

Church News
for the Parishes of
Bromham, Oakley and Stagsden



December 2023



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 **facebook** Benefice of Bromham, Oakley & Stagsden

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vicar@bromhambenefice.org
Assistant Priest: Revd Di Harpham 918691
Curate: Revd Petra Yates - curate@bromhambenefice.org 07504 118405

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Pew Leaflet Sarah Smale, as Administrator

Who's Who in Bromham

Church Officers

Churchwardens	Ms T Woodcock	340089
	Mrs F Bulmer	602718
PCC Secretary	Mrs Vivien Butler	407351
PCC Treasurer	Mrs Sarah Smale	07957 126145

Organist & Choirmaster Mr David P Williams
Messy Church for pre-school children (birth - 4yrs) & their carers

	Mrs F Bulmer	602718
Altar Guild	Mrs M Parrott	824402

Who's Who in Bromham cont....

Children & Young	}Carol Jones	823307
People's work	}Rene Farquhar	307996
Electoral Roll	Mrs Rene Farquhar	307996
Ringers	Mr Robert Jones	881741
Thursday Prayer Gp	Mrs C Wisson	306833
Friends of St Owen's	www.friendsof stowens.org	
Secretary:	Mr David Butler	407351
	 facebook Friends of St Owens	

Who's Who in Oakley

Church Officers

Churchwardens	Mr G Palmer	07710 462535
	Mrs H Worley	262166
PCC Secretary	Mrs C Ord	823477
PCC Treasurer	Mrs S Ball	823133
Organist & Choirmaster - contact Jenny Sudworth		822859
Messy Church for pre-school children (birth - 4yrs) & their carers	Revd Catherine Wilson	825665
Flowers	Mrs A Rolph	824849
St Mary's Ringers	Mr Bill Sellars	823473

Who's Who in Stagsden

Church Officers

Churchwarden	} Post holders names not published	
PCC Treasurer	} please contact thru Revd Di Harpham	918691
PCC Secretary	Caroline Heaton	
Ringers	Mr Richard Brown	823289
Flowers Team	please contact thru Revd Di Harpham	918691

If you know of further details for this page, or have information or articles to publish please send all material to the Editor by post or (preferably) by email - see details on page 3.

The Editor thanks Contributors and Advertisers for their material with acknowledgements to the "Parish Pump" website. Nevertheless, views expressed, and goods and services advertised are not endorsed by the PCC. **Please send material for publication to the Editor by the 22nd of the month.**



Principal Services in the Benefice

<u>3rd December</u>	<u>Advent Sunday</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Oakley)
10.30am	All Age Christingle Service (Bromham)
6.00pm	Service of Music & Readings for Advent (Oakley)
<u>10th December</u>	<u>2nd Sunday of Advent</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Stagsden)
10.30am	LEP Service (Oakley Methodist)
<u>17th December</u>	<u>3rd Sunday of Advent</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Stagsden)
10.30am	Holy Communion (Bromham)
3.30pm	Carol Service (Stagsden)
6.30pm	Carol Service (Oakley)
<u>18th December</u>	
6.30pm	Carol Service (Bromham)

For Christmas Services - see page 9

<u>31st December</u>	<u>1st Sunday after Christmas</u>
10.30am	Holy Communion (Bromham)

Weekday Services

Mondays

11.30am Messy Church (Bromham)*

Tuesdays (1st and 3rd of the month)

11.30am Holy Communion (Bromham
Fellowship Room)

Thursdays

10.00am Messy Church (Oakley)*

**Messy Church closes at the end of School Term*

NB 10.30 church services are streamed via Zoom for those who find it difficult to attend in person (details on www.bromhambenefice.org)

From the Vicarage



Christmas is just around the corner once again, and the Church of England is promoting its Christmas campaign for 2023: 'Follow the Star – Join the Song!'.

Singing has always been a way for people to express their emotions – maybe hearty encouragement of a sports team sung by committed

supporters on the terraces on a chilly afternoon, or joining in a chorus of 'Happy Birthday' for a friend or loved one, or even singing the National Anthem on civic occasions. Some would say 'I can't sing in tune' – but most join in given enough support around them! And singing is known to be good for us: it's an aerobic activity exercising our lungs; it's beneficial for our brains; and it promotes well-being, helping us to relax and feel happier.

