St James Church Magazine



December 2018 - February 2019

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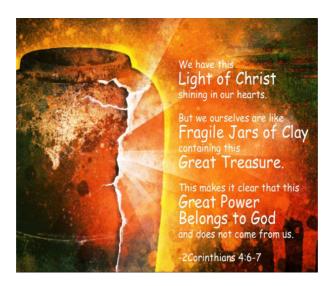
The Cracked Pot

In this season of Advent, Christians around the world are preparing themselves to tell afresh the story of God's coming into our world. It should always strike us how God chose to come to us in sheer vulnerability.

A few weeks ago, I shared the illustration of "the cracked pot," which I had heard from Paula Gooder, a writer and lectures in Biblical Studies. Contrary to the ways of the world, we are reminded in the second epistle to the Corinthians that it is through our own vulnerabilities that the light of God best shines out. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians said "we have this treasure in clay jars [pots], so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." (2 Corinthians 4: 7)

The city of Corinth was famous for two types of pottery. One, the very famous type that still catches our attention when we go to admire it in a museum today, was black-figure pottery. It was highly glazed, made of fine clay and worth lots of money. The other type was in the form of ordinary jars, made of poorquality clay. Under the heat of firing, those ordinary pots would crack and be used as a lamp. As the candle was placed inside, the cracked pot would diffuse light to a whole room.

The whole point of Paul in chapter 4 was to remind the Corinthians and us that his weaknesses (like poor quality



clay), far from undermining the gospel message, are the whole point. The Roman Empire, just like our own society, was a success culture that demanded of people to be successful, to be taken seriously. Paul makes it very clear that the Christian life is very different. People were not meant to look at us and be impressed, but to look through our weaknesses to see God's light shining. Christians, whatever their limitations, inadequacies or circumstances, can diffuse the light of Christ in the world, because it is through those limitations that God's glory can be best expressed. No wonder Paul later in his letter wrote that he delighted "in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Co. 12: 10)

Likewise, God's supreme victory, his victory over sin and death, started with a humble beginning. The birth stories found in the Gospels makes it's clear that Jesus had none of the advantages or privileges that successful people typically have. Not only did Jesus leave the splendour of His heavenly throne to be born as a human under such humble circumstances, but His entire life and ministry testify that it wasn't His goal to achieve what people typically equate as a success. His greatest achievement took place on the cross, the ultimate symbol of defeat, humiliation and rejection. Not the success story the disciples had first envisioned! It took the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit for them to grasp God's way of salvation. So this Christmas season, let us learn to embrace our cracked pots and be "diffusers" of God's light and love to a world that greatly need to hear and experience God's plan of salvation for them.





God with us

Well, we are into the frantic pressie-buying month of December now. The American 'Black Friday' tradition appears to be firmly a part of our own pattern and has brought the search for the perfect Christmas present yet earlier in our calendar. Parish and school Christmas Fayres offer us home-made, Fairtrade, recycled and singular alternatives. And increasingly the inequalities within our economy become more apparent as people risk debt to bring a smile to their child's face.

When I was a parish priest we found that many of our single parents felt trapped by the pressure of keeping up with those around them. We tried to introduce a maximum spend for all our congregational and family present buying in order to bring some parity. It wasn't easy!

I'm reminded at this time of year of the line that we are seeing more frequently, accompanying invitations to weddings and Birthday parties: 'No presents required, just your presence!'

It makes me think about what Christmas really means. During this time of preparation and waiting for the big day to arrive, many of us will sing the words of that Advent hymn, 'O come, O come, Emmanuel', a 12th century hymn that invites God to fulfil his prophecy to his people.

Will we really take in those words?

Emmanuel' means 'God with us', such an important and comforting phrase in these times of uncertainty and anxiety, as we wonder what the new year will bring.

Christmas we know is a time when people can feel lonely, disappointed, stressed. There are reputedly more suicides and marriage breakdowns during the course of this holiday period. One of the best Christmas presents we can offer then must surely be that of hospitality, a listening ear and simply our 'presence' among those who feel forgotten, rejected or overlooked.

