



St James Church Magazine

December 2022 - February 2023

Letter from the Vicar

Reverend Fabian Wuyts
Vicar of St James



Forming Missionary Disciples

At St James, we want to be intentional in our discipleship and evangelism – we want to be Missionary Disciples! In order to do that we first need to have a clear idea of what a missionary disciple is – and is not.

First, a Missionary Disciple is not a set of tasks you need to add to a life that is often already complex and busy! Missionary disciples are those who have encountered the transformational love of God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and who seek to offer their whole self to God daily.



Second, Missionary Disciples want to live in the power and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the normality of their everyday lives. They find growing joy and peace in what they do and they seek to live and tell the story of Jesus wherever they are. Their prayer lives grow bigger as they keep on praying throughout the day, believing that God is at work with them and through them.

Third, Missionary Disciples grow a hunger to learn from the Master (Jesus) together with those who share the Christian faith (local church). They know the importance of real connection with other Christians, of generous giving, of discerned service and of joyful obedience. Following Jesus is not a sacrifice, but a joy that naturally invites others to explore this Jesus for themselves. They become invitational Christians, unashamed to say to their friends and colleagues, 'Come and See.'

Fourth, Missionary Discipleship is not unconscious or accidental, and it is not something culturally acquired. It is a deliberate and thoughtful decision to follow Jesus Christ wherever he leads you and to focus on the limited tasks and areas of responsibilities he has assigned you and for which he will pour out his gifts and abilities.



Finally, Missionary Disciples are learning the difference between busyness and fruitfulness. They are becoming better apprentices of Jesus, learning to do the kind of things Jesus did and discerning how their gifting contributes to the mission of the whole body (church and community). They are happy to limit themselves to what God assigns them and rejoice in the gifts, services and ministries of others. Those around them recognise the life of the Spirit by their fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5: 22-23).

My prayer for each of you is that you will discover that every day (not just Sunday) and every calling (your work, your family responsibilities, your passions, your community

involvement, etc.) are important and valuable to God for the coming of his Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. I pray that each of you will feel called and inspired to live out your faith in the everyday tasks of life and learn to exchange busyness for fruitfulness. I know that it is not easy for us to do that and to help others grow as Missionary Disciples, but let's keep working at this and encourage each other to become better Missionary Disciples.

This article on Missionary Disciples is part of exploring the vision and values of the St James church community. I encourage you to read our vision and values at <http://stjamestaunton.org/vision-and-values>.

See also Richard Carpenter's article 'Singing the song' on page 14 and the PCC notes on page 36 - Ed.

Introducing...



Over many years, St James has developed a healthy tradition of home groups that meet in homes or at church to explore the Bible, share what God is doing, pray and be there for one another.

During the pandemic, those home groups played a crucial role in offering pastoral support to many members of the church. Members phoned each other regularly, met on zoom and found many other ways to stay in touch and look after each other.

Now other groups have also flourished, like the Art Group, the Flower Arrangement Group, the Thursday Fellowship Group and St James' Players. While each group, whether a home group or a focused group, offers something different, they are all about doing life together.

I shared the idea of bringing all our current (and future) groups under one umbrella called Life Groups with our home group leaders, the PCC and those leading interest groups in the church.

The overall feedback was one of excitement. Each group has agreed to produce a short 'synopsis' of what they are about to inform potential enquirers. Those descriptions will be made available on our website, giving those new to St James an overview of the creative diversity.

It also opens up the opportunity to create new Life Groups around a specific interest or for a specific purpose. For example, someone is thinking about starting a Craft Life Group. But what about the possibility of a Life Group for Young Adults, Enquirers, Mothers and Toddlers, Runners and Sport lovers, etc.?

At whatever stage of life you are, it is my hope that you will be part of a Life Group where you can make friends, ask questions about faith, share life, grow spiritually and discover the good intentions and purposes of God for your life.

If you want to know more about our various Life Groups, speak to Roger Fenton in person or send him an email at rogerifenton@gmail.com

Contents

Page 2 Vicar's Letter/Life Groups
Page 6 Letter from the Bishop
Page 7 One Solitary Life
Page 8 HM Queen Elizabeth II
Page 10 Eco Church - (It's a) Fair Cop
Page 12 A Full Life
Page 14 Singing the song...
Page 16 General Synod, one year on
Page 18 Here I am Lord - a reflection
Page 19 Hymns and Tea
Page 20 We three camels...

Page 21 St James' Players
Page 22 Wilder Churches
Page 24 Advent Activity Trail
Page 25 Thursday Fellowship
Page 26 School News
Page 27 Minding our language...
Page 28 Mission Focus
Page 30 Heart on my sleeve
Page 31 email scam
Page 32 Young People and Quiz
Page 36 PCC Notes

Many thanks to all the contributors to this edition of the Magazine. If you have something to share for the March - May 2023 edition, do contact the Editor either directly or through the Church Office - details on page 39.

Deadline for copy is Tuesday 14th February 2023.



In this ***bumper*** edition of the Magazine there are many thought provoking articles. As we near the end of 2022, do read and think on some of the ideas and subjects our contributors have posted.

Bishop Michael installed

The final step of Bishop Michael becoming Bath and Wells' 80th Bishop took place when he was installed at a service at Wells Cathedral on Saturday 12 November. While Bishop Michael legally became Bishop of Bath and Wells in June, and has already been out and about visiting parishes and deaneries, the service in November marked his formal welcome to the diocese.



Follow the Star this Christmas

The Church of England's 'Follow the Star – The Great Invitation' campaign for Christmas 2022 encourages all our churches and all our churchgoers to invite their neighbours and their communities to an 'in person' gathering this Christmastime where they can hear the Christmas story and be welcomed into the love of Jesus. Why not invite some people you know to one or more of the services at St James this Christmas - see opposite - or maybe to St James Players production of 'Stable Manners' at the end of January...?

Finally, to you all I wish a happy Christmas!

Chris Doyle - St James Parish Magazine Editor

Once you've read the magazine, do feel free to give it to someone who otherwise might not get to see it. The magazine is also published online.

Please let friends and neighbours know how they can access this and previous editions through the St James website: www.stjamestaunton.co.uk

Christmas @



Saturday 3rd December

3pm Christingle Service @ St James - a magical moment

Thursday 8th December

6:15pm Business Carol Service @ St James

Sunday 18th December

4pm Carol Service @ St James - followed by mince pies

Saturday 24th December

3pm Crib Service @ St James - fun for all ages

11:30pm Midnight Service @ St James -

Midnight on Christmas Eve

Sunday 25th December

**10:30am Christmas Day @ St James - Just short of an hour,
a chance to unwrap the Christmas Gift**

27-29th January 2023

St James' Players

Stable Manners

...not a Nativity play



www.stjamestaunton.co.uk





DIOCESE OF **Bath & Wells**

Living the story. Telling the story.



Letter from:
Bishop Michael, Bishop of Bath and Wells

As 2022 comes to a close, our hearts go out to the people of Ukraine whose country was invaded by Russia on the 24 February this year. In the months since, we have watched in horror as civilians, cities and infrastructure have been attacked, land occupied and atrocities committed.

The UK has received more than 100,000 people fleeing from the conflict. The gift of their presence among us reminds us that this is no 'quarrel in a far-away country, between people of whom we know nothing'.

As we recall once again the coming into the world of Jesus at Christmas, our challenge is to connect our celebration of his birth with the realities and consequences of the conflict that is happening. Sadly, it's not hard to see the links. Jesus was born in a land (Palestine) that had been annexed by an expansionist foreign power (Rome) in pursuit of its territorial ambitions. The demands of the Roman occupiers meant that Jesus' birth happened not at home in Nazareth, but at a counting centre - Bethlehem. He was born in a stable because 'there was no room at the inn'. While still a baby, Jesus became a refugee when taken to Egypt due to warnings of atrocities to come.

