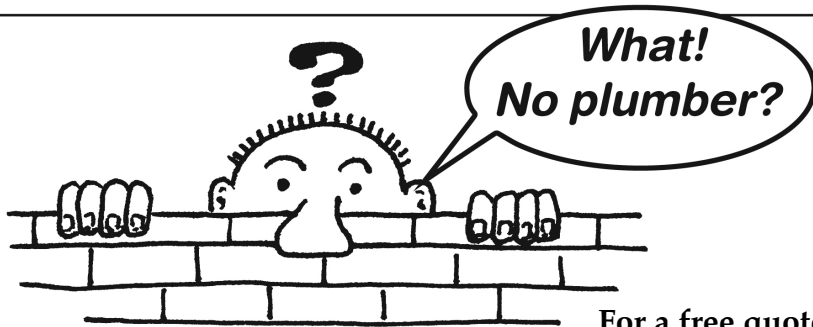


Church News
for the Parishes of
Bromham, Oakley and Stagsden



March 2025



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

Find us at: 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
	 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	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

2nd March

10.30am

Sunday before Lent

Holy Communion (Stagsden)

Bishop Alan's last visit

5th March

10.30am

Ash Wednesday

Holy Communion (Oakley)

9th March

9.00am

1st Sunday of Lent

Holy Communion (Bromham)

10.30am

LEP Service (Oakley Methodist Church)

3.30pm

Evensong (Bromham)

16th March

9.00am

2nd Sunday of Lent

Holy Communion (Oakley)

10.30am

Holy Communion (Bromham)

23rd March

9.00am

3rd Sunday of Lent

Holy Communion (Bromham)

10.30am

Holy Communion (Oakley)

30th March

9.00am

Mothering Sunday

Holy Communion (Stagsden)

10.30am

All-Age Mothering Sunday Service

(Oakley)

10.30am

All-Age Mothering Sunday Service

(Bromham)

Weekday Services

Mondays

11.30am

Messy Church (Bromham)

Tuesdays (1st and 3rd of the month)

11.30am

Holy Communion (Bromham FR)

Thursdays

10.00am

Messy Church (Oakley)

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



March, like other months, is punctuated with anniversaries. Being partly Welsh I celebrate Saint David's Day, Patron Saint of Wales, (1st), when I use my grandma's family recipe and cast iron bake stone to make the traditional Welsh Cakes, liberally topped off with a dusting of sugar. Delicious!

This month we also remember: Saint Patrick, (17th), and as Christians journey into Lent, Shrove Tuesday, (remember the pancakes and toppings- 4th), Ash Wednesday, (5th), with Mothering Sunday, (30th). Digging deeper into the calendar, in a light-hearted way, March also has Red Nose Day, (21st), British Pie Week, (from 3rd), and in the USA: National Meatball Day, (9th), and National Chip and Dip Day, (23rd). There is a further array of dates to remember, some with a deeper cultural meaning and sense of remembrance, with festivals bridging nationalities and cultures.

March 29th, between 8.30-9.30pm, ushers in Earth Hour, from its roots in Sydney, Australia, 2007. We are encouraged to turn off our lights, and non-essential appliances, to acknowledge the damage of climate change and its causes, (the impact which may seem at a distance for us, but not so for large parts of our globe). Sixty minutes to pause, to reflect and look to the future with the hope, and a desire, to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Turning to the Bible, Psalm 104: 24-25, describes the wonder and breadth of God's creation in our lives through our experiences and via our screens. Words that draw us in to remember all creation, in our shared world as 'living things both great and small'.

I am reminded of Saint David's prompt 'to do the little things that I do'. We are reminded that our actions and choices make a difference, for those that we know and significantly for those we will never meet, through the shared community of our global world.

As the days lengthen, the dark evenings recede, we are blessed to witness the light and hope that early Spring brings, through the blossoming of our natural world, here in rural North Bedfordshire. Let us remember that we are all connected to 'living things both great and small', as we reflect on the words of Saint David, and that our small choices and actions may make a difference.

Petra

St Owen's Altar Guild

Decorating St Owens Church for Easter will take place on
Holy Saturday 19 April
from 10 am.

Anyone who would like to help will be most welcome.

Donations for the purchase of flowers would be much appreciated.

Margaret Parrott





Next meeting - **Thursday 13th March**

2.30pm - 4.30pm

for a Neighbourhood Team talk

.....

