

Church News

for the Parishes of
Bromham, Oakley and Stagsden



June 2023



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Find us at: www.bromhambenefice.org



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

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PCC Treasurer	Mrs Emma Harrison	823121

	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

4th June

9.00am

10.30am

Trinity Sunday

Holy Communion (Oakley)

Holy Communion (Bromham)

11th June

9.00am

10.30am

6.00pm

1st Sunday after Trinity

Holy Communion (Stagsden)

LEP service (Oakley Methodist Church)

Evensong (Bromham)

18th June

9.00am

10.30am

4.30pm

2nd Sunday after Trinity

Holy Communion (Stagsden)

Holy Communion (Bromham)

Wild Church (Bromham Scout Site)

25th June

9.00am

10.30am

6.00pm

3rd Sunday after Trinity

Holy Communion (Bromham)

Holy Communion (Oakley)

Evensong (Oakley)

Weekday Services

Mondays

11.30am

Messy Church (Bromham)

Thursdays

10.00am

Messy Church (Oakley)

Tuesdays (1st and 3rd of the month)

11.30am

Holy Communion (Bromham

Fellowship Room)

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)



As we move into early Summer and hopefully warmer, sunnier weather, SATs assessments in school are a fading memory and with the prospect of the school summer holidays on the distant horizon, we can look forward with optimism to the next few months. There are memories perhaps of the May long Bank Holiday weekends that gave us the chance to pause, relax or celebrate, maybe gathering with family, friends or neighbours. Or perhaps we took the opportunity to use that time to go off and do something completely different?

I was reminded of the various ways we could have spent our Bank Holiday weekends, and while I was drawn back to the Coronation, with the ceremony, pageantry and parties, another event stood out. A few weeks ago, Eurovision burst onto our screens, with a technicolour blast and seemingly endless energy. (I admit to being a fan, ever since we sang 'Save all your kisses for me', (Brotherhood of Man), at my Leavers' Assembly way back when!

This year Eurovision carried the strapline 'United by Music' and the whole evening overflowed with a mix of styles, camaraderie with a gentle competitive edge, bookended by humour, sweeping images from the different countries and a sense of goodwill. Music played a big part in the Coronation too, whether the choral and Gospel compositions from the

service, the military bands on route, or the variety of performers at the evening concert a day later.

Both events gifted us experiences beyond our everyday life, probably through the television or computer screen. I'm reminded of the variety that life offers us, a bit like the TV schedules or streaming menu. It's there for us: the good; the bad; the funny; the strange; the unexpected; the challenging and the moments of drama too. I am reminded of Psalm 34, which encourages us to 'Taste and see that the Lord is good', to experience life through the lens of a personal relationship with God, and to have the confidence and openness to be aware of how God is working in our everyday lives.

Our churches in Bromham, Oakley and Stagsden may not offer the full Eurovision experience, but we do offer an open door and a warm welcome. If Sunday morning is not your thing our churches share a taste of community and a friendly welcome at other times too, as we did during our open sessions at Holy Week and Easter. Happily, the Church of England has a tradition that seems to run on cake, biscuits, and a cuppa or coffee, and these will be part of our ongoing welcome through the summer months, (see magazine for dates and details).

Why not take some time out to 'taste and see', whether your preference is squash or coffee, lemon drizzle, chocolate cake or home-made biscuits you will be very welcome.

Come along and 'taste and see'...

Petra Yates

Ordination as Priest - Revd Petra Yates

Sunday 2nd July at St Peter's Sharnbrook

Revd Petra will be one of four deacons being ordained priest at the 10.30am service in Sharnbrook.

Currently each benefice with a deacon being ordained has been allocated 30 seats, which will be ticketed. If not all tickets are being used by any benefice, they will be reallocated to the other benefices. The 30 seats do not include robing clergy or choir members.

There will be "sign-up" sheets in each of our churches during June and we ask you to indicate which of these options you favour:

- a) you would like to attend at Sharnbrook (should we exceed our limit, we may draw names out of a hat), or
- b) you'd like to come to the 9am service in Oakley, or
- c) you want to gather at St Owen's to watch via Zoom at 10.30am although there will not be a service.
- d) none of the above (there will be an option to watch via Zoom at home).