Viewed this way, the Christmas story is no sentimental fable. It is a brutal foreshadowing of the events that Ukraine and our whole world have encountered this year. At the same time, it is also a story of hope. For it tells us that even in the very worst that can happen the Christ child, whose birth we celebrate, knows all too well the realities of the human condition. As a result, in any darkness his light is never extinguished. For he is Emmanuel – God with us.

So, as we come to the end of 2022 we give thanks that God is always with us in whatever we face. May he be with Ukraine. May he be with Russia. And may he be welcomed by us all.

A very happy Christmas.

+Michael

ONE SOLITARY LIFE

He was born in an obscure village.
the child of a peasant woman.
He grew up in another obscure village
where he worked in a carpenter's shop.

He never wrote a book.
He never held an office.
He never went to college.
He never visited a big city.
He never travelled more than two hundred miles
from the place where he was born.
He did none of these things
usually associated with greatness.
He had no credentials but himself.

He was only thirty three.

His friends ran away.
One of them denied him.
He was turned over to his enemies
and went through the mockery of a trial.
He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.
While dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing,
the only property he had on Earth.

When he was dead he was laid in a homemade grave
through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone
and today Jesus is the central figure of the human race
and the leader of mankind's progress.
All the armies that have ever marched,
all the navies that have ever sailed,
all the parliaments that have ever sat,
all the kings that have ever reigned put together
have not affected the life of mankind on Earth
as powerfully as that one solitary life.

Dr James Allan, written in 1926

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, our longest reigning monarch, passed away on 8th September 2022. Her reign spanned over 70 years and saw innumerable changes in science and technology, society and attitudes. Her life and service was based on her Christian faith, to which she referred several times in her Christmas broadcasts over the years.

At her state funeral on 19th September, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, gave the following address.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 53 – End

Psalm 42:1-7

John 14:1-6

Come Holy Spirit, fill us with the balm of your healing love. Amen.

The pattern for many leaders is to be exalted in life and forgotten after death. The pattern for all who serve God – famous or obscure, respected or ignored – is that death is the door to glory.

Her Late Majesty famously declared on a 21st birthday broadcast that her whole life would be dedicated to serving the Nation and Commonwealth.

Rarely has such a promise been so well kept! Few leaders receive the outpouring of love that we have seen.

Jesus – who in our reading does not tell his disciples how to follow, but who to follow – said: “I am the way, the truth and the life”. Her Late Majesty’s example was not set through her position or her ambition, but through whom she followed. I know His Majesty shares the same faith and hope in Jesus Christ as his mother; the same sense of service and duty.

In 1953 the Queen began her Coronation with silent prayer, just there at the High Altar. Her allegiance to God was given before any person gave allegiance to her. Her service to so many people in this nation, the Commonwealth and the world, had its foundation in her following Christ – God himself – who said that he “came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”¹

People of loving service are rare in any walk of life. Leaders of loving service are still rarer. But in all cases those who serve will be loved and

remembered when those who cling to power and privileges are long forgotten.

The grief of this day – felt not only by the late Queen's family but all round the nation, Commonwealth and the world – arises from her abundant life and loving service, now gone from us.

She was joyful, present to so many, touching a multitude of lives.

We pray especially for all her family, grieving as every family at a funeral - including so many families round the world who have themselves lost someone recently - but in this family's case doing so in the brightest spotlight.

May God heal their sorrow, may the gap left in their lives be marked with memories of joy and life.

Her Late Majesty's broadcast during Covid lockdown ended with: "We will meet again", words of hope from a song of Vera Lynn. Christian hope means certain expectation of something not yet seen.

Christ rose from the dead and offers life to all, abundant life now and life with God in eternity.

As the Christmas carol says, "where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in." ²

We will all face the merciful judgement of God: we can all share the Queen's hope which in life and death inspired her servant leadership.

Service in life, hope in death. All who follow the Queen's example, and inspiration of trust and faith in God, can with her say: "We will meet again."



¹ Matthew 20:28, NRSV

² O Little Town of Bethlehem

"Climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic have exposed our deep vulnerability and raised numerous doubts and concerns about our economic systems and the way we organise our societies."

(Pope Francis)

Among all the spin, it may not be easy to work out whether COP26 (held 31st October to 13th November) was a success or not until the dust has settled. Will the words turn into actions or just remain within the covers of the agreement signed in Glasgow? The reactions so far have been somewhat mixed:

- *"One step closer..."* (Christiana Figueres)
- *"It could have been worse..."* (Guardian environment editor)
- *"Empty words, no action"* (First Nations people)
- *"Building blocks for the future"* (António Guterres; UN Secretary General)

As we approached COP26 the stakes were clear, the UN had put it this way, "From the ocean depths to mountain tops, from melting glaciers to relentless extreme weather events, communities and ecosystems around the globe are being devastated. COP26 must be a turning point for people and planet."

Existing commitments would see a global temperature rise of 2.4°C even as the science shows that 1.5°C should be seen a boundary for the planet's climate beyond which some impacts will become catastrophic and irreversible. And in our own country, we have the rhetoric but too often actions seem to contradict them – making internal flights cheaper, opening up new North Sea oil fields, a massive commitment to road building, cutting aid...

"Promises ring hollow when the fossil fuels industry still receives trillions in subsidies..." (António Guterres; UN Secretary General)

Too often we allow the existing polluters to frame the questions – hence the drive for electric vehicles rather than stepping back and asking what forms of transport will be best for society in the twenty-first century. Surely it is in this framing of the debate that church should be able to contribute as it reflects on Jesus' words that *"One cannot serve both God and Money"*. There are better ways to do things. Have we reached the stage where we need to question the fundamental economic models which have underpinned the capitalism we have known for the past 400 years or so?

With the focus of climate change at COP we need to remember that there are other fundamental issues facing our planet and its people in the coming years: species loss, ocean damage, the water crisis – billions face drought, but many others will suffer increased flooding.

It would seem that we have seen some positives come out of COP26:

- a) It keeps alive the goal to limit temperature rises to 1.5°C. The Fijian Prime Minister did though describe it as “battered and bruised”.
- b) An agreement to revisit climate commitments annually. The UK government retains the COP presidency until the next conference so we will have opportunity to affect this.
- c) It is – almost unbelievably – the first time that fossil fuels have been directly mentioned in a COP agreement. The text on reducing coal usage may have been watered down, but at least it’s an opening for the future.
- d) Some (potentially) useful side agreements on topics such as deforestation and methane reduction. There was also the bilateral agreement on reducing emissions between China and the USA.



What though was missing? Principally it would seem commitment to the poorer nations by the rich. It seems far too likely that targets for 2030 will be missed with the disproportionate impact on those who have contributed least to the problem.

I leave you with some words from Her Majesty the Queen’s address for the opening of the COP:

“...we are doing this not for ourselves but for our children and our children’s children, and those who will follow in their footsteps.”

Richard Carpenter

A FULL LIFE

Imagine for a moment that the walls of St James church are made of glass. Passers-by are looking in on a Sunday morning. What do they see? Something irrelevant to them? Or a private club? Or does it seem interesting?

At one time or another all of us feel a lack of some of the basic needs for life shown in the diagram below.



If that's you, read on, because you might discover something in the church which could change your life. People are often nervous about going through a church door, but remember it's only a door not a barrier. A church is not really defined by a building but by the people you find in there. A wise Archbishop once said that the Church is the only institution which exists mainly for its non-members.

And as regards the people you see through those imaginary glass walls, here's other news. Although they would probably say they have become different people by following Jesus, they would also not consider themselves to be superior to anyone else. On God's measuring scale, without exception, we all fall short of the kind of people he wants us to be.