For Christians, it's also a very natural way to express our worship to God. Many hymns and worship songs have lyrics that come straight from the Bible – as we sing them, we are reminded of God's faithfulness to us, and enabled to praise him for all he has done for us.

This is a good point to mention our wonderful Benefice choir, and express huge appreciation and thanks for their dedication in leading our worship at the 10.30am service every week throughout the year. This is a particularly busy

season for them with the service of Advent Music and Readings on Sunday December 3rd in St Mary's Oakley at 6pm, and then the Christmas Carol Services – perhaps you could make a point of thanking a choir member when an opportunity arises?

Carol Services, and the Crib Services on Christmas Eve, remain an important part of the Christmas celebrations for many in our communities who aren't regular churchgoers, yet love to come to hear the Christmas story and sing the familiar carols. Some will listen and sing in other places too – pubs, concerts and outside events – and everywhere the well-known words and tunes remind us all of the 'Reason for the Season' and point us to Jesus.

Within the Christmas story itself there is singing: Mary's beautiful and radical song of praise to God has inspired many hymns, most notably 'Tell out my soul', as well as forming the words of the 'Magnificat'. A few months later in the narrative and it is choir of angels on a hillside outside Bethlehem who take up the song, serenading a group of very surprised shepherds with their praises to God, in response to the message the shepherds have heard – 'Today is born a Saviour!'.

We are all invited to 'Join the Song' this Christmas – to enjoy the carols we hear and to sing with enthusiasm when we join in. And as we do so, to remember the truth of the story they tell – 'He came down from earth to heaven who is God and Lord of all'. So, let's sing our worship with joy and gratitude, joining the shepherds who 'went home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen'.

Catherine Wilson



Next meeting - **Thursday 7th December**

for our **Christmas Buffet**

at "The Fox", Carlton

Thursday 7th December at 12.30pm

Contact Tessa Woodcock

01234 340089



Sewing Group

1st and 3rd Wednesday afternoons
2pm to 4pm in the Fellowship Room at
St Owen's Church.

Further information from Frances on
07470 032296

First Friday Coffee Mornings

Next coffee morning on Fri 1st December

11am- 1pm

in St Owen's Fellowship Room, Bromham

+ collection in support of

Elisabeth Curtis Riding Centre

for disabled children and adults



Please contact Frances for more information
(602718 or francesbulmer@btinternet.com)



Christmas Celebrations 2023

You are warmly invited to celebrate Christmas with us

Tuesday 12th December

3.30 - 'Messy Church for All' Christingle activities
5.30pm at Oakley Methodist Church - all welcome

Sunday 17th December

3.30pm Christmas Carol Service (Stagsden)
6.30pm Christmas Carol Service (Oakley)

Monday 18th December

6.30pm Christmas Carol Service (Bromham)

Sunday 24th December - Christmas Eve

9.00am Holy Communion (Bromham)
3.00pm Crib Service for younger children (Bromham)
4.00pm Crib Service (Stagsden)
4.30pm Crib Service (Bromham)
4.30pm Crib Service (Oakley)
5.00pm Short Holy Communion (Stagsden)
11.00pm Midnight Communion (Oakley)
11.00pm Midnight Communion (Bromham)

Monday 25th December - Christmas Day

10.00am Family Communion with carols (Oakley)

Christian Family Care

There will be opportunities for gifts of cash/cheques in support of their work to be made at any of the services on Christmas Eve or on Christmas Day {please note:- money gifts only, no parcels}





*Rt Revd Dr Alan Smith
Bishop of St Albans*

We are delighted to have made successful bids to the national church Buildings for Mission programme for funding which will allow us to provide more direct support to parishes with the care and maintenance of their church buildings.

Many people inside and outside the Church don't realise that the responsibility lies with the local church for maintaining and repairing church buildings. Many of our churches are nationally significant historic buildings as well as a focus of worship and mission in their communities.

We know that the many volunteers in local churches, who give so much time and energy to caring for their church building alongside the church's mission and outreach, sometimes want support to know how best to do maintenance and repairs, access funding and make grant applications.

This grant is part of the award made by The Church of England from the £11 million Buildings for Mission programme, funded by the Church Commissioners and administered by the Archbishops' Council over the period 2023 to 2025.