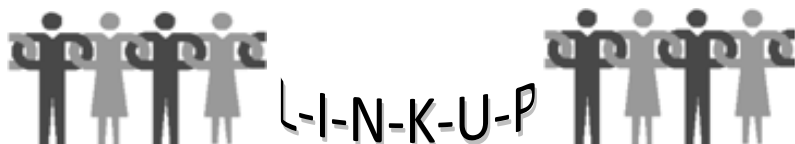
Parking at St Peter's is in short supply, so car-sharing is strongly encouraged. **Also**, please advise of people with **additional needs** eg in wheelchairs so provision can be made for all.

The service in Sharnbrook will be followed by drinks but no food.

Newly Confirmed



Andrew and Anneka, no longer "confirmation candidates" but recently confirmed by Richard, Bishop of Bedford, and welcomed by all at St Owen's. May the Lord bless them on their way.



On 8th June we will be having a meal out; for more information and bookings please contact me.

Anne Tombs - 822949

29th June - Feast of SS Peter & Paul, the two most famous apostles

The two most famous apostles are remembered this month, for they share a feast day.

St Peter (d. c. 64AD), originally called Simon, was a married fisherman from Bethsaida, near the Sea of Galilee. He met Jesus through his brother, Andrew. Jesus gave him the name of Cephas (Peter) which means rock. Peter is always named first in the list of apostles. He was one of the three apostles who were privileged to witness the Transfiguration, the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and the Agony in the Garden.

When Peter made his famous confession of faith, that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus recognised it as being the result of a revelation from the Father. He in turn told Peter that he would be the rock on which His Church would be built, that the 'gates of hell' would never prevail against it. Peter and the apostles would have the power of 'binding and loosing', but Peter would be personally given 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven'. Jesus also forewarned Peter of his betrayal and subsequent strengthening of the other apostles. After His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to Peter before the other apostles, and later entrusted him with the mission to feed both the lambs and the sheep of Christ's flock.

Peter played a big part in the early Church, and he is mentioned many times in the Book of Acts, where in the early chapters he organised the choice of Judas' successor, preached with stirring authority at Pentecost; and was the very first apostle to work a miracle. Peter went on to defend the apostles' right to teach at the Sanhedrin, and to condemn Ananias and Sapphira. It was Peter who first realised that Christianity was also for the Gentiles, after his meeting with Cornelius. Later he took a prominent part in the council at Jerusalem and went on to clash with St Paul at Antioch for

hesitating about eating with Gentiles.

Early tradition links Peter with an apostolate and martyrdom at Rome. The New Testament does not tell us either way, but Peter being in Rome would make sense, especially as Peter's first epistle refers to 'Babylon', which was usually identified with Rome. Peter's presence in Rome is mentioned by early church fathers such as Clement of Rome and Irenaeus. Tradition also tells us that Peter suffered under Nero and was crucified head-downwards. There is no conclusive proof either way that St Peter's relics are at the Vatican, but it is significant that Rome is the only city that ever claimed to be Peter's place of death.

St Peter was a major influence on Mark when writing his gospel, and the First Epistle of Peter was very probably his. (Many scholars believe that the Second Epistle was written at a later date.)

From very early times Peter was invoked by Christians as a universal saint. He was the heavenly door-keeper, the patron of the Church and the papacy, a saint both powerful and accessible.

In England there were important dedications to Peter from early times: monasteries such as Canterbury, Glastonbury, Malmesbury, Peterborough, Lindisfarne, Whitby, Wearmouth, and especially Westminster. Cathedrals were named after him, too: York, Lichfield, Worcester and Selsey. In all, it has been calculated that 1,129 pre-Reformation churches were dedicated to St Peter, and another 283 to SS Peter and Paul together.

Images of Peter are innumerable, but his portraiture remains curiously the same: a man with a square face, a bald or tonsured head, and a short square, curly beard. Not surprisingly, his chief emblem is a set of keys, sometimes

along with a ship or fish.