The Bible tells us that God knows the hearts of his people. Walls, (whether glass or masonry) can't keep him out. He wants the very best for our lives. The Bible also gives us the best picture of God, in the form of his son, Jesus, who came to Earth 2000 years ago. (That sounds a long time ago, but if you consider that 2000 years corresponds to approximately 30 lifetimes, it doesn't seem quite so long, measured that way). Records from Roman and Jewish writers at the time provide extra evidence from outside the Bible that Jesus did exist. He had a human body, and experienced the same things we do, such as working, learning, emotions and temptation. Jesus was much more than an historical figure, however.

A poem elsewhere in this magazine called 'One Solitary Life' describes the life of Jesus. However, his death was not the end. He rose from the dead on the first Easter Sunday and is alive today through his Holy Spirit for you and me. He is there to help us in our struggles and share in our joys.

Jesus taught us that the two greatest commandments are to:

- Love God with all our hearts, minds and strength;
- Love our neighbour as much as we love ourselves.

I think all Christians would say that following these commandments isn't at all easy. A few lines from the song 'My Lighthouse' about Jesus sums this up: 'In my wrestling and in my doubts, in my failures you won't walk out. Your great love will see me through, you are the peace in my troubled sea.'

We describe glass as transparent, meaning we can see through it. But the word also means honest or truthful. The Church (despite all its faults) is fundamentally a truth-telling organisation. So, what is the truth that the Church speaks about?

It is that God loves the people he created so much and wants us to turn back from what we do wrong and from the things which offend those two commandments. He wants us to be the kind of people he created to live on this planet of his. He sent his Son, Jesus, to tell us that and to say that we need to be born again.

Perhaps deep in the souls of each one of us there's a small light, like a pilot light, which is waiting to ignite, to help us see the way ahead...if only we could find the source of that light. Jesus supplied the answer and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness because you will have the light that leads to life."

You may like to come to St James this Christmas to discover more about that and celebrate Jesus' arrival on Earth. You will find out how absolutely relevant that is to your life today. It could be the start of a new journey for you.

If you are on the outside looking in, you will be assured of a very warm welcome.

Andy Hall



Christmas card

Richard, my husband, and I had a hectic Christmas holiday schedule involving work, care of parents, driving of teenagers, shopping, and all the required doings of the season. Running out of time, I asked a local printer to simply print our name on our Christmas cards, to save me signing each one.

Soon we started getting cards from friends signed 'The Modest Morrisons', 'The Clever Clarks', and 'The Successful Smiths'. This baffled me until I looked again at our card. I had posted out a hundred cards neatly imprinted with 'Happy Holidays from the Rich Armstrongs'.



Singing the song

In an earlier article in this series, I looked at two of the six 'bold outcomes' identified by the Church of England as necessary if we are to see its vision come to pass.

Two more ask us to imagine how we might become a community where we see:

- All Christians in the Church of England envisioned, resourced and released to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the whole of life, bringing transformation to the church and world.
- All local churches, supported by their diocese, becoming communities and hubs for initial and ongoing formation.

For those of us not wholly au fait with church-speak; 'formation' can be defined as *'the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others'*; essentially, our growth as Christian believers.

So how might that affect us?

The first of the outcomes is essentially a fuller way of outlining our call to be missionary disciples. We all have God's calling to become disciples and his sending to be missionaries within our own lives. In this way, we bring transformation. It also points to a future where the church devotes more of its resource to supporting lay ministry and is open to recognise those ministries publicly – whether or not they carry any specific 'religious' label. Perhaps we should all be ordained for the role God has given us?

"The primary action of the church in the world is the action of its members in their daily work."

Lesslie Newbigin

The second, though on the surface perhaps obvious, seems to me to mark a sea-change in our approach to church. Over the coming few years, the church's paid resources (incumbent clergy, etc.) will, it seems, need to decrease as resources available to support them decrease. Bath and Wells will see a gradual reduction over five years in the number of stipendiary clergy from 178 at present to 150. Taunton is one of very few deaneries not to see a reduction in numbers, but many areas are having to radically reconsider how the church ministers to their communities. And across this period, diocesan



support will be reduced by an even greater percentage.

It is increasingly being recognised that the typical CofE approach – smearing clergy ever thinner across numerous parishes – is, actually, one of the least effective strategies for ministry. Our diocese’s response has been to propose moving towards a pattern of ‘focal ministry’ – the presence of an identifiable church ‘leader’ – be they lay or ordained, salaried or volunteer – within each community.

Local churches then provide the framework through which the envisioning, resourcing and releasing can occur. As Bishop Graham Cray put it, *“Church gathered exists to equip us for church scattered.”*

I recently heard Steven Cottrell (Archbishop of York) describe how our sharing the gospel should:

*“sing the song of the gospel in the language
of the people we serve.”*

The thought of expressing the gospel in this way brings to mind our own diocesan vision – that we seek to be *God’s people living and telling the story of Jesus*. Though how we do so must absolutely focus on making it meaningful for others and not just comfortable for ourselves.

Story telling has been fundamental within most societies, though perhaps in the west more recently has become intrinsically linked with fiction; things that don’t really exist. Is it perhaps time for the church to recapture the full breadth of this form as we communicate the gospel to a new and changed audience?

As the classical world changed to the mediaeval and the mediaeval to modernism, so the church learnt afresh how to share the good news – an unchanging message told in new ways. For our own times, we must relearn the ‘how’ of evangelism for a post-modern world. And that is increasingly a place where the question is less *‘is it true?’* and far more *‘does it work?’* It may be that our lives have to speak more clearly and urgently than simply our words.

Richard Carpenter

Missionary Disciples is one element of the overall Church of England Vision for the 2020s. If you’ve not seen them before you may like to catch up with Richard Carpenter’s series looking at all elements of the vision. This started with the September 2021 magazine, with his take on the topic of Missionary Disciples in the following issue. You can find the back issues of the magazine on the church website under the Connect tab - Ed.

General Synod, One Year On

Back in October 2021 I was elected to serve on the General Synod of the Church of England, representing lay people from Bath & Wells. So one year on I thought I would let you know how it has been so far.

The General Synod is a bit like Parliament, but for the Church of England. There are 450 members, bishops, clergy and laity, and we meet twice a year for about 4 days each time. One meeting is in London, the other is in York. On a personal note, the meeting in York is special for me because it is held at the university, which is where I studied for my first degree, where I met my wife Janet and where I became a Christian. Taking part in the unusual world of General Synod in a familiar place with such strong personal meaning for me has been a real blessing.



Synod's main job is to pass legislation regarding the church, debate matters internal to the church and also relevant to wider society. The agenda is huge and diverse, so far we have done everything from the technical details of rules regarding church boiler replacement through to debating the situation in Ukraine with contributions from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the UK representative of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is a bewildering

breadth of issues, and the amount of reading makes for a very steep learning curve. I usually get the papers for Synod a few weeks before we meet, and it is literally hundreds of pages on everything from reforming the structures of the C of E to greater inclusion of the disabled to amending rules on the clergy pension fund.

When Synod itself meets it is a very full on experience. We start for worship around 9am, and then are in session moving from one debate to another throughout the day finishing around 6pm or sometimes later. Sessions involve a lot of listening, thinking, praying and then voting – either for or against what we have been discussing. There is a real responsibility knowing that whatever we decide will have a real impact in some way great or small on the life of the church.

It may sound onerous, but my experience so far has been very positive, not least because of the people. The other members of Synod are from across the whole of the C of E, and it is a privilege to work with committed, passionate Christians from all walks of life, from across the country, with different church background and spiritualities, but all committed to serving the church by listening to each other's experiences and perspectives. While we don't always agree, we know we are a Christian body and we work together accordingly. I have heard someone with experience of the UK Parliament wish that our

MPs could learn something from how the Church of England manages its deliberations, particularly the sense that no matter the issue we try and value one another and see that we belong to something bigger than ourselves.



