or your lucky recipient(s) don’t get an actual goat or a pair of chickens (although we know it would be pretty cool if you did).

What you do get for each gift is a physical card. Each card explains a bit more about the gift, and tells a story about someone – a real person – who benefited from a similar contribution.

How does buying a gift work?

- Choose and buy gift(s) for your loved one(s).
- Your money acts as a donation; it goes into a fund for each area of Christian Aid’s work. So if you buy the gift of a goat, your money goes into our Agriculture & Livestock fund, and so on.
- Every gift is represented by a card. You can write a personal message inside it. Then you can arrange to either have it sent to you, or to whoever you’ve bought the gift for.
- The gift delights them and everybody feels good.
- Our local partner uses the money you’ve donated to work on a particular programme or project – like supplying goats to families in Ethiopia.

Some examples from the website



Celebrating the life of Brother Andrew

(1928-2022)

Brother Andrew, the founder of Open Doors, died on 27th September, aged 94.

Famous around the world as ‘God’s smuggler’, he began his ministry in 1957 by smuggling Bibles across the Iron Curtain in a blue Volkswagen Beetle. That trip was the beginning of Open Doors which, more than 65 years later, is now supporting persecuted Christians around the world.

The remarkable story of his Bible ‘smuggling’ was told in his best-selling autobiography *God’s Smuggler*.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Brother Andrew turned his attention to the Islamic World, saying that the rapid spread of Islam posed the greatest challenge yet to the Christian church worldwide. He travelled to the Middle East and South Asia and had private meetings with leaders of several Islamic

fundamentalist groups. However, Brother Andrew preached against retaliation – repeatedly declaring ‘I sincerely love all Muslims’ as a counter to the rising Islamophobia in the west.

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands knighted Brother Andrew in 1993. In 1997, he received the World Evangelical Alliance’s Religious Liberty Award, recognising his lifetime of service to suffering Christians.

But Open Doors UK reveals that “perhaps the recognition that pleased him most was the copies of KGB reports, which he obtained after the fall of the Iron Curtain. There were more than 150 pages about him, detailing his work in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Despite this, they were still unable to stop his work.”

More at www.opendoorsuk.org.

Facebook favourites

Please submit your Facebook favourites to thatcham.urb@ntlworld.com
Be sure to download them and then send as attachments – copying and pasting into an email will not work!