St Paul (d. c. 65) also started life with another name: Saul. This great apostle to the Gentiles was a Jew born in Tarsus and brought up by Gamaliel as a Pharisee. So keen was he to defend the god of his fathers that he became a persecutor of Christianity, and even took part in the stoning of Stephen. He hunted Christians down and imprisoned them, and it was while on his way to persecute more Christians in Damascus that he was suddenly given his vision of Christ.

It was the decisive moment of Paul's life – Paul suddenly realised that Jesus was truly the Messiah, and the Son of God, and that He was calling Paul to bring the Christian faith to the Gentiles. Paul was then healed of his temporary blindness, baptised, and retired to Arabia for about three years of prayer and solitude, before returning to Damascus.

From then on Paul seems to have lived a life full of hazard and hardship. He made many Jewish enemies, who stoned him, and wanted to kill him. Nevertheless, Paul made three great missionary journeys, first to Cyprus, then to Asia Minor and eastern Greece, and lastly to Ephesus, where he wrote 1 Corinthians, then to Macedonia and Achaia, where he wrote Romans, before returning to Jerusalem.

After stonings, beatings and imprisonment in Jerusalem he was sent to Rome for trial as a Roman citizen. On the way he was shipwrecked at Malta; when he finally reached Rome he was put under house-arrest for two years, during which time he wrote the four 'captivity' epistles. Later Paul may have revisited Ephesus and even have reached Spain. Tradition tells he was eventually martyred at Rome during the persecution of Nero, being beheaded (as a Roman citizen) at Tre Fontane and buried where the basilica of St Paul 'outside the walls' now stands.

The belief that Peter and Paul died on the same day was caused by their sharing the same feast day.

Paul was not only a tireless missionary, but a great thinker. His epistles played a major part in the later development of Christian theology. Paul's key ideas include that Redemption is only through faith in Christ, who abrogated the old Law and began the era of the Spirit; that Christ is not just the Messiah, but the eternal, pre-existent Son of God, exalted after the Resurrection to God's right-hand; that the Church is the (mystical) body of Christ; that the believers live in Christ and will eventually be transformed by the final resurrection.

It is difficult to overemphasise the influence of Paul on Christian thought and history: he had a major effect on Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, Calvin and others. In art, Paul is depicted as small in stature, bald and bandy-legged, with a long face, long nose and eyebrows meeting over deep-set eyes. His usual emblems are a sword and a book. In England he was never as popular as St Peter, and ancient English churches dedicated to him alone number only 43.

The history of the relics of Peter and Paul is not very clear. Tradition says that Peter was buried at the Vatican and Paul on the Ostian Way under his basilica. Certainly, both apostles were venerated from very early times both in the Liturgy and in private prayers, as testified by Greek and Latin graffiti in the catacombs of the early 3rd century.

Parish Pump website

When we take least notice of our good deeds ourselves,
God takes most notice of them. - *Matthew Henry*

From the Registers

Marriage:

5th May- Chloe Hill and Samuel Bulmer (Bromham)

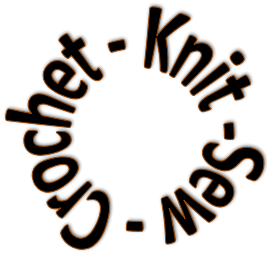
Burial of Ashes:

12th May- Kate Billig (Oakley)

St Owen's Summer Open Mornings

Next date - Sat 10th June 10am to 12pm, as part of the PCC's plan to welcome more people into our church building.

Sewing Group



For those who wish to get together and do hand sewing, crochet or knitting. To take place on 1st and 3rd Wednesday afternoons 2pm to 4pm in the Fellowship Room at St Owen's Church.

Further information from Frances on 07470 032296

AMIGO - Next Event

Thursday 22nd June 2023

A guided tour of part of London led by our superb guide Charlie de Wet is to be arranged. Details to follow.

More information, if required, from John Dixon: Tel 01234 824959 or e-mail jwdixon30@gmail.com

UNISONG

Community choir

10th Anniversary

Summer Concert

Saturday 17th June, 7.30pm

St Owen Church, Bromham.

Tickets £10 on the door.

Includes a glass of wine.

