

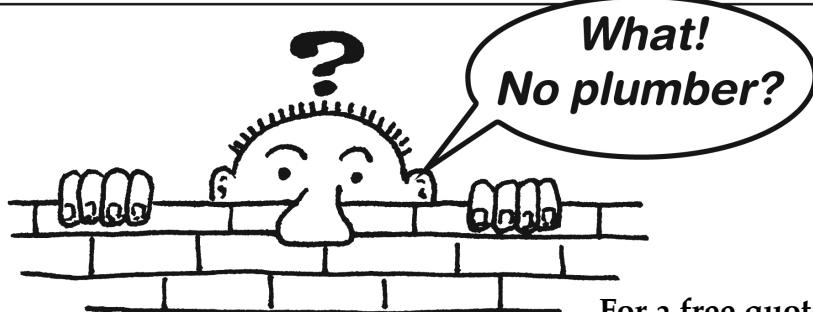
Church News

for the Parishes of Bromham, Oakley and Stagsden

*Ring
out the
old,
ring
in the
new,
Ring,
happy
bells,
across
the
snow*



January 2026



*Need a plumber at any time?
Today that could be a crime,
But not with my competitive rates,
I'll soon get you out of a state.*

*Need a new bathroom, or washing machine fitted?
Just call on me – I'm very well kitted.*

*Need central heating or just a tap washer changed?
Give me a ring and get it arranged.*

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MK41 6EJ

Tel:
07785 716716

Bedford Carers

Maria O'Byrne

melita564@hotmail.com

Tel. 07817 191820



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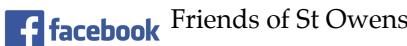
DBS checked Experienced References

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Who's Who in Bromham cont....

Children & Young	}{Emma Harrison	07752 186808
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



Who's Who in Oakley

Church Officers

Churchwardens	Mr G Palmer	07710 462535
	Mrs H Worley	262166
PCC Secretary	Katrina Hyden	07908 987959
	oakleypccsecretary@bromhambenefice.org	
PCC Treasurer	Mrs S Ball	ls.ball@btinternet.com
Organist & Choirmaster	- contact Jenny Sudworth	822859
Messy Church for pre-school children (birth - 4yrs)	& their carers	
	Revd Catherine Wilson	825665
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 through Revd Di Harpham	07973 953744
PCC Secretary	Caroline Heaton	
Ringers	Mr Richard Brown	823289
Flowers Team	please contact through Revd Di Harpha	07973 953744
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>4th January</u>	<u>Epiphany</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Oakley)
10.30am	Holy Communion (Bromham)
<u>11th January</u>	<u>Baptism of Christ</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Bromham)
10.30am	LEP Service (Oakley Methodist)
3.30pm	Plough Sunday Service (Stagsden Village Hall)
<u>18th January</u>	<u>2nd Sunday of Epiphany</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Bromham)
10.30am	Holy Communion (Bromham)
<u>25th January</u>	<u>3rd Sunday of Epiphany</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Bromham)
10.30am	Holy Communion (Oakley)

Weekday Services

Mondays	
11.30am	Messy Church (Bromham)
Tuesdays (1st and 3rd of the month)	
11.30am	Holy Communion (Bromham FR)
Thursdays	
10.00am	Messy Church (Oakley)

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

Cover Quotation from:

'Ring out, wild bells' by Alfred, Lord Tennyson



As we face the new year, our Benefice will be holding a special service to mark Plough Sunday at Stagsden Village Hall on Sunday 11th January at 3.30pm - do come and join us! This service will remember the blessing of the plough which took place in rural communities over many centuries. The connection with soil echoes an ancient truth: that the earth is God's gift and we are called to tend it with care, humility, generosity and hope. Each year we look to God for the mystery of life hidden in every seed, and we recall the deep partnership between God's provision for us, our reliance on Him, and our own responsibility to curate and nurture the environment for future generations.

Traditionally Plough Sunday is a day deeply rooted in village life and the rhythms of the countryside. It marks the end of the Christmas season, the beginning of the farming year, and a return to work for everyone - whether a farm worker or not. It acknowledges that seedtime and harvest, rain and sunshine, growth and yield were – and still are – never fully in human control. Plough Sunday remains a way of placing the year ahead into God's hands. At this service we will recommit ourselves to this shared ambition to care and tend our environment and each other.

