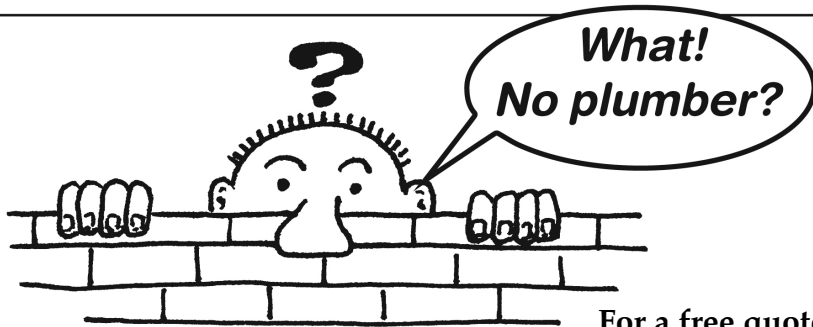


*Church News*  
for the Parishes of  
Bromham, Oakley and Stagsden



**May 2024**



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**Welcome to  
Church News in  
Bromham, Oakley and Stagsden**

**Find us at:** [www.bromhambenefice.org](http://www.bromhambenefice.org)

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

**Clergy:**

Vicar: Revd Catherine Wilson 825665  
vicar@bromhambenefice.org  
Assistant Priest: Revd Di Harpham 918691  
Curate: Revd Petra Yates - curate@bromhambenefice.org 07504 118405

***Benefice Administration***

Website &.....} Administrator 07494 069540  
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  
07767 272584

*Pew Leaflet* Sarah Smale, as Administrator

**Who's Who in Bromham**

***Church Officers***

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

Organist & Choirmaster Mr David P Williams

Messy Church for pre-school children (birth - 4yrs) & their carers  
Mrs F Bulmer 602718  
Altar Guild Mrs M Parrott 824402

## Who's Who in Bromham cont....

Children & Young	} Carol Jones	823307
People's work	} Rene Farquhar	307996
Electoral Roll	Mrs Rene Farquhar	307996
Ringers	Mr Robert Jones	881741
Thursday Prayer Gp	Mrs C Wisson	306833
Friends of St Owen's	www.friendsof stowens.org	
Secretary:	Mr David Butler	407351
	 <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	ls.ball@btinternet.com
Organist & Choirmaster - contact	Jenny Sudworth	822859
Messy Church for pre-school children (birth - 4yrs) & their carers	Revd Catherine Wilson	825665
Flowers	Mrs A Rolph	824849
St Mary's Ringers	Mr Bill Sellars	823473

## Who's Who in Stagsden

### *Church Officers*

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

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

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



## Principal Services in the Benefice

<u>5th May</u>	<u>6th Sunday of Easter</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Oakley)
10.30am	Holy Communion (Bromham)
<u>9th May</u>	<u>Ascension Day</u> Communion at 7.30pm (Stagsden)
<u>12th May</u>	<u>7th Sunday of Easter</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Stagsden)
10.30am	LEP Service (Oakley)
6.00pm	Evensong (Bromham)
<u>19th May</u>	<u>Pentecost</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Stagsden)
10.30am	Holy Communion (Bromham)
4.30pm	Wild Church (Bromham Scout Site)
<u>26th May</u>	<u>Trinity Sunday</u>
9.00am	Holy Communion (Bromham)
10.30am	Holy Communion (Oakley)
6.00pm	Evensong (Oakley)

## 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))



One of the pastimes which took off during the pandemic was researching family ancestry, and those “early birds” inspired others (like me) to follow their example! The project spreads to include sorting and labelling old family photographs and old letters written by family members who are separated from loved ones by war or through living overseas. The letters fascinate children of today who have little experience of hand-written letters although familiar with the new communication methods which technology offers. The latter keeps their relationships with distant family members growing and evolving .

Growing up in Africa, our UK grandparents were not “bodily present” in our lives but as I wrote my letters, I would imagine them sitting by their fire reading my letter. There were also costly phone calls once a year at Christmas, which my father organised with military precision so that we didn’t waste any airtime.

During the weeks after Easter the Church follows the disciples’ emotional and spiritual journey from the grief of Jesus’ death to the heart-stopping relief and joy of seeing him alive again and followed by precious weeks spent with the Risen Jesus. But they must learn that this cannot be a return to the old times when they followed Him on His mission and depended on Him. In those weeks, Jesus prepared them to grow into a new relationship with Him. They learn that when

He leaves them physically and returns to heaven, He will still be close, but in a new way. They must learn to open their lives to His Spirit's presence within them in a more mystical, but closer relationship than before.