Raffle & proceeds in aid of

Bedford Food Bank and St. Owen Church.

Reservations recommended! ...

Call 01234 826551



John the Baptist, preparing the way for the Messiah

John the Baptist, commemorated on his birth date – 24th June, is famous for baptising Jesus, and for losing his head to a woman. He was born to Zechariah, a Temple priest, and Elizabeth, who was a cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus. John was born when his mother was advanced in years, and after the foretelling of his birth and the choice of his name by an angel, we hear nothing more of him until he began his mission of preaching and baptising in the river Jordan c27.

John was a lot like an Old Testament prophet: he lived simply on locusts and honey in the wilderness, and his message was one of repentance and preparation for the coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom. He went on to baptise Jesus, at Jesus' firm request. When John went on to denounce the incestuous union of Herod Antipas with his niece and brother's wife, Herodias, he was imprisoned and eventually beheaded at the demand of Salome, Herodias' daughter.

John is the only saint to be remembered three times in the Christian calendar, in commemoration of his conception, his birth (June 24), and his martyrdom. When John saw Jesus he said that Jesus was the "Lamb of God", and he is the only person to use this expression of Jesus. In art John is often depicted carrying a lamb, or with a lamb near him.





'Messy Church for All' continues this school year!

Do come and join us next on Tuesday 20th June



After school from around 3.30pm till 5.30pm
Oakley Methodist Church, High Street, Oakley MK43 7RQ

All ages welcome - all children accompanied.
If possible, please do let us know that you can come
01234 824504 mcarr49@hotmail.com

***Sessions for pre-schoolers meet in term time
Every Monday at St Owen, Bromham 11.30am – 1.30pm
and every Thursday at St Mary's, Oakley 10am -11.45am***

World Vision help children in war-torn Sudan

As the fighting between Sudan's military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan's capital Khartoum, continues, millions of people are living in fear and great need. Humanitarian activities to help them have been greatly interrupted, due to widespread insecurity.

Emmanuel Isch, World Vision Sudan Country Director, says, *"The escalating violence is putting the lives of innocent civilians, particularly women and children, at risk. Many Sudanese, particularly in Khartoum and South Darfur have been stuck in their homes for days, running out of food and water and facing increased insecurity."*

World Vision has local teams in surrounding countries who are ready to help children and families who urgently need food, water and shelter.

If you can help, please go to:

<https://www.worldvision.org.uk>

The Bible in 50 words

God made	People walked	Love talked
Adam bit	Sea divided	Anger crucified
Noah arked	Tablets guided	Hope died
Abraham split	Promise landed	Love rose
Joseph ruled	Saul freaked	Spirit flamed
Jacob fooled	David peaked	Word spread
Bush talked	Prophets warned	God remained.
Moses balked	Jesus born	Anon
Pharaoh plagued	God walked	

AFTERNOON TEAS

at

St. Mary's Church, Oakley

Every Sunday from 11th June until
17th September 2023

3.30pm to 5.00pm

Come along and enjoy a delicious cream tea
or home-made cake with plenty of tea and
coffee for £3.50 per person including
children aged 12 or over / £1.50 for younger
children.

Cold drinks also available

**Afternoons with live
music!!**



2nd July - Saxophrenia

30th July - Lickerish Allsorts
Clarinets - with a soloist singer



Editor: We continue our occasional series looking at the stories BEHIND some of our favourite hymns. We present here only some of the lyrics of this well-loved hymn... the full lyrics may be found on the internet.

The story behind the HYMN: Lord, for the years

*Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord for the years, we bring our thanks today.*

*Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.
By Timothy Dudley Smith*

This well-loved hymn was written in 1967 by the Revd Timothy Dudley Smith, who later became Bishop of Thetford. He later confessed: "I wrote it on a train when I was very pressed for time. I'm thankful if something I write gets picked up, but I suspect anyone who does something in a rush later regrets that they didn't find time to apply the sandpaper a bit more!"

Dudley Smith had been asked to write a hymn for the centenary service of the Children's Special Service Mission, now Scripture Union, in St Paul's Cathedral. His commission was to write words that could be fitted to Jean Sibelius's *Finlandia*, as it was to be accompanied by an orchestra with this tune in their repertoire. And so – 'Lord for the years' was written.

