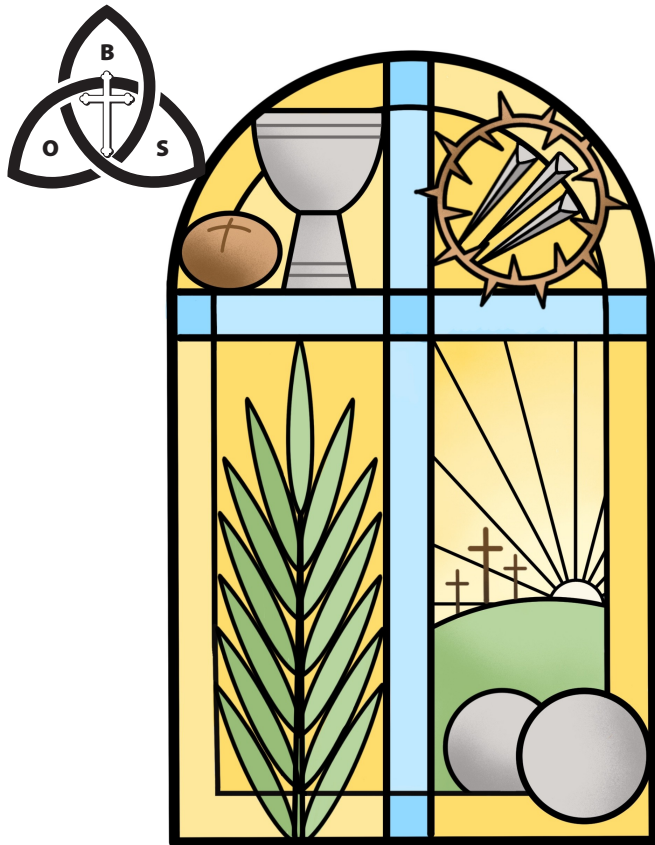


# *Church News*

for the Parishes of  
Bromham, Oakley and Stagsden



**March 2024**



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## Clergy:

## Benefice Administration

Wedding.....} (Mon & Thurs 9.30 -12.00: Tues, 9.30am -1.00pm  
organisation..}

Fees Accounts...} administrator@bromhambenefice.org

Safeguarding Officer - Judith Denyer 07981 928522

## Parish News

Editor Mr Edward Jones stowensnews@btinternet.com 826551

Distribution	Mrs B Cryer	825463
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07767 272584

*Pew Leaflet*      Sarah Smale, as Administrator

## Who's Who in Bromham

## Church Officers

Mrs F Bulmer 602718

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
	 <b>facebook</b> 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

### 3rd March

9.00am

10.30am

### 3rd Sunday of Lent

Holy Communion (Oakley)

Holy Communion (Bromham)

### 10th March

9.00am

10.30am

### 4th Sunday of Lent / Mothering Sunday

Holy Communion (Stagsden)

LEP All-Age Mothering Sunday Service  
(Oakley)

10.30am

All-Age Mothering Sunday Service  
(Bromham)

6.00pm

Evensong (Bromham)

### 17th March

9.00am

10.30am

4.30pm

### Passion Sunday

Holy Communion (Oakley)

Holy Communion (Bromham)

Wild Church (Bromham Scout Site)

### 24th March

9.00am

10.30am

### Palm Sunday

Holy Communion (Bromham)

Palm Sunday Communion with  
Procession (Stagsden)

6.00pm

Evensong via Zoom

## Holy Week and Easter Day services on page 9

### 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)

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](http://www.bromhambenefice.org))



I'm sitting in my little town garden, cuppa in hand, enjoying the gentle sunshine, as I prepare this article. This is an improvement on peering through the window towards the pale grey winter light of recent weeks.

I'm no natural gardener, and I'm pleasantly surprised and relieved at the appearance of bulbs in my borders each March. This element of surprise is magnified as I often forget where I have planted them, frequently missed the planting window and just popped them in wherever! Each bulb in their usual space, but more abundant as nature goes about doing her thing, helped along by the absence of marauding squirrels and mischievous rabbits in urban Bedford.

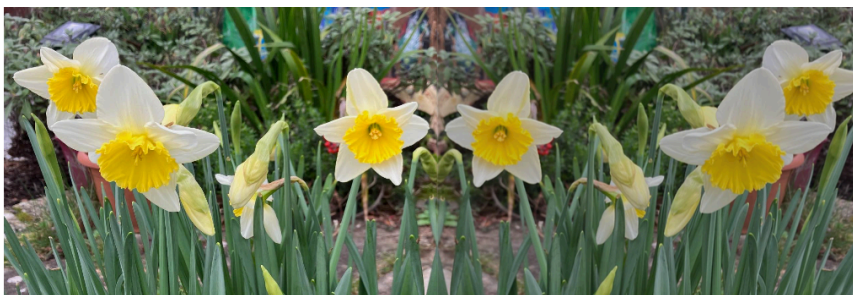
Nature seems to take it all in her stride despite the onslaught of flooding which we have suffered over recent years. The succession of plants emerging with their green foliage, with promise of later colour, marks the seasons, just as Lent marks time for Christians too. Lent provides a 'step change', a time to pause and reflect on our lives and our relationship with God. In church services we retrace the final stages of Jesus' ministry as he turns towards Jerusalem to face the Cross, and his death. It is a time of waiting and prayer, which is the chosen theme of this year's Church of England Lent resource

pack, entitled 'Watch and Pray', (available in booklet form, online and as an app).