Jesus says: "I will dwell within you as my Father dwells in me". St. Augustine describes: "God is closer to us than we are to ourselves".

Jesus gave them, (and us) a job to do.

"Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the hands through which He blesses....". (Teresa of Avila)

*Dí Harpham*

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### **Ascension Day**

**Thursday 9th May at 7.30pm**

**at St Leonards, Stagsden**

a Deanery service to mark Ascension Day  
will include combined choirs singing the anthem  
'When Christ their Lord to Heaven upraised' by  
Charles Wood

---

There's a God-shaped hole in every human heart. If it doesn't get filled with something noble and elevated, modern society will quickly pump it full of garbage.

*Johnathan Haidt - contemporary American social psychologist*



Next meeting - **Thursday 9th May**

at St Owen's Fellowship Room

at 2.30pm

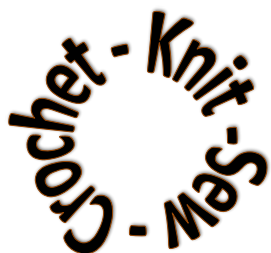
Visiting Speaker - Debra Atkin

a talk about Bromham Neighbourhood Scheme

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 3rd May

11am- 1pm

in St Owen's Fellowship Room, Bromham.



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



## **Benefice Fellowship Lunch**

at St Owen's

There will not be a "First Sunday" lunch this month. Instead you are invited to join in the lunch to be held on Sunday 19th May - see APCM notice below

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## **Annual Parochial Church Meetings (APCMs) Your Church AGM**

These meetings not only include the important legal bits, like electing your Churchwardens, but they give you a chance to learn what's going on and to have a say!

Dates for your Diary: Oakley - Weds 15 May at 7.30pm

Bromham - Sun 19 May at 12noon\*

*\*followed by communal lunch*

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## **St Owen's Open Day**

On Easter Monday an Open Day was held at St Owen's at which £555.80 was raised for church funds.

A huge 'Thank You' to all those who had decorated the church, offered donations to the various stalls, run the tombola etc and served lunches and teas. Your efforts were much appreciated and well done for raising this sum.

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## ***With Trinity Sunday (26<sup>th</sup> May) to remember ...***

Tell me how it is that in this room there are three candles and but one light, and I will explain to you the mode of the divine existence. - *John Wesley*



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND



**Editor:** *Extracts from an article that was originally published in the Easter 2024 issue of the Church of England Newspaper. Words in italics and within brackets are my paraphrase for the sake of brevity.*

### **Archbishop Justin wrote on the new Fund for Healing, Justice and Repair**

In 2023 the Anglican Consultative Council (about 120 people from each Province of the Anglican Communion, lay, clergy and Bishops) had its three-yearly meeting in Accra in Ghana. One day we went down to a former British fort, Cape Coast Castle, where slaves were held before transportation across the Atlantic. It was a blisteringly hot day; the beaches were white and the sea blue.

The fort had all that you might expect. There were slave dungeons, dark and fetid, a dock for slave ships.

Then, the shock. Immediately above the biggest dungeon was a Church of England chapel for the British community. They would have heard the groans from below as, each evening, they sang the words of the Magnificat.

To be there above the dungeons I had just visited was a reminder that the abomination of transatlantic chattel slavery was and has always been blasphemy.

Our visit to Cape Coast Castle occurred soon after the Church Commissioners for England published their report on their

links to Transatlantic Chattel Slavery, an investigation initiated in 2019 [*this led to an investigation of possible links to the in-perpetuity endowment fund, established in 1704, which supports the mission of the Church of England in England*]

Why?

The Church Commissioners is a leading impact investor with a responsibility to support and promote the flourishing of every human being, and of the planet. “Respect for People” is one of its responsible investment principles. When it reported its findings in February 2023, its response included the proposal to set aside £100 million – 1% of its fund – to invest in a new in-perpetuity investment fund; and to encourage others with a similar history to co-invest to bring the fund to at least £1 billion.

[*The fund came to*] be called the “Fund for Healing, Repair and Justice”. Since then, there has been unhelpful and often inaccurate commentary in the media, so it’s important to get the facts straight.