Dudley Smith need not have worried about lack of time – his lyrics were a ‘hit’ in the cathedral on the day, and went on to become so well-loved that George Carey chose the hymn to be sung at his consecration as Bishop of Bath and Wells, and then again later, in 1991, at his consecration as Archbishop in Canterbury Cathedral.

The hymn continued to be widely sung and loved, until in 2002 Timothy Dudley Smith was asked to write an extra verse for it so that it could even be sung around the time of the Queen’s Golden Jubilee.

Many of the words in the hymn were true for the Queen herself. She did indeed thank God ‘for the years your love has kept and guided, urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way’ ...

The ‘extra’ verse, added for the Queen, can now become our prayer and hope for King Charles.

*Lord for our hopes, the dreams of all our living,
Christ and his kingdom one united aim,
Rulers and peoples bound in high thanksgiving,
Lord of our hopes, our trust is in your Name.*

Miscellaneous observations on life...

One test of a person’s strength is his knowledge of his weakness. – *Anon*

The measure of your real wealth is how much people would still value you if you lost all your money. - *Anon*

The nice thing about living in a small town is that when you don't know what you're doing, somebody else always does.
- *Anon*

Have you ever noticed the difference in the Christian life between work and fruit?

A machine can do work; only life can bear fruit. -

Andrew Murray

Sudoku -

medium

Solution on

page 31

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

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FRIENDS OF ST OWEN'S 100 CLUB PRIZE WINNERS

MAY 2023

First Prize: Lorna Holland

Second Prize: Gill Sheen

Third Prize: Edward Jones

Fourth Prize: Vivien Butler

Fifth Prize: Emma Harrison

All in the month of JUNE

It was:

400 years ago, on 19th June 1623 that Blaise Pascal was born. This French mathematician, physicist, inventor, theologian, and philosopher invented one of the first mechanical calculators.

300 years ago, on 16th June 1723 that Adam Smith was born. The 'Father of Economics', this Scottish economist and philosopher is best known for his book *The Wealth of Nations*.

175 years ago, on 7th June 1848 that Paul Gauguin, French post-impressionist artist, was born.

150 years ago, on 5th June 1873 that the great slave market in Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania) was closed after Britain issued Sultan Barghash bin Said with an ultimatum to close it or face a blockade.

125 years ago, on 9th June 1898 that Britain leased Hong Kong from China for 99 years, and it became a British Crown Colony. It was transferred back to China in 1997.

75 years ago, on 21st June 1948 that the ship HMT Empire Windrush docked in London, bringing the first large group of immigrants from the West Indies to the UK.

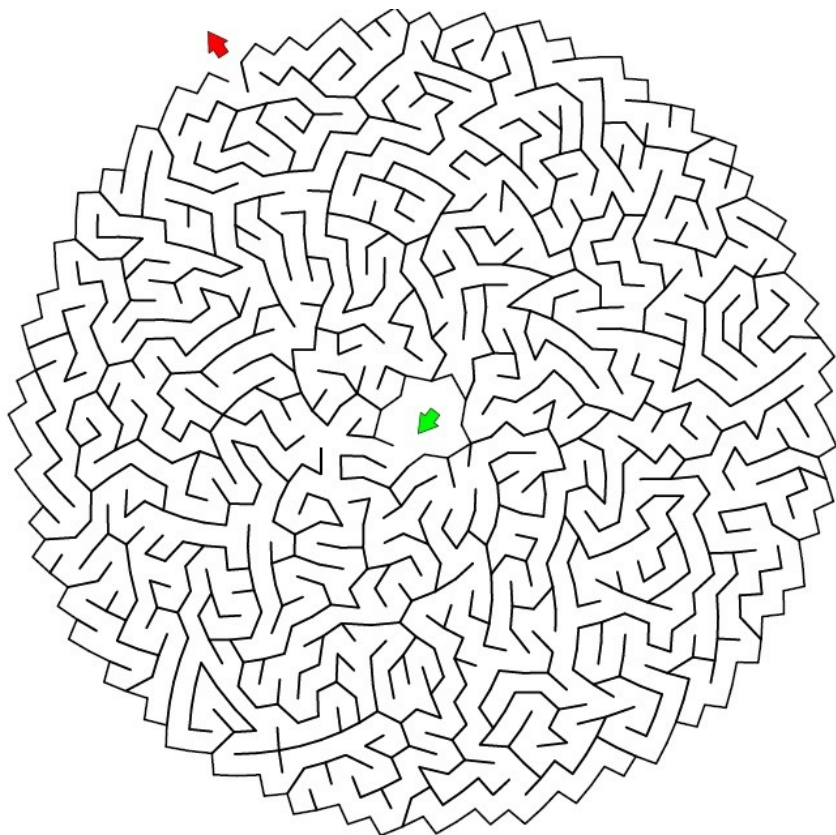
Also 75 years ago, from 24th June 1948 to 12th May 1949 that the Soviet Union began a rail, road and canal blockade of Berlin, cutting off all routes between West Germany and West Berlin. The Allies launched a massive airlift – over 200,000 flights – to take in nearly 9,000 tons of supplies each day.