Plough Sunday gives us an opportunity to give thanks for

those who care for the land, often quietly and faithfully, through long hours and changing conditions. It is also a moment to pray for safety, resilience and hope for all involved in rural work of any kind. The plough is a powerful symbol, it breaks open hard ground so that new life can grow. Through this imagery we are encouraged to reflect on the year ahead and to consider what needs to be prepared in our own lives – new beginnings, fresh intentions, or perhaps the courage to let God work in unexpected ways. The winter fields lie waiting, Plough Sunday reminds us that beneath the surface, life is already stirring.

May we trust God with all our seasons ahead, (the rich and the fallow times), and with all that we place in his care.

Revd Petra

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - 18th to 25th January

This year the prayers and reflections are from the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with the Armenian Catholic and Evangelical Churches.

They draw upon centuries-old traditions of prayer and petitions used by the Armenian people, along with hymns that originated in the ancient monasteries and churches of Armenia, some of which date as far back as the fourth century.

They extend an invitation to draw upon this shared Christian heritage and to delve more deeply into our fellowship in Christ, which unites Christians worldwide. Paul's epistles stress the importance of unity within the Church, urging us to live lives worthy of our calling with humility, gentleness, patience and love (Ephesians 4:1-3).

More details at: <https://ctbi.org.uk/resources/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2026/>



Next meeting - Thursday 22nd January

Talk by Edward Jones "My Flying Life"

For further info contact Tessa Woodcock

01234 340089

Crochet - Knit
Sew - Mason

Sewing Group

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

I would be happy to undertake
alterations or mending. My fee, I will
donate to St Mary's Oakley. For more
information please call Maureen on
01234 356354.



'First Friday' Coffee Morning

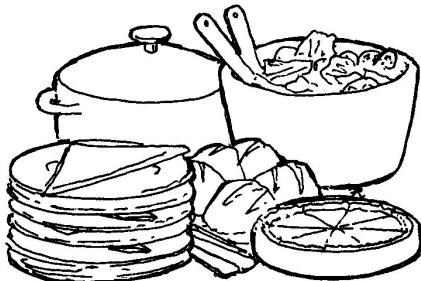
Next coffee morning on Fri 9th January*

11am- 1pm

in St Owen's Fellowship Room, Bromham.



*NB not the usual first Friday



Fellowship Lunch

at St Owen's

Next event

4th January

at 1230

Bring some food to share and enjoy the company of others as we eat together. All welcome no matter where you live.

More information from Vivien Butler 407351



A huge Thank You to everyone who helped, donated, bought, ate and drank at the Extravaganza. A superb amount of £816 has been raised for St.Owen's Church.



'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 CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Women on the Frontline (WFL) is a unique ministry within the Anglican Communion. The ministry, established by Caroline Welby and Sarah Snyder in 2017, supports women in provinces and dioceses across the Communion and sometimes women leaders from other denominations.

Women on the Frontline recognises the essential ministry of Bishops' and clergy spouses across the Anglican Communion. It seeks to gather spouses within a shared province or diocese, to:

- encourage and nurture Bishops' and clergy spouses and women leaders across the Anglican Communion through gatherings which combine retreats and training to enable them to discover their individual identity in Christ and vocation as peacebuilders
- equip women to become ambassadors of reconciliation in their own context
- facilitate these women in cascading their learning to others in their context

The ministry encourages personal relationship, reconciliation to God through Christ and facilitates training to equip these women to carry out their role in their own contexts. WFL enables sharing of experiences with others, breaking down

Continued on next page

the sense of loneliness and providing a supportive environment for spiritual growth and healing.

W F L recognizes that in any violent conflict, women are often the first to notice the beginning of any tension, whether it is with self, family, church, community or the wider community

and naturally defuse the tension, make peace and bring about reconciliation. WFL values the importance of equipping and training women as key actors in reconciliation and any other peace process.



Each residential programme lasts 3 to 5 days and is facilitated by a Women on the Frontline team including current and former Bishops spouses.

The ministry is guided by five basic principles; **Presence, parity, particularity, potential and prayer.**

Presence – a ‘being with’ one another, learning to see, notice, listen and respect one another which demonstrates the value of each person.

Parity – a conscious laying down of anything which sets us apart from one another - status, roles, age, language so that all are equal in God’s - and one another’s – sight.