A total of £2.8 million has been allocated for 30 Church Buildings Support Officers across the country to give specialist advice on the management, conservation, repair

and development of church buildings, including community use alongside worship.

A further £6.2 million has been allocated across 41 dioceses for making grants of up to £12,000 for repairs to churches. The grants will focus on small-scale but urgent works and ‘stitch in time’ projects that could save larger sums in the long term. The fund will also be able to help cover the cost of essential improvements for the mission and ministry of a church.

In our diocese the Buildings for Mission funding has allowed us to recruit a part-time Church Buildings Maintenance Officer, Liz West, who will work alongside Ann Wise – our Historic Church Buildings Support Officer – to provide one-to-one support for a range of parishes, and workshops and resources for everyone. Liz will have a focus on routine maintenance and the small “stitch in time” repairs which can reduce the likelihood that more costly, major repairs will be needed in the future.

The Buildings for Mission programme will also give us a fund to make direct grants to parishes for maintenance, repairs and bat mitigation measures. It won’t be a large amount, but together with Liz’s and Ann’s support, it should make a real difference to many parishes by getting those “stitch in time” repairs and maintenance tasks done.

St Owen’s Altar Guild

Decorating St Owens Church for Christmas will take place
on

Saturday 23 December from 10 am

Anyone who would like to help will be most welcome.

Donations for the purchase of flowers will be gratefully received. Margaret Parrott 18 Tudor Close.

Canon David Winter reflects on the coming of Jesus...

The Most Beautiful Story

A well-known atheist was once interviewed on Radio 4. When asked how he spent Christmas, and he said that he went to Midnight Mass at church. 'But you're an atheist', his interviewer protested. 'Yes', he replied, 'but what they celebrate at Christmas is the most beautiful story ever told'.

That 'beautiful story' tells of a Creator who sent His Son to share the life of His creation, to be born as a helpless baby, to grow up as a man of extraordinary wisdom, gentleness and love, who was executed by the authorities for contradicting the traditions of the time. His followers – who today number about two billion people all over the world – believe that He rose from the dead, and that by His death and resurrection He has made possible forgiveness and eternal life for men and women everywhere.

That is certainly quite a story, perhaps the greatest story ever told, and yes, beautiful. And that is the story that will be rehearsed again this Christmas, in children's Nativities, in hymns and carols, in Bible readings and sermons all over the country. People who stay away from church all year turn up to hear it, and who can blame them? This is a story of hope, of love and of heaven touching earth.

Most of us are familiar with probably the best-known statue in the world, Christ the Redeemer, towering over Rio de Janeiro, His arms outstretched in blessing. Christmas celebrates the birth of that great Redeemer – a tiny baby laid in a feeding trough. His birth changed history, His life transformed our understanding of what it means to be human, His death was at one and the same time a tragedy and a triumph. Yes, 'the most beautiful story ever told'. Enjoy it again this Christmas.

No Room? On the Contrary

This year one carol will be sung with particular poignancy. It retells the message of angels, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests" and continues:

*Yet with the woes of sin and strife,
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled,
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love song which they bring:
O hush the noise, you men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.*

The angels' goodwill message will persist despite our clamour, for it proclaims God's all-embracing and eternal welcome. Heaven's doors are ever open: it is home for everyone. The final biblical vision is of an all-encompassing city: "On no day will its gates ever be shut... the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it."

Jesus, for whom there had been no room at the inn, taught that God's kingdom is home for every race: "I say to you that many will come from the East and the West, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." He reassured those anxious about the future: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms..."

No room? Don't you believe it! *Ven John Barton*

Think twice before buying that goat in Ghana

What are you buying your friends for Christmas this year? If you are tempted by 'socially responsible' gifts that involve you NOT giving your friends anything at all, but instead giving your money to a charity 'in their name', you may wish to think again. Such gifts as goats in Ghana or chickens in Chad can make you feel virtuous, but may also damage your relationships.

A recent study has found that people who buy others 'socially responsible' gifts can be considered self-serving and inconsiderate by the people to whom they give them. It seems that such givers often over-estimate how appreciative their friends will be to receive nothing!