70 years ago, on 2nd June 1953 that the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey took place. It was the first event where the British TV audience (20 million) was greater than the radio audience (12 million).

65 years ago, on 9th June 1958 that London's Gatwick Airport was officially opened.

50 years ago, from 16th to 25th June 1973 that Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev visited Washington DC and said that the Cold War was over as far as the Soviet Union was concerned. He and President Richard Nixon signed a major accord on arms limitation and the prevention of nuclear war.

Can you find your way out from the middle?



For younger readers.....

The tale of the RICH FOOL

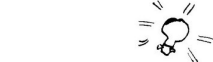


JESUS OFTEN TOLD
STORIES WITH
HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONE STORY WAS ABOUT A MAN
WHO HAD LOTS OF LAND WHICH
GREW WONDERFUL WHEAT.

I HAVEN'T ANYWHERE TO
KEEP ALL THIS FOOD



I KKNOW! I'LL PULL DOWN
MY BARNs AND BUILD
BIGGER ONES



THE MAN DEMOLISHED HIS
OLD BARNs....

...AND BEGAN TO BUILD
NEW ONES.



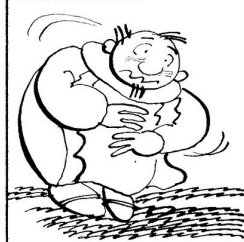
SOON I'LL BE THE RICHEST
MAN IN THE TOWN!



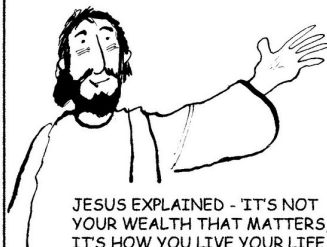
I'M SO LUCKY - I CAN
EAT, DRINK AND BE
MERRY!



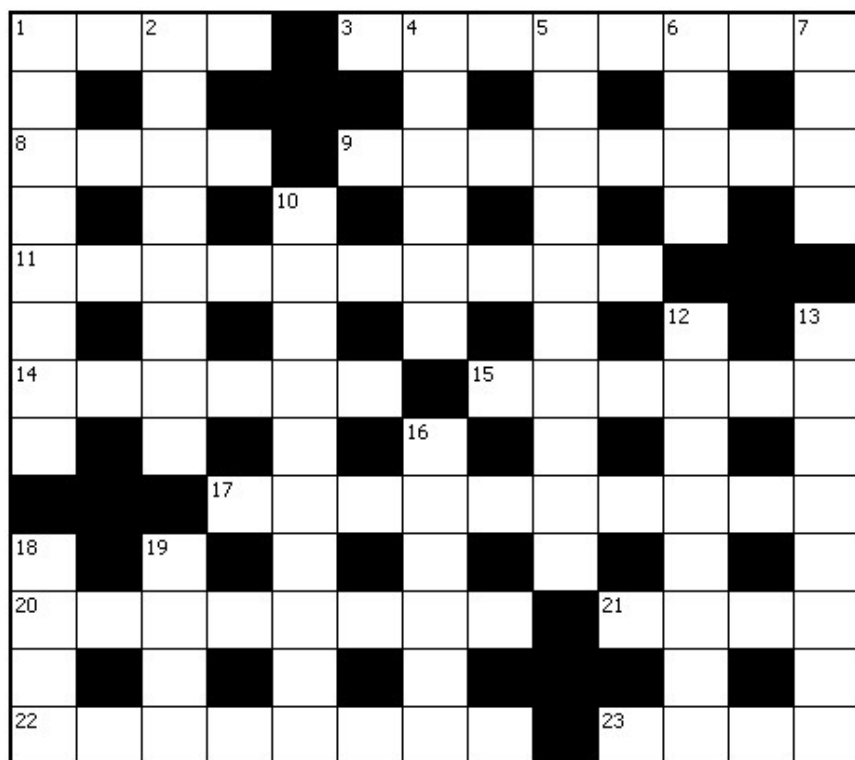
BUT THAT VERY NIGHT,
THE MAN DIED!