For further details

contact Tessa Woodcock

01234 340089



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

First Friday Coffee Mornings

Next coffee morning on Fri 7th March

11am- 1pm

in St Owen's Fellowship Room, Bromham.

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



Book now! - highly recommended

‘Walk Through the Bible’ New Testament day

Sat 22nd March 10am – 4.30pm

Clapham Church Fellowship Centre.

Fun, interactive, interesting, memorable –

see the ‘big picture’ of the Bible.

Book at www.Bible.org.uk Tickets £14.

Book Review

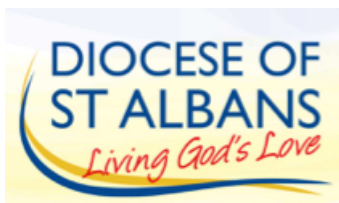
In Quietness & Trust - Lent devotions from the beatitudes

By Matt Searles, 10Publishing, £6.99

Early in His ministry, Jesus gave His followers a description of how He wants His people to live. Rather than seeking to ascend to God, Christian discipleship is a downward flourishing; a counter-cultural way of blessing.

These 40 devotions, with a daily reading and short reflection, will guide you through the beatitudes Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount. This Easter, join Jesus on His path to the cross, and see that His way – though so different to the way of the world – leads to freedom, joy, and life.





Rt Revd Dr Alan Smith
Bishop of St Albans

The Alban Way

New participants on The Alban Way programme for 2025 gathered at High Leigh Conference Centre in mid-February to begin their year of growing in faith through community. The weekend featured worship, reflection and spiritual practices including the *rule of life* and *the Examen*. These last two derive from Ignatius Loyola who made them rules for the Jesuits who still follow them today as do many other Christians. The group were joined by members of the Growing Younger and More Diverse team along with the leaders of the year's cohorts including Archdeacon Dave, Bishop Jane and previous Alban Way participants.

The Alban Way is a programme designed for 18 to 35-year-olds who want to deepen their faith and develop their leadership skills. Over the course of the year participants form a supportive community while



Continued on next page

exploring their faith more fully and seeking direction in their lives. This year, 20 participants from across the Diocese and a variety of church traditions are taking part in the programme. Spanning ages 18 to 35 they bring a diversity of backgrounds and life experiences but share a common interest in exploring how personal faith can be lived out in practice deepening their spiritual roots, and finding stability in life through a relationship with Jesus.

Throughout the weekend there was a variety of teaching sessions, worship times (led by previous participants) discussion groups and space for personal reflection. A key part of the weekend was developing a *rule of life* (a spiritual framework designed to help cultivate a deeper relationship with Jesus). Participants experienced some of the practices which will form a significant part of their year together on The Alban Way including the *rule of life*, *the Examen*, *rest* and *mindful art*.



To follow along with the journey of this year's Alban Way cohorts please follow The Alban Way instagram account.

Bishop Alan's Last Visit

The Bishop of St Albans will visit our Benefice on Sunday 2nd March for the last time before his retirement. He will be at the 10.30am service in St Leonards - dress warmly!

Lent 2025

Lent is a time when we are all encouraged to spend some extra time in personal prayer, reflection and study, and to meet together to share and discuss our faith, so we can help one another to grow.

Various resources and opportunities are available to help us grow this Lent:

Ash Wednesday (March 5th this year) is when Lent begins, and there will be a service of Holy Communion at 10.30am in St Mary's Oakley (including ashing for those who would like to receive it).

Living Hope: this is the Church of England Lent Resource for 2025, and there will be booklets of daily readings available in the churches, price £2 each. The material "invites us to explore the hope God offers us – something real, robust, alive – as we journey with Jesus on the road that leads to the cross and beyond, to the transforming hope of Easter Day". Living Hope offers us the opportunity to deepen our hope in God and be part of what God is doing to bring hope in the world.

You can also sign up to receive the daily reflections in your inbox by going to <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-life/what-we-believe/lent-holy-week-and-easter/living-hope-lent-reflections>

The **Benefice Lent groups** will take place in St Owen's Fellowship Room at 2pm on Mondays in Lent, and on Zoom on Wednesday evenings at 7pm; we will announce the course we'll be following nearer the time. It would be helpful to have an idea of numbers so let us know if you expect to coming along.