The Church Commissioners is a Charity overseen by the Charity Commission, independent of the Church of England’s main charities at national and local level. The Commissioners are trustees and the General Synod has no jurisdiction over them. The CofE is not centralised; Bishops or Archbishops cannot make these decisions, quite rightly.

The Church Commissioners has always been clear that the issue is the underlying mindsets and attitudes that produced Transatlantic Chattel Slavery. These mindsets and attitudes are still very much with us today, and still blighting the lives of millions of people of African descent [*and of other*] backgrounds and ethnicities around the world today.

*Continued on next page*

So let us be clear.

The Church Commissioners' action is not about reparations on account of inherited guilt; it is about living up to its responsibility in the present as a leading impact investor to help create a world that promotes human flourishing for all.

The new Fund for Healing, Repair and Justice has an invaluable catalytic potential to help change the very mindsets and attitudes that produced Transatlantic Chattel Slavery, and so many other atrocities around the world, and to seek that they do not happen again. So, this is about setting up a fund which seeks justice for all. This isn't a zero-sum game. It's about mutual flourishing for all God's children. Through the power of example, however messy, difficult and imperfect, the fund seeks to create a model that could be leveraged elsewhere.

The new Fund will be used strategically to accelerate learning and deepen understanding of the historical forces that produced the economy, the institutions, the society and the culture we have today. Understanding our past helps us all to better understand our present and make better decisions that would lead to human flourishing for all.

The innovations and interventions developed through the Fund for Healing, Repair and Justice, while focussing initially on those of African and Caribbean descent affected by the legacy of Chattel Slavery, in the long run must also be scalable to other historically oppressed groups. The benefits will reach far and wide.

+Justin Cantuar

*The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby  
Archbishop of Canterbury*

## Christian Aid Week – 12<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> May



Christian Aid is urging its supporters to “push back against poverty” this Christian Aid Week by bearing in mind the coming General Election.

The charity says that “people hoping to represent us” in the next UK Parliament will soon be on our doorsteps, “vying for our vote”.

Christian Aid says that these would-be MPs will “be in listening mode, keen to hear what makes the voters in their community tick.” And so, urges the charity, Christians can use this opportunity to “show them that your church cares about poverty, and tell them that you expect them to act on poverty too, if they are elected.”

This year the charity has launched the ‘70K Challenge for May’, encouraging its supporters to do a sponsored “Move 70km during May. Walk, run, cycle, however you move is up to you.” Details at: <https://fundraise.christianaid.org.uk>

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## Childrens Society

There will a coffee morning held on Friday 7th June 2024 from 10am to 12.30pm in the Fellowship Room at St Owen's in support of the Children's Society.

There will be the opportunity to drop off the Children's Society boxes for those who have one or donate to the charity on the day. Enquiries to Anne Rooke tel no 01234 602718.

*David Pickup, a solicitor, considers the potential pitfalls of helping others...*

## **Supporting people in trouble**

*Brothers and sisters, ...Carry each other's burdens (Gal 6. 1-3)*

I am always interfering, in situations where I should not. Sorry, but I do. It is probably because of the job I do, that I want to fix things. Christians naturally want to help others. Churches are loving communities, and we want to do the best for each other.

Sometimes supporting others can be difficult. Some people are easy to help. They know what the problem is and what help they need. Others are very demanding and always need help. They go from person to person asking for support and do not always follow advice. Then there are those who would never ask for help. They battle on and get exhausted and struggle on their own.

Probably the best helper is the person who can listen and not judge and guide the burdened to find their own answers. Often the person who is best at helping others is the one who has experienced life's ups and downs themselves. We can support others by:

Listening and keeping confidences.

Looking out for someone to make sure they are ok.

Respecting their choices even if we do not agree.

And, best of all, praying to know what to say and when to be quiet.

St Paul reminds us that we should bear each other's burdens, and no-one is expected to carry some things by themselves. The law of Christ that Paul was referring to was the New Commandment Jesus gave... that we love one another.

*Revd Peter Crumpler, a Church of England priest in St Albans, Herts, and a former communications director for the C of E writes:*

### **DailyHope is on the line – again!**

A free telephone line that provides spiritual support for older people has been relaunched.

The DailyHope telephone line serves many people in later life unable to participate in person with church life in the community, either in the long term, or temporarily due to sickness or medical treatment. It was launched during the Covid pandemic.