A study at the University of Southern California found that to be successful, a gift must make the recipient feel 'special'. So, if you suspect that giving your various loved-ones news about some goat in Ghana won't achieve that, there is only one solution: instead of *giving* only socially responsible gifts, insist on *receiving only them*. Then your mantelpiece will be full of photos of happy goats and chickens, and your family and friends will enjoy your more usual gifts - and still be speaking to you.

Parish Pump website

Friends of St Owen's

As we begin to contemplate the beginning of another year please look out for reminders from Frances, our Membership Secretary, that annual subs and contributions to the 100 Club fall due next month.

Note for your diary - FoSO AGM Thursday 15th February at 7.30pm in the Fellowship Room at St Owen's.

EJ - Chairman FoSO



Singing together in Bromham

WINTER with UNISONG

Saturday 2nd December

2:00pm

**at St. Owen's Church,
Bromham**

**An afternoon of Winter Songs &
Christmas Carols**

Tickets at the door

(reservations recommended- Tel 01234 826551)

Tickets £10 adults, £5 U14s

Drinks & seasonal refreshments

Raffle

Proceeds to St. Owen's and BECHAR*

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www.unisong.weebly.com

Old Testament Guided Tour

Jesus – brought up on the Old Testament
He knew it so well He could lecture in the Temple.
Have you ever wished you knew it better than you do?

Join our expert guide to the Old Testament

Saturday 10th February 2024

9.30am – 4.00pm

at

**The Fellowship Centre
Clapham Parish Church
£14 – b-y-o packed lunch**

Sessions promise to be FUN, MEMORABLE & with such
CLARITY

that you will be able to retell the whole storyline.

Book with Revd Min-Min Peaker,
Curate at Clapham Parish Church

curatecpc@btinternet.com

07739 391037

Teas in Church

Christmas Special

St Mary's, Oakley

Sunday 10th December

3.30 – 5.00pm

Adults £3.50 u12 £1.00

plus Grand Raffle



Curry Night

at

Indian Summer

Tues 30 Jan 2024

7 for 7.30pm

£15

+ a Grand Raffle

Raising funds for St Mary's, Oakley

A cheery evening out
for a good cause!

Further details from:
Dorothy 01234 823959
Diane 07788 677513

Stick with Love - Rejoicing in Every Tongue, Every Tribe, Every Nation by Arun Arora, SPCK, £10.99

The Archbishop of York's Advent Book 2023

Martin Luther King famously declared that 'I have decided to stick with love... Hate is too great a burden to bear'. In these luminous daily readings, Arun Arora helps us consider the biblical picture of the Church as the people of God, drawn from every tribe, every tongue, and every nation.

Themes of racial justice, hospitality and welcome are explored alongside the stories of saints from across the globe. Beginning with reflections from Isaiah and Revelation, the meditations lead us on to consider the missionaries, martyrs and mystics who light our Advent way.



'Messy Church for All'
at Oakley Methodist Church
on 3rd Tuesday in the month
3.30 till 5.30pm
Contact 824504 or
mcarr49@hotmail.com

The first-ever nativity scene

This Christmas, thousands of Nativity plays will be held around the UK. Ever wondered who staged the very first one?

It was St Francis of Assisi, and it was 800 years ago, in Greccio, Italy, on 25th December 1223.

Francis had been born into a wealthy family, but abandoned his noble inheritance when he became a Christian. Instead, he had turned to a life of great simplicity, in service to Christ's church.

Francis spent many hours meditating on the stories of the life of Christ, and even travelled to the Holy Land in 1219 and 1220, to see the various holy sites of Jesus's life. The sites deeply moved him, as they brought the Bible stories to vibrant life.

Back in Italy, in November of 1223, Francis was in Rome, and he had an idea. Why not share something of the inspiration of the Holy Land with his people here in Italy?

Barely 50 miles to the north, in Greccio, he knew many people to whom he had been ministering for years. He could at least show them something of the simplicity of the birth of Jesus.

And so it was that, two weeks before Christmas, Francis asked his friend, the Lord of Greccio, Giovanni Velita, to prepare a nearby cave with live animals and a hay-filled manger.

That cave, beside some rocky crags, became the venue of the very first ever Nativity scene. On Christmas 1223, when the people of Greccio attended Christmas Mass as usual, they were invited to 'come and see' the simple scene.