In so doing we will find God's own present to us this Christmas, as in any and all other Christmases, His presence. The God to whom "every animal of the forest and the cattle on a thousand hills, belongs" (Psalm 50) has given us the best present of all - **He is with us**.

The Right Reverend Ruth Worsley Bishop of Taunton

Prayer for Christmas Joy

Loving, generous Father,

This Christmas, please help us to keep you at the centre of our preparations and celebrations. May our thankfulness for the gift of your precious son, Jesus, motivate all that we think and say and do. May the joy of His coming shine from us and attract those who don't know what Christmas really means, so that they want to find out!

In Jesus' name and for His glory,

Amen.

by Daphne Kitching

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Room

(Luke 2:6,7)

There was no room for Him.
There is no room.

In a world full of grasping, acquiring and keeping, of rights and demanding and self-centred living, there is no room for Him, the Child who is God.

The world is full.

And yet...without Him, without Jesus, this full world is empty.

Make room.
Invite Him in.
Make room.
Find life in all the fullness
Christmas offers –
Love and hope and joy and peace.
Emmanuel,
God with us and in us, always.

Make room!

by Daphne Kitching

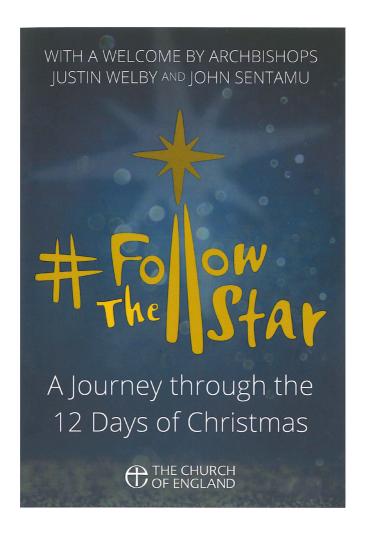


Follow The Star

You are welcome to take this small book away.

14 Reflections in total, one for each day from
Christmas Eve (24th December) throughout the

12 Days of Christmas, ending with the
Feast of Epiphany (6th January).







St James Church, Taunton, at 6:15pm on Tuesday 11th December 2018

Speaker: Supt. Matt Allingham

British Transport Police - Pioneer of Rail Responders

kindly supported by

Crèche available.

Free Parking from 6pm in local car parks



LIFE AS AN ORDINAND

I began my training in August so am well into a life of juggling work, family and study.. My vocabulary increases almost daily as I get to grips with cohortative, epistemological exegesis and other such delights!

The pattern of training I am following involves about 10-12 hours self-study with guided readings, videos and practical tasks, supplemented by a weekly on-line tutorial, using Adobe Connect (think celebrity squares on a computer screen with everyone using headphones and microphones) mixed in with a week's Summer School and periodic weekends at Salisbury.

Summer School in August is perhaps best described as full on. Days began at 7.30 with morning prayer in the Cathedral and ended at about 8pm. Each years summer school is different so students at all stages in their training attend. The focus this year was pastoral theology so we considered identity and different theologies (e.g. black or feminist theology) and the church response to poverty and well-being. We also spent a day with a group of people led by Dr Christopher Southgate from Exeter University who have researched how churches managed trauma which led to a bizarre sort of top trumps for trauma in churches (a clear winner was the Baptist trainee from Amesbury whose church was closed because of Novihok poisoning).

I completed the first module a couple of weeks ago so am now waiting on the marking for an assignment discussing the different sources of theology in the context of a prayer and a reflection on a passage from Ruth. The module I have just begun is focussed on human identity, vocation and professional practise (everything at college is multilayered). So far this has included completing a 'being human' checklist, a series of readings about the call and vocation of the prophets and some exercises in prayer using different senses.

Thank you to everyone who has asked how the course is going and please do ask, but I'll try not to bore you by talking about it too much. I know many are praying and I very much value your prayers. Particular prayer requests would include that I can manage the workload (at the moment its OK, but it feels as if just one unexpected things could cause it all to topple) and also that you would remember Steve who now has a wife who spends several evenings a week at her laptop working.