The recorded phonenumber provides a vital spiritual resource aimed at the around six million UK people aged over 65 who are either unable to use the internet safely and successfully or are not online at all.

The organisation “Faith in Later Life” announced earlier this year that the line would have to be suspended because of a lack of funding. It came as many churches were being encouraged to ‘grow younger’ and put an emphasis on reaching younger people.

Now their chief executive officer Alexandra Drew has announced that the phonenumber is back in action. She said: “Closing the DailyHope line was an extremely heart-wrenching decision to make. I know that it’s been a lifeline to many older people, especially those unable to attend church in person, and without access to spiritual comfort.”

Now additional funding has been secured, DailyHope has been relaunched, with a drive to find new content and content-providers.

Alexandra Drew said: “We’re looking forward to welcoming

*Continued on next page*

new callers, as well as content providers and funding partners, to help us to continue to bring DailyHope to older people, and others who are staying at home.”

Broadcaster Pam Rhodes, an ambassador for Faith in Later Life, said: “DailyHope has brought Christian fellowship through the landline into the homes of so many, filling their hearts and souls with God’s presence and comfort through word, prayer and song.

“It’s no wonder that DailyHope has remained so popular – and the thought that this vital service may have been lost to those who value and rely upon it brought real despair. But now, we’re thankful to God that DailyHope has been saved. This is wonderful news.”

The DailyHope free telephone service is available on 0800 804 8044. If you know of anyone locally who might like to use this service please let them know the number to call.



**‘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

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**Children’s exam papers**

*The following real-life answers to various exam papers explain why teachers need long holidays...*

*What is a nitrate? Cheaper than a day rate*

*Look out for several more in our May magazine!*





On Easter Monday over 600 people from across the Diocese gathered together at St Albans Cathedral to celebrate this year's Easter Monday Pilgrimage.

This annual tradition goes back over 70 years with people from across the Diocese and beyond journeying together to St Albans Cathedral for an Easter celebration each year on Easter Monday. Some walk from their home church, some drive or cycle, some walk or get a bus or lift-share from a church along the way. Walkers were glad that the sun was out this year! Beyond our diocese there were visitors from as far away as our link diocese of Linköping in Sweden and the US state of Arkansas.

The theme was *All Things New* drawing on the start of Isaiah 43. Having read through the opening verses three individuals then shared reflections looking at how the theme resonated throughout their own lives and testimonies with two of the speakers having been part of our spiritual development year – **The Alban Way**. The celebration finished with communion led by the Bishop of Hertford, the Rt Revd Jane Mainwaring and the celebration ended with the triumphant Easter hymn, *Thine be the Glory*.



## **Philip, the apostle with common sense**

Is there someone in church whom you respect for their spirituality and common sense combined? Someone you feel easy about approaching to ask questions? That person's patron saint should be Philip who is remembered by the Church on 1<sup>st</sup> May.

Philip came from Bethsaida and was a disciple of Jesus from early on. He knew how to lead others to Jesus; he brought Nathanael (or Bartholomew) to Him in a calm, kindly way. He knew how to do some financial forecasting: at the feeding of the 5,000 it was he who pointed out that without divine help, even 200 pennyworths of bread wasn't going to feed that crowd.

He was the one whom the Greeks approached when they wanted to ask Jesus to show them the Father but didn't quite have the nerve to approach Jesus directly. People had confidence in Philip's spirituality, common sense, and kindness. Such a person is a gift to any church! In art, the Apostle Philip has been represented either with a cross, or with loaves of bread.

*Parish Pump website*

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### **From the Registers**

#### **Funerals:**

8th April	Shirley Worrall (Stagsden)
11th April	Jean Marlton (Bromham)
24th April	Una Toombs (Bromham)
30th April	David Davies (Oakley)

#### **Burials/Burials of Ashes:**

17th April	Dorothy Hendry (Oakley)
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# THY KINGDOM COME

– 9<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> May 2024

This year more than a million Christians worldwide will be joining in long-distance prayer between Ascension Day to Pentecost (9<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> May).



What started in 2016 with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York inviting the CofE to pray, has grown into an annual international and ecumenical call to 11 days of specific prayer that more people will come to know Jesus.

According to the organisers of Kingdom Come, the movement is now in nearly 90% of countries worldwide and spread among 85 different denominations and traditions.