Continued on next page

Particularity – responding to the particular needs of the spouses to create training sessions suited to them; expecting personal encounter with the God who knows each person by name.

Potential - a recognition that when we know who we are in Christ we can more clearly become the people he calls us to be; that women can unlock potential in one another; that multiplication of potential can be seen in collaborative and prayerful teamwork; that each participant has the potential to spread what they have received to those in their care.

Prayer – implicit and explicit, running through each principle and in each encounter. Every activity and group and gathering is underpinned by prayer before, during and after.

Future of Women on the Frontline

Women on the Frontline leadership, staffing and programmes continue to operate, having transferred to the Rose Castle Foundation on 1 August 2025 (www.rosecastlefoundation.org)

For further information, please contact Jane Namurye on jane.namurye@rosecastle.foundation for further details.

Archbishop of Canterbury's website

St Timothy and St Titus, how local church leaders should be!

Timothy and Titus, who are commemorated on 26th January, are the saints for you if you've been a Christian for some time, and now suspect that God wants you to move into some form of leadership. A daunting prospect!

The books of First and Second Timothy and Titus are what are known as the three pastoral letters, where Paul writes to

Continued on next page

ministers in charge of important churches, instead of writing to the churches themselves. Paul gives both Timothy and Titus explicit instructions for how to shepherd the sheep in their care. Timothy had been given the responsibility of the church at Ephesus, and Titus the care of the church at Crete. Both Timothy and Titus were young men, and both felt quite daunted at the task ahead of them!

Timothy, half Jewish, had met Paul when he was still a child, living with his mother Eunice at Lystra. Paul had come to their city and preached, and they had both become Christians. Timothy had then accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey – a great training experience. But experience is given to us so that we might in turn become productive – and in due course Paul entrusted the vastly important church of Ephesus into Timothy's care. This church was so vibrant in its faith that within 50 years so many Ephesians became Christians that the city's pagan temples were almost forsaken. A huge responsibility!

Titus was a gentile, almost certainly converted through Paul. Paul had used Titus as a trouble-shooter with the Corinthians, and when Titus was successful in that, gave him a real bit of trouble: the church at Crete. Again, Titus served his Lord faithfully, even in this most difficult of situations.

Timothy became the first bishop of Ephesus and was finally martyred when he opposed pagan festivals (probably in honour of Dionysius). He was killed by stones and clubs, easily to hand during the pagan festival of Katagogia. His supposed relics were translated to Constantinople in 356.

Titus went on to become the first Bishop of Crete, and is believed to have died there, though history does not tell us how. His relics are supposed to be buried in Crete, except for his head, which was allegedly taken to Venice in 823.

New Year's Resolutions

Which qualities will you resolve to embrace this year?



1 Cor 11:10, Ps 20:5

And

for which will you pray that those around you exhibit?

How to keep those New Year Resolutions

We are full of good intentions at the start of each year. How come we usually fizzle out by February? Here are some tips to keep you going...

Be realistic. If you have several goals, don't attempt them all at once. Research has found that if you stagger your goals, you will have more success. So, for example, if this year you want to spend less money, do more exercise and spend more time with your family, start one change this month, another in February, and start the third in March.

Be specific. For example, don't tell yourself: Lose weight. Decide exactly how much you want to lose. When do you want to lose it by? How will you do it? If you want more time with your family, how and when will you do that? The more exact you can be, the more likely you are to succeed.

Write it down. There's something about committing thoughts to paper that helps to cement your resolve. Why not start some sort of journal this year, to track your thoughts, your hopes, your goals – and your successes!

Tell other people. If you intend to do something, tell someone, and therefore you will feel more obliged to get going with it... your pride may keep you going when all else fails!

Focus on GAIN, not loss. Ever notice how many resolutions are about giving something up? Why not put it the other way round - instead of saying you will eat less, tell yourself you are headed for those skinny jeans....

Give yourself rewards. If you are quitting smoking or sweets, for example, put the money that you would have spent in a jam jar, and treat yourself to something nice (and healthy) with it.

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Break your resolution into steps. Some goals will take months to achieve. So, break each one down into tiny steps, and simply head for each step. Build in some time frames, to prevent you procrastinating.

Finally, don't let failure defeat you. You will make mistakes. But the secret is to simply get up again and to keep going. Only if you stop are you really defeated. None of us are perfect, and the Bible encourages us to always start again.