This sense of waiting which Lent brings is mirrored by bulbs emerging through the soil after many months of apparent dormancy when the soil appeared empty, and the garden lifeless. All seemed abandoned as the garden held a desolate air, as the earth paused, waiting to bring forth fresh shoots. Christians, during Lent, are led into a time of uncertainty, reflection and waiting. In the words of 'Wait and Pray', waiting to find God "in ways we have not yet discovered or even imagined". Lent shows us that it is in times of uncertainty, doubt and challenge that God may be closest to us, and formative in our lives.

This Lent, being in my garden reminds me of God's presence, not just through the simplicity of the snowdrops and daffodils, but in the recognition and awareness of that time of waiting before any shoots appear. A reminder that God may be found in the emptiness and the waiting of Lent, and through the tough times that life may bring us.

*Petra*



Self-emptiness prepares for spiritual fullness.  
*Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) Anglican theologian*



Next meeting - **Thursday 14th March**

at St Owen's Fellowship Room

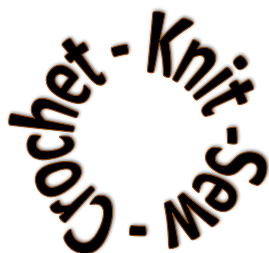
at 2.30pm

**Bring a favourite poem to share**

For further details

contact Tessa Woodcock

01234 340089



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### **Sewing Group**

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

Further information from Frances  
on 07470 032296

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### **First Friday Coffee Mornings**

Next coffee morning on Fri 1st March

11am- 1pm

in St Owen's Fellowship Room, Bromham.



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

## **Holy Week Events**

### Monday 25th March

3.00pm          Holy Communion & Stations of the Cross  
(Oakley)

### Tuesday 26th March

11.30am        Holy Communion (Bromham)

### Maundy Thursday 28th March

6.30pm          Maundy Meal with Holy Communion  
(*followed by the Watch*)                      (Bromham)

### Good Friday 29th March

10.00am        Good Friday Craft Workshop & Trail  
(Bromham)

2.00pm          Good Friday Service (Bromham)

2.00pm          Good Friday Service with Communion  
(Oakley)

### Easter Day 31st March

10.00am        All Age Holy Communion + egg hunt  
(Oakley)

10.30am        All Age Holy Communion + egg hunt  
(Bromham)

3.00pm          Stagsden Easter Trail and Crafts

4.00pm          Songs of Praise (Stagsden)

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### **Benefice Fellowship Lunch**

at St Owen's

No gathering in March - our next event will be on Sunday

**7th April**



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND



**Following his February visit, the Archbishop of Canterbury has spoken of the need for long-term support for the people of Ukraine as he saw first-hand the physical and psychological toll of war almost two years after the full-scale invasion.**

Visiting a shelter and support centre for people impacted by the war and meeting some of the country's first military chaplains, he heard how needs are shifting from dealing with the initial crisis to providing long term support.

During a visit to the Heritage Ukraine crisis centre and shelter in Odesa, southern Ukraine, Archbishop Justin spent time with people who were left homeless, had lost loved ones or were themselves injured in Russian drone and missile strikes.

Following the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Heritage - originally a charity helping orphaned children - transformed itself into a wider humanitarian aid and crisis operation, partnering with Christian Aid.

"At 5am on the 24th of February, 2022, when the bombing started, our lives changed radically," Heritage's director Slavik Puzanov told Archbishop Justin.

"In the first days of the war we would go to the railway stations and feed those who were fleeing other regions of the south, close to the front line.

“Since the full-scale invasion began, we left aside much of our other work as a charity and began to focus mostly on responding to pain, trauma and suffering.”

Iryna Dobrohorska, Christian Aid’s Ukraine Response Country Director, said there is a need to continue to support people with ongoing needs and “be there for them”.

“I think we are all in agreement that the war is not ending any time soon and the needs are dire,” she said.

“Our mission as Christian Aid is to support our partners, to support our people. For me as a Ukrainian it is a big honour to help the people of Ukraine, the people who suffered, I also underwent evacuation.

“And we are very grateful that there is still attention, that there is still interest in the most challenging time for our country”.