According to his biographer, Brother Thomas of Celano, Francis wanted people to see what Jesus had "suffered for lack of the necessities of a new-born babe, and how He lay in the manger between the ox and ass."

According to eyewitness accounts of the moment, fires lit the dark scene while crowds arrived at the spot carrying candles and torches. There were also accounts of miracles happening that night. Some people had a vision of a real infant in the empty manger, and others reported miraculous healings.

All in all, the Nativity scene was an instant success, and soon other communities were staging their own.

Today, you can still visit the cave and rocks where the first Nativity was staged. It is now a Franciscan hermitage and sanctuary. Every year at Christmas, the people of Greccio stage a live, historical re-enactment of St Francis and the first Nativity scene.

Pope Francis has visited the spot twice: in 2016 and then in 2019, when he signed an apostolic letter on the importance of Nativity scenes.

You can read more on this story at:

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/253123/st-francis-and-the-story-of-the-first-nativity-scene>

Try this quiz by Canon Paul Hardingham.

Nativity Quiz in 20 Questions

1. Where did Mary and Joseph live before Jesus was born?
a) Nazareth b) Bethlehem c) Jerusalem
2. What was the name of the angel who told Mary she would have a child?
3. What did Joseph do for a living?
4. Who was the Roman ruler when Jesus was born?
5. Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem?
6. How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
7. Why couldn't Mary and Joseph find a place to stay?
8. Where does the Bible say Jesus was born?
a) In a stable b) In hay c) In a manger
9. According to the Bible, which animals were specifically mentioned as being present in the stable when Jesus was born?
a) sheep and a donkey
b) cattle and a donkey
c) donkey, sheep and cattle
d) None
10. What does the angel say to the shepherds when they tell them to go to Bethlehem?
11. The wise men travelled to Jerusalem.
a) northward
b) southward
c) eastward
d) westward
12. What did the Wise Men follow to find Jesus?
13. How many Wise Men visited baby Jesus?
14. What gifts did the wise men bring for Jesus?
15. Who spread the news about baby Jesus throughout Bethlehem?
16. What is the City of David also known as in the Bible?

17. Which of the gospels tell the story of the Nativity?
18. What does Jesus' other name, "Immanuel", mean?
- a) God with us
 - b) Son of God
 - c) He who is God
 - d) Chosen One
19. How many days after the birth of Christ did Joseph and Mary give him the name Jesus?
20. Jesus was born on the 25th of December. True or false?

Answers on page 23

All in the month of December

It was:

250 years ago, on 16th December 1773 that the Boston Tea Party took place in Massachusetts. American patriots boarded ships and threw chests of tea belonging to the British East India Company into Boston Harbour, as a protest against the British tax on tea.

200 years ago, on 23rd December 1823 that the poem *The Night Before Christmas* was first published (anonymously) in the Sentinel newspapers in Troy, New York. It was written by Clement Clarke Moore.



From the Registers

Crematorium Service:

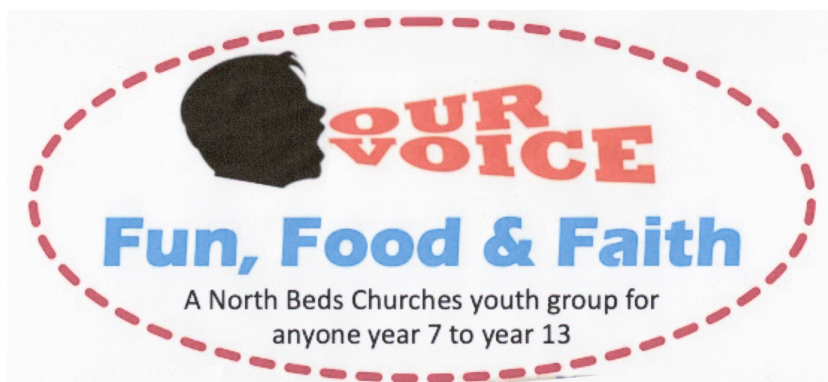
1st November Pat Tanner (Bromham)

Funerals:

2nd November Mary Johnston (Bromham)

Burial of Ashes:

22nd November Pat Tanner (Bromham)



Christmas Special

Saturday 9th December

extended session 5-7pm

Join us for an evening of games, activities,
Christmas food and discussion.