Parish Pump website

Editor: Revd Roy Shaw is a retired but active priest in the diocese of York, where he is a spiritual director. Last month we printed the first half of his thought-provoking article:

This Christmas, will you have enough?

*He left us with the observation that "Any advert you happen to catch will convince you of this truth; western capitalism depends on **you** buying stuff, needed or not." and now he continues.....*

That advert tells us: "You will never feel complete, be complete, unless you have this product. And then let me draw your attention to *this*, a '**must have**'"...

But the fantasy world which supports this compulsion to '**must have**' is that the earth has infinite resources, and we can go on forever fulfilling the fantasy of *all* our wants being satisfied from Amazon or Temu or wherever. We're unwilling to face the fact of the earth's finite resources, either for ourselves or our grandchildren. It is only God who has infinite resources.

As Christians we're supposed to be alive to this lie, that the gewgaws of this world can fulfil us. But many of us still get

Continued on next page

sucked into the myth of *stuff* as being the be-all and end-all of life.

Thank God, then, for the irritant of our faith in this materially obsessed world. It reminds us that *in Christ I have enough*. Let me just slow down and take that in again. *In Christ I have enough*. From Genesis to Revelation the message is 'God will provide, and *I will have enough*'.

I often pray the words of St Teresa of Avila as a reminder, as a brake on my own unfettered wants. It's more needed than ever at Christmas, when God disturbs all our complacencies by breaking into this world in human form, and proving to us in the life of Jesus that God is enough. If we're counter-cultural enough to call ourselves Christian, maybe it's a prayer we all take to heart, to mind, to soul.

Let nothing disturb you, nothing affright you; All things must pass, God never changes. Patience achieves all things. Those who have God lack nothing- God alone suffices. (Teresa of Avila)

Have you ever wondered where the name 'Jesus' comes from?

The name Jesus is a transliteration of a name that occurs in several languages. It is of Hebrew origin, 'Yehosua', or Joshua. There is also the Hebrew-Aramaic form, 'Yesua'. In Greek, it became *Iēsoūs*, and in Latin it became 'Jesus'.

The meaning of the name is 'Yahweh delivers' or 'Yahweh rescues', or 'Yahweh is salvation'. No wonder the angel Gabriel in Luke (1:26-33) told Mary to name her baby Jesus: "because He will save His people from their sins."

Parish Pump website

Music at St Owen's



On Saturday 20th December the community choir Unisong held their charity Christmas Concert at St Owen's. A full church enjoyed a delightful and varied performance and seven lucky people went home with magnificent raffle prizes!

This year, the choir had chosen to support the East of England Air Ambulance and, when all the reckoning had been done there was the wonderful sum of £1,100 to send to the charity

**Messy
CHURCH** **PLUS!!**

Join us for more family fun,
craft, activities and food
next time...

Monday February 16th 2026
11.30am—1.30pm
St Owen's Church, Bromham

Children must come with an adult. Free event.

www.bromhambenefice.org

Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham continues his series on the books of the Bible.

What's the Big Idea? - An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament: Song of Songs

The title of this book, 'Solomon's Song of Song' (1:1), claims to be written by Solomon, and while his name is mentioned seven times and several verses speak of the 'king', the book may be more about Solomon rather than written by him. However, it is reasonable to assume that Song of Songs was written in the tenth century BC, during Solomon's reign (971-931 BC).

The focus of the Song is God's choicest gifts of love and the voice of this love belongs to a woman, the beloved. It is her experience of love, both as the one who loves and as the one who is loved, that is most clearly expressed. The Song begins with her wish for her lover's kiss and ends with an invitation for intimate love. It describes the intimacies of married love as God intends it to be. She speaks profoundly of love; of its beauty and delight; its exclusiveness (2:16); its spontaneity (2:7) and its overwhelming power: *'Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.'* (8:6,7)

God created man and woman, and established marriage as His purpose for society (Genesis 1:27; 2:20-24). This Song is part of the wisdom literature and shows us how to receive and live the gift of God's love with thanksgiving and celebration. However, the Song also speaks symbolically of the experience of intimacy to be found in our relationship with Christ: *'My lover is mine and I am his...and his banner over me is love.'* (2:16,4).

Editor: Have you ever thought how an actual church building might provide a series of visual aids to spiritual meditation? The Revd Michael Burgess begins at the Church Door....