Among those Archbishop Justin met at the shelter was 73-year-old Luba who told him how her home was destroyed and her daughter killed in a Russian attack. Another woman, Tania, explained how her husband lost a leg in a drone attack as they were driving.

Father and son Slava and Andrei recounted how they had been unloading humanitarian aid to a community close to the front line when they came under fire in a drone-directed shelling attack. Andrei, 16, was injured in the leg and is recovering.

As Archbishop Justin led the Heritage Ukraine team in prayer at the end of the visit, the room was filled with the sound of sirens blaring out from on app on people’s mobile phones, warning of an air alert in the Odesa region.

He also heard firsthand about physical and psychological toll

of war on the large numbers of people in Ukraine – and the battlefield itself - when he visited a Christian-run rehabilitation centre for soldiers at Bila Tserkeva near the capital Kyiv.

And he spent time with the newly established Ukrainian Battalion of Military Chaplains, made both of full-time chaplains and volunteer chaplains who are serving soldiers.

They recounted their experiences serving with those in the front lines and the scale of need to support those with not only physical but psychological scars.

When he asked them what they would do when the war ends, one replied: “It is important to know that when the war ends the military chaplains will have more work than ever.”

Speaking at the end of his five-day visit to Ukraine, Archbishop Justin said: “Although in some ways much looks the same as when I last visited just over a year ago, there have been some very significant shifts.

“One thing that people have spoken of everywhere we went is the toll this war is beginning to take on the people of Ukraine in PTSD and other mental health conditions.

“We’re only just beginning to grasp the likely scale of it – and how long-lasting the effects may be.

“While it was wonderful to see people in Britain rallying with support and hospitality for Ukrainians in the first phase of this war, we must now recognise that we need to be in this for the long haul, that’s one of the messages I will take away with me.

“The whole pattern of life and support is changing from immediate crisis to long-term help.

“This is not likely to stop soon.” *Justin Welby website*



***Friends of St Owen's Church***  
***Welcome***



MARK JENNINGS  
ON  
CLASSICAL GUITAR  
PRESENTING  
'THE SPIRIT OF SPAIN'  
AN EVENING OF  
VIRTUOSO CLASSICS

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April**  
**7.30pm at**  
**The Church in Bromham Park**  
**MK43 8LL**

**Tickets: Adult £12**  
**Child under 18 £8**

Price includes glass of wine/squash & 'nibbles'

Pay at the door (cash or card)

Reservations Line - 01234 826551

## St Owen's Altar Guild

Decorating St Owens Church for Easter will take place on Holy Saturday 30 March 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*

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### From the Registers

#### **Baptisms:**

11th February Archie Terry Ashpole (Bromham)

#### **Funerals:**

12th February Stephen Wheatley (Bromham)

29th February David Williams (Bromham)

#### **Burial/Burial of Ashes:**

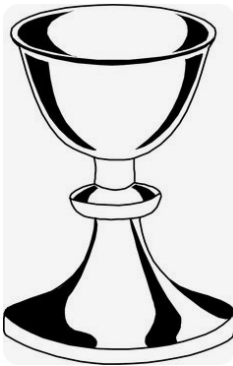
30th January Louise Jones (Oakley)

1st February Anne Johnson (bromham)

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### Re-introducing the 'common cup'

A reminder that we shall return to offering the 'common cup' starting on Easter Sunday Mar 31<sup>st</sup> 2024.



This will mean that from Easter 2024, communicants will either receive a wafer and a sip of wine, or receive a wafer only if they prefer not to drink from the chalice.

Thanks to those who gave feed back on this topic; if you haven't yet and wish to do so please contact clergy or churchwardens in the usual way.

*Catherine Wilson*

*The Revd Dr Jo White considers church gates this month...*

### **Reflecting Faith: Lychgates**

On the moors near to where I used to live in West Yorkshire, there were a couple of large stones with crosses marked on them. Many people thought that they were boundary or marker stones, and in so far as they marked the way towards the oldest church in that area they were. To be more exact, they were on the route towards the oldest churchyard.

In ages past bodies were carried by hand, sometimes over long distances, and there were restrictions placed on where they could be laid to allow the bearers to rest. These two stones were 'resting' stones.

When a body arrived at the church for burial, it would again be put down while the administrative formalities were carried out, and again the bearers could rest. So, a resting stone was placed at the edge or start of the consecrated land around the church.

The priest conducting the funeral would meet the cortege here, not originally out of respect, but rather to receive the required legal certificate for burial before he allowed them to enter the church grounds.

Because of typical English weather - rain and wind - it was usually sheltered, and benches were built for the bearers. There would also be a cross within the construction to signify the start of holy land. This is what today we call the 'lychgate'; lych coming from the anglo-saxon word *lich* or *lic*, related to the modern German word *leiche*, all meaning corpse.