Apart from the main task of listening, thinking, praying and voting, I have contributed to one debate so far and made my own small contribution. There was an item of business looking at how we will appoint the next Archbishop of Canterbury. At the moment there is only one person on the appointments body from the international Anglican Communion, and the proposal was to

increase this to five. This is to reflect the more central role that the Archbishop plays in the life of the family of Anglican churches. Did you know that we are part of a worldwide communion of 41 churches in 165 countries, that has 85 million members making it the third largest Christian denomination in the world? And it's growing, with the average Anglican being a woman under 30 living in Africa. I supported the move for greater international representation but also introduced an amendment requiring at least two of these international members to be male and at least two to be female. I had to make a speech on why, in front of the whole Synod (both Archbishops included), and after a bit of debate Synod agreed and voted in favour. So for the first time in 1400 years, thanks to my intervention, women are legally required to be involved in the appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

I have been elected for a five year term, so one down and four more to go! There are some big issues to work on, including balancing the finances between the different church bodies, church growth and how we engage with the younger generation, and also how the Church can become carbon net zero by 2030 as its response to the climate crisis. There will also be questions about the church and the inclusion of LGBTI+ people, which will be a major focus of the Synod meeting in February 2023 and one of the more contentious areas we will need to work through.

Being on Synod is a challenging role, but it's not one we do by our own strength. We start and finish every day with worship, offering ourselves and our work to God. I am also working with others to set up an online prayer group for Synod members, so we can meet up between the main Synod sessions to pray for each other, for the Church and for the nation we serve. I have learnt so much so far, and there is a lot more to learn, but give thanks that I have been entrusted with this responsibility. And thank you for all your prayers, support and encouragement. I know that I serve our national church with my roots in my local church of St James in Taunton, and think of you often when working through Synod business.

Nic Tall

This reflection by Shona, a member of the worship team, is based on her introduction to a 10:30 service praise time.

Here I am Lord

Here I am Lord...Here we are Lord...wholly available, open to your call, ready to serve...but if we are honest with ourselves, is this more what we are trying to do, what we are aiming for? Maybe, like me, when singing worship songs, you are also silently confessing to God that you are not quite 'there' yet but 'there' is where you aspire to be with his help?

Here I am Lord. I am here.

Reflecting on these words poses the question, 'Where is *here*?' After all, we need to know our starting point on the journey – not trying to be someone different or trying to run before we can walk.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made; each of us unique, special and different. No surprise then that we connect with and experience with God in an infinite variety of ways.

Here may be different (or at least feel different) for each of us. *Here* may be a physical place – church, home, school, work, town, countryside.

Here may be an illness, a relationship, a community, a life changing decision that needs to be made.

Here may be an emotional state – grief, joy, doubt, peace, confusion, anger.

Here may be feeling very ordinary but wanting to make a difference or *here* may just be a moment in time.

Here may be feeling very close to God or feeling disconnected and separated from Him.

Light filled, flickering flame or deep darkness.

What or where is *here* for you, for me, for us? We can only start (or continue) our life journey from *here*, where each of us is right now. Truly being ourselves.

Here I am Lord – *'let your love surround me; bring me near, draw me to your side. And as I wait, I'll rise up like the eagle, and I will soar with you, your Spirit leads me on in the power of your love'*



A prayer for ourselves and the challenges ahead...

Loving God, who speaks a word of peace in a troubled sea,
Caring God, who nudges us away from fear and towards faith;
Ever-present God, who follows us with wonder
But also raises many questions without easy answers;
Open our eyes to see you in our lives today
Strengthen our hearts for the challenges that lie ahead,
Open our ears this week to hear the words you speak
This we pray in Jesus' name

Amen

(Andy Hall found this on the fortnightly Chaplaincy prayer letter. He thought it's so apt for our times and to me seems to chime very well with Shona's thoughts. Ed.)

Sunday Afternoon Traditional Hymns and Tea



Come and sing traditional hymns
and have an afternoon tea

At St James' Church, Taunton, TA1 1JS
'The church next to the County Cricket Ground'
Sundays 2:30 - 4pm
All welcome!

2022

December 11th

2023

8th and 22nd Jan

5th and 19th Feb

5th and 19th March

2nd, 16th and 30th April

14th and 28th May

11th and 25th June



We Three Camels...

Some years ago I was involved in evening services which were less formal than the usual style of the church Geoff and I belonged to – then we called them Contemporary Praise because we used more modern songs led by a worship band...the sort of service now enjoyed Sunday mornings at St James'. One December our service was entitled 'Nine lessons and...Camels' and was comprised of poems, reflections and a short drama together with a mixture of old and new carols and songs. The service came to mind again last Christmas when I saw the artwork by Chris Doyle which adorned the entrance of St James' and below is the Camel poem used all those years ago.



We Three Camels

I carried a king, but not the Child,
Through desert storms and winds so wild
The sands crept into every pack.
But never did my king look back.
'Forward!' he cried, 'We follow the star,
We do not stop.' So here we are.

I carried a king, but not the One,
Through searing heat and blinding sun,
Through nights so cold my nostrils froze,
And slaves wrapped cloths about my toes.
But forward we went led by a star.
We did not stop, so here we are.

I carried a king, but not the Babe,
And also boxes jewel inlaid.
My packs were stuffed with scents and spice,
The grandest ladies to entice.
No ladies saw we, but only a star.
We did not stop, so here we are.
Jane Yolen

Many people appear in the various scenes of the Christmas story and there are animals too – beasts of burden, farmyard, domestic. Each person and animal has a part to play, words to speak, gifts to bring – some to carry, some to lead, some to follow.

As we celebrate Christmas we may feel we've sung some carols so many times we never want to sing them again, or wish we sang them more often throughout the year, and we may have heard the same readings until we can 'name that verse in one' – yet for me, each Christmas there is something hidden in the familiar words that stands out and I am always glad, for it renews and strengthens my faith as I celebrate the birth of a baby who holds the key to my life.

So, instead of the familiar 'We Three Kings' I hope the words of 'We Three Camels' have added something to your Christmas 2022.

Fiona Hope

St James Players - Stable Manners

For many years St James Players have produced a bi-ennial pantomime as well as Murder Mystery plays, 'passioneaster2108' and online seasonal presentations. At the end of January, The Players show us life in a small Bethlehem hotel. Several visitors seem to have come to the wrong place! But is the hotel inspector really who she says she is? And what are the visitors looking for and what effect does it have on them when they find it?

Confusion, laughs and songs abound in this sideways look at events surrounding a blinding light and a new birth - and there are camels...!

Do come along and bring your friends. Details of dates, times and tickets on the back cover of this magazine.

The Players' motto is 'Fun, Fellowship and Fundraising' (and Faith). As usual we are fundraising for two charities, this time one is local and the other is based in Uganda, so please help us to help them - see below for information.

Taunton Food Bank

Taunton Food Bank is part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust, working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK.

The Food Bank has its base on the Belvedere Trading Estate in Taunton with further distribution centres in Wellington and Wiveliscombe. They provide three days' nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people who are referred to them in crisis.

- "The foodbank was there when we really needed it, it was an absolute lifeline."
- "The foodbank was a lifesaver."

If you are in crisis and think they can help, please contact them either by phone or by email with your name, address, post code, year of birth and ages of children (if any) and an emergency box will be given to you to tide you over. They will refer you to an agent who will give you support and take on further referrals to them.