'He gave us eyes to see them' - The Church Door - St John's Adel

George Herbert is a much-loved Anglican poet, who died just 40 years old in 1633. His volume of poems 'The Temple' was published later that year. In it the poet leads the reader through the church door into the building to meditate on all that is seen inside. That procession through the church is the theme of our monthly articles this year. We shall visit a variety of English churches as we make our way from the font to the altar. We begin this month outside the glorious Norman building of St John's Church, Adel, near Leeds in West Yorkshire.

The church has a very fine south doorway with ornate carving. The oak door is a Victorian copy of the original door; the Sanctuary Ring is a replica of the Norman ring/knocker. It shows a monster about to swallow a man, but open the door and there is safety and protection away from the harms of the world. It is the theme in St John's Gospel of Jesus as the door to the sheepfold. Enter through Jesus, we are told, to find the



Continued on next page

safety of the flock, and also to find nourishment and renewal. We can stand at the door of this beautiful church or at the door of our own churches. It opens and welcomes us to enjoy the friendship and refreshment within.

The door could stay closed, protecting us from the storms of life without that threaten us like the dark creature in the Norman sanctuary ring of Adel church. But we know that in the church building we have no abiding city. Our worship ends and the door will open once again to lead us out into that world. Within we have found nourishment in the sacrament of the altar, in the word of scripture, and in the fellowship of the flock. We go out to share those gifts with the world that others may come to know Jesus as the door that leads to life eternal.

From the Registers

Wedding:

6th December	Rosie Kendall & Dean Hickley (Bromham)
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Burial of Ashes:

1st December	Susan Cook (Bromham)
4th December	Ronald Allman (Bromham)
16th December	Theadora Lee (Bromham)
22nd December	Leannah Robinson (Bromham)

Memorial Service:

15th December	Graham Hull (Bromham)
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FRIENDS OF ST OWEN'S 100 CLUB PRIZE WINNERS

DECEMBER 2025

1st prize	Margaret Inegbedion
2nd prize	René Farquhar
3rd prize	Tim Hatton
4th prize	Di Harpham



The boiler only worked if the Verger switched it on!



Next meeting

Saturday 14th February

5 - 6.30pm

The Fellowship Centre
Clapham
MK41 6ER

NB: no January meeting

If we are taken up with our own personal needs, or if we are looking for position and status in the church, we shall be of little use to God. - *David Watson*

Philosophy and religion may reform, but only the Bible can transform. - *B Edwards*

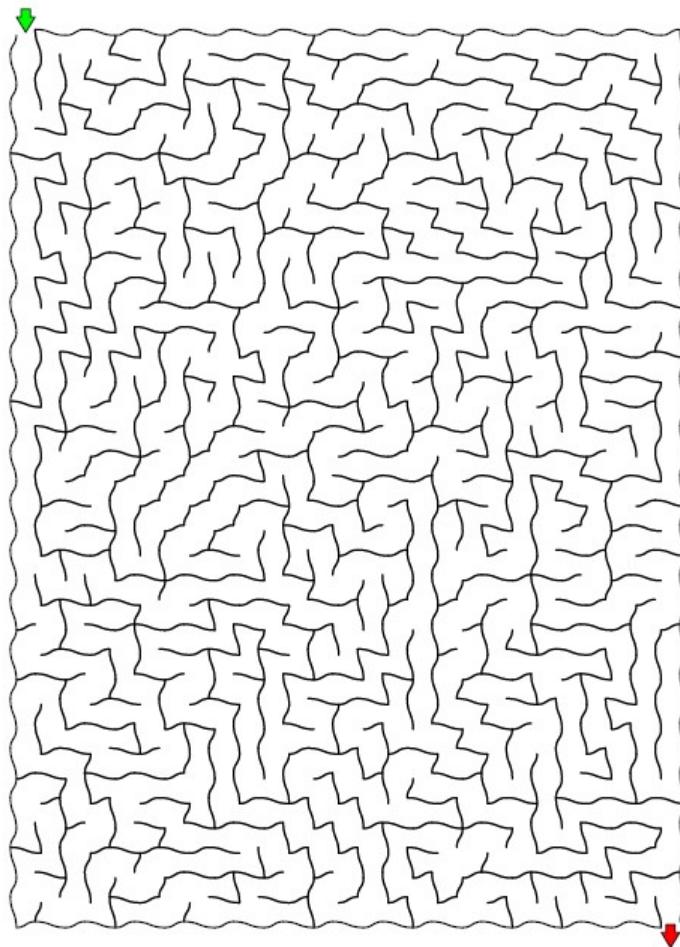
**Sudoku -
Medium**

Solution on
page 33

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

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Can you find your way from top to bottom?