Few old lychgates remain today, as many were destroyed or damaged after the Reformation, and most of those that

*Continued on next page*

survived were constructed of timber and have since decayed. In the eighteenth century, when the use for the resting stones and thus lychgates declined, many were removed and replaced with gates, often retaining the shelter as it continues to be a meeting place for the priest to receive funeral parties.

*This month*

Try and visit a lychgate this month and actually spend a few moments under its shelter. Have a think about what burdens you want to lay down. What do you need to be sheltered from?

*Parish Pump website*



This year's  
Easter Monday  
Pilgrimage  
to St Albans  
will take place on

**1 April 2024**

with the theme of All  
Things New. We can't  
wait to see you there.

The annual Pilgrimage and service is a family event which includes grandparents, parents, young people, children and babies. All are welcome ... even muddy boots and dogs!

You can journey from your local church or from one of a number of 'Hub' churches.

Alternatively, join us at St Albans Cathedral. We gather on the Abbey Orchard for a picnic before processing into the Cathedral for an informal Eucharist at 3 pm.

*Editor: The Rev Michael Burgess continues his series looking at great works of music. You can easily cut this article to fit your available space.*

## **‘Glorious the song when God’s the theme’: Hildegard of Bingen**

In this series we have looked at the psalms of the Old Testament and the songs of the New Testament, and now we enter the Middle Ages. But it is the Middle Ages through the eyes of a record producer in the last century.

In 1980 Ted Perry decided to found a new independent record company, Hyperion. If that was not financial risk enough, in the following year Hyperion issued a CD of a composer virtually unknown in the 1980s – Hildegard of Bingen. The risk paid off, and Gothic Voices’ recording of the music of this remarkable medieval nun became a best seller. The CD sold in its thousands and received awards from the gramophone industry.

‘A feather on the breath of God’, the title of the CD, is how Hildegard described herself. ‘Listen, there was a king sitting on his throne. Around him stood great and wonderfully beautiful columns ornamented with ivory, bearing the banners of the king with great honour. Then it pleased the king to raise a small feather from the ground and he commanded it to fly. The feather flew, not because of anything in itself, but because the air bore it along. Thus am I a feather on the breath of God.’

Hildegard was born in 1098, the tenth child of noble parents who lived in western Germany. Aged only eight, she was given into the care of Jutta, abbess of a monastery in the Rhineland, near Bingen. There she lived the life of an enclosed nun, her only contact with the world outside via a grille through which food was passed.

*Continued on next page*

After 30 years, Hildegard left that cell and was assigned a scribe, who wrote down her visions and meditations in two volumes. She founded two monasteries, wrote books on medicine and natural healing and the first morality play, and composed a great range of songs. She corresponded with the great and the good, and as the 'Sybil of the Rhine,' her advice was sought by popes and emperors, by kings and bishops. A truly creative life of prayer and service until her death in 1179.

The starting point for her own compositions was the plainsong of that time. Modern techniques of singing and performing often make plainsong slow and heavy. The secret to bringing plainchant alive is to sing it with relaxed attention. In many ways that is the secret of the life of prayer: that paradox of resting in the Lord while being alert to the promptings of his spirit. Hildegard realised that secret as she brought to her music, as she did to everything, an intensity of emotion and faith, developing the medieval plainchant into melodies that flowed off the page and soared into the skies.