To contact Taunton Food Bank phone 07761 624216 or email: info@taunton.foodbank.org.uk

Actions for Children's Trust or ACTS- Uganda

Founded in 2015 by Emmanuel Ssebugenyi, ACTS Uganda aims to be a beacon of hope and supports disabled children living with disability and disease, with the aim of adding a quality of life to their living conditions. Most of the children supported are of profound multiple learning disabilities and the organisation provides a range of services including MEDI-fund, which helps with emergency situations, centre-based therapy and sensory play for children with special educational needs, home and follow up services and follow up on the supply of equipment, such as wheel chairs, posterior walking and standing frames, and advice on its effective use to enable children to gain independence. It also meets the children's routine medical assessments and prescriptions. The organisation empowers parents with entrepreneurial skills, advice and support with hard-to-get services such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy. For more details see their website: <https://acts-uganda.org/>

Wilder Churches

Welcome to wintery Wilder Churches! The Christmas message of new life and promise is reflected in our natural world, but you may have to look quietly and carefully to notice it. Mindfulness is a popular concept in these times, and there's evidence to show that observing your natural surroundings is very good for your mental health. Even watching or listening to nature programmes can be helpful. The best is to get out and be active in green places.

Here are some church friends doing just that in the church grounds in November! They were raking the ground to prepare for sowing with Yellow rattle seed which various hands had collected in the summer meadow. I've kept the seed in the freezer for a while, because it grows best if it has been vernalized (the exposure to the prolonged cold of winter, or by an artificial equivalent which cues the plant to grow).



Seasonal plants are in evidence in the church grounds including holly, ivy and yew. I found some useful information about these plants at: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife



Holly provides dense cover and nesting opportunities for birds, while its deep, dry leaf litter may be used by hedgehogs and small mammals for hibernation... (double whammy if you find a hedgehog in a pile of holly leaves I guess...but don't disturb hedgehogs of course!!)

The flowers provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. The leaves are eaten by caterpillars of the holly blue butterfly, along with those of various moths. The berries are a vital source of food for birds in winter, and small mammals, such as wood mice and dormice.

Ivy is growing healthily around the church site. It uses trees and walls for support, allowing it to reach upwards to better levels of sunlight. It is not a parasitic plant and has a separate root system in the soil and so absorbs its own nutrients and water as needed. Ivy does not damage trees and its presence doesn't indicate that a tree is unhealthy, and it doesn't create a tree-safety issue. It supports around 50 species of wildlife!

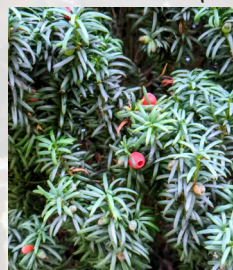


Nectar, pollen and berries of ivy are an essential food source for insects and birds during autumn and winter when food supplies are scarce. It also provides shelter for insects, birds, bats and other small mammals. The high fat content of the berries is a nutritious food resource for birds and the berries are eaten by a range of species including thrushes, blackcaps, woodpigeons and blackbirds.

Ivy is particularly important to many insects before they go into hibernation. Some of the main insect species which forage on the nectar and pollen of ivy are bees, hoverflies and common wasps. It is an important food plant for some butterfly and moth larvae such as holly blue, small dusty wave, angle shades and swallow-tailed moth.



We have a number of **yew trees** in the church grounds which are mainly of Victorian vintage. The yew, once cultivated in churchyards for making English longbows, is one of the longest-lived native species in Europe and it provides food and shelter for wildlife. Yew trees have a dense structure, offering protection and nesting opportunities for many birds. The fruit is eaten by birds,



such as the blackbird, mistle thrush, song thrush and fieldfare; and small mammals, including squirrels (often seen at St James) and dormice. We have also seen the result of foxes eating yew berries!

Look out for church grounds updates on the church Facebook page.
Sue Carpenter

*Young people, why not have a go at the
Advent Activity Trail on the next page? Ed.*

An Advent Activity Trail

Why not try this trail with members of your family - one activity for each day of Advent, the days through December leading up to Christmas. Tick off each activity as you complete it!



Find a pine cone.

Spot a robin.

Find a tree that still has leaves on it.

Add a flower, leaf or other item to a small container of water. Freeze it to make an ice suncatcher.

Have a winter picnic.

Make a snowstorm in a bottle.
Add biodegradable glitter to water in a bottle (you can also add food colouring).

Find a feather.

Find a winter flower.

Build a snowman.

Go puddle jumping.

Make a painted handprint so you can see how much you have grown next year.

Make a maze from sticks.

Find an acorn.

Carefully toast a marshmallow (over a candle or fire).

Find a frozen puddle.

Light a candle and watch the flame dance.

Make paper snowflakes.
Fold and cut a piece of paper to create a snowflake pattern (you can find instructions online).

Go for a torchlight wander.

Put some mud into a pot and mix it with water if needed.

Use this to paint a mud picture, you could even make a paintbrush from twigs and pine needles.

Make a card to say thank you to someone

Find an animal print.

Collect some items from a wander, bring them home and use them to create a story.

Go for a night-time walk to see the Christmas lights.

Drink a hot chocolate outside.

ALL ABOUT...

THURSDAY FELLOWSHIP

This is a friendly group of men and women who meet on the 1st Thursday of each month to enjoy speakers and company. We have been going for over 20 years!

For the two years of the pandemic, my co-leader and I sent a fortnightly letter to members by email or post as required. Members were encouraged to contribute to the letter with information about past careers, hobbies, etc., and by the time we met in person again, we knew a lot more about our friends.

Members arrive at 2pm for tea/coffee and a chat and the meeting begins in earnest at 2:30. We start with a hymn, bible reading and prayers chosen and led by members; then it is over to our speaker.

We aim for a wide range of subjects and some of our speakers are members of the group or members of church sharing a hobby or subject dear to them. We regularly have a St Margarets Hospice speaker and others where we can similarly be better informed and contribute to their funds.

We find new members often come having heard of us or are brought by a friend and then join the church, and new members to church also join us. Current membership is around 40 and I can guarantee anyone coming will be made really welcome and find friendship within this group.

Vicky Dykes

Where are we?

In clanging fill, in noisy restaurant chat and bar-room song
We hear the busy rush and clamour of a bygone age
Where people, so engrossed in all their busyness of busy days,
Were blind, were deaf, to what they wrote on History's page.

In tinselled lights we see the Star of Bethlehem shine
In gift-filled packets we remember Kingly offerings
Through those who work within the daily round we know a Shepherd's care
And midnight bells re-call our minds to Heavenly things.

But where are we in all the noise of Christmas-tide today?
Where are we as the King of Heaven draws near to claim His own?
Where do we stand, or sit, or lie to wait upon the Lord of Life?
Will we be in the Stable where He placed His Throne?

By Sam Doubtfire



School News



It's been a busy term for the school as the children settle in to their new classes. Fabian and Vashti were delighted to welcome the new Reception classes to Church for a look-see. In October we were delighted to welcome the whole school and many of their parents for their Harvest Festival. Covid had put a stop to many things and we had almost forgotten how many chairs we needed to put out for parents and carers who were keen to watch their children celebrate. As a result, the church was full to capacity as the children sang about cauliflowers fluffy, showed off their art work and recited poems and prayers.

YR Visit the Church

Year R had so much fun at the church last week. Rev Fabian and Vashti showed the children around and they learnt about what they do at the church, and they even got to sing a song with Rev Fabian on the guitar.

Well done YR for your first trip out of school



The new year six children have had their long-anticipated trip to Kilve with lots of fun adventures and excitement before settling down next year to working hard for their SATs.

The autumn was also the time when the school had the long awaited SIAMS inspection which takes place in all Anglican and Methodist schools. This involves a visit from an Inspector and "focuses on the impact of the Church school's Christian vision on pupils and adults. This involves looking at the school's Christian vision, the provision the school makes because of this vision and how effective this provision is in enabling all pupils to flourish." A real and very important challenge for the teaching community. Fabian, Vashti (as a governor), David and Jenny from the TLG team were invited to meet the inspector who was interested to hear about the church school links and to observe the children responding to Fabian's collective worship.

And now as December arrives, we will be getting ready to welcome the children, teachers and families from St James school and North Town School to the Christmas Nativity, Christingles and Carol Services and all the excitement and anticipation that brings. May all those children know the joy and promise that the gift of Jesus brings to one and all.