A TALE OF TWO PETER'S ...NOT NAMED RABBIT

This was prompted by a story in the press about stolen cheques. The thief kept them on one side whilst changed his named by deed poll. This enabled him to eventually cash in the cheques! A bit ingenious but morally doubtful. Name change is common in the bible story. Todays little story is about two men who changed their names. A bit like the disciple, they were both renamed Peter.

On the Mission Station where we first served, the nurse employed a man as an assistant we only ever knew as Sya Tikki! In the vernacular it meant a Threepenny piece. The clinic was a very small one and dealt with minor accident or basic treatments, Anything like complicated pregnancies or serious illness meant a 35 mile journey to the nearby Government clinic. One of his many jobs was tooth extraction. I saw him in action on one occasion..he was next to the cold water tap in the clinic with extractors in hand. The man with the toothache was crouched head tilted on one side. Out came the tooth (with no anaesthetic) a shiiling fee changed hands. The now toothless man spit into the gutter and walked away. A bit shaken no doubt. When Sya Tikki became a Christian he changed his name to Peter because he wanted to be a disciple close to Jesus.

The second Peter was a Methodist Minister. He had been a lay Pastor for many years before being elevated to full ministry by a decree of the Methodist Conference. During the war, he had been a part-time fireman. He freely acknowledged that he did not have a good education. During the war she served as a fireman in Stockport. One of the duties he had was to climb the massive chimneys in the town to check their condition. This terrified him!. We aways knew him as George and it was a surprise when his wife kept calling him Peter. When I asked here about this, she simply said, 'I call him Peter because when he became a Christian he became a changed man!'

The bible is full of stories about men and women whose names were changed because they had come into contact with the living God. What would/ what is your new name? Simon became Peter-what will you become?

Brian Stocks

St James Church School News

Harvest

Yes, another year has flown by and we again welcomed the children of St. James School and their families to celebrate their Harvest in the church. Now that the school has grown to having 14



classes, space was at a premium, but everyone



managed to get in, and it was delightful to hear the children celebrating in song, poem and art work. Much of the organisation for the service was done by the newly formed Ethos Forum, which comprises representatives from the KS2 classes working with the RE



coordinator on school worship. (To find out more have a look at the school website and see what the

members of the forum have to say about how they see their role http://www.stjamessch.co.uk/ethos-forum/

The children and their families, also made very



generous
donations to
the Taunton
Foodbank,
remembering
the
difficulties
that people
can be in



locally at this time. It was a tribute to the hard

work by pupils and teachers that the church was alive with enthusiastic singing, aided by Rob on the keyboard. Here are some photographs which show the children's enjoyment in taking part.

Remembrance 2018

2018 has been an important year for remembering and honouring those soldiers who served and very often gave their lives in the First World War. At St James School the children have been learning about this and the impact it had. Some of their learning was focussed on their



were treated there and one of the nurses, Eva Vicary, kept an autograph book into which the patients inscribed their names and contributions.

The Multi Academy Trust challenged the Trust schools to contribute Learning Journey boards for a display in the cathedral and



the children used the theme of the hospital for their board. They also contributed



own school's history and the fact that in 1916, the children were moved from the almost brand new building so that it could be turned into a Red Cross Hospital. Over the 3 years it was a hospital 1121 men



poppies knitted by pupils and staff. The poppies from all the Trust schools were displayed flowing down the stairs of the chapterhouse.



Our Christmas Services at St James Church, Taunton

Sunday 2nd December

10.30am Christingle Service A service with a twist

3.00pm Soul Space

You(th)Can Cook!

Sunday 9th December

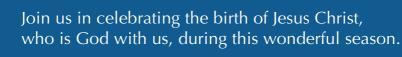
10.30am Holy Communion

7.00pm Advent Evening Praise

Tuesday 11th December

6.15pm Business Carol Service

With Taunton Team Chaplaincy





Sunday 16th December

10.30am Family Service A Christmas experience not to be missed!