NTLive is a one-day event exploring the New Testament – interactive, inspiring and informative, it will help us see the ‘Big Picture’ and understand the context of the New Testament. Saturday 22nd March 2025 at Clapham Church Fellowship Centre, 10am – 4.30pm. Cost £14 includes course materials and drinks, bring a packed lunch. Book online at www.Bible.org.uk or talk to Catherine.

Do think and pray about what you will commit time to this year, sign up if necessary, and walk with God through Lent to the joy of the Easter celebrations.

Catherine

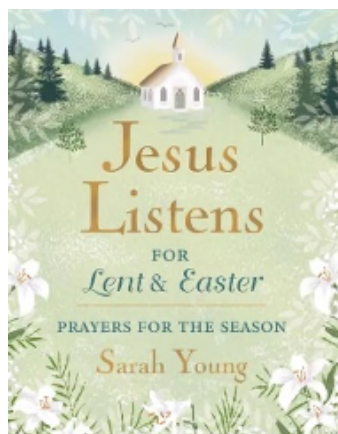
Book Review

Jesus Listens for Lent and Easter – Prayers for the Season

By Sarah Young, Thomas Nelson, £17.99

This inspirational devotional prayer book for Lent and Easter will be helpful for anyone looking for peace and forgiveness, and for any families want to cultivate a tradition of Lenten prayers and devotions together.

It has prayers, reflections, and Bible verses based on Jesus' life, as well as stunning spring and Easter season illustrations.



This season of remembering Christ's death and resurrection will help you understand how prayer connects you to God, helps you seek forgiveness, and brings you the inexpressible joy and freedom of knowing that Christ has risen!

Renewing the Church Electoral Roll

Every Church of England Church has an Electoral Roll – a list of its members. This is revised every year before the church’s annual meeting (APCM), to provide an up-to-date list of those able to vote at the annual meeting. Every 6th year the Roll is scrapped and a new one created, and everyone has to fill out a new form: 2025 is one of those years.

In the first couple of weeks of March, all existing members of the Electoral Rolls of our three churches will receive a letter of explanation and forms to fill in to be included on the new Roll and to update their contact information. New people are welcome to join – to be on the Electoral Roll you must (1) have been baptised, and (2) live in the parish OR (if you don’t live in the parish) have been a regular worshipper for at least 6 months OR wish to be a regular worshipper but are prevented from coming to church by illness etc.

So look out for your form, and return it to the person named on it by Sunday 13th April (Stagsden) or Sunday 27th April (Bromham and Oakley). If you would like to join the Electoral Roll of your church for the first time, or have any questions, do speak to one of the clergy or a Churchwarden.

It is not the number of books you read, nor the variety of sermons you hear, nor the amount of religious conversation in which you mix, but it is the frequency and earnestness with which you meditate on these things, till the truth in them becomes your own and part of your being, that ensures your growth. *Rev'd F W Robertson - mid C19 clergyman famed for his preaching at Holy Trinity, Brighton.*

Canon Paul Hardingham continues his series on the books of the Bible

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

'The Psalms have a unique place in the Bible, because most of the Scripture speaks to us, while the Psalms speak for us' (Athanasius of Alexandria).

The Book of Psalms contains 150 prayers or songs of praise, the majority (73) attributed to David, although some were composed later. They were mostly composed for liturgical worship. There are songs of praise, in which people joyfully express praise for God's work of creation and sustaining (eg 135 & 136). In others, the psalmist recounts a desperate situation and gives thanks for God's answer to his prayers (eg 30 & 116).

There are a significant number of psalms of lament, both individual (eg 3-7; 22) and communal (eg 44), which begin with a cry for help. Some express deliverance from sin (51 & 130), or point to the certainty that the Lord has heard their prayer (7, but contrast 88). The theme of trust is central in many psalms (23, 62 & 91).

The 'royal psalms' (eg 20, 21 & 72) point to the promised Messiah, fulfilled in Jesus. There are also psalms teaching wisdom (eg 37, 49); 'torah' psalms, focussing on the law of the Lord (eg 1, 19 & 119), and psalms which celebrate the history of Israel and God's faithfulness (eg 78, 105 & 106).

The psalms can help us in our own prayers, by providing us with models to follow, as they express our own deepest feelings as we approach God: *'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul'* (Psalm 23:1-3).