Jenny Wakefield

The story of mince pies

Did you know that mince pies have been traditional English Christmas fare since the Middle Ages, when meat was a key ingredient? The addition of spices, suet and alcohol to meat came about because it was an alternative to salting and smoking in order to preserve the food. Mince pies used to be a different shape - cradle-shaped with a pastry baby Jesus on top.

Minding Our Language with Our Young People

Respectfully addressing our young folks can be helpful both in growing the church and helpful to them in that they feel included in church life.

Since becoming a Christian, I have been in membership of six churches as I have moved around the Southwest with various career moves. Also, my wife, Lynn, and I have visited countless other churches and fellowships when staying with relatives and friends and when away on holiday.

We are familiar with comments such as:

“We wish we had more children and families in our congregation”

“My kids say church is boring and no one seems to be interested in them”

“Children seem to stop coming when they reach about twelve or thirteen years old.”

One thing I have noticed over the years is that churches that retain teens and early twenties, are those that not only make a fuss of them, treating them as special, but refer to them as ‘our young people’. I recall a particular church in Herts that excelled in this regard. During a late September Sunday service, the minister was praying over and saying farewell to about a dozen teenagers at the front before they went up to university. All ages were represented in the congregation and I was struck by how many times the leadership team referred to ‘our young people’.

Descriptions such as ‘the little ones’, ‘the children’ and ‘the kids’ (although this is a less problematic term nowadays), do not cut it for the over twelves as they look toward to their teenage future.

How important is this as a serious point for consideration? A Children & Young People’s worker can help with both group identity and how to handle secular peer pressure. But how can all of us at St James help in making young people more welcome and accepted, as they grow and mature, such that they want to stay involved in the life of the church throughout their teens?

I appreciate this topic is part of a bigger picture of influences and is far from straightforward. There are many external factors that are beyond our control. The purpose of my writing this article is to encourage discussion and maybe look at what we can do, via our language, to give the message to our young people that they are special, valued and included as they grow and mature.

John Henden



...MISSION



Transforming Lives for Good

On December 11th we will be welcoming Kate Dommett from TLG (Transforming Lives for

Good) to talk about the current work of this very relevant Christian charity.

TLG exists to help churches bring hope and a future for struggling children. From school exclusion, to poverty and holiday hunger, there are children across the UK facing some of the toughest starts in life. TLG believe change is possible and that's why in all their work lies an unchanging resolve to transform lives for good.

At St James we have been involved in both the mentoring role of TLG and the 'Make Lunch' project which, in the Covid period, sought to work with the school to help families who were struggling to make ends meet. Mentoring involves working in school with individual children and, while this had to be suspended during the early Covid period, our small team of volunteers was back in school in April and this autumn started with new mentees. We are hugely grateful to the school staff for their support and encouragement to get involved and there is ALWAYS room for more volunteers in school.

Kate Dommett will be talking of the wider potential for opportunities in working with schools and the huge need that exists. Come and hear Kate speak and meet some teachers from St James School. Find out more about TLG on their website: <https://www.tlg.org.uk/about-us>

Do talk with David Jordan if you are interested in helping in school.



Taunton Youth for Christ

In January our focus is on Taunton Youth for Christ when the new centre director Kelly will be coming to tell us about

TYFC. It has been a challenging but exciting year. The Friday Night project continues and the bus project as a mobile youth centre is up and running. This has been a real visionary undertaking aimed at young people on the margins in places where they hang out. The youth bus has proved its worth and given increased opportunity, providing a safe and supportive space.



Ant continues his work in schools where there have been many positive opportunities working with young people and he has been welcomed by staff who are often under pressure.

Prayer is a key part of TYFC and underpins everything that they do. Please pray for Kelly, Ant and their team and also the Trustees as they guide and develop the work among the young people of our town.



Taunton Town Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy provides free, confidential and unconditional support to adults of any faith or none at all. Everyone has physical, emotional and spiritual needs and chaplains are motivated by their Christian faith to offer compassionate and caring support to anyone who needs it in our community. Chaplains offer a non-judgmental and confidential listening ear to the people they meet. Typically, each volunteer does this work for half a day each week.

The Chaplaincy currently has 37 volunteers from churches of most denominations in our town. Chaplains operate in seven 'clusters'. These serve shops, (both large stores and sole traders), 3 offices, 7 care homes and open spaces such as Vivary Park. They also serve the marginalised and homeless at a residential hostel, the YMCA and homeless people on the street. Chaplains badged as 'Rail Responders' operate at the railway station and its immediate environment at Obridge, where they particularly look out for vulnerable people. They also provide chaplaincy at Taunton Magistrates Court for defendants, witnesses, families and staff. They always seek prior approval from the management of all our "placements" for the volunteers to be there.

Some members of our church congregation are involved directly with the Chaplaincy.

There are various ways of supporting their work, through our prayer bulletins, financially or by becoming a chaplain yourself (there are vacancies across all of our work and the demand for what they do is high. You will be supported and trained).

Please contact Andy Hall (07817 680436) if you would like to find out more or look on the TTC website: <https://www.tauntontc.co.uk>

Jenny Wakefield

From Heart on my sleeve to pen to paper

This is going to come across in my style, we are all different with our own God given talents, skills to discover and use to further the kingdom of the Lord.

All of the seasons are lovely in their own way and you may have your favourite, to me I am an outdoor person and love the longer lighter days where I can be outside as much as possible or just sit in my conservatory and see the outside beauty.

Now, as the nights are drawing in, we get up in the dark, may go to work as I do and come home in the dark. This time of year is hard. I am fortunate enough to work near Vivary park and each lunchtime, if my schedule allows, I walk around it – some of you I may have bumped into and said a quick ‘hello’. I just love seeing the beauty of the surroundings, the different flowers, trees, colours of the leaves on the trees or ground and the different tones of the sky and clouds.

When I wake up in the morning, I glance at the alarm clock try and give the day to the Lord and get up and get ready. If I do not do this my mind wanders thinking about lots of different things and I just lay there. Consequently, I am then playing catch up to get ready leave the house and get to work.

This does happen at other times of the year but for me it's harder this time of year, I feel better giving my day to the Lord to be in my day to lead me, help me, get me through it whatever it holds.

I have woken up at silly o'clock like the middle of the night and rather than just lay there thinking, I get up, go downstairs, read, look at my Bible or study notes or just pray – but nothing IT related. This usually allows me to return to bed to sleep a bit more before getting up as normal.

My lights in the kitchen and lounge/diner we have updated with brighter and more cost-efficient ones. I am hopeful that this aids my Well Being also.

We have received a lot of good teaching and guidance in our services. These are taped so do listen to them again. I am not quoting exactly or using names. Forgive me if I have missed your message. Some things I remember from the services...

Whatever your task, worry, thought big or small, hand it over to the Lord and leave it.

This is not easy but I am trying to deal with, address me/my thoughts, and move forward.

Service points.

- *Growth... the farmers' harvest*
- *Carrying the load.... Backpack with 2 straps to distribute the weight*
- *Acorn.... Feel it.... growth*
- *Give each day to the Lord.*
- *Hand everything over to the Lord and just forget it.* Easier said than done.

- *Immerse ourselves in the scripture.... Not just on Sunday but in the week.*

There was a lovely prayer in the bulletin 06/11/2022. I have printed this and placed on my fridge to read whenever I want to. I also have printed bible verses, quotes and pinned them on the baffle boards that surround my desk at work so I can focus on these if the day gets hard.

In the Tearfund Lent Devotional this year, this morning I came across the following as I was looking through it, Day 8 – my birthday date, a total coincidence:

What the Light Illuminates.

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

Lastly, I am sometimes loud, usually energetic, silly and smiley but sometimes may be grumpy inside. If I have not been my usual self towards you, forgive me and pray for me as I continue on this journey with my thoughts and feelings.