Kingdom Come explains that it encourages: “Every person, household, and church to pray that those who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ and His love for the world, will hear it for themselves and respond and follow Him.

“Specifically, we again invite each Christian to pray that God’s Spirit might work in the lives of five people whom they know, who have not responded with their ‘Yes’ to God’s call.”

Whether you have joined in ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ before or not, you are invited to take part this year. Archbishop Justin Welby says: “In praying ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ we all commit to playing our part in the renewal of the nations and the transformation of communities.”

*Editor: We continue our occasional series looking at the stories BEHIND some of our favourite hymns.*

## **The Story behind the Hymn – ‘Praise my Soul the King of Heaven’**

*Praise my soul the King of heaven,  
To His feet thy tribute bring;  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
Evermore his praises sing.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise the everlasting King.*

*By Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)*

This stately poetic paraphrase of Psalm 103 has been included in probably more solemn ceremonies than any other hymn in the English language. It was even chosen by Queen Elizabeth for her wedding to the Duke of Edinburgh in 1947.

Henry Lyte had been a brilliant theological student at university in Dublin, with a gift for versifying. After graduation he moved to a tiny and remote parish in County Wexford to serve his curacy. It was here, when he was about 25, that Henry had a religious experience which would transform his life.

A close friend of his, another clergyman, had fallen ill, and was clearly dying. Henry went to visit him. The friend was not as distressed as Henry had imagined he would be. Instead, the friend confessed that he had been re-reading the New Testament, with an eye on eternity, and had made a great discovery. There was no need to rely on religious duties and formalities and good deeds to gain peace with God. Instead, we can trust completely in the mercy of

*Continued on next page*

Christ and His saving power.

Henry was sophisticated and had been very formal in his ministry. But this encounter with his friend's faith at death's very door, made him reconsider his faith. He wrote later that his dear friend 'who died happy in the thought that there was One who would atone for his delinquencies' made him 'study my Bible and preach in another manner than I had previously done'. And soon after this hymn appeared, in 1834.

Lyte rejoices in the majesty and wonder of the living God, who in turn loves us. He captures the measure of the Psalm in enduring lyrics, which combine time, eternity, God and man all swept up into one embrace. Its last verse summons all the created order to join in a great act of joyous praise – surely a preview of eternity!

*Angels in the height, adore Him,  
Ye behold Him face to face;  
Sun and moon bow down before Him,  
Dwellers all in time and space;  
Praise Him! Praise him!  
Praise with us the God of grace!*

---

***Rogation Sunday (5<sup>th</sup> May) is about asking for God's protection and blessing***

Pure prayers have pure blessings. - *Thomas Goodwin*

To spend an hour worrying on our knees is not prayer. Indeed, there are times when it is our duty, having committed a problem to God in prayer, to stop praying and to trust and to do the necessary work to arrive at a solution. - *Oliver Barclay*



For more information see [sharnbrookdeanery.co.uk](http://sharnbrookdeanery.co.uk)  
 or contact us at [ourvoicetoo@gmail.com](mailto:ourvoicetoo@gmail.com)