Open The Book celebrates 25 years of Bible storytelling

Do you remember hearing your first Bible story? Most of us would have been children at the time.

If you had the privilege of hearing them often, those stories would now be a part of you, giving you hope in dark times, and a way to understand the world around you, and a sure sense that the God of the Bible exists. All in all, Bible stories are important to know.

This year Bible Society's 'Open the Book' turns 25. It has seen remarkable progress in getting Bible stories 'out there', to young children right across the world. Open the Book brings the Bible to life through its creative and interactive storytelling approach with teams visiting schools to present a ten to fifteen-minute scripted Bible story.

Hundreds of volunteers and creative storytelling teams have shared the ageless stories in thousands of primary schools. They have created lasting memories, sparked the imagination, given hope, taught important lessons, connected generations and touched the hearts of countless young people and their teachers.

Fiona, a member of the Open the Book staff team at Bible Society, says: "With 95 per cent of children no longer in church, who else will tell them these powerful, life changing stories and take the word into our neighbourhoods?"

Could you share Bible stories with primary school children? Why not become a storyteller by joining your local team, based at Bromham Baptist Church, which includes members of the Baptist and St Owen's communities. You may have seen sample presentations on a Sunday morning but school visits are on Thursday afternoons. To find out more contact Revd Catherine or Edward Jones - phone numbers on page 3.



'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



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

Many people will walk in and out of your life. But only true friends will leave footprints in your heart. -

Eleanor Roosevelt

From the Registers

Baptism:

2nd February

Jude Anthony Brewis (Oakley)

Funerals:

10th February

Bonnie McCabe (Oakley)

19th February

Monica Cull (Oakley)

25th February

James Glass (Oakley)

26th February

Anne Cowsill (Bromham)

Tim Lenton looks back on a remarkable man who has touched all our lives.

A tribute to Alexander Fleming

Seventy years ago, on 11th March 1955, the Scottish bacteriologist Sir Alexander Fleming died. He was joint winner with Ernst Boris Chain and Sir Howard Walter Florey of the 1945 Nobel Prize in Physiology/Medicine for discovering penicillin.

Fleming was not the tidiest researcher, and his discovery of penicillin came about more or less by accident, as he said himself. He regarded his earlier discovery of lysozyme, a mildly antiseptic enzyme which is present in body fluids, as his best scientific work.

The discovery of penicillin was much more significant in practical terms, but for some years he was unable to persuade fellow-experts of its importance – another example of the scientific consensus being wrong. In the end Chain and Florey were vital to its success, having discovered a method of turning penicillin into a practical, useful treatment.

Fleming came from a Presbyterian background but was described as “not particularly religious”. He served through the First World War in the Royal Army Medical Corps, working in battlefield hospitals in France, where he observed that closed wound treatment often had adverse effects.

He was a member of the rifle club at his medical school, St Mary’s, which led to his joining the research department there.

The discovery of penicillin and its subsequent development as a prescription drug marked the start of modern antibiotics. Fleming was knighted in 1944. In 1999 he was named in *Time*

Continued on next page

magazine's list of the 100 most important people in the 20th century, and three years later as one of the 100 Greatest Britons in a BBC poll. He was also voted third greatest Scot in 2009.

When he heard that penicillin production had been patented in the US in 1944, he was furious that his discovery, given free, should become a profit-making monopoly in another country.

Parish Pump website



"No, not the steeple, the roof or the organ – it's for the vicar's post-Christmas-pre-Easter recuperation holiday-break."

St Joseph, patron saint of fathers and holy death

Why should St Joseph's day be on March 19th? Surely, he belongs to Advent and Christmas, at Mary's side in millions of nativity scenes around the world.

In any case, as the foster-father of Christ and husband of Mary, Joseph played a major part in the story of the coming of Jesus Christ. All that we know about him for sure is in the gospels. Read especially Matthew 1 – 2. He was of Davidic descent, but his trade as a carpenter shows that he was not at all wealthy.

Joseph's gentleness and decency towards Mary, and his willingness to do God's will when it was revealed to him, portray him as a kind and godly person. Joseph is the patron saint of fathers of families, and he makes an excellent example. He comes across as a protecting, loyal, thoughtful, self-controlled person, full of integrity, and willing to work hard. Who wouldn't want a father like that?

Joseph is also the patron saint of all who desire a holy death. Thus, countless churches, hospitals and religious congregations are dedicated to Joseph.