Kids' letters to their vicar

Please say in your sermon that Peter Peterson has been a good boy all week. I am Peter Peterson.

Please say a prayer for our local cricket team. We need God's help or a new bowler. Thank you.

For younger readers.....

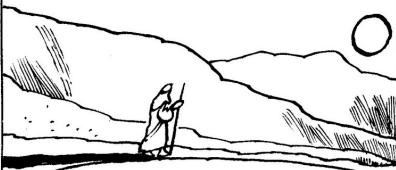
The Good Samaritan

JERICHO

ONCE, A LAWYER TRIED TO TRICK JESUS WITH A CLEVER QUESTION.

...WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

JESUS REPLIED BY TELLING THE LAWYER A STORY.



A MAN WENT FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICHO. ON THE WAY...

HE WAS ATTACKED BY ROBBERS!!



THEY TOOK EVERYTHING HE HAD AND LEFT HIM FOR DEAD!



LATER A PRIEST PASSED BY, BUT DID NOTHING TO HELP - NOR DID THE RELIGIOUS MAN FROM A TEMPLE!

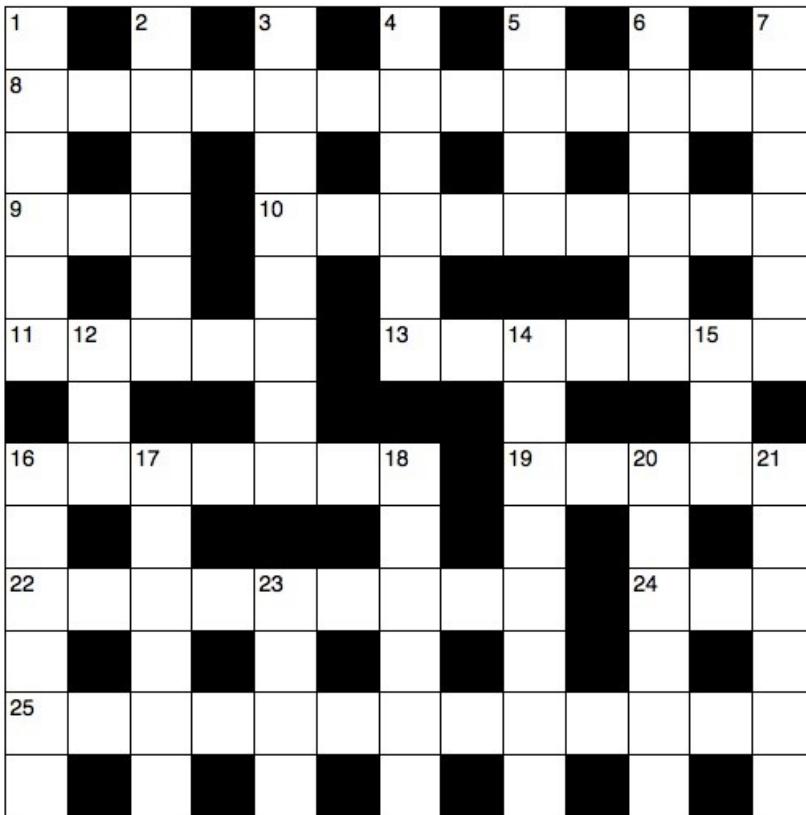
BUT A MAN FROM A FOREIGN COUNTRY STOPPED TO HELP THE INJURED MAN. HE DRESSED THE MAN'S WOUNDS, AND EVEN PAID FOR HIM TO STAY AT AN INN.



JESUS THEN ASKED "WHO WAS THE NEIGHBOUR?"

- PRIEST
- TEMPLE MAN
- FOREIGN MAN

WHICH DO YOU THINK WAS THE ONE THE LAWYER CHOSE?