### Sudoku - medium

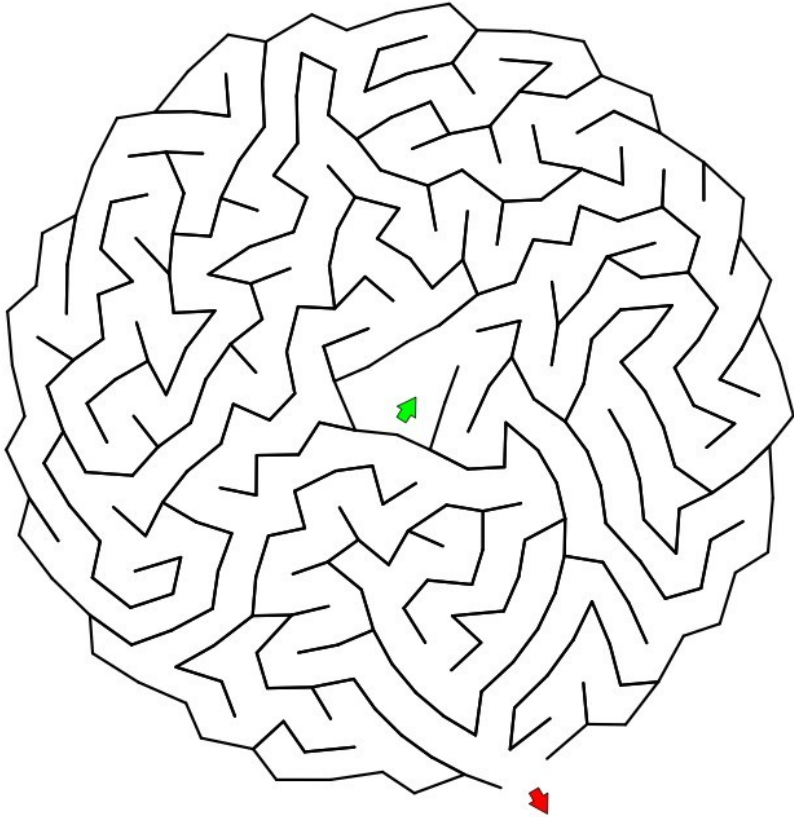
Solution on page 31

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Can you find your way out from the middle?



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### More exam papers

*What was Sir Walter Raleigh famous for?*

He is a noted figure in history because he invented cigarettes and started a craze for bicycles.

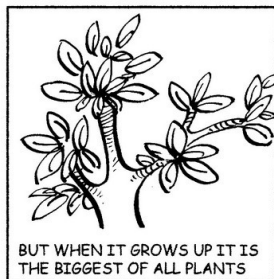
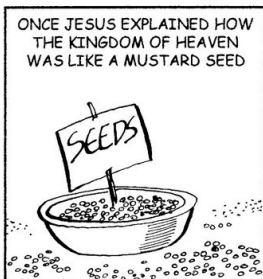
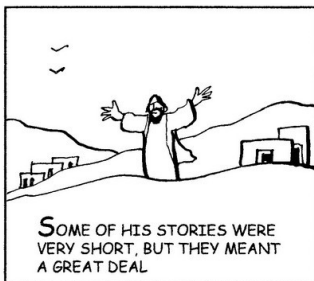
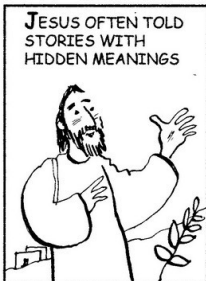
*Where was the American Declaration of Independence signed?*

At the bottom.

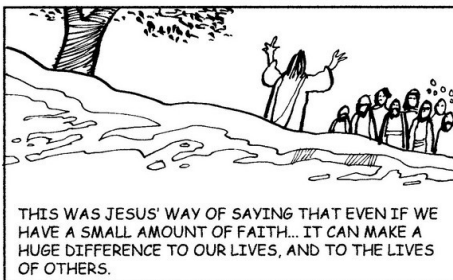
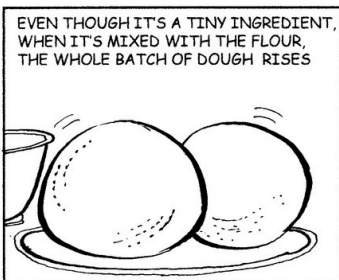


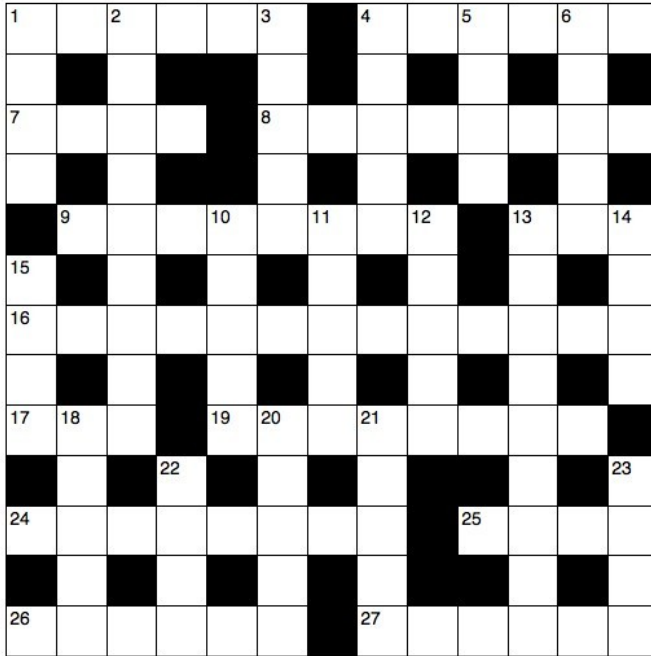
For younger readers.....