With Lent and spiritual self-examination in mind....

'Abide in Me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. - *John 15:4,7*

Bearing fruit takes time

The nine fruits of the Spirit are Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control. We don't strive for the fruits of the Spirit, rather we plant ourselves in good soil, allow ourselves to be fed by the Holy Spirit, keep taking in nourishment, turn to face the light of Christ and these fruits will develop and grow in our lives.

Can you tell whether a tree is an apple tree or a pear tree? Not easily when they are in blossom, but very easily when they bear fruit. Bearing fruit takes time and a lot of planting, preparation, nurture and growth.

March is the time of year when gardeners begin to plant seeds ready for summer, but patience is needed – the seeds will take a while to germinate, and the gardener needs to write the names of seeds on labels and not forget which are fruit, flowers and vegetables. The seeds need to be in the dark, or the light, or the warmth or the cool, depending at what stage of life they are at.

So too, is God with us. God knows what fruit we can bring forth. God nurtures us and gives us light to grow. But first, we need to be planted and that can be scary.

Maybe you are feeling in a cold dark place this March, maybe it feels as if you've been buried, maybe you've got a weight above you and you can't see the way out. Just think that maybe you've been buried because you've been planted.

With patience there will be warmth and light, be like a seed, trust God, and begin to grow out of the darkness towards God's marvellous light. We won't see fruit immediately; we have to be nourished and mature and ripen. Patience will be given to us, fruit of the seed of the Holy Spirit.

Parish Pump website

Our Voice All Day Long

On 8th March 2025 Our Voice is super extended, lasting the whole day at All Saints, Riseley. Come along to share food for the mind and for your belly. Lots of fun activities, discussions and of course the usual campfire worship. There will be a small charge to cover food and expenses.



Like to Try a New Hobby?

Comfortable with IT?

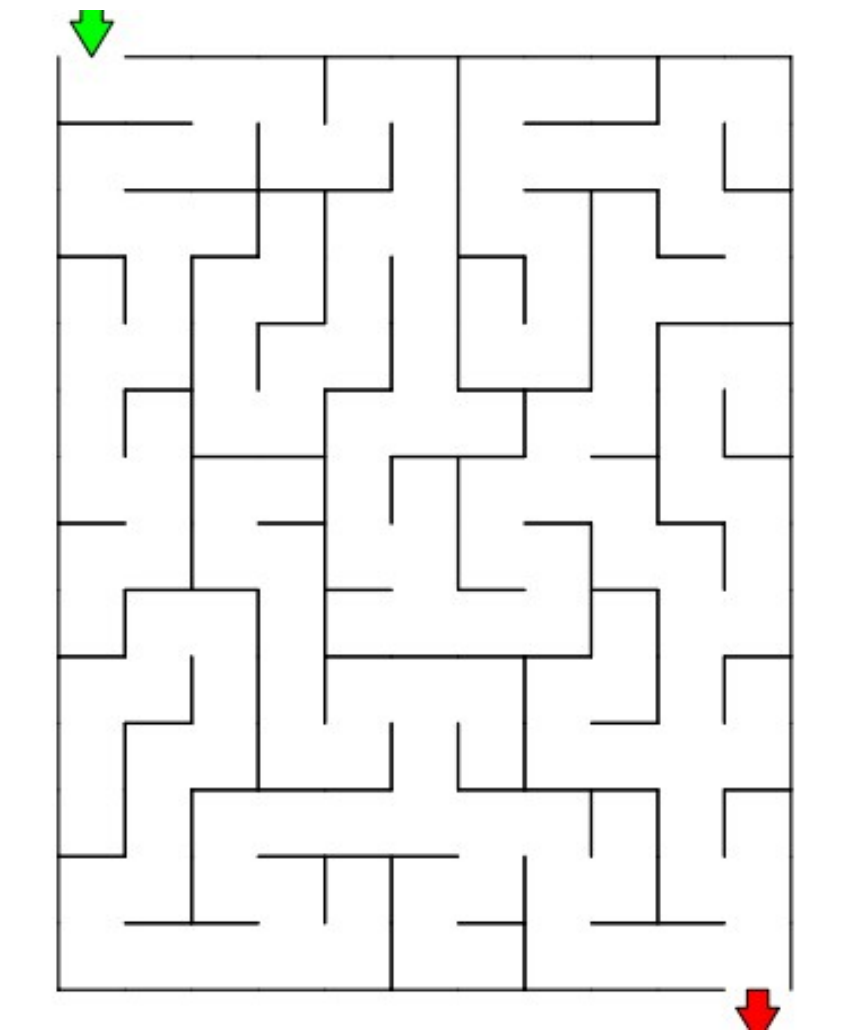
How about joining the editorial team for this magazine?