Blessings, love and hugs
Joycey

Beware the email scam...

In early August, we had our email account hacked. Messages about a member of the family needing money sent to them by Amazon vouchers were sent out as though from us. Many recipients smelt a rat, others contacted us to tell us what was happening... After three phone calls to our email supplier all was back to normal.

Until...two relatives rang to say they had bought and sent vouchers, one of them responding to a second request to send twice as much. So, the hackers made at least £400. Both had reacted without checking the facts. The name used for the so-called family member is not that of any one in the family.

All those who sent vouchers are educated, bright and experienced – how did they fall for the scam?

We know that as Christians they would be driven by compassion, and a desire to help someone in need. But they had responded to an unusual request without checking the facts, they had sent money to ‘a family member’ with a name that doesn’t exist in the family!

Since this happened the advice in Matt 10 v 16 has run through my mind frequently. Be as prudent/wise/cunning as snakes, as guileless as doves.

As a teenager, I remember being told that becoming a Christian did not require you to leave your brains behind. Sometimes we can be too ‘spiritual’ at the expense of being rational, aware and practical.

Andrew Wright

Young Peoples' Pages



Mouse Makes

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Read the Christmas story in **Luke 2:1-21**.

Answer the questions, colour the picture and colour one star each day until Christmas.

Where was Mary's baby born?
Why were Joseph and Mary there?

What did Mary dress her baby in?

Where did Mary lay her baby and why?

Why were the shepherds afraid?

What good news did the angel tell?

What did the shepherds do after they had seen the baby?

Who appeared praising God, what did they say?



GLORY
JOY
MRC
SAYGP
ONVOJ
GBABYNGOODDABLEF
VOSHEPHERDSAVIOUR
DAYTMARYNENFRRO
SCHRISTEPGLTD
ALAI DRWHEOH
EPRAISELC
HEIVALLSK
EEANIGHTOLD
SMCNDCEEB
EAEI SIGN
ET DE

ALL • DECREE • JOSEPH • DAVID • BETHLEHEM • MARY • BIRTH • SON • LAID • MANGER
INN • SHEPHERDS • FLOCK • NIGHT • LORD • GLORY • GOOD NEWS • JOY • DAY
SAVIOUR • CHRIST • SIGN • BABY • GOD • PEACE • ANGELS • GO • SEE • TOLD • PRAISE

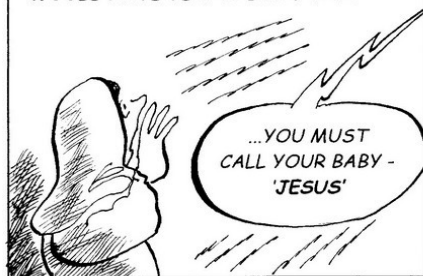
The First Christmas



JESUS WAS BORN ABOUT 2,000 YEARS AGO IN THE SMALL TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, NEAR JERUSALEM.



AN ANGEL HAD TOLD MARY SHE WOULD HAVE VERY SPECIAL BABY



MARY AND JOSEPH MADE THE LONG JOURNEY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM. THEY HAD BEEN ORDERED THERE BY THE CENSUS.



BUT THE TOWN WAS FULL... THE ONLY SHELTER THEY COULD FIND WAS A STABLE...



...WHICH IS WHERE THE BABY JESUS WAS BORN.



SHEPHERDS IN FIELDS NEARBY RACED TO SEE THE BABY. AN ANGEL HAD TOLD THEM WHERE JESUS HAS BEEN BORN.



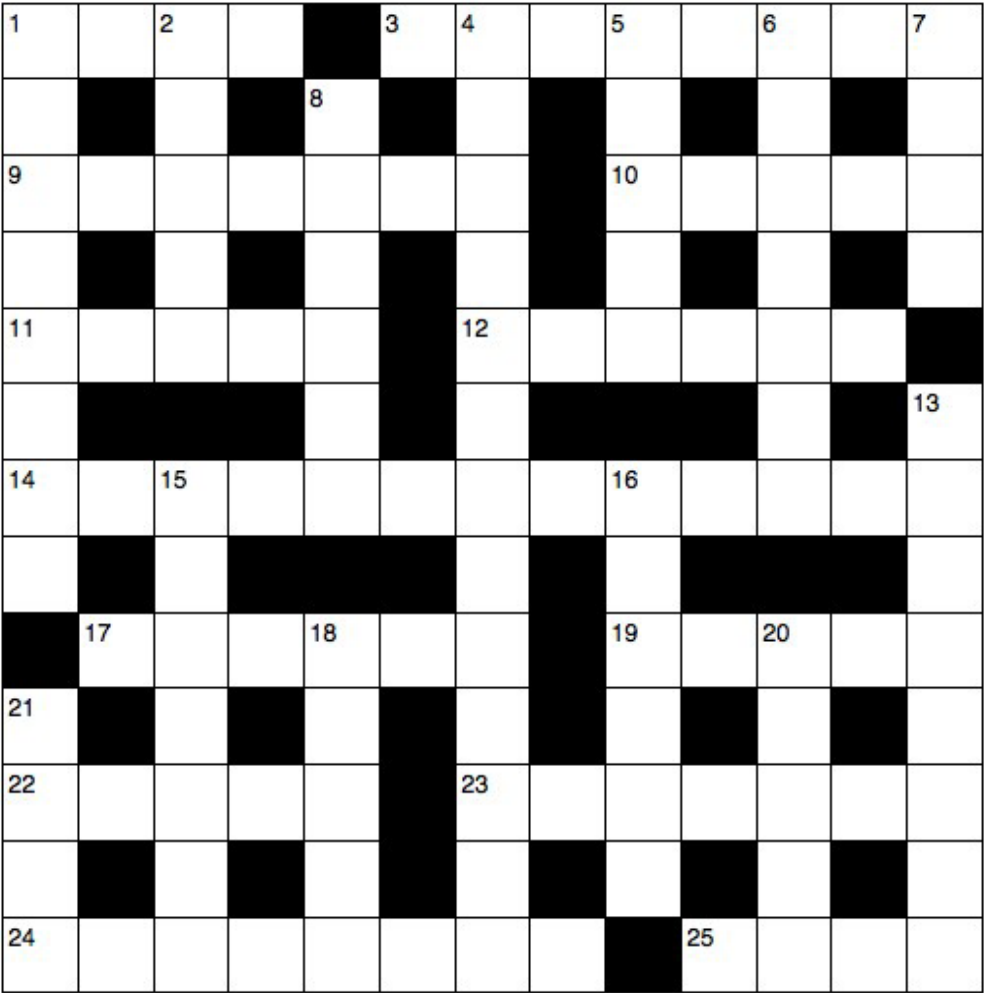
CROSSWORD

Across

- 1 'How long will you — your face from me?' (Psalm 13:1) (4)
3 'Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the — he bore' (Hebrews 13:13) (8)
9 Posh sin (anag.) (Romans 8:15) (7)
10 Solemn pledges (Matthew 5:33) (5)
11 Italian term for full orchestra (5)
12 'For he who avenges blood remembers; he does not — the cry of the afflicted' (Psalm 9:12) (6)
14 Prescience (1 Peter 1:2) (13)
17 Where a Hindu holy man lives (6)
19 'If he found any... who belonged to the Way, whether — — women, he might take them as prisoners' (Acts 9:3) (3,2)
22 Fragrance (2 Corinthians 2:15) (5)
23 Vine hen (anag.) (Jonah 1:2) (7)
24 Precious stone decorating the twelfth foundation of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:20) (8)
25 'Will you keep to the old path that evil men have — ?' (Job 22:15) (4)

Down

- 1 'Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with — —' (Numbers 20:11) (3,5)
2 'You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, " — — murder"' (Matthew 5:21) (2,3)
4 One of Paul's many hardships endured as a servant of God (2 Corinthians 6:5) (13)
5 'We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, — inwardly' (Romans 8:23) (5)
6 Changed (Daniel 6:8) (7)
7 'My yoke is — and my burden is light' (Matthew 11:30) (4)
8 Recoil (Revelation 12:11) (6)
13 'O Lord, you have — me and you know me' (Psalm 139:1) (8)
15 ' — to me the joy of your salvation' (Psalm 51:12) (7)
16 Express sorrow (Isaiah 16:7) (6)
18 'Then he said to Thomas, " — out your hand and put it into my side"' (John 20:27) (5)
20 'God has said, " — will I leave you; — will I forsake you"' (Hebrews 13:5) (5)
21 Son of Onam and brother of Shammai (1 Chronicles 2:28) (4)



Mistletoe's smelly history

Did you know that the word 'mistletoe' means dung on a tree? The Anglo-Saxons thought that mistletoe grew in trees where birds had left their droppings. Mistel means dung, and tan means twig.