For young people from school year 7 to 13
at The Fellowship Centre
Clapham MK41 6ER

Next event - 13th January

For more information see sharnbrookdeanery.co.uk
or contact us at ourvoicetoo@gmail.com

Christmas gifts

Grandfather was talking to his granddaughter, "When I was a child all we got for Christmas was an apple and an orange."

The little girl clapped her hands in joy. "Brilliant! I'd love a new computer and a mobile!"

All in the month of December

It was:

175 years ago – on 19th December 1848 that Emily Bronte, British novelist and poet, died of tuberculosis, aged 30. Best known for her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*.

100 years ago, on 6th December 1923 that Ramsay MacDonald became the first Labour Prime Minister.

Also 100 years ago, on 31st December 1923 that the BBC broadcast the chimes of Big Ben for the first time, to welcome in the New Year. The tradition continues to this day.

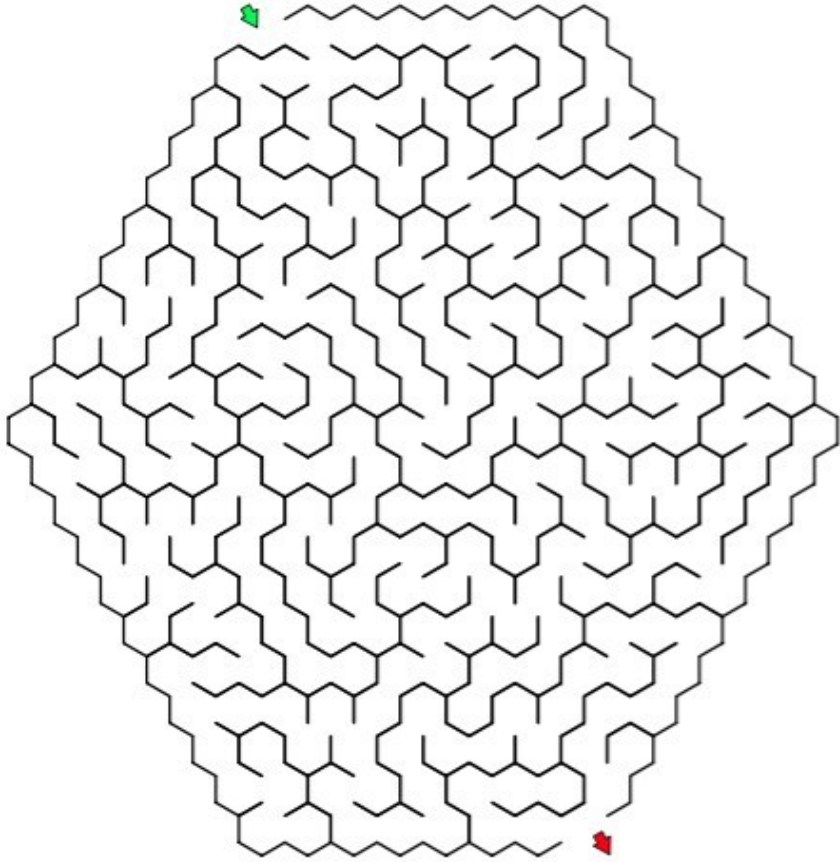
80 years ago, on 22nd December 1943 that Beatrix Potter, children's writer and illustrator, died. She created animal characters including Peter Rabbit, Squirrel Nutkin, Mrs Tiggy-Winkle, Jemima Puddle-Duck, and many more.

75 years ago, on 10th December 1948 that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

Nativity Quiz Answers:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Nazareth | good will to all people' |
| 2. Gabriel | 11. d) westward |
| 3. Carpenter | 12. A star |
| 4. Caesar Augustus | 13. The Bible doesn't say |
| 5. To register for the census | 14. Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh |
| 6. We are not told in the Bible | 15. The shepherds |
| 7. There was no room at the inn | 16. Bethlehem |
| 8. c) In a manger | 17. Matthew and Luke |
| 9. d) None | 18. a) God with us |
| 10. 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, | 19. 8, according to the law |
| | 20. False; we don't know the date |

Can you find your way from top to bottom?