Wherever you live, you can start as an Assistant Editor and play an active role in our church life.

Did you spot the typing error? You're made for it! But, if not, you can learn.

Contact Edward at stowensnews@btinternet.com

Can you find your way out from top to bottom?



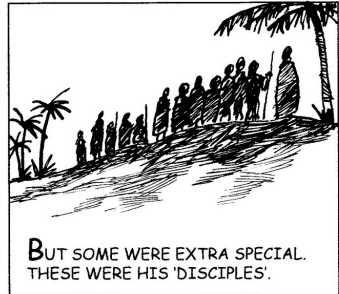
Birthday cake is the only food you can blow on and spit on, and still everybody rushes to get a piece.

For younger readers.....

The Doctor and the Patient



JESUS HAD MANY FRIENDS



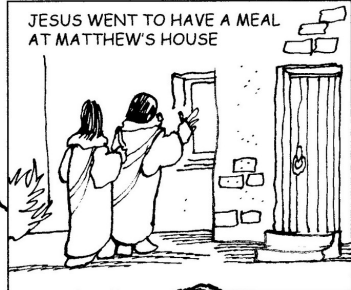
BUT SOME WERE EXTRA SPECIAL. THESE WERE HIS 'DISCIPLES'.



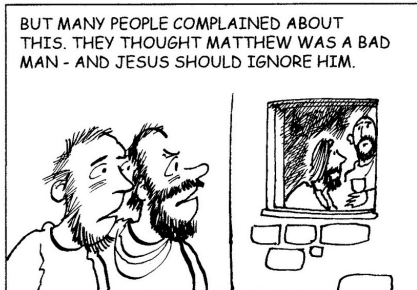
JESUS ONCE ASKED A TAX-COLLECTOR CALLED 'MATTHEW' TO BE ONE OF HIS TEAM



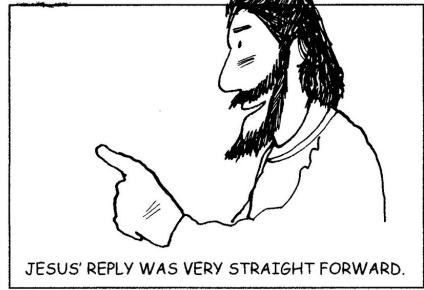
MATTHEW AGREED TO FOLLOW JESUS



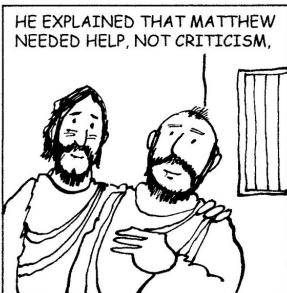
JESUS WENT TO HAVE A MEAL AT MATTHEW'S HOUSE



BUT MANY PEOPLE COMPLAINED ABOUT THIS. THEY THOUGHT MATTHEW WAS A BAD MAN - AND JESUS SHOULD IGNORE HIM.



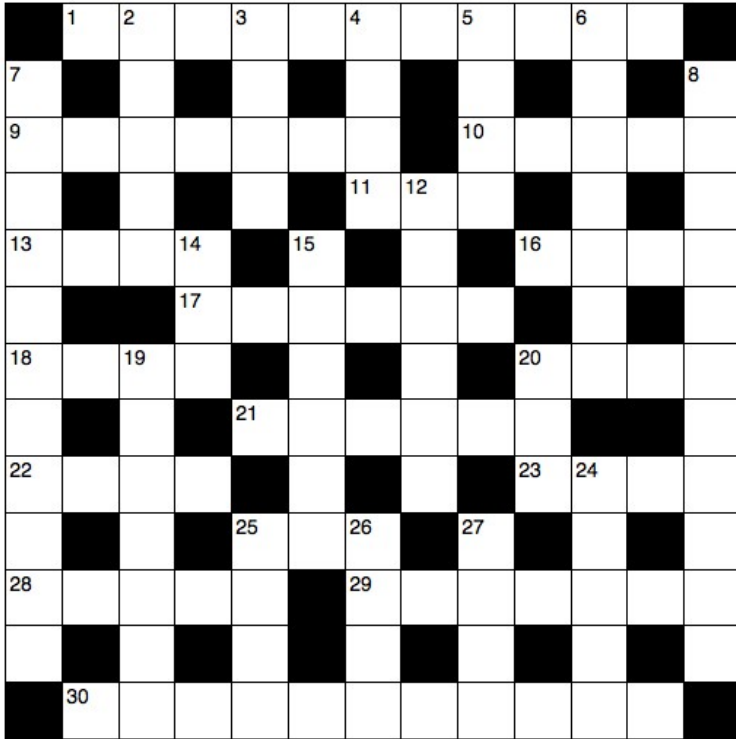
JESUS' REPLY WAS VERY STRAIGHT FORWARD.