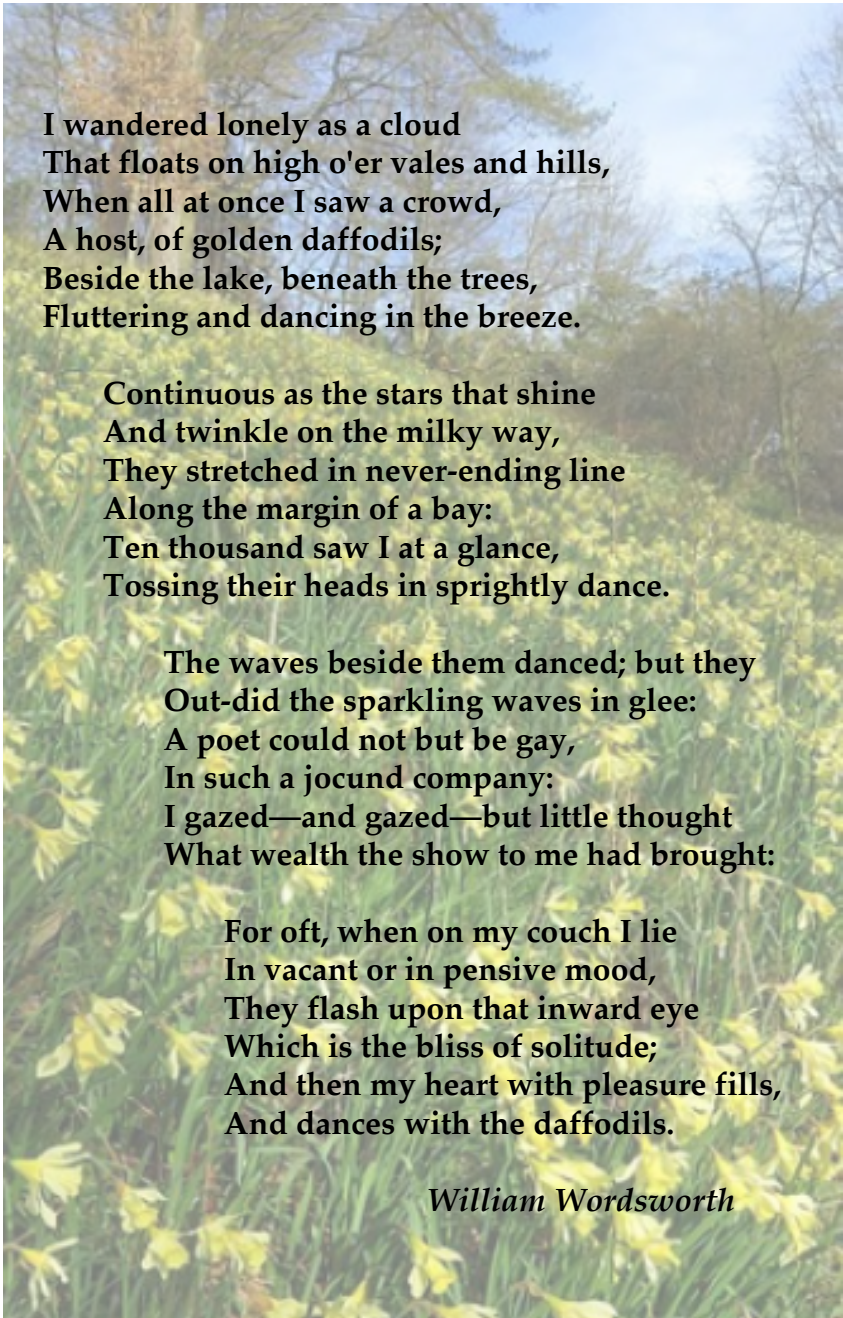
It is all there in the chant 'O ignis spiritus' on the CD – an ecstatic song, praising the life of God's Spirit as breath and spark of flame, as a power within and armour without. As Hildegard contemplates this gift, her music moves and grows, reaching upwards to God's throne of glory in praise and adoration and outwards to those who listen.

*Ed – you can hear this haunting chant if you search on-line for O Ignis Spiritus and click on the you.tube Lyric Video (you may have to skip an advert)*

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An humble knowledge of thyself is a surer way to God than a deep search after learning. -

*Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471) German priest and writer*



I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

*William Wordsworth*

## **Woodbine Willie, bringing love with cigarettes and the Bible**

On 8<sup>th</sup> March the Church of England remembers a 'saint' from the 1<sup>st</sup> World War - the Revd Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy MC, or 'Woodbine Willie', as everyone knew this popular, much-loved army chaplain on the Western Front.

Studdert Kennedy (27<sup>th</sup> June 1883 – 8<sup>th</sup> March 1929) had been born in Leeds as the seventh of nine children. After reading divinity and classics at Trinity College Dublin, he'd studied for ordination at Ripon Clergy College, and served his curacy at Rugby.

By the time war broke out in 1914, Studdert Kennedy was vicar of St Paul's Worcester. He soon volunteered to go to the Western Front as a chaplain to the army. Life on the front line in the trenches was a desperate affair, but soon Studdert Kennedy had hit on a way of bringing a few moments of relief to the stressed-out soldiers: as well as good cheer he gave out copious amounts of 'Woodbines', the most popular cheap cigarette of the time.

One colleague remembered Kennedy: "he'd come down into the trenches and say prayers with the men, have a cuppa out of a dirty tin mug and tell a joke as good as any of us. He was a chain smoker and always carried a packet of Woodbine cigarettes that he would give out in handfuls to us lads. That's how he got his nickname. He came down the trench one day to cheer us up. Had his Bible with him as usual. Well, I'd been there for weeks, unable to write home, of course, we were going over the top later that day. I asked him if he would write to my sweetheart at home, tell her I was still alive and, so far, in one piece... years later, after the war, she showed me the letter he'd sent, very nice it was. A lovely letter. My wife kept it until she died."

*Continued on next page*



Kennedy was devoted to his men, so much so that in 1917 he was awarded the Military Cross at Messines Ridge, after running into no man's land in order to help the wounded during an attack on the German frontline.

During the war, Kennedy supported the British military effort with enthusiasm, but soon after the war, he turned to Christian socialism and pacifism. He was given charge of St Edmunds in Lombard St, London, and took to writing a number of poems about his war experiences: *Rough Rhymes of a Padre* (1918) and *More Rough Rhymes* (1919). He went on to work for the Industrial Christian Fellowship, for whom he did speaking tours. It was on one of these tours that he was taken ill, and sadly died in Liverpool in 1929. He was only 46.