7.00pm Evening Holy Communion

Sunday 23rd December

10.30am Holy Communion Children get their own party!

6.30pm Carols by Candlelight Fo

Followed by mince pies!

Monday 24th December

4.00pm Crib Service A magical hour for all ages.

11.30pm Midnight Communion *'Silent night, holy night...' Midnight on Christmas Eve*

Tuesday 25th December 10.30am Christmas Day Celebration

Coffee and mince pies first. Just short of an hour, a chance to unwrap the Christmas Gift.

BIDERIC

It can be read in the Bible in Luke chapter 2 verses 1-7

A short story from the Bible

The Roman Empire charged the countries it had invaded taxes, based on the number of people and what they earned.

Emperor Augustus gave orders that all people in the Empire were to be registered so they could be taxed.

This census was before Quirinius became Governor of Syria*
(* whose own census started riots - Acts 5:37)



When the order came, Mary and Joseph were Living in Nazareth.















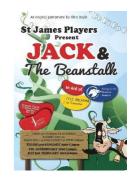
WORD SEARCH

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q	S	e	m	р	i	r	e	W	р	S	n
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baby living Nazareth Quirinius family bed everyone home visitors Augustus space Joseph born
David
room
Jesus
manger
Syria

Why Pantomime?

Panto at St. James started in 2008, when John Newton, then Headmaster of Taunton School, broached the idea. He recruited a small group of people, who enjoyed drama and envisioned us to give it a try. Ten years on we are rehearsing for our 6th Pantomime performance, this time climbing to the top with Jack



and the Beanstalk. Some of us have been there since the beginning, others have come and gone, including John who was lured to the Antipodes, but new people have joined in, and put their Tuesday evenings and Saturday afternoons on hold for the duration. Other skills have also been learnt and developed including lighting, sound and needlecraft.

Our aims in the beginning were simple – Fun, Fellowship and Fundraising, and giving an opportunity for all ages to take part and give enjoyment to others of all ages. There is no other agenda, although as a group of people who share a faith in the Lord Jesus, we hope that those who come to our performances will soak up something special about the place where we worship on a Sunday, and if questions are raised in our conversations we hope that we will be able answer them.



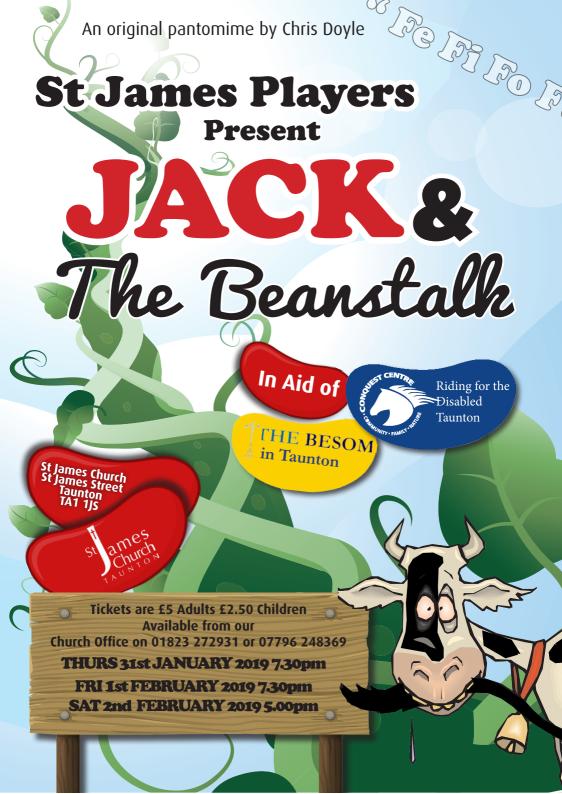
This year our pantomime is rather uniqe, as it has been written by Chris Doyle in rather unusual circumstances. Following a period when he was literally laid low with a detached retina, he was unable to take part in his normal activities which include golf and singing, and in the unaccustomed hiatus he found the time to write the

script, which is a remarkable undertaking.