HE EXPLAINED THAT MATTHEW NEEDED HELP, NOT CRITICISM,



"IT'S NOT THE WELL THAT NEED A DOCTOR - BUT THE SICK!"
see Luke 5:27-32



Across

- 1 These letters come between Romans and Galatians (11)
- 9 'You will not — me to the grave' (Psalm 16:10) (7)
- 10 King of Moab to whom the Israelites were subject for 18 years (Judges 3:14) (5)
- 11 Town possessing mineral spring (3)
- 13 Mede (anag.) (4)
- 16 High-fidelity (abbrev.) (4)
- 17 He succeeded his father Rehoboam as king of Judah (1 Kings 14:31) (6)
- 18 A son of Simeon (Genesis 46:10) (4)
- 20 Controversial religious book of the 1970s, The — of God Incarnate (4)
- 21 'He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you — — and hear' (Acts 2:33) (3,3)

- 22 'You — me together in my mother's womb' (Psalm 139:13) (4)
- 23 Edit (anag.) (4)
- 25 'Who has believed our message and to whom has the — of the Lord been revealed?' (Isaiah 53:1) (3)
- 28 Abraham's brother (Genesis 22:23) (5)
- 29 'When Mordecai learned of — that had been — , he tore his clothes' (Esther 4:1) (3,4)
- 30 Sympathetic (Proverbs 11:16) (4-7)

Down

- 2 'That was why his parents said, "He is — —; ask him"' (John 9:23) (2,3)
- 3 Integrated Services Digital Network (1,1,1,1) 4
- 4 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his — of thousands' (1 Samuel 18:7) (4)
- 5 Concept (John 8:14) (4)
- 6 'Do we, then, — the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law' (Romans 3:31) (7)
- 7 Industrious (2 Timothy 2:6) (11)
- 8 'I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be — in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you (Ephesians 1:18) (11)
- 12 'Out of the same mouth come — and cursing' (James 3:10) (6)
- 14 This was how many of the Jewish leaders described Jesus (John 10:20) (3)
- 15 Vitality (Job 20:11) (6)
- 19 He urged David to kill Saul at Hakilah (1 Samuel 26:8) (7)
- 20 'So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul — with the church and taught great numbers of people' (Acts 11:26) (3)
- 24 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord — — ' (Deuteronomy 6:4) (2,3)
- 25 Parched (Matthew 12:43) (4)
- 26 'In the image of God he created him; — and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27) (4)
- 27 Disparagement (Psalm 15:3) (4)

Solution on page 33

God in the Arts

This year the Revd Michael Burgess surveys works of sacred art that can be found in various museums...you can see the image by googling the title of the painting and the artist.

‘He gave us eyes to see them’: ‘Menorah’ by Roger Wagner

In the midst of the dreaming spires and Gothic splendour of Oxford stands the Ashmolean Museum. Its classic proportions are a contrast to the buildings around. Within, the addition of thirty new galleries has doubled the exhibition space, and the visitor to the museum will discover a wealth of beautiful and impressive works – Renaissance drawings, Eastern art and British paintings. The last category includes this month’s work: ‘Menorah’ by Roger Wagner. It was painted in 1993 and at that time it was the largest contemporary painting acquired by the Ashmolean. It is now on loan to St Giles’ Church at the northern end of the city.