His compassion and generosity in the face of the horrors of the Western Front was immortalised in the song 'Absent Friends': "Woodbine Willie couldn't rest until he'd / given every bloke a final smoke / before the killing." He himself had once described his chaplain's ministry as taking "a box of fags in your haversack, and a great deal of love in your heart."

*Parish Pump website*

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**'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

## Mothers and teenagers

A woman was confiding in her neighbour just how hard it was for her to get her teenagers out of bed in the morning. The neighbour replied that she never had any trouble at all with her son. "I just open the door and throw the cat on the bed," she explained.

The woman was puzzled, and asked how that might help. "Easy. My son sleeps with the dog."



Sudoku -  
medium

Solution on  
page 31

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

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Next event

**Saturday 11th March 5-6.30pm**

at The Fellowship Centre

Clapham

MK41 6ER

For more information see [sharnbrookdeanery.co.uk](http://sharnbrookdeanery.co.uk)

or contact us at [ourvoicetoo@gmail.com](mailto:ourvoicetoo@gmail.com)

## **FRIENDS OF ST OWEN'S 100 CLUB PRIZE WINNERS**

**JANUARY 2024**

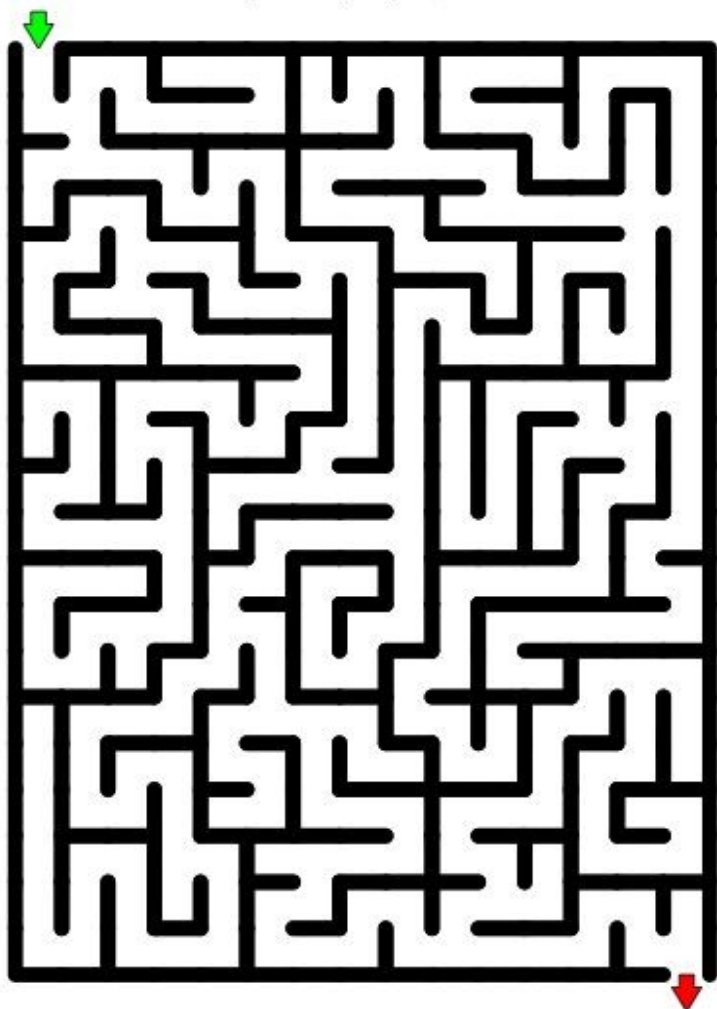
First Prize: David Butler

Second Prize: Edward Jones