Across

- 8 How the Abyss (NIV) is described in the Authorized Version (Revelation 9:1) (10,3)
- 9 Frozen water (Ezekiel 1:22) (3)
- 10 The Ten Commandments (9)
- 11 In Roman Catholic theology, neither heaven nor hell (5)
- 13 Des cons (anag.) (7)
- 16 'Though [your sins] are red as — , they shall be like wool' (Isaiah 1:18) (7)
- 19 Keen (Romans 1:15) (5)

- 22 Repugnant, loathsome (Jeremiah 24:9) (9)
- 24 Drink like an animal (Judges 7:5) (3)
- 25 First and last (Revelation 22:13) (5,3,5)

Down

- 1 Father of Ahi, a Gadite (1 Chronicles 5:15) (6)
- 2 Where David found the stone with which he killed Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (6)
- 3 'Hour by hour fresh lips are making thy — doings heard on high' (8)
- 4 'And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their — at night' (Luke 2:8) (6)
- 5 United Society for Christian Literature (1,1,1,1)
- 6 'If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would — — or a tax collector' (Matthew 18:17) (1,5)
- 7 Where Paul was taken when things became difficult for him in Berea (Acts 17:15) (6)
- 12 Istituto per le Opere di Religione (Vatican Bank) (1,1,1)
- 14 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new — ; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 Corinthians 5:17) (8)
- 15 Used to colour ram skins red for use in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:5) (3)
- 16 Vat car (anag.) (6)
- 17 'Be joyful — — , patient in affliction, faithful in prayer' (Romans 12:12) (6)
- 18 'The parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts — — special treatment' (1 Corinthians 12:23) (4,2)
- 20 Ancient rowing boat (Isaiah 33:21) (6)
- 21 Say again (2 Corinthians 11:16) (6)
- 23 What Jesus did in the synagogue in Nazareth after he stood up (Luke 4:16) (4)

Solution on page 33

Editor: There is a lot of talk about 'mindfulness' these days, and how to find calm moments in our daily lives. Both the BBC and Classic FM have even got radio stations devoted to 'mindful' and 'calm' music. But as Christians, we have an extra, divine resource, to call on. And so this month we are launching a new series, simply offering three verses to help reassure you that you are not alone in tough times.

Peaceful mind

The Bible tells the story of Jesus and His disciples in a boat.

The wind blows, the waves rise, and the disciples are stressed. Like them, we also get hit by storms in life.

Like them, we can't control what comes our way. But like them, we can know that Jesus is also with us.



Why not take a moment to ponder these promises:

In peace I will lie down and sleep, for You alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. (*Psalm 4:8*)

The Lord gives strength to His people, the Lord blesses His people with peace. (*Psalm 29:11*)

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace - as in all the congregations of the Lord's people. (*1 Corinthians 14:33*)

Parish Pump website

What, oh what, is that person's name?!

Do your New Year Resolutions include the forlorn hope that you will be better at remembering people's names in 2026?

Many of us – and not only those of the older generation – have difficulty remembering names. It's not just TV personalities and so on, but people we meet in the street. We know exactly who they are, we see them every week in church or the supermarket, we know what job they do and which school their children go to. But as for their name – it's a blank.

Help is at hand, however. Not to solve the problem, but at least to name it. 'Anomic aphasia' is the clinical name for the inability to remember a name, even when we can remember everything else about someone.

Strangely the cure for anomic aphasia comes spontaneously, often in the middle of the night, when that elusive identity pops unbidden into our memory. We must be sure, of course, to put the light on and write it down, because for sure it will be gone again with the morning light!

Parish Pump website

The puppy

A clergyman was walking down the street when he came upon a group of a dozen boys, surrounding a small puppy. Concerned lest the boys were hurting it, he went to investigate. One boy explained, "We just found this puppy, and we all want him. So, we've decided that whichever one of us can tell the biggest lie will get to take him home."

The minister was taken aback. "Don't you boys know it's a sin to lie? Why, when I was your age, I never told a lie." There was dead silence for a moment. The minister thought he had got through to them.

Then the smallest boy gave a deep sigh and said, "All right, give him the dog."

St James the Least of All

Historically, the Church of England has had its share of eccentric clergy. Clergy such as the elderly, Anglo-Catholic Uncle Eustace, who is incumbent in the small parish of St James-the-Least-of All, somewhere in Very Rural England. Eustace despairs of his nephew, Darren, who has become an evangelical curate in a busy urban parish... and so he writes letters, to try and properly 'educate' Darren in how to run a parish. The Revd Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace'...