ACROSS: 1, Hide, 3, Disgrace, 9, Sonship, 10, Oaths, 11, Tutti, 12, Ignore, 14, Foreknowledge, 17, Ashram, 19, Men or, 22, Aroma, 23, Nineveh, 24, Amethyst, 25, Trod.

DOWN: 1, His staff, 2, Do not, 4, Imprisonments, 5, Groan, 6, Altered, 7, Easy, 8, Shrink, 13, Searched, 15, Restore, 16, Lament, 18, Reach, 20, Never, 21, Jada.

The PCC has been discussing...

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

Finances

Richard Sainsbury's 31 October finance report shows that stewardship income had increased since the earlier appeal. The forecast end-year deficit is now £24,000, with the former £30,000 forecast being a worst case. Hall hire is still £5,000 less than in 2019 and is slow to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

There is no news yet on how much of the Church Commissioners' funding to help with recovery will come to Bath & Wells Diocese.

Taunton Churches Warm Spaces Scheme

Taunton Team Chaplaincy is coordinating local churches' response for people unable to heat their homes because of the energy crisis. As our church is maintained at 15 degrees (to avoid heating it up from cold for each event), we have offered it as a place for people to come on the days that it is normally open.

TLG (Transforming Lives for Good)

Did you see the article in the last magazine asking for volunteers to join the TLG mentoring team? The team does sterling one-to-one mentoring for pupils at St James Church School, for one hour each week. The school would very much like to expand this life-transforming work!

Vashti gave the annual report on TLG Make Lunch. The need for food parcels has declined, possibly because referrals are going to other services (e.g. Halcon Link). The Make Lunch team is reviewing the situation and wondering if the project is coming to a natural end. The PCC is keen to find ways of using the remaining grant funding.

The Big Picture - Evangelism

At each meeting, the PCC steps away from the detail to look at an aspect of the bigger picture of how we as a church fulfil God's mission. Following an overall review of our priorities at the PCC Away Day in October, the PCC had an initial discussion on evangelism at its November meeting.

The framework includes our own 'Vision and Values' (see the new page on the church website) and the Church of England's strategic priorities, notably *'to become a church of missionary disciples, and to be a church that is younger and more diverse'*.

Three specific topics came to the fore during the discussion:

- Restarting the search for a Children and Families Worker. Bearing in mind the lack of suitable candidates (following the closure of many training courses), it was felt that we should build on what we are doing already and seek to release Fabian and others from other tasks.
- The forthcoming '*Stable Manners*' production has an intentional faith component and a follow-up event. We need to be thinking about how we invite friends and what happens after that follow-up event.
- There were nods of agreement to an observation that there is a big gulf between what we do on a Sunday and where most of our non-Christian friends are. We need to be clear that Sunday at 10:30 is just a small part of what we are, and we need to find further ways of living the gospel in language that outsiders can understand. We also need to act in a way that addresses the concerns of those who feel vulnerable.

Miscellaneous Matters

Safeguarding training: most PCC members have now completed the Domestic Abuse Awareness course and we plan to offer this course to those in pastoral roles. A new course on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking would be useful for those working in other settings.

Baby and Toddler Group: thought is being given to restarting this group. However, it does depend on volunteers being available. Please have a word with Dave Wilkie if you are interested in this.

Recruitment: there are still vacancies on PCC – could one of these be waiting for you? Also, we are still looking for someone to take over from Richard Sainsbury as treasurer.

ToneFM: our local radio station is looking to move its transmitter aerial to a better place. After a feasibility study, the PCC approved the move in principle. Detailed planning will now be undertaken. Separately, listen out for the live broadcast on ToneFM of the Business Carol Service!

Annual Reviews: The PCC has an annual cycle for reviewing policy documents. In this period, it looked at the insurance policy; the 'Wages Fees and Charges' schedule, the hall booking form, the Financial Policies document, the Capital Projects List, the Health and Safety Policy, the Fire Risk Assessment – fire, first aid and food hygiene training, the Disability Policy and the diocesan guidelines for the prevention of bullying and harassment. All important matters that underpin our ministry.

Martin Wakefield

Current PCC Members

A reminder of the current members of the Parochial Church Council
If you'd like to raise any issues with the PCC or find out more about what
the Council does, do talk to any of these people



Rev Fabian Wuyts
Vicar



Nigel Bright and Joyce Kirk
Church Wardens



Rev David Wilkie
Curate



Martin Bluemel



Richard Carpenter



Roger Fenton



Marilyn Gibson



Lyn Jones



David Jordan



Julie Kimber



Sue Lucas



Sheila Marlow



Chris Rickard



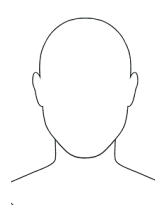
Richard Sainsbury



Vashti Smit



Nic Tall



Vacancy



Jenny Wakefield



Martin Wakefield

PARISH CONTACTS



Vicar: Rev. Fabian Wuyts 01823 333194

email: vicar@stjamestaunton.co.uk



Curate: Rev. David Wilkie 01823 325496

email: curate@stjamestaunton.co.uk

Church Office: 01823 272931

Administration Co-ordinator: Rachel Knowlman

email: info@stjamestaunton.co.uk

Church Wardens: Nigel Bright 07817 627326

Joyce Kirk 01823 971431

Children & Young People's Co-ordinator:

currently vacant

Discipleship & Home Groups Co-ordinator:

Roger Fenton 01823 412113 email: rogerifenton@gmail.com

Fabric (buildings & technical) Co-ordinator: Martin Wakefield

01823 277318 email: martin@scoopscoop.co.uk

Pastoral Care Co-ordinator: Annie Reid 07812 130619

Worship Co-ordinator: Richard Lucas 01823 412942

email: richardlucas.net@gmail.com

Church Treasurer: Richard Sainsbury 01823 284688

email: rjsainsbury61@gmail.com

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Jenny Wakefield 01823 277318

email: jenny@scoopscoop.co.uk

Magazine Editor: Chris Doyle

email: dancingdoyle@sky.com

St James' Players
present

Stable Manners

...not a Nativity play

written and directed by Chris Doyle

St James' Church,

St James' Street, Taunton, TA1 1JS

(the church next to the County Ground)

Friday 27th January @ 7pm

Saturday 28th January @ 5pm

Sunday 29th January @ 5pm

Visitors to a small Bethlehem hotel seem to have come to the wrong place. But what has brought them there anyway? And who is the 'hotel inspector' really working for? What are they all looking for and what effect does it have on them when they find it...?

Confusion, laughs and songs abound in this sideways look at the events surrounding a blinding light and a new birth.

Adults £6

Children (16 years and under) £3

online @ Ticketsource
(use this QR code)

or Jenny Wakefield

01823 277318



Funds raised to Taunton Food Bank (taunton.foodbank.org.uk)
and Actions for Children's Trust (acts-uganda.org)

www.stjamestaunton.co.uk