Third Prize: Katrina Louca

Fourth Prize: Rev Di Harpham

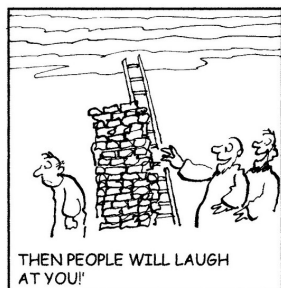
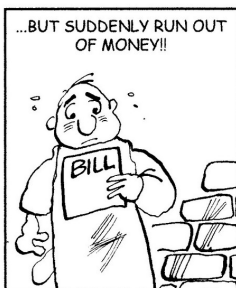
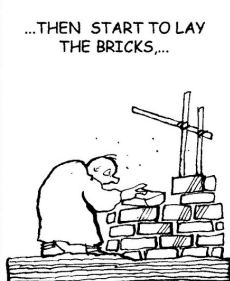
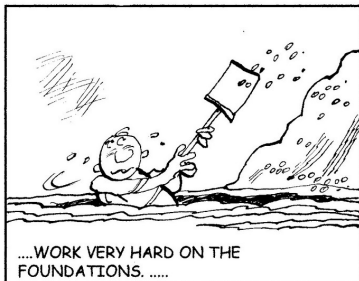
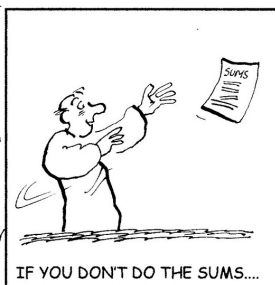
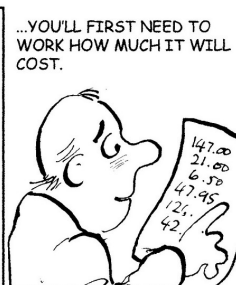
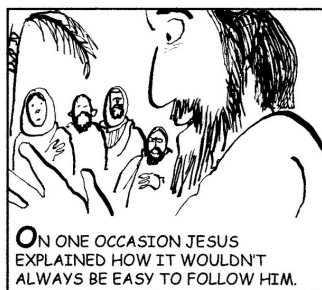
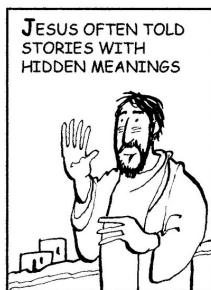
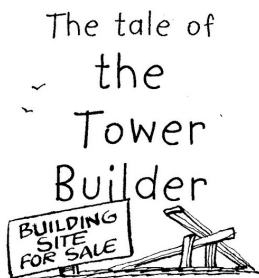
Can you find your way from top to bottom?

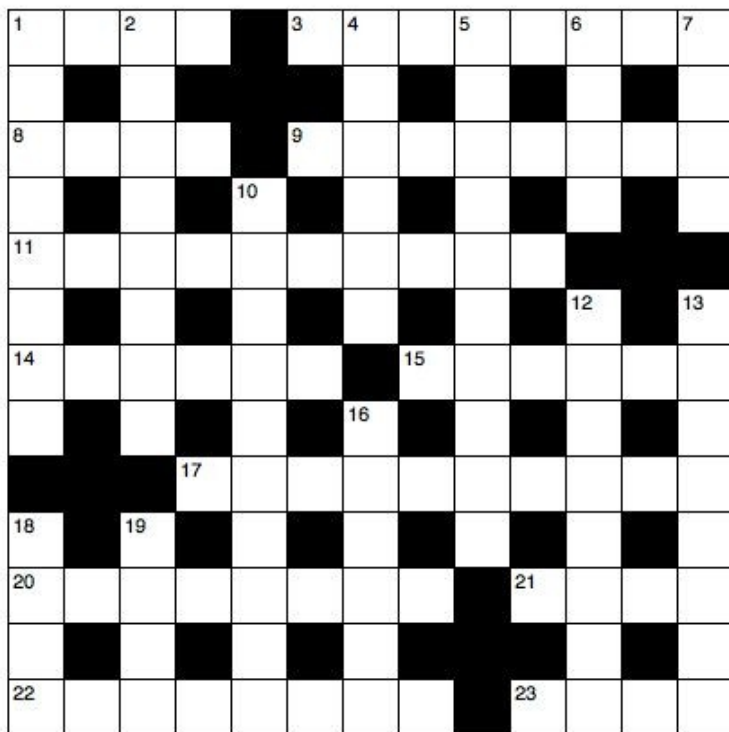


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If you're headed in the wrong direction, God allows U-turns. - *Anon*

# For younger readers.....





### Across

- 1 Made from the fruit of the vine, symbol of the blood of Christ (4)
- 3 'You are to set an ambush behind the city. Don't go very far from it. All of you be on — — ' (Joshua 8:4) (3,5)
- 8 Seep (4)
- 9 Celebrated by Jesus on the night of his betrayal (Luke 22:15) (8)
- 11 One of the supposed sites of Christ's burial place in Jerusalem (6,4)
- 14 'A city on a hill — be hidden' (Matthew 5:14) (6)
- 15 He inherited Elijah's mantle (2 Kings 2:12–13) (6)
- 17 Where Jesus prayed 'Not as I will, but as you

will' (Matthew 26:36, 39) (10)  
20 'Only in his home town and in his — — is a prophet without honour' (Matthew 13:57) (3,5)  
21 Sail (anag.) (4) 22 How Jesus was punished before his crucifixion (Matthew 27:26) (8)  
23 Eye sore (4)