On the perils of leading prayer in church

My dear Darren

I do hope you have now settled down in your first parish - although it is such a pity that you did not choose a more distinguished one. I know you feel your vocation lies in inner city work – whereas mine, fortunately, has always been to the better sort of rural village. I have always felt that the Almighty understands me well in that regard.



We had a little flurry of activity in church on Sunday. At the signal "let us pray", as the congregation dutifully flopped to their knees, sounding like a flock of geese settling in for the night, Major Hastings lost his glass eye. Yes, *again!* That man is so careless at times. Anyway, released from captivity, the eye rolled under the pews like a fugitive marble, ricocheting from hassock to handbag over the stone flags.

My sonorous entreaties to the Almighty were completely lost as the entire congregation scuttled under pews, trying to

Continued on next page

retrieve it. It finally appeared on the collection plate - along with £4.17, 100 pesetas and Miss Simpson's front door key. I was unsure whether the last item represented a fit of absent-mindedness or an improper suggestion. I returned it to her very firmly at the end of the Service.

The eye stared at me mournfully as I blessed it, along with the money. But it left a small social dilemma. What is the etiquette of returning a lost glass eye to its owner?

To have processed down the aisle with it, accompanied by crucifer and verger seemed a little too public. To sneak it to him as we shook hands at the door seemed a little too furtive. I finally decided to send a server to deliver it during the last hymn. I still wonder if it was the right decision. Perhaps you could look through that new Common Worship book and see if they have included an appropriate rite for returning lost glass eyes. We here at St James-the-Least-of-All haven't yet got round to Common Worship. The days are evil enough as it is.

Your loving uncle

Eustace

Meeting God in John - A Companion for Lent, Holy Week, Easter and Beyond *By David F. Ford, SPCK, £8.79*

Whether you are completely new to John's Gospel or have read it many times before, *Meeting God in John* will help you see the Fourth Gospel with fresh eyes and gain a deeper understanding of its essential meaning and purpose. Ford's straightforward approach also makes it helpful for new Christians just starting out on their faith journey. With its focus on the Passion narrative, it also serves beautifully as a Lent devotional



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A Year of the Lord's Favour - Grace in times of need

By Pete Wilcox, CHP, £12.99

Pete Wilcox reflects on the time when, in the space of one year, he was made a diocesan bishop – in the wake of the withdrawal of the preferred candidate – and was diagnosed with and received radical surgery for cancer of the colon that left him with a permanent colostomy. Drawing heavily on daily prayer journal entries kept at the time, he offers encouragement and support for anyone attempting to maintain life as normal while dealing with personal challenges that might be overwhelming. This is a story of both trust and resilience which will inspire and encourage anyone whose hopes and dreams have been overtaken by events. It will enable them to find God's faithfulness in the midst of turmoil.

Solution to puzzle on
page 23

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

Solution to puzzle
on page 26

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

Menai Suspension Bridge celebrates 200 years

If you have ever gone to Anglesey, chances are that you used the Menai Suspension Bridge (*Pont y Borth*, in Welsh). A lot of people do* – an average of 13,300 vehicles a day, or about 4.8 million vehicles a year.

The bridge celebrates a big anniversary this month: it is 200 years old. It was formally opened on 30th January 1826, to link Anglesey (*Ynys Mon*) to mainland Wales (*Gogledd Cymru*).



The bridge is special – it is the world's *first ever* major suspension bridge, with a 176-metre span. Designed by Thomas Telford, it took seven years to build and has been a huge success. It made the crossing safer (until then famers had had to swim their livestock across the strait), and it also made the crossing more dependable and quicker for everyone, cutting hours off the trip from London to Holyhead.

The bridge has changed little over 200 years although the original wrought-iron chains were replaced with high-tensile steel chains in 1940 and in 1998 it was brought under the management of UK Highways A55 Ltd.

To put the history of the bridge into perspective: it was built nearly 25 years before St Stephen's Tower (in 1859), re-named Elizabeth Tower in 2012, which houses Big Ben and more than 60 years before the Eiffel Tower (in 1889).

**Including your Editor, many times, which is why I could not resist including this article!*

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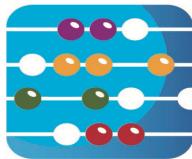
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