WHAT GOOD WERE HIS
RICHES NOW?



JESUS EXPLAINED - IT'S NOT
YOUR WEALTH THAT MATTERS,
IT'S HOW YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE
THAT'S IMPORTANT



Across

1 See 23 Across

3 Where the thief on the cross was told he would be, with Jesus (Luke 23:43) (8)

8 Invalid (4)

9 Blasphemed (Ezekiel 36:20) (8)

11 Adhering to the letter of the law rather than its spirit (Philippians 3:6) (10)

14 Shut (Ecclesiastes 12:4) (6)

15 'This is how it will be with anyone who — up things for himself but is not rich towards God' (Luke 12:21) (6)

- 17 Mary on Isis (anag.) (10)
- 20 Agreement (Hebrews 9:15) (8)
- 21 Native of, say, Bangkok (4)
- 22 Deaf fort (anag.) (5-3)
- 23 and 1 Across 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of — to work it and take — of it' (Genesis 2:15) (4,4)

Down

- 1 Struggle between opposing forces (Habakkuk 1:3) (8)
- 2 James defined this as 'looking after orphans and widows in their distress and keeping oneself from being polluted by the world' (James 1:27) (8)
- 4 'The one I kiss is the man; — him' (Matthew 26:48) (6)
- 5 'Be joyful in hope, patient in — , faithful in prayer' (Romans 12:12) (10)
- 6 St Columba's burial place (4)
- 7 Swirling current of water (4)
- 10 Loyalty (Isaiah 19:18) (10)
- 12 'God was pleased through the foolishness of what was — , to save those who believe' (1 Corinthians 1:21) (8)
- 13 Camp where the angel of the Lord slew 185,000 men one night (2 Kings 19:35) (8)
- 16 'There is still — — — Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet' (2 Samuel 9:3) (1,3,2)
- 18 David Livingstone was one (4)
- 19 Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (1,1,1,1)

Solution on page 31

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. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

A scientist reflects on God's heart for the suffering

It's difficult as a scientist to hear information that is fascinating, but which also involves so much suffering for other people. I worked for a time in a leukaemia research lab. We had to let other people's pain drive our research without it crippling our ability to concentrate on our work. But, during lockdown, I found myself – as a biologically-educated bystander – avoiding looking into the science of COVID-19, because the reminders of its impact on people's lives were everywhere that I looked.

One of the ways I managed my own feelings during the pandemic was by digging deeper into what God has revealed to us about His character, letting that fuel my faith, my prayers, and my actions. For more academic types like myself, study – particularly of the Bible – can be one of the primary ways we connect with God and hear from Him. It's not wrong to be comforted by books, so long as the contents turn our eyes upwards and outwards.