## **Down**

1 Can't grow (anag.) (5,3)  
2 A servant girl to Peter, 'You also were with that — , Jesus' (Mark 14:67) (8)  
4 Well-being (Proverbs 3:8) (6)  
5 Pentecostal denomination, — of God (10)  
6 One of the 'obvious' acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19, 21) (4)  
7 'I preached that they should repent and — to God' (Acts 26:20) (4)  
10 ' — — , the world will not see me any more, but you will see me' (John 14:19) (6,4)  
12 He betrayed Jesus: Judas — (Luke 6:16) (8)  
13 Jesus to Peter: ' — — of my sheep' (John 21:16) (4,4)  
16 The centurion said, 'Surely this man was — — of God' (Mark 15:39) (3,3)  
18 Baked bread (Mark 8:14) (4)  
19 'Blessing and honour, glory and power, be — Him' (Handel's Messiah) (4)

*Solution on page 31*

---

## **Destination?**

Lenora, 95-years-old and in excellent health, confided that she was terribly worried: "Every one of my friends has already died and gone on to heaven. I'm afraid they're all wondering where I went!"

## St James the Least of All

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

### On why pews SHOULD be uncomfortable

The Rectory  
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Visits from your parishioners to our church are always welcome. But I did not expect them to return to you complaining because our pews are uncomfortable.

Pews are *meant* to be uncomfortable. The unshakeable belief of our congregation is that the more uncomfortable the pew, the holier the worship must be. By the same token, an 8am Service is more fervent than one at 11am, since it is much more socially inconvenient. If you add on enduring sub-zero temperatures and damp, then sainthood clearly beckons. Your people may be used to lolling in upholstered chairs in tropical temperatures, but I am sure such comfort places their souls in grave peril.

Our pews were built 500 years ago, when people were several inches shorter and many pounds lighter, and so could accommodate themselves on them perfectly adequately. The fact that a twenty-first century body is in constant danger of sliding off the seat and requires knees to be folded somewhere near ears at least helps to keep minds focussed – apart from Colonel Wainwright, who still manages to sleep peacefully



throughout Mattins every Sunday.

I could point out that your chairs make kneeling almost impossible – although I suspect that posture is not encouraged in your church, as people would then be unable to read the words on your overhead projector or wave their arms about quite as easily during the hymns. While the majority of our congregation find the Anglican crouch perfectly adequate, you can see those who flop to their knees on hearing “let us pray” from the clouds of dust sent up from suddenly compressed hassocks, which were purchased to commemorate Queen Victoria’s Accession.

I may also point out that our box pews are very useful for modern times. Once a family is seated, with the door firmly shut, then any toddler is penned in and unable to use the aisles as a racing circuit. Medieval carpenters were clearly forward-thinking people. Admittedly, box pew doors do tend to stick, and few manage to look dignified while they wait for step ladders to be brought before they can climb out.

If only you would remove your chairs and substitute benches without backs, turn off all heating and replace carpets with slate slabs, I am sure your congregation’s religious zeal would soar.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

---

## Helping

If it’s true that we are here to help others, what are the others doing here?



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### **Pewsheet notice that went wrong....**

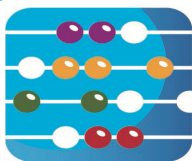
This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.

Solution to puzzle  
 on page 22

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

Solution to puzzle  
 on page 26

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



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"The new vicar is really cool, Dad.  
Did you know that God emailed the Ten  
Commandments to Moses' Tablet PC?"

---

### **Where is the most generous place in the UK?**

The fundraising website GoFundMe has praised the British public, as recent figures show that it receives a donation every second of every day.

According to GoFundMe, the generosity of the British can

even be broken down into regions.

Last year Manchester was the most generous place in the UK, with 43,135 donations, while Liverpool (36,739), Brighton (19,641), Lisburn (11,122) and Saint Albans (10,474) came in second, third, fourth and fifth respectively.\*

This past year, many British donors have given to the victims of conflicts and natural disasters, from Ukraine to Syria, Turkey to Morocco, not forgetting those impacted by the various storms that battered the UK itself.

One notable success was for victims of Storm Babet, whose homes were flooded in Chesterfield. The fundraiser, organised by a team at Lifehouse Church in the town, raised more than £92,000, from a total of 1,600 donations.

All in all, the UK was ranked as the third most generous country in the world per capita, with more than four million donations made last year.

Tim Cadogan, chief executive of GoFundMe, said the organisation has now celebrated its “billion-pound milestone” of donations raised from the UK since its inception in 2017, and he estimates a quarter of a billion pounds was raised on the platform in 2023 alone – which he said were “incredible numbers”.  
*Parish Pump website*

\* \* \* \* \*

\*Hmmm! Without wishing to decry generosity from any quarter, it's always most welcome, but you could turn these statistics on their head! Given the population figures for these cities, St Albans rates a donation from 1 in 9 of its population while the figure for Manchester is 1 in 58. But even that is not wholly true because there are hundreds of ways of donating to charity apart from GoFundMe. Ah me....stats – believe them if you like! *Ed*

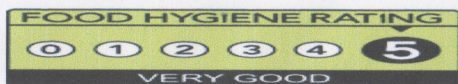


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