What would you like for Christmas?

A little girl went to visit Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and the question of what she would like for Christmas.

The little girl gasped and stared up at him in horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

For younger readers.....

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Luke 1: 26-56 & Matthew 1: 18-25

In Israel, about 2000 years ago, a young woman, Mary, was going to marry Joseph. The weddings were in two stages.

In one year we will
complete our wedding



Then God's messenger
angel came to see Mary.



Don't be afraid!

You will have God's baby,
and call him Jesus, 'God saves',
because he will save people
from what they do wrong.



How can this happen?



With God,
nothing is impossible.

Your cousin Elizabeth, who
couldn't have children, is
now 6 months pregnant.



Mary visited
Elizabeth.



When Joseph heard that
Mary was pregnant, he
was very upset



This will bring
shame on me and
my family.



He always did what was right
so he decided to end their
marriage, but quietly.



But the angel came
to him in a dream.

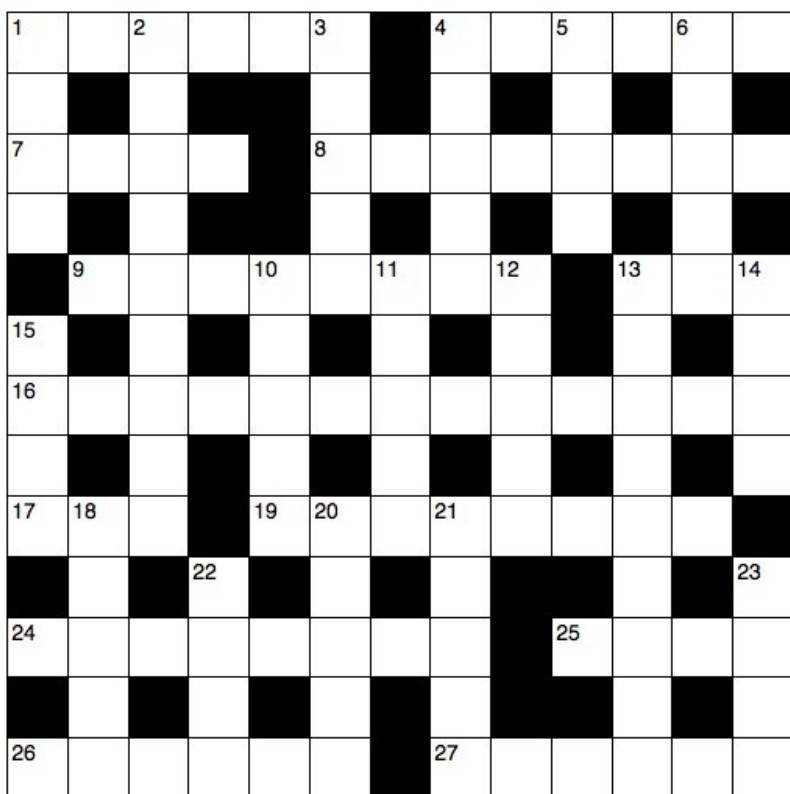


Don't be afraid to marry Mary.
The baby is God's, and you will
call him Jesus.



So Joseph and Mary
completed their marriage.





Across

1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)

4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)

7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) (4)

8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)

9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)

13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)

16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one; so was Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11; 16:2) (4,9)

- 17 National Association of Evangelicals (of the USA) (1,1,1)
- 19 Popular song for New Year's Eve, Auld — — (4,4)
- 24 Able dock (anag.) (8)
- 25 The number of stones David chose for his confrontation with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (4)
- 26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations' (6)
- 27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)

Down

- 1 Money owing (Deuteronomy 15:3) (4)
- 2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2) (9)
- 3 'Do this, whenever you — it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (5)
- 4 A group assisting in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church (5)
- 5 One of the gifts Joseph's brothers took with them on their second journey to Egypt (Genesis 43:11) (4)
- 6 'Reach out your hand and — — into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)
- 10 Be outstandingly good (2 Corinthians 8:7) (5)
- 11 'What — — that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:4) (2,3)
- 12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)
- 13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)
- 14 Comes between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (4)
- 15 One of Israel's northern towns conquered by Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 15:20) (4)
- 18 Narnia's Lion (5)
- 20 One of the two rivers in which Naaman would have preferred to wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)
- 21 Avarice—one of the evils that come from inside people (Mark 7:22) (5)
- 22 Knight Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (1,1,1,1)
- 23 Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)