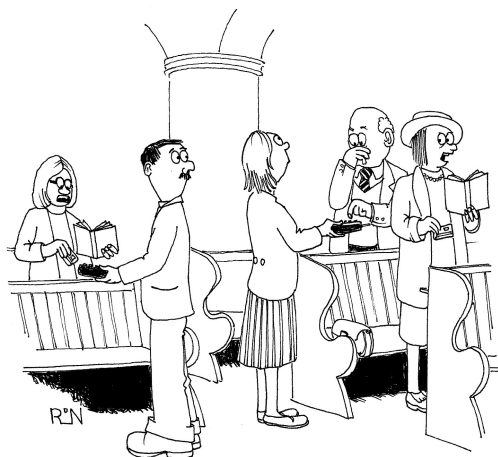
First of all, God hears: "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted" (Psalm 34:18a). In Jesus God took on human form, and He showed us His heart for the world. When His friend Lazarus died, He wept (John 11). God is "the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Human sin has affected the whole of creation, and I believe this is largely the direct impact of our mismanagement of creation and mistreatment of each other. COVID-19 may well

be another animal's friendly virus, pushed by human activity into causing havoc in bodies where it doesn't belong.

But God's world remains good. It is still fruitful, praising Him, as Psalm 19 describes. Even pictures of a deadly virus can seem beautiful – especially to a biologist! These good things are hints of the promised “new heavens and new earth” mentioned in the New Testament. One day “creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay” (Romans 8: 21), and for everyone who follows God, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 21: 4).

Behind the debates about suffering is sometimes the assumption that God doesn't care. My experience is that God does care deeply, and He invites His Church to care for those around them – especially the most vulnerable. He is with us, He hears us and grieves with us, He helps us and promises a better future.



Sunday collection - Mr McKenzie kept forgetting his PIN.



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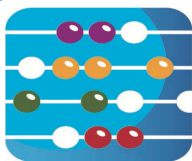
During our minister's very lengthy sermon, a large plant suddenly fell over right behind the pulpit, crashing to the floor. He smiled sheepishly. "Well, that's the first time I actually put a plant to sleep!"

Solution to puzzle
on page 22

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

Solution to puzzle
on page 26

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



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St James the Least of All

Editor: The Revd Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace'...

Beware the church microphone

The Rectory

St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Despite my assurances that it was unnecessary, it was kind of you to loan us your sound equipment, so we could experience the advantages of using radio microphones in church. Your assurance that everyone would then be able to hear with absolute clarity seemed to miss the point that everyone does *not* necessarily want to do so.

I have no doubt that members of your congregation hang on to your every word, eager to make sure you remain theologically sound. But for us, those who had blissfully slumbered throughout my sermons for the last 30 years found themselves unable to filter out a single syllable.

Colonel Wainwright decided to change the start of his Bible readings from the customary "Here beginneth..." to "Testing, Testing" before giving the microphone a good biff, which made the verger dash outside to check if yet another medieval gargoyle had fallen from the roof. Also, forgetting that microphones pick up asides just as effectively, his own comment to his wife in the front pew "I thought I read that rather well" did nothing for the pride he has always cherished for his humility.

I was also not convinced that the 16th century workmen who had devoted the greater part of their lives reverently carving the Lady Chapel altar had intended it to support an electronic

console that would have looked more at home in an aeroplane cockpit.

However, the event which finally decided us against microphones came about an hour after the service. Several of the choir boys had crept back into the church and decided to improvise a rock concert with their guitars and the mikes turned up full blast. The church exploded in a perfect cacophony of noise which panicked a horse and rider going by. The horse bolted down the road, which caused two cars to veer violently to avoid it. One car ended up in a pond, the other in a field, having ripped off a great deal of old fencing.

Whoever fixed the fencing failed, and later that night all 43 cows in the field escaped, and ended up in the Colonel's flower-filled front garden, where they spent a comfortable night slicing his velvet turf with their sharp cleats, and chomping everything in sight.

Your loving uncle, Eustace

DIY

Our churchwarden has the courage, but not always the skills, to tackle any DIY job that needs doing around the church. For example, in the church shed are still pieces of the church lawn mower that she once tried to fix. So, our vicar wasn't surprised the day he found her in the vestry, attacking the vacuum cleaner with a screwdriver. "This thing won't cooperate," she complained.

The vicar thought for a moment: "Why don't you drag it out to the shed and show it what you did to the lawn mower?"

Clearly not one of the churchwardens in our Benefice! Ed



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