We do hope that you will enjoy this pantomime and that you will invite your friends for a evening of fun, while supporting two very worthwhile organisations, the Besom in Taunton and Riding Centre for the Disabled (Conquest Centre).

Tickets are now available from the Church Office, Cynthia on Sundays or Jenny on 07796248369.





WORKING TO COMBAT SUICIDE

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that each year approximately one million people die from suicide, which represents a global mortality rate of 16 people per 100,000 or one death every 40 seconds. It is predicted that by 2020 the rate of death will increase to one every 20 second.

In England suicide is a significant issue, including an increase in younger people taking their own lives, one of things recently highlighted by Taunton YFC.

One of our parishioners, John Henden, who is an author and international Solution Focused (SF) trainer in suicide prevention and severe trauma and stress recovery, returned to the UK in October, after a further tour that took him to Indonesia, New Zealand and South Africa. Below are some excerpts from his diary.

"My first stop was Jakarta, Indonesia, where I was working in an international school, training school counsellors in both the SF approach and applying it to suicide prevention in their work with students. Another piece of work at that same school was to help senior and middle leaders improve their performance coaching skills, both when working in the classroom and in their 1:1s with students."

John had some hair-raising episodes in Jakata, watching the "Go-Jek" or "Grab" Motorbike taxi's, passengers' only protection a loaned helmet as the green jacketed drivers negotiated the idiosyncratic methods of pedestrians crossing roads.

"The second leg of the tour took me to New Zealand, North Island, where I provided specialist training in severe trauma and stress recovery for psychologists, psychotherapists, medical staff and lay workers, held in Auckland, Palmerston North, Wellington and Hamilton.

The final training event in North Island was for Waitemata District Health Board (equivalent to an NHS partnership trust), Auckland North Shore. The clinical director, who is a great supporter of both the SF approach and the international zero suicide

movement, managed, with the help of a sponsor, to sign up over 200 workshop participants! The largest number of trainees for a 2-day workshop I had had for over 10 years. By the end, most had measurably increased their confidence when working with people who are expressing suicidal ideas.

The final leg of the tour took me to Johannesburg, South Africa, training some 130 psychologists in SF suicide prevention. For many, this was their first introduction to the SF way of working and I was bombarded with a plethora of interesting questions during the breaks".

During his South African visit John was able to have some R & R and went to a game reserve and over the three days was able to see, at reasonably close range, four of the 'Big Five' (elephant, rhinoceros, lion, leopard and buffalo). His guide, as well as being knowledgeable about wild life regaled them with tales of narrow escapes, fortunately John was not to be the subject of such a tale.

John concludes that "On these tours, I meet many fellow Christians who are involved in counselling and coaching work. During my Feb-March tour, a senior pastor and five members of his staff attended one of my workshops. Later in the day, he asked me if he could use my workshop materials to encourage his member churches to become more SF in their approach to community outreach, specifically and church issues, generally. Naturally, I was delighted".

John will be happy to tell you more about his work and experiences on his travels if you ask him.

I've been reading ...

Creating a Culture of Invitation in Your Church by Michael Harvey, the developer of Back to Church Sunday.

The starting premise of this book is that all churches like to think of themselves as welcoming, but this does not necessarily extend to actually inviting people to come to or try out that church.

Harvey identifies fear as the reason for not inviting people. One fear is that of failure, in our culture that emphasises success. But success here is in making the invitation: we can't ensure that the invitation is accepted – that's God's work. *I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow* (1 Cor 3:6).

In a running survey, Harvey finds that in all churches he has visited, between 80 and 95% of members have "no intention of inviting anyone". In growing churches, there may be 20% who do invite, but in declining churches it might be only 5%. So for St James, with a membership of 200, we would be looking for at least 40 people who are actively inviting their friends and other contacts.