Solution on page 31



*Sara preferred to let people work
out the hymns for themselves*

Sudoku -
medium

6	1			7				
					4	5		2
				8				3
	7		8			9		
		2				6		
		3			2		8	
4				5				
1		6	3					
				4			9	7

Solution on
page 31

All in the month of December

It was:

65 years ago, on 5th December 1958 that Britain's first motorway, the Preston By-pass, was officially opened. (It is now part of the M6 and M55.)

40 years ago, on 10th December 1983 that Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. (It was accepted by his wife, as he feared he might not be allowed back into Poland if he travelled to Norway to accept it.)

20 years ago, on 1st December 2003 that using a handheld mobile phone while driving became illegal in the UK.

10 years ago, on 5th December 2013 that Nelson Mandela died. This anti-apartheid revolutionary and politician had become President of South African 1994-99. He served as President of the African National Congress (ANC) 1991-97. Winner of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize.

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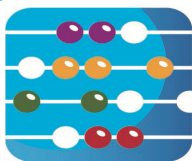
Any astronomer can predict with absolute accuracy just where every star in the universe will be as the clocks chime midnight on Christmas Eve. He can make no such prediction about his teenage daughter. *Anon*

Solution to puzzle
 on page 28

6	1	5	2	7	3	8	4	9
3	8	9	1	6	4	5	7	2
7	2	4	5	8	9	1	6	3
5	7	1	8	3	6	9	2	4
8	4	2	7	9	5	6	3	1
9	6	3	4	1	2	7	8	5
4	3	7	9	5	8	2	1	6
1	9	6	3	2	7	4	5	8
2	5	8	6	4	1	3	9	7

Solution to puzzle
 on page 26

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



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God in the Sciences

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge.

Follow the Star

Jesus' welcoming committee included Eastern scholars who learned about His birth through their study of astrology. I can't help thinking that the arrival of these people at Bethlehem is a link between a very early form of science (albeit mixed in with their own form of religion) and Christian faith. What better way to discover God than to explore the world and follow the evidence wherever it leads? But what exactly was the star of Bethlehem? Scientists have investigated this question over the centuries, coming up with a variety of answers.



First, there is the idea of a supernova: the massively bright explosion caused by a dying star. On rare occasions a supernova can be seen from Earth with the naked eye, remaining visible for several months. We now know that Herod the Great died around 4BC, so the actual date of Jesus' birth must be a little earlier. The two supernovae that might match this timing were one in the Andromeda galaxy between March 8BC and September 7BC, and another in the constellation of Capricorn in the Spring of 5BC.

Next, comes a planetary conjunction. The alignment most commonly associated with the star of Bethlehem was between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7BC, but not

everyone is sure whether this would be extraordinary enough to be the 'star' mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the bright astronomical object that drew the Magi could have been a comet. This idea came from Sir Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Oxford astronomer WG Waddington, who found that a comet was recorded by Chinese astronomers between March and May, 5BC. Humphreys then speculated that the 'no room at the inn' scenario came about because Jesus was born during Passover, and the Magi visited Jesus in May or June.

People interpret the biblical account of Jesus' birth in all sorts of ways, but there's very little argument from serious historians that Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. Whatever the true explanation for the 'star of Bethlehem' may be, there's plenty of evidence that an astronomical event could have happened at the time of His birth.

I think it makes perfect sense that if God was going to enter His own creation and take on the form of one of His own creatures, it should be marked by a very significant physical event!

Looking back on the year...

Everyone is interested in the future, in what lies ahead, and particularly this is true in business. - *Wayne A Johnston*

My political ideal is democracy. Everyone should be respected as an individual, but no one idolized. - *Albert Einstein*

Any event, once it has occurred, can be made to appear inevitable by a competent historian. - *Lee Simonson*

History repeats itself, that's one of the things that's wrong with history. - *Clarence Darrow*

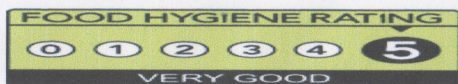


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