Roger Wagner was born in 1957. He graduated from Oxford and now worships at the Romanesque church of Iffley. He works on a small scale with book illustrations, but also creates



large canvases that juxtapose traditional religious images with contemporary symbols in a startling and arresting way. The background of ‘Menorah’ is Didcot Power Station (as it was before 2019 when the cooling towers were demolished).

The central chimney and the cooling towers around form the shape of the seven-branched candlestick of Judaism. In front of them are the three crosses of Calvary. Around the scene of crucifixion we can see a couple consoling each other in the foreground and isolated individuals wandering in the mud in grief and perplexity. They are dressed in Hasidic robes.

An earlier work of Roger Wagner's is 'The Burning Furnace' where angels are painted in the setting of a Victorian iron works. It is the same contrast of ancient and modern in this painting: the Good Friday of 2000 years ago and an industrial, bleak landscape of today. The artist is also contrasting the menorah of Judaism and the cross of Christianity – the suffering of the Holocaust and the suffering of the Saviour.

Here in 'Menorah' the figure of Jesus is insignificant against the immense scale of industrial buildings spewing out pollution into the bright sky.

But it is that figure of Jesus on the Cross that draws us into this painting. The mourners around look like figures in a concentration camp: victims of man's inhumanity to man. The cooling towers are a vivid reminder of our violation and destruction of mother earth. And in the centre we see our crucified Lord. We hear Isaiah's song of the suffering servant that there is no sorrow like this sorrow. We also hear Jesus crying 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' And we can ponder this painting as we ask, "Is it a sign of the absence of God, or, like the Menorah lit in the temple, a sign of the presence of God?" There is human chemistry creating the destruction of life and earth as depicted by Roger Wagner. Can we proclaim a divine chemistry at work which will transform suffering and death into the new life of Easter in the power of the Resurrection?

The Revd Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace' to his clergyman nephew.

On the perils of parking near church

The Rectory
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

I cannot be wholly sympathetic because your church car park is now inadequate, only having space for 100 cars. Your solution of advising members of the congregation to park in the adjoining supermarket car park may not have been wise. The maximum time people can stop there is 90 minutes, and as your services often reach that length, returning to find their cars clamped may not make you universally popular – although it may give your congregation the opportunity of practising Christian forgiveness.

Since the medieval architect who built St James the Least of All was not overly concerned with car parking, the only space we have is along the road by the church. Inevitably, it gets blocked, which causes us all immense satisfaction when those not attending church but intending to have a morning shopping, find themselves unable to get out of the village until Mattins is over.

I did once encourage people to walk to church across the fields, but after we had nearly lost the present Earl in that swampy bit near the brook, I decided the idea was best dropped.

For most, the inconvenience of parking only makes attending

church more of a pleasurable challenge; we so enjoy having something to complain about. Major Hastings, however, who has complained endlessly about parking problems, made a point last Christmas by leaving his car in the middle of the vicarage lawn. I was so pleased he happened to park just where I had had a garden pond filled in only the previous week. He returned to find that the car had sunk up to the windscreen and needed a crane to remove it.

For weddings, a farmer allows us to use the field adjoining the church. While he rarely attends church on Sundays, he is always there the week before – I suspect praying for heavy rain, so he can make a fortune charging to tow out with his tractor those who have got stuck. Perhaps the greatest act of witness your church could perform would be to get everyone attending church to park on the ring road, bringing the entire town to a halt until your Sunday morning Service is over.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

With Mothering Sunday approaching, enjoy this...

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Bottle feeding: A chance for Dad to also get up at 2 a.m.

Family planning: The art of spacing your children the proper distance apart to keep you just on the edge of financial disaster.

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Why a glass of milk may help save your life

Drinking a glass of milk a day could cut the risk of you getting bowel cancer by almost a fifth.

So say researchers at the University of Oxford. They have found strong evidence that calcium protects against the deadly disease.



According to the data, it takes only an extra 300mg of calcium a day (found in a large 240ml of milk, or a couple of pots of yoghurt) to result in a 17 per cent lessening of the risk of bowel cancer.

Currently, one in 20 women and one in 17 men in the UK will be diagnosed with bowel cancer during their lifetime. It affects around 44,000 people each year in the UK.

Solution to puzzle on page 22

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

Solution to puzzle on page 26

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

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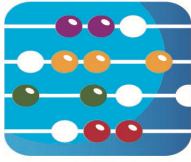
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