The tale of  
the  
Mustard  
Seed  
& the tale of the  
Yeast



JESUS ALSO EXPLAINED THAT THE  
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE YEAST.





**Across**

- 1 One who owes money, goods or services (Isaiah 24:2) (6)
- 4 'A good measure, pressed down, — together and running over' (Luke 6:38) (6)
- 7 Continuous dull pain (Proverbs 14:13) (4)
- 8 This bread contains yeast (Amos 4:5) (8)
- 9 'But take heart! I have — the world' (John 16:33) (8)
- 13 And the rest (abbrev.) (3)
- 16 What Paul was accused of by Tertullus, the high priest's lawyer, in his trial before Felix (Acts 24:5) (13)
- 17 Rap (anag.) (3)
- 19 Founder of the Jesuits in 1534 (8)
- 24 'For where your — is, there your heart will be also' (Luke 12:34) (8)
- 25 The first word written on the wall during King Belshazzar's great banquet (Daniel 5:25) (4)

- 26 'We all, like sheep, have gone — ' (Isaiah 53:6) (6)  
27 One was given in honour of Jesus in Bethany (John 12:2)  
(6)

### Down

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the — hear, the dead are raised' (Luke 7:22) (4)  
2 Conduct (Colossians 1:21) (9)  
3 In the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, the body of a saint or his belongings, venerated as holy (5)  
4 'Like a — of locusts men pounce on it' (Isaiah 33:4) (5)  
5 Very old (Genesis 44:20) (4)  
6 In Calvinist theology, one who is predestined by God to receive salvation (5)  
10 How Nicodemus addressed Jesus when he visited him one night (John 3:2) (5)  
11 Sea (Psalm 148:7) (5)  
12 'I will — you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever' (Psalm 145:1) (5)  
13 One of the groups of philosophers that Paul met in Athens, who disagreed with his teaching about the resurrection (Acts 17:18) (9)  
14 Barred enclosure (Ezekiel 19:9) (4)  
15 'Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in — with the Spirit' (Galatians 5:25) (4)  
18 Cares (anag.) (5)  
20 Garish (Ezekiel 16:16) (5)  
21 'So God said to Noah, "I am going to put — — to all people"' (Genesis 6:13) (2,3)  
22 Just (2 Corinthians 6:13) (4)  
23 'The — of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge' (Proverbs 1:7) (4)

*Solution on page 31*

## God in Music

*The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series looking at great works of music.*

### **‘Glorious the song when God’s the theme’: the Stabat Mater**

May is traditionally the month of Mary, the mother of Jesus. When we read of Mary in the Gospels, we sense the heartache and trial of much of her life: a teenage mother giving birth in a stable, fleeing with her new-born baby and Joseph to Egypt, losing the child Jesus while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, following her son on His ministry but always in the background, and there at the foot of the cross as her son is crucified. It is then Mary must have thought back to that occasion in the temple when Simeon took her child and told her that a sword would pierce her own soul.

That sense of heartache and the sorrow it brings is poignantly expressed in a beautiful poem of the Middle Ages called *Stabat Mater*, which pictures Mary at Calvary and that sword of desolation and sadness that pierces her soul. We are not sure who wrote this poem. It is ascribed to Jacopone da Todi, who became a Franciscan friar on the death of his wife in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The contemplation of Mary’s sorrows in the *Stabat Mater* has inspired many composers, and there are wonderful settings by Palestrina, Rossini, Dvorak, Verdi and Poulenc.

This month let’s focus on a very simple setting, but one that captures those searing pangs of sorrow at the heart of the poem. It is by Antonio Vivaldi, who was born in Venice in 1678. In 1703 he was ordained a priest, but by then he had made his name as a skilled violinist and composer. He continued to compose throughout his life: a vast amount that includes some 40 operas (though only 18 survive), 400 concertos, and over 100 choral works. In 1730 Charles de

*Continued on next page*

Brosses described him as ‘an old man with a prodigious fury for composition.’ For much of his life Vivaldi was music director of the Ospedale della Pieta, a music school for girls. Then in 1740 he left Venice hoping for preferment in Vienna. That was not to be, and his final days were marked by poverty and neglect, and in 1741 burial in a pauper’s grave.