He gives 12 common reasons for not inviting, which we do not have space to cover here. One of the most common is being afraid of damaging a friendship; others include simple timidity or the fear of being seen as strange. Much of the book then unpacks these fears and looks at how to deal with them.

A "Best Practice" chapter presents the acronym ACORN:

- Ask: ask with simple faith just get on and do it!
- Call: don't forget that it's God who is doing the calling.
- Obey: obey Jesus's great commission in Matthew 28.
- Report: share your results, whether you receive a yes or a no.
- Numinous: be aware of the almost tangible presence of God. Harvey challenges: "In the asking and the call within ACORN, did you hear the call of God?" And he suggests that we will feel the presence of God as we obey.

Another section looks at how leaders can encourage church members to become inviters. The final chapter brings us back to the wider picture of God calling people to do his work down the ages. And it returns to the verse at the start, because before the seed was planted (etc), the Lord gave opportunity to each one (1 Cor 3:5).

(A copy of the book will be placed in the church library.) MW



Local Christians have responded positively to a request for help from the British Transport Police. Patrolling in and near the railway station, '*Rail Responders*' are the latest expression of chaplaincy in Taunton.

Whilst rail travel is very safe, sadly stations and railway lines are locations where some people suffer injury and death due to accidents and illness.

The British Transport Police are responsible for public safety on and near the railways. They work in partnership with communities, and approached Taunton Team Chaplaincy. They asked if volunteers from local churches would be willing to offer a welcome and caring presence at Taunton station, recognising that some people experiencing mental health problems might be drawn to the railway. Drawing on many years of experience offering a listening ear, prayer and compassion in workplaces and various community locations, Taunton Team Chaplaincy has recruited a team of 12 volunteers. Wearing a distinctive blue uniform *Rail Responders* seek to respond to human need with God's love, following Jesus' call to care for those who suffer and struggle with many aspects of life.

Training has been provided by the Samaritans to help them engage appropriately with anyone showing signs of distress or anxiety. By means of regular patrols at the station and the Obridge viaduct nearby, a simple, friendly approach and a listening ear, is available. Passengers have welcomed the initiative with many appreciating the offer of prayer or a chance to share about personal concerns. Anyone indicating ongoing needs is signposted to the Samaritans' 24/7 phone line (116 123), other charities or NHS services.

Experience from similar schemes piloted elsewhere in the UK has shown that a timely intervention can prevent someone making a decision which has irrevocable consequences. If it is followed up with an appropriate referral to professional support, most will not repeat their action.

Like the now familiar Street Pastors, *Rail Responders* do not preach but they provide a caring, listening and reassuring presence in an informal manner. Working in teams of three or four, each volunteer patrols at least once a month, at different times of the day. They also help rail operators spread basic safety messages among young people who sometimes play dangerously near fast trains. Similar schemes elsewhere in the UK have brought the added bonus of a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour on and near the stations they visit.



The PCC has been discussing...

Here's a summary of the main things the Parochial Church Council looked at in September, October and November.

ROC

The ROC conversation took place on 26th September and was well attended. The meeting highlighted a number of key areas of need in Taunton Deane. From this initial meeting 108 people have signed up to be involved in the ROC Action Group.

The meeting report from ROC highlighted four areas that were widely mentioned by participants: signposting support, mental health and access to services, loneliness and isolation, and homelessness. The Action Group is meeting regularly to discern specific projects that could be undertaken.

Review of Mission Support

At the November meeting, the PCC began a review of how we support other organisations.

We have strong links with our local mission partners, including Besom, TYFC, Street Pastors, Open Door, the Taunton Town Chaplaincy and Taunton Area Debt Advice. Additionally we support Traidcraft through the monthly stall, and we are registered as Home for Good (a Christian fostering and adoption charity) church.

We used to support many non-local missions, but gradually dropped them as the points of contact stopped and there was nobody willing to promote them to the congregation. The organisations we currently support are WEC, Tear Fund, Barnabas Fund and Samaritans Purse. The original reason for supporting these particular ones was that they cover a wide range of activities: church planting, relief aid, and support for the persecuted church. However, we have had difficulty finding people to actively promote some of these. We now need to see how they fit into our overall vision and how we engage the whole church in it. We have also noted the possibility of exploring the diocesan links to the church in Zambia, with the potential to link with a parish there.

A working group, headed up by Fabian, with support from Jenny Wakefield, will take the discussion forward.

Transforming Lives for Good (TLG)

Geoff Treasure updated the PCC on the TLG mentoring project that we may wish to offer to St James Church School, and which has already been discussed with them in principle. The PCC had already agreed to fund the project, so the emphasis is now on making sure we have enough volunteers to undertake the work. Then we can ask the school about its needs regarding supporting pupils with learning difficulties to see if what we can offer would be helpful.

Safeguarding

Jenny and Becky plan to lead another C1 course in the autumn and will follow up those still needing to do C0 training. Those who did C1 in 2015 will need to do a refresher course, available online.

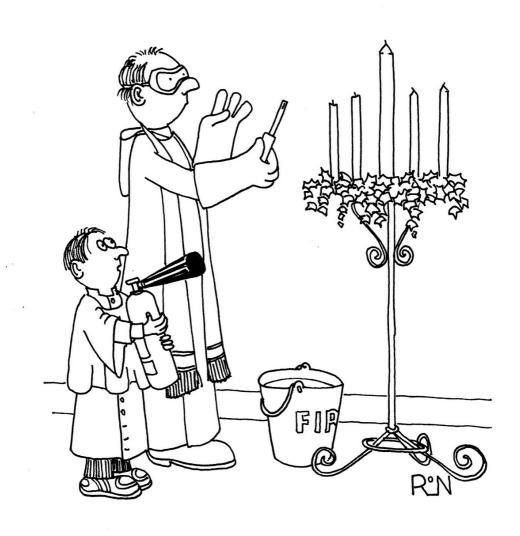
The Social Media Policy is being updated to reflect recent guidance about leaders not being "friends" with young people on Facebook and not messaging at inappropriate hours.

Miscellaneous Matters

- A donation of £1000 was given to ARC (formerly Taunton Association for the Homeless) for their outreach worker appeal.
- The PCC approved the purchase of a new mixer for the sound desk, to replace the present mixer, part of which has failed. The rest of the system will remain in use.
- The five-yearly electrical inspection report has been received.
 The main item needing attention is the replacement of the 1975-vintage distribution boards in the church itself. The wiring is in good condition.
- Following complaints about dogs being brought into church, it was agreed that only official, registered, assistance dogs would be allowed into our buildings.
- The PCC continued its programme of annual review of policies.
 This period included the Health and Safety Policy, the Disability Policy, and the Capital Expenditure Plan.
- Note was taken of the attendance at services on the Sunday of the annual B1 service at Wellsprings. We will look again at this for the 2019 event, further ahead than we did this year.

The latest full PCC minutes are displayed near the coffee area.

MW



After the first candle fiasco, Brian took no chances

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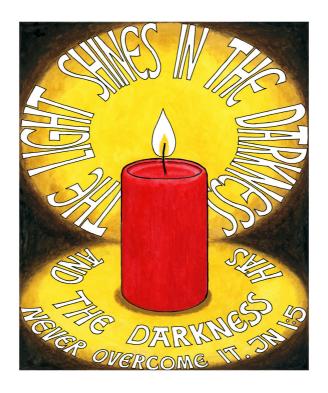
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У	e	(b)	p	ý	р	9	a	Ú	0	m	Ь
(p)	5	<u>i</u>	u	h	0	M	e	X	S	S	e
f	y		i	٧	ì	n	9	d	e	q	α
q	S	e	m	р	i	r	e	w	p	S	n
V	i	S	i	†	0	r	S	S	h	n	J

THANKS TO YOU ALL

This is the last Newsletter produced under Andrew who has been Editor for the past 6 years. The newsletter is only however made possible by the wide range of contributions you all make with the news you bring to the magazine. A special thanks is expressed to everyone.