Most of us know Vivaldi through the brilliance and colour of ‘The Four Seasons’ and his setting of the Gloria. The tone is more restrained in his setting of the Stabat Mater. There is a very fine CD recording entitled ‘Vespers of Sorrow’ where the work is linked to a sonata, a psalm setting and the Magnificat for an imagined celebration of our Lady’s feast.

The Stabat Mater is a long poem and Vivaldi restricted himself to setting eight verses for contralto and strings: the solo voice standing for Mary as she sings of the despair and agony as the mother of Jesus. The opening verse, ‘At the cross her station keeping’ captures the intensity of emotion with the throbbing rhythms of the accompaniment – that mood recurs throughout the work. And then with the verse, ‘Eja Mater, fons amoris’ (O thou Mother! Fount of love!) the violins and viola accompany without any bass instruments. It is a pivotal point in the work as the solo voice cries out ‘Mater’ across the heights and depths of the music, leading into the prayer that the love of Mary will touch all human hearts. The final verse set by Vivaldi begins ‘Make me feel as thou hast felt,’ and so Mary stands for all mothers who have lost loved ones: perhaps sons killed in Afghanistan, perhaps daughters dying through disease.

*if you wish to read all 20 long verses in an English translation from the Latin then search on line for [stabatmater.info](http://stabatmater.info)*



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

Solution to puzzle  
on page 22

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Solution to puzzle  
on page 26

## Book Reviews

### **Grandparenting for Faith: Sharing God with the children you love the most**

**By Becky Sedgwick, BRF, £9.99**

Part of the joy of being a grandparent is to help your grandchildren learn to have confidence in God's love for them.

This book will encourage grandparents to be a unique voice, speaking into their grandchildren's lives, and helping to nurture them into the reality of a relationship with the God who loves them.

\*\*

*Cont on next page*

## **Spiritual Growth in a Time of Change: Following God in midlife**

**By Tony Horsfall, BRF, £9.99**

Our 40s and 50s are often times of personal change and emotional transition for our families, but they can also be important years for our spiritual lives.

Tony Horsfall addresses a number of ‘midlife’ issues – from facing up to the past, to renegotiating relationships – and explores how to navigate a spiritual journey through these years, leading to deeper faith and a closer walk with God.

\*\*

## **Finding Flourishing: Time and pace for your work-life wellbeing**

**By Naomi Aidoo, BRF, £9.99**

In our fast-paced world, wellbeing should still be an accessible pursuit, even for the busiest among us. Naomi Aidoo presents a practical approach to helping you achieve wellbeing; one that doesn’t require adding yet another technique to your busy schedule. Instead, it shows you how to enhance your day-to-day mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.

Aidoo considers how wellbeing might look in our relationships, our work and the rest of our lives, and uses the T.I.M.E. framework to offer manageable steps towards achieving it.



## **Roger Bannister and the Four Minute Mile**

It was 70 years ago, on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1954, that Roger Bannister became the first person to run a mile in under four minutes (3 minutes, 59.4 seconds), in Oxford\*. Just 23 days later, on 29<sup>th</sup> May, Diane Leather became the first woman to run a mile in under five minutes (4 minutes, 59.6 seconds), in Birmingham.

These were both momentous achievements, though Diane Leather, born in Staffordshire, received far less recognition than Oxford-born Bannister. At the time women did not compete in major events over more than 200 metres; so she was not allowed to compete at the Olympics or internationally over her best distance.

Women's athletics was not widely covered in the media at the time, or someone might have pointed out that on the same day that Leather beat five minutes for the mile, she had already broken an 800 metres record. The following year she ran 4:50.8 for the mile and then 4:45.0, which remained a world record until 1962.

Leather – who became Diane Charles on marriage – had also set an 800m world record of 2:09 in 1954. She retired at the age of 27.

Bannister's world record is one of the most widely known in athletics, and he continued to produce top performances, beating his Australian rival John Landy in Vancouver and taking the European title before retiring to concentrate on medical research. A lifelong Christian, he died in 2018, as did Diane Leather – coincidentally the daughter of a surgeon.

*Tim Lenton – Parish Pump website*

\* He was a medical student at the university and became a neurologist; he was knighted in 1975.

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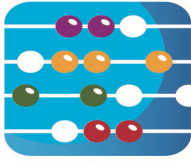
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